NSF Grants Conference
Proposal Preparation

March 19-20, 2012
Hosted by: Loyola University Chicago & Northwestern University • Evanston, IL
Panelists

Sonia Esperanca
Program Director & CAREER Coordinating Committee Member, Directorate for Geosciences, Division of Earth Sciences

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Deborah Lockhart
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Kelly Moore
Program Director, Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences, Division of Social & Economic Sciences
Topics Covered

- Find Funding Opportunities
- Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide
- Sections of an NSF Proposal
- Proposal Development Strategies
- Support for Proposal Writing
- RAPID, EAGER & CREATIV
NSF Home Page
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What is the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide?

The Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG) contains documents relating to NSF's proposal and award process. It has been designed for use by both our customer community and NSF staff and consists of two parts:
What is the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide?

Part I is NSF’s proposal preparation and submission guidelines -- the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) and the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide.
What is the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide?

Part II is NSF’s award and administration guidelines -- the documents used to guide, manage, and monitor the award and administration of grants and cooperative agreements made by NSF.
Grant Proposal Guide

• Provides guidance for preparation and submission of proposals to NSF

• Describes process – and criteria – by which proposals will be reviewed

• Outlines reasons why a proposal may be returned without review

• Describes process for withdrawals, returns, and declinations
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What to Look For in a Program Announcement or Solicitation

• Goal of Program

• Eligibility

• Special proposal preparation and/or award requirements
Sample Cover Page of a Solicitation

ADVANCE: Increasing the Participation and Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers (ADVANCE)

PROGRAM SOLICITATION
NSF 10-593

REPLACES DOCUMENT(S):
NSF 09-504

National Science Foundation
Directorate for Education & Human Resources
Division of Human Resource Development

- Directorate for Biological Sciences
- Directorate for Computer & Information Science & Engineering
- Directorate for Engineering
- Directorate for Geosciences
- Directorate for Mathematical & Physical Sciences
- Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences
- Office of Cyberinfrastructure
- Office of International Science and Engineering

Program Solicitation Number

NSF Directorates and Offices providing funding for this opportunity
Sample Cover Page of a Solicitation

**Anticipated Type of Award:** Standard Grant or Continuing Grant or Cooperative Agreement

**Estimated Number of Awards:** 23 The total number of awards to be made under this Solicitation is estimated to be 23. NSF expects to make: approximately seven (7) Institutional Transformation five-year awards, at various award sizes; up to seven (7) IT-Catalyst awards with durations of up to two years and total budgets not exceeding a maximum of $200,000 each; and up to nine (9) PAID awards, of various durations, not exceeding a maximum of $750,000 for 5 years.

**Anticipated Funding Amount:** $12,200,000 - Pending availability of funds, NSF anticipates having approximately $12,200,000 available over the two-year fiscal period, FY 2011-FY2012, for support of the ADVANCE portfolio. Approximately $5,600,000 will be available for the FY2011 competition and approximately $6,600,000 will be available for the FY2012 competition.

**Eligibility Information**

**Organization Limit:**

None Specified

**PI Limit:**

None Specified

**Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:** 1

Proposers may submit only one Institutional Transformation proposal or one IT-Catalyst proposal. There is no limit on the number of PAID proposals that can be submitted.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per PI:**

None Specified
Sample Cover Page of a Solicitation

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Eligibility Information

Organization Limit: None Specified

PI Limit: None Specified

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization: 1

Proposers may submit only one Institutional Transformation proposal or one IT-Catalyst proposal. There is no limit on the number of PAID proposals that can be submitted.

Limit on Number of Proposals per PI: None Specified
Sample Cover Page of a Solicitation

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**Organization Limit:**

None Specified

**PI Limit:**

None Specified

**Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:** 1

Proposers may submit only one Institutional Transformation proposal or one IT-Catalyst proposal. There is no limit on the number of PAID proposals that can be submitted.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per PI:**

None Specified
Types of Proposal Submissions

No Deadlines – Proposals may be submitted at any time

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F. When to Submit Proposals

Proposers should allow adequate time for NSF review and processing of proposals (see GPG 1.4 for further information). Many NSF programs accept proposals at any time. Other programs, however, establish due dates for submission of proposals. The following types of due dates are utilized by NSF:

1. **Target dates**: dates after which proposals will still be accepted, although they may miss a particular panel or committee meeting.

