National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 17-130

Frequently Asked Questions FAQs for (NSF 17-546) BD Spokes

ELIGIBILITY FAQS

The following set of questions and answers refer to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the Big Data Regional Hubs: Establishing Spokes to Advance Big Data Applications (BD Spokes) solicitation. They are not intended to be a modification of the program solicitation. If there are any inconsistencies between the BD Spokes Program solicitation and these FAQs, the information in the program solicitation prevails.

Before preparing BD Spokes proposals, please read the BD Spokes solicitation and refer to the general information about NSF proposal submission including the Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG) submission guidelines available at: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg. If choosing to submit via Grants.gov, please refer to the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide0117.

FAQs about FastLane can be found at: https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/NSFHelp/flashhelp/fastlane/FastLane_Help/fastlane_help.htm#fastlane_faqs_introduction.htm. Information regarding Grants.gov can be found at: http://www.grants.gov.

1. Can institutions with non-profit 501(c)(6) status apply?
2. Can other Federal government agencies apply?
3. Can a proposing institution work with a BD Hub from a different region?
4. If a BD Spoke is led by a national organization headquartered in a region different from the location where most of the proposed work will be conducted, which BD Hub should the organization choose?
5. How will NSF balance funding between SMALL- and MEDIUM-sized awards?
6. Regarding geographic diversity, will locations of partnering institutions or clients be considered? Or will the consideration be just the PI's institution?
7. For SMALL projects, should more than one institution be involved in a proposal?
8. Do we need to complete a SMALL project before going on to a MEDIUM?
9. Can one institution be on multiple proposals?
10. Will the review process be independent for the individual BD Hubs?
11. Is it true that not all requests for collaboration will receive a Letter of Collaboration?
12. Will the need for BD Hub support be considered a positive feature of a proposal?
13. Can an institution that already has an active BD Spoke award apply to the program?
14. How can I get information on previously-funded projects in my area?
15. How can I be involved with the NSF BD Hubs program if I am not submitting a BD Spoke proposal?
16. Are collaborative proposals allowed?
17. Can an institution other than the PI's institution be responsible for postdoctoral training?
18. What is the role of planning grants in the BD Spokes network? Should proposers connect their projects to planning grants?
19. Do BD Spokes proposals count towards the proposal limit of 2 proposals a year in the core programs of NSF's Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE)?

ELIGIBILITY FAQS

1. **Can institutions with non-profit 501(c)(6) status apply?**

These are organizations such as trade associations, professional organizations, chambers of commerce, etc. Yes, both 501(c)(6) and 501(c)(3) organizations are eligible if they are in the U.S. and their activities are related to education or research.

2. **Can other Federal government agencies apply?**

NSF does not normally support research or education activities by scientists, engineers or educators employed by Federal agencies or Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). Under unusual circumstances, other Federal agencies and FFRDCs may submit proposals directly to NSF; please review NSF's PAPPG for explicit guidance on such circumstances (https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg17_1/nsf17_1.pdf).

3. **Can a proposing institution work with a BD Hub from a different region?**

There is no explicit rule stating that an institution proposing a BD Spoke project must work with the BD Hub servicing the region in which that institution resides. A BD Spoke can seek a Letter of Collaboration from a BD Hub that is not in the same region as the proposing institution. In this case, a compelling justification (e.g., alignment with respect to intellectual interests, logistical rationale, etc.) must be provided. The reviewers will be asked to consider this justification when reviewing the BD Hub-BD Spoke collaboration. Each BD Spoke must select one BD Hub to serve as the lead coordinating BD Hub for the BD Spoke, but also may collaborate with other BD Hubs.

4. **If a BD Spoke is led by a national organization headquartered in a region different from the location where most of the proposed work will be conducted, which BD Hub should the organization choose?**

Prospective BD Spokes are encouraged to reach out to the BD Hub in the region where the work will be conducted.

5. **How will NSF balance funding between SMALL- and MEDIUM-sized awards?**

NSF will determine the balance of funding between SMALL- and MEDIUM-sized awards based on a number of factors, such as the volume of proposals submitted to each category, quality of those proposals, topic areas, and other award portfolio balancing needs.

