

Frequently Asked Questions
DOE Office of Science Early Career Research Program
Version 5, Updated August 19, 2009

Eligibility

Q: How does the DOE Office of Science define “early career”?

A: Principal Investigators are within 10 years of receiving a Ph.D. and are either untenured assistant professors on the tenure track or full-time, nonpostdoctoral, permanent DOE national laboratory employees.

Q: Is the program limited to Principal Investigators (PIs) who are U.S. citizens?

A: No, but the PI must be employed by either a U.S. academic institution or a DOE national laboratory.

Q: Can postdoctoral fellows apply for awards under the DOE Early Career Research Program?

A: Postdoctoral fellows may not apply directly. However, a PI may include postdoctoral support for the project in the proposed budget.

Q: If I have previously won an early career award from another agency or a nonprofit, am I eligible?

A: Yes.

Q: Are research professors eligible?

A: No. In universities, only untenured assistant professors on the tenure track with Ph.D.’s earned within the past ten years are eligible.

Q: If I have an early career award from another Office of Science early career program (e.g., Outstanding Junior Investigator; Junior Faculty Award; Early Career PI), can I apply?

A: Yes. If you are selected for an award, though, you must forgo the remaining years of funding for the current award when the new award begins.

Q: I am an untenured assistant professor on the tenure track and have applied for tenure but have not yet received it. Am I eligible?

A: You are eligible if you are untenured but still on the tenure track as of the proposal due date of September 1, 2009.

Q: I am an untenured associate professor on the tenure track. Am I eligible?

A: No. Only assistant professors are eligible.

Q: I have accepted a position as an untenured assistant professor on the tenure track at a U.S. academic institution, but I have not yet begun the job. Am I eligible?

A: You must be employed in the position on the proposal due date, September 1, 2009.

Q: I have accepted a position as a full-time permanent non-postdoctoral DOE national laboratory employee, but I have not yet begun the job. Am I eligible?

A: You must be employed in the position on the proposal due date, September 1, 2009.

Q: I have earned two Ph.D.'s. One is within the ten-year eligibility window, and one is not. Am I eligible?

A: If a person has multiple Ph.D.'s, the discipline of the one they have earned within the ten-year eligibility window should be relevant to the proposed idea.

Q: I previously won a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). Am I eligible?

A: Yes. Previous winners of PECASE are eligible. If you received your PECASE award through the DOE Office of Science and the award is still active, you must forgo the remaining years of funding for the current award when the new award begins.

Q: My national laboratory has certain appointments not considered permanent but also not considered postdoctoral. Are people in these appointments eligible?

A: To make this determination, the laboratory director should work with DOE to answer the following set of questions generically for the type of appointment (and not for any individual currently occupying the appointment): (1) Is the appointment considered to be a postdoctoral position? (2) Is an appointee in this position an employee of the national laboratory? (3) Is it the laboratory's intention at the time the appointment is made to transition the appointee to career employment status when the appointment ends? (4) Is the appointment considered to be full time? (5) Does the appointment type qualify for the full benefits of a career employee (as opposed to a reduced benefits package that might be provided for a postdoctoral employee)? If the answer to the first question is no and the answer to each of the remaining questions is yes, the type of appointment is eligible.

Q: Is our academic institution required to supply any documentation certifying a Principal Investigator's tenure status and appointment in a tenure-track position?

A: We do not require such certification, but a submission through the institution implies you have made such a determination. The cover page of the proposal asks for position title, tenure status, and year of Ph.D..

Q: I already have funding for a regular university grant through the DOE Office of Science. Am I eligible?

A: Yes, but you must propose new research.

Q: I defended my Ph.D. dissertation in 1998, but I graduated in 1999. Am I eligible?

A: If the Ph.D. conferment date posted on the academic transcript is a date in 1999, you are eligible.

Q: I am a Ph.D. candidate, but I have not yet received my Ph.D. Am I eligible?

A: You must have a Ph.D. as of the proposal due date, September 1, 2009.

Q: I am a U.S. national employed by a non-U.S. academic institution. Am I eligible?

A: No. You must work at a U.S. academic institution or a DOE national laboratory.

Q: Am I required to be PECASE-eligible to apply for the Office of Science Early Career Research Program?

