



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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Note to Reviewers of CAREER Proposals (NSF 20-525)

The Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program is a Foundation-wide activity that offers the National Science Foundation's most prestigious awards in support of early-career faculty who have the potential to serve as academic role models in research and education and to lead advances in the mission of their department or organization. Activities pursued by early-career faculty should build a firm foundation for a lifetime of leadership in integrating education and research. NSF encourages submission of CAREER proposals from early-career faculty at all CAREER-eligible organizations and especially encourages women, members of underrepresented minority groups, and persons with disabilities to apply.

All CAREER awards have five-year duration. Links to the CAREER program solicitation and Frequently Asked Questions can be found on the [CAREER Home Page](#).

The CAREER program announcement specifies that the Project Description should include:

- a description of the proposed research project, including preliminary supporting data where appropriate, specific objectives, methods and procedures to be used, and expected significance of the results;
- a description of the proposed educational activities and their intended impact;
- a description of how the research and educational activities are integrated or synergistic; and
- results of prior NSF support, if applicable.

The CAREER program embodies NSF's commitment to encourage faculty and academic institutions to value and support the integration of research and education. Successful Principal Investigators will propose creative, effective research and education plans, developed within the context of the mission, goals, and resources of their organizations, while building a firm foundation for a lifetime of contributions to research, education, and their integration.

All CAREER proposals should describe an integrated path that will lead to a successful career as an outstanding researcher and educator. NSF recognizes that there is no single approach to an integrated research and education plan, but encourages all applicants to think

creatively about the reciprocal relationship between the proposed research and education activities and how they may inform each other in their career development as both outstanding researchers and educators. These plans should reflect the proposer's own disciplinary and educational interests and goals, as well as the needs and context of his or her organization. Because there may be different expectations within different disciplinary fields and/or different organizations, a wide range of research and education activities may be appropriate for the CAREER program.

In your review of CAREER proposals, we also ask that you consider the Departmental Letter, found in the Supplementary Documentation section. The letter should demonstrate an understanding of, and a commitment to, the effective integration of research and education as a primary objective of the CAREER award. The letter should also acknowledge how the institution will commit to the professional development and mentoring of the PI.

Your detailed comments on the quality of a CAREER proposal should be presented within the framework of NSF's Merit Review Criteria. Reviewers should consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers are asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

- Intellectual Merit: The intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
- Broader Impacts: The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to
 - a. advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
 - b. benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or institution to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home institution or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

Separate text boxes are provided in the FastLane Review module for comments on each criterion, in addition to a box for Summary Comments. Please make sure you respond to both merit review criteria. Thank you very much for your help. Your reviews are important to NSF's evaluation of proposals and provide critical feedback to the Principal Investigators. We very much appreciate the time and thought that go into preparing reviews.

NSF's CAREER Coordinating Committee