



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 13-049

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the Critical Zone Observatory (CZO) Program for Submission in Year 2013

Date: 02/01/13

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Proposals must be submitted via FastLane or Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m., submitter's local time, to the applicable deadline date below:

February 5, 2013

The following set of questions and answers refer to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the CZO Program Solicitation ([NSF 12-575](#)). They are not intended to be a modification of the Program Solicitation (http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=500044&org=EAR&from=home).

Before preparing proposals please read the CZO solicitation and refer to the general information about NSF proposal submission including the Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) submission guidelines. Proposals submitted to this solicitation are subject to the requirements contained in the new *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPG), **NSF 13-1** at: http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13001

Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation via Grants.gov should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov. The complete text of the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: (<http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/docs/grantsgovguide.pdf>).

FastLane FAQ's can be found at:

https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/NSFHelp/flashhelp/fastlane/FastLane_Help/fastlane_help.htm#fastlane_faqs_introduction.htm

NSF Guide to Programs (for descriptions of NSF's research-supporting programs):
http://www.nsf.gov/funding/browse_all_funding.jsp

ELIGIBILITY

1. [Who can apply to this solicitation?](#)
2. [I do not currently have a CZO award. May I apply?](#)
3. [Will NSF consider proposals for sites that are geographically close to existing sites?](#)
4. [Is there a limit on the number of proposals one organization can submit?](#)
5. [Can national laboratories or FFRDCs submit a proposal?](#)
6. [Is involvement in the social sciences required?](#)
7. [Will proposals from groups outside of earth science-oriented departments be competitive?](#)
8. [I would like to apply to the CZO National Office \(CZO-NO\) solicitation, however organizations and](#)

individuals involved in CZO awards are not eligible to serve as the CZO National Office awardee. How can I apply to that competition if I do not yet know whether my institution will be awarded a CZO?

PROPOSAL PREPARATION, BUDGET PREPARATION, AND SUBMISSION

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

9. How do we deal with common measurements when we do not know which other sites will be in the network?
10. What documentation should I submit to show any collaborative efforts?
11. I am interested in adding an international dimension to my proposal. How would I find out what kinds of activities are eligible for support?
12. I have additional information posted on my website I would like the reviewers to see. May I refer readers to my web site within the Project Description?
13. What should be included in the Data Management Plan (DMP) and where should I place this section?
14. I would like to submit some additional tabular material that would exceed the 20-page limit on the length of the project description. Can I submit this information as an appendix?

BUDGET PREPARATION

15. What is an appropriate level of funding to request?
16. Should a CZO proposal request funds for network activities?
17. May I request funds to support the broader impacts component of my proposal?

CZO PROPOSAL REVIEW

18. In addition to the two NSF merit review criteria (intellectual merit and broader impacts), what other factors will be considered in the review process?

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CZO AWARDS

19. When will I be notified of the final decision on my CZO proposal?

POST-AWARD ADMINISTRATION

20. Are the reporting requirements for CZO awards the same as for other NSF awards?

ELIGIBILITY

1. Who can apply to this solicitation?

The categories of proposers eligible to submit proposals to the National Science Foundation are identified in the Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter I, Section E.

2. I do not currently have a CZO award. May I apply?

Previous funding through the CZO program ([NSF 06-588](#)) is not required for proposers wishing to submit a proposal under the current solicitation. Both new and existing CZOs will be competing in this competition.

3. Will NSF consider proposals for sites that are geographically close to existing sites?

Scientific rationale is more important than proximity to other CZOs, or lack thereof. An existing site may not continue to be NSF-supported after 2013, when its current funding ends.

4. Is there a limit on the number of proposals one organization can submit?

Any one institution may submit only one CZO proposal. Scientists at the submitting institution can participate as subawardees on other proposals.

5. Can national laboratories or FFRDCs submit a proposal?

NSF does not normally support research or education activities by scientists, engineers or educators employed by Federal agencies or Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). Under unusual circumstances, other Federal agencies and FFRDCs may submit proposals directly to NSF. Please consult GPG, Chapter I, Section E, for information on exceptions and contact a cognizant NSF Program Officer.

