

2015 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

CENTERS FOR ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY (CAT) PROGRAM

RFP Number: 15-6104

Frequently Asked Questions (Through 4/24/15)

- Can I as the small business apply to this RFP?

No – Pursuant with Section I.C.1 of the Request for Proposals, eligible candidates for the program are limited to: “A ‘University’, ‘University-Affiliated Research Institute’ or Consortia lead thereof that meets each of the following criteria is eligible to apply: a. at least one on-site doctoral program in the research field(s) related to the Proposal’s Technology Focus; and, b. demonstrates its ability to meet the Matching Funds requirements described in Section I.D. of this RFP.”

- If not, would the proposal need to come from the researchers at Cornell or the University itself?

Yes – Pursuant with Section I.C.1 of the Request for Proposals, eligible candidates for the program are limited to: “A ‘University’, ‘University-Affiliated Research Institute’ or Consortia lead thereof that meets each of the following criteria is eligible to apply: a. at least one on-site doctoral program in the research field(s) related to the Proposal’s Technology Focus; and, b. demonstrates its ability to meet the Matching Funds requirements described in Section I.D. of this RFP.”

- Would a project designed to help us create a new material (a novel value added product based upon our unique technology) be eligible?

No – Single/individual projects are not eligible. Pursuant with Section I.A of the Request for Proposals, “The CAT Program is designed to spur technology-based applied research and economic growth in New York; encourage applied research collaboration and innovation with industry; promote workforce development; better leverage State funds with investments from the Federal government, industry, foundations, and not-for-profit economic development organizations; and increase the competitiveness of New York State Companies over the Center’s ten year designation period.”

- It appears that only the stipulated appendices will be allowed with the submission of the proposal. Is this the case or will Letters of Support be accepted?

Yes - Pursuant with Section III.E, the proposal's Project Narrative must; "Address the specific review criteria presented below. All visual materials (such as charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations), footnotes, endnotes, and citations must be included within the 15-page Proposal Narrative. All information provided in the Applicant's Proposal, taken as a whole, will be used in evaluating the Proposal in accordance with the review criteria." However, be advised this will be counted against the 15-page limit.

- Please advise how lines can be added in the different sections of Budget forms Page One (and two)?

Individual Budget Forms are locked/protected to preclude inadvertent additions/deletions/changes to embedded formulae and/or conditional formatting within the respective worksheets of the Excel workbook entitled "RFP 15-6104 (2015 CAT) Budget Forms One and Two". Microsoft EXCEL permits a worksheet (e.g., Budget Form One or Budget Form Two) to be duplicated (i.e., copied in its entirety) and inserted within the workbook regardless of any security/protection controls imposed. The original worksheet (e.g., Budget Form One or Budget Form Two) may then be used to aggregate the additional information from the subsequent [duplicated (copied)] worksheets. When filing the Budget; pursuant with Section III.F and III.G, the applicant's proposal Appendix (4) shall contain any-and-all worksheets from within the completed workbook. Pursuant with Section III.F and III.G, there is no page limit imposed on Appendix (4).

- Please confirm that the indirect rate allowed for matching funds has increased from 15% to 25% percent of salary and fringe benefits.

Yes-Pursuant with Section I.D.2, Indirect Costs are limited to 25 percent of direct personnel costs (salaries plus fringe benefits) on matching funds that will be recognized under the CAT Program.

- As a CAT that has been under contract with NYS for greater than 10 years, what would our match requirement be:

Pursuant with Section I.A: "The CAT Program is governed by Section 3102-b of the Public Authorities Law. Contractors will be bound by and responsible for complying with current laws and regulations and with any and all future statutory changes relating to the CAT Program." Additionally, pursuant with Section 3102-b.3.(a)(iv)(2) of the Public Authorities Law: "In the event a previously designated center is redesignated in the same area of technology, which redesignation is effective for the tenth academic year following the first academic year of both designation and funding, then, in that year and in each year thereafter, the foundation shall provide funds of up to seven hundred fifty thousand dollars to be matched equally by the center, amounts in excess of seven hundred fifty thousand dollars shall be matched by the center in amounts of at least two hundred percent." Therefore, the annual match requirements for a redesignated Center under contract for greater than 10 years will be 1:1 for the first \$750,000 and 2:1 for the balance.

