



National Science Foundation
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NSF 14-124

Dear Colleague Letter: Veterans Research Supplement (VRS) Program

September 30, 2014

The National Science Foundation (NSF) recognizes that veterans represent a potential underutilized workforce for the U.S. science and engineering research and industry communities. Many veterans are transitioning from active military service to civilian careers and exploring education options through the post-9/11 GI Bill. Through this Dear Colleague Letter, NSF is exploring alternate pathways to encourage and support veterans' engagement into STEM fields.

Recommendations from the NSF Engineering Education and Centers (EEC) Division Workshop entitled "Veterans' Education for Engineering and Science" in April 2009 stated:

"NSF and other federal science and engineering agencies should create an education/career development program focused on getting veterans into science and technology careers. NSF already has grant programs that fund student's research experiences. The cost to expand and enrich such programs is a small fraction of the cost of the post-9/11 veteran educational benefit. Yet by expanding it, the community could engage a significant number of veterans with the potential to pursue careers in fields of engineering, science and technology."
(<http://www.nsf.gov/eng/eec/VeteranEducation.pdf>)

Subsequent to this report, the NSF Engineering Directorate (ENG) began to explore how its existing programs could be leveraged to embrace veteran participants. For example, the Industrial Innovation and Partnerships Division (IIP) successfully piloted the Research Experiences for Veterans (REV) supplement opportunity with the Industry/University Cooperative Research Centers (I/UCRC) Program in 2011 ([NSF 11-054](#)) and 2012 ([NSF 12-063](#)). In 2012 IIP and EEC launched the Research Experiences for Veterans and Teachers (REV/T) with the I/UCRCs and Engineering Research Centers (ERCs) via [NSF 12-073](#). In this program veteran teachers and/or veteran/teacher teams were supported to work with the I/UCRC and ERC programs. In addition, the Engineering Directorate endorsed the Engineering Research Experience for Veterans (EREV) for the Grant Opportunities for Academic Liaison with Industry (GOALI) program in 2012 ([NSF 12-074](#)). The EREV program targeted undergraduate veteran scholars to work with GOALI grantees. Finally, in 2013 the ENG Directorate introduced the Veterans Research Supplement (VRS) program to expand its scope of engineering programs eligible for veteran supplements ([NSF 13-047](#)). Veteran undergraduate and graduate students, veteran K-12 teachers, and veteran community college faculty were eligible to participate.

This Dear Colleague Letter continues the VRS program to engage veterans in engineering research. The ENG IIP and EEC Divisions are now accepting requests from their active grantees for the Veterans Research Supplement. The proposed VRS will afford veteran students, veteran teachers, or veteran community college faculty an opportunity to participate with active IIP and EEC grantees to conduct basic and/or industrially relevant research in order to gain a deeper understanding of engineering. Veterans receiving a VRS will intern with any of the following active awardees or affiliated member companies supported by IIP and EEC (Points of contact are listed for each program.):

- Industry/University Cooperative Research Centers ([I/UCRC](#)), ([Raffaella Montelli](#))
- Engineering Research Center ([ERC](#)) university leads and partners, ([Mary Poats](#))
- Research Experiences for Teachers in Engineering and Computer Science ([RET](#)), ([Mary Poats](#))
- Research Experiences for Undergraduates ([REU](#)) sites, ([Esther Bolding](#))
- Engineering Education Research ([EER](#)) grantees, ([Donna Riley](#))
- Nanotechnology Undergraduate Education (NUE) in Engineering grantees, ([Mary Poats](#))
- Small Business Innovation Research ([SBIR](#)) Phase II grantees, ([Ben Schrag](#))
- Small Business Technology Transfer ([STTR](#)) Phase II grantees, ([Ben Schrag](#))
- Partnerships for Innovation - Building Innovation Capacity ([BIC](#)) grantees, ([Sara Nerlove](#))
- Partnerships for Innovation - Accelerating Innovation Research ([AIR](#)) grantees, ([Barbara Kenny](#))
- Grant Opportunities for Academic Liaison with Industry ([GOALI](#)) grantees, ([Don Senich](#))

VETERAN ELIGIBILITY

Under Title 5 U.S. Code 2108, a veteran means an individual who:

- served on active duty in the armed forces during a war, in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized, or during the period beginning April 28, 1952, and ending July 1, 1955;
- served on active duty as defined by section 101(21) of title 38 at any time in the armed forces for a period of more than 180 consecutive days any part of which occurred after January 31, 1955, and before October 15, 1976, not including service under section 12103(d) of title 10 pursuant to an enlistment in the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard or as a Reserve for service in the Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, or Coast Guard Reserve;
- served on active duty as defined by section 101(21) of title 38 in the armed forces during the period beginning on August 2, 1990, and ending on January 2, 1992; or
- served on active duty as defined by section 101(21) of title 38 at any time in the armed forces for a period of more than 180 consecutive days any part of which occurred during the period beginning on September 11, 2001, and ending on the date prescribed by Presidential proclamation or by law as the last date of Operation Iraqi Freedom; and, except as provided under section 2108a, who has been discharged or released from active duty in the armed forces under honorable conditions.

A "disabled veteran" means an individual who has served on active duty in the armed forces, (except as provided under section 2108a) has been separated therefrom under honorable conditions, and has established the present existence of a service-connected disability or is receiving compensation, disability retirement benefits, or pension because of a public statute administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs or a military department.

Eligibility to participate as recipients of the VRS will be limited to the following five groups:

1. Full or part-time veteran STEM undergraduate or graduate students at U.S. universities, institutes, and colleges,
2. Full or part-time veteran STEM community college students,
3. Veteran K-12 STEM teachers,
4. Veteran community college STEM faculty, or
5. Veteran STEM students participating in summer research experiences.

PI Eligibility: All active IIP and EEC grantees (I/UCRC, ERC, EER, NUE, PFI, GOALI, SBIR, STTR, RET site and REU site grantees). Note: *The IIP or EEC grantee is the VRS applicant, not the VRS candidate.*

Anticipated type of award: Supplement to existing IIP or EEC awards.

Supplement preparation and submission instructions: The VRS supplement will be targeted to enable veteran students, pre-college STEM teachers, and/or community college faculty to participate in active NSF grants. Active I/UCRC or ERC centers are particularly encouraged to submit supplement requests for veteran undergraduate students, veteran graduate students, and veteran teachers to work with university faculty and/or active industrial partners on NSF-sponsored center research projects. Veterans must be classified as full or part-time students at U.S. universities, institutes, or community colleges or as teachers at U.S. precollege institutions. PIs requesting the VRS must be active in the IIP and EEC programs listed above. The VRS is not transferrable to the dependents of the veterans. Veterans may complete the research experience at any time during the year. Supplemental funding requests must be submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane system and include a brief description of the request, a budget, and a budget description. PIs should follow the instructions found in the Award and Administration Guide of the Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide at http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=aag.

Anticipated funding amount and estimated number of awards: This supplement program will not exceed \$2,000,000 from the current FY 2015 budget, pending the availability of funds. A maximum of 200 supplements is anticipated, with a maximum VRS amount of \$10,000 per supplement. An individual veteran is eligible for a maximum of three VRS supplements in three separate years. All costs related to the support of the veteran during the supplement period should be budgeted as participant support on the NSF budget form 1030.

NSF also recommends interested principal investigators apply for one or a maximum of two VRS per year. Active principal investigators should consult their NSF program director for specific guidance as to the number and availability of supplements. Supplemental proposals will be internally evaluated per NSF supplemental support guidelines with particular emphasis on the following components: a clearly defined research project, identification of project deliverables and a project timeline, and an explanation of anticipated benefits to the veteran student.

Sincerely,

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