



National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Office of the
Assistant Director
Biological Sciences

Dear Biological Sciences Community,

The Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO), and NSF more broadly, understands the impact that COVID-19 and the responses thereto are having on the research community. We have heard from numerous community members and societies about lab closures, stresses associated with transitions to virtual classrooms and determining new methods of supporting students, and the loss of administration time and resources to COVID-related campus-wide planning. We know that these are affecting, and will continue to affect, the research enterprise by straining resources, ending or delaying planned research and/or impeding training and education, and we are committed to being responsive to the community in these difficult times. With this email, I would like to share with you information about NSF's current operations and provide guidance to current awardees. But, most importantly, I want to emphasize that personal safety is the highest priority and I hope that you and your loved ones stay safe and healthy in this difficult time.

NSF current operations:

BIO program staff are on duty and available to the community, albeit virtually, and we welcome your proposal submissions at any point in the coming weeks and months. We are continuing to review proposals and make awards in a timely fashion and have implemented fully virtual panels to complete this process. Based on feedback from BIO panelists during my own video conversations with them, the high quality of the NSF merit review process is being sustained. Moreover, because NSF is uniquely prepared to respond quickly to address scientific unknowns concerning this coronavirus, Agency staff are working hard to review the literally hundreds of requests for [RAPID funding](#) being submitted each week.

As a reminder, the core programs throughout BIO do not have submission deadlines and we have extended the few special programs that do have deadlines. An agency-wide list of solicitations and Dear Colleague Letters for which deadlines have been extended can be found [here](#).

Current awardees:

On March 23, NSF released [guidance](#) for all awardees on how to mitigate the impacts these challenging times are having and will have. NSF Director France Córdova also released an accompanying [letter](#) to the research community noting that “we are committed to providing the greatest available flexibilities to support your health and safety as well as your work.”

For current awards, grantees and program officers also have flexibility to provide no-cost extensions. NSF gives all awardee organizations the authority to extend an award for one year of no-cost extension (NCE) without needing to seek NSF approval. That first-year extension is called a Grantee-Approved extension and should be utilized prior to requesting an NSF-Approved extension. Your organization's grants office simply needs to inform NSF, two weeks prior to the end of the award, that they intend to use a Grantee-Approved NCE by sending a notification to NSF via [Research.gov](#). If additional time beyond the first year of extension is

required, a formal request for an NSF-Approved NCE can be submitted by the organization's grants officer via [Research.gov](https://www.research.gov) prior to the end date of the grant. BIO program officers will accommodate such requests for a second year of NCE associated with delays due to COVID-19.

Finally, I and all the Directorate staff are interested in hearing how, in addition to those ways outlined above, BIO and NSF can mitigate the longer-term harm of COVID-19 on U.S. research and training. We will be holding a [series of four BIO-wide virtual office hours](#) next week where you can share concerns, ask questions, or offer your suggestions on how we can do more to address this national emergency. Sessions will be held at 4 pm Monday, March 30; 3 pm Tuesday, March 31; 2 pm Wednesday, April 1; and 1 pm Thursday, April 2; all times are EDT. Please feel free to attend the session that best fits your schedule; representatives from across BIO will be in attendance during each session.

For more information on NSF's activities and response to COVID-19, please visit our [coronavirus information page](#); this site is updated regularly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Tornow". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a stylized "T".

Joanne S. Tornow, Ph.D.
Assistant Director