National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative

2020 Catalyst RFP
Q&A Record

Last updated: February 19, 2020

Contents

Letters of Intent (LOI)

Q: Will feedback be provided after LOI submission?
A: There will be no feedback provided after LOI submission. LOIs will be used to inform reviewer recruitment, not the review process. Applicants should not expect a response or comments to the LOI other than confirmation of receipt.

Q: Does the letter of intent require letters of support from project collaborators?
A: No.

Q: Can reserves be added to a proposal if they were not included in the LOI?
A: Yes. The LOI should include the name(s) of participating reserves that are expected to be directly engaged in the project. Other reserves may be added to the proposal if they decide to participate in the proposed work in between submitting the LOI and the proposal.

Q: Is there flexibility with the 1-page LOI? I have so many collaborating Reserves that it is difficult to fit on one page
A: It is OK if the LOI spills onto two pages.

Q: Does the Fiscal Lead have to be designated in the LOI, or can it just be listed in the full proposal?
A: Applicants should include a placeholder fiscal lead in the LOI, but that role can change if needed at the proposal stage.

Eligibility

Q: Can Science Collaborative project funds be used to support federal employees and/or their travel?
A: NERRS Science Collaborative funds may _not_ be used to support salary or travel for federal employees; however, federal employees may participate as unfunded project team members.

Q: Are for-profit entities eligible recipients for Science Collaborative funding?
A: Yes, private and for-profit firms are eligible recipients for Science Collaborative funding, so long as they are working in partnership with one or more reserves as described in the RFP.

Q: Is funding restricted to work performed on reserves?
A: NERRS Science Collaborative projects are _not_ required to be located within the physical boundaries of a National Estuarine Research Reserve, or necessarily within a reserve's watershed. However, projects must be directly related to at least one reserve, address at least one or more reserve management need, and must have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s), as demonstrated in the reserve manager proposal assessment(s).

Proposal Submission Process

Q: How do I submit my catalyst proposal? I can't seem to find the right URL.
A: The person that submitted your letter of intent should have received a confirmation email back in December. The email message includes a unique URL to access your application page. The confirmation email came from this email: nerrs-info@umich.edu with the subject line "Catalyst Letter of Intent Saved." You will need to find this email message and URL, log in to the application form using the same login credentials, update the fields of the application form, and then upload your PDF. You'll be able to access and edit the application page up until the proposal submission deadline. If you have any issues, email us at: nerrs-info@umich.edu. We cannot accept any proposals unless a letter of intent was successfully submitted by the deadline (Dec. 16 2019).

Q: Can a person that is not the project lead submit the final PDF
A: The person that logged into our system and submitted the letter of intent should be the one to upload the proposal through the same application system. This person will be listed as the "applicant" and does not need to be the project lead. The project lead should be listed as a team member and identified as "project lead" in the online application form.

Q: If aspects of our project have changed since the initial letter of intent (e.g. title, additional team members), should we upload an updated letter of intent during proposal submission?
A: We don't need an updated letter of intent, but when you log in and access your application page, please do update all the fields in that online form and then upload your proposal PDF. You'll be able to access and edit the application page up until the deadline.

Proposal Narrative and Format

Q: In the Catalyst RFP, the guidance for the proposal narrative indicates that the approach should address a research question. Our proposal is really about developing/refining a monitoring method, how should we include research questions in our narrative?
A: This RFP is meant to catalyze collaborative research, so the approach should reference some research questions for current or future work. For example, a catalyst project that is jumpstarting a new research initiative might describe how the proposed approach will lay the foundation for addressing critical questions through future research and offer a few examples of those questions. Catalyst projects that are advancing the application of current research could identify the key questions the proposed work will address to make the research more usable. A project that is comparing monitoring methods could specify the immediate questions that are being addressed about each method's performance, and also demonstrate how the work will lay the foundation to address additional management-relevant research questions in the future.

Q: For the proposal narrative, do we need to follow exact order for sections? It seems more natural to discuss Outputs/Outcomes after Methodology. Do we need to follow the given order explicitly?
A: Yes, please do follow the order specified as it will help reviewers tremendously. Typically outputs and outcomes are provided as a short list of bulleted points that can be explained in more details in the approach section. We have found that it can be helpful for reviewers to see where a project is headed before reading methodological details.

Q: Is there any flexibility in the project team section of the proposal? We have a large project team, and writing out the roles and expertise of each member takes 4 pages of the 10 allowable.
A: The ten page limit for the proposal narrative is not flexible, and any extra pages will be removed before sending the proposal to reviewers. You're welcome find creative ways to format sections of your proposal – for example, tables or columns might help organize team roles.

Q: We have a large team and we're having trouble fitting all the required information into a 2-page title page. Can we use more than 2 pages for the title page?
A: Your title page can be a bit longer if needed to accommodate all the required information. You can also think about ways to condense the team list, for example by including more detail for the core team, or using columns or tables.

Project Type and Objectives

Q: What are the key difference between a Catalyst project and a Collaborative Research project beyond the 1 year vs 2-3 year project period?
A: The opportunities are intended for projects that differ in scope and purpose. Collaborative Research grants support the development of new science to inform decisions. The longer timeline of Collaborative Research projects allows for their scope to be broader. Successful collaborative research proposals have a fairly well defined research question or set of research questions that frames the whole proposal and a well-constructed plan for addressing those questions during the project period.
Catalyst grants are a targeted investment for developing a new idea, or enhancing the application and usability of research that is already happening. Catalyst projects may not be able to fully address a new research question during their one year timeline and may invest significant effort into working collaboratively to refine the relevant research questions and appropriate approach and conducting preliminary analyses. Ultimately the project should lay the foundation for subsequent work, both additional research and application of research.

Q: Can you clarify the difference in expected outputs for collaborative research and catalyst projects?
A: In both cases, the work is intended to benefit end users. Collaborative Research projects typically generate publications, as do many catalyst projects, as well as other types of products, including analyses, summaries and/or tools that can support the work of end

users and inform policy discussions and management activities.

