National Estuarine
Research Reserve System
Science Collaborative

2025 Request for Catalyst / Knowledge Exchange Proposals
Question & Answer Record

Last updated: February 25, 2025

Topics Covered

Eligibility

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 or knowledge exchange need, and must have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s).

Q: Are social science proposals eligible? What about proposals focused on socio-ecological topics?
A: Yes. Just make sure that the work is directly responsive to a management or knowledge exchange need articulated by a reserve.

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? Can they serve as the fiduciary institution?
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. They may serve as the fiduciary institution.

Q: Can international collaborators participate as contractors?
A: Yes. Researchers from institutions outside the U.S. may be included on the project but cannot serve as the fiscal agent. Foreign researchers may also be funded by sub-awards through an eligible U.S. entity.

Q: Can one person be a team member on multiple proposals, for example working to address separate management and/or knowledge exchange needs of different NERR sites?
A: Yes. There is no restriction on how many proposals one person can be a part of.

My institution is part of a Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit, which is a partnership of federal agencies (including NOAA) and universities. Can NERRS Science Collaborative Grants be awarded to a CESU?
A: No, we are currently unable to award grants to a CESU.

Reserve Engagement

Q: Can a need that has been identified *after* the annual reserve needs document was prepared be addressed under this RFP?
A: Yes but it will require some explanation in your proposal and a reserve letter of support. More specifically, make sure that your process for identifying the need is clearly

articulated in the proposal narrative and confirmed by the relevant reserves through a letter of support. If you are a non-reserve applicant, this process would need to happen in close partnership with a reserve.

Q: Is it appropriate for reserve staff themselves to be users? Can reserve staff be users and also lead the project?
A: Yes to both. If reserve staff and/or programs are in a position to use the results or products and benefit from the project, they are likely a user. The proposal should explain how the project will enhance the work of the users. In some instances, a proposal is led by a reserve that is also a user, and that is ok.

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 reserve manager(s) are fully aware of and sufficiently engaged in your proposal as it is developed. It is always helpful to double check that the research coordinator has connected with the manager about the proposed work and received any input they may have. This will help ensure everyone is on the same page, particularly around reserve staff contributions to the project. Keep in mind that reserve managers have the opportunity to identify any concerns through a proposal assessment form that is submitted directly to the Science Collaborative, separate from the proposal.

Q: If I am a staff member at a reserve and am leading a proposal, is this sufficient for the reserve engagement requirement?
A: You should ensure that your reserve manager and any other relevant reserve managers are fully aware of and sufficiently engaged in your proposal as it is developed. This will help ensure everyone is on the same page. Keep in mind that reserve managers have the opportunity to identify any concerns through a proposal assessment form that is submitted directly to the Science Collaborative, separate from the proposal.

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

Q: Are there added roles and responsibilities assigned to the "lead reserve"?
A: 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. Beyond this, there are no predetermined roles or responsibilities for the lead reserve. The lead reserve doesn't necessarily lead the project.

Q: Is the lead reserve dependent on the location of the project lead/fiscal lead?

A: No, the designation of the lead reserve is not dependent on the location of the individual serving as the project lead / fiscal lead. The lead reserve is the reserve most engaged in project planning and execution. The reserve that is listed as the lead reserve should make sense for the proposed work and is at the discretion of the applicant and participating reserve(s). If more than one reserve fits this definition, e.g., a few reserves are participating at similar levels, then you have some flexibility to choose among them.

Q: Can a reserve serve as the lead reserve for more than one catalyst / knowledge exchange proposal?
A: A reserve may be the lead reserve for as many catalyst / knowledge exchange proposals as desired but they are unlikely to receive funding for more than one of those proposals, except in cases where the additional project(s) engage three or more reserves. In other words, a reserve may be the lead reserve on more than one catalyst / knowledge exchange award this year if the additional project(s) involve three or more reserves. This secondary selection factor allows the Science Collaborative, in consultation with the NOAA Program Manager, 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, with an exception for proposals involving three or more reserves.

