



Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research

**ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR IDEA PAPERS FOR
VERMONT'S NEXT STATEWIDE NSF EPSCoR
RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROPOSAL**

Vermont is in its second year of a three-year \$6,750,000 NSF EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) grant and will be eligible to submit a new proposal to the NSF in September 2009. The current award ends 30 June 2010, but we will need to submit a proposal in September 2009 in order to have a chance to have a new award in place at that time. A new NSF EPSCoR RII award is expected to provide up to \$3,000,000 per year in total funding.

This announcement is meant to describe the process to be followed by Vermont EPSCoR in preparing the next proposal, to provide general guidance on developing research focal areas for the proposal, and to solicit Idea Papers for these focal areas.

NSF EPSCoR RII awards allow EPSCoR states to pursue focused strategic plans toward building nationally competitive programs in science and engineering. Strategic plans should be interdisciplinary and can be composed of multiple elements. While no single plan includes all these examples, these multiple element can include set-up costs for hiring new faculty members in targeted areas; equipping and staffing core research facilities; postdoctoral, graduate and undergraduate research programs; funds for developing technology-transfer capacity or university-industry partnerships; increasing access to state-of-the-art information technology in support of research; visiting-scientist programs; workshops and training courses; investing in high-risk, high-payoff research projects; mentoring programs for junior faculty; targeted seed-funding programs (with explicit goals tied to creating successful competitive-funding proposals). The goal is to enable Vermont to radically increase its research competitiveness. A key component is sustainability beyond the life of an award; strong commitment by departments, colleges and universities is a must.

Vermont has been extremely successful in obtaining NSF EPSCoR RII grants, most recently with the "Complex Systems Modeling for Environmental Problem Solving" (2007-2010). Vermont's EPSCoR's current initiatives can be viewed at <http://www.uvm.edu/EPSCoR> and illustrate a possible example of building an area of expertise. Keep in mind that NSF EPSCoR RII grants are about increasing Vermont's research competitiveness – they are not about building the research programs of individual PIs.

9 June 2008

Proposal-Development Process: Idea Papers and White Papers

The process for developing Vermont's next NSF EPSCoR RII proposal begins with the solicitation of **Idea Papers**, two-page descriptions of potential scientific or engineering *focal areas from individuals or groups of researchers*. After a preliminary review by the EPSCoR Project Directors to assure their appropriateness for NSF, the Idea Papers will be posted to the Vermont EPSCoR web site, along with the author(s) contact information, to facilitate communication among interested Vermont researchers, and ultimately, to yield stronger and more-inclusive focal area proposals.

Subsequent to the Idea Papers, 10-page **White Papers**, focal-area proposals including preliminary budgets, will be solicited. White Papers will undergo an external review that guides the PD in the final selection process. Leaders of successful focal areas will be enlisted in preparing the statewide proposal, under leadership of the PD. An approximate schedule for the overall process is shown below.

9 June 2008	Announcement and call for Idea Papers
15 July 2008	Idea Papers due
1 August 2008	First call for White Papers
15 September 2008	White Papers due
October 2008	Review/approval of White Papers
November 2008	Selection of Focal Areas
April-May 2009	Preliminary draft sent for informal external review
September 2009	Proposal Submission to NSF

9 June 2008

Call for Idea Papers (Deadline: 15 July 2008)

Vermont EPSCoR is soliciting 2-page Idea Papers laying out potential strategic plans for focal areas to be included in Vermont's next NSF EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement proposal. A focal area may be in any area of research regularly supported by NSF. The primary goal of focal areas should be to develop, in the broadest sense, the research infrastructure in Vermont to allow the targeted area to become nationally competitive and, hopefully, internationally recognized. Focal areas may include research areas specific to Vermont or in which Vermont has special expertise. Focal areas should be interdisciplinary and emphasize inclusiveness (underrepresented groups, students, etc.). An Idea Paper should be a brief general description for building research infrastructure and capabilities in Vermont in areas supported by NSF (see <http://www.nsf.gov> to get a sense of programs at NSF), but not support on-going, already competitive, research programs. Idea Papers should outline the focal area in general terms, and should describe:

1. The current situation in the targeted focal area. (Is there a competitive base in Vermont to build on? Is this essentially a program to be built from scratch? Is this an area that makes sense for Vermont?) Both the interdisciplinary and innovative nature of the proposed focal area should be described;
2. A vision for where the program should be after five years;
3. Specific obstacles or barriers to be overcome to reach the vision and how the EPSCoR program would help (e.g. the need for a core facility or new faculty, or augmented startup-packages to recruit the best new faculty);
4. The intellectual merit of the focal area;
5. A plan for sustainability of the program beyond the five years of EPSCoR funding;

Idea Papers are due to the Vermont EPSCoR office by electronic submission at http://www.uvm.edu/EPSCoR/Idea_Papers_Submission by 4:00 p.m. **15 July 2008**. Idea Papers should be accompanied by an NSF-style 2-page biographical sketch for each author. The electronic submission form will be available on June 16, 2008.

All authors are encouraged to discuss their ideas with the Judith Van Houten, Professor of Biology at UVM and Vermont EPSCoR Project Director.