**NSF 01-91**

# NSF Dear Colleague Letter

## Opportunities for International Research Training Activities with Support from the National Science Foundation and the European Commission

Dear Colleague:

This letter informs the U.S. research community of an opportunity for current NSF awardees, with grants and cooperative agreements, to request support for participation in an international training-through-research program of the European Commission (EC). Specifically, NSF invites grant-supplement requests proposed in partnership with European teams that are requesting support from the Research Training Network activity (RTN) of the EC's Improving Human Potential Programme (IHP). The deadline for European researchers' proposals to the EC's RTN program is May 4, 2001; the deadline for U.S. researchers to submit requests to NSF is May 14, 2001. This letter provides background information and guidelines for NSF awardees to request support.

Interested investigators must contact the NSF program officer responsible for the grant to be supplemented in advance of the deadline to determine whether the proposed scientific, engineering, technical, and educational focus of the proposed affiliation is appropriate for NSF support. Because of their greater capacity to collaborate with a network of European researchers, group NSF awardees, such as the Science and Technology Centers, Engineering Research Centers, Plant Genome Virtual Centers, the BIO Research Coordination Networks, IGERT projects, etc., are particularly encouraged to pursue this opportunity.

### NSF Support for an Internationalized S&E Workforce

A crucial element of NSF's 2001-2005 Strategic Plan is the building of a diverse, globally oriented and internationally competitive science and engineering workforce through programs that make international research experiences available to U.S. students and researchers early in their careers. Such experiences can be provided by promoting collaboration and partnerships among researchers and institutions internationally.

There is no doubt that the global science and engineering enterprise will continue to grow rapidly as nations around the world invest in science and engineering research. A necessary condition for international cooperation is the capacity of individual scientists, engineers, and educators to pursue their professional activities across national boundaries, languages, and cultures. However, a substantive and effective partnership requires trust and a mutual understanding of the intellectual and problem-solving processes of the partners. In this context, the National Science

Foundation will provide support for U.S. participation in Research Training Networks (RTNs) to be established by the European Commission in the 2001 competition. RTNs are designed to provide international research training for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

**General Background: The U.S.-European Union S&T Agreement, and the European Commission's Framework Programme.**

In 1998, the U.S. Government and the European Community concluded the U.S.-European Union Science and Technology Agreement that allows U.S. researchers to participate in proposals to the Community's research programs. Investigators on either side may propose collaborations with investigators on the other side, and each side must provide support for its respective activities in the collaboration. Corresponding proposals to NSF and the European Commission are, in general, reviewed separately according to the normal procedures of each organization.

Collectively, the European Commission's R&D programs are known as the Framework Programmes. They support a specified research agenda and operate with a five-year appropriation from the European Parliament. The Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) runs from 1998-2002 and represents a total investment that is approximately equal to NSF's budget for that period. One of FP5's "Horizontal Programmes" (one that cuts across disciplinary boundaries) is Improving Human Potential (IHP). IHP supports a number of activities that address the development of a scientific and technical workforce, including the RTN program. More information about FP5 and the programs noted above, including possible third-country participation, can be found at the EC's Cordis website.

**Description of the Research Training Network Activity**

The Research Training Networks promote training of researchers at predoctoral and postdoctoral level within the framework of high-quality transnational collaborative projects, with emphasis on emerging fields of research. The RTN program enables young researchers to advance their scientific understanding, to acquire complementary knowledge, and to establish new contacts with other researchers and other institutions. Participants advance their discipline and improve their career opportunities through research experiences in foreign countries.

A research training network consists of five to fifteen mutually independent legal entities from at least five member states of the European Union or Associated Countries. The teams within a network share a common research and training project, and are required to have other sources of funding for the actual research on which the research training activity is built. The EC typically supports networks for three to four years. Networks in emerging and novel interdisciplinary fields of science and technology are encouraged. The RTN awards support two types of activities that complement the teams' existing research projects:

- Predoctoral or postdoctoral mobility support: Each site within the RTN has support for one person per year, and appointments are generally for a one-year term, which is renewable. To encourage international mobility, RTN funds cannot be used to support someone in his/her country of origin.

- Networking activities that connect the training sites: The participating sites hold regular

workshops and conduct short-term exchanges of senior researchers.

