



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 16-132

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

September 8, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

SCOPE

The Directorate for Geosciences (GEO) 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/GEO-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, GEO 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 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Research Cooperation in June of 2013. 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/GEO and NERC interest as set out below:

NSF/GEO Solicitations

Atmospheric and Geospace Sciences, Earth Sciences, Ocean Sciences, and Polar Programs:

https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_list.jsp?org=GEO

NERC Responsive Mode¹

Standard Research Grants (including New Investigator Grants):

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/researchgrants/standard/>

Large Research Grants:

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/researchgrants/large/>

Proposals are expected to adhere to the remit, funding limits, and grant durations for the NSF/GEO 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/GEO-NERC collaborative proposals.

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 letter of intent, the principal investigator (PI) should contact the proposed lead funding agency at NSFGEO-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/GEO is the lead agency, a **letter of intent** (LOI) must then be submitted to NSFGEO-NERC@nsf.gov and the appropriate NSF program officer at least three months in advance of the program deadline. The title of the LOI should be prefaced with "NSFGEO-NERC:" to indicate that the document is to be considered under these lead agency activities. The letter of intent should include the following information:
 - Inside 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
3. If NERC is the lead agency and the proposal meets the Standard Grant scheme criteria, a **letter of intent** (LOI) must then be submitted to NERC at least three months in advance of the relevant standard grant closing date, via email to international@nerc.ac.uk.

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 Large Grant 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).

4. For UK and US partners, involvement in a joint international proposal will count towards the limit on the number of proposal submissions an individual can make to a funding call, whether submitted to NSF or NERC.
5. The lead agency will share the LOI or outline proposal 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). If the lead agency is NERC, the outline 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 NERC. LOIs

will not undergo peer review.

6. 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.
7. 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 GEO solicitation and submitting through NSF's FastLane system (<https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov>) or Grants.gov (<https://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/>).

Biographical sketches of all senior personnel (including US and UK partners) should be prepared in accordance with the standard biographical sketch format identified in the relevant GEO solicitation. Each individual's biographical sketch must be uploaded as a single PDF file associated with that individual.

8. The full proposal should indicate the proposal is to be considered under the lead agency activities by prefacing the title with "NSFGEO-NERC:"
9. 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 (<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/researchgrants/international/uk-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/GEO may limit the US component of any project. Information on the estimated program budget and the estimated number of awards can be found in the award information section in the current GEO solicitations.

10. 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."
11. For projects involving human subjects/participants or vertebrate animals, proposers should consult both NSF and NERC policies.
12. The full proposal will be submitted by established program deadlines or target dates determined by the lead agency. Refer to the GEO solicitations and NERC Responsive Mode/Discovery Science

schemes for specific timing of deadlines.

PEER REVIEW

NSF/GEO-NERC collaborative proposals will be reviewed alongside all other 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 NSFGEO-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/GEO-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.

POSTAWARD 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 publically.

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