

## NE Mission Overview Q&A Section

Q: Concerning accident tolerants, does NE have any activity related to reactors in war zones? For example, protecting against ballistic impact.

A: No we do not. We are working on enhancing the fuel capability under severe accidents, such as what happened in Fukushima. We do not have any activities at the moment. DOD is working on it and is a part of DARPA.

Q: It was mentioned that a consent-based consortia was already formed. For the FOA, is it still possible to get engaged in this topic of R&D if we are not a part of that consortia?

A: Even though the consortia is already formed, there are other vehicles for engagement and for going forth in areas of interest. You are encouraged to reach out the team to see what's available.

Q: Is it possible to contact the program managers for the fit of a topic before the pre-application and what is the suggested timeline?

A: The ability to talk with program managers, there will be an open opportunity May 28-30 for a program manager Q&A session. Program managers and other individuals at DOE are not allowed to review pre-applications or other application ideas before the deadline. That review will happen during the formal review process.

Q: Is there a limit on number of collaborators for R&D without the need to use a nuclear facility?

A: There are no limits on the number of collaborators or co-PIs. That is dictated by the PI on what resources are needed to complete the project.

Q: Are there any published statistics for awardees of CINR funds, maybe by career level tenure research tracks R1R2 universities?

A: We present to nuclear engineering department heads some of those statistic breakdowns and summary of awards and where they go to various levels. It is not published, so to speak.

Q: Is research regarding structural materials concrete for nuclear facilities covered by cladding materials or other programs?

A: The structural material will be a separate program which is managed by Sue Lesica in the material program. One does not need to worry about which part it would fall under. If you provide the best idea and brightest thought, we will then decide internally how to bin them. There are general topic areas and you should look for which of those best represents the overarching concept.

Q: Is there a way for the PIs to find the numerical rating and rank of their proposals?

A: No. Comments are provided back to a principal investigator on both their pre-applications and full applications. Ratings are not something that is released to the PI or to anybody else.

Q: What is the due date for proposals?

A: As long as the timeframe goes as planned, the due date will be late June.

## **CINR Overview Q&A Section**

Q: Are there limits on the funding? What would be the minimum and maximum cap? How does the time period change if the requested award is under \$1M?

A: There is no floor. There is a \$1M cap on topic areas 1-11, \$500,000 on topic area 12, and up to \$3M for IRPs. NSUF cost is defined by NSUF. The time period in relation to the requested amount is at the discretion of the PI. It should be driven by the scope being completed.

Q: Is it known how many projects will be funded under each topic area?

A: That is unknown. We don't have our FY 2025 budget. There is a commitment from DOE that if it puts out a topic area and there are quality applications, the intention is to provide an award in each area. Outside of that, there is too much uncertainty to provide a specific answer.

Q: For fiscal year 2024, the period of performance was 3 years and 2 months. Is this changing back to 3 years in FY 2025?

A: Yes, it will be changing back to 3 years.

Q: Can I apply for REU only, not as a supplement?

A: REUs can only be provided as a supplement

Q: Can we budget MSI faculty as part of the REU?

A: REU funds are intended for undergraduate research experiences only. The MSI faculty type activities would likely come out of the traditional R&D portion of the budget.

Q: Stipend only or can travel be a part of REU?

A: There are some considerations for a summer program that is outside the student stipend. The baseline we have used to inspire our own REU program is NSF's REU program. We look at those costs similarly to how NSF does. Student support costs could include food, housing, and travel support. Those are all considered as part of the stipend.

Q: Does the 20% limit on how much of the budget can go to a non-university partner include the REU supplement?

A: No, it is a supplement after the overall project cost has been considered.

Q: If an REU is not decided to be funded, will the entire proposal be unfunded?

A: They are integrated together. There is a stipulation of the FOA that DOE can choose to fund any portion of the application as they see fit. If the project has merit and going forward for negotiation, whether it has the REU supplement or not, it won't really matter.

Q: Between submission of pre-application and invitation for full application, if a PI or co-PI moves to a different institution, can this person still receive funding at the new institution if selected?

A: We would entertain that type of situation. There are rules that govern those types of changes on how it would take place. Please reference the 4.2.8 section of the Financial Assistance guide because it outlines the rules. If both institutions are on board with the move then that could be entertained by DOE. You do need prior approval from the DOE contracting officer once the application has started the submission process.

Q: When will the new PI move policy become effective?

A: It is effective immediately.

Q: Does the font have to be Times New Roman or are other fonts of the same size allowed?

A: The guidance is Times New Roman, 11-point font. The purpose and idea of that requirement is to provide the exact same space for all applicants. If it's equivalent, there may not be a major issue, but it is slightly smaller, it will be flagged as noncompliant.

Q: Is it possible to create a print entire proposal option that would generate a single PDF with all the documents?

A: It would be complicated on a software development side. We continually try to update the system and will provide that feedback to the software developing team.

Q: If NE office determines other topic areas are more suitable for a proposal what will the applicant be expecting? An email from the NE office or will it just be a suggestion?

A: If there is a change from one topic area to another, that is going to be an interaction between the Integration Office to let you know it was a recommendation provided by a program manager and see if you approve of the change.

Q: Do active projects refer to being primary PI or being a co-PI, does that also count?

A: It is lead PI, not the co-PI that those eligibility restrictions apply to. The 6 and 3 application requirement applies to every university professor regardless of PI, co-PI, or collaborator status. The IRP, no cost extension or active project type restrictions apply to the lead PI only.

Q: Does the no cost extension requirement apply to co-PIs or just the lead PI?

A: It would be the lead PI only

Q: The data isn't published for how many uninvited proposals are funded. Is it possible to know that number?

A: We would have to check with the contracting office on what kind of data can be provided. It is a small number when you think in the less than 5% range.

Q: How will the NEUP office ensure reviewers are being fair and balanced and not evaluating on criteria that isn't stated? Will reviewers that are found to do this be removed from the reviewer pool?

A: We have a review and evaluation plan that we follow on a very strict basis. The key components are provided in the FOA. We do a very extensive review over the course of our review panels to make sure no individual is solely contributing to tanking or elevating a proposal in a way that puts it in consideration or not in consideration. Not only do we have independent review input and then have full review panels for each and every one of the topic areas, both at the pre-application and full application stage. We also have a process through that panel that identifies any outlying evaluations and we specifically talk about those and take action as appropriate. The team ensures peer reviewers selected are enough to make an overall evaluation of the project and can consider any bias, conflict of interest, and any input that isn't well aligned with the overall consensus of the reviewers.

Q: For IRP 3, should the leading university be one of an MSI or would just including an MSI as a collaborator be eligible?

A: The lead institution must be an MSI and 80% of the overall federal budget has to go to an MSI institution. The idea is to build research capabilities at MSIs directly.

Q: Could you provide an example of a PI would bring in HPC computation model capabilities involving a national laboratory? Can any of the national lab participation be considered as cost sharing?

A: As a part of the NSUF, there is the ability to have DOE HPC resources provided. NSUF can add more details. If the national lab or other facility partner is providing "in-kind" cost share, that is an option for the application. It does not count as part of the 20% overall federal budget request.

Q: If a faculty member has one co-PI award, are they ineligible for submitting more than two pre-applications?

A: Co-PIs typically do not fall under those eligibility restrictions. Just the 6 and 3 restriction.

Q: If you are a PI on one proposal and a co-PI on another proposal, does this reduce your chance of having either of the proposals awarded?

A: No, evaluations for these applications are based on technical merit review.

Q: With the new NCE does that mean current projects that end this year, 9/30/24, will you accept NCE requests beyond the 4/15 cut-off date listed on the NEUP website?

A: We will accept no cost extensions with the guidance provided today. Get those requests in as soon as you know you need them, but no less than 90 days before the project end date.

Q: Will NE consider the option that the applicant can submit who should not be reviewers of their proposal to avoid biased comments from competitors or conflicts of interest?

A: No, we do not take reviewer suggestions from PIs or others. If you do feel like there is a critical conflict of interest that has not been declared that you can declare a conflict of interest to the NEUP office at any point in time through email.

Q: Are the FOA dates confirmed or tentative?

A? All of the due dates talked about are anticipated and planned but if there is a major delay in the release of the FOA, it may force us to re-consider the overall due dates. We want to make sure enough time is given to prepare pre-applications and full applications while still meeting the overall schedule.

Q: NSF gives opportunities to oppose reviewers in the case that the PI feels conflict. Can such a mechanism be established and how do flag received reviews the PI feels is unfair and biased?

A: We do not have a formal mechanism in the FOA or review process. It is not anticipated that it would be established but we understand the desire to have that type of process. There are a variety of considerations that go into that in which the speed of which we could provide feedback and overall evaluation of awards. If you do feel like there was something unfair or biased, you can provide that feedback to John Gilligan or Drew Thomas and they can walk you through the review process to prevent any unfair assessments or biased assessments.

## **CINR Phase II Continuation Q&A Section**

Q: Does the LOI for Phase II get reviewed as a pre-application?

A: They will be reviewed using the criteria outlined in the FOA.

Q: For the project in which the original PI moved to a different institute, but is still leading the research effort, how should we submit for the continuation?

A: This may be an extenuating circumstance that may need specific guidance. The lead institution and lead PI should match. If that is not the case, then we would need to walk through the situation with the PI and make DOE aware so they can approve before the LOI application comes in.

Q: Does it count towards the 3 pre-applications a PI can submit the LOI phase of Phase II Continuation?

A: No. The CINR restrictions do not apply to Phase II Continuation CINR. Only one LOI can be submitted per active CINR. There is no overall capping on how many applications you can do in a particular year.

Q: Is it required to have the same team of collaborators on the Phase II Continuation as the CINR full application?

