



National Science Foundation
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Arlington, Virginia 22230

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Frequently Asked Questions: DEB/IOS Preliminary Proposal and Proposal Submissions

1. [What categories of proposals in DEB/IOS require preliminary proposals?](#)
2. [My funding request is a competitive renewal application for a previously NSF-funded research project. Do I need to submit a preliminary proposal?](#)
3. [Can I submit a preliminary proposal to NSF for a project that was submitted to or is under review at another agency?](#)
4. [What is the expected success rate of full proposals under the new solicitation?](#)
5. [Are all BIO divisions switching to the new preliminary proposal solicitation?](#)
6. [Do all programs in DEB/IOS require preliminary proposals?](#)
7. [How does the project description of the preliminary proposal differ from that of a full proposal?](#)
8. [Do results from prior support have to be included in a preliminary proposal?](#)
9. [How many preliminary proposals may I submit?](#)
10. [What is the definition of "other senior personnel"?](#)
11. [How many full proposals may I submit?](#)
12. [Is a data management plan required for preliminary proposals?](#)
13. [Is a post-doctoral mentoring plan required for preliminary proposals?](#)
14. [Does the preliminary proposal have to have a detailed budget?](#)
15. [Do I need institutional approvals for regulated activities, such as recombinant DNA work, human subjects, vertebrate animal use, etc., for the preliminary proposal?](#)
16. [What supplementary documents are allowed for the preliminary proposal?](#)
17. [Do the preliminary proposals and proposals have deadlines or target dates?](#)
18. [My research idea falls between two programs within DEB and/or IOS. How do I submit the preliminary proposal for consideration by both programs?](#)
19. [My research idea falls between DEB/IOS areas and some other programs within the NSF that do not have preliminary proposals. How will my proposal be reviewed?](#)
20. [May I request that my proposal be co-reviewed between DEB/IOS and another program in BIO or NSF in general?](#)
21. [How soon will I learn whether a full proposal is invited?](#)

22. [If I am not invited to submit a full proposal, may I resubmit the preliminary proposal?](#)
 23. [What feedback will I receive on my preliminary proposal?](#)
 24. [If a full proposal is invited but not funded, do I have to start over with a preliminary proposal?](#)
 25. [I am planning to resubmit a proposal in 2012 that was ranked outstanding/superior \(high/medium\) in 2011 under the old system. Do I have to start over with a preliminary proposal?](#)
 26. [My current award is scheduled to expire between April and December 2012 and because of the switch to preliminary proposals in January 2012, I will have a gap in funding even if my preliminary proposal is invited as a full proposal and selected for funding.](#)
 27. [I was invited to submit a full proposal, but did not do so in this cycle. Do I need to start over with a preliminary proposal the following cycle?](#)
 28. [What criteria will panelists use to evaluate preliminary proposals?](#)
 29. [What criteria will be used to make a decision to Invite or Not Invite a full proposal following the preliminary proposal stage?](#)
 30. [What if my question is not addressed in this FAQ?](#)
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1. What categories of proposals in DEB/IOS require preliminary proposals?

All proposals submitted to DEB or IOS in response to the core program solicitations: that is, all regular research proposals previously submitted through the Grant Proposal Guide (GPG), cluster Program Descriptions, or through the Research at Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) and Long Term Research and Environmental Biology (LTREB) solicitations to any of the core clusters in DEB or IOS, must pass the preliminary proposal stage. The only exceptions to the preliminary proposal requirement are LTREB Renewal proposals.

2. My funding request is a competitive renewal application for a previously NSF-funded research project. Do I need to submit a preliminary proposal?

Yes. Except for LTREB Renewals, all proposals to DEB/IOS are treated as new proposals, including projects based on findings resulting from previous NSF funding.

