

Request for Proposal & Funding Awards Process - Foundation Phase



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1 The *INSITE* Programme

During 2011 and 2012, Oil & Gas UK led the 'Decommissioning Baseline Study' joint industry project (JIP) to gather knowledge and experience in the decommissioning of offshore structures and pipelines. The environmental workstream within the JIP identified that gaps exist in the data set used to describe the impact of fixed structures on the North Sea ecosystem.

In May 2013 in response to this situation, Oil & Gas UK facilitated the creation of a scientifically led, long-term environmental JIP aimed at improving scientific knowledge across all aspects of the ecosystem. In April 2014, eight energy company sponsors signed the JIP Agreement, marking the start of the programme. To demonstrate independence and transparency, the programme sponsors are committed to proactively engaging with the broader stakeholder community of the North Sea and make the findings available in the public domain.

Known as the 'INSITE Programme' ('INfluence of Structures In The Ecosystem'), the JIP is a major initiative, which seeks to provide all stakeholders with the science needed to better understand the effect of man-made structures on the North Sea and hence better inform any future decision making process. The overall objective of the study is:

"To provide stakeholders with the independent scientific evidence-base needed to better understand the influence of man-made structures on the ecosystem of the North Sea"

2 The Purpose of this Document

This document describes in detail the methodology, which will be applied in the INSITE Programme's Foundation Phase to seek proposals and award contracts for scientific research to deliver on the JIP's overall study objective. It describes how the two main authorities within the JIP, the Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB) and the Executive Committee collectively confirm a research contract award. Most importantly it describes the governance model within the JIP, which demonstrates the independence of the ISAB, the project's scientific authority.

The document has been jointly approved by the Executive Committee, made up of representatives from the sponsoring organisations, and the ISAB.

The document presents:

- Roles and responsibilities within the JIP
- The Request for proposal (RfP) and funding award process
- The role and purpose of the Independent Audit Group

3 Available Funds

The INSITE Programme will naturally be limited in its ability to perform research by the funds provided by the sponsors. Prior to issuing any RfP, the Executive Committee will confirm to the ISAB the funds available for research from sponsors contributions, taking account project management and other support services necessary to deliver the governance of the project.

The ISAB will take account of available funds when performing its evaluation of proposals and demonstrate in its recommendations that the proposed programme lies within the allocated budget.

The Executive Committee has responsibility for confirming the funding position during its review of the ISAB recommendations.

4 RfP Process - Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB)

The ISAB is appointed by the Executive Committee as the independent body responsible for recommending the scientific programme which will deliver the INSITE Programme's objectives. It has specific responsibilities as follows:

- Develops and agrees the RfP and Contracts Awards process with the Executive Committee
- Develops and agrees the INSITE Scope Framework with the Executive Committee
- Reviews research proposals and makes recommendations for funding based on agreed RfP procedure and available budget provided by the Executive Committee
- Sets and maintains scientific standards
- Ensures proposals and outcomes are subject to peer review as necessary

4.2 The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is made up of a representative from each of the organisations sponsoring the INSITE Programme. It has the following specific responsibilities:

- Reviews and agrees the RfP and Funding Award process with the ISAB
- Reviews and agrees the INSITE Scope Framework with the ISAB
- Determines overall project philosophies
- Approves key appointments
- Sanctions each phase of project and funding request to sponsors
- Communicates available research funds to the ISAB
- Approves funding recommendations made by the ISAB, based on agreed procedure and available funds for research

4.3 The Independent Audit Group (IAG)

The IAG is appointed by the Executive Committee, in agreement with the ISAB at the start of the project to audit the process for requesting proposals, reviewing proposals and recommending funding. It carries the following specific responsibilities:

- Has no other interests in the INSITE Programme and is thus independent of the ISAB, sponsor group and academia
- Primary role to review execution of the RfP and Funding Award Process and identify non-conformance against this process
- Key reference is the RfP and Funding Award Process (this document)
- Performs an audit of the process for all contract awards and reports to Executive Committee and the ISAB

4.4 The Peer Reviewer(s)

Scientific Peer Reviewers provide assistance to the ISAB in reviewing and evaluating proposal from the research community.

