

## Postdoctoral Fellowship Program 2014

### Deadline:

Apr 15, 2014

**Applications for fellowships beginning August 2014 closed April 15, 2014.**

**For information on fellowships beginning June 2015, [click here](#).** [1]

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### Introduction

The National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC) located in Annapolis, Maryland, invites applications for two-year postdoctoral fellowships that begin August 2014.

Fellows will undertake collaboratively-developed socio-environmental or cyberinfrastructure synthesis projects that are consistent with the mission of SESYNC. Projects will be co-developed with a SESYNC [Research Collaborator](#), [2] who will also serve as a postdoctoral mentor during the fellowship. A list of potential Research Collaborators and project ideas will be provided to prospective Fellows following a preliminary screening (details below).

Synthesis is a research approach that accelerates knowledge production by distilling or integrating existing data, ideas, theories, and methods to draw more reliable or generalizable conclusions and to reveal novel areas of study. Synthesis often involves merging large and/or heterogeneous data sets from multiple sources, researchers, or fields of inquiry, as well as critical analysis in evaluating arguments and interpreting evidence. It can employ a diverse array of theoretical and methodological approaches (e.g., statistical/mathematical, structured case studies comparison, cultural analytics, scenario studies, game theory, ethnographic studies, organizational theory, simulation/computational modeling, etc.).

A key element of successful postdoctoral fellowship proposals will be the identification of specific research questions and how they will be addressed using synthesis methods. In particular, proposals should identify the sources and accessibility of existing data, in addition to the theoretical and analytical methods, to be used. SESYNC offers substantial computational support and training opportunities for Fellows. Therefore, successful applicants need not have experience in all of the technical aspects of their analyses. **Prospective Fellows should not propose projects that**

**require extensive collection of new data.** Successful proposals will also clearly delineate the roles of the Fellow and the Research Collaborator in the project.

In addition to conducting synthesis research, SESYNC Fellows spend part of their time (~30%) contributing to Center activities. SESYNC leadership work with Fellows to plan these activities, which could include such efforts as working on a cross-[Pursuit](#) [3] or cross-[Theme](#) [3] synthesis project; organizing a workshop; developing an education, policy, or outreach activity; or exploring visualization and other cyber tools.

**We seek a diverse group of Postdoctoral Fellows with PhDs in social, natural, and computational sciences.** Areas of previous research should be relevant to socio-environmental synthesis or synthesis education, including (but not limited to) anthropology, computer science, ecology, education, economics, geography, history, mathematics, political science, psychology, public policy, planning, sociology, statistics, etc.

## Preliminary Screening

**Interested applicants must first submit a pre-screening application.** If the applicant meets the requirements below, and their background and interests are an appropriate match for SESYNC, they will then receive the list of SESYNC Research Collaborators.

To be eligible for the fellowship, prospective Fellows must have received their PhD in an appropriate discipline within the past five years: no earlier than May 2009 and no later than July 15, 2014. If the applicant has not received their PhD at the time they submit their application, a letter from the graduate advisor or committee member must also be submitted during the screening process *and* with the final application. The letter should verify expectations for date of degree completion. Candidates who are offered a fellowship but do not complete their PhD by July 15, 2014, will have to reapply.

Applicants must include a CV. If the applicant has not yet received their PhD, a verification letter must be included as described above. Pre-screening applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. The list of SESYNC Research Collaborators will be made available after February 7, 2014.

## Co-development

Upon receiving the list of SESYNC Research Collaborators, successfully pre-screened applicants should initiate contact with potential Collaborators with whom they might be interested in co-developing a synthesis research project. The list of SESYNC Research Collaborators will include preliminary project ideas, short bios, and contact information.

If the prospective Fellow and Research Collaborator mutually agree to co-develop a proposal for this fellowship, the prospective Fellow should take the lead in writing and developing the proposal.

**Prospective Fellows are also invited to encourage potential mentors of their choice to apply to be a SESYNC Research Collaborator.** The Research Collaborator may not be the prospective Fellow's PhD advisor or mentor. [Applications for Research Collaborators are accepted on a rolling basis.](#) [2] with an initial screening of Collaborator applications received prior to February 1, 2014.

Final proposals must be submitted via a webform provided to prospective Fellows who have been successfully pre-screened. Required components of the application are described below. All fellowship applications are due by April 15, 2014, 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST).

## Selection Criteria

Postdoctoral applications will be ranked by:

- Explanation of how the proposed research will advance actionable knowledge on the structure, function, or sustainability of socio-environmental systems.
- Novelty, creativity, and/or urgency of proposed activities.
- Feasibility of producing meaningful synthetic research within a two-year time frame, including identifying and showing ability to access appropriate data and methods.
- Applicant qualifications and experience.
- Clear delineation of the value of the collaboration and the respective roles for the Fellow and Research Collaborator in the project.
- Potential to contribute to other research activities at the Center.
- Explanation of why SESYNC is the most appropriate way to support the activity.

## Support

Appointments will be through the University of Maryland, and fellowship awardees must be based at our facilities in Annapolis, Maryland. Depending on their research interests, Fellows may choose to spend part of their time at the offices of our partner organization, Resources for the Future, located in Washington, D.C.

The SESYNC postdoctoral fellowship provides an annual stipend, full University of Maryland employee benefits, and a small annual travel allowance to attend meetings or to meet with collaborators.

