



**National Estuarine  
Research Reserve System  
Science Collaborative**

**National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative**

**2021 Request for Science Transfer Proposals**

*~ Science Transfer Grants: Promoting the Use of Science ~*

**RFP Release: October 6, 2020**

**Proposals Due: February 25, 2021**

***About the NERRS Science Collaborative***

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Science Collaborative's primary goal is to support the co-development and application of relevant and usable knowledge to address critical coastal management issues identified by the NERRS in order to improve the long-term stewardship of the nation's estuaries. The Science Collaborative works to achieve this goal through regular funding opportunities, project support and management, and an adaptive approach to program implementation that fosters ongoing learning and improvement.

The Science Collaborative is managed through a cooperative agreement between the University of Michigan and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

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## **Overview**

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Science Collaborative is soliciting proposals for up to two-year science transfer grants. Science transfer projects share information and techniques within and beyond the reserve system by transferring existing information, approaches, and/or techniques within the reserve system and with partners. Projects leverage existing research and identify new opportunities to put science to work for the benefit of coastal communities and ecosystems. All proposals must adopt an end user<sup>1</sup>-driven approach and articulate how the proposed work directly involves at least one reserve and relates to at least one [Science Collaborative focus area](#).

## **Funding Amount**

The Science Collaborative is interested in funding a variety of science transfer projects with up to two-year project periods and a range of scopes and budgets, with each award not to exceed \$100,000 total.

## **Eligibility for Funding**

Projects funded under this RFP must be developed in collaboration with staff from at least one of [NOAA's 29 National Estuarine Research Reserve sites](#) and have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s).

This funding opportunity is open to applicants from United States (U.S.) academic institutions, non-government organizations, and non-federal public sectors working in partnership with NERRS staff.

Each proposal must designate a fiduciary institution and a fiscal lead<sup>2</sup> that will receive and manage the award if granted. Researchers from institutions outside the U.S. cannot serve as the fiscal lead, but can be included in the project and may be funded by sub-awards through an eligible U.S. entity. Federal employees and agencies are not eligible to receive funding from the Science Collaborative but may participate as unfunded project team members.

## **Proposal Submission Process**

Potential applicants should review the application process as outlined in this request for proposals (RFP) and follow the directions to submit a proposal by February 25, 2020. Proposals include a seven-page maximum narrative that describes the need being

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<sup>1</sup> End users are defined as individuals or groups in a position to apply the information or tools being produced, evaluated, or transferred through a Science Collaborative project in a way that is of direct consequence to the ecological, social, or economic integrity of a reserve(s) and/or surrounding watershed(s). Examples of end users include, but are not limited to, reserve staff, and public, private, or non-governmental decision/policy makers, including landowners, regulators, resource managers, land use planners, leaders of impacted communities and educators at all levels.

<sup>2</sup> In most cases, the project lead is also the fiscal lead. In cases where the project lead is not employed by the institution that will receive and manage the grant, a project team member from the fiduciary institution may serve as fiscal lead and will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the proposed scope of work is completed.



addressed, outputs and outcomes, general approach, team members, and appendices. Applicants must submit their proposal and project budget spreadsheet through an online submission form accessible through the Science Collaborative website. All applicants will receive feedback on their proposals.

## Key Dates

Date	Activity
January 7, 2021 at 3:30pm EST	<a href="#">Webinar: RFP Question &amp; Answer</a>
February 25, 2021 by 11:59pm EST	Proposals due
March 10, 2021	Manager proposal assessments due
June 2021	Funding notifications
September 1, 2021	Anticipated project start date

## Supporting Documents

All supporting documents, including project examples, and access to the online application form can be found at:

<http://nerrsciencecollaborative.org/science-transfer>.

## About Science Transfer Grants

The primary emphasis of science transfer grants is to build a stronger and more connected [National Estuarine Research Reserve System \(NERRS\) network](#) through cross-reserve exchange and learning, with increased opportunities to share information with key partners. Projects may focus on cross-reserve collaboration and knowledge-transfer, transfer of ideas across programs within a single reserve, or between reserves and key partners.

Science transfer grants support the transfer and application of existing information and approaches from the natural, social, or physical sciences to support reserve programs across all reserve sectors (i.e., training, stewardship, education). Proposals must articulate how the proposed work directly involves at least one reserve and at least one NOAA-identified [Science Collaborative focus area](#) (hereafter, “focus areas”). Teams are encouraged to include all relevant NERRS sectors in project planning, development, and implementation.

Science transfer projects leverage and expand the impact of research, education, and training programs in partner organizations or at a reserve. Projects may, but are not required to, be tied to existing or previous projects supported by the Science Collaborative. Projects that develop products from the [System-wide Monitoring Program \(SWMP\)](#) and/or Sentinel Sites, particularly the development of regional and national syntheses that address Science Collaborative focus areas, are encouraged.

Science transfer funding is not intended to support new data collection, except for the purpose of a needs assessment, refining a method, training, or evaluation as part of a transfer activity.

Example activities within science transfer projects include but are not limited to:

- Workshops, summits, and targeted training programs;
- The development of K-12 educational resources that help transfer new research to students and teachers, for example, in support of Teachers on the Estuary (TOTE) programs;
- The aggregation, analysis, and synthesis of scientific information, including existing monitoring datasets and stakeholder perspectives, to address a specific management need identified by a reserve;
- The transfer of a successful outreach, communications, or educational initiative from one reserve to another reserve(s);
- The development of outreach and training supporting the transfer and application of research to a new group of decision makers to inform, for example, local land use planning, coastal management, or climate change adaptation; and
- The creation of information transfer and dissemination frameworks and networks within and between reserves and stakeholders.



## Outputs

Project outputs are specific products or events that are developed during or upon project completion. Examples of project outputs include, but are not limited to the following:

- Curricula;
- A suite of integrated, end user driven communication strategies and products, such as factsheets, informational websites, technical reports, visuals, or interactive communication tools;
- Decision support tools and guides;
- Development and implementation of a targeted training module, e.g., teacher workshop, technical training for land managers or other local decision makers; and
- Issue-specific public outreach.

At least one output must include an activity that shares the project approach and results with the broader reserve community, such as a poster or session at a conference or the NERRS/NERRA Annual Meeting, a system-wide webinar, or a reserve sector meeting.

## Outcomes

Project outcomes are the expected impacts of the project process and outputs. Examples of project outcomes include, but are not limited to the following:

- Changes in management strategies that result from science transfer activities on reserves, within the watershed affecting the reserve, or to the surrounding region;
- Changes in the level of awareness, knowledge, or behavior among end user audiences as a result of the science transfer effort;
- Application of lessons learned in one reserve to another reserve or set of reserves;
- Creation of sustainable information/knowledge networks; and
- Greater alignment and impact of reserve programs, such as through the application of common outreach approaches at numerous reserves.

## Required Elements

In order for proposals to achieve the purpose of this RFP, they must include three elements. All proposals must:

- 1) Clearly connect to at least one Science Collaborative focus area;
- 2) Directly involve at least one reserve and have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s); and
- 3) Clearly identify, engage, and be responsive to the interests and needs of end users.

## 1) Science Collaborative Focus Areas

NOAA's Office for Coastal Management has identified a set of focus areas for projects supported by the Science Collaborative. All Science Collaborative projects, including science transfer projects, must be related to at least one of the following focus areas:

- Research and monitoring related to biophysical, social, economic, and behavioral impacts of habitat change resulting from **climate change** and/or **coastal development**;
- Understanding how an **ecosystem service approach** can be utilized to support the protection and restoration of estuarine systems;
- Understanding the impacts of **land use change, eutrophication, and contamination** in estuarine ecosystems and the options for management and mitigation;
- Investigating options for improving estuarine **habitat resilience**; processes for identifying, prioritizing, and restoring sites; and monitoring and evaluating success; and
- **Syntheses of long-term monitoring data** and information, originating from programs such as the NERRS System-wide Monitoring Program and associated monitoring efforts, to develop regional and national data products that address coastal management priorities for the NERRS and NOAA.

