

**Financial Assistance
Notice of Funding Opportunity
Part 1**



U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* ENERGY

Department of Energy (DOE)

Idaho Operations Office

Fiscal Year 2026 Consolidated Innovative Nuclear Research

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: DE-FOA-0003538

NSUF Letter of Intent: January 5, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST

Pre-Application due: February 3, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST

Full Application due: June 9, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST

Modifications

Mod. No.	Date	Description of Modification
001	01/13/26	Clarify topic areas and formatting corrections.
002	01/27/26	Change pre-application due date from 1/28/2026 to 2/3/2026 and change the NSUF Pre-Application SOW & Readiness Statement Deadline from 02/17/2026 to 02/24/2026.
003	04/23/26	Change the NSUF Full-Application SOW Deadline to May 21, 2026.

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Before You Begin

Navigating the Notice of Funding Opportunity

To reduce the burden on applicants in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process and limit the length of the NOFO information requests DOE has separated the NOFO into two parts.

The NOFO Part 1 describes the specific DOE programmatic goals and evaluation criteria, eligibility, and other components that are specific to each funding opportunity. The NOFO Part 2 includes the fixed DOE requirements that generally do not change from NOFO to NOFO, including standard information for the application phase, expectations for award negotiations, and post-award requirements. Applicants must review both the NOFO Part 1 and the NOFO Part 2 prior to applying. To facilitate navigation, you will find links throughout this document to additional information found in Part 2.

There are several required one-time actions applicants must take before applying to this NOFO. Some of these actions may take several weeks, so it is vital applicants build in enough time to complete them. Failure to complete these actions could interfere with application or negotiation deadlines or the ability to receive an award if selected. If you have previously completed the necessary registrations, make sure your registration is active and up to date. All registrations are free. Please refer to [NOFO Part 2, Get Registered](#), for additional information.

This announcement is published in conjunction with NOFO Part 2.



I. Basic Information

A. Key Facts

Issuing Agency	Department of Energy, Idaho Operations Office
Funding Opportunity Title	Fiscal Year 2026 Consolidated Innovative Nuclear Research
Announcement Type	Initial
Funding Opportunity Number	DOE-FOA-0003538
Funding Instrument	Grant
Assistance Listing Number	81.121
Funding Opportunity Description	This Notice of Funding Opportunity is for Consolidated Innovative Nuclear Research (CINR) and is thus referred to in this document as the "CINR NOFO."
Program Goals & Objective(s)	To provide competitive research and development (R&D) opportunities through the Nuclear Energy University Program (NEUP) and the Nuclear Science User Facilities (NSUF). NEUP supports university and college-led infrastructure and R&D projects relevant to the NE mission. NSUF provides access to material test reactors, beamlines, and post-irradiation examination facilities to researchers from U.S. universities, industry, and national laboratories.
Eligible Applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In accordance with 2 CFR 910.126(b), prime applicant award eligibility is restricted to: U.S. universities and colleges for topics in NOFO Part 2, Appendix A and B. NSUF user access eligibility is restricted to U.S. industry, U.S. universities and colleges, and national laboratories in NOFO Part 2, Appendix C. Other domestic entities including U.S. Universities and Colleges; for-profit entities; non-profit entities; state and local government entities and Indian Tribes; DOE federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs) and non-DOE FFRDCs and Federal Research Agencies are eligible as subrecipients.
Application Site and Helpdesk	Application Site: https://proposals.inl.gov Helpdesk: NEUP@inl.gov

KEY DATES

Notice of Funding Opportunity Issue Date:
December 15, 2025

NSUF Letter of Intent Deadline:
January 5, 2025

R&D Pre-Applications Deadline:
February 3, 2026

NSUF Pre-Application Statement of Work & Readiness Statement Deadline: February 24, 2026

NSUF Full-Application SOW Deadline: May 21, 2026

All Full Applications Deadline:
June 9, 2026

Anticipated Selection Notification Date:
September 30, 2026

Anticipated Award Date:
February 1, 2027

Deadline for all submissions is
5pm EST



1. Funding Details

DOE reserves the right to make more or fewer (or even no awards) depending on funding availability and/or the quality of the applications. DOE is under no obligation to pay for any costs associated with preparation or submission of application. DOE reserves the right to fund, in whole or in part, any, all, or none of the applications submitted in response to the NOFO.

Funding Opportunity Area 1: U.S. University/College-led R&D Projects and NSUF Access with R&D (NSUF-1) Projects

- Approximate total available funding: \$43 million in FY 2026
- Approximate number of awards: Up to 50
- Approximate dollar amount of individual awards: Up to \$1,000,000 for a non-Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) supplemented projects. Up to \$1,100,000 for REU supplemented project, except as explicitly noted in individual program areas.
- Approximate award project period: Up to three years for each of the CINR NOFO program areas except for awards involving NSUF access, *which may take up to seven years if neutron irradiation and Post Irradiation Examination (PIE) is requested.*

Funding Opportunity Area 2: U.S. University/College-, National Laboratory-, or Industry-led Nuclear Science User Facilities (NSUF) Access Only (NSUF-2) Projects

- Approximate total available funding: \$6 million in award value in FY 2026
- Approximate number of awards: Up to 3 awards under the U.S. University/College-, National Laboratory-, or Industry-led NSUF Access Only (NSUF-2) CINR NOFO Area.
- Approximate dollar amount of individual awards: Access value of these awards (funds not provided to the Principal Investigator (PI)) will be defined by a final cost estimate provided by the NSUF office.
- Approximate award project period: Up to three years for each of the CINR NOFO program areas except for awards involving NSUF access, *which may take up to seven years if neutron irradiation and PIE is requested.*

Funding Opportunity Area 3: U.S. University/College-led Integrated Research Projects (IRPs)

- Approximate total available funding: \$6 million in FY 2026
- Approximate number of awards: Up to 2
- Approximate dollar amount of individual awards: Up to \$3,000,000 (3-year project) for non-REU supplemented project. Up to \$3,100,000 for REU supplemented project, except as explicitly noted in individual topic areas.
- Approximate award project period: Three years

Supplemental Funding Opportunity Area: Research Experiences for Undergraduates Supplement

- Approximate total available funding: \$2 million in FY 2026
- Approximate number of awards: Up to 20 awards to supplement awarded U.S. University/College-led R&D and IRP projects.
- Approximate dollar amount of individual awards: Up to \$100,000 per award to supplement proposed U.S. University/College-led R&D and U.S. University/College-led IRP projects.



- Approximate award project period: Up to three years for each of the CINR NOFO program areas except for awards involving NSUF access, *which may take up to seven years if neutron irradiation and PIE is requested.*

2. Period of Performance

The Office of Nuclear Energy (NE) anticipates making awards for up to three years for each of the CINR NOFO areas except for awards involving NSUF access, ***which may take up to seven years if neutron irradiation and PIE is requested.*** Assuming NE makes awards under this CINR NOFO by September 30, 2026, funded projects should begin February 1, 2027. Proposing different start dates for the project and budget periods may make the application ineligible for award. If a later project start date is needed, after August 1, 2027, for the successful performance of the project, it must be fully documented and justified in the application for consideration by NE.

B. Executive Summary

The Office of Nuclear Energy (NE) is seeking applications from U.S. universities and colleges, national laboratories, and industry to conduct nuclear energy-related research to help meet the objectives of the major NE funded research areas.

All research must be non-proprietary and awarded projects must publish their results at the DOE, Office of Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI) website for public access (<https://www.osti.gov>).

Specifically, this CINR NOFO contains the following three separate funding opportunity areas:

- 1) U.S. University/College-led R&D Projects and NSUF Access with R&D (NSUF-1) Projects
 - Optional Research Experiences for Undergraduates Supplement available (as described in **NOFO Part 1, Funding Details**)
- 2) U.S. University/College-, National Laboratory-, or Industry-led Nuclear Science User Facilities (NSUF) Access Only (NSUF-2) Projects
- 3) U.S. University/College-led Integrated Research Projects (IRPs)
 - Optional Research Experiences for Undergraduates Supplement available (as described in **NOFO Part 1, Funding Details**)

C. Agency Contact Information

U.S. Department of Energy
Idaho Operations Office
1955 Fremont Avenue
Idaho Falls, ID 83415

For questions relating to this specific NOFO, please send emails to NEUP@inl.gov.