Q: If the project is intended to address a regional management need, how many reserves should be engaged?
A: A proposal that addresses a regional management need is likely to be stronger when it engages with all or at least multiple reserves from the relevant region(s).

Can a project take a system-level approach?
A: Yes, the Science Collaborative has funded projects that engage all reserves across the NERRS.

Collaboration and User Engagement

Q: Are the National Estuarine Research Reserves themselves appropriate users?
Q: If our reserve is involved as a collaborator and lead reserve, are we also a user?
A: Reserve staff have played a variety of roles in Science Collaborative projects, including serving as project, technical, and collaborative lead, providing critical contributions to the technical work, and participating as a user 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 or knowledge exchange need and it’s appropriate to consider the relevant reserve(s) to be a user for a project, even for projects led by reserve staff and engaging additional 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 users, including reserve staff.

As outlined in the RFP, 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 users include, but are not limited to, reserve staff, and public, private, or non-governmental decision/policymakers, including Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities, landowners, regulators, resource managers, land use planners, leaders of impacted communities, and educators at all levels.

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

Q: Are intended users required to be team members?
A: No. However user representatives are encouraged to be incorporated into the project team if they will be contributing significant time, expertise, or other resources to project activities. You are not required to include users in your project team.

Q: We have a long list of intended users. Do you have suggestions for how we might go about identifying a smaller group of primary users?
A: There are a few resources on the Science Collaborative funding page that should help in identifying primary intended users. See the "Understanding intended user needs" and "Reflections on engaging intended users" resources in the Guide to Collaborative Science.

Q: Do you have any tips for making a one-year project manageable, especially the collaborative elements?
A: The relatively short time frame of these grants requires an efficient, targeted process for engaging users. For example, you might find that close collaboration with a single, highly relevant user group may be sufficient to develop a strong proposal. Or it may be appropriate to identify and engage individual users as representatives of critical groups, rather than designing a process that engages all potential users. Keep in mind that the goals and type of proposed work should dictate the engagement approach as well as the breadth and depth of engagement planned during the project.

The Science Collaborative has developed the Guide to Collaborative Science, which has resources to help you design your engagement process, including key considerations for engaging users effectively and efficiently.

Letters of Support

Q: Do we need a letter of support from a reserve to be eligible or competitive?
A: It depends. You need at least one letter of support from a primary user. If a reserve is a primary user, then a letter of support from the reserve is a great addition to the proposal. A letter of support from a reserve is required if the proposal is designed to meet a reserve need that was NOT included in this year's reserve needs document. If your

proposal is addressing an emergent need, reviewers require that letter to confirm that it is indeed a reserve need.

Q: Do we need a letter of support from every participating reserve?
A: It is not a requirement to include a letter of support from every participating reserve. You need at least one letter of support from a primary user. If a reserve is a primary user, then a letter of support from the reserve is a great addition to the proposal.

Q: If a reserve signs a letter of support, are they then ineligible to be a participating reserve in the project?
A: Signing a letter of support does not preclude a reserve from being a project partner; if a reserve is listed on the title page and also a user, then it makes complete sense for them to provide a letter of support, if they feel so inclined.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of letters of support we can include in our proposal?
A: No, there is no limit to the number of letters of support you may include in your proposal but you must include at least one letter from a primary user. Reviewers do need to make it through all of them, so please be thoughtful about how these letters are packaged.

Q: Are group letters of support ok?
A: Group letters can be helpful but be sure that the voice of every partner signing the letter comes through very clearly and with specificity, e.g., share their specific examples of use/interest. Even in a group letter, the more specificity, the better.

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

Q: Does my proposal need a separate letter of support from the reserve manager, or would it be appropriate if the reserve manager either authors or sign a group letter?
If the reserve is a primary intended user of the work, then a letter of support is absolutely a great idea. You could do it individually or as part of a group letter but make sure the reserve's voice comes through very clearly and with specificity.

