Appalachian State University
Internal competition guidelines for the National Science Foundation’s Major Research Instrumentation program

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has published guidelines for the Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) program. The information in this message pertains to our internal competition since the NSF limits the number of proposals each institution can submit.

Funding opportunity for major research instrumentation

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Major Research Instrumentation program serves to increase access to shared scientific and engineering instruments for research and research training. The NSF limits the number of MRI proposal submissions per institution to three. No more than two proposal submissions may be for instrument acquisition (the third proposal must be for instrument development).

Internal review process

Appalachian State is allowed to submit three proposals to the NSF MRI program. Appalachian State University’s internal review process is as follows:

Deadline:
Individual faculty members and researchers or teams of researchers are invited to submit concept papers to orsp1@appstate.edu by 12 p.m. Friday, November 15, 2013.

Format:
All concept papers must conform to the following format: 3 pp. maximum, 1 in. margins, and at least 12 point type, in Microsoft Word, ODF, or PDF format. Paper submissions will not be accepted. Works cited do not count against the page limit.

Required content for concept papers:
Concept papers must include:
- Proposal category (instrument acquisition or development)
- Principal investigator name and department
- Co-PI name and department (if applicable)
- Collaborators at other institutions (if applicable)
- Brief description of the proposed instrumentation
- A narrative that addresses the criteria for review (see below)

Required content for previous applicants:
Previous applicants whose proposals were declined by the NSF must submit NSF reviewers’ comments and an explicit statement (1 page maximum) explaining how reviewers’ comments have been addressed. These documents do not count against the 3 page limit.

Criteria for review:
Applicants should succinctly address the following criteria that will be used in the internal review process:
- The intellectual merit of the proposed activity
- The broader impacts of the proposed activity
• The extent to which the proposed project will make a substantial improvement in the institution’s capabilities to conduct leading edge research
• The extent to which the proposed project will provide research experiences for undergraduate students using leading edge facilities
• The extent to which the proposed project will broaden the participation in STEM research by women, underrepresented minorities and persons with disabilities.

Acquisition proposals must also address the following criteria:
• The extent of shared use of the instrumentation for research and/or research training
• The extent to which the management plan includes sufficient infrastructure and technical expertise to allow effective usage of the instrument, including the organization’s commitments for operations and maintenance
• The extent to which the request for operations and maintenance is justified and reasonable in magnitude.
• The extent to which the proposed project plans to use the new or enhanced research capability in research and research training.
• For proposals requesting $1 million or above, the impact of the instrumentation at the national level and on the research community of interest.

Development proposals must also address the following criteria:
• The adequacy of the management plan. Does the plan have a realistic, detailed schedule? Are mechanisms in place to deal with potential risks?
• The availability of appropriate technical expertise to design and construct the instrument.
• The appropriateness of the cost of the new technology.
• The need for development of a new instrument. Will the proposed instrument enable enhanced performance over existing instruments, or new types of measurement or information gathering? Is there a strong need for the new instrument in the larger user community?

The following proposals will be rejected WITHOUT review:
• Proposals received after the deadline
• Proposals that do not adhere to the guidelines.

Calendar:
• 12 p.m. Friday, November 15, 2013: concept papers due to orsp1@appstate.edu
• 12 p.m. Wednesday, November 27, 2013: internal review completed by faculty reviewers
• 12 p.m. Thursday, November 28, 2013: all applicants notified of status
• 5 p.m. Tuesday, December 3, 2013: selected applicants confirm intent to apply
• 5 p.m. Wednesday, January 15, 2014: complete proposals and all supporting materials due to the Office of Sponsored Programs via AGrants
• 5 p.m. Thursday, January 23, 2014: complete proposals due to the NSF.

Useful URLs:
• NSF MRI information page, including link to guidelines: http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/mri/

For more information:
Please contact Pollyanne Frantz (262.7789 / frantzps@appstate.edu) or Amy Love (262.8123 / loveas@appstate.edu).