

Sat. March 1, 2025 8:30 hrs. ET - **NASA EPSCoR Caucus Meeting**

Chip: Good morning, NASA EPSCoR Caucus

Chair of NASA EPSCoR Caucus, Go over morning agenda.

Attendance: Chip Cole, Kathy Loftin, Tim Griffin, Frank McDonald, Debora Nielson, Brooke Graham, Luke Flynn, Chris Flynn, Meredith Hecker, Eric Wilcox, Colleen Fava, Aaron Ryan, Jacob Owen, Alexandre Martin, Ed Duke, Tom L (SD), Denise Thorsen, Paulo Oemig, Gerardo Morell, Toni Galvin, Shawna McBride, Tori McIntosh, Caitlin Milera, Susie Johnson, Linda Kliment, Ben, Angie Miller, Kimberley Bailey, Scott Tarry, Dale Thomas, Cass Runyon, Matt Bernards, Romina King, Leslie Aquino, Whitney Jackson, Sara Nelson, Hailey Waller, Melanie Page, Leslee Gilbert, Jessica Molesworth, Constance Meadors.

08:50 NASA Updates

Kathy: I want to thank Jessica and Leslee for the room and breakfast.

Tim Griffin on loan for a year

Frank is the rock, NSF R2, and strategic planning. Frank will be filling in for the SG project manager.

Embeds in the mission directorates: Stephanie Yeldell (STMD), Veronica Seyl (SOMD/ESDMD), Susan Poland (SMD), Dave Berger (ARMD).

I see us as a pipeline

NASA EPSCoR goals: In general, purpose of EPSCoR RID is to increase the TRL and support training of future generations

History 1979, 1992 (PL 102-588-nasa),

Annual timeline for solicitation release: Basic Research opens second Monday of October, closes fourth Monday of January.

R3s opens second Monday of November, closes fourth Monday of February.

ISS/SFO opens second Monday of January, closes third Monday of April

RID opens second Monday of February, closes third Monday of May

RII Track 4 closes second Tuesday of April

16 NSF/NASA FY24 research fellows, 8 NSF/NASA R3 payloads, 45 R3 (4.5M), 14 Basic research awards (10.5M)

Colleen: Research fellows news release?

Kathy: NSF does it.

Denise: There is a list.

Toni: Lack of opportunity in the science fields

Kathy: Currently, due to potential conflicts with executive orders, NSSC will make final determination: Descope, reword, or cancelation. Questions will go through NSSC. I can route them for you.

Melanie: Timeline for the descope, etc.

Kathy: It's due on Monday (March 3rd) to NSSC.

FY25 solicitation ready to go, ISS waiting for funding. This will likely be our last year with the ISS. 150K.

Limited implementation. Plan kickoff at meeting at ASGSR mtg in NV in Dec. 2025. Site visits are in the plan.

26 basic research proposed. Quality review is complete. Reviewing and categorizing by Mission Directorate (MD). Online reviewer requests and assignments. May 8th MD review. Expect awards packages late May to NSSC.

R3 131 received, quality review is just beginning, reviewing and categorizing by MD starting next week, followed by online reviewer requests and assignment, followed by MD.
Development of award packages-goal is May-June.
I'm hoping to have an online webinar.

Meredith: Can you tell us how many were submitted per jurisdictions?

Kathy: We will let everyone know of those who were awarded.

Gerardo: Review with DEIA; can we check those prior to going to NSSC?

Kathy: Tim, please make a note.

Kathy: Educating civil servants and PIs on how EPSCOR-funded projects benefit them. CANs provide alternative solutions.

EPSCoR solicitations differ from other NASA research solicitations. We use cooperative agreements – they allow for more collaboration. EONS basic research as an appendix worked well.

NSSC is looking to have EPSCoR as its own section.

Technical Officer responsible for the administration not the Technical Monitor (TM).

We used to do a ground up approach for to look for research topics. We now share the previous topics with the Mission Directorates.

We encourage civil servants and early faculty: Reviewers, panel members, technical monitors
TMs are not responsible for approving NCE, nor approving changes in technical direction, assigning tasks to grantee.

Denise: Look for TM with research background in the area of the PI project.

Kathy: POC (pre-award), TM (post-award). Sometimes they may be the same person.

POC provides letters of support as relevant; may become a TM. Letters of support are tricky.

Strategy going forward: Looking for a replacement for ISS. Speaking with the HASP people to find rides, RockSat, and STMD Flight Opportunities.

Eric: Does it include the airborne atmospheric aircraft?

Kathy: Yes.

Denise: A few years back, ISS/Suborbital/rocket, included negotiating costs with the rocket people. It didn't work with the Poker Flat people. Will this be revisited?

Kathy: We hitch hike and catch flights with flight providers. RockSat seems viable. I don't expect to have a solicitation having you negotiate with flight providers.

