

Frequently Asked Questions on Automated Compliance Checking in FastLane of GPG-Required Proposal Sections

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1. What proposal related changes will occur in FastLane and when? What is the motivation for this system change?

Beginning March 18, 2013, NSF will enhance the FastLane system to begin automated compliance checking for all required sections of full proposals. This enhancement will bring NSF systems in line with long-standing proposal preparation requirements as outlined in the NSF *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) (Chapter II.C.2 of the *Grant Proposal Guide* (GPG)). It will help reduce the burden of Principal Investigators (PIs), Sponsored Projects Offices (SPOs), and NSF Program Staff who currently must manually check to ensure compliance with the required sections. The enhancement will help inform FastLane users about the completeness of

proposals and ensure that full proposals submitted through FastLane contain all GPG-required sections when they reach NSF.

2. What are the required sections of the proposal?

The GPG-required sections of a proposal include:

Project Summary *	Budget Justification
Project Description	Current and Pending Support
References Cited	Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources
Biographical Sketch(es)	Data Management Plan *
Budget	Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable)
	*

*These proposal sections are already being auto-compliance checked by FastLane.

3. What will FastLane check?

FastLane will check to ensure whether or not a document is included; it will not check formatting, page length, or content requirements (the one exception is the Project Summary, for which page length is checked).

4. What if the solicitation does not require a section to be included?

Certain types of proposals, including those for conferences, symposia, or workshops; international travel grants; or program solicitations may deviate from the GPG instructions. If the submission instructions do not require one of the above sections to be provided, proposers will need to insert text or upload a document in that section of the proposal that states, "Not Applicable." Doing so will enable FastLane to accept the proposal.

5. What types of proposals will be auto-compliance checked?

FastLane will auto-compliance check full proposals including: postdoctoral fellowships; renewals; accomplishment-based renewals; and collaborative proposals (including non-leads; see # 9 below). Proposal file updates (PFU) also will be checked. Proposers must address items listed in "Error" messages in order to submit.

Preliminary proposals and award supplements will not be affected by this system enhancement. A proposer may receive "Required Item" or "Warning" messages when attempting to submit a preliminary proposal or award supplement, but FastLane will still accept the proposal. Also, Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) proposals are submitted through the FastLane GRFP Module and will not be affected by this system enhancement.

6. Will FastLane check formatting, page length, or content requirements?

FastLane will only check for the presence or absence of a section, not formatting, page length, or content. The only exception is the Project Summary, for which character count/page length are checked. Copying and pasting certain formatted text into the *Overview, Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts* text boxes of the Project Summary from word processing software, such as Microsoft Word, **may cause the project summary to exceed the one page limit.** Please check your Project Summary PDF once you have saved it to ensure there are no un-intended blank lines or white spaces, and to ensure that once it is converted to a PDF, it is only one page.

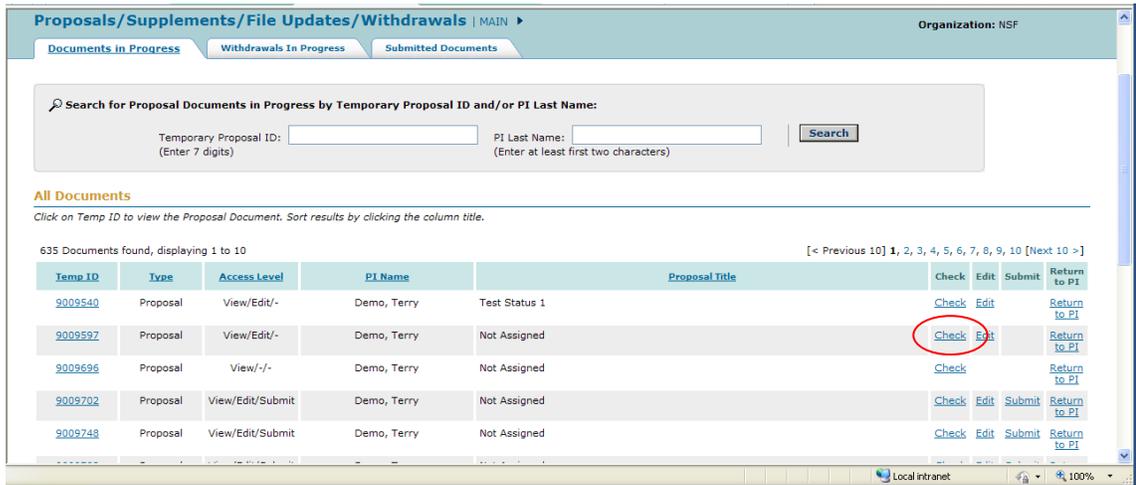
7. How will I know if a section is missing?

PIs or Other Authorized Users (OAU) can perform a validation check at any time prior to allowing SPOs access to their proposals. PIs will receive validation check information when they allow SPO access to their proposals. When SPOs receive proposals, they may also perform a validation check prior to submission. When an SPO submits, if any GPG-required sections are missing, FastLane will provide a list of any sections that are preventing submission.

The PI or OAU validation check is performed by clicking on the Check button, circled in red:

The screenshot shows the 'Proposal Actions' section of the FastLane web interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with 'PROPOSALS', 'PI INFO', and 'LOGON' buttons. Below this is a 'Please note' box regarding Data Management Plans. The main area is titled 'Temporary Proposals in Progress' and features a dropdown menu for selecting a proposal. Below the dropdown is a row of buttons: 'Edit', 'Delete', 'Check', 'Save as Template', 'Allow SRO Access', 'Proposal PIN', 'Print', 'Submit SBIR', and 'Submit STTR'. The 'Check' button is circled in red. At the bottom, there is a 'Create New Proposal' section with buttons for 'Create Blank Proposal', 'Use Template', 'SBIR Phase I', 'SBIR Phase II', 'STTR Phase I', and 'STTR Phase II'. The browser's address bar shows 'Local intranet' and the page is zoomed to 100%.

The SPO validation check is performed by clicking on the Check hyperlink, circled in red:



8. How can I prepare for these changes?

Proposers should perform validation checks while the proposal is being prepared. If any GPG-required sections are missing, error messages will help proposers understand what steps they need to take to ensure a complete submission. Proposers should strongly consider submitting ahead of the deadline to allow enough time to handle any submission issues that arise.

9. How will automated compliance checking work for separately submitted collaborative proposals?

Required sections differ depending on whether an organization is the lead or a non-lead in the separately submitted collaborative proposal. The lead organization must submit all of the GPG-required sections listed in #2 above. A non-lead organization must submit Biographical Sketch(es); Budget; Budget Justification; Current and Pending Support; and Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources. FastLane will check for the required sections according to the lead/non-lead role.

10. Will automated compliance checking apply to proposals submitted through Grants.gov/Research.gov (Application Submission Web Service (ASWS or system-to-system))?

The [NSF Grants.gov Application Guide](#) specifies the same general content requirements* for proposals that are submitted via Grants.gov. Therefore, proposals submitted through Grants.gov **also must** include all required sections identified below, or include a document stating that the section is "Not Applicable."

The required sections of a proposal include:

Project Summary/Abstract	Senior/Key Person Profile (including Biographical Sketch(es) & Current & Pending Support)
Project Narrative	Budget
Bibliography/References Cited	Budget Justification
Facilities & Other Resources	Data Management Plan
Equipment	Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable)

*The *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* may use different naming instructions, but the content is the same.

It is important for proposers submitting through Grants.gov to be aware that Grants.gov may allow a proposal to be submitted, even if one of the required sections is missing. If a required section is missing, a proposal may be returned without review.

11. What sections of the proposal will prevent submission in FastLane, but not in Grants.gov/Research.gov?

Grants.gov/Research.gov may allow a proposal to be submitted if any of the following required attachments is missing: References Cited; Current and Pending Support; Facilities & Other Resources; and Equipment. If one of the required attachments is missing from the submission, the proposer will receive an e-mail with a warning that specifies which attachment(s) is missing. To avoid an incomplete submission, proposers must include an attachment in each section; otherwise, the proposal may be returned without review.