

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for FOA0001531

Q: Does information about the multi-institution university cluster need to be included in the supplement to the Cover Page?

A: Although a multi-institution academic cluster is considered as a combined “institution” as part of the lead university proposal, for the purpose of this FOA it will be useful to provide a breakdown of the overall budget into the various university components indicating the leads at the various academic institutions in the supplement to the cover page. It is a strongly preferred approach to include this in the supplement to the cover page to facilitate review. Collaborations and information described above for FFRDCS and DOE Labs must be included in the supplement to the cover page as well as abide by other requirements described elsewhere in the FOA, its revisions, and other FAQs contained herein.

Q: Can the supplement to cover page exceed one page?

A: Yes, if all the requested information on pages 20 and 21 of the FOA cannot be included in 1 page.

Q: Can successful applicants apply for computational time on NERSC?

A: Yes. Investigators of successful awards can anticipate getting time on NERSC when they apply <http://www.nersc.gov/>. Applicants are reminded that they are responsible for obtaining sufficient computational resources to conduct the research described in their proposals and must request, or otherwise demonstrate access, to sufficient computational capabilities.

Q: How are different combinations/configurations of collaborators to submit proposals for this FOA?

A: A lead institution (university) will submit a single proposal whether on behalf of that institution, alone, or representing the combined interests of a multi-institutional collaboration represented through one or more sub-awards by the lead institution within its proposal. In the unique circumstances where collaborations are proposed with FFRDCs, other federal agencies, or national laboratories, all applications (including that of the lead university institution) are to be treated as separately submitted, companion proposals. These companion proposals must include identical, common project narrative that includes complete descriptions of tasks and activities that will be performed and by which of the collaborating institutions for every budget period of the proposed project. The budget and the budget justification portions (as distinct from the common project narrative) within these companion proposals will be unique for each but may refer back to parts of the common narrative to further elucidate each collaborating institution’s activities in the joint project. There should be no ambiguity about each institution’s role and participation in the collaborative group. The Office of Science will use the multiple applications associated with a collaborative group to create one consolidated document for merit review that consists of the common, identical application materials combined with a set of detailed budgets from the collaborating institutions. It is very important that every application in the collaborative group be identical (including the title) with the exception of the budget and budget justification pages.

Q: What are the page restrictions for the proposal(s)?

A: For proposals from single institutions, with no multi-institutional sub-awards or companion proposals involving FFRDCs, other agencies, or national laboratories, the project narrative should not exceed 25 pages as described in the FOA. In instances where there are one or more sub-awards to other institutions (contained within the single proposal submitted by the lead institution) and/or where there are companion proposals involving FFRDCs, other agencies, or national laboratories, the page limit is extended by 50% for a total of 37.5 pages in order to enable sufficient space to identify and describe roles, contributions, and responsibilities spanning multiple institutions.

Q: Should a single proposal address all three themes listed in the FOA?

A: The proposal must address all three themes described in FOA with the first theme accounting for approximately 80% and the second and the third themes accounting roughly for the remaining 10% each. The whole proposal should be developed as a unified effort that leverages capabilities across the three themes. Additionally, successful applications should seek to build foundational, broadly applicable capabilities that are both flexible and adaptable to address other possible future configurations for an evolving coupled capability between RGCM and IAR. Efforts that focus on just one or two specific spatial domains, one or two model forms, or one or two focused topics or case studies without making the specific connections with broader, encompassing capabilities (as intended by the FOA) will not be considered as strongly as those that do reflect pathways to broader applicability. More simply put, case studies and experimental designs should be developed as a means to broader ends, not ends unto themselves reflecting more limited interests/capabilities in topics, scopes, or specialized geographies.

Q: Are the *Data Management Plan*, the *Software Productivity and Sustainability plan* and the *Progress from DOE-funded research* sections really important.

A: Yes, all these sections are important. Please review the merit review criteria and the whole FOA to make sure you do not miss important details.

Q: What is the anticipated success rate for this FOA?

A: The anticipated success rate is less than 20%.

