



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 14-049

Dear Colleague Letter - Youth Violence: Opportunity for Breakthroughs in Fundamental Basic Research

National Science Foundation
Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences (SBE)

March 12, 2014

Dear Colleague:

This letter is to alert all basic social and behavioral science research communities of the National Science Foundation's interest in receipt of proposals that will enable a better understanding of the contributing factors, causes, and consequences of violence perpetrated by and against youth. This will advance the Foundation's goal to provide scientific evidence in support of important social issues. The interest spans both disciplinary and interdisciplinary research.

Background: Although the incidence of youth violence is at a historic low, the continuing loss of life is tragic and the long term consequences of youth violence are of ongoing public concern. In 2013, the National Science Foundation sponsored a workshop on "Youth Violence: What We Need to Know." This two-day workshop brought together researchers from sociology, anthropology, psychology, communications, computer science, information systems, and public policy. [The resulting report](#) summarized much of the existing scientific evidence regarding the precursors and causes of violence perpetrated by children and adolescents. It underscored the need for additional study to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of, contributors to, and impact of violent ideology and violent acts.

NSF's mission includes support for *basic* research, in this case research with the goal of elucidating the causes, correlates, and consequences of youth violence. For this reason, projects focused on developing or evaluating specific interventions would lie outside NSF's purview.

What is sought: Research responsive to this Dear Colleague Letter would advance the basic theories and methods to improve our understanding of the contributors to youth violence and to its reduction. The Foundation is especially interested in research relating to destructive violence as opposed to harm as a regrettable byproduct of other experiences or activities (e.g., contact sports).

NSF is interested in a wide range of approaches to investigating these issues. Proposals that investigate at the level of individual, family, school, community, and/or culture are encouraged. Topics of interest include (but are not limited to):

- Characteristics of youth at risk for violence and their family and community structures
- Impact of exposure to domestic, community, and media violence
- Positive and negative influences of social interactions, social norms, and group processes
- Biological, neural, environmental, and developmental risk/protective factors
- Organizational processes, institutional structures, and social policies that influence and are influenced by the perception and management of violent incidents
- Roles for technology and engineering in minimizing incidence and impact of youth violence

Research partnerships with school and community agencies and organizations to conduct basic research in these settings are welcome. Workshop proposals are also welcome as they can advance theorizing in a field and foster new collaborations.

International partnerships, in which the proposed collaboration can provide unique advantages of scope, scale, flexibility, facilities, or comparative windows into the topic are welcome. In view of this, U.S. investigators may include international components in new youth violence proposals submitted to relevant NSF programs, or request supplemental funding for projects already supported by NSF. Strong, well-defined international collaborations will typically incorporate opportunities for U.S. students and early career researchers to participate in substantive international research experiences abroad.

In summary, research addressing fundamental scientific questions that might advance understanding of youth violence is of special interest to the Foundation. Research that uses interdisciplinary approaches is particularly encouraged. As always, searching the NSF awards database (<http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/>) can provide illustrative examples of current projects. In all cases, interested prospective PIs are urged to view the program web sites of SBE's research organizations - [Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences \(BCS\)](#), [Social and Economic Sciences \(SES\)](#), and [SBE Office of Multidisciplinary Activities \(SMA\)](#) - as well as consult with relevant program officers in advance of their proposal submission. This is not a special competition or new program. NSF expects the research conducted in response to this DCL to be of the same high quality as for other awards, with scientifically sound research plans that are rooted in relevant theory and literature. There are no separate funds to support this research. Proposals and supplemental funding requests in response to this Dear Colleague Letter must also meet the requirements and deadlines of the program to which they are submitted. Questions concerning this Dear Colleague Letter should be directed to: sbe-youth-violence@nsf.gov.

Sincerely,
Dr. Joanne Tornow
Acting Assistant Director
Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences