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General RFP

Background

The sustainability movement has reached the business models of nearly every industry in the United States, and many companies, municipalities and states have set aggressive sustainability goals that include how waste streams are being managed. The EREF Board of Directors has set an initiative to ensure research

funded reflects EREF's long-term strategic plan to address all areas of integrated solid waste management, with a strong focus towards research that increased sustainable solid waste management practices.

EREF is an IRS 501(c)3 non-profit organization and is one of the largest sources of funding for solid waste research in North America. EREF is not affiliated with any other entity or group and governed by a duly elected Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is the decision-making body that has responsibility for establishing policies that define program interests and fundamental objectives to be served by the Foundation.

Definition of Solid Waste Used in this RFP

It should be noted that EREF defines solid waste to include:

- municipal solid waste (e.g. residential, commercial, institutional)
- construction & demolition debris
- certain industrial wastes (e.g. exploration & production waste, coal ash) and
- other wastes typically managed by the solid waste industry or generated by the public not included in the above items (e.g. electronic waste, disaster debris, etc).

Agricultural wastes (that aren't handled by the waste industry), nuclear waste, and land applied wastewater treatment sludge are generally not included in this definition.

Pre-Proposal Process for Proposal Submission

*All pre-proposals shall be submitted through an online application found [HERE](https://erefdn.infoready4.com/) (<https://erefdn.infoready4.com/>). Mailed hard copies and email submissions will not be accepted. **NOTE: You are being directed to a 3rd party platform called InfoReady. If you have not submitted through InfoReady before, you will need to create an account separate from the EREF website.***

Pre-proposals are now REQUIRED prior to submitting a full proposal using the [pre-proposal template \(https://www.erefdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/EREF_Pre-proposal_Template.docx\)](https://www.erefdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/EREF_Pre-proposal_Template.docx). All pre-proposals must adhere to the criteria noted and be submitted by the established deadlines. Pre-proposals submitted in response to this RFP that do not fit within the topic areas noted will not be reviewed.

Research Topic Areas

Pre-proposal topics must relate to sustainable solid waste management practices and pertain to the following topic areas:

1. Waste minimization
2. Recycling
3. Waste conversion to energy, biofuels, chemicals or other useful products. This includes, but is not limited to, the following technologies:
 - Waste-to-energy
 - Anaerobic digestion
 - Composting
 - Other thermal or biological conversion technologies
4. Strategies to promote diversion to higher and better uses (e.g. organics diversion, market analysis, optimized material management, logistics, etc.)
5. Landfilling

Desirable aspects of the above topics, in addition to or as part of hypothesis driven applied research, also include: economic or cost/benefit analyses, feasibility studies for untested technologies or management strategies, life cycle analysis or inventory, and analyses of policies that relate to the above.

Invitation to Submit Full Proposals

Upon submission, pre-proposals will be examined by a selection committee and successful pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal for consideration. Full proposals will then be subjected to EREF's review process, as described later in this document.

Topics Requiring Approval Prior to Pre-Proposal Submission

There are a number of topics that may require approval before a pre-proposal will be considered. Investigators who would like to propose a research topic where the primary objectives relate to the areas listed below should contact EREF to discuss the topic prior to submitting a pre-proposal. To do this, please email a description of the proposed research that is 1-page or less to proposals@erefdn.org (<mailto:proposals@erefdn.org>) that requests review of the concept. ***This request should be made 2 weeks or more in advance of when the pre-proposal application is active (i.e., four weeks or more from the December 1 or May 1 deadline). Once we begin accepting pre-proposals, we will no longer be able to provide feedback on your topic.*** If necessary, or upon request, the concept can be discussed via phone as well.

