How to Prepare an NSF Proposal: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

NCURA National Meeting

August 8, 2016

Speaker

- Jean Feldman
  - Head, Policy Office
  - Division of Institution & Award Support
  - Office of Budget, Finance & Award Management
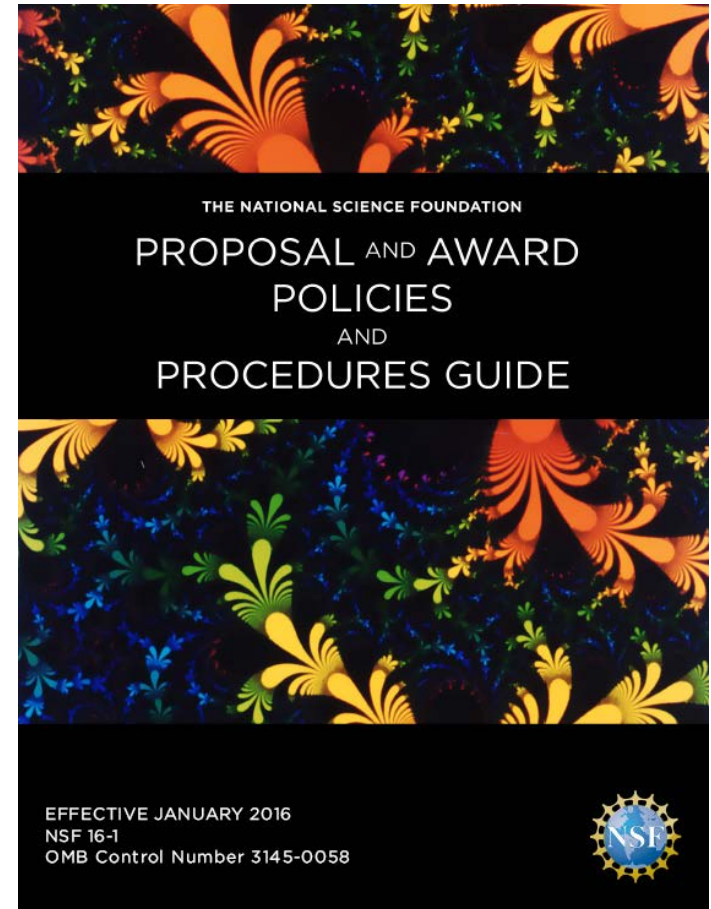 - 703.292.8243
  - jfeldman@nsf.gov

Topics Covered

- Funding Opportunities

- Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide

- Types of Proposal Submissions

- Types of Funding Mechanisms

- Sections of an NSF Proposal

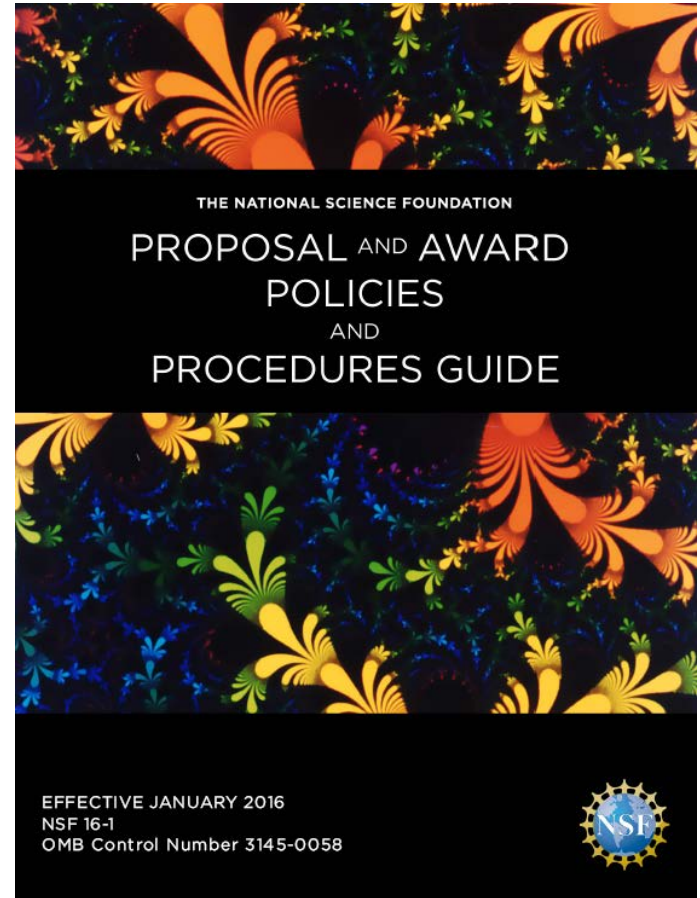# What is the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide?