6. Is involvement in the social sciences required?

No, the involvement of social scientists is not required. Given the expressed guidance that projects will be evaluated in part on their potential to "contribute to strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making" and "inform decisions," as well as "benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes," the proponents should describe and integrate into their project carefully thought-out activities and partnerships designed to translate the outcomes of CZO research to added "downstream value" (e.g., contributing to decision support, economic analyses, or to plans and policies for mitigation and management relating to the critical zone).

7. Will proposals from groups outside of earth science-oriented departments be competitive?

Proposals are expected to focus on earth science-related interconnections. As long as these are at the core of the proposal, it is possible (and beneficial) to bring in knowledge, insights, and methods from other fields.

8. I would like to apply to the CZO National Office (CZO-NO) solicitation, however organizations and individuals involved in CZO awards are not eligible to serve as the CZO National Office awardee. How can I apply to that competition if I do not yet know whether my institution will be awarded a CZO?

You CANNOT submit a proposal for the CZO-NO if

1. your institution submits a proposal to establish a CZO site and the proposal is selected for an award,
2. you are a Co-PI, subawardee, senior investigator, consultant, or collaborator of one of CZO site awards,
3. others at your institution are involved as PI or Co-PIs selected for an award to another institution.

You CAN submit a proposal for the CZO-NO if others at your institution are involved with a selected CZO site established by another institution, but only if they are at the level of subawardee, senior investigator, consultant, or collaborator.

The selected CZOs will be informed by June 2013, so that those interested in competing for the CZO-NO competition would have time to submit a proposal for the deadline in mid-September.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION, BUDGET PREPARATION, AND SUBMISSION

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

9. How do we deal with common measurements when we do not know which other sites will be in the network?

Information about common measurements can be found at the CZO website (www.criticalzone.org). All CZO PIs will meet during the development of the Cooperative Agreement to finalize the initial set of common measurements. Regular, monthly teleconferences organized by the CZO National Office will ensure that this dialog is maintained.

10. What documentation should I submit to show any collaborative efforts?

Describe the collaborative efforts within the project description. In addition, submit brief letters describing the nature of the collaboration. Letters of collaboration are vital when partnering with existing programs or when collaborating with others. The letters should describe how the collaborator would contribute to the project. The specific details of the proposed collaborations should be described in the proposal's Project Description. The collaborative letters cannot be used to circumvent the 20-page limit for the Project Description. Letters of support or recommendation for the PI are not permitted and you will have to remove any letters that NSF determines are not appropriate prior to review. It is up to the PI to explain what is requested and approach the collaborator in a timely fashion to get these letters before the deadline for submission. Scan the signed and dated letter(s) into the Supplementary Documents section. Do not submit any other documentation for the collaborators such as biographical sketches, appendices, or other NSF forms. You will not be allowed to submit these letters after the submission deadline, so plan in advance.

11. I am interested in adding an international dimension to my proposal. How would I find out what kinds of activities are eligible for support?

Although no international observatories will be funded and the focus of activities should be at US sites, plans for international cooperative research and education activities are allowed. Please contact a cognizant NSF Program Officer to find out if a specific activity is eligible for support.

12. I have additional information posted on my website I would like the reviewers to see. May I refer readers to my web site within the Project Description?

PIs are advised that the project description must be self-contained and are cautioned that a web site that provides information related to the proposal should not be used because 1) the information could circumvent page limitations, 2) the reviewers are under no obligation to view the sites, and 3) the sites could be altered or abolished between the time of submission and the time of review.

13. What should be included in the Data Management Plan (DMP) and where should I place this section?

Information about the contents and submission of data management plans can be found in Chapter II.C.2.j of the Grant Proposal Guide. All proposals submitted to NSF must describe plans for data management and sharing of the products of research, or assert the absence of the need for such plans. FastLane will not permit submission of a proposal that is missing a

Data Management Plan. Proposals must include the plan as a supplementary document of no more than two pages.

It is anticipated that the CZOs will adhere to common data management policy and use common data management tools. The DMP should describe how the CZO will use and contribute to centralized efforts for data management explained in <http://www.criticalzone.org/data.html>.

