



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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NSF 16-038

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for [NSF 16-510](#), BigData (BD) Spokes

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### 1. Is my proposal a good fit for the BD Spokes solicitation?

This solicitation extends the BigData Innovation Hubs (BD Hubs) network by building upon the capabilities and strengths of a given region to establish multi-institutional and multi-sector collaborations (i.e., across academia, industry, government, non-profits, etc.) focused on topics of specific interest to that region. Working in concert with the corresponding regional BD Hub, a BD Spoke would pursue a particular topic that requires Big Data approaches and solutions.

This solicitation is not meant to fund proposals where fundamental research is the primary activity. If research is a substantial portion of the proposed activities, please consult with the cognizant NSF program officer of this solicitation. For example, NSF's [Critical Techniques, Technologies, and Methodologies for Advancing Foundations and Applications of Big Data Science & Engineering \(BIGDATA\)](#) solicitation may be more relevant for those seeking basic research funding in Foundations and Innovative Applications related to Big Data. Similarly, basic privacy research proposals would be more suited to NSF's [Secure and Trustworthy Cyberspace \(SaTC\)](#) program.

Please carefully read [NSF 16-510](#) to see if your proposal would be a good fit.

### 2. How do I submit a proposal to this program?

You may use either Grants.gov or FastLane.

### 3. Can I serve as PI or co-PI on more than one proposal?

An individual may only serve as the PI or co-PI on at most one proposal. However, individuals may serve as Senior Personnel in more than one proposal.

### 4. Can my institution submit more than one proposal?

There is no limit on the number of proposals from a given institution.

### 5. Do I need a letter of collaboration from an existing BD Hub to apply?

Yes, all proposals (including planning grants) require a letter of collaboration from a BD Hub.

### 6. Do I need to contact a BD Hub before submitting a Letter of Intent?

Yes, your Letter of Intent must include a statement addressing whether you have discussed your proposal idea with a BD Hub and received preliminary approval from the BD Hub's executive director.

### 7. How soon do I need to contact a BD Hub?

You are encouraged to begin engaging with a BD Hub as soon as possible. The BD Hubs have independent procedures and deadlines for reviewing BD Spokes proposals (including planning proposals). Some BD Hubs are also developing workshops to support the development of BD Spokes in their region. Information about the activities being carried out by each respective BD Hub and how collaboration on BD Spokes proposals are being managed can be found below:

- **MIDWEST:** <http://midwestbigdatahub.org/funding/>
- **NORTHEAST:** <http://northeastbdhub.dsi.columbia.edu/spokeSolicitation.html>
- **SOUTH:** <http://www.southbdhub.org/spokes.html>
- **WEST:** <http://eepurl.com/bH3TrD>

**8. If BD Spokes projects based on similar themes are proposed for more than one BD Hub, could they all be funded?**

Because each BD Spoke must be mission-driven, it is highly unlikely that there will be an exact overlap among multiple BD Spokes proposals. However, if there is strong overlap between a certain pair of projects, the merit review process will result in funding recommendations to NSF.

**9. I have an idea for a BD Spoke that is not listed in the areas of emphasis. Can I still submit a proposal with such an idea?**

Yes, the areas of emphasis listed in the solicitation are not meant to preclude any regional challenges or opportunities of interest.

**10. Can I only collaborate with the BD Hub covering my region?**

Proposers are encouraged to begin by reaching out to the BD Hub serving their respective regions. However, if a proposer's expertise, interest, and project scope align strongly with the regional priorities of another BD Hub, the proposer may collaborate with that BD Hub. *Each project must be coordinated by a single BD Hub.*

**11. My collaboration spans partners in several regions. To which region should I submit my proposal?**

Each project must be coordinated by a single BD Hub. A proposer is therefore encouraged to seek out the BD Hub whose regional stakeholders best align with the proposer's mission.

**12. My collaboration has more than five PIs and co-PIs, but FastLane only gives me the option to specify five. Can we have more than five PIs and co-PIs?**

Proposals are restricted to five PIs and co-PIs. Proposers are recommended to add further staff to the list of Senior Personnel. Collaborative proposals submitted as separate submission from multiple organizations may include up to five PIs and co-PIs per individual proposal within the collaborative group.

**13. May I include international collaborators in my proposal?**

Yes, international collaborations are encouraged across all themes.

**14. Should we expect the BD Hub to provide financial support to our proposed project? Conversely, should we expect our proposed project to provide financial support to the BD Hub?**

Each BD Hub is funded to coordinate region-wide activities. The proposer and BD Hub may decide upon financial support arrangements to facilitate such coordination.

**15. Do the BD Hubs and BD Spokes solicitations constitute a long-term commitment by NSF?**

The BD Spokes solicitation is the second of a planned multi-phase process meant to develop a national Big Data innovation ecosystem. The first phase, the original BD Hubs solicitation ([http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=505185](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505185)), established the governance structure for each BD Hub's consortium of members, and enabled the BD Hubs to begin developing approaches to ensure cross-hub collaboration and sustainability over the long term. This second phase, the BD Spokes solicitation, focuses on building out various sectors of particular interest to each BD Hub (in the form of BD Spokes projects) so as to advance sector innovation in the corresponding region. Future phases will focus on further connecting the BD Hubs and their regional sectors into a national BigData innovation ecosystem, subject to the availability of funds.

**16. What is the difference between a planning grant and a full BD Spoke proposal?**

Planning grants are meant to assist with the planning of future BD Spokes proposals. They may generate proofs-of-concept, bring together stakeholders (e.g., via workshops, events, etc.), and/or build capacity for future BD Spokes activities. Also, a planning grant does not necessarily require the preparation of a proposal to a future BD Spokes solicitation; efforts of a planning grant may lead to proposals appropriate for other programs within NSF, federal agencies, or elsewhere.

**17. What can this program fund?**

BD Spokes funding from this solicitation is not intended to primarily support research activities. Rather, the goal of the program is to enhance and amplify collaborative efforts focused on achieving specific mission-based goals. For example, BD Spokes funding could support staff efforts in maintenance and/or improvement of existing data assets; integration of siloed datasets; analytics using existing high-value data assets, or of datasets made available via the efforts of a given BD Spoke; curation efforts; and workshops, travel, and other activities to support the collaborative and community-building nature of the BD Spokes. For further clarification on the scope of BD Spokes activities, please contact the cognizant program officer listed in the solicitation.

**18. Can my proposed project include funding for long-term data repositories?**

This solicitation is meant to fund pilots and projects over a three-year timescale. Any discussion within a proposal about developing a long-term data repository would need to be part of its longer-term sustainability goals.