



National Science Foundation
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NSF 14-098

Dear Colleague Letter: Special Guidelines for Submitting Collaborative Proposals under the US NSF/BIO/DEB - UK NERC Lead Agency Opportunity

SCOPE

The Division of Environmental Biology (DEB) in the Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO) of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) of the Research Councils UK (RCUK) are pleased to announce an NSF/BIO/DEB-NERC lead agency opportunity. The goal of this opportunity is to reduce some of the current barriers to working internationally. Through a lead agency model, DEB and NERC will address these issues by allowing US and UK researchers to submit a single collaborative proposal that will undergo a single review process.

The US NSF and the RCUK have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Research Cooperation. The MOU provides an overarching framework to encourage collaboration between US and UK research communities and sets out the principles by which jointly supported activities might be developed. The MOU provides for a lead agency arrangement whereby proposals may be submitted to either NSF or NERC.

Proposals will be accepted for collaborative research in areas at the intersection of NSF/BIO/DEB and NERC interest as set out below:

NSF/BIO/DEB Solicitation

Division of Environmental Biology Solicitation (Core Programs) [NSF 15-609](#).

NERC Responsive Mode¹

Standard Research Grants (including New Investigator Grants)

Large Research Grants

Proposals are expected to adhere to the remit, funding limits, and grant durations for the NSF/BIO/DEB and NERC programs of the respective agency from which the funding is sought and must represent an integrated collaborative effort. This document provides guidelines for the preparation, submission, review, and award of NSF/BIO/DEB-NERC collaborative proposals. During an initial two-year phase (2015-2016), both agencies will evaluate the interest in and success of the activities.

Proposers are advised that all documents submitted to NSF or RCUK may be shared with the other agency in order to implement the two-way agency activities.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

1. Researchers will identify a prospective lead agency (either NSF or NERC) based on where the largest proportion of research lies. Prior to submission of a preliminary/outline proposal or letter of intent, the principal investigator (PI) should contact the proposed lead funding agency at NSFDEB-NERC@nsf.gov or international@nerc.ac.uk to discuss the research focus of the project. The two

agencies will consult and confirm which one will act as lead funding agency, and this will be communicated to the PI.

2. If NSF/BIO/DEB is the lead agency, a **preliminary proposal** must then be submitted to NSF in accordance with the standard requirements and submission dates as announced in the DEB solicitation. The preliminary proposal must be submitted to one of the clusters in DEB, using the FastLane system by January 23, 2015, and annually thereafter as announced in the DEB solicitation and website.
3. The title of the document (preliminary proposal, outline proposal, or LOI) must be prefaced with "NSFDEB-NERC:" to indicate that the document is to be considered under these lead agency activities.

Biographical sketches of all senior personnel (including US and UK partners) should be prepared in accordance with the standard biographical sketch format identified in DEB solicitation and uploaded in one PDF file. In addition, **as a Single Copy Document** preliminary proposals submitted under lead agency activities should include:

- Written consent that the proposals and unattributed reviews will be shared with the partner-funding agency, NERC.
- Bottom line estimates of funding for the UK partner's budget that will be requested from NERC (a detailed budget is not needed at this time).

4. If NERC is the lead agency and the proposal meets the Standard Grant scheme criteria, a **letter of intent** (LOI) must then be submitted via email to international@nerc.ac.uk. The deadline for a submission of the LOI is March 17 2015, linking to the subsequent July standard grant full proposal closing date, and annually thereafter.

The following information must be included:

- A brief description of the proposed research and collaboration (up to 5000 characters including spaces)
- The names, institutions, and qualifications of the researchers (US and UK)
- Bottom line estimates of funding to be requested from NSF and NERC
- The proposed use of NSF/NERC facilities

If the proposal meets the Large Grant scheme criteria an **outline proposal** must be submitted via the Je-S system in accordance with usual outline closing date and requirements. An additional page in the case for support must be used to describe the US team and provide bottom line estimates of funding that the US team will be requesting from NSF (a detailed budget is not needed at this time).

5. Involvement in a joint international proposal will count towards the limit on the number of proposal submissions, whether submitted to NSF or NERC. Submissions to a DEB core program require a preliminary proposal that is evaluated on both eligibility and intellectual merit. In a given year, an individual may participate as a PI, Co-PI, or senior lead investigator of a sub award on no more than two preliminary proposals submitted in response to the DEB core program solicitation.
6. The lead agency will share the document with the non-lead agency to check for eligibility (whether the proposed research is within the participating agencies' portfolio, and if the proposers and institutions meet agency eligibility requirements). The outline proposals and preliminary proposals will undergo a peer evaluation for intellectual merit and broader impacts. Based on these

evaluations, proposers may be invited to submit a full research proposal to the lead agency.

