



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

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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for EAR Postdoctoral Fellowships (EARPF) Program

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1. Should I submit my proposal as an individual or can I submit through a university or institution?
2. Do I need to be affiliated with the postdoctoral institution at the time of submission?
3. I would like to carry out my fellowship at the institution where I will complete my PhD or where I am currently a postdoc. Can I propose to continue my fellowship at my current institution?
4. Can I have more than one host mentor? If yes, do they have to be at the same institution?
5. What should be included in the Host Institution Letter(s)?
6. Do I need a separate Postdoctoral mentoring plan?
7. Can I submit letters of collaboration? Are they required?
8. Can I submit letters of support, letters of reference or recommendation letters?
9. Can I choose a foreign institution (and a mentor at that site) as my Host Institution?
10. Can I choose a government agency (and a mentor at that site) for my postdoctoral work?
11. I do not have my dissertation defense scheduled. What is the latest date I could defend and still be eligible to apply?
12. May I be on a temporary visa when I submit a proposal?
13. What Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA) forms do I need to include and where do they belong?
14. Do I need to upload a list of suggested reviewers?
15. What biographical sketches must I include? Do I need to submit the Biographical Sketches of my PhD advisor and host mentor?

16. What documents are required for submission?
  17. Can I submit a proposal to two NSF postdoctoral Fellowship competitions at the same time?
  18. How do I determine what my salary will be if my proposal is awarded?
  19. Why does my salary appear as \$1 in the Research.gov budget?
  20. If I am submitting through Grants.gov, what values should I enter in the budget?
  21. What if I require a Facilitation Award for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED)?
  22. Will I be responsible for administering my grant if it is awarded?
  23. What email should I use when I register in Research.gov?
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**1. Should I submit my proposal as an individual or can I submit through a university or institution?**

EAR Postdoctoral Fellowship proposals must be submitted directly by the Fellowship candidate to NSF. **Before starting proposal preparation, the proposer must be registered as an individual in Research.gov.** To register as a new individual in Research.gov, access the [Research.gov New Account Management System](#). The Fellowship candidate serves as their own Sponsored Projects Office (SPO) and Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) for the purposes of any research administration functions in Research.gov.

**2. Do I need to be affiliated with the postdoctoral institution at the time of submission?**

No, applicants do not need to be affiliated with the host institution at the time of submitting the proposal. However, candidates must identify a **primary** host institution with which they will be affiliated by the time of the award. The host/scientific mentor must be affiliated with the primary host institution. The scientific mentor(s) must be identified in the proposal. This is done by going to the **Personnel Documents** section in Research.gov, clicking on the "Add Mentor/Advisor" tab and entering the individual's NSF ID or Email or Personnel name and Organization. Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information is required to be included for the scientific mentor(s).

**3. I would like to carry out my fellowship at the institution where I will complete my PhD or where I am currently a postdoc. Can I propose to continue my fellowship**

### **at my current institution?**

Yes, you may propose to stay at your current institution if you meet all three of the following eligibility criteria at the time of submission: 1) You have worked no more than 24 full-time equivalent months in a position that requires a doctoral degree (e.g., postdoctoral scholar); 2) You have engaged a new external collaborator as a second mentor for your EAR Postdoctoral Fellowship; and 3) The second mentor's institution must provide a host institution letter that is separate from the primary host institution letter (see below for more information). Proposals with more than one host institution that do not include separate letters from each of the host institutions will be returned without review.

#### **4. Can I have more than one host mentor? If yes, do they have to be at the same institution?**

Yes, you may have more than one host mentor, but you must justify your choice of mentors within the project description. If you propose to have more than one host mentor, they may be at the same institution or at different institutions.

**Each** mentor must submit a signed letter, not to exceed two pages each, certifying that the Fellowship proposal has been read and approved. Each letter must include discussion of the role the proposed mentor will play in the professional development of the Fellow and the opportunities for research and professional development at the host organization that will be of particular benefit to the Fellow.

Each host institution must write and sign a Host Institution Letter. Host Institution letters must be signed by the department chair (or equivalent) and the Sponsored Research Office, certifying that adequate facilities and support will be provided for the Fellow to accommodate the proposed activities and certifying plans to appoint the Fellow as project PI if an award is recommended. See question 5 and the [EAR-PF Solicitation](#) for specific requirements for host institution letters.

