

## Guidance notes for applicants to NEIF Peer Review Panels A, B and C

Contents	
1	<b>Eligibility</b>
2	<b>Nature of the award</b>
3	<b>Types of application</b> 3.1 Applications for Direct Access 3.2 Applications for NERC grant support 3.3 Applications in support of studentships
4	<b>Preparation for application</b>
5	<b>Application process</b> 5.1 Documents required as pdfs 5.2 The NEIF Application Portal: Guidance 5.3 Preparing the proposal document: Guidance
6	<b>Resubmissions</b>
7	<b>Incomplete or late submissions</b>
8	<b>Following submission</b>
9	<b>Review process</b>
10	<b>Notification of outcomes</b>

### 1. Eligibility

- Applicants must be eligible to apply as Principal Investigators (PI) to NERC Research Grants. The full criteria for this are explained at <https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/application/eligibility/>.
- Applications to support a student PhD project must be submitted by a PhD supervisor.
- Applications to Panel A – Radiocarbon, can also be submitted by applicants eligible to apply as Principal Investigators (PI) to AHRC Research Grants.
- **It is incumbent upon individuals to check their own eligibility before submitting any proposal**

### 2. Nature of the award

- Grant support covers all NEIF analytical costs and staff expertise for the requested measurements. This can include student training and laboratory visits but does not cover travel and subsistence expenses incurred whilst visiting NEIF Laboratories.
- The NEIF Laboratories welcome visiting scientists and students who wish to undertake their own analyses, with training if required. Otherwise the work will be undertaken by facility staff.
- NEIF Peer Review Panel support of a project is regarded as a 'grant in kind' from NERC.

### 3. Types of application

- Applications are under three categories: **Direct Access, NERC-UKRI grants, and Studentship Support**
- **Direct Access:** The project is not associated with a separate grant (i.e. is 'stand-alone') or is associated with a non-NEIF grant. NEIF analyses within a NERC grant have to be included in the

original proposal and project budget (see below). Reasons for not including the work in the grant must be made clear in the proposal. Any applications associated with a NERC grant applying via direct access will be referred to NERC.

- **NERC-UKRI Grants:** Applications associated with a NERC or UKRI grant where NEIF support was included in the original proposal and project budget.
- **Studentship Support:** Note this category only refers to all PhD projects regardless of who is funding it. Support for Masters/other student projects will be considered as Direct Access projects.

### **3.1. Applications for Direct Access**

- Direct Access applications must be submitted via the online portal. There are two deadlines per year (see Section 5 below). Direct Access applications are considered by the relevant NEIF Panel following these deadlines.

### **3.2. Applications for NERC grant support**

- Following an award at NERC Peer Review College (PRC), NEIF Panels assess the NEIF analysis component of the grant as soon as possible. This does not require action by the PI, but PIs should alert the relevant NEIF Laboratory of new awards. Initial review is on a rolling basis and may take place separately from the biannual NEIF Panel meetings.
- Following initial review, the PI receives full information on how to proceed. If the NEIF Panel are satisfied with the detail regarding use of NEIF resources, PIs are invited to proceed at their convenience, and the NEIF grade is identical to that at PRC. If additional information is required, this will be requested from the PI (R\* grade). Depending on the level of detail required, a full NEIF application may be requested. The PI response, including full NEIF applications, may be submitted by the PI at any time via the online portal.
- Applications for NERC grant support must include sufficient analytical information in the grant case for support to enable the Panel to assess the application. Applicants will be required to write a full NEIF proposal if the information in the grant case for support is not detailed enough for a full assessment by the panel.

### **3.3. Applications in support of studentships**

- Applications for Studentship support must be submitted via the online portal. There are two deadlines per year (see Section 5 below). These are the same deadlines as for Direct Access applications. Applications for Studentship support are considered by the relevant NEIF Panel following these deadlines.
- As support, including for NERC studentships, is contingent on Panel approval, early discussions should occur between the PI and relevant NEIF Laboratory. If it is known during formulation of a studentship that NEIF analyses will be required, this should be discussed with the Laboratory in advance. If this work is central to the studentship, a NEIF co-supervisor may be appropriate.
- Due to the delay between application and completion of analyses, support should be sought as early as possible in the project, particularly if NEIF analyses are key to the project.

## **4. Preparation for application**

- Collaboration between NEIF scientists and applicants is strongly encouraged
- A completed draft of the application should be provided to the relevant NEIF laboratory at least two weeks before the submission deadline. The requirements of the project must be discussed with the relevant NEIF laboratory at the earliest possible opportunity.

## 5. Application process

- There are two deadlines for submission of applications for consideration at NEIF Panel meetings each year. Dates for these are listed on the NEIF webpage. <http://www.isotopesuk.org/>
- Applications are submitted online via the NEIF Application portal. <https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/nrcf/neif.html>
- The following applications will be dealt with at the relevant panel (associated laboratory node indicated in brackets):
  - **Panel A – Radiocarbon**
  - – Archaeology (Oxford)
  - – Environment (SUERC)
  - **Panel B – Life Sciences**
  - - Compound specific (Bristol)
  - - Biology stable isotopes (SUERC/UKCEH)
  - **Panel C – Geology and Environment**
  - - Argon isotopes (SUERC)
  - - Geochronology and tracers (BGS)
  - - Cosmogenic nuclides (SUERC)
  - - Environmental & geological stable isotopes (BGS)
- Where cross panel support is required (e.g. stable isotopes [Panel C] combined with radiocarbon dates [Panel A]) applicants are encouraged to submit one application. Cross panel applications should be written as a coherent joint proposal and not as two separate applications.

### 5.1. Documents required as pdfs

- Guidelines for document submission vary by panel and application support requested:

#### Panel A

A **proposal document of up to 4 sides of A4 text in length**. This must be Arial 11 font, with 2 cm margins (see below for details). NEIF appreciates the text page limit may limit the inclusion of important supporting information such as figures, tables, diagrams, and photographs. Applicants are therefore able to include these figures/supporting materials in a **document of up to 4 sides of A4 in length. The full document (proposal + figures/supporting material) must not exceed 8 sides of A4 in length**. Note the figures/supporting material should not be an extension of the proposal text, and supporting material that is clearly an extension of the proposal text itself will be excluded during review.

A brief **1-page CV** listing 5 relevant publications (**for the PI only**).

#### Panel B

A **proposal document of up to 2 sides of A4 text in length**. This must be Arial 11 font, with 2 cm margins (see below for details). NEIF appreciates the text page limit may limit the inclusion of important supporting information such as figures, tables, diagrams, and photographs. Applicants are therefore able to include these figures/supporting materials in a **document of up to 4 sides of A4 in length. The full document (proposal + figures/supporting material) must not exceed 6 sides of A4 in length**. Note the figures/supporting material should not be an extension of the proposal text, and

supporting material that is clearly an extension of the proposal text itself will be excluded during review.

A brief **1-page CV** listing 5 relevant publications (**for the PI only**).

#### **Panel C – Stable and Radiogenic Isotope applications**

A **proposal document of up to 2 sides of A4 text in length**. This must be Arial 11 font, with 2 cm margins (see below for details).

NEIF appreciates the text page limit may limit the inclusion of important supporting information such as figures, tables, diagrams, and photographs. Applicants are therefore able to include these figures/supporting materials in a **document of up to 4 sides of A4 in length. The full document (proposal + figures/supporting material) must not exceed 6 sides of A4 in length**. Note the figures/supporting material should not be an extension of the proposal text, and supporting material that is clearly an extension of the proposal text itself will be excluded during review.

A brief **1-page CV** listing 5 relevant publications (**for the PI only**).

#### **Panel C – Cosmogenic nuclide applications**

A **proposal document of up to 3 sides of A4 text in length**. This must be Arial 11 font, with 2 cm margins (see below for details).

NEIF appreciates the text page limit may limit the inclusion of important supporting information such as figures, tables, diagrams, and photographs. Applicants are therefore able to include these figures/supporting materials in a **document of up to 4 sides of A4 in length. The full document (proposal + figures/supporting material) must not exceed 7 sides of A4 in length**. Note the figures/supporting material should not be an extension of the proposal text, and supporting material that is clearly an extension of the proposal text itself will be excluded during review.

A brief **1-page CV** listing 5 relevant publications (**for the PI only**).

#### **Cross Panel Applications**

A **proposal document of up to 4 sides of A4 text in length**. This must be Arial 11 font, with 2 cm margins (see below for details). NEIF appreciates the text page limit may limit the inclusion of important supporting information such as figures, tables, diagrams, and photographs. Applicants are therefore able to include these figures/supporting materials in a **document of up to 6 sides of A4 in length. The full document (proposal + figures/supporting material) must not exceed 10 sides of A4 in length**. Note the figures/supporting material should not be an extension of the proposal text, and supporting material that is clearly an extension of the proposal text itself will be excluded during review.

A brief **1-page CV** listing 5 relevant publications (**for the PI only**).

## 5.2. The NEIF Application Portal: Guidance

- Applicants must use the NEIF online application portal. Applicants need to register to access this using a password system. This is available on the front page of the portal.
- The portal provides an online form which forms the basis of the application. Once this is complete, the applicant must upload their proposal document and CV before final submission.
- Help notes are provided for the various sections on the online form. These are accessed from the form itself. Additional assistance can be provided via the relevant NEIF laboratory.
- For PhD student support the importance of the requested analyses for the completion of the PhD studentship must be clearly stated on the application form. This section should be written by the PhD student.
- In order to identify conflicts of interest during NEIF Panel meetings, NEIF staff closely involved with the project (e.g. as PhD co-supervisors, or research grant Co-Investigators) should be identified as co-investigators.
- If you are unsure which method to select, please contact the Facility. The available methods are: Argon isotopes (Panel C), Cosmogenic nuclides (Panel C), Geochronology and tracers (Panel C), Biology stable isotopes (Panel B), Environmental & geological stable isotopes (Panel C), Compound specific (Panel B) and Radiocarbon (Panel A). In awarding a 'grant in kind', the Panel must ensure the resources of NEIF are put to the best possible scientific use. To achieve this, it is normally assumed that facility staff will be involved in a "Collaborative" role with the research project – i.e. the scientific expertise of facility staff is used in the design, implementation, interpretation, and publication of the analytical work. If there is no requirement for scientific collaboration, i.e. the application is for a technical analytical service only, the rationale for this should be explained in the Project Description.

