NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 20-010

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for NSF 19-587, Advanced Computing Systems & Services

The following set of FAQs relate to NSF 19-587, *Advanced Computing Systems and Services: Adapting to the Rapid Evolution of Science and Engineering Research*. They are not intended to be a modification of the program solicitation.

Before preparing a proposal for this solicitation, please read NSF 19-587 and refer to the general information about NSF proposal submission including the NSF *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)* .

1. The solicitation states, "User support and operating costs are expected to be up to 20% of the initial acquisition cost per year…" Does each year of operating expenses constitute 20% of the yearly acquisition cost or 20% of the total acquisition cost?

2. Should anticipated user support and operating costs be incorporated into the budget section of the proposal?

3. Are U.S. Department of Energy Laboratories or other Federally Funded Research & Development Centers (FFRDCs) eligible for funding under this solicitation?

4. The "Other Budgetary Limitations" subsection of the Budgetary Information section states, "Acquisition and deployment of the full system should be finished before the end of September 2020." Does my proposal need to conform to that deadline given the new proposal deadline?

5. What is the anticipated award date for awards under this solicitation? What is the latest date a proposal may schedule to have a system fully deployed and operational?

6. Are staged system acquisitions allowable, in which part of the functionality is put in place within the first year, and future functionality is planned for in later dates?

7. Are public-private partnerships allowable in proposals to this solicitation?

1. **The solicitation states, "User support and operating costs are expected to be up to 20% of the initial acquisition cost per year…" Does each year of operating expenses constitute 20% of the yearly acquisition cost or 20% of the total acquisition cost?**

   Within the solicitation text, the phrase "20% of the acquisition cost per year..." appears under the Award Information and Program Description sections, and the phrase "20% of the initial acquisition costs per year..." appears in the Budgetary Information section. The stated "acquisition cost" or "initial acquisition costs" are defined as the total value of acquisition award, irrespective of how a proposer may break it down. For example, a Category II system with a budgeted total acquisition cost of $5M could request up to $1M (20%) in user support and operating costs per year. The solicitation offers that "an additional 5% may be requested along with a very strong justification for the request," so in this example, the Category II system could request up to $1.2M (25%) per year with very strong justification for the request.

2. **Should anticipated user support and operating costs be incorporated into the budget section of the proposal?**

   No. NSF 19-587 supports funding for the acquisition of advanced computing systems and services. As noted in the solicitation, user support and operating costs will be considered and provided as a second action to an awarded cooperative agreement. At this point, such costs should be listed in the required supplementary documentation, namely the Detailed Projected Operating Costs supplementary document.

3. **Are U.S. Department of Energy Laboratories or other Federally Funded Research & Development Centers (FFRDCs) eligible for funding under this solicitation?**

   As specified in the solicitation, NSF recognizes that FFRDCs may be positioned to make unique contributions to the advanced computing systems and services ecosystem that is important to academic researchers. Hence, for the purposes of this solicitation, NSF will consider acquiring and deploying advanced computing systems and services at FFRDCs. However, proposing organizations must assure that open access to the deployed advanced computing systems and services will be provided to researchers from the broad range of science and engineering (S&E) fields supported by NSF. Please contact the cognizant program directors for NSF 19-587 before preparing a proposal for such a submission.

4. **The "Other Budgetary Limitations" subsection of the Budgetary Information section states, "Acquisition and deployment of the full system should be finished before the end of September 2020." Does my proposal need to conform to that deadline given the new proposal deadline?**

The inclusion of this reference to "September 2020" in NSF 19-587 is a typographical error that included guidance contained in the earlier version of this solicitation (NSF 19-534). The current solicitation (NSF 19-587) has been updated to include the appropriate date. NSF requires the acquisition and deployment of the proposed system to be completed within 12 months of time of award (see Q5 below for additional details).

5. **What is the anticipated award date for awards under this solicitation? What is the latest date a proposal may schedule to have a system fully deployed and operational?**

   Awards are expected to be made within the Federal Government Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, subject to availability of funds and quality of proposals received. FY 2020 extends from Oct. 1, 2019, through Sept. 30, 2020. Hence, the latest a system can be scheduled to be fully deployed and operational will be approximately Sept. 30, 2021.

6. **Are staged system acquisitions allowable, in which part of the functionality is put in place within the first year, and future functionality is planned for in later dates?**

   NSF expects systems proposed to this solicitation to be fully deployed and ready for an acceptance review milestone approximately 12 months after award. The acceptance review criteria for both Category I and Category II systems will include a comprehensive set of system-level performance and reliability metrics that will be used by NSF for acceptance of the resource or service. The details of what metrics will be covered in the review will be developed in consultation with NSF should an award be made. Proposers are welcome that think broadly to support the full range of computational- and data-intensive research across all of S&E, providing that they take note of the acceptance review milestone criteria.

7. **Are public-private partnerships allowable in proposals to this solicitation?**

   Public-private partnerships are allowed provided that all requirements specified in the NSF PAPPG and the NSF 19-587 solicitation are met. Specifically, proposers in this case should consider the institutional/principal investigator eligibility criteria in this solicitation, the prohibition on voluntary committed cost-sharing (PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g(xii)), and the requirements concerning unfunded collaborators (PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.d(iv)).