



National Science Foundation

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Please Note: FAQs that were posted for the January 27, 2005 deadline still apply for the January 26, 2006 deadline. Additional FAQs were posted for the January 26, 2006 deadline.

Additional FAQs for the January 26, 2006 deadline:

Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) Program Solicitation [NSF 05-515](#) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question: I understand that the MRI program was reviewed by a Committee of Visitors this fall. How will the committee's report affect FY 2006 competition?

Answer: The Committee of Visitors has made a number of recommendations to the MRI program. NSF staff is carefully reviewing these recommendations and some of them will be incorporated in future solicitations. Some internal program management recommendations may be implemented earlier.

Question: I am considering submitting an RUI proposal to the MRI program. Is that appropriate?

Answer: No, you should submit a regular MRI proposal, following guidelines in Solicitation [NSF 05-515](#) and include a statement (in Supplementary Documents, per Section V.A.3) classifying your organization as a non-Ph.D. granting organization.

Question: Is it necessary to address the Broader Impacts Criterion in our Major Research Instrumentation proposal?

Answer: Yes. With *any* NSF proposal you must address the broader impacts criterion. Each Major Research Instrumentation proposal is reviewed based on the following criteria: Intellectual merit, broader impact(s) and management plan. The [review form](http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/mri/mrireviewform.pdf) {<http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/mri/mrireviewform.pdf>} asks the reviewers to delineate the strengths and weaknesses for each of these criteria.

Question: What is the recommended way to address the broader impacts criterion in a MRI proposal?

Answer: As with any other NSF proposal, you should address the broader impacts criterion in a way that works best for your research and education activities and the mission of your organization. You can review several examples of broader impacts at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/broaderimpacts.pdf> .

Question: What is the “optimal” dollar amount that I should request from the MRI program to increase my chances of receiving funding?

Answer: There is no optimal request. The proposals that do the best are the ones that request an instrument that meets the current and future needs of a research group. The MRI program receives a [range of requests, and the awards span this range](http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/mri/rangeofreqawd.pdf) {<http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/mri/rangeofreqawd.pdf>}

Question: I have heard that MRI proposals that are around \$800,000 or higher undergo a multiple-level review process. Is this true?

Answer: MRI proposals are reviewed in directorates and divisions using review procedures that are appropriate for the particular research communities. Typically, both the reviewers and the NSF program directors pay more attention to larger requests to ensure that such awards are meritorious. Each directorate/office may select its two best large proposals (the definition of large may vary from year to year but is typically close to or greater than \$1M) to compete for funds that the MRI Program sets aside for large requests. These proposals are then discussed by representatives of all directorates to ensure the best investment for these set-aside funds. Most of the directorates/offices also fund a number of large requests directly from their own portion of MRI funds.

Question: What is necessary to address in our management plan?

Answer: Management plans required for acquisition and development proposals differ.

For instrument acquisition the plan should detail maintenance and operation projections. Specify how and by whom the requested instrumentation will be operated over the period of three years. Also, describe the technical expertise needed to maintain and operate the instrument with anticipated costs. Describe the facility in which the instrument will be housed. Describe procedures for allocating the new instrument time, if appropriate, and describe plans for attracting new users. Specify the organizational commitments regarding housing and costs associated with instrument maintenance and operations.

For instrument development the management plan should detail the design and construction phases of the project. Also, include plans for making instrument design readily available to other researchers, e.g., for transferring the technology to other U.S. academic, industrial or government laboratories or for commercializing the instrument. Describe the schedule of the project activities, broken into tasks, and estimate cost of each activity. Describe the technical expertise needed to execute each activity. Include the description of parts and materials needed for the construction phase and the associated costs. Specify timelines and deliverables for each activity. List risks associated with each activity and methods for reanalyzing and modifying the project plan if necessary. Describe the organization of the project staff and methods of assessing performance. For each member

of the team include a description of the responsibilities and explain why a given position is necessary for the completion of the design and construction of the new instrument.

FAQs posted for the January 27, 2005 deadline:

**Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) Program Solicitation [NSF 05-515](#)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

The Major Research Instrumentation Program solicitation [NSF 05-515](#) limits the number of proposals from any single organization to three, stating that “an organization may submit or be included as a partner or subawardee in no more than three proposals.” Several questions have been raised about certain entities (multi-campus, and research foundations) and whether or to what extent they may qualify as a separate and distinct organization in calculating the number of proposals from any single organization that NSF will accept under this solicitation. The following questions and answers are provided to assist you in that determination.

Question: My university established a Research Foundation specifically to promote, encourage and provide assistance to the research activities of the university, and the Foundation is a separate not-for-profit organization incorporated under State laws and regulations. The Research Foundation also acts as the fiduciary entity for private contracts and grants, and is lead by a separate governing board and committees. Would a proposal submitted by the Research Foundation count toward our institutional proposal limit or would they be considered a separate entity entitled to submit up to three proposals?

Answer: Although the Research Foundation is a separate entity, it supports the activities of the university and cannot separately be considered an organization with interests distinct from the university. It has no students or faculty of its own separate from the university. Accordingly, research proposals submitted by the Research Foundation will count toward your institutional proposal limit.

Question: We are a separate campus within a multi-campus state university, and have always submitted proposals without having submissions from other separate and distinct campuses count toward an institutional proposal limit. Does the solicitation allow for up to three proposals from each campus?

Answer: Large, multi-campus institutions usually have distinct campuses with their own chancellors, student admissions, and separate research activities. Such a campus which exists as a separate and comprehensive college or university, with both graduate and undergraduate programs, qualifies as a separate entity for purposes of submitting up to three proposals per campus.