2. **Deadline dates**: dates after which proposals will not be accepted for review by NSF. The deadline date will be waived only in extenuating circumstances. Such a deviation only may be authorized in accordance with GPG Chapter II.A.
Types of Proposal Submissions

Target Dates –
Talk to the Program Office if you think you might miss the date

Proposers should allow adequate time for NSF review and processing of proposals (see GPG 1.1H for further information). Many NSF programs accept proposals at any time. Other programs, however, establish due dates for submission of proposals. The following types of due dates are utilized by NSF:

1. **Target dates**: dates after which proposals will still be accepted, although they may miss a particular panel or committee meeting.

2. **Deadline dates**: dates after which proposals will not be accepted for review by NSF. The deadline date will be waived only in extenuating circumstances. Such a deviation only may be authorized in accordance with GPG Chapter II.A.
Types of Proposal Submissions

Deadline Dates – Proposals will not be accepted after this date and time (5 pm submitter’s local time)

Proposers should allow adequate time for NSF review and processing of proposals (see GPG 1.H for further information). Many NSF programs accept proposals at any time. Other programs, however, establish due dates for submission of proposals. The following types of due dates are utilized by NSF:

1. **Target dates**: dates after which proposals will still be accepted, although they may miss a particular panel or committee meeting.

2. **Deadline dates**: dates after which proposals will not be accepted for review by NSF. The deadline date will be waived only in extenuating circumstances. Such a deviation only may be authorized in accordance with GPG Chapter I.I.A.
Types of Proposal Submissions

Submission Windows – Closing date converts to a deadline date

3. **Submission windows**: designated periods of time during which proposals will be accepted for review by NSF. It is NSF’s policy that the end date of a submission window converts to, and is subject to, the same policies as a deadline date.
Types of Proposal Submissions

Letters of Intent – Enables better management of reviewers and panelists

1. Letter of Intent

Some NSF program solicitations require or request submission of a letter of intent (LOI) in advance of submission of a full proposal. A LOI is not binding. The predominant reason for its use is to help NSF program staff to gauge the size and range of the competition, enabling earlier selection and better management of reviewers and panelists. In addition, the information contained in a LOI is used to help avoid potential conflicts of interest in the review process.

A LOI normally contains the PI’s and co-PI’s names, a proposed title, a list of possible participating organizations (if applicable), and a synopsis that describes the work in sufficient detail to permit an appropriate selection of reviewers. A LOI is not externally evaluated or used to decide on funding. The requirement to submit a LOI will be identified in the program solicitation, and such letters are submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane System.
Types of Proposal Submissions

Preliminary Proposals –
Sometimes required, sometimes optional

2. Preliminary Proposal

Some NSF program solicitations require or request submission of a preliminary proposal in advance of submission of a full proposal. The two predominant reasons for requiring submission of a preliminary proposal are to:

- reduce the proposers’ unnecessary effort in proposal preparation when the chance of success is very small. This is particularly true of exploratory initiatives where the community senses that a major new direction is being identified, or competitions that will result in a small number of actual awards; and
- increase the overall quality of the full submission.
Sections of an NSF Proposal

Cover Sheet (Required)
Many of the boxes on the cover sheet are electronically prefilled as part of the FastLane login process.

Example from FastLane
Sections of an NSF Proposal

Project Summary (Required)
The proposal must contain a summary of the proposed activity suitable for publication, not more than one page in length.

Proposals that do not separately address both merit review criteria will be returned without review.

Text from the GPG
Sections of an NSF Proposal

Project Description (Required)
The two merit review criteria should be addressed with the project description, which, unless otherwise specified in the program solicitation, may not exceed 15 pages.

Text from the GPG
Sections of an NSF Proposal

References Cited (Required)
Reference information is required, and proposers must follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials.

