

Frequently Asked Questions for FY26 Energy Frontier Research Centers (EFRC) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Number: DE-FOA-0003614

Getting Help

Q. I have a question that isn't answered in the NOFO or this FAQ document. Who do I contact?

A. Send your question to EFRC@science.doe.gov.

Q. How can I get help with PAMS?

A. For help with PAMS, click the “PAMS Help” link on the PAMS website, <https://pamspublic.science.energy.gov/>. Help is also available through the question mark (“?”) icon at the bottom of every page. You may also contact the PAMS Help Desk, which can be reached Monday through Friday, 9AM – 5:30 PM Eastern Time. Telephone: (855) 818-1846 (toll free) or (301) 903-9610, Email: sc.pamshelpdesk@science.doe.gov.

Q. How can I get help with Grants.gov?

A. Contact 800-518-4726 (toll-free) or support@Grants.gov. Also see Section IX of this NOFO for detailed instructions.

Q. How do I request a late submission?

A. As the NOFO states in section V.D.4. “Applicants must contact the EFRC@science.doe.gov to discuss the option of a late submission. Contacting EFRC@science.doe.gov after the deadline may reduce the likelihood that a request will be granted. DOE notes that not all requests for late submission will be approved.” **If you are experiencing technical difficulties with PAMS, contact the PAMS helpdesk before the deadline.** In the case of widespread PAMS technical difficulties, the pre-application deadline will be extended.

Eligibility

Q. Are “full-time research-track assistant professor” eligible to apply as the lead-PI (Director) on a university led application?

A. The lead-PI on a university led application must be in a tenured position. As the NOFO states on page 7, “EFRC Directors on university led applications must be in a tenured position.”

Q. For university directors, am I eligible to apply as the director if I receive tenure between the pre-application and application deadline?

A. Yes, the tenure requirement for university lead EFRCs is by the application deadline, July 1, 2026.

Q. If the proposed director has a joint appointment as a staff member at research institution at a university and a faculty position, are they eligible to apply as a Director of an application from the university if they are not yet tenured?

A. No, they are not eligible. They may be able to apply as the director of an application from the research institution if it is registered with SAM, has a different Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) than the university, and isn't a university, AND if the director is in a permanent position at the research institute.

Q. Can a joint appointee whose salary and benefits are paid by the university (with nine months reimbursed by the national lab) serve as Director from the university side?

A. No. As the NOFO states, "Individuals receiving more than half of their salary and benefits from a DOE/NNSA National Laboratory may not be named as the EFRC Director in an application submitted by an applicant other than a DOE/NNSA National Laboratory, regardless of any arrangement between the employing Laboratory and the applicant institution." Since the majority of their salary and benefits is coming from the lab, they can only be a Director on the lab application.

Q. Can an EFRC Director on a No Cost Extension (NCE) also be the director of a new EFRC?

A. A director of an EFRC on a terminal NCE in 2026 may submit a pre-application and full proposal (if encouraged) for a new EFRC in this call. However, if the new EFRC is selected for an award, the EFRC Director would be required to step down as the Director of the old EFRC on the NCE. The same person cannot be a director of more than one EFRC at a time.

Q. Can I serve as a director if I have never been funded by DOE before?

A. Yes, anyone who meets the requirements of a Director may apply. See section "LIMITATIONS ON PI (EFRC DIRECTOR)" on page 7 in the NOFO for a full list of requirements. Applicants may also want to read the EFRC Good Practices Document (<https://science.osti.gov/-/media/bes/efrc/pdf/history/other/EFRC-Ref---Good-Practices-2017-12-v2.pdf>) for suggestions on how to structure and manage an EFRC.

Q. Are co-directors allowed?

A. No. As the NOFO states, "Each EFRC application must identify a single Director; no co-directorship is allowed."

Q. Can Non-DOE/NNSA FFRDCs (like NIST) participate as EFRC partners?

A. Yes. as the NOFO states, "Non-DOE/NNSA FFRDCs are not eligible to submit applications under this NOFO but may be proposed as subrecipients under another organization's application."