DISCLAIMER: Applicants are discouraged from submitting information considered proprietary unless it is deemed essential for proper evaluation of the application. If the application contains information that the applicant organization considers to be trade secrets, information that is commercial or financial, or information that is privileged or confidential, the pages containing that information must be identified as specified in the application instructions. When such information is included in the application, it will



be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act, with the understanding that the information will be used or disclosed only for evaluation of the application. The information contained in the application will be protected by DOE from unauthorized disclosure, consistent with the need for merit review of applications of financial assistance awards to assure the integrity of the competitive process and the accuracy and completeness of the information. If a federal financial assistance award is made as a result of or in connection with an application, the federal government has the right to use or disclose the information to the extent authorized by law. This restriction does not limit the federal government's right to use the information if it is obtained without restriction from another source.



II. Eligibility

To be considered for substantive evaluation, an applicant's submission must meet the criteria set forth below. If the application does not meet these eligibility requirements, it will be considered ineligible and removed from further evaluation and ineligible for any award. DOE will not make eligibility determinations for potential applicants prior to the date on which applications to this NOFO must be submitted. The decision whether to apply in response to this NOFO lies solely with the applicant. The information included here is specific to eligibility requirements for this NOFO. For eligibility requirements applicable to all NOFOs, please consult the [NOFO Part 2, Eligibility](#).

A. Eligible Applicants

To be considered for substantive evaluation, an applicant's submission must meet the criteria set forth below. If the application does not meet these eligibility requirements, it will be considered ineligible and removed from further evaluation.

1. Restricted Eligibility

DOE has restricted eligibility for award in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, 2 CFR 910.126(b). This eligibility restriction does not apply to subrecipients, subawards, vendors, or team members of the prime/lead applicant. This CINR NOFO is open to only U.S. universities and colleges, national laboratories, and U.S. industry entities. The eligibility of this NOFO is restricted to support U.S. universities and colleges for topics described in the [NOFO Part 2, Appendix A and B](#), and NSUF user access eligibility is restricted to U.S. industry, U.S. universities and colleges, and national laboratories described in the [NOFO Part 2, Appendix C](#) that are pursuing fundamental and applied research in the nuclear sciences pursuant to 42 USC 16274.

Restricting eligibility ensures the Nuclear Energy University Program (NEUP) supports university and college research, collaborations with industry and national laboratories, and training and educating the next generation nuclear workforce. Pursuant to the Nuclear Science User Facilities (NSUF) mission, access to user facilities is open to a broader range of applicants in [NOFO Part 2, Appendix C](#).

2. Domestic Entities

The proposed prime recipient and subrecipient(s) must be domestic entities. To qualify as a domestic entity, the entity must be organized, chartered, or incorporated (or otherwise formed) under the laws of a particular state or territory of the U.S. or under the laws of the U.S.; have majority domestic ownership and control; and have a physical place of business in the U.S.

The following types of domestic entities are eligible to participate as a **prime recipient** of this NOFO:

- U.S. universities and colleges for topics in the [NOFO Part 2, Appendix A and B](#).
- U.S. industry, U.S. universities and colleges, and national laboratories in the [NOFO Part 2, Appendix C](#).



The following types of domestic entities are eligible to participate as a **subrecipient** of this NOFO:

- U.S. universities and colleges¹;
- For-profit organizations;
- Nonprofit organizations;
- State and local governmental entities; and
- Indian Tribes, as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 25 U.S.C. § 5304.²

3. Foreign Entity Participation

While international partners are encouraged to participate, no U.S. Government funding will be provided to entities incorporated outside of the United States or to a foreign government or any entity owned or controlled by a foreign government. Foreign government ownership means direct ownership of the applicant entity, its parent organization (e.g., trust, holding company, corporation, etc.), and any and all other entities in the corporate structure regardless of the applicant entity's place of incorporation and operation. NE will evaluate the benefit and contribution of any such proposed partnerships as part of its evaluation of the relevancy to the NE mission.

Incorporated Consortia

Incorporated consortia, which may include domestic and foreign entities, are eligible to apply for funding as a subrecipient. For consortia incorporated (or otherwise formed) under the laws of a State or territory of the United States, please refer to "Domestic Entities" above.

Unincorporated Consortia

Unincorporated consortia, which may include domestic and foreign entities, must designate one member of the consortium to serve as the prime recipient/consortium representative (U.S. university or college). The prime recipient/consortium representative must be incorporated (or otherwise formed) under the laws of a State or territory of the U.S. The eligibility of the consortium will be determined by the eligibility of the prime recipient/consortium representative.

Participant Limitations

Participation of the following entities are limited as follows:

- DOE FFRDCs³ are eligible to apply for funding as a subrecipient for topic areas outlined in **NOFO Part 2, Appendix A and B** but are not eligible to apply as a recipient.
- Non-DOE FFRDCs are eligible to participate as a subrecipient for topic areas outlined in **NOFO Part 2, Appendix A and B** but are not eligible to apply as a recipient.

¹ "U.S. Universities and Colleges" is defined consistent with the meaning of "institution of higher education as set forth in 20 U.S.C. 1001(a).

² "Indian Tribe," for the purposes of this NOFO and as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act ([25 U.S.C. § 5304](#)), means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act ([85 Stat. 688](#)) [[43 U.S.C. § 1601, et seq.](#)], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the U.S. to Indians because of their status as Indians.

³ FFRDCs are public-private partnerships that conduct research for the U.S. government. A listing of FFRDCs can be found at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/ffrdclist/>.



- Federal agencies and instrumentalities (other than DOE) are eligible to participate as a subrecipient for topic areas outlined in [NOFO Part 2, Appendix A and B](#) but are not eligible to apply as a recipient.

Performance of Work in the U.S.

All work for awards under this NOFO must be performed in the U.S.

Ineligible Participants

The following entities are ineligible for participation in this NOFO as a recipient, subrecipient, or subcontractor:

- In accordance with 2 CFR 200.214, entities banned from doing business with the U.S. government such as entities debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participating in federal programs.
- Entities identified on Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control Treasury's Sanctions Program Specially Designated Nationals list are prohibited from doing business with the U.S. government and are not eligible. See [OFAC - Sanctions List Service \(treas.gov\)](#).
- Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that engaged in lobbying activities after December 31, 1995, are not eligible to apply for funding.

B. Limitation on Number of Applications Eligible for Review

U.S. university and college PIs may submit up to six Pre-Applications (three of those applications may be as lead PI).

A PI may have no more than one IRP, or three R&D projects (excluding NSUF Access Only projects) funded at any time and may not submit more Full Applications than would be allowed by these restrictions.

PIs cannot submit the same application to multiple topic areas, including the NSUF Access areas. Individuals serving in an advisory capacity to DOE may not participate in any portion of this NOFO, including the NSUF Access Only CINR NOFO area.

NSUF Access Only projects are not bound by these eligibility restrictions, unless specified above.

NOTE: Applications submitted to this CINR NOFO will be awarded to the applicant entity listed and will typically not be transferred to another institution if a lead PI changes institutions. However, DOE may consider PI requests for transferring or subawarding an award from the original institution to the PI's new institution. In the event a PI changes institutions, the PI must contact the Contract Specialist for approval prior to the award being transferred.

The following application restrictions apply to lead PIs:

R&D Application Restrictions

Applicants are ineligible to submit an R&D application to this CINR NOFO as a lead PI under any of the following circumstances:

- The PI has a currently funded IRP that will be active after December 31, 2026.



- The PI has three or more R&D projects that will still be active after December 31, 2026, excluding NSUF Access Only projects and any NSUF project with a duration greater than 3 years.
- The PI has a no-cost time extension on any NE funded project (excluding Infrastructure) that will still be active beyond December 31, 2026, excluding extensions caused by NSUF.

IRP Application Restrictions

Applicants are ineligible to submit an IRP application to this CINR NOFO as a lead PI under any of the following circumstances:

- The PI has a currently funded IRP that will be active after December 31, 2026.
- The PI has a no-cost time extension on any NE funded project (excluding Infrastructure) that will still be active beyond December 31, 2026, excluding extensions caused by NSUF.
- The applicant is designated as PI for more than one currently funded NE project that will be active beyond December 31, 2026. Applicants with only one currently funded R&D project are eligible to apply for an IRP.
- If a PI chooses to submit an IRP application to this CINR NOFO and has no currently funded R&D projects that will still be active after December 31, 2026, excluding NSUF Access Only projects, that PI is allowed to submit up to one R&D application as the lead. In the event that both the IRP and R&D applications are successful, only one award will be made with priority given to the IRP project.

