

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**FY 2020 DOE Office of Science Early Career Research Program**  
**Version 1, November 17, 2019**

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**Eligibility**

**Q: How does the DOE Office of Science define “early career”?**

A: Principal Investigators are within 10 years of having received a Ph.D. and are either untenured assistant professors on the tenure track, untenured associate professors on the tenure track, or full-time, nonpostdoctoral, permanent DOE national laboratory employees. For the present competition, those who received doctorates no earlier than 2009 are eligible. Extensions to eligibility will be considered for individuals who have had a major life event requiring an extended absence (3 months or longer) from the workplace, including but not limited to active military service, an absence due to personal disability, or an absence covered by the Family Medical Leave Act.

**Q: The funding announcement states, “...a Principal Investigator may not participate in more than three Office of Science Early Career Research Program competitions.” Does submission of a pre-application count as participation?**

A: No. Participation in the competition is defined as submission of a full application that has not been withdrawn before being officially declined or that was not declined without merit review.

**Q: Is the program limited to Principal Investigators (PIs) who are U.S. citizens?**

A: No, but the PI must be employed by either a U.S. academic institution or a DOE national laboratory.

**Q: Can postdoctoral fellows apply for awards under the DOE Early Career Research Program?**

A: Postdoctoral fellows may not apply directly. However, a PI may include postdoctoral support for the project in the proposed budget.

- Q: I defended my Ph.D. dissertation in 2008, but I graduated in 2009. Am I eligible?**  
A: If the Ph.D. conferment date posted on the academic transcript is a date in 2009, you are eligible. Extensions to eligibility will be considered for individuals who have had a major life event requiring an extended absence (3 months or longer) from the workplace, including but not limited to active military service, an absence due to personal disability, or an absence covered by the Family Medical Leave Act.
- Q: How do I apply for an extension to eligibility due to a major life event requiring an extended absence (3 months or longer) from the workplace?**  
A: A letter signed by the dean, research vice president, or equivalent university or national laboratory position stating that the applicant had an approved absence from their university or national laboratory position, and the length of this absence, must be included with the pre-application. The letter should include NO personal information about the reason for the absence. The request for an eligibility extension will be evaluated as part of the pre-application assessment.
- Q: Can I get a determination about my request for an eligibility extension before I submit my pre-application?**  
A: No, the letter requesting an eligibility extension will be evaluated as part of the pre-application process. See the question above for instructions on how to apply.
- Q: Can an eligibility extension determination be carried over between years?**  
A: No. We intend to continue allowing eligibility extensions in future years for major life events requiring an extended absence, but will not maintain records of approved extensions from prior years.
- Q: I am a Ph.D. candidate, but I have not yet received my Ph.D. Am I eligible?**  
A: You must have a Ph.D. as of the application due date (shown on the cover of the funding announcement).
- Q: If I have previously won an early career award from another agency or a nonprofit organization, am I eligible?**  
A: Yes.
- Q: Are research professors eligible?**  
A: No. In universities, only untenured assistant professors or untenured associate professors on the tenure track with Ph.D.'s earned within the past ten years are eligible.
- Q: While I hold a permanent position, I am a research (not tenure-track) faculty member. Am I eligible?**  
A: No. Research professors are not eligible.
- Q: If I received an Office of Science Early Career Research Program award previously, am I eligible?**  
A: No.

- Q: I am an untenured assistant or associate professor on the tenure track and have applied for tenure but have not yet received it. Am I eligible?**  
A: You are eligible if you are untenured but still on the tenure track as of the application due date (shown on the cover of the funding announcement).
- Q: I am currently part time at a national laboratory but will convert to full-time status beginning in January. Am I eligible?**  
A: You are eligible if you meet the eligibility requirements as of the application due date (shown on the cover of the funding announcement).
- Q: I have accepted a position as an untenured assistant or associate professor on the tenure track at a U.S. academic institution, but I have not yet begun the job. Am I eligible?**  
A: You must be employed in the position on the application due date (shown on the cover of the funding announcement)..
- Q: I have accepted a position as a full-time permanent non-postdoctoral DOE national laboratory employee, but I have not yet begun the job. Am I eligible?**  
A: You must be employed in the position by the application due date (shown on the cover of the funding announcement).
- Q: I have earned two Ph.D.'s. One is within the ten-year eligibility window, and one is not. Am I eligible?**  
A: If a person has multiple Ph.D.'s, the discipline of the one they have earned within the ten-year eligibility window should be relevant to the proposed idea.
- Q: I previously won a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). Am I eligible?**  
A: Yes. Previous winners of PECASE are eligible for the Early Career Research Program.
- Q: My national laboratory has certain appointments not considered permanent but also not considered postdoctoral. Are people in these appointments eligible?**  
A: To make this determination, the laboratory director should work with the Office of Science to answer the following set of questions generically for the type of appointment (and not for any individual currently occupying the appointment): (1) Is the appointment type considered to be a postdoctoral position? (2) Is an appointee in this position an employee of the national laboratory? (3) Is it the laboratory's intention at the time the appointment type is made to transition appointees to career employment status when the appointments end? (4) Is the appointment type considered to be full time? (5) Does the appointment type qualify for the full benefits of a career employee (as opposed to a reduced benefits package that might be provided for a postdoctoral employee)? If the answer to the first question is no and the answer to each of the remaining questions is yes, the type of appointment is eligible.