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:

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

PROPOSAL AND AWARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES GUIDE

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2016
NSF 16-1
OMB Control Number 3145-0058

What is the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide? (Cont'd)

Part I is NSF's proposal preparation and submission guidelines -- the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) & the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide.
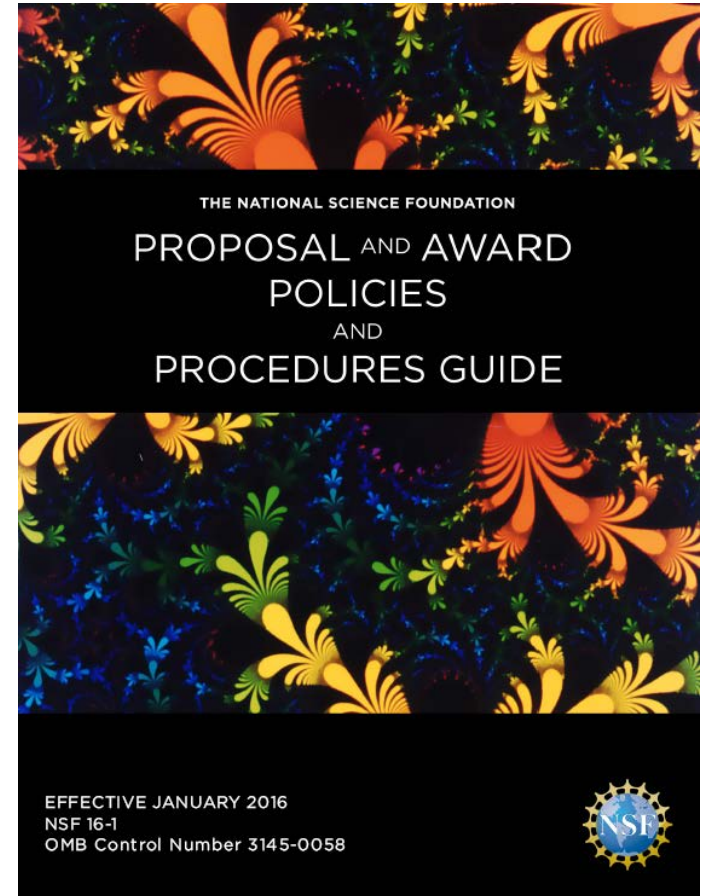
Part II is NSF's award and administration guidelines -- the documents used to guide, manage, and monitor the award and administration of grants and cooperative agreements made by NSF.

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

PROPOSAL AND AWARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES GUIDE

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2016
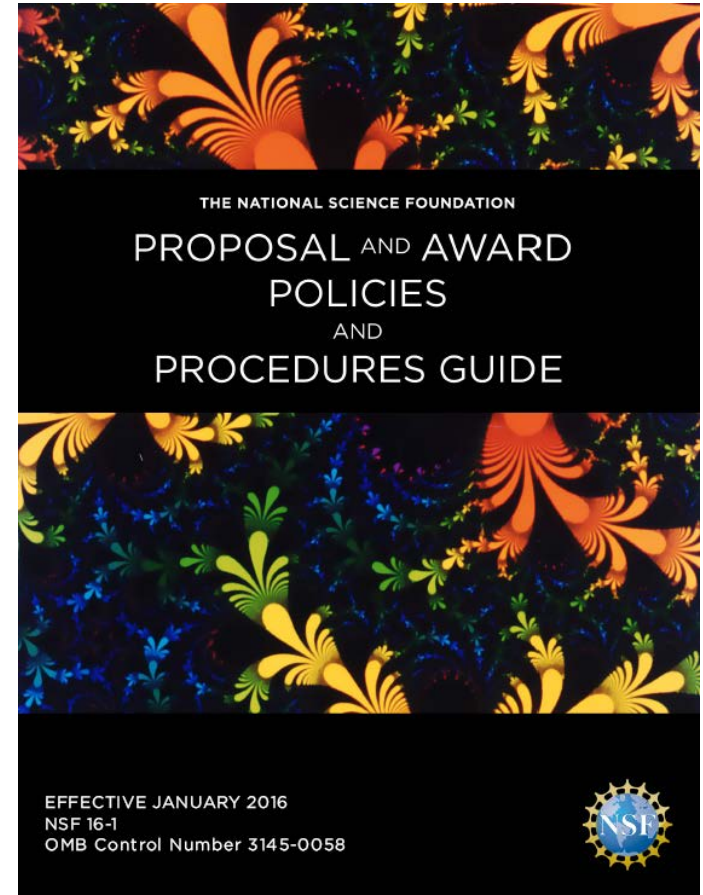NSF 16-1
OMB Control Number 3145-0058

