

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: COLLABORATIVE SYNTHESIS IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Coalition for Archaeological Synthesis
Administered through the [SRI Foundation](#)
October 4, 2017

Synopsis of Program

This solicitation represents the initial effort of the [Coalition for Archaeological Synthesis](#) (CfAS; <http://archsynth.org>) to promote collaborative synthesis in archaeology. CfAS solicits proposals for working groups that, through collaborative synthetic research, will address a substantive archaeological problem and produce intellectual products that will benefit the discipline and products that will inform public policy or benefit relevant publics. Funding will be provided for travel, meals, lodging, and conference facilities for working groups of no more than 8 individuals to meet face-to-face 3 times within a period of 2 years in a setting that is conducive to collaboration.

Proposal Deadline: January 15, 2018, 5PM MST

Expected Awards: 2

Award Amounts: CfAS will pay a maximum of \$50,000 in workshop expenses for each project.

Award Announcement: about March 1, 2018

Contact:

Questions concerning this Request for Proposals (RFP) should be sent to Mr. Terry Klein, Executive Director, SRI Foundation, at tklein@srifoundation.org.

Background

For more than a century, archaeologists have diligently discovered, documented, analyzed, and curated our collective past. The pace of archaeological work increased dramatically in the last 50 years in response to public mandates and laws to identify and protect important vestiges of the past. Although this rich store of data has been critical to documenting long-term trajectories of numerous human societies, it has the potential to do much more. Archaeological data can be key to expanding scientific understandings of human social dynamics, redressing injustices of the past, empowering local and descendant communities, and aiding in the formulation of solutions to contemporary problems.

Synthetic research is not new to archaeology. However, collaborative synthetic research, as conducted by the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis ([NCEAS](#)), is not part of the discipline's standard practice, even though it has been a powerful driver for advancing interdisciplinary scientific research in other fields (Carpenter et al. 2009; Hackett et al. 2008). We believe that key features of the NCEAS model can be productively employed in archaeology.

The [Coalition for Archaeological Synthesis](#) (CfAS) has been formed for the purpose of advancing synthetic research using the working group model pioneered by NCEAS. The rationale behind and the vision of the Coalition is articulated in two articles: [Fostering Synthesis in Archaeology to Advance Science and Benefit Society](#) (Altschul et al. 2017) and [Fostering Collaborative Synthetic Research in Archaeology](#) (Altschul et al., in press). As this competition is intended to put into

practice the collaborative research model laid out in those articles, applicants are strongly encouraged to consult them.

In this model, collaborative synthetic research is completed by small working groups that embody considerable intellectual diversity. Over 2 years, the working group will be funded to meet 3 times for intensive research sessions of 5 working days. In between, team members will continue to collaborate remotely. The working group will integrate multiple perspectives and multiple sources of data to generate explanatory insights that are impossible to achieve through the study of a single case or from a single perspective. Source and synthesized data products must be made available in an open access, digital repository by the end of the project.

Two synthesis projects employing these features are expected to be funded under this solicitation. The CfAS awards will fund the travel and meeting costs of working group sessions at a partner facility, and will cover the costs of using these facilities along with modest digital repository costs. No new field or laboratory work will be funded.

Proposal Submission, Evaluation, and Awards

Proposal Submission

Proposals must be submitted electronically to tklein@srifoundation.org by January 15, 2018, 5PM MST. Proposals shall be submitted in a single pdf or Microsoft Word document, with pages having 1" margins and at least an 11 point font size.

Who May Submit Proposals

Proposals are to be submitted by the Organizer of a proposed working group. While the facilities and services of the organizations with which the participants are affiliated may be relevant to the proposal evaluation, the proposals themselves do not come from these organizations.

Proposal Sections

Each proposal must have each of the following sections and subsections

1. Title Page

- a. Project title.
- b. Organizer name, institutional affiliation, relevant areas of expertise, email address, and phone contact information.
- c. List of proposed working group members, with institutional affiliations, relevant areas of expertise, and email addresses.
- d. Project summary of no more than 250 words suitable for the public (to be posted on CfAS website for successful applications).

2. Proposal Body (no more than 10 pages total, inclusive of figures, tables, and references).

All the following subsections should be included, though they need not appear in this order and may be organized hierarchically in any logical manner.

2.1 Statement of the problem

Responses to the RFP must articulate a problem whose solution would have substantial intellectual impacts and significant implications for public policy or other significant public benefits. For example, as conceived by the review committee, a significant public benefit could include a community outreach program, a public exhibition, the creation of economic or educational opportunities for relevant communities, or policy statements or white papers for government decision makers.

Provide a concise statement of the problem along with relevant background information, a justification for its significance to the discipline, and an argument for why its solution would have relevance to public policy or may directly benefit a particular public.

2.2 Strategy for attacking the problem

Describe a strategy and plan of work that conveys how the working group proposes to address the problem and how it plans to produce both professional and public products. This might include, for example, a schedule of project milestones and a list of objectives for each of the face to face meetings. Include also a discussion of how the working group efforts would proceed between face-to-face meetings and what virtual collaboration technologies will be employed.

2.3 Proposed workshop participants

Proposals will identify no less than 4 and no more than 8 individuals to comprise a working group able to produce synthetic results that transcend their individual talents, skills, and expertise. A key feature of these working groups is that they must have considerable intellectual diversity. Working groups *must* have individuals at different (a) institutions and (b) career stages and in different (c) job settings (e.g., academic, CRM, government, museum), and will usually have members from (d) fields other than archaeology. Working groups composed of (e) individuals who have not collaborated extensively in the past are preferred. Provide an overall assessment of the team's diversity with respect to these five criteria. The proposal should include a list of the proposed working group members. For each member provide a brief justification of their relevance, and if group members have worked together in the past, provide a brief statement on the extent of this past collaboration.

