NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 16-066

Dear Colleague Letter: NSF Special Guidelines for Submitting Collaborative Proposals Under the SBE-RCUK Lead Agency Agreement

April 20, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

The Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Research Councils of the United Kingdom (RCUK) are pleased to announce their continued support of international collaboration under the SBE-RCUK Lead Agency Agreement. The goal of this agreement is to promote transatlantic collaborative research by reducing some of the barriers to conducting international research that researchers may encounter. The SBE-RCUK Lead Agency Agreement addresses these issues by allowing US and UK researchers to submit a single collaborative proposal that will undergo a single review process.

Proposals may be accepted for collaborative research in areas at the intersection of NSF/SBE and RCUK's missions. The UK Research Councils participating in this activity are the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC). Proposers should review the programs supported through NSF/SBE and through the relevant UK Research Council(s) for further information on what areas of research are eligible for support through this activity. Proposals are expected to adhere to typical proposal sizes and durations for the relevant UK Research Council(s) and SBE program(s) from which funding is sought. Proposals will be accepted for both interdisciplinary and disciplinary research projects.

This document provides guidelines for the preparation, submission, review, and award of SBE-RCUK Collaborative Proposals.

Proposers are advised that all documents submitted to NSF or RCUK may be shared by email or other electronic means with other agencies participating in the SBE-RCUK Lead Agency Agreement.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

- Before submitting a proposal, researchers should identify a prospective lead agency (either NSF/SBE or one of the participating UK Research Councils: AHRC, BBSRC or ESRC) based on where the largest proportion of research lies, and through which the greater amount of funding would be requested.

- Proposers must then prepare: (a) a brief description of the proposed research (700 words maximum), including a list of the main objectives of the research, the methodologies to be used, and the anticipated broader impacts/outputs and beneficiaries of the project; (b) the names and affiliations of the researchers and (c) bottom line estimates of funding to be requested from NSF and the relevant UK Research Council(s) (a detailed budget is not required at this time).

- To submit the above information, proposers must complete the SBE/RCUK Lead Agency Expression of Intent (EOI) form at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SBE_RCUK_EOI. Upon submission of your information via the EOI form, data will be transmitted to the NSF and shared with the RCUK. Both agencies will review the submitted information to check for appropriateness.

- Upon confirmation from the lead agency that the proposed collaborative research is appropriate for review under the SBE-RCUK Lead Agency Agreement, researchers may submit a full research proposal to the lead agency.

If NSF is the lead agency, proposers must comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in NSF's *Grant Proposal Guide* (GPG) and submit the proposal through NSF's FastLane system (https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov) or Grants.gov (http://grants.gov) to the appropriate standing program within SBE. If a UK Research Council is the lead agency, proposers must comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in the *Research Funding Guide* (or equivalent document) of the appropriate lead Research Council and proposals should be submitted via the Research Council's JeS system (https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/) using the appropriate Research Council's Responsive Mode Research Grants scheme. Whether submitted to NSF or RCUK as lead agency, the proposal should indicate the proposal is to be considered under this Lead Agency Agreement by prefacing the title with "SBE-RCUK."

For invited proposals where NSF is the lead agency, please select the option "Not a collaborative proposal" under the section on Collaborative Status on the Cover Sheet in FastLane. Although SBE-RCUK projects involve collaborative research, proposals are only classified as "collaborative" in FastLane if they either 1) have subaward(s) or 2) the lead proposal has associated non-lead proposal(s) attached to it. For more information on NSF collaborative proposals, see Chapter II.D.5 of the GPG.

BUDGET PREPARATION

If NSF is the lead agency, the proposal should only indicate the US expenses on the NSF Budget Form. A detailed breakdown of funding requested from RCUK, using the UK budget form, should be added to the proposal as a Supplementary Document. The Budget Justification section of the proposal should address the full project budget (that is, both the US and UK funding items).

If a UK Research Council is the lead agency, the proposal should only indicate the UK expenses on the primary Research Council's budget forms. A detailed breakdown of funding requested from NSF should be added to the proposal as an annex/supplemental document. The Justification of Resources section of the proposal should address the full project budget (that is, both the UK and US funding items).

The costs of the US and UK organizations must be clearly differentiated in the proposal.

Proposals that request duplicative funding may be returned without review.

PEER REVIEW

SBE-RCUK collaborative proposals will be reviewed alongside all other unsolicited or standard proposals received in the same funding round or call and will not undergo a separate or special review process.

Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the lead agency's review criteria. While not identical, NSF and RCUK ask reviewers to evaluate research on both its scientific or intellectual merit as well as its broader or societal impacts.

FUNDING DECISIONS

The lead agency will use its usual internal procedures to determine whether a proposal will be awarded or declined. Funding decisions may be subject to budget limits.

All proposers will be advised whether their proposal has been recommended for funding or will be declined by the lead funding agency. Proposers will receive copies of the reviewers' comments and, where applicable, a panel summary.

Once a proposer has been notified of a pending award, the non-lead researcher(s) associated with the project must submit a copy of the proposal to the non-lead agency(ies) so that each agency has complete documentation of the overall proposed research project.

Because the participating organizations have different funding cycles, it is possible that some projects will have delayed start dates in order to wait until funds become available.

POSTAWARD CONSIDERATIONS

Awardees will be expected to comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the agencies from which they receive funding.

Awardees will be required to acknowledge both NSF and the relevant UK Research Council in any reports or publications arising from the grant. Requests for extensions will be considered by participating agency(ies) using standard procedures. Requests for changes to awards will be discussed with other involved funding agencies before a mutual decision is reached.

NSF POLICY ON RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS AND VERTEBRATE ANIMALS

For information regarding proposals involving human subjects, see Chapter II.D.8 of the GPG and the NSF Human Subjects web site. For information regarding proposals involving vertebrate animals, see Chapter II.D.7 of the GPG·

For additional information on the administration of awards involving human subjects, see Chapter VI.B.1 of the AAG and for information on the administration of awards involving vertebrate animals see Chapter VI.B.3 of the AAG.

RCUK RESEARCH ETHICS POLICIES CONCERNING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS AND ANIMAL RESEARCH

The Research Organization is responsible for ensuring that ethical issues relating to the research project are identified and brought to the attention of the relevant approval or regulatory body. Approval to undertake the research must be granted before any work requiring approval begins. Ethical issues should be interpreted broadly and may encompass, among other things, relevant codes of practice, the involvement of human participants, tissue or data in research, the use of animals, research that may result in damage to the environment and the use of sensitive economic, social or personal data.

HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

The Research Organization is responsible for managing and monitoring the conduct of medical and health research in a manner consistent with the Department of Health's Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care (or equivalent). There must be effective and verifiable systems in place for managing research quality, progress and the safety and well-being of patients and other research participants. These systems must promote and maintain the relevant codes of practice and all relevant statutory review, authorization and reporting requirements.

Research involving human participants or data within the social sciences that falls outside the

Department of Health's Research Governance Framework must meet the provisions and guidelines of the ESRC's Research Ethics Framework. While this research may involve patients, National Health Service(NHS) staff or organizations, it is defined as research that poses no clinical risk or harm to those who are the subjects of research. Research Organizations must ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for independent ethics review of social science research that meets local research ethics committee standards.

Significant developments must be assessed as the research proceeds, especially those that affect safety and well-being, which should be reported to the appropriate authorities and to the Research Council. The Research Organization must take appropriate and timely action when significant problems are identified. This may include temporarily suspending or terminating the research.

The Research Organization is responsible for managing and monitoring statutory requirements for which it accepts responsibility, for example, in relation to legislation on clinical trials, use of human organs, tissues and data.

Guidance by the Medical Research Council (MRC) on the conduct of medical research, and by ESRC on the conduct of social science research, provided on behalf of all Research Councils, must be observed.

ANIMAL RESEARCH

Wherever possible, researchers must adopt procedures and techniques that avoid the use of animals. Where this is not possible, the research should be designed so that:

- The least sentient species with the appropriate physiology is used.
- The number of animals used is the minimum sufficient to provide adequate statistical power to answer the questions posed.
- The severity of procedures performed on animals is kept to a minimum. Experiments should be kept as short as possible.

Appropriate anesthesia, analgesia and humane end points should be used to minimize any pain and suffering.

The provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, and any amendments, must be observed and all necessary licenses must have been received before any work requiring approval takes place.