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For further Information, please send an email to the cognizant program officers listed in the solicitation.

Frequently asked questions as of September 15, 2008

- [Why did NSF decide to compete the operations of the George E. Brown, Jr. Network for Earthquake Engineering Simulation?](#)
- [What is the NSF 08-574 competition schedule?](#)
- [Do I have to submit a letter of intent in order to submit a preliminary proposal?](#)
- [What is the current arrangement for the management and operations of NEES?](#)
- [Will the award for NEES operations made as the outcome of NSF 08-574 be a contract or a cooperative agreement?](#)
- [The solicitation states under Section IV, "Eligibility Information," that the Principal Investigator \(PI\) must be a full-time employee of the lead \(submitting\) organization. Does the PI have to be a full-time employee at the time of the preliminary proposal submission or can the PI be a full-time employee by the date of issuance of the cooperative agreement award?](#)
- [Can a university that is hosting a NEES equipment site be the lead \(submitting\) organization or participate in key headquarters management positions?](#)
- [Is previous experience with the NEES equipment sites required to be the lead \(submitting\) organization on a preliminary proposal?](#)
- [Will all 15 NEES equipment sites continue to be supported and operated through the cooperative agreement made under NSF 08-574? Will new NEES equipment sites be built or added?](#)
- [What is the award process?](#)
- [What should an awardee expect during the transitional period between cooperative agreements?](#)
- [Can I contact individual equipment sites for information when putting my proposal together?](#)
- [Where can I find out more information about the NEES data repository?](#)
- [Does the cyberinfrastructure need to be operated primarily through a subaward?](#)
- [Section II.C of the solicitation requires the awardee to develop](#)

and implement a network-wide cybersecurity plan. What does this involve?

- Where can I find out more about the current NEES operations?
- Where can I find out more about NSF's support for earthquake engineering and cyberinfrastructure?
- Is there a draft cooperative agreement for the award to be made as the outcome of NSF 08-574?

1. **Why did NSF decide to compete the operations of the George E. Brown, Jr. Network for Earthquake Engineering Simulation?**

This competition is being held in accordance with the NSF policy on recompetition, as stated in the National Science Board's resolution NSB 08-12

http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/publications/2008/nsb0812_comp_recomp.pdf, and provides NSF an opportunity to convey to the community the awardee's responsibilities for the second five years of NEES operations.

2. **What is the [NSF 08-574](#) competition schedule?**

The anticipated schedule, subject to change as necessary, is the following:

August 8, 2008	NSF Town Hall Meeting and Webcast
September 3, 2008	Letter of Intent (Required) Deadline
September 12, 2008	Informational Facility Visit, NEES Equipment Site at the University of Minnesota; http://nees.umn.edu
October 1, 2008	Preliminary Proposal (Required) Deadline
November 2008	Merit Review of Preliminary Proposals
February 13, 2009	Invited Full Proposal Deadline
March – May 2009	Merit Review of Invited Full Proposals; Finalists notified for additional information, as needed
May 2009	Potential awardee notified of NSF's intent to award
September 2009	NSF issues cooperative agreement to awardee
October 1, 2009	Awardee begins cooperative agreement
March 31,	Awardee exits start-

3. Do I have to submit a letter of intent in order to submit a preliminary proposal?

Yes. A letter of intent was required to be submitted by the lead organization no later than September 3, 2008, 5 p.m. proposer's local time. Guidelines for the submission of the letter of intent are included in [NSF 08-574](#). Preliminary proposals that are submitted without having previously submitted the required letter of intent by the September 3, 2008, deadline will be returned without review.

4. What is the current arrangement for the management and operations of NEES?

The current award for NEES operations is a cooperative agreement – a form of assistance award – not a contract. The incumbent awardee is NEES Consortium, Inc., located in Davis, CA, <http://www.nees.org>. This non-profit organization was incorporated in early 2003 and has overseen NEES operations since October 2004. The current cooperative agreement, for a total amount approved by the National Science Board not to exceed \$106,500,000, began on October 1, 2004 and will expire on September 30, 2009. This cooperative agreement may be extended through FY 2010 to enable the incumbent awardee to complete all project documentation and to assist the new awardee during its start-up and transition phase.

5. Will the award for NEES operations made as the outcome of [NSF 08-574](#) be a contract or a cooperative agreement?

As stated in [NSF 08-574](#), the award will be a single cooperative agreement for the management and operations of NEES. For information about financial and administrative terms and conditions for NSF cooperative agreements, visit the NSF website at http://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/co-op_conditions.jsp?org=NSF. This page also includes links to Supplemental Financial/Administrative Terms and Conditions for Large Facilities. NEES is an NSF-supported large facility.

6. The solicitation states under Section IV, "Eligibility Information," that the Principal Investigator (PI) must be a full-time employee of the lead (submitting) organization. Does the PI have to be a full-time employee at the time of the preliminary proposal submission or can the PI be a full-time employee by the date of issuance of the cooperative agreement award?

The PI does not have to be a full-time employee of the lead organization at the time of submission of the preliminary proposal or at the time of submission of the invited full proposal. However, the preliminary proposal should discuss how the lead organization intends to meet this eligibility criterion by the cooperative agreement award date and the invited full proposal must include a letter from the lead organization confirming pending employment arrangements with the PI by the cooperative agreement award date. The PI must be a full-time employee of the lead organization by the date of issuance of the cooperative agreement.

