

2007 Program Announcement and Request for Proposals RC.ESRE.2007.WV.01

Vision 2015 Plan Eminent Scholars Recruitment and Enhancement (ESRE)

Proposal Due Date: June 1, 2007

Program Title: Eminent Scholars Recruitment and Enhancement (ESRE)

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Eligibility Limits

- **Organization:** Doctoral granting institutions of higher education in West Virginia
- **Principal Investigator:** Provost or Vice President for Research
- **Limit on Number of Proposals:** One per institution (May be a combination of activities; see below)

Award Information

- **Anticipated Type of Award:** Standard
- **Estimated Number of Awards:** Two (2)
- **Anticipated Funding Amount:** Up to \$5,000,000 per institution

Background

The mission of the West Virginia Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (WVEPSCoR) is to increase West Virginia's competitive research infrastructure through investments in people, tools and ideas within the state's institutions of higher education. Awards for "tools" help to purchase scientific instruments, equipment and laboratory enhancements while "ideas" are funded through traditional seed grants to initiate new research. "People" are eminent scholars, professors, sponsored faculty, endowed chairs, post-docs, technicians and students at all levels. Enhancement of the research environment may also include research infrastructure and mission support directly linked to research activities, including equipment, materials and supplies, start-up packages and research-related expenses permitted by university policy. Pursuant to West Virginia Code §18B-1B-12, the Research Challenge Fund (RCF) was created by the West Virginia Legislature to fund research and development at institutions of higher education and to increase competitiveness for extramural funding. Goals for investment in people, tools and ideas are complementary to those of the National Science Foundation (NSF).

In early 2006, the WVEPSCoR Advisory Council involved business, research universities and state government to build a vision of the state's technology-driven economy fueled by innovative university research. The resulting report is *Vision 2015: The West Virginia Science and Technology Strategic Plan* which is available at

<http://www.wvepscor.org/downloads/Vision2015.pdf>. By capitalizing on research and development to build a vibrant, technology-rich economy, West Virginia plans to move into the mainstream of NSF research funding and, over time, into an enhanced technology-based economic position. Increased participation in competitive programs at NSF, DOE, DOD, NIH, NASA and other federal agencies will have a strong economic impact in and of itself, placing millions of new dollars into the state's economy. With increased expertise in the basic sciences, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM), industrial research and development support can be constantly expanded.

With the financial backing of the state legislature, the state's research universities, private foundations and other supporters, *Vision 2015* will continue to emphasize recruitment of talent and resources by driving an effective strategy for achieving these results. *Vision 2015* states, "By 2015, research and innovation will be the number one driver of West Virginia's new, diverse and prosperous economy." WVEPSCoR grant programs are focused on this vision and Eminent Scholars Recruitment and Enhancement (ESRE) applicants should use this program to further the goals of the *Vision 2015* strategic plan. Increasing the Ph.D. level workforce, with demonstrated research competitiveness, is the primary focus of the current solicitation. ESRE researchers will:

- Compete successfully for a larger share of federal and foundation research funds;
- Increase the volume of intellectual property creation, patenting and licensing;
- Enhance the stature of our universities as vibrant, world-class research institutions;
- Attract other talented faculty and graduate students to West Virginia;
- Foster new companies and create new collaborations with industry to commercialize technologies; and
- Create economic opportunities and jobs for West Virginians.

Program Description

The ESRE program is the centerpiece of West Virginia's *Vision 2015* plan. WVEPSCoR will provide ESRE awards specifically targeted toward recruiting eminent scholars and enhancing the research environment on doctoral-granting campuses. The purpose of an ESRE award is to provide support for lasting improvements in an institution's research capacity and to build toward technology-based economic development. ESRE plans must focus on building core research strengths needed to develop efforts for the successful pursuit of significant regional opportunities in science and engineering that also have economic development potential.