6. **Regarding geographic diversity, will locations of partnering institutions or clients be considered? Or will the consideration be just the PI's institution?**

Yes. The geographic diversity of all collaborative institutions and partner institutions will be considered.

7. **For SMALL projects, should more than one institution be involved in a proposal?**

Partnership is a critical component of this program. There are many mechanisms for partnership-through subawardees, collaborative proposals, letters of collaboration, and others. If there is no other institution involved in your proposal, it might not be a good fit for this solicitation.

8. **Do we need to complete a SMALL project before going on to a MEDIUM?**

No. SMALL projects are not planning grants but rather BD Spokes projects at a smaller scale than MEDIUM projects.

9. **Can one institution be on multiple proposals?**

There is a limit of one proposal (total) that any institution can submit as a lead of a collaborative or an independent proposal. However, an institution can participate as a non-lead in multiple proposals.

10. **Will the review process be independent for the individual BD Hubs?**

No. The review panels will be organized by domain or technical areas, not by BD Hubs.

11. **Is it true that not all requests for collaboration will receive a Letter of Collaboration?**

This is possible, if what a prospective PI requested is not what the BD Hub can provide, or if one's topic is not of interest to the BD Hub. The BD Hubs will determine with which projects they wish to collaborate, and will offer these projects Letters of Collaboration. BD Spokes proposers are encouraged to start a dialogue with the respective BD Hub to discuss BD Hub interest in their project.

12. **Will the need for BD Hub support be considered a positive feature of a proposal?**

Yes, this would be considered a positive, especially if the BD Hub can assist with outreach and building connections. If your project can be funded independently without being part of the BD Hubs and Spokes network, it might be more appropriate to be in another program. As described in the 'Proposal Preparation Instructions' and 'Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria' sections of the program solicitation, proposers must justify why their projects should be part of the BD Hubs and Spokes network

13. **What if I applied in the final year of my joint BS/MS program? Under the new one-time rule for graduate student applicants, am I still eligible to apply in the first year of my Ph.D. program?**

Yes. When you applied in the final year of your joint BS/MS program, you were still considered to be an undergraduate since you hadn't yet earned your BS degree. After your joint degree was awarded, you have one more chance to apply-but it must be at the beginning of the first year of your Ph.D. studies (before you complete any additional graduate credits). Note that having earned a joint BS/MS degree, you would *not* be eligible in the second year of your Ph.D. studies, as by then you will already have completed more than the allowable amount of graduate study.

14. **How can I get information on previously-funded projects in my area?**

You can find information on previously-funded BD Spokes projects on each regional BD Hub's website (see question 15 for links to the BD Hubs' websites). You can also find abstracts of all BD Spokes awards in the NSF awards database linked at the bottom of the BD Hubs and Spokes program page (https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505264) under the "What has been funded" link.

15. **How can I be involved with the NSF BD Hubs program if I am not submitting a BD Spoke proposal?**

   - Midwest: midwestbigdatahub.org;
   - Northeast: nebigdatahub.org;
   - South: southbigdatahub.org; and
   - West: westbigdatahub.org.

16. **Are collaborative proposals allowed?**

Yes.

17. **Can an institution other than the PI's institution be responsible for postdoctoral training?**

For collaborative proposals involving awards to multiple institutions, the other institutions can be responsible for mentoring postdocs who are based at the collaborating institutions.

18. **What is the role of planning grants in the BD Spokes network? Should proposers connect their projects to planning grants?**

    Proposals submitted to the current BD Spokes solicitation can coordinate/collaborate with any ongoing/upcoming planning grant activities that have already been funded by the NSF. While planning grants may be developing potential new activities that will be seeking further NSF funding, proposers should not assume such further funding will be made available for these potential new activities; all future proposals are subject to NSF's merit review process.

19. **Do BD Spokes proposals count towards the proposal limit of 2 proposals a year in the core programs of NSF's Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE)?**

    The CISE core programs limit a PI, Co-PI, or senior personnel to two proposal submissions a year to these programs. However, this limit does not apply to other programs, including proposals submitted to the BD Spokes solicitation.