

IRP-2 Grand Challenge Research and Development at Minority Serving Institutions Q&A

Q. Is IRP-2 meant to overlap with the other topic areas? Should an MSI submit to IRP-2 instead of one of the other topic areas?

In short, yes, it is meant to overlap. IRP-2 is inclusive of any topic area within the NE mission. The difference is the overall budget and scope of what you can potentially do; the maximum for an application in other topic areas is either \$500K or \$1M, whereas this is a \$3M project. The major difference: broader in scope and would really be focused on addressing a grand challenge, meaning finding a large technical gap and being able to fill that in a holistic way with the proposal that you proposed in an IRP. The traditional topic areas tend to be a little bit more incremental, while the IRPs tend to be a little bit bigger and broader.

Q. Is there a requirement to have multiple universities, similar to IRP-1, or can the entire budget be spent within a single MSI?

A. That would be left up to the discretion of the PI. One of the things we like to see, one of the natural designs of the IRP, is to pull in multiple institutions to tackle a big, significant problem (that's why the budget is set at \$3M rather than some of our smaller projects at \$500K or \$1M). If you look at all the previous IRP awards, or even regular R&D awards, the majority have multiple institutions. Very rarely do we see a single institution capable of providing everything.

Q. How much emphasis should be placed in research training of students?

A. If you look at the IRP awards from last year, one was more research training, involvement of students in a select topic area. It was more of that model, whereas the other IRP award was more focused research in a particular area. Yes, it should include both in this case because it is a much bigger award. You should definitely include emphasis on the minority students that are participating...that you are trying to recruit. How are they going to be involved? What's the advantage for them, etc.? That should be a key part of the entire proposal.

Q. Is it acceptable to have non-MSI universities as collaborators?

A. Yes, but only up to 20% of the proposed budget. The 20% maximum is for non-MSI university partners, National Laboratories, and/or industry. The idea behind this IRP is that 80% of the budget is reserved for minority serving institutions to help them address the grand challenge, capability build, do those types of things with a non-MSI university or a National Laboratory, or an industry partner in a supporting role to provide expertise, not necessarily to lead the project.

Q. Is there an expectation to have multiple MSI university partners?

A. It is not required, however, as previously mentioned, we have not seen an IRP that didn't have many partners to address a large scope project, Grand Challenge in particular, and even our standard R&D. However, yes, the expectation would be multiple MSIs involved, not required, but more likely the case than not.

Q. Does the lead institution need to be an MSI?

A. Yes, the lead institution must be an MSI.

Q. Is there an expectation to have industry partners?

A. If an industry partner doesn't fit, don't force it. You could always have industry partners, but again, that can only be up to 20% of the budget. One of the suggestions we've had for many MSI institutions in the past is that they needed to build a capability at many MSI institutions for legitimate research kinds of activities. This is all aimed at accomplishing that and why the emphasis on 80% of the money going to MSI institutions.

Q. Is a partnership with a National Laboratory encouraged? And if so, does this fall under the 20% of the budget rule?

A. National Laboratory engagement is not encouraged or discouraged. Yes, it would fall under the 20% budget rule.

Q. Should the research proposed be mission focused or broader?

A. All projects must be NE mission focused, but the Grand Challenge is usually focused in one particular area. If you look at the awards from last year, one was very focused, and another was a little bit broader. So, there is flexibility.

Q. Can you expand on any of the previous awards that were education focused?

A. I would suggest looking at the abstracts on NEUP.gov, specifically, https://neup.inl.gov/SitePages/FY23_IRP_Awards.aspx.