NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 23-161

Dear Colleague Letter: Veterans Research Supplement (VRS) Program

September 28, 2023

Dear Colleague:

The Directorates for Biological Sciences (BIO), Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE), STEM Education (EDU); Engineering (ENG), Geosciences (GEO), Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS), Social, Behavioral, and Economics Sciences (SBE) and the Office of Integrative Activities (OIA) at the National Science Foundation (NSF), through this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) provide support for alternate pathways to encourage veterans' engagement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) research in academia and industry. NSF's commitment to broadening participation is embedded in its Strategic Plan. Initiatives such as the Veterans Research Supplement (VRS) program emphasize the need to proactively seek and effectively develop STEM talent from all sectors and groups in society. NSF recognizes that veterans represent an underutilized workforce for U.S. STEM communities. Through this DCL - BIO, CISE, EDU, ENG, GEO, MPS, OIA and SBE hope to provide additional support to veterans transitioning from active military service to civilian careers and exploring education options through the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

VETERAN DEFINITION

Veteran is defined as a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, under Title 38 USC 101. This DCL engages veterans in research by providing supplemental funding to active NSF awards. Veterans supported by VRS funding may participate in research activities associated with any active award supported by programs listed in the following Divisions and Offices of the NSF Directorates:

BIO: Divisions and Office

- Biological Infrastructure (DBI);

- Environmental Biology (DEB);
- Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS);
- Molecular and Cellular Biosciences (MCB); and
- Emerging Frontiers (EF).

CISE: Divisions and Office

- Computing and Communication Foundations (CCF);
- Information and Intelligent Systems (IIS);
- Computer and Network Systems (CNS); and
- Advanced Cyberinfrastructure (OAC).

EDU: Divisions

- Equity for Excellence in STEM (EES);
- Graduate Education (DGE);
- Research on Learning in Formal and Informal Settings (DRL); and
- Undergraduate Education (DUE).

ENG: Divisions and Office

- Chemical, Bioengineering, Environmental and Transport Systems (CBET);
- Civil, Mechanical and Manufacturing Innovation (CMMI);
- Electrical, Communications and Cyber Systems (ECCS);
- Engineering Education and Centers (EEC); and
- Emerging Frontiers and Multidisciplinary Activities (EFMA).

GEO: Divisions and Office

- Atmospheric and Geospace Sciences (AGS);
- Earth Sciences (EAR);
- Ocean Sciences (OCE);
- Polar Programs (OPP); and
- Research, Innovation, Synergies, and Education (RISE).

MPS: Divisions

- Astronomical Sciences (AST);
- Chemistry (CHE);
- Materials Research (DMR);
- Mathematical Sciences (DMS); and
- Physics (PHY).

OIA: Programs

- Historically Black Colleges and Universities Excellence in Research (HBCU-EiR);
- Growing Convergence Research (GCR); and
- Science and Technology Centers: Integrative Partnerships.

SBE: Divisions and Office

- Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS);
- SBE Office of Multidisciplinary Activities (SMA); and
- Social and Economic Sciences (SES).

This DCL affords veterans who are undergraduate and graduate students, K-12 teachers, or community college faculty the opportunity to work with active NSF recipients to conduct basic and/or industrially relevant research and to gain a deeper understanding of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Education.

VETERANS ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility to participate in the VRS program is limited to the following four groups:

1. Veteran full- or part-time STEM undergraduate students at U.S. 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education (IHEs);
2. Veteran full- or part-time STEM graduate students;
3. Veteran K-12 STEM teachers; or
4. Veteran community college STEM faculty.

Graduate students that are being nominated for support must not have other government-funded support (stipend and tuition), e.g., students currently being supported full-time by the Principal Investigator (PI) on any NSF award as a doctoral student are not eligible for VRS support. NSF Graduate Research Fellows also are not eligible for VRS support. However, students who have received past support from the Post-9/11 GI Bill (and/or associated programs such as the Yellow Ribbon program) are eligible for support.

WHO MAY SUBMIT A SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING REQUEST

A request for VRS support may be submitted to one of the programs in the Divisions and Offices listed above as a post-award supplemental funding request to an active award. Note: The PI or co-PI of the award cannot be the VRS participant.

