

EPSCoR/IDeA Coalition May & June Newsletter

July 6, 2023

CONGRESS

Congress Weighs How to Regulate AI Without Hindering Competition

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) [launched](#) an effort to begin discussions on potential regulations for the emerging realm of artificial intelligence, aiming to accelerate U.S. innovation while mindful of harmful societal impacts. Schumer joins the Biden administration, tech-industry leaders and other members of Congress in seeking to put limits on the technology, amid fears that AI tools can be abused to manipulate voters, pull off sophisticated financial crimes, displace millions of workers or create other harms.

The House Science Committee held a hearing focused on supporting innovative research and development in artificial intelligence that advances national interest. Chairman Frank Lucas (R-OK) stated that the committee will work to establish and promote technical standards for trustworthy AI and explore ways to mitigate risks caused by AI systems through research and development of technical solutions, such as using automation to detect AI generated media. Congress will continue to focus on various facets of artificial intelligence that may benefit from federal guidelines.

Below are the only appropriations bills of interest to EPSCoR/IDeA jurisdictions that have publicly released funding reports. Aside from Ag, Energy, and Defense, we expect both the House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees to continue markups when they return from July 4 recess and before the August break. We will continue to update you on EPSCoR/IDeA FY24 funding as the appropriations process moves forward. We'd also like to note that we will be rolling out an official EPSCoR/IDeA Coalition website before the next newsletter comes out; there will be more details to come.

House Appropriations Committee approves FY24 Defense bill

The House Appropriations Committee [met last Thursday](#) to consider the Fiscal Year 2024 Defense Appropriations bill. The measure was approved by the Committee with a vote of 34 to 24. The bill includes a total of \$146.83 billion for research, development, test and evaluation, an increase of \$1.95 billion above the budget request.

House Appropriations Committee approves FY24 Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies bill

The House Appropriations Committee met to consider [the Fiscal Year 2024 Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations](#) bill. The measure was approved by the Committee with a vote of 34 to 24. Funding for the Department of Energy is \$133.2 million above the FY23 enacted level and \$3.7 billion below the President's budget request. Allocations include:

- \$35 million for DOE EPSCoR jurisdictions
- \$24 billion for the National Nuclear Security Administration, \$1.8 billion above the FY23 level; \$1.783 billion for Nuclear Energy, equal to the FY23 level;
- \$8.1 billion for the Office of Science, equal to the FY23 level;
- \$470 million for ARPA-E, equal to the FY23 level and \$180 million below the President's request;
- \$3 billion for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, \$466 million below the FY23 level, and \$1.8 billion below the President's request;
- \$35 million for the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations, \$54 million below the FY23 level and \$180 million below the President's request.

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Senate Appropriations Committee advances FY2024 Agriculture funding bill

The Senate Appropriations Committee [approved](#) its FY2024 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. The bill includes \$6.3 billion for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)—a \$615 million increase over FY 2023 that meets the President’s budget request. The bill also provides \$1.792 billion—a \$48.6 million increase—for the Agricultural Research Service. There is language consistent with previous years, keeping a 15% set aside from AFRI for EPSCoR jurisdictions.

SASC Completes its NDAA Markup

U.S. Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Roger Wicker (R-MS), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, announced that the Committee voted 24-1 to advance the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024. During the subcommittee and full committee markups of the legislation, the Committee considered 445 amendments and adopted 286 amendments. The bill now heads to the Senate floor for consideration. Within the bill, there is \$25 million for the Defense Established Programs to Stimulate Competitive Research (DEPSCoR), which ensures EPSCoR state jurisdictions may compete to perform cutting-edge basic research and partner with defense labs.

Debt Ceiling Deal

Early June, Congress passed and President Biden signed, the bipartisan debt ceiling agreement to avert a U.S. government default. The bill was carried by moderates in both parties. As a reminder, the agreement suspends the debt ceiling through Jan. 1, 2025 and sets spending caps for fiscal 2024 and 2025. Those caps would limit defense spending to a 3.3% increase in 2024 and a 1% increase in 2025, while nondefense discretionary would be essentially flat funded in 2024 and 2025. Regarding appropriations, the debt ceiling bill also includes a mechanism to discourage a FY24 Continuing Resolution (flat FY23 funding), providing that if all twelve appropriations bills are not enacted by Jan 1, 2024, discretionary spending will temporarily operate at a maximum of 99% of current levels.

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

E-CORE & E-RISE

As many of you already know, NSF is phasing out the Track 1 system and replacing it with the [E-RISE RII](#) and [E-CORE RII](#) programs. While there is still a great amount of uncertainty concerning these two programs, NSF has expressed great interest in hearing from you so they can continue to create a detailed FAQ sheet. Below is further information about each program, also linked to recent NSF webinars which dive deeper into each.

