

REASoN CAN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following Questions and Answers were presented at the REASON Pre Proposal Conference. Questions and answers submitted after the conference are listed following the Pre Proposal Questions. Questions are in *italics*, answers follow in plain type.

1. Regarding cost share requirements, is there distinction to be made between private for-profit companies as subcontractors who are primarily needed as a service provider versus companies whose involvement is for the purpose of developing and marketing a commercial product?

Answer

For-profit entities participating in a proposed projects sponsored by NASA under the cooperative agreement must be team members – must be part of the consortium. NASA will pay no fee or profit to such firms. Regarding cost sharing, if a commercial company is not engaged in performing the project but is simply a vendor of supplies, a vendor of commercial type services, then that entire cost, including profit, can be reimbursed and there is no cost-sharing requirement for that element itself.

2. If we have Federal partners who co-write and participate in carrying out the grant work, can Federal money used as matching funds from NASA?

Answer

No. Other Federal funds are not available to count for cost sharing.

3. If a commercial company is currently funding its own IR&D, can that be leveraged into the overall objectives of the CAN? Can that time and expense be used as a cost share contribution? Can this previous expense to the company be considered cost share?

Answer

For commercial entities or any entity involved in a NASA CAN and cost sharing, the general principle is that money received from the government under any other program(s) does not count toward cost sharing commitments, but for commercial firms who have IR&D programs, the money they contribute can be allocated as an IR&D expense and reimbursed from the government under all of its government contracts as an indirect cost. It's considered allowable under the FAR cost principle for IR&D.

4. If a proposal is submitted by a commercial for-profit entity and there is no anticipated commercially marketable product, can the proposal be considered as a not-for-profit arrangement and minimal cost share required?

Answer

The entity in that situation may include in its proposal information to substantiate that it has no realistic expectation of developing or enhancing a commercial product derived from the work performed under this cooperative agreement. Under those circumstances, NASA can reduce or eliminate the cost-sharing requirement for that particular firm.

5. In this cooperative agreement procurement, can a profit making organization expect to make a profit on the venture?

Answer

If you develop something in performance of this effort that you believe has commercial potential, the necessary intellectual property rights will be available to you to try to pursue a commercial activity.

6. How much dollar value of the work can a primary investigator subcontract to team members?

Answer

See answer to Question 1 above: team members may not be subcontractors. Regarding the amount or percentage of work provided by the primary investigator, there is no set amount or percentage. However, the proposed teaming arrangement will be evaluated under the appropriate criterion/criteria.

7. Will all non-commercial awardees receive advanced payment equal in value to the upcoming milestone?

Answer

Yes.

8. Please describe milestones, and, for each milestone, does all the work have to be completed before payment?

Answer

The payment milestones should identify what work is to be done during the given period and establish a dollar value to go with that effort. Yes, the work has to be completed. In the cooperative agreement, milestone payments will be established for both commercial and not-for-profit, or non-profit, entities. NASA does not expect a not-for-profit entity to support itself, i.e., to finance the work in advance. Consequently, NASA will provide advance payments for the non-profit. Milestone payment information from not-for-profits is requested so that NASA will know the funding requirements and funding schedule for the projects and can plan disbursements accordingly. Therefore, for commercial entities, all work on a task identified with a milestone has to be completed before payment; not so for not-for-profit entities.

9. Please describe the required co-funding percentage and type for not-for-profits.

Answer

NASA does not require cost sharing for not-for-profits or non-profits but certainly appreciates it. There are a number of things considered cost sharing, including matching funds and so forth. They are listed in the Linda Kelley presentation materials from the pre-proposal conference. It's not just limited to labor. It's not just limited to dollars per se. It can include in-kind resources like facilities or equipment or what have you. But whatever you do has to be documented. With commercial entities, the expected cost sharing is 50 percent.

10. Is cost sharing required for NASA organizations, i.e. can the RTOP cover 100 percent of the cost of proposed activity including non-substantive subcontracts?

Answer

It wouldn't make much sense for NASA to cost share with another NASA entity. So if the NASA entity is planning on subcontracting, essentially it would be handling an RTOP from

Code Y or from headquarters, or whoever, directly to that NASA center. So the subcontracting issue really doesn't come into it.

11. If a company gets an award and the company funds a university, does the company have to pay the 50 percent cost share for the amount to the university?

Answer

No, we're only cost sharing the portion that NASA funds the commercial entity for its own participation.

12. Are the payment milestone criteria the same or how do they differ for not-for-profits and commercial?

Answer

The not-for-profits are going to be receiving their payment via an advanced payment but we do ask that milestone payment information be provided to us so that we can do our planning. Only the commercial entities will be receiving their payment based upon milestone accomplishment.

13. Can a person on an IPA at a NASA center but still on the university payroll serve as a PI on a proposal submitted by that university?

Answer

To my rather untutored procurement mind, that sounds like you are asking can one person be in two places at one time. That sounds to me like a physical impossibility. I imagine you have other circumstances in mind that might clarify this so if you would come back later and elaborate on that perhaps we can get you an answer on the website.

14. Can we offer source code as the incoming funding for our share of the project cost?

Answer

Yes, but you must explain why you feel that is valid and you should be able to verify the commercial value of the source code as an in-kind contribution.

15. Are NASA centers eligible to fund partnerships and compete for funds allocated to this CAN?

Answer

Yes.

16. Can a NASA center be the lead organization and serve as the Project Leader?

Answer

Yes.

17. Will NASA centers be funded separately or would NASA cost be included in the proposal budget?

Answer

Please list and detail the NASA costs. Separate them from the non-NASA partners but still identify them because NASA will need to know how much money to provide under an RTOP, how much to provide under a cooperative agreement, etc.

18. *Does a proposal need to identify a task or procedure for participating in or contributing to SEEDS working groups?*

Answer

Yes.

19. *Will there be proposals submitted from ESIPs, ARCs and RESACs, and can you estimate how much percentage of total selections will go to these organizations?*

Answer

The REASoN CAN is a follow-on solicitation for ESIPs, ARCs and RESACs as well as for Pathfinder Data sets. REASoN CAN solicits proposals from all sources and will make selections based on results of a peer review of those proposals.

20. *Under your science interests, you list global change, weather prediction and natural hazards. Are they roughly co-equal concerns? That is, will funding be allocated to these three areas roughly equally?*

Answer

These are the three focus areas of the ESE mission statement but funding will not necessarily be allocated equally to these areas.

21. *Will funding be divided or allocated according to research field, for example meteorology, solid earth, oceans?*

Answer

No.

22. *What do you mean by "federation"?*

Answer

The reference is to the ESIP Federation, an existing organization. The Federation website included in the cooperative agreement notice is "<http://esipfed.org/>."

23. *What is a congressionally directed program?*

Answer

A program or project specifically directed by Congress, such as an earmark.

24. *Are proposals acceptable that include the fusion and use of commercial data sources with ESE data? There may be an implication for data use and redistribution rights.*

Answer

Yes, proposals are acceptable that include fusion and use of commercial data sources with ESE data. Data use and distribution rights implications should be included in the proposal. The CAN has an appendix on scientific data rights for research REASoN projects, Appendix G. If there is a further question concerning this specific text in the appendix, it can be asked upon reading that text.

25. *Can NASA provide proposals on the website with SEEDS documents relevant to the CAN?*

Answer

Relevant SEEDS documentation can be found on the SEEDS website at: “<http://lennier.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEEDS>”.

26. What is the scope of the activities or subjects associated with the concept of reuse? What else besides software is included?

Answer

Within the CAN request, the focus is on open source prototypes that can reuse software, software designed artifacts, for example test plans, design documents, etc. and potentially software architecture. The CAN focus is on mission success activities. Mission success addresses open source activities that complement NASA missions by extending the use and utility of NASA earth science data and products. In addition to the actual prototypes, the CAN winners may participate in working groups who will be charged with planning and advocating for reuse within the mission success community. Please refer to the entire reuse study found on the SEEDS Formulation Team Website “<http://lennier.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEEDS>” for the complete context of all related reuse efforts.

