

# National Science Foundation MAJOR RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION (MRI)

## NSF Grants Conference

Arlington, VA

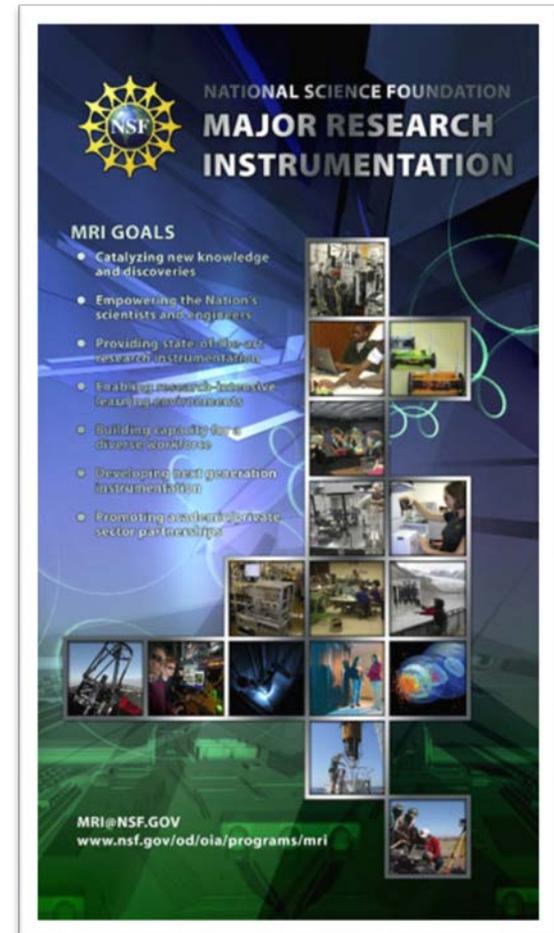
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**<http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/mri/>**



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# Major Research Instrumentation Strategic Goals

Supports the *acquisition* or *development* of *major research instrumentation* that is, in general, too costly or not appropriate for support through other NSF programs. The instrument is expected to be operational for regular research use by the end of the award period.

- Supports the *acquisition* of a shared, major, state-of-the-art instrument, thereby improving access to, and increased use of, a modern research instrument by scientists, engineers and students;

**OR**

- Supports the *development* of the next generation of major instrumentation, resulting in a new type of instrument that is more widely used, and/or opens up new areas of research and research training;

**AND**

- Enables academic departments, disciplinary & cross-disciplinary units, and multi-organization collaborations to integrate research with *research training*.



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# MRI-Eligible Expenses

## *MRI does not support requests for multiple instruments to outfit labs/facilities*

- NSF expects the institution to provide basic infrastructure for the major research equipment - including common, general purpose ancillary research equipment.
- Equipment that would move together with the major unit if it were to be relocated, and/or that would otherwise not be found in the lab without a main instrument may however be eligible if justified.



Note: The solicitation from the previous competition (NSF 15-504) remains in use....



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# The MRI Program Will **Not** Support:

- **Construction, renovation or modernization of rooms, buildings or research facilities** (instruments must be able to decouple from their host environment);
- **Large, specialized experimental facilities** (constructed with significant amounts of common building material using standard building techniques);
- **General purpose and supporting equipment** (e.g., general purpose computers/laboratory equipment, fume hoods, cryogen storage systems);
- **Sustaining infrastructure and/or building systems** (e.g., electrical, plumbing, HVAC, toxic waste disposal, telecommunications);
- **General purpose platforms or environments** (e.g., fixed, non-fixed structures, manned vehicles);
- **Instrumentation used primarily for science and engineering education courses or for medical/clinical/pharmaceutical research.**



# MRI Proposals – The Basics

- **Restrictions on organization submission eligibility** - see solicitation (currently [NSF 15-504](#)).
- **Submission limit** - Three (3) per organization: *If three proposals are submitted, at least one of the proposals must be for instrument development.*
- **Submission deadline** – January 13, 2016 (earlier than in the past)
- **Cost-sharing** at the level of 30% of the **total project cost** is required for Ph.D.-granting institutions and non-degree-granting organizations. **Cost-sharing is not required for non-Ph.D. granting institutions.**
- **Merit Review** - At the time of submission, PI's are asked to identify an NSF division(s) to review proposal. NSF reserves the right to place proposals in the appropriate division(s) for review.



**Note:** Any proposal submitted in response to the MRI solicitation should be also conform to the latest *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)* and its *Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)*. – Note that when in conflict, the MRI solicitation guidance trumps the GPG.

