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**KANSAS NSF ESTABLISHED PROGRAM
TO STIMULATE COMPETITIVE RESEARCH
(EPSCoR)**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

FIRST AWARDS

**Research in Resiliency and Smart
Infrastructure**

***A Funding Opportunity for Tenure Track
Faculty Early in their Careers***

Submission Deadlines:

Notice of Intent: **Monday, March 16, 2026**

Full Proposal: **Tuesday, April 14, 2026**

Program Name

Kansas National Science Foundation Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (Kansas NSF EPSCoR) First Awards

Project Director

Dr. Belinda Sturm, Kansas NSF EPSCoR, Foley Hall, University of Kansas, 2021 Constant Ave., Lawrence, KS 66047-3729.

Email: nsfepscor@ku.edu Web site: <https://nsfepscor.ku.edu/>

Source of Funds

First Awards are funded by Kansas NSF EPSCoR, which receives its funding from the National Science Foundation (OIA-2148878), the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR), and the participating universities.

First Awards are contingent upon the availability of NSF funds which are awarded to Kansas NSF EPSCoR incrementally.

Purpose

Kansas NSF EPSCoR helps Kansas build its research capacity and competitiveness in science and technology **in areas that are clearly related to the current Kansas NSF EPSCoR focus - Adaptive and Resilient Infrastructures driven by Social Equity (ARISE)**. See <http://arisekansas.org/> for more information about ARISE.

The First Award program helps early career faculty become competitive for funding from the research directorates at the National Science Foundation by: 1) encouraging early career faculty to submit proposals to the NSF (or other federal funding agency) as soon as possible after their first faculty appointment, and 2) by accelerating the pace of their research and the quality of their subsequent proposals. First Awards are intended to be single-investigator awards to support the PI's research program at their institution. The inclusion of Co-PIs, other senior personnel and subawards to other institutions is prohibited. However, applicants are encouraged to include collaborators or mentors from the [ARISE team](#) in their proposal. Applicants are allowed to contact team members to discuss how project ideas may relate to the current ARISE project.

Webinar recording: https://mediahub.ku.edu/media/t/1_st82eaug

Eligibility

Any individual tenure-track faculty member at Kansas State University, University of Kansas, Wichita State University, Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, Pittsburg State University, or Washburn University and who:

- is an Assistant or non-tenured Associate Professor,
- has not previously received a First Award or similar funding from another EPSCoR or EPSCoR-like (Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence, COBRE) program in Kansas, and

- is not currently nor has previously been a lead Principal Investigator of a research grant funded by a federal agency.

Other Requirements

- **Teaching Load:** It is of critical importance for junior faculty to have the time to devote to the research proposed in any Kansas NSF EPSCoR-funded project. It is therefore required that the PI's teaching load be limited to a maximum of 2+2 courses per academic year, i.e., two courses per semester, for the duration of the award. A statement in the required letter from the PI's Chair or other appropriate administrator confirming that the PI's teaching load will not exceed that maximum is also required as part of this proposal.
- **Submission of Proposal to Federal Funding Agency:** The Principal Investigator must have a pending proposal or be planning to submit or resubmit a proposal to the NSF (or other federal funding agency) for the proposed research submitted to this program. If in the planning stages, the proposed research must be submitted to a federal funding agency by July 31, 2028.
- **Integration with NSF EPSCoR RII Track-1 Project:** First Awardees will be required to participate in ARISE annual meetings and trainings. Collaborators or mentors from the [ARISE project team](#) are encouraged to participate in the proposed project, as appropriate.

Award Amount

An individual Principal Investigator may submit a total project budget of **up to \$50,000** in direct costs to the First Award program. It is expected that Kansas NSF EPSCoR will fund two to three First Awards depending upon the size of the requests.

First Awards are contingent upon the availability of NSF funds which are awarded to Kansas NSF EPSCoR incrementally.

Duration of Award

Individual Principal Investigators may request funding for **up to 12 months** to be expended between June 1, 2026 and May 31, 2027.

Application Procedure

****Notices of intent and proposals MUST adhere to the following guidelines. Non-compliant notices of intent and proposals may be returned without review.****

1. **Submit a Notice of Intent by 5:00 PM Monday, March 16, 2026** to the Kansas NSF EPSCoR Project Director. The Notice of Intent should include two PDFs:
 - a. The first PDF should be the *First Award Notice of Intent Information Form* which can be downloaded from: [First-Award-NOI-Form-2022.pdf](#). Fill out this PDF form providing the name and contact information for the PI, proposal abstract, and **three**

potential reviewers outside of Kansas with expertise in the area of the proposed project. Reviewers should not include Ph.D. or postdoctoral advisors or current or past collaborators. *Please note this is a fillable form. Do NOT print and scan this into a PDF but save it in its native format (PDF) as a separate file.*

- b. The second PDF should be a PI biosketch, preferably in the NSF format.

To be considered for a First Award, both PDF's prepared as described in *a.* and *b.* above should be attached to a single email message sent to nsfepscor@ku.edu by the due date. The Kansas NSF EPSCoR Project Director will notify applicants whose projects do not meet the criteria above.

Eligible applicants and their institution's research office will be emailed an invitation to submit a Full Proposal as described below. Full Proposals will only be accepted by invited applicants.

