

NASA EPSCoR Caucus Meeting

Agenda

800 Maine Ave. SW, Washington, DC

Penthouse conference room

February 28, 2026

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast

8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. Welcome, announcements, and introductions

8:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. NASA updates Torry A. Johnson, Deputy Associate Administrator, STEM Engagement Program, NASA Dave Berger, NASA EPSCoR Manager

10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. NASA EPSCoR advocacy, Leslee Gilbert

10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. EPSCoR/IDeA Foundation and Coalition Boards, Jessica Molesworth

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. NASA EPSCoR grant mechanisms (Basic Research, R3, RID, etc.)

12:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Break (box lunch available)

12:45 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. Discussion of next-gen TIMs

1:45 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Wrap-up and summary

Welcome remarks by Chip Cole. Chair of NASA EPSCoR Caucus. Preview of agenda above and updates to agenda: Minutes from last year's meeting to approve.

Denise moved, Sara seconded, all in favor, none opposed.

New NASA EPSCoR website will house ExCom and Caucus meeting agendas and minutes.

Caucus expiring positions this summer:

Treasurer: Melanie

Secretary: Paulo

Excom member: Toni

Excom member: Sara

Nominating committee: Caitlin

8:44 Dave Berger: NASA EPSCoR Update

Torry Johnson Deputy Assoc Administrator STEM Engagement program, Office of STEM Engagement opening remarks. Reintroduced Dave Berger. Excited about what we're going to do together. Dave worked with MUREP, very versed in the technical arena.

You may have already met Matt and James.

Data and processing, how we can expedite costing; it's a concern. It's a compressed schedule this year, especially with furloughs and not getting your funds on time.

Colleen: We appreciate your leadership and support for NASA EPSCoR.

Torry: Absolutely, but we're still responsible for Eos.

Melanie: NSF EPSCoR moving to AI and quantum science, what's NASA approach?

Torry: I'm not familiar, but we're all about the mission. SMD still having to address funding issues. We, at OSTEM, are doing to make sure we are on mission. Not targeted AI efforts at this time.

Dave: Introduces his team: Matt Pearce, James Harrington on travel (also MUREP), Josh Parent (finances), Allison Rapp at Ideas to Play Conference (PCI) I haven't seen any direct AI concerted effort; but like with drones 10-15 year ago now they're a central component of ARMD. So, AI may evolve in a similar fashion with its relevance.

Grants' uncertainty-FY25. Executive Orders. Personnel reduction.

You are all still producing and I want to congratulate you.

54 awards

19.5 M in institutional funding

>1200 publications

NASA's missions are changing in shape and size.

RID supplements AR, VI, PR, KY, AK NSSC to release NLT March 11

Next batch not until May in sequence to be released.

FY25 R3 in internal selection, NSSC notifies proposers

Expected July 2026 and ISS as well

R3 and ISS NOFO

FY2026 NOFOs Basic Research NOFO, in NASA internal release process

Research focus areas released last night (2/27/2026).

Mid-March basic research guide released; 60 days application window

RFA Website goes live

June 15 (target) proposals due

Internal selection in July, again NSSC notifies proposers

Period of performance to begin NLT than Sept 30, 2026 (incremental funding).

Melanie: Spent a lot of time on the focus areas, given that points are not given for aligning or not. Is it time to let this go?

Dave: Is up to the directorates, but a lot of you really value the focus areas as a guideline on what the directorates contributed fundamental questions they're asking. From the signals I'm receiving, this is a compromise.

Colleen: LA likes the focus areas. It's a quick snapshot for our researchers. So, from that point of view it's helpful.

Bill: When I read the heliophysics areas, they looked very similar from what SMD has, people may think what's new to existing SMD areas.

Dave: SMD is very large. Some folks really value EPSCoR, some value ROSES, EPSCoR is a seed or building block for ROSES. Some groups are working on 12 ideas like ARMD, I'm working on 8, here are 4 for others to work on.

Bill: Let's say someone had a heliophysics project and needed extra funds, is this something to go for.

Angela: I agree with Colleen, knowing the research areas is helpful. Good chance that we won't get our RID funds until after our anniversary day?

Dave: Yes, it's a good chance. But, there is an option to get it earlier. NSSC has to have it out in 20 days.

Shawna: NASA NOFO as first step for ROSES; is there an option to do a webinar for early career faculty?

