

**National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative
2017 Collaborative Research and Integrated Assessment
Funding Announcement & Request for Pre-Proposals (RFP)**

Q&A: last updated January 18, 2017

Eligibility

Q: Are for-profit entities eligible recipients for Science Collaborative funding?

A: Yes, private and for-profit firms are eligible recipients for Science Collaborative funding, so long as they are working in partnership with one or more reserves and meet the requirements described in the RFP.

Q: Can NERRS Science Collaborative project funds be used to support federal employees and/or their travel?

A: NERRS Science Collaborative funds may **not** be used to support salary or travel for federal employees; however, federal employees may participate as unfunded project team members.

Q: Is funding restricted to work performed on reserves?

A: NERRS Science Collaborative projects are not required to be located within the physical boundaries of a National Estuarine Research Reserve, or necessarily within a reserve's watershed. However, projects must be directly related to at least one reserve, address at least one or more reserve management need, and must have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s), as demonstrated in the reserve manager proposal assessment(s).

Q: Can NERRS Science Collaborative project funds be used to support graduate assistants?

A: Yes

Q: Is graduate student tuition an eligible expense?

A: Yes, projects that include graduate student support may include tuition for these students in the budget.

Pre-proposal Format

Q: Should appendices adhere to the 12 point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins requirements?

A: Yes, all portions of the proposal should adhere to these requirements.

Q: Is the proposal required to include resumes required for end users?

A: 2-page resumes are required for all team members; proposals should only include an end user's resume if that end user is a member of the project team.

Q: Is the proposal required to include a resume for the project fiscal agent?

A: No, the proposal does not need to include a resume for the fiscal agent.

Q: Is there flexibility in the pre-proposal format requirements (i.e., single pdf file using 12 point Times New Roman font, no less than single space and one inch margins and organized using the headers identified in the RFP) and page limits (i.e., title page up to two pages, project narrative 5-page maximum)?

A: No; pre-proposal format and page limit requirements are strict.

Q: Can the pre-proposal include letters of support? If so, where should these be included?

A: Pre-proposals should not include letters of support - if invited to submit a full proposal, letters of support may be included at that stage.

Integrated Assessments

Q: Should Integrated Assessment proposals include a plan for an external technical review?

A: An expert technical review plan is not required at the pre-proposal stage; in lieu of including a detailed plan for an external technical review of the integrated assessment, it would be appropriate at this stage to refer to the planned external review in the "project approach" and indicate when you anticipate this process taking place. If invited to submit a full proposal, the full proposal requirements will ask for the more detailed external technical review plan.

Q: Can you distinguish between what is meant by "focal problem" vs "focal question" in the request for pre-proposals?

A: After looking again at the RFP, we appreciate why these two terms may be confusing. The term "focal question" refers to the policy or management question that the IA seeks to inform - for more on this, see page 4 in the IA primer:

http://graham.umich.edu/media/files/NERRS_IA_Primer.pdf

Rather than using the term "focal problem" in the text on page 11, the RFP should have read: "*identify previous and ongoing attempts to address the issue, and the technical and non-technical barriers that hinder an effective response*".

Budget

Q: If invited to submit a full proposal, can the budget request in the full proposal be different than the pre-proposal budget estimate?

A: Yes; however, the total budget request in the full proposal may not exceed the budget estimate in the pre-proposal.

Q: Can CESU (Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit) entities apply their negotiated reduced indirect rates to Science Collaborative grants?

A: Contracts for funded Science Collaborative grants will be made between the University of Michigan and the project's fiscal agent; as such, project fiscal agents should apply their federally negotiated indirect rate to the project.

Q: How will budgets be handled for multi-institutional teams?

A: The University of Michigan will subcontract to the lead fiscal agent which will then subcontract to all partners. If invited to full proposal, you will need to provide a detailed budget and justification for your institution and all subcontracts.

Q: Do you encourage in-kind matching funds from outside of the reserves?

A: This is not a requirement but is one way to demonstrate commitment and engagement from your partners.

Q: Can a nongovernmental organization serve as the primary fiscal agent? If so, are there specific guidelines to guide selection of an appropriate organization?

