



FY2026 APPROPRIATIONS PRIORITIES

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, & RELATED AGENCIES PRELIMINARY REQUEST

AGENCY	ACCOUNT	APLU FY26 REQUEST
National Science Foundation (NSF)	National Science Foundation	\$9.9 billion
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)	Science Mission Directorate	\$9 billion
	Aeronautics Research Directorate	\$1 billion
	Space Technology	\$1.5 billion
	Space Grant Program	\$65 million
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)	Oceanic and Atmospheric Research - Operations, Research and Facilities	\$721 million
	Sea Grant	\$116 million
	Marine Aquaculture Program	\$18 million
National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST)	Manufacturing Extension Partnerships	\$195.4 million
	Manufacturing USA	\$200 million
Economic Development Administration	Build to Scale	\$50 million

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$9.9 BILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$9.060 BILLION

The National Science Foundation (NSF) funds merit-based fundamental research across disciplines and supports science, math, and engineering education at universities throughout the nation. NSF-supported research has yielded groundbreaking discoveries and novel technologies – stimulating new industries and enhancing health and national security. For example, NSF-funded research supported technological advancements such as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, 3-D printing, next generation computer chips, MRI scans, and threat detection devices. APLU requests an appropriation of at least \$9.9 billion for NSF in FY26.

The latest National Science Board Science and Engineering Indicators report shows China’s annual increase of R&D spending has averaged 11 percent over the last decade while the United States’ annual average increase was only 6.4 percent over the same period. As a result, the share of global R&D the United States performs has declined to 28 percent while China’s share has

increased to 26 percent.¹ The U.S. is at risk of losing its technological leadership if these trends continue.

Congress previously demonstrated through authorization legislation strong congressional intent for major NSF growth to advance these critical technology areas, enable transformational efforts to enhance regional innovation, and increase support for foundational research and education activities. APLU's request for at least \$9.9 billion for NSF in FY26 would support NSF's core and interdisciplinary programs, further strategic investments in industries of the future such as AI and quantum computing, enhance critical workforce development programs, and support the Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnership.

There is demonstrated overwhelming need for immediate increased funding at NSF. Without appropriate funding it will be difficult for NSF to expand exciting new programs like the Regional Innovation Engines (RIE), which support the development of regional coalitions of researchers, institutions and companies to conduct research, support economic development, train local workforces, and grow innovation ecosystems for nationally important technologies like semiconductor manufacturing, advanced batteries, regenerative medicine and others. The first Engine competition created great interest across the country with 188 concept outlines, narrowed to 34 semifinalists, then 16 semifinalists, then only [10 winners](#). 71 new teams were [selected](#) to compete for new Engines in FY25.

Strong funding levels for NSF will not only lead to new knowledge and technologies, support the U.S. economy, improve our nation's health and well-being, and better safeguard our country from national security threats, it will also support the development of tomorrow's scientific research workforce. We need to ensure a stronger pipeline of Americans studying science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and ultimately contributing to our STEM workforce. These programs are essential to countering the dual-pronged concerns that international competitors are enticing U.S. educated talent with foreign resources and that other countries are more effectively developing their own STEM workforces.

The U.S. is facing major competition from China and other nations in critical technologies such as AI and quantum, and our nation will lose its leadership if Congress does not do more to expand our research and innovation ecosystem. We must invest strategically and robustly in the National Science Foundation.

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)

SCIENCE MISSION DIRECTORATE

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$9 BILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$7.334 BILLION

The NASA Science Mission Directorate (SMD) develops and deploys satellites and probes in collaboration with NASA's partners around the world to answer fundamental questions requiring the view from and into space. In an environment of growing private sector investment in space exploration, federally funded SMD work still plays a crucial role in supporting high-

¹ <https://www.wipo.int/web/global-innovation-index/w/blogs/2024/end-of-year-edition>

risk, high-reward research with no obvious business cases. The requested \$9 billion for SMD in FY26 will give the agency necessary resources to pursue long-term missions including the Geophysical Dynamics Constellation, and Habitable Worlds Observatory, as well as a fleet of operating and developing spacecraft including the Chandra X-Ray Observatory, Hubble Space Telescope, Perseverance and Curiosity rovers, among others. NASA-university partnerships on science missions have revolutionized understanding of space sciences, life sciences, and aeronautics, enabling space travel in new realms. For example, the NASA Psyche mission has partnered with over a dozen universities and research institutions to launch a spacecraft to study the formation of rocky bodies in our solar system. Investment in SMD research will inform future human exploration of the Moon, Mars, and solar system while supporting the development of a highly-skilled space workforce and advancement of fundamental basic research, infrastructure, and facilities. FY26 offers this Congress an opportunity to ensure America's continued leadership in the space and Earth-observing sciences.

