



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 13-078

Dear Colleague Letter: Frequently Asked Questions for NSF 13-537, George E. Brown, Jr. Network for Earthquake Engineering Simulation Operations FY 2015-FY 2019 (NEES2 Ops)

Date: February 25, 2013

The following set of questions and answers refer to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about submitting full proposals to the NSF 13-537, "George E. Brown, Jr. Network for Earthquake Engineering Simulation Operations FY 2015-FY 2019 (NEES2 Ops)" program solicitation

http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?org=NSF&ods_key=nsf13537. These FAQs are not intended to be a modification of the Program Solicitation NSF 13-537.

The full proposal must conform to the guidelines specified in the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) or the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide, and the additional full proposal preparation instructions contained in NSF 13-537, which include deviations from the NSF GPG and the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide.

Full proposals submitted via FastLane: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the general guidelines contained in the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG). The complete text of the GPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg.

Full proposals submitted via Grants.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation via Grants.gov should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov. The complete text of the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: (<http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/docs/grantsgovguide.pdf>).

FastLane FAQ's can be found at:

https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/NSFHelp/flashhelp/fastlane/FastLane_Help/fastlane_help.htm#fastlane_faqs_introduction.htm

INTRODUCTION

The Universal Resource Locator (URL) for NSF Large Facilities Documents, http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/lfo/lfo_documents.jsp now posts an updated Large Facilities Manual, NSF 13-038. Which version should I use when preparing my proposal?

Proposers should use the most current NSF Large Facilities Manual (NSF 13-038), http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13038, which replaces NSF 10-012.

ELIGIBILITY

What organizations are eligible to participate as NEES2 facility host institutions?

The NEES2 facility's host institution must be an academic institution. Academic institutions are defined in the solicitation as "universities and two- and four-year colleges (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members." Non-academic U.S. institutions and organizations, including national laboratories and private-sector companies, as well as non-U.S. institutions, may participate in network activities using their own resources; however, this shall not be interpreted to prohibit purchases, services, or sales contracts/agreements with these entities.

Can an academic institution propose to provide NEES2 resources on more than one proposal?

Yes; however, the institution may submit only one proposal as the lead institution.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

After submission of the Letter of Intent (LOI) by the due date, can participating organizations and key participants be changed, added, or deleted?

The lead institution cannot change, as full proposals may be submitted only by lead institutions that have submitted a complete LOI by the LOI due date. With the exception of the lead institution, all other participants listed on a submitted LOI may be changed at any time prior to the full proposal submission deadline. NSF will use the LOI only to prepare for the proposal merit review process.

Are NEES2 facilities limited to "four to six multi-user, earthquake engineering experimental facilities, plus an additional facility to support post-earthquake, rapid response research (PERRR)," or can the proposal scope and budget include additional NEES2 facilities?

Proposals may include "four to six multi-user, earthquake engineering experimental facilities, plus an additional facility to support post-earthquake, rapid response research (PERRR)." Additional facilities are not permitted.

Can satellite or affiliate facilities be included in the scope and budget, in addition to the "four to six multi-user, earthquake engineering experimental facilities, plus an additional facility to support post-earthquake, rapid response research (PERRR)?"

No. Satellite and/or affiliate facilities are not permitted.

The solicitation states that "NEES2 facility resources must be available to accommodate NSF-supported awards at least 80% annually, i.e., at least 200 days out of a 250-day year." If a NEES2 facility has multiple major equipment components, must each major equipment component be available to accommodate NSF-supported awards at least 80% annually?

NEES2 facilities will be national, multi-user facilities. As such, each of the facility resources, including each of the facility's major equipment components, must be available to accommodate NSF-supported awards at least 80% annually. If any facility resource will not be able to meet this annual level of availability for NSF-supported awards, then that resource should not be included in the proposal.

Can existing experimental equipment be part of the NEES2 PERRR facility?

All facility resources for the PERRR facility are to be procured under the award. The PERRR

facility resources are to be available for post-earthquake rapid response research only. PERRR facility resources are not to be used to support ongoing research projects, as this could lead to scheduling conflicts for rapid deployment of PERRR facility resources.

