



U.S. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 24-052

Dear Colleague Letter: The Social and Behavioral Science of Bias, Prejudice and Discrimination (BPD)

January 26, 2024

Dear Colleague:

Research supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation's (NSF) Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate has significantly advanced understanding of the science of bias, prejudice, and discrimination. SBE programs have supported transformative projects on many topics in this area, such as the developmental origins of social bias, neural mechanisms underlying how stereotypes bias behavior, principal factors driving the expansion of bias, identification of protective factors that mitigate bias, and interventions aimed at reducing bias, discrimination, and prejudice. In addition, SBE programs have supported research that addresses understanding bias-based violence, terrorism, and hate crimes perpetrated against individuals and groups¹. Transformative research that contributes to the scientific understanding of the genesis, proliferation, management, mitigation, and societal responses to hate-based violence is still needed. Because of the ever-evolving expression of bias, discrimination, and prejudice and their pernicious effects on society, SBE encourages research proposals that expand the breadth and depth of scholarship in this area. SBE highly encourages proposals submitted in response to this DCL to plan their research in partnership with communities directly impacted by bias, prejudice, and discrimination such that the experiences and perspectives of those directly impacted by bias and discrimination are reflected in the approach. This DCL is aligned with Administration priorities focused on the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion and the prevention of hate-motivated violence². The following three strategic directions are of particular interest to SBE programs:

1. **Bias, prejudice, and discrimination in under-studied contexts and communities**

Research that investigates forms and sources of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and violence towards and in under-studied populations.

2. **Situating bias, prejudice, and discrimination in context**

Research that situates bias, prejudice, discrimination, and violence within their geographic, economic, societal, sociocultural, institutional, or systemic/structural contexts would broaden understanding of how these behaviors evolve and are expressed in different environments.

3. **Development of bias, prejudice, and discrimination**

Research on the developmental origins of bias has traditionally relied on early emergent responses (e.g., looking preferences) to make inferences about more advanced socio-cognitive processes that underlie bias (e.g., moral reasoning about social groups, sensitivity to social justice, social stereotyping, the origins of racial prejudice). Proposals that casually connect early development preferences to more advanced constructs and social behaviors are encouraged.

This DCL is not a special competition or a new program. Proposals submitted in response to this DCL should be submitted to existing programs, following their guidelines, including program scope and deadlines or target dates. This DCL also complements the [SBE Science of Broadening Participation](#) (SBE SBP) activity. Proposing organizations should submit a proposal directly to one of the participating programs. Principal Investigators are encouraged to discuss planned proposals with Program Directors in target programs. A proposal responding to this DCL should start the proposal title with "BPD." Additional programs not identified with the "BPD" can be designated once the proposal is created using the "manage where to apply" feature on Research.gov.

Participating programs in the Social, Behavioral and Economics Sciences Directorate include:

- [Accountable Institutions and Behavior](#)
- [Build and Broaden](#)
- [Cognitive Neuroscience](#)
- [Cultural Anthropology](#)
- [Developmental Sciences](#)
- [Linguistics](#)
- [Law and Science](#)
- [Social Psychology](#)
- [Sociology](#)
- [Science of Science](#)
- [Security and Preparedness](#)
- [Decision, Risk and Management Sciences](#)

Questions concerning this Dear Colleague Letter should be directed to bpd@nsf.gov.

Sincerely,

Sylvia M. Butterfield
Acting Assistant Director, SBE

¹ Interested investigators should explore the NSF [Simple](#) or [Advanced Award Search](#) tools to view the full scope of SBE-supported research in these scientific areas.

² Including Executive Orders such as [13985](#); [13988](#); [14031](#); [14075](#) and numerous [national strategies](#).