

**George E. Brown, Jr. Network for Earthquake Engineering Simulation  
Research (NEESR) Program Solicitation NSF 03-589  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the NEESR Solicitation**

1. **Question:** If I work for a “for profit” company, can I be a PI on a NEESR project?

**Answer:** *No – The NEESR solicitation states: “U.S. universities and colleges and U.S. non-profit, non-academic organizations may submit NEESR proposals as the lead organization.”*

2. **Question:** We don’t want to do a single proposal and get charged with overhead charges (IDC) on all of the subawards, can we submit a set of collaborative proposals instead?

**Answer:** *No – The NEESR solicitation states: “NEESR proposals involving more than one organization must be submitted as a single administrative package from the lead academic institution or non-profit organization; collaborative proposals with multiple administrative packages will not be accepted.”*

3. **Question:** Can we use experimental equipment from sites that do not have NEES equipment?

**Answer:** *Yes. The NEESR solicitation states: “NEESR proposals submitted under this solicitation are required to utilize appropriate equipment resources at one or more of the NEES equipment sites operated by the NEES Consortium, Inc.”*

4. **Question:** We are planning to use equipment at a site that is not a NEES site, so as to allow full use of the equipment, it will need to be fully configured to use NEESgrid and the other IT resources. Is NSF going to have a special initiative to invite proposals for equipment sites to be upgraded to become full NEES nodes?

**Answer:** *No. There are no plans to hold a special initiative for funding of sites to provide IT services for NEESgrid usage.*

5. **Question:** Can we include the equipment costs to configure the site for NEESgrid as part of the NEESR proposal?

**Answer:** *Yes. You can include equipment costs to provide IT resources for sites to connect to NEESgrid. However, this will reduce available funding resources for research. Moreover the review panel will determine how the IT equipment costs play into the scope of the proposed research. Equipment costs included for IT improvements that are not essential to the proposed scope of work may be subject to criticism by the review panel.*

*Another option is to submit a separate proposal to CMS under the unsolicited competition to provide the IT resources to connect to NEESgrid.*

6. **Question:** I am going to propose using equipment at a particular NEES site, do I have to have a co-PI from this NEES site as part of my team?

**Answer:** *No, you do not have to have a co-PI from any NEES site that you intend to use. The NEESR solicitation has no requirements for “local co-PI’s” and the review panel will be instructed that this is not required. You should consider including a “local PI” from the NEES site on your project only if makes sense for your project.*

7. **Question:** If we are at an NSF funded Engineering Research Center (ERC), can we submit a proposal with just ERC personnel on the proposal?

**Answer:** *There are no specific NEESR requirements that prevent an ERC from submitting a proposal. ERC's do have infrastructure that will assist in many of the outreach activities required of Small Group and Grand Challenge proposals. However keep in mind that while an ERC can submit a NEESR proposal, that "diversity" is important and will be used in the review. It is important that teams be comprised of broad representation from the community that includes researchers from a variety of organizations and professional backgrounds. GC projects also will be reviewed for geographic diversity as well. The intent is to provide a means to form new partnerships and associations in earthquake engineering research under this new initiative.*

8. **Question:** How important will diversity be the evaluation?

**Answer:** *Diversity is very important. Traditional measures of diversity are of course important. However in NEESR the forming of new research associations to attack these problems is the intent. It is hoped that project teams will be comprised of a mix of professionals from a variety of backgrounds. Many proposal topics can greatly benefit from project teams that have representation of non-engineers, including social scientists, economists, political scientists, geologists, seismologists and others. Moreover, it is hoped that teams will a mix of established and younger researchers so as to being new participants into NSF-supported research.*

9. **Question:** How can the payload projects be incorporated?

**Answer:** *You have two options:*

- *Include the payload(s) in the proposal from the start and build it in as part of the overall effort.*
- *Payloads also can be added as separate proposals after the initial award. These will be separately evaluated and funded and are not part of the initial proposal effort.*

10. **Question:** Can a member of the original project propose a payload project for later funding?

