EPSRC-NSF (ENG) Lead Agency Agreement

1. Introduction

i.   The US National Science Foundation (NSF) and UK Research Councils have a long history of collaboration in supporting research through both bilateral activities and multilateral arrangements. Both organisations agree that as research becomes increasingly global in nature it is important for funding agencies to continue to identify and develop flexible mechanisms to foster and support collaborative international research. The NSF Directorate for Engineering (ENG), Division of Chemical, Bioengineering, Environmental and Transport Systems (CBET), the Division of Civil, Mechanical and Manufacturing Innovation (CMMI), and the Division of Electrical, Communications and Cyber Systems (ECCS) of the National Science Foundation and the Engineering, ICT and Manufacturing the Future Themes of the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council are pleased to announce the continuation and expansion of the EPSRC-NSF(ENG) Lead Agency Agreement.

ii. The goal of this activity is to reduce current barriers to working internationally including: identifying appropriate funding agencies; dealing with the risk of "double jeopardy," whereby one country's funding agency review process decides to fund the research but where the partner country's funding agency review process does not; and dealing with differing timetables for different funding agencies. The lead agency agreement model will address these issues by:

   a. Allowing researchers to submit a single collaborative proposal with a joint funding decision, informed by a single lead agency review. This review process will follow the usual process for the lead agency.
   b. Being structured so that each country's researchers are supported by his/her funding agency. This will allow funding agencies to maintain budgetary control over their awards.
   c. Ensuring the funding agencies align decision-making points where possible.

2. Scope of the agreement

i.   Proposals will be accepted for collaborative research in areas at the intersection of NSF ENG (CBET, CMMI, and/or ECCS) and the EPSRC Engineering, ICT and/or Manufacturing the Future Themes' remits. **Multidisciplinary research is encouraged; however, the balance of research on the UK side must be within the interests of the Engineering, ICT and/or Manufacturing the Future Themes**. Proposers are expected to review the CBET, CMMI, and ECCS Program Descriptions and the EPSRC website for information on which areas of research are eligible for support through this agreement.

ii. NSF and EPSRC agree in principle to allow joint UK-US proposals to be submitted to and peer reviewed by whichever agency's investigators have the largest proportion of the research.

iii. Where proposals lie partly outside EPSRC's remit, input from other UK Research Councils will be sought on a case-by-case basis according to standard processes.

iv. This opportunity covers research applications through EPSRC standard mode only; Programme grants and Fellowship applications are excluded. Any joint managed/solicited calls will be agreed on a case-by-case basis by NSF and EPSRC and advertised separately.

v.   Each agency has its own funding parameters and principles that will be followed when reviewing proposals. Proposals are expected to adhere to typical proposal sizes and durations for the NSF-ENG and EPSRC program(s) from which funding is sought.

vi. Proposers should note that all documents submitted to NSF or EPSRC may be shared by email or other electronic means to the non-lead agency.

3. Submission process

A. Prior to formal proposal submission

i.   Before submitting a proposal, researchers should identify a prospective lead agency, either NSF-ENG or EPSRC, based on where the largest proportion of their research lies. If NSF-ENG is selected as the Lead Agency, please see the documentation for Solicitation 20-510 at https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505644 for more information.

ii. If EPSRC is the lead agency, at least 60 days in advance of the date the applicants expect to submit a formal proposal, proposers must email an Expression of Interest using Smart Survey containing the following information. If this communication does not take place, the formally submitted proposal will be rejected without review.
   a. An indication of the target program in both NSF-ENG and EPSRC for the proposed topic. Please note this is not the only program that will consider the EoI, but it allows for faster review of the EoI.
   b. A brief description of the proposed research – a breakdown of the UK/US components,
   c. The names and affiliations of the researchers, and
   d. Bottom line estimates of total funding (including indirect costs) to be requested from NSF and EPSRC (a detailed budget is not required at this time).

iii. If NSF is the lead agency, please refer to the Solicitation referenced above. A Research Concept Outline must be submitted at least 60 days prior to full proposal submission by email to ENGUKRI@nsf.gov. If this communication does not take place, the formally submitted proposal will be rejected without review. The document submitted should not exceed 5000 characters, including spaces. The RCO should contain:
   a. An indication of the target program in both NSF-ENG and EPSRC for the proposed topic. Please note this is not the only program that will consider the topic, but it allows for faster review of the topic.
   b. A brief description of the proposed research – a breakdown of the UK/US components,
   c. The names and affiliations of the researchers, and
   d. Bottom line estimates of total funding (including indirect costs) to be requested from NSF and EPSRC (a detailed budget is not required at this time).

iv. The lead agency will share all expressions of interest/RCOs received with the non-lead agency for both agencies to check eligibility (whether the proposed research is within the participating agencies' portfolio, and if the proposers and institutions meet agency eligibility requirements). A spreadsheet record will be kept for financial and demand monitoring purposes.

v.   Agreement by NSF and EPSRC to accept a proposal will be contingent upon sufficient funding being available on both sides.

