Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
for the U.S. Wheat & Barley Scab Initiative's (USWBSI)
FY22 Request for Pre-Proposals (RFP)
Updated: 9/8/21

This FAQ addresses common questions regarding the preparation and submission of Pre-Proposals for a Coordinated Project, an individual Research Area or the Transformational Science categories. The FAQs are listed in alphabetical order according to topic.

A

Award Notifications
When will I know the funding outcome of my submitted pre-proposal(s)?
Award Notifications are <u>normally</u> distributed in mid- to late-January. Notifications are sent directly to the Principal Investigator (PI). The notification will include the USWBSI's funding recommendation for all pre-proposals submitted by a PI.

B

Budget Calculations
I'm a USDA scientist and should not have IDC or SBIR fee included in my budget, how do I adjust for this?
The budget template was set up with this in mind, simply put in $0 for IDC in the associated row noting the "Alternate IDC Calculation if using a percentage below 10% or $0 for ARS Scientist" and $0 for the SBIR fee in corresponding "Calculation if budget being submitted for ARS Scientist," it will use your $0 entries over the IDC calculation and the 3.2% SBIR fee.

Our University has voluntarily offered an IDC rate lower than 10% for USWSBSI awards, how should I include this in the budget?
In the budget template, simply include the calculated amount that your university has approved in the corresponding "Alternate IDC Calculation if using a percentage below 10% or $0 for ARS Scientist" row in the IDC section. The template is set up to automatically include the lesser amount.

Budget Duration
If I am submitting for a multi-year project, how much budget detail is needed for each year?
It is possible for you to submit your budget request for up to a 4-year project duration. However, since the USWBSI funds are awarded yearly, only the first-year's full budget justification will be required for your pre-proposal submission. Estimates on your budget request for the duration of the project term (depending on your selection of a 2-year or 4-year project) will be required for each subsequent year up until the final (second or forth) year of the project. The full duration amount is just an estimate, and thus can be based on a multiple of the first year's budget or adjusted according to your projected estimates. A detailed justification will not be required beyond the first year for the pre-proposal.

Budget Justification
Can I only provide the budgeted dollar amounts in the Budget Justification Template?
In order for the reviewers to have a complete understanding of your project, budget line item amounts and justification details (text) need to be provided in the corresponding areas in the Budget Justification Template.

The Budget Justification Template indicates the areas on the template where text descriptions are needed, look for the blue shaded cells and double click to add in your details.

Budget Summary
Do I need to recalculate my sub-totals for the budget page?
The Budget Justification Template has been developed to transfer the sub-totals of required budget line items onto the Budget Summary page automatically. However double checking that all of your details transferred as intended and all totals match is still advised. If you have any issues with the template calculations, contact the USWBSI's Networking and Facilitation Office for assistance, nfo@scabusa.org or call 517.290.5023.

C

Conditional Forms
Do I need to include the conditional forms for all the cooperators in a multi-PI project?
The conditional forms (i.e. the Breeder Form, Pre-Breeding/Germplasm Form, IM-CP Trials Form) are intended for submission with individual projects only. They do not need to be included with Multi-PI projects.

Collaborative Projects (CP)
How do I prepare a budget justification when we have multiple collaborating PIs on a project?
An Excel template for the Budget Justification has been developed for projects with multiple PIs. Make sure to select and use the 'Budget Justification Template – Multi-PI ' version if the award from ARS would be going to multiple individuals at different institutions (i.e. separate agreements/awards). The template provides for up to five (5) different PIs to each have separate budget justifications that will transfer automatically into a single cumulative Budget Summary page. The template is available at: https://scabusa.org/research_rfp-fy22/forms_templates. If your pre-proposal has more than five (5) Co-PIs, please contact the USWBSI-NFO, nfo@scabusa.org or call 517.290.5023 and a special template can be prepared.

Confidentiality
How is my submitted pre-proposal handled so that confidentiality is maintained?
Pre-proposals submitted to the USWBSI are treated as confidential documents. Pre-proposals are only viewed by the administrative staff of the Networking & Facilitation Office, and the Reviewers. The Reviewers are instructed prior to their review that the content of all pre-proposals are confidential and thus should be handled accordingly.

