

Ridge 2000 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes: October 2002

Dear Colleague,

The RIDGE 2000 Steering Committee met in New York City on October 29 and 30, 2002. A summary of the minutes of the meeting will be posted as soon as they are transcribed and approved by the committee. In the meantime, I wanted to provide you with a few of the highlights of what was a very intense and productive meeting.

The highlights actually started the day before the STCOM meeting, with the first meeting of a RIDGE 2000 program Relevancy Review panel. Relevancy Review Panel: Thirty proposals were submitted in response to the NSF Ridge 2000 program announcement for the August 15, 2000 target date, and most of these proposals were multi-PI and multi-institutional. The Relevancy Review Panel consisted of 6 members of the RIDGE 2000 Program Steering Committee. NSF conflict of interest guidelines were employed and panel members in conflict with a specific proposal left the room during the discussion of that proposal. The criteria used by the panel to evaluate each proposal were those available to the proposal writers. Specifically, these included: the relevant parts of the RIDGE 2000 Science Plan, the Implementation Plans, the NSF Program Announcement, and the RFP for the Data Management Office. Each proposal was read by at least two panel members and all summaries were distributed to each panel member. All proposals were discussed. The Panel did not consider the scientific merit of the proposals in any way.

The Panel sorted or rated the proposals based on two distinct criteria: "relevance" and "sequencing considerations." Relevancy to the program's objectives and science plans were evaluated and categorized as: Central to the program (support entirely with R2K funds if funded) Partially relevant to the program (Support with 50 to 90% R2K funds if funded) Peripheral to the program (Support with 10 to 50% R2K funds if funded) Not relevant to the program (use entirely core funds if funded). After discussing the relevancy of each proposal, one of these ratings was provided to NSF program managers to guide their use of Ridge 2000 program funds to support the proposal if it is recommended for funding by the NSF following their next panel meeting.

Under the "sequencing considerations" category, the panel considered temporal constraints and issues that might have a significant impact on the success of the Integrated Studies (or other aspects of the program). For example, the committee considered whether a proposal required other studies to be carried out before it could go forward, whether a proposed study would interfere with other proposed work, whether a proposed study needed to be completed before other work could go forward, or (the most common result at this first panel) whether a proposed study could go forward at any time. When sequencing considerations arose they were straightforward and followed guidelines specified in the implementation plans. It should be noted that the sequencing category is not a priority criterion. For example, "go forward any time" simply means that there are no significant sequencing considerations for the proposal: it could be central to the program or peripheral. I am happy to report that the review process went smoothly and in a very productive way. The majority of the research proposals were found to be central to the program and ready to go forward at any time. The main exception to this was for work proposed in the Lau Basin; this was because these proposals often had sequencing considerations that were clearly defined in the Implementation Plan (and recognized by the proponents).

There were a few proposals that included both work that was central to the program and work that was not, and these proposals were recommended for partial R2K support (and partial support from core). On the less than positive side, a number of proposals did not include a section on R2K relevancy or contained only limited discussion of it, even though the NSF program announcement specifically indicates that P.I.s should include a section on R2K relevancy. In those cases where R2K relevancy was not specifically addressed, the committee discussed relevance and made the case for the proposal. For this first round, we accepted this without prejudice and all of those proposals were found to be centrally relevant. However, for future submissions, relevancy will be evaluated based on what the authors present in the text of the proposal. Authors should address how their proposal fits into the Implementation Plan (when appropriate) and address interdisciplinary links between their proposal and other parts of the ridge system. Proponents must make the case themselves, and not count on the Relevancy Review Panel to do it for them.

Pre-proposals:

The utility of requiring brief descriptions of intent or interest by investigators 30 days before the target date was discussed. The aim of this process is not to stake out territory but rather to foster collaboration and integration among people with different interests. Statements of intent were made "optional but encouraged" for the first round because some of the Implementation Plans were not available until 30 days before the target date. However, submitting brief descriptions of planned investigations 30 days in advance is specifically called for in all three Implementation Plans. It was unanimously decided to maintain this requirement and to enforce it from now on by not considering any proposals for R2K funding from PI's who have not submitted descriptions of intent to the website at least 30 days prior to the target date. These statements do not need to be detailed proposal outlines, since proposals are intended to evolve on the basis of people with different interests getting together. To maintain flexibility and increase communication, letters of intent or interest from co-investigators and potential co-investigators are also strongly encouraged.