27. What is the anticipated scope of the activity for proposers participating in the architecture and reuse working group?

Answer

Partners in the architecture and reuse working group will work collaboratively to establish processes for software reuse by ESE-funded data service providers focused on mission success activities. Proposers who select the reuse working group as their primary SEEDS focus will be expected to commit a minimum of one- quarter FTE to the working group along with two trips.

28. Are there existing charters for the working groups identified in the CAN and can they be accessed by the proposer?

Answer

All public information about the SEEDS working groups is contained in the documents covering the SEEDS study teams. These documents are available on the SEEDS Formulation Team website “<http://lennier.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEEDS>”. The working groups to be formed in the future evolve from the corresponding study teams indicated at this site.

29. Do the open source test beds or prototypes have to be coupled with one or more applications?

Answer

The open source test bed must be done in the context of a REASoN. It should be integral to a research, applications or education solution.

30. Would a grid-based test bed based on the GLOBUS grid code be considered potentially acceptable in the open source test bed? If so, would other applications have to be recruited and included in a proposal?

Answer

A proposal for an open source test bed must be in the context of a proposal for a research, education or applications solution.

31. *What SEEDS working group is concerned with defining or understanding and growing the community?*

Answer

Each REASoN is challenged with defining and knowing its user community. There is no specific SEEDS objective or working group addressing growth of the overall community.

32. *Is REASoN the only mechanism for the community to contribute to SEEDS?*

Answer

Participation in SEEDS working groups is open to all interested parties. However the CAN is the only current opportunity for funded participation.

33. *Is an open source prototype demonstration also considered to be a technology development option or are they separate?*

Answer

They are separate. If you want to propose similar things to both, you must include both as options on your proposal.

34. *Does an open source prototype demonstration have to be as closely tied to the other components of a proposal as the technology development option does?*

Answer

Yes. The open source prototype must be in the context of the solution.

35. *Do you need to join or identify the SEEDS group before submitting the proposal?*

Answer

Your first and second choice for a SEEDS working group participation must be identified in your proposal and on the proposal coversheet (check-off box.)

36. *It is noted that participation in a working group is required by SEEDS. Please elaborate or clarify working groups.*

Answer

The SEEDS working groups are described in the CAN. Further information about the SEEDS studies can be found on the SEEDS Formulation Team website:

“<http://lennier.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEEDS>”. They are all listed in the CAN and notes. If you have additional questions, just send them in.

37. *Would the CAN support work may overlap with what the DAACs are doing?*

Answer

The REASoNs were in many cases interfaced with the DAACs to access EOS and other data to meet their objectives. The REASoN CAN is designed to be complementary to the activities currently performed by the DAACs. The types of activities may in some cases overlap similar activities done by the DAACs but we are soliciting new activities.

38. *How rigid are boundaries of this CAN between providing data and doing science?*

Answer

The REASoN CAN is soliciting solutions to help the community address and answer science questions in support for the ESE research objectives. Towards this objective, the REASoN CAN is soliciting projects that will work in concert with NASA's existing and emerging data systems by improving and/or providing data and information and/or services. The questioner should read the objectives and the evaluation criteria in the CAN for further information.

39. Can NASA provide proposers with a website with SEEDS documents relative to the CAN?

Answer

We did so today and it's listed in the CAN in the endnotes:
“<http://lennier.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEEDS>”.

40. Are there any restrictions or direction for a proposed software development that off-the-shelf technology be used where available?

Answer

The CAN is designed to give a REASoN proposer the maximum flexibility for implementation of his/her REASoN. We aren't requiring use of COTs or GOTs hardware or software. Proposals will be evaluated for overall value and cost.

41. Will the submission of separate but complementary proposals by the same group or PI for the AIST NRA and REASoN CAN projects jeopardize the award if either one or both provided they are separate and complementary?

Answer

No.

42. Should the REASoN CAN proposal identify or reference technology submitted in a separate proposal to the AIST NRA? In this case, the AIST NRA technology would be embedded in the research proposal for the REASoN CAN.

