



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
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NSF 20-120

Dear Colleague Letter: ANR - NSF/Physics/MCB Lead Agency Opportunity at the Physics - Molecular and Cellular Biosciences Interface

August 31, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

SCOPE

The US National Science Foundation (NSF) and the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) have signed an agreement on Research Cooperation. The agreement provides an overarching framework to encourage collaboration between US and French research communities and sets out the principles by which jointly supported activities might be developed. The agreement is a lead agency opportunity whereby collaborative proposals between US and French researchers are submitted to only the lead agency for review, and the partner agency agrees to accept the review. Based on the lead agency review of collaborative proposals, NSF and ANR will make joint funding decisions to support meritorious collaborative projects. The lead agency opportunity allows for reciprocal acceptance of merit review through unsolicited mechanisms with its goal to reduce some of the current barriers to working internationally.

The NSF Division of Physics in the Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Division of Molecular and Cellular Biosciences in the Directorate for Biological Sciences (NSF/PHY and NSF/MCB) and the ANR are pleased to announce topical areas associated with the lead agency opportunity. In FY 2021 (October 2020-September 2021), ANR will serve as the lead agency for all proposals. It is expected that NSF and ANR will alternate as lead agency in subsequent years.

FY 2021 NOTICE OF INTENTIONS

The lead agency opportunity allows US and French researchers to submit a single proposal describing a project involving US and French researchers, that will undergo a single review process by the lead agency, on behalf of NSF/PHY, NSF/MCB and ANR. In FY 2021

proposals will be accepted for US-France collaborative projects in the areas of intersection between NSF/PHY, NSF/MCB and some of the research themes covered by the ANR's Generic call for proposals, 2021 edition G as set out in this Dear Colleague Letter.

Proposals must address the priorities of each of the participating entities: ANR, NSF/PHY and NSF/MCB. Proposers must provide a clear rationale for the need for a US-France collaboration, including the unique expertise and synergy that the collaborating groups will bring to the project. Proposers should note that the lead agency opportunity does not represent a new source of funding. Proposals will be assessed in competition with all others submitted to the priority areas and agency programs identified in this DCL, and outcomes will be subject to both success in merit review and the availability of funds from ANR, NSF/PHY and NSF/MCB.

Proposals relevant to the following priority areas and agency programs are eligible to apply for the lead agency opportunity in FY 2021.

Physics from Molecules to Cells

The emergence, evolution, dynamics and function of self-organized cellular systems stem from the interaction of biological components and the environment to yield robust, resilient and adaptive living systems. Through this DCL, NSF and ANR seek proposals that use multidisciplinary approaches that emphasize quantitative, predictive and theory driven science aimed at understanding mechanisms underlying these essential life processes at the molecular, subcellular and cellular scales. We are seeking proposals which integrate approaches from theoretical and experimental physics and biology to develop testable and quantitative understanding of biological questions. Projects providing innovative methodological or conceptual approaches to a biological question and with a strong theoretical physics component are strongly encouraged. Purely descriptive projects without predictive quantitative components are of low priority. Projects that leverage unique resources and capabilities of partners in the US and France will be given priority.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

In FY 2021, proposals in response to this lead agency agreement should be submitted to ANR as part of their Generic call for proposals (Appel à Projets Générique 2021 (AAPG 2021)). Proposers should submit one proposal only to ANR. ANR will share proposal and review information with NSF.

The due date for the submission of a registration file (dossier) is December 1st, 2020, 1pm (Paris time). Full proposals will be evaluated only via the second stage of the ANR AAPG review process. The expected submission deadline for full proposals is April 2021. Further information about due dates for full proposal submission will be communicated to applicants who have submitted qualified letters of intent.

Special instructions associated with submission of ANR - NSF/PHY/MCB proposals

1. At the time of submission of the registration file (dossier) to ANR, investigators should submit a copy of the dossier to NSF via the email address ANRNSFphybio@nsf.gov. Included in the email should be a short (one page or less) synopsis of the proposal, names of US and French investigators, and an estimated bottom (direct plus indirect costs) line budget for both the US and French portions of the project, with the US budget in dollars and the French budget in Euros.
2. Included in the full proposal submission to ANR should be CVs for the US PIs.

MERIT REVIEW & AWARDS

Merit Review

1. Proposals will be reviewed in competition with other unsolicited proposals or with proposals received in response to a specific call by the lead funding agency (that is, proposals submitted to the Lead Agency Opportunity will not undergo a special review process).
2. Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the lead agency's review criteria, in this case ANR's generic call for proposals. While not identical, the NSF/PHY, NSF/MCB and ANR ask reviewers to evaluate the proposed project on both its scientific or intellectual merit as well as its broader or societal impacts. A description of the NSF merit review process is provided on the [NSF merit review website](#). A description of the ANR assessment process is provided in the Generic Call for proposals text and its Guide as well as in the annex dedicated to the ANR- NSF/PHY, NSF/MCB collaboration.

Funding Decision

1. After the reviews are received, program directors from the lead and non-lead agencies will discuss the potential outcomes. Afterwards, the lead agency will use its usual internal procedures to determine whether a proposal will be awarded or declined. In the case of NSF, an award requires a formal recommendation by the Program Officer and then concurrence by the cognizant Division Director. NSF's Division of Grants and Agreements will review the proposal from a business and financial perspective. NSF funding decisions are subject to the availability of funds. Only the NSF Grants Officer can make commitments on behalf of the Foundation or authorize the expenditure of funds. In the case of the ANR, funding recommendations from Panels are received by Research Council Officers who, taking into account the availability of funds, will fund those proposals recommended for funding in the order identified by the Panel.
2. Proposers will be advised whether their proposal has been recommended for funding or will be declined by the lead funding agency. Proposers will receive unattributed copies

of all review materials.

When ANR is the lead agency, NSF will only request copies of proposals that are to be awarded, after the funding decision is made. NSF will ask that the US PI prepare and submit the proposal that was reviewed by ANR, in accordance with the guidance contained in the [NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide](#) (PAPPG).

3. If a proposal is recommended for funding, the US organization(s) will be supported by NSF/PHY and/or NSF/MCB, and the French organization(s) will be supported by ANR. NSF/PHY, NSF/MCB and ANR staff will review budgets to ensure that there are no duplications in funding.
4. Because the participating organizations have different funding cycles, it is possible that some projects will have delayed start dates in order to wait until funds become available.

Award Conditions and Reporting Requirements

1. NSF and ANR will clearly state in award notices and any related documents that awards resulting from this activity were made possible by funding from this ANR - NSF/PHY/MCB Lead Agency activity.
2. Awardees will be expected to comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the agencies from which they receive funding.
3. Researchers will be required to acknowledge both NSF and ANR in any reports or publications arising from the grant
4. Requests for extensions will be considered by the funding agency using standard procedures. Requests for changes to awards will be discussed with other involved funding agencies before a mutual decision is reached.

Timeline for submissions

- December 1st, 2020: Deadline for the registration file (dossier) with ANR
- April 2021: Deadline for the full proposal submissions to ANR
- April/June 2021: Merit review
- September-October 2021: ANR/NSF decision and publication of results
- January 2022: possible commencement of projects

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