Melanie: What other platforms in LEO?

Kathy: Plans for other commercial platforms. But we also need to get the flight to get them there. I'm working with NSF looking for synergy. We have labs they don't. We don't have much funding, NSF does. We can leverage funding and help each other.

Melanie: There was a GAO report a few years back, it suggested jurisdictional changes.

Kathy: We internally audited those numbers – facility usage – cooperative agreement – but those were purely operational.

Shawna: If a PI is working with a civil servant, can they write a letter of support for RII.

Kathy: Yes.

Toni: Thank you for the increment for the RID opportunity.

Eric: Small awards resonate with me. For a PI trying to shift research makes it worth it. Research focus areas, SMD, would like to see more atmospheric research.

Kathy: Letter of support – template/form available. Letter of recommendation is different (SMD cannot do that). We don't do letters of endorsement.

Denise: If they have had an active award, they cannot apply for a current. Reconsider one year and done, breaks up the continuity.

Kathy: A practice from NSF, same players always applying. One year gap only. I would encourage with your RID the type of successes you have had, don't just write et al. List them all.

Luke: Would you consider a two-year period for R3s?

Kathy: Most publications don't materialize during the POP.

Chip: And it's pretty easy to get a NCE.

Kathy: Yes, as long as you are submitting annual reports and making progress. We have had TM that were able to find augmentations for some of these R3s.

09:50 Discussion of Technical Interchange Meetings (TIMs) meeting topic Chip.

Chip: I received 16 responses from 15 jurisdictions to the survey I sent at the beginning of the week.

Projects/collaborations from AMES 2023: Most respondents commented on the importance of making connections via TIMs.

Alexandre: It's confusing, if nothing came out, what's the importance?

Chip: How important are TIMs? Most stated 'neutral.' 50% not important/neutral.

What do you hope to gain: Understand NASA science goals, develop NASA contacts, minimal to no gain. Alternative meeting formats? Faculty travel to specific research forum or conferences. Improve agendas to avoid scheduling conflicts. Searchable database of NASA researchers.

Kathy: We have that database; it's called the TechPort.

Meredith: Will you be willing to put together a webinar for faculty?

Kathy: Yes, TechPort people have volunteered to share their expertise and participate.

Susie: We have a faculty meeting, introduce them to TechPort, don't cold call people; you let us know what you find out and we make introductions.

Tim: You can reach out to the Center's Chief Technologist.

Denise: Warfield - history of TIMs/ With Jeppie we started TIMs, not just about learning about NASA, but also about us, for the NASA people to learn about the NASA EPSCoR jurisdictions. Arranged by center-wide topics.

Other ways: Topical workshops that NASAs puts together – then it would be easy to send faculty to these specific topic meetings.

Alexandre: I did go to the TIM, I happened to be at JPL. I know the heat shield person, that person already know that center. For me the TIM is so random, it's hard to get anything useful out of it.

Colleen: Please extend the survey, Chip. TIM never had a specific goal; we can refine them. We should have more than one metric.

Caitlin: The TIMs that were valuable are when the NASA people learned from our faculty. These were useful for SD.

Melanie: What are all the workshops NASA is doing? But you have to pay for some.

Leslee: Question for Kathy – NASA personnel to get to meetings – EO this week – Travel approval. Do you see fewer approvals for travel?

Kathy: It's really hard to get to travel with the latest EOs. I think more specific meetings will be more beneficial.

Scott: Question for Jessica, is the DOD doing TIMs?

Jessica: NIH/IDeA model is to do regional meetings. Regional issues, may be one model. But for DOD and others not. Professional societies – newsletter biweekly – trying to track that information.

Colleen: NASA Earth Science data workshop with MSIs. Very targeted outreach; share with your people. We need to share more widely.

Romina: Coordinate TIM with a NASA regional mtg.

Paulo: Echoing what Colleen said, Ablation workshop at NMSU in Las Cruces, we need to share more widely these topic specific opportunities.

Toni: Workshop AGU in January; GSFC had a workshop LASSO - we funded students. If I knew more about these workshops, I would be able to track my faculty and students to participate.

Colleen: Reset, start with online discussions, organize a committee.

Susie: Understanding the gaps that need to be filled. Get topics in advance and organize them by MDs.

Chip: Put together a one-pager with goals for the TIM while on hold in discussion with NASA. Put on hold the TIM for time being.

Matt: I will invite you to be part of the organizing committee to the STEM Symposium representing EPSCoR.

10:47 hrs. **NASA EPSCoR Advocacy**

Leslee: FY 21 TO 24 26M, FY25 still at a 26M, in the queue 29M in the House, 26M Senate
FY26 coalition goal 30M while keeping admin costs low.

