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Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen only mode. After the presentation we will conduct a question and answer session. To ask a question please press star then 1. You will be prompted to record your first and last name. Today’s conference is being recorded. If there

are any objections, please disconnect at this time. I'd now like to turn the conference over to your host, Jim Deshler.

Hello, everybody and welcome. I'd like to apologize for that delay, but we had to get everybody on to the audio line as well as the video line. I'd like to just remind you that this event is being recorded and that participants are in a listen only mode until we start the Q & A session of this webinar. I'm Jim Deshler, I'm a program Director in IOS, and all of you are members of the IOS community so we appreciate the fact that you're joining us today. I am in a webinar room, I'm in a conference room at NSF, and we have a panel of program Directors here.We also have two people observing this interaction and it's our acting division Director Jane Silverthorne and new assistant to the Director of National Science Foundation in Biological Sciences, John Wingfield.

So right now I'm going to transfer over to the presentation mode. Basically, we're here to discuss the new proposal submission policies that are being implemented in the division of Integrated Organismal Systems next January. Beginning next January, we are going to start a new policy for the way we review proposals, and the primary reason for having this webinar is to listen to the concerns and questions that you have so that we can help incorporate those as we walk through this process for the first time in 2012.

Slide 1: The outline, the way it's going to work is that we have about a 20 minute presentation, there are 19 slides and what we want to do is just remind you of what is changing or if you haven't read the solicitation yet, this may be the first time you've heard it, give you a few of the basic reasons

It is changing and what some of the details are that you should pay particular attention to as you submit your next proposal which, would be a pre-proposal, and then open it up to questions.

The slides are numbered and for those of you that registered after the participant limit was reached, as we proceed, I will give slide numbers so that you can transition through the slides with us on your own computer and stay on track with the audio portion of the webinar over the telephone.

Slide 2: The take-home message from this presentation is that starting January of 2012, all proposals submitted to the core programs in the division of integrated organismal systems must conform to a new, division-wide program solicitation which requires preliminary proposals in January followed by invited-only full proposals in August.

Slide 3: This is one of three new solicitations, such that in three of the divisions in the Biological Sciences Directorate, there have been changes to the way proposals are submitted. For example, in molecular and cellular biosciences they've gone to an eight month review cycle as opposed to the six-month that they had previously. And in IOS and DEB, we're going to a pre-proposal in January followed by a full proposal in August.

Slide 4: We are reading the chat line live so if something you want to know please send a chat question in. IOS and DEB solicitations both will require a pre-proposal submission in January followed by a full proposal deadline in August, and these full proposals can only be submitted to the core programs only if invited based on the review of the pre-proposal.

Slide 5: What types of proposals are affected by these new solicitations? All regular research proposals that were previously submitted through the NSF grant proposal guide or to any of the core program descriptions in IOS or DEB must conform to the new solicitation. In addition, any proposals submitted to those divisions through the research and undergraduate institutions (RUI) program or long term research and environmental biology (LTREB) solicitations must conform to the same new solicitations. That means they require pre-proposals.

Slide 6: This is self explanatory and just a review of the IOS core programs. Most of you know what they are so I'm not going to walk through them, you can read those. But basically, there are clusters and within each cluster there are multiple programs managed by individual program Directors or sometimes teams of programs. So those are the IOS core programs.

Slide 7: This is likewise a self-explanatory list of the DEB core programs, clusters and core programs.

Slide 8: This slide basically highlights some of the programs that are NOT going to be affected by the solicitation. At the top is the Plant genome research program and Career program. These have their own solicitation and do not require a pre-proposal. Also, Research Coordination Networks, likewise are not affected and DDIG, ATOL. You can read down the list. I'd like to emphasize here that at the bottom of this are Conferences, Workshops, EAGERs and supplements and these will not be affected by the

IOS Solicitation. So EAGER proposals for example, Early Grants for Exploratory Research don't have deadlines and you can still apply for these as you always have in the past.

Slide 9: Now, the reason we're going to pre-proposals is because it's one mechanism to deal with increased proposal loads. NSF has been thinking about this for years, talking about this internally for years, and there is a report that I want to draw your attention to. It's called the IPAMM report that's publicly available. It is called the Impact of Proposal and Award Management Mechanisms. I'm just showing you the cover on Slide 9, but in the full report, you'll find key data that was collected through analysis of NSF proposals and awards and surveys over 50,000 NSF-funded researchers.

Slide 10: This shows foundation-wide data in the red bars that proposals are increasing in number from 1997 to 2006. The blue bars show that the number of awards NSF gives every year, and you can see that's fairly flat. So, what's happening is the community is writing more proposals for fewer awards. Consequently, there have been a lot of discussions about how to manage this because the PI community is spending a lot of time, maybe too much time, writing grants. A lot of ideas have been analyzed by the foundation. I should say that associated with this report, was a survey of over 50,000 NSF PIs and they were asked a series of over 100 questions. Several had to do with pre-proposals and overall the majority of the community was fairly comfortable and thought that it would save them work if they had to write pre-proposals for low success rates instead of full proposals for low success rates. That is one of the driving factors for making this transition.

Slide 11: These data were compiled in 2006 and we wanted to know in IOS specifically, what the numbers look like. We went back and did our own analysis in the division. You can see the same trend and we went back 10 years to 2001-2011. What you can see basically is that number of awards, and these are competitive awards that went to panel only, are fairly flat and actually have decreased by about 14%. Those are represented by the red dots on the bottom, whereas the number of proposals has increased steadily. We've received a 43 per cent increase in number of proposals in IOS with a 14% decrease in awards. So we see this trend of increasing workloads on the community, the same as was seen at an NSF-wide scale. One consequence of this is also a lower response rate to ad hoc review requests. People are just very saturated with reviewing proposals and writing proposals so we're trying to figure out a way to give the same number of awards with less work by both the community and NSF itself.

Slide 12: In IOS, the full proposal success rate declined 11%, from 28% success rate in 2001 to 17% in 2010 and that's just in the division. So we think PIs are writing more and more full proposals, and that these increased proposal numbers lead to heavier work load on the reviewing community. So IOS and DEB decided a remedy for this is to move to a system that starts with a pre-proposal which is a four page proposal which you'll see in a minute followed by full proposals.

