



USWBSI's Annual Request for Pre-Proposals (RFP)



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Pre-Proposal Preparation, Submission and Award Notification Updated: 7/22/19

The FAQ addresses common mistakes made during both the preparation and submission of individual Research Area Pre-Proposals and Proposed Research Projects submitted to a Coordinated Project.

A

Award Notifications

When will I know the funding outcome of my submitted pre-proposal(s)?

Award Notifications are normally distributed in mid- to late-January/early February. Notifications are sent directly to the Principal Investigator (PI). The notification will include the USWBSI's funding recommendation for all proposed research projects/pre-proposals submitted by a PI.

C

Collaborative Projects (CP) - Proposed Research Project (PRP) or Individual Pre-Proposals

Individual budget requests for collaborating PIs.

Individual budget justification forms from all collaborating PIs should be included in the submitted collaborative proposed research project or individual project pre-proposal. The Multi-PI Budget Worksheet (Excel file converted to PDF) should be used in place of the single budget page included with the proposal forms.

Common mistakes made during preparation and submission of pre-proposals.

Budget Justification – Missing descriptive details where funds are being requested.

For all line items (categories and sub categories) where funds are being requested, PI must provide descriptive details that provide a justification for the amount being requested.

Budget Justification – Indirect Cost Rate (IDC) rate not entered into Section H.

PI must enter IDC rate and base amount in designated area in Section H.

Budget Page – Intent to attend Forum not indicated (F. Domestic Travel section of Budget).

PI must indicate his/her intention to attend the USWBSI's Annual Forum to be held during the Award Year by checking either 'Yes' or 'No' in Section D.

Cover Page for Individual Project Pre-Proposals – no designation of Research Area(s).

In Box 13, PI must designate one research area for which the submitted pre-proposal best fits.

Collaborative Arrangements - letters of intent missing from pre-proposals (Individual Pre-Proposals only).

If the proposed work involves collaborative arrangements, letters of intent from collaborators (including letters from Co-Investigators) must be included with the submitted pre-proposals. The letter of intent (may be in the form of an email) must include specific details describing the services the collaborator will provide.

Curriculum Vitae and Publication List - exceeds maximum page limit per scientist.

A limit of four-pages is allowed for the Curriculum Vitae and Publication List (combined) of PIs and Co-Investigators.

Exceeding Page Limits.

Proposed Research Projects - The Plan of Work should NOT exceed 5 pages (including tables and figures) in length included tables and figures.

Individual Pre-Proposals - The page limit for the Project Description is 10 pages total (up to five pages for text plus additional pages for graphics (i.e. tables and figures). When graphics or tables are inserted throughout the text rather than at the end of the Project Description, PIs sometimes exceed the text limitation (five full pages). The total amount of text in the Project Description can be less than five pages, but it cannot total more than five pages (even if graphics are included throughout text). The Project Description includes the following sections: Title, Introduction, Rationale and Significance, Research Methods and Materials (includes expected results).

Non-conformance to instructions regarding formatting.

Proposed Research Project - The Plan of Work should be formatted using Times New Roman (Normal type except headings), 12 point or higher, black colored font with one-inch margins.

Individual Pre-Proposals - The Project Description should be formatted using Times New Roman (Normal type except headings), 12 point or higher, black colored font with one-inch margins.

All Categories: Bold formatting should only be used for section headings or used minimally to emphasize importance or significance. Conformance to the format requirements will be strictly enforced.

Confidentiality

How is my submitted pre-proposal handled so that confidentiality is maintained?

Pre-proposals submitted to the USWBSI are treated as confidential documents. Pre-proposals are only viewed by the administrative staff of the Networking & Facilitation Office, and Reviewers. The Reviewers are instructed prior to their review that the content of all pre-proposals are confidential and thus should be handled accordingly. The NFO securely stores original pre-proposals for at least two years.

Current and Pending Support

Who should submit a Current and Pending Support Form?

A separate Current and Pending Support (CPS) form should be submitted by the PI and all Co-PIs. Only the USWBSI' CPS form will be accepted.

What is the difference between the two columns with subheadings "Total \$ amount" and "PI Allocation."