Part I of the PAPPG

- 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 not be accepted or may be returned without review

- Describes process for withdrawals, returns, and declinations

- Describes the NSF Reconsideration Process

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

PROPOSAL AND AWARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES GUIDE

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Part II of the PAPPG

- Provides information on grantee responsibilities upon acceptance of NSF awards
- Provides guidance on obtaining additional funding support to existing awards
- Provides policies for monitoring and reporting on project performance
- Describes process for grantee notifications to NSF and requests to NSF for approval
- Provides grantee standards for financial management and allowability of costs
- Provides information on other federal-wide and NSF-specific post-award requirements

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

PROPOSAL AND AWARD
POLICIES
AND
PROCEDURES GUIDE

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Types of Funding Opportunities

Program Descriptions

Proposals for a **Program Description** must follow the instructions in the GPG.

Program Announcements

Proposals for a **Program Announcement** must follow the instructions in the GPG.

Program Solicitations

Proposals must follow the instructions in the **Program Solicitation**; the instructions in the GPG apply unless otherwise stated in the solicitation.

Dear Colleague Letters

Dear Colleague Letters are notifications of opportunities or special competitions for supplements to existing NSF awards.

What to Look For in a Program Announcement or Solicitation

- Goal of Program

- Eligibility

- Special proposal preparation and/or award requirements

Navigating a Program Description

Division of Mathematical Sciences

Algebra and Number Theory

CONTACTS

Name	Email	Phone	Room
Tie Luo	tluo@nsf.gov	(703) 292-8448	1025 N
J. Matthew Douglass	mdouglas@nsf.gov	(703) 292-2467	1025 N
Andrew Pollington	adpollin@nsf.gov	(703) 292-4878	1025 N
Victoria Powers	vpowers@nsf.gov	(703) 292-2113	1025 N

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Apply to PD 10-1264 as follows:

For full proposals submitted via FastLane: standard *Grant Proposal Guide* proposal preparation guidelines apply.
For full proposals submitted via Grants.gov: the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide; A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov Guidelines* applies. (Note: The *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide)

Important Information for Proposers

A revised version of the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) (NSF 15-1), is effective for proposals submitted, or due, on or after December 26, 2014. The PAPPG is consistent with, and, implements the new Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) (2 CFR § 200). Please be advised that the guidelines contained in NSF 15-1 apply to proposals submitted in response to this funding opportunity.

DUE DATES

Full Proposal Target Date: October 9, 2015
    Second Friday of October
    Second Friday in October, Annually Thereafter

Research proposals (as opposed to conference proposals) are expected to be submitted by the target date. An extension may be granted under unusual extenuating circumstances, provided that approval is obtained from the cognizant Program Director prior to the target date.

SYNOPSIS

The Algebra and Number Theory program supports research in algebra, algebraic and arithmetic geometry, number theory, and representation theory.

Conferences

Principal Investigators should carefully read the program solicitation "Conferences and Workshops in the Mathematical Sciences" (link below) to obtain important information regarding the substance of proposals for conferences, workshops, summer/winter schools, and similar activities.

For conference proposals with budgets not exceeding $50,000, which in accordance with NSF policy can be reviewed internally at NSF, the following target dates are in effect: For an event that will take place at some time prior to October 1 during a given year, the proposal should be submitted in October of the previous year. For an event that will occur in the period October 1 through December 31 of a given year, the proposal should be submitted in May of that year. A conference proposal with a budget request exceeding $50,000 should be submitted roughly seven months before the event is scheduled to take place, in order to allow time for external review.

RELATED PROGRAMS

Focused Research Groups in the Mathematical Sciences
Research Training Groups in the Mathematical Sciences
Faculty Early Career Development Program
Mathematical Sciences Postdoctoral Research Fellowships
NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program

RELATED URLS

Conferences and Workshops in the Mathematical Sciences

THIS PROGRAM IS PART OF

Disciplinary Research Programs

What Has Been Funded (Recent Awards Made Through This Program, with Abstracts)

Map of Recent Awards Made Through This Program

News

NSF

Navigating a Program Solicitation

Enhancing Access to the Radio Spectrum (EARS)

PROGRAM SOLICITATION
NSF 15-550

REPLACES DOCUMENT(S):
NSF 14-529   ←

National Science Foundation

Directorate for Mathematical & Physical Sciences
  Division of Astronomical Sciences

Directorate for Engineering
  Division of Electrical, Communications and Cyber Systems

Directorate for Computer & Information Science & Engineering
  Division of Computer and Network Systems

Full Proposal Deadline(s) (due by 5 p.m. proposer's local time):

June 02, 2015   ←

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND REVISION NOTES

Any proposal submitted in response to this solicitation should be submitted in accordance with the revised NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG) (NSF 15-1), which is effective for proposals submitted, or due, on or after December 26, 2014. The PAPPG is consistent with, and, implements the new Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) (2 CFR § 200).

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS   ←

General Information

Program Title:

Enhancing Access to the Radio Spectrum (EARS)
Opportunities for interdisciplinary research that increases the efficiency of the radio spectrum, expanding the access to wireless-enabled services for all Americans.

Synopsis of Program:

The National Science Foundation's Directorates for Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS), Engineering (ENG), and Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) are coordinating efforts to identify bold new concepts with the potential to

Award Information   ←

Anticipated Type of Award: Standard Grant

Estimated Number of Awards: 20 to 25

Each proposal may request up to $750,000 in total funding over a period of up to three years.

Anticipated Funding Amount: $15,000,000

Eligibility Information   ←

Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Universities and Colleges - Universities and two- and four-year colleges (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in, the US acting on behalf of their faculty members. Such organizations also are referred to as academic institutions.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities.

Who May Serve as PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI:

A proposer may be a Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI on up to two proposals.

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions   ←

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

- **Letters of Intent:** Not required

- **Preliminary Proposal Submission:** Not required

- **Full Proposals:**
  - Full Proposals submitted via FastLane: NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide, Part I: Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) Guidelines apply. The complete

When to Submit Proposals

No Deadlines – Proposals may be submitted at any time

F. When to Submit Proposals

Proposers should allow adequate time for NSF review and processing of proposals (see GPG Chapter I.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 be returned without 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.

When to Submit Proposals

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

F. When to Submit Proposals

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When to Submit Proposals

Deadline Dates – Proposals will not be accepted after this date and time (5 p.m. submitter's local time)

F. When to Submit Proposals

Proposers should allow adequate time for NSF review and processing of proposals (see GPG Chapter I.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:

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Procedures for Natural & Anthropogenic Events

- Proposers should contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer in the Division/Office to which they intend to submit their proposal and request authorization to submit a proposal after the deadline date.

- Proposers also must check the "Special Exception to the Deadline Date Policy" box on the NSF Cover Sheet, indicating NSF approval has been obtained.

- If available, written approval from the cognizant NSF Program Officer should be uploaded with the proposal as a Single Copy Document in FastLane. Proposers should then follow the written or verbal guidance provided by the cognizant NSF Program Officer.

When to Submit Proposals

Submission Windows – Closing date converts to a deadline date

Types of Proposal Submissions

Letters of Intent –
Enables better management of reviewers and panelists

1. Letters of Intent

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

An LOI normally contains the Principal Investigator's (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. An LOI is not externally evaluated or used to decide on funding. The requirement to submit an LOI will be identified in the program solicitation, and such letters are submitted electronically to NSF. Failure to submit a required LOI identified in a program solicitation will result in a full proposal not being accepted or returned without review.

Types of Proposal Submissions

Preliminary Proposals – Sometimes required, sometimes optional

2.   Preliminary Proposals

Some NSF program solicitations require or request submission of a preliminary proposal in advance of submission of a full proposal. The three 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 when the community senses that a major new direction is being identified, or competitions that will result in a small number of awards;

- increase the overall quality of the full submission; and

- assist NSF program staff in managing the review process and in the selection of reviewers.