Dave: Absolutely. Great idea. I'm writing it down.

Susie: It would be helpful not only for ROSES but also for the funding directions for the other directorates, understanding how they work.

Luke: As far as the RID waiting for 60 days is too late. To change the PI on our award we put it in and it has been longer than 20 days.

Leslie: Are you going to check on the must to include items?

Dave: Yes, we will check on requirements. For instance, SMD only way to participate. But not automatic dequeue.

RID augmentation and 1 year extension. Approval in development. Mid-march: RID A&E guide. April: NOFO release (no-NSPIRES)
June: Proposal delivered to the EPSCoR Team
Augmentation to be released NLT Sept 30
Extension to continue on anniversary data.

Melanie: For the extension will you accept new ideas?

Dave: Yes, you can propose something new for the extension.

Colleen: One year extension 200K, additional 200K to augment. Are we proposing for the 400K into a single proposal. 6th year release on anniversary date.

Dave: Yes.

Chip: Timeline? I'm already thinking about the augmentation but to take place over a 2 years period. If NCE is possible, that would help.

Dave: One year, one time fund.

Denise: My POP is February 1. There is no way for you to tell me that I have until September 30, 2027 to spend it.

Dave: For the augment you have to propose. Write a plan and budget. Legally follow what your plan is. NCEs are approved. You are writing you're going to do it in one year.

Denise: If the augmentation is on an existing grant; the augment is not a separate grant. But, you are legally giving it to an existing grant.

Chip: Augment for workforce development?

Dave: Not necessarily, just like Gamaliel's augment.

Chip: The reason I ask is because for program to roll it out and implement it's not reasonable to get it done in one year.

Dave: Forecast FY27

Now through June there are incremental improvements. What's working on R3s and NOFOs. Collect jurisdictions feedback.

Develop improved STEM Gateway integrated reporting system.

Collect revised RFAs (Note: intend to update website on two-month cycle)

Finalize NOFO

July through Sept.

Bill: R3s a few year ago used to go out from NASA EPSCoR offices. In Delaware, that meant less paperwork, but now we've lost track of the connections between PIs and NASA. I don't think it has make it better.

Paulo: Perhaps making a requirement to have a letter of support from the jurisdiction offices would help track those researchers.

Susie: Yes, going through the jurisdictions offices meant more work for me. But we were able to encourage our researchers.

Alexander: I agree. [And 'South Carolina agrees'].

Colleen: What's expectation on POP NLT Sept 30?

Dave: I don't think we can count on a firm timeline.

Eric: For the dissent voice, in Nevada the way the R3s work right now, it works for us. It would be nice to require a letter from the jurisdictions NASA EPSCoR.

Denise: Comment on your schedule; fourth Monday of January. Right before Christmas or after Christmas due dates make it difficult. A due date in late January works better.

Melanie: The jury is out on the R3s. We haven't heard the successes. At our lead institution, we'll take IDC on the first 50K. Another institution will have to waive it.

Colleen: In Louisiana we have 3 R1s, 4 R2s and 5 active institutions. When decentralize it, most proposals will come from the R1s.

Chip: For Vermont either one is fine. Lose ability to direct investments.

Gerardo: Expanding on Colleen's comments, some PIs exclude themselves from the process. If awarded, we work directly with the other institution directly to process the subaward.

Dave: FY27 January 27 release on NSPIRES 90-day window for 5 years RID.

Engaging with jurisdictions: Docs Google Drive for Gov. Common folder-templates, POCs, portals, etc. Jurisdiction folders: limited by email address, monthly financial snapshots.

NASA EPSCoR would like to engage more directly; monthly open meetings (Weds 3-4 pm ET in SG slot); jurisdiction small group virtual tag-ups, financial review, understanding jurisdiction needs, asking questions both ways, once per year with a one per month for Technical Officers cadence, starting in March. Matt and James each have 14 jurisdictions.

TIMS: NASA supports these.

Matt: EPSCoR CoP

Increase collaboration between EPSCoR teams. Improve dissemination of STEM research outcomes relevant to NASA missions and directorates.

