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NSF 23-113

Dear Colleague Letter: Special Guidelines for Submitting Collaborative Proposals under the U.S. NSF/GEO – DFG/Geosciences Lead Agency Opportunity on collaborative Research on Climate Change

May 26, 2023

Dear Colleagues:

SCOPE

The Directorate for Geosciences (GEO) of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the German Research Foundation (DFG) Geosciences are pleased to announce an NSF/GEO-DFG/Geosciences Lead Agency Opportunity. The goal of this opportunity is to reduce barriers to working internationally. Through a Lead Agency model, GEO and DFG/Geosciences will address these issues by allowing U.S. and German researchers to submit a single collaborative proposal that will undergo a single review process.

The U.S. NSF and the DFG signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Research Cooperation in January of 2020. The MOU provides an overarching framework to encourage collaboration between U.S. and German 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 DFG.

As an initiation of the partnership, proposals will be accepted for **collaborative research on climate change** at the intersection of NSF/GEO and DFG/Geosciences interest as set out below:

NSF/GEO Participating Programs

- a. Division of Atmospheric and Geospace Sciences: [Atmospheric Chemistry](#), [Climate and Large-Scale Dynamics](#), [Paleoclimate](#), [Physical and Dynamic Meteorology](#)
- b. Division of Earth Sciences: [Geobiology and Low-Temperature Geochemistry](#), [Geomorphology and Land Use Dynamics](#), [Geophysics](#), [Hydrologic Sciences](#), [Petrology](#)

- and Geochemistry, Sedimentary Geology and Paleobiology, Tectonics
- c. Division of Ocean Sciences: Marine Geology and Geophysics, Chemical Oceanography, Physical Oceanography
- d. Office of Polar Programs: Arctic and Antarctic (non-fieldwork and fieldwork) Research Programs on the topics mentioned above.

DFG/ Geosciences Participating Review Boards

313 Atmospheric Science, Oceanography and Climate Research

313-01 Atmospheric Science

313-02 Oceanography

314 Geology and Paleontology

314-01 Geology and Paleontology

315 Geophysics and Geodesy

315-01 Geophysics

315-02 Geodesy, Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing, Geoinformatics, Cartography

316 Mineralogy, Petrology and Geochemistry

316-01 Mineralogy, Petrology and Geochemistry

317 Geography

317-01 Physical Geography

318 Water Research

318-01 Hydrogeology, Hydrology, Limnology, Urban Water Management, Water Chemistry, Integrated Water Resources Management

Proposals are expected to adhere to the requirements, funding limits, and grant durations for the NSF/GEO and DFG programs of the respective agency from which the funding is sought. The project must describe an integrated collaborative effort where the participation of proponents from both countries is essential for the success of the investigation. This document provides guidelines for the preparation, submission, review, and award of NSF/GEO-DFG/Geosciences collaborative proposals.

Proposers are advised that all documents submitted to NSF or DFG 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 DFG) based on the country with the largest share of the budget, unless the agencies mutually decide otherwise. In this latter case this decision will be communicated to the proponents.
2. All NSF proposals submitted to this opportunity, regardless of which agency is the Lead, must be preceded by an Expression of Interest (EOI), sent to NSF at least 60 calendar days in advance of the date the proposers intend to submit a full proposal. The EOI template will be available at <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/forms/GEO-DFG-Lead-Agency-Opportunity-Expression-of-Interest-Form.pdf> and should be returned to NSFGEO-DFG@nsf.gov. This EOI identifies the investigators and their institutions in both countries, provides a brief summary of the project, and provides the estimated budget associated with contributions of PIs in each country. NSF will share submitted EOIs with DFG for their awareness.
3. For German and U.S. researchers, 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, if a limit is specified, whether submitted to NSF or DFG.
4. NSF will inform the proposer who submitted the EOI on whether or not the proposed submission is invited to proceed under the Lead Agency process. The proposer will then share that decision with their collaborators.
5. Proposers who are invited to submit a **full proposal** will do so in accordance with the proposal preparation requirements of the agencies. If NSF is lead, complying with the GEO proposal submission requirements and submitting through NSF's Research.gov system (<https://www.research.nsf.gov>) or Grants.gov (<https://grants.gov>). And if DFG is lead, complying with the [Proposal Preparation Instructions \(DFG form 54.01\)](#) via the elan system (<https://elan.dfg.de/my.policy>).
6. The full proposal should indicate the proposal is to be considered under the Lead Agency Opportunity by prefacing the title with "NSFGEO-DFG:"
7. If NSF is the Lead Agency, the proposal should only indicate the U.S. expenses on the NSF budget form. If DFG is the Lead Agency, the proposal should only indicate the German expenses on DFG'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 justify the full German and U.S. project budgets, both of which must be clearly discussed and differentiated in the budget justification. Proposals that request duplicative funding may be returned without review.
8. In addition to any other requirements, the following documents must be provided as **Supplementary Documents** for the full proposal:
 - For proposals submitted to NSF, German personnel should be listed as "non-NSF funded collaborators." 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. Guidance on information to provide for "non-NSF funded collaborators" is below.

