**National Science Foundation**
**4201 Wilson Boulevard**
**Arlington, Virginia 22230**

**NSF 13-039**

# Frequently Asked Questions for NSF 12-573, Catalyzing New International Collaborations (CNIC)

## ELIGIBILITY

## COMMUNICATION WITH NSF REQUIRED BEFORE SUBMISSION

## SELECTION

## ELIGIBILITY

1. **Who is eligible for the CNIC program?**

   NSF welcomes proposals on behalf of all qualified US-based scientists, engineers and educators. See the Grant Proposal Guide for more information on eligibility ([http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg](http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg))

2. **How is a 'new' collaboration defined?**

   'New' is defined as a collaboration that is new to the investigator or co-PI. This can mean a substantially different research direction, or a new collaborative relationship. For example, proposed projects for which collaborators have only met at a conference, and not yet visited each other's laboratories would be considered new. Projects for which the collaborators have already published or received funding together will not necessarily be ineligible, but will require justification for why the proposed collaboration should be considered new.

3. **Where can I use a CNIC award?**

   NSF will consider proposals from U.S. institutions for collaborative work with investigators in any country that is not explicitly proscribed by the Department of State (see current list at [http://www.state.gov/j/ct/list/c14151.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/ct/list/c14151.htm)). CNIC awards also can be used to fund collaboration in more than one country. No countries have a favored status for funding; rather funding decisions are based on how well the proposal meets the program guidelines and NSF's review criteria.

4. **What areas of research are supported by CNIC awards?**

   CNIC supports collaboration with international researchers in any field of science and engineering research and education supported by NSF. Of particular interest are projects which represent new, previously unfunded scientific areas for the principal investigator, or areas in which preliminary data is needed for establishing a proof-of-concept. The outcome of CNIC awards should be submission of a full research proposal to an NSF research program. When formulating your proposed research, determine into which [NSF directorate](#) your proposed research would fit:

   - [Engineering](#)
   - [Mathematical and Physical Sciences](#)
   - [Geosciences](#)
   - [Computer and Information Science and Engineering](#)
   - [Biological Sciences](#)
   - [Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences](#)
   - [Education and Human Resources](#)

   For more information on NSF Directorates, visit [http://www.nsf.gov/staff/orglist.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/staff/orglist.jsp) If your research is multi-disciplinary in nature, try to find the best match, and see this list of cross-cutting programs: [http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_list.jsp?type=xcut](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_list.jsp?type=xcut). Please consult program websites for detailed descriptions of and lists of funded projects to determine where your work might best fit. Please contact one of the directorates listed above, or the [CNIC program](#) at [OISE-CNIC@NSF.GOV](mailto:OISE-CNIC@NSF.GOV) if you are unsure whether your research proposal is eligible for NSF funding.

5. **What forms of collaboration are funded?**

    The CNIC program will support U.S. researchers' participation in activities intended to catalyze new international collaborations that open up new scientific directions for the proposer. These include, but are not limited to: research planning visits, initial data gathering activities, proof-of-concept, and single or multiple research visits within a maximum 12-month time period. CNIC awards are meant to be a direct precursor to submission of a research proposal to an NSF research program. A CNIC award is not required, however, prior to submission of a research proposal including an international collaboration.

6. **Can CNIC support international workshops?**

    CNIC *cannot* be used to fund workshops. Funding for workshops must be proposed to an NSF disciplinary program directly.

7. **What if I have an active NSF Award?**

    PIs with active NSF awards related to the topic of their planned catalytic activity may be eligible to seek funding for the activity by requesting a supplement to the existing award, which could be funded by CNIC if it meets the program guidelines. They should contact the cognizant Program Officer for the existing award.

## COMMUNICATION WITH NSF REQUIRED BEFORE SUBMISSION

8. **Why do I need to contact a disciplinary program officer prior to submission?**

    CNIC awards are intended to support the initial phases of an international collaboration with the strong expectation that the next phase will involve submission by U.S. investigators of a follow-on proposal to an NSF Directorate for continued funding of the research initiated with the CNIC grant. To facilitate this end, prior to submission in response to this solicitation, it is required that PIs establish communication with the cognizant Program Officer in the NSF Division to which the follow-on proposal would be submitted, to assure that there is a prospective program home at NSF for the project.

9. **What is the difference between disciplinary and country/regional program officers?**

    Disciplinary program officers are associated with NSF programs in a specific field of science and engineering research and education supported by NSF (see FAQ 4 above for the complete list of disciplines) whereas regional program officers are associated with NSF activity in a specific geographic region. (For a list of OISE Program Officers by geographic region, see http://www.nsf.gov/od/iia/ise/country-list.jsp.)