Text from the GPG

References Cited
Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the title of the publication, the journal name, volume number, issue number, issue date, and page numbers. If the document is available electronically, the website address also should be identified. Proposers must be especially careful to follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials when preparing any section of the proposal. When there is no established page number for a reference, this section must include a parenthetical citation outside of the 15-page Project Description.

a) Acknowledgments
Acknowledgments are required. They must include the names of all persons, institutions, organizations, or services involved in the research effort. The acknowledgments section should not be used for cost-sharing reporting.Acknowledgments must be limited to the following:

1. Acknowledgments may not be used to legally commit the proposer or the awardee to specific obligations.
2. Acknowledgments may not be used to acknowledge any person who has not given permission to be acknowledged.
3. Acknowledgments may not be used to acknowledge any person who has not given permission to be acknowledged.
4. Acknowledgments may not be used to acknowledge any person who has not given permission to be acknowledged.
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19. Acknowledgments may not be used to acknowledge any person who has not given permission to be acknowledged.
20. Acknowledgments may not be used to acknowledge any person who has not given permission to be acknowledged.

References Cited

References Cited (Required)
Reference information is required, and proposers must follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials.
Biographical Sketches (Required)

Biographical sketches are required for all senior project personnel and must not exceed two pages in length, per individual.

Text from the GPG
Sections of an NSF Proposal

Budget (Required)
Each proposal must contain a budget for each year of support requested. The budget justification should be no more than three pages for all years of the project combined.

Example from FastLane
Budgetary Guidelines

Information regarding budgetary guidelines can be found in both the GPG and in the Award & Administration Guide (AAG), as well as NSF program solicitations.

Amounts should be:
- Realistic and reasonable
- Well-justified and should establish need
- Consistent with program guidelines

Eligible costs consist of:
- Personnel
- Equipment
- Travel
- Participant support
- Other direct costs (e.g., subawards, consultant services, computer services, and publications costs)
NSF Cost Sharing Policy

- Inclusion of voluntary *committed* cost sharing is prohibited in solicited & unsolicited proposals.
  - To be considered voluntary committed cost sharing, the cost sharing must meet all of the standards of 2 CFR § 215.23, to include identification of cost sharing on the NSF budget.
  - Line M will be “grayed out” in FastLane.
- Organizations may, at their own discretion, continue to contribute any amount of voluntary uncommitted cost sharing to NSF-sponsored projects.
Sections of an NSF Proposal

Current & Pending Support (Required)
This section of the proposal calls for information on all current and pending support for ongoing projects and proposals.

*Example from FastLane*
Sections of an NSF Proposal

Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources (Required)
This section of the proposal is used to assess the adequacy of the organizational resources available to perform the effort proposed.

*Example from FastLane*
Sections of an NSF Proposal

Special Information and Supplementary Documentation

This segment should alert NSF officials to unusual circumstances that require special handling; more information can be found in the GPG Chapter II.C.2.j.

Text from the GPG

Costs of entertainment, amusement, diversion, and social activities and any costs directly associated with such activities (such as tickets to shows or sporting events, meals, lodging, incidentals, transportation, and gratuities) are unallowable. Travel, meal, and travel expenses of grantee employees who are not on travel status are unallowable. Costs of employees on travel status are limited to those allowed under the governing cost principles for travel expenses.

(b) Meals and Coffee Breaks

No NSF funds may be spent on meals or coffee breaks for informal meetings of an organization or any of its components, including, but not limited to, laboratories, departments, and centers.

(c) Alcoholic Beverages

No NSF funds may be spent on alcoholic beverages.