Upon confirmation from both agencies that the collaborative research proposal is appropriate for

the ENG-EPSRC Lead Agency Agreement, the agencies will decide which agency will act as lead. The lead agency will then contact the researchers to inform them that they may submit a full research proposal to the lead agency. In some cases, an alteration of the NSF and/or the EPSRC budget request may be required in the full proposal submission.

B. Proposal format, budget information and formal submission

i.   In both cases, the proposal should indicate it is to be considered under this Lead Agency Activity by prefacing the title with "CBET-EPSRC", "CMMI-EPSRC", or "ECCS-EPSRC" depending on the NSF division and target program.

ii.   If NSF is the lead agency:
- Please see solicitation documentation at https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505644 .
- Proposers must comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in NSF's Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG) and submit the proposal through NSF's FastLane system (https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov), Research.gov, or Grants.gov (http://grants.gov) to the appropriate standing program within NSF division that will perform the proposal review.
- In addition to the US Budget and Budget Justification, the UK budget and budget justification should be included as a supplementary document using the UK Proposal form and Justification of Resources found on the EPSRC Je-S. These forms should be downloaded, completed, and attached to the NSF submission as supplementary documents. The US budget and budget justification should only include the costs for the US collaborators. The UK budget and budget justification should only include the costs for the UK collaborators.
- The UK investigators should be included as "non-funded senior personnel". The Biographical Sketches of these UK personnel can then be added in the appropriate section of the proposal with a format that follows the NSF PAPPG guidelines. The "Current and Pending Support" section for the UK personnel can be left blank, or entered as "0" or "none", unless they have funding from a US government organisation. A "Results of Prior Support" Section is also NOT required for the UK personnel.

iii.   If EPSRC is the lead agency:
- Proposers must comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in the EPSRC's Research Funding Guide and proposals should be submitted via the Je-S system (https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/) through EPSRC standard mode via the 'NSF(ENG)-EPSRC: EPSRC-Led Peer Review (INVITE ONLY)' call.
- The proposal should only request the UK expenses on the Je-S form. The US collaborating research organizations should be included as project partners on the Je-S form, and the funding totals by research organization should be included as project partner contributions. The Justification of Resources attachment should include a clear summary and justification of the US costs sought from NSF as well as the funding sought from EPSRC. In addition, a detailed breakdown of funding requested from NSF should be submitted to EPSRC as an Other Attachment. The latter document will be shared with NSF to verify eligibility of costs requested.

iv.   Proposals that request duplicative funding from NSF and EPSRC may be returned without review.

v.   An institutional statement in support of the joint submission must be provided by each non-lead country partner organization in the proposal submission. This statement should be in the form of a signed letter from an authorized institutional representative including the following text: "I

confirm on behalf of [insert name or institution] that the US-UK Collaborative proposal between [insert name of lead agency PI and institution] and [insert non-lead agency PI and institution] is endorsed and has been submitted by [name of research office]." For NSF this letter must be included in the Supplementary Documents; for EPSRC the letter should be provided as a cover letter to the proposal.

4. Peer review

i. ENG-EPSRC collaborative proposals will be reviewed alongside all other unsolicited or standard proposals received in the same funding round or call and will not undergo a separate or special review process.

ii. Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the lead agency's review criteria. While not identical, NSF and EPSRC ask reviewers to evaluate research on both its scientific or intellectual merit, as well as its broader or societal impacts.

iii. The lead agency will share reviews with the non-lead agency in accordance with the lead agency's confidentiality regulations.

5. Funding decisions

i. The lead agency and the non-lead agency will use their standard internal procedures to make their funding decision. The non-lead agency's funding decision will be informed by the lead agency's panel recommendation and funding decision.

ii. Because the participating organizations have different funding cycles, it is possible that some projects will have delayed start dates in order to wait until funds become available.

iii. UK partners on a proposal to be funded following NSF-led peer review will be invited to submit a proposal through Je-S to allow EPSRC to fund the UK portion of the project. This submission will not be subject to further peer review.

6. Post-award considerations

i. Awardees must comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the agencies from which they receive funding.

ii. Requests for extensions will be considered by participating agency(s) using standard procedures. Requests for changes to awards will be discussed with other involved funding agencies before a mutual decision is reached.

iii. Grants funded through this initiative will be subject to a grant condition that grant holders should be prepared to assist EPSRC and NSF with an assessment of this pilot agreement upon request.

Name	Date	Version	Change
Stephanie Williams	3.2.20	1	NSF-led process description updated to reflect recent changes

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