ANTICIPATED TYPE OF AWARD

Supplement to existing award as described above.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING REQUEST PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

The VRS supplement will enable eligible veterans to participate on active awards supported by BIO, CISE, EDU, ENG, GEO, MPS, OIA, and SBE directorates and offices at NSF. The VRS is not transferable to the dependents of the veterans. The recipient's research project must be consistent with the research topic of the original award and the term of the supplemental funding may not exceed that of the underlying research project.

High quality mentoring is important in the VRS program. Investigators should plan on developing participants' research skills, involving them in the culture of research in the discipline, and connecting their research experience with their overall course of study and future career plans. The request for VRS supplemental support must include the following:

1. Summary of the proposed work (1 page);
2. Justification of the need for the supplemental funds (no more than 2 pages);
3. Budget, along with a Budget justification;
4. In addition, each as its own Supplementary Document:
    a. Specific tasks for the participant(s) to perform (no more than 1 page);
    b. Mentoring Plan describing the mentoring activities that will be provided to the veteran participant should also identify the individual(s) who will serve as mentors, as well as describe their mentoring experience (no more than 1 page per participant); and
    c. Biographical Sketch of the participant(s) as supplementary document (no more than 2 pages per participant).

Supplemental funding requests must emphasize the following components: a clearly defined research project, identification of project deliverables and a project timeline, and an explanation of anticipated benefits to the veteran participant(s). For questions, please contact the cognizant program officer for the award that would be supplemented. Results from any VRS activities must be included in the annual project report for the associated award.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

There is no deadline for submissions of supplemental funding requests.

Supplemental funding requests must be submitted electronically via Research.gov. PIs should follow the instructions for requesting supplemental support found in Chapter VI.E.5 of the NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG).

ANTICIPATED FUNDING AMOUNT AND ESTIMATED NUMBER OF SUPPLEMENTS

Number of supplements per active award under this DCL is at the discretion of the managing program officer for the award for which the supplemental funding is requested and will be

supported based on the quality of the request and availability of funds.

REVIEW PROCESS

The supplemental funding request will be internally reviewed by the managing program officer of the award.

BUDGET GUIDANCE

Group 1. Veteran Full- or Part-time STEM Undergraduate at U.S. 2- and 4-Year IHEs:
Please refer to the REU Supplement guidelines provided in the most recent REU Solicitation.

Group 2. Veteran Full- or Part-time STEM Graduate Students:
The only allowable expenses in the graduate VRS supplemental funding request are the student stipend and fringe benefits that are consistent with organizational practices, tuition support, and any allowable indirect costs. **Anticipated duration is** one year (twelve months) for a single Ph.D. student to join an active award and is renewable for a total support period of up to three years, contingent upon the duration of the active research award and satisfactory progress of the student towards completion of the Ph.D. The annual and final annual project reports must discuss the impact on the career of the veteran Ph.D. student being supported. The supplemental funding will be based on availability of funds. The Grad-VRS renewal request must include a report on the student's progress towards the Ph.D. Grad-VRS renewals are subject to availability of funds in the program.

Group 3. Veteran K-12 STEM Teachers and Group 4. Veteran Community College STEM Faculty:
Please refer to the RET Supplement guidelines provided in the most recent RET Solicitation. A VRS typically provides support for one or two veterans to participate in research as part of a new or ongoing NSF-funded research project. However, centers or large research efforts may request support for several participants commensurate with the size and nature of the project. Active PIs should consult the cognizant managing NSF Program Officer for their current award for specific guidance as to the number and availability of supplements.

Synergy with the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Program:
Dear Colleague Letter: Undergraduate Research Experiences in Advanced Technological Education (ATE-URE, NSF 20-054) encourages (1) current ATE PIs to implement and study UREs in the context of education in advanced technology fields and (2) calls for research experiences for veterans to foster new collaborations to support veterans and other students. Prospective investigators outside ATE are encouraged to consider new collaborations with current ATE PIs. To find ATE projects that may be suitable, use the "Advanced Search" function on the NSF website and search with Element Code 7412.

Additional Opportunity for Veteran Inclusion - Research Experience and Mentoring

(REM) Program:
Investigators holding an active award from the Emerging Frontiers in Research and Innovation (EFRI) program, or an active Engineering Research Center (ERC) award may also consider applying for REM supplemental funding if their cohort includes six or more research participants. Please refer to the most recent REM DCL.

POINT OF CONTACT

For questions regarding the VRS, please contact the cognizant managing Program Officer of your current award.

Sincerely,

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