Catalyst project outputs can include a refined set of research, a detailed scope of future work, or assessment results that lay the foundation for future work. Other catalyst projects might help move a body of research into application through the development of new tools or customized data analyses. The catalyst and collaborative research RFPs include example outputs and outcomes that can further clarify the difference.

Q: Do you have a sense of (or descriptive stats on) how many Catalyst projects eventually led to Collaborative Research projects?
A: It is really too soon to say. The first time we offered catalyst projects was 2 years ago and those project ran from Sept 2019 to Sept 209. Several catalyst grant recipients have secured other types of funding to continue aspects of their work. In so.me cases, very engaged end users have found creative sources of funding and the next steps may not look like a traditional research project.

Q: It seems like it may be difficult to distinguish between RFP objective 1 and 2 for many projects. If you are proposing to conduct new work, but with some partners with whom you have previously collaborated as well as new ones, building on earlier efforts, which objective does this fall under?
A: This is something the project team will need to determine. Consider where the preponderance of effort lies—is the proposed project mostly building on existing work and taking it to the next level by advancing its application (objective 2) or is it really jump starting a new research effort around a new topic (objective 1)?

Q: The proposal evaluation criteria for potential impact indicates that the project outcome/product should 'catalyze science'. Can you elaborate on that, please?
A: In terms of "catalyzing science" we are interested in supporting activities that advance collaborative science by facilitating the development of new collaborative science ideas; amplifying or enhancing existing collaborative research; or synthesizing NERRS System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) data for a regional or national application.

Q: The RFP states that work under objective 2 (amplify or enhance existing collaborative research efforts) must be new and distinct from prior or existing collaborative research projects. Can you elaborate?
A: It is important that the proposed work take the existing work to the next level. If you are building on a prior project, you must have completed and delivered everything you set out to achieve in that project. It should be clear that what you propose for a catalyst grant is not the completion of something you set out to do previously but, rather, building on that work and achieving something different and significant for your end users.

Q: Does objective 2 in the RFP (amplify or enhance existing collaborative research efforts) pertain to only Science Collaborative funded collaborative research, or does it pertain to other collaborative research efforts as well?

A: It refers to both collaborative research the Science Collaborative has supported and other collaborative research efforts as well.

Q: Is it preferred to focus on an individual RFP objective or cover multiple objectives?
A: There is not a preference for focusing on one versus multiple RFP objectives with a single project. We encourage you to focus on what is achievable within the one-year project timeline.

Core Project Activities

Q: The focus on our proposal is on planning and establishing a strong collaboration for future work. How important is it to include pilot or preliminary data collection?
A: As outlined in the RFP (page 5), proposals must include at least one, or a combination of, the following core activities: collecting and analyzing new data (including social science data); compiling and analyzing existing data; and/or developing new or refining existing tools or products to maximize utility. This RFP is not intended support projects that are exclusively planning or outreach efforts; those project ideas might be better suited for science transfer program. We encourage teams to dedicate ample time and resources to fostering a strong collaboration, but catalyst projects must also include some pilot data collection, analysis of existing data and/or tool development as appropriate for their objectives.

Collaboration and End User Engagement

Q: For SWMP-synthesis proposals that address a regional or national management issue, it seems difficult to identify a specific end-user beyond the reserve system.
A: It is appropriate to think of members of a reserve staff or the reserve system as an end user, but there may be additional users for projects addressing a regional or national management issue.

Q: If the reserve system is the main end user, who should provide the letter of support?
A: Letters of support can come from the subset of reserves that are most directly involved and positioned to benefit the most.

Q: Are the National Estuarine Research Reserves themselves appropriate end users? If our reserve is involved as a collaborator and lead reserve, are we also an end-user?
A: Reserve staff have played a variety of roles in Science Collaborative projects, including serving as project, technical or collaborative lead, providing critical contributions to the technical work, and participating as an end user representative and project advisor. Roles should match the expertise and interests of the individuals involved and the scope of a particular project, and be clearly explained in the proposal.

All Science Collaborative projects must address a reserve management need and it's appropriate to consider the relevant reserve(s) to be an end user for a project, even for projects led by reserve staff and engaging additional end user groups. Applicants should consider which staff and which reserve programs are in a position to use the results/products and benefit from the project, and proposals should explain how the project will enhance the work of end users, including reserve staff.

As outlined in the RFP, end user is defined as a person or group 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, resource managers, land use planners, and educators at all levels.

Q: Can researchers and scientists be end users?
A: Yes; researchers and scientists may be end users if the research will ultimately address a reserve management need. In this case, the proposal must make clear why the research is needed to address an identified reserve management need.

Q: Can NOAA be an end user?
A: Yes; NOAA may be an end user if they will use the results to benefit their work.

Q: Are end users required to be team members?
A: No; while you may choose to include an end user on your project team, you are not required to do so.

Q: Do the primary end users need to be regional or nationally scaled or both?
A: The end users should be relevant to the project you propose. If you are proposing a SWMP synthesis, keep in mind the requirement for these syntheses to have a regional and/or national application and therefore the need to connect the work to end users at this scale.

Q: We have a long list of end users. Do you have suggestions for how we might go about identifying a smaller group of primary end users?
A: For one-year projects, this step is especially important to be able to focus your time and energy in order to have an impact. You want to be able to identify the best set of end users most directly and tightly connected to the work. There are a few resources on the Science Collaborative funding page that should help in identifying primary end users. See the "Characterizing end users" and "Reflections on engaging end users" resources on the Catalyst grant page.

Q: Are letters of support required from all end-users?
A: All proposals must include at least one letter of support from an end user. End users should describe how they have been engaged with the development of the proposal and

how they anticipate using project outputs. Reviewers will be looking for this information to confirm end user engagement.