Can PERRR facility resources be used for rapid response research for post-disaster research investigations other than for earthquakes?

Yes. While the PERRR facility must be resourced to support post-earthquake investigations, the facility's resources may be used for rapid response research for hazards other than earthquakes if such use is identified in the proposer's NEES2 Science Plan. As stated in NSF 13-537, "While the primary experimental capabilities and use of NEES2 must be for earthquake hazard mitigation, there may be NEES2 facilities whose equipment has a secondary capability to support research for mitigation of other natural hazards. Such multi-hazard usage is permissible, and these experimental capabilities also should be identified in the NEES2 Science Plan to help potential researchers discover resources for multi-hazard mitigation."

The education and community outreach (ECO) component must include a *Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) site* supported under the award. Should the proposal scope and budget request include support for an REU site, or is the REU site to be supported from funding external to the NEES2 Ops award?

The REU site, which must follow the guidelines and student eligibility requirements in NSF 13-542, http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13542 (the successor solicitation posted on February 22, 2013, to NSF 12-569 referenced in the solicitation), or its successor solicitations, must be part of the scope and budget request of the full proposal submitted to NSF 13-537.

What are the requirements for including biographical sketches?

Biographical sketches must be included in the proposal in accordance with the PAPPG, NSF 13-1, Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter II.C.2.f, "Biographical Sketch(es)," http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_2.jsp#IIc2f. In addition, NSF 13-537 states that the Special Information and Supplementary Documentation section may include two-page biographical sketches for up to ten additional project personnel requesting support.

There is additional information posted on my website that I would like reviewers to see. May I refer readers to my web site within the Project Description?

The Project Description must be self-contained and Universal Resource Locators (URLs) that provide information related to the proposal should not be used because 1) the information would circumvent page limitations, 2) the reviewers are under no obligation to view the sites, and 3) the sites could be altered or abolished between the time of submission and the time of review.

What if my proposal is submitted after the full proposal submission deadline?

Late Submissions will not be accepted. The submission deadline is: May 24, 2013, 5:00 p.m. proposer's local time.

I am having problems submitting my proposal and the NEES2 Ops full proposal deadline is almost here. Who should I contact?

Questions related to the NSF FastLane electronic proposal submission system should be

directed to the FastLane User Support desk at (800) 673-6188. You can also send an e-mail message to fastlane@nsf.gov. For information on the availability of the NSF FastLane system, phone (800) 437-7408 for a recorded message. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov contact center by phone at (800) 518-4726 or by email at support@grants.gov.

I just noticed a major problem with my submitted NEES2 Ops proposal, but the full proposal deadline has not passed. Can I fix the problem before the full proposal deadline?

Yes, if you see a problem **before the full proposal deadline**, you may use the FastLane Proposal File Update Module to replace files or revise other Proposal Attributes of a submitted proposal. An automatic request for a proposal file update will be accepted if submitted prior to the full proposal deadline.

Please clarify the information required for the work breakdown structure (WBS) to be included in the Project Description, Section 4, "Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and Budget Allocations," and to be included in the Special Information and Supplementary Documentation, Section A, "Complete Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), Dictionary, and Budget Allocations."

The proposal must include the WBS, WBS dictionary, and budget allocated to each WBS element for the entire project for only year one. WBS information for project years two through five is not required in the proposal. The year-one WBS will be provided in the proposal in two ways. First, the complete WBS for year one, to be provided in the Special Information and Supplementary Documentation, Section A, is the WBS, dictionary, and budget allocations that represents the year-one (12 months) project state at full operations, including start-up and transition during the first six-months of year one. [For year one, the start-up and transition activities are a subset of the year-one WBS at full operations. However, the more detailed start-up and transition activities do not need to be detailed and included in the WBS for year one, as those activities will be described in more detail in the Special Information and Supplementary Documentation, Section B, "Year One Start-up and Transition Plan."] The budget allocations for each year-one WBS element (including both direct and indirect costs), when rolled up, should total to the year-one FastLane requested budget (including both direct and indirect costs). Second, the year-one WBS to be included in the Project Description, Section 4, is the WBS from the Special Information and Supplementary Documentation, Section A, rolled up and presented to level 3.

