



**Division of
Molecular and Cellular Biosciences (MCB)**

Virtual Office Hours

Welcome!

We will begin at 2pm ET



Questions and Answers

Submit your questions via the Q&A box on your screen

- You may elect to submit your question anonymously.
- For specific questions about your project, please contact a Program Director.

Next MCB Virtual Office Hour

March 13, 2024: Special Funding Opportunities Relevant to MCB PIs
(IntBIO, LIFE, NSF-DBT India)



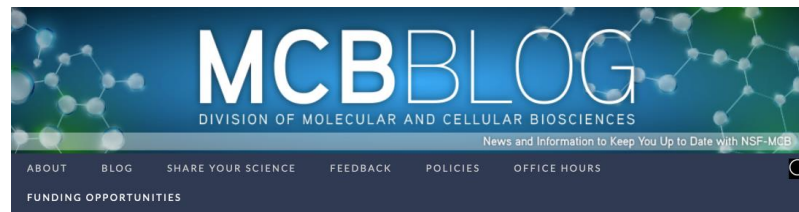
MCB Virtual Office Hour

Today's Topic:

Working with an NSF Program Director (Initial 1-Pager through Post-award/Decline)

Slides and recordings of past presentations at

<https://mcbblog.nsfbio.com/office-hours/2/>



Note: underlined text = hyperlinks

Program Directors: Who are we?

Permanent Federal Employees

- Often former faculty members from academia, sometimes industry
- Work full-time at NSF
- May conduct research part-time

Rotators

- Current faculty members in academia , sometimes industry
- Work at NSF (often 2-3 year stints)
- Maintain research programs at their home institution



Program Directors: What do we do?

Program planning and management

- Maintain dynamic, high-quality and effective **proposal merit review** process.
- Serve as **advisor** to applicants and awardees, e.g., about NSF program objectives, priorities, requirements, and policies.

Stewardship

- Conduct **planning activities** that support NSF's mission to promote the progress of science and advance national welfare.
- Responsible for **post-award management** and oversight.



Program Directors: What do we do?

Organization, Coordination and Liaison

- Provide **leadership and direction** to support the NSF mission.
- **Communicate and coordinate** within NSF and with other Federal science agencies, the scientific community, and the public.

Diversity and Outreach

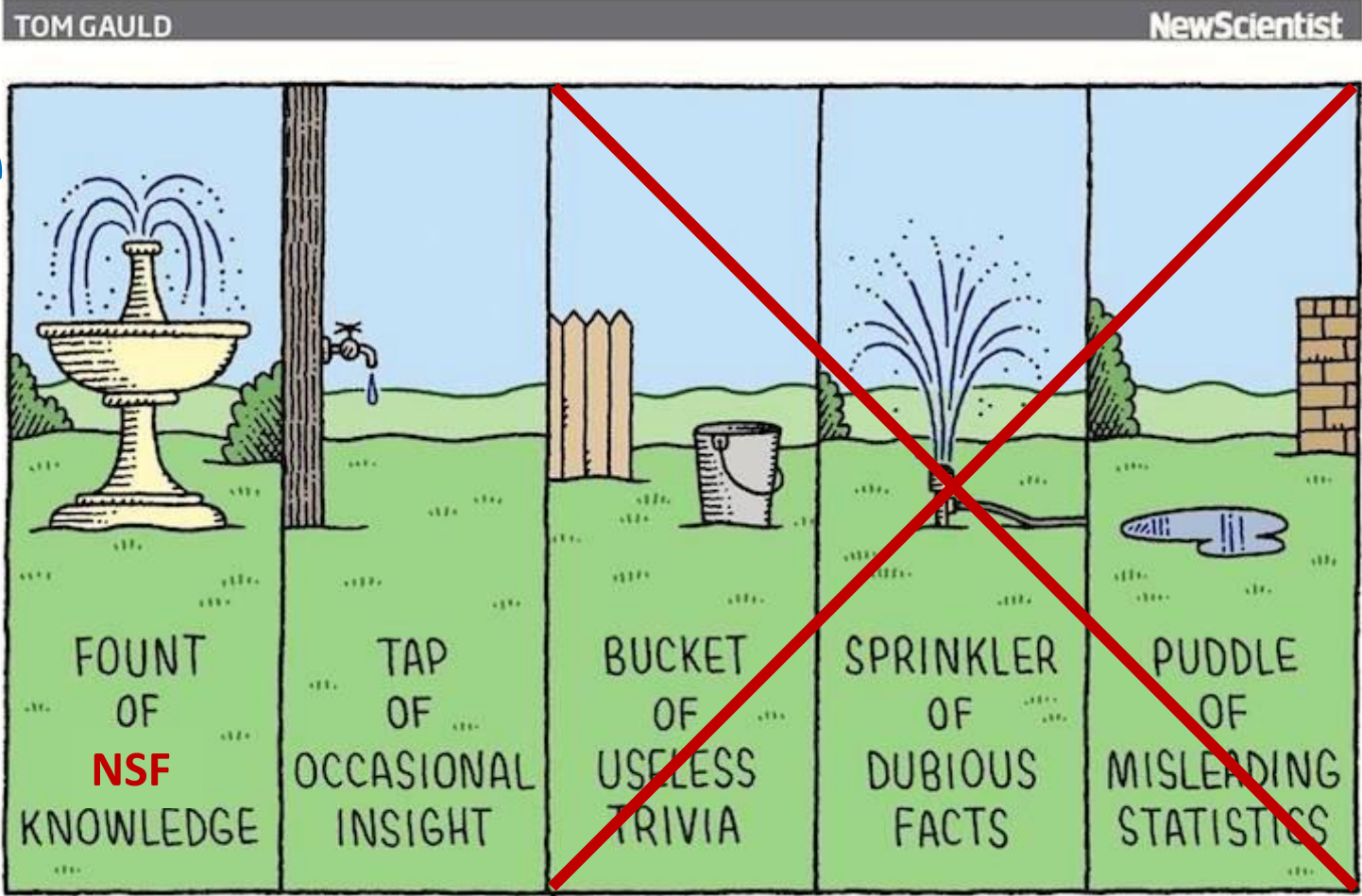
- **Foster diversity** in the review process and the award portfolio.
- Conduct **outreach** that broadens participation in NSF activities.

Professional Development

- **Maintain current knowledge** in scientific areas covered by the program, e.g., through participation in conferences, workshops, active research.



Why seek out a Program Director?



Funding opportunities
(within, across programs)

Program priorities

Merit Review Criteria
(esp. Broader Impact)

Budget

Review process

Post-decision
advice

Peer review
opportunities



When/why connect with a Program Director?

Before

Introduce yourself and your research idea(s)

- Provide brief information about your background, current career stage/position (especially if new to NSF/program).
- One-page summary of your project idea.
- Offer to participate in peer review (especially if new PI/new to NSF).

Seek input on which NSF program(s) align with your research

- Do some homework ahead of contact.
- Indicate which program(s) appear appropriate to you.

Ask specific questions about NSF review criteria and process



Before you contact a Program Director (homework)

- Peruse [NSF Division websites](#) to identify programs most relevant to your research and find Program Director(s) contacts (e.g., [MCB](#))
 - Don't worry if your research appears to cross NSF programs, Divisions or even Directorates! (cross-disciplinarity is welcome)
 - Find the 1-2 PDs who might best fit and [copy them on the same email query](#). ("cc" not "bcc" to avoid duplication of effort)
- Look at [relevant solicitations](#) (MCB: [NSF 23-548](#))
- If you're new to the NSF, [skim through the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide](#) (PAPPG: [NSF 23-1](#))
 - Introduction
 - Ch. IIIA on NSF Merit Review Principles and Criteria



Your email query

- Provide a [brief introduction](#) to yourself (and others if collaborative project). Include:
 - Current position, institution
 - General research area and educational/broader impacts interests
 - If you're new to the NSF
 - What kind of advice you're seeking, and why this program(s)
 - Any other specific questions
 - Link to professional web page
- Introduce your project idea in a [1-page summary](#)
 - Include your name in the document and file name
 - More advice on the next slide...



Your 1-page project summary

- Describe your **research idea**. Include:
 - Brief introduction to research field
 - Motivation (cover the “what” and “why” in context of current state/gaps in field)
 - Specific questions/hypotheses driving the project
 - Outline plan to address them (cover the “how”)
 - Expected outcomes
 - Anticipated impact in/beyond the field
 - Particularly innovative or transformative aspects
- Outline your **broader impacts interests**. Include:
 - Brief description of educational/outreach motivation and plans



1-page summary – Dos and Don'ts

Do	Don't
Present relevant info on current state of the field – be strategic	Waste half a page on general knowledge
Highlight overarching hypotheses and tightly focused specific aims	Bury the core goals and strengths of the project in dense text
Provide an overview of planned approaches or experiments	Get bogged down in experimental details
Explain your motivation, especially if the research is health related (NSF/BIO can fund basic science that can be use inspired, including future biomedical implications)	Propose research that directly concerns the etiology, diagnosis or treatment of disease
Write clearly and avoid technical jargon	Make the font too small; it's OK if your "1-pager" goes a bit over
Email a primary program director and copy any others you think may have interest in your idea	<u>Separately</u> email multiple program directors, leading to duplication of effort



What Program Directors do with your query

- **Acknowledge receipt** of your email, within a week or two.
- Behind the scenes we may
 - **Consult** with colleagues within the program
 - If it's not a good fit (or may be of interest to other programs), **shop the idea**
 - in MCB, and/or BIO and/or other NSF Directorates
- Respond with **information** on
 - Whether the idea is appropriate for review in the program or what other programs you might consider
 - Whether other programs might be interested in co-review
 - Whether a phone conversation might be helpful, etc.

Note: PDs will not provide detailed or evaluative feedback on your proposed project.