Current and Pending Support
Who needs to submit a Current and Pending Support form?
A separate Current and Pending Support (CPS) form is required for the PI and Co-Investigators who are expected to work on the project in a significant fashion (e.g. expectation of co-authorship on ensuing publications), whether or not funds are sought for this support. Forms need to be submitted by the PI, for both the PI and all Co-PIs. All CPS forms should be formatted using the USWBSI' CPS form provided and only these forms will be accepted. The form is available at: https://scabusa.org/research_rfp-fy22/forms_templates. (**Note:** Accommodations may be requested if one of your Co-PIs is a PI on a USWBSI pre-proposal and is unable to provide their CPS form to you prior to the pre-proposal submission deadline; if this is your situation contact the USWBSI-NFO for assistance.)

If I am the main PI on one pre-proposal and a Co-PI on another pre-proposal, how do I submit my CPS form?
Submissions are organized by project pre-proposal this year. In this situation, you will upload your CPS form for your project pre-proposal. For pre-proposals for which you are the Co-PI, you will need to provide your form to the lead PI, and they will upload the document to their pre-proposal. In cases where you are a Co-PI, make sure to allow enough time to prepare your form and provide to the lead PI.

Curriculum Vitae and Publication List
What if my CV/Publication List or one of my Co-PIs is more than 4-pages long?
The Curriculum Vitae and Publication List (combined) document for each PI and Co-Investigator(s) is limited to four pages. You may need to modify the document to meet the four-page limit, for example by presenting the most recent or relevant publications.

D

Deadlines
Where can I find important deadlines?
The key deadlines are available on the main USWBSI RFP webpage at https://scabusa.org/research_rfp-fy22, as well as on each of the specific category pages and in the published PDF version of the USWBSI RFP.

Deviation Authorization
What is the process for requesting authorization of a deviation from the RFP pre-proposal preparation instructions?
The NFO must authorize any deviations from the RFP instructions in advance of pre-proposal submission. Deviations may be authorized by receiving written approval from the Researcher Co-Chair (ruthdm@umn.edu) or Director of Operations (nfo@scabusa.org). Requests for deviation of guidelines should be submitted in writing via e-mail to either the NFO Director of Operations or the Researcher Co-Chair prior to submission of the pre-proposal.

DON Sample Estimates
How do I include my estimates for DON Samples in the pre-proposal?
Tracking of PIs estimated DON samples is no longer a required element in the pre-proposal. Funded PIs will instead be contacted directly by their DON Lab Coordinator for sample estimates to assist in determining appropriate counts and DON lab funding for the coming year. You should submit your estimated numbers once requested; look for that request to come sometime in August.

Duration of Proposal
What is the maximum amount of time I can request for my project proposal?
New this year (for FY22), PIs will have the option to select the duration of the project for either a 2-year or 4-year term. The USWBSI is encouraging longer term (4-year) projects to reduce the significant processing requirements for the USDA-ARS, USWBSI-NFO, University Sponsored Programs Offices and PIs to establish new agreements. Please note, the USWBSI has always awarded funding annually and will continue to do so, providing your project duration, if awarded, does not commit the USWBSI to the full-term budget. Annual performance reports and renewal review/approval will continue to be required for each year of the project. The submitted duration simply allows the USDA-ARS to establish the agreement with those terms in place, allowing for continual amendments for the duration of the term. If you have questions about determining the term length of your project please contact the USWBSI Networking and Facilitation Office for assistance, nfo@scabusa.org or call 517.290.5023.

What if I have a pre-proposal with elements that will be done in 2-years and other elements that will require 4-years?
In order for your pre-proposal to be approved for one USDA-ARS agreement, how you position the title and objectives of the project will be important. You can submit your request for a 4-year duration, just make sure to keep the title of your project broad in scope, allowing for changes in project objectives annually as needed. Your objectives can have varying timelines for completion, allowing for some to be realized in the first two-years of a 4-year project is acceptable. You will be asked to provide, in the Project Summary, an abbreviated tentative project schedule/timeline for the full project duration and a corresponding total estimated requested amount for each year of the project, timing of the various component objectives can be articulated

in this manner. If, however, the projects you are planning are clearly distinct, you may consider submitting multiple pre-proposals of varying durations.