- Appointed by the ISAB in accordance with this process (see Section 8)

-
- Provides specialist expert support to the ISAB in evaluation of proposals
 - Makes recommendations in an advisory capacity to the ISAB on suitability of proposals to deliver the INSITE objectives
 - Governed by the process set out in this document

5 Request for Proposals

5.1 Overview – RfP Preparation

To provide for the efficient management of responses received from the public RfP process, the request and evaluation of proposals will be split into two stages: Pre-proposal and Full Proposal, executed as follows:

- i. The Pre-proposal RfP format and wording is agreed between the Executive Committee and the ISAB
- ii. The Pre-proposal RfP is published
- iii. Pre-proposal submissions are reviewed by the ISAB and a shortlist prepared
- iv. Shortlisted responders are invited to submit a Full Proposal
- v. Full Proposal submissions are evaluated by the ISAB
- vi. ISAB recommends award of funding

5.2 Preparing and Publishing the Pre-proposal RfP

The Request for Proposals Process is shown in Figure 1. It consists of the following stages:

- Pre-sanction – The ISAB and Executive Committee confirm:
 - The RfP and Awards Process (this document); and
 - The INSITE Scope Framework
- RfP Stage 1 – ISAB Drafts the Pre-proposal RfP and supporting documentation in accordance with this document (See Section 5.3)
- RfP Stage 2 - Executive Committee reviews the Pre-proposal RfP against the agreed structure contained in this document
- RfP Approval – Subject to the Pre-proposal RfP developed by the ISAB reflecting the structure agreed in this document, the Executive Committee approves it for publication.
- Pre-proposal RfP Publication in selected scientific publications

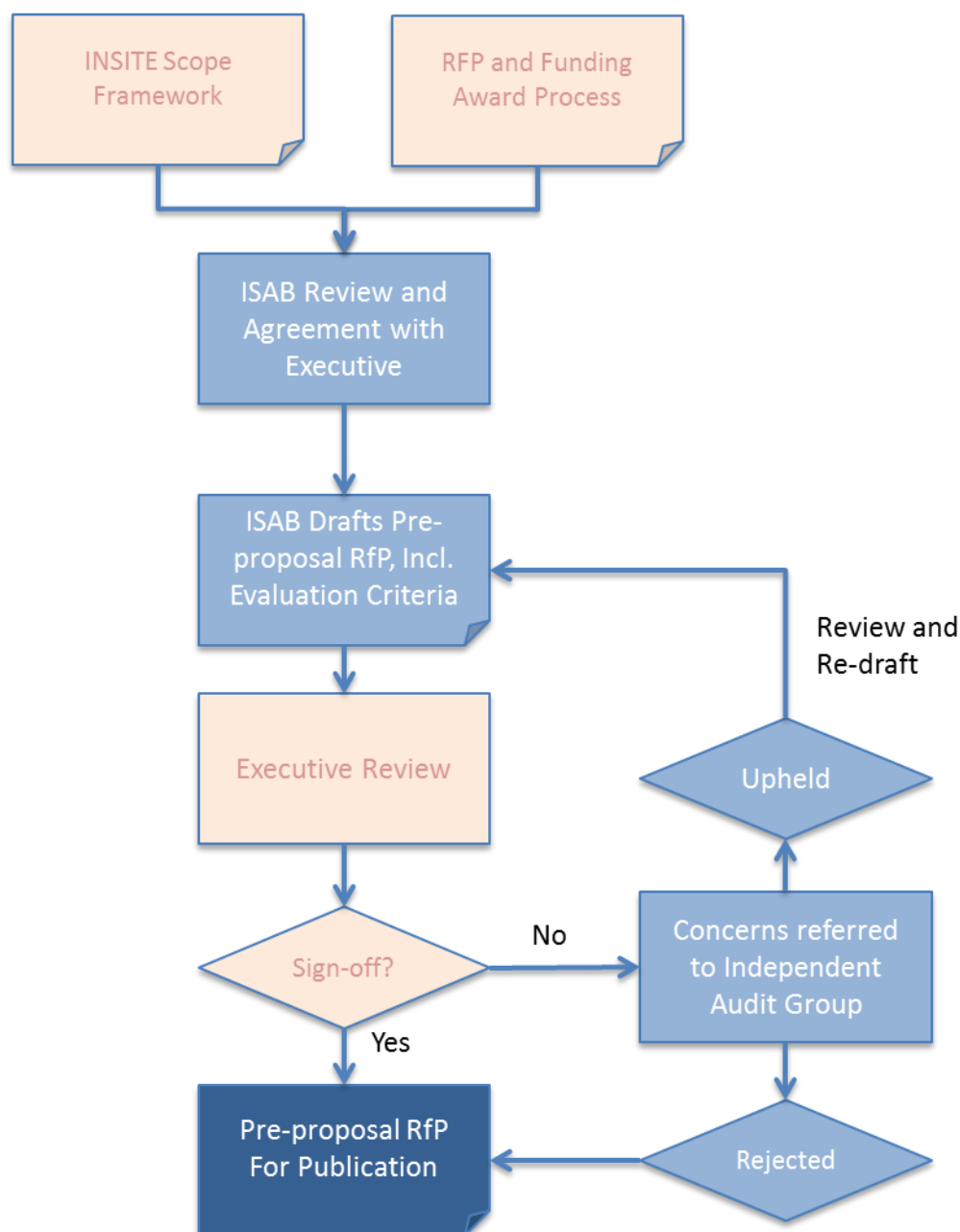


Figure 1 Development and Publication of the Pre-proposal RfP

5.3 Pre-proposal RfP Documentation

The Pre-proposal RfP consists of the following:

Pre-proposal RfP Advertisement	Drafted by the ISAB, this is the advertisement that will be published in the scientific press and on the JIP web-site. The appropriate publications will be selected by the ISAB.
The INSITE Scope Framework	Provides the scope definition to be used when responding to the Pre-proposal RfP and the subsequent Full Proposal submissions and against which submissions will be evaluated.
RfP Evaluation Criteria	Used by the ISAB to evaluate the proposals submitted in response to the RfP.
Instructions to Bidders	Details of the RfP process and compliance requirements.
Request for Proposals and Awards Process	This document

5.4 The RfP Documentation Review Process

The ISAB is responsible for developing the Pre-proposal RfP documentation, including the supporting documents, which will be made available to bidders. Once complete the Pre-proposal RfP documents are submitted to the Executive Committee for approval. If the Executive Committee considers that the documents are not consistent with requirements laid out herein, it is referred to the Independent Audit Group (IAG) for an independent review.

If the IAG finds the process is not as agreed in this document, the ISAB is requested to modify the Pre-proposal RfP to comply with the agreed process.

5.5 Development of the RfP Schedule

The RfP schedule will be developed by the ISAB to ensure:

- Bidders have sufficient time to prepare Pre and Full Proposals
- The ISAB has sufficient time to efficiently review and shortlist the proposals
- The ISAB has the opportunity to enhance the proposals for example by identifying complimentary proposals or consortium opportunities to enhance the outcomes
- Outcomes will be delivered within the Foundation Phase of the project

6 Evaluation of Proposals

6.1 Overview of the Evaluation Process

The process of evaluation is shown in Figure 2 and consists of the following stages:

- Pre-proposal Evaluation – performed by the ISAB to develop a shortlist for Full Proposal submissions
- Full Proposal Evaluation – performed by the ISAB with specialist input from nominated Peer Reviewers
- Recommendations for Funding – prepared by the ISAB following completion of the evaluation of proposals
- Executive Committee Review – A review of the funding recommendations report from the ISAB
- Audit – performed by the Independent Audit Group (IAG) on the evaluation process carried out by the ISAB
- Award

6.2 Evaluation of Pre-proposals and Full Proposal

The evaluation of both the Pre and Full Proposals are the responsibility of the ISAB. The process is illustrated in Figure 2.

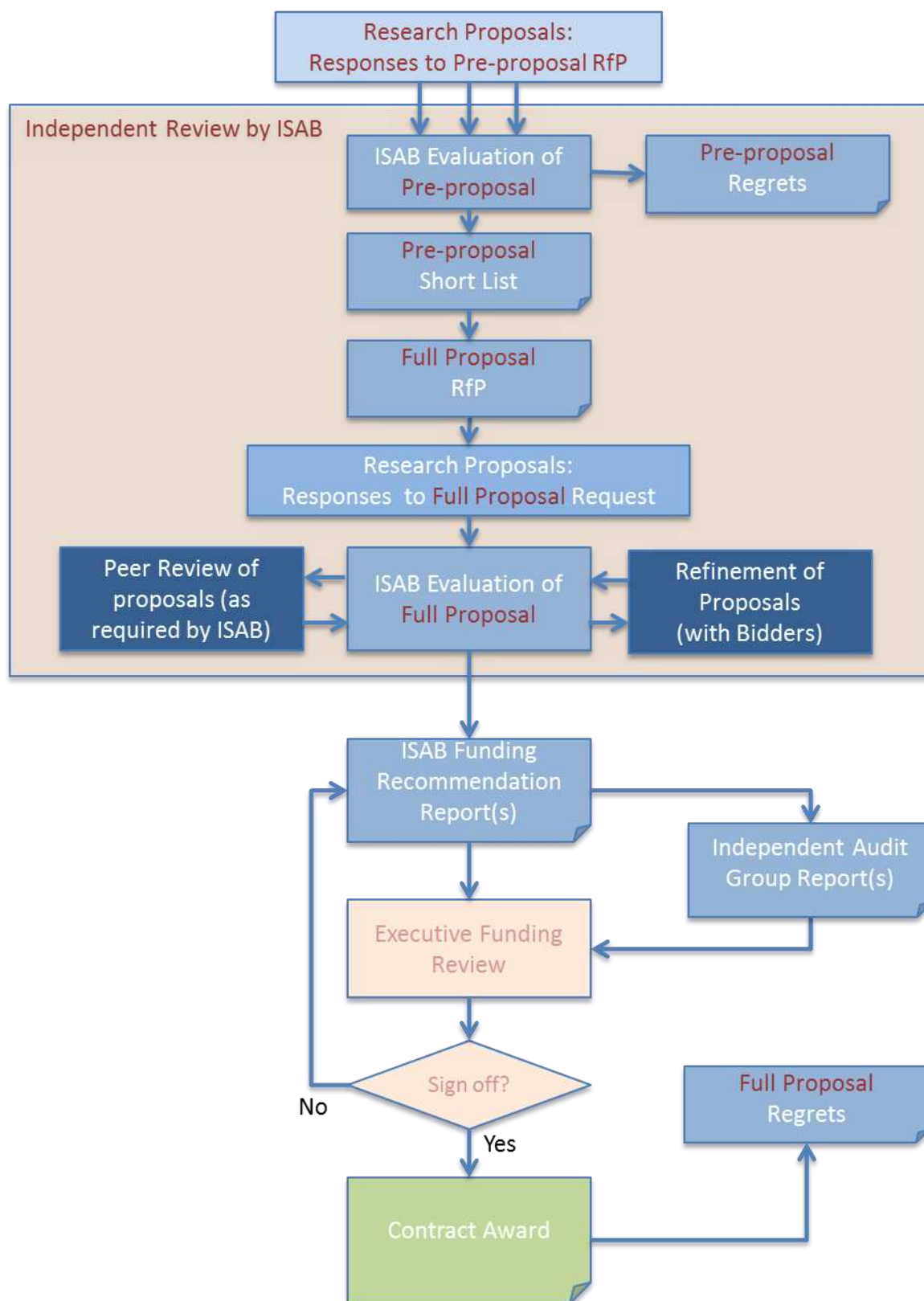


Figure 2 Proposal Evaluation and Award Process

6.2.1 The Pre-proposal Evaluation and Short List

The evaluation of the Pre-proposal submissions is performed solely by the ISAB membership with the objective of developing a shortlist of proposals for which Full Proposals will be invited. Evaluation criteria are presented in INSITE Pre-proposal Evaluation Criteria.

The objective of the Pre-proposal is to attract a wide response from the academic community and enable the proposals, which are judged to best deliver the Programme's objectives, to be shortlisted. Institutions whose proposals are shortlisted will be invited to submit a Full Proposal in a format defined by the ISAB.

Those institutions, which have submitted a proposal at the Pre-proposal stage, but are not shortlisted, will be notified along with feedback indicating why their proposal was not taken further. This feedback will be based on the criteria used to screen the submissions.

6.2.2 Full Proposal Evaluation

The evaluation of the Full Proposals will be compiled in the Recommendations for Funding Report which documents the conclusions of the evaluations for review by the Executive Committee.

To support the Full Proposal evaluation and where the ISAB considers it necessary, specialist 'Peer Reviewers' may be engaged by the ISAB. The process and selection criteria for Peer Reviewers are summarised in Section 8.

All reviewers, whether members of the ISAB or selected Peer Reviewers will be required to sign the INSITE Programme:

- Non-disclosure agreement (see Appendix A), and
- Conflict of interest declaration (see Appendix A)

These documents will be kept on the project files for reference.

As part of the evaluation process, the ISAB may conclude that two or more proposals should be integrated by formation of consortia to improve the outcomes from the different proposed projects. The ISAB is at liberty to facilitate such consolidation; the grounds for such action or encouragement shall be included in the Recommendations for Funding Report.

6.3 Recommendations for Funding

Following completion of their evaluation of the Full Proposals, the ISAB prepares a 'Recommendations for Funding' Report for the Executive Committee. This report summarises the ISAB's recommendations and will include:

- Overview of process, including lessons learned
- List of shortlisted proposals, including name of proposer(s), summary of proposal, identification of key thematic areas covered, estimated cost and duration
- Summary of each Full Proposal received, including:
 - Name of investigator and institution or consortium
 - If a consortium is being recommended for funding and has been facilitated by the ISAB, justification for the formation of the consortium shall be included
 - Description of proposed research
 - Estimated duration and cost of programme
 - List of key outcomes in order of priority
 - Scoring pro forma for each proposal
- Summary for each Full Proposal recommended for funding, including:
 - Justification of award against the Scope Framework
 - Overall conclusion why the proposal is recommended for funding
 - Confirmation that the recommended programme lies within the financial constraints of the JIP

6.4 Proposals not Recommended for Funding

- It is the responsibility of the ISAB to provide feedback to the unsuccessful bidders once the funding awards have been confirmed. The ISAB will prepare a summary for each Full Proposal not recommended for funding, including:
 - Description of performance of the proposal against the overall INSITE objective
 - High scoring areas of the proposal
 - Areas where the proposal could have been more attractive to INSITE

7 Independent Audit

7.1 The Appointment of IAG

The IAG is appointed by the Executive Committee with agreement from the ISAB.

The criteria for selecting an appropriate IAG are:

- The group shall demonstrate that it has no conflict of interest from affiliation with any organisation with interests in man-made structures in the North Sea
- The group shall have no involvement in any advocacy position relating to man-made structures in the North Sea
- The group shall have a demonstrable track record in auditing against ISO standards or similar
- The group shall be independent of the project both in terms of the JIP's management and administration and potential tendering organisations

Once complete, the Executive Committee shall report on the appointment of the IAG against these criteria.

The role and responsibilities of the IAG are noted in Section 4.3.

7.2 The Frequency of Audit

The Independent Audit Group will perform an audit as follows:

- If the Executive Committee request it following compilation of the Pre proposal RfP
- When the evaluation of Full Proposals is concluded and the Recommendations for Funding have been submitted to the Executive Committee by the ISAB. This audit takes place for all such evaluation and award processes.

7.3 Audit Reports

Audit reports prepared by the IAG will be published on the INSITE web-site.

8 The Peer Review Process

8.1 The Appointment of Peer Reviewers

Peer reviewers are appointed by the ISAB to provide specialist skills and knowledge to assist in the ISAB's evaluation of proposals. The ISAB may appoint Peer Reviewer support at their own discretion, but their appointment must be justified and they are required to perform their work in accordance with the processes described in this document which cover the ISAB's work. The following criteria for appointment must be met:

- Peer reviewers must have no professional relationship with any organisation that has submitted a proposal which has been shortlisted and for which a Full Proposal has been submitted
- They must have demonstrably specialist skills and/or experience which is pertinent to the thematic areas covered by the subject proposal(s)

8.2 The Responsibilities of Peer Reviewers

The role and responsibilities of the Peer Reviewers is presented in Section 4.4. They are treated as members of the ISAB when they are engaged in the proposal review process.

9 Executive Committee Review

The Executive Committee reviews the 'Recommendations for Funding' report prepared by the ISAB to allow formal sanction of the award of research contracts. The Executive Committee must satisfy itself that the evaluations performed by the ISAB have been performed in accordance with the process contained in this document and that the proposed programme is affordable. In support of this, the IAG will provide their own report following their audit of the complete RfP process.

If the Executive Committee considers that the process has not followed that agreed and specified in this document it shall refer its concerns back to both the IAG and the ISAB for consideration and response.

If this review cannot resolve the concerns, it is incumbent on the Chair of the Executive Committee and the Chair of the ISAB to resolve the impasse before the award can proceed.

At any point during the Executive Review stage, the Executive Committee can request further information about the process that has been followed by the ISAB in the course of their evaluation and development of their recommendations.

Once the Executive Committee is satisfied that the correct process has been followed the contract award is approved and the award can proceed.

10 Publication of INSITE Documentation

The following documents will be made available on the INSITE Programme's web-site – www.insitenorthsea.org :

- The RfP and Funding Award Process (this document)
- The INSITE Scope Framework
- RfP Evaluation Criteria
- Instructions to Bidders
- The IAG Audit Reports
- A summary of funding awards

The detailed reviews performed by the ISAB will not be made publicly available due to the sensitivities inherent in commercial proposals. Confidential feedback will be provided directly to the tendering organisations.

Appendix A: INSITE Non-Disclosure and Conflict of Interest Agreement

Peer Review Nondisclosure Agreement

I agree to use the information provided to me in my capacity as a Peer Reviewer (as defined in the document titled "Request for Proposal and Funding Award Process – Foundation Phase" by INSITE only in my capacity as a Peer Reviewer as part of the INSITE Programme, to treat the information which may be confidential in nature in confidence and to not use this information for any other purpose."

If in the course of this review, I do acquire or have access to any information, data, or material which is business confidential, proprietary, or otherwise privileged, and is so indicated in writing, I agree that such information will not be divulged to any person or organization or utilized for my own private purposes or in any manner whatsoever, other than in the performance of this INSITE Programme review:

1. without the prior written permission of the INSITE ISAB, or the organisation proposing the work to INSITE, or
2. until such information, data, or material is first publicly disseminated by INSITE or the research institution performing the work, or
3. is or becomes known to the public from a source other than me, or
4. is already known to me or my employer as shown by prior records, whichever shall first occur.

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Printed Name)

_____ (Date)

Conflict of Interest Agreement (Sheet 1 of 2)

Your designation as an INSITE Programme reviewer requires that:

1. When you handle proposals or other applications, you must be aware of potential conflict situations. Examples of potentially biasing affiliations or relationships are listed on sheet 2 of this form. Should any conflict arise during your review, you must bring the matter to the attention of a member of the INSITE Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). That ISAB representative will determine how the matter should be handled and will tell you what further steps, if any, to take.

2. Since your role gives you access to information not generally available to the public, you must not use that information for your personal benefit or make it available for the personal benefit of any other individual or organisation. This is to be distinguished from the entirely appropriate general benefit of learning more about the INSITE Programme, learning from other reviewers, or becoming better acquainted with the state of a given discipline.

I have read the list of possible conflicts attached to this form and understand that I must contact the appropriate INSITE ISAB representative if a conflict arises during my term of service. I also will not divulge any confidential information I may become aware of during my term, and I confirm that I will comply with the terms of the non-disclosure agreement I entered into on or around the date hereof. I further understand that I must sign and return this Conflicts Statement to the appropriate official before I may serve as a reviewer.

I certify, to the best of my knowledge, I have no affiliation or relationship that would prevent me from performing my INSITE Peer Review duties.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Date

Received from Reviewer: _____

To be retained in INSITE Programme file.

Conflict of Interest Agreement (Sheet 2 of 2)

AS AN INSITE REVIEWER, PLEASE REVIEW THESE EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE CONFLICTS.

1. AFFILIATION WITH AN INSTITUTION SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL TO INSITE.

A conflict may be present if you have/hold:

- Current employment at the institution as a professor, adjunct professor, visiting professor, or similar position. (This includes other campuses of a multi-campus system, but a waiver may be available.)
- Current employment or are being considered for employment at the institution. (This includes employment via consulting or advisory arrangement.)
- Any formal or informal reemployment arrangement with the institution.
- Current membership on a visiting committee or similar body at the institution. (This is a conflict only for proposals or applications that originate from the department, school, or facility that the visiting committee or similar body advises.)
- Ownership of the institution's securities or other relevant evidences of debt.
- Any office, governing board membership, or relevant committee chairpersonship in the institution. (Ordinary membership in a professional society or association is not considered an office.)
- Current enrolment as a student. (Only conflict for proposals that originate from the department or school in which one is a student.)
- Received and retained an honorarium or award from the institution within the last 12 months.

2. RELATIONSHIPS WITH A RESEARCHER, PROJECT DIRECTOR, OR OTHER PERSON WHO HAS A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE PROPOSAL OR OTHER APPLICATION.

- Known family or marriage relationship.
- Business or professional partnership.
- Employment at the same institution within the last 12 months.
- Past or present association as a thesis advisor or thesis student.
- Collaboration on a project or on a book, article, report, or paper within the last 48 months.
- Co-editing of a journal, compendium, or conference proceedings within the last 24 months.

3. OTHER AFFILIATIONS OR RELATIONSHIPS

- Interests of the following persons are to be treated as if they were yours: An affiliation or relationship of your spouse, or your minor child, of a relative living in your immediate household or of anyone who is legally your partner that you are aware of and that would be covered by Items 1 or 2 above (except for the receipt by your spouse or relative of an honorarium.)
- Any other relationship, such as close personal friendship, that you think might tend to affect your judgements or may be seen as doing so by a reasonable person familiar with the relationship.