Types of Proposals

- Research
- RAPID
- EAGER
- Ideas Lab
- Equipment
- Conference
- International Travel
- Fellowship
- Facility/Center

Proposals Not Accepted

- Proposals that do not contain the following required sections may not be accepted by FastLane:
  - Project Summary
  - Project Description
  - References Cited
  - Biographical Sketch(es)
  - Budget
  - Budget Justification
  - Current and Pending Support
  - Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources
  - Data Management Plan
  - Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable)

Single Copy Documents

- Some proposal documents are for "NSF Use Only" and are not provided to reviewers.

    - Demographic information about PIs and co-PIs

    - Authorization to deviate from proposal preparation requirements

    - List of suggested reviewers to include or not to include

    - Proprietary or privileged information

    - Proposal certifications

    - Collaborators & Other Affiliations Information

Sections of an NSF Proposal

Cover Sheet

Many of the boxes on the cover sheet are electronically prefilled as part of the FastLane login process.

Example from FastLane

NSF Merit Review Criteria

- Intellectual Merit: The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and

- Broader Impacts: The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to:

> a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and

> b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?

2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?

3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?

4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?

5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

Sections of an NSF Proposal

Project Summary

Text boxes must contain an Overview and Statements on Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts.

Proposals that do not separately address the Overview and both merit review criteria in text boxes will not be accepted by FastLane.

Project summaries with special characters must be uploaded as a PDF document.

Text from the GPG

- Beginning Investigator (See GPG I.G.2) (Note: this box is applicable only to proposals submitted to the Biological Sciences Directorate.)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (See GPG II.C.1.e)
- Proprietary or Privileged Information (See GPG I.D.3 & II.C.1.d)
- Historic Places (See GPG II.C.2.j)
- Vertebrate Animals[15] (See GPG II.D.7)
- Human Subjects[16] (See GPG II.D.8)
- International Activities Country Name(s) -- For each proposal that describes an international activity, proposers should list the primary countries involved. A maximum of five countries may be listed. An international activity is defined as research, training, and/or education carried out in cooperation with foreign counterparts either overseas or in the US using virtual technologies. Proposers also should enter the country/countries with which project participants will engage and/or travel to attend international conferences. If the specific location of the international conference is not known at the time of the proposal submission, proposers should enter "Worldwide". (See GPG II.C.2.j)

b. Project Summary

Each proposal must contain a summary of the proposed project not more than one page in length. The Project Summary consists of an overview, a statement on the intellectual merit of the proposed activity, and a statement on the broader impacts of the proposed activity.

The overview includes a description of the activity that would result if the proposal were funded and a statement of objectives and methods to be employed. The statement on intellectual merit should describe the potential of the proposed activity to advance knowledge. The statement on broader impacts should describe the potential of the proposed activity to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The Project Summary should be written in the third person, informative to other persons working in the same or related fields, and, insofar as possible, understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader. It should not be an abstract of the proposal.

The Project Summary may **ONLY** be uploaded as a Supplementary Document if use of special characters is necessary. Such Project Summaries must be formatted with separate headings for Overview, Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. Failure to include these headings will result in the proposal being returned without review.

c. Table of Contents

A Table of Contents is automatically generated for the proposal. The proposer cannot edit this form.

d. Project Description (including Results from Prior NSF Support)

(i) Content

The Project Description should provide a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and must include the objectives for the period of the proposed work and expected significance; the relationship of this work to the present state of knowledge in the field, as well as to work in progress by the PI under other support.

The Project Description should outline the general plan of work, including the broad design of activities to be undertaken, and, where appropriate, provide a clear description of experimental methods and procedures. Proposers should address what they want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified. These issues apply to both the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions.

[15] If the proposal includes use of vertebrate animals, supplemental information is required. See GPG Chapter II.D.7 for additional information.
[16] If the proposal includes use of human subjects, supplemental information is required. See GPG Chapter II.D.8 for additional information.

Grant Proposal Guide   II-9   **NSF 16-1**

Sections of an NSF Proposal

Project Description

Proposers should address what they want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful.