- Page 5, Section D the RFP states: "ESD expects that a successful CAT's outreach efforts will extend beyond New York State to attract funds from non-New York State Companies into the State and help to foster an environment that encourages these companies to expand and/or relocate within New York." My question is if NYS CAT funds may be used as matching funds on projects with companies outside of New York State if there is a reasonable chance that the company may be persuaded to move some part of their business to the State and if so, would cash contributions from non-NYS companies be counted toward the required match?

For the purpose of a proposal being submitted against the Request for Proposals - No; New York State funds awarded to the CAT; when used to support project cost share, is limited to only New York State companies. There have been situations when an existing CAT has demonstrated a strong case where a company is close to moving to New York State and they have requested; and been granted, a waiver from this requirement based on the CAT's assessment of the situation and the potential impact to New York State.

- The Request for Proposals indicates that Appendix 1 should include "Biographical Sketch Form" for each research faculty member who will participate in the CAT's activities. Our CAT does not directly employ faculty members, but rather engages faculty members on a project-by-project basis throughout the year to address the very specific technical needs of each company client. Can we forego inclusion of a Biographical Sketch Form for each of these faculty members, as most won't be identified until we enter into a collaboration with the company?

Yes; a Biographical Sketch Form is required for those faculty whom the CAT knows are/will be involved; e.g., existing/ongoing projects, projects where research agreements are in the final stage of being formally approved, faculty whom the CAT has a high degree of confidence will be called upon based on past activity, etc.

- As per Center for Advanced Technology Program RFP section III.F:1 When preparing the budget for the fiscal year starting July 1 2015 if projects have not yet been awarded for the year is it preferred to:
 - 1) leave the matching funds portion of the year 1 budget blank (empty),
 - 2) make an estimate of matching funds,
 - 3) use a prior year's matching funds (for existing CATs)
 - 4) other?

Pursuant with Section III.F; budgets involved are identified as "Projected". For the purpose of projected Matching Funds, applicants are expected to use whatever means prudent to satisfy this requirement with the associated rationale discussed/presented in the "Use of Funds" portion of the Proposal Narrative pursuant with Section III.E.3.

- I am writing to confirm if my institution, the Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences qualifies to apply to the RFP 15-6104. We award a doctoral degree in Pharmacy (the Pharm.D. degree).

Pursuant with Section I.C.1: A "University," "University-Affiliated Research Institute," or Consortia lead thereof that meets each of the following criteria is eligible to apply; (a) at least one on-site doctoral program in the research field(s) related to the Proposal's Technology Focus; and, (b) demonstrates its ability to meet the Matching Funds requirements described in Section I.D. of the RFP.

- Since the original CATT award was made to Brooklyn Polytechnic School of Engineering, the school has now fully merged with New York University to form the NYU Polytechnic School of Engineering. We just wanted to confirm that the Vice Provost of Research at the school would be an acceptable signatory on the Proposal Cover page, as we feel it best reflects the organizational oversight of the current and proposed center.

Pursuant with Section III.C of the RFP, a proposal coversheet/checklist is required to be completed. Pursuant with the proposal coversheet/checklist from Appendix B of the RFP, two signatures are required from the Applicant Institution; the Vice Provost or Vice President of Research, or equivalent, of the Applicant/Lead Institution who will be responsible for the CAT; and, Authorized Organizational Representative defined as the duly authorized representative with authority to enter legal agreements on behalf of, and commit resources of, the institution; albeit, this individual may be one-in-the-same if deemed as-such by the Applicant Institution.

- The NYU Poly CATT team will be proposing a consortia partnership with another university, and we wanted to confirm that the consortia partner will also be required to complete the RFP-15-6104 MWBE documentation for their part in the center.

Yes.

- Regarding the corporate matching requirements, is it required to have specific corporate \$ commitments at the time of submission of the application or are general corporate letters of support sufficient for the application?

*Pursuant with Section III.E.2.d of the RFP, Applicant Institutions submitting a proposal must “Provide a Project Summary Template (refer to Appendix B to the RFP) for **up to ten** of the most recent committed projects³ the CAT will conduct with industry during its first year of operations. If the Proposal is for a new CAT, provide Project Summary Templates for five potential projects where the company partner has agreed to consider the project and up to five committed projects. Provide a separate template for each project and limit each to two pages. Include the Project Summary Templates as **Appendix 3** to the Proposal.”; and furthermore, “A Committed project is one that has been agreed to by the company with the dollar amount of support and CAT deliverables identified.” Additionally, Appendix-A (Glossary of Terms) of the RFP clarifies Committed Matching Funds as “Funds associated with a specific project that has been accepted by the Matching Funds sponsor and in which the amount of Matching Funds support and CAT deliverables are defined.”*

- Should our application be approved for designation, would corporate matching dollars received prior to the start date of the award, but that is targeted specifically toward the research area designated, be allowed to count for the match, or would we only be able to count corporate dollars received after the award designation?

