



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 17-026

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for NSF 17-508, FY 2017 IOS Core Programs Solicitation

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1. What types of proposals are covered in this solicitation?

Preliminary proposals and invited full proposals to programs within the Behavioral Systems, Developmental Systems, Neural Systems, and Physiological and Structural Systems clusters in IOS.

2. Which type of proposals in this solicitation require preliminary proposals or Letters of Intent?

All proposals submitted to this solicitation, including those responsive to the Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) solicitation, require a preliminary proposal. No proposal in response to this solicitation requires submission of a Letter of Intent.

The preliminary proposal requirement does not include proposals to other solicitations considered by IOS (e.g., Research Coordination Networks, Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grants, CAREER, EDGE, Plant Biotic Interactions, Plant Genome Research Program, Basic Research to Enable Agricultural Development), or special proposals described in the [NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide](#) (PAPPG) (i.e., Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID), EARly Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER), Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED), conference and workshop proposals, and requests for supplemental funding).

3. Should preliminary proposals concerning plants and their associated symbiotic partners that, in the past, were reviewed by the Symbiosis, Defense and Self-recognition (SDS) program be submitted under this solicitation?

No. The SDS program is no longer accepting preliminary proposals in the area of plant symbiosis, defense and self-recognition. Proposals in this area should be submitted to the Plant Biotic Interactions (PBI) solicitation ([NSF 16-551](#)), a program jointly offered by NSF/BIO/IOS and USDA/NIFA. PBI does not require the submission of a preliminary proposal.

4. Does the Plant Biotic Interactions program consider proposals covering the same breadth of plant research as was previously reviewed by the NSF/IOS Symbiosis, Defense and Self-recognition (SDS) program?

Yes. The joint NSF-USDA PBI program accepts for review all proposals concerning plants and their associated symbionts, microbes, and insect pathogens that were previously reviewed by SDS.

5. I plan on submitting a competitive renewal application for a previously NSF-funded research project in response to this solicitation. Do I need to submit a preliminary proposal?

Yes. All proposals to IOS are treated as new proposals, including projects based on findings resulting from previous NSF funding.

6. 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 [GPG Chapter I.G.2](#)).

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

Preliminary proposals will normally be reviewed by a panel of scientists in the discipline, and you will receive a summary of their discussion (the panel summary), 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 feedback into account, both in full proposal preparation and in any resubmission of the preliminary proposal.

8. What criteria will panelists use to evaluate preliminary proposals?

Each preliminary proposal will be assigned to three panelists for written reviews. All NSF rules for Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest will be followed. The rating scale for written reviews will be: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, and Poor. A panel summary describing the key points of the panel discussion and the rationale for the proposal's placement in one of the five panel ranking categories (Outstanding, High, Medium, Low, and Not Competitive) will be provided for each proposal.

As with all NSF proposals, panelists/reviewers will be instructed to evaluate the intellectual merit and broader impacts of the proposed project. Preliminary proposals contain a shorter project description (1 personnel page plus 4 pages of text) and lack much of the documentation associated with a full proposal, including budget, budget justification, equipment and other resources, and current and pending support. Consequently, we expect the reviews of preliminary proposals to focus on the following critical aspects of the work: the questions driving the research, the goals expected to be accomplished, and the approaches employed in the experimental design.

While reviewing, panelists are asked to consider:

- Are the ideas innovative or potentially transformative?
- Are the ideas conceptually well grounded?
- Are the experimental approaches and experimental design feasible and logically linked to the central ideas?
- Are the senior personnel well qualified and experienced enough with the approaches to be able to conduct the research?
- What risks are involved? Can they be overcome?
- What is the potential impact of the science?
- Is there a convincing and significant effort made towards broader impacts?

A strong preliminary proposal is one in which the logical flow and significance of the proposed line of investigation are articulated clearly and the broader impacts of the work are apparent. In other words, panelists are asked to identify preliminary proposals that address questions and/or ideas that are most likely to lead to large advances in the field.

Panelists do NOT make specific Invite/Do Not Invite recommendations. These recommendations are made by the Program Directors after the conclusion of the panels.

9. 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 make Invite/Do Not Invite decisions based on the scientific merit and broader impacts as well as the balance of awards among sub-disciplines, geographic distribution,

types of institutions, and the potential contribution of each award to broadening the participation of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in science. These latter considerations comprise the program's "portfolio balance".

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

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

11. What is the expected invitation rate for preliminary proposals?

Over the course of the first four years of running the merit review process requiring submission of preliminary proposals, the invitation percentage for full proposals has generally been between 20%-25% of the number of preliminary proposals. We expect future invitation rates or percentages to be similar, depending on the number of preliminary proposals submitted each January. Depending on the number of preliminary proposals received and the amount of funding expected in the following fiscal year, the invitation rate may be adjusted to ensure an appropriate success rate in the full proposal competition (see [FAQ #20](#)).

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

The preliminary proposal deadline is 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 the reviews and panel summary into account when re-submitting, and you are encouraged to talk to your Program Director.

13. What should be included in the Project Description of a preliminary proposal that is not typically found in a full proposal? In what other ways do they differ?

The first page of the preliminary proposal project description (the Personnel page) must list the PI, co-PI(s), and other senior personnel (including leads for sub-awards) as defined in the Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide ([PAPPG](#)). Consultants or collaborators who provide specific technical expertise on a limited portion of the project are not considered other senior personnel, and therefore should not be listed on the Personnel page. They should, however, be listed on the Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information workbook (see [FAQ #25](#)).

If a multi-institutional Collaborative Research proposal is planned, personnel as listed above from each of the collaborative proposals should also be listed. Each name should be followed by the institutional affiliation, and a single sentence describing that individual's role in the project. No other text should appear on this page.