Answer

Yes. A REASoN CAN should reference relevant technology submitted to the AIST NRA. An AIST proposal is not embedded in the REASoN CAN. Technology is optional in the REASoN CAN so you should have what I call a contingency plan because you are not assured of an award in the AIST NRA.

43. If new data fusion assimilation products are developed, how would they interface with the existing data systems? How will developments be infused?

Answer

The SEEDS Technology Infusion Working Group is addressing this precise issue. Within the REASoN proposal, one should show the path to use your own technology component within your own REASoN proposal. The second part is to participate in the Infusion Working Group to come up with resolutions to technology infusion processes.

44. For the technology development evaluation criteria, what are the relevant weights of these criteria compared to the criteria in the other areas?

Answer

The proposal must show successful meeting of the criteria for a research, application or education proposal in order to be considered for the technology option.

45. Does this CAN seek enabling computer software technologies for more efficient processing of multiple high-end interdependent algorithms executed on geographically distributed computer systems?

Answer

Yes if it integrated with a research application or education REASoN project.

46. With respect to TRL, technology readiness levels, what are constraints on initial and final TRL levels within the scope of a successful proposal? If there are options, how are development over levels evaluated?

Answer

Does this refer to technology development over the TRL levels? For example, going from a three to a seven, is that better than going from a three to a six even if it is at a significantly greater cost? Proposers must demonstrate an entry level of TRL-3 and the proposed development would show accomplishment of a TRL level seven or higher. The proposer needs to show how he/she expects to achieve that, the TRL-7 or higher.

47. For the open source prototypes, is it conceivable that a CAN would get funded but the particular prototype in the CAN would be rejected?

Answer

Yes. This would hold true for the open source prototype option or the technology option, i.e., it is possible that NASA would negotiate for a research, application or education CAN without the technology or open source option included in the proposal.

48. Does the rejection of a prototype mean the rejection of the whole proposal?

Answer

No.

49. Is there actually a nested evaluation criteria 1) the CAN's criteria, 2) the SEEDS criteria?

Answer

The criteria for the options, the technology and reuse options, are considered if the proposal qualifies for the research, application and education and its embedded SEEDS aspects.

50. In education, will NASA be looking for one or two comprehensive proposals or will there be several focus projects?

Answer

NASA is looking for several projects. Education is 15 percent of the total selected plus or minus five percent.

51. In regards to work force development in science and technology, has NASA or any agency developed an assessment of the demands in skill development for the public as well as the private sectors?

Answer

ASPRS in several campuses both in this country as well as internationally have been doing studies of different scope and depth. I think UCTIS, University Consortium, for geographical information in science has listed all those studies. NASA has not itself undertaken a detailed study of that data but there have been different aspects.

52. Telepresence in education is not well tested. Can there be a proposal to test the effectiveness that is a essentially education evaluation component which is quite expensive?

Answer

Yes, but a proposal using telepresence should be researched-based.

53. How many schools are participating in GLOBE both nationally and internationally?

Answer

This question is not germane to this CAN. Right now, about 3,000. There will a separate GLOBE CAN. NASA intends to integrate education outreach into all programs. Goals for research and applications do not specifically list outreach goals criteria.

54. Will such derived goals be seen as adding value to research and applications submittals?

Answer

Outreach means different things to different people. "Education" actually includes what people generally consider as outreach with an audience from teachers to students to museums to film makers, and so forth. One needs to identify and target a set of audiences. If a research application proposal has that component, the component will be evaluated by the education team.

55. What is the current opinion of your attitudes toward the astronaut photos and their scientific role?

Answer

It's not clear what's meant by astronaut photos. If it really refers to the pictures that astronauts take from the shuttle, the program EARTHCAM is still on-going and has a great deal of value in the classroom.

56. Must education be K through 16?

Answer

The education proposal itself does not have to cover the full spectrum. It goes back to the question of the impact. If a proposal costs \$100,000 that only affects two schools, that can not be scaled to a bigger region where it would affect the national agenda having an national impact in some way. When it comes to evaluation, that would definitely be less attractive.

57. How scalable must the curricula be?

Answer

The more scalable the better. NASA agenda is to impact nationally.