Research Experiences for Undergraduates Supplement Eligibility

All R&D and IRP applications can request an REU supplement as part of their application with the following restrictions:

- REU activities should not exceed \$100,000.
- The term of the REU supplement cannot exceed that of the associated award.
 - The Participant/Support Cost section of the budget may not exceed the \$100,000 amount allotted to the REU supplement.
- Student stipends should be comparable to other REU programs per student per week.
 - Amounts for academic-year projects should be comparable to this number on a pro rata basis. Typically, students working during the academic year are paid on a per hour basis.
- Total costs for a summer REU program—including all allowable direct (student) costs (e.g., stipend, travel, housing, etc.)—should be comparable to other REU programs. However, exceptional circumstances may exceed comparable programs and would need to be approved by DOE.

Students can participate in a funded REU supplement under the following circumstances:

- Student eligibility is restricted to U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or permanent residents of the United States.
- An undergraduate student is a student who is enrolled in a degree program (part-time or full-time) leading to a baccalaureate or associate degree.
- Students transferring from one college to another and are enrolled in neither institution during the intervening summer are eligible to participate.
- High school graduates who have been accepted at an undergraduate institution who have not yet started their studies are eligible.



- Students who have received their bachelor's degree and are no longer enrolled as an undergraduate are not eligible.

C. Cost Sharing

Applicants are expected to follow through on estimated cost share commitments proposed in their applications if selected for award negotiations. Please refer to the [NOFO Part 2, Eligibility](#) for more information on Cost Sharing.

1. Cost Share Requirements

Cost sharing is encouraged but not required under this NOFO. Any cost sharing proposal must be included in the application. Applicants are bound by the cost share proposed in their application if selected for award negotiations.

If cost share is proposed, the cost share must come from non-federal sources unless otherwise allowed by law. The cost share percentage is calculated by dividing the cost share by the total allowable project costs for the award where the total allowable project costs include government share (including FFRDC costs if applicable) and cost share. To help applicants calculate proper cost share amounts, DOE has included a cost share information sheet and sample cost share calculation in the [NOFO Part 2, Eligibility—Cost Sharing, Cost Share Calculation Examples](#).

2. Unallowable Cost Share Sources

The unallowable cost share sources identified here are specific to this announcement. Refer to [NOFO Part 2, Eligibility--Cost Sharing, Unallowable Cost Share Sources](#) for unallowable cost share sources applicable to all NOFOs.

D. FFRDC Eligibility Criteria

1. DOE FFRDCs as the Applicant

A DOE Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) is eligible to apply for funding under this NOFO if its cognizant Contracting Officer provides written authorization and this authorization is submitted with the application.

The following wording is acceptable for the authorization:

Authorization is granted for the Laboratory to participate in the proposed project. The work proposed for the Laboratory is consistent with or complementary to the missions of the Laboratory and will not adversely impact execution of the DOE assigned programs at the Laboratory.

If a DOE FFRDC is selected for award negotiation, the proposed work will be authorized under the DOE work authorization process and performed under the laboratory's Management and Operating (M&O) contract.

2. DOE and Non-DOE FFRDCs as a Subrecipient

FFRDCs may be proposed as a lead institution (except as otherwise prohibited by this CINR NOFO) or team member on another entity's application subject to the following guidelines:



Authorization for non-DOE FFRDCs

The Federal agency sponsoring the FFRDC must authorize in writing the use of the FFRDC on the proposed project and this authorization must be submitted with the application. The use of an FFRDC must be consistent with the authority under its award and must not place the FFRDC in direct competition with the private sector.

Authorization for DOE FFRDCs

The cognizant contracting officer for the FFRDC must authorize in writing the use of a FFRDC on the proposed project and this authorization must be submitted with the application. The following wording is acceptable for this authorization:

“Authorization is granted for the Fill-in 1: [Name] Laboratory to participate in the proposed project. The work proposed for the laboratory is consistent with or complimentary to the missions of the laboratory, will not adversely impact execution of the DOE/NNSA assigned programs at the laboratory, and will not place the laboratory in direct competition with the domestic private sector.”

NOTE: Letter of Authorization for DOE/NNSA FFRDCs is required for all National Laboratory participants listed on the application regardless of funding level or tier.

NOTE: FFRDC individuals acting in an advisory role only to the project should not be named in the application or listed as a collaborator.

NOTE: The FFRDC’s participation in the proposed project is subject to the terms and conditions of its management and operating (M&O) contract with DOE. Participants requiring access to the FFRDC facilities are subject to the FFRDC’s policy and DOE regulations.

NOTE: If all FFRDC/non-FFRDC management has been notified of all submissions and acknowledgment of all participants are identified, individual Letters of Authorization may be submitted or submitted as blanket permission. Identification of participants by name is to be included in the body or as a separate list.

NOTE: Letter of Authorization is not required for NSUF Technical Leads unless the Technical Lead is designated as senior/key personnel on the application and is requesting R&D funding support under this CINR NOFO.

- The FFRDC effort, in aggregate, shall not exceed 20% of the total estimated costs of the projects.

Responsibility: The applicant, if successful, will be the responsible authority regarding the settlement and satisfaction of all contractual and administrative issues, including but not limited to, disputes and claims arising out of any agreement between the applicant and the FFRDC contractor.

Funding, Cost Share, and Subaward with FFRDCs

The value of and funding for the FFRDC portion of the work will not normally be included in the award. DOE FFRDCs participating as a subrecipient on a project will be funded directly through the DOE Work Authorization process in accordance with DOE O 412.1A. Non-DOE FFRDCs participating as a subrecipient will be funded through an interagency agreement with the sponsoring agency.



Although the FFRDC portion of the work is excluded from the award, the applicant's cost share requirement will be based on the total cost of the project, including the applicant's, the subrecipient's, and the FFRDC's portions of the project.

All DOE FFRDCs are required to enter into a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement⁴ (CRADA) or, if the role of the DOE FFRDC is limited to technical assistance and intellectual property is not anticipated to be generated from the DOE FFRDC's work, a Technical Assistance Agreement (TAA), with at least the recipient. A fully executed CRADA or TAA must be in place or be compliant with a Master Scope of Work process prior to the FFRDC starting work directly allocable to the FA award.

A CRADA is used to ensure accountability for project work and provide the appropriate management of IP, e.g., data protection and background IP. A Data Management and Sharing Plan is not suited for this purpose.

The recipient will be the responsible authority regarding the settlement and satisfaction of all contractual and administrative issues, including but not limited to disputes and claims arising out of any agreement between the recipient and the FFRDC.

Limit on FFRDC Effort

The FFRDC effort, in aggregate shall not exceed 20% of the total project cost, except for projects in support of NSUF. The effort by non-universities and colleges, in aggregate, shall not exceed 20% of the total project cost.⁵

⁴ A cooperative research and development agreement is a contractual agreement between a national laboratory contractor and a private company or university to work together on research and development. For more information, see <https://www.energy.gov/gc/downloads/doe-cooperative-research-and-development-agreements>.

⁵ Total project cost is the sum of the government share, including FFRDC costs if applicable, and the recipient share of project costs.



III. Program Description

A. Program Purpose

The Office of Nuclear Energy's (NE) mission is to advance nuclear energy science and technology to meet U.S. energy, environmental, and economic needs. NE has identified the following goals to address challenges in the nuclear energy sector, help realize the potential of advanced technology, and leverage the unique role of the government in spurring innovation:

- Enable continued operation of existing U.S. nuclear reactors
- Enable deployment of advanced nuclear reactors
- Develop advanced nuclear fuel cycles
- Maintain U.S. leadership in nuclear energy technology.

NE strives to promote integrated and collaborative research conducted by national laboratory, university/college, industry, and international partners under the direction of NE's programs, and to deploy innovative nuclear energy technologies to the market and to optimize the benefits of nuclear energy.

B. Program Goals and Objectives

All applications submitted under this CINR NOFO must demonstrate a strong tie to at least one of the four mission priorities and highlight how it supports the DOE priorities. Applications focused specifically in areas not of interest to the NE mission, such as fusion energy, medical physics, nuclear forensics, or environmental management, will not be reviewed or considered.

NE reserves the right to respond to potential shifts in R&D priorities during Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 that may be driven by events, policy developments, or Congressional/budget direction. Further, NE reserves the right to fund all or part of an application to this CINR NOFO.

