



About the National Science Foundation

NSF is an independent federal agency created by the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. Its aim is to promote and advance progress in science and engineering research and education in the United States. The idea of such a foundation was an outgrowth of the important contributions made by science and technology during World War II. Among federal agencies that provide funds for basic research, only NSF is responsible for strengthening the overall health of U.S. science and engineering across all fields. In contrast, other agencies support inquiry focused on a specific mission such as defense or energy. The NSF focus on basic research supports these and other missions, as well as the advance of fundamental knowledge for humankind. NSF leads the nation's efforts to achieve excellence in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology education at all levels. The Foundation is committed to ensuring that the United States has a strong cadre of scientists, engineers, and science educators; a workforce that is scientifically and mathematically literate; and a public that fully understands basic concepts of science, engineering, and technology.

NSF funds research and education in science and engineering through grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements to about 1,600 colleges, universities, K-12 schools, academic consortia, nonprofit institutions, small businesses, and other research institutions in all parts of the United States. NSF is one of the federal government's most cost-effective agencies. Its internal operations consume about 4 percent of its total budget, leaving more than 96 percent for investment in merit-reviewed research and education projects. In the 1999 fiscal year, NSF invested \$2.8 billion in research and \$614.7 million in education activities. While NSF's budget accounts for only about 3 percent of the total federal expenditure on research, the Foundation provides half of the federal support to academic institutions for non-medical basic research. Not only does NSF-sponsored research result in new knowledge and technologies, it also helps to educate future generations of scientists, engineers, educators, and other technically trained professionals.



Through its investments—in future generations, in merit-reviewed research and education projects, and in the extensive distribution of new knowledge—NSF is committed to enhancing the nation’s capacity for achieving excellence in all fields of science and engineering, thereby ensuring new sources of prosperity and opportunity for all Americans.

NSF welcomes proposals from all qualified scientists, engineers, and educators. The Foundation strongly encourages women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to compete fully in its programs. In accordance with federal statutes, regulations, and NSF policies, no person on grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin, or disability shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving financial assistance from NSF (unless otherwise specified in the eligibility requirements for a particular program).

Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED) provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities (investigators and other staff, including student research assistants) to work on NSF-supported projects. See the program announcement or contact the program coordinator at (703) 292-6865.

NSF has Telephonic Device for the Deaf (TDD) and Federal Relay Service (FRS) capabilities that enable individuals with hearing impairments to communicate with the Foundation regarding NSF programs, employment, or general information. TDD may be accessed at (703) 292-5090 or through FRS at 800-877-8339.

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