

# Thriving through Uncertainty

## Navigating the process to submit proposals to the National Science Foundation

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**Morgan State University**  
**May 14, 2025**



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PRISSEM Academic Services, LLC

# PRISSEM Academic Services, LLC

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*PRISSEM provides research development, grant development, and faculty development services to faculty and administrators in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.*



Dr. Falcon Rankins, founder, brings a host of experience working closely with STEM faculty at HBCUs to develop research plans, obtain funding, and successfully carry out funded projects.



Dr. Claudia Rankins brings 12 years of experience as an NSF program officer, having managed a portfolio of \$400m in awards, mostly to HBCUs. She also has over 20 years of experience in STEM faculty and administrative positions at an HBCU.



Dr. Koren Bedeau brings 18 years of experience as a university administrator in academic affairs. She has a wealth of experience in leadership development for women faculty in STEM, STEM faculty at HBCUs, and grant execution for broadening participation.

# We are here today to talk about

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- What we know about the current NSF funding landscape
- The merit review criteria - broader impacts revisited
- Some upcoming deadlines (as of 5/13/2025)
- Q&(maybe some)A - Please feel free to put your questions in the chat at any time during the presentation

# Take care of yourself

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- Continue to embrace your authentic self and resist internalizing negative narratives
- Be like water: flexible, adaptable, flow around and over barriers. Or erode them.
- Take time to find joy, harmony, and connection with people, nature, and self (it's okay to not be angry or sad all the time).

What is happening is NOT a **valid** judgement on the quality, significance, or value of the work you are pursuing.

**How are you doing, right now?**

# Recent Events

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## Mid-late April

- Director Panchanathan resigns
- White House seeks 55% reduction in NSF budget for FY2026
- NSF staff instructed to screen grant proposals and return proposals not in alignment with agency priorities
- NSF staff instructed to “stop all funding actions until further notice”

## Early May

- 15% standard IDC rate adopted on all new grants
- 66 grants worth \$59m+ obligations to 30 HBCUs terminated (as of 5/10) for ‘not effectuating NSF priorities’
- EES Division “sunsetting”; staff positions terminated, including HBCU-UP program officers
- A few awards were made as of May 8

# NSF Reorganization Appears to be Underway

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*Science* reports:

- All 37 divisions across all 8 directorates are being abolished
- Number of programs will be drastically reduced
- Current directors and deputy directors lose their titles

Programs likely to be reorganized into “pods”

NSF structure will likely no longer parallel academic structure

# What we “know” about NSF

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- White House has proposed cutting NSF budget by >50%
- Even if Congress chooses to keep FY26 NSF budget closer to FY25 budget...
  - Agency priorities have changed and limited funds will be available for STEM education research and possibly HBCU-specific programs
  - The FY2027 budget is **much more** uncertain.
- For now, most programs, including for student support programs and HBCU-UP, remain active.



# What we “know” about NSF

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Effective May 5, 2025, NSF will apply a standard indirect cost rate not to exceed 15% to all grants and cooperative agreements awarded to IHEs for which indirect costs are allowable. The awardee is authorized to determine the appropriate rate up to this limit. More can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/policies/document/indirect-cost-rate>.

# What we “know” about NSF

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From the webpage “[Implementation of Executive Orders](#)”  
(4/25/25 update):

- *Review criteria remain consistent. Guidance on reviews and panel summaries has not changed.*
- *NSF does not recommend using a keyword-based approach. Instead, focus on the substance of your proposal.*
- *Proposals may be submitted in [research.gov](#)*

**note, there are changes to  
Broader Impacts**

Keep informed at [www.nsf.gov](#), [www.energy.gov](#), [www.ed.gov](#)

# Research grants enterprise going forward - temporarily

- Less funding available to the community
  - Overall, and particularly for efforts focused on specific students or populations
  - Fewer awards made
- Less federal structure for grant awards
  - ...means...
- Longer wait times, less technical assistance, less grace
- More pressure to know and play by the rules of the game
- Need to diversify
- Look for plan B

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Percentage of NSF  
proposals processed  
within 6 months

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In 2012: 78%

In 2021: 65%

In 2025: ??

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# Call for reviewers

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- Beginning May 2, researchers can join NSF's reviewer pool without being invited by program staff to join a panel or complete an *ad hoc* review.
- Some NSF Divisions maintain their own program-specific volunteer to review capabilities, and reviewers may choose to complete either or both.
- NSF strongly encourages members of the research community to engage with this new Volunteer to Review feature in Research.gov.