Q: Will end user interviews be part of the review process as in years past?
A: No. We know that asking end users to participate in the interviews takes social and political capital, and the energy and time of an entire proposing team. For these one-year projects, end user interviews are not part of the review process; instead, a letter of support from at least one end user is required. Note that the RFP indicates specific items that the end user letter of support should indicate and make clear to the review panels.

Project Roles

Q: Can we indicate two project leads or would it be preferable to list only one?
A: Your proposal should identify a single project lead who will be responsible for overseeing the full project, and that person should be based at the institution that will be handling all the contracting and invoicing for the grant. It's really up to you who should fill that role. You're welcome to share leadership with co-leads, and you can spell out these roles in the proposal, but for grant contracting we need a single lead and point of contact.

Q: Should we be listing all currently known and committed end users as team members or only those who will be contributing a significant number of hours?
A: It's really up to you how to define your project team and how you want to manage the process. For a short project, an efficient process that provides sufficient end user input will be important. The roles of all team members should be explained in the narrative, including how the team will stay coordinated, and resumes should be included for all team members. Some projects create different tiers of involvement - core vs. extended team, advisory groups, or they identify end user representatives to participate in the project team.

Q: When describing how the team and its expertise are qualified to conduct the study, does the "team" include all end users and the target reserve? Should the description include how specific staff at the target reserve and staff affiliated with the end users are qualified to implement the study?
A: All of your designated team members should be listed on the proposal cover page, be referenced in the team section of the narrative and have resumes in the appendix, and these are the individuals that reviewers will consider as they are evaluating the team's qualifications to conduct the project.

Many projects do include end user representatives and specific reserve staff as part of their core project team and their roles are explained in the proposal. We expect proposals to outline a plan for a productive collaboration between the project team and the reserve and intended users, but it's up to you how you'd like to define your team, team roles and process for team coordination. We encourage you to find a structure that works for you and is feasible in the short project time period.

Q: Can you provide more information on the collaborative lead? Is this someone separate from the project lead?
A: The collaborative lead is someone who is responsible for the full engagement of end users by helping to develop and manage a process that ensures iteration with them, including mechanisms for being adaptive and responsive to their input. This person should have the appropriate experience and skills to design and implement a collaborative process that provides the team with the end user input necessary to produce outputs that are responsive to their needs. This collaborative lead may, but does not have to be, the project lead.

Q: Who can serve as the collaborative lead?
A: Project teams should include a collaborative lead who has the appropriate skills and experience to lead the collaborative process. The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the collaborative lead has the appropriate skills to successfully facilitate the collaborative aspects of the project. This person may also play a technical or other role on the team, if appropriate.

Q: Does the reserve need to be the collaborative lead, or can other project team members fulfill that role?
A: There is no requirement that a member of the reserve system be the collaborative lead. The only requirement is that the individual can demonstrate that they have the skills and experience to lead the collaborative process developed in the proposal.

Q: If the reserve is the end user, can they also be the Collaborative Lead?
A: There is no restriction on the reserve's ability to be both an end user and team member in any role.

Q: For the different roles of team members, it is clear that a Project Lead and Collaborative Lead are required, and they are well-defined in the RFP. However, in the team member roles section, "technical lead" is also listed, is this a role we should include?
A: You do not need to specify a technical lead for this RFP. If not specified, our assumption is that the project lead can be considered the technical lead. You do have the option to separate these two roles and specify a technical lead as someone other than project lead if that makes sense for your team and project. This [reference] provides definitions for each of the leadership roles.

Reserve Engagement
Q: Our proposed project is focused across the reserve system and there isn't a logical reserve who would be lead. Is there any way to submit a proposal without a lead reserve if we can get letters of support from all the reserves who are interested in pushing this idea forward?

A: With the way the Catalyst RFP is written, we do need to have a lead reserve indicated for each proposal. This does not mean that one reserve necessarily needs to be more involved than others, you just need one of the engaged reserves to agree to be listed as lead.

Q: How do we decide whether to include a reserve on the proposal title page as a participating reserve?
A: Demonstration of end user interest is important for this program, but you can focus on the reserve(s) most interested and engaged in the proposed work. It is up to you to decide whether to list additional reserves on your cover page and how to demonstrate their interest, e.g., in the proposal narrative or through letter(s) of support as end users.

Please note that if you decide to identify additional reserves as being "directly engaged" in the project and list them on your title page, this triggers the expectation that a reserve manager assessment will be submitted from each of those reserves, as well as from the lead reserve.

Q: If I am working with a reserve research coordinator to develop a proposal, is this sufficient for the reserve engagement requirement, or should I also reach out to the reserve manager directly?
A: As the applicant, it is your job to ensure that the relevant manager(s) are fully aware of and sufficiently engaged in your proposal as it is developed in order to provide a positive assessment. In this case, it would be good to double check that the research coordinator has connected with the manager about the proposed work to receive any input he/she may have and to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Q: Is it acceptable to ask reserve managers for the use of reserve equipment and/or personnel time?
A: You should feel free to reach out to reserve managers with these types of questions; however, it is up to them to decide how to respond. You should be aware that capacity and ability to accommodate these kinds of requests will vary from reserve to reserve.

Q: Will the reserves be given the opportunity to update their management needs annually?
A: Yes, reserves are asked annually, prior to the release of Science Collaborative request for proposals, to review and update, if necessary, their reserve management needs.

Q: The list of reserve management needs shows a lot of overlap in the general issues (e.g. climate, water quality), but if you read the specifics for each reserve, they are rather divergent. Can you recommend strategies for determining a project that would be applicable to multiple reserves?
A: This is largely the job of the applicant. Start by having a conversation with the reserve with which you have a close relationship and see where that leads you.

Q: What about projects that will engage multiple reserves and address a system-wide need, such as system-wide data syntheses or enhancements to the System-wide

Monitoring Program. How should these projects reference individual reserve management needs?

