



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY

Office of
Science

Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER Plans)

Office of Biological and Environmental Research (BER)
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<https://science.osti.gov/sw-dei>

PIER Plans in the context of SC DEIA initiatives



Advancing DEI at the SC DOE National Laboratories

In FY 2017, SC initiated a new annual process that required the 10 SC DOE Labs to develop and implement actionable DEIA strategies that would be reviewed by SC headquarters.

In FY 2020, SC conducted the first-ever external peer review of the SC Laboratories' DEI Strategies.

Reviewers identified strengths and weaknesses of each Lab's DEI efforts, as well as laboratory-wide opportunities for improvement.

Reviewers also provided recommendations to SC on how to improve our oversight and promote advancement of DEIA at the Labs.

In response to the FY 2020 DEI peer review:

- SC restructured the annual guidance to the laboratories on their annual DEIA strategies to address peer review recommendations.
- Added a DEIA objective to Goal 4 in the SC DOE Laboratories' performance evaluation and management plans (PEMPs), and DEIA related elements in other relevant PEMP goals/objectives.
- Required the SC DOE Laboratories to publicly post multiyear trend data on the demographics of the laboratory workforce.
- Initiated a triennial onsite peer review process. Beginning in 2023, SC will review 3-4 labs per year; each lab will be externally reviewed every three years.



Advancing DEI in SC Business Practices

A 2019-20 internal review of SC's awards management practices resulted in 15 overarching recommendations (40+ actions) for advancing DEI in SC business practices. A new SC DEI Working Group was established to focus on implementation.

Some implementation actions to date:

- Beginning in FY 2021, all FOAs must include at least one DEI-promoting program policy factor.
- New public resources to increase awareness of existing flexibilities and support allowed under financial assistance awards (e.g., allowable costs, supplemental awards).
 - New page dedicated to applicant and awardee resources, including extensive list of FAQs <https://science.osti.gov/grants/Applicant-and-Awardee-Resources>
 - Standard FOA language on allowable costs; New section on Supplemental Awards in the [SC Open Call](#).
- Updated [SC Statement of Commitment](#), and associated [statement of potential consequences](#) of unprofessional behavior.
- Updated requirements in PAMS to respond to demographic questions by applicants, awardees, reviewers.
- Requirement for **Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER Plans)** beginning in FY 2023.
- New requirement beginning in FY 2023 for proposals to SC requesting funding for conferences.



SC Statement of Commitment – Updated October 2022

“The DOE Office of Science (SC) is **fully and unconditionally committed to fostering safe, diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible work, research, and funding environments** that value mutual respect and personal integrity.... SC’s effective stewardship and promotion of safe, accessible, diverse, and inclusive workplaces that value and celebrate the diversity of people, ideas, cultures, and educational backgrounds across the country and that foster a sense of belonging in our scientific community is foundational to delivering on our mission. We are **committed to promoting people from all backgrounds**, including individuals and communities that were historically underrepresented and minoritized in STEM fields and the activities we sponsor in recognition of our responsibility to serve the public...

Discrimination and harassment undermine SC’s ability to achieve its mission by reducing productivity, discouraging or inhibiting talent recruitment, retention, and career advancement, and weakening the integrity of the SC enterprise overall. **SC does not tolerate discrimination or harassment of any kind...**

Beyond issues that may rise to the level of legal action, SC expects the scientific community, particularly those engaging in SC-sponsored activities, to always conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful, ethical, professional, and inclusive. **SC reserves the right to take appropriate action at SC-hosted events** should participants not adhere to these expectations for responsible workplace behavior. **SC also strongly encourages recipient and partner institutions to adopt and implement their own codes of conduct...**”



Potential Consequences for Unprofessional Behavior at SC Meetings

The Office of Science (SC) expects the scientific community participating in SC-sponsored events to conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful, ethical, professional, inclusive, and non-disruptive. By attending such events, participants agree to conduct themselves according to these expectations. If a participant does not adhere to such expectations, SC reserves the right to take appropriate action.

Such action may include:

- A verbal reprimand and reminder of the expectations,
- Being asked to leave the event,
- Removal by security personnel,
- Temporary or permanent suspension from receiving invitations to future non-public SC events, and,
- Reporting of individual(s) responsible for exclusionary and/or disruptive workplace behavior through appropriate channels.

