

NERRS Science Collaborative 2017 RFP Feedback Report

The NERRS Science Collaborative is an adaptive program. We work to refine and adjust our approach continually to meet our goal of delivering highly relevant, usable science that addresses coastal management problems important to the reserves. Our adaptive approach is driven by feedback from program participants and the NERRS, and direction provided by NOAA.

This document summarizes the 2017 Science Collaborative RFP feedback process and the feedback we received.

2017 RFP Feedback Process

We invited feedback on the 2017 Science Collaborative RFPs using two different avenues:

1. Written responses via an anonymous, web-based feedback form; and
2. Comments and questions via a feedback webinar for RFP participants and all NERRS sectors.

Web-based feedback form

Participants in the 2017 Research and Integrated Assessment and the 2017 and 2018 Science Transfer competitions, along with all of the reserve sectors were invited by email to provide feedback using an anonymous, web-based form. We received 17 responses; of those that self-identified, approximately half were reserve staff and most had participated in at least one Science Collaborative competition during the past two years.

Feedback webinar

The same group that received the feedback form was also invited to participate in a webinar, held October 3, 2017. On the webinar, the 11 attendees (largely reserve staff) were invited to elaborate on the feedback we had received so far and share additional input and feedback.

2017 Feedback

This is the third year of the current iteration of the Science Collaborative running similar RFPs and collecting feedback on them. Each year, we have solicited and received feedback from applicants and the NERR System and made adjustments accordingly. This year's feedback data show that the RFP is generally well understood and the process is working well.

Figures 1-3 summarize the responses we received to three key performance questions from the web-based feedback form. Overall, the responses indicate that the changes made



to the competitions based on the prior year's feedback were useful and the proposal application purpose, requirements, and submission processes were clear. Responses also indicate that the various elements of the review process were clear, however open-ended comments about the review process revealed that it could be better explained.

Specifically, more clarity could be provided about the role of the review panel for the research and integrated assessment competition. The panel follows proposals from the pre-proposal stage to the final panel meeting, serving as the connecting link throughout the multiple steps of the review process. The panel is also tasked with resolving conflicts among written reviews and is the final recommending body to NOAA. In future RFPs, we will make an effort to articulate this role more clearly in the RFP and Q&A webinars.

This year's feedback also indicated that improvements could be made to the panel summary documents returned to applicants with a funding decision. We know that these documents are the most important piece of feedback applicants receive after undertaking the intensive process of developing an application. We strive to guide panelists to make these summaries as clear and meaningful to applicants as possible. Each year we work to adjust and sharpen our guidance to the panel to ensure the best summary products. Based on feedback comments received this year, we acknowledge that there is still room for improvement to these summaries and commit to assisting panelists in producing even better summaries. Example areas for improvement include ensuring that multi-step review processes more clearly build on one another, that there are more suggestions for improvement, and that there is more explanation and context for how the panel made its recommendations.

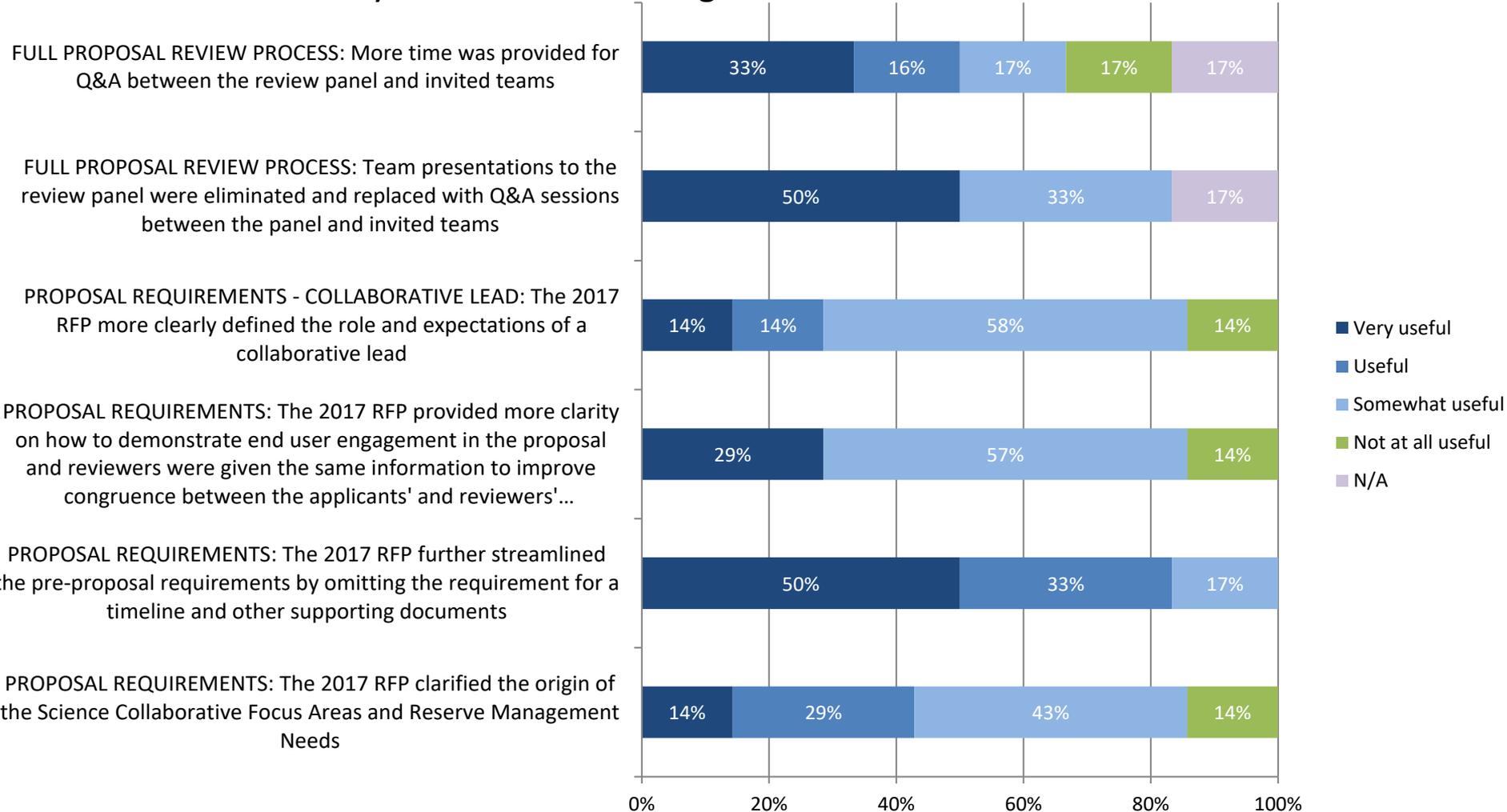
We thank everyone who participated in this year's RFPs and provided feedback on the process. Understanding what works well and where improvements can be made is critical to ensuring we are delivering the best program to the NERR System. We take your feedback seriously and look forward to continuing to evolve and improve the program.