58. The number of contact hours for teachers, students?

Answer

That is part of the project design. One just has to argue for impact. Were a proposal that uses new NASA supported technology to enhance the performance of an existing earth science educational organization be appropriate? Improved support is valid. I would still ask what is the objective of the proposal and what the proposal seeks to accomplish that is relevant to NASA and earth science education.

59. Would an activity that proposes continued development of an existing prototype educational tool, previously funded by NASA, with focus on moving it to a non-profit organization so that it is in a better position to solicit and incorporate user community feedback to guide development for support and open source distribution be responsive to the CAN?

Answer

In principle, yes. It still goes back to what is needed. What impact it would have.

60. Are there any guidelines on the amount of reduction in budget after the second year expected from proposals in the applications area?

Answer

There are no specific guidelines in the amount of reduction of NASA support after the second year. The intent of this requirement is to promote the transition of innovative decision support systems to an operational environment that is owned and operated by NASA's partners by decreasing financial support from NASA. The budget amount requested after the second year will be considered in light of a plan proposed for operation of the application in the post cooperative agreement period.

61. Can application projects address both Type one and Type two applications?

Answer

Yes, if that is the intention of the proposal, but both types should be checked on the proposal coversheet and the proposal sections that relates to the two types should be clearly indicated.

62. The CAN states that proposers are allowed to address more than one of the three areas. However in Appendix C, the evaluation criteria applied to each area are different. If a concept incorporates more than one area, what are the implications with respect to the proposal evaluation criteria in Appendix C? Is the proposal evaluated against that much larger suite of combined criteria? Is there a rating applied as to the relevance of the evaluation criteria across multiple areas?

Answer

The respondents may address more than one focus area. Proposals will be evaluated by focus area. For example, a proposal that addresses research and applications would be evaluated by research and applications teams. Each team will apply the criteria established for that area. However a proposal that scores very high in one of two or two or more focus areas may be accepted for that focus area only with commensurate adjustments to budgets and schedules. The final selection and the funding decision will not involve weighing across the focus areas.

63. Should a proposer choose a single topic area, research, applications or education?

Answer

Each proposal must address at least one of the three topic areas but may address more.

64. If a proposal straddles two areas, for example research and applications, how would a principal investigator address the requirement levied on applications projects to reduce their budget for each consecutive year after the second year?

Answer

Respondents should identify in the budget the cost basis for tasks, for research and for applications separately, then make explicit the tasks that support both areas. The reduction in cost for applications should be described and justified. The overall budget may decrease, remain flat, or increase in the out years in the scenario presented depending on the work proposed and the proposal evaluation.

65. I gather that we can integrate an applications and education project but please advise if it would be better from NASA review perspective to keep activities separate.

Answer

Either way. It depends on nature of the proposal.

66. If combining applications and education, is it acceptable to ramp up NASA funding for education as we ramp down funding for the applications?

Answer

Yes, it is acceptable.

67. We are interested in several applications. Is it advisable to pursue two or three applications and how important is it to integrate this applications?

Answer

Another way to ask the question is whether two applications should be pursued separately, possibly in parallel, with different user organizations? I believe that question is related to whether this is Type one or Type two proposal. Type two proposals are cross-cutting solutions in applications. So this can be handled in either way. This question could be answered if you are dealing with more than one application, you could handle it as separate Type one proposals or you could handle it as a single Type two proposal depending on the nature of the applications and how you would like to propose them.

68. Is a data distribution activity by the proposer required in a REASoN project?

Answer

The simple answer to this question is “no,” data distribution is not required. Please see Figure 2, “ESE Information Cycle,” in Section I.B of the CAN, which graphically depicts the CAN emphasis on facilitating data distribution. An example of such facilitation without actual data distribution activity would be provision of a service website or tools in conjunction with a research, education, or applications project.

69. What is the probable allocation in terms of percentage between the relative numbers of Type one and Type two applications proposals that would be funded?

Answer

NASA has no preconceived notion of the numbers of Type I or Type II application proposals that it will fund. It's open and it will be determined by the quality of the proposals.

