National Science Foundation
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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) regarding: "Cyberinfrastructure for the Biological Sciences: Plant Science Cyberinfrastructure Collaborative (PSCIC)" (NSF 06-594)

The Division of Emerging Frontiers (EF) in the Directorate for Biological Science (BIO) of the National Science Foundation recently released a new solicitation: "Cyberinfrastructure for the Biological Sciences: Plant Science Cyberinfrastructure Collaborative (PSCIC)" (http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=13704) Questions about this solicitation are answered below.

FAQs

Q: Will the Collaborative fund new experimental research and new data gathering?

A: No. The Collaborative is an infrastructure project; a resource that enables investigators to use data that already exist or are being generated world-wide to pursue their research goals. Support for de novo data generation must be sought from other funding sources.

Q: What are the grand challenge questions that the Collaborative will focus on and how many such questions will it address?

A: A central goal of the Collaborative is to enable the *community* to identify and answer these questions. Using its cyberinfrastructure resources and synthesis activities such as study groups, virtual interactive environments, etc. the Collaborative will provide mechanisms for the community to continuously evaluate opportunities for progress. This will be an ongoing process, with new questions constantly arising as progress is made. There is *a priori* no limit to the number of questions. Questions at and across all scales and encompassing a wide variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts are appropriate.

Q: How will the Collaborative interact with institutions outside the US? Can funding be provided to foreign organizations?

A: Plant science, computer and information sciences, and cyberinfrastructure are global enterprises and the Collaborative is expected to operate in a fully global context. This includes the formation of effective linkages with foreign partners and integration with other resources around the world. Funds may be requested to support US investigators and students involved in Collaborative activities for work in an international setting and for foreign investigators and students engaged in Collaborative projects to work with the Collaborative in the US. However,

foreign investigators should secure support for their own activities at their home institutions from their own funding sources.

Q: Must the principal investigator (PI) be a plant scientist?

A: There is no requirement that the PI be a plant scientist. The solicitation lists the desired qualifications of the PI (or Collaborative Director). These include broad vision, ability to lead diverse teams, demonstrated leadership in research and education, and proven managerial skills. Note that it is not just the capabilities of the PI, but the ability of the proposed Collaborative as a whole to advance plant science that will be evaluated.

Q. Can institutions from various settings and levels, such as those from EPSCoR states, participate?

A. Participation by a diversity of institutions (including those in EPSCoR states) is welcome and strongly encouraged. The solicitation limits institutional eligibility to U.S. academic institutions and non-profit research organizations directly associated with research or educational activities. It also states that the Collaborative will actively engage a diverse range of institutions. In keeping with this, interested institutions at all levels and settings that meet the eligibility requirements are encouraged to apply in whatever capacity they deem appropriate, whether as lead institution, subawardee, or another participant status.

Q: Given the need for the Collaborative to involve individuals and institutions throughout the U.S. and globally, are separate letters of recommendation or commitment required from each collaborator ?

A: Short letters of commitment from collaborators (individuals and institutions) who are key to the Collaborative effort as stated in the proposal may be included in Section I, *Special Information and Supplementary Documentation*. Letters of recommendation should not be included. The difference is that a letter of commitment documents a contribution (for example of time, expertise, or other tangible contributions) to be made to the project whereas a letter of recommendation provides only an endorsement of the project. Applicants are encouraged to consider what is needed to evaluate the credibility/feasibility of important collaborations while avoiding overwhelming reviewers with a large volume of extraneous letters. In this light, providing a letter from every information resource (database) that might be linked to the Collaborative would be excessive. Providing a letter from those specific information resources whose material contributions and/or active cooperation are required to meet the explicit goals of the Collaborative is advisable.