



Updates on NSF Priorities

This page provides updated guidance on the priorities of the U.S. National Science Foundation.

If you are looking for information about recent executive orders, please visit the [NSF Implementation of Recent Executive Orders](#) page.

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Statement of NSF priorities

April 18, 2025

The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) was established in 1950 to promote the progress of science, advance the national health, prosperity and welfare, and secure the national defense. It does this by investing in the most promising ideas and people across all fields of science and engineering (S&E). NSF priorities

NSF's broadening participation activities, including activities undertaken in fulfillment of the Broader Impacts criterion, and research on broadening participation, must aim to create opportunities for all Americans everywhere.

Feedback

are grounded in the mission of the agency and modulated by statutory directives and administration priorities.

NSF uses two statutory criteria to ensure that every award has the potential to advance new knowledge (Intellectual Merit) with maximum impact on the Nation and its people (Broader Impacts). NSF investments unleash groundbreaking discoveries, translational solutions and expand participation in STEM. These efforts strengthen our domestic workforce to fuel economic prosperity, national security, and global S&E competitiveness.

The principles of merit, competition, equal opportunity, and excellence are the bedrock of the NSF mission. NSF continues to review all projects using Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria.

These efforts should not preference some groups at the expense of others, or directly/indirectly exclude individuals or groups. Research projects with more narrow impact limited to subgroups of people based on protected class or characteristics do not effectuate NSF priorities.

NSF will continue to support research with the goal of understanding or addressing participation in STEM, in accordance with all applicable statutes and mandates, with the core goal of creating opportunities for all Americans.

NSF will continue to support basic and use-inspired research in S&E fields that focus on protected characteristics when doing so is intrinsic to the research question and is aligned with Agency priorities.

Sethuraman Panchanathan
*Director, U.S. National Science
Foundation*

Frequently asked questions

1. Why is NSF terminating awards?

All federal agencies that support research and development (R&D), including NSF,

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must ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent in the most efficient way possible consistent with each agency's mission. This requires that NSF regularly evaluate its research priorities within the policy framework established by Congress, the Administration and the Director of NSF. Awards and funding opportunities that do not align with these priorities cannot be funded.

2. Why is NSF changing its priorities?

NSF is continuing to prioritize cutting-edge discovery science and engineering (S&E) research, advancing technology and innovation, and creating opportunities for all Americans in every region of the Nation. NSF has always established priorities within the policy context set forth by Congress, the Administration and the Director of NSF, and it continues to do so.

3. What types of awards are being terminated?

Awards that are not aligned with NSF's priorities have been terminated, including but not limited to those on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and misinformation/disinformation.

4. Can I still propose broadening participation activities (e.g., outreach) in fulfillment of the Broader Impacts criterion?

Investigators should prioritize the first six broader impacts goals as [defined by the](#)

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[America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010](#). Investigators wishing to address goal seven — expanding participation in STEM for women and underrepresented groups — must ensure that all outreach, recruitment, or participatory activities in NSF projects are open and available to all Americans. Investigators may conduct these types of engagement activities to individuals, institutions, groups, or communities based on protected characteristics only as part of broad engagement activities. Investigators may also expand participation in STEM based on non-protected characteristics, including but not limited to institutional type, geography, socioeconomic status, and career stage. However, engagement activities aimed at these characteristics cannot indirectly preference or exclude individuals or groups based on protected characteristics.

5. Will NSF consider proposals directed to a legally mandated NSF program/funding opportunity?

NSF will continue to operate programs that contain elements of broadening participation for individuals based on protected characteristics that are explicitly established in law and prioritized in NSF appropriations language. The research and broader impacts activities proposed in response to these programs should align with the relevant statutory language and aim to generate knowledge broadly

[protected characteristics?](#)

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impactful to Americans from all backgrounds and regions in the country.

Projects submitted to legally mandated broadening participation programs must not directly or indirectly preference or exclude any Americans on the basis of protected characteristics. Projects that have limited impact or rely on DEI frameworks or advocacy do not effectuate NSF priorities.

6. What about the court order that says you cannot withhold funding due to the EOs? Isn't NSF in violation of that?

No. NSF has continued to fund new awards and support existing awards that are in alignment with NSF priorities.

7. What are the protected and non-protected characteristics?

Protected characteristics are those contained in relevant laws, such as but not limited to, the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

8. There are still gaps in the achievements of certain groups of people. Can we still research those?

NSF will continue to fund projects that rate highly using our Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts review criteria in high priority S&E areas. Projects that aim to create more opportunities for more people in every region of the country to participate

in science and technology remain an important part of NSF's mission.

NSF will continue to operate legally mandated programs that aim to expand participation in STEM for individuals of protected characteristics so long as the projects submitted to these programs do not preference or limit participation based on these protected characteristics.

9. Can I research individuals or groups based on protected characteristics in other areas of S&E?

Yes. Researchers may recruit or study individuals based on protected characteristics when doing so is (1) intrinsic to the research question (e.g., research on human physiology), (2) not focused on broadening participation in STEM on the basis of protected characteristics, and (3) aimed to fill an important gap in S&E knowledge. For example, research on technology to assist individuals with disabilities may be supported even when the research subject recruitment is limited to those with disabilities.

10. Is there a list of words I should be avoiding?

There is not a list of words. Investigators should focus on Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts for proposals in a way that is consistent with NSF priorities.

11. Can I still work with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)?

Yes. Collaboration and partnerships between and among various types of institutions of higher education (IHEs) as well as cross-sector partnerships involving government, academia, and the private sector remain a top priority.

12. Are centers impacted? What about facilities that have DEI plans, will those be impacted?

The NSF guidance on broadening participation applies to all current and future NSF awards.

13. Are you still funding research on misinformation/disinformation?

Per the [Presidential Action](#) announced January 20, 2025, NSF will not prioritize research proposals that engage in or facilitate any conduct that would unconstitutionally abridge the free speech of any American citizen. NSF will not support research with the goal of combating "misinformation," "disinformation," and "malinformation" that could be used to infringe on the constitutionally protected speech rights of American citizens across the United States in a manner that advances a preferred narrative about significant matters of public debate.

Submit your questions

You can direct your questions through this webform. We are receiving a large volume of submissions, and we will not be able to respond individually.

As we collect your questions, we will compile and post frequently asked questions (FAQs) on this page. Please check back regularly to access these FAQs.

[Submit a question](#)