C. Expected Performance Goals

Projects proposed under the CINR NOFO are intended to provide competitive R&D opportunities through the Nuclear Energy University Program (NEUP) and the Nuclear Science User Facilities (NSUF). NEUP supports university and college-led infrastructure and R&D projects relevant to the NE mission. NSUF provides access to material test reactors, beamlines, and post-irradiation examination facilities to researchers from U.S. universities and colleges, industry, and national laboratories.

D. Topic Areas

For more detailed information on each topic area, please refer to the NOFO, Part 2, Appendices A, B, and C.



FY 2026 Topic Area Overview

Topic Area	Appendix	NSUF Access	Led by:		
			University /College	National Laboratory	Industry
Topic Area 1 – Advanced Reactor Development and Plant Optimization	A	No	X		
Topic Area 2 – Existing Plant Optimization	A	No	X		
Topic Area 3 – Nuclear Fuel Recycle Technologies	A	No	X		
Topic Area 4 – Fuels	A	No	X		
Topic Area 5 – Disposal Research	A	No	X		
Topic Area 6 – Design of a Mined Deep Geological Repository	A	No	X		
Topic Area 7 – Social Economic Model for a Future Deep Geological Repository Program	A	No	X		
Topic Area 8 – Public Perceptions of Integrated Waste Management System	A	No	X		
Topic Area 9 Modeling and Simulation	A	No	X		
Topic Area 10 – Measuring, Monitoring and Controls	A	No	X		
Topic Area 11 –Licensing, Safety, and Security	A	No	X		
Topic Area 12 – Advanced Nuclear Materials and Manufacturing Technologies	A	No	X		
Topic Area 13 – Artificial Intelligence for Nuclear Energy	A	No	X		
Topic Area 14 – Strategic Needs Blue Sky	A	No	X		
NSUF-1: Nuclear Science User Facilities (NSUF) Joint R&D and Access	A	Yes	X		
IRP-1: Grand Challenge IRP – Accelerating Advanced Reactor Development and Deployment	B	No	X		
IRP-2: Grand Challenge IRP – Artificial Intelligence for Modeling of Deep Geological Repositories	B	No	X		
NSUF-2: Nuclear Science User Facilities (NSUF) Access Only	C	Yes	X	X	X



E. Applications Specifically Not of Interest

The following types of applications will be deemed non-responsive and will not be reviewed or considered (please also refer to the [Responsiveness Review](#) section below):

- Applications that fall outside the technical parameters specified in the [Program Goals and Objectives](#) section above
- Applications that describe performing actions that result in duplicating existing capabilities
- Applications focused specifically in areas not of interest to the NE mission, such as fusion energy, medical physics, nuclear forensics, or environmental management.

NE reserves the right to respond to potential shifts in R&D priorities during Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 that may be driven by events, policy developments, or Congressional/budget direction. Further, NE reserves the right to fund all or part of an application to this CINR NOFO.

F. Statutory Authority

The activities to be supported under this NOFO are authorized under § 951(a) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, as codified at 42 U.S.C. § 16271(a). Additionally, 42 U.S.C. § 16274 and 31 U.S.C. § 6304 applies.



IV. Application Content and Form

This section includes application information specific to this NOFO Part 1. Refer to the [NOFO Part 2, Application Content and Form](#) for standard information that applies to all DOE NOFOs such as formatting and content requirements, and funding restrictions.

A. Summary

The application process includes three submission phases: letter of intent (LOI) (Mandatory only for NSUF-1 and NSUF-2 Applications), R&D/NSUF Pre-Applications (Mandatory except for IRPs), and Full Applications.

All non-budget documentation (use templates where provided) is to be prepared using standard 8.5" x 11" paper with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, right) and a font size no smaller than Times New Roman 11 point. This is a requirement for all pages included in the document (i.e., table of contents, references, etc.). The preferred file format is Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) for all documents except for spreadsheets. All spreadsheets are to be uploaded in Excel file format to the online application. Do NOT lock any cells in the spreadsheet.

Applicants must comply with all pertinent page limitations. Any text (including references and data tables) in a document that does not adhere to the requirements listed above (except graphics, graphs, charts, and equations) will be removed from the document and will not be reviewed. DOE reserves the right to dismiss applications that violate formatting requirements. Signature blocks must be signed by the designated official.

Documents should be saved using the document naming suggestion at the bottom of each document description. The tracking ID will automatically be generated by the application system and can be found at the top of the application form under "Tracking ID."

DOE reserves the right to dismiss applications which it deems, after initial review, to lack enough detail for reviewers to adequately judge technical merit. Applications submitted with corrupted, incomplete, or incorrect files may be dismissed without further review.

Application Submission Phase	Eligibility for Submission
Letter of Intent (Mandatory only for NSUF-1 and NSUF-2 Applications)	Must be submitted by the specified due date and time to be eligible for comprehensive merit review.
Pre-Application (Mandatory except for IRPs)	Must be submitted by the specified due date and time to be eligible for comprehensive merit review.
Full Application	Must be submitted by the specified due date and time to be eligible for comprehensive merit review.

B. Letter of Intent (LOIs)

Letter of Intent (LOIs) are a requirement for projects needing NSUF access. Applicants must submit an LOI by the specified due date and time to be eligible to submit an application. Applicants who do not submit an LOI cannot submit an application. LOIs will be used by DOE to plan for the merit review



process. The submission should not contain any proprietary or sensitive business information. LOIs will not be used for down-selection purposes, and do not commit an applicant to apply. Applicants are not bound to the statements made in the LOI; it is reasonable for project partners, locations, or other factors to change during the application development process. DOE will not provide feedback on the LOIs.

Each applicant must provide the following information as part of the LOI:

Letter of Intent Content Requirements	
Project Title	The project title should be consistently used across other application documents.
Technical Topic or Area	Applicable topic area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSUF-1 (R&D funds available) • NSUF-2 for NSUF Access Only (no R&D funds available)
Lead Organization	Complete legal name of the lead organization.
Organization Type	Academic; Federal Government; Federally Funded Research and Development (FFRDC); Government Owned and Operated (GOGO); Indian/Native American Tribal Government; Individual; Large Business; Non-Profit; Small Business; State and/or Local Government
Recipient Technical Point of Contact (POC)	Name and title for the Principal Investigator (PI) or Lead Project Manager (LPM).
Identification of NSUF Facilities	Points of contact (POCs) for the NSUF facilities, as well as facility descriptions, are provided on the NSUF website at NSUF.inl.gov/Page/Partners . NSUF Partner Institution contacts are also the Technical Leads. Technical Leads are assigned by the NSUF Program Office and provided to the applicant. For assistance in identifying a NSUF Technical Lead or facility POC, please contact NSUF staff members listed on the website NSUF.inl.gov .

The LOI includes a brief project description, which should cover only the NSUF scope of the project. The LOI is uploaded to the electronic form at www.NEUP.gov. Applicants must include the following information:

Letter of Intent Requirements	
Project Description	An LOI template is available via this link: NEUP Documents
Page Limit	3-page limit; 11-point font
Name File	2026 LOI "Insert ID #"

For complete details on the content and documents required, please refer to [NOFO Part 2, Application Content and Form](#).



C. Pre-Application (Mandatory except for IRP)

Pre-Applications are a mandatory requirement for R&D and NSUF Projects for U.S. University/College-, National Laboratory-, or Industry-led projects. Pre-Applications must be submitted by the date and time specified in the [NOFO Part 1, Key Facts](#) of this CINR NOFO.

The PI and named collaborators identified in the Pre-Application may not be changed in the Full Application without adequate justification and consent of the Contracting Officer. If a change is necessary, the applicant shall provide this request and justification at least 7 calendar days prior to the full application due date

For complete details on the content and documents required, please refer to [NOFO Part 2, Application Content and Form](#).

Component	File Format	Page Limit	File Name
Technical Volume	PDF	5 pages	FY26 Technical Volume [Tracking ID#].pdf
Principal Investigator Resume (Research and Development (R&D))	PDF	3 pages each	FY26 CV [Last Name] [Tracking ID#].pdf
Benefit of Collaboration	PDF	4 pages	FY26 BOC [Tracking ID#].pdf
Publications	PDF	N/A	FY26 NE Supported Publications [Tracking ID#].pdf

D. NSUF Pre-Application Statement of Work (Pre-Application SOW)

NSUF applicants are required to provide a Pre-Application SOW in support of their NSUF Pre-Application. The pre-application SOW includes the required statement of readiness described in NOFO Part 2, [Appendix D](#). The Pre-application SOW must be submitted at NEUP.gov using the SOW located at [Documents - NEUP - Nuclear Energy University Program](#).

