PIER Plans At-a-Glance

- Initiated in FY 2023, a [PIER Plan](#) is a required proposal element for all applications submitted to the DOE Office of Science.*

- PIER Plans should describe the activities and strategies that applicants will incorporate to enhance the scientific and technical merit of the proposed research through efforts that foster inclusive research and learning environments and broaden access to research and research careers.

- Should be no more than 3 pages in length (*unless otherwise specified in the solicitation*) and follow the format instructions for font size/margins in the solicitation.

- Are included *as an appendix* to the research proposal narrative - attached as part of the proposal narrative PDF file, not a separate attachment.

- Are expected to increase in complexity and detail with the increase in the size of the research team, total funding requested, and the number of personnel to be supported.

- Are evaluated as part of the merit review process and thus may inform funding decisions.

- Should be tailored to the project, not a restatement of standard institutional policies or broad principles.

* Notices of Funding Opportunities, DOE National Laboratory Announcements, and invitational proposals from requested from DOE Labs

PIER Plans - Exceptions

PIER Plans:

- Are not required for applications for supplemental funding on existing awards.

- Are not required for applications requesting funding to support conferences, which are subject to [separate requirements](#).

- Are not required for the continuation of funding for remaining years on research proposals submitted/awarded before FY 2023 (but PIER Plans are required for renewal applications).

SC's Commitment to Increasing Access & Inclusive Cultures

As a steward of public funding, the Office of Science has a responsibility to ensure that we are serving the public.

SC is deeply committed to:

- Supporting diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible work, research, and funding environments that value mutual respect and personal integrity.

- Increasing access and supporting people of all backgrounds, including individuals from groups and communities historically underrepresented in STEM fields.

- Advancing scientific discovery by harnessing a diverse range of views, expertise, and experiences to drive scientific and technological innovation.

The inclusion of PIER Plans in funding applications makes this commitment to inclusive excellence explicit and a consistent expectation for all SC-funded research and research related activities.

PIER Plans: General Guidance Language (Example)

SC solicitations will provide the specific guidance for the content of the PIER Plans in the "APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION" section.

Example general language can be found on the SC website: https://science.osti.gov/grants/Applicant-and-Awardee-Resources/PIER-Plans/Information-about-PIER-Plans

APPENDIX [#]: Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research Plan

"All applications must provide a Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER) Plan as an appendix to the research proposal narrative. The PIER plan should describe the activities and strategies of the applicant to promote equity and inclusion as an integral element to advancing scientific excellence in the research project within the context of the proposing institution and any associated research group(s)[1]. Plans may include, but are not limited to: strategies for enhanced recruitment of undergraduate students, graduate students, and early-stage investigators (postdoctoral researchers, and others), including individuals from diverse backgrounds and groups historically underrepresented in the research community; strategies for creating and sustaining a positive, inclusive, safe, and professional research and training environment that fosters a sense of belonging among all research personnel; and/or training, mentoring, and professional development opportunities[2]. **PIER Plans should be tailored to the research project**…"

[1] Please see definitions and related information at https://science.osti.gov/SW-DEI/DOE-Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Policies/Q-and-As#definitions.
[2] Please see SC's Things to Consider When Developing a PIER Plan.

PIER Plans: Example Solicitation Language (cont'd)

"…While PIER Plans may incorporate or build upon existing efforts of the project key personnel or applicant institution(s) to recruit diverse participants and create inclusive research environments, plans should not be a re-statement of standard institutional policies or broad principles. The complexity and detail of a PIER Plan is expected to increase with the size of the research team and the number of personnel to be supported.

For renewal applications only: Discuss briefly how this PIER Plan builds on or expands upon actions and accomplishments of the relevant efforts (e.g., PIER Plan or related activities) in the currently supported research.

Subject to the applicable cost principles, applications may request costs necessary for implementing the PIER Plan.

See also Section V for information on the Merit Review Criteria associated with this section.

- Do not attach a separate file.
- This response should not exceed three (3) pages*. This appendix will not count in the project narrative page limitation."

* *Note:* Based on the size and complexity of proposals expected for the solicitation, the sponsoring SC program office may increase the page limit for the PIER Plan. This is a page limit, not a minimum.

Merit Review of the PIER Plan

A specific merit review criterion for the PIER Plan will be used in the peer review of applications:

- Scientific and/or Technical Merit of the Project;

- Appropriateness of the Proposed Method or Approach;

- Competency of Applicant's Personnel and Adequacy of Proposed Resources;

- Reasonableness and Appropriateness of the Proposed Budget; and

- **Quality and Efficacy of the Plan for Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research.**

DOE SC's standard merit review criteria are set forth by 10 CFR Part 605.10 and may include additional criteria relevant to the scope and objectives of the solicitation. ***Unless otherwise tailored in the solicitation***, the merit review criteria for the evaluation of applications are in descending order of importance as listed above.

The sponsoring SC Program Office may elect to modify this order at the time the solicitation is developed, as appropriate for the scope and objectives of the solicitation.

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Guiding Reviewer Questions for PIER Plan Criterion

QUALITY AND EFFICACY OF THE PLAN FOR PROMOTING INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE RESEARCH

- How well integrated is the Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER) Plan with the proposed project?

