



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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Frequently Asked Questions for the Smart and Connected Health (SCH) Program

1. Should proposals focus on health outcomes, technology, or both?
2. Does Smart and Connected Health (SCH) require a health organization to be part of the team? Should a health organization be a sub-award under the primary institution submitting the proposal or is it possible to have joint proposals?
3. What is the benefit of applying to this announcement over a NSF core program or a standing NIH program (e.g., a standard R01)?
4. How is it decided whether NSF or NIH is interested in funding of any particular proposal?
5. Who selects the review panel? Is it NSF or NIH?
6. Are collaborative proposals allowed or does an investigator have to include a sub-award to collaborators in other universities?
7. Is a collaboration plan required in the proposal?
8. Smart and Connected Health is required to have a number of Principal Investigators (PIs and co-PIs). Is there a limit on the number of co-PIs who can apply? Also, can there be dual PIs as in the NIH system?
9. Do we need to address the protection of human subjects in the 15 page NSF proposal limit?
10. Will there be jointly funded proposals by NSF and NIH?
11. Is there a training component to these proposals?
12. What about the NIH Institutes/Centers that are not represented in the announcement?
13. Is there a way for for-profit companies to participate in this announcement?

1. Should proposals focus on health outcomes, technology, or both?

The answer is BOTH. A proposal that is a strong candidate for funding must have both. It must address an important health or medical problem, but it must also advance computer science, engineering, and/or social/behavioral science. A competitive project should demonstrate strength in both as NSF review panels will evaluate the novelty and merit of the fundamental science and health contributions of the work proposed.

2. Does Smart and Connected Health (SCH) require a health organization to be part of the team? Should a health organization be a sub-award under the primary institution submitting the proposal or is it possible to have joint proposals?

There is no requirement for a health organization to be part of the team. However, it is important to have the appropriate health expertise in the proposal. As the solicitation indicates, the objective is to address health-related problems, so it is necessary to demonstrate the health expertise is integrated in the proposal. Whether you have a health expert as a co-PI, include a sub-award, or use another mechanism, you must convince the reviewers that your team has the necessary expertise. This is true for both NSF and NIH.

3. What is the benefit of applying to this announcement over a NSF core program or a standing NIH program (e.g., a standard R01)?

The main benefit is that this program has different review criteria. It funds projects that do not fit NSF and NIH core or standing programs. If the proposed work makes sense for a core or standing program at either agency, then it will not benefit you to submit to SCH. Smart and Connected Health proposals must conform to the NSF criteria and style (not NIH) because it will be submitted to NSF for review. Applying to this program will benefit you if the proposed ideas and efforts do not fit within any other existing programs. A discussion with the relevant NSF or NIH program officers will be valuable in helping you make that determination.

4. How is it decided whether NSF or NIH is interested in funding of any particular proposal?

NSF and NIH work very closely together to support this research. NSF has allocated funds for this solicitation and NIH will be supporting a portion of projects from their own funds. There are multiple opportunities for funding. Decisions are based on funding levels and mission. Both agencies aim to fund proposals of the highest quality. A benefit of applying to this program is the potential to be funded by either NSF or NIH.

5. Who selects the review panel? Is it NSF or NIH?

NSF selects each SCH review panel, but with considerable input from NIH research officers and reviewers to ensure an appropriate range of expertise. Reviewers selected have often served on review panels at NIH. All SCH panels take place at NSF with NIH presence and support.

6. Are collaborative proposals allowed or does an investigator have to include a sub-award to collaborators in other universities?

NSF collaborative proposals are definitely allowed. A key objective of the program is to develop and encourage integrated multidisciplinary teams of researchers that will work closely together in a seamless way.

7. Is a collaboration plan required in the proposal?

Yes, proposals with more than one investigator must have a collaboration plan. Proposals with multiple investigators without a collaboration plan will be returned without review.

8. Smart and Connected Health is required to have a number of Principal Investigators (PIs and co-PIs). Is there a limit on the number of co-PIs who can apply? Also, can there be dual PIs as in the NIH system?

There is a limit of one (1) PI and four (4) co-PIs per proposal, but there is also a limit on the available funds. It is important to ensure that the co-PIs' effort and importance to the project are clear.

The NSF requires one person be designated as the PI from each institution, with additional personnel listed as co-PIs or senior personnel. The NSF allows collaborative proposals, that is, linked proposals with separate budgets but a single project description, submitted from different institutions. In such cases, each institution in the collaboration has its own PI. For proposals submitted to this program that are chosen for funding directly by the NIH, the resubmission to NIH will be subject to NIH rules; that is, a single proposal with multiple principal investigators.

9. Do we need to address the protection of human subjects in the 15 page NSF proposal limit?

Yes, but this does not require an extensively detailed explanation, as you will be submitting an additional document detailing human subjects issues (see below). If you already have Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, you can note that in your proposal. Please see the [NSF GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDE](#) for details.

In addition to the main proposal, proposals involving human subjects should include a supplementary document of no more than two pages in length summarizing potential risks to human subjects, plans for recruitment and informed consent, inclusion of women, minorities, and children, and planned procedures to protect against or minimize potential risks.

10. Will there be jointly funded proposals by NSF and NIH?

There is a potential for jointly funded proposals, as well as proposals solely funded by either NSF or NIH. If NIH opts to fully fund a proposal the process will involve submission of the proposal to NIH (sending a paper copy of the NSF submission with a cover letter) for fast-tracked funding and withdrawal of the proposal from NSF consideration.

11. Is there a training component to these proposals?

Yes. The solicitation-specific review criteria include Education and Training.

"The degree to which research and education are integrated and activities involve participation and training of students. Reviewers will assess the potential for involvement of motivated populations of young researchers in advancing health through science, technology, and behavior."

In addition, if the proposed work includes a post-doctoral fellow in the project, the proposal is required to have a mentoring plan.

12. What about the NIH Institutes/Centers that are not represented in the announcement?

Only those NIH Institutes/Centers listed are participating in this solicitation. There are many reasons for selective NIH Institutes/Centers participation. It is not necessarily from a lack of interest. If you're interested in submitting a proposal that meets criteria in the solicitation, but the Institute/Center is not listed on this solicitation, the proposal should be submitted through standard NIH mechanisms including contacting the appropriate program officer. If you do not know a program officer, send Wendy Nilsen (wnilsen@nsf.gov) a message describing your project and she will connect you with someone at the appropriate NIH Institute or Center.

13. Is there a way for for-profit companies to participate in this announcement?

NSF does not directly fund for-profit companies. NSF does, however, allow academic or non-profit organizations to include a sub-award for a portion of the work to a for-profit entity, with justification.