#### **5. What should be included in the Host Institution Letter(s)?**

As stated above, a separate Host Institution Letter is required from **each** of the mentors' institutions. Proposals with more than one host institution that do not include separate letters from each of the host institutions will be returned without review.

The primary host organization's letter must specifically acknowledge that:

- the organization is aware that award recommendations will require a pre- award transfer of the proposal to the primary host organization;
- the organization will submit all documents required for a pre-award transfer, including a new Cover Sheet that lists the Fellow as the PI and a budget that adds

funding for organizational fringe and overhead costs to support the Fellow's benefits; and

- o the organization will administer the award to provide the Fellow's salary, benefits and proposed research activities.

If a host organization is not the primary host organization and if the organization is eligible to receive NSF funding, the letter must acknowledge that the organization is willing to administer the award if the Fellow transfers to the organization. Awards cannot be transferred to foreign organizations or government agencies. If the host organization has not received prior NSF funding, the organization will need to submit "New Awardee" documentation, which will be subject to NSF's evaluation before an award can be made or transferred.

#### **6. Do I need a separate Postdoctoral mentoring plan?**

No, a postdoctoral mentoring plan should not be submitted.

The section entitled "Mentoring Plan" in Research.gov should be empty upon submission.

#### **7. Can I submit letters of collaboration? Are they required?**

You may wish to document collaborative arrangements of significance to the proposal through Letters of Collaboration (see [PAPPG Chapter II.D.2.i\(iii\)](#)). Letters of collaboration should be limited to stating the intent to collaborate and should not contain endorsements or evaluation of the proposed project. Letters of collaboration must adhere to the PAPPG language, included below.

"If the proposal submitted by Dr. *[insert the full name of the Principal Investigator]* entitled *[insert the proposal title]* is selected for funding by NSF, it is my intent to collaborate and/or commit resources as detailed in the Project Description or the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal."

If you have letters of collaboration, they should be uploaded as part of the "Postdoctoral Fellowship Documents".

Letters of collaboration are not required.

#### **8. Can I submit letters of support, letters of reference or recommendation letters?**

No, the EAR Postdoctoral Fellowship program does not accept letters of support, letters of reference or recommendation letters. Proposals that contain letters of support, letters of reference or recommendation letters may be returned without review.

#### **9. Can I choose a foreign institution (and a mentor at that site) as my Host**

## **Institution?**

No, a foreign institution cannot be your primary host institution because awards cannot be transferred to foreign organizations.

### **10. Can I choose a government agency (and a mentor at that site) for my postdoctoral work?**

No, a government agency cannot be your primary host institution because awards cannot be transferred to government agencies.

### **11. I do not have my dissertation defense scheduled. What is the latest date I could defend and still be eligible to apply?**

You can apply as a graduate student. If the Fellowship is awarded, your PhD degree must be conferred and you must provide certification of PhD completion before starting your Fellowship. The EAR-PF program will provide you with a form to certify completion upon request. If you are selected as a Postdoctoral Fellow, you will be expected to start the Fellowship between August 1 of the year following the submission deadline and July 1 of the subsequent year.

### **12. May I be on a temporary visa when I submit a proposal?**

No, the applicant must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident at the time of application. If you are on a temporary visa you may want to consider partnering with a scientist or group at a U.S. institution to submit a standard research proposal where you are identified as the postdoc working in the project. These standard research proposals should be submitted to the appropriate program in the appropriate directorate at NSF (not the EAR-PF program).

### **13. What Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA) forms do I need to include and where do they belong?**

- o Your own and your proposed mentor(s) Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA) information using the [instructions and spreadsheet template](#) as described in the PAPPG should be uploaded to the personnel tab.
- o A list of Collaborators and Other Affiliations for your Ph.D. advisor **must** be submitted as "Additional Single Copy Documents" using the [instructions and spreadsheet template](#) as described in the PAPPG. The COA template for your Ph.D. advisor must be converted to PDF before uploading.

### **14. Do I need to upload a list of suggested reviewers?**

A list of suggested reviewers who are not current collaborators in the submitted COA

lists is appreciated but not required. Suggested reviewers should be included in Additional Single Copy Documents.