Can a new PI, or new PIs, join a multi-PI project that lasts four years in the middle of the project?
Yes. A new RFP will be issued every two years, if a new PI comes forward in the middle of an existing 4-year project, they could consider submitting an individual two-year project in the interim, and then join in the Collaborative Project at the next 4-year point. Alternatively, the USWBSI Executive Committee has the flexibility to take special circumstances under consideration, and is open to a project adding one or more PIs during a funding cycle. Please contact the USWBSI's Networking & Facilitation Office to discuss your options, nfo@scabusa.org or call 517.290.5023.

E

Electronic Pre-Proposal Submission (EPS) System
Do I have to pre-register this year (2021)?
No. There is not a separate pre-registration process this year. If you have received an award from USWBSI before, you will simply need to login for access to the EPS system once it opens. If you are new to USWBSI, you must create an account at the login screen. Once you have an account, you can proceed to access the EPS system.

Do I have to submit my pre-proposal electronically?
Yes. All pre-proposals (Categories 1-4) and supporting documents must be submitted using the USWBSI's EPS System.

Will I be able to save and return to my pre-proposal in the EPS system before submitting?
Yes. The EPS System will allow all PIs to be able to start the submission process, save, and return as needed until the deadline for submission is reached.

Will my Co-PIs have access to the online pre-proposal submission form?
No. Only the PI will be able to access the online pre-proposal submission form within the EPS System. PIs will be asked to enter the contact information and upload the CVs/Publication Lists and Current & Pending Support forms for all of the Co-PIs on their submission.

Eligibility
I am new to USWBSI, how do I know if I'm eligible for these funding opportunities?
USWBSI funding is awarded through Federal funds appropriated to the USDA Agricultural Research Service and authorized in the Farm Bill. Eligibility requirements specify that funding can only be made to PIs within land-grant colleges and universities in the U.S. or to USDA-ARS scientists. If this is your situation, and there is a clear link between your proposed research and the mission of the USWBSI, then you are encouraged to submit a pre-proposal.

I have collaborators outside the U.S. that I would like involved in my project, is that an option?
A U.S. based PI must be the lead PI submitting the pre-proposal. It is an option for you to include a Co-PI who is based outside the U.S., but the funding for their portion of the project would need to be set up via a sub-contract with your University. USDA-ARS agreements for the USWBSI can only be established with U.S. land-grant colleges and universities.

F

Formatting

Are there specific formatting requirements for the documents I upload?

For the Project Pre-Proposal Materials (Project Summary and Project Description), the document should be formatted using either Calibri or Times New Roman (<u>Normal</u> type except headings), 12 point or higher, black colored font with one-inch margins. Bold formatting should only be used for section headings or used <u>minimally</u> to emphasize importance or significance. Conformance to the format requirements will be enforced.

Funding

If my proposed project is awarded funding, how will I receive my award?

Funding awarded to PIs who submitted pre-proposals to the USWBSI comes in the form of either a Research Grant Agreement or Non-assistance Cooperative Agreement (NACA) between the PI's institution and USDA-ARS. For ARS scientists, the award will be 'deposited' into their CRIS account.

How is approved funding handled on a Collaborative/Multi-PI Project?

If you are part of a collaborative/multi-PI project, and your proposed research is approved for funding, the funding will come in the form of a direct award (i.e. Research Grant Agreement or NACA) from USDA-ARS to you at your institution.

What is the USWBSI's funding cycle for this RFP?

Pre-proposal requests can be based on either two-year or four-year projects, although funding is only awarded one year at a time.

I

Images for Figures/Tables

Is there a limit on the size of images?

Digital images inserted into the Project Description must only be included within the page limits (see RFP sections for specific page limits). The maximum size of images to be included is 1200 x 1500 pixels, using 256 colors. Figures must be legible when printed on an 8.5" x 11" page (100% scale).

