



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 23-036

Dear Colleague Letter: Special Guidelines for Submitting Proposals: NSF and DFG Opportunity for Collaborations in Physics

December 27, 2022

Dear Colleague:

The pursuit of scientific goals recognizes no geographic boundaries and as such, international collaborations are today more the norm than the exception. To facilitate the support of collaborative work between US groups and their German counterparts, NSF's Division of Physics (PHY) and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) Division of Physics and Chemistry (PC) have recently agreed on a review process for projects in those areas of physics that fall within the purview of PHY (<http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=PHY>). German researchers are invited to consult http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/announcements_proposals/index.jsp.

The proposals will be assessed in competition with other proposals received for the same funding cycle. It is important to note that there are no separate funds available for these efforts; proposals must compete with all other proposals within the program and must succeed on the strengths of their intellectual merit and broader impact. The result of the review process will be shared between the agencies to make final decisions on this basis. Support may be granted for those proposals with both DFG and NSF recommendation for funding.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

1. Prior to submission, proposers must discuss within their research team where they feel the largest proportion of research lies and agree on a proposed lead agency (either NSF or DFG).
2. The eligibility to submit a proposal is subject to the requirements of the respective NSF and DFG programs. All program specific requirements also apply to joint DFG-NSF proposals. Proposers to be funded by the DFG are requested to fulfill the eligibility

requirements of DFG Research Grants, see the corresponding guidelines of the Research Grants Programme (cf. DFG form 50.01). This includes the duty to cooperate (“Kooperationspflicht”) within Germany for members of non-university institutions with permanent positions. Researchers are strongly encouraged to contact the corresponding program officers prior to submission.

3. Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the proposal preparation requirements of the chosen lead agency via *Research.gov* or *Grants.gov* (NSF) or *elan* (DFG). For NSF, proposals should be submitted to the current “[Division of Physics: Investigator-Initiated Research Projects](#)” program solicitation and prepared in accordance with its requirements and the [NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide](#) (PAPPG). For the DFG, the Guidelines Research Grants Programme 50.01 should be consulted. In parallel to submitting the proposal to the lead agency, the partner has to submit the proposal to the non-lead agency (NSF or DFG), including any additional necessary information and forms into the corresponding system. In a short accompanying letter or email, the proposers should inform DFG and NSF about the chosen lead agency.
4. 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 for both the German and US groups). However, the budget forms submitted to each agency should only indicate the amount requested from that agency.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO NSF

1. **Title:** The proposal should preface the title with “DFG-NSF Physics:”.
2. **Deadlines:** Proposals must be submitted by the program deadlines or target dates.
3. German personnel are considered “non-funded collaborators”. Do not list them as PIs/Co-PIs/Senior Personnel. This listing is for administrative purposes and is not intended to characterize the level or value of the contribution of German personnel to the project. Biographical Sketches, Current and Pending Support, Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA) Information, and Results from Prior NSF Support are **not** required for the German collaborators and should not be included in the proposal submitted to NSF.
4. **Project Description:** The project description should clearly describe the work that will be accomplished by the entire team, including the German partners.
5. **Budget:** In addition to the U.S. budget and budget Justification, the German budget and budget justification should be included as a supplementary document (see 8.). The German budget and budget justification should **ONLY** include the costs for the German collaborators, and the U.S. budget and budget justification should **ONLY** include the costs for the U.S. collaborators.
6. **Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources:** This section should contain descriptions of both U.S. and German facilities, equipment, and other resources.
7. **Supplementary Documents:** (one PDF containing the documents described below,

plus any other necessary documents described in the PAPPG):

- a. German budget: Please attach the section “Requested modules/funds” from the [DFG individual research grants proposal form](#).
 - b. Please attach the section “Ethical and/or legal aspects” from the [DFG individual research grants proposal form](#).
 - c. Letter(s) of Collaboration from participating German researchers and all other collaborators. These letters should follow the format provided in the NSF Solicitation “Division of Physics: Investigator-Initiated Research Projects”.
8. In parallel to submitting the proposal to NSF, the German partner is required to submit a copy of the proposal documents to DFG via elan, the DFG’s electronic proposal processing system, and input the necessary information and forms into the corresponding system. Please select “NSF-DFG PHYS” from the list of calls. The U.S. investigators should be included as cooperation partners.

For submissions to DFG, please see website [DFG, German Research Foundation - Calls for Proposals - Information for Researchers](#) for more details and instructions.

MERIT REVIEW

1. Proposals will be reviewed in competition with other proposals received in the same submission window.
2. Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the Lead Agency’s review criteria. For proposals where DFG is the Lead Agency, the U.S. part of the project is to describe the broader impacts of the project. A description of the NSF merit review process is detailed here: https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/index.jsp; a description of the DFG review process can be found here: https://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/proposal_review_decision/.

FUNDING DECISION

1. After the reviews are received, the agencies will use their established internal procedures to determine whether a proposal will be awarded or declined. In the case of NSF, an award requires a formal recommendation by the cognizant Program Officer and the Division of Physics Director and approval by NSF's Division of Grants and Agreements. In the case of DFG, funding recommendations are prepared by the relevant program officers and submitted to members of a standing review board for a formal recommendation, who consider the availability of funds when suggesting proposals for funding.
2. Based on the recommendation, the final decision on a grant in the case of DFG is made by the DFG Joint Committee (*Hauptausschuss*) and in the case of NSF by the Division of Grants and Agreements.

3. A deviation of the decision of the partner organization from that of the lead agency is possible. Funding will be granted only if both funding organizations give a positive vote for funding.
4. If a proposal is funded, the US elements of the projects will be supported by NSF and the German elements of the project will be supported by DFG.
5. The two funding agencies will coordinate the sending of decision letters to the proposers so that these are sent at the same time. The lead agency will send a decision letter and comments from the merit review to the proposer in accordance with its policies. The non-lead agency will send a decision letter without comments, mentioning that the lead agency proposer has received comments from the review process.

AWARD CONDITIONS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1. Because the participating organizations have different funding cycles, it is possible that some projects will have start dates delayed until funds become available.
2. Researchers will be expected to comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the agencies from which they receive funding.
3. Researchers will be required to acknowledge both NSF and DFG in any reports or publications arising from the grant.
4. Requests for no-cost extensions will be considered by each funding organization using their respective standard procedures. The agencies will also consult one another on any requests for changes to awards.

DATA SHARING

1. The agencies intend to use secure means to share information about received proposals and the recommendations of the corresponding panels and boards.
2. NSF and DFG are committed to maintaining data confidentiality, protection, and privacy, and intend to fully abide by their own applicable laws and policies concerning the sharing of data in our collaborative activities.
3. NSF and DFG will follow their own data retention policies once data is shared from one to the other.

POINTS OF CONTACT

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Sincerely,

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