

Guidance on NSF-Supported Conferences, Workshops, and Symposia Requirements

It is National Science Foundation policy to foster harassment-free environments wherever science is conducted, including at NSF-sponsored conferences, workshops, and symposia. Starting with the 2019 [NSF Proposal Award Policy and Procedure Guide \(PAPPG\)](#), NSF has required applicants requesting NSF funds for the purpose of carrying out conferences, workshops, and symposia to have a policy or code-of-conduct that addresses sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, or sexual assault, and that includes clear and accessible means of reporting violations of the policy or code-of-conduct.

Recipients of NSF funds to carry out conferences, workshops, and symposia must also provide this policy or code of conduct to all event participants prior to the event and at the conference/workshop/symposium itself.

The following message complies with the above NSF requirements. This message should be provided to all participants prior to and during NSF-supported conferences, symposia, and workshops carried out after February 25, 2019.

Dear Participant:

This conference/workshop/symposium is supported all or in part by the National Science Foundation under Award No. _____.

We are required by the [NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide](#) (Chapter II.E.7), effective February 25, 2019, to provide all event participants with information on the University's policy on sexual and other forms of harassment or sexual assault as well as directions on how to report any violations of this policy. For purposes of this requirement, "other forms of harassment" is defined as "non-gender or non-sex-based harassment of individuals protected under federal civil rights laws, as set forth in organizational policies or codes of conduct, statutes, regulations, or executive orders."

Auburn University is committed to creating and maintaining a community dedicated to the advancement, application and transmission of knowledge and creative endeavors through academic excellence, where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation.

- The University has general policies prohibiting harassment and discrimination on the basis of protected categories, including the [Auburn University Policies Related to the Workplace](#); [AA/EEO Policies and Procedures](#); and [Code of Student Conduct](#).

Any person may report incidents of sexual violence, sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, or other forms of prohibited behavior to the campus [Title IX office](#). Links to report an incident and additional information is available on this website.

Guidance on Off-campus and Off-site Research Requirements

NSF's PAPPG (23-1) includes a requirement (effective January 30, 2023) for the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) to certify that the grantee organization has in place a plan for safe and inclusive research environments (PSI-FVAR) **for any proposal including off-campus or off-site research.**

For purposes of this requirement, off-campus or off-site research is defined by NSF as data/information/samples being collected off-campus or off-site, such as fieldwork and research activities on vessels and aircraft.

The plan must describe how the following types of behavior will be addressed:

- a. 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
- b. Conduct that is unwelcome, offensive, indecent, obscene, or disorderly.

The plan also should identify steps the proposing organization will take to nurture an inclusive off-campus or off-site working environment, e.g., trainings; processes to establish shared team definitions of roles, responsibilities, and culture, e.g., codes of conduct; and field support, such as mentor/mentee support mechanisms, regular check-ins, and/or developmental events.

Communications within the team and to the organization should be considered in the plan, minimizing singular points within the communications pathway (e.g., a single person overseeing access to a single satellite phone), and any special circumstances such as the involvement of multiple organizations or the presence of third parties in the working environment should be taken into account. The process or method for making incident reports as well as how any reports received will be resolved should also be accounted for.

The plan for the proposal must be disseminated to individuals participating in the off-campus or off-site research prior to departure. **Proposers should not submit the plan to NSF for review. However, NSF may request the plan as a supplementary document.**

PSI-FVAR Template

PIs submitting NSF proposals involving off-campus or off-site research after January 30, 2023 should work with departmental- and college-level research administration toward the completion of a **project specific** Plan for Promoting a Safe and Inclusive Research Environment (PSI-FVAR) prior to the submission of the proposal. A copy must be provided to Tony Ventimiglia (ventiaf@auburn.edu) at the time of submission (the Proposal ID number must be included in the email). If required by NSF, the plan should also be included in the NSF proposal per proposal guidelines. The PI/s must use this [template](#) to prepare the PSI-FVAR.

The following resources are available to provide guidance regarding Auburn University's commitment to promoting safe and inclusive field experiences:

- [Auburn University Policies Related to the Workplace](#)
- [Auburn University Ombuds Office](#)
- [AA/EEO Policies and Procedures](#)
- *A set of principles and practical suggestions for equitable fieldwork in biology*, [PNAS 2022](#), Ramírez-Castañeda *et al*