Please do not hesitate to provide additional input by email (nerrs-info@umich.edu) or phone (Maeghan Brass: 734-763-0727, Lynn Vaccaro: 734-763-0056, Dieter Bouma: 734-763-0061).



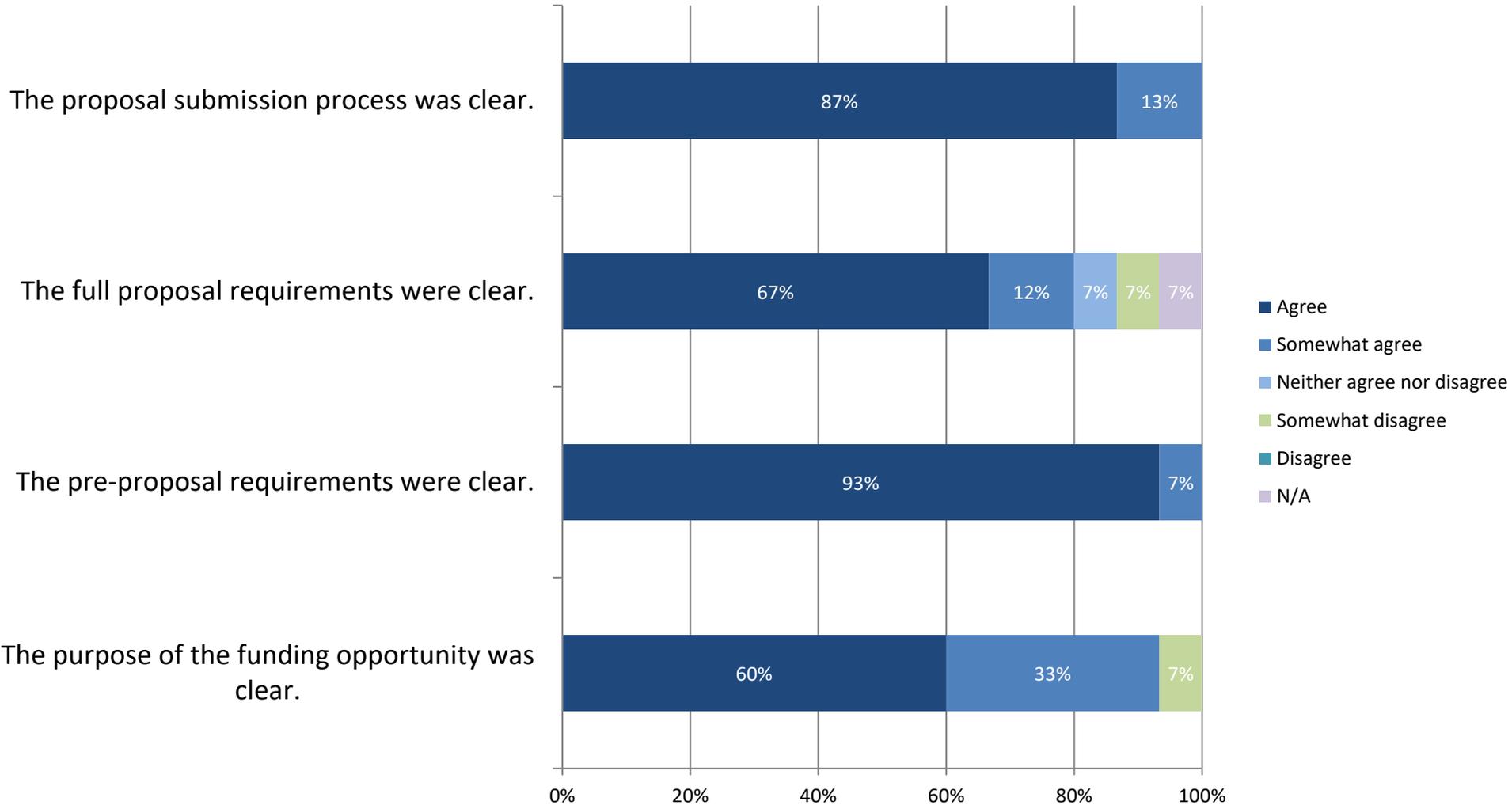
Changes made to 2017 RFP

Please rate how useful you found each change to be



2017 Application Process

Please indicate how strongly you agree with each of the following statements:



2017 Proposal Review Process

Please indicate how strongly you agree with each of the following statements:

