



National Science Foundation
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NSF 20-095

Dear Colleague Letter: IUCRC Program Policy Flexibility in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Situation

June 09, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Industry University Cooperative Research Centers (IUCRC) Program fosters long-term partnerships among academia, industry, and government in various technology sectors through multi-university, industry-focused research centers. These partnerships, developed through the cooperative execution of precompetitive research, strengthen the U.S. innovation ecosystem and the Nation's overall economic competitiveness. Precompetitive research conducted by IUCRCs addresses application-inspired fundamental topics that industry recognizes as longer-term challenges; industry members benefit from collaboration with academic partners in the definition and execution of the corresponding research. NSF provides catalyzing investment to the centers, which are primarily supported by industrial members and other stakeholders. The research carried out at each center is of interest to both the center faculty and the center's industry members. IUCRCs contribute to the Nation's research infrastructure base and enhance the intellectual capacity of the science and engineering workforce through the integration of research and education. As appropriate, IUCRCs establish international collaborations to advance these goals within the global context.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a great deal of uncertainty in the US economy, and across nearly all industry sectors. In recognition of the high level of industry engagement (within both existing and proposed future IUCRCs), the COVID-19 pandemic could present new challenges related to industry membership commitments at the current time and into the near future. Therefore, industry membership requirements could be more difficult to meet. Potential impacts may be in relation to confirming commitments related to both the retention of existing members and the recruitment of new members.

To mitigate possible adverse effects of the COVID-19 hardship with respect to meeting Center/Site membership requirements, NSF offers the following guidance for IUCRCs with active NSF grants, *applicable through December 31, 2020*:

1. The PI must notify the cognizant Program Officer of COVID-19-related challenges in meeting industry membership requirements. PIs and Center/Site Directors should present relevant documentation. Documentation may include emails, letters, minutes from meetings, etc. and must include identification and specification of the following:

- Affected organization(s) (i.e., industry or government entities), including Industry Advisory Board point of contact information,
- Anticipated duration of adverse impact,
- Specific reasons for any changes in ongoing membership commitments of the affected organization(s) in the IUCRC, and
- Estimated financial impact.

2. The PI must request approval from the cognizant Program Officer for a waiver of specific requirements of the solicitation that the grant was funded under, that are directly impacted by the COVID-19 related hardship.

Based on the nature of the issues identified, and a review of the merits of the request from the PI, the cognizant Program Officer may provide approval of a waiver on specific solicitation requirements, in writing.

Centers or Sites needing flexibility with respect to timing and extension of award duration are encouraged to take advantage of the NSF No Cost Extension (NCE) opportunities (please consult the NSF PAPPG https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg20_1/pappg_6.jsp#VID3c <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg20_1/pappg_6.jsp#VID3c> for further guidance).

The *temporary* nature of these guidelines is designed to assist IUCRCs in dealing with COVID-19 related hardships. For all IUCRCs funded prior to the date of this DCL, it is expected that all grantees meet their governing solicitation minimum annual membership and program income requirements beginning January 1, 2021.

NSF will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation and will update this DCL as needed.

Please contact one of the NSF Program Directors listed below if you have questions about this IUCRC DCL.

- Prakash Balan, Ph.D. – IUCRC Program Director, Division of Industrial Innovations and Partnership (IIP), Directorate for Engineering (ENG). Telephone: (703) 292-5341; E-mail: pbalan@nsf.gov (mailto:pbalan@nsf.gov)
- Gregory Reed, Ph.D. – IUCRC Program Director, Division of Industrial Innovations and Partnership (IIP), Directorate for Engineering (ENG). Telephone: (703) 292-2003; E-mail: gregreed@nsf.gov (mailto:gregreed@nsf.gov)
- Behrooz Shirazi, Ph.D. – IUCRC Program Director, Division of Computer and Network Systems (CNS), Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE). Telephone: (703) 292-8343; E-mail: bshirazi@nsf.gov (mailto:bshirazi@nsf.gov)
- Barbara Ransom, Ph.D. – IUCRC Program Director, Office of the Assistant Director (OAD), Directorate for Geosciences (GEO). Telephone: (703) 292-7792; E-mail: bransom@nsf.gov (mailto:bransom@nsf.gov)
- Rebecca Ferrell, Ph.D. – IUCRC Program Director, Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS), Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE). Telephone: (703) 292-7850; E-mail: rferrell@nsf.gov (mailto:rferrell@nsf.gov)

Sincerely,

Dawn M. Tilbury
Assistant Director
Directorate for Engineering

Margaret Martonosi
Assistant Director
Directorate for Computer & Information Science & Engineering

William E. Easterling
Assistant Director
Directorate for Geosciences

Arthur William Lupia
Assistant Director
Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences

National Science Foundation, 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, USA Tel: (703) 292-5111, FIRS: (800) 877-8339 | TDD: (800) 281-8749