



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
4201 WILSON BOULEVARD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230

NSF 16-100

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for NSF 16-041, Recompensation of the Management and Operation of the Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI) Program

1. Will the overall annual budget number remain constant or grow at the same rate as inflation growth in the OCE budget? Are proposed budgets to be for the first 5 years? If so, shall the responder prepare budgets for a second 5-year period?
2. What are the assumptions regarding the functionality of CI at the time of the Request for Proposals (RFP)? Will the bidders have the opportunity to augment, change or replace functionality of the CI to meet requirements?
3. We assume that "centralized" refers to the logical architecture rather than the physical architecture, and that the physical architecture will be free to make use of the most cost effective solutions available. This may include distributed platforms and services such as those brokered through relationships with commercial cloud vendors.
4. What level of flexibility, reorganization, and redistribution of functionality will be allowed with a newly proposed CI structure?
5. How will the transition in April 2017 for infrastructure, cruises and cruise planning, closeouts, carry-forwards etc. be orchestrated and what is the expected time frame for this?
6. When will Ocean Leadership budgets, tasks and schedule be made available to the bidders?
7. If, like any maritime project, there are expected operating infrastructure losses (e.g. failed gliders, lost moorings, broken docking stations), how will replacement budget decisions be made?
8. In the event of a natural disaster or other Force Majeure type of event, will contingency funds be available to respond to the event and repair infrastructure if necessary? At what level will the response and repairs be funded (e.g. 100% funded, 80%, etc.)? Who determines whether something is a natural disaster or Force Majeure event?
9. What will the requirements be for data Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) at a programmatic level?
10. What are the requirements of Ocean Leadership and the Marine Implementing Organizations to respond to bidders' questions during the RFP duration? How will potential conflicts of interest be handled?
11. Who determines responsibility of and reporting structure to advisory committees anticipated to be in place for the next phase of the program? Will the costs associated with these committees be included within the overall budget or covered by other resources?
12. Will Education and Public Engagement be included in the RFP?
13. Who will determine plans for the Pioneer array in the next 5 years?
14. If infrastructure de-scoping is proposed, what becomes of the de-scoped infrastructure and how will decisions regarding its future use be made?
15. Should the proposal be based on the use of UNOLS-NSF assets?
16. Should ship cost estimates be based on transit time from the closest port of departure to the work area?

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1. Will the overall annual budget number remain constant or grow at the same rate as inflation

growth in the OCE budget? Are proposed budgets to be for the first 5 years? If so, shall the responder prepare budgets for a second 5-year period?

NSF anticipates an award for an initial duration of five years with the possibility of renewal for a second five year period, contingent on the successful outcome of a comprehensive external review of Awardee performance to be held prior to completion of the initial period. The proposal budget should be for the initial five year period of the prospective award. The Solicitation will require that proposal budgets be submitted in accordance with Section 4.2 of the draft 2016 NSF Large Facilities Manual(http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/lfo/lfo_documents.jsp) or final revision effective in early 2017. The proposal should provide all staffing and budgeting information needed to address how the organization would fulfill the Awardee responsibilities included in the solicitation. The first year budget should be based on total funding of no more than \$44,000,000, excluding transition period costs, if any. Each subsequent year the proposal may request up to that amount but should not escalate by any percentage above that amount. Any inflationary increases should be absorbed by the increased effectiveness of the OOI management.

- 2. What are the assumptions regarding the functionality of CI at the time of the Request for Proposals (RFP)? Will the bidders have the opportunity to augment, change or replace functionality of the CI to meet requirements?**

As indicated in the Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), "The Awardee is expected to continue to provide the OOI users a consistent user interface and data products experience." Cyberinfrastructure (CI) functionality documentation will be available to interested proposers at the time of Solicitation issue and will be updated as enhancements, if any, are introduced. Further information on opportunities by bidders to propose enhancements to the existing CI will be provided in the Solicitation.

- 3. We assume that "centralized" refers to the logical architecture rather than the physical architecture, and that the physical architecture will be free to make use of the most cost effective solutions available. This may include distributed platforms and services such as those brokered through relationships with commercial cloud vendors.**

Yes, subject to the expectation as indicated in the DCL that "the Awardee is expected to continue to provide the OOI users a consistent user interface and data products experience."

- 4. What level of flexibility, reorganization, and redistribution of functionality will be allowed with a newly proposed CI structure?**

As stated above and in the DCL, "The Awardee is expected to continue to provide the OOI users a consistent user interface and data products experience." Any enhancements to the existing CI must take this into account along with budgetary constraints. The first year budget should be based on total funding of no more than \$44,000,000. The available budget is expected to remain flat for the foreseeable future, with inflationary increases absorbed as stated previously.

- 5. How will the transition in April 2017 for infrastructure, cruises and cruise planning, closeouts, carry-forwards etc. be orchestrated and what is the expected time frame for this?**

The Solicitation will indicate that proposing organizations, other than the incumbent, may be funded for an additional transition period of approximately 6 months preceding the transfer of operating authority. If a new Awardee is selected to manage, operate, and maintain the OOI, the incumbent will cooperate with the successor to the extent necessary to facilitate uninterrupted support for OOI during the transition period, and will provide transfer of legal rights to relevant property and equipment. NSF will support appropriate transition costs incurred by the successor Awardee if different from the current Awardee. Proposer organizations other than the incumbent will be required to submit their detailed transition plan and budget for the transition period following the

new award.

6. When will Ocean Leadership budgets, tasks and schedule be made available to the bidders?

Relevant, releasable content within the most current Annual Work Plan for OOI operations will be made available as reference information upon issue of the Solicitation during 2016.

7. If, like any maritime project, there are expected operating infrastructure losses (e.g. failed gliders, lost moorings, broken docking stations), how will replacement budget decisions be made?

Any replacement of infrastructure losses must fit within the program budget. We anticipate that the Program Description section included in the Solicitation will require proposers to present a preliminary management plan. The plan will address internal program governance issues, including but not limited to decision-making processes. Budget decision-making will be based on input from the Awardee and budgetary constraints. Decisions will be further informed by a separately funded, independent science advisory structure that will provide advice to NSF concerning replacement infrastructure priorities.

8. In the event of a natural disaster or other Force Majeure type of event, will contingency funds be available to respond to the event and repair infrastructure if necessary? At what level will the response and repairs be funded (e.g. 100% funded, 80%, etc.)? Who determines whether something is a natural disaster or Force Majeure event?

Contingency funding for repairs resulting from a Force Majeure event or natural disaster may be included within the annual OOI Management & Operations budget, currently projected at \$44M per year. If budget contingency is proposed it will need to be in compliance with 2 CFR Para 200.433 (Uniform Guidance) and Section 4.2.6 of the draft 2016 NSF Large Facilities Manual (https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/lfo/lfo_documents.jsp) or final revision effective in early 2017. Decisions and impacts concerning the damaged infrastructure will need to be informed accordingly. We anticipate that such large and hopefully rare situations will be addressed by the incumbent, the external advisory structure, and NSF in accordance with procedures that will be formalized early in the Cooperative Agreement (CA) performance period.

9. What will the requirements be for data Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) at a programmatic level?

Current Data QA/QC Protocols and Procedures as described under the OOI Data tab of the OOI website should serve as a baseline for proposal purposes, which may be refined and updated as needed under the new CA.

10. What are the requirements of Ocean Leadership and the Marine Implementing Organizations to respond to bidders' questions during the RFP duration? How will potential conflicts of interest be handled?

All responses to bidder's questions will be managed and distributed by NSF. The current Awardee and Marine Implementing Organizations may be called upon to provide information to NSF that will assist in providing responses to bidder's questions, and efforts will be made to avoid transmittal of business and/or competition sensitive information. NSF will resolve any conflicts of interest.

11. Who determines responsibility of and reporting structure to advisory committees anticipated to be in place for the next phase of the program? Will the costs associated with these committees be included within the overall budget or covered by other resources?

Costs for proposer's internal program management structure and/or internal advisory committees should be included in the proposed budget. NSF will also be developing and separately supporting an external advisory structure. We anticipate the Solicitation will ask for a description of how the proposer will engage with this external structure.

12. Will Education and Public Engagement be included in the RFP?

No. Only Science and User Community Engagement will be included as a Statement of Work task. NSF's Ocean Sciences (OCE) will entertain and consider OOI-related Education and Public Engagement using separate funding mechanisms, subject to availability.

13. Who will determine plans for the Pioneer array in the next 5 years?

In general, community engagement led by NSF and the external advisory structure, in close cooperation with the successful Awardee, will determine future plans for the Pioneer Array, and this will be considered during the initial performance period. The successful Awardee will be encouraged to make recommendations concerning the Pioneer Array consistent with (1) Science needs, (2) Operator, User and Community engagement and (3) the independent input of the external advisory structure.

14. If infrastructure de-scoping is proposed, what becomes of the de-scoped infrastructure and how will decisions regarding its future use be made?

Proposals should include a description of the plan for refurbishing "active" infrastructure to be retrieved and redeployed and a plan for warehousing/storing/reusing inactive infrastructure, if any, to be de-scoped. Final decisions on future use of de-scoped infrastructure will be made in consultation with and subject to approval by NSF.

15. Should the proposal be based on the use of UNOLS-NSF assets?

For proposal purposes, it should be assumed that UNOLS (University-National Oceanographic Laboratory System) vessels will be used to service the OOI marine components.

16. Should ship cost estimates be based on transit time from the closest port of departure to the work area?

No, longer transit times may be necessary. OOI Program past experience regarding ship usage data will be provided as a reference document to assist in developing ship cost estimates. At a minimum, transit time from the home port of the likely service vessel, e.g., RVIB NATHANIEL B PALMER (Research Vessel Ice Breaker) for the Southern Ocean and Argentine Basin Global Arrays, should be included in the process.