# Review Criteria

# Broader Impacts

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“NSF continues to apply the statutorily required Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts review criteria, as well as any solicitation-specific review criteria”. \*

*\*NSF website on implementation of recent executive orders.*

# Seven Goals for the Broader Impacts Criterion\*

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1. Increasing the economic competitiveness of the United States.
2. Advancing of the health and welfare of the American public.
3. Supporting the national defense of the United States.
4. Enhancing partnerships between academia and industry in the United States.
5. Developing an American STEM workforce that is globally competitive through improved preK-12 and undergraduate STEM education and teacher development.
6. Improving public scientific literacy and engagement with science and technology.
7. Expanding participation of women and individuals from underrepresented groups in STEM ← **not currently an NSF priority**

\* as mandated by the [America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010](#).

# Broadening Participation Becomes Stronger Workforce

## Previous Priorities

NSF Supports **research on broadening participation in STEM**

A dynamic and highly qualified workforce is vital to maintaining the nation's standard of excellence and global leadership in STEM.

[NSF] is committed to identifying and addressing barriers to opportunities and innovation in STEM, and to ensuring fairness and integrity in how the agency delivers its programs.

## Priorities as of 5/9/2025

NSF Supports **Research on building a stronger STEM workforce**

A strong workforce is vital to maintaining the nation's standard of excellence and global leadership in STEM.

[NSF] supports efforts to increase the participation of individuals, institutions and communities across the nation — ensuring broad access to resources and opportunities for discovery and innovation.



# How do you find your broader impacts?

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## Reflect on *your local context*

- What are the applications of your work? (note: these might not be your intellectual merit)
- How are you best positioned to build institutional infrastructure or prepare students to participate in the STEM enterprise?
- What do you want the communities you care about to say about your work ten years from now?
- How might your work impact policies?

**We can't stop doing what we are doing!**

**Upcoming Funding Opportunities**

# Some Upcoming Deadlines (as of 5/13/2025)

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## HBCU-UP [NSF 23-563](#)

Letters of intent (req'd, but not binding)

- **July 22, 2025:** Research Initiation Award
- **Sept 9, 2025:** Targeted Infusion Projects, Broadening Participation in STEM Research Projects, Implementation Projects

Full Proposals

- **October 7, 2025:** Research Initiation Award
- **November 13, 2025:** Targeted Infusion Projects, Broadening Participation in STEM Projects, Implementation Projects

## HBCU Excellence in Research [NSF 23-598](#)

- LOI **July 10, 2025**
- Proposal **October 21, 2025**

# Some Upcoming Deadlines (as of 5/13/2025)

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CAREER [NSF 22-586](#) July 23, 2025

Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) [NSF 23-601](#) August 20, 2025

Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program [NSF 23-586](#) August 26, 2025

U.S. NSF Research Trainee Program (NRT) [NSF 24-597](#) September 8, 2025

# When grants are working for you...

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## What grants should do

- Enable your research
- Support a strategy that moves you towards your professional goals and interests
- Solve problems & make your life easier

## What grants should NOT do

- Create extra burdens on you
- Take you further away from your research goals and interests
- Cause undue stress

**Remember: the goal is not to get a grant. The goal is to advance your research, your work.**

# What should be on your grant writing timeline?

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Ensure you budget sufficient time for things like:

- Institutional approval steps
- Getting letters of collaboration
- Peer review!
- Ancillary documents
- Budget
- Uploading documents and AOR submission
- Resubmitting? Don't underestimate the revision process
- Thinking things through

# Identifying program interests

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- Spend some time looking at options to make sure you have the right home for your proposal
- Read program solicitations and RFPs carefully
- Talk to the program officer
  - Email a 1-pager; ask for a meeting to discuss
  - *During call: focus on alignment, not revisions*
  - Do your homework, first
- See what was previously funded
- Serve as a reviewer

**EVERY SECOND COUNTS.** You don't have time to waste on the wrong program.

# Contacting program directors

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- This may be difficult at the moment, particularly outside of R&RA directorates.
- One PD described his colleagues as “exasperated faithful wandering the cubicle desert”.
- PRISSEM may be able to help with some questions as to program fit or other issues.
- Share with PRISSEM your experience in contacting POs.

**Many NSF programs currently do not list the names of POs, but have an email alias.**



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**Questions?**

# Thank you

**Contact us:**

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