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AVAToL Ideas Lab Frequently Asked Questions

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1. **Question: Is AVAToL a permanent replacement for the AToL program?**

Answer: No, AVAToL is a one-time solicitation. Pending the availability of funds, plans are to resume the AToL competition in fiscal year 2012.

2. **Question: Do you anticipate making awards of longer duration than one year?**

Answer: There is no pre-determined expectation for award duration. We anticipate that the Ideas Labs projects will incorporate high-risk, proof-of-concept ideas, focusing on solving near-term problems to enable major breakthroughs for the field.

3. **Question: How do the preliminary proposals differ from typical NSF proposals?**

Answer: The preliminary proposals are actually applications to participate in the Ideas Lab. They are very different from standard proposals in that the selection criteria are background, vision, and the ability to contribute to the development of ideas in a team setting. In contrast to "typical" proposals, you are not asked to outline specific projects and research plans.

4. **Question: What are you looking for in the 2-page preliminary proposals for participation in the AVAToL Ideas Lab?**

Answer: The specific components required in the preliminary proposal are detailed in section V.A. of the program solicitation (see links below). In the preliminary proposal; we seek to learn about three main things: 1) your professional background (in broad outline), 2) the expertise, vision, and interest you bring to the Ideas Lab, and 3) your ability and willingness to engage with others.

5. **Question: What kind of title should I give the preliminary proposal?**

Answer: The title should reflect the expertise and vision you bring to the Ideas Lab.

6. **Question: Is it okay to submit a preliminary proposal with two PIs?**

Answer: Each preliminary proposal can only list one individual. **Proposals listing more than one individual will be returned without review.** Only a single person should be described in each preliminary proposal, but your organization may submit more than one application. However, selection of multiple people from one organization is unlikely. The full proposals invited after the workshop will likely involve more than one PI/Co-PI. If you and your collaborators have relevant expertise and interest, you can each apply for participation in the workshop separately, but not with the same proposal.

7. **Question: Can two PIs attend the Ideas Lab?**

Answer: We will select participants for the Ideas Lab. There may be options afterwards to involve other collaborators (see next question), depending on the project ideas that develop.

8. **Question: Can we bring someone in as a Co-PI for the full proposal even if they did not attend the workshop? Would their inclusion be something that would be discussed and/or approved at the workshop?**

Answer: This will depend on the ideas that develop at the Ideas Lab. The expectation is

that the right mix of people to form new teams and address important questions will be present at the Ideas Lab. The general rule will be that if the expertise required is represented among Ideas Lab participants, then these participants should be involved. If, as a project develops, it becomes apparent that expertise is required that is not found among workshop participants, then personnel outside the workshop may be considered. For now, each person should apply as an individual, and team collaborations will develop during the Ideas Lab.

9. **Question: May I work remotely with my team members from my lab/home institution at the Ideas Lab?**

Answer: The intent of the Ideas Lab is to foster collaboration among the participants present at the Ideas Lab. For this reason, the development of project ideas with those not participating in the Ideas Lab will not be permitted.

10. **Question: How should a group indicate that they are planning to collaborate? Should each of the preliminary proposals be linked as collaborative through FastLane?**

Answer: Please do not link your proposal to any others, as the NSF team will select participants on an individual basis. While participants are free to describe their current collaborations, it is expected that participants at the workshop will form NEW teams for the project ideas that are developed during the workshop. The goal of the Ideas Lab is for participants to come together and develop new ideas and research plans, and form new multidisciplinary teams to tackle these plans. So, preformed teams with an already-defined research plan should submit proposals to one of NSF's regular programs.

11. **Question: Is it okay for a small business, company or for-profit organization to participate in this program?**

Answer: Per the NSF Grant Proposal Guide, persons working at "for-profit organizations" are eligible to submit proposals to NSF. A link to the relevant section of the GPG is here: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/gpg_1.jsp#IE3 Please be advised that this competition has special considerations. Chief among these factors is the need for open and full disclosure of ideas, innovations, and project development plans at the workshop. Such discussions are considered privileged exchanges among the meeting participants. There will be restrictions on disclosure or independent pursuit of projects developed at the Ideas Lab.

