Infrastructure Revitalization and Reactor Sharing Q&A

Q: Can a software license expense count towards the amount for equipment and upgrades (e.g., physical infrastructure/equipment)?

A: Software that is integrated into and necessary to operate a property, plant, or equipment, may be considered part of the property, plant, or equipment of which it is an integral part. Accordingly, costs associated with such software (including licensing costs) may count toward an applicant's equipment and upgrades budget requirement.

Q: Can you comment on if there are any preferred reactor types, for example, sodium cooled gas cooled SMR for the infrastructure FOA?

A: We don't have any preferred reactor types based on the funding opportunity, but I would recommend you review the DOE missions and the current I awards that are out there to make an assessment as to what the direction you want to go in.

Q: Does it include LWR SMR's?

A: It is all encompassing. It is possible that you could consider LWR's, but you can also take a look at what awards have gone out recently and make an assessment from there.

Q: Is the expectation that the 50% of physical infrastructure would be concentrated at one lead university or spread across all consortium partners?

A: It could be in in both. We're intentionally vague on that aspect so it doesn't unnecessarily limit a piece of infrastructure.

Q: Would the Transparency of Foreign Connections be required from unfunded collaborators?

A: The FOA states proposed "recipient and subrecipients." Transparency of Foreign Connections would not be required for unfunded collaborators.

Q: Is Current and Pending Support required for FFRDC participants?

A: Current and Pending Support is not required for FFRDC participants.

Q: The required 50% or more of the funding on equipment, is that applicable to just the federal funds or if we are contributing cost share, is that calculated as well?

A: It is 50% of the federal funds. That is how it's written in the funding opportunity.

Q: How is the 50/50 split done in the budget? Is it the total for the whole team must be in a 50/50 split or each consortia portion must have their budget satisfying the 50/50 split?

A: The overall budget needs to have a minimum of 50% of the total budget directed at equipment and upgrades. There may be situations where a lead institution would place a major piece of equipment for 50% of the budget. That would mean that the Co-PIs or the collaborators would primarily be doing research instead of infrastructure investments in those spaces and that would be a fine way to do things as long as the overall budget meets the minimum 50% requirement for infrastructure investments.

Q: Are the funds mainly used to buy equipment or for research? How? What is the balance supposed to be for that?

A: The intention is to bring back the infrastructure for nuclear R&D from the university perspective. The FOA is vague to see what kind of proposals come. The intention is to revitalize R&D and revitalize the capabilities. It's really on a case-by-case basis and the balance is up to all of you to provide justification for.

Q: When the call says revitalization, is there an implication of using the funds already existing infrastructure and upgrading or repurposing it?

A: That is an option. The ideal when we say revitalization is from a holistic standpoint. For revitalizing the R&D aspects it can also be coming up with potentially new capabilities.

Q: Will the attendees receive a copy of the slides that were presented today?

A: Yes, they will be posted on NEUP.gov

Q: Can the funds be used to upgrade an existing facility?

A: Yes

Q: This reactor sharing program appears to have a larger expected award size and fewer awards than the program that existed in the earlier 2000s. Is this based on an intentional aim?

A: We are limited based on how much we are appropriated for these types of funding opportunities. The larger amount of funds was intentional. We took feedback from the previous program so something more impactful can be done. Now, it's not just to support public visits, or offset some of those costs. It's about how do you develop the reactor outreach? DOE is always interested in

feedback on how these programs are going and about making adjustments.

Q: What is the expectation of the roles of the industry and lab partners in this consortia? For example, advising on how to purpose our labs to align with the industry needs, helping us with R&D. I assume most of the equipment should be used in the colleges, not the labs in industry.

A: Yes, the idea is that the equipment would be placed at colleges or universities.

Q: What is the expectation for these programs to become annual?

A: Each year, the university program evaluates how effective their different programs are and makes decisions based on federal funding allocations and DOE priorities in those spaces. There's no guarantee year after year but we hope it continues.

Q: For the three themes suggested for the infrastructure call, is the expectation to address all of them or just focus on a single one?

A: The effort here is to be able to directly tie to at least one of these. Those three items do come directly from the Congressional Budget.

Q: Does the 50% include labor to install equipment?

A: Costs typically include installation. They do not cover overhead costs, operational, or maintenance costs. Our traditional infrastructure programs typically exclude HVAC and major modifications of buildings unless they're directly tied to the installation of the equipment.

Q: Lab FWP's don't break out funding easily for leads to identify the effort verse facility or equipment costs. Is there an easier way to show this 50/50 split to NEUP with multiple collaborators?

A: The intention for revitalization is that the infrastructure is going to be situated at colleges and universities. If there are national laboratory FWP's that come through, we would expect those to be a research effort rather than equipment costs.

Q: Are the costs of development (including technical design, certification, development, V&V, and operation) of a proposed new infrastructure allowed and counted under the 50% of funds for infrastructure?

A: Equipment development, construction, installation, testing, etc. should count as infrastructure. However, operation and research costs of the equipment would fall under the non-equipment part of the grant.

Q: For a project to establish a new "nuclear AI infrastructure" to enable university research and training. The infrastructure (defined as research capability) shall include both AI-compatible hardware and necessary "soft" components (e.g., nuclear-qualified datasets, knowledge base, ML platforms. Are developments of these "soft" components of infrastructure allowed and counted under the 50% funds for "physical infrastructure/ equipment"?

A: Equipment development, construction, installation, testing, etc. should count as infrastructure. However, operation and research costs of the equipment would fall under the non-equipment part of the grant.

Q: We do have a follow-up question that was asked during the webinar about cost share. The initial response was clear that the 50/50 split on the federal portion should be ensured. Now, let's assume there is a $1M cost-share on top of the $6M that comes from the participants. Do you accept preserving the 50/50 split on the total ($3.5M/$3.5M) while the federal portion may not meet that criteria?

A: To clarify, a minimum of 50% of federal funds need to be spent on infrastructure. Any cost share could be spent on either the infrastructure or operations/research, etc.

Q: Our university is planning to submit a proposal for the recent Reactor Sharing FOA (DE-FOA-0003041). We plan to involve 3-4 other universities as part of our proposal, where representatives from each of those entities would travel to our university. Should our request for travel funds be directed to applicant University and then disseminated to each university as a subcontractor, or should each university receive funds directly from DOE-NE?

A: Lead universities will receive funding through DOE, and depending on the activity, the university will distribute funds to partners as participant supports costs as defined by 2 CFR 200 or, in some cases, through subaward/subcontract arrangements. DOE will only provide funds to the lead university.