- The types of data, samples, physical collections, software, and other materials to be produced in the course of the project;
- The standards to be used for data and metadata format and content (where existing standards are absent or deemed inadequate, this should be documented along with any proposed solutions or remedies);
- Policies for access and sharing including provisions for appropriate protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, or other rights or requirements;
- Policies and provisions for re-use, re-distribution, and the production of derivatives;
- Plans for archiving data, samples, and other research products, and for preservation of access to them;
- Some data policy will be mandated at the network level as appropriate;
- Support for a data manager should be included in each CZO budget request.

14. I would like to submit some additional tabular material that would exceed the 20-page limit on the length of the project description. Can I submit this information as an appendix?

No. The Project Description cannot exceed 20 pages (including Results from Prior NSF Support, which is limited to five pages). All visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 20-page limitation. Appendices are not permitted for CZO proposals.

BUDGET PREPARATION

15. What is an appropriate level of funding to request?

Proposals should request up to 1 million dollars per year for a maximum of 5 years.

16. Should a CZO proposal request funds for network activities?

Network activities described in solicitation [NSF 12-595](#) will be supported by the CZO National Office. CZO proposals should request funds to support research in collaboration with other CZO sites. Funds to support travel to the semi-annual face-to-face meetings with other CZO PIs held each Fall at the American Geophysical Union meeting, and in conjunction with Spring annual PI meetings should be included in each CZO budget request.

17. May I request funds to support the broader impacts component of my proposal?

Yes. You should support the broader impacts component with adequate resources to carry out your proposed activities. If resources are required, either the proposal budget or the letter of commitment/collaboration should indicate how this aspect of the program would be funded. If working with K-12, consult teachers or those working with local teachers regarding teacher stipends and substitute pay. You may also budget for materials, participant stipends and travel, and the like.

CZO PROPOSAL REVIEW

18. In addition to the two NSF merit review criteria (intellectual merit and broader impacts), what other factors will be considered in the review process?

In addition to addressing the standard NSF review criteria of Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts identified in the new PAPG, [NSF 13-1](#), proposals submitted in response to this solicitation will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- Potential for Scientific Impact: What is the potential impact of the proposed CZO? In what ways can the proposed activities have catalytic or transformative impact on critical zone sciences? Is the scope of the proposed CZO addressing pressing scientific questions? To what extent does the proposed CZO fulfill a need for important critical zone knowledge in a locale that is currently underrepresented in NSF or Federal investments?
- Potential for societal impact: How important are the expected outcomes for predicting the fate of ecosystem services associated with the critical zone proposed? What is the nature of the climate or anthropogenic threat, which specific ecosystem services are under threat for depletion or disruption, and how will the CZO inform decisions to avert or manage the threat? What is the likelihood of up-scaling and generalizing models generated in the CZO?
- Suitability of the CZO team: Is there appropriate core expertise in the CZO team for disciplinary measurement, process evaluation, modeling and synthesis? How well integrated is this set of expertise? Are the roles and contributions of all PIs, co-PIs, other senior investigators and subawardees clearly articulated and justified?
- Appropriateness and scientific need for proposed activities: In what ways is the proposed work tactical, strategic, innovative, and informed by current research on the critical zone? Is the timeline of proposed activities appropriate? Are cross-site activities likely to contribute to the network-wide products?
- Adequacy of the Management Plan: Does the proposal provide sufficient detail regarding the roles and responsibilities of PIs, co-PIs, senior personnel, and partners? Are the proper mechanisms set in place to coordinate these efforts?
- Adequacy of Engagement Plan: Does the proposal present a sufficient plan for engaging scientists outside the core CZO team?
- Adequacy of the Dissemination Plan: What mechanisms have been identified for communicating research results to audiences within and beyond the critical zone research community, and will these mechanisms be sufficient?

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CZO AWARD

19. When will I be notified of the final decision on my CZO proposal?

Most proposers will be notified within six months of submission. You can check the status of your CZO proposal by accessing the FastLane website. If you have not received notification of a decision on your proposal by June and your proposal status is shown as "pending" in FastLane, you can contact the program officer managing your proposal to inquire about the status of your application.

POST-AWARD ADMINISTRATION

20. Are the reporting requirements for CZO awards the same as for other NSF awards?

In addition to meeting all of the requirements for annual and final reports that apply to other NSF awards, the CZO must comply with additional reporting requirements that will be specified in the Terms and Conditions of the cooperative agreement.