Indirect Cost Calculation

How do I determine the Indirect Cost Rate (IDC) rate?

The USWBSI actually adheres to an Indirect Cost <u>Limitation</u>, rather than a rate (As part of the 2018 Farm Bill - Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 – a fixed Indirect Cost Limitation of 10% has been set for the USWBSI, <u>See Title VII, Subtitle C, Section 7303</u>, page 332 of bill; page 336 of PDF). The determination of the limitation is calculated differently than a rate is calculated. This is a limitation on the reimbursement of indirect costs and represents the maximum amount of grant dollars available to recover indirect costs. PIs must calculate the allowable IDC% per their institution's NICRA/F&A rate agreement to determine which calculation generates the lowest IDC amount for reimbursement, in accordance with the 10% limitation of Total Federal Funds Awarded. <u>Universities may voluntarily</u> elect to use a percentage <u>below 10%</u> for pre-proposals submitted to the USWBSI, however they **cannot charge a rate higher than 10%**. A formula is included in the Budget Justification template to determine the 10% limitation amount, PIs will need to enter their allowable NICRA/F&A rate for comparison, the lower amount will automatically carry forward. **NOTE:** Indirect Costs are not applicable to ARS Scientists and PIs currently funded under Non-Assistance Cooperative Agreements (NACAs).

L

Letters of Intent (LOI) for a Coordinated Project or Transformational Science (TSCI) Submission

Where should I send my Letter of Intent for a Coordinated Project or the Transformational Science category?

All USWBSI Letters of Intent (LOIs) need to be submitted via the online LOI forms; links are provided on the USWBSI RFP website for each applicable category.

Login
I went to login to the EPS system, but it won't let me login?
If you have received a USWBSI award in prior years, you already have login credentials to the system. If you don't remember your login credentials, simply select the "Reset Your Password" or "Send Username Reminder" options on the Login page and you will receive an email notification with needed information for access. If you are new to the USWBSI, make sure to select "Sign up now" on the Login page and you'll be prompted to set up an account for access. If you have issues with the login, contact the USWBSI's Networking & Facilitation Office, nfo@scabusa.org or call 517.290.5023.

P

Project Summary (All Categories)
What has to be included in my two-page project summary?
All four items listed below **must be addressed** in the Project Summary as part of the 400-word limitation:
- Overall project goal(s)
- Project Objectives (list in numbered format) and Expected Outcome(s) for each objective
- Approaches that will be used to accomplish project goal(s) within the period of proposed work
- Statement of Mutual Interest (i.e. how will stakeholders/end-users benefit from this research)

Additionally, you should include these items in the Project Summary section (this will not be counted toward the 400-word count requirement).
- Abbreviated (but tentative) Project Schedule/Timeline for the full project duration (i.e. all years)
- Total Estimated Requested Amount for each year of the project

R

References
What information should be included in the "References to Project Description" section of the pre-proposal if requested?
Reference information is required of references cited in the Project Description. PIs must follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the pre-proposal. If the document was accessed electronically, the website address should be identified in the citation. While there is no established page limitation for the references, this section must include bibliographic citations only, and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the project description**.**

Rejections of Letter of Intent (LOI)
What do I do if my Letter of Intent was rejected for inclusion in one of the Coordinated Projects (CPs)?
PIs have the option, if their proposed research was not accpeted by a CP, to submit an individual project pre-proposal for consideration by following the instructions for Category 3, Individual Research Area Pre-Proposals, in the RFP.

Research Categories
What if my project pre-proposal does not align with any of the current USWSBSI research categories?
The USWBSI is always interested in novel approaches and welcomes new PI submissions. You may consider the new Transformational Science (TSCI) Category 4 for your submission if your proposed research fits into this category. A Letter of Intent (LOI) is a required element for submissions in Category 4. If the reviewers determine your project doesn't meet the Transformational Science expectations, but is still deemed of interest to the USWBSI, you may be invited to submit an individual project pre-proposal. You also have the option to suggest a new objective within one of the other Categories if your project aligns, but is not

specifically noted in one of the current priorities (the USWBSI's current Research Priorities can be viewed starting on page 41 of the RPF and also found on their web page which can be accessed through the USWBSI's Website at https://scabusa.org/research).