7. The lead agency will provide a written response to proposers on whether or not the proposed submission is invited to proceed under the lead agency process.
8. Proposers who are invited to submit a **full proposal** will do so in accordance with the proposal preparation requirements of both agencies: if NSF is lead, complying with the DEB solicitation and submitting through NSF's FastLane system (<https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov>) or Grants.gov (<http://grants.gov>) and if NERC is lead, complying with the *Research Grants Handbook* via the Research Council's Je-S system (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>).

The proposal must include a description of the full-proposed research program and research team and describe the total resources for the joint project (that is, the funds requested from both the NSF and NERC).

9. The full proposal should indicate the proposal is to be considered under the lead agency activities by prefacing the title with "NSFDEB-NERC:"
10. If NSF is the lead agency, the proposal should only indicate the US expenses on the NSF budget form. If NERC is the lead agency, the proposal should only indicate the UK expenses on NERC's budget form. A copy of the proposed requested budget of the non-lead agency should be included as part of the full proposal as a supplementary document. The Budget Justification section of the full proposal should address the full UK and US project budgets and they must be clearly differentiated in the justification. Proposals that request duplicative funding may be returned without review.

As the non-lead agency, NERC will make awards up to a limit of £300,000, calculated at 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC) (NERC will fund 80% of the FEC). In addition NERC anticipates managing an annual volume of 3% of its Discovery Science budget that can be awarded as non-lead agency. As the non-lead agency, NSF/BIO/DEB will make awards up to a limit of \$500,000. Information on the estimated program budget and the estimated number of awards can be found in the award information section in the current DEB core solicitation.

11. The following documents must be provided as **Supplementary Documents** for the full proposal:
 - o Funding requested from non-lead agency: A detailed breakdown of funding requested from non-lead agency, using the non-lead agency's budget form.
 - o Institutional endorsement: An institutional acknowledgement of the submission must be a signed letter from an authorized institutional representative from the non-lead partner's country with the following text: "I confirm on behalf of [insert name of institution] that the US-UK Collaborative proposal between [insert name of lead agency PI and institution] and [name of non-lead agency PI and institution] is endorsed and has been submitted by [name of Research Office], thereby acknowledging the proposed collaboration."
12. For projects involving human subjects/participants or vertebrate animals, proposers should consult both NSF and NERC policies.
13. The full proposal will be submitted by established program deadlines or target dates determined by the lead agency during the initial phase of this activity (2015 and 2016) and annually afterwards. Refer to the DEB solicitation and NERC Responsive Mode/Discovery Science schemes for specific timing of deadlines.
 - o The lead agency full proposals will be accepted for the:
 - o August deadline for DEB Core Programs

- July deadline for NERC Standard Grants
- November deadline for NERC Large Grants

PEER REVIEW

NSF/BIO/DEB-NERC collaborative proposals will be reviewed alongside all other standard proposals received in the same funding round or call and will not undergo a separate or special review process.

Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the lead agency's review criteria. While these are not identical, NSF and RCUK ask reviewers to evaluate research on both its scientific or intellectual merit as well as its broader or societal impacts.

FUNDING DECISIONS

The funding decisions will be discussed with the partner agency. The lead agency will use its usual internal procedures to determine whether a proposal will be awarded or declined. Funding decisions may be subject to availability of funds. All proposers will be advised by the lead funding agency whether their proposals have been recommended for funding or will be declined. Proposers will receive copies of the reviewers' unattributed comments and, where applicable, a panel summary. Once a proposer is notified that his or her proposal has been recommended for funding, the non-lead research partner(s) must contact the non-lead agency, in the case of NSF at NSFDEB-NERC@nsf.gov, and in the case of NERC at international@nerc.ac.uk and subsequently submit a copy of the proposal to the non-lead agency so that both agencies have complete documentation.

Each agency will notify the proposer that these awards were made possible by the NSF/BIO/DEB NERC lead agency activities.

Because the participating organizations have different funding cycles, it is possible that some projects will have delayed start dates in order to wait until funds become available.

Should a proposal be declined for funding, proposers should refer to each agency's individual resubmission policies. Involvement in a proposal submitted to the lead agency will count as a submission to the non-lead agency for purposes of resubmission monitoring.

POSTWARD CONSIDERATIONS

Awardees will be expected to comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the agencies from which they receive funding.

Awardees will be required to acknowledge both NSF and NERC in any reports or publications arising from the grant.

Extension and supplement requests will be considered by participating agencies using standard procedures. Requests for changes to awards pertaining to the scope of research or significant changes or delays to the research will be communicated to counterpart funding agencies.

All NSF and NERC requirements for data storage are still applicable to investigators funded by these respective agencies. NERC funded scientists must make their data openly available within two years of collection. <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/sites/data/policy/>

In accordance with NSF and NERC standard procedures, awards are announced publicly.

¹NERC Responsive Mode schemes are now known as Discovery Science.