Applications must describe the strategy and implementation mechanisms to recruit and sustain the ESRE scientific foci of the proposal. Institutions should describe the STEM scholar positions that will enhance the university's competitiveness position with federal agencies in **specific disciplinary or cross-disciplinary areas**. Strategies for placement of positions or enhancements must be clearly articulated with projected outcomes over time. Each institution must submit a Project Plan that includes defined recruitment strategies and research enhancements. It is expected that the personnel hired or supported with these funds will meet a variety of needs and priorities at institutional and state levels. While not all personnel will fulfill every role identified below, the plan must reflect a strategic and integrated blend of roles and responsibilities for new hires and current faculty. Plans shall include descriptions for how faculty and researchers hired or supported with these funds will:

- Enhance the quality and productivity of research in STEM fields;
- Engage in entrepreneurial activity that leads directly to economic development;
- Provide service and leadership to the university and the state in STEM research, education and policy;
- Improve the quality of instruction at the undergraduate and graduate levels in STEM fields; and
- Improve the quality of student advising (including service on thesis and dissertation committees and mentoring student research experiences) in STEM fields.

ESRE support for initiatives under this program shall not exceed five years in length and shall include salary and start-up packages for the first year only. Institutions must make a matching commitment that may span the five year performance period. All positions should be self-supporting at the end of the grant period or otherwise be included in institutional budgets. Funding of ESRE activities will follow the formulas established by the *Vision 2015* plan for qualified institutions or as directed by the West Virginia legislature.

Eligible Activities

- **Chairs:** New STEM faculty positions and associated expenses for those positions, including start-up costs, salaries, benefits, travel and other professional expenses permitted by university policy.
- **Professorships:** New STEM faculty positions at the Associate or full Professor level and associated expenses for those positions, including start-up costs, salaries, benefits, travel and other professional expenses as permitted by university policy.
- **Salary Supplements:** Existing faculty positions that exhibit meritorious achievement and scholarship in STEM fields. Under a faculty retention plan, salaries, benefits, travel and other professional expenses as permitted by university policy are allowed.
- **Start-up Support:** Packages of support used to attract and recruit outstanding STEM faculty. Start-ups should be limited to supplies, instruments, laboratory renovations and support, and student assistantships as may be required to initiate a high-caliber research program. Nationally competitive ranges should be used in establishing support levels.
- **Stipend Support for Graduate Students:** Stipends for outstanding STEM graduate students at nationally competitive rates. Stipend support should primarily be used to attract excellent graduate students but may also be used to raise the stipends of current graduate fellows. (See the STEM Fellows program at <http://www.wvepscor.org/programs/rcf.php> for guidance.)
- **Scientific Literature and Digital Resources:** To acknowledge the importance of researchers' access to appropriate digital resources and relevant scholarly journals, publications and literature, as well as the positive correlation between this access and research quality and productivity, universities may propose to allocate up to 5% of the total requested ESRE funds for library materials in STEM fields.

Ineligible Activities

- Program funds may not be used for positions that are primarily administrative. However, appointments such as department chair, center director or dean are eligible as long as such individuals or scholars have active STEM research programs.
- Capital construction projects are not eligible.
- Indirect cost recovery is not permitted.

Application Instructions

Applications for ESRE funding must be submitted by the specified due date. The application shall be submitted via the WVEPSCoR Management, Application and Reporting System (MARS). If applicants do not already have an account with MARS, online registration is required no later than five (5) days before the submission deadline, at <http://www.wvepscor.org/MARS>. The application in MARS will contain the following sections:

(A.) Project Plan Summary is a one-page summary that includes a heading and the plan abstract. The heading should include the title of the proposed endeavor and the names of the submitting institution and Principal Investigator. The abstract should briefly describe the project goals, content and expected outcomes. The Project Plan Summary may be entered directly into MARS or copied and pasted into MARS from any word processing document.

(B.) Project Plan is limited to ten (10) pages with 2.5-cm margins on all sides, should be single-spaced and must use a legible font such as 10-point Arial or an 11-point proportional font such as Times New Roman. The Project Plan may be entered directly into MARS or copied and pasted into MARS from any word processing document.

(C.) Evaluation Plan is limited to three (3) pages with 2.5 cm margins on all sides, should be single-spaced and must use a legible font such as 10-point Arial or an 11-point proportional font such as Times New Roman. The Evaluation Plan may be entered directly into MARS or copied and pasted into MARS from any word processing document. This plan must describe the metrics, milestones, and other accountability measures that will demonstrate achievement of primary objectives.