A: No. PECASE eligibility is not required for the program, but we will not be able to nominate you for a PECASE later if you do not qualify for PECASE.

Budget

Q: What is the lower limit on the proposed budget?

A: The minimum award size is \$150,000 per year for five years for universities and \$500,000 per year for five years for DOE national laboratories.

Q: What is the upper limit on the proposed budget?

A: There is no upper limit, but you should keep your budget as close to the minimum as possible.

Q: Does the minimum budget specified in the announcement include indirect costs?

A: Yes, the minimum budget includes both direct and indirect costs.

Q: Can there be a co-Principal Investigator on my proposal?

A: No.

Q: May I have a paid collaborator on my proposal?

A: Our intention is to fund projects directed and executed by the early career Principal Investigator (PI). In rare cases where a collaborator (either early career or senior) brings something unique to the project, support will be considered. However, our preference is that you propose a project with research support staff (e.g., students, postdocs), travel, supplies, equipment, and other necessary expenses for the PI-led project.

Q: May I propose equipment and/or travel support?

A: Yes.

Q: Can the budget contain funding for graduate students and other participants?

A: Yes.

Q: Why is the minimum laboratory award larger than the minimum university award?

A: The university award is intended to pay up to three months' summer salary for the Principal Investigator (PI) to supplement the normal, academic-year salary. The laboratory award is intended to pay the year-round PI salary. Also, universities can involve students part-time in research, while laboratories generally rely on full-time staff to support their research projects. The minimum university award is competitive with similar programs at other agencies. This is the only such award of its type available to DOE national laboratory scientists.

Q: Does this program require cost sharing?

A: No.

Q: The announcement provides a minimum cumulative award size. Must this minimum budget be distributed equally over the five award years or can it be distributed in any way as long as the five-year total equals the minimum award size?

A: You can distribute the budget any way you'd like, but make sure that the cumulative budget is about equal to the minimum award size. If possible, we ask university applicants to aim to spend about \$150k in the final year of the project. Laboratory Principal Investigators must charge at least 75% of salary to the award each year of the award.

Letter of Intent and Proposal

Q: How does my university submit a full application?

A: Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. The Funding Opportunity Number is DE-PS02-09ER09-26 and the CFDA Number for the Office of Science is 81.049. The deadline for submission into Grants.gov is 8 p.m. Eastern time, September 1, 2009. Late applications will not be accepted.

Q: Do you require an educational or outreach component in the application?

A: No.

Q: I work for a U.S. academic institution. Do you require a letter from my department chair with the application?

A: No.

Q: The announcement states that I must include several pieces of information (e.g., for academic institutions, Applicant/Institution; Street Address/City/State/Zip; Principal Investigator (PI); Position Title of PI; Mailing Address of PI; Telephone Number of PI; Email of PI; DOE/Office of Science Program Office; Program Office Technical Point of Contact; Year Doctorate Awarded; Is the PI in a Tenure-Track Appointment? (Yes or No); and PECASE Eligible) on the first page of the narrative. Does this header information count within the 15 page limit?

A: You may place this information on a separate cover page outside of the narrative.

Q: What mailing address should I list on my proposal?

A: Please list your professional or work mailing address (not your home address).

Q: I would like to submit a proposal with a title and/or topic different from the one in the letter of intent I submitted. Is this allowed?

A: Yes.

- Q: What is the difference between a timeline of major activities and a project timetable?**
- A: These two items convey the same information; you may include one or the other in your proposal.
- Q: Should the list of current and pending support in the proposal include startup funds provided by my university?**
- A: No.
- Q: I am at a DOE national laboratory and will submit a full proposal. Does the submission deadline apply to getting the proposal to the DOE site office or does it apply to getting the proposal to DOE headquarters?**
- A: Proposals should be submitted by the laboratory to the site office through Searchable FWP by the submission deadline of 8 pm EST September 1st. The site offices will release all of them to DOE headquarters within a week. Late proposals will not be accepted.
- Q: I am at a DOE national laboratory. To whom should the letter from the laboratory director be addressed?**
- A: It can be addressed to the relevant technical point of contact from the announcement.
- Q: Is the Letter of Intent required, and will it be used to select a reduced number of proposals for full submission?**
- A: The Letter of Intent is optional, but we strongly encourage you to submit one. The letter of intent will not be used as a screening tool to narrow down the number of full proposals. If you would like feedback on how your idea fits within the Office of Science programs listed in the announcement prior to submission of the letter of intent or proposal, you should get in touch with the relevant technical contact in the announcement. You are always welcome to contact our program managers, but you should do so well in advance of the proposal deadline.
- Q: Is there a required format for the Letter of Intent?**
- A: All we ask is that you include a brief summary (one paragraph) of the proposed research and clearly state the program area to which the application is being submitted (e.g., BER, BES, HEP, NP, ASCR, FES). Please include the program acronym along with "Early Career Research Program Letter of Intent" in the subject line. For example, the subject line of a letter to the Office of Biological and Environmental Research (BER) would be "BER Early Career Research Program Letter of Intent."
- Q: May I submit more than one letter of intent? Alternately, may I submit the same letter of intent to multiple programs?**
- A: No. You may submit only one letter of intent.