## 5.3. Preparing the proposal document: Guidance

- If your application is for a feasibility study of limited scope, prior to a larger application, this should be clearly stated in the proposal.
- If the work forms part of a student's project the significance to the thesis must be described.
- Text in Figures and tables must be clearly legible.
- If the work has to be completed by a certain time (e.g. PhD Thesis deadline) please state this in the application.
- The application should be clear, concise, and analyses requested must be fully justified. In particular it should contain:
  - A brief description of the scientific aims, objectives, and methodologies, together with their wider context (e.g. previous relevant work by others/applicant)
  - Evidence for the scientific importance of the proposed project
  - Evidence that the NEIF resources will make a vital contribution to the project's aims
  - Evidence that appropriate sample material will be available
  - Evidence that any permissions required for the collection/import of material are in place (e.g. FERA/SASA licence for import of soil to UK institutions from non-EU countries). NEIF laboratories may not be able to accept material for analysis without a valid licence.
  - Description and justification of the samples for which analyses are requested. This includes reasons for the choice of samples, information on their nature and/or composition, and any other relevant information (e.g. supporting material such as tables and/or diagrams/photographs). This is to enable the panel to assess the suitability of the samples for the specific aims of the project.
  - An assessment of possible problems with measurement and/or interpretation. This includes factors such as contamination, stratigraphic complexity, taphonomy, etc. Appraise honestly these potential difficulties, and how they will be overcome.

- Evidence that any additional information/data required to make a proper interpretation of the NEIF analyses will be available

## 6. Resubmissions

- Applications graded R\* (see below for definition) are encouraged to resubmit.
- All other applications for which funding is not approved at Panel may resubmit providing the application has been substantially revised from the original.
- The NEIFPR reserves the right to reject without formal consideration any application that has not been modified satisfactorily from a previous unsuccessful application.
- All resubmissions must include:
  1. A cover letter stating that this is a resubmission, and a point-by-point explanation of how the comments accompanying the R\* grade/ grade below funding cut-off have been addressed.
  2. A copy of the previous application and case for support
  3. A copy of the previous decision letter
- Items 1-3 above should be uploaded to the portal with the new (revised) application paperwork and collated as 1 single PDF document prior to submission.
- Resubmissions should be made within 2 meetings following the original submission (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

## 7. Incomplete or late submissions

Incomplete applications will not be progressed and will be returned to the applicant. Late submissions will be deferred to the next NEIF Panel meeting.

## 8. Following submission

Once the form and documents are submitted online successfully, a confirmation email is sent. When the application deadline passes, all applications are collated and given a number.

## 9. Review process

Each application is evaluated by the relevant NEIF panel and graded according to NERC grant assessment criteria (0-10 scale). The possible outcomes are:

- **Full support.** Full support entails all requested analyses/work being approved.
- **Part support.** Where applications receive a grade allowing support (as above), but not all analyses are felt to be justified or suitable to achieve the stated aims.
- **R\* grade (invited resubmission).** An R\* grade is not uncommon; this is not a rejection, but demonstrates the Panel feel the application cannot be awarded without clarification. Examples include increased information on the context, sampling strategy, sample justification etc. This has prevented an award being made, but if suitable information is forthcoming, an award could be made. If the amount of information requested is minor, a full proposal reapplication may not be necessary, and a point-by-point response by the PI may be sufficient. If timing is critical, decisions may be made under Chair's Actions (i.e. outside the biannual application deadlines). A full explanation of what is required will be given to the PI in the notification of outcomes.
- **Pilot project.** Where an application would benefit from a small amount of preliminary data before a decision on full funding could be taken, the panel may recommend a Pilot study. Once pilot data are available, a decision on the remainder of the analyses will be made. If timing is critical, decisions may be made under Chair's Actions (i.e. outside the biannual application deadlines). Instructions on how to proceed will follow the application outcome.

- **No support.** If the application is graded below the cut-off level, the Panel feels that support for the requested analyses cannot be provided on the basis of the application.

#### **10. Notification of outcomes**

Principal applicants will be notified of the panel decision as soon as possible following review (normally within 4-6 weeks). Successful applicants may then submit their samples to the relevant laboratory. This will include completion of an agreement explaining conditions of NEIF access and data protocols.