



National Science Foundation
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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for NSF 14-502, Coastal SEES

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1. How many Coastal SEES competitions will there be, and what is the expected timeframe?

The first Coastal SEES competition had a January 17, 2013 proposal deadline. There will be two more competitions. As noted in the solicitation, the next proposal deadline will be January 21, 2014, and the final proposal deadline will be October 2, 2015.

2. What happened to Track 1 type proposals that were invited in the first competition?

As noted in solicitation NSF 12-594, Track 1 proposals were invited as Incubator Research Proposals with anticipation that some funded Track 1 projects would lead to mature teams and ideas and that the PIs would submit full research proposals in a later round of Coastal SEES. With only two remaining competitions, Track 1 proposals have been eliminated. Instead, researchers are invited to propose projects from 3-5 years in duration with total budgets in the range of \$800,000 to \$2 million (maximum).

3. Are the North American Great Lakes included?

Yes, the North American Great Lakes are eligible under this solicitation.

4. Are Arctic coastal systems included?

Yes, a Coastal SEES proposal may be based partially or wholly in the Arctic, but there may be cases where a proposal is a better fit with ArcSEES (see below).

5. My idea may be appropriate for both Coastal SEES and another NSF program: can I submit to both?

No, NSF does not allow the same proposal to be submitted concurrently to more than one competition.

6. How do I decide if my proposal should be submitted to Coastal SEES as opposed to another SEES (or SEES-like) program, such as CNH (Dynamics of Coupled Natural and Human Systems), ArcSEES (Arctic SEES), Hazards SEES, or RCN (Research Coordination Networks)-SEES?

Each of the potential alternative programs mentioned above is discussed separately below. If Coastal SEES determines that a proposal is clearly better suited to another solicitation, Coastal SEES may ask the PI to withdraw the proposal and resubmit to the other program, or the proposal may be returned without review. The Programs at NSF encourage prospective PIs to discuss their ideas with relevant Program Managers before preparing a proposal if the PIs are unsure of the intent of a solicitation or the goodness of fit between the solicitation and their ideas.

- **Arctic SEES (ArcSEES).** Coastal SEES and ArcSEES indeed have many similar goals, but there are differences in emphasis, eligibility, and proposal deadlines. Coastal SEES will accept proposals that are based wholly or partly in the Arctic as long as they meet requirements of the Coastal SEES solicitation and are not clearly better suited to ArcSEES. Prospective PIs should note that ArcSEES partners with a number of other (non-NSF) U.S. federal agencies and a French consortium, which might make that program more appropriate for some types of collaborations. Compared with Coastal SEES, ArcSEES also encourages closer involvement with management solutions, specifically encourages capacity-building in native populations, and has, as one of its program themes, natural resource development. See: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503604.
- **CNH.** The CNH Program is an early investment of NSF SEES and welcomes SEES-related proposals. It aims to support basic research and related activities that enhance fundamental understanding of the complex interactions within and among natural and human systems. At this level, CNH and Coastal SEES are similar. One difference between the two is that Coastal SEES addresses only coastal issues, whereas CNH will consider any human-natural system interaction. Beyond this (and details such as program structure, deadline dates, and award sizes), the differences are more subtle and not mutually exclusive. CNH places special emphasis on the dynamics of interactions between systems and is interested in how studies can contribute to the theory of such interactions. Coastal SEES shares these interests and insists on integrative approaches, but emphasizes research results that bear directly on the topic of sustainability in coastal zones. See: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=13681.
- **Hazards SEES.** Coastal SEES takes a broad, long-term view of coastal processes and the complex and dynamic interactions among natural and human-driven processes. As noted in the solicitation, relevant issues for the Coastal SEES program may include, for example, sea-level rise; salinity intrusions; changes in coastal morphology, land use, vegetation and ocean ecosystems; erosion and land defense; coastal energy development; and human perceptions,

attitudes and responses to these issues. Proposals with a primary focus on hazards are considered out of scope for the Coastal SEES program. The overarching goal of Hazards SEES is to catalyze well-integrated interdisciplinary research efforts in hazards-related science and engineering in order to improve the understanding of natural hazards and technological hazards linked to natural phenomena, mitigate their effects, and better prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. The next Hazards SEES proposal deadline is expected in FY 2015. See: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=504804.

- **RCN-SEES.** RCN-SEES supports the formation of new collaborations on the topic of sustainability. The most important distinction is that RCN-SEES grants only support the coordination of research partnerships, whereas the Coastal SEES program supports the actual conduct of the new research. See: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=11691.

7. What is meant by inter/trans-disciplinary research in the context of this solicitation?

Sustainability involves reciprocal interactions between humans and the broader biological and geophysical world. Therefore, proposals to Coastal-SEES must include meaningful and well-integrated contributions from multiple disciplines. If the hypotheses or questions to be put forth in a proposal could be answered by one discipline alone, then the proposed research will not be considered inter/trans-disciplinary. Coastal SEES projects will be expected to lead to generalizable theoretical advances in natural sciences and engineering while, at the same time, integrating key aspects of human processes required to address issues of coastal sustainability. How this will be done, the particular aspect(s) and breadth of the processes and interactions being investigated, and the disciplinary composition of the investigative team, should be clearly described and justified in the proposal. A working definition of interdisciplinary research can be found at: http://www.nsf.gov/od/iia/additional_resources/interdisciplinary_research/definition.jsp.