Inappropriate behavior can be reported by an attendee to the senior most SC federal manager present at the event or the senior federal manager of the SC host office for the event. *(Specific SC individuals to which issues can be reported should be identified by the host Program at the beginning of each event.)* Retaliation against individuals who report inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.

SC Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

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;
- Promoting 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 FY 2023 new proposal requirements are a reflection of this responsibility and of this commitment. [“Everyone has a Role to Play in Making Science More Equitable and Inclusive”](#)



Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER) Plans

Beginning in FY 2023, Office of Science solicitations now require that applicants submit a plan for **Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research, or PIER Plan**, along with their research proposals.

- This is a requirement for proposals submitted to all Office of Science solicitations, as well as invited proposals from the DOE national laboratories.

PIER Plans are limited to 3 pages and should describe the activities and strategies that investigators and research personnel will incorporate to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in their research projects.

- 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.
- The PIER Plans will be evaluated under a new merit review criterion as part of the peer review process.

Additional information and FAQs: <https://science.osti.gov/grants/Applicant-and-Awardee-Resources/PIER-Plans>

Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER) Plans

At-a-glance:

- Should describe the activities and strategies proposed by the Principal Investigator (PI)/project team to promote equity and inclusion **integral to the research project**;
- Are required for all research proposals submitted to SC;
- Are not required for existing awardees unless they are submitting a renewal proposal starting in FY 2023;
- Are not required for applications for supplemental funding on existing awards;
- Are not required for applications requesting funding to support conferences (*but there are new conference proposal requirements for FY 2023*)
- Are not required for proposals submitted to SBIR/STTR Programs announcements. A requirement will be phased in at a later date.
- Applicants may ask for funding in the budget that support PIER Plan activities. Costs must conform to applicable cost principles for financial assistance.

PIER Plans Should be Tailored to the Research Project

Because **PIER Plans should be intrinsic to the proposed research project**, SC expects to receive a wide range of ideas and approaches. In developing tailored PIER Plans, applicants are encouraged to consider one or more of the following areas:

- **The composition of the project team, including project personnel and partnering institutions.** Could include: recruitment and inclusion of individuals from diverse backgrounds on the research project, individuals from groups [historically underrepresented in the proposed research area](#); partnering with individuals from institutions historically underrepresented in Federal research, including but not limited to [minority serving institutions](#), [non-R1 institutions of higher education](#); and/or institutions of higher education in [EPSCoR states](#).
- **The research environment.** Could include: establishing and cultivating research and work environments that promote mutual respect and professionalism, where all project personnel feel welcome, safe, and supported; development and/or adoption of laboratory-, community-, or collaboration-specific codes of professional conduct; practices and protocols for ensuring safe conduct of research and personnel safety, including in isolated environments; and/or providing equitable access to research tools and making reasonable accommodations for researchers with disabilities.
- **The implementation of the research project, and scholarly and professional growth of project personnel.** Could include: distribution of leadership responsibilities among project key personnel; mentoring and/or training opportunities for project personnel; equitable access of project personnel to professional development opportunities; inclusive and equitable plans for recognition on publications and presentations; and/or inclusive practices for community engagement.



Questions for applicants to consider when developing a PIER Plan

SC's online resources provide the following questions for applicants to consider when developing their PIER Plans.

- How do the activities proposed in the PIER Plan enhance the scientific and/or technical merit of the proposed research project?
- Are the proposed activities and strategies reasonable and appropriate for the project scope and project period?
- Does the proposed research project include a clear strategy for ensuring the 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 equitable and understood by the applicant's key personnel on the project?
- Does the applicant and key personnel have demonstrated experience and competencies in carrying out the proposed scope of the PIER Plan that could be emphasized?



Questions for applicants to consider when developing a PIER Plan

(Continued)

- How are the proposed activities and strategies leveraging institutional resources or resources available through scientific professional societies 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 timelines or milestones for proposed activities and strategies appropriate to allow for reasonable tracking of and reporting on progress?



PIER Plans will be evaluated in the peer review

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*** (Funding Opportunity Announcement or DOE Laboratory Call), the merit review criteria for the evaluation of applications are as follows, in descending order of importance:

- 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.**

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.