Grant awards may be divided among Investigators (PI and CO-PI), whereby the Total amount of the award may be different than the amount allocated each investigator (including PI). These columns should be used to indicate this type of scenario.

D

Deadlines

Where can I find important deadlines?

Commodity-based or VDHR-Uniform Nursery CP Proposed Research Projects – Page 27 in Section 1 of RFP. May also be viewed on-line at https://scabusa.org/pdfs/fy20-21_rfp_section1_deadlines.pdf.

FHB Management's Integrated Management (IM-CP) Proposed Research Project – Page 36 in Section 2 of RFP. May also be viewed on-line at https://scabusa.org/pdfs/fy20-21_rfp_section2_deadlines.pdf.

Individual Research Area Pre-Proposals – Page 45 in Section 3 of RFP. May also be viewed on-line at https://scabusa.org/pdfs/fy20-21_rfp_section3_deadlines.pdf.

Deviation Authorization

What is the process for requesting authorization of a deviation from the RFP Pre-proposal preparation instructions?

The NFO must authorize any deviations from the RFP instructions in advance of pre-proposal submission. Deviations may be authorized by receiving written approval from the Researcher Co-Chair (ruthdm@umn.edu) or Director of Operations (nfo@scabusa.org). Requests for deviation of guidelines should be submitted in writing via e-mail to either the NFO Director or the Administrator prior to submission of the pre-proposal.

E

Electronic Pre-Proposal Submission (EPS) System

Do I have to submit my pre-proposal electronically?

All individual pre-proposals (Category 3) and supporting documents will be submitted using the EPS system. PIs submitting to a Coordinated Project (Categories 1 and 2) will upload only their supporting documents (i.e. CV/Pubs List and Current and Pending Support (CPS) Form) to the EPS System.

Can I change the title of my proposed research project after I have completed the Pre-Registration step of the EPS Process?

In short, yes. The title provided during the Pre-Registration simply acts as a 'placeholder' for the PI's pre-proposal within the EPS system. Forward the confirmation e-mail you received to the NFO with the updated title included.

F

Funding

If my proposed project is awarded funding, how will I receive my award?

Funding awarded to PIs (only those not affiliated with USDA-ARS) who submitted pre-proposals to the USWBSI comes in the form of either a Grant Agreement or Non-assistance Cooperative Agreement (NACA) between the PIs institution and USDA-ARS. For ARS scientists, the award will be 'deposited' into their CRIS account.

How is approved funding handled on a Collaborative/Multi-PI Project?

If you are part of a collaborative/multi-PI project, and your proposed research is approved for funding, the funding will come in the form of a direct award from USDA-ARS to you at your institution.

What is the USWBSI's funding cycle for this RFP (FY20-21)?

The majority of proposed research and budget requests should be based on two years, although awards will be made one year at a time. There are budget related forms for both Year 1 (FY20 – Approx. May 2020-April 2021) and Year 2 (FY21 – Approx. May 2021-April 2022) included in the pre-proposal forms/documents.

I

Images for Figures/Tables

Is there a limit on the size of images?

Digital images inserted into the Plan of Work/Project Description must only be included within the page limits (see RFP sections for specific page limits). The maximum size of images to be included should be approximately 1200 x 1500 pixels using 256 colors. Figures must be readable as printed on an 8.5” x 11” page at normal (100%) scale.

Indirect Cost Rate

What is the Indirect Cost Rate (IDC) for pre-proposals submitted to the USWBSI?

Because Fusarium head blight is such a severe problem for the U.S. wheat and barley industries, the USWBSI’s review process focuses on the **competitiveness of total** projects costs (i.e. direct and indirect) to maximize total funding used for research.

As part of the 2018 Farm Bill - Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 – signed into law (Public Law 115-334) on 12/20/18, a fixed Indirect Cost Rate of 10% has been set for the USWBSI ([See Title VII, Subtitle C, Section 7303](#), page 332 of bill; page 336 of PDF). Universities may voluntarily elect to use a percentage below 10% for pre-proposals submitted to the USWBSI, however they **cannot charge a rate higher than 10%**.