Q. Can international institutions participate as EFRC partners?

A. Yes. As the NOFO states, "Applicants may propose non-domestic entities as subrecipients in their applications. Applicants are advised that successful applications that propose non-domestic entities as subrecipients include a detailed demonstration of how the proposed non-domestic subrecipients possess skills, resources, and abilities that do not exist among potential domestic subrecipients."

Q. Can industrial institutions participate in EFRCs?

A. Yes, they may participate as a lead or partner institution. As the NOFO states, "All types of domestic applicants are eligible to apply, except nonprofit organizations described in section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that engaged in lobbying activities after December 31, 1995." In addition, "This NOFO does not support an applicant's commercial activity. This NOFO seeks to support basic research to advance understanding rather than to address commercial opportunities. Applications that propose research related to current commercial activity or current customer needs may be declined without merit review. All for-profit applicants must include a description, not to exceed 200 words of how their proposed work will advance scientific understanding of a basic and fundamental nature as an appendix to the Project Narrative."

Q. Is written authorization for non-DOE/NNSA FFRDC participation required for the pre-application?

A. No, written authorization for non-DOE/NNSA FFRDC participation is not required at the pre-application stage. As stated on page 61 of the NOFO, written authorization is only required for the submission of the full application.

Q. Can a single or small team of PIs apply?

A. As the NOFO states, "The purpose of this program is to bring together world-class teams of scientists from universities, DOE national laboratories, and other institutions to perform energy-relevant basic research with a scope and complexity beyond what is possible in single-investigator or small-group awards." A single PI or small team is unlikely to be successful. We suggest looking at past EFRC technical summaries (<https://science.osti.gov/bes/efrc/History/Archives/Technical-Summaries>) to better understand the type of EFRC projects that have been funded previously.

Q. Are different campuses in a state university system considered separate institutions for this solicitation?

A. In general, yes. Any institution that has registered with SAM and obtained a different Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is considered a separate institution.

Q. Are Princeton University and PPPL considered separate institutions even though they have the same Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)?

A. Yes, Princeton University and PPPL are considered separate institutions for this NOFO.

Q. Can Co-PIs listed on one pre-application/application be a Co-PI on other applications as well?

A. A Co-PI on a pre-application or application can be listed as a Co-PI on an unlimited number of separate submissions.

Pre-application or Application Preparation

Q. Can I get feedback on my idea for an EFRC application?

A. Please submit your questions to EFRC@science.doe.gov. We won't be able to provide feedback on the competitiveness of your idea but can answer general questions. For more information about the EFRC program, we suggest looking at:

- EFRC Good Practices Document (<https://science.osti.gov/-/media/bes/efrc/pdf/history/other/EFRC-Ref---Good-Practices-2017-12-v2.pdf>)
- Past EFRC technical summaries (<https://science.osti.gov/bes/efrc/History/Archives/Technical-Summaries>)

Q. Is my idea within scope for an EFRC application?

A. We won't be able to provide feedback on your idea. However, the following resources may help you decide on whether your idea fits within the EFRC program:

- Read section III.A "Program Description - Purpose" in the NOFO carefully. Specific requirements for each topic area are listed. If it is difficult to squeeze your idea into one of the listed topics, your idea may be out of scope.
- Read the past EFRC technical summaries (<https://science.osti.gov/bes/efrc/History/Archives/Technical-Summaries>) to better understand the type of EFRC projects that have been funded previously.
- Review the Basic Energy Sciences (BES) website (<https://science.osti.gov/bes>) to better understand the scientific disciplines supported by BES. The EFRC program is part of BES.
- Read the EFRC Good Practices Document (<https://science.osti.gov/-/media/bes/efrc/pdf/history/other/EFRC-Ref---Good-Practices-2017-12-v2.pdf>) for suggestions on how to structure and manage an EFRC.

Q. Is it preferred that multiple BES reports and/or special topics be addressed?

A. A crisp scientific mission of an appropriate scope should be defined such that progress can be made in a 4-year project period. The aim of the center should not be overly broad like "Nanoscience". More than one BES Reports topic or Special Topics may be addressed, but this is not required (or expected). If more than one report or topics are listed, the requirements listed under each topic should be sufficiently addressed. If you find that you have to squeeze your idea into the allowed topics, you may be out of scope.