Q: How can I locate the format requirements for the full proposals?

A: For academic institutions, you must download the full Funding Opportunity Announcement from Grants.gov. Point your web browser to www.grants.gov, click on Find Grant Opportunities at the left of the page, click on Basic Search, and type DE-PS02-09ER09-26 under *Search by Funding Opportunity Number*. Next, click on *Recovery Act (ARRA) - Early Career Research Program*. Scroll down on the page and select *Click here to view the opportunity*. Scroll down again to click on *FOA_Notice_09-26.pdf*. For DOE national laboratories, the proposal format requirements can be found in the laboratory announcement on our Grants and Contracts website (http://www.sc.doe.gov/grants/LAB09_26.html).

Q: Is there a limit on the number of proposals that may be submitted by an institution?

A: No.

Q: In my field, there are routinely more than ten and sometimes hundreds of co-authors of archival publications. If I list every co-author on every paper, my biographical sketch will exceed the three-page limit. May I abbreviate the author lists?

A: Yes. You may use an abbreviated style such as the *Physical Review Letters* (PRL) convention for citations (list only the first author). For example, your paper may be listed as, "A Really Important New Result," A. Aardvark et. al. (MONGO Collaboration), PRL 999. You may also use this convention in the proposal bibliography.

Q: Can the research I propose overlap with other research for which I am already funded by DOE or any other agency?

A: The proposal should not duplicate your currently funded research, regardless of the agency funding it. You should propose new research. There is one exception for current recipients of Office of Science early career awards (see the next question).

Q: I am a current recipient of one of the previous program-specific junior investigator awards (ASCR Early Career PI Program; FES Plasma Physics Junior Faculty Award Program; HEP Outstanding Junior Investigator Program; NP Outstanding Junior Investigator Program) and would like to apply for the new Office of Science Early Career Research Program. Can the idea I propose for the new program overlap with the idea for which I am already funded in the other program?

A: Current recipients of one of the above awards must forgo the remaining years of funding for the current award when the new award begins. The idea proposed can overlap with the research already funded, but the proposed work should exclude 2009 progress and begin with new efforts proposed for 2010 and beyond.

Q: Several early career investigators at my national laboratory would like to work together to solve a large problem. Can we propose one large award of two to four times the minimum budget with multiple early career investigators?

A: No. This is a single-Principal Investigator (PI) program. Our intention is to fund projects directed and executed by one early career PI.

- Q: My idea seems to cut across two of the programs described in the funding announcement. How should I handle this?**
- A: You should select a single program to be the primary one to which the proposal is submitted. The programs may move proposals or even co-review or co-fund certain proposals, but that will be decided by the Office of Science program managers after all of the proposals are received.
- Q: I want to submit a basic plasma science proposal to the Fusion Energy Sciences program. Is my idea eligible?**
- A: Yes, basic plasma science is included in the FES topics of interest.
- Q: Even though letters of support are not allowed, will you accept letters of collaboration?**
- A: Our preference is to support PI-led efforts without paid collaborators. If either an unfunded or funded collaboration is proposed, the best place to add the optional letters of collaboration is Appendix 6 (Other Attachments).
- Q: Is it necessary for technical support staff (e.g., postdocs or students) to be on board at my institution at the time the proposal is submitted?**
- A: No.
- Q: I am applying to the DOE National Laboratory announcement. Searchable FWP requires a Budget & Reporting (B&R) code for submission. Which code should I use?**
- A: The table at the end of this document lists by topic the appropriate B&R codes for national laboratory Field Work Proposals (FWPs).
- Q: I am an eligible PI at a U.S. academic institution. Am I required to make contact with or collaborate with a DOE national laboratory for a successful proposal?**
- A: No. Your proposal will be evaluated using the merit review criteria in the announcement, and collaboration or contact with a national laboratory is not required.
- Q: If I choose to support graduate students or postdocs using a grant from the Office of Science Early Career Research Program, are they required to be U.S. citizens?**
- A: No.
- Q: I did not submit a letter of intent. May I submit a full proposal?**
- A: Yes. The letter of intent was optional. Please read the announcement and these FAQs very carefully before submitting.