The Pre-application SOW is necessary to inform the NSUF feasibility and readiness review. The document is not used for the merit review. The Pre-Application SOW will be appended to the already submitted Pre-Application. To append the Pre-Application SOW: 1) Find the submitted Pre-application in the “My Applications” section of the submission website; 2) Open the submitted Pre-application by using the ‘pencil’ icon; 3) Scroll to the bottom of the application form; and 4) Click “Attach File” on the “Post Submission Attachment” section and attach the Pre-application SOW.

Any submissions uploaded or altered after the deadline outlined in the CINR NOFO will be disregarded. Do not make changes to the Pre-application SOW after the submission deadline, as the upload timestamp is used to confirm timely submission:



NOTE: Do not resubmit the Pre-Application. A timestamp will appear in the “File Upload Date” area, which is confirmation that the Pre-application SOW was appended correctly.

For complete details on the content and documents required, please refer to [NOFO Part 2, Application Content and Form](#).

E. NSUF Full Application Statement of Work (Full Application SOW)

If an NSUF applicant is invited to submit a Full Application, a Full Application SOW is required, prior to the submittal of their Full Application. Full Application SOW documents are submitted at NEUP.gov using the SOW template located at [NEUP Documents](#).

The Full Application SOW is necessary to complete the NSUF feasibility and readiness reviews and determine a value (cost) for NSUF access. The document is not used for merit review. Ensure that any required readiness discussion is included as described in the [NOFO Part 2, Appendix D](#). The Full Application SOW is not included in the technical peer review. Technical details that will inform a peer reviewer must be included in the 15-page technical narrative.

If an application is awarded, the applicant reviews the Full Application SOW and is allowed to make minor corrections (typographical errors, schedule adjustments and so forth). Changes to work scope are not allowed. This document becomes the Final SOW; it is the control document for work performed on a project. Once the project is complete, the Final SOW will be placed in NSUF’s Nuclear Research Data System (NRDS) data repository. See [NOFO Part 2, Award Administration Information](#) for more on the NRDS.

The Full Application SOW must contain a summary of the proposed activity, suitable for dissemination to the public. It should be a self-contained document that identifies the following: the name of the applicant; the name of the PI(s); the project title; a list of major deliverables; the scope and objectives of the project; a description of the project, including major tasks (phases, planned approach, etc.) and methods to be employed; the potential impact of the project (i.e., benefits, outcomes); and the names of senior/key personnel (for collaborative projects). This document must not include any proprietary or sensitive business information as it will be available to the public after awards are made and the project is completed.

Full Application SOW documents are submitted by appending to the already submitted Pre-Application. To append the Full Application SOW: 1) find the submitted Pre-Application in the “My Applications” section of the submission website; 2) Open the submitted Pre-Application by using the ‘pencil’ icon; 3) Scroll to the bottom of the application form; and 4) Click “Attach File” on the “Post Submission Attachment” section and attach the Full Application SOW. Do not delete the Pre-application SOW. Applicants must submit a Full Application SOW even if there are no changes from the Pre-application SOW.

NOTE: A timestamp will appear in the “File Upload Date” area, which is confirmation that the Statement of Work was appended correctly.



For complete details on the content and documents required, please refer to the [NOFO Part 2, Application Content and Form](#).

F. Full Application Content Requirements

1. Covered Individual Definition, Designation, and Responsibility

Several of the Application Content Requirements listed below and in the NOFO Part 2 are required of covered individuals.

For the purposes of this NOFO, a Covered Individual means an individual who (a) contributes in a substantive, meaningful way to the development or execution of the scope of work of a project proposed for funding by DOE, and (b) is designated as a covered individual by DOE. Often, these individuals have doctoral or other professional degrees, although individuals at the master’s level may be considered covered individuals if their involvement meets this definition. Consultants, graduate students, and those with a postdoctoral role also may be considered covered individuals if they meet this definition.

DOE designates as covered individuals any principal investigator (PI); project director (PD); co-principal investigator (Co-PI); co-project director (Co-PD); project manager; and any individual regardless of title that is functionally performing as a PI, PD, Co-PI, Co-PD, or project manager.

The applicant is responsible for assessing the applicability of (a) above, against each person listed on the application. Further, the applicant is responsible for identifying any such individual to DOE for designation as a covered individual, if not already designated by DOE as described above.

The applicant’s submission of a current and pending support disclosure and/or biosketch/resume for a particular person serves as an acknowledgement that DOE designates that person as a covered individual.

DOE may further designate covered individuals during award negotiations or the award period of performance.

2. Summary of Application Requirements

Applicants must provide all information requested. Forms and optional templates may be used to provide the information in accordance with the instructions below. Files that are attached must be in PDF format, unless otherwise specified in this announcement. Optional document templates can be found on the NEUP.gov website by clicking the ‘Documents’ button at the bottom of the front page (https://neup.inl.gov/SitePages/Related_Documents.aspx).

You must save the Full Application before a tracking ID number is generated.

Summary of Full Application Requirements

Component	File Format	Page Limit	File Name
Conflict-of-Interest	Checkbox	n/a	Certified by Lead Applicant for all Participants



Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424 R&R)	PDF	n/a	FY26 SF424 [Tracking ID#].pdf
Research & Related Other Project Information	PDF	n/a	FY26 R&R Other [Tracking ID#].pdf
Project Summary/Abstract File	PDF	2 pages	FY26 Summary Abstract [Tracking ID#].pdf
Technical Volume	PDF	R&D = 10 pages; IRP = 50 pages; All NSUF = 15 pages	FY26 Technical Volume [Tracking ID#].pdf
Research Experience for Undergraduates Plan	PDF	2 pages	FY26 REU Plan [Tracking ID#]
Waiver for Foreign Entity Participation	PDF	n/a	FY26 LeadOrganization FEW [Tracking ID#].pdf
Performance of Work in the United States (Foreign Work Waiver)	PDF	n/a	FY26 LeadOrganization FWW [Tracking ID#].pdf
Resumes (for each covered individual)	PDF	3 pages each	FY26 CV [Last Name] [Tracking ID#].pdf
Current and Pending Support (for each covered individual)	PDF	n/a	FY26 CPS [Tracking ID#].pdf
Digital Persistent Identifier (for each covered individual)	N/A	N/A	Include in Current & Pending Support
Research Security Training Requirement (for each covered individual)	N/A	N/A	Include in Current & Pending Support
Benefit of Collaboration	PDF	4 pages	FY26 BOC [Tracking ID#].pdf
Capabilities	PDF	2 pages	FY26 Capabilities [Tracking ID#].pdf
Letters of Commitment and Support	PDF	1 page each	FY26 Letters [Tracking ID#].pdf
Research and Related (R&R) Lead Budget Form	MS Excel	n/a	FY26 RR Budget [Tracking ID#].xlsx
Lead Budget Justification	PDF	n/a	FY26 Budget Justification [Tracking ID#].pdf
Subrecipient Budget Form	MS Excel	n/a	FY26 Subrecipient Budget [Tracking ID#].xlsx
Subrecipient Budget Justification	MS Excel	n/a	FY26 Subrecipient Budget [Tracking ID#].pdf
Field Work Proposal for DOE FFRDC	PDF	n/a	FY26 FFRDC [Tracking ID#].pdf
Authorization for Non-DOE or DOE FFRDCs	PDF	n/a	FY26 CO Authorization [Tracking ID#].pdf
Coordination and Management Plan	PDF	n/a	FY26 CMP [Tracking ID#].pdf
Lobbying Activities	PDF	n/a	FY26 SF-LLL [Tracking ID#].pdf



Transparency of Foreign Connections	PDF	n/a	FY26 TCF [Tracking ID#].pdf
Project/Performance Site Location(s)	PDF	n/a	FY26 Site Location [Tracking ID#].pdf

For complete details on the content and documents required, please refer to [NOFO Part 2, Application Content and Form](#).

G. Funding Restrictions

Program-specific funding restrictions applicable to awards funded under this NOFO are identified below. Standard funding restrictions are described in the [NOFO Part 2, Funding Restrictions](#) section.