## 2) Reserve Engagement

All science transfer projects must directly involve at least one of the 29 reserve sites within [NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve System \(NERRS\)](#), project plans must be developed in collaboration with reserve staff, and the proposal must have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s).

Proposals should outline a plan for collaboration with relevant reserve staff and offer a clear and specific explanation of how the proposed project will benefit and inform the work of the reserve. Relevant reserve managers and staff must be engaged in the development of project plans and given an opportunity to offer feedback on the proposal, particularly sections that explain the project's relevance to reserve programs, local management needs, proposed project roles for reserve staff, and any reserve resources to be provided to the project.

The proposal title page must identify a lead reserve as well as any additional reserves that will be participating in the proposed work. For each proposal that engages their reserve, managers will be asked to confirm that:

- 1) The proposing team engaged reserve staff sufficiently during the proposal development process; and



- 2) The reserve manager agrees with plans for how the reserve would contribute to the work (e.g., staff roles in the project) and any funding allocated to support those contributions.

Reserve managers will have an opportunity to identify any related concerns through a proposal assessment form that is submitted directly to the Science Collaborative, separate from the proposal. If a reserve is not directly engaged in the proposed work, that reserve should not be listed as a partner on the project title page and the reserve manager will not complete a proposal assessment. ***It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the relevant reserve manager(s) is adequately consulted during project development and receives a copy of the final proposal.***

### 3) Collaboration and End User Integration

Science transfer proposals must clearly identify, engage, and be responsive to the interests and needs of end users<sup>3</sup>—the intended users of project outputs.

Proposals should clearly identify a set of primary end users for the project, including groups invested in the proposal topic that are in a position to apply the information or tools being produced or transferred through the project.

Because this grant program is meant to strengthen the reserve system, it is appropriate to think of the reserves as one of the project's end users, even if the project is led by reserve staff. Applicants should be explicit about which aspects of the reserve program will benefit from the project (i.e., land stewardship, education, training, monitoring, etc.) and will use project outputs.

In many cases, science transfer projects will be designed to meet the needs of an audience that extends beyond a primary set of end users. This secondary audience (which could be considered another tier or category of users) should also be clearly identified and the proposal should demonstrate responsiveness to their needs; however, the level of collaboration and mechanisms for soliciting input may vary for different groups of users. For example, a project may involve a close collaboration between researchers and educators to develop a new K-12 teacher training module that builds on recent research. Reserve educators may be considered the project's primary end users because they will be delivering the training, but the proposal also should explain how the needs of K-12 teachers informed the project design and how their feedback will be incorporated.

Science transfer proposals should outline a collaborative process that engages end users in project planning and implementation to help ensure that the project activities and outputs

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<sup>3</sup> End users are defined as individuals or groups in a position to apply the information or tools being produced, refined, or transferred through a Science Collaborative project in a way that is of direct consequence to the ecological, social, or economic integrity of a reserve(s) and/or surrounding watershed(s). Examples of end users include, but are not limited to, reserve staff, and public, private, or non-governmental decision/policy makers, including landowners, regulators, resource managers, land use planners, leaders of impacted communities, and educators at all levels.



are useful and impactful. This includes specific mechanism(s) for soliciting end users' input and feedback *during* the project in order to enhance the team's ability to confirm and/or adapt their outputs. Examples of these mechanisms include, but are not limited to:

- Questionnaires, individual consultations, or focus group meetings to solicit input or inform final products;
- Structured processes for formal or informal end user review of draft project products; and
- Workshop or training evaluations to provide feedback or input on final products and/or future efforts.

End user representatives can be incorporated into the project team if they will be contributing significant time, expertise, or other resources to project activities. In these cases, input can be solicited through regular team meetings and collaborative development of project products.

### **Additional Considerations**

Proposals that are selected for funding will be reviewed to determine if a data sharing plan or environmental review is needed. If either is required, applicants may be asked to complete some additional steps prior to grant contracting to support the environmental review process or to develop a data sharing plan that complies with federal regulations. If this process leads to changes in the proposed scope of work, applicants will have an opportunity to make small adjustments to their budget, but cannot change the total award size.