**Q: Is there a list of the appointment types that have already been approved by DOE?**

A: Lists of positions already approved and disapproved appear below. If a position type does not appear in the charts below, it means that no questions have come up about its eligibility in the past that had to be resolved by DOE and the laboratory. Absence of a position type from the lists below does not imply approval or disapproval. If there is any doubt about the eligibility of any position type or if you'd like to see the documentation of the eligibility determination, please email [SC.Early@science.doe.gov](mailto:SC.Early@science.doe.gov) . Note that *limited term employees are not eligible for this program* unless their position types appear in the first chart below. It is a best practice to have your laboratory clear your position type with DOE if there is any question at all about eligibility. National laboratories must follow the determinations made. We appreciate the laboratories' cooperation in working with DOE to make these eligibility determinations, which make the process fair and transparent for everyone.

Positions that have thus far been approved based on the answers to the five questions above:

Lab	Position Type	Eligibility Determination	Date of Determination
ANL	Maria Goeppert Mayer Fellow and Enrico Fermi Fellow	Eligible	3/31/2016 (These are the 2 named Argonne Director's Fellows)
BNL	Assistant Scientists, Associate Scientists, and Scientists	Eligible	7/16/2009
FNAL	Associate Scientist, Wilson Fellow, and Peoples Fellow	Eligible	7/16/2009
LANL	Limited Term Foreign Nationals Intended for Permanent Employment but Awaiting Residency or Citizenship	Eligible	8/6/2010. Regular limited term employees hired for short term projects are not eligible; "The Director's letter will assure that any application is NOT part of the larger limited term staff population, but solely Foreign Nationals in process for permanent residency or citizenship."
LBNL	Divisional Fellows	Eligible	7/8/2009
ORNL	Wigner, Shull, Householder, and Russell, Weinberg Fellows	Eligible	7/30/2009; Russell Fellow 9/21/2016
SLAC	Panofsky Fellow	Eligible	8/12/2013
SLAC	Associate Staff Scientist	Eligible	8/10/2014
SNL	Foreign National Interim Technical Staff (FNITS)	Eligible	8/6/2010. Regular limited term employees are not eligible. "...indicate in the letter that this is a DOE-approved position that is eligible for the program."

Positions that have thus far been disapproved:

Lab	Position Type	Eligibility Determination	Date of Determination
ANL	Limited Term Position	Not Eligible	8/26/2015
BNL	Goldhaber Distinguished Fellowship	Not Eligible	7/9/2009
PNNL	Linus Pauling Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellow	Not Eligible	7/27/2012
TJNAF	Term Scientist	Not Eligible	9/22/2010

**Q: My appointment type is listed on the laboratory website as a postdoctoral appointment. Is my appointment type eligible?**

A: No. If the appointment type is designated as a postdoctoral position on the laboratory's website, the answer to Question (1), "Is the appointment type considered to be a postdoctoral position?" is yes.

**Q: Is our academic institution required to supply any documentation certifying a Principal Investigator's tenure status and appointment in a tenure-track position?**

A: We do not require such certification, but a submission through the institution implies the institution has made such a determination and takes responsibility for the decision. The cover page of the proposal asks for position title, tenure status, and year of Ph.D.

**Q: I already have funding for a regular university grant through the DOE Office of Science. Am I eligible?**

A: Yes, but you must propose new research.

**Q: I am a U.S. national employed by a non-U.S. academic institution. Am I eligible?**

A: No. You must work at a U.S. academic institution or a DOE national laboratory.

**Q: Am I required to be PECASE-eligible to apply for the Office of Science Early Career Research Program?**

A: No. PECASE eligibility is not required for the program, but we will not be able to nominate you for a PECASE later if you do not qualify for PECASE.

**Q: I have accepted an eligible faculty position but am not yet on campus. The university has given me a courtesy appointment so that I can serve as a Principal Investigator and submit applications for funding support. Am I eligible?**

A: No. To be eligible, you must be receiving a paycheck from the submitting institution as of the application due date (shown on the cover of the funding announcement).

**Q: I start my tenure-track position next calendar year. My soon-to-be department chair has offered to write a letter declaring that I will be employed in the position by July 1. Would I then be eligible?**

A: No. You must be working in the eligible position as of the application due date (shown on the cover of the funding announcement).

**Q: I worked in industry after receiving my Ph.D. but before joining academia. I meet all the eligibility requirements except one: My doctorate was awarded more than ten years ago. Am I eligible?**

A: No. You must be within 10 years of having received a Ph.D. For the present competition, those who received doctorates no earlier than 2009 are eligible.

**Q: I work at an academic institution that does not have a tenure track. Am I eligible to apply?**

A: No. Your institution must have a tenure track and you must be on it.

**Q: My title is Assistant Professor. My department is implementing an alternative model, so I am not in a tenure-track position. I am also not a temporary or visiting employee. Our program has renewable, three-year contracts instead of tenure, and senior faculty members use titles of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor. My position is considered by my institution to be tenure-track equivalent. Am I eligible?**

A: No. You must be on a tenure track and be an untenured Assistant Professor or untenured Associate Professor.

**Q: My institution has instructional and research faculty tracks. The instructional faculty tracks are at the Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor level, whereas the research tracks are at the Assistant, Associate, and Full Researcher level. I am on the researcher track. Am I eligible?**

A: No.

**Q: If my DOE national laboratory has no funding from the Office of Science, would our scientists be eligible?**

A: No. Each proposal must include a signature from the national laboratory director on the cover page confirming that the proposed research idea fits within the scope of Office-of-Science-funded programs at the national laboratory. If there are no Office-of-Science-funded programs at the lab, there would be no basis for the signature.

**Q: If my DOE national laboratory has a small amount of funding from the Office of Science, would our scientists be eligible?**

A: Yes. However, the ideas proposed must fit within the (small) scope of Office-of-Science-funded programs at the lab.

