



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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NSF 18-012

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Associated with **NSF 18-011**, Dear Colleague Letter: Implementation of "No-Deadline," Full-proposal Submission Process for Most Programs in the Directorate for Biological Sciences

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1. Why are BIO programs moving to a "no deadline" model? What exactly does "no deadline" mean?
2. Why are DEB and IOS discontinuing the preliminary proposal mechanism?
3. Will the shift away from preliminary proposals in IOS and DEB impact current awards or full proposals invited from the January 2017 competition currently in review?
4. Will the shift to no deadlines impact proposals submitted for the calendar year 2017 deadlines for MCB and the Research Resources Cluster in DBI?
5. When will no deadline submissions begin?
6. Have other NSF programs implemented no deadline processes? What were the outcomes?
7. What is happening with the Long Term Research in Environmental Biology (LTREB) program in DEB?
8. What other opportunities for funding will there be in 2018?
9. What programs will still have deadlines?
10. What will happen to NSF-wide or cross-directorate programs like Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU sites, NSF 13-542) and Research Coordination Networks - Undergraduate Biology Education (RCN-UBE)?
11. What will happen with CAREER proposals submitted to the July 2017 deadline and in the future?
12. When should Research Coordination Network (RCN) proposals be submitted?

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### 1. **Why are BIO programs moving to a "no deadline" model? What exactly does "no deadline" mean?**

The no deadline model addresses the community's dissatisfaction with a single deadline date each year. Issues of career-life balance, such as holidays, illness, family matters, etc., present often unexpected obstacles to a principal investigator (PI) submitting the best proposals possible when a fixed deadline is in place. Under "no deadline" means that a PI is free to submit a proposal when it is as well-developed and competitive as possible, and when it is convenient for them. Submitting proposals at any time allows investigators to have more time to prepare proposals, build collaborations, and to think more creatively without the

pressure of a deadline. Submitting proposals with no deadline is also expected to ameliorate administrative burden for institutions. In addition, the "no deadline" approach permits BIO to better support merit review across its Divisional structure, and seek better collaboration across biological scales and disciplinary boundaries.

**2. Why are DEB and IOS discontinuing the preliminary proposal mechanism?**

The preliminary proposal mechanism was a pilot with the intent to evaluate this mechanism's impact on reducing community workload while maintaining the integrity of the merit review process. While the preliminary proposal process did reduce reviewer workload, time spent writing full proposals, and it had no detrimental impact on merit review, there were other consequences. It was clear from the independent review ([Abt Report](#)) that having only a single deadline per year was a significant concern to the community. There were also concerns that the absence of preliminary proposal co-review between programs and Divisions was an impediment to supporting projects that spanned disciplines and scales. Lastly, the preliminary proposal mechanism also adversely impacted workload and workflow at NSF.

**3. Will the shift away from preliminary proposals in IOS and DEB impact current awards or full proposals invited from the January 2017 competition currently in review?**

No. The proposals invited from the January 2017 competition and submitted for the August 2017 deadlines will be reviewed as planned and awards will be made using FY 2018 funds. The change to move away from using preliminary proposals will go into effect for projects awarded in FY 2019.

**4. Will the shift to no deadlines impact proposals submitted for the calendar year 2017 deadlines for MCB and the Research Resources Cluster in DBI?**

No. Proposals submitted for the 2017 deadlines will be reviewed as usual and considered for award with FY 2018 funds.

**5. When will no deadline submissions begin?**

Programs in MCB and DBI have upcoming deadlines in 2017; following those deadlines four divisions ([Division of Environmental Biology (DEB); Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS), Molecular and Cellular Biosciences (MCB) and Division of Biological Infrastructure (DBI)] will release new solicitations in 2018 for awards in FY 2019. These new solicitations will call for submissions of full proposals to the relevant programs and there will be no deadlines. Once the solicitations are released, but not before, full proposals may be submitted at any time. Proposals may only be submitted to one of the solicitations. All BIO divisions will continue to accept CAREER proposals through the normal Foundation-wide solicitation with due dates in July.

**6. Have other NSF programs implemented no deadline processes? What were the outcomes?**

Pilot programs in the Geosciences Directorate and in the BIO Plant Genome Research

Program have instituted no deadline submissions. Results have shown that eliminating deadlines can reduce the burden on institutions and the community by spreading out the request period over the course of the year, as opposed to having submissions limited to a single deadline. The positive reaction of these communities to the opportunity to submit any time was one important outcome. Another outcome was the increase in proposal quality and decrease in the number of submitted proposals. Given the substantial increase in proposal load experienced by DEB and IOS over the past decade, this was seen as beneficial.

**7. What is happening with the Long Term Research in Environmental Biology (LTREB) program in DEB?**

The LTREB program was also part of the preliminary proposal pilot in DEB. LTREB proposals are reviewed in the core DEB programs but have unique requirements and review criteria that justified a separate solicitation. LTREB is not going away, but as with the core DEB solicitation, the LTREB solicitation ([NSF 17-513](#)) will be archived and in the future LTREB will not require preliminary proposals or deadlines. Submission of LTREB and LTREB-Renewal full proposals will be governed by a new solicitation to be released in 2018, when new core program solicitations are released.

**8. What other opportunities for funding will there be in 2018?**

During fiscal year 2018, BIO divisions will fund projects resulting from invited full proposals submitted in 2017 in IOS and DEB, and proposals submitted to the normal fall 2017 deadlines in MCB and DBI. All Divisions will continue to support supplements, EAGER, RAISE, RAPID, Workshops, and non-core programs.

**9. What programs will still have deadlines?**

IOS will support projects for genomic tool development through the Enabling Discovery through Genomic Tools (EDGE) program. DEB will support integrative research in the [Ecology and Evolution of Infectious Diseases](#) (EEID) program and the [Dimensions of Biodiversity](#) program. DBI will support the [Postdoctoral Fellowship in Biology](#) program. The [Macrosystems Biology and Early NEON Science](#) program will remain under deadlines. You are strongly encouraged to contact a program officer if you have specific questions about programs.

**10. What will happen to NSF-wide or cross-directorate programs like Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU sites, [NSF 13-542](#)) and Research Coordination Networks - Undergraduate Biology Education (RCN-UBE)?**

These programs have their own solicitations and deadlines and will not change. The REU and RCN-UBE proposals that are submitted by the respective deadlines will be reviewed and considered for funding with FY 2018 funds. Proposals to the NSF-wide program Major Research Instrumentation ([NSF 15-504](#)) should continue to be submitted by the deadline determined in the solicitation.

**11. What will happen with CAREER proposals submitted to the July 2017 deadline and in**

## **the future?**

The CAREER program has its own solicitation and deadline, and this will not change. CAREER proposals submitted to BIO divisions for the July 2017 deadline will be reviewed in relevant panels and considered for funding with FY 2018 funds. CAREER proposals submitted for the 2018 deadline will be assigned to an appropriate program and brought to panel as has also been done in the past.

## **12. When should Research Coordination Network (RCN) proposals be submitted?**

The RCN solicitation, [NSF 17-594](#), which applies to programs in most NSF Directorates, instructs proposers to submit to a particular program according to the deadlines posted on that program's webpage and to contact cognizant program officers in that program for guidance. Since BIO is moving to no deadlines for programs that participate in that RCN solicitation, there will no longer be a specified submission date for RCN proposals submitted to any of the four BIO Divisions, effectively immediately. If you are planning an RCN proposal for submission to a BIO program, you are strongly encouraged to first discuss the idea with a program officer to ensure your idea fits that particular program.