Q: What is the page limit for the pre-applications?

A: There is a 4-page limit for pre-applications. References and figures, if included, must fit within the 4-page limit. The list of investigators and collaborators should be added after the last page in the pre-application file and will not count against the page limit.

Q: Should the main thrust of this effort focus on the entire, contiguous U.S. and can it extend beyond?

A: The framework for the 80% contribution from the RGCM program should be developed in a way that can be applied to the entire, contiguous U.S. As you focus on specific problems of interest for addressing near-field effects of human influences on microclimates, the focus can address more regional scales within the U.S. as appropriate to the scientific issues and

particular influences being addressed. Additionally, and insofar as such capabilities can address capabilities and reveal meaningful insights for the non-contiguous states of Alaska and Hawaii, without significantly extending beyond those specific geographies, such efforts are encouraged. As previously mentioned, efforts that focus on just one or two specific spatial domains, one or two model forms, or one or two focused topics or case studies without making the specific connections with broader, encompassing capabilities (as intended by the FOA) will not be considered as strongly as those that do reflect pathways to broader applicability. More simply put, case studies and experimental designs should be developed as a means to broader ends, not ends unto themselves reflecting more limited interests/capabilities in topics, scopes, or specialized geographies.

Q: In the reference to “metrics-driven, multi-model evaluation system,” is the expectation to develop metrics of the physical system, e.g., climate system, alone?

A: We are looking for metrics that evaluate parameters of particular interest necessary for modeling, at high-resolution and fine scales, the climate system. Ideally, but not essential, the work could encompass the near-field feedbacks of human influences as described in the FOA, thereby developing metrics surrounding the fully integrated system. Recognizing the inherent difficulties and early efforts in understanding and modeling, in an integrated framework, the near-field feedbacks, it is not the highest priority or main focus of metrics development. Some consideration of those additional approaches and any tailored metrics may be developed as part of activities developed within themes 2 and 3 of your effort (20% of the work). For example, theme 2 (*human influences on climate on local to regional scales*) calls for “a critical scientific evaluation of the overall efficacy of such an approach.”

Q: Will you consider supporting smaller efforts (~200K/year) relevant to the work?

A: No. The goal is to develop sufficient critical mass of core capabilities, collaborations as required, and an overall integrated approach to make significant progress on this major, multi-disciplinary scientific challenge.

Q: Can FFRDC’s, government agencies, and/or national laboratories apply and can they lead the effort?

A: FFRDC’s, government agencies, and national laboratories cannot lead the effort but they can be collaborators or co-investigators on the proposal. University proposals can be submitted with or without such collaborations but if such collaborations are pursued, they must conform to specific requirements for separate but coordinated companion proposals (see other relevant Q and A).

Q: Do DOE-labs or other FFRDC’s, or government agencies have to be involved in the activity?

A: No. This FOA is intended primarily for universities and involvement of the DOE labs, FFRDCs, and/or government agencies is optional. That being said, the total participation from DOE-labs cannot exceed 40% of the total effort.

Q: Can teams submit more than one proposal, and can they be “coordinated” in some capacity so as to provide highly complementary capabilities (in essence proposing for the full \$4M)?

A: Yes, but each proposal will be examined independently and competitively on its own merits and for how it addresses the full range of needs and opportunities identified in the FOA. “Coordinated” proposals may be mentioned as such but will NOT be treated as required collaborations and will NOT receive preferential consideration either individually or collectively as if they represent a single larger proposal. Accordingly, applicants are strongly encouraged to prepare individual proposals that will stand on their own merits and address the broad needs of the FOA. Following scientific peer review, and as part of a final selection of awardees among those of highest individual merit, DOE will consider balance and relevancy issues in context of two awards.

Q: Can researchers appear in more than one proposal?

A: Researchers can appear in more than one proposal but the combined efforts spanning the proposals should not exceed, in any single or possible pairing of awards, the researcher’s capacity to serve at the specified level of effort. In other words, if a researcher has only 50% time available, no two combinations of proposals where that researcher is included should exceed a 50% allocation.