



U.S. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 24-091

Dear Colleague Letter: Announcement of Topic for the Fiscal Year 2025 and 2026 EPSCoR Research Improvement Infrastructure-Focused EPSCoR Collaborations (RII-FEC) Program

May 21, 2024

Dear Colleagues:

The [Focused EPSCoR Collaborations \(FEC\) program \(NSF 24-573\)](#) is an EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) program within the Research Capacity and Competitiveness (RCC) Section of the Office of Integrative Activities. A primary driver of the RII-FEC program is the need to build STEM-driven, interjurisdictional research collaborations with the potential to be nationally and internationally competitive in focus areas consistent with U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) priority program investments and high-priority national challenges ([National Science Foundation 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#)).

With the enactment of the [CHIPS and Science Act of 2022](#), [national key critical and emerging technologies](#), NSF's [key technology focus areas](#), and the establishment of the [NSF Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships \(TIP\)](#), NSF EPSCoR recognizes that entry into the use-inspired space from foundational research requires significant partnerships and infrastructure that may not be equitably accessible to all.

While [foundational research](#) aims to perform experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying physical phenomena and observable facts without any particular application or use in view, [use-inspired research](#) is work whose rationale, conceptualization, and directions are inspired by potential use cases. Both foundational and use-inspired research are interrelated, in the sense that foundational research develops the knowledge that enables use-inspired questions to be asked, and use-inspired research ultimately develops pathways towards translational research.

Through this DCL, the RII-FEC program intends to provide a mechanism for interjurisdictional research teams to increase their capacity for conducting use-inspired research, by accepting proposals in the following focus area: "Building capacity towards use-inspired research."

Therefore, for the fiscal year 2025 and 2026 RII-FEC competition, RII-FEC invites proposals that are focused on enabling the opportunity for interjurisdictional teams who have been historically conducting foundational research, to extend their work by pursuing related, use-inspired research questions in any area of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics that NSF supports. This work may focus on developing and positioning the research toward a use-inspired approach; building the partnerships necessary to enable this work; or building institutional and multijurisdictional resources across the network to have the support of such efforts. Successful projects are expected to position teams to be competitive in acquiring further funding for use-inspired research activities.

While submissions must address the focus area: “Building capacity towards use-inspired research”, the scientific disciplinary or topical area for submissions is open. Proposals that address the [national key critical and emerging technologies](#) or NSF key technology focus areas are particularly encouraged. Proposed research should be motivated by a societal challenge or national need.

Note: The definition of use-inspired research for this DCL includes any topic that advances research and innovation for breakthrough technologies and solutions to national and societal challenges.

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Submissions should follow the full guidance in the EPSCoR RII Focused EPSCoR Collaborations (RII-FEC) solicitation (NSF 24-573).

Relevant due dates for funding considerations for this focus area are:

Letter of Intent Due Date(s) (required) (due by 5 p.m. submitting organization’s local time):

- **December 17, 2024**
- **December 16, 2025**

Full Proposal Deadline(s) (due by 5 p.m. submitting organization’s local time):

- **January 28, 2025**
- **January 27, 2026**

POINTS OF CONTACT

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Sincerely,

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