**University of Utah DOE Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research**

**(PIER) Plan Guide**

**What is a PIER Plan?**

Beginning in FY23, all DOE Office of Science Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) require applicants to include a 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.

PIER Plans are included as an appendix to the proposal, and are limited to **3 pages, with 11-point font**, unless otherwise specified by the solicitation. It does *not* count towards the overall page count of the main proposal narrative.

Applications for supplemental funding on existing awards and applications requesting funding for conference do not require PIER Plans. [SBIR/STTR](https://science.osti.gov/sbir/Applicant-Resources/PIER-Plan) applications will be phased in and require PIER Plans for FY24 funding opportunities.

**What should be included in the PIER Plan?**

This document provides general guidelines. Make sure you **read the solicitation for your program** for specific requirements of your PIER plan.

Thoroughly review the PIER Guidelines, including the FAQ and refer to them as you develop your plan: <https://science.osti.gov/grants/Applicant-and-Awardee-Resources/PIER-Plans> DOE’s definitions of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Underrepresented can be found on [DOE’s DEI Q&A page](https://science.osti.gov/SW-DEI/DOE-Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Policies/Q-and-As#definitions).

DOE does not give prescriptive instruction on how to organize the PIER Plan, but the FY23 SC Solicitation ([SC-FOA-0002844](https://science.osti.gov/grants/FOAs/-/media/grants/pdf/foas/2023/SC_FOA_0002844.pdf)) gives the following description of what a PIER plan should include:

*“All applications must provide a Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER) Plan as an appendix to the research proposal narrative. The PIER plan should describe the activities and strategies of the applicant to promote equity and inclusion as an intrinsic element to advancing scientific excellence in the research project within the context of the proposing institution and any associated research group(s). Plans may include, but are not limited to: strategies of your institution (and collaborating institutions, if applicable) for enhanced recruitment of undergraduate students, graduate students, and early-stage investigators (postdoctoral researchers, and others), including individuals from diverse backgrounds and groups historically underrepresented in the research community; strategies for creating and sustaining a positive, inclusive, safe, and professional research and training environment that fosters a sense of belonging among all research personnel; and/or training, mentoring, and professional development opportunities. Plans may incorporate or build upon existing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion efforts of the project key personnel or applicant institution(s), but should not be a re-statement of standard institutional policies or broad principles. The complexity and detail of a PIER is expected to increase with the size of the research team and the number of personnel to be supported.”*

Some solicitations may include additional guidance language for PIER Plans tailored to the scope and objectives of the solicitation and history of the programmatic activities.

**How will the PIER Plan be reviewed and evaluated?**The PIER Plan will be evaluated in the peer review process. The guiding criteria include the following:

* 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 PIER Plan include intentional mentorship and are the associated mentoring resources reasonable and appropriate?

**What should the PIER Plan focus on**?

* The composition of the project team and partnering institutions
* The research environment—cultivating respectful, professional, and accessible environments.
* Equitable and inclusive implementation of the research project
* Partnering with underrepresented institutions and/or underserved communities

**Things to keep in mind while developing your PIER Plan:**

* It should be specific, relevant, and unique to your project, and draw upon the experiences, connections, and strengths of your research team.
* It should be purposeful, doable, measurable, and impactful.
* It should be developed as the research plan is developed, not as an add-on at the last minute.
* It should have appropriate timelines or milestones for proposed activities and strategies that allow for reasonable tracking of and reporting on progress.
* Consider costs and build those into the budget.

**Things to Consider when Developing a PIER Plan:**

When considering the questions below, do not provide a boilerplate list of all ongoing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) efforts. Focus on efforts integral to this specific project. This can include new planned activities as well as existing EDI efforts that will be directly leveraged during the project.

Applicants are [encouraged to consider](https://science.osti.gov/grants/Applicant-and-Awardee-Resources/PIER-Plans/Things-to-Consider-When-Developing-a-PIER-Plan) one or more of the following:

1. **The composition of the project team, including project personnel and partnering institutions**  
   How will youenhance recruitment of undergraduate students, graduate students, and early-stage investigators (postdoctoral researchers, and others), including individuals from diverse backgrounds and groups historically underrepresented in the research community?
2. **The Research Environment**  
   What strategies will you use for creating and sustaining a positive, inclusive, safe, and professional research and training environment that fosters a sense of belonging among all research personnel?
   1. Open and regular team communications

Establish a method for regular and open communications that allow for all members of the team to feel included and respected for their contributions. If the project is funded, the processes to establish shared team definitions of roles, responsibilities, and culture will include an initial meeting at or shortly after the project’s starting date, with follow-up including regular check-ins at team meetings, regular reminders for all team members of appropriate conduct, and regular check-ins while in the field or laboratory.

