

September 23, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Committee on
Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cole, Chairwoman Collins, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Vice
Chairwoman Murray,

As founders of private sector companies and startups, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and business leaders, we write to urge Congress to sustain funding for the National Science Foundation as a cornerstone of U.S. competitiveness. The agency's investments are vital for maintaining American scientific leadership – and in many instances have proven critical for our own success as innovators, investors, and job creators.

Public investment in basic science has been key to our nation's success since World War II: It has helped drive business productivity, enabled the creation of a highly skilled workforce, and yielded immense economic growth. In the American system of innovation, federal funding connects universities and businesses and allows ideas and talent to flow freely between the two. University-industry partnerships have benefited all Americans, and few entities have forged more successful linkages than the NSF.

For example, NSF investments in neural networks and cognitive science helped drive the development of modern-day AI. The NSF seeded the internet by investing in its own precursor, NSFNET, which built on the Department of Defense's "ARPANET," and by investing in research into digital networks and information; it also funded the graduate students who went on to found Google. And the NSF played an important role in the development of additive manufacturing through its investments in foundational research into materials science, mechanical engineering, and computational workflows. The sectors built around NSF-supported fields have added trillions of dollars to the U.S. economy, reflecting massive returns on federal investment.

As it happens, the areas of science and engineering in which the NSF has most excelled are exactly those domains in which China is now ascendant, thanks to its own long-term investments. China is now a clear technological rival in fields as diverse as robotics, materials, quantum communications, AI, and many others.

Though its mission continues to focus on basic science, the NSF does not operate in a vacuum. It proactively seeks to engage with industry through initiatives such as the Regional Innovation Engines program and the Engineering Research Centers, which have yielded hundreds of spinoff companies, supported students, and added more than \$50 billion in economic value. Other programs like Small Business Innovation Research/ Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) have boosted scientific and commercial outcomes achieved by entrepreneurial firms while seeding industry players like Qualcomm and Symantec (now Gen Digital).

Lastly, the NSF is also important for its role in developing a skilled workforce. NSF research and educational awards provide substantial support for undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers. The skills they develop while working on NSF-funded projects make them attractive hires and productive employees at the most innovative businesses and start-up companies.

If the United States wishes to sustain its ability to compete globally while continuing to reap the rewards proffered by innovation in the long run, it needs a strong and thriving NSF. We, as founders of private sector companies and startups, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and business leaders, urge you to ensure NSF's funding is sustained in FY26.

Sincerely,

The individuals listed here are signing as individuals, not as formal representatives of their respective companies or organizations. Affiliations are included for identification purposes only.

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CC:

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Ranking Member Chris Van Hollen, Senate Appropriations Commerce, Justice, and
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Ranking Member Grace Meng, House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, and Science
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