

NSF Tips: CAREER Proposals

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The NSF Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER) is a Foundation-wide program; it is the agency's most prestigious award for early career faculty. CAREER is a career development award designed to help junior faculty lay the foundation not only as outstanding researchers but also as educators demonstrating commitment to teaching, learning, and dissemination of knowledge. There are three deadlines for proposals in 2017: July 19, 20, 21, depending on the directorate to which the proposal is submitted.

Updates

A new CAREER solicitation (17-537) was released in January 2017. While it is substantially unchanged from the previous solicitation, it contains a few revisions. Of note:

- Introductory paragraphs emphasize the integration of education and proposed research and the reciprocal relationship between the two.
- A new paragraph states that for certain disciplines and career interests, activities such as entrepreneurship, industry partnerships, or policy may enhance research and education plans. (Our advice: Consult with a cognizant program officer.)
- Additional emphasis given to strategies for assessing impact/effectiveness of research and education plans.
- New examples of educational activities provided. (Per NSF: These examples are not intended to be prescriptive; they are provided to spark innovation and creativity.)
- New information provided on scientific software development and proposals requiring seagoing facilities.
- New requirements for departmental letter described.
- New FAQs for Submission in Years 2017 – 2019.

Tips and Suggestions for CAREER Education Plans

1. Reviewers' expectations for the size, number, and scope of education activities for CAREER proposals vary greatly by directorate, division, and even specific cluster. It's therefore essential that the investigator carefully research what a successful education/BI plan looks like in his/her discipline. NSF's Award Search Feature is a user-friendly tool that all investigators should become familiar with. In the reference code field, enter "1045" (the code for CAREER awards). In the organization field, select the directorate. Additional fields, such as element and reference codes, allow the PI to further refine the search by division and cluster. For more info, visit NSF's advanced search help page.

2. PIs may also gain valuable insights from colleagues and collaborators in their field, particularly those who have submitted successful CAREER proposals.

3. Once the PI has a basic conceptual framework for his/her research and education plans, it's highly recommended that s/he contact an NSF program officer to get feedback. Program officers can offer invaluable insight and assistance as ideas are developed. PIs may contact a program officer for the directorate listed in the solicitation.

4. To see most common mistakes made by PIs in both the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impact proposal sections, [see pages 34-35 of a recent NSF slideshow](#). The other slides share pertinent information as well.

Want to Learn More?

Come join us at the 2017 NABI Summit where we'll be co-leading a session entitled *NSF CAREER Program-A gateway to get faculty "hooked" on BI*.