NSF EPSCoR Program

NSF EPSCoR in Idaho

In Idaho, the National Science Foundation’s Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, or NSF EPSCoR, brings together the University of Idaho (UI), Boise State University, Idaho State University and Idaho’s two- and four-year colleges to provide lasting improvements to academic research infrastructure and increase Idaho’s research competitiveness.

Idaho EPSCoR currently receives $4 million per year in core federal funding for the NSF EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) award. Idaho will compete for a new five-year, $20 million statewide RII Track-1 award in fall 2017. Idaho researchers are also submitting multiple independent research proposals in 2017 to the NSF EPSCoR RII Track-2 program to build collaborative teams with other EPSCoR states and to the Track-4 program that gives opportunities for early career researchers to develop research collaborations with major research centers outside Idaho.

Idaho has two active NSF EPSCoR awards:

- Managing Idaho’s Landscapes for Ecosystem Services (MILES) is a RII Track-1 project funded at $20 million in June 2013, which will end in May 2018. MILES brings together researchers in the biophysical and social sciences to study challenges that arise as Idaho’s mid-sized cities grow. The project’s goal is to help Idaho manage and sustain the benefits humans derive from the natural world — also known as ecosystem services — such as water, forests and air quality.
- Indigenous STEM Research and Graduate Education (ISTEM) is a RII Track-3 project funded at $750,000 in June 2014 that will end in February 2019. Led by the University of Idaho, this project creates a national network of institutions collaborating to increase the number of Native American students obtaining master’s and doctoral degrees in STEM fields.

Idaho also is completing an RII Track-2 grant in a no-cost extension to July 2017:

- Western Consortium for Watershed Analysis and Visualization (WC-WAVE) was the second $6 million collaborative project involving Idaho, Nevada and New Mexico EPSCoR. It supported innovation in watershed science, workforce development and education by developing advanced visualization, data and computer-based research tools and technologies.

Background

A 16-member committee leads Idaho EPSCoR, with representatives from the public and private sectors, the legislature and across Idaho. The director reports to the Idaho EPSCoR Committee and is supported by a professional staff in the Idaho EPSCoR Office, located at the University of Idaho in Moscow.

The office leads the planning, administration and implementation of EPSCoR RII programs and supports Idaho’s Science and Technology Plan for Higher Education in areas that contribute to the national research agenda through the philosophy of ONEIdaho — an integrated, productive and creative research culture and community of Idaho researchers and educators.
Recent Accomplishments

- Idaho researchers have been highly successful in competing for additional research funding from NSF and other agencies, a key objective of EPSCoR, by winning an additional $20 million for research and education projects within just the first three years of the Track-1 RII award.
- The NSF EPSCoR award has supported 10 new early-career faculty positions since 2013, including scientists who are trained in working effectively with colleagues and students from multiple areas of expertise.
- Idaho EPSCoR has engaged more than 400 university faculty, staff, undergraduates, graduate students and technicians and nearly 14,000 K-12 students, teachers and other stakeholders in STEM programs throughout the state, in many cases providing new or expanded research, data management and communications skills.
- Idaho EPSCoR has raised the profile of STEM knowledge and career development opportunities to strengthen the enrollment and retention of students in higher education STEM fields and to help them prepare for successful careers.
- Idaho’s universities and Department of Commerce have participated in strategic planning to explore how EPSCoR might contribute to economic development in smaller jurisdictions.

Upcoming Goals

- Provide a legacy of improved research capacity by establishing and promoting the long-term success of research centers at Idaho’s universities.
- Compete successfully for a new NSF EPSCoR RII Track-1 award to support the next five years of academic excellence in areas of strategic importance to Idaho’s future.
- Institutionalize strong collaborations among scientists from Idaho’s universities and colleges and to provide excellent education and highly relevant STEM research experiences for an ever-more diverse population of Idaho students.

Projected Impact of Continued and Increased Funding

NSF EPSCoR provides four competitive funding opportunities (Tracks 1, 2, 3 and 4) from which Idaho can directly benefit for training students for the science and engineering workforce and conducting research to enhance Idaho’s quality of life, environment, and economy. Continued and increased federal funding will result in more partnerships with local communities, agencies, and stakeholders, and a sustainable environment for world-class research, facilities, and diverse scientific expertise.

Accounts: Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Bill, National Science Foundation, Research and Related Activities (RRA), Office of Integrative Activities, EPSCoR

FY17 Funding: House $170 million, Senate $160 million

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