



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
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NSF 11-075

**Frequently Asked Questions: for Engineering Research Centers (ERC):
Partnerships in Transformational Research, Education and Technology - A
Focused Call for Nanosystems ERCs (NERCs) ([NSF 11-537](#))**

Cost-Sharing

1. [Is the percentage contribution of cost-sharing to be calculated on the full budget \(including indirect costs\) or on the budget without indirect costs?](#)
2. [Is there a limit as to how much of the cost sharing can be cash and how much can be in kind?](#)

Eligibility, Center Director, and Other Personnel

3. [Does the lead PI \(Center Director\) need to be a tenured faculty at the time of submission, or at the time the proposal is awarded?](#)
4. [Can I lead an ERC as a chemist who is tenured in the Department of Chemistry with a joint appointment in the Department of Chemical Engineering?](#)
5. [Can a PI serving as the director of an existing center be named as the PI on the ERC proposal?](#)
6. [Does the Deputy Director have to meet the same eligibility requirements as the Center Director?](#)
7. [Do the three required personnel from each partner university have to be tenured or tenure track faculty members or can they be research faculty?](#)
8. [Since we have almost equal partnership with two universities, can my ERC have two Deputy Directors \(one from each university\)?](#)
9. [What happens if the Lead PI \(Center Director\) leaves or decides to transfer to another university during the review process or after the award? Can he/she take the ERC proposal/award to the new university?](#)
10. [Can the personnel listed in the LOI change between submission of the LOI and submission of the full proposal?](#)
11. [Can we change the lead university and/or other academic and innovation partners of the NERC after the full proposal has been submitted to NSF?](#)
12. [Does the person who will be serving as the Managing Director need to be named in the LOI or the proposal?](#)
13. [For the LOI submission there is a limit of the PI plus up to three additional Co-PIs. Is there a Co-PI limit for the full proposal submission?](#)
14. [Can a faculty member from a foreign partner university be a Co-PI on the ERC?](#)

Proposal Discussion Guidance

15. [Is there a "cut-off" date beyond which the NSF will allow proposers to discuss the content of their proposals with NSF staff?](#)
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University Partners/Affiliates

17. [Is there an exact limit on the number of affiliated universities? The solicitation says there can be a "few."](#)
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COST-SHARING

1. **Is the percentage contribution of cost-sharing to be calculated on the full budget (including indirect costs) or on the budget without indirect costs?**

The percentage contribution of cost sharing is to be calculated on the total project funding to be received from NSF, including indirect costs, but not on total project costs since there will be other funds coming in from industry, etc.

2. **Is there a limit as to how much of the cost sharing can be cash and how much can be in kind?**

No.

ELIGIBILITY, CENTER DIRECTOR, AND OTHER PERSONNEL

3. **Does the lead PI (Center Director) need to be a tenured faculty at the time of submission, or at the time the proposal is awarded?**

At the time of the LOI submission and throughout the review process and any subsequent award, the PI/Center Director must hold an eligible appointment as a tenured faculty member in an engineering department/school of engineering at the lead university.

4. **Can I lead an ERC as a chemist who is tenured in the Department of Chemistry with a joint appointment in the Department of Chemical Engineering?**

No. However, a chemist with substantial career experience in engineering can lead the ERC if he/she is a tenured faculty member in the Department of Chemical Engineering and that is their primary appointment.

5. **Can a PI serving as the director of an existing center be named as the PI on the ERC proposal?**

There will be questions raised by reviewers and NSF as to how well a director could effectively manage two centers, i.e., a graduated ERC or another NSF or Federally funded Center. Therefore, the proposal would have to explain how the PI would manage both centers simultaneously or that he/she would step down from managing the other center. It is unlikely that an award would be made to someone who would be leading two centers.

6. **Does the Deputy Director have to meet the same eligibility requirements as the Center Director?**

No. However, if the Lead PI/Center Director were to leave or step down, the replacement Center Director must meet the ERC Center Director eligibility requirements. That is not

meant to imply that the Deputy Director would automatically become the Director in that case. A search would have to be held and the lead university would need to appoint a new Center Director who must be approved by NSF.

7. **Do the three required personnel from each partner university have to be tenured or tenure track faculty members or can they be research faculty?**
They can be tenured, tenure track, or research faculty.
8. **Since we have almost equal partnership with two universities, can my ERC have two Deputy Directors (one from each university)?**
Yes.
9. **What happens if the Lead PI (Center Director) leaves or decides to transfer to another university during the review process or after the award? Can he/she take the ERC proposal/award to the new university?**
No. If the Lead PI (Center Director) decides to transfer to another university during the review process or after an award is made, the NERC proposal/award remains with the lead university.
10. **Can the personnel listed in the LOI change between submission of the LOI and submission of the full proposal?**
Yes.
11. **Can we change the lead university and/or other academic and innovation partners of the NERC after the full proposal has been submitted to NSF?**
No, once the full proposal has been submitted and the deadline has passed the lead university and the other academic and innovation partners of the NERC cannot change. Industry partners may be added throughout the review process.
12. **Does the person who will be serving as the Managing Director need to be named in the LOI or the proposal?**
No. The Managing Director position may be filled after award.
13. **For the LOI submission there is a limit of the PI plus up to three additional Co-PIs. Is there a Co-PI limit for the full proposal submission?**
Yes, but for the full proposal submission you are limited to the PI and up to four additional Co-PIs, for a total of five.
14. **Can a faculty member from a foreign partner university be a Co-PI on the ERC?**
No, all Co-PIs must be faculty from the ERC's domestic partner universities.

PROPOSAL DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

15. **Is there a "cut-off" date beyond which the NSF will allow proposers to discuss the content of their proposals with NSF staff?**
Proposal submission questions are allowed throughout the process, however August 15, 2011 is the last day proposers will be able to talk with NSF staff to discuss the content of their proposals.
16. **Is there a reference document of NSF-funded nanotechnology achievements?**
Innovations in Nanotechnology at the NSECs and NNIN will be published at <http://www.nsf.gov/nano> by the end of July.

UNIVERSITY PARTNERS/AFFILIATES

17. **Is there an exact limit on the number of affiliated universities? The solicitation says there can be a "few."**

No. "Few" means a manageable number. The purpose is to bring in individuals from non-partner universities at different times when their skills are needed, and not to keep them on board for the duration of the award.

18. **Is there a minimum number of PIs for a foreign institution to be considered partners?**

No. There is a minimum of three PIs specified for a domestic university to be considered a partner but this does not apply to foreign institutions.

INDUSTRIAL PARTNERS/AFFILIATES

19. **How do the industrial affiliate programs in the NERC program differ from those of previous ERCs?**

The NERC industrial affiliates or members program is the same as for all ERCs.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT

20. **How is support for the translational research partnership for my ERC obtained?**

For ERC intellectual property that member firms do not license, Gen-3 ERCs are encouraged to seek translational research partnerships between ERC faculty and small firms. The purpose of the partnership is to accelerate product development. When the small firm has obtained the license for the IP, the firm will be eligible submit a proposal to the ERC Translational Research Fund and compete for support. The proposal will include a sub award to a member of the ERC faculty to support the translational research effort. New IP generated by that project will not revert to the ERC's home university or its industrial partners.