

National Science Foundation Broader Impacts

NSF uses two merit review criterion for evaluating research proposals for funding: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge. The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to:

- Full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (specifically African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders)
- Improved STEM education and educator development at any level
- Increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society
- Development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce
- Increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others
- Improved national security
- Increased economic competitiveness of the United States
- Enhanced infrastructure for research and education

Planning your Project:

Step 1: Choose your goals and objectives. Then pick one or more of the above outcomes -- describe them in terms that are specific, measurable and realistic.

Step 2: Create activities based on your goals and objectives. Use an Excel or Word document to keep track of suggestions for a particular project. Include as many activities as you need—there is no set number of activities that you MUST include.

Step 3: Choose an evaluation method that fits your goals, objectives, and activities. You might want to consider hiring a professional evaluator to design and/or evaluate your broader impacts activities. If necessary, choose an evaluation method for each part of your broader impacts plan. Some evaluation methods to consider are surveys, interviews, observations, tests, and case studies. Remember to conduct formative and summative, quantitative and qualitative evaluation. Also refer to the [NSF User Friendly Handbook for Evaluation](#).

Brainstorming for communication-oriented broader impact projects

The Division of Research and Economic Development Communication and Planning Office will meet with faculty to help brainstorm for ideas on communicating the broader impacts of their projects.

Additionally, a variety of campus communication-oriented services are available to contribute to broader impacts projects, such as UNLV TV, Reprographics, Photo Services, and Web Communication. Some services involve cost and staff, so be sure to discuss projects with representatives of these units to obtain information for planning and budgeting purposes.

Broader Impacts Resources:

[NSF Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter II, Proposal Preparation Instructions](#)

[CEOSE Recommendation for a Bold New Initiative for Broadening Participation](#)

[NSF's Merit Review Broader Impacts Criterion: Representative Activities](#)