Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

National Nuclear Forensics Expertise Development Program (NNFEDP)
Nuclear Forensics Research Award (NFRA)

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Q1: Will the funds to the National Laboratory partner go directly to that Laboratory? We are trying to determine how this funding will flow, to do our budget accordingly.

A1: The academic institution is expected to provide a subaward to their national laboratory partner through a cooperative agreement.

Q2: Is undergraduate student participation required?

A2: Yes – under the Objectives section (pg. 3/29), in Objective 1 of the NOFO, it is stated: "*Additionally, the NFRA sponsors the participation of two or more undergraduate student(s). ... The undergraduate student(s) may remain on the research project for as long as the eligibility requirements are met.*"

Q3: (a) What is the difference between the two NOFOs? (b) How many awards are you going to make? (c) Is there a list of previous awardees? (d) Should the proposed projects be in basic or applied research?

A3 (a): Eligibility requirements for each NOFO are provided in *Section C Eligibility Information*:

The NOFO titled DHS FY 2022 NFRA NOFO_DHS-22-DN-130-NFRA-001 is open to "*Private institutions of higher education*" and to "*Public & State controlled institutions of higher education.*"

The NOFO titled DHS FY 2022 NFRA NOFO_DHS-22-DN-130-NFRA-MSI is designated for: ***"Minority Serving Institutions****, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institutions, Alaska Native-serving institutions, and Hawaiian Native-serving institutions.*"

A3 (b): Per *Section B Federal Award Information* of the NOFO, the projected number of awards is one (1) or more per NOFO based on available funding.

A3 (c): No – there is not a list of previous awardees. However, a list of recently funded research projects under the National Nuclear Forensics Expertise Development Program (NNFEDP) was presented in the NOFO Webinar slides, a copy of which is posted to the announcement on Grants.gov.

A3 (d): Either one – Research projects can cover Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 1-7.

Q4: Will you be posting the Webinar slides?

A4: Yes, the Webinar slides have been posted to the announcement on Grants.gov.

Q5: The NOFO says that you need to supply biographical information on the Key Personnel. In what form should that be?

A5: There is no standard form for the biographical information. We recommend submission of a 1–2-page resume.

Q6: Are you allowed multiple laboratory partners? Just wondered if the funds could be split.

A6: Historically, NFRAs have funded one laboratory per award since funds cannot be split between laboratories. However, multi-university proposals with a collaborative laboratory partner are allowable under the NFRA structure.

Q7: Can you clarify what the difference between the Project Narrative and Proposed Research sections is?

A7: As stated under Section 3 of the *Proposal Preparation Instructions* (pg. 15/29) of the NOFO:

Project Narrative:

This is the main body of the application and should provide clear and specific statements regarding the proposed research. This section should demonstrate the applicant's understanding of nuclear forensics as an applied science and how the proposed program aligns with U.S. Government TMAs as outlined on pages three-five.

Describe the goals of the proposed research, approaches, and methodologies to attain the goals, and the expected outcomes. The narrative should include how the university and national or defense laboratory will jointly manage the proposed research project, to include student participation. Please include a proposed project timeline, listing milestones as appropriate.

Also articulate how the research project will offer opportunities for underrepresented minority groups and women, if applicable. The description of work should demonstrate congruency with the Evaluation Criteria (please refer to Section E).

High-risk proposals with the potential for high impact are encouraged. The Management Plan, Project Narrative, and References Cited sections are limited to a total of ten (10) pages. The following sections on Key Personnel and the Mentoring Plan are limited to a total of five (5) pages.

As stated under Section 4 of the *Proposal Preparation Instructions* (pg. 16/29) of the NOFO:

Proposed Research: The proposed research narrative consists of the following items:

• An explanation of the scientific context, intellectual merit, relevance to the technical mission areas on pages three-five, potential long-term impact and timeliness of the proposed project;
• A detailed description of the proposed research, its goals, objectives and milestones, and any substantive risks and risk mitigation strategies;
• If appropriate, a discussion of the multidisciplinary approach taken and its proposed benefits;
• A description of the contribution to be made by Key Personnel;
• A description of how project progress will be tracked and continuously evaluated; and
• A timeline for the planned work.

Q8: What is needed to show agreement between the national laboratory and the university? Do we need a letter from the laboratory's cognizant Contracting Officer confirming their participation?

A8: A formalized agreement will be required prior to final award, as stated under *Section E Application Review Information* in the NOFO (pg. 20/29): "Criterion III: Collaboration Concept and Management Plan." However, due to time constraints in meeting the submission deadline, a letter of intention provided by the national laboratory partner to the academic institution will suffice for completion of the application package.

Q9: Does the national laboratory participant have to be a US citizen as well?

A9: Yes

Q10: The two graduate students that we should be funding in the NFRA, should they be considered graduate fellows, or should we be budgeting them like a regular graduate assistant?

A10: Funding for the graduate students should be provided in the form of NFRA Graduate Fellowship appointments. The students should comply with the Terms of Appointment (TOAs) as stated in Appendix A Graduate Student TOA.pdf posted at Grants.gov.