A separate section within the narrative must include a discussion of the broader impacts of the proposed activities

Text from the GPG

- Beginning Investigator (See GPG I.G.2) (Note: this box is applicable only to proposals submitted to the Biological Sciences Directorate.)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (See GPG II.C.1.e)
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[16] If the proposal includes use of human subjects, supplemental information is required. See GPG Chapter II.D.8 for additional information.

Sections of an NSF Proposal

Results from Prior NSF Support

If any PI or co-PI identified on the project has received NSF funding with a start date in the past five years (including any current funding and no-cost extensions), information on the award is required for each PI and co-PI, regardless of whether the support was directly related to the project or not. Funding includes not just salary support, but any funding awarded by NSF.

Text from the GPG

The Project Description must contain, as a separate section within the narrative, a section labeled "Broader Impacts". This section should provide a discussion of the broader impacts of the proposed activities. Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to the achievement of societally relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); improved STEM education and educator development at any level; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the US; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

Plans for data management and sharing of the products of research, including preservation, documentation, and sharing of data, samples, physical collections, curriculum materials and other related research and education products should be described in the Special Information and Supplementary Documentation section of the proposal (see GPG Chapter II.C.2.j for additional instructions for preparation of this section).

(ii)   Page Limitations and Inclusion of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) within the Project Description

Brevity will assist reviewers and Foundation staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description (including Results from Prior NSF Support, which is limited to five pages) **may not exceed 15 pages.** Visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation. PIs are cautioned that the Project Description must be self-contained and that URLs **must not** be used because: 1) the information could circumvent page limitations; 2) the reviewers are under no obligation to view the sites; and 3) the sites could be altered or deleted between the time of submission and the time of review.

Conformance to the 15-page limit will be strictly enforced and may not be exceeded unless a deviation has been specifically authorized. (GPG Chapter II.A contains information on deviations.)

(iii)   Results from Prior NSF Support

If any PI or co-PI identified on the proposal has received NSF funding with a start date[17] in the past five years (including any current funding and no cost extensions), information on the award is required for each PI and co-PI, regardless of whether the support was directly related to the proposal or not. In cases where the PI or co-PI has received more than one award (excluding amendments to existing awards), they need only report on the one award most closely related to the proposal. Funding includes not just salary support, but any funding awarded by NSF. NSF awards such as standard or continuing grants, Graduate Research Fellowship, Major Research Instrumentation, travel, conference, and center awards, etc., are subject to this requirement.

The following information must be provided:

(a)   the NSF award number, amount and period of support;

(b)   the title of the project;

(c)   a summary of the results of the completed work, including accomplishments, supported by the award. The results must be separately described under two distinct headings: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts;

(d)   a listing of the publications resulting from the NSF award (a complete bibliographic citation for each publication must be provided either in this section or in the References Cited section of the proposal); if none, state "No publications were produced under this award."

[17] Previously referred to as the effective date.

Sections of an NSF Proposal

References Cited

Reference information is required, and proposers must follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials.

Text from the GPG

(e)   evidence of research products and their availability, including, but not limited to: data, publications, samples, physical collections, software, and models, as described in any Data Management Plan; and

(f)   if the proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

Reviewers will be asked to comment on the quality of the prior work described in this section of the proposal. Note that the proposal may contain up to five pages to describe the results. Results may be summarized in fewer than five pages, which would give the balance of the 15 pages for the Project Description.

(iv)   Unfunded Collaborations

Any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal (see GPG Chapter II.C.2.i) and documented in a letter of collaboration from each collaborator. Such letters should be provided in the supplementary documentation section of the FastLane Proposal Preparation Module and follow the format instructions specified in GPG Chapter II.C.2.j. Collaborative activities that are identified in the budget should follow the instructions in GPG Chapter II.D.

(v)   Group Proposals

NSF encourages submission of proposals by groups of investigators; often these are submitted to carry out interdisciplinary projects. Unless stipulated in a specific program solicitation, however, such proposals will be subject to the 15-page Project Description limitation established in Section (ii) above. PIs who wish to exceed the established page limitations for the Project Description must request and receive a deviation in advance of proposal submission. (GPG Chapter II.A contains information on deviations.)

(vi)   Proposals for Renewed Support

See GPG Chapter V for guidance on preparation of renewal proposals.

e.   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 article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. (See also GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.(iii)(d)) If the proposer has a website address readily available, that information should be included in the citation. It is not NSF's intent, however, to place an undue burden on proposers to search for the URL of every referenced publication. Therefore, inclusion of a website address is optional. A proposal that includes reference citation(s) that do not specify a URL is not considered to be in violation of NSF proposal preparation guidelines and the proposal will still be reviewed.

