



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230

NSF 16-012

## **Dear Colleague Letter: NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) - Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW)**

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October 21, 2015

Dear Colleague:

The Division of Graduate Education announces the continuation of the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program's Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW). GROW provides NSF Graduate Research Fellows (referred to as "Fellows") with opportunities to engage in international collaborations with investigators in partner countries around the world. Through GROW, Fellows benefit from partnerships developed by NSF with counterpart funding organizations in other countries (see <http://www.nsf.gov/grow> for a current list of countries and partner organizations).

GROW offers funding for international stays of 2-12 months, with the duration varying by country and partner organization. Details for each partner organization, including eligible institutions and organizations, levels of in-country support, and any restrictions on the duration of stays, are available through links to partner websites at <http://www.nsf.gov/grow>. As additional organizations and countries develop partnerships with NSF, updates will be made to the GROW website (<http://www.nsf.gov/grow>).

### **ELIGIBILITY**

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GROW is open to active Fellows (both "on tenure" and "on reserve")<sup>1</sup> who have completed at least one year of their graduate program at the time of application and will retain their active status for at least 12 months following the application submission deadline. They must be certified by the GRFP Institution to be making satisfactory progress towards their degrees and have fulfilled all GRFP reporting requirements.

Fellows are encouraged to consult the GRFP Administrative Guide and FAQs for questions related to their fellowship. These are accessed through the following links:

[https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=grfp](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grfp)

[http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf13084](http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13084)

GROW international travel allowances are awarded to Fellows based on an annual competition. The maximum number of Fellows to be supported by GROW in fiscal year 2016 is 400. All GROW awards are subject to the availability of funds, merit review, and acceptance by both the National Science Foundation and NSF's partner organizations.

Only one (1) application per year per Fellow will be accepted. Previous GROW recipients may reapply to conduct research in the same country as their original award, or propose a new international

collaboration, as long as they meet the general eligibility requirements.

## **GRFP GROW INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL ALLOWANCE INFORMATION AND ALLOWABLE COSTS**

GROW Fellows will receive an international travel allowance of \$5,000 through their GRFP institution to cover travel and research costs associated with the international research collaboration (see the Budget and Budget Justification section below for restrictions on use of NSF funds). Additional support to cover in-country living expenses while abroad differs among partner organizations. Further information, including links to the partner organizations' GROW websites, is available on the NSF GROW website (<http://www.nsf.gov/grow>). The travel allowance provided by NSF may be used to fund multiple trips to the partner country within the award period, subject to the approval of the partner organization, international host, and the Fellow's research advisor and GRFP institution.

Fellows "on tenure" selected for GROW will receive GROW travel allowances in addition to their NSF GRF stipend through their GRFP institution. The NSF GRF stipend is subject to U.S. tax laws. Fellows "on reserve" for any or all of the GROW research experience period will not receive the NSF GRF stipend during the period they are on "on reserve" but will receive the GROW travel allowance and associated support from the partner organization.

GROW funding is a travel allowance to the Fellow for the current fellowship year or subsequent fellowship year. Fellows must complete their GROW experience and associated travel before the end of August of the subsequent fellowship year or by the end of the Fellow's GRFP Fellowship Period<sup>1</sup>, whichever occurs first. GROW funds may not be transferred to another Fellow and may not be used to support travel for spouses or dependents.

## **GROW APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND REVIEW SCHEDULE**

*Please note that the information presented is current at the time of publishing. See the [GROW](#) website for any program updates.*