**Answer:** *Yes. There is nothing in the NEESR solicitation to prohibit a PI or co-PI on a NEESR project from proposing a payload project for later funding by NSF. Of course additional duties from a payload project must not adversely affect the existing duties under the original project funding.*

11. **Question:** How many Co-PI's can I have on the proposal? We have many more than four Co-PI's lined up for our Grand Challenge proposal.

**Answer:** *NEESR requires that you follow the existing NSF Grant Proposal Guidelines to prepare the proposal. As such there is a limit to the number of co-PI's that are permitted, and required, to sign the cover sheet. However, the details of the project organization are to be described in the Project Description. It is recognized that the larger projects will require perhaps many more co-PI's than are allowed on the cover sheet. The entire project organization must be described and their duties identified. This is the personnel listing that will be used in the review of the proposal – not just those listed on the cover sheet.*

12. **Question:** My university will not permit Co-PI's from outside the university to sign the NSF proposal cover sheet. Is this a problem?

**Answer:** *No. As stated above, the complete list of project personnel is to be provided in the Project Description. Those signing on the cover sheet may in fact represent only a portion of the overall team.*

13. **Question:** We have a group of four or five people who wish to put together a small proposal for NEESR. The budget request will be small so that we are thinking of doing an Individual Investigator award with this number of Co-PI's. Is this ok?

**Answer:** *There are no limits on the number of project personnel that can be part of any of the three different sizes of projects. The sole limitation is the budget.*

*Also keep in mind that a project team is not required to request all of the funding allowed under the specific project size. So that a small group proposal for example may request annual funding less than the maximum permitted under this category.*

14. **Question:** We are putting together the budget for our proposal and are wondering about how to find out what charges will be required to run our experiments at the NEES site that we have selected. How can we identify these costs?

**Answer:** *You need to make your best effort on the budget. If you can talk with the NEES Consortium or with the specific NEES equipment site(s) that you intend to use, this will provide the best source of information. However, it is recognized that much of this information is being developed now and may not be in place for the development of budgets, especially in this first year.*

*In the absence of better information, assume that the project is being conducted in your laboratory. There are major equipment items that will be in place and not part of the budget. However, consumables such as concrete and steel, strain gages, and other items that will be used up during the experiments will need to be part of your budget. Also travel expenses for your team to assist in construction, testing or demolition also should be considered.*

*Each equipment site will have technicians and other permanent employees that will be provided for your use as part of their NEES funding. However, you should not assume that the actual labor to construct the specimens and do detailed labor on the project will be provided free of charge.*

*The budgets are going to be reviewed prior to final awards and will be adjusted as needed. As such, it is recognized that there is uncertainty in the budgeting process.*

15. **Question:** We would like to include a colleague in our team who is at a foreign university. Can we do this? Will this be viewed as a good thing to do?

**Answer:** *You must follow appropriate NSF rules. If the colleague is a US citizen or permanent resident, they can be included in the proposal and also be included in the budget, receiving NSF funding. If they are a foreign national at a foreign university or other organization, they cannot receive NSF funding. Here they should obtain funding from their own national science agency or other sources. Their funding stream should be identified in the proposal and budget. They should be listed in the project team just as any other member of the team. The only difference is that their funding comes from another source.*

*The goal is to bring together the best team to do the research. If a person can provide important expertise to the project, and they are located outside the United States, then you should consider including them. The review panels will be instructed that project personnel should be judged on their expertise, experience and the contribution that they can bring to the project. Nationalities are not necessarily an important issue in themselves. However, bringing in people whose sole important contribution is that they are located outside the US may not necessarily be a positive attribute in the review.*

16. **Question:** There is an Applied Technology project underway (ATC-58) funded by FEMA that is looking at developing guidelines for performance-based design. Is it acceptable to propose placing NEESR data from this project to be used as part of the ATC-58 effort? Will this be viewed positively in the review?

**Answer:** *This is an important project that is attempting to develop rational information for use in developing design rules based on performance-based design. Projects that develop data that is appropriate to this ATC effort should strongly consider becoming part of this effort. The NEES Data Repository will be in the public domain, as will the data. As such it is entirely appropriate to place public data into the ATC-58 project. Review panels will be instructed that this is an appropriate use for NEESR data.*