

General

What is the age range for student participants?

K-12. Projects do not have to address the whole age range.

Does "traditional STEM disciplines" include the agricultural and life sciences?

Yes.

Do SPReAD projects need to build on prior ITEST projects or just prior projects?

The previous project does not have to be funded by ITEST; however you must present evidence from the research or evaluation from the project which is serving as the basis of your proposal.

For SPREAD - what other types of institutions can/should be involved?

There are no limitations or specified requirements for the types of institutions that can be involved, or how. The typical types of institutions involved in ITEST projects include schools, school districts, technical schools, community colleges, 4-year colleges, universities, state and local government governments, non-profit non-academic organizations (museums, professional societies, research laboratories), and for-profit organizations (U.S. commercial organizations or small businesses).

What is the difference between ITEST program and the DRK-12 program?

DRK-12 is focused on resources, models, and tools for classroom settings. ITEST is focused on strategies for informal and formal settings. The other difference is that ITEST is focused specifically on building capacity in the STEM workforce.

Do ITEST projects generally fall under Research Types 1 or 2 in the Common Guidelines (i.e., Foundational, Early-State, or Exploratory Research)?

Yes, a majority of ITEST proposals will likely fall under Research Types 1 or 2 in the Common Guidelines.

Now that the strategies and research strands were combined is there a difference in expectations regarding the design in revising a (past) strategies projects proposal?

The only difference would be that if you look at the Common Guidelines for education research that you may want to use the strategy that is less exploratory and more in the realm of design based research. The expectations in general are the same. You may want to review the revised description of research/evaluation in the new ITEST solicitation, since they suggest some new angles on research/evaluation.

Does "senior personnel" include PI and Co-PIs?

Yes, "senior personnel" does include PI's and Co-PIs.

Can a business person be considered as the PI?

In some cases, yes. See Section E of Chapter 1 in the Grant Proposal Guide. If a commercial organization has special expertise or proposes a project of special concern from a national point of view. Please refer to the Grant Proposal Guide.

What is cost sharing?

Cost sharing, not allowed as part of the formal budget, is where you would include funding from another source.

How do you define "academic position"?

This term typically refers to faculty members at institutions of higher education where some amount of research is expected as part of their regular duties. For more precise language regarding what level of support is allowable for senior personal in academic or non-academic positions, please see the Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter 2, Section C, paragraph g.

What does "intellectual merit" mean?

This is one of two review criteria that are defined in the solicitation in Section VI. Briefly, "The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge," but see "Merit Review Principles" of part A.1 of Section VI of the solicitation for details.

Budget

Can funds be allocated to industry partners?

Yes.

If our education research Co-PI is at a university, would ITEST fund a graduate student under her supervision?

Yes, graduate students can be funded for carrying out activities under the supervision of a PI.

Is there any flexibility on the two-month salary limit?

There is a two-month salary limit but a higher amount of time is allowed as long as you provide a justification in the budget narrative statement.

Is a two-month salary for one year or all three years?

Two months per year.

If you need laptops for the students can this be allowed?

Generally, NSF does not support major equipment purchases such as laptops for every participant. However, it would be best to consult with an NSF program officer to discuss specifics.

Under what circumstances are tuition costs for graduate students allowed?

Tuition costs for graduate students can be included, check with a program officer with more specific questions.

Can the businesses receive and funding?

Yes, as appropriate to their role in the project.

Can businesses submit proposals for Labor cost?

Yes, as appropriate to the project. Discuss the specifics with a program officer.

In the Supplemental Section can you put information in about funding that was not NSF?

No, discuss the context of the project, such as any other resources that will support the project, in the project description. NSF does not allow costing sharing as a formal part of the budget.

Would 10% of the award be considered appropriate to dedicate to the evaluation section?

The proportion of budget should be appropriate to the amount of work and related expenses, so the 10% has no basis, it is the amount or percent of the budget needed to carry out the work.

Can a program asking for ITEST grants also charge participants a tuition?

There is not a general answer for this question; much depends on the context. It is recommended that in this situation a brief description of what is being considered be submitted to an ITEST Program Director for specific feedback.

Evaluation

Can an external evaluator be from the same university?

Yes, the evaluator must be independent of the project. It would be a good idea for the evaluator to be from a different department, college, or unit in the institution. The primary criterion is that they be independent of the project team, with no conflicts of interest. This can be clarified in the proposal narrative.

What is the level of rigor expected from an evaluation?

Evaluation in general is being increasingly emphasized in all NSF projects. We want to know the extent to which the project that was proposed was in fact the project that was carried, out and the degree to which it was effective in some way. The evaluation piece is quite important though it should not be the major emphasis of the study.

What are some suggestions for finding an evaluator?

Participants in the webinar suggested two different websites:

Eval.org: <http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=108>

The NSF ATE program evaluation list: http://evalu-ate.org/community/evaluator_directory/

Partnerships

What part, if any, can businesses play in an ITEST project?

Businesses can take whatever role is appropriate. NSF accepts proposals from businesses who are eligible to receive federal funding. They can also serve as partners in terms of providing workplace experiences for students or providing people with expertise to participate in the project. You must explain and justify their role, just as you would for any partner.