AERONAUTICS RESEARCH MISSION DIRECTORATE

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$1 BILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$935 MILLION

The NASA Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate (ARMD) supports cutting-edge aviation research with the overarching goal of providing safe, affordable, and convenient air travel to the public. APLU's FY26 request of \$1 billion will support ARMD in its efforts to improve commercial aircraft efficiency, reduce aircraft noise and emissions, and advance the safety of air transportation. Through the University Innovation project, ARMD provides opportunities for university-led teams to conduct research in transformative aeronautics technology. Recent awards have included investigating aviation capabilities to improve the agriculture industry and innovate prototypes of emergency response aircraft. ARMD promises to elevate U.S. aviation as an economic engine working to transform the future of air travel through ultra-efficient airliners, high-speed commercial flight, and advanced air mobility. Increased funding is necessary to ensure the U.S.'s position as the global aeronautics leader.

SPACE TECHNOLOGY MISSION DIRECTORATE

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$1.5 BILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$1.1 BILLION

The NASA Space Technology Mission Directorate (STMD) serves as the national technology base for civil space. Through Space Technology Research Grants, STMD supports university researchers in the pursuit of novel ideas critical to making science, space travel, and exploration more effective, affordable, and efficient. STMD encourages partnerships between industry and academia that support early-career researchers and increase our nation's competitive STEM workforce. STMD demonstrates that in an era of a growing commercial space sector, public-private partnerships with NASA offer added benefits to both parties. For example, STMD's Tipping Point solicitations seek industry-developed space technologies that offer both profitable commercial applications as well as advance NASA's mission.² In 2023, NASA selected 11 U.S.

² <https://www.nasa.gov/space-tech-industry-partnerships/>

companies to develop emerging technologies in support of exploring the Moon and space such as in-space 3D printing and the utilization of lunar materials to build infrastructure. Scientific knowledge gained from STMD has also led to advancements that extend beyond space applications, such as the development of cutting-edge medical devices, increased agricultural production, and the development of enhanced military protective armor. APLU requests \$1.5 billion in FY26 for STMD to prepare NASA and commercial partners for the next era of space exploration.

NATIONAL SPACE GRANT COLLEGE AND FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM (SPACE GRANT)

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$65 MILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$58 MILLION

NASA's National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program is a national network of colleges and universities that expands opportunities for all Americans to understand and participate in NASA's aeronautics and space projects. The Space Grant national network operates in all 50 states and includes over 850 affiliates from universities, colleges, industry, museums, science centers, and state and local agencies. For states without a NASA Center, Space Grant is the community's connection to NASA science. The consortia funds nearly 4,000 fellowships and scholarships for students pursuing STEM careers, curriculum enhancements, and faculty development and provides internship experiences at NASA Centers and in the commercial space sector. APLU requests \$65 million for Space Grant in FY26 to ensure the network continues to recruit and train U.S. citizens in aeronautics and space sciences and strengthen the pipeline of our nation's STEM workforce.

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA)

OFFICE OF OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH (OAR)

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$721 MILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$656 MILLION

The NOAA Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) office funds research to enable better forecasts, earlier warnings for natural disasters, and a greater understanding of Earth systems. OAR offers intramural and extramural grants through its national network of laboratories and programs to collect and study vital data from the ocean's depths to the highest reaches of space. With a focus on science in the service of society, OAR research helps states manage their infrastructure, agricultural resources, fisheries, water resources, and natural disaster planning and response. APLU urges support for OAR at \$721 million for FY26; this request represents three percent growth over three years from OAR's highwater mark of FY23 enacted levels.