A: In these cases, you will likely need to take an approach that summarizes rather than lists every reserve-specific management need the project addresses. You might consider using a table or two and/or find a way to strike a balance of summarizing but also providing some specifics to demonstrate that you have thought through the details. It may be helpful to provide examples of application for some reserve-specific needs and also reference other planning documents, such as the SWMP needs assessment or NERRS Strategic Plan.

Q: If you are submitting a proposal involving the entire NERR System, would this require a manager assessment from every manager?

A: Relevant managers are those whose reserves will be directly engaged in project implementation and, as a result, should be able to answer each of the three manger assessment criteria listed on pages 8-9 of the RFP definitively. 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 manager will not be expected to submit a proposal assessment.

Q: What is expected in terms of reserve engagement for conducting SWMP syntheses with the potential for regional and/or national application?

A: You could approach this in a number of ways. You could engage and work directly with a number of reserves in a particular region or across the country for a national perspective. You could also work on a project with a single reserve as long as you demonstrate how the output can be applied to more than that single reserve. In all cases, you should reach out to and directly engage the reserve(s) that will be participating in project implementation. Other reserves who stand to benefit from the work but are not directly participating can vouch for the importance of the work by submitting letters of support.

Q: Does a reserve listed under section 5 on the title page have to have a named team member to be included here?

A: Listing a reserve on the title page does not require you to include staff from that reserve on the project team. However, you should clearly demonstrate support (via letters of support from end users and manager assessments) and provide detail about how the reserves are contributing to and benefiting from the project in your narrative.

Q: Should applicants solicit and attach manger proposal assessments in appendix E or do those get submitted separately by the reserves?

A: The manager proposal assessments referenced in the RFP are submitted by reserves directly to the Science Collaborative. You are also free to attach letters of support from reserves in appendix E. Please keep in mind that you must include at least one letter of support from an end user with the information specified on page 17 of the RFP.

Q: Are there added roles and responsibilities assigned to the "lead reserve"?

A: There are no added roles or responsibilities for the lead reserve.

Review & Selection Process

Q: Must the proposal narrative headers and their order be identical to what is laid out in the RFP, or is it possible to provide these in another order?
A: For ease of review, please do stick to the headers and their order as laid out in the RFP. To avoid repeating yourself, you can always direct readers to other places within the proposal if you need to reference something explained elsewhere in detail.

Q: On page 21 of the RFP it says, "No reserve will serve as the lead reserve on more than one catalyst project." Does this mean a reserve can only support <u>one proposal</u> submission or does this mean multiple proposals can be submitted with the same lead reserve but, in the selection process, only one of those multiple proposal could be awarded?
A: A reserve may be named as lead reserve on more than one proposal submission but the selection process allows the program to fund no more than one of the catalyst proposals the reserve is leading. This secondary selection criteria allows the Science Collaborative, in consultation with the NOAA Program Officer, to make small deviations for the rank ordering of proposals provided by the review panel to ensure that a single reserve is not the lead reserve for more than one award through this funding opportunity.

Q: Page 21 of the RFP states that, "No reserve will serve as the lead reserve on more than one catalyst project." How does this criteria relate to other Science Collaborative funding opportunities?
A: Both the 2020 Catalyst and the 2020 Collaborative Research RFPs include this same selection criteria, and the criteria will be applied to the proposals submitted to that RFP independent of other funding opportunities. This means that a single reserve may serve as lead reserve on both a catalyst and collaborative research grant award in 2020.

Q: The RFP states that "No reserve will serve as the lead reserve on more than one catalyst project." How will this affect the proposal review process, i.e., will proposals be reviewed independently? Will the Science Collaborative be looking to the reserves to indicate their preference if there are multiple proposals involving their reserves?
A: All proposals will be reviewed independently; technical reviewers and panelists will not consider this criteria in their review and ranking process. While we do not expect reserves to choose one proposal over the other, we encourage managers to provide their perspective about the value of each proposal involving their reserve in their manager assessments.

Budget and Timeline

Q: Can we modify the timeline template to include additional information?
A: You are welcome to modify the provided timeline template to suit your project needs. We suggest including the core information of the original template as reviewers will be looking for that information.

Q: What is the CFDA number for this RFP?
A: This RFP does not have a CFDA number. Because this RFP is being run through the University of Michigan, it is not considered a Federal Assistance program or Federal Funding Opportunity and won't be listed in those catalogs.

Q: The timeline guidelines indicate that we should include the fall NERRs Science Collaborative workshop. Do you know what month that will be?
A: We haven't nailed down a date for the Science Collaborative workshop. For your timeline, you can pick a month in late fall or early winter.

Q: Who will be the sponsor and contracting entity for Catalyst grant awards?
A: Catalyst grants will be awarded as a contract between the "Regents of the University of Michigan" and the applicant's fiduciary institution. All grant funds come from the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This means that NOAA can be referred to as the "prime sponsor" with the University of Michigan serving as the "direct sponsor". The RFP and grant contacts include guidelines based on NOAA's requirements for the program.

Q: Could you provide some additional information about the Science Collaborative Workshop planned for fall 2020?
A: We haven't finalized our plans for our first workshop with our new cohort of project leads. Our program budget (not your grant budgets) will cover the travel costs for two project leads to attend the workshop. In the past we've held our project workshop in conjunction with a national conference of interest to grantees.

Q: How does the Science Collaborative calculate indirect costs (e.g. only travel & personnel)?
A: Your project budget table should include line items for all direct costs, including travel, personnel salaries and benefits, and supplies. The indirect line in your budget is for the money the fiduciary institution will be retaining, in addition to all direct costs, to cover grant management and invoicing etc. This is typically an established percentage (10 -50%) of the overall budget, and most institutions will have a standard indirect rate and a policy for how this is calculated. If your fiduciary institution has a federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement they can use that rate in their proposal to the Science Collaborative.