What is the limit on the number of partners if we were to work in different states with multiple partners?

No limit on partners, just make sure you have adequate resources to serve multiple partners.

What should be the role of the partners?

There is no pre-specified role for partners. The hope is that the expertise and involvement of partners will enhance the quality and impact of the project. For instance, business partners may be able to provide workplace exposure or experiences for participants, or schools may provide facilities and counseling services for participants. Scientists and engineers may provide content expertise or research opportunities for curricular or instructional models. College students may serve as mentors for high school students, etc.

Project Scope

Will projects that prepare teachers, who will in turn affect K-12 students, be welcomed?

They are welcomed as long as students are involved in the projects. All ITEST projects must involve students, but they can also focus primarily on the teacher preparation.

To what degree does ITEST want to see projects incorporate family involvement and/or a mentoring component?

Family involvement and mentoring can be included in projects. This is highly desired.

Can projects focus on young people in after school programs without having a connection to formal education?

Yes, they can. They can be entirely separate from a formal education, though we do encourage there to be some sort of alignment with the expectations in the formal education component.

Is there a preference either for in-school versus afterschool or outside school activities?

There is no preference.

Can developing / testing new measures be the central element of an ITEST proposal?

Developing assessment tools can be a part of an ITEST proposals that also serves students. There is another DRL program, PRIME, that specifically supports the development of assessment tools as the focus of the project.

Would a project that is more focused on developing interventions for teachers, where the effect of the intervention on students is indirect (e.g., sense of competence, autonomy, etc.), be appropriate for ITEST?

Yes, we are very interested in any sort of strategy that would help people develop confidence and self-identity appropriate for STEM related professions. It is quite appropriate to focus on that domain and to focus specifically on how to help teachers help students in those domains. The important thing though is that students still have to be involved in the project.

Are school districts seen as less competitive as direct applicants, given that few K-12 school districts have been funded directly by ITEST?

We do not receive the same volume of proposals from school districts. We do like to see proposals from school districts. There is no disadvantage.

Does the 5% math funded program reflect ITEST priorities?

The 5% simply refers to the proportion of ITEST projects that are math-focused. More could be funded if a greater number of competitive proposals are submitted.

Must projects be regional or statewide, or may a project focus on school districts in one county?

Projects can be within one district or county.

Are pilot programs supported?

Yes.

Resources

Do you have any results about past projects from previous funding?

We are in the process of evaluating the impact of past projects. Those findings will be made available. Descriptions of all past projects can be accessed on the NSF website.

Where can I get more information on Data Management Plan?

Refer to the Grant Proposal Guide, page II-19, section j ("Special Information and Supplementary Documentation")

Does STELAR provide project support in locating appropriate validated instruments for assessing student interventions?

Yes, the STELAR website provides an instrument database. STELAR is in the process of redesigning the website so if there is anything in particular you are looking for, but are unable to locate, contact STELAR directly (stelar@edc.org).

Other resource centers also have instrument databases on their websites:

CADRE (Resource center for DRK-12 Program): <http://cadrek12.org/>

CAISE (Resource center for AISL Program): <http://informalscience.org/>

NSF is interested in seeing more projects that use previously validated instruments, rather than outcomes being measured by instruments designed specifically for the proposed study.

Submission

What is the difference between the application dates?

There are two dates during 2014 when proposals will be accepted; there is no difference in terms of expectations or guidelines for proposals.

Should a two-page bio of the external evaluator be included? Where in the proposal?

The bio of the evaluator should be included with senior personnel.

Can an institution submit multiple proposals if there are different PIs?

There are no limits to the number of proposals an institution/organization may submit. The only limitation is that a person can only serve as the lead PI on one proposal.

Can an organization apply for both deadlines in 2014 if we do not receive the grant the first time?

Yes. The competition is very intense for these grants. Some very strong proposals often do not get funding the first time around. If you have feedback prior to the second solicitation date you are encouraged to make whatever revisions are necessary and resubmit the same proposal.

Can resubmitted proposers explain how we addressed previous reviewer feedback?

Yes, if you like, you can discuss the issues identified in a proposal that was not funded in the new project description. This is not required, it is your choice.

Are there assigned ITEST program officers at this point?

Yes, there are assigned POs, but the information has not yet been posted (as of 12/12/13).

Technology

To what extent is computer-based technology a requirement of ITEST?

The focus of the ITEST Program is on workforce development and so it is not required that a particular form of technology or even cutting-edge technologies be a major part of the proposal. There is an emphasis on technology; it does not have to be a computer.

Are there expectations on the complexity of technological tools that are used by students and teachers?

The level of technology should be appropriate to the project and reflect the technologies needed in today's workforce.

Would K-12 school-based instructional equipment, not including computers or iPads, be acceptable?

The acquisition of general-use equipment is usually not supported by ITEST grant funds. The only equipment generally considered are items that are not commonly available for general use that are specific to the project and needed for the project to be successfully implemented. Typical items would be specialized software or probes of various types.