The 10% Indirect Cost (IDC) rate should be calculated on the Modified Total Direct Costs of your pre-proposal, which is described below:

Modified total direct costs, consisting of all salaries and wages, fringe benefits, materials, supplies, services, travel and subgrants and subcontracts up to the first \$25,000 of each subgrant or subcontract (regardless of the period covered by the subgrant or subcontract). Modified total direct costs **shall exclude** equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, participant support costs, student tuition remission, rental costs of off-site facilities, scholarships, and fellowships as well as the portion of each subgrant and subcontract in excess of \$25,000.

NOTE: Indirect Costs are not applicable to ARS Scientists and PI’s currently funded under a Non-Assistance Cooperative Agreement (NACA).

L

Letter of Intent (LOI) for a Coordinated Project

Where should I send my Letter of Intent for a Coordinated Project?

Letters of Intent should be sent electronically via e-mail to the Chair/Coordinator of the Coordinated Project with a copy going to the Networking & Facilitation Office.

P

Pre-Proposal Section (Individual RA Pre-Proposals – Category 3)

Cover Page – Do I need to complete all sections (i.e. boxes)?

Sections (i.e. boxes) 1 through 14 must be completed.

What information should be included in the "References to Project Description" section of the proposal?

Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal/book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. If the document is available electronically, the Website address also should be identified. PIs must be especially careful to follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the proposal.

While there is no established page limitation for the references, this section must include bibliographic citations only, and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the project description.

Project Summary (All Categories)

All four items listed below **must be addressed** in the Project Summary:

- Overall project goal(s)
- Project Objectives (list in numbered format) and Expected Outcomes;
- Plans to accomplish project goal(s) within period of proposed work; and
- Statement of Mutual Interest (i.e. how will stakeholders/end-users benefit from this research).

R

Rejections

What do I do if my proposed research was rejected for inclusion in one of the Coordinated Projects?

PIs have the option, if their proposed research has been rejected by a CP, to submit an individual project pre-proposal for consideration by following the instructions for Category 3 Pre-Proposals beginning on page 38 of the FY20-21 RFP.

Returned Pre-Proposals

For what reasons does the USWBSI/NFO return a pre-proposal?

Pre-proposals may not be considered by the USWBSI for the following reasons.

1. The pre-proposal/proposed research project does not meet preparation requirements, such as page limitations, or formatting instructions as specified in the RFP Guidelines.
2. The pre-proposal/proposed research project does not meet the announced deadline date and/or time, where specified.

S

Signatures

Does the USWBSI require Authorized Organizational Representative's signature (including electronic) on pre-proposals?

No. The USWBSI does NOT require signatures by the Authorized Organizational Representatives (AORs) on pre-proposals, therefore AORs will not be granted access to the EPS system. If a pre-proposal or proposed research project requires approval prior to submission by PIs sponsored programs office, a Cover Page under 'Special Forms' may be downloaded from the FY20-21 RFP website (https://scabusa.org/research_rfp20-21) for obtaining AORs approval.

Small Business Innovated Research (SBIR) Fee

Is the SBIR fee applicable to me?

Only USDA-ARS scientists are exempt from the SBIR fee.

Am I required to incorporate the SBIR fee into my budget?

All non-ARS PIs are advised to incorporate the SBIR fee into their budget requests. If the fee is not incorporated into the budget request, and the proposed research is recommended for funding, ARS will subtract the fee from the USWBSI's recommended amount prior to issuing the award. The SBIR fee rate for FY20-21 is 3.2% of total direct and indirect costs.

T

Travel

Is travel to Canada and Mexico considered Domestic Travel?

No, travel to Canada and Mexico is Foreign Travel (outside the U.S.).

Tuition Remission

Can tuition remission costs for graduate students be included in the proposed budget?

Tuition remission is **permitted** under USDA-ARS **grant agreements (not allowed for NACAs)** with any type of recipient organization (i.e. universities). If tuition remission is budgeted as a direct cost, it should be included "PARTICIPANT/ TRAINEE SUPPORT COSTS" category of the Budget Justification and Budget Page (Section E).