Q: If a user is also contributing a letter of support for another proposal in this competition, does that mean they have a conflict of interest and cannot submit one for my proposal?
A: From our perspective, that does not constitute a conflict of interest. A user could certainly be interested and benefit from more than one project, and is free to submit a letter of support for more than one proposal. However, it is important to make sure that, if both proposals happen to be funded, that they can commit whatever time they need to be engaged in the project.

Q: Do letters of support from reserves need to be signed by the director?

A: Who your letters of support come from and who they are signed by is really up to you. Our guidance focuses on the types of letters of support to provide but you know best which individuals should provide them.

Project Roles

Q: Can you provide more information on the collaborative lead? Is this someone separate from the project lead?
A: Project teams should include a collaborative lead who has the appropriate skills and experience to lead the collaborative process. The collaborative lead is responsible for the full engagement of users by helping to develop and manage a process that ensures iteration with them, including mechanisms for being adaptive and responsive to their input. The proposal should clearly demonstrate that the collaborative lead has the skills to facilitate the collaborative aspects of the project. This person may also play a technical or other role on the team, if appropriate. The collaborative lead may, but does not have to be, the project lead.

Q: Can a reserve manager serve as the project lead?
A: Yes, reserve managers may serve as project lead, or play any other role on a project team if it is appropriate for the proposed work.

Q: Can there be more than one technical lead?
A: We suggest limiting the number of "leads" on a proposal to project lead, technical lead, and collaborative lead, but you can have as many other co-investigators or team members as you would like, with roles that you might define yourself. Part of the technical lead role is to oversee and help coordinate and integrate the technical elements, which is probably best done by a single individual.

Q: Is it common to have one person be the project, fiscal, and the technical lead?
A: In most cases, the project lead is also the fiscal lead. Some projects do list the same person as project lead and technical lead. Just be sure to explain who will help manage the overall project process. For example, different project management tasks might fall to the project lead, collaborative lead, or another designated project manager, and some brief explanation of this is helpful so reviewers understand how the team will ensure good management and completion of the proposed work.

Q: If a proposal includes a collaboration between a university and multiple reserves, who should serve as the fiscal lead?
A: The project lead should be the fiscal lead. The fiscal lead manages the grant award and will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the proposed scope of work is completed. The fiscal lead must be employed at the fiduciary institution that will receive the grant contract.

Q: Is it appropriate to include unfunded people as team members?

A: It is ok to include unfunded people as team members but you will need to be clear about how this will work. The narrative and letters of support are key places to do this. We provide general guidance about the types of letters of support to include and it is up to you to develop the set that conveys the essential information. Pledges of in-kind contributions are especially important when individuals are contributing significantly to the work. If reserve staff are contributing to the project, you will need to make sure it's clear how that will happen and that it is manageable. Sometimes teams develop different categories of team members to help convey how they are contributing at different levels, e.g., core team, advisory group, etc. Group letters are also permissible. Just be sure that the voice of every partner signing the letter comes through very clearly and with specificity, e.g., share their specific examples of use/interest. Even in a group letter, the more specificity, the better.

Review & Selection Process

Q: On page 35 of the RFP it says, “No reserve will serve as the lead reserve on more than one catalyst or knowledge exchange project, except in cases where a reserve is leading a project that involves three or more reserves.” Does this mean a reserve can only support one single-reserve proposal submission?
A: A reserve may be the lead reserve for as many catalyst / knowledge exchange proposals as desired but they are unlikely to receive funding for more than one of those proposals, except in cases where the additional project(s) engage three or more reserves. In other words, a reserve may be the lead reserve on more than one catalyst/knowledge exchange award this year if the additional project(s) involve three or more reserves. This secondary selection factor allows the Science Collaborative, in consultation with the NOAA Program Manager, 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, with an exception for proposals involving three or more reserves.

Q: 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; panelists will not consider secondary selection factors (such as distribution of funds across regions or reserves) in their review and ranking process. While we do not expect reserves to choose one proposal over the other, managers can provide a letter of support to be included as an appendix to the proposal or share concerns only directly with the Science Collaborative via a proposal assessment form.