Postdoctoral fellowships are awarded for a maximum of two years and include structured mentoring programs, facilitated access to policy makers, and opportunities to participate in ongoing Center activities. In addition to mentoring support from their SESYNC Research Collaborator, postdoctoral Fellows will also receive professional mentoring from SESYNC leadership members, and will have access to a wide range of professional development resources and programs.

SESYNC Research Collaborators will also receive support to travel to SESYNC to work with the Fellow.

## Deadline

**The deadline for applications for fellowships beginning August 2014 is April 15, 2014, 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST).** Candidates must be available for Skype interviews on April 29-30, 2014, and for in-person interviews at SESYNC on May 13-14, 2014.

## Components of an Application

Include the following as a single PDF using single spacing, 12-pt type fonts, and 1-inch margins. Proposals that do not include all six components listed below will be returned. Applications, as well as reference letters and Research Collaborator letter, must be received by SESYNC by April 15, 2014, 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST).

### [1] Cover Sheet (1 page)

- Descriptive title (“SESYNC Postdoc: ....”)
- Short title (25 characters max)
- Name and contact information
- Date of PhD defense: If the defense has not yet occurred, applicants need a letter from their

graduate advisor or committee member verifying the expected data of completion. Candidates who are not expected to complete their PhD by July 15, 2014, will be removed from competition.

- SESYNC Research Collaborator name, title, and affiliation
- Project summary (250 words), appropriate for the public and to be posted on the SESYNC website
- Keywords (up to 5 keywords different from those used in the title)
- Potential conflicts of interest with members of the SESYNC [External Advisory Board](#) [4] or [Leadership Team](#) [5]

## **[2] Research Proposal (5 pages max, including references)**

- Problem statement: Clear and concise statement of the project goals including specific research questions and how it will advance socio-environmental synthesis and/or contribute to [actionable](#) [6] socio-environmental synthesis science or policy
- Methods to be used for the synthesis project
- How the proposed project/activities will make use of SESYNC's opportunities to enhance the scholar's career and why SESYNC is the most appropriate place to undertake the work
- Description of applicant's and Research Collaborator's respective roles in the project and plans for maintaining communication throughout the project

## **[3] Status of Synthesis Material (1 paragraph)**

- Type of material (datasets, models, case studies, theories, etc.)
- Location and accessibility of material

## **[4] Anticipated Cyberinfrastructure Needs (1 page max)**

If applicable, briefly describe any anticipated needs for cyberinfrastructure support. This information should include descriptions of data sets to be used during this project; new data sets or software/databases to be developed; high performance computing needs; required data aggregation or fusion; and visualization software needs. Applicants should review SESYNC's IT and data sharing policies and are encouraged to contact SESYNC cyberinfrastructure staff prior to submission if the project's needs are beyond the scope of services outlined in these documents.

## **[5] Center Activities (~1/2 page)**

Briefly describe your interests and ideas for potential Center activities that you might initiate or engage in during your postdoctoral fellowship in residence at SESYNC.

## **[6] Full CV of the Applicant**

Include names and contact information for two references.

Please arrange for each reference to provide a letter of recommendation regarding your background and ability to carry out the independent research as proposed, and your ability to engage in collaborative research as part of SESYNC community. These letters should be submitted separately from your application, directly by the recommender, via email to [postdoc.application@sesync.org](mailto:postdoc.application@sesync.org) [7]

Please also arrange for a letter of commitment from your SESYNC Research Collaborator describing their view of their role and commitment as mentor and collaborator. These letters should be submitted separately from your application, directly by the Collaborator, via email to [postdoc.application@sesync.org](mailto:postdoc.application@sesync.org) [7]

All letters of recommendation must be submitted by the application deadline of April 15, 2014, 5 p.m.

Eastern Standard Time (EST).

## Application & Submission Process

The URL for the application webform will be emailed to all successfully pre-screened applicants. It can also be found on the SharePoint site (accessible only to pre-screened applicants).

Applications must be submitted as a single PDF file with all sections in the following order:

1. Cover Sheet
2. Research Proposal
3. Status of Synthesis Material
4. Anticipated Cyberinfrastructure Needs
5. Center Activities
6. Full CV of the Applicant

International applicants should review visa requirements before applying. The application webform will be provided to prospective Fellows who have been successfully pre-screened.

The deadline for applications for fellowships beginning August 2014 is April 15, 2014, 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST).

## Questions?

Please contact Dr. David Hawthorne at [dhawthorne@sesync.org](mailto:dhawthorne@sesync.org) [8]

*The University of Maryland is an Equal Opportunity Employer  
Minorities and Women are Encouraged to Apply*

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**Source URL:** <https://www.sesync.org/opportunities/postdoc-2014>

### Links

[1] <https://www.sesync.org/opportunities/postdoc-immersion>

[2] <https://www.sesync.org/opportunities/postdoc-collab>

[3] <https://www.sesync.org/opportunities/programs#themesventures>

[4] [https://www.sesync.org/about/team-directory?field\\_role\\_tid\\_1=89](https://www.sesync.org/about/team-directory?field_role_tid_1=89)

[5] [https://www.sesync.org/about/team-directory?field\\_role\\_tid\\_1=28](https://www.sesync.org/about/team-directory?field_role_tid_1=28)

[6] <https://www.sesync.org/actionable-science>

[7] <mailto:postdoc.application@sesync.org>

[8] <mailto:dhawthorne@sesync.org>