Slide 13: So here is the basic idea. Preliminary proposals will come in January. They're absolutely required for submission to the core programs. There's a limit in IOS which probably will not affect most of you based on our analysis that there will be two proposals within IOS per PI, co-PI, or lead person on a sub-award. DEB has its own solicitation with identical limits so you can actually have two in IOS, and two in DEB if you'd like, just to clarify before the question comes.

Pre-proposal panels will be in March and April. These would not be ad hoc reviewed, most likely, and what we're going to do is have the panels read them and we'll have three panel reviews for each pre-proposal. We will rank them and then we will make invite/not insight decisions and send back the reviews and panel summaries to those pre-proposals. That would hopefully happen in May. Then full proposals will be due in the first week in August, so you have from mid-May to August to develop your full proposal based on the pre-proposal, with October panels and then awards/declines.

Slide 14: Here is a schematic view of how it will work and it just reviews what I just said. If you look at the top there, you will see that you have from May to August to write a full proposal based on feedback from the pre-proposal.

Slide 15: This summarizes some of the benefits that we believe will occur through this process. We think that the PIs will benefit because they will have a shorter format and less time invested in developing their four page proposals, yet they will still receive feedback early on and once invited, the odds for being funded from a full-proposal panel only will be better than they are currently. Overall, the odds will be a little bit different but the number of awards that we give per year is not really going to change much.

We've actually heard from the community itself that they feel that the institutions will benefit because the pre-proposals don't involve a budget. Therefore, it will be much easier for our SROs to submit the pre-proposal than a full proposal than a full proposal. The benefits to the community, well a lot less requests for reviews from NSF in your e-mail box, [LAUGHTER].

Slide 15: Moving on to the preliminary proposal format. This slide, I believe is quite important because it summarizes some of the major changes that you need to think about when you submit to IOS. I really need to emphasize that when you have that pull-down box to submit to a solicitation or a program, you need to submit to the solicitation, the specific solicitation number and not the GPG, okay? And this is when you're putting your cover sheet together. Also, titles must begin with “IOS preliminary proposal:”. It is possible that if you do not apply to the proper solicitation number that, your proposal will be returned without review and that's just because of the systems at NSF and the way it is set up. This is one thing we're most worried about, to be honest; That's why the solicitation number in big bold red font in the slide. Okay?

It's important that you also check the pre-proposal checkbox. Since there's no budget, you need to enter something in the amount requested on the cover page so you enter $2. Project summary, you all know how to do that. As usual, it has to address your scientific merit and broader impacts.

The Project Description is five pages total but there's the first page that only has personnel on it. That's where you list all of the PIs, the co-PIs and the senior personnel, and their contribution to the project. And then there is the project narrative that's limited four pages and I'll get to that in a subsequent slide. Do stay within your page limits and if you go over it could be a reason to have your proposal returned without review. So please follow these directions to the tee. Biographical sketches are pretty much the same as they’ve been in the past except for the COI information, your thesis advisor, post-doctoral advisor, etc., does NOT go on the biosketch for pre-proposals. It goes on to another document which we will discuss in a second. People ask about references, where do I put my references. The references have a three-page limit and are included separate from the project narrative. The COI information instead of being on the biosketches actually goes into a spreadsheet described in the solicitation. In these guidelines, you will see that there's a very specific format that you need to do in an XL spreadsheet and I suggest that you follow the guidelines on that precisely and when you submit that, you will submit it as a single copy document in the proposal. Appendix and other supplementary documents are not allowed.

Slide 17: What's in the project narrative for preliminary proposal? It's similar to a full proposal and basically you should address the main ideas, the significance, the specific questions, the research approaches and the qualifications of the team to conduct the research and the broader impacts.

Slide 18: What will be the basis for invite/not invite decisions? It will be very similar to the way we make funding decisions. Are the ideas innovative? Potentially transformative? A the ideas conceptually well-grounded? Are the experimental approaches and experimental design feasible and logically linked to the central ideas? Are the PIs well qualified and experienced enough with the approaches to be able to conduct the research? What risks are involved and how can they be overcome? What is the potential impact of the science? Is there a convincing and significant effort made towards the broader impacts?

In addition, we have to work on our portfolio balancing of existing awards in our program where we consider things like career level, whether or not PIs are underrepresented, geographical locations and the types of institutions. So we're going to have to gauge how many invitations to send out so that we'll have a good competitive set of proposals for the full proposal round.

That's all I really have to say today. Thanks for listening. At this time, we are ready to open it up the phone lines for questions.

Thank you.

[OPERATOR INSTRUCTIONS].

Please press star 1. You'll be prompted to record your first and last name. To withdraw your question press star 2. Once again, to ask a question, press star then 1 now. Please stand by for our first question. Our first question comes from Rachel O'Neill. Your line is open.

Yes, hi, thank you. My question is actually about the two PI co-PI and senior personnel limit. The two PI proposal limit seems to make some sense. The co-PI and senior personnel does not. It seems to really limit the type of collaborative activities that the NSF is very fond of, in particular access to high school instrumentation, for example, Next Generation sequencing instrumentation, often I'm asked to be on many many proposals to help out with NextGen sequencing because obviously, not everybody is going to have that kind of capacity in their own personal lab. Has the NSF considered this might actually limit collaborative proposals?

Yes, and thank you very much for that question. It's a great one. There are two ways to deal with that. One is as far as senior personnel within the same institution there is no limit on senior personnel, so you can be on as a senior personnel on as many proposals as you want. For institutions that are not your own institution, what we're suggesting in that case, is that people work in their proposals of fee-for-service as a consultant. What that means for you directly is that you're going to have to figure out how best to use those PI and CoPI limitations so that you indicate you intellectual commitments to a proposal the projects for which you are actually intellectually engaged.

Does that help? Would anybody like to chime in on that or add anything else to that answer?

