

NASA EPSCOR

A LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- EPSCoR: The Beginnings
- EPSCoR: Eligibility
- NASA EPSCoR: The Beginnings
- EPSCoR: National Academies Study and Future Direction

EPSCOR: THE BEGINNINGS

- National Science Board established the program in 1978 by a resolution. Congress formally established the program in 1988
- Goal of the program at NSF was to avoid “undue concentration” of federal research funds by providing competitive grant opportunities to states that have received little federal research and development funding.
- Participating states were required to demonstrate a commitment to the program by establishing science and technology governing committees to ensure NSF funding was sensitive to the state’s overall strategy for research. Congress also required significant cost sharing between states and the federal government.

EPSCOR: THE BEGINNINGS

- The 1988 statute stipulated that the program was to increase research and infrastructure capacity, thereby improving the ability of institutions in EPSCoR states to compete for non-set-aside federal R&D funding.
- More recently, the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010, continued the program at NSF “with the objective of helping eligible states to develop the research infrastructure that will make them more competitive for Foundation and other Federal research funding.”

EPSCOR: ELIGIBILITY

- Jurisdictions are currently eligible if their most recent 5-year funding level of NSF research support is equal to or less than 0.75% of the total NSF Research and Related Activities budget. This amount excludes EPSCoR funding from the count.
- EPSCoR States are home to 20% of the country's population and workforce and contain nearly 30% of the nation's research institutions. They bestow 20% of the nation's undergraduate degrees and over 16% of the nation's doctorate degrees. Despite all of these numbers, EPSCoR states receive just 13.6 percent of all NSF research funds. A larger portion—15%--went to just eight of the nation's research universities.

NASA EPSCOR: THE BEGINNINGS

- In 1992, Congress established the NASA EPSCoR program, using eligibility based on NSF's EPSCoR program (P.L. 102-588)
- The policy outlined in Section 303 of that act states that “a stable and balanced program of space science and applications, aeronautical research and technology, and space research and technology should include programs to assure that geographic areas of the United States that currently do not successfully participate in competitive space and aeronautical research activities are enabled to become more competitive.”

EPSCOR: NATIONAL ACADEMIES STUDY AND FUTURE DIRECTION

- In 2013, NAS launched a large report on the EPSCoR programs. In the report, they recommend that “EPSCoR programs should concentrate on the program’s core elements: enhancing research excellence through competitive processes and enhance the capacity for postsecondary training in STEM fields” (page 51)
- The NAS also issued a warning on EPSCoR “mission creep”: “The addition of broader social goals to the EPSCoR mission—as compelling and justified as these broader social goals may be—dilutes the program’s ability to advance its primary goal of strengthening research capability and providing research opportunities for postsecondary students” (page 2).