



**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
4201 WILSON BOULEVARD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230**

NSF 16-112

Dear Colleague Letter: Management and Operation of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR)

August 8, 2016

Dear Colleague,

The Division of Atmospheric and Geospace Sciences (AGS) in the Directorate for Geosciences (GEO) of the National Science Foundation (NSF) is anticipating a competition in 2017 for the management and operation of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR). This letter provides general information about the upcoming competition and invites potential proposing organizations to contact NSF to identify information needed for preparing proposals and, additionally, invites members of the community to submit comments regarding the future management and operation of NCAR, which need not follow the current model.

Program Description

NCAR was established in 1960 in Boulder, Colorado as a center of excellence for research and education in atmospheric science, providing research, facilities and services for the atmospheric and geospace sciences and the wider geosciences community. NCAR is designated as an NSF Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) with approximately 750 full-time equivalent staff. In FY 2015, NCAR's funding from NSF totaled \$111 M, with \$98.7 M in base funding and \$13.1 M in additional support from other NSF programs. Another approximately \$57 M was provided by other federal agencies (\$39 M) and non-federal sources (\$18 M).

The NCAR mission is to understand the behavior of the atmosphere and related Earth and geospace systems; to support, enhance, and extend the capabilities of the university community and the broader science community, nationally and internationally; and to foster the transfer of knowledge and technology for the betterment of life on Earth. This mission is accomplished through scientific research; the development, improvement, and operation of a number of facilities; and educational and outreach programs.

In collaboration with the university science community, NCAR scientists focus on fundamental research aimed at improving our ability to predict meteorological, air quality and space weather hazards and increasing our understanding of the variability in and changes to the Earth's climate system at regional and global scales. These research themes are enabled by NCAR-operated facilities such as two highly modified aircraft (a C-130Q Hercules and a Gulfstream-V); a petascale supercomputing center in Cheyenne, Wyoming; and state-of-the-art community models, including the Community Earth System Model (CESM), the Weather Research and Forecasting Model (WRF) and the Whole Atmosphere Community Climate Model (WACCM). Partnerships with researchers in complementary fields, such as

hydrology, cryospheric science, oceanography, terrestrial biology, public health and social sciences, to name a few, broaden NCAR's activities beyond the traditional atmospheric and geospace sciences. Details about NCAR's research activities can be found on the website at ncar.ucar.edu and in NCAR's current strategic plan.

NSF's Expectations of Managing Organization

NCAR will be operated and managed by an organization (hereinafter referred to as the "manager") that is funded and overseen through a Cooperative Agreement with NSF. The manager will ensure that NCAR promotes the progress of atmospheric and geospace research; maintains a culture of excellence in serving the scientific community through collaborations; provides access to shared observational facilities, computational infrastructure, and modelling resources; engages in technology transfer; and integrates research and educational activities. The manager is responsible for:

- Planning, executing, staffing, and managing the NCAR program;
- Providing and maintaining advanced observational, computational, and modeling facilities and services;
- Operating and maintaining the NCAR buildings and facilities, developing and incorporating new facilities, as appropriate;
- Recruiting, developing and retaining a highly competent and diverse staff;
- Planning for and implementing future initiatives;
- Overseeing and sustaining an innovative and vigorous program of basic and applied research in support of the atmospheric, geospace and related sciences.

Eligibility Information

The competition for the management and operation of NCAR will be open to universities or consortia of universities, other not-for-profit or nonprofit organizations, and any industrial firm operating as an autonomous organization or as an identifiable separate non-profit operating unit of a parent organization.

The operation of NCAR must be conducted in the public interest with objectivity and independence, free from organizational conflicts of interest, and with full disclosure of NCAR's affairs to NSF. NSF will be responsible for award oversight, including technical, programmatic, and financial and administrative performance. Policy considerations are described in the FAR 35.017, "Federally Funded Research and Development Centers" (<https://www.acquisition.gov/?q=/browse/far/35>); NSF Cooperative Agreement Financial and Administrative Terms and Conditions (https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/cafatc/cafatc_116.pdf); and the Cooperative Agreement Supplemental Financial/Administrative Terms and Conditions for Managers of Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) (https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/cafatc/cafatc_ffrdc116.pdf).

Anticipated Competition Schedule

This notice does not constitute a solicitation; therefore, no award of any kind will result from this notice. NSF anticipates that a program solicitation will be issued in early 2017. The due date for full proposals in response to the program solicitation is expected to be approximately 5-6 months following its publication.

Requests for Information

NSF invites written comments and questions by **October 7, 2016** from eligible organizations interested in this competition. Requests for individual meetings with NSF officials will be considered. Interested parties are encouraged to request clarification of general aspects of the competition or to identify to NSF any information they feel would be needed for proposal preparation. All material should be submitted via email to the Primary Contact listed below. Comments and questions regarding the scope, management and operational requirements to meet the objectives given above are also invited. Input from the community about the management and operation of NCAR is also welcome and may be used to inform AGS' plans for the program solicitation. This input should be e-mailed to the Primary Contact.

Responses to this request do not bind NSF to any further or specific actions related to this topic. This Dear Colleague Letter is not a formal solicitation for proposals, and conveys neither a financial commitment nor a reflection of any decision about the management of NCAR.

Oral discussions during any meetings will be non-binding. To the extent that the sender plans to provide any information that it considers proprietary, such status must be communicated unambiguously and marked clearly. NSF will protect such information as allowed by law.

The program solicitation and any posted responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be considered the guiding documents for proposal submission. All inquiries regarding this announcement and the competition for the management and operation of NCAR should be directed to the Primary Contact listed below.

Primary Contact

All responses to this Dear Colleague Letter should be directed to

Kristin Spencer
NSF Grant and Agreement Specialist
Ph: 703-292-4585
Email: kspencer@nsf.gov

Additional Sources of Information

NSF/Division of Atmospheric and Geospace Sciences: <https://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=ags>
NCAR Strategic Plan: https://ncar.ucar.edu/sites/default/files/NCAR_Strat_Plan_Final_102014.pdf
NCAR Annual Reports: <https://nar.ucar.edu/>

Sincerely,
Roger M. Wakimoto
Assistant Director
Directorate for Geosciences
National Science Foundation