- Biographical Sketch - Required. The biographical information must be clearly identified as "non-NSF funded collaborators" biographical information and uploaded as a single PDF file in the Other Supplementary Documents section of the proposal. Use of a specific format is not required except in specific cases when the individual announcement to the community for the participating programs will indicate a required NSF format.
 - Current and Pending Support - Not required for German PIs.
 - Results from Prior NSF Support - Not required for German personnel.
 - COA information should be provided through the use of the COA template, identified as "non-NSF funded collaborators" information, and uploaded as a PDF file in the Single Copy Documents section of the proposal. In some specific cases, the individual announcement to the community for the participating programs will indicate that the COA information will be required for German personnel, rather than just optional.
- Funding requested from non-Lead Agency: A detailed breakdown of funding requested from non-Lead Agency, using the non-Lead Agency's budget form.
 - 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-German Collaborative proposal between [insert name of Lead Agency proponent and institution] and [name of non-Lead Agency proponent and institution] is endorsed and has been submitted by [name of Research Office], thereby acknowledging the proposed collaboration."
9. For projects involving human subjects/participants or vertebrate animals, proposers should consult both NSF and DFG policies.
 10. The full proposal will be submitted by established program deadlines or target dates determined by the Lead Agency. Refer to GEO programs and DFG Review Boards for specific timing of deadlines.

PEER REVIEW

NSF/GEO-DFG 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. NSF and DFG ask reviewers, panelists, and/or members of review boards to evaluate the proposed project on its scientific or intellectual merit. Because NSF has two review criteria (Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts) any proposal where NSF is the lead must also address the

project's broader impacts. For proposals where DFG is the Lead Agency, the U.S. part of the project must describe the broader impacts of the U.S. part of the project. A description of the NSF merit review process is provided on the NSF merit review website at:

http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/index.jsp. An outline of DFG merit review process is provided at:

https://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/proposal_review_decision/quo_vadis_proposal/index.html.

FUNDING DECISIONS

The Lead Agency will use its usual internal procedures to determine whether a proposal will be awarded or declined. All potential award decisions will be discussed with the partner agency. Funding decisions may be subject to availability of funds.

The lead proponent will be advised by the lead funding agency whether their project has been recommended for funding or will be declined. Proposers will receive copies of the reviewers' unattributed comments and, where applicable, a panel summary.

Once the Lead Agency has made an award, it notifies the non-Lead Agency. The non-Lead Agency notifies the proponent in its country and provides them with information on what to submit to process its part of the award. If a proposal is recommended for funding, the U.S. elements of the project are to be supported by NSF, and the German elements of the project are to be supported by DFG.

Awardees of these Lead Agency Opportunity must state in any publication or presentation of research results that the work was made possible by the NSF/GEO-DFG Lead Agency Opportunity.

Because the participating funding agencies 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. Please note that any resubmitted proposal must be preceded by a new approved EOI.

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 DFG 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 DFG requirements for data storage and public accessibility are applicable to proponents funded by either agency.

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

Questions about this DCL should be addressed to NSFGEO-DFG@nsf.gov

Sincerely,

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Directorate of Geosciences