



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 12-012

Frequently Asked Questions: **CREATIV**

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1. I have an idea that I think is appropriate for the CREATIV mechanism. How should I start working on a proposal?

As a first step, you are encouraged to fill out and submit the CREATIV Inquiry Data Form, [here](#). *Before submitting the form, you must identify at least two appropriate NSF Program Directors to consider your inquiry.* Do this thoughtfully; naming program directors who are far removed from your topic will lead to delays and unproductive effort both for you and for them. Naming senior managers (director, deputy director, office head, office director, assistant director, deputy assistant director, division director, deputy division director, section head) is also unproductive; please avoid this. If you need assistance in finding appropriate program directors, some keyword searching of the NSF web site may be helpful in finding appropriate NSF divisions and programs, for example by using the "Search Funding Opportunities" box in the left-hand column of the [home page](#), or the "Search Award For" box in the [Award Search](#) database. Another potential resource is the NSF Interdisciplinary Research web site, http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/additional_resources/interdisciplinary_research/, where the [Contact Options](#) page suggests various approaches, and the [Points of Contact](#) page lists people who can be helpful at the directorate level. Upon submission, the [CREATIV Inquiry Data Form](#) will be forwarded automatically to the program directors listed on it. Soon thereafter, the program directors will respond to your inquiry and can help you determine whether and how to proceed further. Note that the first listed program director will be initially responsible for coordinating this reply. If you can determine one program that is the most impacted by your proposed research, it will usually be best to list one of the Contacts for that program as the first program director. The second program director should represent a different program.

2. After the initial contact with program directors, what are the subsequent steps?

You should receive a response to your inquiry within two weeks after submitting the Data Form. The reply could come from the first listed program director, who will initially coordinate this response, or from someone else who may be determined by the program directors to be most appropriate for this role. You will have listed at least two program directors on the [Data Form](#). If these program directors find that the proposal idea is not promising or is not appropriate for the CREATIV mechanism, the process may end there with a coordinated response to you explaining the reasons for this finding. For instance, a frequent outcome is that the idea is considered to be more suitable for a proposal to a regular review process. If the program directors find instead that the topic is too distant from their programs, then in some cases, they may voluntarily refer you to one or more program directors in other programs, or may make such contacts themselves. However, it is not their responsibility to make such referrals or contacts; it remains your responsibility to identify and contact at least two program directors in intellectually distinct divisions or programs. If the program directors find that the idea is appropriate for their programs and appears to be worth pursuing further via the CREATIV mechanism, you might have follow-up communications with them to determine whether they will authorize submission of a full proposal. Whatever course the process follows, the end result before writing a full CREATIV proposal must be written authorizations to submit a CREATIV proposal by program directors from at least two intellectually distinct divisions or programs. How you reach that point is between you and the program directors.

3. If I am unable to obtain the authorizations from at least two program directors as described, but I still want to submit a CREATIV proposal, what can I do?

If you submit the CREATIV proposal without the authorizations, it will be returned without review. You could reformulate your proposal idea, or consider other submission mechanisms.

4. The Dear Colleague Letter states that a CREATIV award must be substantially co-funded by at least two intellectually distinct NSF divisions or programs. What is meant by "intellectually

distinct"?

The intent of this criterion is that the project be interdisciplinary, in a manner that attracts support from multiple programs that extend beyond the scope of one field. The NSF organizational structure is not the primary determining factor, because some divisions cover multiple disciplines, and some disciplines are supported by more than one division. NSF staff will judge whether a proposal meets this criterion. Principal investigators should discuss this issue with NSF staff early in the process, before committing significant effort to writing a proposal. If two co-funding programs are from the same NSF division, it would be useful for the proposal to argue that the programs represent distinct disciplinary communities.

5. In the same vein, what is meant by "substantially co-funded"?

This criterion is meant to require serious interest from the co-funding programs, i.e., "token" contributions are discounted for this purpose.

6. INSPIRE is an ongoing initiative. As a part of it, will CREATIV continue in FY 2013 and beyond?

CREATIV is a pilot that will be evaluated as experience is gained with it. The current expectation is that it will continue.

7. If INSPIRE funding increases until FY 2016 as planned, what other funding opportunities will it include?

Future INSPIRE funding opportunities are under discussion by NSF management and staff. For FY 2012, CREATIV will be the only funding opportunity under INSPIRE.

8. I have a proposal that was declined because some reviewers said that the techniques would not work. Can I resubmit this as a CREATIV proposal?

First, you should discuss this with appropriate program directors, probably including someone from the program that handled your declined proposal. As the Dear Colleague Letter describes, a CREATIV proposal is different from a regular program proposal, and is subject to additional review criteria. If your idea attracts the required authorization from at least two program directors, you could write a new CREATIV proposal on the basis of that authorization.

9. I have an award that expires in 2012. Can I apply for renewed funding through a CREATIV proposal?

You can, in principle, though it is unlikely that this will be appropriate. As the Dear Colleague Letter indicates, projects that continue well-established lines of research, or that can be expected to receive an appropriate evaluation through external review in regular programs, should go through a regular NSF review process and are not appropriate for submission as CREATIV proposals. You should only consider the CREATIV mechanism if there is something unconventional about your "renewal" request. The first step is to discuss this with program directors, and if your request is for a conventional renewal, they will inform you that your proposal should go through a regular external review process instead.

10. Does a CREATIV proposal have to address "hot topics" or Administration science and technology priorities for the 2012 budget?

No. There are no favored topics. In terms of review criteria, unusual promise for societal benefit can contribute to the broader impacts of a proposal.

