



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Request for Information

AGENCY: National Science Foundation.

ACTION: Request for Information.

SUMMARY: The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) invites information, suggestions, and innovations to inform a comprehensive review of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) program and the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM) program. Together, the programs constitute NSF's Excellence Awards in Science and Engineering (EASE) investment. Details about the two programs can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/honorary-awards/paemst> and <https://www.nsf.gov/honorary-awards/paesmem>. In July 2025, NSF announced a pause in the annual application and award cycles of the programs so that the agency can conduct a strategic review and planning process to reorient the programs for the future.

DATES: NSF must receive your comments by **[INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]**.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted using any of the following methods:

- *Web:* Responses can be submitted via https://nsfevaluation.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_85KQysAz92UZmlg.

- *E-mail: RFI-EASE@nsf.gov.* E-mail submissions should be machine-readable and not be copy-protected. Submissions should include "RFI Response: PAEMST/PAESMEM" in the subject line.
- *Mail:* U.S. National Science Foundation, Directorate for STEM Education, Attn.: RFI on PAEMST/PAESMEM, Randolph Building, 401 Dulany St., Alexandria, VA 22314, USA.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tyrslai Williams-Carter or Narcrisa Norman, Directorate for STEM Education, U.S. National Science Foundation, Randolph Building, 401 Dulany St., Alexandria, VA 22314; e-mail *RFI-EASE@nsf.gov*; phone 703-292-8600.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

The PAEMST and PAESMEM programs recognize the nation's best and brightest teachers and mentors in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Established by the White House, both programs are administered by NSF on behalf of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). While the following paragraphs summarize the historical operation of the programs, through this RFI, NSF welcomes suggestions for changes that transform the programs.

The PAEMST award is the highest recognition that a kindergarten through 12th-grade STEM teacher may receive for outstanding teaching in the United States. These awards were established by Congress in 1983. Annually, up to 110

outstanding teachers from around the country are recognized for their passion, dedication, and impact in the classroom. Over 5,500 teachers have received the award to date.

STEM teachers in each state submit applications to the PAEMST program. The program receives and reviews the applications in two groups, K-6th grade teachers and 7th-12th grade teachers. Awardees are selected from each state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Department of Defense Education Activity schools, and the U.S. jurisdictions (i.e., American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

Each awardee receives \$10,000 and a certificate signed by the President. Awardees are also invited to participate in a recognition ceremony in Washington, DC, which includes meetings with leaders in STEM education, research, and policy. After receiving the award, many awardees continue teaching in their classrooms, while others move to positions in school administration, become involved in preparing future teachers at the university level, or work in teacher professional development. Collectively, they reflect the expertise and dedication of America's STEM teaching corps, and they demonstrate the positive impact of excellent teachers on student achievement.

The PAEMST application and award process consists of the following components:

Nomination --> Application --> State Review --> State Finalist Selection -->

Application Refinement --> National Review --> Award Notification --> Award

Announcement --> Awardee Recognition --> Awardee Engagement

PAEMST applicants are evaluated according to five "dimensions":

Dimension 1: Mastery of content appropriate for the grade level taught.

Dimension 2: Use of effective instructional approaches that are appropriate for the students in the classroom and that support student learning.

Dimension 3: Effective use of student assessments to evaluate, monitor, and improve student learning.

Dimension 4: Reflective practice and life-long learning to improve teaching and student learning.

Dimension 5: Opportunity, access, and leadership in education inside and outside the classroom.

The PAESMEM award serves as the nation's highest recognition of excellence in mentoring in STEM. It was established by the White House in 1995. Annually, up to 15 individuals and organizations are honored for their passion, dedication, and impact on mentoring, which supports the future productivity of the U.S. STEM workforce. Over 350 mentors have received the award to date.

Nominations (including self-nominations) are encouraged from all geographic regions of the United States. Individuals and organizations from the public and private sectors -- including industry, academia, K-12, military and government, non-profit organizations, and foundations -- are eligible. Exceptional STEM or STEM-related mentoring in both formal and informal settings is eligible for recognition. Each individual or organization selected for an award receives \$10,000 and a certificate signed by the President. Awardees are also invited to participate in a recognition ceremony in Washington, DC, which includes meetings with leaders in

STEM education, research, and policy. New awardees join a community of award-winning mentors and have opportunities to expand their impact on a national scale.

The PAESMEM application and award process consists of the following components:

Nomination --> Application --> National Review --> Award Notification --> Award Announcement --> Awardee Recognition --> Awardee Engagement

PAESMEM applicants are evaluated according to four "dimensions":

Dimension 1: Mentoring Philosophy and Strategies

Dimension 2: Assessment and Outcomes

Dimension 3: Reflective Practice

Dimension 4: Leadership and Sustainability

II. Solicitation of Comments: Reviewing the PAEMST and PAESMEM Programs

As part of NSF's commitment to supporting the development of a robust, high-quality STEM workforce in the United States, the agency wishes to continue to stimulate innovation and promote high-quality teaching at the K-12 level and mentoring across all levels. NSF seeks information to inform an assessment and update of the PAEMST and PAESMEM programs. In particular, NSF requests insights on exemplary practices and input on lessons learned from the programs; the information that the programs should require nominators and applicants to provide; and the criteria that the programs should use to determine which applicants/nominees should be selected to receive an award.

Responding to the questions below is voluntary; all questions are optional. If you choose to respond, please respond to *any* or *all* of the questions and respond with regard to *both* programs (PAEMST and PAESMEM) or *either* program.

1. Do you think that any components of the PAEMST and/or PAESMEM application and award processes should be revised to more effectively promote identification and recognition of the highest quality teachers and mentors from all types of institutions across the nation?
2. Do you think that any of the "dimensions" (outlined in the background section above) that are used to evaluate applicants/nominees should be revised or removed/eliminated? Should any new dimensions be considered? Please provide justification for the changes suggested.
3. How do you think applicants'/nominees' success in each dimension should be indicated in applications and assessed as part of the review process? In particular, how should the applicants/nominees demonstrate that they are using effective pedagogies, models, and frameworks to achieve success in teaching or mentoring for the communities they serve? How should they demonstrate the use of research and data to set goals, to monitor progress toward goals, to address gaps and defects in their practices, and to ensure success and impact?
4. How do you think applicants/nominees should demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of their efforts on the STEM workforce (including the teacher/faculty workforce)? Important elements of such efforts include a commitment to success for all students; promoting students' persistence in STEM and

advancement in the STEM workforce; engaging in professional development; providing advice to colleagues and service to the community; building knowledge in STEM education; and exhibiting transparency regarding outcomes.

This is a request for information only. It is not a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) or a promise to issue a NOFO. Information and documents submitted in response to this RFI become the property of the U.S. Government and will not be returned.

Accessible Format: If you need this document in an accessible format, contact the person(s) listed under "For Further Information Contact" above for an accommodation. Please specify the format(s) that would meet your needs.

Electronic Access to This Document: The official version of this document is the version published in the *Federal Register*, which is available online at <https://www.federalregister.gov>.

(Authority: 42 U.S.C. 1861, et seq.)

Dated: April 24, 2026.

Suzanne H. Plimpton,

Reports Clearance Officer,

National Science Foundation.