

**From:** Ridge 2000 <ridge2000@whoi.edu>  
**Subject:** **Covering Memo Regarding NSF Changes to the Ridge 2000 Program**  
**Date:** September 23, 2010 4:11:03 PM EDT  
**To:** all@ridge2000.org  
**Cc:** Ridge 2000 <ridge2000@whoi.edu>, Jon Alberts - UNOLS Office <office@unols.org>  
1 Attachment, 52.5 KB

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To: The Ridge 2000 Research Community

From: Ridge 2000 Steering Committee

Date: Sept. 23, 2010

Subject: Covering Memo Regarding NSF Changes to the Ridge 2000 Program

Dear Colleagues:

Attached to this memo as a PDF file please find a letter written by NSF Program Managers to the Ridge 2000 community concerning the future of the Ridge 2000 program. NSF requested that the Program Office forward this letter by email to all US investigators.

Over the past few months, Program Managers at NSF have been contemplating making significant changes to the Ridge 2000 program. The Ridge 2000 Steering Committee (StCom), and especially Program Chair Dan Fornari have been in close contact with Program Managers during this decision process. Numerous discussions were held in person and through email and phone correspondences. The StCom believes that, given the nature of the changes NSF is making to Ridge 2000 for the remaining two years of the Program, it should provide some context. We note that this does not change NSF's commitment to Ridge 2000 science or its science plan. As such, the R2K Office and StCom encourage the community to continue working on important Ridge 2000 research objectives and integration and synthesis activities.

The principal changes to the Ridge 2000 Program, effective immediately as mandated in the accompanying letter from NSF and in other correspondence to the Ridge 2000 office, are as follows.

- 1) The Ridge 2000 Program Solicitation will be withdrawn. Ridge 2000 science will now be evaluated by the Core Marine Geology and Geophysics and Biological Oceanography Panels, and reintegrated into the normal OCE proposal targets of Feb. 15 and Aug. 15 for FY2011 and FY2012. Ridge 2000 funds – which are likely to be ~\$3-5 million in each of the next two years – will be folded into Core budgets and used to fund the best science.
  - 2) Ridge 2000 Science Plan objectives remain active areas of research and integration & synthesis activities associated with Ridge 2000 research are strongly encouraged by NSF as viable topics for proposals.
  - 3) The scope of Ridge 2000 science is broadened to consider research proposed at ANY oceanic spreading center, including field programs, which address Ridge 2000 program goals, especially in relation to integration and synthesis activities.
  - 4) The Ridge 2000 office budget will be reduced, primarily by cutting funds for a community meeting in 2011. A 2011 meeting for Ridge 2000 science will occur only if proponents submit a competitive meeting proposal to NSF. NSF also requested that the Ridge 2000 StCom only meet through web or phone conferences to reduce travel expenses. Funding for US InterRidge membership and the Distinguished Lecture Series will be maintained for FY2011 and 2012.
- It is important to note that Ridge 2000 research objectives and especially integration and synthesis activities are strongly encouraged to continue by NSF. The StCom believes that these types of endeavors will help to fulfill the Ridge 2000 Program goals and ensure the legacy of both the RIDGE and Ridge 2000 Programs, both of which have contributed greatly to our understanding of a wide spectrum of oceanic spreading center processes. The StCom is considering the impacts that these changes will have on the Program and developing a strategy for accomplishing Program goals. We welcome community input and will be discussing this at the Portland community meeting and at the subsequent StCom meeting with NSF.

The very strong interest and participation in the upcoming Ridge 2000 meeting in Portland demonstrates that proposing and accomplishing Ridge 2000 research remains a vibrant and active area of multidisciplinary science for many in the US. Opening up the previous Ridge 2000 proposal restrictions on fieldwork and site selections may have a beneficial, stimulating effect on oceanic spreading center field and laboratory studies. We hope that you will be thinking about new research initiatives as well

as continuing to work on integration and synthesis studies as you plan for your upcoming proposal submissions in 2011 and beyond.

StCom believes that there are advantages to the changes that NSF has made. Primarily, the return to two proposal targets per year will help provide more venues for proposal ideas and can help jump start ideas that are stimulated at the upcoming Portland Ridge 2000 meeting at the end of October. At the Portland meeting, we hope that groups of investigators make real progress on discussing and framing out integration and synthesis ideas based on the past decade of Ridge 2000 research. Those projects may need additional support to complete the analyses and papers that have to be written – the Feb. 15, 2011 OCE proposal target will be a real opportunity to do that.

As always, you are welcome to contact the NSF program managers who signed the attached letter to discuss these changes. The Ridge 2000 Office and StCom also welcome your comments and questions, and we stand ready to continue to serve the community in these research activities over the next two years.

Sincerely,

The Ridge 2000 Steering Committee

[http://www.ridge2000.org/science/info/stcom\\_bio.php](http://www.ridge2000.org/science/info/stcom_bio.php)

**Date:** September 17, 2010

**From:** National Science Foundation

Marine Geology and Geophysics, Biological Oceanography Programs

**To:** Ridge 2000 Office, Dan Fornari R2K Office Head

**Subject:** Changes in Ridge 2000 Program for 2011, 2012

Dear Dan:

Thank you for your recent visit to NSF to present the on-going R2K community activities and plans for the near future. NSF concurs with you that the R2K Program (and RIDGE before that) greatly enhanced our knowledge of ridge-related science. We are also aware that this could not have been accomplished without a dedicated program. By all measures RIDGE/R2K has been successful in advancing interdisciplinary marine science and is something to be proud of. You, along with all previous chairs of the R2K Steering Committee, are to be congratulated for providing excellent leadership over the program's nearly 20-year tenure. And you, in particular, have made a valiant effort to keep the program going past its midterm review. Thank you for all for efforts on behalf of NSF and the community.

At this stage NSF's prime consideration must be as a course of action that serves the community best. R2K has been in a synthesis/integration mode for a few years now and such integrative studies must, of course, continue. However, in view of the falling proposal pressure (which includes an increasing rate of resubmittals), it is felt by the Division that the community would be better served if we returned reviewing all future ridge-related proposals to the Core panels. Separating the review of Ridge proposals to once-a-year special panel in 2007 was made necessary mostly due to proposal pressure. That reason now no longer exists. Thus, in 2011 there will be no special competition for R2K. Instead, all future ridge-related proposals will be welcomed back in the Core panels and the R2K as a special initiative will formally come to an end in 2012 after a long and successful run and proud legacy.

We feel that the early reintegration of R2K into Core and removing the programmatic confines imposed by the R2K mid-term review will help invigorate and broaden ridge science by providing PIs more flexibility by allowing ridge-related proposals to be submitted to two, as opposed to one, competition a year. It also allows all compelling ridge-related ideas to come forth, including new field programs anywhere along the global ridge system. In the next two years, however, NSF especially encourages submission of R2K integration and synthesis proposals that capitalize on the last eight years of focused R2K research as these will lead to insights that will stimulate new lines of inquiry and will be important for casting R2K in the best light, in its end-of-program documentation.

We know that considerable work has been done by the R2K community to prepare for the 2010 Portland Meeting and that many groups are working on collaborative projects related to integration and synthesis. Having a 2011 February proposal target through the Marine Geology and Geophysics and Biological Oceanography programs will allow researchers at the meeting who are developing ideas to submit their

Oceanography programs will allow researchers at the meeting who are developing ideas to submit their proposals for consideration earlier than would otherwise be possible.

Once again, thank you Dan. We hope you will share this letter with the R2K Steering Committee and the broader community of mid-ocean ridge researchers the program has fostered.

Yours truly,

For the R2K Program

Barbara Ransom, Rick Carlson, Bilal Haq, Larry Harding, Dave Garrison,  
Rodey Batiza and Phil Taylor