



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 18-083

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) **NSF 18-082**: Removal of Deadlines for Core Programs in the Directorate for Engineering

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1. **What does "no deadline" mean?**

Beginning August 15, 2018, all core programs in the Directorate for Engineering (ENG) will accept proposals at any time throughout the year. There will no longer be any restriction on when an unsolicited proposal can be submitted for consideration to the core programs.

2. **What are core programs?**

The two primary mechanisms for submitting proposals to NSF are through solicitations or to core programs. Core programs are standing programs that accept unsolicited proposals across the range of engineering disciplines. In ENG, these core programs have had annual or semi-annual submission windows but, effective August 15, 2018, will accept unsolicited proposals at any time throughout the year. While the number, names and topics of core programs may evolve, at the time of posting these FAQs, the list of ENG core programs includes:

[Chemical, Bioengineering, Environmental and Transport Systems \(CBET\)](#)

Chemical Process Systems Cluster: Catalysis, Electrochemical Systems, Molecular Separations, Process Systems, Reaction Engineering and Molecular Thermodynamics

Engineering Biology and Health Cluster: Biophotonics, Cellular and Biochemical Engineering (CBE), Disability and Rehabilitation Engineering (DARE), Engineering of Biomedical Systems (EBMS), Biosensing

Environmental Engineering and Sustainability Cluster: Biological and Environmental Interactions of Nanoscale Materials, Environmental Engineering, Environmental Sustainability

Transport Phenomena Cluster: Combustion and Fire Systems, Fluid Dynamics, Particulate and Multiphase Processes, Thermal Transport Processes

[Civil, Mechanical and Manufacturing Innovation \(CMMI\)](#)

Advanced Manufacturing Cluster: Cybermanufacturing Systems (CM), Manufacturing Machines and Equipment (MME), Materials Engineering and Processing (MEP), NanoManufacturing (NM)

Mechanics and Engineering Materials Cluster: Biomechanics and Mechanobiology (BMMB), Mechanics of Materials and Structures (MOMS)

Operations, Design, and Dynamic Systems Cluster: Dynamics, Control and Systems Diagnostics (DCSD), Engineering Design and System Engineering (EDSE), Mind, Machine and Motor Nexus (M3X), Operations Engineering (OE)

Resilient and Sustainable Infrastructure Cluster: Civil Infrastructure Systems (CIS), Engineering for Civil Infrastructure (ECI), Humans, Disasters, and the Built Environment (HDBE)

[Electrical, Communications and Cyber Systems \(ECCS\)](#)

Communications, Circuits, and Sensing-Systems (CCSS)
Electronics, Photonics, and Magnetic Devices (EPMD)

Energy, Power, Control, and Networks (EPCN)

Engineering Education and Centers (EEC)

Broadening Participation in Engineering (BPE)

Research in the Formation of Engineers (RFE)

3. Does the change to no deadlines also apply to solicitations?

No. Solicitations (such as CAREER, Engineering Research Centers, Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer, etc.) will continue to accept proposals by the deadlines stated in their respective solicitations.

4. Why is this change being made?

By accepting proposals at any time, ENG is affording more time to prepare proposals, build strong collaborations, and to think more creatively without the pressure of a deadline. Spreading proposal submissions more evenly over the year may also reduce the burden on principal investigators (PIs), reviewers, and proposing organizations.

5. Will proposals still be panel and ad hoc reviewed?

As is present practice, unsolicited proposals will undergo panel and/or ad hoc review as determined by the cognizant NSF Program Director(s). NSF relies on a merit review process that incorporates consideration of both the intellectual merit and broader impacts of the proposed project. NSF Program Directors make every effort to conduct a fair, competitive, transparent merit review process for the selection of projects.

6. Will the community be told the dates of panels?

Consistent with NSF policy, panel dates will not be announced to PIs.

7. Will it take longer to receive a decision on my proposal?

No change in average time to decision and release of reviews is expected with this transition to use of no deadline dates.

8. Can I resubmit a declined proposal right away or do I have to wait a certain length of time to resubmit it?

A declined proposal may be resubmitted, but only after it has undergone substantial revision, as determined by the cognizant NSF Program Director, and only after 12 months has passed from the previous date of submission. Any proposal that is a duplicate of, or substantially similar to, a previous proposal that is under the moratorium period will be returned without review (see NSF Proposal and Award Policies and

Procedures Guide (PAPPG) Chapter IV.E). A revised proposal must abide by the 12-month moratorium regardless of whether it is to be resubmitted to the same program as the previous proposal or to a different program in the Engineering Directorate

9. Is there a limit to how many proposals I can have pending at the same time as a PI or co-PI?

There is no limit to the number of pending proposals a PI or co-PI can have within the Engineering Directorate at any given time. However, each proposal must be significantly different from the others pending at NSF in order to be considered for review. A proposal that is a duplicate of, or substantially similar to, a pending proposal at NSF will be returned without review.

10. Do I need to alert the program if I intend to submit or when I submit a proposal?

No, PIs are not required to contact a Program Director before submitting a research proposal to a core program. However, the Directorate recommends that PIs contact a Program Director if they have questions about program fit, or if they are proposing a large or complex proposal that they want to discuss with the Program Director.