Applicable Funding Restrictions		
Title	Location	Additional Information
Allowable Costs	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO
Pre-Award Costs	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO
Performance of Work in the United States (Foreign Work Waiver Requirement)	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO
Foreign Travel	NOFO Part 2	Foreign Travel may be allowed, if it is requested as part of the original application and budget request, allowed for awards made under this NOFO
Lobbying	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO
Equipment and Supplies	NOFO Part 2	Purchasing American-made equipment and supplies is applicable to this award
Davis-Bacon Act Requirements	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO
Construction Signage	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards with construction activities made under this NOFO
Build America Buy America Requirements for Infrastructure Projects	NOFO Part 1	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO

1. Build America Requirement for Infrastructure Projects

Awards funded through this NOFO that are for, or contain, construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of public infrastructure in the United States undertaken by applicable recipient types, require that:

- All iron, steel, and manufactured products used in the infrastructure project are produced in the United States; and
- All construction materials used in the infrastructure project are manufactured in the United States.



Please refer to the [NOFO Part 2, Buy America Requirements for Infrastructure Projects; Required Use of American Iron, Steel, Manufactured Products, and Construction Materials](#) and [2 CFR Part 184](#) to determine whether the Buy America Requirement applies and if they should consider the application of the Buy America Requirement in the proposed project's budget and/or schedule. (Note that the Buy America Requirement does not apply to prime recipients that are For-Profit Entities.)



V. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

There are several one-time actions applicants must take before applying to this NOFO. Some of these may take several weeks, so it is vital applicants build in enough time to complete them. Failure to complete these actions could interfere with application or negotiation deadlines or the ability to receive an award if selected. These requirements are outlined in detail in the [NOFO Part 2, Get Registered](#).

A. Required Registrations

1. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. To register, go to SAM.gov Entity Registration and click Get Started. From the same page, you can also click on the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register.

Each applicant must:

1. Be registered in SAM.gov before submitting an application;
2. Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier in the application; and
3. Continue to maintain an active registration in SAM.gov with current information at all times during which you have an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal agency.

DOE may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time DOE is ready to make a federal award, the DOE will determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

B. Application Package

The application package requirements are outlined in the [NOFO Part 2, Application Content and Form](#). Various templates for application requirements are included at NEUP.gov. To access these materials, select the appropriate call under “My Applications” once logged into NEUP.gov.

Electronic Authorization of Applications and Award Documents

Submission of an application and supplemental information under this NOFO through electronic systems used by the DOE, including NEUP.gov, constitutes the authorized representative’s approval and electronic signature.

C. Submission Date and Times

All required submissions must be submitted via the NEUP.gov application site no later than 5 p.m. ET on the dates provided on [Key Facts](#) section.



Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit all required application documents at least 48 hours in advance of the submission deadline. Under normal conditions (i.e., at least 48 hours before the submission deadline), applicants should allow at least one hour to submit application documents. Once the application documents are submitted via the NEUP.gov application site, applicants may revise or update that submission until the expiration of the applicable deadline. If changes are made to any of these documents, the applicant must resubmit them before the applicable deadline. DOE will not extend the submission deadline for applicants that fail to submit required information by the applicable deadline due to server/connection congestion.

D. Intergovernmental Review

This NOFO is not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.



VI. Application Review Information

A. Standards for Application Evaluation

Applications that are determined to be eligible will be evaluated in accordance with this NOFO and the guidance provided in the “DOE Merit Review Guide for Financial Assistance,” effective October 1, 2020, which is available at: <https://energy.gov/management/downloads/merit-review-guide-financial-assistance-and-unsolicited-proposals-current>.

B. Responsiveness Review

The following concept papers and applications will be deemed nonresponsive and will not be reviewed or considered:

- Project concepts or approaches not based on established scientific principles.
- Project concepts or approaches identified specifically as NOT of interest (see the [Applications Specifically Not of Interest](#) section above).

C. Review Criteria

1. Compliance Criteria

All applicant submissions for applications must:

- Comply with the applicable content and form requirements listed in Application Content Requirements and Submission Requirements and Deadlines of the NOFO Part 1 and 2;
- Include all required documents;
- Be uploaded successfully in NEUP.gov site indicated in the [Key Facts](#) section above including clicking the “Submit” button; and
- Comply with the submission deadline stated in [Key Facts](#).

DOE will not review or consider submissions submitted through means other than the NEUP.gov site indicated in [Key Facts](#), submissions submitted after the applicable deadline, or incomplete submissions.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit all required application documents at least 48 hours in advance of the submission deadline. Under normal conditions (i.e., at least 48 hours before the submission deadline), applicants should allow at least one hour to submit application documents. Once the application documents are submitted in the NEUP.gov site identified in the [Key Facts](#) section, applicants may revise or update that submission until the expiration of the applicable deadline. If changes are made to any of these documents, the applicant must resubmit them before the applicable deadline. DOE will not extend the submission deadline for applicants that fail to submit required information by the applicable deadline due to server/connection congestion.

2. Technical Review Criteria

A. Pre-Application

At the Pre-Application review stage, DOE will invite selected applicants to provide Full Applications, based on relevance to NE mission and technical merit, provided below.



All compliant Pre-Applications submitted under this CINR NOFO will be reviewed and rated on the below areas.

Initial Review Criteria of Pre-Applications

DOE will perform an initial review to determine the following: (1) the applicant is eligible for an award; (2) the information required by the announcement has been submitted; and (3) all mandatory requirements are satisfied. Only applications meeting these Pre-Application initial review criteria will be considered during the Pre-Application technical review process.

Relevancy Criteria

Following the Pre-Application initial review, programmatic experts will assess those applications that have met the Pre-Application initial review criteria for relevance to the NE mission. All applications that meet the objectives of the NOFO will move forward to technical review.

Technical Review Merit Criteria

Several technical experts/peers will assess each pre-application on its technical merit. Reviewers will review the technical basis of the application, assigning the application a merit category as described below. During this technical review, applications will be evaluated as meeting all, most, or some expectations for that merit category.

- **High Merit:** The project unquestionably advances the technical state of knowledge and understanding of the NE mission or relevant topic area and is creative and based largely on original concepts. The scope can be executed fully in the facilities available.
- **Moderate Merit:** The project advances the technical state of knowledge and understanding of the NE mission or relevant topic area and is based on some established concepts, although several creative and original concepts are presented. The scope may be executed fully in the facilities available.
- **Some Merit:** The project incrementally advances the technical state of knowledge and understanding of the NE mission or relevant topic area, and is based predominately on established concepts, with some creative, original concepts. The scope may be difficult to execute fully in the facilities available.
- **Low Merit:** The project recognizes the technical state of knowledge and understanding of the NE mission or relevant topic area and is only marginally creative and contains few original concepts. The scope will require resources not named in the project or will require additional facilities or resources to execute.
- **No Merit:** The project does not advance or recognize the technical state of knowledge and understanding of the NE mission or relevant topic area and is not creative or original. The scope cannot be executed fully in the facilities available.

Feasibility Review (only for NSUF Projects)

The feasibility review is a very important part of the NSUF Pre-Application review process. Many factors will be considered as part of the feasibility review including the following: type of project; duration of project; experimental degree of complexity; types of samples; number of samples; need for shipping and containment; potential needed capability or facility enhancement or upgrade; project schedule, and cost. The feasibility review may include input from partner facilities' authorization processes to ensure that facility specific factors have been considered.



To ensure that a Pre-Application and eventual Full Application is submitted with the highest possible degree of feasibility, it is imperative that potential proposers establish contact with an NSUF Technical Lead at the earliest possible time. The NSUF Technical Lead will have knowledge of and direct access to the facility or facilities where the work will be performed. It is intended that the Technical Lead should be an integral collaborator on the project and contribute strongly to the application preparation. The Technical Lead will provide guidance in establishing the scope of the project in negotiation with the facility to produce a cost estimate. Should the project be awarded, the Technical Lead will be the primary POC to best ensure the project is performed on schedule and within budget.

Applications deemed not feasible or high risk by the NSUF Program Office will not be considered for NSUF access.

Readiness Review (only for NSUF Projects)

Prior to final selection, Pre-Application SOW for NSUF access proposals will be reviewed by the NSUF Program Office to verify the project is ready for NSUF access, as discussed in [NOFO Part 2, Appendix D](#) of this CINR NOFO. Pre-Applications deemed not ready for NSUF access will not be considered for NSUF access.

