



## NSF Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER) Summary

For more information, see the CAREER solicitation [20-525](#), [CAREER FAQs](#) and the [CAREER program page](#)

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### Deadlines

Beginning 2020, NSF only has one deadline for CAREER proposals: the **Fourth Monday in July**. Proposals should be routed through the Office of Research Services no later than 5 business days before the NSF deadline.

### Eligibility

To be eligible, investigators must:

- Hold a doctoral degree in a field supported by NSF by the proposal deadline.
- Be employed in a tenure-track position (or its equivalent) as an assistant professor (or an equivalent title) who has not yet received tenure by the proposal submission deadline.
- Not have received a CAREER award previously.
- Not have previously submitted more than two CAREER applications

### Budget

- For some programs, the minimum budget amounts listed below are also the maximum amount commonly awarded. PIs are encouraged to contact the relevant program officer to help determine what a feasible budget will be. A list of CAREER Division/Directorate Contacts can be found on the CAREER web page at <http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/career/contacts.jsp>
- PIs are also encouraged to review the list of recent CAREER awards made in their discipline for guidance on the average award size. Previous awards can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/>

### Restrictions

- No letters of support are allowed. The departmental letter should be uploaded in the Supplementary Documents section, not the Single Copy Documents section.
- Co-PIs are not allowed.
- Not all programs allow academic year course buy out. Check with your program officer before including it in your proposal.
- Cost sharing is not allowed.
- Letters of collaboration may not include any information other than what is included in the one-sentence template provided by NSF:

*“If the proposal submitted by Dr. [PI name] entitled [proposal title] is selected for funding by the NSF, it is my intent to collaborate and/or commit resources as detailed in the Project Description.”*

### Traits of Successful CAREER Proposals

- Proposal matches the expectations of the relevant disciplinary program in terms of research and education.
- Written with peer reviewers (Ad hoc and/or Panel) in mind. The types of reviewers can vary depending on the program. Ask your Program Officer who will be assessing your proposal. The Fastlane form

allows you to recommend reviewers or identify people who should not review. Take advantage of this opportunity and include the suggested reviewers' contact information.

- Presents a scope of education and research activities appropriate for a 5-year plan.
- Goes outside the education box of regular research proposals in your field
- Strikes a balance between doable research activities and more risky pursuits.

## **Integration of Research and Education**

A distinctive feature of CAREER proposals is that they “must have an integrated research and education at their core.” This means that the research must impact the PI’s education goals, and the education goals should feed back into the research.

- Research and education goals do not need to be addressed separately, but they can be. The choice is up to the PI on how best to address them.
- PIs should plan for five (5) years, not the rest of their lives. That is for future proposals.
- Questions for the PI to consider are:
  - Does my proposal include a plan for assessing the research and education plans?
  - Does it have specific activities that will build a firm foundation for continued contributions to research and education?

## **Most Common Mistakes/Weaknesses in the Research Component**

- Proposed work is not new or too close to what has been done before (i.e. incremental advance)
- Techniques and methods are not cutting edge
- Project scope is too large or too small
- Research plan is not likely to produce results that address the stated goals
- The design is flawed
- Necessary resources are unavailable to the PI
- PI does not have or has not demonstrated they possess the necessary expertise to successfully carryout the project

## **Most Common Mistakes/Weaknesses in the Education Component**

- Education component is generic and consists of activities expected of anyone in the field
- Unoriginal or “reinventing the wheel” (e.g. another blog, another website).
- Unrealistic scope or activity
- Research and education plans are not aligned or integrated—“parallel lines that will never intersect”
- Lack of understanding of what is effective in education/ no knowledge of relevant education research.

## **What NOT To Ask a Program Officer**

- Will you fund my research?
- Is the NSF interested in my topic?
- What hypothesis should I use?
- What research topic do you think I should work on?
- Wat is your program’s funding rate?
- If I send a copy of my proposal to you, will you help me edit it?
- This is my last chance, what can I do?

## **Resources:**

Cox, C., & Reed, C. (2020, May 13). 2020 CAREER Webinar. Washington D.C.; National Science Foundation.

Esperança, S. (2015, May 26). Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program: Program Solicitation – NSF 15-555. Washington D.C.; National Science Foundation.

Martin, J. P. (2018, December 17). Demystifying the NSF CAREER Program: Tips from a Program Officer. Washington D. C.; National Science Foundation.

Moyer, D. (2020, February 24). NSF Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER) Summary. Knoxville; University of Tennessee.