

CALL NOTES – CSC / University Call
October 22, 2015

CSC Reviews:

The CSC review and evaluation is meant to:

- 1) review the implementation of the current host university agreements to inform the next round of competition,
- 2) evaluate the CSC network as a whole to inform ongoing management of the network

Dates for the onsite reviews for the first 3 CSCs have been moved to Jan/Feb 2016

NW CSC (Corvallis) - January 20-22, 2016
AK CSC (Fairbanks) – February 10-12, 2016
SE CSC (Raleigh) - February 24-26, 2016
(SW, NC reviews – 2017)
(NE, PI, SC reviews – 2018)

We have a cooperative agreement with the American Fisheries Society (AFS, Doug Austen is the lead with AFS) & Cornell University to lead the reviews. They are working on getting members for the Science Review Teams and are still figuring out logistics for the on-site reviews. The Cornell team will focus on the partnership aspects of the CSC and will work with stakeholders and partners at the on-site review to help develop a survey to go to a broader audience.

The particulars of the review process are still being developed (Doug Austen hopes to get out a draft agenda for the initial on-site reviews very soon).

We will also be looking at the operational and administrative aspects of each CSC. The main goal here is to make sure the expectations in the next RFP are very clear. USGS will develop an agenda for this after the Cornell/AFS agenda is clarified.

There will also be a Review Advisory Team that AFS/Cornell will put together that will look across all 8 of the reviews to draw out some lessons for the network (they will also be active during the review process to better understand consistencies/inconsistencies etc.). There will be some overlap between this advisory team and members on our federal advisory committee (Advisory Committee on Climate Change and Natural Resource Science). You won't necessarily interact with these folks, but they will try and get picture of the overall structure of our network.

Question: Will the same contractors (AFS/Cornell) be doing ALL the reviews or just in 2016?

Answer: They will be doing all 8 CSC reviews but will do them in different rounds (AK, NW, SE first, then SW and NC second, then NE, SC, and PI third). There will be different people on each Science Review Team for each CSC. We have a flier soliciting applications for members to be on the Science Review Teams that can be distributed (Robin will distribute and it is also [online here](#)). The members of the review teams cannot have taken or applied for funds for the specific CSC they'd be reviewing but someone who has applied for or received funds from one CSC CAN review a different CSC. The review teams are open to all partners (states, NGOs etc.). The SC CSC is sending the flier for solicitation for reviewers out to their Stakeholder Advisory Committee (this would be good opportunity for the SAC members to review other CSCs and be exposed to the CSC network as a whole)

Q: How will stakeholders will be involved with the review?

A: Doug Austen should be reaching out to CSCs to get a list of key partners who would attend the on-site reviews. Cornell will use input from the on-site visit to develop a survey to go to a broader group of stakeholders (we aren't yet sure how large this broader audience would be or who it would be). They should be working with CSCs to get a list of folks to send the survey to.

Q: Some of the initial guidelines for the review imply a sort of firewall between the federal actors and universities. I think their relationship is very important in terms of the CSC success. Can you give clarity on this? Is there a way for the CSC to demonstrate how well they have coordinated with USGS federal partners without those federal partners being actively engaged?

A: AFS/Cornell won't just focus on the host university but will definitely look more broadly at how well the CSC is working. We are hoping the review teams look at the partnerships and how effective the partnership is between USGS and the university at doing scientific research and making the CSC a success. This is not just a review of the university side (we will look at how both sides are working together).

Q: As we go through the review process, will the review teams have access to specific guidance we've received on developing budgets and the final contents of the award the host received. There have been some changes in how we handle budget/administrative tasks since the initial proposal (e.g. guidance the universities have gotten on administrative staffing)

A: The review teams will have access both to the original university proposal and to the final award terms. It is likely that the "administrative / operational" side of the review might take this on. There may be some overlap on the science and administrative review sides.

Q: Could we provide the reviewers with a timeline of the setup and development of all the CSCs? (i.e. to show them the delays in getting a federal director in place, or delays in getting staff in place, or the length processes for administrative/grants etc.). This would help the review team understand how the CSCs were understaffed at the beginning.

A: Yes, this is a good idea. CSCs are encouraged to develop such timelines.

Re-competition:

We will be re-competing the hosting agreements in 3 batches (*see Robin's slides for more details about timing and plan*). Each of the current CSC agreements will be extended by about 19-25 months to account for the late start of getting the CSCs up and running and staffed. We also want to move the agreement start/end dates away from the end of a fiscal year.

A consequence of extending the agreements is that the CSCs will likely enter new agreements for less than 5 years.

We can't say much about the content of the RFP. What we can say is:

- we will be much clearer about what we need / hope for out of the federal-university partnership
- we will ask for more concrete expressions of what the partnership will mean
- we will ask for more specificity in what is proposed
- we will provide some indication of the desired funding range for a host (moving towards a central tendency)
- there are some partners listed on the initial proposals that don't get funding and don't have a significant role in the CSC. We will be looking for partners that have a significant substantive role in the CSC.
- the basic agreement/funding model for the CSC & host will remain the same: host institution will remain a single institution with a single cooperative agreement. Research funds will flow to the host and then out to other partners.

This limited guidance that we give you will also be made publicly available. We are in the process of drafting a note about this that will go in a Federal Register Notice, on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), on the NCCWSC website etc.

We recognize that incumbents have a natural advantage and we want to make it very clear that current hosts are not getting insider information. We want this process to be abundantly clear and transparent.

We know that CSC staff and partners, including university partners, engage in strategic discussions about the future of the CSC enterprise. When we have these strategic discussions, we will try to capture the outcomes & main points of these and make them publicly available. We want to make this information available to all potential proposers.

A reminder that CSC partners on the federal side (USGS employees) can NOT be involved in shaping and writing the proposal. Please help us to keep this process clean.

Q: The original cooperative agreements were for 5 years. Then they got extended to 6 years. Are they now for 7 years?

A: They will be close to 7 years, but will align with the April end dates that Robin has laid out. For example, in NE, extensions will go to April 2019.

Q: How will funding happen with the stretched agreements?

A: We intend that CSCs will be fully funded for the entire agreement time (i.e. if the agreement ends up being 2 years and 2 months extension, you will get funding for 2 years and 2 months).

Q: Can you provide a timeline and expectations for when you want a budget and workplan for the extension agreement period? a time line for augmentation process?

A: Yes, we will try and get out clarity on this

Q: What happens if only the current host university puts in a proposal in the re-compete? Is that acceptable to USGS?

A: Yes, given that that proposal is acceptable. That is not unprecedented in this process. There's no minimum # of bids we need to get.

Q: What documents will we need to provide to the review team? What do the CSCs need to prepare?

A: That guidance has not come out yet. We're waiting on AFS/Cornell leads to let us know.

Q: Will we have a meeting of university/federal directors and staff in the near future?

A: Possibly a June date (probably later in June), probably in SW or NW region (Mote, Overpeck possible hosts)
- The week of June 13th is possibly planned for the CSC Quarterly for federal directors