Pre-Application Invitations

After considering the overall evaluation ratings, available funding, and the other selection factors (see [NOFO Part 1, Other Selection Factors](#) of this CINR NOFO) as needed, DOE will make a final determination of applicants, who will be invited to provide Full Applications.

Applicants, other than NSUF Pre-Application applicants, who are not specifically invited to submit Full Applications may still do so at their own risk. There is no guarantee that uninvited Full Applications will receive a full review; however, all Full Applications will be re-reviewed for NE mission relevance. Only those uninvited Full Applications that demonstrate relevance to the NE mission will be forwarded for technical peer review during the evaluation phase for Full Applications.

NSUF Pre-Applications that do not receive an invitation to submit are not permitted to submit a Full Application.

B. Full Application

Selection will be made in accordance with the review criteria identified for each area and the program policy factors (other selection factors) listed in [NOFO Part 1, Other Selection Factors](#). The criteria for the respective NOFO areas are identified below along with the relative importance of each criterion or sub-criterion, if applicable. All applications will be point scored and ranked. Applications must be fully responsive to each of the following criteria.

Review of Full Applications shall be based on how well the applications meet or exceed the technical merit criteria provided below and as weighted and described in the corresponding table below. All invited Full Applications submitted under this CINR NOFO will be reviewed and scored as described in this CINR NOFO. A panel of experts will assess each Full Application's relevance to the NE mission. Multiple technical peer reviewers will evaluate the project for technical merit. Effective partnerships will be incorporated into the overall score.

Initial Review Criteria of Full Applications



Prior to a comprehensive merit evaluation, DOE will perform an initial review to determine: (1) the applicant is eligible for an award; (2) the named applicant, PI(s) and collaborators have not changed from the Pre-Application to the Full Application or, if they have, DOE's Contracting Officer has provided signed approval; (3) the information required by the announcement has been submitted; and (4) all mandatory requirements are satisfied. Only applications meeting these initial review criteria will be considered during the merit review and award selection decision.

Relevancy Criteria

Following the Full Application initial review, programmatic experts will assess those applications that have met the Pre-Application initial review criteria for relevance to the NE mission. All applications that meet the objectives of the NOFO will move forward to technical review.

Technical Review Merit Criteria

Applications will be subjected to formal merit review and will be evaluated against the following criteria.

- **Criterion 1 – Advances the State of Knowledge and Understanding and Addresses Gaps in Nuclear Science and Engineering Research:** DOE will evaluate the technical merit of the proposed R&D project, including the extent to which the project advances the state of knowledge and understanding and addresses gaps in nuclear science and engineering research. Evaluation will consider how important the proposed project is to advance knowledge and understanding within the area selected and how well the proposed project advances, discovers, or explores creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts.
- **Criterion 2 – Technical Quality of the Proposed R&D Project:** DOE will evaluate the overall quality/acceptability of the proposed R&D project. In evaluating this criterion, DOE may consider the following: (1) merit, feasibility, and realism of the proposed methodology and approach to the project; (2) schedule, including sequence of project tasks, principal milestones, and times for each task; (3) planned assignment of responsibilities; (4) proposed project efficiencies; and (5) technical expertise available to the applicant in carrying out the project.
- **Criterion 3 – Applicant Team Capabilities, Risks, and Experience:** DOE will evaluate the extent to which the applicant team provides objective evidence that it has the resources and abilities to successfully complete the R&D project in a technically defensible manner. Current activities, relevance, and depth of the organization's experience and capabilities, integration of students, past performance, together with that of the PI, and the adequacy of the requested resources and their supporting justification will all be evaluated as they relate to the likely successful completion of the R&D objectives.

In evaluating criterion 3, DOE will consider the extent to which the application demonstrates the following:

- That the capabilities and qualifications of engineering and scientific personnel, PI, and other key contributors are such that they can successfully accomplish the technical scope of the proposed project.
- That the applicant or respective team members demonstrate successful experience/past performance, knowledge, and understanding of the business and regulatory requirements for projects of similar size, scope, and complexity in achieving project technical success on time with no significant, unresolved safety and quality issues.
- The applicant team's identification of, and work with nuclear energy stakeholders, to gain perspective and technical knowledge important to project decisions, and how the



applicant will work with stakeholders to best achieve the objectives of this NOFO and the project.

Note: REU supplements will be considered as part of the overall technical approach and will receive consideration based on how well students are integrated into the project in Criterion 3 of the full application review.

Readiness Review (only for NSUF Projects)

Prior to final selection, Full Application SOW for NSUF access will be reviewed by the NSUF Program Office to verify the project is ready for NSUF access, as discussed in *NOFO Part 2, Appendix D*. Full Applications deemed not ready for NSUF access will not be considered for NSUF access.

NSUF and R&D Full Applications - Weighting of Evaluation Scores

Review Criterion Overview	
Criterion	Weight
Advances the State of Knowledge and Understanding and Addresses Gaps in Nuclear Science and Engineering Research	35%
Technical Quality of the Proposed R&D Project	35%
Applicant Team Capabilities, Risks, and Experience	30%

C. IRP Merit Review for Full Applications

Selection for the IRP for U.S. university or college-led projects will be based on the following relevancy and technical merit attributes and criteria and sub-criteria. The criteria are equally important. Review of Full Applications shall be based on how well the applications meet or exceed the technical merit criteria and relevance to the NE mission, as weighted and described in the corresponding table below.

Initial Review Criteria for IRPs

Same criteria used for the R&D pre-application (including R&D and NSUF Access) evaluation phase applies to IRPs.

Relevancy Criteria

Same criteria used for the R&D Pre-Application (including R&D and NSUF Access) evaluation phase applies to IRPs.

Technical Review Merit Criteria

- **Criterion 1 – Scientific and/or Technical Merit of the Project:** DOE will evaluate the scientific and technical merit of the proposed IRP, including the extent to which the project advances the state of scientific knowledge and understanding relative to the IRP and addresses key scientific challenges and shifts in research directions towards promising developments. Evaluations will consider how the proposed project presents a balanced and comprehensive program of research that, as needed, supports experimental, theoretical, and computational efforts and develops new approaches in these areas.
- **Criterion 2 – Appropriateness of the Proposed Method or Approach:** DOE will evaluate the appropriateness of the proposed IRP method or approach, including risk posed by the approach, as well as the extent to which the strategy and plan for the development and operation of the



proposed IRP identifies an acceptable approach involving senior/key personnel, the means for achieving integration on the IRP, and plans for leadership and guidance for the scientific and technical direction. DOE shall consider whether the applicant presents a comprehensive management plan for a world-class program that encourages research, including high-risk, high-reward research, as well as synergisms among investigators. The organization structure should delineate the roles and responsibilities of senior/key personnel and describes the means of providing external oversight and guidance for scientific and technical direction and approval of the research program. Additionally, DOE will also consider the following:

- The applicant's plans (if any) for education, outreach, and training in the proposed IRP are appropriate and, if needed, described as part of the scope.
 - Appropriateness and reasonableness of applicant's plans (if any) for external collaborations and partnerships.
 - The roles and intellectual contributions of the IRP lead PI, other investigator(s), and each senior/key person.
 - Maximizing the use of other available facilities and existing equipment.
 - Relation to existing and planned research programs at the host or collaborator institution.
- **Criterion 3 – Applicant Team Capabilities, Risks, and Experience:** DOE will evaluate the extent to which the applicant team provides objective evidence that it has or can obtain the professional resources and abilities to successfully complete the IRP project in a technically defensible manner. Current activities, relevance, integration of students, and depth of the organization's experience and capabilities, together with that of the PI, will be evaluated as it relates to the likely successful completion of the IRP. DOE will evaluate risk posed by the applicant team. In evaluating this criterion, DOE will consider the extent to which the application demonstrates the following:
 - Maximizing the use of other available facilities and existing equipment.
 - The proposed access to existing research space, instrumentation, and facilities at the host institutions and its partners are likely to meet the needs of the proposed IRP.
 - There is adequate access to experimental and computational capabilities as needed to ensure successful completion of the proposed research.
 - The lead institution and the senior/key personnel for the IRP have proven records of success in project, program, and personnel management for projects of comparable magnitude.
 - The plan for recruiting any additional scientific and technical personnel including new senior staff, students, and post-docs is reasonable and appropriate.
 - The IRP leadership has the capability to communicate effectively with scientists of all required disciplines.
 - The IRP lead PI and senior/key personnel will be adequately involved in the proposed IRP, particularly taking into account their potential involvement in other major projects.

