

# National Environmental Isotope Facility User Survey 2024

## Responses Overview Closed

Responses

51



Average Time

07:36



Duration

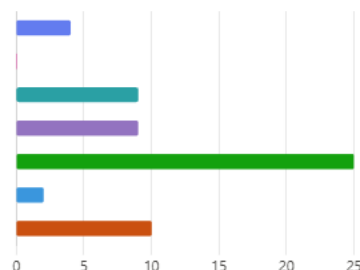
142 Days



1. Which area of the NEIF have you used during the last calendar year?

[More details](#)

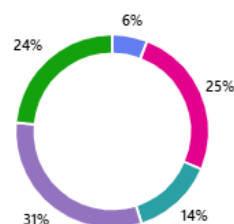
Argon isotopes (Ar-SUERC)	4
Cosmogenic nuclides (CN-SUERC)	0
Geochronology and tracers (Geochron-BGS)	9
Biology stable isotopes (SI-Ecol-SUERC, SI-CEH)	9
Environmental & geological stable isotopes (SI-BGS, SI-Geo-SUERC)	25
Compound specific (Org-Bristol)	2
Radiocarbon (14C-Oxford, 14C-SUERC)	10



2. How frequently do you apply to the NEIF?

[More details](#)

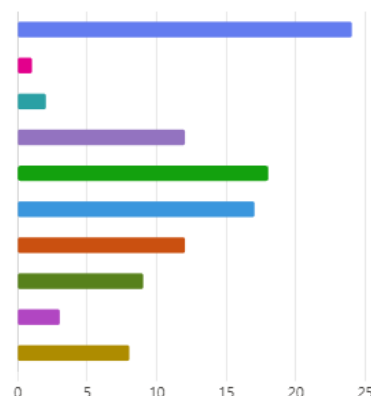
More than once per year	3
Once per year	13
Every other year	7
Occasionally	16
This is the first time	12



3. Which main areas of science are you actively involved in?

[More details](#)

Earth sciences/ observation	24
Forensic science	1
Atmospheric sciences	2
Geochronology	12
Fresh water and marine sciences	18
Climate change	17
Life sciences	12
Archaeology	9
Polar sciences	3
Modern Environmental Tracing	8



[More details](#)

## Responses

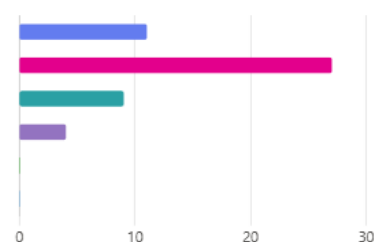
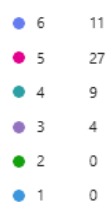
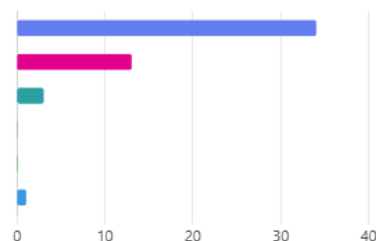
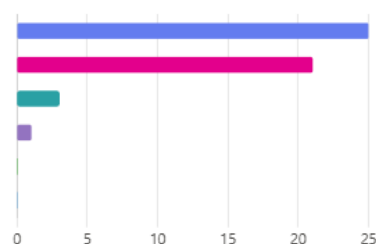
### Latest Responses

"Through Nick Roberts at the start of my PhD in 2014"

"Through colleagues"

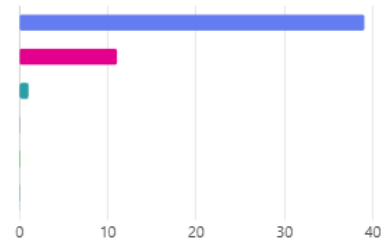
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13 respondents (27%) answered colleague for this question.

[More details](#)[More details](#)[More details](#)

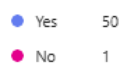
8. Do you feel you had adequate support and feedback from facility staff prior to the submission of your proposal?  
With 6 being detailed and helpful and 1 being poor

[More details](#)



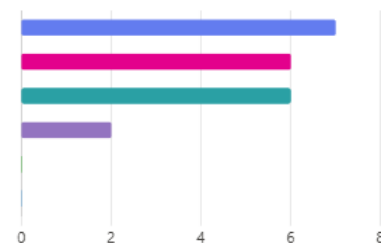
9. Was your proposal funded? If yes please skip forward to Q15  
If no, please continue through questions Q9-Q14

[More details](#)



10. How would you rate the response time for comments, following the submission of your proposal to NEIF?  
With 6 being prompt and 1 being very slow

[More details](#)