70. What is the probable allocation of proposals selected for funding on research, applications and education?

Answer

The targets are described in the CAN - Section IV.F.

71. If a proposal incorporates more than one area, how will the proposal be evaluated?

Answer

Separately by focus area.

72. In the national priorities the invasive species description recognizes only introduced species, changes in climate resulted in invasive species due to change in the ecological system for example jellyfish in the Bering Sea. Many of these changes result in economic and public health issues. Would this national objective include climate enforced species changes?

Answer

Yes, those are not precluded. Again it would depend on how such a proposal is presented.

73. At present, NASA congressional earmarks are more or less geographic. This is along congressional lines. Will there be an effort to assure that these geographic areas continue to receive funding?

Answer

No. This is an open competition. There are no pre-selected proposals.

74. This is a quote from the CAN. "Provide data and data products from NASA ESE systems..." That's a description of applications Type I. Is there a model for ESE systems from which data and data products are available that is appropriate within the scope of the CAN?

Answer

Look at the ESIP projects which are described on the ESIP Federation website:

"<http://esipfed.org/>."

75. Would proposals with ESIP and/or RESAC participation be favored, be considered more responsive? If so, should the ESIP/RESAC organization be the lead or is it acceptable for them to play a minor role?

Answer

No, to the first part. They will not be favored. It doesn't make any difference. They can play a major role or a minor role if they are included as a partner.

76. Is it acceptable and of interest to NASA if some of the users are from countries other than the United States? Are there any conditions or restrictions?

Answer

It is acceptable. Partners outside the United States can participate but on a no-exchange-of-funds basis.

77. Is there any recommended cost share for educational, non-profit or government agencies?

Answer

No. NASA welcomes it but there is no recommended cost share.

78. Will any emphasis be placed on direct involvement of end users in an application project going beyond demonstrating and understanding of user needs?

Answer

Yes. It's very important to have end user involvement, to have end user identified and involved in the development of an application.

79. Can you discuss whether conservation, environmental management questions are a priority under the research and applications focus?

Answer

They are certainly not precluded. It depends on the quality of the proposal.

80. Please comment on the national focus of the CAN. Will organizations that work with international groups on international issues be considered?

Answer

Yes, they will.

81. Must there be a specific analysis related to the United States?

Answer

No, not necessarily.

82. Is it possible for a coalition of non-profits to apply together?

Answer

Yes, it certainly is.

83. How would the funding vehicle work in a coalition of non-profits?

Answer

There has to be an institution identified as the lead institution with the PI and the cooperative agreement will be written with that institution.

84. Regarding advance payment: Will a non commercial awardee receive advance payment equal in value to the upcoming milestone?

Answer

Yes

85. Has this CAN had funding committed to it?

Answer

Yes, funds have been committed to CAN-02-OES-01, although the maximum amount available has not yet been determined.

86. What is the anticipated scope of the activity for proposers participating in the Architecture and Reuse Working Group?

Answer

Partners in the Architecture and Reuse Working Group will work collaboratively to establish processes for software reuse by ESE-funded data service providers focused on mission-success activities. Proposers who select the Reuse Working Group as their primary SEEDS focus will be expected to commit a minimum of .25 FTE effort to the working group (along with 2 trips).

87. Are there existing charters for the Working Groups identified in the CAN and can they be accessed by the Proposer?

Answer

All public information about the SEEDS working groups is contained in the documents covering the SEEDS Study teams. These documents are available on the SEEDS Formulation Team web site at <http://lennier.gsfc.nasa.gov/seeds/>. The working groups to be formed in the future will evolve from the corresponding study teams indicated at this site.

88. What is the policy regarding the AIST proposals due in early November and the REASoN proposals in late November? A simple paragraph to loop the two or a tightly meshed technology data product argument throughout?

Answer

The answer is a simple reference in each solicitation to the other.

89. Are concepts allowed or encouraged that enable the operational co-tasking or cross-tasking of sensors on different space or ground platforms?

Answer

Given that within the NASA program, we do not currently have the capability to command sensors across space or ground-based platforms, this appears to be too low a level of technology readiness to be in scope.