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# MRI: Classification of Organizations

- **Ph.D. granting institutions of higher education** are accredited colleges and universities that have awarded more than 20 Ph.D.s or D.Sci.s in all NSF-supported fields during the combined previous two academic years. Additionally, any organization that awards Ph.D. or D.Sci. in NSF-supported fields is considered to be a Ph.D.-granting institution if the only degrees it awards in NSF-supported fields are post-Bachelor's degrees. → Cost Sharing of MRI-eligible expenses!
- **Non-Ph.D. granting institutions of higher education** are accredited colleges and universities(including two-year community colleges) that award Associate's degrees, Bachelor's degrees, and/or Master's degrees in NSF-supported fields, but have awarded 20 or fewer Ph.D./D.Sci. degrees in all NSF-supported fields during the combined previous two academic years.
- **Non-degree granting organizations** are those that do not award Associate's degrees, Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees, and/or Ph.D.s or D.Sci.s. Non-degree-granting organizations also include institutions of higher education that award all of their degrees outside of NSF-supported fields. → Cost Sharing of MRI-eligible expenses!



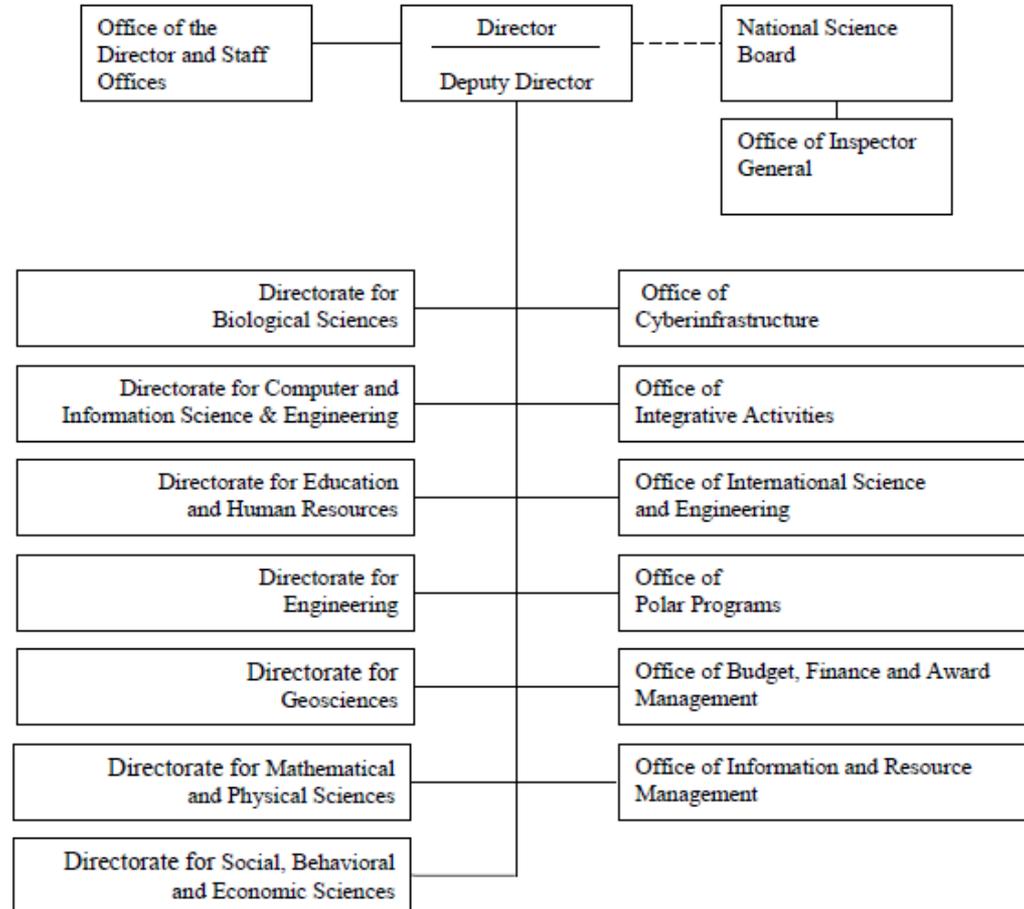
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# Finding a Home at NSF

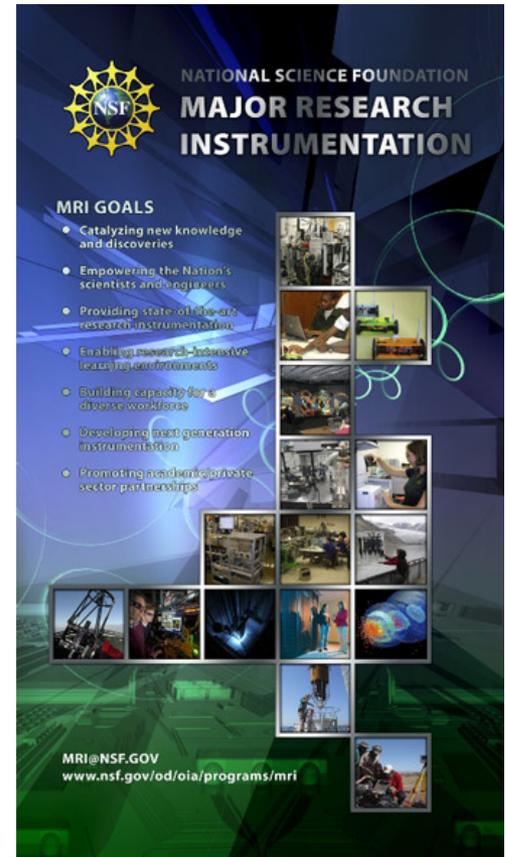
**Directorates →**  
**Colleges**  
**Divisions →**  
**Departments**

- **Proposals come to OIA, and are checked for compliance.**
- **Proposals are distributed to Divisions based largely on PI-selected choice.**
- **MRI funds allocated to Divisions based on \$\$ value of proposals they are reviewing w/ reserve to support large awards.**
- **Divisions may co-review/fund MRI proposals.**
- **Award/decline decisions made by Divisions**



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# What Makes an MRI Proposal Fail, What Makes an MRI Proposal Competitive?



**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
MAJOR RESEARCH  
INSTRUMENTATION**

**MRI GOALS**

- Catalyzing new knowledge and discoveries
- Empowering the Nation's scientists and engineers
- Providing state-of-the-art research instrumentation
- Enabling research-intensive learning environments
- Building capacity for a diverse workforce
- Developing next generation instrumentation
- Promoting academic-private sector partnerships

MRI@NSF.GOV  
[www.nsf.gov/od/oi/programs/mri](http://www.nsf.gov/od/oi/programs/mri)

The poster features a grid of 18 small images showing various scientific instruments and researchers in use, set against a background of blue and green abstract patterns.



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# *Understand NSF Before Considering a Proposal!*

- Know the NSF Website ([www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov))
- Search Recent Awards ([www.nsf.gov/awardsearch](http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch))
- Identify appropriate funding opportunities ([www.nsf.gov/funding](http://www.nsf.gov/funding))
- Talk to Program Officers in Divisions where you fit
- Know the “Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide” ([http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=papp](http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=papp))
- Know program purpose, goals, and requirements
- Serve as a panelist!
- Talk to successful PIs
- Know NSF’s role compared to other Federal agencies



# MRI Proposals

## *What makes an MRI proposal fail before it is reviewed?*

- Proposals that do not include a properly formatted budget table in the budget justification;
- Proposals describing activities that fall outside of the scope of those supported by the MRI program;
- Proposals describing activities that fall outside of the scope of those supported by NSF;
- Proposals that do not adequately distinguish development efforts from acquisition or basic research efforts;
- Proposals that exceed an organization's submission limit;
- Proposals that represent standard research projects appropriate for submission to regular NSF programs;
- Proposals to place an instrument at a facility of another Federal agency or one of their FFRDCs that are not submitted by consortia (rare);
- Proposals that augment the scope of facilities receiving funding through the NSF Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction (MREFC) account (rare);
- Proposals that do not indicate appropriate levels of cost-sharing;
- Proposals that do not contain required documentation demonstrating organizational commitment and information on MRI awards to the organization in the past five years or that do not contain Results from Prior MRI Support in the Project Description;
- Proposals that do not contain required supplemental documentation (e.g [Data Management Plan](#) and, if applicable, a [Post-Doc Mentoring Plan](#))
- Proposals that contain supplemental documentation not required and/or encouraged by the MRI program;
- Proposals that do not conform to font, margin & page limitations;
- Proposals that do not separately address the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts in the Project Summary and Project Description;
- Proposals that do not contain a Management Plan in the Project Description.

**There is a checklist in the solicitation – use it!**

Proposals with the above issues are subject to *Return Without Review!*



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# MRI Proposals

## ***What makes an MRI proposal fail during the review?***

- Proposals that do not demonstrate adequate institutional commitment;
- Proposals that do not adequately demonstrate how and by whom the instrument will be utilized, operated and maintained – i.e., proposals without a strong management plan;
- Proposals that do not demonstrate shared-use within the institution, and/or among institutions;
- Proposals that request instrumentation that is otherwise reasonably accessible;
- Proposals that do not adequately match the budget to the scope of the project;
- Proposals that do not describe research training, particularly for groups underrepresented in science & engineering or persons with disabilities.

***These proposals will be not review well!***

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# MRI Proposals

*So what makes an MRI proposal competitive?*

*Note the term “competitive”, rather than “successful”!*

*Due (in part) to budget limitations, 20-25% of submitted proposals are funded*

***Good proposals may not get funded***



# MRI Proposals

*So what makes an MRI proposal competitive?*

***An obvious first step is to avoid the pitfalls already mentioned!***



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# MRI Proposals

## *So what makes an MRI proposal competitive?*

### Build your case on its merits

What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?

What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?

- Describe (enthusiastically) compelling research / research training activities to be undertaken with the instrument. *Buy/Build it and they will come is not a good reason...*
- Demonstrate how your activities will make meaningful contributions within and across disciplines in both research and research training. *We are the ones best able/positioned to do this work!*
- Establishing a *need* is usually not enough. *What makes you unique?*
- Match your proposed effort to the mission of your institution and describe it in that context. *MRI awards build institutional capacity...*



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# MRI Proposals

## *Some Additional Thoughts...*

- Demonstrate appropriate leadership and commitment to bring the project to completion. *Being a good research scientist is one thing, being a good manager is quite another...*
- How would the project enable the integration of research and education? *MRI is a Research and Research Training program.*
- How would the project enable integrating diversity into NSF programs, projects, and activities? *Saying it will is not enough!*
- Ask for what you need, no more no less. *Bells and whistles are nice, but..*
- Avoiding pitfalls (*i.e.*, “Don’t Do This”) will not guarantee a competitive proposal. *So your proposal is technically flawless but is it compelling?*

*The “opposite” of “Don’t Do This” is a vast range of possible approaches, strategies, and designs for your proposal.*



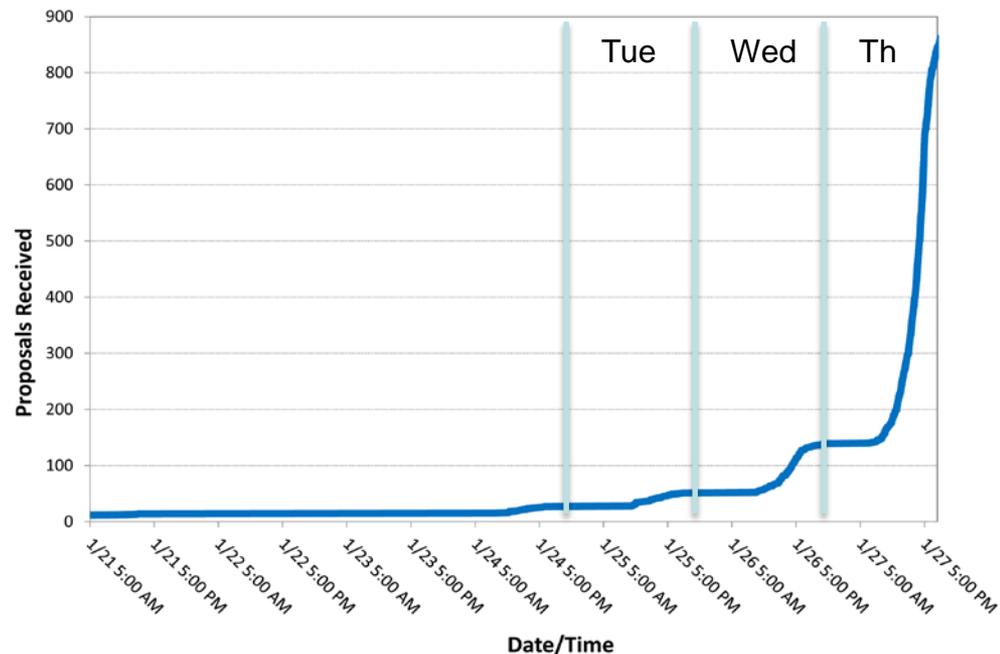
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# Important Takeaway

***Submit early and check that what was received at NSF is what you intended to submit!***

***You can always revise and resubmit proposals prior to the deadline, but not afterwards!***

**FY2011 MRI Proposal Deadline: 01/27/2011, 5 PM Local Time**



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# MRI Proposals

## *Some Additional Thoughts...*

### *Think like a reviewer*

- *What “story” would you want to hear?*
- *If you wonder if reviewers will have a concern, almost certainly they will!*
- *MRI, like other grants programs, is a competition – what makes your proposal stand out?*



# *Thank You!*



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