2.4 Analysis-ready data sources

Working groups are expected to employ a wide range of data resources including CRM and other under-utilized sources. It is also expected that not all potential data sources will have been identified when the proposal is submitted. Nonetheless, the proposal should identify a set of initial data sources to be used, including their strengths, weaknesses, and availability. It should also describe the steps that will be taken to identify other relevant data. Typically the data will derive from more than one geographical region. All source data must be freely available in a public repository or deposited in such a repository by the end of the project. No new field or laboratory work will be funded.

2.5 Expected professional products and data availability

Describe the intended professional products (e.g. publications, professional meeting presentations). Also, indicate the intended digital repository for source (unless already deposited in a public digital repository) and synthesized data products. Suggested repositories include tDAR, ADS, or Open Context (simply having the data available on a university or company server is not acceptable). The proposal should explicitly articulate metrics for professional success.

2.6 Expected public products

Describe the intended public products along with any institutional resources available to the workshop participants that could help effect public benefits (e.g., a university or NGO's, government affairs or public relations office or an associated museum). The proposal should explicitly articulate metrics for success in the public sphere. CfAS cannot provide direct funding for these efforts outside of the working group meetings.

3. References Cited

List of references cited in the proposal body.

4. Biographical Sketch for the Organizer

A biographical sketch for the Organizer (only), with a maximum length of 2 pages. The bio sketch should include, at a minimum, recent professional positions, education, and a selection of references to relevant publications. The format specified by NSF is acceptable but not required.

5. Budgetary Notes

A budget is not required as most expenses will be paid directly by CfAS (see Award Information, below). However, indicate in this section any working group participants who would be expected to incur unusually high travel expenses, such as international travel. In all cases, provide an anticipated cost for repository services. Modest costs for digital repository services will be paid by CfAS.

6. Attachments

Attach a copy of a letter or email from each working group member indicating that individual's agreement to participate if the proposal is funded. No other attachments may be included.

Review and Selection Process

The proposals will be evaluated by a review panel using the evaluation criteria listed below. In writing a proposal, bear in mind that some review panel members may not be archaeologists. The review panel will make a recommendation to the SRI Foundation Board of Directors who will make a final determination on the awards. (The SRI Foundation serves as the current administrative home of CfAS.) Award conditions will be negotiated between the working group Organizer and Terry Klein, Executive Director of the SRI Foundation. Proposals not satisfying the proposal requirements specified here may be rejected without evaluation.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Each proposal will be evaluated on the extent to which it conveys a convincing plan for collaborative research that will creatively and effectively address an important problem and produce valuable professional and public products by integrating multiple perspectives in synthesizing extant archaeological data. Each of the 6 sections of the Proposal Body (2.1-2.6, above) will be separately evaluated by the reviewers, who will also provide an overall assessment of the proposal.

Award Information

Direct monetary awards will not be made. Instead, CfAS will pay directly for the conference facility, lodging, and meals during the working group meeting. CfAS will reimburse individuals for reasonable travel expenses. This would include, for example, transportation to and from the origin airport, advance-purchase coach airfare, transportation from the destination airport to the conference facility, and meal expenses (at a standard General Services Administration [GSA] rate) during travel. If reimbursement represents a problem, it may be possible to arrange an advance or for CfAS to purchase plane tickets directly.

CfAS reserves the right to negotiate with a potential awardee concerning the proposed approach. The number of participants may be limited based on unusually high anticipated travel costs (e.g., due to a number of foreign participants). As discussed in the Proposal Evaluation Criteria above, CfAS is committed to the idea that the working groups represent considerable diversity and as a result may negotiate the participant list.

Progress Reporting

Within 2 months after each in-person meeting, the working group organizer must submit a brief letter report describing the meeting and project progress and outcomes to Terry Klein at tklein@srifoundation.org.

Effect of Submitting a Proposal

By submitting a proposal in response to this Request for Proposals, the applicant submitting the proposal acknowledges that proposals may be submitted by other applicants and that CfAS is under no legal obligation to select an applicant's proposal. Applicants submitting proposals further acknowledge that CfAS' decision as to whom to grant an award is final, binding and non-appealable.

References Cited

- Altschul, Jeffrey H., Keith W. Kintigh, Terry H. Klein, William H. Doelle, Kelley A. Hays-Gilpin, Sarah A. Herr, Timothy A. Kohler, Barbara J. Mills, Lindsay M. Montgomery, Margaret C. Nelson, Scott G. Ortman, John N. Parker, Matthew A. Peeples, and Jeremy A. Sabloff
2017 Fostering Synthetic Research in Archaeology to Advance Science and Benefit Society. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (in press).
- 2018 Fostering Collaborative Synthetic Research in Archaeology. *Advances in Archaeological Practice* (in press).
- Carpenter, E.V., P. Armbrust, F.S. Arzberger, I. Chapin, J. Elser, E. Hackett, A. Ives, P. Kareiva, M. Leibold, P. Lundberg, M. Mangel, N. Merchant, W.W. Murdoch, M.A. Palmer, D. Peters, S.T.A. Pickett, K.K. Smith, D.H. Wall, A.S. Zimmerman
2009 Accelerate Synthesis in Ecology and Environmental Sciences. *Bioscience* 59(8): 699–701.
- Hackett, Edward J., John N. Parker, David Conz, Diana Rhoten, and Andrew Parker
2008 Ecology Transformed: The National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis and the Changing Patterns of Ecological Research. In *Scientific Collaboration on the Internet*, edited by Gary M. Olson, Ann Zimmerman, and Nathan Bos, pp. 277–296. MIT Press, Cambridge.