Q: Do you expect that the person to serve as the Fiscal Lead also be the "fiscal point of contact" that we will identify under Fiduciary Information on the proposal's Title Page?
A: In most cases the project lead and fiscal lead will be the same person. You can also identify a fiscal point of contact, which is typically a grant administrator that will help manage the grant contracting process.

Q: Are grants explicitly for one year, or do you allow some no cost extensions?

A: No cost extensions are not encouraged. Reviewers are looking for projects whose scopes are feasible within one year.

Q: I am developing a proposal that includes several reserves and a couple of other subcontracts, which has implications for administering and indirect costs. Is there an alternate way for the Science Collaborative to administer funds to multiple reserves on a project like this or is it best to plan this as a single award to one fiscal agent with subcontracts below that?
A: Please plan the budget as a single award to one fiscal agent with subcontracts below that.

Q: What are the requirements for Science Collaborative projects regarding indirect cost rates?
A: The Science Collaborative recognizes the federally negotiated indirect cost rates of the hosting organization that will receive and manage the grant contract. There is no cap on indirect costs. Lower indirect cost rates are acceptable, if the proposing organization or institution approves it. If the fiscal agent does not have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate, they may apply a rate of 10%. Please note that for any subcontracts, unless otherwise noted in the indirect cost rate agreement, indirect costs may only be applied to the first $25,000 of each subcontract.

Q: What budget template should subcontracts use?
A: Subcontracts should use the budget template linked to in the RFP. The budget template should be completed for the full budget *and* for any subcontracts. The full budget should provide the total annual amounts for each subcontract in section F. Specific costs for each subcontract must then be detailed in a separate budget sheet which should follow the same format as the template. Each subcontract should also be accompanied by a budget narrative.

Q: Do fringe and indirect wages need to be broken out separately in the budget or can hourly rates include those costs?
A: Please use the budget template provided on the Catalyst RFP page. Hourly rates, fringe, and IDC should be broken out separately.

Q: Can we use the federal fringe rate when estimating personnel costs on the budget.
A: Yes, we do not limit fringe rates, so you may apply the federal fringe rate.

Q: If we have team members who are not requesting funding but are part of our team do we need to submit a budget for them or should their contributions just be mentioned in the budget narrative?
A: For team members contributing to the project but not requesting funding, you do not need to submit a budget for them. Instead, please be sure to account for their time and contributions to the project in the budget narrative. E.g., Jane Doe will contribute

approximately 20 hours to the project to support field work but is not requesting funds. See item "iii" on page 16 of the RFP for more specific guidance on this element.

Q: Is there a cap on the award amount for a one-reserve proposal?
A: No, there is not an award cap for a single reserve proposal, however, we expect the larger awards, closer to $200,000, will be for multi-reserve projects.

Q: How many projects do you anticipate funding?
A: The number of projects funded will be dependent on the outcomes of the review process, but we expect to fund 5-6 under this cycle.

Q: Who administers the funds granted by the Science Collaborative—the University of Michigan or the program directly?
A: Funds will be administered via a subcontract from the University of Michigan.

Letters of Support and Fiscal Letters of Commitment
Q: Could you please clarify whether the Letters of Support from participating reserves can also serve as the Manager Assessments? If best to keep them separate, could you please clarify the submission process for the manager assessments?
A: Here's a detailed comparison of the two distinct processes:
Letters of support:
- Letters of support are submitted directly to the project lead and are included as an appendix to the proposal. The proposal + appendices should be submitted as a single PDF file.
- At least one letter of support must be provided from an intended user of project results. You're welcome to include a couple other letters if you think it strengthens your proposal. Reserve staff and programs are appropriate end users for a catalyst project, and reserve staff can provide the required end user letter of support on behalf of a reserve program, an individual reserve, or as a representative of a group of reserves.

Proposal assessments from reserve managers:
- Manager proposal assessments are a simple form that reserve managers submit directly to the Science Collaborative one week after proposals are due. Managers must complete an assessment form for every proposal that names their reserve on the proposal title page. We provide guidance about the submission process directly to managers.
- The manager assessment process is our way of determining if a reserve is supportive of the proposed scope of work and the budget allocation involving reserve staff. It does NOT take the place of the required letter of support from an end user.
- If a reserve would like to provide detailed comments in support of a proposal, the potential application, and use of the proposed work, the reserve can submit a letter of support to the project lead.
- Even if a reserve is providing a letter of support for a proposal, if the reserve is named on the proposal title page the reserve manager must also complete a proposal assessment form.

- Project leads must provide a copy of their final proposal to the managers of all reserves named as collaborators on the proposal title page.

Q: Do we need to get letters of support from all end users? What if an end user is from a government agency that has indicated they are not able to provide a letter?
A: You must provide a letter of support from at least one end user. For these one-year projects, it likely makes sense to focus on a small set of primary end users, those who will be most intensively engaged in the work and best positioned to use the outputs. Including a letter of support from primary end users is a good rule of thumb. If an end user is restricted from providing a letter of support, the likely next best approach is to find a way to demonstrate in the narrative that you have engaged and received input from the end user, e.g., provide details about their engagement to date, how they have helped to shape the proposed work, how they have expressed their anticipated use of the products.

Q: The RFP indicates that letters of support should be provided by unfunded team members, does this include co-investigators that are not requesting any salary support?
A: Letters of support are a way of confirming that all team members and collaborators are able to commit the requisite effort to make a project successful. If reviewers will have any questions about why a team member isn't part of the budget, a letter of support should be provided. This might include federal agency scientists that can't accept funding through this RFP or partners that are participating in a project as part of their current professional duties and have opted to not accept salary support.