Science transfer funding is not intended to support new data collection, except for the purpose of a needs assessment, evaluation, training, or refining a method as part of a transfer activity. Therefore, projects rarely need a formal data sharing plan or full environmental review. However, if there will be some data collection in connection with the proposed work, please pay particular attention to the [Data Management Considerations](#) and [Environmental Compliance Review](#) sections at the end of this RFP, which include contacts for any questions that arise during proposal development.



## Proposal Requirements

**Proposals must be submitted by 11:59pm EDT on Thursday, February 25, 2021.**

Proposals must be provided as a single pdf file using 12-point Times New Roman font, no less than single spaced, with one-inch margins, and be organized using the headers below. Proposals must include a title page, seven-page maximum narrative, and appendices as outlined below. Budget tables should be submitted as an excel file and also included as an appendix within the proposal PDF. **Proposals not meeting these requirements, including budget and header requirements, will be removed from the competition without further review.**

### Title Page

The title page should include the following information using these headers:

- 1) Project Title
- 2) Project Lead / Fiscal Lead<sup>4</sup> (primary contact for the project) –
  - a) Title / Position
  - b) Institution
  - c) Telephone Number
  - d) Postal Mailing Address
  - e) E-mail Address
- 3) Additional Team Members (anyone receiving project resources or contributing significant time or resources to the project) – Name, institution, telephone, email, and role in the project.
- 4) Fiduciary Information – Indicate the institution that would receive and manage the grant contract. Please provide a point of contact, including email address, to receive fiscal questions. The fiduciary institution is responsible for managing any project subcontracts, tracking grant-related spending, and submitting invoices to the University of Michigan for reimbursement on behalf of the grant.
- 5) Name of Reserve(s) – Identify a lead reserve for the project. If relevant, identify any additional reserves that are directly engaged in the project.<sup>5</sup> Multiple reserves may collaborate on a proposal but a *single, lead* reserve must be identified here.

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<sup>4</sup> In most cases, the project lead is also the fiscal lead. In rare cases where the project lead is not employed by the institution that will receive and manage the grant, a project team member from the fiduciary institution may serve as fiscal lead and will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the proposed scope of work is completed.

<sup>5</sup> See the [Reserve Engagement](#) section for additional guidance on reserve involvement. Managers of each listed reserve will have an opportunity to complete a proposal assessment and provide directly to the Science Collaborative program any concerns about the reserve's engagement in the proposal and their anticipated contribution to the project.



- a) Lead reserve<sup>6</sup>
- b) Any additional reserves
- 6) Budget Request – Requested dollar amount. The total budget may not exceed \$100,000.
- 7) Project Duration – Please indicate project duration in number of months. Projects should start September 1, 2021 and end no later than August 31, 2023.
- 8) Project Summary – Provide a 200-word summary of the proposed project that is suitable for a non-technical audience. Please include the project’s objectives, responsiveness to end user needs, planned outputs, and anticipated outcomes.

### Project Narrative (7-page maximum)

The proposal narrative should be written in a way that will be compelling to a diverse set of reviewers, including individuals with expertise in outreach, education and training, natural and social sciences, collaborative processes and coastal management. Reviewers may not be familiar with reserve programs.

The project narrative **should not exceed seven pages** and should be organized using the following five headers in this order.

- 1) Statement of Need and Response to End User Needs<sup>7</sup> – Be sure to include the following information, using an organizational structure that best suits the proposal topic.
  - State the need for this science transfer project, provide any background and context necessary to understand the project’s purpose, and indicate how the project relates to at least one Science Collaborative [focus area](#).
  - Describe the project’s relevance to the National Estuarine Research Reserve site(s) involved in the project and explain how the project will inform and advance the work of that reserve(s).
  - Describe what the project will accomplish, indicating the type of data, knowledge, or tools that will be transferred and the entities involved in the transfer. Clearly identify the project end user(s)<sup>8</sup> and explain how they will use project outputs in their work.
- 2) Project Approach – Applicants are encouraged to show how collaborative and technical elements of the project will be integrated to achieve the desired outputs

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<sup>6</sup> The lead reserve is the reserve most engaged in project planning and execution. If a proposal is led by a non-reserve entity, the lead reserve may serve as an additional point of contact for reserve and NOAA partners.