I mean, I still think by directing people to do it as work for service, you're sort of taking away that collaborative effort that people could have cross-institution. I mean if they have an intellectual merit, intellectual property and it's now turned into a fee-for-service, you don't really want to be on their papers, you don't want to talk about this at conference, it becomes a very different relationship.

Okay, so Jane Silverthorne is going to add more to this answer.

The point is that you should not be on a proposal as senior personnel or co-PI unless you're part of the intellectual leadership with the project. You can have people who are involved in your projects who might be on multiple projects because they're providing a particular specialized kind of service, perhaps

they're doing sequencing for you, they have a particular technique they are an expert in, and they're doing that for the project, but not really leading the project -- that's really where you can have the fee-for-service. You can also be a non-funded collaborate as much as you want, but I think at the same time, what we don't want is people being on a lot of different projects so that's where the limit to two really comes. If you're going to be the intellectual leader on a project, then you're really limited two of those but if you're providing a service, then you can request the fee-for-service for that and you can be in a non-funded collaboration on any number of project, so I hope that clarifies the issue.

It clarifies it but I still think it's a limitation that the NSF might want to look at, now that you're on a once a year cycle.

Point taken. Next question?

Thank you. Our next question comes from El Mura, your line is open.

Yes, good afternoon. Thank you. It was a very clear presentation, thank you. I wanted to ask you what is your targeted success rate for initial invites and targeted success rate of those that are invited?

Thank you for that question. Since we have no idea how many pre-proposals we're going to receive, we can't give you a percentage of pre-proposals that will be invited. We do have a good sense for how many awards we can make. So what we're going to do is work backwards from that and try to invite enough people so that the success rate for full proposal isn't too low, but we still have a good competition in panels there will be able to really identify the best science possible, so it's kind of a two tiered system for assessing proposals.

I understand the backwards one, that makes sense, but still what do you consider, what's the targeted success rate? One to two, one to four, one to 10?

Yup, so let's say we have a program that typically gives 10 proposals, makes 10 awards. We would probably invite somewhere between 30 and 40 full proposals so that we would have somewhere between a 25 and 30% success rate. Does that help?

Yes, yes. Thank you so much.

Okay, thank you. Next caller?

Thank you. Our next question comes from Tamara Gulevay. Your line is open.

Hi. I was wondering how your new changes would work with other Directorates because sometimes grants can be considered for funding from two different ones and especially if now it's on a different funding cycle from the others, how would that work out?

Okay, thank you again. That's another very good question and for some programs, for example, DEB, it's not going to be much of a problem because we're going to be on a similar cycle, right?

Right.

But for other programs like MCB, it's going to be a little bit more challenging. I will tell you that there are different ways to co-review proposals. For example, if a proposal came in that was basically an IOS proposal that had a very heavy molecular and cellular component, we have no problem sharing that with colleagues at MCB and having them co-support or ask them for ad hoc reviews. So there's a number of mechanisms internally in the foundation that we can use to handle that and half of the people here are rotating program Directors and they learn pretty soon how flexible things are at NSF and we don't believe it's going to be much of a problem.

I was actually thinking of other Directorates like geosciences?

Yes?

And international programs?

Yes?

So things that are outside of the biology and how that would work.

Well that's always challenging when it comes to deadlines because they always have different types of deadlines across the foundation, yet when there is a proposal, for example, that has some international activity we simply go up to OISE and show them the proposal and we see if they're interested supporting it and if they want to put their name on that proposal so that's how it works around here and it's really not that big of a deal.

Okay, thank you.

Okay, thanks for the question. Next question?

The next question comes from Stanley Hilliard. Your line is open.

Yeah, hello. A couple questions actually. One, it seems that if you applied this NSF 11572 drop down the fast lane is formatted for the new pre-proposal submission?

Absolutely. It’s got a checkbox that says pre-proposal and it gets processed by a slightly different mechanism than a full proposal.

Okay, and secondly, since there's a temptation now instead of writing one big proposal to write two small proposals, because we all have a few things on the back burners, and I think it's more of a temptation to put in two proposals perhaps under the same subset of IOS or maybe two different subsets. How would two pre-proposals be seen? In other words if they both look good you say well go for it or would you tend to say well, we're only going to give you one.

That's the thousand dollar question.

So we don't know, but our community will let us know in January.

I see.

That's what's going to happen. I tell PIs in my program, if you have two great projects we want to see them. We want to see both of those pre-proposals and see what generates the most enthusiasm. However, if one of your proposals is much better than the other one, you may want to spend most of your time making that pre-proposal as tight as possible because it has the best chance. It's going to be a competitive round so you're going to have to make that call for yourself.

Right, okay and if one involves international collaboration, then is there any special way, where is my people from Japan? Should I contact the international programs people as well to try and coordinate them? I'm just curious.

Yes, so you don't really need to worry about that. We'll take care of that as long as you put it in the proposal we will note that there's international activities and we like to get more money in our programs any way we can. That's why program Directors come here and so we'll run upstairs and see if we can get all your foreign travel and student support covered by somebody else so we don't have to pay for it and then we can pay for something else.

Cool! Okay, thank you.

Sure. Dori?

Yes.

Can we take a couple questions from chat? The panel identified a couple

questions.

Sure. Go ahead.

And then we'll get back to you.

Okay, so we've been answering some of the questions in chat but the one that just got posted, will the invitation to submit a full proposal also include suggestions or comments to the project? Everybody will get comments back on their pre-proposal from the pre-proposal panel so you will have those while

you're writing your full proposal and you'll have suggestions as you're preparing an invited full proposal. And yes, there was another one. Want to do that one?

Okay, there was an earlier question, if the pre-proposals go in in January, why are the panels only meeting in March? Just like when the proposals come in, we have to set up the panel and we have to give the panelists, some of you have been on panel, time to actually read the proposals so they can make informed suggestions and good reviews for you, so that does require a little bit of time and all of that requires some organization so that takes time.

So we have another question, do you encourage interaction with the program officer before submission? Absolutely! Always talk to your program officer.

Thank you, Michelle and I think we're ready for the Nextel Ephone question.

Thank you. Our next question comes from Keri Williams. Your line is open.