Q: Page 35 of the RFP outlines secondary selection factors for proposals. How does this selection process relate to other Science Collaborative funding opportunities?
A: Both the 2025 Catalyst / Knowledge Exchange and the 2025 Collaborative Research RFPs include similar secondary selection factors, and the factors will be applied to the proposals submitted to that RFP independent of other funding opportunities. For

example, it is possible for a single reserve to serve as lead reserve on both a catalyst/knowledge exchange and collaborative research grant award in 2025.

Q: Is there any advantage or disadvantage to reserves that have/had previous Science Collaborative projects?
A: There is no advantage or disadvantage to reserves that have had previous projects. Each proposal is reviewed independently for its own internal logic.

Q: Is there any advantage or disadvantage to proposals with participation with more than one reserve?
A: The number of reserves involved should be appropriate for the proposed work. It is perfectly acceptable for a project to focus on one reserve or on multiple reserves. The proposal should explain how the proposed work addresses a reserve management or knowledge exchange need(s) at any participating reserves.

Q: Does the Science Collaborative provide feedback on Letters of Intent (LOI) before full proposals are due?
A: No, applicants will not receive feedback on their LOI. LOIs are used by Science Collaborative staff to inform proposal reviewer recruitment; they will not be used as an evaluative tool. Only applicants that have submitted a letter of intent will be permitted to submit a proposal.

Proposal Format and Appendices

Q: Does the order of the subheadings in the project narrative of my proposal have to be the same as in the RFP guidelines?
A: Yes, applicants should follow the order of the headings in the proposal narrative. Within each section, applicants can sequence content as they choose.

Q: Can we have a table or a conceptual figure in the project narrative?
A: Yes, figures and/or tables may be included within the narrative so long as the 10-page limit is not exceeded. These are usually somewhat situational depending on the proposal. If including a figure or table is important to convey a message you can, and should feel free, to include them but it is not necessary for the success of a proposal.

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 a 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 do not specify a format for the resumes, other than to limit them to two pages. 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. You are also welcome to use different formats for different types of team members.

Q: Are we required to include the resumes of intended users in Appendix G?
A: Resumes are required for team members listed on the proposal title page. Resumes will be used by reviewers to determine whether the team has the requisite technical and collaborative skills and experience to undertake the project successfully. If users are on your team and will be contributing to the work, you should include their resumes.

Q: Do we need resumes from each team member listed, or just the leads?
A: Resumes should be included for all the team members listed on the proposal title page, but not necessarily "advisors".

Q: Who should fill out the Subrecipient Statement Collaborative Intent?
A: Only the fiduciary institution that will receive and manage the grant needs to fill out this form. The term “subrecipient” in the name of the form refers to the relationship of the grantee to University of Michigan. Entities listed as subcontracts listed in Appendix D do not need to fill this out.

Q: How do we determine the “authorized official” for the Subrecipient Statement of Collaborative Intent (Appendix E)?
A: For universities, the authorized official is normally a designated individual(s) in their pre-award (ORSP) or Sponsored Programs Office. For non-university organizations, this individual is typically a director or manager level individual that's able to approve organizational commitments. They should also be in a position to certify that the information provided on the subrecipient form is accurate. There's a statement to this effect above the signature line on the form. The authorized official is typically not the researcher or program director, however, that may not be true for small institutions where the researcher does serve as the authorized representative.

Q: In the Subrecipient Statement of Collaborative Intent form, the “Biographical Sketches” checkbox has been pre-checked. Are the 2-page resumes that are also required sufficient to count as biographical sketches, or do additional biographical sketches need to also be submitted?
A: No additional biographical sketches are required beyond the 2-page resumes.

Q: What types of materials can be included in “Appendix I: Other Supporting Documents”?
A: Applicants may include up to five pages of documents in support of the project. This may include figures, maps, diagrams, references, or other relevant items that help to clarify and/or demonstrate the value of the proposed work.

Q: Do the formatting requirements (12-point, Times New Roman, single spaced, one-inch margins) apply to the 2-page resumes and letters of support?
A: No.

