

Five pages to fill in as you plan: your deadline, an eligibility check, an evidence worksheet, statement and reference tracking, and a timeline. Your Major Field sets both your deadline and your review panel.

Date and time	Submission
October 16, 2026 8:00 PM ET	All reference letters
October 19, 2026 8:00 PM ET	Life Sciences
October 20, 2026 8:00 PM ET	Computer and Information Science and Engineering; Materials Research; Psychology; Social Sciences
October 22, 2026 8:00 PM ET	Engineering
October 23, 2026 8:00 PM ET	Chemistry; Geosciences; Mathematical Sciences; Physics and Astronomy

Three years of support are available within a five-year fellowship period.

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Eligibility check

Tick a box only once you have checked it against the current solicitation and your own record. This worksheet does not decide eligibility; NSF does.

☐ Citizenship, national, or permanent-resident status is satisfied by the application deadline.

☐ The intended degree is research-based, thesis-bearing, and in an eligible STEM field.

☐ The applicant has never accepted a Graduate Research Fellowship.

☐ The applicant is not a current NSF employee.

☐ The applicant fits one of the four current academic-level routes below.

☐ The proposed research is eligible, including any health, policy, conservation, or applied boundary.

☐ Any prior offer was declined by the required deadline.

☐ The selected Major Field and subfield align with the degree program and research plan.

When you can apply

Level	Status	Application rule
Level 1	Final-year undergraduate	May apply while in the final year of a bachelor's degree program.
Level 1	Bachelor's degree holder	May apply before enrolling in a graduate degree program.
Level 2	Joint bachelor's-master's student	May apply once, in the final undergraduate year or first graduate year of the joint program.
Level 2	First-year graduate student	May apply once with less than one academic year completed in the first graduate degree program.

Open questions to take to an advisor

Verify with the [NSF eligibility page](#) and [Section IV of the solicitation](#).

Back up each claim

One row per experience, proposed activity or goal: what happened, what it shows, what comes next, and which criterion it supports. This is our own planning method, not an NSF scoring formula.

What happened	What it shows	What comes next	Criterion (IM, BI or both)

A made-up example. Built a reproducible image-analysis workflow and documented the errors found while validating it. That shows careful problem-solving, not ownership of the whole project. Next: extend it to a new measurement problem. Criterion: Intellectual Merit.

Intellectual Merit

The potential to advance knowledge.

What in the record demonstrates the ability to plan, conduct, interpret, and communicate research?

Broader Impacts

The potential to benefit society and contribute to specific desired societal outcomes.

What specific activity, audience, mechanism, and plausible outcome make the benefit concrete?

Statements and references

Personal, Relevant Background, and Future Goals

Up to 3 pages

Connect preparation, professional development, career goals, and potential contributions to knowledge and society.

Formatting check

- ☐ Both statements contain separate headings exactly named Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts.
- ☐ Font family, font size, and spacing meet the current NSF rules.
- ☐ All references, figures, charts, images, publications, and presentations fit inside the page limits.
- ☐ The uploaded PDF was opened and checked after export.

Graduate Research Plan

Up to 2 pages

Present an original research topic, approach, needed resources, Intellectual Merit, and Broader Impacts.

- ☐ Page size is 8.5 x 11 inches with one-inch blank margins and no text in the margins.
- ☐ References use abbreviated publication titles and contain no URLs or DOIs.
- ☐ Figures and charts have descriptive alt text and sufficient contrast.
- ☐ The applicant certified that both statements are original work.

Reference letters

Rank	Writer and accurate email	Confirmed	Received by Oct 16, 8 PM ET
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Timeline and sources

1. Before drafting

Confirm citizenship status, academic level, degree type, eligible field, and proposed-research boundary against the current solicitation.

2. Before selecting your Major Field

Select the Major Field and subfield that best match the proposed graduate program and research plan. The Major Field controls the deadline and broad review panel.

3. Before requesting letters

Enter at least three accurate writer records, rank them, and confirm that at least two letters can arrive by October 16 at 8:00 PM ET.

4. During statement development

Map every important experience or proposed activity to evidence, meaning, next action, and one or both merit criteria.

5. Before upload

Use the current NSF templates and check page size, margins, font, spacing, headings, references, alt text, and PDF output.

6. Before submission

Use Research.gov Application Completion Status, confirm the selected Major Field deadline, and verify that every required item has been received.

7. If withdrawing

Withdraw by November 15, 2026 if the application should not count under the applicable application-limit rule.

Your internal deadlines

NSF sources, checked September 28, 2026

A. NSF 26-526 program solicitation

Document History; Summary; Sections III to VI

[Open source](#)

C. How to apply

Proposed fields; reference information; statement requirements; formatting requirements

[Open source](#)

E. Applicant resources and current templates

Application overview; Templates; Major Fields; Uploading your application

[Open source](#)

G. Major fields of study

Major fields and subfields for the current competition

[Open source](#)

I. NSF 25-547 program solicitation (previous competition)

Due Dates; Section IV Eligibility; Section V; Appendix

[Open source](#)

B. Applicant eligibility

Who can apply and eligibility questionnaire disclaimer

[Open source](#)

D. How applications are reviewed

How applications are reviewed; Intellectual Merit factors; Broader Impacts factors

[Open source](#)

F. Information for reference writers

Important; Who can write; What to include; Formatting requirements

[Open source](#)

H. NSF GRFP program page and applicant deadlines

Applicant deadlines and Fellowship benefits

[Open source](#)

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