

What are the thematic areas for Tennessee EPSCoR?

- 1) Biomedical/Health Science
- 2) Environmental Science and Engineering
- 3) Materials Science
- 4) Computational Science and Applications

Do I need to mark my NSF proposals in a special way to indicate that Tennessee is an EPSCoR state?

It is not necessary to mark NSF proposals in any way. It may be useful to mention casually or in an email to the NSF Program Manager that Tennessee has once again been designated as an EPSCoR state. The NSF EPSCoR web site at <http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/epscor/invest.jsp> states:

Co-funding Mechanism: *This effort enables more awards to be made to researchers in EPSCoR jurisdictions from the Foundation's ongoing research, education, and special emphasis competitions, by providing partial support for those proposals that merit review places at or near the cutoff for funding by the reviewing program. **This mechanism operates internally within NSF and does not require any action on the part of the proposer.***

What is the change in the probability of funding from NSF for researchers in Tennessee now that it is an EPSCoR state?

The probabilities of an award are improved for proposals that are "near the cutoff for funding". The program manager can obtain part of the money to fund a Tennessee award from the EPSCoR office through the co-funding program. Many NSF directorates limit co-funding to faculty who have not received an NSF award for some period of time prior to the request. The co-funding is particularly helpful for CAREER awards.

How can I determine if Tennessee is eligible for the EPSCoR program in a particular agency?

Many federal agencies use the NSF designation to determine EPSCoR eligibility for the programs. Some agencies have their own evaluation processes. Information regarding Tennessee eligibility is posted on this web site for known cases. Investigators who are submitting proposals to a federal agency can inform the appropriate program director that the NSF web site now indicates that Tennessee is an EPSCoR state. An investigator can also contact the EPSCoR project director with a question about a particular agency.

Do DEPSCoR and DOE EPSCoR programs provide co-funding?

No. DOE EPSCoR and DEPSCoR only fund specific targeted programs. Proposals to those programs are limited, and MUST be submitted through the state EPSCoR office. There is normally an internal competition with out-of-state reviewers to select the proposals to be submitted from Tennessee.

What about NASA EPSCoR?

Tennessee was not eligible for NASA EPSCoR during the previous NSF eligibility because NASA only considers states that are eligible for the RII program. NASA determined that Tennessee is now eligible and Dr. Al Strauss, the Director of the Tennessee Space Grant Consortium, has been designated the Tennessee NASA EPSCoR Director. Like DOE and DOD, NASA EPSCoR accepts a limited number of proposals that MUST be selected by the state director. Proposals have been selected for the 2008 deadline and will be submitted in March.

Where is information available about DEPSCoR and DOE EPSCoR programs?

Every effort is made to provide information regarding funding opportunities and the necessary in-state selection processes on this web site. Additional information about the DOE programs is available at <http://www.sc.doe.gov/bes/EPSCoR/index.html> along with information about programs that are currently supported. DEPSCoR information is less accessible, and the call for proposals is often very close to the due date. Questions can be directed to David Hercules, the state DEPSCoR director (david.m.hercules@vanderbilt.edu).

How were the state themes determined? Are they likely to be expanded or modified?

In the NSF planning grant process, a series of forums were held across the state and broad faculty input was solicited. The result of the planning process was the submission of a final report from the NSF planning grant which articulated the four themes. The state also funded an independent study to establish a state science and technology plan. Overlapping areas from those two studies were considered for the recent RII proposal submission. If the RII is funded, a new study to identify appropriate themes for the next RII proposal would be initiated in about 2010. The themes will not be modified until after such a study.

How would a Community College benefit from the EPSCoR program? Can Community Colleges be partners in the project?

EPSCoR applies to all higher education institutions in the State of Tennessee - public or private, undergraduate and graduate. Our planning status gives everyone a better opportunity on any NSF research proposal. The most likely way for a Community College to participate would be through a partnership with a research intensive university. Some ideas might include summer research for faculty or students, or perhaps some partnerships during the school year that involve computational and laboratory work. There are also possibilities for field studies in many disciplines.

Look around on the NSF web site and see the areas where they provide funding and you will find many programs aimed at primarily undergraduate institutions. There is a very big program called Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI), http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5518&from=fund, and another called Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU), http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5517&from=fund, that faculty can pursue. There are a lot of other ways to request funding in collaboration with UT, Vanderbilt, the University of Memphis or other universities in Tennessee.

Why were the University of Tennessee Knoxville, Vanderbilt and the University of Memphis chosen as the primary leaders for the EPSCoR RII proposal?

Those three universities are the only institutions in Tennessee that are classified as Research Universities, either Very High Research or High Research, (RU/VH or RU/H) by the Carnegie Foundation, <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/>. As such, these are seen to be the leaders for the state. The objective of the RII proposals is to increase the research activity and status of all Tennessee universities, and there are many opportunities for faculty at other higher education institutions to participate in the project. If RII funding is received, information about funding opportunities will be available on this web site.

What is the anticipated timeline for the RII proposal?

The proposal was submitted prior to the January 4 deadline. The review panel will meet in February and make recommendations to the NSF EPSCoR office. It is anticipated that the management team will receive feedback in March. If the proposal is funded, the funding could begin as early as June 1, 2008, and could extend up to five years.

What if Tennessee research activity increases and the state again graduates from EPSCoR?

This happened in 2005 and all active awards with all of the agencies were continued to their normal ending dates. At that time, Tennessee began a phase-out program with NSF, retaining access to the co-funding program and continuing to participate in national EPSCoR meetings. Should Tennessee receive an RII award, it is anticipated that the RII award would be continued for the full award for three years following the period and that co-funding would be maintained for three years.

Are there any special conditions on the RII award?

The RII award will require substantial data collection and evaluation to measure progress toward graduation. Participation of under-represented faculty and students is a critical parameter. Other conditions may be added as part of the award negotiations.