- **September 11 - December 4. GROW application submission.** Fellows submit GROW travel requests through the GRFP FastLane module. Applicants are encouraged to check with their GRFP Coordinating Official regarding institutional policies and deadlines for submitting GROW requests. **GROW applications that are incomplete or do not comply with the submission guidelines will be returned without review.**
- **December - March. Review of GROW applications.** GROW applications are reviewed internally by NSF using the National Science Board approved Merit Review Criteria and additional criteria described below (GROW Application Review). Meritorious GROW applications are forwarded to the GROW contact person at each partner organization for review and approval by the counterpart funding organization.
- **April - May. Announcement of GROW recipients.** Fellows and their Coordinating Officials are notified via email and NSF's Fastlane system of the outcome of the review process. GROW travel allowances are provided to the Fellows' institutions as part of the summer funding increment in June-July. The GRFP PI (Graduate Dean) and Financial Official provide administrative and financial oversight of the GROW travel allowance(s) of Fellows selected for GROW as part of the GRFP award to the institution.
- Successful applicants may commence their international research collaboration as early as **June 1** of the award year; research visits must be initiated between June 1 of the award year and July 1 of the following year.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING GROW APPLICATIONS

1. Applications for GROW are submitted by Fellows through the "GRFP Additional Funding Opportunities" link in the **GRFP FastLane module**. Applications must adhere to the NSF submission guidelines specified in this Dear Colleague Letter and comply with the NSF standard proposal preparation instructions (e.g., font, spacing and margin requirements; see [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf16001/gpg\\_2.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf16001/gpg_2.jsp)) and **all materials must be uploaded as a single PDF file**.

Fellows interested in working as a collaborative team on the same project with the same international host(s) must submit separate applications that include descriptions of the specific nature of the collaboration and the applicants' individual contributions to the joint project. Separate letters of endorsement from the Fellows' research advisor(s) are also required.

GROW applications must be certified by the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) at the Fellow's home U.S. institution through the use of a signed AOR Certification form (available at <http://www.nsf.gov/od/iaa/ise/grow-aor-certifications-form.pdf>), which is submitted with the application as part of the PDF file. GROW applicants should contact their GRFP Coordinating Official to identify their institution's AOR for GROW proposals. The GRFP Coordinating Official must approve the Fellow's request in the GRFP FastLane module by **5 p.m. local time on December 4**; the GRFP Coordinating Official must approve the submission before NSF receives the application.

2. GROW applications must include all of the following elements (**in the order they appear below**), **submitted as a single PDF file**.
  - a. **Coversheet** with the Fellow's Name, Fellow's GRFP ID, Project Title, Start Date of Graduate Training/Education, Proposed International Research Collaborator(s), Host Institution/Organization, Proposed Dates and Duration of Visit(s).
  - b. **Project Summary**. A summary (maximum of 1 page in length) consisting of an overview of the project and collaboration and separate statements of the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts of the proposed international research activities. Each section must be formatted with separate headings (i.e., Overview, Intellectual Merit, and Broader Impacts). The Project Summary should be written in the third person, informative to other persons working in the same or related fields, and understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader.
  - c. **Project Description**. (Limit: 4 pages; single spaced, references are not included in the page limit). A concise, substantive description of the proposed plan for research and general interaction between the Fellow and the proposed international research partner(s), including a justification for the duration of the proposed international research visit, research timeline, and the expected mutual scientific/engineering benefits and outcomes of the project.

The Project Description must describe how the Fellow will:

- i. Benefit from specialized expertise, equipment, facilities, field sites, data, and/or other resources located outside the U.S.
- ii. Build international collaborations that will enhance and contribute to the Fellow's professional network.
- iii. Integrate the proposed international research activities into the Fellow's graduate degree and research program and future career goals.

Applications submitted by previous GROW awardees must include a section labeled "Results of Prior GROW Support". The section must include a summary of the outcomes and accomplishments of the research funded with prior GROW support and, if the proposal is for renewed support with the same international collaborator(s), a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

- d. **References Cited:** (Limit: 2 pages) Each reference must include the names of all authors, the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication.
- e. **Budget and Budget Justification:** (Limit: 2 pages) The budget should consist of a \$5,000 international travel allowance request for the Fellow's costs incurred as a result of the international cooperation. Anticipated expenses should be itemized and reported in tabular format. Allowable expenses include, but are not limited to, travel to host country and institution, visa applications, field permits, research supplies, excess luggage, travel and health insurance, and other travel-related costs. Support for Fellow stipends or salary, major pieces of equipment, large amounts for materials and supplies, and spouse and dependent travel are not allowed. Travel to specific conferences and workshops may be included, but relevance to the international research collaboration must be justified. Applications may not consist primarily of conference or workshop travel; international research engagement is required. The Budget Justification should include a reference to airfare (estimated) and other travel, relocation, and project costs (the remainder of the amount requested) for the project.