Budget

Q: What are the requirements for Science Collaborative projects regarding indirect cost rates?
A: The Science Collaborative will reimburse overhead costs up to an institution's federally negotiated indirect cost (IDC) rate agreement. If the fiduciary institution or a subcontractor does not have a federally negotiated indirect rate, they should use the de minimis rate of 10%. Unless otherwise noted in the IDC rate agreement, indirect costs may only be applied to the first $25,000 of each subcontract.

Q: Is there a cost match requirement?
A: We do not require matching funds for any Science Collaborative opportunities.

Q: How will budgets be handled for multi-institutional teams?
A: The University of Michigan will subcontract to the lead fiduciary institution which will then subcontract to all partners. A detailed budget and justification is required for the lead institution and each subcontractor.

Q: Would it be a disadvantage to submit a proposal with a relatively smaller budget compared to the maximum?
A: No, proposals should have appropriate budgets for the proposed work.

Q: How much of the budget should be dedicated to data management? Should it account for time or other components such as software?
A: Our rough rule of thumb is that you should assume that 10-15 % of your overall budget should be dedicated to data management and data sharing activities. This portion of the budget should focus on everything you need to meet data sharing and archiving requirements, e.g., personnel time for cleaning up and preparing data and metadata for archival, software licenses, etc.

Q: When they are not subcontracted, what types of expenses are allowable to support user participation?
A: Honoraria, travel support, compensation for child care to attend a meeting, provision of traditional food/gifts that have cultural significance when convening partners are examples of allowable costs to support user participation. You will need to clearly articulate the purpose and justify the amount in the budget. Gift cards are not permitted.

Q: Is there a preferred category for participant support costs or support to attend workshops in the budget template?
A: Those can go as a separate line under "participant support," "travel support," or can be classified as "other."

Q: Are permit fees an allowable cost?
A: It would be an allowable cost if it has a sufficient direct benefit to the statement of work, so we suggest clearly explaining in the budget narrative how this expense is connected to the work. On the budget template, you could include it in section D-Supplies or G-Other.

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 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. In the past, project teams have also used honoraria to easily provide resources to many participating reserves, versus via subcontract.

Q: I would like to offer staff at many different reserves who are engaged in the project and experts/advisors to the project the ability to invoice to cover the cost of their time. Do I need to present these as individual contracts or is there a simpler way?
A: You could go the route of subcontracts or maybe think about these expenses as honoraria that you set a maximum amount for and account for as separate lines in your budget. You need to provide an explanation for them in your justification but can avoid drawing up lots of subcontracts.

Alternatively, depending on the fiduciary's rules, a partner institution may invoice (vs subcontract) small amounts for reserve staff time. For example, a fiduciary may have a rule that allows them to reimburse up to 10K without a subcontract. Typically an honorarium is to compensate an individual for work outside their regular work, so the language might affect your approach.

Q: Is graduate student tuition an eligible expense?
A: Yes, projects that include graduate student support may include tuition for these students in the budget.

Q: Are expenses associated with infrastructure eligible expenses?
A: No, infrastructure is not supportable with the type of funds we have for this grant program.

Q: What are the NERRS Science Collaborative's CFDA (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance) or ALN (Assistance Listing Number) numbers?
A: Use the CFDA number, 11.419-Coastal Zone Management Administration Awards. If needed, the federal award ID is NA19NOS4190058.

Data Management and CDMO Services

Q: Is using the NERRS Centralized Data Management Office (CDMO) for data archival the preferred approach?
A: We don’t have a preference for data archival, it just needs to be logical and accessible to the maximum number of people. It might be helpful to see where similar types of data, such as genetic data or remote sensing data, are already archived and accessible.

Q: Does using CDMO for data archival and management need to be budgeted for?
A: Data archival services are provided as part of CDMO core requirements and do not need to be part of a project's budget. If a project has more involved data management or archival needs, CDMO can work with project leads to evaluate whether there needs to be an associated cost; those conversations should take place as early as possible with those submitting proposals.