[The E-RISE RII](#) program supports the incubation of research teams and products in a scientific topical area that links to research priorities identified in the submitting jurisdiction’s approved Science and Technology (S&T) Plan. E-RISE RII invites innovative proposals that will lead to development and implementation of sustainable broad networks of individuals, institutions, and organizations that will transform the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) research capacity and competitiveness in a jurisdiction within the chosen field of research. E-RISE RII projects must be designed to incubate (i) areas of research capacity building within a chosen research topic; (ii) development of a skilled workforce that is relevant to the project and its outcomes; (iii) promotion of diversity, equity, access, and a culture of inclusion of different types of academic institutions (see below) and non-academic sectors (e.g., industry and government); (iv) integration of the research with societal impacts in a timebound manner; and (v) sustainability of a clear pathway towards preserving the resulting research incubator’s team and products beyond E-RISE RII funding. The NSF webinar is linked [here](#) and the presentation slides [here](#). FYI you must scroll down and expand the “View Information on EPSCoR’s new E-RISE and E-CORE programs” tabs. Deadline: January 16 2024

- **Award information**

- Up to \$31,500,000 annually, to support up to 18 newly funded awards for the first four years. Number of awards is approximate and subject to the availability of funds and quality of the proposals submitted.

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Funding requests may be for a maximum total budget of \$7,000,000 over the first four (4) years and a maximum of \$4,500,000 over the subsequent three-year renewal period, as applicable. The Year-1 budget will be committed upon award, and subsequent year budgets are subject to satisfactory annual review of project success. Pending performance and outcome of a renewal proposal review in the fourth year, support for years five through seven will continue at an expected total of up to \$4,500,000 over the three-year renewal period.

- **Estimated number of awards**
 - 18
- **Estimated number of awards description**
 - Up to 18 awards annually (pending the quality of proposals and availability of funds). More than one award per jurisdiction will be considered depending on the quality of the proposals and the availability of funds.
 - Awards will be funded for up to seven years, with the initial award for the first four years and the second award for three years based on project performance and review of a renewal proposal. Each individual year's continued funding will be contingent on satisfactory progress as based on the annual reporting requirements.

[The E-CORE RII](#) program supports jurisdictions in building capacity in one or more targeted research infrastructure cores that underlie the jurisdiction's research ecosystem. Based on the evidence-based and self-identified need of the jurisdiction, capacity building supported by E-CORE RII may include (but is not limited to) development, enhancement, and/or sustainability of: jurisdiction-wide research administration; research facilities; higher education pathways; STEM education (K-16) pathways; broadening participation; workforce development; national and global partnerships; community engagement and outreach; economic development and use-inspired research; and/or early career research trainee pathways. E-CORE RII projects must be designed to support the sustainability of the infrastructure core(s) beyond the award period. In E-CORE RII's support of one or more research infrastructure cores in an EPSCoR-eligible jurisdiction, the program will also support the development and growth of new jurisdictional networks, and the leveraging of existing jurisdictional networks, that can drive demonstrable and sustainable impact to advance the jurisdiction-wide research ecosystem. The NSF webinar is linked [here](#) and the presentation slides [here](#). FYI you must scroll down and expand the "View Information on EPSCoR's new E-RISE and E-CORE programs" tabs. December 6 2023 - Deadline date (due by 5p.m. submitter's local time)

- **Award information**
 - Up to \$37,500,000 annually, to support up to 15 newly funded E-CORE RII awards. Number of awards is approximate and subject to the availability of funds and quality of the proposals submitted. Funding requests must be for a duration of four (4) years, with a maximum budget of \$8 million total for the first four years. Within the maximum award budget, there is no restriction on the amount requested annually.
 - Note that in only rare and exceptional circumstances will no-cost extensions be granted during the initial or renewal award period. NSF EPSCoR support of a proposed RII activity should not duplicate other available federal, jurisdictional, or institutional resources and should add significant value to increasing scientific competitiveness at the national or regional level.
- **Estimated number of awards**
 - 15
- **Estimated number of awards description**
 - Up to 15 awards annually (pending quality of proposals and availability of funds). More than one award per jurisdiction will be considered depending on the quality of the proposals and availability of funds. Awards will be funded for up to eight years, with an initial commitment for the first four years and a



possibility of continuation for four additional years, where the continuation is based on project performance and review of a renewal proposal. Each individual year's continued funding will be contingent on satisfactory progress as based on the annual reporting requirements.

Regional Innovation Engines Awards

NSF [announced the first-ever NSF Regional Innovation Engines](#), or NSF Engines, program awards to 44 unique teams spanning universities, nonprofits, businesses and other organizations across the U.S. states and territories. Each awardee team will receive up to \$1 million for two years.

A New Organization to Help Secure the Nation's Research

The Office of the Chief of Research Security Strategy and Policy (OCRSSP) at the National Science Foundation (NSF) is [released a Dear Colleague Letter](#) (DCL) soliciting input from the research community on creation of the Research Security and Integrity Information Sharing Analysis Organization (RSI-ISAO). As described in the DCL, the RSI-ISAO is meant to empower the U.S. research community to address foreign interference issues, support a security-informed decision-making structure, and serve as a conduit that connects research community stakeholders with U.S. government officials and expertise as appropriate. Importantly, the RSI-ISAO will offload some of the administrative workload from those it serves and empower them to utilize tools and other capabilities not typically available to them.