List of Topics Requiring Approval

- Development of new life-cycle/process models to evaluate solid waste (use of existing models is acceptable and do NOT need approval)
- Evaluating specific applications of pyrolysis/gasification to manage niche/minor waste streams
- Development of specific gasification/pyrolysis techniques or technologies
- Using algae to create biofuels from waste

Typical Award Amount and Project Duration

Projects and research previously funded by the Foundation can be viewed on its website at www.erefndn.org (<https://www.erefndn.org/>). Previously awarded grants have ranged from \$15,000 to over \$500,000 with the average grant amount in recent years being \$160,000. Typical project durations are about 2 years. It should be noted that proposed research in excess of \$300,000 or longer than 3 years should contain sufficient details that justify the need for the higher than average amount requested and longer project duration.

Submission Criteria

Non-U.S. Institutions

There are no restrictions in regards to geographic location. Any U.S. or non-U.S. institutions are eligible to apply.

Non-Academic Institutions

Proposals will be accepted from non-academic institutions provided the principal investigators are qualified to conduct the research.

Who Can Serve as a Principal Investigator

Principal investigators (PI) must be qualified to do the work proposed and should be experts in the subject matter referenced in the pre-proposal/proposal. Typically this would include full-time faculty at academic institutions, post-doctoral employees, and principals or senior personnel at non-academic institutions. Graduate students are not eligible to be principal investigators. However, graduate students are encouraged to consider applying to EREF's scholarship program (see the EREF website for details).

Multiple Pre-Proposal Submissions

Pre-Proposal submissions are limited to two (2) submissions per principal investigator during a particular submission period. Beyond this, the PI cannot be listed as a PI or co-PI on other submissions that round, but may be listed as a supporting investigator on other submissions.

Repeat Submittals

Pre-proposals that did not receive an invitation to submit a full proposal may re-submit a revised version of the original pre-proposal once, and thereafter, approval must be obtained by EREF beforehand. In the event a research topic is very closely related to a prior submittal by the same entity, EREF staff will make any determinations regarding whether or not a submitted proposal constitutes a re-submittal.

Overhead Costs

EREF will not pay indirect or overhead costs in excess of 25% of direct costs. This also includes any overhead associated with subcontractors. For non-academic institutions, the definition of overhead can vary. However, typically this refers to payment that denotes a time and materials rate multiplier of 1.25. Please contact EREF if your firm does not fit this model to discuss defining an appropriate overhead definition.

Cost Sharing

Cost sharing is encouraged, but is not required. For clarity, any cost sharing should not be listed in the "Amount Requested" line of the pre-proposal form. Only the amount requested from EREF should be listed. If cost sharing will be a part of the proposal, the amount of the cost share and where it comes from can be noted in the full proposal if one is requested.

In Kind Services and Additional External Funding

Because the amount of funding for research is limited, EREF encourages submitting parties to form partnerships with other funding sources (real-dollars or in-kind services). Parties should identify the sources and amounts of external funding in their submissions. It is preferred that real dollars from external sources be managed through EREF rather than going to the research institution directly. Note that in such instances this does not reduce the amount of these funds that go to the research institution.

Including Educational Objectives/Efforts in Research Proposals

Pre-proposals do not need to contain specific or direct educational objectives. There is no special consideration given to proposals when such objectives are included. If the proposed research includes substantial efforts related to education, these may be deemed an educational project. For information regarding educational projects, see below.

Educational Projects

Grants are typically not provided to support the development of educational projects. However, collaborations or partnerships with entities seeking to develop educational materials for sustainable solid waste management, including conferences or events, which advance the Foundation's educational mission may be considered. It is preferred that this be done with EREF being a primary stakeholder/partner in the event and that utilizes a revenue model that covers expenses for the project. To be considered, proposed concepts should be discussed with EREF and should include: (i) a description of how the concept is unique or provides a value-add to the solid waste field, (ii) how EREF might be included as a partner/stakeholder, and (iii) how it relates to EREF's mission.

Additional Limitations

It is EREF's policy that all results from funded projects are made publicly available and are without bias. Thus, EREF will typically avoid funding proposals prepared with the following aims:

- To directly commercialize and/or patent a particular technology or process
- To provide venture capital or operating funds for start-up companies
- To provide funds that primarily aid in the formation or initialization of community programs (e.g. recycling programs, re-use projects, etc)
- To directly support lobbying activities
- To fund conferences or events, except as noted under "Educational Projects"
- To conduct research or evaluations with an extremely narrow scope. Examples include projects that impact a small portion of the solid waste stream, benefit a single entity or community, or that cover a very small geographical area (e.g. a single county or town).

Submittal Deadlines

EREF has two deadlines per year for pre-proposals:

December 1

May 1

Pre-proposals will be accepted starting from 15 days prior to the deadline date and up to the close of business (5:00 p.m. eastern time) on the deadline date.

Proposals must be received during this window to be considered. If any of the above dates fall on a weekend, then the deadline will be the Monday following the due date.

Pre-Proposal Formatting and Submission

[Click here \(https://www.erefndn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/EREF_Proposal_Template.docx\)](https://www.erefndn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/EREF_Proposal_Template.docx) to download the Pre-Proposal Template.

Formatting Requirements

All proposals shall be in English. Proposals should be between 1 to 2 pages in length in 12-point Times New Roman font. The spacing on each page shall be between 1.15 and 1.5 lines. All pre-proposals **MUST** use the template provided. Pre-proposals that do not use the template will not be reviewed.

File Attachment and Naming

Pre-proposals must be attached as a single Microsoft Word® or in portable document format (PDF) and named as follows:

PI Last

Name_AbbreviatedInstitutionName_MonthSubmittedYearSubmitted_preproposal

Example

Dr. John Smith from Arizona State submits a pre-proposal in August 2016 then the file submitted would be named: Smith_ASU_0816_preproposal.doc (or .pdf)

Files submitted that are incorrectly formatted will not be accepted.

Multiple Institutions

Submissions may include multiple institutions but only one contract will be issued. Therefore, one entity will have to manage the additional PIs as subcontractors through their respective institution. EREF cannot issue multiple contracts.

Cover Letters

Cover letters for pre-proposal submissions are not required.

Submitting Your Pre-Proposal

All pre-proposals shall be submitted through an online application found [HERE \(https://erefndn.infoready4.com/\)](https://erefndn.infoready4.com/). Mailed hard copies and email submissions will

not be accepted. NOTE: You are being taken to a 3rd party platform called InfoReady. If you have not submitted through InfoReady before, you will need to create an account separate from the EREF website.

EREF's Review Process

The following information summarizes EREF's review process from pre-proposal submittal to final award.

Tier 1: Pre-proposal Screening

Pre-proposals submitted successfully in accordance with EREF guidelines go through two stages of review:

- Initial Screening: Done by EREF staff to ensure relevance to the Foundation's mission, compliance with stated focus areas, formatted properly and are well written
- Selection Committee Review: Remaining pre-proposals are reviewed by a selection committee consisting of technical experts in solid waste management
- Invitation to Submit a Full Proposal: Pre-proposals are deemed most relevant to the solid waste management field and that have a high perceived impact by the selection committee will receive invitations to submit a full proposal.

Tier 2: Full Proposal Screening

Full proposals are subjected to the following review process where multiple reviewers are assigned to each proposal and consist of industry experts and academic personnel who have particular/specific expertise in the research topic. All reviews are compiled and the proposal receives a technical review score ranging from 0% to 100%. Proposals with technical review scores of less than 65% are dropped from further consideration.

Tier 3: Research Council Rating

Remaining proposals are rated by the Research Council during one of its in person meetings. The Research Council is a volunteer body of industry experts who have broad expertise in the field. The Council rating is based on various factors, including but not limited to: relevancy to industry needs, perceived impact, applicability, need to subsequent/follow-up work, etc.

The Council then considers the technical review scores and Council rating scores together and develops short list of proposals that are recommended for funding.

Tier 4: Funding Allocation by Board of Directors

The EREF Board of Directors reviews the Research Council's recommendations and approves funding for all or a selected number of proposals. It should be noted that all proposals recommended by the Council to the Board of Directors are considered worth funding. However, various factors are considered in this process (e.g. available funds, ability to fund multiple projects, strategic direction, etc.) and thus there are times when not all recommended projects are funded.

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