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6. *All other innovative concepts and approaches:* Dr. Francis Thio, Research Division, SC-55, Telephone: (301) 903-4678, or by Internet address: francis.thio@science.doe.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: General information about development and submission of applications, eligibility, limitations, evaluations and selection processes, and other policies and procedures may be found in the Application Guide for the Office of Science Financial Assistance Program and 10 CFR part 605. Electronic access to SC's Financial Assistance Guide and required forms is possible via the Internet using the following Web site address: <http://www.sc.doe.gov/production/grants/grants.html>. DOE is under no obligation to pay for any costs associated with the preparation or submission of an application if an award is not made.

In selecting applications for funding, the DOE Office of Fusion Energy Sciences will give priority to applications that can produce experimental results within three to five years after grant initiation. Theoretical research will be accepted for consideration under this Notice when bundled with and in support of an experimental application.

Applications concerned with scientific assessment of new concepts or approaches that are not ready for experimental investigation should have a well-defined scope. The product of such assessment would be a clear scientific description of the concept and its operation, its physics and engineering basis, critical analysis of major difficulties to be overcome in developing the concept as a net producer of energy through the fusion process, and an analysis of what would be achieved by moving to experimental research.

Program Funding

It is anticipated that about \$6,000,000 of Fiscal Year 2004 funding will be available to fund new work or renewals of existing work from applications received in response to this Notice. The number of awards and range of funding will depend on the number of applications received and selected for award. Future year funding will depend upon suitable progress and the availability of funds. The cost-effectiveness of the application will be considered when comparing applications with differing funding requirements. Applications for scientific assessment of new concepts will be limited to a maximum of \$150,000 in

any year. Applications requiring annual funding as low as \$50,000 are welcome and encouraged.

Collaborative research projects involving more than one institution are encouraged. Applications submitted from different institutions, which are directed at a common research activity, should clearly indicate they are part of a proposed collaboration and contain a brief description of the overall research project. However, each application must have a distinct scope of work and a qualified principal investigator, who is responsible for the research effort being performed at his or her institution. Synergistic collaborations with researchers in federal laboratories and Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs), including the DOE National Laboratories are also encouraged, though no funds will be provided to these organizations under this Notice. Further information on preparation of collaborative applications may be accessed via the Internet at: <http://www.sc.doe.gov/production/grants/Colab.html>.

Applications from individual PIs or small groups (1-4 people) should be limited to a maximum of twenty (20) pages (including text and figures) of technical information, while applications from larger research groups should be limited to thirty (30) pages. The PDF file may also include a few selected publications in an Appendix as background information. In addition, in the electronic submission, please limit biographical and publication information for the principal investigator and key personnel to no more than two pages each. Each principal investigator should provide an e-mail address.

In addition to the information required by 10 CFR part 605 each application should contain the following items: (1) A statement about the goal of the proposed investigation, (2) a synopsis of the research plan, (3) the specific results or deliverable expected at the end of the project period, (4) a discussion of why this research would have an important impact on the prospects for fusion energy, or why this research would lead to an attractive pathway towards practical fusion energy, (5) a discussion of how the research would elucidate the physics principles of the innovation, (6) a detailed research plan, and (7) information on the adequacy of the facilities and budget.

Merit Review

Applications will be subjected to formal merit review and will be

evaluated against the following criteria, which are listed in descending order of importance as set forth in 10 CFR part 605. (<http://www.sc.doe.gov/production/grants/605index.html>)

1. Scientific and/or technical merit of the project;
2. Appropriateness of the proposed method or approach;
3. Competency of the applicant's personnel and adequacy of the proposed resources; and
4. Reasonableness and appropriateness of the proposed budget.

The Office of Fusion Energy Sciences shall also consider, as part of the evaluation, other available advice or information as well as program policy factors such as ensuring an appropriate balance among the program areas and within the program areas, coupling to the theory and computational efforts, and quality of previous performance. Selection of applications/proposals for award will be based upon the findings of the technical evaluations, the importance and relevance of the proposed research to the Office of Fusion Energy Sciences' mission, and funding availability. Funding under this Notice is limited to supporting research activities based in the U.S., though subcontracts with limited funding for collaborators outside the U.S. may be allowed with appropriate justifications.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number for this program is 81.049, and the solicitation control number is ERFAP 10 CFR part 605.

Issued in Washington, DC on February 24, 2003.

John Rodney Clark,

Associate Director of Science for Resource Management.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

[DE-PS07-03ID14447]

Nuclear Energy Plant Optimization Program (NEPO)

AGENCY: Idaho Operations Office, Department of Energy.

ACTION: Notice of competitive financial assistance solicitation.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Idaho Operations Office (ID) is seeking proposals from nuclear utility R&D organizations, nuclear reactor owner's groups, nuclear R&D organizations, reactor vendors, and other nuclear industry companies to conduct advanced research and development designed to improve the operation of present U.S. nuclear power