<sup>7</sup> For projects NOT led by reserve staff, it is particularly important that project partners from participating reserves are consulted in the development of this section.

<sup>8</sup> The section above on [Collaboration and End User Engagement](#) provides a definition of end user and explains how applicants may find it helpful to identify different tiers of users or audiences for a transfer effort.



and outcomes. Be sure to include the following information using an organizational structure that best suits the proposal topic.

- Provide a detailed description of the project approach, including the specific activities and products that will help to achieve the refinement, transfer and application of existing data, knowledge, tools, or techniques. Identify specific data sources, methods, and tools you will use to develop the planned outputs.
  - Outline the consultation and collaboration process that will be used to ensure that the science transfer project aligns with the interests and needs of intended project end users. Describe when and how the project team will solicit input from end users and the type of project decisions that will be influenced by that input (e.g., an initial needs assessment survey to determine scope, or a workshop to test a beta version of a new tool).
- 3) Outputs and Outcomes – Provide a list of the planned outputs and anticipated outcomes, clearly distinguishing between the two. Clearly state how the outputs meet the end user and reserve needs discussed in the “statement of need” and how the outputs relate to the anticipated outcomes. Explain how the usability of the outputs will be sustained beyond the project period, e.g., who will be responsible for disseminating products and how these products will be updated/maintained.
- *Output* – A specific product that is developed during or upon project completion; there may be several outputs associated with a project. See [example outputs](#) provided above. Outputs must include an activity that shares the project approach and results with the broader reserve community.
  - *Outcome* – An expected impact of the project process and outputs; there may be several outcomes associated with a project. See [example outcomes](#) provided above.
- 4) Team – Identify each team member and describe each person’s role and contribution to the project. Indicate each team member’s expertise, referencing resumes as appropriate to demonstrate how the team is well qualified to implement the project. Briefly describe how the team will collaborate and coordinate their efforts. Two-page resumes for all team members must be included in Appendix E.
- 5) Data Accessibility – For projects using existing datasets, identify who owns them, and how the project team will access them. Projects that propose using SWMP or Sentinel Site data must indicate which specific SWMP or Sentinel Site data will be used. If a critical dataset is not publicly available, demonstrate permission for accessing the data by including letters of support in Appendix D.

## Appendices

- A. Timeline – Using the required [timeline template](#) found on the application website, provide the following:



- i. Project start and end dates. Projects should start on September 1, 2021 and end no later than August 31, 2023.
  - ii. A schedule with key tasks and deliverables. This schedule must:
    - a) Identify significant tasks, including end user engagement;
    - b) Reference all outputs identified in the project narrative; and
    - c) Indicate when all project outputs will be completed.
- B. Budget & Budget Narrative – Use the [budget template](#) found on the application website to provide an itemized estimate of all project costs. **Budget tables should be submitted as an excel file and also included as an appendix within the proposal PDF.**

The total amount requested must not exceed \$100,000. **Proposals with budgets that exceed \$100,000 will be disqualified from the competition.**

Multi-reserve projects are complex and require an efficient subcontracting process to ensure project teams are able to begin their work quickly. It is important to identify a fiduciary institution and fiscal point of contact that is familiar with the subcontracting process and has mechanisms currently in place in order to facilitate the sub-award process effectively.

The overall budget must include a separate budget for each subcontract (using the budget template). The Science Collaborative will reimburse overhead costs up to the subcontractor's federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.

Budget Narrative – Provide a budget narrative to justify expenses in all budget categories. Please note the following:

- i. Personnel costs must be broken out by individual team member, including number of months and percentage of time requested.
- ii. Any unnamed personnel, e.g., reserve staff, graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, or technicians, must be identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained as described above.
- iii. The contribution of any personnel to the project goals shall be explained even if not receiving support under this grant. In particular, all reserve staff time anticipated for the project must be accounted for, even if funds are not being requested to support that time.
- iv. Equipment costs must describe the equipment to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of project goals. If a piece of equipment costs more than \$5,000, a cost analysis will be required. If a lease vs. purchase analysis cannot be completed at the time of proposal development, a statement is needed that the analysis will be completed before the equipment is purchased. This analysis will compare the cost of purchasing a piece of equipment against the cost of leasing the same piece of equipment.