Hi, yeah. That was fantastic listening to all this and I have a question about just the impact that you think it might have on the stability it of science, so in other words, we were used to sort of a six-month cycle where you were getting information and then immediately sending a new proposal in and you were trying to get past that, but I wonder what's going to happen to those that don't make it past the pre-proposal stage. You're now talking almost a two-year period before another pre-proposal goes in and reviewed and then potential full proposal and I particularly wonder about young investigators where it takes a couple of cycles to get through and now you're talking a period of time that is so extraordinary, I suspect they will leave science.

Great question. Thank you very much. The answer to that question, the most important component of the answer to that question is that we are going to fund the same number of proposals from the same number of investigators that we always have, so in effect, there should absolutely be no affect on what happened to the scientific community. The only thing that will diminish the scientific community is if our budgets get severely cut and we can't support as many scientists as we want to, okay? This is simply a different mechanism for people to get the same number of awards. We will support young investigators by inviting a sufficient number such that they are competitive. We will be working with them. We have RAPIDs, we have EAGERS, and we have different mechanisms to address this issue so that we can keep science strong but we are not, there is in no way any inclination here at NSF to diminish the number of young investigators that get funded. That's just not going to happen. We're simply hoping they have more time to develop their science and ideas instead of writing these proposals every six months. Thus, we think it might actually increase the quality of the science that we see. Often people will get their reviews back three weeks before a deadline and try to revise and resubmit it. That results in basically the same proposal that we just reviewed being reviewed. The new system will allow a little more time for PIs to think about their projects so we're really hoping that this improves the overall quality if the science. In either case, however, this new system should in no way diminish the number of investigators that ultimately are supported by IOS. Does that help?

It does. It's just that I look at it in terms of actual time on the ground here, and it will be interesting. I think that it will be one of the great things to take a look at in this first year to see what happens to people if they don't make it past that first round or they thought in six months, I can sort of hold

my lab together, and sort of hold myself together, but when it gets beyond a year, you start looking for alternatives and that's just watching young students go through this process. But like you said it's supposed to be the same number of proposals funded so it will be interesting to see if there is a ramification in this.

And just so you know, we have already started tracking and getting prepared to track the effects of this as we speak.

Yeah, that will be exciting.

Thanks for the question. Next question?

Thank you. Our next question comes from Doug Harrison. Your line is open.

Hi. I have a couple of questions. First, will it be the same panel for the pre and full proposals and secondly, can you give us some guidance on the emphasis that we should place on each of the sections in the pre-proposal, clearly the length will be shortened compared to a full proposal and how should we best and most effectively reduce the length to something that would be that would have the most content for review?

Okay, got it. I've got both of them, so the first question, will the panel be the same? That has not been sorted out exactly and there are no prescribed methods for insisting that they either are or they are not. Our best guess is there will probably be a mix. Some of the people from the pre-proposals will be

held over and part of the full proposal panel and in DEB, it might be different. They're actually thinking they would like to have, they're thinking, it's not a done deal. They haven't made the final decision yet but there's some thought they should have a different set of panelists for each one, but in IOS, the

feeling is we'll probably have some overlap. Logistics make it so it can't be the same panel. You aren't going to get all your pre-proposal panelists to be available on two different extended dates so that's what's happening there. As far as what to emphasize and what to eliminate from the pre-proposals to make them strong pre-proposals, well there's a lot of experimental detail and controls in a full proposal and a lot of background in full proposals that I would imagine would not be in pre-proposal. So what you're going to have to do is simply make your ideas as clear as possible. Every panel here is directed and encouraged to identify the most innovative and potentially transformative science they can find through a particular panel review, so you should keep that in mind as you put your proposal together. On the other hand you don't want to make it, you know, such a big idea, such a big concept that it doesn't look like it's going to work. So you need to address the issue of feasibility for your approach, so that's why really the significance and the feasibility are probably the two major components to putting together a successful pre-proposal. But again, we're going to have to see how panels look at these as the panels ultimately have a big say. They're the ones that will inform the decision on this.

One of my colleagues on the panel looks like she may have something to say here. Diane, would you like to add anything?

So I think one of the most important things in both the pre-proposals as well as the full proposals ultimately is that you begin your proposal by addressing an unmet need and laying that out right from the beginning because remember, these panels are going to be looking at a variety of different subject areas and if you cannot convince them that this is really something important that is maybe holding back other areas of science or that this type of proposal may in fact reveal some underlying biological principles that could apply to other fields, I think you'll be at a disadvantage if you can't convince the panel up front, so I would begin to be very concise in that way and then go on to the other areas that you need to address in the proposal regarding feasibility.

Thank you very much. I have a chat question I'd like to ask and answer. It has been brought to my attention that somebody asked if you can submit a pre-proposal on a topic that overlaps with a full proposal at NIH. That actually is allowed in the solicitation if you read it carefully, so that is a possibility. That actually has a lot to do with some of the previous questions, and it gives people more of an opportunity to apply the same ideas to both agencies whereas in the past with the full proposals you could only put in one BIO proposal to either NSF or NIH. So as we move to pre-proposals you could have a great idea and submit it into a full proposal at NIH and a pre-proposal at NSF.

Okay, let's take the next question on the phone.

Thank you. Our next question comes from Aixa. Your line is open.

Hi, Jim. How are you?

Fine, thank you.

I was wondering what would the role of the panel for pre-proposal evaluation be? Is it as its been in the past to recommend, to evaluate the science and the impact, but then the program Director will be making the decision of who to invite or is that panel going to make suggestions on who to invite and not to invite? I mean, I know in order for you to be able to deal with portfolio diversity with levels of entry of research and all of that, I guess the program Director ultimately makes those decisions, but how do you integrate both?

Thank you for the question. The panels are going to be managed. You're right. There's different ways to manage pre-proposal panels. The way IOS is going to manage them is we are going to have the panels do what they always do. They are going to rank the proposals relative to the batch of pre-proposals they have based on scientific merit and broader impacts, two criteria at NSF, and they are going to express their enthusiasm for the project by ranking them in high priority, medium priority, or low priority as they always do. Program Directors will read all of the comments, look at all of the reviews and make invite, non-invite decisions based on a portfolio balance and the advice of the panel as they always do, so I think what you're really trying to ask is whether or not the panel is going to decide who gets invited and who doesn't and they aren't even going to, they basically aren't even going to have those categories.

Thank you.

Thanks for the question.

Our next question comes from Dennis Lanning, your line is open.

Dennis?We may have lost him.

Thank you. Laurie Smith?

Hi. My question was addressed to a large extent by a previous person who asked how does one decide what are the most important things to have in the four pages compared to the 15 page that we are all used to, but I just want to add one more part to that and ask about something that's a renewal. There's always space in a renewal that is very important to establish what you accomplished with the prior award and a certain amount of the content is going to focus on that. How important when you're having to make these really difficult choices about what to do in your four pages if it's a renewal, what do you think is, how important is it to really still include a lot of stuff about results from prior NSF support or is that really just something that can wait for the full proposal if you get invited?

Well, some of the discussion in NSF and IOS have dealt with that question specifically and several of us thought that people with renewals might have a little stronger advantage because they can reference their preliminary data that they generated from their previous award, whereas, new investigators may have a little bit harder time because they don't have the publication record and the independence. So we believe that for more senior investigators that have a track record, it actually would be more efficient text wise to address that. I don't know if any of my colleagues would like to weigh in on that?

Well, I'm not sure that I understand your answer because I guess I'm really just talking about how much of the four pages would you really devote to explaining, results of prior NSF support may or may not be critical for the next proposal because there may be all kinds of cool things you did that were important from the prior award but they may not be essential for the foundation of the next proposal, not all parts of it.

Michelle Elekonich is going to weigh in.

The amount as it speaks to, the amount of space that you spend talking about that is really at your discretion and it's up to you as to how much of that argument you need to put forward to support the new idea that you want to put in your pre-proposal. So, we're not forcing you to use any particular amount of space. It's really at your discretion.

So it sounds like your advice is don't worry about telling everybody trying to explain all the wonderful things you did before, but only talk about the things that are needed to support the ideas and the new award? That's like one tenth of what you did with your prior award?

Yes, you do have three pages of references so you can have all of the great work referenced if you think that will help--

But you might have lots of unpublished stuff.

So you'll have to be very economical. What I tell PIs in my program is if you are proposing to do a very complicated assay that nobody believes would work, that including preliminary data to address feasibility could be a good idea. I think what you want to do is make the most compelling case for your science as Diane Witt said earlier and use preliminary data and previous publications to support you to make the biggest step forward in that next funding phase of funding.

So I guess what we're saying here is that you're just, what you're accustomed to doing in a full proposal where you list out everything that's been done and all of the publications and so forth to convince that you've been productive with the previous funding, that's not the type of thing that you want to spend most of your time on in the pre proposal. Stick to what's relative in the existing idea.

Okay, thank you.

Next question?

Our next question comes from Terry Cowen. Your line is open.

Hi, Jim, I have so many questions to ask but I'm going to stick to one. So I spent a lot of time giving my time to NSF, but the basic idea of encouraging bright young sciences in the standard area of plant biology and there are many other areas of biology other than biomedicine, but as a person who mentors a lot of young scientists, why in the world now would I tell a scientist to go to an agency that they're going to take a full year cycle to get funding when they can get three rounds at the NIH? And so why should I not encourage somebody in the other areas that we're interested to consider a career other than biomedicine if they're approaching tenure and they can get multiple shots at the apple in biomedicine and now only one shot a year with NSF? It just seems to me that all that effort that I spent through the 90s trying to get people to move from microbiology and molecular biology and everything into areas that NSF was going to fund well is now really challenged by a process which appears to be driven by the fact that you're trying to save not the investigators a lot of time because people will actually get grants, but you're actually saving yourselves time. So my question really is: Why would I tell a mentor to go into areas of basic science other than biomedical science?

Okay, so you've got a lot of different angles to that question, [LAUGHTER]. The first thing I want to say, it's not one, they don't have only one chance a year. If they have two really big ideas, you can encourage them to put two in just to IOS. Secondly, the answer I gave earlier about the number of awards we give is exactly the same, so I don't see why you would discourage anymore or encourage anymore than you would have before, because the number of chances you give somebody (say six chances a year) does not increase the number of scientists trained and encouraged to go into science nation-wide. What you need to do is think about the application process separately from the amount of science that gets supported; it appears you think more tries are better. However, if everyone gets more tries to apply for the same amount of funding, they are going to spend more time trying to be supported than actually being supported, overall. Michelle Elekonich looks like she has something she wants to weigh in. Michelle?

I would add that they can also come in for the career awards so they have another opportunity there in addition to the core proposals.

Okay, does any of that help?

Well I still think that your view is jaded. First of all, most of us in science have a lot more than two good ideas and if we don't have more than two good ideas, it's really sad. We're not limited by number of good ideas. We're limited by the number of hours we can spend trying to get funding from those new ideas and so basically, the purpose of this based on your own design is to turn off the task and that is NSF is getting more good ideas than they can fund so the idea is to have less good ideas put in front of them, right? That's basically what you're asking.

That's not true. At least in my program, I don't know about other programs, but most people put in one proposal because we all know biologists have tons of ideas, but they have to be feasible ideas and in addition there are lots of programs at NSF other than the solicitation that people can apply to. So one

thing I would encourage you to do is when you are encouraging your students to become scientists is to teach them about funding agencies because once they realize how these agencies work and how to best utilize NSF solicitations, for example, they can better find programs with interests in their own research?

You think I don't know how to do that, Jim?

I never said that, but I'm just saying, some of your things suggest that we're trying to cut down science and we're trying to cut down the number of applications for the same number of awards. That's all we're trying to do, so I don't think, I mean the only way to get more scientists trained in science is

to put more money in science and be able to support more science.