**Q: I have a 50% staff position at a DOE national laboratory and a 50% research staff position at an academic institution. Am I eligible to apply?**

A: No. You are neither a full-time, non-postdoctoral, permanent DOE national laboratory employee nor an untenured assistant or associate professor on the tenure track at an academic institution.

**Q: Are early career scientists employed by other federal agencies eligible?**

A: No. The PI must be employed by either a U.S. academic institution or a DOE national laboratory.

**Q: I am expecting to leave my current university or national laboratory to work at a DOE National Laboratory, and there is a chance I might transfer after the pre-application is submitted but before the application is due. If the pre-application from my current institution is encouraged, is my new national laboratory allowed to submit a full proposal for the work described in the encouraged pre-application?**

A: We recommend that you wait a year and apply from your new lab when you can be there for both the preproposal and proposal deadlines. We may decline a proposal from a lab different from the institution on the preproposal if we deem it to be not responsive (including if it does not fit within the scope of SC funded programs at the new lab). At the preproposal stage, the submitting lab "...is responsible for ensuring that the research ideas submitted in its preproposals fit within the scope of Office-of-Science-funded programs at the national laboratory." DOE will not have this implied assurance from the new laboratory. Our preference is that you wait until next year.

**Q: I am expecting to leave my current university or national laboratory to work at a university, and there is a chance I might transfer after the pre-application is submitted but before the application is due. If the pre-application from my current institution is encouraged, is my new university allowed to submit a full application for the work described in the encouraged pre-application?**

A: Yes.

## **Budget**

**Q: What is the lower limit on the proposed budget?**

A: The minimum award size is \$750,000 for five years for universities. Historically, the average academic award has been \$750,000 for five years (~\$150,000 per year). Typical awards for DOE national laboratory staff are \$500,000 per year for five years.

**Q: What is the upper limit on the proposed budget?**

A: The ceiling for an academic application is \$1,000,000 for five years. Historically, the average academic award has been \$750,000 for five years (~\$150,000 per year). Larger awards (historic maximum of \$960,000) are possible with sufficient justification.

**Q: Does the minimum budget specified in the announcement include indirect costs?**

A: Yes, the minimum budget includes both direct and indirect costs.

**Q: Can there be a co-Principal Investigator on my application?**

A: No.

**Q: May I have a paid collaborator on my application?**

A: Our intention is to fund projects directed and executed by the early career Principal Investigator (PI). In rare cases where a collaborator (either early career or senior) brings something unique to the project, support will be considered. However, our preference is that you propose a project with research support staff (e.g., students, postdocs), travel, supplies, equipment, and other necessary expenses for the PI-led project.

**Q: May I propose equipment and/or travel support?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Can the budget contain funding for graduate students and other participants?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Why is the minimum laboratory award larger than the minimum university award?**

A: The university award is intended to pay up to two or three months' summer salary for the Principal Investigator (PI) to supplement the normal, academic-year salary. The laboratory award is intended to pay at least 50% of the year-round PI salary. Also, universities can involve students part-time in research, while laboratories may rely on full-time staff to support their research projects. The minimum university award is competitive with similar programs at other agencies. This is the only such award of its type available to DOE national laboratory scientists.

**Q: Does this program require cost sharing?**

A: No.

**Q: The announcement provides a minimum cumulative award size. Must this minimum budget be distributed equally over the five award years or can it be distributed in any way as long as the five-year total equals the minimum award size?**

A: You can distribute the budget any way you'd like, but make sure that the cumulative budget is about equal to the minimum award size. Laboratory Principal Investigators must charge at least 50% of salary to the award each year of the award.

**Q: PAMS allows a maximum of five budget periods. My laboratory prices work based on fiscal years, so our tools are more suited for six budget entries than five. Can we enter six budget periods based on fiscal years instead of five budget periods that cross fiscal years?**

A: No. Please complete the PAMS budgets in one year increments.



## **Pre-application/Preproposal and Application/Proposal**

(Note: The terms application and pre-application are generally used for applications through a FOA; the term proposal and preproposal are generally used for national laboratory proposal submissions. For this document, the term application and pre-application are used when the question and response apply to submissions through both the FOA and the national laboratory funding announcement)

**Q: Is the pre-application required, and will it be used to select a reduced number of applications for full submission?**

A: Yes. Pre-applications will be reviewed for responsiveness of the proposed work to the research topics identified in this funding announcement. In addition, if a scientific topic receives a large number of pre-applications, federal Program Managers may evaluate the pre-applications to determine their competitiveness within the scientific topic, based on the following criteria:

1. Responsiveness to the objectives of the FOA.
2. Scientific and technical merit.
3. Appropriateness of the proposed research approaches.
4. Likelihood of scientific impact.
5. Ensuring a diverse pool of applicants.

Pre-application comparative reviews will compare pre-applications within a topical field with priority given to scientifically innovative and forward-looking basic research with the highest likelihood of success as a full application. These reviews will be conducted by no less than three federal program managers chosen for their topical knowledge and diversity of perspective. Applicants with the highest rated pre-applications will be encouraged to submit applications; others will be discouraged from submitting applications.

DOE will send a response by email to each applicant encouraging or discouraging the submission of a formal application by the date shown on the cover of the funding announcement. Only those applicants that receive notification from DOE encouraging a formal application may submit full applications. No other formal applications will be considered.

**Q: May I contact the program manager before I submit my pre-application for feedback?**

A: Yes. Feel free to contact a program manager if you are uncertain about which topic from the solicitation is the best fit for your idea. The program manager can provide informal feedback on your idea and suggest other program areas if the idea does not fit within his or her area. Please note that you may formally submit any preproposal you believe fits within the topics described in the solicitation, regardless of the informal feedback you may receive from a program manager. A formal encourage/discourage decision based on topical fit with the solicitation will be issued for every pre-application we receive.

