



**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION**  
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**NSF 22-035**

## Dear Colleague Letter: NSF and William T. Grant Foundation Partnership to Increase the Use, Usefulness, and Impact of Research about Youth

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December 27, 2021

Dear Colleague:

With this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), the Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) of the National Science Foundation (NSF) notifies the research community of a collaboration with the William T. Grant Foundation (WT Grant) on a coordinated call for proposals focused on increasing the public value of scientific research: “Increasing the Use, Usefulness and Impact of Research about Youth.”

The William T. Grant Foundation is a private philanthropy founded in 1938, that has been investing “in high-quality research focused on reducing inequality in youth outcomes and improving the use of research evidence in decisions that affect young people in the United States.”

Public and private sector decision-makers across the U.S. work hard to improve the quality of life of young people. Research findings can help them in that effort but only if certain conditions are in place. Those conditions include:

- Research findings are timely and relevant to the challenges that decision-makers face;
- Decision-makers have access to trusted research findings and the capacity to use them;  
and
- Research findings can be effectively used to improve youth outcomes.

Drawing on their complementary strengths, NSF and WT Grant are encouraging submission of proposals to help the public and private sector use research to increase quality of life for America’s youth. The public interest in this endeavor is significant “as research that improves the effectiveness of early interventions in youth-related challenges can produce sizeable and long-lasting benefits to society. At least three categories of research can help achieve this outcome.

- Studies of research use will address ways to improve decision-makers' use of research. Researchable questions include:
  - What organizational conditions enable decision-makers to use research effectively?
  - What strategies improve decision makers' timely access to the research they need?
  - Do school districts or community-based organizations involved in research-practice partnerships use research more routinely in their decision-making than agencies without partnerships?
- Studies of research production will address ways to make research more useful in policy creation and practice. Researchable questions include:
  - How can researchers design their studies to better produce the types of information policymakers and practitioners need in their work?
  - What conditions enable and encourage researchers to pursue youth-focused research in collaboration with communities?
  - What types of research communication allow decision-makers to better understand what works and when a finding from one context will generalize to another?
- Studies of research impacts will address when and how using research findings improves youth outcomes. Researchable questions include:
  - Under what conditions does using research in policy creation improve the well-being of youth?
  - What is needed to ensure that research is utilized in an effective manner?

Proposals that do not fall neatly into one of these categories are also welcome, as long as they describe projects that can increase the use, usefulness, and impact of youth-oriented research. A wide variety of approaches are acceptable, ranging from qualitative to quantitative, from descriptive to normative, and from comparative case studies to large-scale data collection or analysis. Principal investigators can represent a sub-specialty or a multi-disciplinary team. Methodological rigor is critical. Proposals on topics related to youth well-being that do not focus explicitly on increasing the use, usefulness and impact of research about youth as described above are not appropriate for consideration under this partnership.

## **PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

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Proposals may be submitted to either NSF or WT Grant. Proposers can submit to both organizations only if the proposed activities submitted to each organization are unique, respectively, and are not redundant.

Investigators interested in submitting proposals to NSF should follow the proposal preparation guidelines contained in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)* and submit proposals to the [Science of Science: Discovery, Communication, and Impact](#)

(SoS:DCI) program. To designate the proposal as being related to this collaborative research topic, include “WTG:” at the beginning of the proposal title.

Proposal submissions to NSF in response to this DCL are accepted anytime. Proposers will be required to select a target date in NSF’s proposal submission systems and should choose the next upcoming target date option.

Investigators submitting to WT Grant should submit proposals to the [Improving the Use of Research Evidence](#) initiative. The upcoming deadlines for applications for research grants addressing this topic are January 12, May 4, and August 3, 2022, at 3 p.m. Eastern time.

Successful research proposals submitted to NSF will have scientifically sound research plans that are explicitly rooted in relevant theory and literature. Proposals will be evaluated using the standard National Science Board approved merit review criteria of intellectual merit and broader impacts, as well as their potential contribution to increasing the use, usefulness, and impact of research about youth.

Questions about this DCL should be directed to the SOS:DCI Program Officer Mary Feeney, [mfeeney@nsf.gov](mailto:mfeeney@nsf.gov).

Sincerely,  
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Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences