



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Related to Programmatic Changes to the Systematics and Biodiversity Science (SBS) Cluster

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1. What are the major changes in the revised cluster description?
2. Where should I submit my proposals that were planned for the Phylogenetic Systematics (PS), Biodiversity and Discovery Analysis (BDA), or Genealogy of Life (GoLife) programs?
3. Is the new special category (PurSUiT) a replacement for the GoLife program?
4. Do I need to submit a preliminary proposal for research applications to the revised Systematics and Biodiversity core program? What about proposals in the special categories (ARTS or PurSUiT)?
5. Is there a limit on the number of proposals that I can submit to the revised Systematics and Biodiversity Science core program?
6. Is there a budget cap for proposals submitted to the revised SBS core program? What about the special category proposals (ARTS and PurSUiT)?
7. Will expeditionary biodiversity discovery proposals still be considered by the revised Systematics and Biodiversity Science core program?
8. I would like to develop a new method for phylogenetic or biodiversity analysis. Is this research area appropriate for the revised Systematics and Biodiversity Science core program?
9. I would like to investigate a comparative, macroevolutionary question within a phylogenetic framework; do I need to generate my own phylogeny, or can I use an existing published phylogeny or one from the Open Tree of Life?
10. I am unsure if my research questions or organismal focus fall within the SBS core program?

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### 1. What are the major changes in the revised cluster description?

The [Revisions to the SBS Cluster](#) description reflects the National Science Foundation's continued commitment to systematics research and biodiversity discovery and recognizes the increasingly integrative nature of SBS proposals and the breadth of research questions being asked within the research community. The realignment of the cluster creates one unified core program, clarifies the priorities of the core program, and introduces a new special category of proposals — Poorly Sampled and Unknown Taxa (PurSUiT).

### 2. Where should I submit my proposals that were planned for the Phylogenetic Systematics (PS), Biodiversity and Discovery Analysis (BDA), or Genealogy of Life (GoLife) programs?

All proposals that were previously considered appropriate for submission to the PS, BDA, and GoLife programs should now be submitted to the Systematics and Biodiversity Science (SBS) core program under the Division of Environmental Biology core solicitation. This change will be effective for preliminary and full proposals submitted to the 2018 deadlines.

Please refer to the [Program Description](#) for a detailed description of the research supported by the SBS program.

### 3. Is the new special category (PurSUiT) a replacement for the GoLife program?

The PurSUiT category is meant to encourage biodiversity discovery and species description in poorly known, or dark areas, of the Tree of Life. This emphasis was previously included in the Genealogy of Life (GoLife) Program, and its incorporation as a special category within the SBS core program reflects a continued effort to close significant gaps in biodiversity knowledge.

GoLife also supported projects addressing comparative, macroevolutionary research questions by collecting and integrating various data layers (e.g., genomic, phenotypic, spatial, ecological, geological, temporal data, etc.), within a phylogenetic context. If not focused on poorly known areas of the Tree of Life, these projects are not appropriate as PurSUiT proposals. However, these should now be submitted as regular proposals to the SBS core program through the Division of Environmental Biology core solicitation.

### 4. Do I need to submit a preliminary proposal for research applications to the revised Systematics and Biodiversity core program? What about proposals in the special categories (ARTS or PurSUiT)?

Yes - Any research proposal submitted to the Systematics and Biodiversity core program, including proposals submitted to the special categories of ARTS and PurSUiT, must be submitted first as a preliminary proposal under the Division of Environmental Biology core solicitation.

### 5. Is there a limit on the number of proposals that I can submit to the revised Systematics and Biodiversity Science core program?

In a given year, an individual may participate as a PI, co-PI, or lead of a sub-award on **no more than two** preliminary proposals submitted in response to the core solicitation from the Division of Environmental Biology. Preliminary proposals in excess of the limit for any person will be returned without review in the reverse order received.

### 6. Is there a budget cap for proposals submitted to the revised SBS core program? What about the special category proposals (ARTS and PurSUiT)?

There are no budget caps for regular proposals submitted to the SBS core program or the special categories of ARTS and PurSUiT, unless the proposal is also designated as a small grant (SG) — see DEB core program solicitation [NSF 17-512](#).

### 7. Will expeditionary biodiversity discovery proposals still be considered by the revised Systematics and Biodiversity Science core program?

Yes - The SBS core program will continue to support expeditionary and exploratory research to advance the discovery, identification, description, classification, and cataloguing of the world's biodiversity. Biodiversity discovery proposals that specifically target poorly explored areas of the Tree of Life, and integrate this biodiversity data into a phylogenetic and/or taxonomic framework may be appropriate for the special PurSUiT category.

**8. I would like to develop a new method for phylogenetic or biodiversity analysis. Is this research area appropriate for the revised Systematics and Biodiversity Science core program?**

Yes - Proposals that advance systematics theory and/or develop new methods of phylogenetic analysis, comparative approaches, or biodiversity analysis are appropriate for the revised SBS core program.

**9. I would like to investigate a comparative, macroevolutionary question within a phylogenetic framework; do I need to generate my own phylogeny, or can I use an existing published phylogeny or one from the Open Tree of Life?**

Projects that build, refine, and/or use existing phylogenies to study biogeographic distributions; temporal or spatial patterns of evolution; evolution of morphological, physiological, developmental, behavioral and molecular traits; adaptive or non-adaptive radiations; or other macro-evolutionary patterns are appropriate. For macroevolutionary projects that will not develop a new phylogeny, but rather use an existing phylogeny, the collection and integration of new and existing data layers (geographic, environmental, organismal, etc.) within a broad phylogenetic context is required.

**10. I am unsure if my research questions or organismal focus fall within the SBS core program?**

A diversity of systematics and biodiversity science research is funded through the SBS core program and no organismal groups are excluded. You are encouraged to visit the [Program Description](#) page for a description of the kinds of research supported by the SBS cluster and the [What Has Been Funded](#) page to search through past awards to help determine the appropriateness of your project idea for the SBS program. Please contact the cognizant Program Directors with further questions about the SBS core program.