11. Please add your suggestions of how we could improve the application process

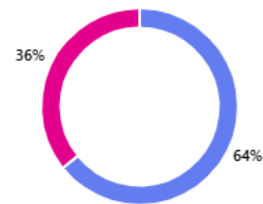
9 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Opportunity for applicants to answer/defend before the final decision by responding to reviews' comments.
2	anonymous	The online portal needs updating. It is very difficult to complete (for example press submit before uploading documents).
3	anonymous	No improvements needed.
4	anonymous	I think the process was quick and easy. I don't have major issues.
5	anonymous	Honestly, I am quite pleased with its current state!
6	anonymous	N/A my on-going project application was submitted in 2019, I don't recall issues with the application.
7	anonymous	Response was delayed by 2 months. I completely understand that the selection process takes time, and sometimes there are delays. Some updates stating when the selection meeting would be held, and when we should expect to hear back would be very helpful.
8	anonymous	Eliminate the page count and focus instead on a word count limit. The panel cannot require lots of detail about every archaeological site but then refuse applications that span too many pages. For my application, I had to reduce the size of the site plans to the point that they were too small to see just to fit into the arbitrary page count.
9	anonymous	Establishing initial contact with NEIF to discuss my intended application proved difficult, with e-mails (plural) going unanswered. Improvement is needed in this area.

12. Do you intend to/ have you resubmitted your unsuccessful application?

[More details](#)

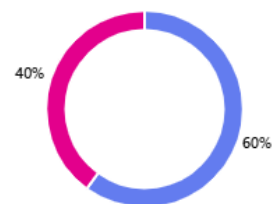
● Yes 9  
● No 5



13. If you have resubmitted within this calendar year was this resubmission successful?

[More details](#)

● Yes 6  
● No 4



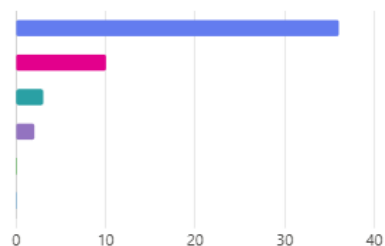
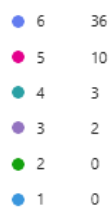
14. Please comment on the helpfulness of the committee's comments on the resubmission of your proposal

11 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	The feedback received was useful and actionable. Both my proposals were funded so I don't really have any examples of resubmitted applications to comment on.
2	anonymous	They were helpful, and made me re-evaluate the study design to make the science more rigorous. I would say, the most difficult thing is making changes and keep context within the short length of the application form.
3	anonymous	The comments were constructive, focused and helpful, for which I'm very grateful.
4	anonymous	Excellent feedback that included specific strengths/weaknesses and point-by-point requests for further information/clarification in order to maximize potential for successful (re)submission
5	anonymous	N/A
6	anonymous	N/A: I have not needed to resubmit my application.
7	anonymous	Very helpful comments in selecting better depths to sample from in a sediment core.
8	anonymous	Excellent.
9	anonymous	N/A
10	anonymous	Very helpful, needed clarifying the proposal and discussion of wider implications
11	anonymous	Not applicable

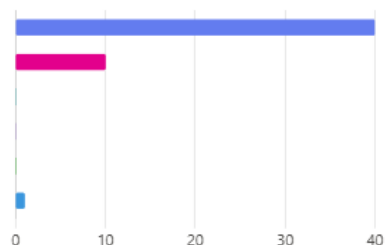
15. How would you rate the analytical facilities provided by the NEIF?  
With 6 being world leading and 1 being below standard

[More details](#)



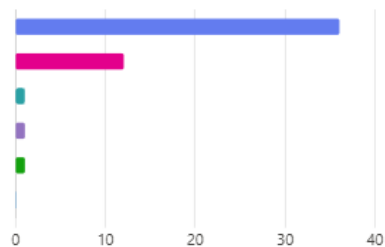
16. How would you consider the quality of service you have received from the NEIF staff?  
With 6 being world leading and 1 being below standard

[More details](#)



17. How important to you is science collaboration with the NEIF staff?  
With 6 being world leading and 1 being below standard

[More details](#)



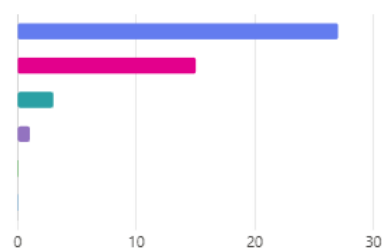
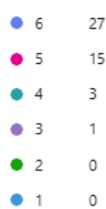
18. Has your work produced any non scientific impact or exposure? For example: been used to inform policy, contributed to citizen science programs, been communicated via blog/ social media posts. If so please give details below.

