

Tennessee Tech Office of Sponsored Programs

NSF Information Regarding Off-Campus Research Activities

Effective January 30, 2023, NSF is requiring institutions to prepare Safety and Inclusive Environment (SAI) plans for any projects that include off-campus or off-site (off-campus) research activities. The PI is responsible for determining whether off-campus research will take place.

If the project will include off-campus research, the PI must prepare a SAI Plan and submit it to the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) for review and approval *before* the proposal is submitted to NSF. The PI is expected to implement the plan if the proposal is funded.

The SAI Plan template can be found here <https://www.tntech.edu/research/pdf/nsf/NSF-Safe-and-Incluseive-Working-Environment.pdf>

The same plan may be used or reused throughout the project if the off-campus work is the same throughout the project period. **However, all participants (regardless of when they join the project) must receive a copy of the plan before they participate in off-campus research.**

Off-Campus Research

NSF defines off-campus or off-site research as "data/information/samples being collected off-campus or off-site, such as fieldwork or research activities on vessels and aircraft." The underlying premise is that all participants should know how to recognize and report inappropriate behavior and receive guidance in advance about how to feel safe and protected, even while away from campus.

The intent of this requirement is to provide guidance and protection for participants when they do not have ready access to the on-campus in-person resources they normally do. If your participants continue to have such access, no plan is needed. If participants are sufficiently distant from campus such that access to these resources is more limited than they would be if they were on campus, then a plan is needed. Work from home by an individual employee would not, for the purpose of this policy, be considered off-campus.

Attendance or presentation of research results at a conference does not require a plan; if participants will also engage in the conduct of research activities while attending a conference, a plan would be required.

Participants

All Tennessee Tech employees, students, volunteers, and others working under the university's direction (which might include contractors) are participants as defined by the NSF. For subrecipient personnel, their own institution should have issued a plan for the off-site activity. PIs should verify with the PI of the subrecipient organization that a plan

is in place.

The SAI Plan developed by the Tennessee Tech PI may be shared and adapted for use by the subrecipient. Typically, the Tennessee Tech PI is only responsible for Tennessee Tech participants although there may be exceptions. It is a good idea to confer with the OSP well in advance of the off-campus research should this be applicable so that special arrangements can be created.

Points of Contact

It is advisable to have a primary and a secondary point of contact available. The PI may be listed as the primary point of contact or may delegate the primary point of contact responsibility to another individual who is present at the off-campus location. Having a second point of contact helps when a participant is unable or unwilling to notify the primary point of contact and the standard reporting options are unavailable.