What if my pre-proposal is applicable and best to be included in two different research areas?
Splitting your pre-proposal between two research areas is definitely an option. With the new submission process, what will work the best in these circumstances is to submit the pre-proposal twice, one time in the XXX category and one time in the YYY category. Everything you enter/upload can be the same, except for the Research Category and the corresponding Budget fields in the form, please enter the specific Year 1 and cumulative budget amount that is being requested for XXX in the XXX submission and the amount for YYY in the YYY submission. The actual budget you upload can show the full amount and be the same file for both submissions, just the form field references should be specific. Please make sure to include reference in your project description to this approach and notify the NFO of this submission being split.

Returned Pre-Proposals
For what reasons does the USWBSI/NFO return a pre-proposal?
Pre-proposals may not be considered by the USWBSI for the following reasons.
- The pre-proposal project does not meet eligibility (see eligibility above) or preparation requirements, such as page limitations, or formatting instructions as specified in the RFP Guidelines.
- The pre-proposal project does not meet the announced deadline date and/or time, where specified.

S

Signatures
Does the USWBSI require Authorized Organizational Representative's signature (including electronic) on pre-proposals?
No. The USWBSI does not require signatures by the Authorized Organizational Representatives (AORs) on pre-proposals, therefore AORs are not granted access to the EPS system. If a pre-proposal requires approval prior to submission by a PIs sponsored programs office, a Cover Page for this purpose is available for download at https://scabusa.org/research_rfp-fy22/forms_templates

Signed Budget Summary Page
Do I have to sign the Budget Summary Page?
Yes. There is a space at the bottom of the Budget Summary page for you to add your electronic signature. Simply insert a digital image of your signature, or utilize the Excel e-signature functionality if you have those settings in place.

Small Business Innovated Research (SBIR) Fee
Is the SBIR fee applicable to me?
Only USDA-ARS scientists are exempt from the SBIR fee, all non-ARS PIs should incorporate the SBIR fee into their budget requests. The SBIR fee rate is 3.2% of total direct and indirect costs.

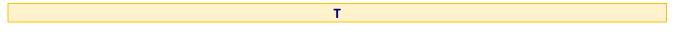## Sub-Contract Arrangements (Collaborative Agreements)
What if I want to sub-contract part of the project work to a collaborator?
If the nature of the proposed project requires collaboration or contractual arrangements with other research scientists, corporations, organizations, agencies, etc., the applicant must identify the collaborator(s) and provide a detailed explanation of the nature of the collaboration in their proposal. Evidence in the form of letters of intent from all collaborators must be included with the submitted pre-proposal. The letter of intent, which may be in the form of an email, must include specific details describing the services the collaborator will provide. The Budget Justification must also specify the amount(s) of all sub-contracts.

Submission Limits

is there a limit on the number of proposals someone can be a PI or Co-PI?

There are no limitations in place on the number of pre-proposals someone can be listed as a PI or a Co-PI.

T

Travel

Is travel to Canada and Mexico considered Domestic Travel?

No. Travel to Canada and Mexico is international travel. Travel, domestic and international, should be accounted for in the appropriate category in the Budget Justification template.

Tuition Remission

Can tuition remission costs for graduate students be included in the proposed budget?

Tuition remission is permitted under USDA-ARS grant agreements, except if an agreement is established as a Non-Assistance Cooperative Agreement (NACA), with any type of recipient organization (i.e. universities). If tuition remission is budgeted as a direct cost, it should be included in the "Participant/Trainee Support Costs" category of the Budget Justification template, or in "Other Direct Costs - Miscellaneous."

In the past the tuition fees had to be kept out of the total direct costs for calculating IDC, but in the new Excel budget template the IDC cell is auto-filled with calculations adding everything, how can I adjust?

Actually, the IDC policy is now based on total federal funds which includes both direct and indirect costs. PIs should no longer exclude tuition remission from the IDC calculation. The template calculation is based on total direct costs for the automated 10% limitation line item. No adjustment for tuition remission is needed for IDC.