Q: Who should sign a fiscal letter of commitment and what should it say?
A: These letters are meant to confirm that each institution that is included in the budget is committed to the proposed scope of work. Fiscal letters should come from the primary fiduciary institution and any partners/co-investigators that will receive a sub-contract. The letter can be signed by the person that will serve as the point of contact for contracting and fiscal questions, or someone from their unit. For universities, this can be a grant administrator or pre-award specialist in their office of sponsored programs. There is no set format for these letters, but the key message should be that X institution is committed to X project as outlined in the proposal narrative and budget.

Q: Do we need letters of support for all the datasets we might use during catalyst project, and will we be restricted to using just those datasets?
A: You should include letter of supports from the dataset "owners" for the key sources of data that are referenced in your proposal, if that data is not already publically available or owned by a core team member. If the data are managed/owned by a team member, just make that clear in the narrative. These letters will help reviewers gauge feasibility and identify any potential data access issues that would be a barrier for the project. Once funded, you could find and incorporate other datasets, and you could reference potential data sources in your proposal that will be explored later, as long as it is clear you can accomplish the project with the data you have access to now.

Q: Does the Collaborative Lead also need to submit a letter of support if that individual is not based at a Reserve?
A: No, team members don't typically provide letters of support for a proposal. If the collaborative lead will be funded through a subcontract to their organization, that organization should submit a fiscal letter of commitment.

Q: Who should letters of support be addressed to?
A: Letters of support should be addressed to "Members of the Review Panel".

Q: Who should fiscal letters of commitment be addressed to?
A: Letters of commitment may be addressed to "Members of the Review Panel" or the project lead.

Resumes and Appendices
Q: Can we suggest reserve staff as suggested reviewers for our proposal?
A: We wouldn't ask any reserve staff to provide written reviews of Science Collaborative proposals to avoid any real or perceived conflicts of interest. We encourage you to identify other experts in the field that you haven't worked with directly as potential reviewers.

Q: Which team members should provide resumes for the proposal? Must the point of contact at the target reserve and the point of contact for each end user submit a 2-page resume with the proposal, or is the resume only required for the project lead, collaborative lead, technical lead, and any team member conducting the study?
A: Resumes are only required for people you consider part of the project team and that will be key contributors to the project, including technical and collaborative aspects of the proposed project. These resumes are intended to demonstrate that you have the right expertise to conduct the proposed work, including your collaborative approach or any proposed engagement/outreach activities. If you see your user representatives or reserve staff as primarily advisors to the project team, then you wouldn't need to include their resumes. See Q&A section above on Project Roles for additional considerations.

Q: Should two-page resumes be included for team members not receiving funding?
A: Yes, please include two-page resumes for all team members, even if they are not requesting funding.

Q: Do the two-page team members' resumes need to be in Times New Roman 12-point font?
A: Team members' resumes do not need to be in Times New Roman 12-pt font. However, they should not exceed two pages in length.

Q: Other than a limit of two pages, is there a particular format or style you would like to see in the resumes of team members? For example, should we aim for more formal academic style (with lists of publications) or are you looking for a more condensed display of project summaries (perhaps those that highlight examples of collaborative work)?

A: We don't specify a format for the resumes. You are welcome to use whatever style you think best conveys the person's expertise that is most relevant to the proposal and their specific role in the project. And you're welcome to use different formats for different team members.

Q: Is an optional, supplementary appendix permitted for supporting information such as figures, photos, and tables?
A: No. Please include all figures, photos, tables, and other illustrations within the 10-page narrative.

Data Management

Q: I'd like to use CDMO for archiving and making our project data accessible. What's the appropriate process for coordinating with CDMO and ensuring we have an appropriate strategy?
A: You are welcome to reach out to Dwayne Porter from the CDMO (porter@sc.edu) to discuss your needs. CDMO is committed to helping all recipients of Science Collaborative grants in a few ways, including consulting on data sharing plans and processes, and archiving and making accessible project datasets using their servers and typical protocols.

The Science Collaborative team can provide the following access and archival process for any project teams that wish to archive data with CDMO: We will create an entry about your datasets in the Science Collaborative online library, as well as in national data catalogs (InPort), and potential users will have an option to complete a data request form. The form will generate an email response with a data download link connecting the user to the package of data and metadata files that have been archived with the CDMO. If that archival/access process meets your project needs, applicants are welcome to include that approach in their proposal's data sharing plans without a detailed conversation with CDMO. More complicated data sharing ideas, such as developing an interactive user interface for a database, would require some extra conversations with CDMO and likely additional resources, as this is not part of CDMO's typical support for Science Collaborative projects.

Q: Could I see an example of Data Sharing Plan that uses your template?
A: We provide one Data Sharing Plan Example on the Catalyst grant webpage. If you are proposing to collect a particularly unique or challenging type of data, we may be able to provide examples that are more specific to your data.

Q: We are developing a proposal for what is essentially a needs-assessment where we'll be doing a series of small listening sessions with individuals around the community. Results would be compiled into a report. Would this be considered collection of new data and will we need to develop a Data Sharing Plan?
A: In general, natural and social science data collection that is intended to inform the development of a program or product (such a needs assessment) 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.

Q: There will be data collection occurring tangential to our proposed project that will be used to inform new products created as part of the proposed project. This data collection will occur regardless of the grant, but will be included in grant outputs. Is this considered existing or new data?
A: If the new data collection has an entirely separate source of funding than you should not need to develop a formal data sharing plan for that data as part of your catalyst proposal.

Q: Regarding data sharing plans, could you provide any guidance on potential pathways to protect "sensitive" information; for instance, human dimensions-related information or other sensitive qualitative responses protected under Institutional Review Board approvals?
A: Projects collecting human subject or other sensitive data may need develop a unique approach to data sharing. We encourage you to go through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process at your institution and lay out your approach to protecting sensitive data. Make it very clear in your proposal that you have sensitive data. CDMO has experience working with projects that collect data that must go through IRB approval or is protected under HIPAA and can offer further guidance.

