



Scaling a Systems Approach to Inclusive Graduate Research Environments
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the Request for Proposals
Last updated: June 23, 2025

I. ELIGIBILITY

Our institution awards a PhD in two of the three required fields. Is our institution eligible to apply?

Yes, an institution is eligible to apply if the institution can commit to collecting data from students and faculty from a minimum of five STEM doctoral programs that award a PhD.

- Data collection must be from at least two of three required STEM fields: Chemistry, Computer, Electrical, and Electronics Engineering, and Computer and Information Sciences
- Data collection must also be from a minimum of three other priority STEM fields – see RFP Attachment B for a list of the other priority STEM fields

New – Our enrollment numbers on one or more of the required or other priority fields are below the enrollment thresholds stated in the RFP. Should / can my institution still apply?

CGS encourages institutions to apply even if your institution's enrollment numbers are below the enrollment threshold for one or more of the fields of study. Your proposal may bring unique strengths that align with the study's objectives and other factors beyond strict eligibility criteria contribute to the selection process.

My institution has computer science as a PhD program, but not computer and information science, is this still eligible as a program?

Yes, please see RFP Attachment B (Taxonomy of Fields of Study).

Is there a ratio of students to faculty that should be used for the minimum enrollment size? Or a percentage of students to meet the minimum threshold?

No, the Proposal Cover Form requests applicants to specify the number of PhD students currently enrolled in at least five STEM fields of study (two of three required fields and at least three other priority fields).

Is there a minimum or maximum number of key personnel you want/would like to see on these projects?

No, applicants should identify key personnel and other personnel that they feel are needed to successfully execute the study's required activities.

***New* - Please clarify the difference between the Field of Study and Program.**

Does the threshold mean cumulative number of all students within the field or in each program that's in the field? When data are reported does that go back to the field level or program level?

There may be one or more programs within a particular field of study that grant the PhD degree. The threshold is the cumulative number of all PhD students within each of the programs that are under the particular field of study. The data that will be reported are at the program level.

Example – chemistry (required field). The department is chemistry. The programs are physical chemistry and chemical chemistry. PhD student enrollment in physical chemistry is 12 and in chemical chemistry is 12, meeting the total enrollment threshold of 23. The degree awarded in physical chemistry and chemical chemistry is a PhD.

II. PROPOSAL PREPARATION

The Proposal Cover Form requests an Institutional Review Board case number. Is a case number required in the proposal submission?

A case number is not required in the proposal submission.

New – Institutions are not required to obtain IRB approval prior to submission of a proposal. If your institution is selected to participate in the study, your institution will need to obtain IRB approval prior to the disbursement of the first payment to sub-awardees. CGS anticipates that the time period for the first payment is around September/October 2025.

Our institution's IRB requires us to submit the data collection instruments as part of our submission package. When will draft data collection instruments be available?

The CGS project team aims to have draft data collection instruments (surveys and focus group questions) available this summer (June – August).

When you say you want to see University support, can you clarify what that means?

“Institutional support” does not refer to financial support. Rather, it refers to an institution’s commitment to creating the conditions that will allow the project to succeed. Institutional support is demonstrated by a letter of support from the university president or provost indicating that they are aware of the project, support its goals, and are confident that the project will be able to continue even in the case of leadership changes.

What is the specific format for the budget or budget narrative?

There is not a specific format for the budget and budget narrative. We have provided a sample budget template located on the CGS Supporting Inclusive Research Environments webpage that is optional for applicants to use with modifications as needed.

There is not a specific format for the budget justification. The budget justification should justify the amounts requested for each budget line item, explaining how the expense is necessary to the execution of the project.

What percent to use for indirect costs?

At this time, we are recommending that applicants use their federal negotiated indirect cost rate when they submit their proposal. If required by the National Science Foundation, the indirect cost rate and budget may be updated in coordination with CGS.

New - In addition to the institutional description, could you please clarify what other types of information should be included as part of the submission?

The proposal narrative should address the following selection criteria:

1. Description and examples of success implementing data collection efforts on campus with doctoral students and faculty.
2. Plan to implement required data collection effort on campus.
3. Plan to conduct analysis of your institution’s data from student and faculty surveys.
4. Strategy for communicating survey findings to participating programs and other institution stakeholders.
5. Strategy for using resulting data for program improvement and improving students’ experiences and success.
6. Sustainability plan.
7. Data management plan.
8. Project personnel and their roles in successfully implementing all project activities.

Further details on these criteria can be found on page 5 of the [Request for Proposals](#).

New - Given the state of NSF funding, does CGS believe this grant will be funded?

CGS received funding for the project in the Fall 2024 and has not received notification of termination of funds for this study. While in the current environment there are no guarantees, CGS is moving full speed ahead on the project and hopes institutions decide to submit a proposal.

