



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 20-020

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about 2019 Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Repositioning

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For a general overview of the repositioning effort, please read this "[Dear Colleague Letter](#)" and watch this [webinar presentation](#).

1. What was the motivation for the recent programmatic changes in the Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE)?
2. How will these changes impact the science funded by NSF's SBE? Will they change the balance of basic vs. applied or interdisciplinary vs. disciplinary research?
3. How do I figure out which SBE program is the best "home" for my proposal?
4. When do the SBE repositioning changes take effect?
5. Does the SBE repositioning affect current awards managed or funded by programs that are changing as part of the repositioning? Will I need to submit annual and final reports to the new program if the original program is being repositioned? What about no-cost extensions? Will the Program Director for my current award change?
6. What if I plan on revising/resubmitting a proposal originally reviewed and declined by a program that will no longer exist after the repositioning takes effect?
7. Why the addition of Augmented Intelligence to the Science of Learning program?
8. Will SBE still fund political science research? Will students still be able to get Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants in Political Science?
9. How will SBE ensure that proposals submitted in response to the Dynamic Language Infrastructure (DLI) Program are reviewed by individuals with expertise in language infrastructure and endangered languages? Will the new DLI-DEL Program have the same budget as the former DEL Program?
10. Are there any other programmatic changes in the works?

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**1. What was the motivation for the recent programmatic changes in the Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE)?**

As described in the "[Dear Colleague Letter](#)" that announced the changes, NSF funds social, behavioral, and economic (SBE) science research that has a tremendous impact on quality of life. With increasingly diverse workforce and methods, SBE-supported researchers are making transformative advances in many areas. Innovators and entrepreneurs are using SBE insights to create new companies that provide jobs and grow the economy. First responders and service providers of all kinds are using SBE insights to deliver critical services with greater speed and precision. SBE discoveries about brains and behavior are helping us improve education and health outcomes, better serve communities in need, and enhance our understanding of one another. SBE sciences are critical to addressing nearly every major challenge we face today, from unemployment to terrorism, from the spread of infectious disease to the roots of violence, from the risks of natural hazards to man-made threats, and from entrepreneurial economic development to enhanced quality of life and well-being.

**2. How will these changes impact the science funded by NSF's SBE? Will they change the balance of basic vs. applied or interdisciplinary vs. disciplinary research?**

The new program descriptions and solicitations are designed to encourage researchers to develop innovative proposals whose scientific merit and broader impact are more apparent to more people. If more people are able to see how SBE research advances science and improves quality of life, we believe it will create more opportunities in the SBE fields.

We remain interested in innovative interdisciplinary and disciplinary proposals. Repositioning efforts do not change this.

At the same time, NSF-wide efforts such as its Big Ideas are designed to catalyze new kinds of inter-disciplinary and convergent research. As a result of these efforts, we would not be surprised to see more SBE-centered proposals with these attributes.

NSF remains primarily a basic science funding agency. Repositioning efforts do not change this. We will continue to fund basic science research proposals from across the fields of the SBE sciences.

**3. How do I figure out which SBE program is the best "home" for my proposal?**

Start by reviewing the program descriptions or solicitations on the programs' websites

and then contact the Program Officer(s) of the program(s) that appear(s) to be the best fit. It is often useful to send a one-page description of your project to the Program Directors to initiate a discussion. In some cases, a project might seem to fit into more than one program's portfolio. We are accustomed to managing this type of proposal. SBE's Program Officers regularly work with PIs to have these proposals reviewed by appropriate experts.

**4. When do the SBE repositioning changes take effect?**

All changes take effect with solicitations and program descriptions whose deadlines occur after January 1, 2020.

**5. Does the SBE repositioning affect current awards managed or funded by programs that are changing as part of the repositioning? Will I need to submit annual and final reports to the new program if the original program is being repositioned? What about no-cost extensions? Will the Program Director for my current award change?**

The SBE repositioning does not affect current awards and awards made through the end of 2019. These awards remain in the original programs. PIs will submit annual and final reports, and requests for no-cost extensions to the original Program Directors, until the awards expire.