Approximately one-third of OAR's budget supports sixteen Cooperative Institutes (CI) which are hosted by academic or non-profit research institutions and co-located with a NOAA facility to

promote scientific exchange and technology transfer. Collectively, the CIs partner with 61 APLU member institutions.³ Each CI is competitively selected to address a research and education theme within NOAA’s mission, such as weather forecasting or ocean exploration. The CIs provide teaching, training, and mentoring to the nation’s future scientific workforce. The CIs also provide the public and government with data to make real-time decisions and shape long-term policies that enhance public health and protect commercial and national security interests.

As examples of recent successes, in 2024, OAR funded research which resulted in improved seasonal drought prediction; quicker and more accurate weather forecasts; the deployment of autonomous underwater vehicles into hurricanes; the launch of a Great Lake water quality forecast tool; new understanding of atmospheric rivers and other causes of extreme flooding; and many more critical advances in Earth sciences.

NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$116 MILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$80 MILLION

The National Sea Grant College Program enhances the practical use and conservation of coastal, marine, and Great Lakes resources through research, extension, and education. The Sea Grant network consists of a federal/university partnership between NOAA and 34 university-based programs in every coastal and Great Lakes state, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The network draws on the expertise of more than 3,000 scientists, engineers, public outreach experts, educators, and students to help citizens better understand, conserve, and utilize America’s coastal resources. Sea Grant awards over 90 percent of its appropriated funds to coastal states through a competitive process to address issues such as healthy coastal ecosystems, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, resilient coastal economies, and environmental literacy and workforce management. APLU requests \$116 million for the National Sea Grant College Program in FY26 to meet growing demand for services of the program following its proven success.

The National Sea Grant Program is a known job creator that is highly leveraged to maximize the effectiveness of federal investment. For example, in 2023, federal investment in Sea Grant of \$94 million resulted in \$828.3 million in economic benefit.⁴ Sea Grant helped implement sustainable practices in 646 communities; created or maintained 22,251 jobs and 1,479 businesses; enabled 49,228 seafood industry personnel adopt safe and sustainable fishing practices; helped restore or protect over 15 million acres of habitat; and reached over 2 million individuals through Sea Grant education efforts.⁵ Sea Grant also supports the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship which matches highly qualified graduate students with hosts in the legislative and executive branches of government bolstering career pathways for recent graduates into federal service. Robust funding for Sea Grant will help grow the program’s nationwide impact on coastal communities at the state and local level through research, training, technical assistance, and coordination.

³ <https://ci.noaa.gov/research-institutions/>

⁴ <https://seagrants.noaa.gov/our-story/impacts/>

⁵ <https://seagrants.noaa.gov/our-story/impacts/>

MARINE AQUACULTURE PROGRAM

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$18 MILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$14 MILLION

NOAA's National Sea Grant Marine Aquaculture Program ensures safe, secure, and sustainable supplies of domestic seafood that complements wild-caught fisheries. The program has made substantial investments in aquaculture research, development, and community outreach that has resulted in new industry sectors, innovative technologies, and increased production. As the only U.S. government grant program dedicated to supporting marine aquaculture development, the program plays a unique role in limiting reliance on seafood imports, helping reduce a near \$17 billion seafood trade deficit.⁶ The grant program works in coordination with state fisheries managers, seafood processors, fishing associations and consumer groups. These grants tackle some of the top challenges to marine aquaculture like reducing fishmeal and fish oil in aquaculture feeds, increasing seafood safety and quality, and increasing the variety of available seafood products. New solutions, made possible with an investment in the Marine Aquaculture Program of \$18 million in FY26, will enhance the training and effectiveness of the aquaculture-related workforces, and create opportunities for the growth of domestic aquaculture-based businesses.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY (NIST)

HOLLINGS' MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PROGRAM (MEP)

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$195.4 MILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$175 MILLION

APLU requests \$195.4 million for NIST's Hollings' Manufacturing Extension Program (MEP) for FY26. MEP improves the competitiveness of U.S.-based manufacturing by making manufacturing technologies, processes, and services more accessible to small and medium-sized manufacturers. The program has grown from a pilot project of just three MEP Centers to 51 centers located in every state and Puerto Rico. MEP centers are based at university, non-profit, or state-based organizations throughout the nation providing manufacturers with science-based expertise to help them reduce costs, create new products, develop the next-generation workforce, find new markets, and achieve business success. MEP centers provide critical contributions to workforce development, supply-chain resilience, and the strength of the U.S. economy.