Improve access for EPSCoR students and teams to collaborate with NASA subject matter experts, centers and missions and teams. Strengthen student awareness and access to future STEM opportunities. Celebrate and showcase team accomplishments. Support community STEM engagement events and workshops and have experience with Science Activation leadership, experience with Goodard Institute for Space Studies in NY. Director Gavin Schmidt, looking for a new home for the institute; and it's my experience that brings me to this topic: Dynamic collaboration, Community of Practice. I have built many CoPs. I wanted to plant the seed. I heard today some folks may want to know more about how to write grants, etc. The work you're all doing is epic, I want to be your cheerleader. Do a needs analysis, understand the community.

Chip: Thank you to Dave, Matt, Gamaliel and Torry.

10:06 Leslee Gilbert. NASA EPSCoR Advocacy
Appropriations/Authorizations updates

FY26 recap, appropriations mechanism is an annual occurrence to appropriate dollars. Congress was late for 2026, but despite WH zeroing EPSCoR, Congress put funds back. We're in FY27 advocacy for a start date of October 1. On Wednesday the House announced you need to get all the projects in by March 13th, that means offices have quick internal deadlines. The process hasn't changed, but the timeline has.

Senate has more of a normal timeline. After President's request, late April. But some offices have earlier deadlines (late March or early April). CS appropriators love the program; expect no additional funding. President's budget request is delayed. Congress needs you to enter your appropriations.

NASA Authorization: Congress appropriates annually, authorization approves programs generally every 3 years. e.g., OSTEM=\$143M. 1 year authorization.

Senate action next week= Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute (ANS), amendment on Wed=>Authorization of appropriations for OSTEM \$147.5M

Gerardo: Is that money specifically for EPSCoR?

Leslee: For OSTEM in general. It would be good if we codify programs. We've been talking to some members to offer an amendment to codify different programs.

DEM minority Lisa Rochester DE, Lujan NM, Rosen NV, Schatz, HI
GOP majority Capito WV, Fischer, NE, Lummis, WY, Moran KS, Sheehy Mt, Sullivan AK, Thune SD, Wicker, MS.

Melanie: Is there a Senator introducing it?

Leslee: Ben Ray Lujan is introducing it.

Eric: Authorization, House bill, the science language has very little about research language. How much authorization get into research language?

Leslee: Authorization matters a lot, they set policy, a way to set direction for agency. It's not the final word, but general direction.

House bill hasn't passed yet, negotiation between House and Senate; we have a long way to go.

Chip: Future, mid-term elections?

Leslee: House one seat majority currently. Don't expect to see a lot of legislation coming out. Another member from FL is very sick. If House flips, Jeffries may be the chair. FY27 wanted to get it done by Oct. 1, but it hasn't happened in 28 years.

Melanie: What if it doesn't pass?

Leslee: The program keeps going with a lapsed authorization and continues to exist and be funded.

Jessica: The last authorization EPSCoR had was in 1993 and it still continues.

Leslee: And NOAA has never been authorized.

Colleen: Will there be another trigger moment?

Leslee: Go ahead with thank you emails. Once they pass out of committee go to the floor House or Senate, touch base with your delegation as a reminder.

Gamaliel: Any conversation about the appropriation, CR, and flowing of funding?

Leslee: I was hoping you'll tell me. This is a creation of the OMB; we are not going to spend the money until Congress tell us. Congress is very unlikely to get it done by October 1. When we have CRs agencies tend to hold back some money because don't know what Congress it's going to do with the appropriation. The shutdown and then the CR didn't help; unfortunately all forces outside of our control.

Gemaliel: We're trying to be proactive and plan ahead.

Chip: Thank you, Leslee.

Jessica: Coalition and Foundation Updates

How we are organized and governed: Created in 1988, nonprofit, targeted for Congress 501cR NSF 8M program at that time and in existence for 10 years at that time. Only 17 jurisdictions in 1988.

Feb/March annual conference. Generate talking points, draft report language, letters to House/senate appropriations Charis and ranking members, complete required appropriation forms.

Submit questions/testimony

EPSCoR/IDEA in created in 1995 when Joe Danek left NSF, created as a non-lobbying organization. Tagert agencies and states.

Some foundation activities: State and federal agency outreach to achieve mutually benefiting programming. EIF newsletter. Respond to requests for information from wide range of stakeholders federal, state, and community. Annual state summaries. Outreach to national groups and associations. Board activities: bi-weekly drop-on calls, F&A issues, eligibility issues. I have been in this role for 9 years.

Bylaws: Section 4 membership 23 coalition members, each state chooses a representative. Section 6 board of directors. In 2020 it expanded to 15 members. And ten directors are designated representatives. Colleen is an agency director from the Coalition. The foundation's role is to support the coalition. Colleen represents NASA EPSCoR on the Coalition Board. Chip as head of the NASA EPSCoR Caucus represents NASA EPSCoR on the Foundation Board. And then there are Foundation Associates (Section 5).

Engagement and Outreach: Growing pains, how do we reach so many people, 5 programs plus the NIH program; how big or small should we be? Chip and I have monthly meetings with Dave Berger. Boards meet in Feb. April, July, Fall retreat and an end-of-the-year meeting.

In theory every PI could be a Foundation Associate. How do we enlist more interest?

Liaisons? How do we do more with the associate role? Outreach to university Presidents and our Government Relations group quarterly or as needed.

Early career faculty, similar to what we do with UG students, take your IDeA science to the Hill. New campaign for the "Science Works Here" Danny interviews for 3 min your researchers. Reach out to me if you would like to participate and provide feedback.

Melanie: The IDeA on the Hill event, are you looking at expanding it, or keeping it as a small group of students? What's too big? Or do you have a different idea?

Jessica: We take 5 or 6 students. And I work with John and Leslee. What's manageable for our staff.

Colleen: Is there a way to know who is on the Gov Relations group?

Leslee: We will be updating that list. If you have a person in mind, let us know.

Colleen: National UG organization does a national program and present posters. What if we do something like that for NASA EPSCoR?

Jessica: Yes, it's the National IDeA Symposium in June.

Denise: On Mon. I saw the larger foundation including us, if you haven't seen it, I encourage you to go and look at it.

Jessica: We will be taking it down. The state page, lots of the news at the bottom of the page, are old. Danny will be updating that. If you have your summaries, please reach out to Danny.

Chip: When I send the email later, I will point you to the link.
Thank you for hosting us for this meeting, Jessica.

Chip: Dave, any other updates?

Dave: Reminders 3 points: Monthly open mics, RPPR satisfying grants requirements (and alignment to OSTEM reporting), moving forward with onboarding new people to participant list only, if there is a new student/faculty ask them to be on Gateway, over the course of 2026 doing a webform excel attachment, a lot of information to translate it into narrative form; it can be improved. R3 the average of closing awards is 1.7 years; is it the time to ask to make them a 2 year POP. Looking at incremental funding; important for our NASA system. Inflation analysis: Update it to 1.5 million. 9 basic NOFO at 1.5M/each will it be more impactful?

Denise: For reporting purposes, we can say: I don't give your money until you enter your profile on Gateway. Your spreadsheet is easier to identify the PIs.
R3 I'm all in on a 2-year POP.

Colleen: But I don't want to enter the other info in Gateway.

Dave: R3, Basic Research, the EPSCoR Program, enter the basic info; and reach out to the PI with a follow up congratulations letter with a reminder to enter their information on the roster of email addresses and complete the PLOs.

Colleen: Gateway doesn't work well with SG.

Melanie: Differential funding brackets if 2 years for R3s.

Dave: Yes, let's account for that plan.

Susie: Reporting, trying out new approaches, I'll be happy to try it out before rolling it out.

Dave: Office 360 enter info there and then we'll take it from there. But the RPPR is not working into OSTEM reporting needs.

Chip: The old style of engagement with the agency had more active collaboration with NASA. In Vermont we had two grant mechanisms, and we used to require a letter of requirement from NASA. I lifted that this year because it's difficult now to get those letters of support. Can you speak generally about the connection with the agency for the PIs?

Dave: I agree in the short term it is difficult to get those connections, finding new TMs; 25% are no longer with the agency and 75% of those 25% are doing double duty. The MUREP team has implemented onboarding people for their proposal and then making the connections after the proposals are submitted. With Jared Issacman, as job postings come onboard a lot of those hires will be early career. And I suspect senior scientists/engineers will be needed to mentor our new hires, biggest hiring boom since Apollo is expected this year.

Matt: I would love to help make those connections.

Bill: TM in advance, I wonder why they have to be at a NASA center. Why not have some of these people in larger missions be TMs.

Angela: Increasing basic BUDGET for Basic Research NOFO, I advocate for an in-between approach, 1M.

Chip: I agree with the 1M target. Particularly for junior faculty.

Scott: There is value to be able to submit 2 proposals; both going through a review process. Even when one gets selected.

Shawna: Will a survey be helpful to get a full picture: Funding level, type of award, length of award?

Chip: Absolutely.

Susie: Influx of new people at NASA, how familiar of the value proposition of NASA EPSCoR will they be? Are there ways to incentivize their participation?

Eric: When I was at GSFC and became the director, I would ask them about NASA EPSCoR and none knew about it.

Dave: I would love to bring back the stimuli in the fall. I have a lot of super NASA EPSCoR fans, and other folks saying "I don't have time for that." To demonstrate the value, it's a challenge. A message I'm working to correct.

In the act of writing a proposal, will including a Step 2 be helpful?

Eric: It's already a successful program, acceptance rate wise.

Colleen: Maybe a mechanism for the R3s but for the basic research it may create more problems.

Dave: RID OSTEM seems to have strong support for a workforce development focus. The EPSCoR statutory language is based on building engineering and science, research, human output within the state. Interest in expanding the RID, capacity building/workforce? More fellowships? Professional challenges?

Denise: SG and EPSCoR are two different programs, for Alaska Space Grant is all about students, EPSCoR is all about research (faculty/postdoc). My initial response is no. Don't be Space Grant.

Colleen: I made this program under my RID, faculty fellowship with students so they can get access to R1 labs. Faculty fellows supervise a student or two at a faculty center?

Alexander: I agree with Denise.

Susie: In Idaho we raised the RID to \$75,000 to support a research student.

Bill: Research yes, but we also emphasize the economic development importance within the jurisdiction.

Leslie: Our island economic development dept aligns to research areas.

Melanie: I believe there is flexibility for all states as long as you don't mandate so much funding must go into workforce projects.

12:37 hrs Chip: Next Gen TIMS
What would you like to see from the NextGen TIMS?

Scott: Over the years TIMS have made me want to say they are useful, but when you consider the cost, it's something to consider.

Chip: With the staffing at NASA and new people coming, constraints for the near future.

Colleen: Virtual meetings, guest speakers, dept heads and researchers, and alignments, potential collaborations. We should be making some efforts to support our PIs, how to write ROSES grants, workshops, seminars, one of the benefits of TIMS is that for some of the PIs it was the only time they've been at a NASA center or visit their labs.

Alexander: I personally don't think they are useful at all. Virtual conferences may do well. Or send the researchers to the NASA centers. Send researchers where the NASA people go, the match making happens at those events.

Gerardo: Since we have those research areas, over time, each of those POCs can give a talk online and invite our researchers.

Shawna: Invite our researchers within our states for a community of practice.

Chip: Our last TIM was organized by Louisiana Erin, thank you. Online. One-pagers. I used them for recruiting researchers for subawards. Maybe flash talks, TIMs as a NASA EPSCoR Caucus task. Multi-jurisdiction.

Toni: The Langley TIM that was cancelled left a bad taste in our mouth. The Marshall one made me think about what other jurisdictions were doing. NASA was sort of a presentation; we don't have to go through all the lawyers for our researchers to do a presentation.

Colleen: More opportunities to promote our materials. Accidental encounters, Louisiana planetary scientists, Alaska testbed.

Alexander: It would be good to know what other jurisdictions researchers are doing.

Denise: I would like to acknowledge that the Center base TIMs weren't as effective. But, I would like a focused thematic meeting. The center focus never worked as well as we've always hoped.

Chip: I feel we have reached a consensus of sort. TIMs are good but need to be focused.

Angela: A quarterly session and rotating topics. One of the challenges it's blasting those out; planning ahead will help tremendously.

Susie: Topic led by NASA.

Chip: I can work with Dave and colleagues. Is that okay, Dave?
To get started twice/year.

Toni: I want to thank you, Chip, for opening the caucus meetings to everybody.

Chip: I will work with rest of Caucus and put it out for an electronic vote.

Colleen: Are we talking about an EPSCoR meeting with the Omaha meeting.

Scott: Michaela, it would be on Wednesday morning as an option.

Chip: I would work with ExCom. Chip concluded meeting and thanked all for participating.

12:58 hrs. ET Meeting adjourned.