Q: Who should we contact with data management questions?
A: All questions regarding proposal requirements and development, including data management, should be sent to nerrs-info@umich.edu. If needed, we can connect applicants with specialists at the NERRS Centralized Data Management Office.

Q: In terms of making data available, do project teams need to have web hosting capabilities or is NOAA able to support this?
A: While the NERRS Centralized Data Management Office (CDMO) does not have the resources to support the development and maintenance of individual project websites, the CDMO does have the resources to support projects that need a mechanism by which to make the data and associated metadata available. Depending upon the needs of a project and intended users of the data, the CDMO can support data access via a variety of approaches including web-based data downloads and web services for data pushes and pulls.

Q: What is the definition of "derived data"?
A: The NOAA/NERRS Science Collaborative requirements for data sharing are in effect for new data collected as part of a Science Collaborative-funded activity and for derived data created as part of such activity. "Derived data" refers to information derived from existing data resources and/or new data that you have collected. As an example, a project focusing on coastal resiliency may collect data on the environmental, social, infrastructural and policy characteristics of communities in support of developing a coastal resiliency index for each community. The determined resiliency index for each community would be considered derived data.

Q: If we have a dynamic modeling component, should those results be considered new data, even if it is incorporating existing observed data?
A: Model outputs are considered derived data and this would therefore require a Data Sharing Plan.

Q: If we plan to use the CDMO to host our data, do we need to get permission or some sort of agreement to include in the proposal?
A: Not every project will need to utilize CDMO services for data sharing or archival. For those projects that do anticipate needing support from the CDMO, however, the team's designated data management point of contact should contact the CDMO (via nerrs-info@umich.edu) to discuss the project's needs and develop an appropriate strategy. The proposal's Data Sharing Plan should reflect the approach agreed-upon by the CDMO and the data management point of contact. There is no need to include a formal agreement in the proposal.

Q: For projects that are collecting very large data sets, e.g., imagery, can the team submit the metadata to the CDMO or other NOAA repository but store or archive the raw data using a proposing team member's institutional resources?
A: Yes, this is an appropriate strategy; NOAA's repositories may be able to accommodate such large data sets for archival purposes, but timely access of stored data can be an issue. The proposing team should describe this process in their Data Sharing Plan and provide links to any existing websites that will be used to make data accessible.

Q. For projects that propose running models, how should the storage and availability of model outputs be addressed?
A: Archival and access to model outputs can present the same challenges as with imagery described above. Project teams should develop an appropriate strategy for both archival and access of model outputs.

Q: How should projects address long-term accessibility and usability of project data sets, results, models or other tools?
A: Ideally, the project team should engage intended users from the beginning and work together to develop a plan for making data, results and tools accessible and usable for end users during and after the project period. Intended users will have different needs, capabilities and expectations for how they might access and use project outputs. Storing project datasets in established data repositories (e.g., CDMO, NODC) is important, but additional steps may need to be taken to ensure that intended users are able to find and apply project results.

Q: Is there a standard for social science data, similar to the standards for environmental data?
A: No, there is no standard for social science data, as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process for human subject research varies from institution to institution. In general, social science data collected as part of a research project that had to go through IRB approval is

also subject to federal data sharing rules. Research studies involving human subjects require IRB review. Evaluative studies, such as needs assessments, user experience surveys and program/tool evaluation activities typically do not require IRB approval, unless the activity is being conducted to answer a broader research question. However, it is not always easy to distinguish between these two types of projects and many projects frequently have elements of both.

Human subjects are defined as "living individual(s) about whom an investigator conducting research obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual; or (2) identifiable private information." Research involving the secondary analysis of existing data must be also reviewed by the IRB to ensure that the original data was properly and ethically obtained and that the objectives of the secondary analysis are aligned with those for which consent was obtained. All human subject research, as explained above, regardless of whether or not identifying information is collected must be reviewed by the IRB. The research, including the recruitment of research participants, cannot begin until the application has been reviewed and approved. Therefore, the decision about whether review is required should be made in concert with the IRB. Proposing teams should identify and comply with the IRB process that is appropriate for their project team. If you have any questions about whether this applies to your project, please contact us (nerrs-info@umich.edu).

Q: Would documenting end-users' or stakeholders' needs ahead of proposal development (through a series of interviews) be considered "new data collection" that would require IRB approval?
A: Please refer to your home institution to determine whether this kind of data collection requires prior IRB review and approval. The response to the question above about social science data may be helpful.

Q: Are letters of support from the Centralized Data Management Office required for projects that propose using System-Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) data?
A: Because SWMP data are readily accessible, there is no need to include a letter of support in proposals that call for the use of SWMP data.

Q: What services are the CDMO able to provide for funded NSC projects? What services will the CDMO NOT provide?
A: The CDMO can host and make accessible data and associated metadata for funded NSC projects that need such a service, and can also provide long-term archival and back-up storage for data even if data in not currently available for download through CDMO. The CDMO can also provide web services for projects that need to provide data pushing or pulling services.

Individual projects are responsible for expenses and activities associated with data collection, QA/QC and metadata development, though the CDMO can provide some guidance in these areas if needed. Please note that the CDMO can only provide web-based

data archiving and access services; the CDMO will NOT provide for the development and maintenance of full-blown websites for individual projects.

Q: Are there expenses associated with utilizing the CDMO's data-hosting services that should be included in the project budget?
A: There are no costs associated with the CDMO's data-hosting services that need to be included in the project budget.

Q: Are there formatting requirements for data that will be transferred to the CDMO for data-hosting services?
A: The Centralized Data Management Office (CDMO) will not be requiring specific data formats. The CDMO will be available to offer assistance, if requested. What will be expected is that associated metadata provided by projects will clearly state the data formats, QA/QC methods, etc. as outlined in the Data Sharing Plan Requirements and Outline.