3. Can I submit a preliminary proposal to NSF for a project that was submitted to or is under review at another agency?

Yes. However, invited **full proposals** cannot be duplicates of proposals to any other Federal agency for simultaneous consideration, except for Beginning Investigators (see GPC Chapter I.G2; http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/gpg_1.jsp#IG2).

4. What is the expected success rate of full proposals under the new solicitation?

One of the primary reasons for this new solicitation is to reduce the tremendous investment of time and energy by the PI community in developing full proposals, which presently have a low success rate. The success rate for preliminary proposals therefore is likely to be quite low; however, the success rate for invited full proposals will probably be in the range of 25%-35%.

5. Are all BIO divisions switching to the new preliminary proposal solicitation?

No. Only DEB and IOS programs have implemented the preliminary proposal solicitation format. Please review the relevant solicitation carefully for specific requirements.

6. Do all programs in DEB/IOS require preliminary proposals?

All of the core programs that previously received unsolicited proposals now require preliminary proposals (including responses to "Dear Colleague" letters). Preliminary proposals are not required for other solicitations, such as, but not limited to Plant Genome Research Program, Ecology of

Infectious Disease, Coupled Natural-Human Systems, Assembling the Tree of Life.

7. How does the project description of the preliminary proposal differ from that of a full proposal?

The preliminary proposal project description must include a one-page list of all expected participants (PI, Co-PI, collaborators [including leads for sub-awards], other senior personnel). The page limit for the narrative part of the project description is four pages, compared to 15 for a full proposal. Obviously, the level of detail that would be provided in a full proposal cannot be included in this page limit. However, the preliminary proposal must include a specific enough overview of the approach to answering the scientific question or testing the proposed hypotheses to allow panelists to evaluate the likely success of the research. The preliminary proposal narrative should be prepared carefully with the general descriptions of the relevant DEB/IOS program in mind.

8. Do results from prior support have to be included in a preliminary proposal?

Results from previous support may be included in the preliminary proposal at the discretion of the PI. Although not required, in some cases, building upon prior support may make the preliminary proposal more compelling.

9. How many preliminary proposals may I submit?

In a given year, an individual may participate as a PI, co-PI, or lead senior investigator of a subaward on **no more than two** preliminary proposals submitted per Division solicitation (DEB or IOS). Preliminary proposals in excess of the limit for any person may be returned without review in the reverse order received. "PI, co-PI, or lead senior investigator of a subaward" refer to the role an individual would play in a full proposal (e.g., PI on a non-lead collaborative proposal).

10. What is the definition of "other senior personnel"?

For the purposes of this Solicitation, other senior personnel are individuals with a substantial role in the project who might be receiving salary, but do NOT have budgetary authority as through a role as a PI or co-PI or as the lead person responsible for a subaward. There is no limit to the number of preliminary proposals on which an individual may be listed as "other senior personnel."

11. How many full proposals may I submit?

An individual may only submit as many full proposals as are invited. Uninvited proposals will be returned without review.

12. Is a data management plan required for preliminary proposals?

No data management plan is required for preliminary proposals, though one is required for full proposals.

13. Is a post-doctoral mentoring plan required for preliminary proposals?

No post-doctoral mentoring plan is required for preliminary proposals, though one is required for full proposals if a post-doctoral scholar is included in the budget.

14. Does the preliminary proposal have to have a detailed budget?

Preliminary proposals should not include a detailed budget or budget justification; a value of \$2 should be entered to allow Fastlane submission. The words "Not Applicable" should be entered in the Budget Justification.

15. Do I need institutional approvals for regulated activities, such as recombinant DNA work, human subjects, vertebrate animal use, etc., for the preliminary proposal?

No. However, institutional approvals are required for full proposals, as specified in the [NSF](#)

[Proposal & Award Policies and Procedures Guide.](#)

16. What supplementary documents are allowed for the preliminary proposal?

No supplementary documents are allowed. However, a Single-Copy Document that lists all Conflicts of Interest is required (see solicitation for required format).