Appropriation committee members, CJS subcommittees for both House and Senate membership. Great deal of support in both, particularly in the Senate.

Some Eos: DEIA order, agencies still working out all the parameters of that and the judiciary. You may have seen an article, EPSCoR is in trouble because of DEIA, but that's not the case.

NIH IDC, will NASA follow? There is some concern, 15% may bleed into other agencies. We haven't seen it. Also tie up at the courts. It could be that Trump is using NIH IDC pressuring Congress to address IDC costs to get lower costs than 65%; a negotiating tactic.

Funding freezes, impoundments. OMB intends to trigger impoundment. Executive branch using money that Congress didn't allocate. Congress doesn't like that.

This particular law has never been adjudicated.

Funding freezes, so far, are not impoundments. You have to spend it before the fiscal year.

Cuts to agency personnel – now a lot of people are required to be rehired. Is EPSCoR a unique target?
No.

We haven't seen the end of DEIA. Title VI: more pronouncements anticipated. Restructuring of NIH/DoED/Climate agencies. Research Security/China; unique challenge for NASA.

Mechanisms: EOs, staff reductions, impoundment, slow walking. Congress: Reconciliation, annual appropriations, authorizations. Raising questions on federalism.

Now: Bipartisan → completion of FY25 current CR expires March 14. Leader working to reach agreement on 'topline' (unlikely). Then, shutdown? Partisan: FY26 'trifecta' unlocks reconciliation process.

Bipartisan→ addressing the debt ceiling (it was reached in Jan. 2025), 'x-date' likely summer 2025.
Partisan, considering Trump nominees – most cabinet level appointees sworn in.

Reconciliation: The House and Senate are trying to pass a budget resolution. It can be two pages.
Topline budget categories. Only 4.5 trillion apart, but they need to be on the same page. First step here: budget topline items. Instructions second. Then committees get to work. Reconciliation only requires 51 votes (no super majority needed). With reconciliation, we can talk about taxes, sale of federal land (revenues) and cuts. Only direct spends on the table. Medicaid, SS, food programs, some student loans; if you qualify you will get this type of payment. Reconciliation doesn't cover discretionary spending. Reconciliation won't affect NASA EPSCoR.

Positioning: Lots of support for NASA EPSCoR. These programs are connecting with industry; it's a very positive aspect. Lots of interest in space and drones and AI. We need congressional and administration engagement. At the DoE there is a lot of chatter, they wanted to hear what kind of solutions you have to put them into RFP.

Colleen: Underscore my experience on the Hill was similar to you all. Lots of positive reinforcement. The IDC will get a push to get it to ~35%. A new majority/minority chief of staff, it's frowned upon to put appropriation request and working with speaker's office. Help with, how to get industry partners. If you have an industry that takes internships.

Appropriation – subject to funding. Subject to review within a contract, the agency usual has that option. Lots of DEIA in RFPs.

Kimberley: Conflict of interests here?

Leslee: Tons of COIs. Many of these actions have popular support. Attack on the big institutions. Nobody likes the IRS, bureaucracy easy to pillory. As long as the President keeps them at the big institutional level, it's a safe space for the WH.

11:40 hrs. **RID discussion.**

Chip: Worksheet – small group discussion – then we will share out.

13:15 hrs. **RID report out**

Table one: Jurisdictional practices: Meredith: we all do something similar, small grants, travel, quantities change.

Table 2: Same

Table 3: Same, but we try to estimate the amount of funding grants 80-90%, 10 to 42 admin percent, one jurisdiction set aside for tribal grants.

Other tables: Same

Susie: Award amount, 25 to 75K.

Melanie: It's a good thing that they are 5 years awards. Yearly conference with RID researchers. A graduate student from psychology will be putting together an EPSCoR public science network, help people translate their science like AAAS does.

Outcomes and success measures: Leslie: We follow the annual report guidance.

Constance: Every one who received an award is required to present at our conference.

Toni: It's hard sometimes to get decent impact statements.

Denise: Follow on EPSCoR grants. Level of faculty impacted early career. Are there spin-off startups, commercialization? Following up with Toni, I hired a writer.

Susie: Two of our earlier RID awarded, presidential awardees now. Great success we shared with our delegation.

Colleen: Follow-on grants.

Meredith: Brand new researchers, great mentoring through the RID and cost-share.

Melanie: Also important, all 28 states only get 10% of all R&D. What is the purpose of the program – it's allowing our citizens a higher quality of life.

Colleen: Jessica M. gave me this tip:

"Most of our students live within 100 miles of our universities. Opportunity to develop local talent."

Meredith: It's important to always mention that you come from an EPSCoR state, even when the proposals is open to the nation.

Jessica: Because the work of Leslee on CHIPs and science act, there is a percentage of funding - 2.6% all the way up to 20%. It's a good time to write proposals to NSF EPSCoR to meet these percentage.