A: Yes. This is permissible and NGOs have successfully served as the fiscal agent for previous NERRS Science Collaborative projects. To serve as a fiscal agent, the NGO should be a 501(c)(3) organization and be registered and fully credentialed through the Internal Revenue Service. The NGO should also have an interest and role in the proposed work.

Q: What are the requirements for Science Collaborative projects regarding indirect cost rates?

A: The Science Collaborative recognizes federally negotiated indirect cost rates (i.e., there is no cap on indirect costs). Lower indirect cost rates are acceptable, if the proposing organization or institution approves it. If the fiscal agent does not have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate, they may apply a rate of 10%.

Q: Is graduate student tuition an eligible expense?

A: Yes, projects that include graduate student support may include tuition for these students in the budget.

Q: If invited to submit a full proposal, can the fiscal agent/organization listed in the full proposal be different than what was listed in the pre-proposal?

A: Yes.

Q: Should the pre-proposal budget be detailed, i.e. provide more than the total request?

A: No. The pre-proposal should not include a detailed budget, only the total requested. If invited to submit a full proposal, you will be asked to provide a detailed budget.

Q: Can we budget for more than \$250K in one year, so long as we not exceed the total allowable \$500K over the course of the two years?

A: We encourage applicants to adhere as closely as possible to the \$250K/year guideline, but are open to up to 10% overage in a given year, as long as the total project does not exceed \$500K. If you plan to take advantage of this flexibility, it should be clear in the submitted proposed budget.

Collaboration and End User Engagement

Q: Can researchers and scientists be end users?

A: Yes; researchers and scientists may be end users if the research will ultimately address a reserve management need. In this case, the pre-proposal must make clear why the research is needed to address an identified reserve management need.

Q: Are end users required to be team members?

A: No; while you may choose to include an end user on your project team, you are not required to do so.

Q: Are end users required to be included in the project budget?

A: No.

Reserve Engagement

Q: Will the reserves be given the opportunity to update their reserve management needs annually?

A: Yes, reserves will be asked annually, prior to the release of the Science Collaborative request for proposals, to review and update, if necessary, their reserve management needs.

Q: If I am working with a reserve research coordinator to develop a proposal is this sufficient for the reserve engagement requirement, or should I also reach out to the reserve manager directly?

A: As the applicant, it is your job to ensure that the relevant manager(s) are fully aware of and sufficiently engaged in your proposal as it is developed in order to provide a positive assessment. In this case, it would be good to double check that the research coordinator has connected with the manager about the proposed work to receive any input he/she may have and to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Q: Is it acceptable to ask reserve managers for the use of reserve equipment and/or personnel time?

A: You should feel free to reach out to reserve managers with these types of questions; however, it is of course up to them to decide how to respond. You should be aware that capacity and ability to accommodate these kinds of requests will vary from reserve to reserve.

Q: How should proposals that include multiple participating reserves demonstrate that the project will meet each reserve's individual management need(s) in a way that does not take up too much space in the pre-proposal?

A: Proposing teams are encouraged to creatively consider how they might succinctly capture the proposed work's responsiveness to the engaged reserves without taking up too much space. The reserve manager assessments will also speak to the pre-proposal's responsiveness.

Review Process

Q: How many pre-proposal teams do you anticipate inviting to submit full proposals?

A: The number of pre-proposal teams invited to submit full proposals is dependent on the outcomes of the pre-proposal written reviews and panel discussion. Though we seek to have a high funding potential for invited full proposals, we are unable to anticipate the number of high-quality pre-proposals that will be submitted and are therefore unable to estimate how many pre-proposal teams will be invited to the full proposal stage.

Q: How many projects do you anticipate funding?

A: The number of projects funded will be dependent on the outcomes of the full proposal panel review and budget considerations; we are unable to predict what this number will be.

Q: What kind of reviewers should be listed in “Appendix 2: Reviewers”?

A: This appendix is meant to help us identify strong, non-conflicted technical reviewers of your proposal should you be invited to submit a full proposal. Reviewers should be subject experts unlikely to have a conflict of interest.

Miscellaneous

Q: Can additional team members be added after the pre-proposal stage?

A: Yes. If invited to submit a full proposal, new members may be added to the project team.

Q: Can we apply for and use capacity building funds before knowing if our pre-proposal is invited to advance in the competition?

A: Yes, capacity building applications are accepted on a rolling basis.