Education and Outreach (E&O):

Liz Goehring presented a draft E&O plan that was the result of several workshops and input of the E&O sub-committee. The plan includes a sequence of outreach projects to help bring R2K science to the public, K-12 community and the scientific community, as well as an infrastructure to facilitate effective, community-wide E&O projects. The committee was unanimous in endorsing the plan and encouraged Liz to move forward with what was identified as the greatest need in the K-12 area with respect to ridge science offerings: development of curricular material and student-oriented web-based cruise coverage. We will also begin moving forward with a Ridge 2000 Distinguished Lecture Series, patterned after the very successful ODP Series and continue the R2K presence at a variety of society meetings. You can expect to hear more about R2K E&O in the very near future when the plan is posted on our website. You can also expect the R2K office to take a supportive and an active role as you make your own plans to include an E&O project in your next proposal. Feel free to contact Liz to discuss your own ideas or how you might be able to help with ours.

Workshops and meetings:

Since our last STCOM meeting earlier this year there were at least 13 workshops and meetings that were either hosted by R2K, partially supported by R2K, or R2K relevant and attended by members of the R2K steering committee. These included meetings like the Implementation Plan and R2K Teachers workshops, several InterRidge workshops and an InterRidge Theoretical Institute, related meeting sponsored by other programs, and various steering or organizing committee meetings of other programs. We had informational reports on all of these and were pleased by the R2K-related momentum evident in both the US and international science communities. Especially exciting were the Status Reports from InterRidge, DEOS, NEPTUNE (and MARS), CanNEPTUNE (and VENUS), and the Ocean Observatories Initiative, all of which seem to be moving forward.

In related news, the US Navy has renewed its commitment to repair and maintain the Northeast Pacific SOSUS array that has proven to be so important to the Time Critical Studies component of the R2K program.

We also discussed proposals and pre-proposals for R2K sponsorship or co-sponsorship of a number of exciting upcoming meetings. These include a workshop to define a slow-spreading ISS on the MAR, a Summer School in Iceland, a Theoretical Institute focused on Back-Arc Basin Spreading Systems (co-sponsored with InterRidge), an "Exploratory Studies" workshop with the ChEss program of the Census of Marine Life, InterRidge and Ocean Exploration (NOAA), and other InterRidge workshops. All were endorsed in concept with various levels of support from R2K recommended. More information on each will be forthcoming as plans mature.

Committee Membership:

First of all, thanks to all of you who indicated a willingness to serve on the committee. It was as hard to decide which new members to select as it was to let the 'old' members go. Four members rotated off of the committee in order to set up an orderly 3-year service and rotation system for the program. Mike Perfit accepted an appointment to the Executive Committee and a three-year rotation in that position. David Christie, Maya Tolstoy, Colleen Cavanaugh, and Debbie Kelley all rotated off. All will be missed. On a personal note, David Christie's service to the RIDGE and R2K programs and the community goes way, way, beyond the call of duty and he deserves all of our thanks and gratitude.

The new members who have accepted their invitations to join the committee for a three-year stint are: Bob Lowell from GA Tech, Suzanne Carbotte from Lamont, Geoff Wheat from the UA Fairbanks and MBARI, and Anna Louise Reysenbach from Portland State. Look for short bios on our new members on the web site soon.

As I look over my notes, I see that this message could go on and on, as the program has really gathered momentum and the Committee is taking its job seriously. Nonetheless, I will end here as much more detail will be forthcoming in the meeting minutes. We will notify you when they are posted. Thank you all for your support of the program during our first year! We look forward to seeing you at our booth and the Ridge 2000 Smoker at AGU in December.

Cheers,
Chuck Fisher and the RIDGE 2000 Program Steering Committee