Fellows are responsible for making their own travel arrangements, as well as for obtaining health insurance, travel insurance, passports, visas, and any other required travel documents. Under the terms of the Fly America Act, international air travel must adhere to requirements to use U.S. flag air carriers [see NSF Award and Administration Guide, Chapter VI, Subsection G, 1 (b-c);

[http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf16001/aag\\_6.jsp#VIF1](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf16001/aag_6.jsp#VIF1) ]. Travel that fails to comply with the Fly America Act cannot be reimbursed with federal funds.

- f. **Biographical sketch of the NSF Graduate Fellow.** (Limit: 2 pages). A biographical sketch is required and must be submitted using the NSF guidelines for senior personnel [see NSF Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter II, Subsection C, 2 (f); [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf16001/gpg\\_2.jsp#IIC2f](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf16001/gpg_2.jsp#IIC2f) ]. Do not include personal information, such as home address, telephone, fax, date of birth, and drivers' license number.
- g. **Letter of Endorsement from the Fellow's Research Advisor.** (Limit: 2 pages): The letter should describe the anticipated research benefits of the international collaboration for the Fellow's graduate program and the anticipated impact on his/her career. The letter must also indicate that the Fellow is making satisfactory progress in his or her graduate degree program.
- h. **Letter(s) of Collaboration from International Host/Sponsoring Scientist(s).** (Limit: 2 pages per letter). The letter(s) must support the proposed interaction and summarize the objectives to be achieved between the applicant's research plan and ongoing research efforts at the foreign site. The letter should demonstrate the interest and commitment to hosting the Fellow and indicate how the collaboration with the Fellow will engage the expertise and specialized skills, facilities, and/or resources of the international host.
- i. **Biographical Sketch of the International Host/Sponsoring Scientist(s).** (Limit: 2 pages per host). A biographical sketch is required and must be submitted using NSF guidelines for

senior personnel [see NSF Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter II, Subsection C, 2 (f); [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf16001/gpg\\_2.jsp#IIC2f](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf16001/gpg_2.jsp#IIC2f) ].

- j. **Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) Certification Form** signed by a representative of the Fellow's institution who is authorized to sign on behalf of the University. It should not be signed by the Fellow, the host scientist(s), or a representative of the international host institution. GROW applicants should contact their GRFP Coordinating Official to identify their institution's AOR for GROW applications.

## **GROW APPLICATION REVIEW**

GROW applications will be reviewed by NSF using the National Science Board approved Merit Review Criteria of Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. In addition, the following criteria will be used in evaluating the applications:

- The potential for true intellectual collaboration with the international research partner, engaging the expertise and specialized skills, facilities, and/or resources of the international collaborator; and
- The potential opportunities for effective research and career development for the NSF Graduate Fellow applicant.

Approval by the NSF and the partner organization in the respective host country is required before GROW travel allowances are awarded. NSF will notify Fellows and the Coordinating Officials via email and NSF's GRFP FastLane Module regarding the status of their application.

## **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Fellows who receive GROW travel allowances are expected to submit a report by May 1 of the following year through the GRFP FastLane Module that details the experience and accomplishments of the GROW research activities. The report should highlight publications, presentations, and other products or achievements that are outcomes of the GROW activities. GROW partner organizations may have their own reporting requirements as well.

The GRFP Institution disburses the \$5,000 internship allowance to the Fellow and is responsible for reporting the expended GROW allowance (\$5,000) for each Fellow on the GRFP Program Expense Report covering the time period of the GROW research collaboration.

<sup>1</sup> Fellowship Tenure status is the period of time during which active Fellows receive GRFP financial support. Fellowship Reserve status is the period of time during which active Fellows do not receive GRFP financial support. An active Fellow is within the five-year Fellowship Period; not Completed or Terminated.