25 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	We have done some public outreach work to explain the science we are doing to the community local to the rock outcrops we have dated.
2	anonymous	Not yet but papers will written next year
3	anonymous	The project involved using 13C isotope in novel fertilisers to trace it in plant and soil. The novel fertiliser is derived from a carbon capture process and the 13C tracing is to ensure how recalcitrant it is in soil. The data is being analysed so the non-scientific exposure is limited for now. However from a policy perspective it can have an impact on implementing net zero practices in agriculture to improve soil health.
4	anonymous	No non-scientific impact/exposure as yet in relation to my current award of services. However, this may come, given the interesting palaeoclimatic findings.
5	anonymous	not yet, proposal got awarded 2 days ago
6	anonymous	n/a
7	anonymous	Contributions to marine spatial planning
8	anonymous	No, we are still in the process of completing the work.
9	anonymous	Not yet, but soon :)
10	anonymous	Not possible. We still don't have our Ar-dating results, 4.5 years after submitting our samples.
11	anonymous	Past applications have featured as blog posts some years ago
12	anonymous	No yet - but I intend to share some social media posts about this work in the new year
13	anonymous	no, not yet
14	anonymous	Yes, previous work has been presented in public fora (e.g. Edinburgh Festival Fringe) and is making its way into policy (e.g. 'planting the right trees in the right places).
15	anonymous	not yet
16	anonymous	Yes, over the years there have been numerous public outreach and impact opportunities, e.g. television programmes, newspaper and magazine articles, museum displays etc
17	anonymous	Yes, I have used preliminary results in social media posts and within casual presentation-style talks.
18	anonymous	not yet (part of PhD project)
19	anonymous	N/A
20	anonymous	Many popular press articles. And many more to come.
21	anonymous	No
22	anonymous	My work with NEIF on a project funded by the mining company BHP produced results that directly impacted their exploration strategy in Chile.
23	anonymous	No
24	anonymous	Yes, it has helped create a new framework for copper exploration within BHP, the world's largest mining company, there has also been blog and social media posts on the paper that presents the results Lamont et al. (2024), Porphyry copper formation driven by water-fluxed crustal melting during flat-slab subduction, Nature Geoscience.
25	anonymous	Too early to judge.

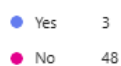
19. How important do you consider the training that is provided by the NEIF, for yourself or your students?  
With 6 being world leading and 1 being below standard

[More details](#)



20. Have you heard about the GAEA platform for online isotope training?

[More details](#)



[More details](#)

21. If yes please provide feedback of your experience using GAEA

[More details](#)

5  
Responses

Latest Responses

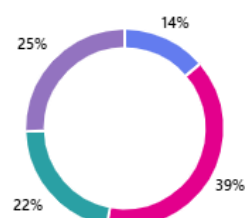
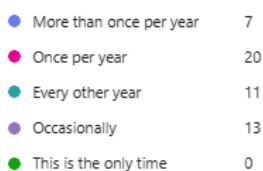
...

1 respondents (20%) answered useful to my students for this question.

useful to my students great  
available modules that would be useful

22. The service allocation of time depends upon accurate forecasting of likely demand. How frequently do you anticipate using the NEIF over the next five years?

[More details](#)



23. Which new analytical facilities or offerings would you like to see within the NEIF?

15 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Tephra geochemistry facility for geochronology
2	anonymous	High resolution MS coupled with GC-C-IRMS; d2H analyses of bulk (biological) tissues.
3	anonymous	nitrogen isotope sample preparation via bacterial denitrification
4	anonymous	Carbonate clumped isotope analysis
5	anonymous	Ammonia-N isotopes using chemical conversion to N2O (more precise and accurate than the diffusion techniques currently used). Further method development using the Titanium method for nitrate isotope analysis - developed to enable analysis of nitrate in carbonates and other geologies. Dissolved organic carbon isotopes in aqueous samples.
6	anonymous	no suggestions
7	anonymous	N/A
8	anonymous	I would like to see a functioning Ar-dating facility that takes its role seriously and provides high quality data within a reasonable timeframe.
9	anonymous	Pb-210
10	anonymous	210Pb and 137Cs
11	anonymous	n/a
12	anonymous	I am very happy with the facilities/analyses already on offer.
13	anonymous	ICP-MS trace element analysis - currently that has to be added onto an isotope application but sometimes I, and my students, just need trace elements and it would be useful to be able to apply for that support
14	anonymous	210Pb & 137Cs analysis for dating short (recent) sediment cores
15	anonymous	Rb-Sr dating and Lu-Hf dating

