Frequently Asked Questions

General

What is socio-environmental synthesis?
Socio-environmental synthesis generates useful new insights about the world's most challenging environmental problems by combining diverse forms of knowledge in creative ways. Focusing on the complex interaction of humans and the natural environment, such synthesis opens up new ways of thinking about a particular problem, generating discoveries and solutions.

What is actionable science?
Actionable science is science that is relevant and/or applicable to government, business, and non-governmental organizational (NGO) audiences, and, in its broadest sense, can inform a larger, interested public. It is scholarship with the potential to inform decisions within government, business, and households; improve the design or implementation of public policies; influence public or private sector strategies; and inform planning and behaviors that affect the environment.

What are the current projects at the center?
A complete list of current projects at SESYNC can be found here. [1]

Can SESYNC help with a local problem in my community or region?
No. SESYNC's mission is to support research into and develop solutions for problems that are global in scope or affect a large percentage of the earth's system. Therefore, we are not able to provide funds or staff to investigate or ameliorate issues that are particular to a local community.

Where does SESYNC's funding come from?
SESYNC is funded through a cooperative agreement between the National Science Foundation and the

University of Maryland. The University of Maryland provides operational and financial support for the Center.

Does SESYNC advocate for policy changes?

No. SESYNC supports actionable science that has the potential to inform policy. Although we work to educate policy makers about important findings and their potential implications, we do not advocate or lobby for policy changes.

Where is SESYNC located?

SESYNC is located in Annapolis, Maryland, a thriving waterfront community conveniently located near Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, DC.

Prospective Applicants

What are SESYNC's current funding opportunities?

SESYNC's current funding opportunities are available [here.](#) [2]

How do I apply?

Application instructions vary by opportunity. Details for each are available [here.](#) [2]

What types of projects does SESYNC fund?

SESYNC supports several programs that include funding for Pursuits focused around specific Themes; Ventures; Postdoctoral, Sabbatical, and Visiting Fellows; Workshops; and Short Courses. Learn more about our programs [here.](#) [3]

What doesn't SESYNC fund?

SESYNC does not fund:

- The collection of new empirical data that requires field work, surveys, or assessments at sites other than SESYNC.
- Projects that should be funded by another entity.
- Projects that are not linked to the SESYNC mission.
- Projects requesting overhead or funds to be spent by the Principal Investigator (PI) at the PI's home institution. (Salary support for a PI or research assistant may be provided for computationally-intensive projects.)

How are proposals selected for support?

Proposals for support submitted under the Themes, Ventures, and Workshops programs are reviewed by SESYNC's Scientific Review Committee (SRC), an external panel composed of experts from a variety of fields. SESYNC's External Advisory Board may also review and comment on applications. Criteria used for proposal evaluation differs slightly for each program, but all have the following in common:

- A focus on fundamental research questions
- Creativity and urgency of proposed activities
- Feasibility
- Qualifications, diversity of scientific backgrounds, and experience of proposed participants
- Potential to contribute to actionable science
- Participation of underrepresented groups with respect to gender, ethnicity, disability, and geographic location

Postdoctoral Fellowships are also reviewed by members of the SRC, in addition to SESYNC Leadership

and external reviewers. All other Fellowships are reviewed by Center Leadership. The above criteria, which apply to the constitution of teams, are not relevant to Fellowship applications.

What type of costs does SESYNC cover?
SESYNC provides travel support for participants of SESYNC programs such as Pursuits, Ventures, and Workshops. This support includes transportation, accommodations, and meals. Additional information is available here. [4]

Will SESYNC pay a portion of my salary?
SESYNC does not provide salary support for its projects. However, salary support is provided for the Center's Sabbatical and Postdoctoral Fellowships.

What types of non-financial support does SESYNC provide to supported projects?
SESYNC offers state-of-the-art computational support and experienced technical consulting to all supported projects. Additional information is available here. [5]

What computational resources are available?
The cyberinfrastructure (CI) program at SESYNC exists to support the hardware, software, and data needs of the Center and its supported research; to enhance onsite and remote collaboration; and to facilitate the provision of technical resources needed to produce actionable science.

