



National Center for Science and
Engineering Statistics

Survey Description

Survey of Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Nonprofit Institutions

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Survey Overview (FY 2024 Survey Cycle)

Purpose

The Survey of Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Nonprofit Institutions (through the FY 2020 data collection) and the Federal Science and Engineering Support module within the Survey of Federal Funds for Research and Development (Federal Funds for R&D) (as of the FY 2021 data collection) is the only source of comprehensive data on federal science and engineering (S&E) funding to individual academic and nonprofit institutions. The module is sponsored by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the U.S. National Science Foundation.

Data collection authority

The information is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended, and the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010. NCSES has reviewed this product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and approved its release (NCSES-DRN26-017).

Major changes to recent survey cycle

There are no major changes to the survey for this cycle.

Key Survey Information

Frequency Annual.

Initial survey year FY 1963.

Reference period FY 2024.

Response unit Federal agencies.

Sample or census Census.

Population size Federal Funds for R&D is a census of all federal agencies that conduct research and development (R&D) programs, excluding the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Security Agency (NSA). Those that obligate money to higher education or nonprofit institutions or consortia for S&E R&D or the construction or maintenance of R&D facilities completed the Federal S&E Support module. During the FY 2024 cycle, the Library of Congress, which is known to conduct R&D programs, was unable to report and did not provide inputs to Federal Funds for R&D. For the Federal S&E Support module, data results should not be impacted by this lack of response since in all previous cycles the Library of Congress did not obligate money to higher education or nonprofit institutions or consortia for support of S&E activities. In the FY 2024 survey cycle, the population is 29 federal agencies.

Sample size Not applicable.

Key variables Key variables of interest are listed below. Data are collected at the funding-agency level and provided in aggregated form for individual higher education institutions—1,125 in FY 2024. The survey provides data on federal funding by the following key variables:

- Category of support
 - R&D conduct (research, development, test, and evaluation [RDT&E] for the Department of Defense [DOD])
 - R&D plant
 - S&E fellowships, traineeships, and training grants
 - Facilities and equipment for instruction in S&E
 - Other general support for S&E
- Type of institution
- Federal agency providing support
- State
- Higher education institution characteristics
 - Highest degree granted

- Historically Black colleges and universities
- High-Hispanic-enrollment institutions
- Tribal institutions
- High-American Indian-enrollment institutions
- Minority-serving institutions
- Type of control (public versus private)

Data are also collected at the funding agency level and provided in aggregated form for nonprofit institutions—1,028 for FY 2024. The survey provides data on federal funding to nonprofit institutions by the following key variables:

- Category of support
 - R&D conduct (RDT&E for DOD agencies)
 - R&D plant

Note that this survey uses definitions for “R&D” and “R&D plant” that are comparable to those used by the Office of Management and Budget [Circular A-11](#), Section 84 (Schedule C).

Survey Design

Target population

The target population for the Federal S&E Support module was all federal agencies that conduct R&D programs, excluding the CIA and the NSA, that obligated money in FY 2024 to higher education or nonprofit institutions or consortia for S&E R&D or the construction or maintenance of R&D facilities.

The module collects data on federal agency obligations to institutions of higher education and nonprofit institutions in the United States that engage primarily in providing resident or accredited instruction for not less than a 2-year program above the secondary school level that is acceptable for full credit toward a bachelor's degree or that provide not less than a 1-year program of training above the secondary school level that prepares students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation. Included are colleges of liberal arts; schools of arts and sciences; professional schools, as in engineering and medicine, including affiliated hospitals and associated research institutes; and agricultural experiment stations.

Nonprofit institutions are private organizations, other than educational institutions, whose net earnings in no part benefit a private stockholder or individual. Nonprofits also include private organizations created for the exclusive purpose of turning over their entire net earnings to a not-for-profit organization. Consortia are organizations formed by the membership of institutions from one or more types of performers to promote and support efforts to enhance knowledge in one or more disciplines. NCSES has identified several consortia and classified them as either academic or nonprofit types based on the predominance of their membership at the time of identification. If a consortium's members are not primarily higher education or nonprofit but the consortium is legally organized as a nonprofit, NCSES classifies that consortium as a nonprofit institution.

Sampling frame

The agencies are identified from information in the president's budget submitted to Congress. The Analytical Perspectives volume and the "Detailed Budget Estimates by Agency" section of the appendix to the president's budget identify agencies that receive funding for R&D. As of the FY 2021 data collection, all respondents to Federal Funds for R&D were presented with the higher education and nonprofit institution questions, although some had no obligations to report for these two categories.

Sample design

Not applicable. This survey is a census.

