



National Science Foundation
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Dear Colleague Letter - International Activities within the Physics Division - Potential International Co-Review

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Dear Colleague:

The study of Physics is a global pursuit. While this is generally recognized in research in particle physics, where hundreds of scientists work in extended world-wide collaborations on mutual areas of emphasis, it is less well-known that valuable international scientific collaborations frequently take place on a much smaller scale - including at the individual investigator level. The Physics Division (PHY) is well aware of this potential for productive collaborations and encourages interactions of PHY-supported scientists with scientific colleagues around the world.

The Physics Division has no special program specifically dedicated to fostering international collaborations, instead regarding these as part of the normal way of doing business. Thus, each disciplinary program within the Division handles these collaborations in its own way and as appropriate to the field. The role of the international component is reviewed as part of the normal review process, and funding may be provided through the normal research award to support the US-based researchers' costs. The level of support can vary - from the inclusion of a small amount of funding for international travel for less-formal activities, to a larger fraction of the award for funding in support of research on special facilities outside the US that offer unique scientific opportunities.

It occasionally happens that a situation arises in which an informal collaboration driven by mutual areas of interest can expand into a project in which both the US PI and the international partner have something unique and indispensable to bring to the effort. Each partner is funded independently by a funding organization within his or her own country for his or her contribution, but sometimes a strong scientific case can be made that the progress of science will be enhanced if both efforts can be combined into a unified project. In such cases, and based upon a mutual understanding between the NSF Physics Division and the counterpart funding organization and the written permission of the investigators, Program Officers from the Physics Division and the counterpart funding organization may work to coordinate the review process such that the overall project, and not just each component separately, gets a hearing.

We stress that this co-review process only pertains to those efforts in which a mutual coordination of the review and funding processes by counterpart funding organizations can be beneficial to the science. It is not intended to replace those situations for which existing, proven procedures are in place and for which there is no need for a coordinated review. There are no separate funds available for these efforts through the Physics Division; proposals must compete with all other proposals within the program and must succeed on the strengths of their intellectual merit and broader impact.

Anyone who wishes to pursue an international activity that might be a candidate for a co-review should begin by contacting the Program Officer in the Physics Division for the disciplinary program of interest and ask if the project is suitable and if a Science and Technology Agreement is in place that would allow the country of interest to be open to consideration of a co-review prior to the submission of any proposal.

As coordination of reviews can take some time, it is important to do this well in advance of any deadline in order to allow time to establish the interaction at the agency level. Program Officers will also provide information about the standard practices in their respective programs regarding international efforts.

Yours sincerely,
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