24. Please offer any final comments about your experience with the NEIF

25 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Both of the Ar-Ar dating awards I have had in the past 5 years have experienced significant delays of over a year. I do understand that equipment can break down and there will always be some risk of delay. I completely accept that delays can occur, but when they do, I think it is reasonable to expect good proactive communication to mitigate the inconvenience. In practice, there has been little communication unless I pressed for it (which I believe is in your control to fix), and then the estimates of how long the delay will be have proved so elastic as to be effectively useless (which underscores the importance of more frequent and more proactive communication, especially when the delays themselves are tough for you to control). I'm sure you understand that lack of effective communication makes my job of planning personnel to work up this valuable data, and ultimately to achieve impact, more difficult.
2	anonymous	NEIF is an excellent opportunity for stable isotope researchers.
3	anonymous	Excellent!
4	anonymous	The NEIF scientists have been so helpful and supporting before and during the grant application and after winning it. They are enthusiastic and are inspiring to work with. Jack Lacey, Andi Smith and Charlotte have been a super team to engage with. I will be back !
5	anonymous	The NEIF staff at the Keyworth BGS facility were very welcoming, supportive, and generous in sharing their expertise. I was highly satisfied with the training I received and continue to collaborate with the researchers as co-authors on a resulting publication. I would highly recommend NEIF to my colleagues.
6	anonymous	As in the vase of previous awards,, I have received friendly and accommodating service in relation to my present award



7	anonymous	Absolutely fantastic. A world leading bench mark for knowledge, technique development and quality support. Many thanks for all the support - my science would not be possible without NEIF.
8	anonymous	The submission process on the "oxcal server" can do with an update. It is particularly confusing that you have to click "submit" prior to actually being able to upload your proposal (and that the system doesn't tell you that this option will come later). There's other minor issues like the "title", which I thought would just be the project name on the server, not the actual proposal title. etc. I think by now there are better ways of setting up a proposal submission system than the one currently used
9	anonymous	The staff we're incredibly helpful and knowledgeable. Particularly, Rona and Jason at the ecology isotopes lab.
10	anonymous	It was a great experience, and I'd certainly recommend my colleagues using NEIF services!
11	anonymous	Fantastic!
12	anonymous	There have been lots of reasons (some very reasonable, eg COVID backlogs, personal situations) provided for the 4.5 year delay on our Ar-dates, but so long as awards are still being made, whilst previous grants remain unfulfilled, there seems to be a problem. My previous two experiences with the Ar-dating facility (Mark as co-I on a NERC standard grant) and dates for a Leverhulme grant with Clive Oppenheimer and Celine Vidal, were also poor. Timelines for delivery of results were unreasonably stretched, even after data was apparently collected, scientific discussions about results were difficult and highly defensive. Contributions to papers were slow, and required extensive reminders over more than a year. I should note that my experience of applications to the stable isotope facility at BGS has been excellent.
13	anonymous	An incredibly valuable component of environmental scientific research in the UK
14	anonymous	I have always found the NEIF staff extremely helpful, and am pleased that the delay between submitting C14 samples and receiving results has been reduced in recent months.
15	anonymous	I've always had a very good experience with NEIF. I've received training as part of it which was reasonably thorough. I've been through the application process several times now. Whilst there is often a relatively fair wait time from proposal submission to data analysis, I think this is reasonable given the valuable analysis we are afforded. Staff have always been very pleasant and communicative even when there have been delays eg equipment failure lab restrictions etc.
16	anonymous	n/a
17	anonymous	I have worked with NEIF/NERC Radiocarbon Facility for nearly 30 years now (off and on) and it has always been an extremely positive and valuable working relationship. My research involving 14-C has been co-developed with the staff at NEIF, and I value this collaboration tremendously; it has enabled me to work with cutting-edge techniques on highly novel applications and with world-class staff at NEIF.
18	anonymous	It is a vital, fabulous service which opens up complex and difficult analytical methods to researchers who do not have the background or facilities within their institutions by providing access to both the methods and, crucially, expertise.
19	anonymous	Thank you!
20	anonymous	We could not do our work without it
21	anonymous	Despite a series of technical issues, my experience with NEIF research facilities has been very positive do to the extensive support of the staff. A special thank you to Laura Hepburn.
22	anonymous	I have worked with NEIF staff and facilities for many years and have always had a very positive experience. Much of my research has relied heavily on this collaboration and I hope to continue it for many years to come. NEIF is an amazing facility and deserves full support.
23	anonymous	give Nick Roberts a pay rise!
24	anonymous	I really the value my collaboration with NEIF staff, and facilities since during my PhD and afterwards. They have always been extremely helpful, and accommodated me for any additional work that needed mineral separation, or discussion/editing of manuscripts. My strong relationship with NEIF staff particularly Nick Roberts, Adrian, Ian Millar, Simon Tapster and Dan Condon, during my PhD (2014-2019) and Postdocs (2019-2024) has helped develop my scientific career. I hope our great relationship and collaborations continue long into the future.
25	anonymous	The service was exemplary, once initial contact had been established. Indeed, Ian Miller in particular, with help from Doris Wagner, went well beyond the call of duty to assist. The one adverse comment I have is that servicing the application took too long - bottlenecks in provision need to be fixed, whether that means employing more staff or having more mass-spectrometers (probably both).