12. **Question: Is someone who is not affiliated with any organization eligible to participate in this program, and if so, how should they register?**

Answer: They would register as an unaffiliated individual. An online form is available on the Fastlane Website in the "Registration Information" section at <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a0/about/registration.htm> FastLane support personnel are available via email fastlane@nsf.gov or phone 1-800-673-6188 to assist with the registration process if necessary.

13. **Question: How many participants will be invited to the workshop?**

Answer: The current plan is to invite 20-30 participants to the Ideas Lab.

14. **Question: Can I participate in just part of the Ideas Lab workshop?**

Answer: No, submitting a preliminary proposal is an indication of your willingness to attend and participate through the full course of the five-day residential workshop. The constantly interactive and dynamic nature of the workshop requires attendance throughout.

15. **Question: How many proposals are likely to be funded?**

Answer: The anticipated number of awards is 2-6 but that will depend on the nature and number of the invited proposals from the outcome of Ideas Lab.

16. **Question: Will this grant be considered a teaching grant, a research grant or can it**

have components of both?

Answer: It is expected that some education or outreach component will be incorporated into invited proposals; however, the nature of such activities will be determined at the Ideas Lab.

17. Question: What do we bring to the Ideas Lab if we are selected to participate?

Answer: All you need for the Ideas Lab is an open mind, a desire to address pressing questions concerning the tree of life, and a healthy dose of collegiality. Further instructions will be provided to selected participants.

18. Question: Are final proposals "invited" from those ideas generated in the Ideas Lab or can they be generated "outside" of the Ideas Lab?

Answer: The invited proposals will be based on ideas generated at the Ideas Lab; however, it is expected that there will be some further development of the project ideas as the proposals are drafted.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL SUBMISSION PROCESS

19. Question: Does the proposal classification form need to be completed for the submission of the preliminary proposal?

Answer: Yes, the classification form will need to be submitted.

20. Question: Does a start date need to be entered on the preliminary proposal cover sheet?

Answer: For the start-date, choose the preliminary proposal due-date from the pull down menu.

21. Question: Where can I find the proposal classification form on the website?

Answer: When you are going to prepare your proposal in FastLane, there is a button towards the lower left that says "Proposal Classification". Click on that button to get the form. The button does not show up until you select a BIO program from the cover-sheet page (in this case, AVAToL).

22. Question: When will I know if I have been selected for participation in the Ideas Lab?

Answer: The selection process will take several weeks after the preliminary proposal submission deadline. An email will be sent by June 22nd, 2011 at the latest. This will leave sufficient time to arrange travel to the Ideas Lab venue.

23. Question: Although reference citation is waived, are references allowed to be cited, and if so, do they have to be included in the two page limit?

Answer: You are limited to the two-page project description. Please embed any citations you feel need to be included. Also note that your Biosketch needs to be submitted, and could include some of your references.

24. Question: What would be the next steps after receiving approval of my registration in FastLane via email?

Answer: Once you are registered, you will be able to write and submit your preliminary proposal through FastLane. After the proposal submission due date, we will review all the applications and notify applicants of their status.

25. Question: When will notifications be sent regarding the submission of a full proposal?

Answer: Invitations to submit full proposals will be issued within one to two weeks after the Ideas Lab, so that the proposals can be prepared in a timely fashion. Further guidance will be provided to workshop participants and only invited proposals will be reviewed.

26. **Question: How do I complete the Preliminary Proposal Solicitation without having the actual topic of the full proposal, the budget, duration, or title?**

Answer: In the "Previous NSF Award" section of the coversheet, be sure to check the box that indicates this is a preliminary proposal. The title of your preliminary proposal should reflect the expertise and vision you bring to the Ideas Lab. Proposals will be submitted with \$0.00 budgets. In order to do this, click on the budget button, then the link to add a year, and finally highlight year 1 and create. You do not need to put any items in the budget for year 1. You will also need a completed BIO classification form. The FastLane Helpdesk (1-800-673-6188) will be able to assist you with registration if necessary.

Links to the solicitation:

For the PDF: <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11534/nsf11534.pdf>

For HTML: <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11534/nsf11534.htm>