**Q: Is there a required format for the pre-application?**

A: The pre-application attachment must include, at the top of the first page, the following information:

Title of Pre-application  
Principal Investigator Name, Job Title  
Institution  
PI Phone Number, PI Email Address  
Year Doctorate Awarded:  
Eligibility Extension Requested: (Yes/No)  
Number of Times Previously Applied:  
Topic Area:  
Funding Opportunity or DOE National Laboratory Announcement Number:

This information must be followed by a clear and concise description of the objectives and technical approach of the proposed research. The pre-application may not exceed three pages, with a minimum text font size of 11 point and margins no smaller than one inch on all sides. You may include optional figures and references, but they must fit within the page limitation. To help the Office of Science avoid conflicts of interest in identifying potential reviewers, a list of the Principal Investigator's collaborators, co-editors, and graduate/postdoctoral advisors and advisees must be submitted with the pre-application. **Failure to include this information will result in the pre-application being discouraged from submitting a full application.** The list must be the last page in the pdf pre-application file and will not count against the page limit for the pre-application. Since the Office of Science will never use individuals from your institution as reviewers, you may omit them from the pre-application list to save space.

**Q: I have accepted a position that is eligible for the program, but I have not yet begun the job as of the pre-application due date. I understand that I must be employed in an eligible position on the application due date (shown on the cover of the funding announcement) to apply for the program. I fully expect to be employed in my new position by the application due date. How can I indicate this on my pre-application?**

A: Please list your current job title at the top of the first page, but add a footnote. In the footnote, provide your soon-to-be position title and indicate that you anticipate starting that position by the application due date.

**Q: How does my university submit a pre-application?**

A: The pre-application must be submitted electronically through the DOE Office of Science Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS) website <https://pamspublic.science.energy.gov/>. If you are applying from a university, choose "View / Respond to Funding Opportunity Announcements."

**Q: How does my DOE national laboratory submit a preproposal?**

A: The preproposal must be submitted electronically through the DOE Office of Science Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS) website <https://pamspublic.science.energy.gov/>. Note: If you are applying from a DOE National

Laboratory, make sure you choose “View / Respond to DOE National Laboratory Announcements.” Do not choose “View / Respond to Funding Opportunity Announcements.” If you choose the latter, you will respond to the wrong solicitation, and your preproposal might not be considered.

**Q: May I submit more than one pre-application? Alternately, may I submit the same pre-application to multiple programs?**

A: No. You may submit only one pre-application.

**Q: Does the Principal Investigator submit the pre-application or does the sponsored research office submit it?**

A: We have no preference. The acknowledgment email will go to the Principal Investigator’s email address.

**Q: How do I submit a Pre-application?**

A: Pre-applications must be submitted electronically through the DOE Office of Science Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS) website, <https://pamspublic.science.energy.gov/>. Universities should respond to Funding Opportunity Announcement DE-FOA-0002173. DOE National Laboratories should respond to DOE National Laboratory Announcement LAB 20-2173. The deadline for submission into PAMS is shown on the cover of the funding announcement. Late pre-applications will not be accepted. The Principal Investigator and anyone submitting on behalf of the Principal Investigator must register for an account in PAMS before it will be possible to submit a pre-application. You are encouraged to register for an account in PAMS at least a week in advance of the pre-application submission deadline so that there will be no delays with your submission.

**Q: If I include citations on the pre-application, are they required to be within the 3-page limit and with a minimum text font size of 11 point?**

A: Yes, you must fit everything you submit in your pre-application within the three allowed pages. If you choose to include references, they must fit in the three-page limit.

**Q: May I include figures in my pre-application?**

A: Yes, you may include figures within the three pages, but do not exceed three pages under any circumstances.

**Q: If I submit a pre-application and it is discouraged, does it count toward the three attempts?**

A: No. Participation in the competition is defined as submission of a full application that has not been withdrawn before being officially declined or that was not declined without merit review.

**Q: If I submit a pre-application and it is encouraged, do I have to submit the full application?**

A: No.

**Q: If I submit a pre-application and it is encouraged but I decided not to submit the full application, does that count toward the three attempts**

A: No. Participation in the competition is defined as submission of a full application that has not been withdrawn before being officially declined or that was not declined without merit review.

**Q: Is there any budget information required in the pre-application?**

A: No.

**Q: Does the pre-application require institutional approval?**

A: From the DOE perspective, a university pre-application can come directly from the Principal Investigator, but check with your institution to find out its pre-application submission policy. For DOE National Laboratories, the cover page must be signed by the national laboratory director confirming that the proposed research idea fits within the scope of Office-of-Science-funded programs at the national laboratory.

**Q: I did not get an encourage/discourage notification from PAMS, and the encourage/discourage date has passed. What do I do?**

A: Notifications sent from the PAMS system will come from the PAMS email address <[PAMS.Autoreply@science.doe.gov](mailto:PAMS.Autoreply@science.doe.gov)>. Please make sure your email server/software allows delivery of emails from the PAMS email address to yours. When the email went out, the status (encouraged or discouraged) of the pre-application was updated at the PAMS website. Thus, you can log into PAMS and navigate to the My Preproposals page to determine the status. You can also contact the program manager. To report a missing email, please contact the PAMS Help Desk, which can be reached Monday through Friday, 9 AM – 5:30 PM Eastern Time. Telephone: (855) 818-1846 (toll free) or (301) 903-9610, Email: [sc.pams-helpdesk@science.doe.gov](mailto:sc.pams-helpdesk@science.doe.gov). Please provide the solicitation number in all communications with the PAMS help desk.

**Q: I work at a DOE national laboratory and would like to submit a preproposal, but I'm not sure if my idea fits within the scope of Office-of-Science-funded programs at my laboratory. How do I find this out?**

A: You are encouraged to discuss your idea with a lab manager familiar with the scope of funded programs at the laboratory to make sure it fits.

**Q: I was not able to submit my pre-application or national laboratory proposal into PAMS because of technical issues with the PAMS software. Can I submit a late pre-application or DOE national laboratory proposal under these circumstances?**

A: Your case will be considered only if you contacted the PAMS help desk well before the preproposal or proposal submission deadline to report a problem. Please email [SC.Early@science.doe.gov](mailto:SC.Early@science.doe.gov) with your request. You will be asked the following questions: (1) Did you contact the PAMS help desk for help assistance with the problems well before the deadline? (2) If so, approximately what time did you place the call or send the email? (3) Do you have a help desk tracking number? Please be ready to answer these questions when informing DOE of problems with PAMS.

**Q: If I withdraw my application, does it still count toward my limit of three submissions?**

A: Starting in FY 2020, applications withdrawn prior to being officially declined will not count as a submission. Before FY 2020, applications withdrawn prior to being sent for merit review by the DOE Office of Science did not count as a submission. Once an application was sent for merit review, its status as reflected in PAMS changes from “Submitted to DOE” to “Under Review,” and it counted as a submission even if it was withdrawn. In all years, applications declined without merit review by the DOE SC do not count as a submission.

**Q: How does my university submit a full application?**

A: Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. The Funding Opportunity Number is DE-FOA-0002173 and the CFDA Number for the Office of Science is 81.049. The deadline for submission into Grants.gov is shown on the cover of the funding announcement. Late applications will not be accepted. Only those applicants that receive notification from DOE encouraging a formal application may submit full applications.

**Q: How does my DOE national laboratory submit a full proposal?**

A: Laboratory proposals must be submitted electronically through the DOE Office of Science Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS) website, <https://pamspublic.science.energy.gov/>. The DOE National Laboratory Announcement Number is LAB 20-2173. The deadline for submission into PAMS is shown on the cover of the funding announcement. Late proposals will not be accepted. Only those proposers that receive notification from DOE encouraging a formal proposal may submit full proposals. Anyone submitting on behalf of the Principal Investigator must register for an account in PAMS before it will be possible to submit a preproposal. Submitters are encouraged to register for an account in PAMS at least a week in advance of the laboratory proposal submission deadline so that there will be no delays with your submission.

**Q: May I submit my DOE national laboratory proposal into Searchable FWP?**

A: **No.** Do not use the Searchable FWP system to respond to this announcement. Proposals submitted into Searchable FWP will not be accepted. Laboratory proposals must be submitted into the DOE Office of Science Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS) website, <https://pamspublic.science.energy.gov/>.

**Q: Is my DOE national laboratory required to submit a Field Work Proposal or FWP?**

A: No. Do not submit or attach a DOE Field Work Proposal (FWP) at this time. The program office will request submission of Field Work Proposals later *only from those applicants who are selected for possible funding.*

**Q: A list of synergistic activities is required in the biographical sketch of the full application. I am asked to list professional and scholarly activities related to the effort proposed. What kind of information should be included here?**

A: Your answer in this section depends on your experiences. Include information that can be used by reviewers to evaluate your potential for leadership within the scientific community (review criterion 6). Some examples might be invited and/or public lectures, awards received, scientific program committees, conference or workshop organization, professional society membership activities, special international or industrial partnerships, reviewing or editorship activities, or other scientific leadership experiences.

**Q: Is a data management plan required for this application?**

A: Yes. A data management plan must be included in Appendix 6. For guidance on data management plans, refer to the solicitation. Please also refer to the DOE Office of Science Statement on Digital Data Management at <https://science.osti.gov/Funding-Opportunities/Digital-Data-Management>.

**Q: I forgot to include a data management plan in my application and the deadline has passed. Will DOE accept it if I send it by email after the deadline?**

A: No. The DOE Office of Science will decline without review any application that does not include a data management plan.

**Q: May I include a list of suggested reviewers *not* to involve?**

A: You should send such suggestions to the program manager in an email. Make sure you identify the title of your encouraged pre-application and your institution in the email. Please *do not* include this list in your application because the application will be seen by the reviewers. We also advise against putting this in your pre-application.

**Q: Do you require an educational or outreach component in the application?**

A: No.

**Q: I work for a U.S. academic institution. Do you require a letter from my department chair with the application?**

A: No.

**Q: The announcement states that I must include several pieces of information (e.g., for academic institutions, Institution; Street Address/City/State/Zip; Principal Investigator (PI); Position Title of PI; Business Mailing Address of PI; Telephone Number of PI; Email of PI; Funding Opportunity Announcement; DOE/Office of Science Program Office; Topic Area; Topic Area Program Manager; Year Doctorate Awarded; Eligibility Extension Included in Approved Pre-application; Is the PI in a Tenure-Track Appointment? (Yes or No); Does the PI have tenure (Yes or No); Number of Times Previously Applied; PAMS Preproposal Number; PECASE Eligible (Yes or No); Proposal Contains Biosketch in Appendix 1 (Yes or No) and Proposal Contains Data Management Plan (Yes or No)) on the first page of the narrative. Does this header information count within the 15 page limit?**

A: You may place this information on a separate cover page outside of the narrative.

**Q: How is PECASE Eligibility defined for this solicitation?**

A: A PI is PECASE-eligible if he or she is, as of the closing date of the solicitation, a U.S. citizen, U.S. national or permanent resident and if she or he has not received a PECASE previously through any agency.