Data Collection and Processing

Data collection

Data for FY 2024 were collected by Synectics for Management Decisions, Inc. under contract to NCSES. Data collection began with an e-mail to each agency to verify the name, phone number, and e-mail address of each agency-level survey respondent. A Web-based data collection system is used to collect the data, and that system was redesigned for the volume 71 survey (FYs 2021–22).

For the Federal S&E Support module, information was collected for federal FY 2024 (i.e., 1 October 2023 through 30 September 2024). Data collection began 28 May 2025, and the requested due date for data submissions was 6 August 2025. Data collection was extended until all surveyed agencies provided complete and final data.

Data processing

A Web-based data collection system is used to collect and manage data. This Web-based system was designed to help improve survey reporting and reduce data collection and processing costs by offering respondents direct online reporting and editing. However, some agencies submit their data in alternative formats.

The data are checked through both manual reviews and automated data checks that include a comparison of current year obligations by category of support and the corresponding prior year obligations. Problems are referred to by the agency that submitted the data for correction; respondents' data are not changed by the survey contractor or NCSES.

Estimation techniques

During the data verification process, three DOD offices and one office within the Department of Energy presented discrepancies between the total R&D obligations to U.S. institutions in FY 2024 and the itemized list of institutions to receive R&D obligations. An imputation was used on the data from the Federal S&E Support module by calculating the distribution percentage of R&D obligations provided in volume 73 to each institution. Once calculated, the distribution percentage was applied to institutions that reported obligations in volume 73 but reported \$0 obligations in volume 74 to estimate the R&D obligation individual institutions may have received from the total amount of R&D obligations.

All survey fields must be populated with data, and agencies input \$0 if no funds are obligated.

Survey Quality Measures

Sampling error

Not applicable.

Coverage error

For the FYs 2024–25 cycle, the Library of Congress, which is known to conduct R&D programs, was unable to report and did not provide inputs to Federal Funds for R&D. For the Federal S&E Support module, data results should not be impacted by this lack of coverage since in all previous cycles the Library of Congress did not obligate money to higher education or nonprofit institutions or consortia for S&E R&D or the construction or maintenance of R&D facilities (a requirement to be part of sample). The CIA and the NSA are purposely excluded from the survey coverage.

Nonresponse error

The Library of Congress, an agency with known R&D funding, did not respond to the FY 2024 survey. For the Federal S&E Support module, data results should not be impacted by this lack of response since in all previous cycles the Library of Congress did not obligate money to higher education or nonprofit institutions or consortia for S&E R&D or for the construction or maintenance of R&D facilities (a requirement to be part of sample). Agencies are encouraged to estimate information when actual data are unavailable. The data collection instrument allows respondents to enter data, and agencies input \$0 if no funds are obligated. Although respondents are required to complete all fields and are not permitted to submit the survey unless all fields are completed with either data or \$0, there may still be some item nonresponse error by respondents. For example, respondents may inadvertently report \$0 in a field when data are unavailable.

Measurement error

The major source of nonsampling error in this survey is measurement error. Agencies are not always able to provide the precise information requested. For example, federal agencies are not always able to identify which branch of a university receives funding from them. Thus, complete disaggregation by actual university branch may not be feasible for some universities. Occasionally, small amounts (less than \$100,000) of R&D may be obligated to a university or college by an agency other than the ones included in the survey, and these amounts are not captured.

Other problems include agency difficulties in matching program descriptions with the proper funding category (e.g., R&D, facilities and equipment for instruction in S&E) in the database. At least one agency stated in the past that the categories general support for S&E and other S&E are a catchall for programs that do not fit anywhere else. (Beginning with the FY 2021 data collection, these two categories were combined as other general support for S&E.)

Data Availability and Comparability

Data availability

Annual data are available for FYs 1963–2024.

Data comparability

Eight federal agencies supplied data for FYs 1963–67 (data collection began in 1965). The initial survey elicited information about higher education institutions only. Additional agencies have been included in the years since then. The survey has been conducted annually since 1968. Information on nonprofit organizations was added in 1968.

In some instances, prior year data have been modified based on discrepancies noted during the consistency reviews of the data across years. To obtain accurate historical data, data users should use only the most recent publication, which incorporates corrections agencies have made in prior year data.

Data Products

Publications

NCSES publishes data from this survey annually in the detailed tabular data series Survey of [Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Nonprofit Institutions](#). Data for major data elements are available for FY 1963 onward.

Electronic access

Access to the data for major data elements is available for FY 1963 onward in NCSES's [interactive data tool](#). Users can create custom tables about federal S&E funding to higher education and nonprofit institutions by federal agency.