

**S-STEM Site Visit Protocol**  
**STUDENTS**

<Salutation>, my name is <name>, from <Abt or Sage Fox and brief description of firm and location>. Let me introduce the team who will participate in today's focus group. <List with descriptive information.>

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is a federal agency created to promote the progress of science by supporting research and education in all fields of science and engineering. The National Science Foundation has contracted with us to evaluate the Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics program, otherwise known as S-STEM. On this campus, the S-STEM program is called <program name> and we understand that you are all current or former participants of the program. Is this true?

The goals of the evaluation are to understand the role of S-STEM in the educational and career trajectories of scholarship recipients and to examine the effects of the program on grantee institutions. We're also interested in the characteristics of exemplary S-STEM programs.

We're here today to talk with you about your experiences, in particular, as they relate to the <S-STEM> program. Your comments will be part of a report to NSF about the implementation of <S-STEM> on this campus and on the benefits of the program to your education and career progression. We hope that your participation in this focus group will help improve the S-STEM program for the benefit of future grantee institutions and scholarship recipients.

Before we begin our discussion, I would like to let you know that:

- You are not required to participate in this focus group. You may decline to answer any questions we ask, and you may leave at any time;
- We will be recording and taking notes during the discussion; and,
- We will not quote you by name in our report to NSF.

Now, I must ask each of you, do you agree to participate in this focus group? Do you have any questions?

Great. Now why don't we go around the room/table so that <name(s)> and I can get a sense of who's in the room. If you could each just share your first name, year in school, and major... (This is for ice breaking purposes and not for strict data collection.)

Of course, you're all here because you have participated or are currently participating in <S-STEM> program. Tell us...

**1. What was it that attracted you to <S-STEM>?**

Probes:

- a. Was it strictly the scholarship money or was it more than that?
- b. How did you learn about <S-STEM> and how was <S-STEM> presented to you?
- c. Was it something you knew about before coming to this college/university?

**2. What would have been different for you if you had not received the <S-STEM> scholarship?**

Probes:

- a. What would you have been doing if you were not an <S-STEM> scholarship recipient?
- b. Have you been able to work less? Take out fewer loans?
- c. How else has it changed how you spend your time?
- d. Has the money meant you can stay in school?

Based on our understanding, the program includes <list components>. Is there anything else I missed?

**3. Beyond the scholarship, what other supports have been important for you and why?**

Probes:

- a. Have you received academic advising, career counseling, mentoring or access to research, internships or other experiential opportunities? <can refer to specific offerings based on our knowledge of the program>
- b. Why was <component> important to you?
- c. Would this have been possible if you were not an <S-STEM> scholar?

**4. Do you feel a sense of community with the other students in <S-STEM>? With the faculty or staff involved in <S-STEM>?**

Probe:

- a. What are the benefits to being part of this community?

**5. Has S-STEM had an influence on your plans for the future?**

Probes:

- a. How has <S-STEM> affected your course selection or choice of major?
- b. Has the program contributed to your desire or ability to transfer to a four-year college or university (if appropriate), to go to graduate school or work in a STEM field once you graduate?
- c. Has <S-STEM> opened doors; like given you access to internships or undergraduate research? Access to professional meetings or conferences? Other opportunities that will have an impact on your education or career plans?

**6. What other STEM enrichment programs are you involved with?**

Probe:

- a. How are they different from <S-STEM>?
- b. How does your participation in them relate to what you get from participating in <S-STEM>?

**7. Have you experienced any challenges related to program participation? What recommendations would you give to the National Science Foundation to improve the <S-STEM> program?**

Probes:

- a. Could the program meet students' needs better?
- b. Are some aspects of the program more helpful than others?

Thank you so much for your time, we know that you are very busy. This has been an important conversation and will greatly help us to understand the impact of S-STEM on students and institutions.