The benefits of leasing or purchasing should be addressed in this analysis as well.

- v. Travel costs must be broken out by number of people traveling, destination, and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Domestic and foreign travel should be itemized separately. Foreign travel must comply with the Fly America Act which limits the use of foreign flag carriers. For more information, go to <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/103191>.
- vi. Overhead may be charged up to the fiscal institution's federally negotiated indirect cost rate. If an institution does not have a federally negotiated indirect rate, they are able to use the de minimis rate of 10%. Unless otherwise noted in the indirect cost rate agreement, indirect costs may only be applied to the first \$25,000 of each subcontract.

The budget narrative should explain the project's IDC rate and which project expenses are used for calculating the total indirect amount.<sup>9</sup>

- vii. A separate budget narrative is required for each subcontract, including the same detail as is required for the overall budget.

If a proposal includes an estimate for a subcontract, for example, for work that will be competitively bid after the project is awarded, the budget narrative should include a summary of and justification for the subcontract services. If the project is selected for funding, exact costs must be provided before funding is awarded. In all cases, contractual expenses will be capped at the amount listed in the budget.

- C. Fiscal Letters of Commitment – The fiduciary institution must provide a letter of commitment approving the proposal submission, including approval of any subcontracts included in the proposal. A letter of commitment is also required from each subcontracting institution. There is no standard form for this letter. Letters of commitment may be addressed to “Members of the Review Panel” or the project lead.
- D. Letters of Support – Provide letters from individuals and/or partners confirming contributions to and support for the project. Include letters from the following:
  - i. Primary end users who will be engaged throughout the project and will use the outputs. In their letters of support, end users should describe in their own words: (i) how they have been engaged with the development of the proposal; (ii) how they see themselves continuing to inform the project if funded; and (iii) how they anticipate using project outputs. Reviewers will be looking for personalized, signed letters on an organization's letterhead to confirm end user engagement and understand how the work will meet their needs. **All proposals must include at least one and no more than three**

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<sup>9</sup> For example, applicants should indicate if the project will use a federally negotiated indirect cost rate, something lower, or a de minimus 10% rate. In addition, the budget narrative should indicate which project costs (e.g., salaries and travel but not tuition) the IDC rate is being applied to for the calculations of the total indirect amount.



**letters of support from end users, not including letters related to the two elements below, ii and iii.<sup>10</sup>**

- ii. Team members or partners included in the project approach but not funded in the budget.
  - iii. Individuals, groups, and/or institutions that have agreed to provide data/access to data or other resources necessary for the project not otherwise accounted for in the budget.
- E. Resumes – Two-page resumes for each team member are required. Resumes will be used by reviewers to determine whether the team has the requisite skills and experience to undertake the project successfully.

## How to Submit Your Proposal

**Proposals must be submitted by 11:59pm EDT on Thursday, February 25, 2021.**

Access the application page by clicking the “Begin your application” button at:  
[www.nerrsciencecollaborative.org/science-transfer](http://www.nerrsciencecollaborative.org/science-transfer)

You will need a U-M Friend Account to start an application and submit your proposal. You will be prompted to login or create an account when you access the application page.

Once you have logged in, you will need to complete an online application form, upload your proposal and your budget spreadsheet, and “save” your application. The application form mirrors some of the same content in the proposal title page.

You will receive a single confirmation email when you have successfully saved your proposal for the first time. The email will include a link you may use to return to your proposal application page and make edits until the deadline. Your saved application will be automatically submitted at 11:59pm EST on February 25, 2021 and you will not receive another confirmation email.

If you do not receive a confirmation email after the first time you’ve saved your application, your proposal was not saved properly and you should resave or contact us directly at [nerrs-info@umich.edu](mailto:nerrs-info@umich.edu).