Well, first of all you have a training rule and the second thing is that you've seen enough examples I'm sure in your position to see panels that make stupid decisions in the absence of ad hoc reviews and if you haven't seen that you need to go to more panels, but so right now, you're going to actually do the

preliminary screening based on panels only and panels always have gaps. They always have gaps and in the early 1990s grants were turned down at NSF because panels had no plant biologists and so they turned them down because people proposed to do transformation in plants and panels actually turned them down because they said plants can't be transformed. There are lots of old stories about that. Panels make decisions and those decisions are really good based on the expertise that you can put into them but the ad hoc has a perfectly good role and so you're turning this based on panels only and that has real limitations.

Well that's kind of a specific case where there might be a technique that the panel thinks won’t work and what you're worried about is they get a pre proposal rejected for an invalid reason. But that's where it is the responsibility of the PI to provide some confidence that things are feasible. That's why we emphasize that feasibility is such an important part of the pre-proposal. Thus, I encourage you to talk to Program Directors. Panelists make good recommendations, bad recommendations, and program Directors can do the same. However, everybody is doing the best they can do and I would encourage you to participate. I don't know maybe you have been on panels, but that's the only way to get involved in this process.

[INAUDIBLE] in IOS or in DBI.

Yes, yes, yes, so we like these kinds of conversations. We have them with panelists all the time and I appreciate your views but I think I've said everything that I can think of, and if the panel has anything else, if they don't have anything else to add, I think we'll move on to the next call is that okay?

Yes.

Okay, have a great day.

Thank you. Our next question comes from Becky Berdine. Your line is open.

Hi, everyone. I guess I have two questions. The first is, what does this do for those of us that have a proposal in now that's being evaluated that might come back as not funded? The second question is more philosophical. Four pages just for a pre-proposal actually seems to me like a little long. Do we really need something that long to propose a really good idea and whether or not we can do it? I'm wondering if part of the purpose is to reduce the amount of work that we're putting in, if we couldn't have gotten by with a two or three page pre proposal?

Okay, let me take that question first because we actually did some experiments last year and I can't go into the details where we had two page proposals and people thought that was too short. The five page proposal is really, it's really a four page pre proposal. People felt from these experiments that IOS did last year, that if they would have had two more pages they could address the feasibility issue and two

pages wasn't enough to get at feasibility. So we did experiments last year where we did parallel panels with two page proposals and 15 page proposals and in a different panel and we compared them and realized two pages seemed a little bit too short so we went with four proposals so people would have the space to deal with feasibility. That was the main issue and your first question what does it

do for you with somebody who has a proposal, a full proposal and currently. I don't think it does much for you. Basically, it's just a new system that we have to adapt to. If you get funded it's a non-issue, and if you do not get funded you'll have to come in with a four page pre-proposal.

But at that point are you trying to address, is there something that says this is already submitted once, and I'm addressing reviews or do you submit it like it’s never been seen?

Yes, it will submitted as a new proposal. I would not waste text addressing reviews specifically. I always tell people to take what you got from the review scientifically, incorporate it into your next submission to make the strongest proposal possible. I don't think panelists care whether or not it was recommended by a reviewer. They just want to see the best proposal they can read, and they want to be excited by it.

Let's move to a chat question. Michelle, do you want to read a chat question? Thanks.

So there's been multiple questions about what we mean by portfolio balance and whether previous funding is part of portfolio balance and how that plays into beginning investigators so we thought maybe we should comment a little bit on that.

Gert (de Couet), do you want to say something?

So the portfolio has many different factors, and they come in as geographic factors, consider your Congressman from which State they come from, they all vote for the funding of NSF, so it's part of the portfolio and another balancing factor may be the type of model systems you're using and the type of questions being addressed, for example, developmental biology is a huge area that ranges from fertilization so we don't just want to fund proposals that address one or two of these questions. That kind of gives you an idea and also we obviously want to support a range of career stages. We want to support underrepresented minorities in the sciences.

I also want to mention that in balancing the portfolio, it isn't just what the proposals that come in in a given round. It also includes the existing awards that we have and if we make attempts to balance the portfolio every single time we make an award decision, we then have all the bases covered into all of the

areas we do intend to support.

Our next question comes from Kim Baychong. Your line is open.

Hello?

We're not hearing anything.

One moment, please. Our next question comes from Debra Barrow.

Hello, can you hear me, Jim?

Hi, Deb how you doing?

Good. How are you?

Very well.

Thanks for hosting this webinar. It's great. I'm curious, how strictly must the invited proposal adhere to the pre-proposal and will you have any mechanisms to sort of make sure that they adhere?

Okay, so that's a great question. The personnel page on the pre proposal is very important so we do not expect that that should change much without at least some consultation with the program Director. Refocusing of the question doesn't seem like a great idea because if the pre proposal comes in and there's a lot of excitement for what you propose and then you change it, it doesn't seem, like a good idea unless you have a good reason for it. If it's obvious as time goes by that the science changes, there may be a good reason to change. So I think this is something that on a case-by-case basis. If all the preliminary data you generate between the pre proposal and full proposal support what you hypothesized originally, stay on it. Everybody understands that things change so you'll have to use your own judgment there.

Okay, thanks.

Okay, Bye. Next question?

Our next question comes from Regina Smith. Your line is open.

Hi there. There have been a number of changes that I think represent sea changes in the biological sciences. What can you guys tell us about the thinking in other NSF Directorates? Over the years we've seen an increase in the use of internal competition to select proposals to go forward and now these major changes. What else is going on across NSF? Are we going to expect the same kind of thing?

That's a good question. I know there is a large foundation wide analysis of ways to improve the merit review process and there are a number of factors on the table. NSF doesn't make these decisions lightly. They do large surveys, interact with panel members, and talk with PIs on the phone. The program Directors are part of the conversation. They rotate every year. Half of the program Directors almost rotate every year so I can't specify anything specifically but it's possible and if it's being done, it's because there's enough people that think it might be a good idea for the scientific endeavor as a whole across the whole nation.

Thank you. There are a lot of models across the foundation for the merit review system. Some of them require panels, some require panels and ad hoc, some of them use pre proposals. This is not necessarily something new to the foundation and, in addition to all the discussions, the surveys, the IPAMM, the discussion with the panelists, there's also the committee of visitors which are individuals that are brought in every three years and each program is evaluated. They formulate recommendations that they have included in writing up their reports, and they indicated that we need to do something about this work load situation.

