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Today, President Biden released his preliminary top-line budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2022. This budget request highlights Biden’s top priorities for FY 2022: tackling the climate crisis, advancing racial equity, increasing public health initiatives, and rebuilding the economy, among others. The “skinny budget” requests $751 billion for the Department of Defense (DOD) that includes support for defense research and development; $102.8 billion for the Department of Education (DOE); $46.1 billion for the Department of Energy that supports the creation of jobs, clean energy technologies, and solutions for clean energy; $27.8 billion for the Department of Agriculture, that includes expanding broadband access, improved water infrastructure, and research and development for farmers; and $10.2 billion for the National Science Foundation and $51 billion for the National Institutes of Health. While a more detailed discretionary budget can be expected next month, Congress can officially kick off the Administration’s priorities. More details on the “skinny budget” will be included in next week’s newsletter.

The University of Minnesota Washington Update provides intelligence and analysis on recent federal activities. Faculty visiting Washington, D.C. are encouraged to contact Sarah Neimeyer, Director of Government Relations, at neimeyer@umn.edu. Contact Christina Laridaen, Lewis-Burke Associates LLC, at christina@lewis-burke.com with any questions or comments related to the Update’s content.

Funding Opportunities and Agency Updates
Engagement Opportunity, 2022 Maritime RobotX Challenge
The U.S. Office of Naval Research (ONR), the Australian Defence Science and Technology Group (DST) and RoboNation recently announced its 2022 Maritime RobotX Challenge. The Maritime RobotX Challenge is an international, university-level competition designed to foster interest in autonomous robotic systems operating in the maritime domain, with an emphasis on the science and engineering of cooperative autonomy. The competition will take place in Sydney, Australia from November 11 – 17, 2022, and applications to participate in the contest are due by Friday, April 30, 2021.

More information about the challenge and the Wave Adaptive Modular Vehicle (WAM-V), which all teams must outfit with propulsion, control systems, sensors, and other systems necessary to accomplish the competition challenges, are available at: https://robotx.org/. Eligible teams must be student-led and can include undergraduate and graduate students from a single university or multiple universities as well as industry participants. Award recipients will be announced on June 18, 2021.
**Funding Opportunity: NSF Issues Solicitation for Transdisciplinary Space Weather Research**

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has issued a solicitation for a new program titled Grand Challenges in Integrative Geospace Sciences: Advancing National Space Weather Expertise and Research toward Societal Resilience (ANSWERS). The aim of the program is to support “transformative, use-inspired basic research” that advances understanding of the Sun-Earth coupled system and its impact on space weather (SWx). In addition, NSF intends that ANSWERS will support research and educational activities designed to improve societal resilience to SWx and develop the technical workforce required to sustain a more capable SWx enterprise in the long term. The program is sponsored by the Division of Atmospheric and Geospace Sciences within the Directorate for Geosciences.

Successful project proposals will feature transdisciplinary approaches that holistically address the Sun-Earth system rather than targeting any of its individual components. Specifically, proposers are asked to address one or both of the following topics:

- Solar and space physics, which includes explorations of processes such as solar-terrestrial coupling; and
- SWx and space climate, which focuses on predictability as well as SWx impacts on human society.

Given the collaborative and integrative nature of grand challenge projects, the solicitation explicitly notes that ANSWERS proposal must build on and go beyond existing disciplinary Geospace programs. NSF encourages proposers to leverage the agency’s suite of available solar and geospace user instruments and facilities, and to “apply new capabilities in high-performance computing, machine learning, artificial intelligence, or uncertainty quantification to deal with grand challenge questions.”

ANSWERS teams should include STEM education experts to ensure that funded proposals aid in workforce development. Example activities include, but are not limited to, curricula development, workforce training, and life-long/informal learning and public engagement. NSF encourages the participation of underrepresented groups in both research and education aspects of ANSWERS teams, and proposals will be reviewed, in part, based on diversity of the collaborative team and integration of early-career researchers.

ANSWERS objectives are largely driven by the contents of the National Space Weather Action Plan, the recently passed PROSWIFT Act, the 2013 Decadal Survey in Solar and Space Physics, and the NSF Geospace Science Portfolio Review. Interested proposers are encouraged to review these documents for additional guidance on identifying research challenges to address.