As a public-private partnership, MEP delivers taxpayers a 17:1 return on investment. According to the MEP National Network FY23 survey, over 107,000 jobs were created or retained by the more than 36,000 manufacturers interacting with MEP Centers across the country. In addition, these MEP Center clients reported that MEP assistance led to \$16.2 billion in sales, \$2.9 billion

⁶ <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/sustainable-fisheries/fisheries-united-states>

in cost savings, and \$4.8 billion in new client investments.⁷ U.S. manufacturers are leveraging MEP's expertise to ensure that America remains competitive in critical industries, ranging from defense, aerospace, and automotive to energy, electronics, and medical devices.

MANUFACTURING USA

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$200 MILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$37 MILLION

NIST's Manufacturing USA is a network of 18 manufacturing institutes in which universities, industry, and government partners collaborate to develop and accelerate the commercialization of innovative manufacturing technologies and help fuel our nation's position as a global leader in advanced manufacturing. Each institute focuses on certain technologies, such as 3-D printing, digital manufacturing, smart manufacturing, and advanced robotics manufacturing. APLU requests \$200 million for Manufacturing USA in FY26 to help develop new manufacturing technologies for rapid scale up of U.S. discoveries.

According to Manufacturing USA's 2023 report [Revitalizing America's Manufacturing Workforce](#), in 2022, the 16 manufacturing innovation institutes collaborated with over 2,500 manufacturers, conducted more than 670 applied research and development technology projects, and trained more than 106,000 people in advanced manufacturing.⁸

It is estimated that by 2030 manufacturers will need to fill four million manufacturing jobs in the United States. Manufacturing USA identified three priorities to help meet this need: equip the advanced manufacturing workforce with evolving skills; broaden access to advanced manufacturing career pathways; and spark interest in advanced manufacturing careers to secure a steady workforce talent pool. Many institutes provide workforce training opportunities to new and existing manufacturing workers to develop the skills they will need in the newly advanced manufacturing economy. For example, a Manufacturing USA Institute in partnership with an APLU member institution, created an advanced composites internship program based on experiential learning, mentorship, professional development, and industry collaboration that has provided 119 opportunities for students with 40 partners at 25 different locations such as member companies, national labs, and universities.

⁷ <https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-national-network>

⁸ <https://www.manufacturingusa.com/sites/manufacturingusa.com/files/2023-12/Manufacturing%20USA%20Education%20and%20Workforce%20Development%20Roadmap-FINAL-508-12.19.23.pdf>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)

BUILD TO SCALE (B2S)

APLU FY2026 REQUEST: \$50 MILLION

FY2026 PBR = TBD; FY2025 = TBD; FY2024 = \$50 MILLION

EDA's Build to Scale program (B2S) provides competitively awarded grants to universities, startups, nonprofits, and entrepreneurship-focused organizations that further regional technology-based economic development initiatives. Past EDA investments have supported industries such as agriculture technology, bioscience, health technology, and advanced manufacturing. With a required 1:1 match of federal funds, B2S awards enhance research commercialization, advance new technology development, and leverage regional competitive strengths to stimulate economic growth through innovation. APLU requests at least \$50 million for B2S for FY26 for the program to expand its investments into economically distressed communities, create high-wage local jobs, and accelerate long-term economic growth.

In 2023, EDA awarded grants to 60 organizations across 36 states totaling \$53 million. Awardees leveraged an additional \$55 million in matching funds from various private and public sector sources, making this program a successful partnership between the federal government and grantees.⁹ In 2025, EDA expects to announce 40 to 50 competitively selected awards of up to \$5 million per awardee, with an emphasis on awards that compliment NSF Engines and EDA Tech Hubs.¹⁰

⁹ <https://www.eda.gov/news/press-release/2023/11/09/us-department-commerce-announces-60-recipients-build-scale-program>

¹⁰ <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/build-to-scale>