New - Does our submission to CGS need to be approved by our institution's Research Office prior to submission given we are applying to CGS as a subawardee? Your submission/proposal does not need to be approved by your Research Office prior to submission of your proposal to CGS.

New - We have more than five programs who are interested and meet the thresholds. Are there “too many” programs, or can we include 7 or 8?

There are not too many programs, and you can include more than 3 other priority programs/fields. Each program does have to grant a PhD.

New - We have a number of programs that are not on the priority list. Can we include them if we also have two of the required programs and 4-6 priority programs?

In addition to at least two of three required fields, institutions can select from the list of other priority fields. All selected fields of study/programs must grant a PhD. The ‘other priority’ fields are broad fields. For your reference, we included with the RFP (attachment B) the Taxonomy of Fields of Study. If one of the programs you are considering is a fine field identified on the Taxonomy list, that program would be okay to include. If a program/field is not listed on the Taxonomy list, it should not be included in your list of other priority programs.

New – The RFP notes that there will be period meetings for project leaders and key project staff. Will those meetings be held in-person?

No, the biannual meetings will be held virtually. As such, there is no need to budget for travel.

III. DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT

The RFP states that the first round of the survey is planned for Fall 2025. Is this the standard timing, or is there flexibility to administer it in a later semester?

There is flexibility to administer the surveys. The student and faculty surveys can be administered in the Fall 2025 or Spring 2026 term.

Do you have an estimate for the amount of time a student, faculty member, program director would need to complete these surveys, inventories, etc.?

We expect the student and faculty survey to take no more than 15-20 minutes and for the program inventory to take about 30 minutes.

After the survey and focus group data are shared with CGS, what analyses will UC Berkeley conduct using our data? Additionally, who will have access to the results of this research?

During the study period, the CGS Research Environments project team will have access to the survey, program inventory, and focus group data. Each school will also have access to their own data for analysis. In line with NSF requirements, approximately two years after the completed study, the combined, anonymized dataset will be available to the broader community of researchers.

Our institution has an established governance structure for campuswide surveys, and the current guidance is to survey a random sample of the population rather than the entire population. Additionally, we have a large number of STEM graduate students and faculty. Would this sampling strategy be acceptable for this proposal? If so, do you have a recommended percentage or sample size of the student and faculty populations we should target to ensure meaningful and representative results?

You may want to inform the governance structure that this study is not a campus wide population survey of all graduate students enrolled in STEM programs. It is a selected set of degree programs within which you would survey the whole population of students within each of the selected degree programs.

Are the data collection approaches standardized? Will they be provided by the CGS teams?

Yes, the data collection approaches are standardized and will be provided by the CGS project team.

New - The CGS team is still finalizing the details around data collection. However, we anticipate both the student and faculty surveys will be

administered simultaneously for a window of approximately four weeks. The CGS team will likely build the survey in Qualtrics and provide survey links to subawardees for dissemination to faculty and students.

***New* - Please clarify the intent of the study related to data collection.**

CGS will use the methods identified below to answer the study's research questions to increase our understanding of the influence of structured and transparent research environments on student success.

- Survey to gather information from students and faculty about their perceptions of structured and transparent research environments (one student survey and one faculty survey)
- Program inventory administered at two points in time during the study period to gather information from the Director of Graduate Studies, or their designee, about policies, resources, etc. reflective of the research environment at the institution
- Focus groups of selected students and faculty to get a deeper understanding about any differences between student and faculty perceptions of research environments that are identified from the survey findings

***New* – Is purchasing/providing gift cards to survey respondents an allowable expense for this grant?**

Incentives are not an allowable expense for this grant. Moreover, your institution cannot use its own funds to provide incentives or to support any other project expenses as cost sharing is also not allowed for the grant.

***New* - Would it be allowable to provide lunch to graduate students on a day when they are invited to come in and complete the student survey?**

Yes, it would be allowable to budget for food for a working meeting. Those costs could be entered in the budget as participant costs.

***New* - What is CGS's preferred format for focus groups? Is there flexibility in holding them remotely?**

CGS will hold the focus groups remotely. The CGS project team will conduct/moderate the focus groups and compile and analyze insights from the focus groups. We will ask participating institutions to send the focus group invitation and log-in information, which will be provided to institutions by CGS, to select doctoral students and faculty who participated in the surveys.

***New* - For the Program Inventories, will CGS be sending the questions to an institution's project team for the institution to distribute to program chairs,**

and then each institution compiles the information to send back to CGS? Or will there be a form that the institution has to send to program chairs/fill out and send back to CGS “as is”?

CGS will send the program inventory to the participating institution’s project director. If the project director is not able to complete the inventory themselves, they will forward it to the individuals, such as program or department chairs, at their institution who can provide the information requested in the program inventory. Completed inventories will be returned to CGS “as is”, that is, the participating institution will not be asked to compile the information.

If you have additional questions about the RFP, please contact the CGS Research Environments Project Team at researchenvironments@cgs.nche.edu.