Q11: My question is about the page length and how it is described in the NOFO because I think you call out like six or seven different components and then say that the management plan, project narrative and references should only take up 10 pages, and then the key personnel and mentoring plan should be 5 pages. But then there is no mentioning of a proposed research section that was called out. So, maybe I am not understanding what the

difference between a project narrative and the proposed research is, or are we free to organize it how we want? Maybe some clarification on that would be helpful.

A11: The difference between a Project Narrative and Proposed Research has been addressed in Q7/A7 above along with the page limitations for certain sections of the proposal. For example, regarding the page limitations, under the Project Narrative description in Section 3 of the "Proposal Preparation Instructions" (pg. 15/29) of the NOFO it is stated: "The Management Plan, Project Narrative, and References Cited sections are limited to a total of ten (10) pages. The following sections on Key Personnel and the Mentoring Plan are limited to a total of five (5) pages."

Q12: Is the academic institution expected to subcontract the funding to their national laboratory partner? Or, if one of our proposals is selected, would you initiate a separate Interagency Agreement (IAA) to send the funding directly to the national laboratory? In one location, the Laboratory funding is referred to as a sub-award, but, in another, it says that we would be funded separately.

A12: The academic institution is expected to subaward the funding to their national laboratory partner through a cooperative agreement. Because of this subaward requirement, an IAA would not be used as IAAs generally define cooperative work between government agencies and departments.

Q13: One of the academic institutions that we contacted would like to involve another laboratory and us in their proposal. Is that allowed?

A13: No more than one laboratory can be proposed. Please note that there is a hard limit of $165K per year for laboratory funding per proposal.

Q14: We are an academic institution and we have identified a national laboratory to partner with for the NOFO. A second national laboratory would like to also partner with us. The first laboratory will be funded through a sub-award from the NOFO. Are we allowed to also partner with the second laboratory if the funding would be coming directly from us (the academic institution)?

A14: We ask that one laboratory be named for the proposal. This would be the case even though the proposed support to the second laboratory would be through funding from your institution.

Q15: If multiple laboratories are allowed, would the funding for both laboratories need to fall below the $165K/year funding limit for the national laboratory? Or could each laboratory receive funding up to the $165K limit?

A15: Per the response above, only one national laboratory should be proposed per award.

Q16: We have a question about the degree program. I am in the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Department. We have been collaborating with a national laboratory on nuclear forensics, specifically on high temperature post detonation analysis and plasma. However, the NOFO says "Universities must have doctorate-level programs in related chemistry fields such as, analytical, geo- or radiochemistry; nuclear physics or engineering; computer science,

physics, mathematics, geology, or materials science. Applications must include active participation from these doctoral programs."

Does this mean that we are not eligible to submit because I am not in the Nuclear Engineering Department?

A16: Given the information provided, your institution is eligible to submit. The overall intent of this language is to assure that respondents have doctorate-level programs corresponding to core capabilities needed in the field of nuclear forensics. The NOFO language states "Universities must have doctorate-level programs in related chemistry fields such as, analytical, geo- or radiochemistry; nuclear physics or engineering; computer science, physics, mathematics, geology, or materials science. Applications must include active participation from these doctoral programs." This was not meant to be an exhaustive list. We also recognize the significant overlap in science and engineering disciplines, and that there is nuclear forensics related R&D within other Departments.

Q17: **I am interested in the NOFO DHS-22-DN-130-NFRA-MSI. A quick question: can a Green Card holder be the Principal Investigator (PI) of this NOFO?**

A17: For clarification, the NOFO does require all key personnel to be eligible for a clearance, and full U.S. citizenship is required for clearance eligibility. Based on this, a Green Card holder cannot be the PI for this award.

Q18: We have a young staff member who recently started his Ph.D. program at UC Berkeley. His advisor at the university, and his mentor here at the Laboratory are thinking about submitting a proposal to this NNFEDP NFRA Call for Proposal. In this case, our young staff member would be the graduate student, who would be entitled to appropriate support on the university side, but could potentially access the Lab funding as well, as a Lab employee. Do you see any issues with a proposal like that? If the University makes full disclosure of all these connections in their proposal, would that be sufficient?

A18: DHS general counsel and ethics staff agree that here does not appear to be a legal objection at the application stage of the award process. However, we note that the terms of the award as specified in Appendix A of the NOFO would preclude the student from receiving additional compensation for services rendered during the appointment period. This would include his income as a laboratory employee, whether or not that is funded by the subaward. If the recipient is selected for the NFRA, consideration should be given as to how to document and ensure that the student is not receiving duplicative compensation during their appointment.

Q19: I was discussing with a colleague the potential to apply to your organization's NOFO but we have concerns that the short response timelines indicate that DHS knows who they will

pick. I would have to spend the effort of getting together a quality proposal if the funding were intended for another.

A19: DHS CWMD follows a fair process and will award based on the results of the review.

Q20: The call for proposals (Nuclear Forensics Research Awards NOFO DHS-22-DN-130-NFRA-001) states that the base performance is for 3 years but can be as long as 5 years. It also states that proposals submitted for longer than the performance period will not be considered. Does this mean we can submit a proposal for 3 to 5 years or 3 years or less?

A20: Performers are to propose a scope of work covering from three to five years. Please note that there is no guarantee of funding for years 4 and 5. Sponsored programs will be reevaluated in the last six months of the base period to determine the merit of awarding option years based on project performance, and other factors.