Proposers must be especially careful to follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the proposal. While there is no established page limitation for the references, this section must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the 15-page Project Description.

f.   Biographical Sketch(es)

(i)   Senior Personnel

A biographical sketch (limited to two pages) is required for each individual identified as senior personnel. (See GPG Exhibit II-7 for the definitions of Senior Personnel.) Proposers may elect to use third-party solutions, such as NIH's SciENcv to develop and maintain their biographical sketch. However, proposers are advised that they are still responsible for ensuring that biographical sketches created using third-party solutions are compliant with NSF proposal preparation requirements.

The following information must be provided in the order and format specified below. Inclusion of additional information beyond that specified below may result in the proposal being returned without review.

Sections of an NSF Proposal

Biographical Sketches

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

Text from the GPG

(e)   evidence of research products and their availability, including, but not limited to: data, publications, samples, physical collections, software, and models, as described in any Data Management Plan; and

(f)   if the proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

Reviewers will be asked to comment on the quality of the prior work described in this section of the proposal. Note that the proposal may contain up to five pages to describe the results. Results may be summarized in fewer than five pages, which would give the balance of the 15 pages for the Project Description.

(iv)   Unfunded Collaborations

Any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal (see GPG Chapter II.C.2.i) and documented in a letter of collaboration from each collaborator. Such letters should be provided in the supplementary documentation section of the FastLane Proposal Preparation Module and follow the format instructions specified in GPG Chapter II.C.2.j. Collaborative activities that are identified in the budget should follow the instructions in GPG Chapter II.D.

(v)   Group Proposals

NSF encourages submission of proposals by groups of investigators; often these are submitted to carry out interdisciplinary projects. Unless stipulated in a specific program solicitation, however, such proposals will be subject to the 15-page Project Description limitation established in Section (ii) above. PIs who wish to exceed the established page limitations for the Project Description must request and receive a deviation in advance of proposal submission. (GPG Chapter II.A contains information on deviations.)

(vi)   Proposals for Renewed Support

See GPG Chapter V for guidance on preparation of renewal proposals.

e.   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 article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. (See also GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.(iii)(d)) If the proposer has a website address readily available, that information should be included in the citation. It is not NSF's intent, however, to place an undue burden on proposers to search for the URL of every referenced publication. Therefore, inclusion of a website address is optional. A proposal that includes reference citation(s) that do not specify a URL is not considered to be in violation of NSF proposal preparation guidelines and the proposal will still be reviewed.

Proposers must be especially careful to follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the proposal. While there is no established page limitation for the references, this section must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the 15-page Project Description.

f.   Biographical Sketch(es)

(i)   Senior Personnel

A biographical sketch (limited to two pages) is required for each individual identified as senior personnel. (See GPG Exhibit II-7 for the definitions of Senior Personnel.) Proposers may elect to use third-party solutions, such as NIH's SciENcv to develop and maintain their biographical sketch. However, proposers are advised that they are still responsible for ensuring that biographical sketches created using third-party solutions are compliant with NSF proposal preparation requirements.

The following information must be provided in the order and format specified below. Inclusion of additional information beyond that specified below may result in the proposal being returned without review.

Sections of an NSF Proposal

Budget

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 § 200.306, 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

This section of the proposal calls for information on all current and pending support for ongoing projects and proposals.

Example from FastLane

Current and Pending Support
(See GPG Section II.C.2.h for guidance on information to include on this form.)

The following information should be provided for each investigator and other senior personnel. Failure to provide this information may delay consideration of this proposal.

Investigator:

Other agencies (including NSF) to which this proposal has been/will be submitted.