**Award Information:** Award size and duration will depend on the size of each project, with small projects being funded at $900,000 for up to three years and large projects being funded at $2.5 million for up to four years. Total funding of up to $7.5 million is available for this solicitation for 4-6 awards.

**Eligibility:** Proposals may only be submitted by Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs); non-profit, non-academic organizations such as independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities; and U.S. for-profit companies, especially small businesses. Individuals listed as PI, Co-PI, or senior personnel may serve on no more than two ANSWERS proposals.

**Due Dates:** Full proposals are due by 5:00 PM submitter’s local time on **August 23, 2021**.
Sources and Additional Information:


Funding Opportunity: ED Releases NIA for Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities program

The Department of Education’s (ED) Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has announced a notice inviting applications (NIA) for the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities program. The program is looking to address state-identified needs for personnel preparation in special education, early intervention, related services, and regular education to work with children, including infants and toddlers, with disabilities.

The NIA includes two absolute priorities and two competitive priorities:

- **Absolute Priority 1:** Preparation of Special Education, Early Intervention, and Related Services Faculty
  - “The purpose of this priority is to support existing doctoral degree programs that prepare special education, early intervention, and related services personnel who are well-qualified for, and can act effectively in, leadership positions as researchers and preparers of special education, early intervention, and related services personnel in institutions of higher education (IHEs).”

- **Absolute Priority 2:** Preparation of Special Education and Early Intervention Administrators
  - “The purpose of this priority is to support existing doctoral degree programs that prepare special education or early intervention personnel who are well-qualified for, and can act effectively in, leadership positions in public school systems, such as SEAs, charter management organizations (CMOs), charter school authorizers, lead agencies (LAs), LEAs, early intervention services programs (EIS programs), or schools.”

- **Competitive Priority 1:** Application proposes a partnership consisting of two or three Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) in a high-need area of leadership shortages.

- **Competitive Priority 2:** Demonstrate applicant has not had an active discretionary grant under the program from which it seeks funds.

Additional details of each priority can be found in the full NIA announcement. For Absolute Priority 2, doctoral programs in educational administration that include a focus on special education are eligible. Both Competitive Priorities are worth an additional 3 points to an application.
IHEs and private nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. ED plans on granting up to 19 awards for individual (IHEs) with a period of performance of up to 60 months. ED intends to fund in FY 2021 at least 13 individual IHE applications meeting the requirements under Absolute Priority 1 and 6 high-quality individual IHE applications meeting the requirements under Absolute Priority 2.

Estimated average size of awards under this competition are $225,000-$250,000 per year for an individual IHE; $450,000-$500,000 per year for a two-IHE group application; and $675,000-$750,000 for a three-IHE group application.

Applications will be made available here on April 8, 2021 and will be due for submission no later than June 7, 2021. The full unpublished version of the NIA announcement can be found here.

**Funding Opportunity: EDA Releases FY 2021 University Centers Solicitations**

The Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) recently released a pair of solicitations for the fiscal year (FY) 2021 University Center Economic Development Program (University Centers). This program provides funding for universities to leverage existing assets to promote regional innovation, high-growth entrepreneurship, inclusiveness, and resiliency. EDA competes University Centers on a staggered schedule for the six EDA Regional Offices and generally funds eight to ten awards per region. This competition is restricted to universities in areas covered by EDA’s Chicago Regional Office (including Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin) and Philadelphia Regional Office (including Connecticut, Delaware, Washington, D.C., Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, the Virgin Islands, and Virginia).

Through this award, EDA will provide funding for universities to establish University Centers that provide expertise and technical assistance to develop, implement, and oversee regional strategies focused on innovation, resiliency, inclusiveness, and high-growth entrepreneurship. According to the solicitation, a University Center could address “workforce training programs, applied research centers, technology commercialization, feasibility studies, market research, economic impact analyses training, and other technical assistance to help communities foster vibrant economic ecosystems.”