10. **How should I document my communication with NSF program officers in the proposal?**

    Include as supplementary documentation evidence of prior communication and consultation (e.g. copy of an email exchange or synopsis of a telephone conversation) with the CNIC Program Director or a disciplinary Program Director indicating the appropriateness of the proposed activity within the scope of the program.

11. **What should I include in the one-page summary of my intended CNIC proposal?**

    When you contact an NSF disciplinary or CNIC program officer, include a summary of the research questions you expect the collaboration to address (in terms of the intellectual merit and broader impact), the reasons why the international collaboration is key to the success of the project, the names and institutional affiliations of key foreign collaborators, and a note

of their roles in the proposed activities. In addition, please indicate in rough terms how requested funds will be used.

12. **What can be supported with CNIC funds?**

The award supports travel for international planning visits taken by the PI (and co-PI, if applicable). PIs are encouraged to include students and postdoctoral researchers in planning visits, accompanying the PI. CNIC support for students or fellows is limited to US citizens and permanent residents. CNIC funds cannot be used to support travel, salary, or other expenses of any non US-based researchers or participants. CNIC can cover travel and subsistence of the US-based PI while on a planning visit abroad, as well as that of accompanying student(s) and/or postdoc(s) and/or co-PIs. Other expenses incurred undertaking the preliminary research conducted abroad, such as supplies also can be included. Equipment purchases cannot be supported by CNIC. Salary should be claimed only for time spent conducting research while located outside the U.S. plus necessary travel expenses to get there. If you are splitting your time between the United States and another country, you cannot receive salary through this program for the time you are conducting research in the U.S.

13. **Do I need to include students?**

No, but it is encouraged. Students may be undergraduate or graduate.

14. **Can postdoctoral fellows or students apply independently for a CNIC award?**

CNIC is not intended to function as fellowship funding for students or postdoctoral researchers. Students may participate if they accompany a US-based PI on a planning and/or data-gathering visit abroad.

15. **How long can the project last?**

CNIC will support activities within a maximum 12-month period.

16. **What information do I need to include about the non-US based collaborator?**

The Project Description should include a justification for selecting the proposed site/collaborators including a description of unique expertise, and other resources being made available to the US researchers at the foreign site. This should provide evidence of true intellectual collaboration. In addition, biographical sketches for all principal foreign collaborators should be included in the supplemental documentation, along with a letter confirming their role(s) and contribution to the project. All sketches must adhere to the format given in the Grant Proposal Guide (Chapter II.C.2.f, http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13001.

17. **What is the average award size?**

The average award for this program is expected to be $50,000, including indirect costs. Funding depends on how a proposal fares in review, as well as on available funds.

18. **When should I submit my proposal?**

There is no specific deadline. However, applicants are advised to submit proposals at least nine months prior to the expected date of the proposed activity.

19. **How long will it take to get an answer?**

Because proposals must be reviewed, the timing will depend on how quickly reviews are returned and on how many other proposals are received around the same time. While we aim to turn these proposals over quickly, it can take up to six months after submission for an award decision to be finalized.

20. **How will my non-US based collaborator be funded?**

NSF expects that foreign collaborators will seek support from the science funding agencies in their home countries.

## SELECTION

21. **What should I do to prepare a strong proposal?**

Read the Program Solicitation carefully and follow the instructions on proposal preparation. Also, read the How to Apply Guide and respective Handbook. If you have further questions, you can contact the CNIC program officer by email, oise-cnic@nsf.gov, or phone, (703)292-8710.

22. **How is a CNIC proposal tested for compliance?**

CNIC proposals will be checked for the following:

- compliance with page limits
- inclusion of biosketch and letter of collaboration from non-US based collaborator(s)
- addressing NSF review criteria of intellectual merit and broader impacts
- inclusion of 2-page biosketch for PI (and each co-PI) and letter of collaboration
- adherence of budget to program guidelines
- evidence of prior contact with NSF disciplinary program officer in supplementary documents
- inclusion of all elements of proposal required in program guidelines
- adherence to guidelines regarding type font size and margins

23. **How many awards will be made?**

It is anticipated that approximately 30-40 awards will be made annually at a total investment of $2 million, subject to the quality of proposals and availability of funds.

24. **How will proposals be reviewed?**

Stand-alone CNIC proposals will be reviewed by external reviewers. Proposals submitted as supplements will be reviewed by experts within NSF.