

Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) Program Solicitation NSF 04-511

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

FAQ #1. Changes in the MRI Program and Solicitation

1.A. Question: How does the new FY 2004 MRI Program Solicitation differ from the previous FY 2003 MRI Program Solicitation?

Answer: The new MRI Program Solicitation has been revised in several ways: Changes have been made in the classification of eligible institutions, NSF's revised cost sharing policy, and the conformity of the program with recently instituted Foundation-wide policies. Highlights of the changes include:

- New requirements as specified in the revised NSF Grant Proposal Guide <http://www.nsf.gov/pubsys/ods/getpub.cfm?gpg>
- New deadline date for proposals: Thursday, January 22, 2004
- Revised language to clarify:
 - Eligible institution classification – from two types of institutions in previous fiscal years to three classifications in FY 2004: non-Ph.D. granting, Ph.D. granting, and non-degree granting institutions
 - Cost sharing policy – in conformance with NSF's revised cost sharing policy, proposers may provide no more and no less than the stipulated cost sharing level
- Changes in the requirements of the Supplementary Documents section of the FastLane proposal:
 - Except for instrument development proposals, letters of commitment are neither required nor allowed
 - Letter(s) of agreement from private sector partner(s) describing the role of the private sector partner in the development effort should only be submitted in conjunction with development proposals
 - *Certification of Institutional Classification* document is required – officially states the institutional classification: non-Ph.D. granting, Ph.D. granting, or non-degree granting

FAQ #2. Eligible Institutions

2.A. Question: What is the difference between non-Ph.D. granting institutions, Ph.D. granting institutions, and non-degree granting institutions?

Answer: Per the MRI solicitation, Ph.D. granting institutions are academic institutions that have produced more than 20 Ph.D.'s or D.Sci.'s in all NSF-supported disciplines (NSF is the only federal agency responsible for advancing research and education across all disciplines of science and engineering – please review NSF's Guide to Programs for supported disciplines <http://www.nsf.gov/od/lpa/news/publicat/nsf03009/start.htm>) during the previous two academic years. Non-Ph.D. granting institutions are two- and four-year colleges and universities that have produced fewer than 20 Ph.D.'s or D.Sci.'s in all NSF-supported disciplines during the previous two academic years. Non-degree granting

institutions are independent nonprofit research institutions, research museums, and legally recognized consortia. Please see FAQ #6 for cost sharing requirements for each eligible institution category.

2.B. Question: What type of documentation is needed to convey to NSF my institution’s type/ classification? Where in the proposal should this documentation be included?

Answer: Beginning with the FY 2004 MRI competition, institutions must upload a *Certification of Institutional Classification* document into the Supplementary Documents section of their FastLane proposal. Please bear in mind that these classifications are mutually exclusive. This document must indicate the name of the institution, the type of institution (non-Ph.D. granting, Ph.D. granting or non-degree granting) and must be signed by an Authorized Institutional Representative. Below is a sample of a *Certification of Institutional Classification document*.

Sample Certification of Institutional Classification

“By submission of this proposal, the institution hereby certifies that the originating and managing institution is a [non-Ph.D. granting, Ph.D. granting, or non-degree granting] institution per the respective definitions in the MRI program solicitation ([NSF 04-511](#)).”

Authorized Institutional Representative

Typed Name and Title _____ Signature _____ Date _____

2.C. Question: I understand that institutions may no longer submit proposals to the MRI competition as Research Undergraduate Institutions (RUI). If I submitted as an RUI in past MRI competitions, what is my institutional classification for the FY 2004 MRI competition?

Answer: A RUI should submit as a non-Ph.D. granting institution. Unlike past MRI competitions, RUIs should not put “RUI” in the proposal’s title, should not provide a RUI impact statement, and should not include a RUI certification of eligibility document.

FAQ #3. Merit Review Criteria

3.A. Question: Where should I address NSF’s merit review criteria – intellectual merit and broader impacts?

