




Department of Energy
Office of Science
Washington, DC 20585

Office of the Director

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MEMORANDUM FOR OFFICE OF SCIENCE APPLICANTS AND AWARDEES

FROM: CHRIS FALL 
DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF SCIENCE

SUBJECT: Response to Delayed Progress in Research Caused by COVID-19

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has changed the research enterprise supported by the Office of Science (SC). Between cancelled conferences and workshops, months of telework, placing facilities into safe statuses and curtailed research operations, challenges in institutional recruitment and hiring, and transitioning to remote learning, we've all accommodated a number of changes to how we do and support science.

Despite the challenges caused by current circumstances, the scientific community endures. Conferences and workshops moved online, instruction of students continues, researchers remain productive by analyzing data, writing papers and submitting proposals, peer reviews continue, and awards have continued to be issued.

Uncertainty thrives at the intersection of disruption and continuity. Investigators—whether with decades of support from SC, or selected in the most recent Early Career Research Program solicitation—see this every day.

I can assure you this: SC is committed to maximum flexibility in administering awards, recognizing potential delays in research caused by impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Investigators will not be penalized for such delays. Researchers are encouraged to make the best progress possible in their changed, and changing, situations. Progress reports will be read in light of the real disruptions from the pandemic. With regard to future applications, merit reviewers will be reminded that SC recognizes the real and potential delays when evaluating new and renewal proposals. SC will continue to recommend proposals to be awarded, knowing that research projects require time to ramp-up and that the evolving situation may continue to pose challenges.

Over the past several months, SC has engaged and continues to engage the scientific professional societies, university associations, and other Federal agencies to obtain up-to-date information on the impacts to institutions and the research communities, to help inform an open, transparent, and equitable response by SC within the resources available. Additional information about SC's responses to COVID-19 may be found at <https://science.osti.gov/grants/Policy-and-Guidance/COVID>.