



U.S. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 24-125

Dear Colleague Letter: NSF and the Romanian Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) Lead Agency Opportunity in the Mathematical and Physical Sciences

September 6, 2024

Dear Colleagues:

The Mathematical & Physical Sciences Directorate (MPS) of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Romanian Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) are in a partnership to support international collaboration under the NSF-UEFISCDI Lead Agency Opportunity in Mathematical and Physical Sciences. The goal of this activity is to promote collaborative research within the mathematical and physical sciences by reducing barriers to conducting research with international collaborators. The NSF-UEFISCDI Lead Agency Opportunity allows U.S. and Romanian researchers to submit a single collaborative proposal that will undergo a single merit review process through NSF as the lead agency.

This document provides guidelines for the preparation, submission, review and award of NSF-UEFISCDI Collaborative Proposals.

Under the NSF-UEFISCDI Lead Agency Opportunity, proposals may be accepted for collaborative research in areas at the intersection of MPS's and UEFISCDI's missions. Proposers should review the participating MPS and UEFISCDI programs for further information on which areas of research are eligible for support through this activity. Proposals are expected to adhere to typical proposal sizes and durations for the relevant UEFISCDI and MPS programs from which funding is sought. Proposals will be accepted for both interdisciplinary and disciplinary research projects. [Please consult the list of participating MPS programs](#). Please note that this activity is limited to core programs within the MPS Directorate; no cross-cutting or agency-wide special programs are eligible.

Proposers are advised that all documents submitted to NSF for this opportunity may be

shared by secure electronic means with UEFISCDI.

The collaborative opportunity described in this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) remains in effect until archived.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

All proposals must fall within the mission and funding parameters of both NSF/MPS and UEFISCDI. Proposals that do not fall within the missions of both funding organizations will not be considered.

There is a two-stage application process. Stage 1, Expression of Interest (EOI) submission, must be completed prior to Stage 2, full proposal submission.

After acceptance of an EOI, proposals must be submitted in accordance with the deadlines of the participating NSF programs. For NSF programs with a proposal submission deadline, project teams should submit the EOI at least 60 days ahead of the proposal submission deadline. For NSF programs without a proposal submission deadline, project teams should submit the EOI 60 days ahead of their intended proposal submission date.

Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)

1. The EOI submission includes the following information:
 - o Proposed Project Title.
 - o Names, email addresses, and departmental and institutional affiliations of the U.S. and Romanian researchers.
 - o Bottom-line estimates of total expected funding (including indirect costs) to be requested from NSF and UEFISCDI in appropriate monetary units (USD for U.S. budget and RON for Romanian budget).
 - o Clear indication of the NSF/MPS target program. This may not be the only NSF program that will consider the Expression of Interest, but identification of the target program allows for faster consideration.
 - o Project Summary (1000 words maximum) of the proposed research which must include:
 - a. a statement on the intellectual merit of the proposed activity, and
 - b. a statement on the broader impacts of the proposed activity.

The U.S. portion of the work should fall within the scope of one or more participating programs as noted above. The Romanian portion of the work should fall within the scope of Bilateral/Multilateral Complex Projects, **Lead Agency Procedure**.

It is advisable for proposers to consult with their institution's Office of Sponsored

Research for budget advice prior to finalizing a total estimate. Full proposal budgets should not vary from those specified in the EOI by more than 10% and any such changes should be fully justified.

2. To submit the above information, **proposers complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) form**. Proposers email the completed form to nsf-uefiscdi@nsf.gov at least 60 days prior to the intended proposal submission date. EOIs will be shared with UEFISCDI and both agencies will review the submitted information to check for eligibility (namely whether the proposed research fits within the participating agencies' portfolios and whether the proposed researchers and institutions meet the agencies' funding eligibility requirements). UEFISCDI eligibility requirements for the Romanian side can be found here: <https://uefiscdi.gov.ro/nsf-uefiscdi-lead-agency-opportunity>.
3. Upon confirmation from the NSF that both agencies have reviewed the EOI and confirmed that the proposed collaborative research is appropriate for review under the NSF-UEFISCDI Lead Agency Opportunity, NSF will contact the proposers to inform them whether they are encouraged to submit a full research proposal to the NSF/MPS program indicated. In some cases, an alteration of the budget request may be required in the full proposal submission.
4. If this communication has not taken place prior to a proposal submission, the proposal will be returned without review.

Stage 2: Full Proposal Submission

1. Proposers from both countries are to collaborate to write a single proposal. It is the responsibility of the U.S. proposer to submit the proposal to the appropriate NSF program for review. The full proposal should be submitted within twelve months of the EOI being approved. In the case of the original EOI expiring, proposers should contact NSF for clarification on how to proceed; a new EOI may be necessary.
2. The proposal should indicate that it is to be considered under this Lead Agency Opportunity by prefacing the title with "NSF-UEFISCDI:".
3. Proposers must comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in NSF's Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG). The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate standing program within MPS via Research.gov or Grants.gov. If proposers are using Research.gov and the research collaboration only includes one US institution, proposers may select the option "Single Proposal (with or without sub-awards)" in Step 4. Proposal Details of the "Prepare New Full Proposal" wizard in Research.gov. Although NSF-UEFISCDI projects involve collaborative research, proposals are only classified as "collaborative" in Research.gov if they either 1) have sub-award(s) or 2) the lead proposal has associated non-lead proposal(s) attached to it. For more information on NSF collaborative proposals, see Chapter II.E.3 of the PAPPG.