15. **What biographical sketches must I include? Do I need to submit the Biographical Sketches of my PhD advisor and host mentor?**

You should provide your own and your proposed mentor(s) Biographical Sketches created using SciENCv ([Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae](#)), which will produce an NSF-compliant PDF version. Do not include a biographical sketch for your PhD advisor.

16. **What documents are required for submission?**

Proposals must include all of the required sections of a full research proposal submitted to NSF as specified in [Chapter II.D.2](#) of the PAPPG. Note the following deviations from the PAPPG as outlined in the EAR-PF solicitation:

**Project Summary** must include the name(s) of the host mentor(s), host institutions, and EAR Discipline most aligned with the project.

**Project Description** may not exceed 10 pages. Project descriptions must include:

- a coherent program of professional development activities;
- justification for the choice of the host organization(s) and scientific mentor(s) and career mentor that relates the proposed Fellowship work to available expertise, facilities and resources;
- description of the array of expected broader impacts, including a specific statement of commitment to broadening participation in science; and
- description of the candidate's long-term career goals and the role of this postdoctoral experience in achieving them.

**Data Management and Sharing Plan:** As specified in the PAPPG, all proposals must include a Data Management and Sharing Plan that describes plans for data management and sharing of the physical and virtual products of research or asserts the absence of the need for such plans. The Fellow is also required to adhere to the [EAR Data Policy](#) available on the NSF website.

**Budget Justification:** In Research.gov, the budget is prepopulated with the stipend and Fellowship allowance. A budget justification must be included and must include the proposed spending plan for the Fellowship allowance.

**PhD Abstract:** The PI must provide a copy of their PhD abstract.

**Host Institution Letter(s):** See question [#5](#).

**Mentor Letter(s):** See question [#4](#).

**Biographical Sketches:** See question [#15](#).

**Collaborators and Other Affiliations:** See question [#13](#).

**17. Can I submit a proposal to two NSF postdoctoral Fellowship competitions at the same time?**

You may **not** submit the same (or similar) proposals to two different NSF postdoctoral Fellowship competitions to be reviewed at the same time. If you submit two identical or similar proposals to different postdoc Fellowship programs, one or both proposals may be returned without review.

If the two proposals are on completely different topics, this **may** be allowable. If you would like to determine the amount of overlap, you will need to send a 1-2 paragraph summary of each proposal to both Fellowship programs for review by NSF program officers.

**18. How do I determine what my salary will be if my proposal is awarded?**

If recommended for award, the EAR-PF Fellowship salary will be based on the U.S. Government Office of Personnel Management (OPM) General Schedule (GS). For Year 1 of the Fellowship, the Fellow will receive the submission year OPM GS-11 Step 1 locality pay for the host institution location. (See Locality Pay Tables for Geographic Areas at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2024/general-schedule>). The stipend should be escalated by 3% for Year 2.

**19. Why does my salary appear as \$1 in the Research.gov budget?**

The budget is pre-populated in Research.gov for all EAR PF applicants. A place holder value of \$1 is used for your salary. If your proposal is recommended for award, the award will be transferred to your host institution for administrative purposes. At that time, your salary will be adjusted to the appropriate OPM GS 11 Step 1 locality pay for your host institution.

**20. If I am submitting through Grants.gov, what values should I enter in the budget?**

Enter \$1 in Participant Support Costs for years one and two on line E.2 and the \$15,000/year fellowship allowance on line E.5. Enter (1) as the total number of participants. No other budget lines should be used for fellowship proposals.

If your proposal is recommended for award, the award will be transferred to your host institution for administrative purposes. At that time, your salary will be adjusted to the appropriate OPM GS 11 Step 1 locality pay for your host institution.

**21. What if I require a Facilitation Award for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASSED)?**

Requests for FASSED funds will only be considered at the pre-award transfer phase or as a supplement.

**22. Will I be responsible for administering my grant if it is awarded?**

No. If your proposal is recommended for award, it will be transferred to your host institution for administration. You will remain the PI on the grant.

**23. What email should I use when I register in Research.gov?**

We recommend that you use an email address that will not expire in the next 48 months. We cannot extend any deadlines, including offer deadlines, if you no longer use or check the email provided in your submission.

**For further questions contact the NSF program staff at: [earpf@nsf.gov](mailto:earpf@nsf.gov).**