More than 165 new RTNs were funded in the first (1999) competition under the Fifth Framework Programme, and about 250 such networks were supported under the Fourth Framework Programme (1994-1998).

The second and final call for RTN proposals under FP5 was announced on December 15, 2000. The deadline for receipt of those proposals is May 4, 2001. The EC is expected to fund approximately 165 RTNs in this competition. Researchers and students from U.S. laboratories participating in these proposed networks are eligible to take part in all aspects of RTN activities, but they are not eligible to receive EC support. The following sections describe the procedure by which U.S. researchers who have NSF awards may request NSF support for participation in new RTNs to be funded by the EC in 2001.

**Guidelines for Requesting NSF Support**

NSF will accept requests for supplements to existing awards from U.S. institutions that have established collaborations with their European counterparts, and are included as partners in pending RTN proposals. Supplementary funding may be requested to support the incremental costs of training U.S. graduate students and postdoctoral fellows ("trainees") through assignment to European network institutions, and the costs of coordination and collaboration with scientists at partner RTN sites in the member states of the European Union or Associated Countries. NSF will support the travel expenses for only the U.S. component of such collaborations; however, U.S. applicants may include in their supplemental requests the local research expenses of the European students in their laboratories.

**Eligibility and Allowable Costs**

1. The proposed European activities should fall within the general scope of the existing NSF-funded project for which supplemental funding is requested.

2. Incremental participant support can be obtained for one person-year of participating trainees each year. The time spent in Europe by an individual may be the entire year, or it may be divided among several shorter assignments and several participants. For any participant, however, there must be at least one assignment with a minimum duration of 90 days.

3. Typical budgets of about $50,000 per U.S. team per year are deemed adequate. It is expected that the major portion of the NSF funding will go toward the mobility expenses of U.S. trainees.

4. Allowable budget categories are: incremental travel and per diem living expenses for the U.S. trainees, travel funds for faculty advisors for supervision and coordination, and research expenses (materials, supplies, etc.) of the European trainees in the U.S. laboratory**.** European counterparts will provide their own travel and living expenses for their research visits to U.S. partners, and also will cover research expenses of the U.S. trainees in European laboratories.

5. U.S. trainees must be graduate students or postdoctoral fellows who are U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents.

**Instructions for Request Preparation**

Investigators must contact the NSF program officer responsible for the grant to be supplemented in advance of submitting a request. Since this supplement represents the addition of an international dimension to current activities, the request must include the following information:

1. A concise, substantive summary of the proposed interaction between the U.S. and European partners, including the anticipated benefits of the interaction (**limit: 5 pages**). In addition to trainee activities in Europe, this summary should also comment on the proposer's capacity to receive European trainees.

2. Information clearly identifying the counterpart EC proposal including the project name, EC identification code, and a 1-page technical abstract.

3. A letter from the coordinator of the partner network in Europe supporting the planned affiliation and certifying inclusion of the U.S. researcher as a partner in the EC-RTN proposal.

4. A brief description of the process and criteria for selection of the U.S. trainees. If a trainee has been pre-selected, then the grounds for selection and a brief biographical sketch of the student should be included.

5. All expenses for U.S. and European trainees, as well as faculty travel costs, should appear as "Participant Support" on line **F** of Form 1030, the summary budget page.

The supplement request must describe the U.S. part of the cooperative project in sufficient detail to enable the program officer and reviewers to evaluate (1) its intellectual merit and (2) the broader impacts of the proposed activity. In addition to these review criteria, NSF will take into consideration the value added by the proposed international cooperation, and the extent to which the proposal integrates research and education and promotes diversity.

Requests must be received at NSF before close of business on **May 14, 2001.** Supplement requests to NSF must be submitted in accordance with the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (NSF 01-2). Requests must be submitted *via* FastLane using the "Supplemental Funding Request" module. Item 1 above should be entered within the "Summary of Proposed Work" section. Items 2-4 above should be entered within the "Justification for Supplemental Funding" section. In order to identify the category of the request, the submission should also reference the announcement number of this letter, which is **NSF 01-91**, and include it within the "Summary of Proposed Work" section. Please note that if the text of the submission includes non-ASCII characters and/or images, it must be uploaded to NSF as a PDF file or in a word processor format that NSF will convert to a PDF file. Also, if the required documentation from the European partner is not available in electronic form, it may be submitted to the program officer as paper copy. Note should be made in the "Justification for Supplemental Funding" section that paper copies are being forwarded to NSF.