Leslee: At end of the five years, 20% has to go to the states.

15:15 hrs. **Discussion of NASA EPSCoR grant review process.**

Kathy: once proposals are received, quality check (make sure all qualifications are met), then subject areas (to get online reviewers); R3 and basic research collect all that data and then off to the MD panel – they submit a ranking.

For the R3s, we put them in different buckets and, even though, we don't need a panel, we do have a panel.

MD panels for the basic research: After online review, panel review. MD panels – comments: Scientific value, we read all the recommendation letters. What is the best proposal for NASA? Is it a high need idea?

Colleen: NASA research priorities, some things are more of a priority than others?

Kathy: Yes. And there is no way for me to communicate this.

Melanie: Is the directors' part of the evaluation?

Kathy: No, isn't. Letters of endorsement.

Denise: Letters of collaborations, how important?

Kathy: Very important, though is not a requirement, but important in telling a story.

Denise: Prior awards for jurisdictions – PI and/or Sc-I.

Toni: What I'm hearing is that they are not used at all.

Kathy: It's not discriminatory – But I agree we need to revisit this for our next solicitation.

Shawna: Collaboration between jurisdictions, is there a percentage/funding?

Kathy: Stronger together to share what resources we can share among jurisdictions.

Colleen: Unless we get more money, we are not going to encourage interjurisdictional collaboration.

Tim: Each center gets a certain amount of money, but both working toward a common goal.

Kathy: How do we help those jurisdictions that are struggling?

Denise: Keith Hudson shared with me a CAN template, I tweak it every year, my researchers have been very successful.

Kathy: NSF training reviewer materials to be shared with the NASA EPSCoR Caucus.

14:36 hrs. EPSCoR/IDeA Foundation/Coalition update

Jessica M.: I am often asked: Why are they two orgs? What's the difference?

I thought I would review these often-asked questions.

1950 NSF was created 'to strengthen research and education in science and education...and to avoid undue concentration of such research and education.'

1977-78 Congressman Thornton (D-AR) how much money does my state get?

1978 NSF approved the creation of experimental EPSCoR

1988 EPSCoR Coalition was created. The universities were looking at Harvard and they had people going to the Hill. The Coalition is a nonprofit 501(c)3 org.

1992 PL 102-588

1995 EPSCoR Foundation created – Joe Danek program officer

Coalition, what does it do? Congress – advocates for increased funding each year with the Committees of jurisdiction and members/staff from Congress.

Total 861.5M

Foundation it's a non-lobbying 501(c)3 org, created in 1995 to work more directly with the PIs in the field. Created to support the Coalition and identify program priorities, gather data, and communicate the impact of the NASA EPSCoR program. If you don't receive our EIF newsletter, let me know.

There is a Foundation Associate Role opportunity: Our board, liaison between the board and the greater community. I'm looking for a leader from this group to consider this associate role.

14:53 break.

15:15 hrs. R3 discussion mechanism.

Chip: We have the recent R3 solicitations and how it went to discuss.

Denise: I'm happy I'm not the PI. But that means I didn't do the marketing. Don't how many applications went out. They won't have a writer.

Paulo: In NM 3 out of 5 or 6 reached out to me for letters of support. Two things: My institution takes a cut on the funding, and two I'm not the PI (I'm the admin PI).

Colleen: We were very involved with the PIs. We make it a requirement that PI contact the POC. We would charge 10% for admin, but that takes money from their funding.

Kathy: I'll get the stats and send that information out to you. Everything is on the table.

Toni: My institution charges IDC on the first 25K. The university requires that if you are the PI you charge to the grant. I'm happy that the PI takes the full amount of money.

Chip: I went to my VPR and asked them to post it as an opportunity and I was asked to be part of review process for a down-select.

Kimberley: Submission rate?

Kathy: Last year 117 and for this year 131. We had 35 more submitted, but not finished. We also received a lot more questions. This is the hard season for Tim and I.

Eric: We had 8 applications from NV that I know of. R3s are popular in NV. I don't have to do down-select nor be concerned with the reports.

Melanie: We have an organization from outside of WV, but they have a building in WV. A few years back they applied and won an award.

Alexandre: Four submitted, three went out.

Hailey: Concern with our researchers. Start with seed grants, then R3, before going into the 750K basic research. Our concern is that we may lose track of those researchers.

Chip: Keep the pie free or revisit?

Colleen: We need to wait to see how it goes – Get more money.

Chip: We are at the very end of the agenda – Thanks our host Jessica and your colleagues.

Jessica: Thank you for coming here.

Chip: And thank you Leslee for your support and advocacy.

[[For next year – most caucus members agreed that the caucus meeting should be held on Tue. before the Wed. Hill visit.]]

15:48 hrs. ET meeting adjourned