**Q: How are PECASE nominees reviewed and selected?**

A: The DOE Office of Science selects its PECASE nominees from the pool of PECASE-eligible winners of the Office of Science Early Career Research Program. Selections are made after a cross-disciplinary review panel meets to review the Early Career Research Program proposals, merit reviews, and updated CVs provided by the winners prior to the panel review. The PECASE review criteria, established by the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), are listed here: (1) the pursuit of innovative research at the frontiers of science and technology, and (2) a commitment to community service as demonstrated through scientific leadership, public education, or community outreach. The DOE Office of Science emphasizes the scientific leadership aspect of the second PECASE review criterion.

**Q: I received my permanent residency a few days before the closing date for this solicitation, but my application had already been prepared for submission and did not declare my eligibility. Am I eligible to be considered for PECASE?**

A: Yes, but you must let DOE know by immediately sending an email to [SC.Early@science.doe.gov](mailto:SC.Early@science.doe.gov) explaining the situation.

**Q: I received a DOE Early Career Research Program award a few years ago, but I was not eligible for PECASE at the time. Since then, I have become a permanent resident. Can I be considered this year?**

A: No. Automatic consideration for PECASE happens only in the year you win the award.

**Q: I received my permanent residency one day after the closing date for this solicitation. Am I eligible to be considered for PECASE?**

A: No.

**Q: What mailing address should I list on my application?**

A: Please list your professional or work mailing address (not your home address).

**Q: I would like to submit an application with a title and/or topic different from the one in the pre-application I submitted. Is this allowed?**

A: Our preference is that you keep the same or a very similar title. A slight change in the title is allowed, but the topic may not change.

**Q: Should the list of current and pending support in the application include startup funds provided by my university?**

A: No.

**Q: How can I locate the format requirements for the full applications?**

A: For academic institutions, you must download the full Funding Opportunity Announcement DE-FOA-0002173 from our Grants and Contracts website, <https://science.osti.gov/grants/FOAs/Open>. For DOE national laboratories, the proposal format requirements can be found in the laboratory announcement LAB 20-2173 on our Grants and Contracts website, <https://science.osti.gov/grants/Lab-Announcements/Open>.

**Q: Is there a limit on the number of applications that may be submitted by an institution?**

A: No.

**Q: In my field, there are routinely more than ten and sometimes hundreds of co-authors of archival publications. If I list every co-author on every paper, my biographical sketch will exceed the three-page limit. May I abbreviate the author lists?**

A: Yes. You may use an abbreviated style such as the *Physical Review Letters* (PRL) convention for citations (list only the first author). For example, your paper may be listed as, "A Really Important New Result," A. Aardvark et al. (MONGO Collaboration), PRL 999. You may also use this convention in the bibliography.

**Q: Can I include a table of contents in my proposal?**

A: Yes. The table of contents will not count toward the 15-page limit.

**Q: Can the research I propose overlap with other research for which I am already funded by DOE or any other agency?**

A: The application may not duplicate your currently funded research, regardless of the agency funding it. You should propose new research. There is one exception (see the next question).

**Q: Can I submit the same proposal to two federal agencies simultaneously (e.g., can I submit the same proposal to the NSF CAREER program and the DOE Early Career Research Program)?**

A: Yes, but you can only be funded once by the federal government for a given scope of work. Thus, if both are selected for funding, you will only be able to accept one award. To avoid this situation, you can submit proposals for completely different scopes of work to the two agencies.

**Q: Several early career investigators at my national laboratory would like to work together to solve a large problem. Can we propose one large award of two to four times the minimum budget with multiple early career investigators?**

A: No. This is a single-Principal Investigator (PI) program. Our intention is to fund projects directed and executed by one early career PI.



**Q: My idea seems to cut across two of the topical areas described in the funding announcement. How should I handle this?**

A: You should select a single topical area to be the primary one to which the pre-application is submitted. The pre-applications may be moved between topical areas within a program office (ASCR, BER, BES, ...), but that will be decided by the Office of Science program managers after all of the pre-applications are received. You may also contact the Technical Contact prior to the pre-application deadline to discuss whether your idea fits within their topical area. Once a pre-application is encouraged by a particular program office, the application must be submitted to that program office and cannot be moved to another program office by DOE.

**Q: Are letters of recommendation, endorsement, or support allowed?**

A: No. Applications that include recommendation letters will be subject to elimination from consideration during DOE's initial review.

**Q: Even though letters of recommendation are not allowed, will you accept letters of collaboration?**

A: Our preference is to support PI-led efforts without paid collaborators. If either an unfunded or funded collaboration is proposed, the best place to add the optional letters of collaboration is Appendix 7 (Other Attachments). Each optional letter of collaboration may contain two and only two sentences and must use the following format:

Dear <Principal Investigator Name>:

If your application entitled, "<Application Name>," is selected for funding under the DOE Office of Science Early Career Research Program, it is my intent to collaborate in this research by <Complete Sentence With a Very Short Description of What the Collaborator Offers to Do or Provide>. Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Sincerely,

<Collaborator's Name and Signature Block>

**Q: Is it necessary for technical support staff (e.g., postdocs or students) to be on board at my institution at the time the application is submitted?**

A: No.

**Q: I am an eligible PI at a U.S. academic institution. Am I required to make contact with or collaborate with a DOE national laboratory for a successful application?**

A: No. Your application will be evaluated using the merit review criteria in the announcement, and collaboration or contact with a national laboratory is not required.

**Q: If I choose to support graduate students or postdocs using a grant from the Office of Science Early Career Research Program, are they required to be U.S. citizens?**

A: No.

**Q: I did not submit a pre-application. May I submit a full application?**

A: No.