17. Do the preliminary proposals and proposals have deadlines or target dates?

Both of these have deadlines. Preliminary proposals or invited full proposals received after the deadline will not be reviewed. Preliminary proposals and full proposals that are not compliant with the solicitation and the NSF Grant Proposal Guide may be returned without review.

18. My research idea falls between two programs within DEB and/or IOS. How do I submit the preliminary proposal for consideration by both programs?

All preliminary proposals will be screened for possible consideration by the programs in DEB/IOS. Co-review will not occur at the preliminary proposal stage but might at the full proposal stage, just as in the past. Full consideration will be given, though, to preliminary proposals that bridge among programs and disciplines.

19. My research idea falls between DEB/IOS areas and some other programs within the NSF that do not have preliminary proposals. How will my proposal be reviewed?

Co-review will not occur at the preliminary proposal stage but might at the full proposal stage, just as in the past. Full consideration will be given, though, to preliminary proposals that bridge among programs and disciplines.

20. May I request that my proposal be co-reviewed between DEB/IOS and another program in BIO or NSF in general?

You may alert the program directors to other programs that might be relevant to your proposal. However, this does not guarantee co-review will occur.

21. How soon will I learn whether a full proposal is invited?

Invitations to submit full proposals will be issued by May each year.

22. If I am not invited to submit a full proposal, may I resubmit the preliminary proposal?

Preliminary proposal deadlines are in January of each year, and there is no limit on the number of times you may resubmit a preliminary proposal. However, you are strongly advised to take comments from panel summaries into account when re-submitting.

23. What feedback will I receive on my preliminary proposal?

Preliminary proposals will be reviewed by an expert panel and you will receive a summary of their discussion, as well as individual reviews from three panelists. If you are invited to submit a full proposal, you will have this feedback to help you in preparing the full proposal. We strongly advise that you take this summary into account, both in full proposal preparation and in any resubmission of the preliminary proposal.

24. If a full proposal is invited but not funded, do I have to start over with a preliminary proposal?

Yes. If your full proposal is declined you must begin again with a preliminary proposal. It is strongly advised to take comments from both preliminary and full proposal review panel summaries into account when re-submitting.

25. I am planning to resubmit a proposal in 2012 that was ranked outstanding/superior (high/medium) in 2011 under the old system. Do I have to start over with a preliminary proposal?

Yes. Under the new review system, all proposals need to go through the preliminary proposal stage at least once.

26. **My current award is scheduled to expire between April and December 2012 and because of the switch to preliminary proposals in January 2012, I will have a gap in funding even if my preliminary proposal is invited as a full proposal and selected for funding.**

Please contact the Program Director managing your award for guidance on how to proceed.

27. **I was invited to submit a full proposal, but did not do so in this cycle. Do I need to start over with a preliminary proposal the following cycle?**

No, but you must contact your Program Officer for submission guidance.

28. **What criteria will panelists use to evaluate preliminary proposals?**

As with all NSF proposals, panelists will be instructed to evaluate the intellectual merit and broader impacts of the proposed project. For preliminary proposals it is likely that relatively more attention will be given to the general question being addressed in the proposal and the approach to be employed, than the finer technical aspects of the experimental design. In this context, priorities will be given to innovative or potentially transformative ideas, the logic of the experimental approach, the qualifications of the PIs to conduct the research, and feasibility.

29. **What criteria will be used to make a decision to Invite or Not Invite a full proposal following the preliminary proposal stage?**

Program Directors will use criteria to formulate Invite/Not Invite decisions that are similar to those used currently to make funding decisions on full proposals. These include portfolio balancing with respect to programmatic scientific interests, career level, and the full range of broader impacts.

30. **What if my question is not addressed in this FAQ?**

Please ask us! Contact information for Program Directors and management in DEB and IOS can be found linked from the solicitations and Division websites. DEB, IOS and the office of the Assistant Director for Biological Sciences are committed to broad and accurate communication of these new processes.