Review, Selection, and Award Management

Q: What happens if I select the wrong program when I submit my proposal?

A: If an idea is submitted to a program for which it is a bad fit, we will move the proposal to the more appropriate program for review. However, the idea must fit within the topics described in the announcements to be successful.

Q: If I am selected for an early career award from another agency at the same time I am selected for one from DOE Office of Science, may I accept both of them?

A: You are allowed to receive both awards. However, you will not be funded twice for the same work. Make sure you keep the ideas you propose to the two agencies distinct if you want to accept both awards.

Q: How will the proposal review be conducted?

A: Review of the proposals will be handled in the programs using the review criteria established in the announcement. Proposals may be reviewed by either mail review or panel review or some combination of both. Each program will decide individually on its review method. Large numbers of proposals are generally handled by panels. The best way to prepare for the review is to learn about the review criteria and proposal format by reading the full announcement. If you write your proposal to be responsive to the review criteria, to fit in with the Office of Science mission areas, and to follow the required format, you will be ready for any review process.

Q: What is a reasonable start date for the award?

A: DOE will strive to make awards under this opportunity within six months of the date proposals are due (September 1, 2009).

Q: Will this program be offered next year?

A: Our intention is to continue this program on an annual basis, subject to availability of funds. Each Principal Investigator (PI) may only submit one Office of Science Early Career Research Program proposal per annual competition, and a PI may not participate in more than three Office of Science Early Career Research Program competitions over time.

Q: If I receive Office of Science Early Career Research Program funding and subsequently get tenure, can I keep the award for its remaining years or must it stop once I get tenure?

A: An award is for five years (assuming satisfactory progress and available funds), and you will not have to give up the award when you receive tenure.

Q: Will I receive the reviewer comments after the review is complete?

A: Yes. We will send reviewer comments to the Principal Investigator at the time the award is issued or at the time the proposal is declined.

**TABLE 1. Budget & Reporting (B&R) Codes
for DOE National Laboratory Field Work Proposal Submission:**

I. Advanced Scientific Computing Research (ASCR)	
(a) Applied Mathematics	KJ0401
(b) Computer Science	KJ0401
(c) Computational Science	KJ0401
(d) Network-Environment Research	KJ0401
II. Biological and Environmental Research (BER)	
(a) Biological Systems Science	KP16
(b) Climate and Environmental Sciences	KP17
III. Basic Energy Sciences (BES)	
(a) Materials Sciences and Engineering	KC02
(b) Chemical Sciences, Geosciences, and Biosciences	KC03
(c) Scientific User Facilities-Related Research	KC04
IV. Fusion Energy Sciences (FES)	
(a) Science	AT5010900
(b) Enabling Research & Development	AT5010900
V. High Energy Physics (HEP)	
(a) Experimental High Energy Physics Research	KA110102, KA120102, KA130102
(b) Theoretical High Energy Physics Research	KA140102
(c) Advanced Technology Research and Development	KA150102, KA150302
VI. Nuclear Physics (NP)	
(a) Medium Energy Nuclear Physics	KB010102-2
(b) Heavy Ion Nuclear Physics	KB020102-2
(c) Low Energy Nuclear Physics	KB040102-2
(d) Nuclear Theory (including the Nuclear Data subprogram)	KB030102
(e) Accelerator Research and Development for Current and Future Nuclear Physics Facilities	KB010105-2
(f) Isotope Development and Production for Research and Applications	KB0502