Is there a particular work breakdown structure (WBS) format that should be used for the proposal?

No. No format is specified in the solicitation.

Is there a particular Risk Matrix Table format that should be used for the proposal?

No. No format is specified in the solicitation.

Must the proposal include Current and Pending Support information for all Senior Personnel?

Yes. The NSF Grant Proposal Guide (NSF 13-1), Chapter II.C.2.h, "Current and Pending Support," states that "the proposed project and all other projects or activities requiring a portion of the PI and other senior personnel must be included, even if they receive no salary support from the project(s)."

Must pages in the proposal containing figures and tables adhere to the page margin requirements in the NSF Grant Proposal Guide?

Yes. All pages in the proposal must adhere to the page margin requirements in the NSF Grant Proposal Guide.

How will scheduling of projects at the NEES2 facilities be handled? For example, will there be an annual cut-off date by which new NSF-supported projects obtain priority access to a facility, after which time NSF-supported projects compete with non-NSF projects for access in the next twelve months?

Development and implementation of the network-wide coordinating scheduling protocol will be the responsibility of the NEES2 Management Office. The protocol must incorporate the following solicitation requirements: (a) Section II.E, "NEES2 Management Office (NMO)," which states: "Network-wide coordinated scheduling protocol for scheduling users at each facility transparently without prejudice, including prioritization and rescheduling due to delays or equipment damage, and web-posted facility schedules," and (b) Section II.C, "NEES2 Science Plan," which states, "Priority for access to NEES2 resources must be given to awards supported by NSF."

Can you give further guidance on developing NEES2 facility budgets?

For the NEES2 facilities, the solicitation outlines requirements for resources, services, and information that each facility must provide (for example, Sections II.F, "Experimental Facilities," and II.I, "Year One Start-up and Transition"), facility availability for and utilization by NSF-supported awards (Section II.F), and budgeting and treatment of program income (Sections V.B, "Budgetary Information," and Section VII.B, "Award Conditions"). Proposers should develop the budget for each NEES2 facility to be responsive to solicitation requirements. The solicitation is based on NSF supporting 100% of the annual costs for the maintenance, operations, and management of each NEES2 facility, except for those resources that may be supported entirely through cost recovery of institutionally-determined user fees/recharge rates charged directly to users as listed in the Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources section of the proposal. All assumptions used in developing each facility budget should clearly be listed on the facility institution's budget justification provided in the proposal.

How will program income generated at the NEES2 facilities be handled?

Program income treatment, addressed in the solicitation under the Section VII.B subheading, "Award-Specific Financial/Administrative Terms and Conditions," is based on NSF supporting 100% (250 days) of facility maintenance, operations, and management: "If a facility is utilized for NSF-supported awards at least 200 days annually (i.e., 80% based on a 250-day year), including routine maintenance and calibration time supported by the award, then the facility's institution may retain the program income earned during the remaining time to specifically further the NEES2 facility, per NSF approval. If the facility has more than 50 days of annual utilization by awards not supported by NSF, then NSF may require the use of program income to offset the NSF support," i.e., to offset NSF support for days that the facility was not used by NSF-supported projects.

Can you clarify this statement under Section V.A, "Proposal Preparation Instructions" for Table 2: "Proposals that do not identify the names for all Key Personnel positions, include names of individuals to be supported in the proposal but do not list these names in Table 2, or include names of external advisory committee and PERRR steering committee members and chairs, will be returned without review and will not receive further consideration."

(1) Proposals that do not identify the names for all Key Personnel positions will be returned without review. (2) Proposals that include the names of individuals to be supported in the

proposal but do not list these names in Table 2 of the Project Description will be returned without review. (3) Proposals that include the names of external advisory committee members and chairs and that include the names of PERRR steering committee members and chairs will be returned without review.