



National Science Foundation  
4201 Wilson Boulevard  
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 15-064

## Dear Colleague Letter - Stimulating research using NEON data

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Date: April 1, 2015

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is supporting construction of the [National Ecological Observatory Network \(NEON\)](#). NEON will offer the measurements, flexible operation, and research capability needed to assess long-term biosphere change and vastly expand our knowledge of regional and continental scale biology. When complete, the NEON observatory will collect and provide high-quality, standardized data from 106 sites (60 terrestrial, 36 aquatic and 10 aquatic experimental) across the U.S. using instrument measurements and field sampling. The sites have been selected strategically to represent different regions of vegetation, landforms, climate, ecosystem performance, and gradients of change. NEON's site-based, remotely sensed and continental-scale data are provided as a range of scaled data products that can be used to describe changes in the nation's ecosystem through space and time.

Several NEON sites are nearing completion and have begun operations; many more sites will be completed during the coming year. Provisional [NEON data](#) from sites and airborne observations, along with protocols and documentation, are now available on the NEON Data Portal. In addition, NEON-collected [specimens and samples](#) are available and can be requested for research purposes.

Through this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), NSF's Directorate for Biological Sciences aims to foster and coordinate research that makes use of NEON data and/or samples/specimens by enabling research teams to coordinate their efforts and to address specific questions. This DCL encourages two types of funding request: 1) Conferences<sup>1</sup> designed to support costs of bringing together a team of researchers with shared research interests to coordinate plans for specific analysis or synthesis of NEON data; and 2) Early Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGERs) to support innovative research that leverages NEON data and/or samples/specimens. Requests must propose to use NEON data and/or NEON samples/specimens in order to be considered for funding.

Conference requests are envisioned as providing travel and meeting costs for [synthesis working groups](#), in which geographically dispersed researchers meet several times a year to collaboratively pursue analysis and synthesis of NEON data. Other types of conference ideas that make use of NEON data or samples will also be considered. Conference requests must not exceed \$100,000 for one or two year duration.

EAGER requests will be considered if they propose to: 1) use NEON data and/or NEON samples/specimens to address innovative ecological or other biological questions, or 2) leverage NEON data and/or samples/specimens and combine with other data, for the purposes of extending the spatial or temporal dimension of potentially transformative research. EAGERs can be supported at up to \$300,000 for two-year duration, although they are typically funded at lower levels.

## SUBMISSION PROCESS

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Conference and EAGER proposal inquiries will be accepted from a Principal Investigator (PI) or any consortium of investigators led by a PI at an eligible U.S. institution.

Interested PIs must email a 3-page (maximum) summary of their research ideas and planned activities to [NEONresearch@nsf.gov](mailto:NEONresearch@nsf.gov) by close of business, Friday, May 8, 2015.

PIs can expect to be notified by early June whether submission of a full Conference or EAGER proposal is encouraged or discouraged; if encouraged, instructions will be included in the notification email for how and when (within June) to submit a full proposal via FastLane.

Any questions should be directed to the email address [NEONresearch@nsf.gov](mailto:NEONresearch@nsf.gov); do not contact the signatory to this DCL.

The summaries will be reviewed internally and those ideas that best meet the goals of this Dear Colleague Letter will be encouraged to submit Conference or EAGER proposals. Proposals must be submitted *via* Fastlane or Grants.gov, following the NSF's *Grant Proposal Guide instructions*. It is anticipated that all awards will be made in FY 2015.

Sincerely,

James L. Olds  
Assistant Director for Biological Sciences  
National Science Foundation

<sup>1</sup> Conferences include symposia and workshop proposals.  
NSF NEON Program Summary: <http://go.usa.gov/3jUUUV>  
NEON FAQ: <http://go.usa.gov/3jvqeq>