* 1. If research will be conducted in remote or isolated environments
     1. The PI and CO-PIs in each of the collaborating institutions should establish a culture of “INCLUSION” and “SAFETY FIRST,” including attitudes of respect, appreciation, and celebration of personal differences and of circumspection and continuous alert for potential dangers, with assurance that interruption of research activities because of threats to inclusiveness or safety will be commended, not punished.
     2. The following is recommended:
        1. In advance, team member identities that may increase personal risk will be ascertained and team leaders will provide relevant training and counseling, including consideration of cultural norms or a history of safety or harassment incidents at the planned research sites.
        2. Team members should each carry emergency contact information (police, ambulance, fire-rescue, roadside assistance) relevant for the research sites. For field work, at least two different telephone service providers will be subscribed by different members of any given field team, if possible.
        3. First-aid kits should accompany each field team and team members should be trained in their use.
        4. Each member of a field research team should have current and relevant national, university, or personal medical insurance. Accidents of any kind affecting the health or well-being of any team member will be managed immediately by team members with all appropriate care and efficiency and, if needed, with help from any emergency services in the area; such accidents or appearance of any unanticipated threats to safety and inclusion justify cancelling the remainder of a field trip, seeking immediate shelter, and returning to campus.
  2. To ensure safe conduct of research and personnel safety, all individuals should be provided with the following information:
* In the case of immediate safety concerns, contact*: UU Police at 801-585-2677 or 911 for emergencies*
* All UU employees and students may access the [UU reporting avenues and support services](https://osp.utah.edu/grants-toolbox/nsf/nsf-safe-and-inclusive-environments.php#policies)
* Concerns may be anonymously reported to [safe.utah.edu](https://safeu.utah.edu/)

1. **Scholarly and professional growth of project personnel**  
   What training, mentoring, and professional development opportunities will be available towards achieving equity and inclusion in the research environment? PIs are advised to consult with their college’s EDI contacts for opportunities that can be incorporated into this plan.

**Additional Considerations:**

* **Will the proposed activities** **leverage any university-wide programs** or resources (at UU or collaborating institutions) to broaden participation in STEM, create an inclusive research environment, and/or provide inclusive mentoring or professional development opportunities?
* Examples include but are not limited to:
  + Recruitment of a diverse pool of trainees
  + Participation of PIs as faculty mentors
  + Participation of trainees as student mentors
  + Partnering with minority-serving institutions
  + Leveraging resources to develop relationships with tribal communities
  + Leveraging resources to perform outreach with rural communities
* **Will the proposed activities leverage any department-level initiatives** to broaden participation in STEM, create an inclusive research environment, and/or provide inclusive mentoring or professional development opportunities?
* Examples include but are not limited to:
  + Departmental seminars provided by a diverse set of speakers that personnel involved in the project may attend
  + Department events, networks, or resources that PIs will utilize to recruit trainees or postdocs from diverse populations into the project
  + Channels for assessment or feedback that promote accountability within the department (e.g., surveys, annual reviews)
  + Department-level training, workshops, or professional development opportunities focused on equity and inclusion that personnel in this project can participate in
  + Department-level efforts that foster a sense of belonging, such as social events and activities, that research personnel can participate in
* **Are the project** **PIs** **implementing efforts in their own research groups** to broaden participation in STEM, create an inclusive research environment, and/or provide inclusive mentoring or professional development opportunities?
* Examples include but are not limited to:
  + Code of conduct or policies in place that promote inclusion & equity, both within the lab and when performing fieldwork
  + Channels for assessment or feedback that promote accountability within the group (e.g., surveys, annual reviews)
  + Scheduled meetings, social gatherings, or other events that promote a sense of belonging.
  + Providing opportunities for trainee career planning, skills development, etc.
  + Resources to ensure equitable access to opportunities, such as dedicated funds to attend conferences, networking events, etc.
* **What individual activities will the PIs implement** during the project timeline to broaden participation in STEM, create an inclusive research environment, and/or provide inclusive mentoring or professional development opportunities?
* Examples include but are not limited to:
  + Presentations to public audiences as outreach
  + Visiting K-12 classrooms
  + Participating in external mentoring programs
  + Attending external professional development opportunities that provide training on EDI.

Additional Resources can be found at <https://osp.utah.edu/grants-toolbox/equity-diversity-inclusion.php>