EDA prioritizes applications that tailor a sponsoring institution’s strengths to the economic needs of a well-defined geographic region. In addition, to avoid duplication of efforts, University Centers should present a clear plan for collaborating with existing EDA support streams and statewide and local economic development initiatives. A complete list of EDA’s investment priorities for the University Centers is provided in the full solicitation. The FY 2021 opportunity notes the importance of developing science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills, supporting workforce training to match the needs of local industries, applied R&D, commercialization of technology, and activities that improve regional economic development. EDA will hold a virtual webinar at 3:00 PM ET on Wednesday, April 7, 2021 to go over details of the solicitations. Registration is not required to attend.

**Cost Sharing or Matching:** Generally, the amount EDA grants cannot exceed 50 percent of the total cost of each project. At the discretion of EDA, projects may receive an additional amount of no more than 30 percent of the total cost based on the relative need of a region. In addition, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development has the discretion to provide up to 100 percent of a project’s cost if deemed necessary.
Due Date: Applications are due June 4, 2021.

Eligibility: Institutions of higher education and consortia of institutions of higher education.

Total Funding and Award Size: In FY 2021, EDA anticipates allocating $7.4 million for the University Center program and the Chicago and Philadelphia regions will receive a total of $2.5 million for the first year of funding. While award size is determined by the participating Regional Offices, awards for University Centers have typically been between $80,000 and $200,000 and 8 to 10 awards are provided to each region. Awards will have a performance period of five years with initial funding for the first year. After the first year, centers will not have to recompete for funding, but support for years beyond the first year is subject to the availability of funds and a center’s ability to meet performance milestones.

Sources and Additional Information:
- Additional information, including the link for the informational webinar, is available at https://www.eda.gov/programs/university-centers/.

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Funding Opportunity: NEH Announces ARP Act Funding for Humanities Organizations and Grantmaking

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) announced two new grant opportunities funded out the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, the COVID-19 relief and stimulus bill passed in March 2021. The American Rescue Plan: Humanities Organizations grants will provide funding to “cultural organizations and educational institutions to support humanities projects across the fields of education, preservation and access, public programming, digital humanities, and scholarly research for one year.” Proposals may involve new projects or support core humanities activities. Allowable uses of funding include personnel costs for employed individuals to carry out the funded activities, fees for consultants and contractors, supplies or equipment needed to carry out proposed activities, and general operating support, among other activities.

Award amounts will be proportional to applicants’ annual operating budget:
- Organizations with operating budgets under $1 million may request up to $50,000 in funding;
- Organizations with operating budgets between $1 million and $10 million may request up to $200,000 in funding; and
- Organizations with operating budgets over $10 million may request up to $500,000 in funding.

The Humanities Organizations solicitation includes a special interest in applications relating to the “A More Perfect Union” initiative, covering topics of American history and civic education.
Eligible applicants include colleges and universities, museums, libraries, archives, independent research institutions, professional organizations, historic sites, and other relevant humanities organizations. Applicants are limited to one proposal, including subordinate organizations. Institutions of higher education are explicitly encouraged to submit a single proposal including academic libraries, museums, research centers, and academic presses.

NEH expects to make approximately 150 grants under this program. Applications are due **May 14, 2021**.

NEH is additionally offering funding through the new **American Rescue Plan: Humanities Grantmaking** program, which will provide funding to organizations with national or regional grantmaking experience to expand, adapt, or create competitive grantmaking programs in the humanities. Institutions of higher education are not eligible to apply but are eligible as subrecipients.

These grantmaking programs may fund either humanities organizations or individuals working in the humanities but may not fund both. However, the program may feature multiple applicant tracks within the chosen category, such as separate tracks for early-career and senior scholars if funding individuals or separate tracks for museums and archives if funding organizations. Awards through the Humanities Grantmaking program will be for up to $2 million if funding individuals or up to $5 million if funding organizations, both over a period of two years. Eligible applicants include 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations, other than institutions of higher education, that currently administer competitive grantmaking programs in the humanities. NEH expects to make approximately 15-20 grants under this program. Applications are due **May 13, 2021**.

**Sources and Additional Information:**
- Additional details and application information on the Humanities Organizations program is available at [https://www.neh.gov/program/american-rescue-plan-humanities-organizations](https://www.neh.gov/program/american-rescue-plan-humanities-organizations).
- Additional information on the Humanities Grantmaking program is available at [https://www.neh.gov/program/american-rescue-plan-humanities-grantmaking](https://www.neh.gov/program/american-rescue-plan-humanities-grantmaking).

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