If you don't receive a response, feel free to follow up in a couple weeks.



When/why connect with your Program Director?

During Review

Average time to decision is 5-6 months

- Note: proposals submitted in late April - June will take a couple months longer as PDs are involved in fiscal year closeout activities.
 - See MCB blog post on - [When should I submit my proposal?](#)



What information can PDs provide during review?

- **Practically none** – so there's really no point in asking.
- Also, we **cannot add any updates** to the proposal **nor forward any additional information to reviewers** (e.g., more preliminary data or new publication).



When/why connect with your Program Director?

After (Decline)

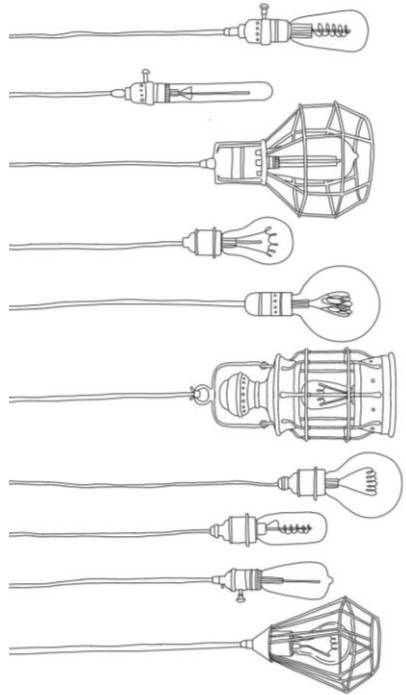
Don't give up

Reflect on the feedback

- Pay attention to the **panel summary** (explains proposal ranking)
- What are common messages in the reviews?
 - Inadequate preliminary data
 - Lack of focus or clarity in rationale/experimental approach/analysis/interpretation, etc.

Seek advice on resubmitting the proposal

- What are important considerations?
 - What aspects need substantive revision/minor revision?
 - What pitfalls can be avoided?



When/why connect with your Program Director?

After (Award)

What to expect?

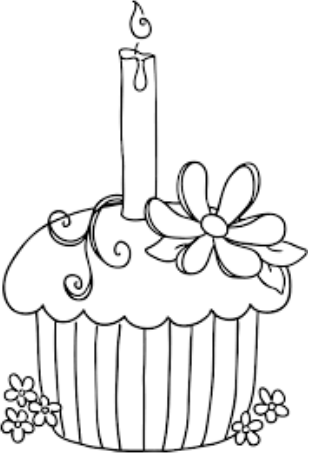
- Possible budget revisions.
 - **Resource:** Feb 13, 2023, VOH recap & slides on [Preparing an NSF Budget](#)
- Resolution of any current/pending support overlap.
- Other: public abstract; timeframe for funding.

Post-award reporting

- **Annual report:** progress on research and broader impacts; challenges; plans.

Stay in touch

- Hearing your success stories **as they happen** helps us convey the impact of the science and education supported by NSF. For example:
 - email your PD news of an exciting manuscript accepted for publication.
 - amplify your NSF-funded successes on NSF social media ([Science Happens Here](#)).
- Discuss funding opportunities - supplements, new ideas, programs etc.



Your Annual Report

- Due 90 days before award anniversary (overdue on anniversary)
 - Gather information on what was accomplished for **both research and broader impacts** goals (successes and challenges), who was supported, and what were the outcomes.
- For both Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts, include:
 - Activities, challenges, any unexpected directions, progress, accomplishments for each aim, and plans for the next year.
 - Note: it is possible to upload a pdf file with additional information (e.g., manuscript draft)
- Information on Participants:
 - Highlight in narrative and remember to include in Participants List (include students, high school on up).
- List publications for award period and link to the [NSF Public Access Repository](#)



Upcoming...

Office hours:

- Wed March 13th, 2024, 2-3 pm ET
Special Funding Opportunities Relevant to MCB PIs (IntBIO, LIFE, NSF-DBT India)
- Wed April 10th, 2024, 2-3 pm ET
How to Write a Great NSF Proposal
- Wed May 8th, 2024, 2-3 pm ET
Faculty Early-CAREER Development Program (CAREER)

Funding opportunity deadlines:

- Mid-Career Advancement ([NSF 22-603](#))
February 1 - March 1, 2024
- Building Research Capacity of New Faculty in Biology ([NSF 22-500](#))
May 1 - July 1, 2024



See [Funding Opportunities](#) page on MCB blog for other relevant funding calls.

Upcoming...

CASA-Bio – Catalyzing Across Sectors to Advance the Bioeconomy

Virtual Town Halls hosted by NSF and other federal agencies to garner community input on research areas that will advance the bioeconomy.

- Register at www.casa-bio.net

- February 12, 7 - 8.30 pm ET
- February 15, 9 - 10.30 am ET
- February 21, 12 - 1.30 pm ET
- February 22, 5 - 6.30 pm ET

-  Climate change
-  Food and agriculture
-  Supply chain resilience
-  Human health
-  Cross cutting areas