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<sup>10</sup> More than one organization may sign a single letter of support if their views are similar. If more than three end user letters of support are submitted, the subsequent letters will be removed from the proposal before the review process.



## Review and Selection Process

Proposals must comply with all submission instructions and guidelines to be considered for funding. Proposals not meeting these requirements will be removed from the competition without further review.

## Evaluation Criteria

Each compliant proposal will be evaluated based on how well it met each of the criteria listed below.

- 1) Appropriateness
  - a) Does the project address at least one Science Collaborative focus area?
  - b) Does the proposal directly involve at least one reserve?
  - c) Does the proposal foster the transfer and application of existing knowledge or tools?
- 2) Response to End User Need
  - a) Does the proposal identify the appropriate end users and clearly articulate their needs?
  - b) Will the outputs meet the identified end user's needs, as demonstrated in letters of support from the end user(s)?
- 3) Approach
  - a) Is the approach appropriate for achieving the project outputs?
  - b) Are the methods sufficiently detailed and technically sound?
  - c) Does the approach detail a process for engaging end users that is tailored to the needs of the end users?
- 4) Feasibility
  - a) Does the team have the appropriate expertise and experience for the proposed technical methods and end user engagement?
  - b) Is the timeline realistic for the proposed work, including sufficient time for soliciting and incorporating end user feedback, and completing proposed project outputs?
  - c) Is the budget appropriate for the proposed work?
  - d) Does the proposal demonstrate access and/or availability of necessary resources, including data or staff time not covered by the funding requested?
- 5) Potential Impact: Are the proposed approach and outputs likely to lead to desired outcomes?

## Review Process

The review process for science transfer proposals is as follows.





- 1) **Minimum requirements assessment** - Proposals must be submitted by February 25, 2021. Science Collaborative staff will review all submitted proposals to confirm that they meet the requirements as described in this RFP, including adherence to proposal specifications (e.g., font size, page limit, title page, budget limit) and inclusion of specified headers and appendices. Proposals not meeting these requirements will be removed from the competition without further review.
- 2) **Written review** - Proposals will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary panel composed of collaboration, communications, and outreach experts, and relevant technical experts. Each proposal will be assigned three non-conflicted panelists who will develop written reviews according to the evaluation criteria outlined above. In their written reviews, panelists will be asked to provide comments to explain their rating and, where possible, suggestions for improvement.
- 3) **Panel review** - Panelists will convene to discuss the outcomes of the written reviews. For each proposal, panelists will discuss strengths and weaknesses and any discrepancies among the written reviews. Panelists will identify projects that are supportable in rank order as input to the final selection process as outlined in the following section. Applicants will receive a copy of the panel summary along with the blinded written reviews.

## Selection Process

Final funding decisions will be based on the panel's recommended rank ordering of supportable projects. In consultation with the NOAA Program Manager, the NERRS Science Collaborative shall award grants in rank order unless a proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following secondary selection factors:

- Concerns identified by reserve managers related to their level of engagement during proposal development, or the level of support for reserve contributions to the project;<sup>11</sup>
- Availability of funding;
- Balance/distribution of funds geographically by NERRS regions; and
- No reserve will serve as the lead reserve on more than one science transfer project, except in cases where a reserve is leading a project that involves three or more reserves.<sup>12</sup>

Funding notifications are expected in June 2021.

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<sup>11</sup> See section on [Reserve Engagement](#) for additional details. Managers of participating reserves will have an opportunity to share any concerns via a proposal assessment form. If concerns are not easily addressed, they could affect the final selection of proposals for funding.

<sup>12</sup> A reserve may lead as many science transfer proposals as desired, but they are unlikely to receive funding for more than one science transfer project that they are leading if those proposals involve fewer than three reserves. A reserve may be the lead reserve on more than one science transfer award this year if the additional projects involve three or more reserves. This criterion will be applied to proposals submitted to this RFP independent of other Science Collaborative funding opportunities.