**Q: How can I correct a typo in an application I have already submitted when it is before the deadline?**

A: If you are from a university, correct the typo and submit the application a second time through Grants.gov. Check the “Changed/Corrected Application” box on the proposal cover page. Send an email to [SC.Early@science.doe.gov](mailto:SC.Early@science.doe.gov) to let DOE know you have submitted a changed/corrected application. If you are from a DOE National Laboratory, log into PAMS, select the “View My Existing Proposals” link, and click the “Actions/Views” link in the Options column next to the proposal to obtain a dropdown menu. Select “Reopen and Edit Proposal” from the dropdown. Note that this action withdraws the application and resubmission of the proposal, including budget information, must be completed before the proposal deadline. Late proposals will not be accepted.

**Q: Can I make changes to my pre-application or application after the deadline?**

A: No. Changes after the deadline are not allowed for any reason.

**Q: I submitted my application through Grants.gov twice. Which one will be considered by DOE?**

A: As a courtesy, if you discover this has happened, please send an email to [SC.Early@science.doe.gov](mailto:SC.Early@science.doe.gov) to let DOE know you submitted twice. If you have a preference for which copy we should consider, please let us know. If we do not hear from you, we will consider the application that arrived last and disregard the one that arrived first.

**Q: My pre-application was transferred by DOE to a Program Manager other than the one I selected when I submitted it. What should I do?**

A: When you submit your full application, provide the new topic area and program manager’s name on the cover page under “Topic Area” and “Topic Area Program Manager.” If you are with a DOE National Laboratory, select the new program manager from the dropdown when you submit your full proposal into PAMS. If the new program manager is not listed in the solicitation, please contact [SC.Early@science.doe.gov](mailto:SC.Early@science.doe.gov) for guidance.

**Q: What fraction of pre-applications usually gets encouraged?**

A: Historically, the Office of Science has encouraged about 80% of submitted pre-applications. However, starting in FY 2019, if a scientific topic receives a large number of pre-applications, federal Program Managers may evaluate the pre-applications to determine their competitiveness within the scientific topic. This evaluation will potentially result in a higher number of discouraged pre-applications. The intent in discouraging submission of certain pre-applications is to benefit applicants who otherwise would have prepared and submitted applications with a negligible likelihood of success; noting that the failed application would also then “count” towards the PI’s three allowed applications to the Office of Science Early Career Research program.

## Review, Selection, and Award Management

**Q: May I submit my application to a program office other than the one that encouraged my pre-application?**

A: No. Once a pre-application is encouraged by a particular program office, the application must be submitted to and reviewed in that program office. This is especially important because some offices have additional requirements for their data management plans as described in the solicitation. Your application must conform to the data management requirements of the specific office that encouraged it. Because of this, applications will not be moved between program offices after they arrive. They must be reviewed within the office that encouraged them.

**Q: If I am selected for an early career award from another agency at the same time I am selected for one from DOE Office of Science, may I accept both of them?**

A: You may be allowed to receive both awards. However, you will not be funded twice for the same work. Make sure you keep the ideas you propose to the two agencies distinct if you want to accept both awards.

**Q: How will the peer review be conducted?**

A: Review of the applications will be handled in the programs using the review criteria established in the announcement. Applications may be reviewed by either mail review or panel review or some combination of both. Each program will decide individually on its review method. The best way to prepare for the review is to learn about the review criteria and application format by reading the full announcement. If you write your proposed research to be responsive to the review criteria, to fit in with the Office of Science mission areas, and to follow the required format, you will be ready for any review process.

**Q: What is a reasonable start date for the award?**

A: We suggest a start date of September 1, 2020.

**Q: Will this program be offered next year?**

A: Our intention is to continue this program on an annual basis, subject to availability of funds. Each Principal Investigator (PI) may only submit one Office of Science Early Career Research Program application per annual competition, and a PI may not participate in more than three Office of Science Early Career Research Program competitions over time.

**Q: If I receive Office of Science Early Career Research Program funding and subsequently get tenure, can I keep the award for its remaining years or must it stop once I get tenure?**

A: An award is for five years (assuming satisfactory progress and available funds), and you will not have to give up the award when you receive tenure.

**Q: Will I receive the reviewer comments after the review is complete?**

A: Yes. We will send reviewer comments to the Principal Investigator at the time or shortly after the award is issued or at the time or shortly after the application is declined.

**Q: Are the peer reviewers asked to provide scores?**

A: Yes. In addition to providing narrative comments associated with each of the six merit review criteria, each reviewer will be asked to provide an overall integer numerical rating between 1 and 6 for each application, where the scale follows:  
Strongly Encourage Funding (5 or 6);  
Encourage Funding (3 or 4); or  
Discourage Funding (1 or 2).

**Q: Will all applications with a merit review score above a certain level get funded?**

A: No, the Selection Official will consider the merit review scores and written recommendations, program policy factors, and the amount of funding available. Program policy factors may include the alignment of proposed research with existing or planned projects and the utilization of existing or planned facilities within a given program.

**Q: How will the reviewers evaluate criterion 6, Potential for Leadership within the Scientific Community?**

A: For criterion 6, the following guidance is given to the reviewers: The potential for scientific leadership should be interpreted broadly according to your individual experience within your discipline. The Office of Science wants to identify those researchers early in their careers who have the potential to develop new scientific ideas, promote them, and convince their peers to pursue them as new directions. Each applicant was asked in the solicitation to provide in Appendix 1 information that can be used to evaluate whether the applicant is being recognized by peers as a prospective leader. Examples provided were invited and/or public lectures, awards, scientific program committees, conference or workshop organization, professional society activities, special international or industrial partnerships, or reviewing or editorship activities. However, you are encouraged to use your evaluation of the proposed science with your own professional judgment of what scientific leadership means. Beyond its utility in the selection of winners, your input on criterion 6 will be used, along with other information, to evaluate which of the winners will be nominated to the White House for the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE).

**Q: If a lab scientist receives an Early Career Research Program award and, at a later date, accepts a 50/50 joint position with a university, would they be able to keep their award?**

A: The person would not be able to keep the award at the lab because they would no longer be full time at the lab. To keep an award at a lab, the PI must be in a full time, permanent, non-postdoctoral national laboratory position. To transfer the award to a university, the PI must move into a tenure-track or tenured position at the university. It is never automatic to transfer or keep an award. Under the transfer rules described in the solicitation, the new institution would submit an application to us. If there is no change in scope, the work can be transferred. If there is a change in scope, then we will get the

application reviewed and make a decision based on the reviews. The award amount would be reduced to an appropriate level for a university early career award, typically \$150k per year.

**Q: How many Early Career Research Program applications did each program office within the Office of Science receive in previous years?**

A: The table below shows the number of applications received in each of the past few years:

Program Office	Number of Applications/Proposals									
	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
<b>ASCR</b>	361	181	87	75	94	61	96	94	105	133
<b>BER</b>	277	150	79	71	58	67	51	52	62	72
<b>BES</b>	867	615	524	477	442	356	404	394	421	317
<b>FES</b>	42	34	22	23	30	23	32	29	24	28
<b>HEP</b>	153	129	89	79	75	73	84	83	91	99
<b>NP</b>	56	40	38	44	49	30	35	51	53	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>1756</b>	<b>1149</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>696</b>

\*ASCR and BER reduced the number of topics included in the solicitation after fiscal year 2011. BES began alternate year topics in 2015. FY 2019 included program manager review of pre-applications in BES.

**Q: How many Early Career Research Program awards did each program office within the Office of Science make in previous years?**

A: The tables below shows the number of awards issued in each of the past few years:

Office	Number of University Awards									
	FY 10	11	12	13	14*	15*	16*	17	18	19
<b>ASCR</b>	5	3	3	3	3	2	2	4	4	4
<b>BER</b>	5	4	6	4	1	4	2	2	5	2
<b>BES</b>	18	24	21	26	10	17	16	19	29	24
<b>FES</b>	4	4	1	2	1	2	4	4	2	4
<b>HEP</b>	10	8	8	7	3	4	3	4	7	7
<b>NP</b>	5	4	5	6	3	4	3	5	7	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>

\*Success rates for university grants are temporarily reduced because the Office of Science changed the way it funds grants and cooperative agreements. For further information, see <https://science.osti.gov/Funding-Opportunities/Digital-Data-Management> .

Office	Number of Laboratory Awards									
	FY 10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
ASCR	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	4
BER	3	3	3	3	3	1	5	5	3	5
BES	8	7	8	5	6	8	6	2	11	6
FES	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	4	2
HEP	4	5	4	2	3	1	4	7	7	7
NP	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	2	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>

## Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS)

**Q: What is PAMS?**

A: The DOE Office of Science Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS) is a software system that accepts submissions from outside DOE and helps applicants and DOE program managers organize their application and award portfolios. PAMS is integrated with Grants.gov such that grant applications submitted into Grants.gov are imported into and stored by PAMS. Pre-applications and DOE National Laboratory proposals can be submitted directly into PAMS.

**Q: How do I register in PAMS?**

A: To register, click “Create New PAMS Account” on the website <https://pamspublic.science.energy.gov/> and follow the instructions for creating an account. You will be prompted to create a username and password and to enter your contact information. Registering to PAMS is a two-step process. Once you create an individual account, you must associate yourself with (“register to”) your institution. Follow the onscreen instructions to do this.

**Q: How can I get help with PAMS?**

A: For help with PAMS, click the “External User Guide” link on the PAMS website, <https://pamspublic.science.energy.gov/>. You may also contact the PAMS Help Desk, which can be reached Monday through Friday, 9AM – 5:30 PM Eastern Time. Telephone: (855) 818-1846 (toll free) or (301) 903-9610, Email: [sc.pams-helpdesk@science.doe.gov](mailto:sc.pams-helpdesk@science.doe.gov). All submissions and inquiries about this program must reference either DE-FOA-0002173 (for universities) or LAB 20-2173 (for DOE National Laboratories).

**Q: How do I submit a pre-application into PAMS?**

A: Detailed instructions are provided in the solicitations. When submitting the pre-application, you will be asked to select a program manager. Select the program manager associated with the detailed program description to which the proposed research idea is responsive. Upon submission, the PI will receive an email from the PAMS system <[PAMS.Autoreply@science.doe.gov](mailto:PAMS.Autoreply@science.doe.gov)> acknowledging receipt of the pre-application.

**Q: How do I submit a full DOE national laboratory proposal into PAMS?**

A: Note that only DOE National Laboratories will submit full proposals into PAMS. Universities will continue to use Grants.gov to submit full proposals. Detailed instructions are provided in DOE National Laboratory Announcement LAB 20-2173. When submitting the proposal, you will be asked to select a program manager. Select the program manager associated with the detailed program description to which the proposed research idea is responsive. Upon submission, the PI will receive an email from the PAMS system <[PAMS.Autoreply@science.doe.gov](mailto:PAMS.Autoreply@science.doe.gov)> acknowledging receipt of the proposal.

Each DOE national laboratory has already appointed and registered at least one administrative business officer into PAMS. If you need contact information for your Administrative business officer, please contact [SC.Early@science.doe.gov](mailto:SC.Early@science.doe.gov).