Pursuant with Section I.B of the RFP, the contract start date is July 1, 2015; likewise, pursuant with Section I.B : “The amount of ESD funds reimbursed to the Award Recipient will be based on the amount of eligible Matching Funds expended within each twelve-month contract period. ESD reserves the right to adjust the amount of an Award Recipient’s funding based upon the availability of State funds, the CAT’s economic impact performance including assistance to Small New York State Companies, and the CAT’s ability to meet the Matching Funds requirements.”

- With regard to the Limitations section on page 5, does the requirement that a designated Center of Excellence rescind its designation if it is awarded a CAT apply to the broader Technology Focus Areas or the sub areas? In other words for example, could an institution have a COE in one of the sub areas of Advanced Manufacturing and still apply for a CAT in one of the other sub areas?

Pursuant with Section I.C.2 of the RFP, “A designated Center of Excellence shall rescind its designation as a Center of Excellence should it be awarded a Center for Advanced Technology designation.”

- On page 16, under review criteria for Economic Opportunity (#2b), what would be considered “economic development organizations” for purposes of this application?

Pursuant with Section III.E.1.d of the RFP “Discuss the Applicant’s plans to partner with other organizations to ensure that a referral network exists for companies to receive assistance beyond that offered by the CAT (e.g., business plan refinement, general business consulting) and achieve the objectives described in Section I.A. and in the Applicant’s Proposal. Discuss specific areas in which the partner increases and advances the CAT’s ability to achieve the objectives identified and create economic impact in New York. Include previous collaborations between the organizations and discuss the formality of the agreement (e.g., a Memorandum of Understanding) and pertinent terms. Refer to the requirements of Section I.C. and the definition included within Appendix A for limitations and examples of Partner Organizations.”

- May a continuing CAT propose a new name for itself in the proposal although it will continue the same technology focus?

Yes.

- The fixed, provided text on the RFP's Project Summary Template form is in Arial Narrow 11 font, but applicant information typed into the form appears as Arial 12 font. To conserve space on the form, which is limited to two pages, may applicant use Arial Narrow 11 font for information typed into the template?

Yes.

- The RFP, on page 12, states that the Executive Summary should be a maximum of one page. The Proposal Checklist form provided with the RFP states that the Executive Summary should not exceed two pages. What is the correct page limit for the Executive Summary?

One Page. This is an editorial oversight. Strike out the words "two pages" from the paragraph, replace with "one page" and initial and date in the right margin of the certification page.

- The examples of prospective partner organizations on p. 19 appear to be limited to higher education institutions and state-operated or -designated programs. May partner not-for-profit organizations include trade associations serving companies in the industry sector addressed by the CAT application?

*Pursuant with Appendix A (Glossary of Terms) of the RFP, "Partners or Partner Organizations: Those organizations that will assist the Applicant in achieving its mission. **Subject to the limitations of Section I.C. of the RFP, Partner Organizations may include, but are not limited to,** other schools or departments within the Applicant, Regional Technology Development Centers, NYS Designated Incubators and Innovation Hot Spots, Centers of Excellence, other Centers for Advanced Technology, technical and community colleges, Small Business Development Centers, Empire State Development programs, and other similarly focused not-for-profit organizations and programs."*

- With regard to the CAT's obligation to provide education and training: if a training entity offering non-degree programs -- some in areas related to but not duplicative of the proposed CAT's mission area -- already exists at the campus submitting the CAT proposal, may the proposed new CAT partner with this existing entity to deliver education and training programs or must it establish a new entity?

Yes.

- May Centers of Excellence be partners in CAT applications in areas that are related to but do not duplicate their missions?

See Previous FAQ response regarding “Partners or Partner Organizations”.

- May CAT applications have Co-PIs, or must there be a singular PI? What is the limit, if any, on the number of Co-PIs?