Q. I want to include a BES Report and PRO/PRD OR add a BES Report with PRO/PRD that is not listed in the 1. EFRC Science Topics NOFO Template 2026.xlsx. Is that allowed?

A. No, you should only select from the options provided in the 1. EFRC Science Topics NOFO Template 2026.xlsx spreadsheet. Not all PROs/PRDs are available for the BES Reports, and nothing should be listed in column B for the special topics.

Q. If two Special Topics and/or BES Reports are selected, how will my pre-application/application be reviewed?

A. The submission will be reviewed in a panel with the topic/report listed first in the EFRC Science Topics template. However, a final decision will be made in comparison to submissions from all panels.

Q. Where can we find the EFRC Science Topics and EFRC NOFO Budget templates required for submission?

A. The required spreadsheets are available on [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) and the Funding Opportunities page: <https://science.osti.gov/grants/FOAs/Open>.

Q. How do I submit the science topics table in the pre-application?

A. The science topic table should be included on the cover page and submitted as an “Additional Attachment” to your pre-application in PAMS as detailed on pages 22-23 of the NOFO.

Q. Where can I find the Collaborator Template form?

The Collaborator Template is available at <https://science.osti.gov/grants/Policy-and-Guidance/Agreement-Forms>.

Q. Does the use of the Collaborator Template from <https://science.osti.gov/grants/Policy-and-Guidance/Agreement-Forms> satisfy the requirement to provide a “List of Individuals Who Should Not Serve as Reviewers”? If so, should the file remain as an excel doc or be converted to pdf for final submission in PAMS?

A. The instructions “10. How to Prepare a List of Individuals Who Should Not Serve as Reviewers” begin on Page 73 and end on Page 74. As noted on those pages, the Collaborator Template available at <https://science.osti.gov/grants/Policy-and-Guidance/Agreement-Forms> may be used for your convenience. The file should remain as an excel doc.

Q. Should the “List of Individuals Who Should Not Serve as Reviewers” (i.e., Collaborators table) be separate files and/or tabs for each senior personnel and/or institution?

A. The collaborator spreadsheets from all participating key personnel and partner institutions should be consolidated into a single file with two tabs (“Senior-Key Personnel” and “Collaborators”) for submission. The file should remain as an excel doc.

Q. How do I submit the collaborators table in the pre-application?

A. On page 24 of the NOFO: “The list of individuals should be included as an “Additional Attachment” to your pre-application in PAMS, not in the appendices of the proposal narrative.”

Q. Do we need to include SciENCv DOE/NNSA compliant biosketches in the pre-application?

A. No.

Q. Do I need to submit a budget in the pre-application?

A. There is no requirement to include a high-level budget as a part of the pre-application submission.

Q. Does the title page count towards the 5-page limit of the pre-application?

A. No. Page 22 of the NOFO states: “The pre-application must begin with a title page that will not count toward the pre-application page limitation.”

Q. Can the cover page be more than one page?

A. Yes, the cover page can be more than one page if additional room is needed to include the requested information. No other information should be included.

Q. For pre-applications, can I put references in the footnotes or shorten the format?

A. The pre-application instructions say, "The pre-application may not exceed five pages, when printed using standard letter-size (8.5-inch x 11-inch) paper with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right). The body text font must not be smaller than 11-point. Figures and references, if included, must fit within the five-page limit." It does not state that you may use footnotes to include additional information. While there isn't a required reference format, if sufficient reference information isn't provided in the PDF narrative, it is possible the reviewer won't fully appreciate the point the applicant is trying to make. Please keep in mind that there is no obligation for reviewers to click on publication links to find more information.

Q. The wording in special topic (a) says: "Exclusions: Applications focused on discrete variable quantum computing or phenomena in conventional and/or bulk materials are not responsive to this topic." In this context, what does the word “Applications” mean?

A. In special topic (a), the word “application” refers to a “submitted proposal”.