Additional information on charging certain types of costs generally associated with meetings and conferences to NSF awards is available in AAG Chapter VI.5.

h. Current and Pending Support

This section of the proposal calls for required information on all current and pending support for ongoing projects and proposals, including current funding in the case of continuing grants. All current project support from whatever source (e.g., Federal, State, local, or foreign government agencies, private foundations, trade associations or other organizations) must be listed, including all other projects of activities requiring a portion of time of the PI and other senior personnel must be included, even if they receive no salary support from the project(s). The total award amount for the entire award period committed (including indirect costs) must be shown as well as the number of personnel-months per year to be devoted to the project, regardless of sources of support. Similar information must be provided for all proposals already submitted or submitted concurrently to other possible sponsors, including NSF. Consultant submission of a proposal to other organizations will not prejudice its review by NSF. Note the Biological Sciences Division’s exception to this policy, however, delineated in GPG Chapter I.D.2.

If the project now being submitted has been funded previously by a source other than NSF, the information requested in the paragraph above must be furnished for the last period of funding.

i. Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources

This section of the proposal is used to assess the adequacy of the organizational resources available to perform the work proposed. Applicants should describe only those resources that are directly applicable. Applicants should include an aggregated description of the resources that the organization will provide to the project, should it be funded. Such information must be provided in this section. In lieu of other parts of the proposal (e.g., budget justification, project description), the description should be narrative in nature and must not include any quantitative financial information. Reviewers will evaluate the information during the merit review process and the cognizant NSF Program Officer will review it for programmatic and technical sufficiency.

Although these resources are not considered cost sharing, as defined in 2 CFR § 215.35 (OMB Circular A-110), the Foundation does expect that the resources identified in the Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources section will be provided, or made available, should the proposal be funded. AAG Chapter 5.B.1 specifies procedure for use by the awardees when there are postaward changes to objectives, scope or methodology.

j. Special Information and Supplementary Documentation

Except as specified below, special information and supplementary documentation must be included as part of the project description (part of the budget justification). It is important in determining the quality of the proposal work information submitted in the following areas is not considered part of the 15-page project description limitation. This special information and supplementary documentation section also is not considered an appendix. Specific guidance on the need for additional documentation may be obtained from the organization’s sponsored projects office or in the references cited below.

Grant Proposal Guide 11-18
NSF 11-15
Special Information and Supplementary Documentation

- Postdoctoral Mentoring Plans
- Data Management Plans
- Letters of Support versus Letters of Commitment
Mentoring for Postdoctoral Researchers

- Proposals that include funding to support postdoctoral researchers must include a description of the mentoring activities that will be provided for such individuals.

- Proposed mentoring activities will be evaluated as part of the merit review process, under NSF’s broader impacts merit review criterion.
Mentoring for Postdoctoral Researchers

- Mentoring activities may include:
  - Providing career counseling, training in the preparation of grant proposals, or training in responsible professional practices
  - Developing publications and presentations
  - Offering guidance on techniques to improve teaching and mentoring skills
  - Providing counseling on how to effectively collaborate with researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary areas
Mentoring for Postdoctoral Researchers

- Proposals that identify a postdoc on the budget but do not include a maximum one-page mentoring plan as a supplementary document will be prevented from submission in FastLane.

- For collaborative proposals, the lead organization must submit a mentoring plan for all postdoctoral researchers supported under the entire collaborative project.
Data Management Plan Requirements

• All proposals are required to include, as a supplementary doc, a data management plan of up to two pages.

• Plan should describe how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on dissemination and sharing of research results.

• A valid Data Management Plan may include only the statement that no detailed plan is needed, as long a clear justification is provided.

• Plan will be reviewed as part of the intellectual merit and/or broader impacts of the proposal.
Data Management Plan Requirements

Dissemination and Sharing of Research Results

NSF Data Sharing Policy

Investigators are expected to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the primary data, samples, physical collections, and other supporting materials created or gathered in the course of work under NSF grants. Investigators are expected to encourage and facilitate such sharing. See Award & Administration Guide (AAG) Chapter 5.1-D.4.

NSF Data Management Plan Requirements

Proposals submitted or due on or after January 18, 2011, must include a supplementary document of no more than two pages titled "Data Management Plan." This supplementary document should describe how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results. See Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) Chapter 9.10 for full policy implementation.