Note: REU supplements will be considered as part of the overall technical approach, and will receive consideration based on how well students are integrated into the project in Criterion 3 of the full application review



IRP Full Applications - Weighting of Evaluation Scores

Review Criterion Overview	
Criterion	Weight
Scientific and/or Technical Merit of the Project	35%
Appropriateness of the Proposed Method or Approach	35%
Applicant Team Capabilities, Risks, and Experience	30%

3. Criteria for Replies to Reviewer Comments

DOE has not established separate criteria to evaluate Replies to Reviewer Comments. Instead, Replies to Reviewer Comments are attached to the original applications and evaluated as an extension of the application.

D. Other Selection Factors

Program Policy Factors. The Selection Official may consider the following program policy factors in the selection process:

1. Degree to which proposed project optimizes/balances/maximizes use of available DOE funding to achieve DOE program goals and objectives, including how those R&D and IRP projects support DOE research. It may also include research portfolio diversity, geographic distribution and/or how the projects support other complementary efforts that, when taken together, will best achieve program research goals and objectives.
2. Application selection may optimize appropriate mix of projects to best achieve DOE research goals objectives.
3. Cost/Budget considerations, including availability of funding.
4. Extent that the applicant has awards in progress, or not completed, from DOE, from a previous year's NOFO, or has existing no cost time extensions.
5. Demonstrated ability of the applicant to successfully complete projects (including relevant prior projects) and do so within budget and within the specified timeframe of the award.
6. Applicability across multiple reactor technologies, including future design types. Proposed cost share that exceeds minimum required amounts on the part of the applicant may be given preferential consideration.

The Selection Official may consider any of the above factors independently in determining the optimum mix of applications that will be selected for support. These factors, while not indicators of the application's merit, may be essential to the process of selecting the application(s) that, individually or collectively, will best achieve the program objectives. Such factors are often beyond the control of the applicant.

Applicants should recognize that some very good applications might not receive an award because of program policy factors and available funding. Therefore, the Selection Official may use program policy factors to assist in determining which applications shall receive DOE funding support.



VII. Selection and Award Notices

Please see the [NOFO Part 2, Selection and Award Notices](#) for information on notifications for Concept Papers (if applicable), Applications, Award Negotiations, and Post-Selection Information Requests.



VIII. Award Administration Information

A. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

DOE requires all award recipients to follow and accept requirements governed by laws and policies – both federal government-wide and DOE or program specific. These post-award requirements include all National and Administrative Policy Requirements; financial assistance general Certifications and Representations; Build America, Buy America requirements; Davis-Bacon Act requirement; Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-Specific Requirements; Fraud, Waste and Abuse requirements; Safety, Security, and Regulatory requirements; and Environmental Review in Accordance with National Environmental Policy Act requirements.

Post-Award requirements and administration applicable to awards funded under this NOFO are identified below. Detailed descriptions of standard funding restrictions are provided in the [NOFO Part 2, Post-Award Requirements and Administration](#) section. Detailed descriptions of program specific funding restrictions are provided below the table.

Applicable Post-Award Requirements and Administration	
Title	Location
Award Administrative Requirements	NOFO Part 2
Subaward and Executive Reporting	NOFO Part 2
National Policy Requirements	NOFO Part 2
Applicant Representations and Certifications	NOFO Part 2
Statement of Federal Stewardship	NOFO Part 2
Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) Financing Statements	NOFO Part 2
Interim Conflict of Interest Policy for Financial Assistance	NOFO Part 2
Whistleblower Protections	NOFO Part 2
Fraud, Waste, and Abuse	NOFO Part 2
Participants and Collaborating Organizations	NOFO Part 2
Current and Pending Support	NOFO Part 2
Prohibition Related to Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Programs	NOFO Part 2
Foreign Collaboration Considerations	NOFO Part 2
U.S. Manufacturing Commitments	NOFO Part 2
Subject Invention Utilization Reporting	NOFO Part 2
Intellectual Property Provisions	NOFO Part 2
Technology Protection Plan	NOFO Part 2
Data Management and Sharing Plan	NOFO Part 2
Conference Spending	NOFO Part 2



Cost-Share Payment	NOFO Part 2
Implementation of Executive Order 13798, Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty	NOFO Part 2
Pay Transparency Requirements	NOFO Part 2
Human Subjects Research	NOFO Part 2
Real Property and Equipment	NOFO Part 1
Rights in Technical Data	NOFO Part 1

1. Real Property and Equipment

Real property and equipment purchased with project funds (federal share and recipient cost share) are subject to the requirements at 2 CFR 200.310, 200.311, 200.313, and 200.316 (non-federal entities, except for-profit entities) and 2 CFR 910.360 (for-profit entities).

For resulting awards under this NOFO, the recipients may (1) take disposition action on the real property and equipment; or (2) continue to use the real property and equipment after the conclusion of the award period of performance with Grants Officer approval. The recipient’s written request for Continued Use must identify the property and include: a summary of how the property will be used (must align with the authorized project purposes); a proposed use period, (e.g., perpetuity, until fully depreciated, or a calendar date when the recipient expects to submit disposition instructions); acknowledgement that the recipient shall not sell or encumber the property or permit any encumbrance without prior written DOE approval; current fair market value of the property; and an estimated useful life or depreciation schedule for equipment.

When the property is no longer needed for authorized project purposes, the recipient must request disposition instructions from DOE. For-profit entity disposition requirements are set forth in 2 CFR 910.360. Property disposition requirements for other non-federal entities are set forth in 2 CFR 200.310 – 200.316. In addition, pursuant to the FY23 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Pub. L. No. 117-328), Division D, Title III, Section 309, at the end of the award period the Secretary or a designee of the Secretary, at their discretion, may vest unconditional title or other property interests acquired under this project regardless of the fair market value of the property.

2. Rights in Technical Data

Data rights differ based on whether data is first produced under an award or instead was developed at private expense outside the award.

“Limited Rights Data”: The U.S. government will not normally require delivery of confidential or trade-secret-type technical data developed solely at private expense prior to issuance of an award, except as necessary to monitor technical progress and evaluate the potential of proposed technologies to reach specific technical and cost metrics.

Government Rights in Technical Data Produced Under Awards: The U.S. government normally retains unlimited rights in technical data produced under government financial assistance awards, including the right to distribute to the public. However, pursuant to special statutory authority, certain categories of data generated under DOE awards under this NOFO may be protected from public disclosure for up to five years after the data is generated (“Protected Data”). For awards permitting Protected Data, the protected data must be marked as set forth in the award’s intellectual property terms and conditions



and a listing of unlimited rights data (i.e., non-protected data) must be inserted into the data clause in the award. In addition, invention disclosures may be protected from public disclosure for a reasonable time in order to allow for filing a patent application.

3. Cost Share Payment

If cost share is proposed in the application, DOE requires recipients to contribute the cost share amount incrementally over the life of the award. Specifically, the recipient's cost share for each **billing period** must always reflect the overall cost share ratio negotiated by the parties (i.e., the total amount of cost sharing on each invoice when considered cumulatively with previous invoices must reflect, at a minimum, the cost sharing percentage negotiated).

B. Questions and Support

1. Questions

Upon the issuance of a NOFO, DOE personnel are prohibited from communicating (in writing or otherwise) with applicants regarding the NOFO except through the established question and answer process described below. Questions regarding this NOFO must be submitted to NEUP@inl.gov no later than three (3) business days prior to the application due date and time. Please note, feedback on individual concepts will not be provided through Q&A.

All questions and answers related to this NOFO will be posted on the NEUP.gov site listed in the [Key Facts](#) section above. DOE will attempt to respond to a question within three (3) business days unless a similar question and answer has already been posted on the website.

Questions related to the registration process and use of the NEUP.gov site listed in the [Key Facts](#) should be submitted to NEUP@inl.gov.

2. Support

Grants.gov

Grants.gov provides 24/7 support. You can call 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov. Retain your ticket number.

SAM.gov

If you need help, you can call 866-606-8220 or live chat with the [Federal Service Desk](#).

NEUP.gov

If you have any questions about NEUP.gov site registration, application processes, eligibility, or application document requirements contact the Nuclear Energy External Innovation Integration Office at 208-526-4854 or at neup@inl.gov.



IX. Other Information

Please see [NOFO Part 2, Other Information](#) for additional information and requirements that apply to all DOE NOFOs.