11. Can a CREATIV proposal involve biomedical research?

Yes, under the same limitations as any NSF proposal, as explained in the Grant Proposal Guide, http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/gpg_1.jsp#IB. Discussion with program directors will clarify this point.

12. Are education projects eligible for CREATIV?

Yes, education projects are eligible but must address STEM subject matter and must focus on research on education or learning. Proposals focused on implementation activities (e.g., the provision of student support, teacher professional development) are discouraged. Like all CREATIV proposals, prospective principal investigators must obtain the written authorization of program directors in two or more intellectually distinct divisions or programs. In the case of projects in research on education and learning, this will typically mean programs from different directorates or offices of NSF.

13. Is there a deadline for CREATIV submissions?

No, not in the usual sense of a deadline. CREATIV proposals for support in FY 2012 can be submitted at any time between December 1, 2011, and June 15, 2012. Any submission after June 15, 2012, will be too late for consideration in FY 2012, but could be considered in FY 2013 if the CREATIV pilot continues.

14. Is there a limit on the number of PIs and co-PIs?

Because CREATIV does not accept multi-institution collaborative proposals (i.e., a multi-organization project must be submitted as a single proposal, including requests for subawards), at most five investigators can be listed on the cover sheet. In principle, there is no limit on the number of senior personnel on a CREATIV project. Generally, it is expected that awards will support an individual PI or a small team.

15. Does the requested duration affect the maximum allowable award? For example, could I request \$1,000,000 for three years, or does it have to be over five years?

The requested duration does not affect the maximum allowable award. You could request \$1,000,000 over three years, if you have written authorization from at least three intellectually distinct divisions or programs.

16. I work at a national laboratory (federally funded research and development center (FFRDC)) or a private company, and I have an adjunct appointment at a university. Can I be the PI on a CREATIV proposal?

The proposal must be submitted by a U.S. academic institution or by a U.S. non-profit, non-academic organization. An FFRDC or a private for-profit organization cannot submit a proposal. If the institution where you hold the adjunct appointment will submit a proposal on which you are the PI, NSF will accept it for review.

17. Can a PI or co-PI be located at a non-U.S. organization?

Proposals must be submitted by a U.S. academic institution or by a U.S. non-profit, non-academic organization. It is up to the submitting organization to decide who is, or is not, eligible to serve as a PI or co-PI. As the position of PI or co-PI is an administrative role, different organizations may have different rules regarding individuals from outside their organization serving in these roles.

18. Can a subaward be made to a non-U.S. organization?

Yes, although indirect costs cannot be charged by the non-U.S. organization unless it has a negotiated indirect cost rate.

19. When submitting my CREATIV proposal, I have to choose a primary program in FastLane. Does it matter which of the interested programs I choose?

The one that you choose will be the one that handles some of the internal "paperwork". Scientifically, it should not make a difference. Make sure to list all of the other interested programs on the cover sheet.

20. How does the CREATIV mechanism differ from the existing EAGER mechanism?

EAGER projects are limited to two years' duration and \$300,000 in funding. As explained in the Grant Proposal Guide, http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/gpg_2.jsp#IID2, EAGER supports exploratory work in its early stages on untested, but potentially transformative, research ideas or approaches. EAGER awards are typically supported by one disciplinary program, entirely with its own funds. The CREATIV mechanism allows for increased project scope, beyond the exploratory stage in both duration and funding level. CREATIV requires interdisciplinarity in both content and co-funding, in keeping with the goals of INSPIRE. Also, the FY 2012 INSPIRE budget request provides NSF-wide funding to leverage the investments of the co-funding programs in CREATIV awards.

21. How long should my Project Description be? Will I be penalized if it is less than 15 pages?

The Grant Proposal Guide states that an EAGER Project Description is expected to be brief (five to eight pages). As explained above, CREATIV proposals have some features in common with EAGER proposals, but could be substantially deeper and more complicated. The appropriate length is best left to the judgment of the submitters, based on the particular characteristics of the proposal ideas.

22. For the additional CREATIV intellectual merit criteria relating to interdisciplinarity, does my proposal have to respond to the five specific items ("Combining concepts/methods ...", etc.) listed in the Dear Colleague Letter?

No, these are examples. However, a compelling case for interdisciplinarity must be made.

23. How important is it that a CREATIV proposal be potentially transformative?

It is essential and critical. For any NSF proposal, the standard National Science Board-approved intellectual merit review criterion now includes: "To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?" Thus, in a "regular" proposal, "potentially transformative" is a positive consideration; in a CREATIV proposal, it is a requirement.

24. How will the internal review process for CREATIV proposals work?

As indicated by the additional review criteria relating to interdisciplinarity and transformative potential, it will be a very rigorous process. For a CREATIV award, multiple program directors from intellectually distinct programs must independently conclude that the review criteria are met. Furthermore, an NSF-wide CREATIV management group must also agree that the recommending programs are committing substantial funds and are sufficiently distinct intellectually to make the proposal appropriate for CREATIV.

25. My CREATIV proposal was declined, and I do not agree with the reasons for the decision. What can I do?

As explained in the Dear Colleague Letter, by choosing the alternative pilot CREATIV review mechanism, you waive the option of asking for reconsideration. The program director who handled your proposal should be able to advise you on possible further steps, such as a revised CREATIV proposal, a regular proposal, etc.

26. I have an unconventional interdisciplinary idea that I have been reluctant to submit to a regular NSF review process because I think the reviewers will be too risk-averse to evaluate it favorably. Should I consider submitting this as a CREATIV proposal?

Yes, if your description is accurate, this is a primary type of proposal that CREATIV is intended for. As explained above, identify at least two appropriate program directors and submit the [CREATIV Inquiry Data Form](#) to start the process.