

Elements of a Safe and Inclusive Work Environment Plan

New Requirements for Proposals



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NSF Guidance

“It is NSF policy to foster safe and harassment -free environments wherever science is conducted. NSF’s policy recognizes that a community effort is essential to eliminate sexual and other forms of harassment in science and to build inclusive scientific climates where people can learn, grow, and thrive.”

<https://new.nsf.gov/events/safe-inclusive-working-environments-requirements>

There are two possible requirements, depending on the call:

- Pilot program: 2-page supplemental document Safe and Inclusive Working Environments being piloted in BIO and GEO. Required for the following GEO calls where off-campus or offsite research is being proposed:

GEO: GEOPATHs (due 27 March)

GEO: CTGC (due 3 April)

Strong possibility that the pilot program will expand in the future. Only one document is required per proposal but all participating institutions are expected to provide input.

- Other calls require participating institutions to check a box certifying that such a plan is in place, but not attach it. All institutions involved in a proposal must check the box.

<https://new.nsf.gov/events/safe-inclusive-working-environments-requirements>

Off-campus or off-site research is defined as data/information/samples being collected off-campus or off-site, such as fieldwork and research activities on vessels and aircraft.

Behaviours to be addressed

1. Abuse of any person, including, but not limited to, harassment, stalking, bullying, or hazing of any kind, whether the behavior is carried out verbally, physically, electronically, or in written form; or
2. Conduct that is unwelcome, offensive, indecent, obscene, or disorderly.

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Guidance from NSF - Required Elements

1. a brief description of the field setting and unique challenges for the team;
2. the steps the proposing organization will take to nurture an inclusive off -campus or off-site working environment, including processes to establish shared team definitions of roles, responsibilities, and culture, e.g., codes of conduct, trainings, mentor/mentee mechanisms and field support that might include regular check -ins, and/or developmental events;
3. communication processes within the off-site team and to the organization(s) that minimize singular points within the communication pathway (e.g., there should not be a single person overseeing access to a single satellite phone); and
4. the organizational mechanisms that will be used for reporting, responding to, and resolving issues of harassment if they arise.

<https://new.nsf.gov/events/safe-inclusive-working-environments-requirements>

1. Is there a compelling plan (including the procedures, trainings, and communication processes) to establish, nurture, and maintain inclusive off-campus or off-site working environment(s)?
2. Does the proposed plan identify and adequately address the unique challenges for the team and the specific off-campus or off-site setting(s)?
3. Are the organizational mechanisms to be used for reporting, responding to, and resolving issues of harassment, should they occur, clearly outlined?

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UCAR's First Draft

Initial Thoughts

1. This is not boilerplate or a checkbox - the PI will need to dedicate considerable thought, time, and effort to this requirement
2. You cannot hand it off to your DEI office or anyone else to complete - they won't have the context to be able to write it
3. You will need to think about the plan from the perspective of team members with marginalized identities - NSF will have reviewers with those perspectives
4. Your plan will be rigorously evaluated and may well be returned to you until it meets NSF's expectations
5. NSF will not spoon-feed you the answer
6. You will have to implement your plan - it will likely be a considerable change from the way you've previously operated. Consider this in your budget and timeline.

a) a brief description of the field setting and unique challenges for the team;

This will be completely unique to each proposal. Some example considerations:

- Working in a foreign country (esp if the local language is not spoken by all team members);
- Working in a remote environment;
- Working in extreme climate/environmental/weather conditions;
- Limited communication options (e.g., out of cell phone range);
- Limited transportation options;
- Countries or states with laws, beliefs, or culture differences that might impact team members with minoritized identities (e.g. Black team members in an area with Confederate flags, LGBTQ team members in countries or states with anti-trans/anti-queer laws or sentiment);
- Anything that could cause a challenge for individuals on the team communicating with individuals onsite or offsite, or getting help in the event of an incident, should be included.

b) the steps the proposing organization will take to nurture an inclusive off -campus or off -site working environment

- Establish and disseminate a Code of Conduct and information about psychological safety. The PI sets the tone. All team members should sign the code of conduct before leaving for the field
- Clearly define team members' roles and responsibilities and communicate to the whole team, including identifying mandatory reporters
- Define mentor roles and responsibilities; leadership weekly check-ins with all team members
- Harassment prevention and bystander intervention training for everyone before leaving for the field
- Policies and expectations on: alcohol and drug use; breastfeeding and lactation; privacy; hygiene; changes to sleeping arrangements; relationships
- Plans for keeping team members with minoritized identities safe
- Procedures for including all team members in dinner and after-hours plans

c) communication processes;

- All team members will have access to communications devices that can communicate with people offsite. If the location is remote and satellite phones are necessary then at least one satellite phone shall be made available in an accessible location at all times, for use by any team member.
- All students and postdocs at the field site will be required to check in with an onsite member of team leadership and offsite mentor at least once a week. The mentors should have the contact details of the onsite SAIFER Team (see next slide) in the event that a safety issue is reported to them. Mentors are required to report to the SAIFER team in the event of threat to life, safety, or property.
- All team members will also be provided with the details of UCAR's EthicsPoint hotline, which will allow them to make an anonymous report. Such reports will be handled by UCAR HR and routed back to the onsite SAIFER Team if appropriate.

d) the organizational mechanisms that will be used for reporting, responding to, and resolving issues of harassment if they arise.

- Establish an onsite Safe And Inclusive oFFsite EnviRonment (SAIFER) Team: 3-4 individuals who will have the responsibility for intake of concerns, liaison with UCAR HR, and determining an appropriate response. The team will receive training from UCAR for their role.
- The SAIFER Team will be introduced to all onsite team members before or immediately upon arrival at the field site.
- Upon receiving a complaint, the SAIFER Team will complete an intake form (provided by UCAR HR) to assess the level of threat and help determine next steps.
- Responses may include such things as: advice and coaching; mediation; verbal or written warning; reassignment; removal from the field site; involvement of law enforcement
- In the event of a serious infraction (e.g. bullying, harassment, intimidation, and similar concerns), or the allegation of a serious infraction, the team member's home institution will be informed. If upheld, NSF will also be informed.

- NSF's guidance:
<https://new.nsf.gov/events/safe-inclusive-working-environments-requirements>
- Report of the Workshop to Promote Safety in Field Sciences:
https://fieldworkfuture.ucsc.edu/assets/files/SIFS_WorkshopReport.pdf