Pursuant with Section III.E.1.a, “Describe the entrepreneurial spirit of the CAT’s leadership (CAT Director and management team) demonstrated by work with startup companies; creation of faculty or student spin offs; and/or applied research with industry in areas similar to those identified in the Applicant’s Proposal. Indicate the anticipated percentage full-time equivalent (FTE) each member of the management team will work on CAT activities (based on 1,800 hours available per 12 months). Identify any vacant management team positions and required qualifications. In addition, include the Curriculum Vita (CV) of the CAT’s Director and a brief resume of each member of the management team including Business Development staff in Appendix 1 of the Proposal. If the Proposal is for the designation of a new center include the job description and qualifications for the CAT Director and the management team including the Business Development staff. If the Proposal is for the designation of a new center and a specific individual is identified as the Director, indicate the criteria used to select the person and the person’s relevant experience in successfully partnering with industry. If the Proposal is for re-designation of a Center, indicate the Director and any plans within the first five years of any changes in the CAT’s management. Include in Appendix 1 to the Proposal a brief biographical sketch (using the “Biographical Sketch Form” provided in Appendix B to this RFP) for each research faculty member who will participate in the CAT’s activities.”

- The examples of prospective partner organizations on p. 19 appear to be limited to higher education institutions and state-operated or -designated programs. May partner not-for-profit organizations include trade associations serving companies in the industry sector addressed by the CAT application?

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- With regard to the CAT's obligation to provide education and training: if a training entity offering non-degree programs -- some in areas related to but not duplicative of the proposed CAT's mission area -- already exists at the campus submitting the CAT proposal, may the proposed new CAT partner with this existing entity to deliver education and training programs or must it establish a new entity?

Yes.

- In Part E (Proposal Narrative), under number 2 (Economic Opportunity), Part d states that we must submit up to ten of the most recent committed projects the CAT will conduct with industry during its first year of operations. I want to clarify:
 - That "first year of operations" means the fiscal year 2015-16

Yes.

- In Part E (Proposal Narrative), under number 2 (Economic Opportunity), Part d states that we must submit up to ten of the most recent committed projects the CAT will conduct with industry during its first year of operations. I want to clarify:
 - We are currently reviewing our institutions submitted proposals for 2015-16 CAT awards, and we will make final decisions of CAT awardees during the week of May 18th. I want to confirm that we are selecting the “ten of the most recent committed projects...” from this set of proposals, correct?

*Pursuant with Section III.E.2.d of the RFP, Applicant Institutions submitting a proposal must “Provide a Project Summary Template (refer to Appendix B to the RFP) for up to ten of the **most recent committed projects**³ the CAT will conduct with industry during its first year of operations. If the Proposal is for a new CAT, provide Project Summary Templates for five potential projects where the company partner has agreed to consider the project and up to five committed projects. Provide a separate template for each project and limit each to two pages. Include the Project Summary Templates as Appendix 3 to the Proposal.”; and furthermore, “A Committed project is one that has been agreed to by the company with the dollar amount of support and CAT deliverables identified.” Additionally, Appendix-A (Glossary of Terms) of the RFP clarifies Committed Matching Funds as “Funds associated with a specific project that has been accepted by the Matching Funds sponsor and in which the amount of Matching Funds support and CAT deliverables are defined.”*

- What documentation is required for matching funds that are in-kind donations at the time of the proposal and at the time of reimbursement?

Pursuant with Section I.D of the RFP, “There are two general categories of eligible Matching Funds with specific thresholds and limits that must be met:

1. *New York State Company Cash: Cash provided to the CAT from New York State Companies (as defined in Appendix A) to support the CAT’s ESD-approved activities must be at least 50 percent of the total required Matching Funds must be from this category. Small New York State Company cash will be credited at a 2:1 ratio (\$2 match credit for every \$1 of small New York State Company cash).*
2. *Other Sources of Support: Up to 50 percent of the total required Matching Funds may be from this category and include:*
 - *Cash from non-New York State Companies: Cash provided to the CAT from an entity not meeting the definition of a New York State Company (as defined in Appendix A) including non-New York State Companies and not-for-profit organizations in support of the CAT’s ESD-approved activities.*

