

## QUICK GUIDE

# National Science Foundation REUs, RETs and VRS

**What is a supplement and how do I find out about them?** Supplements can be made under an existing NSF award or within a proposal for a new or renewal NSF award. Supplements often extend an existing or proposed award to engage traditionally underrepresented populations in STEM research. The Principal Investigator (PI) should consult with the appropriate program director before submitting a request for supplemental funds.

**When do I apply for a supplement?** Supplement requests can be made under an existing NSF award or within a proposal for a new or renewal NSF award. In both circumstances, a PI should speak with their program officer before requesting supplemental funds. The Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) and Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) programs also accept stand-alone proposals for sites.

## SUMMARY OF REUs, RETs AND VETERANS RESEARCH SUPPLEMENTS (VRS)

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCES FOR UNDERGRADUATES (REU)

[REUs](#) support active research participation by undergraduate students in any of the areas of research funded by the NSF. There are two ways to apply for REU funds:

1. REU Supplements may be included as a component of proposals for new or renewal NSF grants or cooperative agreements or may be requested for ongoing NSF-funded research projects. They typically engage one to two students in research.
2. REU Sites are independent proposals to initiate and conduct projects that engage several (eight to 10) students in research. They are typically funded for three years but can be awarded for up to five years. REU Sites may be single discipline, interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary with a coherent theme. Proposals with an international dimension are welcome.

For REU sites, a significant proportion of undergraduate researchers must come from outside the institution and projects must recruit at least half of the students from academic institutions where research opportunities in STEM are limited.

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE FOR TEACHERS (RET)

[RETs](#) provide an NSF-wide opportunity to facilitate professional development of K-14 STEM educators through research experience at the cutting edge of science. The NSF is particularly interested in encouraging its researchers to build mutually rewarding partnerships with teachers at less well-endowed school districts. The [Engineering and Computer and Information Science and Engineering](#) and [Biological Sciences](#) directorates have their own class for RETs; however, RET components also can be included in REU proposals. There are two ways to apply for RET funds:

1. RET Sites are independent proposals to initiate

and conduct projects that engage several students in research. REU Sites may be single discipline, interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary with a coherent theme. Proposals with an international dimension are welcome.

2. RET Supplements may be included as a component of proposals for new or renewal NSF grants or cooperative agreements or may be requested for ongoing NSF-funded research projects.

### **VETERANS RESEARCH SUPPLEMENT (VRS)**

The VRS aims to provide support to veterans as they transition to civilian careers and explore education options. It affords veterans who are students, K-12 teachers or community college faculty an opportunity to work with active engineering grantees to conduct basic and/or industrially relevant research to gain a deeper understanding of engineering. Veterans supported by VRS funding may participate in research activities with any active awardees or affiliated member companies supported by engineering programs.

A request for a VRS may be submitted to one of the programs in the [Directorate for Engineering Divisions/Offices](#) as part of a new or renewal award or as a post-award supplement.

### **ELIGIBILITY FOR REUs, RETs AND VRS**

REUs, RETs and VRS supplements should be written into proposals while REU and RET Sites should have their own proposal. REUs, RETs and VRS should be submitted by PIs and not by participants. The plans must include recruitment strategy and consider eligibility of participants.

**REU Participants** — Undergraduate student participants supported with NSF funds in either REU Supplements or REU Sites must be U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals or permanent residents of the U.S. and enrolled in a degree program (part-time or full-time) leading to a baccalaureate or associate degree.

**RET Participants** — K-14 educators supported by RETs can be current or pre-service K-12 teachers and/or community college faculty.

**VRS Participants** — Veterans are defined as people who served in the active military, naval or air service, and who were discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. The VRS includes veterans in one of four categories: (1) veteran full- or part-time STEM undergraduate students at U.S. two- and four-year institutions of higher education (IHEs); (2) veteran full- or part-time STEM graduate students; (3) veteran K-12

STEM teachers; or (4) veteran community college STEM faculty.

There are no restrictions on the number of proposals per PI or organization.

### **THE REVIEW PROCESS FOR REUs, RETs AND VRS**

As is consistent for all proposals with the NSF, supplements are reviewed for:

- Intellectual Merit (potential to advance knowledge).
- Broader Impacts (potential to benefit society and contribute to societal outcomes).

Reviewers for REUs, RETs and VRS place additional emphasis on the following criteria:

- Appropriateness and value of the research and professional development for the participants.
- Quality of the research environment for participants (including facilities, preparedness of research mentors and professional development opportunities).
- Appropriateness of the recruitment plans.
- Appropriateness and quality of mentoring plan.
- Quality of plans for participant preparation and follow-through.
- Appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of the budget and effectiveness of the project management and evaluation plans.