2. **Submit a Full Proposal by 5:00 PM Tuesday, April 14, 2026.** Proposers must work with their institution's research office to submit the proposal. Prepare the proposal in accordance with the general guidelines contained in the *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide*, part 1: *Grant Proposal Guide (GPG), NSF 24-1*. Exceptions are noted below.
 - a. Prepare the Cover Sheet using the PDF form that is available for download at [Cover-Sheet-Fillable-Form2023.pdf](#). This form should be signed by your institution's authorized organizational representative.
 - b. In the project description, state research goals and objectives that can be accomplished in the timeline requested and how they relate to the ARISE project goals. PIs writing First Award proposals should consider the guidance of <https://www.nsf.gov/executive-orders> (NSF Implementation of Recent Executive Orders) when preparing the project description.
 - c. Prepare the proposal budget using the Kansas NSF EPSCoR Budget Form that is available for download at [Seed-Funding-RFP-Budget.xlsx](#). The First Award budget **should:**
 - Support research activities that can be accomplished in the timeline requested
 - Only include items that directly support the PI's research program at their institution
 - Include in-state travel support for attending the ARISE annual symposium (Statewide EPSCoR Meeting)
 - Be followed by a budget justification of up to two pages in length

- Be followed by a one-page timeline with milestones for completing the scope of work and expending the funds requested. An example appears at [First Award timeline 30226 Example.pdf](#)

The First Award budget **should NOT**:

- Exceed \$50,000 in direct costs
- Include subawards or support for Co-PIs or other senior personnel
- Include any indirect costs (F&A, as allowed, will be added when a proposal is awarded)
- Include more than one month of PI salary (summer or otherwise)

- d. The proposal should be accompanied by a letter from the Principal Investigator that explains their funding status according to one of the three scenarios below:
- The proposed research was submitted to the NSF (or other federal funding agency, e.g. DOE) and is pending. Include the proposal submission date and title of proposal. When the status of the proposal is determined, it should be reported to the Kansas NSF EPSCoR office.
 - The proposed research will be submitted to the NSF (or other federal funding agency). Include the date when the proposal will be submitted and identify the program to which it will be submitted. In this case, submission must occur by July 31, 2028.
 - The proposed research was submitted to the NSF (or other federal funding agency) and declined. In this case, provide the date and title of the proposal, enclose all of the reviews, and describe the activities that are in progress regarding re-submission by July 31, 2028 of this or other proposals.

This letter should be included in the Special Information and Supplementary Documentation section of the proposal.

- e. Include a letter of support from the chair of the Principal Investigator's primary department. The letter should contain the following information:
- The amount and nature of start-up funding provided to the faculty member when hired
 - A description of the research space and any special facilities provided to the faculty member as part of the start-up package
 - The faculty member's teaching load per semester (must be limited to 2+2 during the academic year for the duration of the award)
 - The nature of the department's mentoring program related to research
 - Other evidence of departmental efforts to promote the PI's research competitiveness

This letter should be included in the Special Information and Supplementary Documentation section of the proposal.

Proposal Submission

Please note: Full Proposals will only be accepted by invited applicants (see number 1 above). Proposals received from uninvited applicants will not be accepted.

The proposal must be prepared as described in number 2 above as a single PDF. The PDF must be attached to a single email message sent by the institution's research office to nsfepscor@ku.edu by the due date.

Review Criteria

Kansas NSF EPSCoR solicits reviews of proposals from peers with expertise in the area of the proposed project. In reviewing proposals, Kansas NSF EPSCoR uses the general merit review criteria established by the National Science Board. These are discussed in the *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide*, part 1: *Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)*, NSF 24-1 and listed below. In responding to NSF's **Broader Impacts** criterion, reviewers will be asked to place special emphasis on the likelihood that the proposed project will enhance the research competitiveness of the PI and how it contributes to the Kansas NSF EPSCoR major initiative focus area. **Only research clearly related to the Track-1 ARISE project will be considered.**

Funding priority will be given to PIs who have included collaborators or mentors from the ARISE team.

When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers will be asked to consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

- **Intellectual Merit:** The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
- **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
 - a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
 - b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?

4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

General Conditions of Award

First Awards are contingent upon the availability of NSF funds which are awarded to Kansas NSF EPSCoR incrementally.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Project Director reserves the right to negotiate the budget and the term of the award.

During the term of the award and for five years after the end date, the Principal Investigator must inform the Project Director of:

- Any proposals submitted and any awards received as a result of the award. Information provided should include the title of the proposal or award, the funding agency, the amount of the proposal or award, and its duration.
- Changes in the Principal Investigator's contact information.

Because Kansas NSF EPSCoR is part of the National Science Foundation EPSCoR, it must comply with NSF EPSCoR reporting requirements. Therefore, each First Award Principal Investigator will be required to submit an annual report identifying *the numbers of women and members of other underrepresented groups in STEM fields participating as faculty, staff, graduate students, or undergraduate students in the activities funded by the award (NSF 21-586)*. Other required information will include demographics on all project participants, proposals submitted and funded, publications, presentations, patents, degrees granted, and research outcomes. Kansas NSF EPSCoR will request information from award recipients with compliance expected within 30 days of the request.

Any publication resulting from the award must include the following statement of acknowledgment: *This research is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under grant no. OIA-2148878 and the State of Kansas through the Kansas Board of Regents.*

The Principal Investigator will be expected to attend the Statewide EPSCoR Meeting scheduled during the award period.

Contact Information

Kansas NSF EPSCoR Office
2021 Constant Ave.
Lawrence, KS 66047-3729

Telephone: 785-864-3227
E-mail: nsepsc@ku.edu
Web site: <https://nsepsc.ku.edu/>

Questions

A list of frequently asked questions and answers can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/y2s63czx>.

Other questions about this RFP may be directed to Doug Byers, Assistant Director, at nsfepscor@ku.edu.