The CI team has instituted and will continue to refine a process for ongoing engagement with supported project teams. This engagement begins soon after award notification, and aims to have cyber resources in place and ready for use well ahead of each team's first visit to SESYNC. Additional information is available here. [5]

Leads & Participants in Currently-Funded Projects

I'm the project lead. How do I schedule my group's meeting?
PIs who have been awarded support by SESYNC need to complete the following to plan a meeting at our Annapolis Center:

1. Schedule your meeting
2. Complete the online meeting planner
3. Notify SESYNC of remote participants

PIs should email scheduling@sesync.org [6] early in the planning process to request meeting dates and to ensure availability of meeting space. Meeting requests must contain the following information:

- Project name
- Number of attendees
- Length of meeting
- Preferred dates

Our scheduling office will work with PIs to identify two date options and will hold them for up to one week. Additional information is available here. [7]

Do our meetings need to be held at SESYNC?
Yes, meetings for SESYNC-funded projects must be held at SESYNC headquarters [8] in Annapolis, Maryland.

How can I access my group's cyber resources?

All SESYNC cyber resources may be accessed online though links found on each project's website within the project's collaboration platform.

How do I book my travel?

All participants will receive a copy of SESYNC's travel policies and an email containing a link to use our online travel system approximately six weeks prior to their meeting. These policies outline allowable expenses, how to book your travel, and the reimbursement process.

All participants are required to read and confirm the travel policies prior to booking travel.

- [Travel and Reimbursement Policies](#) [9]

All participants must complete the online travel request form using the link in the email they receive from our travel office. The online travel request form must be submitted to SESYNC before booking any travel and a minimum of four weeks prior to your meeting.

After submitting the online travel request form, participants may contact Globetrotter, SESYNC's travel agent, to complete their travel arrangements. SESYNC will reserve accommodations at one of our contracted hotels for all participants.

How do I get my travel expenses reimbursed?

During the meeting, all participants will be provided with expense reimbursement forms. The completed form, along with original receipts, must be returned to SESYNC's travel office for processing.

- [Expense Reimbursement Form](#) [10]

How do I acknowledge SESYNC support for my project?

All products generated as a result of SESYNC support should appropriately and conspicuously acknowledge SESYNC and the National Science Foundation. Given that SESYNC is supported through two NSF awards, **please see below** regarding acknowledgements.

- For all projects supported from SESYNC solicitations posted between September 1, 2011 and August 31, 2016 (this includes projects supported from the October 2016 RFP and any prior to this date), please use the following text: This work was supported by the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC) under funding received from the National Science Foundation DBI-1052875.
- For all projects supported from SESYNC solicitations posted from September 1, 2016 through the present (this includes projects supported from the May 2017 RFP), please use the following text: This work was supported by the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC) under funding received from the National Science Foundation DBI-1639145.

If you are unsure of which award you are supported from, please either refer to your support letter or reach out directly to research@sesync.org [11].

Source URL: https://www.sesync.umd.edu/about/frequently-asked-questions

Links
[1] https://www.sesync.umd.edu/projects-results/funded-projects

[2] https://www.sesync.umd.edu/opportunities

[3] https://www.sesync.umd.edu/about/programs

[4] https://www.sesync.umd.edu/about/funding-support

[5] https://www.sesync.umd.edu/visitor-resources/computing-collaboration-technology

[6] mailto:scheduling@sesync.org

[7] https://www.sesync.umd.edu/visitor-resources/information-for-pis

[8] https://www.sesync.umd.edu/visitor-resources/facilities

[9] https://www.sesync.umd.edu/sites/default/files/basic_page/travel_policies_jan_2019.pdf

[10] https://www.sesync.org/sites/default/files/basic_page/sesync_travel_reimbursement_request_form_2019_-_fillable_january_2019.pdf

[11] mailto:research@sesync.org