- What aspects of the PIER Plan are likely to contribute to the goal of creating and maintaining an equitable, inclusive, encouraging, and professional training and research environment and supporting a sense of belonging among project personnel?

- Are all aspects of the PIER Plan actionable and are the goals attainable during the project's period of performance?

- How does the proposed plan include intentional mentorship of project personnel?

Guiding Reviewer Questions (cont'd)

- How are the proposed resources and budget for the PIER Plan reasonable and appropriate?

- To what extent is the PIER Plan likely to lead to participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including individuals historically underrepresented in the research community?

- *For renewal applications only*: How does the proposed plan build or expand upon actions and strategies to promote diversity and professional, inclusive research environments in the currently supported research?

Note: These are the general guiding reviewer questions. *Not all questions may be applicable to each PIER Plan.* Additional reviewer questions may be included in the solicitation if applicable to the scope of the solicitation and history of the research efforts.

Things to Consider When Developing a PIER Plan

- PIER Plans should describe the activities and strategies applicants will incorporate to enhance the scientific and technical merit of the proposed research through efforts that foster inclusive research and learning environments and promote equitable access to research and research careers.

- Since these plans should be tailored to the proposed research, the Office of Science expects to receive a wide range of ideas and approaches in applicants' PIER Plans.

- SC has developed a summary of [Things to Consider When Developing a PIER Plan](#) to provide a broad range of areas applicants are encourage to consider focusing on in their PIER Plans.

- **This is not a check list. This is not an exhaustive list of possibilities**.

- *Applicants are strongly encouraged to incorporate into their PIER Plans specific actionable tasks that are tailored to the proposed research project. PIER Plans with actionable tasks and milestones tend to be rated higher in the merit review process than plans with generic statements or plans that only reference institutional policies and plans.*

Things to Consider (continued)

Areas of focus to consider in PIER Plans:

- The composition of the project team, including project personnel and partnering institutions and organizations.

- The research environment.

- Implementation of the research projects, and scholarly and professional growth of project personnel.

https://science.osti.gov/grants/Applicant-and-Awardee-Resources/PIER-Plans/Things-to-Consider-When-Developing-a-PIER-Plan

Things to Consider – guiding questions for applicants

Applicants may want to consider the following questions as they develop their PIER Plan:

- How do the activities proposed in the PIER Plan enhance the scientific and/or technical merit of the proposed research project?

- How do the proposed activities and strategies support equity and inclusion as an intrinsic element to advancing scientific excellence in the research project?

- Are the proposed activities and strategies reasonable, actionable, and appropriate for the project scope and project period?

- Does the proposed research project include a clear strategy for ensuring the safety, including physical and psychological safety, of all participants, including those working in traditional workspaces (e.g., labs, offices), remote or isolated research environments, and/or atypical hours?

- Are the roles and responsibilities for implementing the PIER Plan fair and equitable and understood by the applicant's key personnel on the project?

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Things to Consider – guiding questions for applicants

Applicants may want to consider as they develop their PIER Plan (cont'd):

- Do the applicant and key personnel have demonstrated experience and competencies in carrying out the proposed scope of the PIER Plan that could be emphasized?

- How are the proposed activities and strategies leveraging institutional resources or professionals, or resources available through scientific professional societies or similar organizations to support project personnel?

- Is the rationale for the proposed activities and strategies, and their potential contributions to promoting inclusion and equity within the research project, clearly described?

- Are adequate resources (including budget) requested to reasonably carry out the proposed PIER Plan?

- Are timelines or milestones for proposed activities and strategies specific and appropriate to allow for reasonable tracking of and reporting on progress?

PIER Plans – Recap

- There is no single model or "template" example for PIER Plans. **Tailor plans to the project**!

- While we have suggested some potential focus areas in the "Things to Consider…" resource, these are only suggestions and applicants are encouraged to be innovative in their approaches.

- The complexity and detail of a PIER Plan are expected to increase with the size of the research team, the total funding requested, and the number of personnel to be supported.

- Awardees will be expected to report on the progress of their PIER Plans as part of annual progress reports with the same level of rigor as reporting research progress. Lack of sufficient progress on PIER Plans will be taking into consideration if a renewal award is requested.

- **Applicants can request funding** to support the implementation of their PIER Plans, subject to applicable cost principles.

- **PIER Plans with actionable tasks and milestones** tend to be rated higher in the merit review process than plans with generic statements or plans that only reference institutional policies and plans.

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Informational Resources

- DOE Office of Science website on PIER Plan information:

  https://science.osti.gov/grants/Applicant-and-Awardee-Resources/PIER-Plans

  Includes lists of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for applicants and reviewers that are updated regularly.

- Community Informational Resources (compendium of public reports):

  https://science.osti.gov/SW-DEI/Community-Resources

Questions?

Please unmute to ask your question.

Recording will be available on the SC Office Hours website:
https://science.osti.gov/officehours

Slides will be available on the SC PIER Plan website:
https://science.osti.gov/grants/Applicant-and-Awardee-Resources/PIER-Plans

Any questions not addressed today can be sent to sc.swdei@science.doe.gov.