## **Data Management Considerations**

Science transfer funding is not intended to support new data collection, except for the purpose of a needs assessment, refining a method, training, or evaluation as part of a transfer activity. Therefore, projects do not typically need to adhere to federal data sharing requirements.

If a project is proposing the collection of natural or social science data (e.g., surveys or interviews, demonstration or training test data, calibrating a protocol, or user experience studies) it is important to consider the purpose of that work. In general, natural and social science data collection that is intended to inform the development of a program or product (such as a needs assessment or methods training) or to evaluate a program or tool is not subject to federal data sharing requirements.

In contrast, if data are also being used to answer a broader research question and the team is hoping to develop a scholarly publication about their findings, then teams may need to develop a data sharing plan. For data collection involving human subjects, teams should consult with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) that oversees human subject research at their institution.

The NERRS Centralized Data Management Office (CDMO) is available for consultations with applicants and funded teams to help them navigate IRB and data sharing requirements. If a science transfer project needs a formal data sharing plan, applicants will be asked to develop one after being selected for funding and prior to grant contracting.

Any questions about data management can be directed to the CDMO (Dwayne Porter, 803-777-4615; [porter@sc.edu](mailto:porter@sc.edu)).



## **Environmental Compliance Review**

Applicants should be aware of the following environmental compliance requirements:

NOAA requires that, prior to award, every Science Collaborative project recommended for funding undergo review for potential impacts to the environment. This initial review process by NOAA takes a minimum of 30 days.

Projects that are identified by NOAA as potentially impacting the environment, e.g., projects that involve field work, or are conducted in areas where historic or archeological artifacts might be present, will require further review by the agency.<sup>13</sup> NOAA will review for compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act related to essential fish habitat (EFH) impacts. If the proposed project is placing fixed structures in the environment, consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may also be required. NHPA, ESA, and EFH reviews take a minimum of 30 days to complete, but can often take 60 to 90 days.

If you have questions about your project regarding this requirement, please direct them to the NOAA Program Manager (Doug George, [douglas.george@noaa.gov](mailto:douglas.george@noaa.gov), 510-637-3796 ).

## **Proprietary Information & Intellectual Property**

Applicants should be aware that the disclosure of patentable ideas, trade secrets, and privileged, confidential, commercial, or financial information can hinder an applicant's chances to secure patents, trademarks, or copyrights.

Proprietary information of this kind should only be included in proposals when it is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project. Applicants must mark proprietary information clearly in the proposal with appropriate labels, such as, "The following is (proprietary or confidential) information that (proposing entity) requests not be released to persons outside the NERRS Science Collaborative, except for purposes of review and evaluation."

Please protect your intellectual property rights at the proposal preparation stage as appropriate. This will allow you to speak freely about ideas and avoid the inadvertent loss of intellectual property rights. You should contact your institution's technology transfer or intellectual property office to determine the best way to protect your intellectual property.

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<sup>13</sup> Most science transfer projects will qualify for an exclusion, however NOAA will conduct an initial review and project leads will be notified as soon as possible if their project requires a full review.



## **Questions Regarding this Request for Proposals**

**Question and Answer Record:** Responses to all questions, without reference to project specifics, will be posted on a rolling basis for all interested applicants to view online at <http://nerrsciencecollaborative.org/science-transfer>.

**Q&A Webinar:** The Science Collaborative will host a question and answer webinar on **January 7, 2021 at 3:30pm EST**.

To register, go to: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5578012013689585419>

After the webinar, questions and responses will be incorporated into the online Q&A Record, and webinar slides and the recording will be posted online at <http://nerrsciencecollaborative.org/science-transfer>.

**Email:** The Science Collaborative will accept and reply to written questions regarding this request for proposals through February 24, 2021. Questions should be submitted to [nerrs-info@umich.edu](mailto:nerrs-info@umich.edu).

**Phone:** The Science Collaborative will also accept questions via phone regarding this request for proposals. Questions should be directed to Lynn Vaccaro (734-763-0056) or Nick Soberal (734-763-0034).

**Website:** More information about the NERRS Science Collaborative can be found at [www.nerrsciencecollaborative.org](http://www.nerrsciencecollaborative.org).