Disciplinary NSF program officers and the Division of International Programs will manage the review of requests on the U.S. side. Counterpart proposals from European institutions to the EC will be reviewed through its normal procedures. Following notification of NSF by the EC regarding those RTNs that it intends to support, the Foundation will announce supplemental

awards for U.S. participation in new RTNs. Successful proposals will be designated as cooperative activities under the European Community-U.S. Science and Technology Agreement.

If you have questions, please contact one of the NSF staff listed below:

Henry Blount, Head, Office of Multidisciplinary Activities, Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences, (703) 292-8803. E-mail: **hblount@nsf.gov**

Jeanne Hudson, Program Coordinator/Western Europe, Division of International Programs, (703) 292-8702. E-mail: **jhudson@nsf.gov**

Additional information about the EC and NSF programs may be found at the following web links:

http://www.cordis.lu/improving/networks/home.htm - A description of the EC RTN activity.

http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/eu/971205_eu_science_agree.html – The U.S.-EU Science and Technology Agreement.

http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/about.htm – Fifth Framework Programme.

http://www.cordis.lu/improving/ - Improving Human Potential program.

http://www.cordis.lu/improving/calls/rtn_200002.htm – The EC call for proposals.

http://improving-rtn.sti.jrc.it/network/ - Listings of currently funded Research Training Networks

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2001/nsf012/start.html – The NSF Grant Proposal Guide, NSF 01-2

http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/int/oppost.htm – The NSF International Research Fellowship Program

http://www.nsf.gov/cgi-bin/getpub?nsf0018 – (NSF Dear Colleague Letter) - Opportunities for Cooperative Activities in Materials Sciences between NSF and the EC

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**ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION**

The National Science Foundation (NSF) funds research and education in most fields of science and engineering. Awardees are wholly responsible for conducting their project activities and preparing the results for publication. Thus, the Foundation does not assume responsibility for such findings or their interpretation.

NSF welcomes proposals from all qualified scientists, engineers and educators. The Foundation strongly encourages women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to compete fully in its programs. In accordance with federal statutes, regulations, and NSF policies, no person on grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin, or disability shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving financial assistance from NSF (unless otherwise specified in the eligibility requirements for a particular program).

Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED) provide funding for

special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities (investigators and other staff, including student research assistants) to work on NSF-supported projects. See the program announcement or contact the program coordinator at (703) 292-4674

The National Science Foundation has Telephonic Device for the Deaf (TDD) and Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) capabilities that enable individuals with hearing impairments to communicate with the Foundation regarding NSF programs, employment, or general information. TDD may be accessed at (703) 292-5090 or (800) 281-8749, or through FIRS on 1-800-877-8339.

## PRIVACY ACT AND PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENTS

The information requested on proposal forms and project reports is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. The information on proposal forms will be used in connection with the selection of qualified proposals; project reports submitted by awardees will be used for program evaluation and reporting within the Executive Branch and to Congress. The information requested may be disclosed to qualified reviewers and staff assistants as part of the review process; to applicant institutions/awardees to provide or obtain data regarding the proposal review process, award decisions, or the administration of awards; to government contractors, experts, volunteers and researchers and educators as necessary to complete assigned work; to other government agencies needing information as part of the review process or in order to coordinate programs; and to another Federal agency, court or party in a court or Federal administrative proceeding if the government is a party. Information about Principal Investigators may be added to the Reviewer file and used to select potential candidates to serve as peer reviewers or advisory committee members. See Systems of Records, NSF-50, "Principal Investigator/Proposal File and Associated Records," 63 Federal Register 267 (January 5, 1998), and NSF-51, "Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records," 63 Federal Register 268 (January 5, 1998). Submission of the information is voluntary. Failure to provide full and complete information, however, may reduce the possibility of receiving an award.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 120 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions. Send comments regarding this burden estimate and any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: Suzanne H. Plimpton, Reports Clearance Officer; Division of Administrative Services; National Science Foundation; Arlington, VA 22230.

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