8. How do I demonstrate that we have an integrated inter/trans-disciplinary research team?

The specific objectives of your proposal will dictate the disciplinary make-up of the team needed for the proposed research. To understand the dynamics of the coupled human-natural systems involved in coastal areas, it is likely that the team would be composed of researchers who would naturally seek support from different Directorates or Divisions at NSF. Each disciplinary area should be integrated into the research project and make a meaningful contribution to the research. An integrated research team is one in which the results of each individual or group are utilized by other members of the research team, and researchers from each disciplinary area contribute directly to the final product of the research.

PIs are reminded that the Merit-Review Panel will be made up of individuals from many disciplines and will be specifically looking for integration of elements within each project.

The Management and Integration Plan should demonstrate how the team and team efforts will be integrated. Examples of this might be: regularly scheduled team meetings/video conferences; inclusion of individuals from multiple disciplinary areas in each research task; explicit plans for graduate student interaction; student coursework that provides a common background in sustainability science.

9. Under Revision Summary, the solicitation states that the Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) is no longer formally participating in Coastal SEES. What does this mean, given the program's strong emphasis on intimately interconnected areas of scholarship about natural and human processes?

As noted in the solicitation, Coastal SEES projects will be expected to lead to generalizable theoretical advances in natural sciences and engineering while, at the same time, integrating key aspects of human processes required to address issues of coastal sustainability. The Coastal SEES management team will consult with SBE program officers to ensure that the human processes aspects of proposals are given appropriate consideration in the merit review and selection process.

10. With its emphasis on identifying pathways by which research results will be translated to policy and management domains, does Coastal SEES support applied research?

Coastal SEES is seeking to identify and fund work at the frontiers of science and engineering. As described in the Merit Review Criteria section of the solicitation, proposals will be reviewed for Intellectual Merit in terms of their potential to advance knowledge and understanding, and for Broader Impacts in terms of their potential to benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes. For the Coastal SEES program, coastal sustainability is the primary desired societal outcome. Thus, competitive proposals will clearly articulate how a project's research outcomes will help to advance coastal sustainability.

11. What are the opportunities and rules governing international collaborations?

A PI may include international collaboration(s) as part of a research proposal if there is a clear benefit to the U.S. science and engineering community from expertise, facilities, or resources of the foreign collaborator. Coastal SEES assumes the international collaborator will have similar expectations, and the proposal should therefore explain how the relationship will be mutually beneficial. A PI considering such collaboration should consult early with a Coastal SEES Program Officer and with an NSF International Program Officer for the relevant country or region (<http://www.nsf.gov/od/ia/ise/country-list.jsp>). The PI should be aware that NSF provides support only for the U.S. portion of the collaborative effort, and only rarely does this involve payment to a foreign organization. Any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be explained in the Project Description and documented with a letter of commitment (not to exceed two pages) and a biographical sketch (adhering to NSF requirements) from each collaborator, which should be provided in the supplementary documentation section of the FastLane Proposal Preparation Module.

Coastal SEES researchers interested in international collaborations may also wish to consider other funding opportunities coordinated by NSF's International Science and Engineering section (<http://www.nsf.gov/od/ia/ise/index.jsp>) for catalyzing new collaborations, networking, and student engagement.

12. Can a PI participate in more than one Coastal SEES proposal?

An individual may appear as Principal Investigator (PI), Co-PI, other Senior Personnel, consultant, or elsewhere in the proposal budget in no more than one proposal. An individual may appear as an unpaid collaborator in additional proposals. Any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be explained in the Project Description and documented with a letter of commitment (not to exceed two pages) and a biographical sketch (adhering to NSF requirements) from each collaborator, which should be provided in the supplementary documentation section of the FastLane Proposal Preparation Module.

13. I work for a government agency. Can I submit a proposal to Coastal SEES through my agency?

No, a government agency is not allowed to submit a proposal to Coastal SEES.

14. I am a federal government employee. How can I participate in Coastal SEES as an investigator?

You may be a no-cost collaborator on a proposal submitted by an eligible institution. If you have an adjunct or similar appointment at a university, you might be able to appear on the cover sheet as a Co-PI depending on the policies of the university, but you cannot receive salary, travel or other compensation and expenses. Rules against voluntary cost-sharing prohibit your appearing on the budget sheet, but as a named investigator (collaborator) your biographical sketch (adhering to NSF requirements) can be included in the proposal. Your collaboration should be described and documented with a letter of commitment provided in the supplementary documentation section of the FastLane Proposal Preparation Module. If you are advising a student or a post-doc, that person can be supported on the university budget. NSF's Grant Proposal Guide should be consulted for details: http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13001.