- *Federal cash: Cash provided by a Federal agency to support a project conducted with a specific company or companies where the company and the principal CAT faculty member(s) are identified in the Proposal. In addition, the project must be conducted within the CAT under the guidance of the CAT Director.*
 - *Applicant support: Salaries and fringe benefit costs paid by the Applicant, not reimbursed by other New York State government sources, for the portion of time CAT research faculty, graduate or undergraduate students, and/or dedicated staff work on CAT activities. Dedicated staff is defined as CAT management, business outreach, and/or support staff who spend at least 25 percent of his or her time on CAT activities. Dedicated staff does not include shared services of institutional staff that work on general contract activities and whose services are designed to be recovered under the institution's Indirect Cost rate.*
 - *Donated equipment and unique materials: The fair market value of new or pre-owned equipment donated to the CAT for unrestricted use in furtherance of its mission. Title must transfer to the CAT and the equipment's value must be confirmed by the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) of the donating entity with accompanying documentation. With prior written ESD approval, such equipment or material may be counted as eligible matching funds. Donated material and/or supplies cannot be a company partner's sole support of a CAT project."*
- Should we use 7/1/15-7/1/16 as the proposal timeline with respect to the expenditure timeline of the match and reimbursement requests?

No; pursuant with Section I.B of the RFP, anticipated contract start date is July 1, 2015; therefore, the annual contract period would run July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016.

- Indirect costs of 25% on total salary plus fringe benefits on matching funds that will be recognized under the CAT program are now allowed. On Budget Form 1 when the indirect cost in the “NY Company Cash” or “Other sources of support” columns exceeds 15% the cell for Indirect Costs in the “Total” Column turns red. Is it possible that the formula in this cell was not updated? Since we can now go up to 25% of personnel costs on some sources the cell in the Total column should allow that.

Conditional formatting for “Total” Indirect Costs (cell F36) is in error and will be disregarded. Conditional formatting on cells for Indirect Cost against respective funding categories; “New York Company Cash” (cell C36), “Other Sources of Support” (cell D36) and “NYSTAR Funds” (cell E36) are correct and will be adhered to.

- Page 5 Section 2. Limitations
 “A designated Center of Excellence shall rescind its designation as a Center of Excellence should it be awarded a CAT designation.”
 Is a University, applying for a new CAT, with an existing Center of Excellence (COE) allowed to have partial overlap of personnel and investigators between the COE and the CAT, without that implying that the COE is the applicant?

See Previous FAQ response regarding “Center of Excellence Designation forfeiture”.

- Page 17 Section V. Appendix B, MWBE Forms
 Please provide detailed guidance on how a new CAT applicant most effectively complete the MWBE forms given that the budget, and contractors are truly speculative.

Pursuant with Appendix B (MWBE Preamble) of the RFP; “For purposes of this solicitation, ESD hereby establishes an overall goal of 30% for MWBE participation, 15% for Minority-owned Business Enterprises (“MBE”) participation and 15% for Women-owned Business Enterprises (“WBE”) participation (based on the current availability of qualified MBEs and WBEs).” Applicant Institutions should complete and submit the necessary forms; pursuant with directions provided, to the best of their ability.

- Page 14 Section 2d.
 What are Letters of Commitment and how are they different from the industry/project commitments required under the Project Summary Templates section of the proposal?

“Letters of Commitment” are not cited/requested/identified in Section III.E.2.d of the RFP.

- General Question
Are letters of support allowed as an attachment, if so is there a maximum amount of support letters allowed and where should they be attached?

See Previous FAQ response regarding "Letters of Support".

- Page 15 Section F: Budget
Does NYSTAR have guidance, or a preference, on how the budget is structured regarding the breakdown between operating dollars and project dollars? Current CAT has a 50%/50% split and this is our preference/inclination as the CMI CAT budget is developed.

Pursuant with Section I.E.2 of the RFP, "The total ESD funds that may be expended per year on project cost sharing, defined as direct research costs (e.g., research faculty, graduate students, lab supplies, etc.) incurred on a project with a specific company, will be determined by ESD on an annual basis. Project cost sharing with small New York State Companies is expected."

- Page 4 of RFP Section 1.
Please provide a more detailed explanation of the year one budget process for a new CAT, in specific reference to the below quoted text.
"In the event a new Center is selected in the redesignation process, ESD shall provide up to 75% of the first year's annual funding to such new Center; in accordance with the funding match requirements set forth in Section I.D, to support Center start-up efforts."

Pursuant with Section I.B of the RFP, "All proposals should reflect funding of \$921,200."