Let me make one additional comment for you all to consider and that is if each Directorate sets up its own unique and idiosyncratic way of dealing with this problem, it's going to make life much more difficult for not just you but for people in research administration and investigators who might be doing

cross-discipline our it work.

That's a good point and it's well taken. We are in constant communication with people in other Directorates as we move forward with these processes. So just me personally, I'm involved in a recent dear colleague letter that's trying to generate more proposals addressing computational thinking and biology and it's really not been that big of a problem. Personally, I think, you're right. It's administrative and logistically a little bit of a headache, but I think the advantages at least we're trying things and trying to make the process better so it's a tradeoff. You have to allow some flexibility to allow things to improve otherwise you're just going to get stuck in a single system for everybody and we feel that's probably not the better way to go, but thanks for the comment and we are aware of the potential issues that happen when those used to collaborating one way have to collaborate a different way.

Thank you.

Bye. Next call?

Our next question comes from Nathan Morehouse, your line is open.

Hi. Thanks for all of the information. I'm a junior faculty, I just started my first faculty position and I think--

Congratulations!

Thank you. I think there is some concern in junior faculty that this does reduce the number of shots at getting a grant that might be the basis for tenure decisions. We may find this frees up some time. My concern is that it does extend the time from the submission of the pre proposal to the time of funding

and for people trying to build labs and populate them with post-Docs and graduate students this adds another six months and I'm wondering if there's going to be any effort to review full proposals and fund those more rapidly to reduce the amount of lag time between the submission of ideas and their actual funding.

So that's a good question. We have all thought very hard about that and like I said, I don't think any of us believe that we're going to fund fewer junior investigators with this new system. You will get feedback after the pre-proposal that we hope will feed into the full proposal so that you are successful. Now, in addition, I would encourage junior investigators with this new system to look at the NSF website carefully for the opportunities that exist there. There are a lot of opportunities that are under-utilized and the best way to do that is scroll through the website, find the funding opportunities and learn the foundation and talk to your program Directors. I think junior investigators may, in order to address that just may need to find more places to submit to make up for the lack of two per year. I've got to say, two per year, a lot of times reviews don't get back until a couple weeks before that proposal and that's just not enough time often to do what it takes to revise a good proposal into an outstanding one. So in the end, we're hoping that junior investigators get feedback on the pre proposal and come in with a very strong full proposal and aren't in this rushed revise and resubmit system. Or, I've got to get my reviews back so I can incorporate my changes into the next submission, okay? So I would encourage them to look for other opportunities such as EAGERs or different solicitations. For example, you can submit two in DEB, two in IOS, and maybe crafting really good pre proposals on two diverse tracks of research might be a way to go to enhance their chances, so there's multiple ways that junior investigators are going to have to get wise to the different things that are happening in the funding agencies to adapt to this change, to alleviate a little bit of what you're concerned about.

And I've got another, Diane Witt wants to add something--

I want to remind you for Jr. faculty there are two options. You can come in through the pre-proposal route and you can also use the career awards.

Great. Thanks.

And a career remember does not require a pre proposal. Okay?

Right.

Does that help?

Yup. Thank you.

Good.

Next question?

Our next question comes from Julie Polokovich. Your line is open.

Hi, Jim. Thanks for the very informative presentation. You alluded to the fact that very few applicants actually are applying for more than two awards. I was hoping that you could quantify what percentage of applicants in past years or recent years have actually applied as a PI or co-PI'm or more than two grants?

Okay, it varies by cluster, it varies by division and it varies by program. I can tell you my program which is organizational systems. Maybe I'll have one PI submit two proposals every other cycle or maybe within a year out of maybe 160 total so believe it is less than 1% of the PIs in my program and I'm getting a lot of heads nodding from other program Directors so it's an incredibly small number of people. So if you look at it that way and people do decide to submit two pre proposals, they are going to enhance their chances to some extent. Does that help?

It does, thank you.

Okay. Next question?

Our next question comes from Junjay Young. Your line is open.

Hi. Thanks for the presentation. So I just have a very simple question. I wonder, for one person to submit two pre-proposal and both got invited so actually, who end up having two of his own projects compete with each other, so what is the chance actually if both end up being very good, excellent proposal,

will both of them really get funded or actually the panel will just pick one saying anyway this guy has two, how come he got two? So would that happen or actually it would just give them one?

That's a really good question and it reminds me of a phone call I had recently from a PI who was going through this thinking process on the phone and was saying, should I submit two pre proposals or one proposal?” I never had to speak, I just had to listen and she said, well if I write two great pre proposals and I get invited on both of them for both of them, it's going to be tricky to write two excellent full proposals.

Right, because--

So that's the system we have. Especially since these two proposals will compete with each other.

That's okay though. If you have two great ideas, and you can write two full proposals in two months, you can do it I would encourage you to do it. If you think you have a better chance of getting funding in your laboratory with a single proposal by focusing on only one proposal that's a decision for you to make.

Well, yeah. I understand because previously, there were two cycles a year and the person could submit as many as they wanted to per cycle. Now two grants will compete with each other. But now

there's only one cycle per year, so instead of submitting one, he may want to submit two if he has two very good projects ongoing.

Right, right. So another way to deal with that is to put one in one program and another in another program.

Okay.

So there are multiple ways to deal with these things.

Next question?

Thank you. Our next question comes from Ida Chow. Your line is open.

Hi, Ida.

Hi. I already submitted several questions on the chat line, so pretty much I worry about the young folks. If they miss out on one round they have to wait for another year. If they miss out a couple times there's a chance for tenure is gone, or like Jim has suggested, the person can look for other opportunities even within NSF. So that means the person will end up having to spend quite a bit of time trying to find out which is most appropriate for them. Yes, there are several, but NSF does help the younger folks by setting up some kind of a central place or a phone call or website or somebody that can orient and guide these young folks a little bit faster. Because I remember when I was beginning to do or look for grants, it's very hard to understand what people are even asking.