For each individual listed on the preliminary proposal Personnel page, you must include a Biographical Sketch (2-page limit for each) as specified in the Grant Proposal Guide (see [GPG Chapter II.C.2.f](#)).

The remaining 4 pages (pages 2-5) comprise the preliminary proposal narrative, termed Section 2, Project. The general significance of the work, efficacy of the experimental plan, feasibility of technical approaches, and broader impacts plan should be clearly and concisely presented.

For a preliminary proposal the references are limited to 3 pages. The reference section does not count towards the Project Description page limits.

14. Are preliminary data required in the preliminary proposal?

No; however, a PI may include preliminary data in support of the feasibility of the research

approach at his/her discretion.

15. Are results from prior support required in a preliminary proposal?

Although not required, results from previous support may be included in the preliminary proposal at the discretion of the PI.

16. 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 to one of the IOS core programs. It is strongly advised that you consider the comments from both preliminary and full proposal reviews and panel summaries when re-submitting and contact your Program Director if you have any questions or concerns.

17. 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?

Yes, you would have to submit a preliminary proposal at the next January deadline. You may only submit a full proposal for the August full proposal deadline for which you were invited.

18. May I add a co-PI or other senior personnel who were not listed on the Personnel page of the preliminary proposal to the invited full proposal in the Core track?

You may add such senior personnel only after receiving the prior permission of the cognizant Program Director for the IOS core program. The Program Directors understand that PIs may wish to add senior personnel based on advice written in panelist reviews and panel summaries stemming from merit review of preliminary proposals, and are more than willing to discuss these possible changes. However, PIs should carefully consider the expertise needed to achieve the goals of the project plan before submitting the preliminary proposal for review because panelists on the preliminary proposal review panels are asked to consider whether the project plan is feasible and whether the senior personnel are qualified to conduct the research. Permission to add senior personnel to an invited full proposal may not be granted if there is no suggestion of the need to do so in the review materials of the preliminary proposal.

19. Will reviewers for full proposals see the reviews I received for the preliminary proposal?

No. All proposals to IOS are treated as new proposals.

20. What is the expected success rate of full proposals?

The success rate for invited full proposals is anticipated to be in the range of 25%-30%, depending on the invitation rate and availability of funds.

21. How do I apply for summer support for REU students? Can I still apply for an REU supplement?

Investigators are reminded that support for undergraduate students involved in carrying out research under NSF awards should be included as part of the research proposal itself instead of as a post-award supplement to the research proposal, unless such undergraduate participation was not foreseeable at the time of the original proposal. If an REU supplement is being requested, a supplementary document of up to 3 pages should be included to describe the intended activities of the REU students. All student costs should be entered in the proposal budget as Participant Support Costs. (Please note that indirect costs (F&A) are not allowed on Participant Support costs

for REU supplements.) See the REU solicitation [NSF 13-542](#) for complete details about preparing an REU supplement request.

For individuals with ongoing awards given before FY 2012, supplemental funding requests may be submitted through FastLane as in the past. The target date for such submission is 1 March. As always if you have questions, contact a Program Director.

22. Are there minimum or maximum budget limits for proposals?

No. Requested budgets should be commensurate with the scope of the proposed project.

23. Do I need to submit a proposal classification form for Core track preliminary and full proposals? This form is not covered in the PAPPG. What about other things that are not covered in the PAPPG?

Yes. All submissions to IOS and the Directorate for Biological Sciences require a proposal classification form.

In general solicitation instructions focus on how the requirements differ from what is stated in the [PAPPG](#), and solicitations take precedence over the PAPPG. Solicitation instructions may require that you include elements in your proposals that are not covered in the PAPPG. In the event that a particular issue is not mentioned in the solicitation, you should follow the instructions in the PAPPG.

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

Institutional approvals are not required for preliminary proposals. However, institutional approvals are required for full proposals as specified in the PAPPG (see PAPPG Part I, [Chapter II.D.4](#) and [Chapter II.D.5](#)).

25. What is the Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information workbook? Why do you want this information submitted twice?

The [Collaborators and Other Affiliations](#) Information workbook provides information to help Program Directors select reviewers who do not have any potentially biasing relationships (personal or professional) with any of the individuals identified as senior project personnel. The [PAPPG](#) requires this information be uploaded as a Single Copy document along with the proposal. PI's should use the [Collaborators and Other Affiliations](#) Information workbook provided and upload as a Single Copy document. Note leave Column A blank when uploading with the proposal as you will not yet know the proposal number.

When you submit your proposal you will receive an assigned seven digit NSF Proposal ID preceded by the submission year (for example 16XXXXX). Record this number in Column A of the workbook. The completed Excel [Collaborators and Other Affiliations](#) Information workbook needs to be emailed to IOScoaspreadsheet@nsf.gov before the proposal deadline. Having the workbook in an Excel form allows the Program Directors to compile the information across the programs.

26. My research idea falls between two programs within IOS or between two programs found in different divisions or directorates. How do I submit the preliminary proposal for consideration by both programs?

In IOS, preliminary proposals will not be co-reviewed with other programs. Thus, you will need to

choose a single IOS program for your preliminary proposal submission. In general, it is the primary question addressed by the proposal that determines which program it belongs in rather than the species, methods or measures used. If you have any questions regarding which IOS program would be best for your submission, please contact a Program Director.

27. May I request that my invited proposal be co-reviewed between a program in IOS and another program in BIO or NSF in general?

You may alert the IOS Program Director(s) to other programs that might be relevant to your proposal. However, he/she cannot guarantee co-review will occur.

28. What if my question is not addressed by these FAQs?

Please ask us! Contact information for Program Directors and management in IOS can be found in the solicitation and at the Division website (<https://www.nsf.gov/ios>).