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NSF 24-078

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Global Centers Program (NSF 24-556)

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The NSF Global Centers Program Solicitation is available on the NSF Global Centers webpage¹. Any specific question not answered below about the NSF Global Centers program can be addressed at². All proposals submitted in to the 2024 call of the NSF Global Centers Program must follow the guidelines for proposal preparation and submission as detailed in³ the NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG) (NSF 24-1) and the Global Centers program solicitation.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Who is eligible to serve as Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI in NSF proposals?

The PI must be an employee representing either 1) a U.S. Institution of Higher Education (IHE), or 2) a U.S.-based non-profit, non-academic organization associated with educational or research activities. U.S. citizenship of the PI and other researchers on the U.S. team is not required.

2. Can a PI or co-PI be listed on more than one NSF Global Centers proposal?

An individual may be listed as a PI or a co-PI on no more than one proposal submitted in response to this solicitation. There are no restrictions or limits on the number of proposals where an individual can be listed in other categories of Senior/Key Personnel, or as unfunded/no-cost collaborator.

3. What types of organizations are eligible to submit NSF proposals?

1) U.S. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)- Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US (see Special Instructions for international branch campuses of U.S. IHEs in Section IV of the solicitation), and 2) Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities.

4. Can Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) submit Global Centers proposals as lead organizations?

Yes. U.S. academic institutions that primarily serve underrepresented minorities are eligible and encouraged to submit proposals as lead organizations. If they choose not to submit as lead organizations, they are encouraged to participate as partner institutions. In addition, PIs are encouraged to establish linkages with NSF-sponsored programs to enhance diversity (e.g., AGEP, LSAMP, HBCU-UP, TCUP, CREST, ADVANCE, all described at⁴), especially at their own institutions.

5. Can organizations in EPSCOR Jurisdictions submit Global Centers proposals as lead organizations?

Yes. U.S. organizations in EPSCOR jurisdictions are encouraged to submit proposals as lead organizations. If they choose not to submit as lead organizations, they are encouraged to participate as partner institutions.

6. Can a given organization submit more than one Global Centers proposal?

There are no restrictions or limits on the number of proposals submitted per eligible U.S. institution or organization.

7. Which U.S. organizations are eligible to partner on Global Centers projects?

Partnerships may include multi-organizational collaborations or arrangements with other universities/colleges, national laboratories, research museums, private sector research laboratories, industrial organizations, and/or state and local government laboratories. Collaborations with colleagues from U.S. government agencies and labs are welcome although strict rules govern the use of NSF funds in such collaborations. Please consult⁵ PAPPG Chapter I.E for more information.

8. Does the Global Centers program accept separately submitted collaborative proposals?

No. Global Centers proposals that are collaborations including more than one U.S. organization must be submitted as a single integrated proposal by the lead organization, with proposed subawards to the other partner institutions. Separate submissions from multiple U.S.-based organizations are not allowed and will not be accepted.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

9. Must proposals involve partnership with at least one of the partner countries, i.e., Canada, Finland, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom?

Yes. Proposals must involve partnership with at least one foreign collaborator based in one of the partner countries listed in the solicitation (see above) and may include as many as all five of the foreign partner countries. Please refer to Section II.D.2 of the solicitation "Funding Partner-Agency Requirements and Specificities" for details on specific additional requirements from each partner country.

10. Can proposals involve partnerships with more than one partner country?

Yes. Multilateral partnerships involving more than one of the partner countries is allowed and encouraged and may include as many as all five of the partner countries.

11. Can proposals involve partnerships with countries other than Canada, Finland, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom?

Yes. However, the bulk of the Global Center proposed work must involve U.S. participants partnering with foreign participants in one or more of the partner countries listed in the solicitation and above.

12. Can an individual employed by a foreign institution be listed as PI or co-PI on the

NSF proposal cover sheet?

No. The individuals listed as PI or co-PIs on the proposal cover sheet (up to five total) must be eligible as detailed in the answer to [Question #1](#). Collaborators working in foreign institutions must be identified as foreign collaborators, not as PIs, Co-PIs or other Senior/Key Personnel.

13. Which foreign organizations are eligible to receive support from funding partner agencies?

Foreign organizations in Canada, Finland, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom may receive funding from their respective country partner agencies if the proposal they are involved in is successful. Please contact the appropriate funding partner agencies to check the eligibility of a given foreign organization to receive foreign funds.

14. Can a proposal involve one or several organizations based in the U.S. which do not request support in the framework of this call?

Yes. A Global Center can involve partnerships with organizations based in the U.S. which do not request support within the framework of this call. For instance, this could be because this organization is not eligible to receive funding from NSF and/or their participation in the project will be supported by other sources of funding.

15. Can a proposal involve one or several organizations based in partner countries which do not request support in the framework of this call?

Yes. A Global Center may involve partnerships with organizations based in partner countries which do not request support within the framework of this call. For instance, this could be because this organization is not eligible to receive funding from one of the partner agencies and/or their participation in the project will be supported by other sources of funding.

PROGRAM DETAILS

16. Can you describe what is meant by a Center?

Centers exploit opportunities in science, engineering, and technology in which the complexity of the research program or the resources needed to solve a global challenge requires the advantages of scope, scale, duration, equipment, facilities, and students.

NSF anticipates Global Centers will create and/or develop a research collaboration with one or more international partners. Center headquarters may be virtual or physical. Centers must illustrate why the proposed work needs to be an international effort.

Centers will take advantage of the expertise and experience of all partners, integrating their contributions so that the Center global effort is bigger than the sum of its parts.

Typically, NSF-funded centers undertake new efforts to tackle research challenges or expand on existing efforts, exploiting opportunities afforded by the scale and duration of awards, including opportunities for advances from cross-boundary (e.g., interdisciplinary, international, etc.) collaboration.

17. What do you mean by use-inspired?

In the framework of the Global Centers call, use-inspired research is basic research strongly motivated by the need to create knowledge that helps to address global challenges. Use-inspired research may have significant potential to support downstream technological developments or domain-specific applications. Use-inspired research directions are driven by the potential use of the results as illustrated by Pasteur's Quadrant (see Stokes, Donald E. (1997), "Pasteur's Quadrant - Basic Science and Technological Innovation," Brooking Institution Press, p.196. ISBN 9780815781776).

Indeed, producing knowledge is often not sufficient to address a global challenge. Additional efforts are usually needed to design ways in which that knowledge can become actionable towards addressing the challenge. This often requires cooperation and uptake of solutions by stakeholders beyond academia such as participants from the private sector, recipient communities, and/or local governments. Thus, multidisciplinary research that involves the social sciences and engages diverse stakeholders are likely to be needed. The Program envisions that Global Center teams will involve relevant stakeholders to help identify their research priorities so that the expected outcomes of their project will have foreseeable benefits to society.

18. What does 'co-development' of research with communities mean?

Co-development is a concept that entails involving affected communities and stakeholders in the design of the research so that the kinds of questions asked are likely to produce actionable outcomes they will find useful. This is in contrast to the data deficit model in which researchers hand over the final product to affected communities.

19. What is the expected number and amount of funding available through the program?

NSF anticipates funding between 5 and 7 awards to support the U.S. efforts for successful proposals, each up to \$5 million total for durations of 4 to 5 years. The relevant partner funding agency (or agencies) will fund equivalent efforts in their respective countries for proposals recommended for funding.

20. What areas of research are appropriate?

Proposals are accepted in any field or combination of fields of science, engineering, or education research supported by NSF, or convergent fields that cut across NSF-supported disciplines (see NSF definition of convergence⁶). Projects that focus on expanding existing operations to other countries or building capacity abroad are not appropriate for this call.

For the 2024 call, proposals must focus on a research area within the field of Bioeconomy. They must include either one or both of the two subtopics: 1) Leveraging Biodiversity Across the Tree of Life to Power the Bioeconomy; and/or 2) Biofoundries, using the Design-Build-Test-Learn process in Biology. In addition, proposals must include aspects of both the two cross-cutting themes: 1) Public engagement and co-generation of research activities to strengthen the global science and technology enterprise; and 2) Workforce Development and Education.

21. **What is meant by the term bioeconomy?**

Bioeconomy is defined as economic activity derived from biotechnology and biomanufacturing. Biotechnology, in turn, is defined as technology that applies to and/or is enabled by life science innovation or product development. Biomanufacturing is the use of biological systems to produce goods and services at a commercial scale.

Many kinds of research could benefit the bioeconomy, ranging from **basic**, fundamental research all the way to **applied** research that is ready for commercialization. Collaborative research across many disciplines and sub-disciplines is needed to contribute to the bioeconomy, including but not limited to: biology at all scales (molecules, organisms, communities, ecosystems), biomedicine, biotechnology, agriculture, food technology, genetics, microbiology, engineering, chemistry, materials science, robotics, environmental science, renewable energy, geology, mathematics, computational science, data science, economics, and social and behavioral sciences.

BUDGET

22. **Can Global Centers funds be used to support the salary or travel-related expenses of foreign participants?**

NSF funds are intended to support the U.S. side of a research and collaboration. However, for successful proposals – which must involve partnerships with foreign collaborators in Canada, Finland, Japan, Republic of Korea, and/or the United Kingdom – the foreign collaborators based in partner countries and requesting support from partner funding agencies will be supported by their respective country agencies. Refer to Section II.D.2 "Funding Partner-Agency Requirements and Specificities" of the solicitation for details on specific requirements for each funding partner agency, and to

Section V.7.e "Supplementary Documentation / Funded Foreign Collaborator, Organization, and Funding Information" for the required information relative to foreign collaborators based in Canada, Finland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and/or the United Kingdom that NSF PIs must provide as supplementary documentation.

Foreign collaborators based in countries not listed in the program solicitation should seek funding for their participation in the project from their own funding sources. However, some of their travel expenses notably to the U.S. in the framework of a Center's activities may be supported by NSF grants.

23. Can the Global Centers grant support sabbatical leave for a PI or co-PI?

The Global Centers program is not intended as a sabbatical support program. Salary support for the PI, Co-PIs, and/or senior/key personnel is typically limited to two summer months per year (including all NSF support).

24. Must we request the same level of budget for each year?

No. You are encouraged to request yearly budgets that make sense for your project. Ramping up the budget as the project develops may make sense in many cases.

25. Can we use some of the budget to support project coordination? Must a project coordinator be a co-PI?

Yes, part of the Global Centers budget may be used to support project coordination, (e.g., part-time salary for a coordinator, coordination meetings, support for an outside advisory committee) at scale commensurate with the complexity of the partnership.

No, the project coordinator does not have to be a PI or a co-PI.

26. When and where should my foreign collaborators seek funding on their side?

PIs are encouraged to be in contact with their foreign collaborators and encourage them to seek funding from their own sources in their respective countries as they develop their proposals.

For 2024 Global Centers proposals, NSF has entered into collateral funding agreements with partner funding agencies in Canada, Finland, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom, to enhance opportunities for collaborative activities between U.S. investigators and their colleagues in these countries. The funding partner agencies are NSERC and SSHRC in Canada, RCF and Business Finland in Finland, JST in Japan, MSIT and NRF in the Republic of Korea, and UKRI in the United Kingdom (see details in the solicitation).

In addition, PIs may want to discuss with the relevant country program officers in OISE

additional mechanisms for international collaborators to seek support in their own countries. OISE Program Officers are listed by region at⁷.

MERIT REVIEW PROCESS

27. How will merit review of proposals be carried out?

Proposals will be reviewed on their scientific merits through NSF's Merit Review Process. All NSF proposals will be evaluated through use of the two National Science Board merit review criteria, Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts, and the additional solicitation specific review criteria outlined in Section VI of the Global Centers solicitation. Please see the Global Centers solicitation for additional details regarding the merit review of proposal in the framework of this call.

28. How will award/decline decisions be made?

Global Centers final decisions of award and decline will be made in consultation with the relevant partner funding agency or agencies.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

1. NSF Home Page: <https://www.nsf.gov>⁸
2. Office of International Science and Engineering Section (OISE): <https://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=OISE>⁹
3. How to Prepare Your Proposal: <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/preparing>¹⁰
4. NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide¹¹

REFERENCES

¹ Global Centers (GC): <https://new.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/global-centers-gc>

² globalcenters@nsf.gov

³ NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG) 24-1: <https://new.nsf.gov/policies/pappg/24-1>

⁴ Equity and Excellence in STEM: <https://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=HRD>

⁵ Chapter I: Pre-Submission Information - Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide

(PAPPG): <https://new.nsf.gov/policies/pappg/24-1/ch-1-pre-submission#ch1E>

⁶ Learn About Convergence Research: <https://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/convergence/index.jsp>

⁷ OISE Regional and Country Contacts: <https://www.nsf.gov/od/oise/country-list.jsp>

⁸ NSF Home Page: <https://www.nsf.gov/>

⁹ Office of International Science and Engineering Section (OISE):
<https://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=OISE>

¹⁰ How to Prepare Your Proposal: <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/preparing/>

¹¹ NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide