

Demystifying How to Participate in NSF Funding: Lessons Learned from NSF-Funded Resource Centers

In 2024, the [Evidence Quality and Reach \(EQR\) Hub](#) interviewed leaders from four National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded resource centers about strategies for expanding the pool of prospective grantees, particularly those who have historically been underfunded by NSF.

Challenges

Prospective Grantees have shared with Resource Centers



Disparities in institutional resources

Prospective grantees may have limited access to and support from institutions for all phases of grant development, varying teaching loads, and limited access to graduate students and staff to support grant work.



Limited social capital

Prospective grantees may have limited knowledge of and experience with activities that current grantees credit for their success, such as serving on a review panel, consulting a program officer, or having an NSF-experienced colleague review their proposal.



Reducing barriers to participation

Resource centers group prospective grantees by criteria such as identities, interests, or professional challenges for targeted capacity building. Although this is beneficial, it may unintentionally exclude some individuals. The thoughtful design of events and activities is needed to maximize impact and inclusivity.



Strategies

Used by Resource Center Leaders



Building relationships with prospective grantees

Resource centers engage individual researchers or small groups of researchers in conversation to identify their specific needs. Insights from these conversations enhance resource centers' understanding of challenges faced by prospective grantees and guide the creation of learning events and resources that are timely and responsive to the needs of prospective grantees.

Broker connections between current and prospective grantees

Resource centers facilitate activities such as webinars, workshops, and office hours to foster connections between prospective and current NSF grantees. Hosting events with both groups increases social capital for all participants.

Center the expertise and assets of prospective grantees

Prospective grantees benefit from resource centers and colleagues who respect their expertise and help build their capacity to communicate their ideas and assets effectively in proposals.

Prospective grantees can increase the social capital necessary for NSF grant success by engaging with NSF-funded resource centers and strengthening relationships with current grantees.

Resources to Support Grant Writing • cadrek12.org

If you are interested in learning more about the Discovery Research PreK-12 (DRK-12) program or looking for resources to build your capacity to apply for a grant, visit the [Community for Advancing Discovery Research in Education \(CADRE\) website](https://cadrek12.org).

Here are a few direct links to help you get started!



[Demystifying How to Participate in NSF Funding](#)

Learn from NSF-funded resource center leads about the challenges that applicants face when applying for and securing NSF grants and the strategies their centers have used to help increase participation.



[Contributing Factors to DRK-12 Grantee Success](#)

Learn about the factors that current and former DRK-12 grantees say contributed to their success with NSF grant funding.



[CADRE: NSF Proposal Toolkit](#)

Explore NSF funding opportunities for STEM education research and gather advice for the proposal preparation, submission, and review process.



[CADRE: The DRK-12 Community](#)

Learn about DRK-12 STEM education projects and the people working on them.



[CADRE: CADRE, NSF & NSF Network Events](#)

Browse upcoming events hosted by the NSF network.



[EQR Hub: STEM Ecosystems webinar recording and slides](#)

Watch this October 2023 webinar on what STEM ecosystems are, how STEM ecosystems can support PreK-12 STEM education research and development projects, and how researchers can get involved.

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