Q: Is there a maximum size limit on data that can be archived on CDMO?
A: CDMO has not yet encountered any data collections that they cannot archive. If this changes at a later date, CDMO will evaluate each situation on a case-by-case basis.

Q: Who should we contact with data management questions?
A: All questions regarding the full proposal guidelines and development, including data management, should be sent to nerrs-info@umich.edu. The Science Collaborative will coordinate responses with other team members, including CDMO.

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 data and associated metadata for funded NSC projects that need such a service. 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 websites for individual projects.

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: 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. If CDMO's standard archival/access process, as explained below, meets your project needs, applicants are welcome to include that approach in their proposal's data sharing plans without a detailed conversation with CDMO.

The Science Collaborative 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. 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. You are welcome to reach out to Dwayne Porter from the CDMO (porter@sc.edu) to discuss more involved data management needs.

Q: Our proposed work does not include collection of new data. Do we need to develop a Data Sharing Plan?
A: For projects that do not propose the collection of new data: Provide a statement that "no detailed Data Sharing Plan is needed," accompanied by a clear justification as to why, e.g., no new data are being collected. If you plan to use existing data, it is recommended that you use the project narrative (Section 5) to demonstrate that you have access to the existing data you intend to use. If your project will generate synthesized data, explain where these data will be archived.

Data Management for Unique Types of Data

Q: If part of the project is to develop and improve code, are there special places to share it? Special requirements?
A: CDMO can provide access to code directly, but also considers GitHub a legitimate and effective way of sharing statistical and modeling code.

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: 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 NSC-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. 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: 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: What is considered data? For example, are interviews or evidence libraries considered data?
A: Survey responses collected as part of a research are typically considered data in the eyes of NOAA and the Federal Government. Evidence libraries would require further discussion to determine whether they meet requirements.

Q: If we are collecting data with an existing Data Sharing Plan 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 they will be stored, and how they can be accessed. In the case above, it is important to detail what 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.

General Data Sharing Expectations

Q: What is the time frame for data sharing? Do data need to be shared by the end of the grant timeline?

A: The expectation is that data will be made available as quickly as possible. For some projects this could be throughout the life of the project, for others it could be at the end of the project or within 2 years of the end date. 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. If a team is not ready to make their data publically accessible at project closeout, they must provide a copy of their datasets and metadata for interim archival with the Science Collaborative.

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 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: 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.

Other

Q: In our letter of intent, we indicated 12 months for project duration. Is it ok to change it to 18 months in our proposal?
A: Yes

Q: Is there a repository of previous successful catalyst and knowledge exchange projects?
A: The Science Collaborative [project catalog] allows you to select "catalyst" and “science transfer” projects to get a full list of current and prior projects.

Q: Do you have any tips about team management for successful project management?
A: Previous teams have been successful with charters as a way to clarify roles and responsibilities early on, along with expectations and accountability. The Guide to Collaborative Science has a tool for developing project charters

Can a project address more than one management / knowledge exchange need?
A: Yes, a project can address more than one management / knowledge exchange need. However, keep in mind that you must demonstrate that the project will inform and advance management related to each need you name. The link between the science you are proposing and the management need(s) that will be addressing should be very clear. The relatively short time frame of these grants (12-18 months) will require an efficient, well-managed process. Ensure that the project scope is realistic given this timeline and your proposed budget.

Q: Collaborative Research grants and Catalyst Objective 1 grants both involve the need for new research. How do I choose between the two styles of grants?
If you have a well-defined research question that was developed with intended users and you have clarity about how you will approach the research together, a Collaborative Research grant is likely to be most appropriate for your project. If you are still developing your research question with intended users and could use more time to figure out how you will work together and/or could benefit from some preliminary data collection, a Catalyst grant (Objective 1) is likely to be more suitable.

Q: Should the timeline be uploaded separately to the online application?
A: The timeline should not be uploaded as a separate excel file. Please include it in your single file proposal package as an appendix.