Support: ☐ Current ☐ Pending ☐ Submission Planned in Near Future ☐ *Transfer of Support
Project/Proposal Title:

Source of Support:
Total Award Amount: $ Total Award Period Covered:
Location of Project:
Person-Months Per Year Committed to the Project.   Cal: Acad: Sumr:

Support: ☐ Current ☐ Pending ☐ Submission Planned in Near Future ☐ *Transfer of Support
Project/Proposal Title:

Source of Support:
Total Award Amount: $ Total Award Period Covered:
Location of Project:
Person-Months Per Year Committed to the Project.   Cal: Acad: Sumr:

Support: ☐ Current ☐ Pending ☐ Submission Planned in Near Future ☐ *Transfer of Support
Project/Proposal Title:

Source of Support:
Total Award Amount: $ Total Award Period Covered:
Location of Project:
Person-Months Per Year Committed to the Project.   Cal: Acad: Sumr:

Support: ☐ Current ☐ Pending ☐ Submission Planned in Near Future ☐ *Transfer of Support
Project/Proposal Title:

Source of Support:
Total Award Amount: $ Total Award Period Covered:
Location of Project:
Person-Months Per Year Committed to the Project.   Cal: Acad: Sumr:

Support: ☐ Current ☐ Pending ☐ Submission Planned in Near Future ☐ *Transfer of Support
Project/Proposal Title:

Source of Support:
Total Award Amount: $ Total Award Period Covered:
Location of Project:
Person-Months Per Year Committed to the Project.   Cal: Acad: Summ:

*If this project has previously been funded by another agency, please list and furnish information for immediately preceding funding period.
Page G-0   USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS AS NECESSARY

Sections of an NSF Proposal

Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources

This section of the proposal is used to assess the adequacy of the organizational resources available to perform the effort proposed.

Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources

Instructions: Upload an aggregated description of the internal and external resources (both physical and personnel) that the organization and its collaborators will provide to the project, should it be funded. Describe only those resources that are directly applicable. The description should be narrative in nature and must not include any quantifiable financial information. If there are no Facilities, Equipment, or Other Resources identified, a statement to that effect should be indicated in this section and uploaded into FastLane. See GPG II.C.2.i for more information.

Upload File

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

projects) must be listed. The proposed project and all other projects or 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 covered (including indirect costs) must be shown as well as the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the project, regardless of source of support. Similar information must be provided for all proposals already submitted or submitted concurrently to other possible sponsors, including NSF. Concurrent submission of a proposal to other organizations will not prejudice its review by NSF. The Biological Sciences Directorate exception to this policy is delineated in GPG Chapter I.G.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.

In FastLane, current and pending support for all senior personnel may no longer be grouped together and uploaded in a single PDF file associated with the PI. Each individual's current and pending support must be uploaded as a single PDF file or inserted as text associated with that individual.

i. Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources

This section of the proposal is used to assess the adequacy of the resources available to perform the effort proposed to satisfy both the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts review criteria. Proposers should describe only those resources that are directly applicable. Proposers should include an aggregated description of the internal and external resources (both physical and personnel) that the organization and its collaborators 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 quantifiable 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 § 200.306, 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 II.B.1 specifies procedures for use by the awardee when there are postaward changes to objectives, scope or methods/procedures.

j. Special Information and Supplementary Documentation

Except as specified below, special information and supplementary documentation must be included as part of the Project Description (or part of the budget justification), if it is relevant to determining the quality of the proposed 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.

- Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan. Each proposal[26] that requests funding to support **postdoctoral researchers**[27] must include, as a supplementary document, a description of the mentoring activities that will be provided for such individuals. In no more than one page, the mentoring plan must describe the mentoring that will be provided to all postdoctoral researchers supported by the project, regardless of whether they reside at the submitting organization, any subrecipient organization, or at any organization participating in a simultaneously submitted collaborative project. Proposers are advised that the mentoring plan must not be used to circumvent the 15-page Project Description limitation. See GPG Chapter II.D.5 for additional information on collaborative proposals. Mentoring activities provided to postdoctoral researchers supported on the project will be evaluated under the Broader Impacts review criterion.

[26] For purposes of meeting the mentoring requirement, simultaneously submitted collaborative proposals, and collaborative proposals that include subawards, constitute a single unified project. Therefore, only one mentoring plan may be submitted for the entire project.
[27] In situations where a postdoctoral researcher is listed in Section A of the NSF Budget, and is functioning in a Senior Personnel capacity (i.e., responsible for the scientific or technical direction of the project), a mentoring plan is not required.

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Special Information and Supplementary Documentation

- Postdoctoral Mentoring Plans

- Data Management Plans

- Letters of Collaboration (not Letters of Support)

- International Implications

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

http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp

For More Information…..

Ask Early, Ask Often!

policy@nsf.gov