



**National Science Foundation**  
**4201 Wilson Boulevard**  
**Arlington, Virginia 22230**

**NSF 14-034**

**Dear Colleague Letter: Special Guidelines for Submitting Collaborative Proposals under the US NSF/BIO - UK BBSRC Lead Agency Pilot opportunity**

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March 3, 2014

**SCOPE**

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The US National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Research Councils UK (RCUK) have signed a Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) on Research Cooperation. The MoU provides an overarching framework to encourage collaboration between US and UK research communities and sets out the principles by which jointly supported activities might be developed. The MoU provides for a lead agency arrangement whereby proposals may be submitted to either NSF (via FastLane) or one of the UK Research Councils (via Je-S).

The NSF Directorate for Biological Sciences (NSF/BIO) and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) are pleased to announce a pilot program for the NSF/BIO - BBSRC lead agency arrangements under the NSF / RCUK Research Cooperation MoU. The pilot program allows for reciprocal acceptance of peer review through unsolicited mechanisms and its goal is to help reduce some of the current barriers to working internationally.

The pilot will allow US and UK researchers to submit a single collaborative proposal that will undergo a single review process. The pilot will operate for fall 2014 and fall 2015 submissions and proposals will be accepted for UK-US collaborative projects in the areas of intersection between NSF/BIO and BBSRC (responsive mode only) as set out below:

**NSF/BIO Solicitations**

Division of Molecular and Cellular Biosciences Solicitation NSF 13-510

Division of Biological Infrastructure Solicitation NSF 12-567

**BBSRC Strategic Research Priorities, Responsive Mode**

Data Driven Biology

Systems Approaches to the Biosciences

Synthetic Biology (Fall 2015 submissions only)

The intersection areas include systems biology, computational biology, bioinformatics and synthetic biology (fall 2015 only).

Proposals are expected to adhere to the remit, funding limits and grant duration for BBSRC responsive mode and NSF/BIO program(s) from which funding is sought. This document provides guidelines for the preparation, submission, peer review, and award of NSF/BIO-BBSRC Collaborative Proposals.

Proposers are advised that all documents submitted to NSF or BBSRC may be shared between these two organizations by email or other electronic means (e.g. secure extranet) in order to implement the two-way lead agency arrangements.

## PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

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### Preparation

1. Prior to submission of a full proposal, proposers will need to discuss within their research team where they feel the largest proportion of research lies and agree on a proposed lead agency (either NSF/BIO or BBSRC). The proposer should contact the relevant staff member (at [INCA@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:INCA@bbsrc.ac.uk) or [NSFBIOBBSRC@nsf.gov](mailto:NSFBIOBBSRC@nsf.gov)) at the proposed lead agency to discuss the research project. The staff member will then confirm that they will act as lead funding agency (and subsequently inform other participating agency) or will consult with the other agency to identify a new lead funding agency prior to returning a decision to the proposer (generally within ten working days).
2. Proposers will then be required to submit to the lead agency a PDF Intention to Submit (ITS) of no more than 2 pages (A4/letter) that sets out:
  - A brief description of the proposed collaborative research project
  - The names, institutions and qualifications of the applicants and project partners
  - An estimate of the funding to be requested from NSF/BIO and BBSRC (a detailed budget is not required at this time)
3. For proposal submission in Fall 2014 prospective applicants must submit this document no later than Friday 30 May 2014. For proposal submission in Fall 2015 prospective applicants must submit this document no later than Monday June 1 2015.
4. If BBSRC is the prospective lead agency applicants should e-mail their intention to submit to [INCA@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:INCA@bbsrc.ac.uk) If NSF is the lead agency applicants should e-mail [NSFBIOBBSRC@nsf.gov](mailto:NSFBIOBBSRC@nsf.gov)
5. The ITS will be shared with the non-lead agency to check for eligibility (namely whether the proposed research fits within the participating agencies' portfolio, the scope of the pilot and whether the proposed researchers and institutions meet the agencies' funding eligibility requirements). The ITS will also be used to gauge proposal pressure by program and assist programs with budget planning.
6. Following consultation between NSF/BIO and BBSRC the lead agency will provide feedback (generally within 10 working days) to the applicant on whether or not the proposed submission can proceed.

### Submission

7. If NSF is the lead agency, proposers must comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in NSF's *Grant Proposal Guide* 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 BIO.
8. If BBSRC is the lead agency, proposers must comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in the BBSRC Grants Guide (<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/apply/grants-guide.aspx>) and proposals should be submitted via the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submission (JeS) system (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>) using the BBSRC's Responsive Mode Research Grants scheme.

UK proposers should follow the directions set out in the document 'BBSRC guidance notes for the BBSRC-NSF-BIO Lead Agency Pilot Application Procedures'.

9. The proposal should include a description of the full proposed research program and research team and describe the total resources for the joint project (that is, the funds requested from both the NSF/BIO and BBSRC). However, **the budget forms submitted to the lead agency should only indicate the amount requested from that agency**. A copy of the proposed requested budget of the non-lead agency should be included as part of the full proposal (in the case of NSF, this should be added as a "Supplementary Document"; in the case of BBSRC, this should be added as an attached document to the grant application). 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.
10. For projects involving human subjects/participants or animals, proposers will be advised about both NSF/BIO and BBSRC policies and are advised to consult with appropriate staff at NSF/BIO or BBSRC prior to submitting a proposal.
11. The proposal should indicate the proposal is to be considered under the lead agency arrangements by prefacing the title with 'Bilateral BBSRC-NSF/BIO'.
12. The proposal will be submitted by established program deadlines or target dates determined by the lead agency. For BBSRC, this is the September 2014 and 2015 deadline (see - <http://bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/apply/deadlines.aspx>).

## PEER REVIEW

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NSF/BIO - BBSRC collaborative proposals will be reviewed alongside all other standard proposals received in the same funding cycle 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 BBSRC ask reviewers to evaluate the proposed project on both its scientific or intellectual merit as well as its broader societal impacts.

While the lead agency will bear the ultimate responsibility for obtaining written reviews, the non-lead agency will be responsible for providing names of qualified reviewers to the lead agency. The lead agency will take steps to use these reviewers and will communicate with the non-lead agency in the event that these reviewers are non-responsive or fail to provide reviews.

## FUNDING DECISIONS

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The lead agency will use its usual internal procedures to determine whether a proposal will be awarded or declined. In the case of NSF, an award requires a formal recommendation by the Program Officer and then endorsement by senior management and NSF's Division of Grants and Agreements. In the case of the BBSRC, funding recommendations from Panels are received by Research Council Officers who, taking into account the availability of funds, will fund those proposals recommended for funding. The decisions will be discussed with the partner agency. 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. Proposers are best placed to share the results of the review with other members of the research team.

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 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**

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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 BBSRC in any publications arising from the grant. Requests for extensions and changes to awards will be considered by funding agencies using standard procedures. Requests for will be discussed with other involved funding agencies before a mutual decision is reached.