4. The proposal should only indicate the U.S. expenses on the NSF Budget Form. A detailed breakdown of funding requested from UEFISCDI should be added to the proposal as a Supplementary Document, using the Budget Breakdown Template available on UEFISCDI's website, here: <https://uefiscdi.gov.ro/nsf-uefiscdi-lead-agency-opportunity>. This document is to be shared with UEFISCDI to verify eligibility of costs requested. The Budget Justification section of the proposal should address the full project budget (that is, both the U.S. and Romanian funding items).
5. Romanian personnel should be listed in the Overview section of the Project Summary as "non-NSF funded collaborators." This listing is for administrative purposes and is not intended to characterize the level or value of the contribution of Romanian personnel to the project. *Guidance specific to "non-NSF funded collaborators" is as follows:*
 - o Biographical Sketch - Required. The biographical information must be clearly identified as "non-NSF funded collaborators" biographical information and uploaded as a single PDF file in the Other Supplementary Documents section of the proposal. Use of a specific format is not required except in specific cases when the individual announcement to the community for the participating programs will indicate a required NSF format.
 - o Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA) Information - Required. The COA information should be provided through the use of the [COA template](#), identified as "non-NSF funded collaborators" COA information, and uploaded as a PDF file in the Single Copy Documents section of the proposal.
 - o Synergistic activities - Required
 - o Current and Pending (Other) Support - Not required.
 - o Results from Prior NSF Support - Not required.
6. An institutional statement in support of the joint submission must be provided by each Romanian partner organization in the proposal submission. This statement should be in the form of a signed letter from an Authorized Organizational Representative including the following text: "I confirm on behalf of [insert name or institution] that the U.S.-Romanian collaborative proposal between [insert name of the lead agency PI and institution] and [insert name of the non-lead agency PI and institution] is endorsed and has been submitted by [name of research office]." This letter must be included in the "Supplementary Documents" section.
7. For projects involving human subjects/participants or animals, proposers are expected to adhere to the policies, law, and guidelines concerning research ethics and must have requisite institutional approvals or exemptions in place prior to any potential award.
8. Research funded through this Lead Agency Opportunity is to be conducted in accordance with NSF's Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research Policies (<https://www.nsf.gov/od/recr.jsp>).
9. Proposers are advised that all documents submitted to NSF as the Lead Agency may be shared securely, via a password-protected SharePoint or extranet site, with

UEFISCDI. These documents will be hosted on a site associated with NSF, housed behind firewalls, and using NSF-specific protocols to ensure data protection (personal data protection included).

10. Proposals that request duplicative funding from NSF and/or UEFISCDI may be returned without review.

MERIT REVIEW

NSF-UEFISCDI collaborative proposals will be reviewed alongside all other unsolicited or standard research grant proposals received in the same funding round or call and will not undergo a special or separate review process. Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with NSF's standard merit review criteria.

FUNDING DECISIONS

There are no separate NSF funds available for this effort; proposals will compete with all other proposals submitted to participating programs and will be evaluated on the strengths of the proposed intellectual merit, broader impacts, and any program- and/or solicitation-specific review criteria that may apply. NSF, as the lead agency, will use its usual internal procedures to determine whether a proposal will be awarded or declined. Funding decisions may be subject to budget limits.

All proposers will be advised whether their proposal has been recommended for funding or will be declined. Proposers will receive copies of the reviewers' unattributed comments and, where applicable, a panel summary.

Once a proposer has been notified of a pending award, the Romanian researcher(s) associated with the project must submit a copy of the proposal to the UEFISCDI so that each agency has complete documentation of the overall proposed research project. UEFISCDI will provide further guidance to successful proposers at this stage.

For projects recommended for award, NSF and UEFISCDI will coordinate the U.S. and Romanian award timing as much as possible. However, because the participating agencies have different funding cycles, it is possible that some projects will have delayed start dates to wait until funds become available or until all pre-award requirements are met. Wherever possible, both agencies will endeavor to hold standard turnaround times for each participating agency, but in exceptional circumstances outcomes could be delayed.

RESUBMISSIONS

Should a proposal be declined for funding, proposers should follow these guidelines on resubmission:

1. refer to the resubmission guidelines of both agencies.
2. submit a new EOI at least 3 months in advance of resubmitting a full proposal. The EOI should clearly indicate that it is a resubmission and what changes have been made. Both agencies reserve the right to reject an EOI that does not meet their resubmission criteria.

POST-AWARD CONSIDERATIONS

Award recipients will be expected to comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the agencies from which they receive funding.

Award recipients are to acknowledge both NSF and the UEFISCDI in any reports or publications arising from the grant.

Requests for no cost extensions will be considered by NSF and UEFISCDI using standard procedures. Requests for changes to awards will be discussed with other involved funding agencies before a mutual decision is reached.

DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

NSF and UEFISCDI will share relevant information and data—whether in connection with the proposal and award process, or thereafter during the post award process. Data are expected to be shared between NSF and UEFISCDI to enable the secure and efficient processing of full proposals for the NSF- UEFISCDI Lead Agency Opportunity. Data shared may include proposal attachments, anonymized peer reviews, and panel summaries. NSF and UEFISCDI are committed to maintaining data confidentiality, protection, and privacy and intend to fully abide by their own applicable laws and policies concerning the sharing of data in our collaborative activities.

PROGRAM CONTACTS

For general inquiries about the NSF-UEFISCDI lead agency opportunity, please contact nsf-uefiscdi@nsf.gov. For inquiries pertaining to the specific MPS programs to which an NSF-UEFISCDI may be submitted, please contact the program officers listed on the specific programs' web pages. A list of participating MPS programs can be found at the bottom of NSF's web page on international collaborations with Romania, here: [OISE International Collaborations - Romania](#).

Additionally, NSF's Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE) helps to coordinate the overall engagement between NSF and UEFISCDI. The current OISE program manager for Romania is listed at <https://www.nsf.gov/od/oise/country-list.jsp>.

Sincerely,

Denise Caldwell
Acting Assistant Director
Mathematical and Physical Sciences