

Congressional Update: National Science Foundation for the Future Act

Lewis-Burke Associates LLC – March 29, 2021

On Friday, March 26, the House Science Committee introduced the bipartisan [National Science Foundation for the Future Act](#). This bill would authorize increased funding for National Science Foundation (NSF) research, support STEM Education at all levels, increase opportunities for broadening participation, and would create a new Directorate for Science and Engineering Solutions (SES) to address societal grand challenges to be funded initially at \$1 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2022.

The bill would authorize increased funding of \$2 billion for NSF in FY 2022 (not including the new SES Directorate) and additional increases up to \$13.3 billion by FY 2026. The bill would further direct a 50% increase to the Mid-Scale Research Infrastructure program, which would include development of a roadmap to address the growing need for advanced computing capabilities. Regarding STEM education, the bill would authorize a 50% increase in funding over five years for key STEM education programs, establish a new program to scale up K-12 STEM education, increase mentoring and other efforts to better support graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, increase support for minority serving institutions (MSIs) and other emerging research institutions, and expand data collection on the STEM workforce. The bill includes a number of requirements to increase research accessibility, accountability, and security. There are also several provisions related to specific areas of research, including: climate change; violence; social, behavioral, economics; food-energy-water; sustainable chemistry research and education; risk and resilience; and support for biological research collections. Finally, the proposed new SES Directorate would support collaborative, use-inspired and translational research with authorized funding of \$1 billion for the new SES Directorate in FY 2022, increasing to \$5 billion in FY 2026.

This bill demonstrates the House Science Committee vision for NSF, which differs in scale from the Endless Frontiers Act expected to be introduced in April by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Sen. Todd Young (R-IN), which would propose an additional \$100 billion for NSF over five-years and would also include significant resources for translational research. Both the House and Senate bills only authorize funding levels; appropriated funding would come from different congressional committees.

As a pre-cursor to further efforts to move the legislation through committee, the House Science Committee plans to hold a hearing in mid-April to examine the overall state of U.S. leadership in S&T, the balance of fundamental research and technology development/use-inspired research, best practices for partnerships with non-NSF governmental and private entities, and efforts to broaden the inclusivity of NSF's research and education enterprises.

While the Senate is working to develop a package of bipartisan bills to address U.S. competitiveness that would include the Endless Frontiers Act and/or a broader NSF reauthorization package, the House has established a slightly differing approach, setting up forthcoming negotiations on policy details for NSF. Finally, this week the White House is expected to release initial details of its budget proposal for FY 2022 and the Build Back Better infrastructure plan, which will include a slightly different approach that NSF is beginning to flesh out around translation, innovation, and partnerships.

Regardless of final details, the House, Senate, and White House are each working toward new initiatives and incorporation of NSF programs in efforts to solidify and grow U.S. leadership in science and education.

Additional Resources:

- The House Science committee press release is available at <https://science.house.gov/news/press-releases/science-committee-leaders-introduce-nsf-for-the-future-act>.
- The House Science Committee two-page summary of the bill is available at https://science.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Summary_NSF%20for%20the%20Future%20Act.pdf.
- The Section-by-Section overview is available at https://science.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Section-by-section_NSF%20for%20the%20Future%20Act.pdf.