



U.S. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 24-089

Dear Colleague Letter: Planning Proposals for Centers of Research Excellence in Science and Technology (CREST Centers) in Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE)

May 09, 2024

Dear Colleagues:

Consistent with the National Science Foundation's (NSF) efforts to increase institutional diversity within science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), the Directorate of STEM Education (EDU) and the Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) jointly encourage the submission of planning proposals for a future CREST center proposal with a focus on research in all areas of CISE to include the participation of the full spectrum of diverse talent in STEM.

The [CREST Program](#) supports the creation of research centers that will lead to strong societal impacts through 5-year awards. The projects focus on the enhancement of institutional capacity building and research expansion at Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) through the establishment of centers that effectively integrate education and research. CREST Center awards promote the development of new knowledge, the increase in the research productivity of individual faculty, institution, and the expanded engagement of students from all backgrounds in STEM disciplines

A CREST award is expected to catalyze institutional transformation through the development of research capabilities aligned with the institution's mission and long-term goals. Demonstrated leadership to increase opportunities everywhere, for everyone in STEM is expected at all levels – students, postdoctoral researchers when applicable, and faculty. The research activities supported by CREST are expected to enable the full participation of faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates in a nationally competitive research enterprise.

A competitive CREST proposal will include a meaningful, coherent plan for building sustainable research capability. Formulation of such a plan requires time and resources, which may not otherwise be available to some and thus could constitute a barrier to preparing

a CREST proposal. Through this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), EDU and CISE jointly encourage the submission of planning proposals for CREST centers with a focus on all core research areas within CISE, to help mitigate potential barriers to the preparation of competitive CREST proposals for the proposing institutions and Principal Investigators (PIs).

A CREST center proposal planning award could be used to support initial conceptualization and design of collaborative activities to facilitate the formulation of new and coherent plans for future submission of a CREST center proposal. Anticipated planning activities could include, but are not limited to, planning visits/meetings within the institution and with partnering institutions to discuss potential collaborations, exchanges to launch/initiate scientific collaboration, strategic planning (including the development of a collaborative research plan), training efforts and infrastructure needs to enable coordination of collaborative efforts, and development of evaluation strategies.

Institutions from EPSCoR jurisdictions are always encouraged to apply for NSF support and are particularly welcome to apply to the CREST program. In addition, we seek individuals from EPSCoR jurisdictions to serve as merit review panelists which is an excellent way to learn about an NSF program you may want to apply to in the future.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

Proposals must be prepared in accordance with the guidance for Planning Proposals specified in Chapter II.F.1 of the [NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\)](#) and submitted through Research.gov. Proposers should select the current PAPPG as the funding opportunity and direct proposals to EDU/EES/Centers for Research Excellence in S&T, as listed in research.gov.

Interested proposers should follow this guidance closely:

1. The proposal must include a clear statement as to why this project is appropriate for a planning proposal, including how the funds will be used to formulate a sound approach for future submission of a CREST center proposal.
2. The proposal must explain how a competitive research center will be created and sustained.
3. The proposed research should be aligned with research supported by the Directorate for [Computer and Information Science and Engineering](#) (CISE). The PIs are encouraged to outline a vision that simultaneously promotes inclusiveness and research excellence in CISE focused funding areas.
4. The PI must hold a faculty appointment at an eligible MSI that awards degrees in computer science or computer engineering and must be eligible to submit a future

CREST center proposal as defined in the recent [CREST Centers solicitation](#).

5. The budget may be up to \$100,000/year (including indirect costs) and up to two years in duration.

Prospective PIs must send an initial concept outline (no more than one page) by email no later than **August 1, 2024**, to one of the Program Officers listed below to verify that the proposal topic fits with the research areas of the Directorate for Computer and Information Sciences and Engineering. An invitation from at least one NSF Program Officer to submit a full planning proposal must be uploaded by the PI in the "Program Officer Concurrence Email" section in Research.gov at submission of planning proposal. Planning proposals submitted in response to this DCL for consideration in FY 2025 are welcome through October 1, 2024, but earlier submission is strongly encouraged.

Please contact the following Program Officers for concept outline submission or any questions regarding this DCL:

- Subrata Acharya, Lead PO CISE Research Expansion, (CISE/CCF) acharyas@nsf.gov
- Sonal Dekhane, PO EDU, (EDU/EES), sdekhane@nsf.gov
- Tomasz Durakiewicz, PO EDU, (EDU/EES, MPS/DMR), tdurakie@nsf.gov
- Luis Cubano, Acting Deputy Division Director, EDU, (EDU/EES), lcubano@nsf.gov

Sincerely,

James L. Moore III
Assistant Director
Directorate for STEM Education (EDU)

Dilma Da Silva
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Directorate for Computer & Information Science & Engineering (CISE)