Guiding Reviewer Questions for the PIER Plan Criterion

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

- Is the proposed PIER Plan suitable for the size and complexity of the proposed project and an integral component of the proposed project?
 - 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?
 - 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?
 - How does the proposed Plan include intentional mentorship and are the associated mentoring resources reasonable and appropriate?
- Not all questions above may apply to all PIER Plans being reviewed.
 - Additional/tailored guiding reviewer questions may be provided for each review/solicitation.



What constitutes an insufficient PIER Plan?

- A copy of a departmental or institutional DEIA plan or listing standard institutional policies and procedures.
- A proposal for STEM K-12 or community outreach that **is not** integral to the proposed research.
- A DEIA activity that is already being carried out by the applicant or partners and is not related to or relevant to the proposed research.

PIER Plans should be integral to the proposed research and research team.



SC Near Term & Long-Term Evaluation of PIER Plans

Evaluation of the PIER Plan requirement is a priority for SC and DOE leadership.

In the first year of implementing this new requirement, we are focused on understanding:

- How applicants and reviewers are responding to the new requirement;
 - How SC can improve the implementation of the new requirement through lessons learned (examples of what a good PIER Plan looks like is the most common feedback);
 - What functional changes in PAMS can be made to improve implementation and support future evaluation.
- SW-DEI in the process of hiring a social scientist to focus on mid-term and long-term evaluation of outcomes and impacts.
 - Longer-term tracking of progress will incorporate evaluation through existing processes:
 - Progress reports,
 - Renewal proposals,
 - Committee of Visitors' reviews.



FAQs and Early Observations

Most frequent questions/comments from Applicants:

- Can I request funding for implementing aspects of the PIER Plan? [Yes!]
- Do you have examples of good PIER Plans; what does success look like?
- What is a good PIER Plan for small teams, single PI projects?
- How is this different from NSF's broadening participation requirement?

Early Observations:

- Very few applications have not included PIER Plans (if no PIER Plan, application is declined without review).
- As expected, a SC is receiving plans with a broad range of ideas and approaches.
- Seeing "insufficient plan" and seeing very well thought out, intentional plans.

SC will be incorporating lessons learned and updating guidance for applicants and reviewers for FY 2024. (Examples for applicant; benchmarks for reviewers)



New Conference Proposal Policy in FY 2023

Beginning in FY 2023, all proposals to SC requesting support for conferences:

1. Require that the host organization of the conference/meeting have a **code of conduct** (or equivalent policy) that addresses:
 - Discrimination and harassment of all kinds,
 - Defines how issues can be reported and how complaints will be addressed,
 - Describes how all attendees will be informed of the policies and procedures.
2. Require a **recruitment and accessibility plan** that describes plan for recruiting speakers and attendees, including discussion of recruitment of individuals from groups underrepresented in the research/professional community associated with the technical focus.
 - This policy applies to all applications to the DOE Office of Science requesting funding to support conferences or conference activities. (*Non-SC hosted conferences, meetings, or workshops*)
 - Both requirements will be evaluated by peer reviewers under the *Appropriateness of the Proposed Method or Approach* criterion.



SC PIER Plan/Conference Resources



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Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER) Plans

Beginning in FY 2023, all Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) and DOE National Lab Announcements and other funding solicitations will require applicants to submit a Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER) Plan as an appendix to their proposal narrative. PIER Plans should describe the activities and strategies applicants will incorporate to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in their research projects. PIER Plans will be evaluated as part of the merit review process and will be used to inform funding decisions.

The Office of Science (SC) is deeply committed to supporting diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible work, research, and funding environments that value mutual respect and personal integrity, and SC is committed to promoting people of all backgrounds, including individuals from groups and communities historically underrepresented in STEM fields and SC activities in recognition of our responsibility to serve the public.

Transforming our understanding of nature to advance scientific discovery and U.S. energy, economic, and national security can only be accomplished 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 of all SC-funded research and research related activities.

Applications to the Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) programs do not require PIER Plans at this time but will be phased in at a later date. Applications for supplemental funding on existing awards and applications requesting funding for conferences do not require PIER Plans.

- [Information about PIER Plans](#)
- [Things to Consider when Developing a PIER Plan](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Recorded Public Webinar: New FY 2023 Proposal Requirements, October 17, 2022](#)
- [PIER Plan Resources for SC Program Staff](#) (Internal to SC network only)

New: “Things to Consider...”

Updated PIER Plan FAQs for Applicants and Reviewers.

Thank you!

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<https://science.osti.gov/sw-dei>