7. Can a university that is hosting a NEES equipment site be the lead (submitting) organization or participate in key headquarters management positions?

Yes. Per the eligibility information, the following organizations may submit preliminary and invited full proposals: (1) Universities and colleges located and accredited in the U.S., acting on behalf of their faculty; (2) Non-profit, non-academic organizations located and incorporated within the U.S. that are associated directly with research activities or that are a non-profit subsidiary of a college or university. All the NEES equipment sites are located at academic institutions that fall under category (1) of the eligible organizations. The lead organization may be one of the academic institutions hosting a NEES equipment site and the headquarters management team may include personnel from institutions hosting a NEES equipment site. As discussed in Section V of [NSF 08-574](#), the proposal should discuss how conflicts of interest will be addressed by the lead organization in the allocation of support to the equipment site in question as well as other activities.

8. Is previous experience with the NEES equipment sites required to be the lead (submitting) organization on a preliminary proposal?

No. While demonstration of lead organizational capability as it relates to the scope of NEES operations must be addressed in the proposal, there is no explicit requirement to have prior experience with the NEES equipment sites.

9. Will all 15 NEES equipment sites continue to be supported and operated through the cooperative agreement made under [NSF 08-574](#)? Will new NEES equipment sites be built or added?

It is the responsibility of the incumbent awardee and the new awardee made under [NSF 08-574](#) to conduct annual assessments of each NEES equipment site performance and usage, and to make recommendations to NSF for future year budget formulation and work plans. The resulting recommendations may include a realignment of facilities. As stated in [NSF 08-574](#), no new equipment sites will be added to NEES as a result of this competition.

10. What is the award process?

The potential awardee under [NSF 08-574](#) will be notified of NSF's intent to award in May 2009. The cooperative agreement is anticipated to be awarded by September 30, 2009, pending the NSF review process and availability of funds.

11. What should an awardee expect during the transitional period between cooperative agreements?

The major transitional issues are maintaining continuity of operations at the equipment sites, since they support users throughout the year, and the cyberinfrastructure, including the data repository. NSF will require an alignment of milestones for ramping up and ramping down between the new awardee and the incumbent awardee, respectively. The awardee's year one budget must include all costs required by the lead and its partner organizations to implement a start-up and

transition plan from October 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010. Section V.A. of the solicitation requires proposers to provide a start-up and transition plan for the first six months of NEES operations. Support for the awardee will be ramped up by March 31, 2010, to full level, as by this date the transitional period between awardees should be complete.

12. Can I contact individual equipment sites for information when putting my proposal together?

The equipment sites recommend that all questions be directed to Dr. James M. Ricles, Chair, NEES Equipment Site Forum, and Professor, Lehigh University, at innees@lehigh.edu. The NEES Equipment sites have also established a FAQ website where answers to these questions will be posted. It can be found at:

<https://wiki.nees.org/display/Recompetition/Sites>

13. Where can I find out more information about the NEES data repository?

Good starting points are the incumbent awardee's web site for NEES operations: NEES central at <https://central.nees.org/> and NEES library for data publications: <http://it.nees.org/library/data/index.php>.

14. Does the cyberinfrastructure need to be operated primarily through a subaward?

No, this is not a requirement. Proposers are encouraged to provide unique and potentially transformative solutions to meet the awardee responsibilities for cyberinfrastructure outlined in [NSF 08-574](#).

15. Section II.C of the solicitation requires the awardee to develop and implement a network-wide cybersecurity plan. What does this involve?

Proposers should review the NSF Cooperative Agreement Supplemental/Administrative Terms and Conditions-Large Facilities dated June 1, 2007, Section 51, "Information Security" <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/cafal607.pdf>. As stated in [NSF 08-574](#), as part of the start-up and transition plan, the awardee must submit the cybersecurity plan to NSF by December 1, 2009. In addition, the incumbent awardee maintains a cybersecurity plan, "NEES Cyberinfrastructure Security Plan," available at http://it.nees.org/support/security/neesit_sec-plan.pdf.

16. Where can I find out more about the current NEES operations?

[NSF 08-574](#) includes a number of links to the incumbent awardee's web site. Suggested starting points are the following:

- Main NEES website: <http://www.nees.org>
- NEES IT (Cyberinfrastructure) website: <http://it.nees.org/>
- NEES Education, Outreach, and Training Activities: <http://nees.org/Education/>

17. Where can I find out more about NSF's support for earthquake engineering and cyberinfrastructure?

The following links are included in [NSF 08-574](#) and should be visited:

- NSF Division of Civil, Mechanical and Manufacturing Innovation, Directorate for Engineering (CMMI):
<http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=CMMI>. Most of the NSF support for earthquake engineering research is through the CMMI Division's Resilient and Sustainable Infrastructure cluster's programs.
- National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP)
<http://www.nehrp.gov/>
- NSF Office of Cyberinfrastructure:
<http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?org=OCI>

18. **Is there a draft cooperative agreement for the award to be made as the outcome of [NSF 08-574](#)?**

Yes. A draft cooperative agreement, dated July 31, 2008. It is document number [NSF 08-074](#)