(D.) Biographical Sketches for each key personnel member must be included. Each sketch is limited to two (2) pages and should be sufficiently detailed to demonstrate the necessary expertise to manage and execute the plan. Biographical Sketches may be uploaded to MARS as a single document or individually for each investigator.

(E.) Budget spreadsheets can be downloaded from MARS in the budget detail section. When completed, upload the Budget to MARS. A Budget Justification, not to exceed three (3) pages and addressing each budgetary line-item must also be prepared and uploaded to MARS.

Cost Sharing: Matching of an equal or greater amount is required for each ESRE position or activity proposed. Matching funds may be secured over a five-year period through gifts and pledges. In order to withdraw ESRE funds during FY2008, pledges for the entire match must be secured no later than 30 June 2008. Assurances that funds to provide annual salary and ongoing support for positions for a minimum of five (5) years must be made in the proposed budget. Institutions may supplement position packages with additional funds or enhancements such as travel allowances, graduate student stipends or assistantships as provided in this Program Announcement. The WVEPSCoR Advisory Council will consider the positive impact of leveraging additional external support (beyond the base requirement) in the overall consideration of each proposal.

Leveraging external support for STEM growth is a major component of West Virginia's long-range strategy. As a requirement to receive state funds, universities must provide dollar-for-dollar matching within proposed budgets. Only newly-generated contributions, received after June 1, 2007, are eligible. Gifts and pledges must be from external sources and cannot include funds from federal and state government sources. General revenue and student-derived revenues are not eligible to match ESRE funds.

Pledges or promises of future payment [over five (5) years] are eligible as match provided they are based on a written contract or agreement and include a payment schedule which does not exceed five (5) years from the initial pledge date. Pledge payment schedules showing receipts to date and scheduled future payments are to be included in the audited financial statements of the institution. In the event funds are not received within five years of the initial pledge, the university must replace the portion of private funds not received with another eligible cash gift for the unmatched portion. In this event, a grace period will be negotiated with WVEPSCoR.

(F.) Endorsement of the proposal by the applicant and an appropriate authorized institutional representative is required. Endorsement is indicated by electronic signature in MARS. The applicant must certify the appropriate institutional official has reviewed and approved the proposal budget by typing the institutional representative's name and contact information in the appropriate boxes in MARS. The applicant must also check the box that indicates the applicant certifies the institutional representative has given approval.

Due Date

Proposals must be received by 8:00 p.m. on June 1, 2007.

Review and Award Procedures

This competition, established to determine awards, is rigorous and selective. Proposals will be reviewed for scientific merit and competitiveness by an expert external review panel. Proposals will be further assessed for economic development, academic, and scientific potential by the WVEPSCoR Advisory Council.

The Council will approve awards to the successful applicants. Awards are anticipated in July 2007. The Council retains the right to conduct interviews of applicants or solicit additional information in reaching a final funding decision.

Award Administration

Notification: Notification of the award is made to the submitting organization by the WVEPSCoR office with a copy to the Principal Investigator.

Award Conditions: All award packages consist of: (1) the award letter, which includes any special provisions applicable to the award and any numbered amendments thereto; (2) the budget, which indicates the amounts, by categories of expense, on which WVEPSCoR has based its support (or otherwise communicates any specific approvals or disapprovals of proposed expenditures); (3) the proposal referenced in the award letter; and (4) the applicable award conditions generally pursuant to West Virginia regulations. Awardees may adjust budget line items up to 10% without receiving prior written approval from WVEPSCoR after the effective date of issuance.

Reporting Requirements

Although state ESRE funds are available for disbursement during fiscal year 2008, matching funds may be provided over a five-year period. Annually awardees must provide a detailed report describing the implementation of recruitment and enhancement plans and programs. Each report must include the numbers, demographics, services, financial details and milestones for each component projected by the original plan. A financial report that clearly identifies matching pledges and the sources of external funding must also be filed. A MARS online reporting site will be provided by WVEPSCoR with specific questions that must be addressed by awardees. Annual reports must be filed via MARS 60 days before the end of the performance period.

As required by state code, reports and outcomes will be shared with the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability (LOCEA) by the first day of August each year beginning in 2008.

Contact Information

Programmatic questions should be directed to:

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Questions about MARS should be directed to:

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