# Proposal Guidance

*Updated: December 2023*

This guidance is for authors submitting a full proposal in response to the Large-Scale EMSL Research call, EMSL-ARM FICUS call, and Exploratory Research call. Full proposals for these calls may only be submitted by invitation following a successful letter of intent (LOI). Applicants should read the following guidance carefully. Failure to comply with the requirements will result in proposals being returned without review.

Proposals must be submitted electronically through the EMSL [User Portal.](https://nexus.emsl.pnnl.gov/Portal) The online form for full proposal submission will require the same information as the LOI (see LOI Guidance), and these fields will be prepopulated with the information provided in your LOI. All previously entered information from the LOI can be modified if needed.

The online form for full proposal submission will contain a new “Resources” section for detailed information about requested resources. Researchers are encouraged to contact or continue discussions with EMSL scientific staff regarding their research goals and resource needs. For help identifying the appropriate contacts, see the contacts identified in the proposal call announcement or contact [User Program Services](mailto:emsl@pnnl.gov).

**Proposed Research Document**

Applicants are required to submit a detailed description of the proposed research using the standardized Full Proposed Research template provided. This document will be uploaded as a single PDF file to the “Proposed Research” section in the EMSL User Portal and should contain the five parts described below. For proposals submitted to calls utilizing dual anonymous peer review, EMSL User Program Services will extract the anonymous parts from this document for peer review.

* **Project Description.** The Project Description should provide details about the proposed research including the title, specific aims, mission relevance, background, and approach/work plan. Detailed guidance is provided below and in the Full Proposed Research template. This section is a maximum of 4 pages with pagination required. For calls utilizing dual anonymous peer review, this section must be anonymized by the author.
* **Computing Approach.** (Only required if Tahoma compute cycles are requested.) Provide a written description of the proposed computational method or approach and the software to be used (1-page maximum). Complete the Computing Resource Request form included in the Full Proposed Research template. Guidance for completing the Computing Resource Request form is provided at the end of the form. The form does not count toward the page limit. For calls utilizing dual anonymous peer review, this section must be anonymized by the author.
* **Appendix 1: List of References.** List all bibliographic citations following accepted scholarly practices when providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the proposal. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, the book title, the volume number, page numbers, and the year of publication. **Do not indicate which authors are members of the research team submitting the proposal.** If the document is available electronically, the website address should also be identified. In-text citations must use numbered formatting with brackets (i.e., [1] or [2-5]) corresponding to the full citation listed. This section does not have a page limit but must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside the 4-page Project Description or 1-page Computing Approach.
* **Appendix 2: CVs.** Provide abbreviated CVs for the PI and each co-PI (2 pages maximum per person). CVs are not required for participants identified as “Team Members.”
* **Appendix 3: Active Collaborators List.** Provide a list of active collaborators and individuals who may represent a conflict of interest for the PI and co-PI(s) from the past 2 years. Conflicts of interest are not required for participants identified as “Team Members.” In addition to research project collaborators, the list must include coauthors with whom you've actively interacted, coeditors, advisors and advisees, and financial affiliations, all from the past 2 years. Participation in very large collaborative efforts with an individual does not necessarily constitute a conflict of interest. Identify those who would have a personal interest in this proposal or whose unbiased judgment would be questioned by a reasonable person familiar with your relationship.

**Document Formatting Requirements**

The Full Proposed Research template is set up to conform to the formatting requirements listed below. You must make sure that the final uploaded document adheres to these formatting requirements.

* **Font size.** Main text and headers not smaller than 11 point. Captions, symbols, and special characters may be less than 11 point.
* **Margins.** 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right).
* **Line spacing.** No more than 5 lines of text within a vertical space of 1 inch.
* **Columns.** Single-column format for text.
* **Page limit.** The Project Description has a 4-page limit. The written description of the Computing Approach has a 1-page limit. Appendices 1 and 3 do not have page limits. For Appendix 2, each CV is limited to 2 pages.

**Project Description Guidance**

The Project Description should be written at a level appropriate for someone familiar with your general area of research who is not necessarily an expert on the specific topic. For calls with dual anonymous peer review, the entire Project Description must be anonymized by the submitter. Suggested word counts are provided below. Authors may deviate from these suggestions, but the whole Project Description cannot exceed 4 pages. Visual materials and tables must be included in the 4-page limit. The abstract submitted in the web-based proposal form does not count against the 4-page limit and should not be repeated in your Project Description.

The Project Description should include the following sections:

* **Title**. The project title must be brief, scientifically or technically valid, intelligible to a scientifically or technically literate reader, and suitable for use in the public press.
* **Specific Aims** (~250 words). State the specific objectives of the research proposed (e.g., test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology), providing concise and unambiguous detail.
* **Mission Relevance** (~100 words). Clearly explain how your research addresses specific mission areas and advances the science pertinent to DOE’s Biological and Environmental Research program and EMSL’s mission and/or describe the value/impact of its economic or societal importance.
* **Background** (~400 words). Provide a concise discussion of previous work to clarify the research problem, why you want to do this study, and exactly what has been accomplished and to demonstrate why the studies need to be continued.
* **Approach or Work Plan** (~1200 to 1500 words). Describe the work to be conducted at EMSL for the entire project duration along with any preliminary, background measurements or completed tests that validate the approach (include references where relevant and attach the full citations as an addendum). Identify which team member will be doing each portion of the work plan and demonstrate why your project requires EMSL resources and cannot be done elsewhere. For calls utilizing dual anonymous peer review, use anonymized identifiers such as PI-1, PI-2, or Grad Student-1. For projects expected to require more than one year to complete, clearly delineate work activities for the first year.

**Anonymization**

For calls using dual anonymous peer review, the Title, Abstract, Project Description, and References must be written in an anonymous format that does not explicitly identify the names of team members or their institutions. Details and examples can be found on the [dual anonymous guidance](https://www.emsl.pnnl.gov/proposals/dual-anonymous-guidance) page.

**Contacts**

For questions about the proposal submission process, please contact [User Program Services](mailto:emsl@pnnl.gov).

For technical help with NEXUS, please contact [NEXUS Support](mailto:nexus.support@pnnl.gov).

For scientific questions, contact the [EMSL staff](https://www.emsl.pnnl.gov/people) identified in the focus topics or highlighted capabilities of the proposal call.