



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 19-082

Dear Colleague Letter: MPS/DMS-EPSRC Lead Agency Opportunity in Mathematical Sciences

August 14, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

The US National Science Foundation (NSF) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) have signed a Memorandum 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 allows for a lead agency opportunity whereby a single international collaborative proposal may be submitted to either NSF or UKRI.

The NSF Division of Mathematical Sciences of the Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS/DMS) and the UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) are pleased to announce topical areas associated with the lead agency opportunity. The lead agency opportunity allows for reciprocal acceptance of merit review through unsolicited mechanisms and its goal is to help facilitate collaboration and reduce some of the current barriers to working internationally.

1. SCOPE OF THE ACTIVITY

- i. Proposals will be accepted for collaborative research in areas at the intersection of the MPS/DMS and EPSRC missions. Proposers will be expected to review the relevant [NSF-MPS/DMS Program Descriptions](#) and the [EPSRC website](#) for information on which areas of research are eligible for support through this collaboration.
- ii. NSF-MPS/DMS and EPSRC agree in principle to allow joint UK-US proposals to be submitted to and merit reviewed by whichever agency's investigators have the largest proportion of the research. Both agencies reserve the right to decide which agency will act as lead when inviting a formal proposal.
- iii. This collaboration covers a pilot phase from January 2020, with a review point after three years (January 2023). This will allow for the pilot to extend over a complete MPS/DMS funding round.

- iv. This collaboration principally covers unsolicited (NSF) or standard (EPSRC) proposals, with managed/solicited calls included on a case-by-case basis by prior agreement of MPS/DMS and EPSRC.
- v. Each agency has its own funding parameters and principles that will be followed when reviewing proposals. Proposals are expected to adhere to typical proposal sizes and durations for the DMS and EPSRC Themes from which funding is sought.
- vi. Proposers are advised that all documents submitted to NSF or EPSRC as the lead agency may be shared by email or other electronic means to the non-lead agency.
- vii. At all stages, the lead agency will seek to keep the non-lead agency informed at a suitable level.

2. SUBMISSION PROCESS

A. Prior to formal proposal submission

- i. Before submitting a proposal, investigators should identify a prospective lead agency, either NSF or EPSRC, based on where the largest proportion of their research lies.
- ii. At least two months in advance of the date the proposers expect to submit a formal proposal, an expression of interest/white paper must be submitted to their prospective lead agency. If this communication does not take place, the formally submitted proposal will be returned without review. For the period September 1-December 31, 2019, this stage may be waived. However, applicants are strongly advised to contact the prospective lead agency prior to application. The expression of interest/white paper must contain the following information:
 - a. An indication of the target program in both NSF-MPS/DMS and EPSRC for the proposed topic. Please note this is not the only program that will consider the topic, but it allows for faster review of the topic.
 - b. A brief description of the proposed research - a breakdown of the UK/US components.
 - c. The names and affiliations of all senior personnel.
 - d. Separate bottom-line estimates of total funding (including indirect costs) to be requested from NSF and EPSRC - a detailed budget is not required at this stage.
- iii. If NSF is the lead agency, proposers should email the white paper to an alias account (DMS-EPSRC@nsf.gov) and copy the cognizant program director. The document submitted should not exceed 5000 characters, including spaces.
- iv. If EPSRC is the lead agency, proposers must submit the expression of interest using the Smart Survey found at <https://epsrc.ukri.org/about/partner/international/agreements/nsf/>.
- v. The lead agency will share all expressions of interest/white papers received with the non-lead agency for both agencies to check eligibility, i.e., whether the proposed research is within both agencies' missions, whether the proposing organizations meet

agency eligibility requirements, and whether the proposed research budgets are appropriate for the respective agencies. Upon confirmation from both agencies that the collaborative research proposal is appropriate for the MPS/DMS-EPSRC Lead Agency Opportunity, the agencies will decide which agency will act as lead. The lead agency will then contact the investigators to inform them that they may submit a full research proposal to the lead agency.

B. Proposal format, budget information and formal submission

i. If NSF is the lead agency:

- a. Proposers must comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in [NSF's Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\)](#) and submit the proposal to a program within MPS/DMS through the NSF FastLane, Research.gov or Grants.gov.
- b. Proposers must comply with any applicable program submission deadlines/target dates.
- c. The proposal should indicate it is to be considered under this Lead Agency Opportunity by prefacing the title with "DMS-EPSRC".
- d. The proposal should only indicate the requested US funds on the NSF Budget Form. A detailed breakdown of funding requested from EPSRC, using the EPSRC Je-S form, should be added to the proposal as a Supplementary Document. This document will be shared with EPSRC to verify eligibility of costs requested. The Budget Justification section of the proposal should address the full project budget (that is, both the US and UK funding items).
- e. The UK investigators should be added to the proposal as "non-funded senior personnel." This will allow both a "Biographical Sketch" and a "Collaborators and Other Affiliations" section to be filled out for the UK investigators. A "Current and Pending Support" and a "Results of Prior Research" section is not required for the UK investigators (none or \$0 can be filled in for "Current and Pending Support").

ii. If EPSRC is the lead agency:

- a. Proposers must comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in EPSRC's Research Funding Guide and proposals should be submitted via the Je-S system (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>) through EPSRC standard mode via the 'NSF-EPSRC: EPSRC-Led Peer Review' call.
- b. The proposal should indicate it is to be considered under this Lead Agency Opportunity-Pilot by prefacing the title with "DMS-EPSRC".
- c. The proposal should only request the UK funds on the Je-S form. The US collaborating research organizations should be included as project partners on the Je-S form, and the funding totals by research organization should be included as project partner contributions. The Justification of Resources attachment should include a clear summary and justification of the US costs sought from NSF as well

as the funding sought from EPSRC. In addition, a detailed breakdown of funding requested from NSF should be submitted to EPSRC as an Other Attachment. The latter document will be shared with NSF to verify eligibility of costs requested.

- iii. Proposals that request duplicative funding from NSF and EPSRC will be returned without review.
- iv. An organizational statement in support of the joint submission must be provided by each non-lead country partner organization in the proposal submission. This statement should be in the form of a signed letter from an authorized organizational representative including the following text: "I confirm on behalf of [insert name or organization] that the US-UK Collaborative proposal between [insert name of lead agency PI and organization] and [insert non-lead agency PI and organization] is endorsed and has been submitted by [name of research office]." For NSF, this letter must be included in the Supplementary Documents; for EPSRC, the letter should be provided as a cover letter to the proposal.

3. MERIT/PEER REVIEW

- i. MPS/DMS-EPSRC collaborative proposals will be reviewed alongside all other unsolicited (NSF) or standard (EPSRC) proposals received in the same funding round or call and will not undergo a separate or special review process.
- ii. Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the lead agency's review criteria. While not identical, NSF and EPSRC ask reviewers to evaluate research on both its scientific or intellectual merit, its broader or societal impacts, and additional review criteria when applicable.
- iii. While the lead agency will bear ultimate responsibility for obtaining written reviews, the non-lead agency will be responsible for providing names of qualified reviewers to the lead agency.
- iv. Both agencies hold a final prioritization meeting for some of their programs. Where appropriate NSF may propose a suitable panel member to attend a final prioritization meeting, where such is held. Such panel members will participate in the panel meeting according to EPSRC standard procedures.
- v. The conflict of interest and confidentiality policies of the lead agency will apply. The lead agency will be responsible for obtaining any necessary conflict of interest documentation and for resolving any conflicts in accordance with its standard rules and procedures.
- vi. The lead agency will share reviews with the non-lead agency in accordance with the lead agency's confidentiality policies and regulations. EPSRC will share the full content of reviews, PI responses and, where applicable, a panel summary. NSF will share unattributed reviews, PI responses and, where applicable, panel summaries.

4. FUNDING DECISIONS

- i. The lead agency and the non-lead agency will use their standard internal review procedures to make their funding decision. The non-lead agency's funding decision will be informed by the lead agency's panel recommendation and funding decision.
- ii. NSF and EPSRC will confirm a final recommendation for funding with each other. Each agency reserves the right to fund its own country's investigators, regardless of the other lead agency's decision to fund or not.
- iii. NSF and EPSRC reserve the right to negotiate final budgets with the proposing organization(s) prior to award.
- iv. 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 unattributed reviewers' comments and, where applicable, a panel summary.
- v. Once a proposer has been notified of a pending award, the non-lead investigator(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. Where EPSRC is the non-lead agency a Je-S form and mandatory attachments must be submitted through EPSRC standard mode at this stage. Guidance will be provided to successful applicants.
- vi. 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.
- vii. Should a proposal be declined for funding, proposers should refer to each agency's individual resubmission policies.

5. AWARD MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

- i. Awardees must comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the agencies from which they receive funding.
- ii. Awardees will be required to acknowledge both NSF and the relevant UK Research Councils in any reports or publications arising from the grant.
- iii. Requests for extensions will be considered by the participating agency(s) using standard procedures. Requests for changes to awards will be discussed with other involved funding agencies before a mutual decision is reached.
- iv. All NSF and EPSRC requirements for data storage/management plans are applicable to investigators funded by their respective agencies.
- v. In accordance with NSF and EPSRC standard procedures, awards are announced publicly.
- vi. For projects involving human subjects/participants or vertebrate animals, proposers should consult both EPSRC and NSF policies. When invited, guidance will be provided on this.

CONTACTS

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