Requirements by Directorate, Office, Division, Program, or other NSF Unit

Links to data management requirements and plans relevant to specific Directories, Offices, Divisions, Programs, or other NSF units, are provided below. If guidance specific to the program is not provided, then the requirements established in Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) Chapter 5.1-D.4.1, apply.

Please note that if a specific program solicitation provides guidance on preparation of data management plans, such guidance must be followed.

- Engineering Directorate (ENG)
- Directorate-wide Guidance
- Geosciences Directorate (GEO)
- Division of Earth Sciences
- Integrated Ocean Drilling Program
- Division of Ocean Sciences
- Mathematical and Physical Sciences Directorate (MPS)
- Division of Astronomical Sciences
- Division of Chemistry
- Division of Materials Research
- Division of Mathematical Sciences
- Division of Physics
- Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE)
- Directorate-wide Guidance

Data Management & Sharing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - updated November 30, 2010

Proposal Development Strategies

Key Questions for Prospective Investigators

• What do you intend to do?
• Why do you want to do it?
• How do you plan to do it?
• How will you know if you succeed?
• What benefits would accrue if the project is successful?

These questions apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions.
Proposal Development Strategies for Individual Investigators

- Determine your long-term research and education goals
- Develop your bright idea
  - Survey the literature
  - Contact other investigators currently working on the same subject
  - Prepare a brief concept paper
  - Discuss with your colleagues and mentors
- Read solicitation instructions carefully
Proposal Development Strategies for Individual Investigators

- Prepare to carry out your project
  - Determine available resources
  - Realistically assess your needs
  - Develop preliminary data
  - Present to your colleagues, mentors, and students
- Determine possible funding sources
- Understand the ground rules
Find Support for Proposal Writing

- NSF Publications
  - Program announcements and solicitations
  - Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide
- Program Web pages
- Funded project abstracts
- Reports and special publications

- Targeted workshops
- Program Officers
- Mentors on Campus
- Former panelists
- Sponsored Research Office
- Successful proposals

Finally, serving as a reviewer is helpful as well!
Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID)

The RAPID funding mechanism is for projects having a severe urgency with regard to availability of, or access to data, facilities or specialized equipment, including quick-response research on natural or anthropogenic disasters and similar unanticipated events.
RAPID

• Requests may be for up to $200K and for one year of duration
• The project description is expected to be brief; no more than five pages
• Only internal merit review is required for RAPID proposals. Under rare circumstances, Program Officers may elect to obtain external reviews. If external merit review is to be used, then the PI will be informed
EArly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER)

• The EAGER funding mechanism may be used to support exploratory work in its early stages on untested, but potentially transformative, research ideas or approaches.

• This work is considered especially "high risk-high payoff" because it involves radically different approaches, applies new expertise, or engages novel disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspectives.
EAGER

• Requests may be for up to $300K and for two years of duration

• Only internal merit review is required. Under rare circumstances, Program Officers may elect to obtain external reviews. If external merit review is to be used, then the PI will be informed

• No-cost extensions, and requests for supplemental funding may be requested but are subject to full external merit review
Creative Research Awards for Transformative Interdisciplinary Ventures (CREATIV)

- Pilot grant mechanism under the Integrated NSF Support Promoting Interdisciplinary Research and Education (INSPIRE) initiative, to support bold interdisciplinary projects in all NSF-supported areas of science, engineering, and education research.

- Not intended to handle proposals that are more appropriate for other existing mechanisms
CREATIV

• Requests may be up to $1M and for 5 years of duration

• Must be substantially co-funded by at least two intellectually distinct NSF divisions or programs

• Only internal merit review is required. Under rare circumstances, Program Officers may elect to obtain external reviews. If external merit review is to be used, then the PI will be informed

• No-cost extensions, and requests for supplemental funding may be requested and will processed in accordance with standard NSF policies and procedures

• Dear Colleague Letter (NSF 12-011) and FAQs (NSF 12-012)

• Deadline is June 15, 2012
For More Information

Ask Early, Ask Often!

nsf.gov/staff
nsf.gov/staff/orglist.jsp
nsf.gov/about/career_opps/rotators/index.jsp