Q: Is the data sharing plan similar to those required as part of NOAA or NSF proposals?
A: Yes. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) requires that data collected and/or created under NOAA grants and cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or security requirements. Therefore, NERRS Science Collaborative project proposals must include a section describing the Data Sharing Plan (DSP). This section should describe how the proposal will conform to Department of Commerce and NOAA/NOS guidelines for data sharing and metadata and should include descriptions of the following components:

- Methods and protocols for data collection.
- Data quality control / quality assurance (QA/QC) procedures.
- Metadata.
- Data access.
- Data archival.

It is expected that methods and protocols for data collection, QA/QC, and metadata development will be described within the DSP. Plans for data access and archival should include how data will be made accessible and how data will be archived. Examples of data management plans are available at the NOAA Environmental Data Management Wiki (https://geo-ide.noaa.gov/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page) under the Data Management Plan Repository. A valid DSP may include only the statement that no detailed plan is needed, as long as the statement is accompanied by a clear justification (e.g. no new data are being collected).

Q: Is it expected that data will be archived at the NERRS CDMO?

A: Not every project will need or want to utilize CDMO services or support for data sharing or archiving. Ideally, the project should identify a strategy for transferring the project results, including data access and archival, to the end user(s) over the course of the project. However, if the end user(s) do not have the ability or capacity to store, provide access to, or archive the data, the data may be archived at a variety of other data archival sites. For those projects that do need/want to utilize CDMO services, the proposing team's designated data management point of contact should contact the CDMO (via nerrs-info@umich.edu) to discuss the project's needs and develop an appropriate strategy. The proposal's Data Sharing Plan should reflect the approach agreed-upon by the CDMO and the data management point of contact.

Q: Does meta-data need to be submitted to a clearinghouse, where should it be stored, and will the Science Collaborative store it?
A: Detailed metadata should reside with the data; i.e. metadata should be accessible from the same location as are the data. In addition, projects are encouraged to submit project metadata to appropriate clearinghouses / catalogs that are appropriate for that type of type of data or a targeted user. For all Science Collaborative projects, CDMO will archive project metadata and will develop a project record through the NMFS national catalog of data documentation, InPort, which connects to NOAA's Data Discovery Portal. This ensures that project data records are accessible and potential users can discover where all the project data sets are stored and made accessible.

Q: If we are collecting data with an existing DSP under CDMO, such as SWMP data, as well as new, original data, how should we articulate this in our data sharing plan?
A: It is important to be as detailed as possible on what data are being collected, where it will be stored, and how it can be accessed. In the case above, it is important to detail which data being collected are SWMP data and what are new, original data and how they will be managed. NERRS CDMO wants to know where data management responsibilities lie and where the data resides in case authorized individuals are interested in seeing portions of the data collected.

Q: Our data collection will be adaptive with timing and frequency depending on certain triggers. How should we detail this in our data sharing plan?
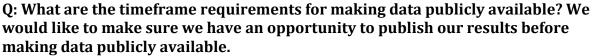**A:** Data sharing plans should document data collection, storage, and access to the fullest extent possible. In this case, it would be important to specify as many of the triggers as you can identify. If there are uncertainties in the process, these should be articulated as well.

Q: Our data collection coincides with a NERRS Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) program. Does this affect our data sharing plan at all?
A: If data are collected as part of LTER activities, it is expected that data collection activities are adhering to LTER data management requirements. Please specify if your data are being managed through the LTER program in your DSP.

Q: What are the timeframe requirements for making data publicly available? We would like to make sure we have an opportunity to publish our results before making data publicly available.

A: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) requires that environmental data collected and/or created under NOAA grants and cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security requirements. Failing to share environmental data in accordance with the submitted DSP may lead to disallowed costs and may impact future funding decisions by NOAA and the University of Michigan.

Q: All of the existing data that we are planning on using is public domain, and is currently in our possession; what information should we include in the "Data Accessibility" section of the DSP?

A: If the existing data you plan to use is already publicly available, you should indicate in the "Data Accessibility" section that the data you plan to use are already in the public domain; be sure to include a description from where those data are available.

Q: Where can we find the ISO 19115 Metadata Standards that are referenced in the DSP guidance?

A: The ISO 19115 Metadata Standards are available on NOAA's website at: https://geo-ide.noaa.gov/wiki/index.php?title=ISO_19115_Core_Elements

Q: Does including collected data in a table or as an appendix of a published manuscript or technical report suffice for meeting the requirements for data sharing?

A: Sharing data is defined as making data visible, accessible, and independently understandable to users in a timely manner at minimal cost to users, except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements. While including collected data in a table or as an appendix in a published manuscript or technical report is encouraged, that alone does not meet the NOAA requirements for data sharing. It is expected that each project collecting new data will make the actual QA/QC'd data and associated metadata available and archived via a web portal or data repository maintained by the project investigators, project partners, a NOAA-approved data warehouse, or the CDMO.

Q: If our project is collecting new data to augment or integrate into an already existing dataset, do we also need to make available the previously collected data?

A: No; the requirement to archive and share data applies only to data collected with Science Collaborative funding.

Q: Can you provide an example Data Sharing Plan for a project that is related to coastal or estuarine research?

A: Yes – a sample estuarine research Data Sharing Plan is available on the RFP webpage: http://www.nerrssciencecollaborative.org/catalyst

Q: Are there other examples of data sharing plans that have been done well?
A: Yes, NOAA has put together a set of examples of well-constructed data sharing plans. Examples of data management plans are available at the [NOAA Environmental Data Management Wiki](#) under the Data Management Plan Repository.

Q: Can you clarify how CDMO data are available for sharing or bringing into the development of a new product? Is there any flexibility to this protocol?
A: There are protocols for the ensuring quality and integrity of data as it is being shared, and there are some limitations on external archiving of data. The CDMO and protocols it adheres to are guided by the NERRS Data Management Committee and, while we are unable to comment on modifications to long-standing protocols, the goal is to be as flexible as possible to ensure the greatest access to NERRS and SWMP data.