Well that just emphasizes what we're trying to say which is they should be calling their program Directors, finding programs for which they can submit pre-proposals. In some sense if they have to write a pre-proposal and then develop a strong full proposal, the idea is they will look for other places to get money as well. It's good for them to be able to look at agencies and learn how to apply for money because there is a steep learning curve. Otherwise they may be writing the same proposal over and over and over and coming back to the same (wrong) program. This is a tradeoff and they are going to have to adapt and we all share your concern, but we'll keep our eye out for young investigators. There is

still the career program that's been mentioned two or three times earlier.

Right. So another question then is if after one year, will NSF evaluate the impact that this has, this change has been made, and be ready and prepared to change if necessary?

Absolutely.

And a little bit more to the people who let's say more important to the ones who did not get invited who were not invited.

We fully expect that we will fund the same number of junior investigators that we've always funded.

And are you ready to change the procedure if it shows that a lot of people with being negatively impacted all across?

Absolutely.

Okay. Thanks.

Our next question comes from Susan Coal and our line is open.

Hi, Susan.

Thanks for taking my question. I actually had a comment first which was the thing that I worry about with the time cycle is not so much as having two bites of the apple but if I put in something in January I used to know in June or July if I could take a student in the Fall and now I know in June or July whether I

have a 40% or 25% chance of doing that and I think that is something that's going to make it harder for people to strategize building a lab and my actual question is are all the grants now going to have the same start date?

The answer is no, they will not all have the exact same start date because they will be funded within a range of a few months.

And for people who have a grant that's coming to an end in the middle of the year in a future year like say Summer of 2014, is there going to be a mechanism to overlap a renewal?

For specific issues it's really important you call the program Director and figure out the best way to deal with it. I don't want to get into specifics here.

Okay, thank you.

Let's take a chat, couple of chat questions that Michael Mishkind has identified.

There is a thread of discussion in the chat line that the pre proposals might encourage more standard science. In talking about the merits of pre proposals we anticipate it being the opposite in that interesting ideas can be raised in ways that are very compelling and will not be clouded by lots of detail and panels and certainly the program is going to very much want to encourage striking and

risk the ideas as a full proposal that we could consider in all of the details.

Thank you, Michael. Let me just take a quick pause here and I'll be back with you all in a second.

Hello. We're back. We're noting it's about 3:30 and that was our scheduled finish time but since we started late and there seems to be a lot of interesting questions we want to, Dora, is it possible to go another 15 minute?

Yeah, that would be fine.

Oh, thank you very much. Okay then let's pass on, how many calls do you have in the queue?

Currently, two.

Well that sounds great. Let's take a couple more.

Thank you, one moment. Our next question comes from Nick Santangelo. Your line

is open.

Yes, hi. Just a really quick question actually. For the RUI pre proposals since there's no impact statement, how much of that kind of information would you want to see in a pre proposal of the kind of University you're at or how all that kind of information?

I would hit the high points. [LAUGHTER].

But it should be in there? So we should be discussing that also?

I would put a couple sentences in saying what's unique about your institution and why it's so important that you get funded with this project and what that project is going to do for your institution. You don't want to leave that out. I've got more feedback.

Also don't forget to put RUI in the title.

Okay. Right, thanks.

Thank you.

Our next question comes from David Buckwalter, your line is open.

Hi, thanks for taking my call. I could be completely off base here, I often am, but my sense is from having applied to NSF and been successful one-time that the bar for preliminary data is high and it seems like the pre proposal route is going to kind of obscure, I mean if you guys are basing a lot of your decisions

on work that's half completed already or even further along, how are you going to sort that out in a pre proposal context where you don't have the time to see preliminary data as robustly?

I think this would really be a problem for a new investigator, Jr. investigator who has a long publication list proving he or she can do what she's proposing to do. Other than that I wouldn't say that we have a particularly high bar for preliminary proposals. If you can make a compelling point that you can do what

you propose to do or you have another senior staff member or a collaborator who can help you, I think a panel and a program officer would always give you the benefit of the doubt.

Okay. That help?

Yes, it does.

Good.

Next call?

Thank you. Dennis Lanning, your line is open.

Hi, thank you. Hi, Jim and everybody. I apologize this has been addressed. I'm actually on vacation in the great smokies and my phone has cut out a couple of times, but I'm in the third year of a grant. I'm a research assistant professor and my position is dependent on my funding. I'm planning to write a

competitive renewal in January and this kind of changes my goal posts because my appointment is supported by soft money and my funding will be ending in July . Now I won't learn if I have funding until December as I understand it. So I guess I may ask is there consideration being made for people in my position?

There's been a lot of discussion about people in your position.

Okay.

And we understand we're going through a phase of adaptation and we have a number of mechanisms in place that could potentially be used to address it, but I really don't want to get into the specifics at the moment because you really need to talk specifically to your program Director, but I would say that you would be in a better situation if your pre proposal were reviewed well, then if it were not, okay?

Yeah.

So you’ve got to think about that as you move forward and think about alternative mechanisms in the case that it's not.

Okay, thank you.

Okay, good luck.

Next question?

At this time we have no additional questions.

Okay. Thank you very much. How about the chat questions? Do we have a few, anything catching anybodies attention there that we haven't heard in the past?

There have been several questions about particular timing, if you're applying to multiple agencies. I think in each of those it's a special case where they should really contact their program Director about that. We have to put ground rules in place in terms of what will be allowed and what won't be.

Okay, so if we have taken all the calls and everybody feels their questions have been addressed, I think we can wrap it up. So I'd like to thank anybody else that's left out there. I'm getting a question pointed to me as I speak. Okay, yeah, so we do, what we're going to do is take the chatted questions we didn't get to and we will add them to the FAQs on the IOS website. In addition, this entire webinar will be available for viewing after the fact for those of your colleagues that were unable to attend today. So again I'd like to thank the panelists and our division Director and Katherine Otts who from our Division of administrative Services. Thank you very much and everybody else that helped out with this

webinar. Signing off.

Thank you for joining todays conference. That does conclude the call at this time. All participants may disconnect.

[Event Concluded] Actions