A: No, it is up to the lead PI to decide who the collaborators will be for the proposed Phase II Continuation project.

### **DECP Q&A Section**

Q: Would Covid-19 related difficulties count against the 7-year rule?

A: If you had a serious illness related to covid or any other illness and you had a medically approved extension of your tenure clock by your university, that could potentially be a way of getting an extension. There must be a letter from the dean or vice president or someone of equivalent status.

Q: Is a staff researcher in the university eligible to apply?

A: The PI must be an untenured assistant professor on the tenure track and no more than seven years beyond his/her doctorate at a U.S. academic institution as of the last day of January 2025. The PI must be employed in the eligible position as of the last day of January 2025.

Q: Is the NRC faculty grant still not considered as another early career award for applicants? Historically it was excluded since the department chair is the PI but last year, NRC forced a PI to choose between DECP and NRC since they considered DECP in their own criteria.

A: That is still the same. Dr. Huff definitively said that the NRC grant is not the same as DECP. As far as we are concerned, you can get both but NRC may have a different opinion.

Q: What is the eligibility for the DECP in terms of year of PhD and tenure track start?

A: It is no more than seven years beyond the date the doctorate was awarded as of the last day of January 2025. If you have a specific eligibility question, please email.

Q: DECP is not part of the number limit of CINR R&D proposal submissions?

A: No it is not.

Q: Is it okay for the faculty to move to another campus during the award?

A: It will fall under the DOE financial guidance section 4.2.8. DOE would consider a change but would have conditions that need to be met to make a move.

Q: Are incoming tenure track faculty eligible to apply?

A: It depends on the institution that you are going to or are accepting the position. Will they allow you to apply in that category or not? It is up to them.

Q: Is the data available in terms of number of proposals received and can a DECP applicant be a participant in R&D pre-applications or IRP in the same year?

A: Yes, they can participate.

Q: Would a mentoring plan from a senior faculty be something that could be used to fortify the basic qualification of the PI?

A: If the senior faculty is a collaborator, no. There can be no co-PIs or collaborators. It is not suggested to add in the application.

Q: Is it year of PhD or tenure track position that starts the seven-year period?

A: It starts from the day of the award of your PhD.

Q: Could you provide information on number of proposals received?

A: The application received, and review information are considered to be procurement sensitive and they are not released, even after the process is finished.

Q: Can the seven-year time frame be moved to ten years from award of PhD?

A: There has been significant consideration put into the timeline chosen for DECP. The seven years is intentional. Feedback can be provided to John Gilligan and Drew Thomas.

## **NSUF Q&A Section**

Q: Is it okay for the PI from the university to file for a patent or disclosure before the proposal or during the work is in progress?

A: There is a section in the FOA about invention disclosure and these types of issues. Ultimately, should be referred to the DOE-ID contracting specialists.

Q: For NSUF 2, no research support is provided but what is the support budget showing in the slide for?

A: The \$4M showing on NSUF 2 is the user access. This is not funding in terms of R&D. This is the cost for the program to execute the user access project. That cost does not go to the user.

### **Infrastructure Overview Q&A Section**

Q: How can DOE support a \$5M project when the total available is \$2.5M?

A: The overall estimated budget for this FOA is \$5M. It may be very unlikely that all \$5M would go to one single project but could be if that project had exceptional technical merit and create a new national infrastructure capability.

Q: When will the results be announce for the FY 2024 Revitalization program?

A: It is in the final review process and it is targeted for May 2024.

### **UNLP Overview Q&A Section**

Q: What is required in the application?

A: Required documents for both scholarship and fellowship are outlined in the FOA and RFA.

Q: What if the institution does not have a formal NE department program but faculty are actively engaged in nuclear energy work?

A: You can still apply and be awarded even without an NE department program. They need to have a relevant discipline.

Q: Is there a deadline for the university application?

A: To get the university approved, it is a rolling application essentially. The FOA will remain open continuously until 2030. Universities submit application if they know they have a student that has applied. There is nothing stopping a university from applying at anytime, however.

Q: How long does it take once a university has applied?

A: It could take several weeks, about 6 weeks. It just depends on how many were submitted under that cycle and how long the review process takes in order to evaluate each one.

Q: How detailed is the proposal or documents needed and is it a full description of the program or just a couple of pages?

A: There have been various levels of commitment and applications. A few pages to 10 or more is typical, but depends what you really commit to and what the heart of the matter and what you can show from faculty. There is typically a 2-page limit per discipline in the submission.

### **INSC Overview Q&A Section**

Q: If a student's research is not directly related to one of those 6 categories, can they still apply?

A: Yes, we just ask that the student to pick the topic area that is most closely related to their publication.

Q: Where can we find the definition of an underserved community?

A: It is relatively flexible. There are some resources in the DOE space where you can read a little bit more about the energy equity and energy justice type initiatives happening. They have some descriptions of those terminology.