

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

**Fast Track Initiatives and Cluster Activities
Announcement and Application Guidelines
February 2014**

1. Background

Future Earth is a 10-year international research programme that will provide critical knowledge required for societies to face the challenges posed by Global Environmental Change (GEC) and to identify opportunities for transitions to global sustainability.

Future Earth will answer fundamental questions about how and why the global environment is changing, what are likely future changes, what are risks and implications for human development and the diversity of life on Earth, and what the opportunities are to reduce risks and vulnerabilities, enhance resilience and innovation, and implement transformations to prosperous and equitable futures.

Some of the key characteristics of Future Earth are that it:

- delivers science of the highest quality, encompassing bottom-up ideas from the wide scientific community, and being inclusive of existing international GEC projects and related research activities, notably those coordinated by four major international research programmes (International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, International Human Dimensions Programme, DIVERSITAS (programme on biodiversity) and World Climate Research Programme);
- is international, with a strong regional focus, recognising the need for scientists and stakeholders throughout the world to participate in Future Earth, and the importance of changes occurring at regional and local scales;
- promotes the integration of foundational and solutions-oriented research to address policy needs at different scales and fundamental societal questions regarding global environmental change and pathways toward sustainable futures;

- promotes inter-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity, bringing together disciplinary strengths from across the natural and social sciences, engineering and humanities;
- is co-designed and co-produced, engaging stakeholders across the public, private and voluntary sectors in defining and delivering the research; and
- incorporates capacity building among the scientific and other stakeholder communities to strengthen integrated research for sustainability and the uptake of this research in decision-making processes.

Further details can be found in the Future Earth Initial Design Report¹.

2. Call for proposals

Future Earth is now issuing a call for a set of Fast Track Initiatives (FTIs) and Cluster Activities, supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation.

2.1. Fast Track Initiatives (FTIs)

FTIs have been identified as a valuable model to kick-start Future Earth integrated activities. The intent of the FTIs is to create early opportunities to support Future Earth research with specific outputs. Proposals may have either a research focus or an engagement focus. Funding could support activities such as integrative workshops and working groups on emerging issues and the development of a specific product, e.g. a high-level paper, policy brief, or data product in a relatively short time-frame. FTIs should aim either to solve an issue swiftly, or to establish the basis (e.g. in an agenda-setting synthesis paper) for a longer-term research effort which can seek funding elsewhere.

2.2 Cluster Activities

Cluster Activities will allow existing GEC projects to engage with Future Earth's integrated and co-designed science agenda. Clusters will create the opportunity for existing GEC projects to join together in either longer-term collaborations or mergers. This will play a role in reshaping the existing project structures, by supporting joint planning between existing projects, development of new organisational and research plans and supporting their implementation, and to identify and develop collaboration with potential stakeholders/partners, with the overall aim to enhance capability to meet Future Earth needs.

¹ http://www.icsu.org/news-centre/future-earth/media-centre/relevant_publications/future-earth-initial-design-report

3. Guidelines

General guidelines and eligibility criteria for both FTIs and Cluster Activities are as follows:

- The maximum amount of funding available for each initiative is US\$100,000 or €75,000, though co-investment is encouraged.
- Each initiative should run for no longer than 2 years.
- Individual scientists may not lead more than one proposal.
- Proposals should involve at least 2 Core Projects, or a Core Project and a significant 'new community of researchers'. See Appendix A for list of eligible Core Projects. A 'new community of researchers' refers to a substantial, identifiable international community with global reach, which brings in disciplinary skills not strongly represented in the existing Core Projects, e.g. ICSU/ISSC Scientific Unions. [Note that future calls will be open to leadership by such new communities, but in this first round, proposals must be led by an existing Core Project.]
- All proposals are encouraged to draw in new researcher and/or stakeholder communities
- Core Projects and individuals may be involved in more than one proposal
- Proposals should align with the Future Earth characteristics noted in Section 1 above and relate to at least one of the Future Earth Research Themes of 'Dynamic Planet', 'Global Development' and 'Transformations towards Sustainability'. (See Future Earth Initial Design Report¹).

4. Process and Important dates

Applicants are asked to fill in the application form and return the completed application to the Future Earth interim Secretariat (diana@futureearth.info) before the deadline.

If you have any questions please contact Diana Greenslade (diana@futureearth.info) or Frans Berkhout (frans@futureearth.info).

Closing time for applications is **Midnight, Central European Time (CET), April 4, 2014.**

All proposals will be reviewed by the Future Earth Science Committee and a final decision will be made at the in-person meeting of the Science and interim Engagement Committees in early June 2014.

An announcement about successful proposals will be made by the end of June 2014. All lead applicants will be contacted directly.

Appendix A. List of eligible Core Projects

1. AIMES
2. bioDISCOVERY
3. bioGENESIS
4. CCAFS
5. CLiC
6. CLIVAR
7. ecoHEALTH
8. ecoSERVICES
9. ESG
10. GCP
11. GECHH
12. GEWEX
13. GLP
14. GMBA
15. GWSP
16. IGAC
17. IHOPE
18. iLEAPS
19. IMBER
20. IRG
21. LOICZ
22. MAIRS
23. PAGES
24. PECS
25. SOLAS
26. SPARC
27. UGEC

Note that other Networks, Working Groups, Initiatives etc. under the GEC programmes are welcome to join bids led by these Core Projects.