Unless your Program Director changes jobs for other reasons, s/he will remain the same for the duration of your award. If your Program Director changes jobs, you will submit these reports and requests to their successor.

**6. What if I plan on revising/resubmitting a proposal originally reviewed and declined by a program that will no longer exist after the repositioning takes effect?**

NSF treats revised proposals as new proposals. You may submit a revised proposal to the program that declined the original one if the program's (or solicitation's) deadline is before January 1, 2020. After that date, you submit a revised proposal to the repositioned program or solicitation.

**7. Why the addition of Augmented Intelligence to the Science of Learning program?**

The Science of Learning program has been a great success. The Science of Learning Centers, in particular, provided many important new insights. However, the centers program has ended. We have been looking for a way to build upon its success. The concept of Augmented Intelligence plays this role.

We see Augmented Intelligence as a complement to Artificial Intelligence. Where

Artificial Intelligence typically entails using code and algorithms to replace human reasoning, Augmented Intelligence entails using knowledge of various kinds of learning contexts (including those that build from code and algorithms) and interpersonal relationships to empower human reasoning. Where development of Artificial Intelligence sometimes ignores "the human factor", the Science of Learning and Augmented Intelligence program puts human benefit at center stage. We believe that this approach signals exciting new directions for research in this area

**8. Will SBE still fund political science research? Will students still be able to get Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants in Political Science?**

SBE remains committed to supporting transformative, basic research conducted by political scientists and other researchers. To help a wide range of stakeholders see the public value of this work, we have split the former political science program into the Security and Preparedness Program (SAP) and the Accountable Institutions and Behavior Program (AIB). At NSF, almost all of its funding programs are named after what researchers do or why it matters. This change is consistent with that norm. In order to provide more time for graduate students to adapt to the change, the DDRIG program will remain affiliated with the Political Science program for at least one more year.

**9. How will SBE ensure that proposals submitted in response to the Dynamic Language Infrastructure (DLI) Program are reviewed by individuals with expertise in language infrastructure and endangered languages? Will the new DLI-DEL Program have the same budget as the former DEL Program?**

SBE is continuing the former DEL partnership with NEH, but under a new name. The new name is NSF Dynamic Language Infrastructure – NEH Documenting Endangered Languages (DLI-DEL). The NSF component has been renamed "Dynamic Language Infrastructure" to emphasize the important scientific context for the study of endangered languages. To assist in this program transition, SBE continues its commitment to convene panels of endangered language experts to review DLI-DEL proposals in partnership with NEH. The renamed DLI-DEL program currently has a comparable budget to the former DEL program.

**10. Are there any other programmatic changes in the works?**

While SBE has no immediate plans to change our other standing (core) programs, we will continue to engage our scientific communities and shape our programs to respond to the evolution of the SBE sciences and the needs of society. Moreover, and as indicated in the solicitation for "Human Networks and Data Science – Infrastructure", we anticipate a funding announcement for a new "Human Networks and Data Science – Core Research" program during the coming year.

In addition to these activities, we are:

- Working on ways to create many more research opportunities at colleges and universities where members of historically underrepresented groups are numerous.
- Working to help more SBE researchers understand the opportunities present in NSF's Big Ideas and to encourage them to write great interdisciplinary proposals in these domains.
- Working with a range of organizations on potential partnership ideas. We are seeking partners who share our public service mission and who have assets, or are part of networks, that are complementary to ours. We believe that there are organizations that can help more people benefit more effectively from the types of research that we fund. Strategic partnerships are one way to help us deliver such benefits.

The success of these and other efforts depends on the quality of the proposals that we receive. Please take a moment to learn about the many funding programs that we offer. Reach out to our Program Directors if you have questions and please consider converting your groundbreaking ideas into public-serving NSF proposals.