Answer: Per NSF’s Grant Proposal Guide (under Chapter II C.2.b. <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2004/nsf042/2.htm>), the proposal should “clearly address in separate statements (within the one-page summary): (1) the intellectual merit of the proposed activity; and (2) the broader impacts of the proposed

activity... Proposals that do not separately address both merit review criteria within the one page Project Summary will be returned without review.” The merit review criteria should be addressed more thoroughly in the project description.

Please also read the additional review criteria for the MRI program located in Section VI of the MRI solicitation.

FAQ #4. Proposal Content

4.A. Question: In past MRI competitions, we were instructed to submit letters of support/commitment/agreement within the supplementary documents section of our proposal. Is this still the case?

Answer: The only instance where a letter of agreement should be uploaded into the supplementary documents section is for development proposals. Letter(s) of agreement from private sector partner(s) describing the role of the private sector partner in the development effort should only be submitted in conjunction with development proposals. No other letters of support/commitment should be included in any section of the proposal.

FAQ #5. Development proposals

5.A. Question: What types of proposals are appropriate for the instrument development category?

Answer: The instrument development proposals target the next generation of research instrumentation. The proposed instrument should be unique and have enhanced capabilities (e.g. accuracy; reliability; resolving power; throughput speed; sample capacity; flexibility of operation; breadth of application; and user-friendliness). It is expected that at the end of the grant period (up to five years), there will be a working version of the instrument and that results of the completed work will be broadly disseminated. In cases where appropriate, instrument development may include transfer of technology to the U.S. industrial and governmental laboratories.

5.B. Question: What issues should be addressed in instrument development proposals?

Answer: The proposal should contain a specific plan for instrument development and an explanation of how the research conducted with the requested instrument will advance knowledge and understanding in the relevant scientific field. The proposal should also include prior work of the investigators indicating that the instrumentation will be successfully developed and utilized.

FAQ #6. Cost Sharing

6.A. Question: What are the cost sharing requirements for the three categories of eligible institutions: non-Ph.D. granting institution, Ph.D. granting institutions and non-degree granting institutions?

Answer: Non-Ph.D. granting institutions are not required nor allowed to provide cost sharing. For instrument acquisition proposals, Ph.D. granting and non-degree granting institutions are required to provide no more and no less than 30% cost sharing of the total project cost. (The total project cost is the sum of **Line L** and **Line M** on the FastLane budget). For instrument development proposals, Ph.D. granting and non-degree granting institutions are required to provide no more and no less than 30% cost sharing of the total equipment hardware cost. (The total equipment hardware cost is **Line D** of your FastLane budget).

6.B. Question: What happens if a non-Ph.D. granting institution is willing to provide cost sharing even though it is not required? Likewise, what happens if a Ph.D. granting institution or a non-degree granting institution is willing to provide more than the 30% of total project cost for acquisition proposals/30% of equipment hardware cost for development proposals?

Answer: Per NSF Important Notice 128 (<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/issuances/in128.pdf>), “proposers should not exceed the cost sharing level or amount specified in the solicitation.” Therefore, non-Ph.D. granting institutions are not required nor allowed to provide cost sharing. Also, Ph.D. granting institutions and non-degree granting institutions should provide no more or no less than the stipulated cost sharing requirements for acquisition proposals and development proposals. Proposals that provide more than or less than the stipulated cost sharing requirement are subject to return by the NSF even if the proposal is recommended for award during the review process.

6.C. Question: Will the FastLane budget automatically calculate the required cost sharing amount?

Answer: No. The proposer manually inserts the cost sharing amount on **Line M** (cost sharing proposed level) of the FastLane budget. For Ph.D. granting institutions and non-degree granting institutions, this amount should reflect exactly 30% of the total project cost for acquisition proposals and exactly 30% of the total equipment hardware cost (**Line D**) for development proposals. Please keep in mind that all entries in the column titled, "Funds Requested By Proposer," on the proposal budget should reflect only those costs that you are requesting from NSF. **Line L** should reflect the total amount that you are requesting from NSF. On your FastLane budget, **Line M** should **never** be equivalent to 30% of **Line L**.