Federal Research Funding: Is There a Fairer Way to Share the Pie?

On June 27, 2023, Issues in Science & Technology [hosted a discussion](#) of how efforts to share research dollars can promote equity and enhance research capacity nationwide. Issues in Science and Technology is a quarterly journal published by the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) and [Arizona State University](#). Panelists are below and you can find a video of the discussion [here](#).

- Anna Quider, Founder, The Quider Group; Senior Research Fellow, Northern Illinois University
- Vanessa Sansone, Director of Policy, Alliance for Research on Regional Colleges; Professor, University of Texas – San Antonio
- Dina Stroud, Program Director, NSF GRANTED; Lead Program Director, HBCU Excellence in Research Grant
- Chris Nomura, Vice President for Research & Economic Development, University of Idaho; Member, EPSCoR/IDeA Coalition Board

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tech Hubs Phase 1 NOFO Launched

EDA is now [accepting](#) applications for Phase 1 of the new Tech Hubs Program, which is designed to invest directly in high-potential U.S. regions to enable them to become globally competitive in industries of the future. This program will invest directly in regions with the assets, resources, capacity, and potential to transform into globally competitive innovation centers while catalyzing the creation of good jobs for American workers. In Phase 1, EDA will designate at least 20 Tech Hubs across the country and award strategy development grants. [\[Read More\]](#) Additional Open Funding Opportunities (NOFO):

- [BUILD TO SCALE PROGRAM](#)
- [FY 2023 DISASTER SUPPLEMENTAL](#)
- [FY 2023 PUBLIC WORKS AND ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE](#)
- [STEM TALENT CHALLENGE](#) (Application deadline June 12, 2023)
- [FY 2023 UNIVERSITY CENTER COMPETITION](#) (States served by Austin and Denver regions)

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EDA Tech Hubs Webinar

Our team attended a [tech hubs webinar](#), hosted by EDA, and the highlights are below. You can find the slide presentation [here](#). Over 150+ questions were asked on the webinar and EDA has promised to address them all on their website. We will report further when there is more information.

- You can apply as a designation or strategy development grants, or for both. Must apply for designation if you want to apply for Phase 2
 - EDA expects to designate ~20 regions for Phase 1
- Strategy Development grants could help you receive a designation in the future.
- Phase 2 – EDA expects to award 5-10 consortia
- At least 3 tech hubs will be designated in each of EDA's 6 regions
 - 1/3 will significantly benefit small and rural
 - 1/3 will go to EPSCoR states
 - 1 will be headquartered in a low population state
 - At least 2 will benefit underserved communities
- Only Consortia, with a clear lead, are eligible, and each must include:
 - An institution of higher education
 - Subnational or tribal government
 - Relevant industry or firms
 - Economic development organizations
 - Labor or workforce training organizations
- The slides go into greater detail of how to apply either as a designation, strategy development grant, or both.
- Regarding evaluation criteria, tech-based potential of the region for global competitiveness will receive the highest consideration. Additional criteria can be found on the slides.

Tech Competition

The White House released the [National Standards Strategy for Critical and Emerging Technology \(CET\)](#) to strengthen and protect U.S. consumers' technology and pursue leadership and competitiveness in international standards development. As a part of the strategy, the federal government will engage with the private sector, academia, and other stakeholders to address gaps and bolster U.S. participation in CET standards development activities. More [here](#).

Department of Commerce / EDA

FY 2023 Recompete Pilot Program - Phase 1

Funding Opportunity Number: [EDA-RECOMPETEPHASE1-2023](#)

Closing Date for Applications: Oct 5, 2023

Summary: The Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program (Recompete Pilot Program) aims alleviate persistent economic distress and support long-term comprehensive economic development and job creation, in places with a high prime-age (25 to 54 years) employment gap.

EDA will run this competition in two phases through two separate Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs). In this Phase 1 NOFO, EDA will fund Strategy Development Grants and will approve Recompete Plans for certain regions. Applicants to this Phase 1 NOFO must choose whether they are pursuing a Strategy Development Grant, approval of a Recompete Plan, or both. Strategy Development Grants are funded and are discussed in greater detail in the NOFO. Recompete Plan approval, on the other hand, is unfunded, but is a prerequisite to applying to the Phase 2 NOFO. Under the Phase 2 NOFO EDA will award Implementation funding. Thus, if an applicant would like to compete for Implementation funding under the upcoming Phase 2 NOFO, it should at minimum apply for Recompete Plan approval under this Phase 1 NOFO (the applicant

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can also apply for a Strategy Development Grant if it so chooses). Recompete Plan approval is discussed in more detail in the NOFO.

EDA also announced the launch of its new grants management platform: the Economic Development Grants Experience (EDGE). EDGE was developed to streamline the application and grants management process by implementing a single platform with increased transparency, improved user experience, higher data quality, and more efficiency throughout the entire grant lifecycle.

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