

Questions and Answers:

RFA-CA-19-054: Cancer Intervention and Surveillance Modeling Network (CISNET) (Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

Question 1: Site Hosting Costs

In the travel section of the RFA, there is a sentence that says “Since the mid-year meetings are generally held at a common location to facilitate modelers who are part of more than one cancer type, each application should budget to host one meeting during that five-year period.” Could you please describe what costs should be included? Can you clarify what is meant by “each application should budget to host one meeting”?

Answer:

By each application, we mean 3–6 modeling groups applying together to do modeling for a single cancer type. While we do not know this far in advance where the meeting will be, we would generally rotate the locations so that, “on average,” each cancer type application would host one meeting per funding cycle (i.e., 5 years). Which particular modeling group (that is part of a specific cancer type application) would host would depend on the specific locations selected. NCI (or a designated contractor of NCI) would provide meeting support to include creating and maintaining a registration website and preparing meeting materials (including preparation of agendas, name tags, list of attendees, signage, etc.) that would be sent to the site. The major necessary support is local administrative staff who can assist NCI (or its contractors) by finding and reserving conference space (including AV equipment), determining the best hotel to secure a room block, suggesting local transportation options (including shuttles if needed), etc. During the meeting, the host site would be expected to staff the meeting registration desk. Because the meeting is being sponsored by the local university faculty who are members of CISNET, in many cases conference space and the use of AV equipment can be provided “in kind”. However, any actual fees would be paid by NCI or its contractors.

Question 2: Attachment 3

For Attachment 3 (Modeling Project Table) – this table is for proposed modeling projects by the area of coverage – meaning the 9 Targeted Priority Areas? Can you clarify: is Attachment 3 supposed to clarify proposed work? It is supposed to be referred to in Sub-Section D “Proposed Model Extensions, Applications and Comparative Modeling”? Are there any particular problems or areas of clarification that motivated this extra attachment?

Answer:

Correct – The purpose of Attachment 3 is to summarize the modeling projects by area of coverage (in terms of the 9 targeted Priority Areas as well as where they fall along the cancer control spectrum). The attachment was not requested because of any particular problem. Its purpose is to allow reviewers to see at a glance what is discussed in Sub-Section D.

Question 3: Direct Cost Budget Limits

Do direct cost budget limits exclude sub-recipient F&A?

Answer:

From the NIH Grants Policy Statement:

2.3.7.1 Applications That Include Consortium/Contractual F&A Costs

For FOAs that include a direct cost limit, NIH policy excludes consortium/contractual F&A when determining if an applicant is in compliance with the direct cost limitation. This policy extends to all solicited and investigator-initiated applications and to all active announcements (Requests for Applications and Program Announcements), involving consortium/contractual F&A costs, regardless of budget amount or budget format (e.g., modular and non-modular). While consortium F&A costs may be requested and awarded, applicants should not consider these costs when determining if a budget exceeds a direct cost limit.

Question 4: Rapid response funds

For the rapid response funds, can you advise how much detail we should provide for the professional enhancement activities for junior investigators? Are there examples available for specific activities?

Answer:

You should propose a list of activities that you feel would be useful for the entire CISNET consortium to consider post award. The idea is to take advantage of the rich diversity of expertise and approaches across the consortium. Some examples include (but are not limited to) regular lectures and webinars, extending annual or mid-year meetings to have a mini-meeting run by junior investigators, a program to allow visits to other modeling groups or cancer site groups, a program for funding projects for junior investigators, etc. Once the consortium is funded, one (or more) representatives from each awarded application will form a central group across CISNET to sort through these ideas and determine which ideas would be feasible and most productive under the anticipated budgets.

Question 5: Other attachments

Can you discuss why the other attachments were added to this RFA, as compared with the RFA 5 years ago?

Answer:

These sorts of attachments used to be included in the page limit of the Research Strategy section. Now they essentially serve the same purpose but are not included in that section, and have their own separate page limit.

Question 6: Multiple PIs per institutional site

Are multiple PIs per institutional site frowned upon?

Answer:

If you have multiple PIs at a single institution for different cancer sites, that is generally not a problem. If you have different two different PIs at a single institution representing two different models, it is important that the models were developed independently, so the group can conduct comparative modeling among groups representing a diversity of approaches. If you have two different PIs at the same institution representing the same model, then it is important to clarify their roles and justify why this structure will substantially improve how both the individual modeling group and the entire cancer site group will function. While there is some flexibility in structure that is allowed, deviations from the usual structure of a single PI per modeling group should be well justified.

Question 7: Insights into past issues that arose in review

Can you give us some insights from previous rounds in the study section on what issues or application sections have given the reviewers the most trouble or were most susceptible to criticism?

Answer:

Most important is clarity and being succinct. You should take care to justify that any proposed models represent the application, extension, refinement and/or merging of existing models. If well justified, an existing model can be reformulated using a more robust statistical/mathematical framework. However, de novo model development will NOT be supported. You want to be very clear about why you chose the Specific Aims and the comparative modeling exercises that you're going to do, how the group is going to be attuned to new issues that arise and how you'll accommodate those into your work. Although there is a 30-page limit, you are not required to use all 30 pages. While you can have some technical/statistical sections, try to really keep the big picture in terms of what the overall purpose, especially justifying any method development in terms of the associated applications. It is, of course, important to recognize that any issues that arose in prior CISNET study section may or may not arise in future ones.