



National Science Foundation  
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## Public Access: Frequently Asked Questions

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## I. GENERAL

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### 1. What is NSF's public access policy?

NSF requires that either the version of record or the final accepted manuscript in peer-reviewed scholarly journals and papers in juried conference proceedings or transactions (also known as “juried conference papers”) be deposited in a public access compliant repository designated by NSF; be available for download, reading and analysis free of charge no later than 12 months after initial publication; possess a minimum set of machine-readable metadata elements in a metadata record to be made available free of charge upon initial publication; be managed to ensure long-term preservation; and be reported in annual and final reports during the period of the award with a persistent identifier that provides links to the full text of the publication as well as other metadata elements. For more information, see section 3.1 of “[Today's Data, Tomorrow's Discoveries: Increasing Access to the Results of Research Funded by the National Science Foundation](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2015/nsf15052/nsf15052.pdf),” at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2015/nsf15052/nsf15052.pdf>.

### 2. Why does NSF have a public access policy?

On February 22, 2013, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) released a memorandum entitled “[Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Research](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2015/nsf15052/nsf15052.pdf).” It directed Federal agencies with more than \$100 million in research and development (R&D) expenditures to develop plans to make the published results of federally funded research freely available to the public within one year of publication, and it required researchers to better account for and manage the digital data resulting from federally funded scientific research. NSF’s response, **Today’s Data, Tomorrow’s Discoveries**, is posted at: <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2015/nsf15052/nsf15052.pdf>. The response builds upon NSF’s long history of encouraging data sharing. The Foundation requires that each proposal submitted to NSF include a data management plan, as set forth in the [Grant Proposal Guide](#) (GPG) Chapter II.C.2.j. The data management plan describes how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results (see the [Award & Administration Guide](#) (AAG) Chapter VI.D.4 for additional information).

### 3. How does NSF's public access policy work?

The Foundation's approach to implementing public access goals is based, to the greatest extent possible, on existing policies and procedures.

**Data. Existing NSF policies on preparing data management plans will be retained.** In 2011, the Foundation updated implementation of its data sharing policy by requiring proposers to include a two-page supplementary document to their proposals in which they describe a data management plan (DMP) for data created under an award that result from the proposal. More information on preparing DMPs is available in the [GPG Chapter II.C.2.j](#) and at:

<http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>. If an award is made, the investigator must manage data described in the DMP in accordance with the plan and should report these data-related activities in annual and final project reports. Investigators are expected to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable amount of time, the primary data created or gathered in the course of their work under an NSF grant. Grantees are expected to encourage and facilitate such sharing.

**Publications. Peer-reviewed journal articles and juried conference papers, based wholly or partially on NSF support, must be deposited in the designated NSF repository. Either the final accepted version of the manuscript or the version of record may be submitted. NSF expects to make the repository service available in the fall of 2015 for voluntary compliance.** In accordance with the applicable award terms and conditions, NSF “expects significant findings from research and education activities it supports to be promptly submitted for publication, with authorship that accurately reflects the contributions of those involved” ([Grant General Conditions \(GC-1\) Article 45](#)). NSF also requires grantees to acknowledge NSF support, assure that any publication of NSF-funded material contains the appropriate disclaimer, and provide the cognizant NSF program officer with a copy of the publication, together with the award number and other appropriate identifying information, promptly after publication ([GC-1 Article 27](#)). The public access policy concerning publications, including juried conference papers, will go into effect for articles resulting from awards made for proposals submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016. NSF’s Public Access requirements will be imposed via the addition of a new award term and condition that will be applied to awards resulting from proposals submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016.

#### 4. Who must comply with NSF's public access policy?

Awards to institutions will include conditions to implement NSF Public Access requirements. Principal Investigators must ensure that all researchers who work on projects funded in whole or in part by NSF grants or cooperative agreements comply with the public access policy.

#### 5. Does the public access policy apply to NSF staff?

NSF employees who generate published journal articles and juried conference papers in the course of official business must comply with NSF's public access policy.

#### 6. Who is responsible for meeting the public access requirement (e.g., submitting material to a designated repository; managing the data in accordance with the DMP)?

Principal Investigators are responsible for meeting the public access requirements.

#### 7. What material is covered by NSF's public access policy?

NSF's public access policy covers **articles in peer-reviewed journals, juried conference papers, and data that result from NSF funding**. These research outputs are a subset of the outcomes that should be reported in annual and final project reports. NSF's public access policy for data is covered by NSF's data management plan requirements.

Principal Investigators are already required to include a two-page data management plan (DMP) as a supplementary document in their proposals (see [GPG II.C.2.j](#)), and the DMP is evaluated during the merit review process. The scope of the material covered by the DMP (for example, whether it includes software) is governed by [guidance](#) at the directorate, division, and program levels. PIs are encouraged to consult with the cognizant program officers.

#### **8. When does the policy go into effect?**

The public access requirement will apply to new awards resulting from proposals submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016, which will be the effective date of the updated Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG). For further information, see the GPG, Chapter II.C.2.j and <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>.

#### **9. What repository does NSF require PIs to use for depositing publications?**

NSF requires principal investigators who publish peer-reviewed journal articles or juried conference papers to deposit a copy of the item (either the final accepted version or the version of record, as defined in NSF's public access plan) in the NSF public access repository hosted by the Department of Energy (DOE). The NSF public access repository is expected to be available for voluntary compliance by the end of the 2015 calendar year.

#### **10. What is a "final accepted version" of a manuscript?**

The final accepted version is the author's final manuscript of a peer-reviewed paper accepted for journal publication, including all modifications resulting from the peer-review process. It is the version before the journal makes edits that will constitute the final "version of record."

#### **11. What is a "version of record"?**

The version of record is the publisher's authoritative copy of the paper, including all modifications from the publishing peer-review process, copyediting, stylistic edits, and formatting changes.

#### **12. What are "page charges"?**

A "page charge" may be imposed by the publisher to help cover the costs of publication. These also may be known as publication and printing costs. See the [Grant Proposal Guide II.C.2.g.\(vi\) b., Publication/Documentation/Dissemination](#) for additional information.

#### **13. What is an Article Processing Charge (APC)?**

As defined by Wikipedia and based on research by David Solomon and Bo-Christer Björk, "An article processing charge (APC), also known as a publication fee, is a fee which is sometimes charged to authors in order to publish an article in an [open access academic journal](#)"

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Article\\_processing\\_charge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Article_processing_charge)). These also may be known as “publication costs”. See the [Grant Proposal Guide II.C.2.g.\(vi\) b., Publication/Documentation/Dissemination](#) for additional information.

**14. Does NSF require PIs to deposit their publications in a "trusted repository"?**

As stated above, NSF requires principal investigators who publish peer-reviewed journal articles or juried conference papers to deposit a copy of the items (either the final accepted version or the version of record, as defined in NSF's public access plan) in the NSF public access repository hosted by the Department of Energy (DOE). The NSF public access repository is expected to be available for voluntary compliance by the end of the 2015 calendar year. At this time, NSF has not formally adopted ISO 16363, a recommended practice for assessing the trustworthiness of digital repositories. As outlined in NSF's public access plan (section 7.7), "DOE stores and preserves the information in a dark archive in a climate-controlled, appropriate environment in Oak Ridge, Tenn., with redundant, backup systems in geographically distinct locations. DOE accommodates both the widely used non-proprietary PDF and PDF/A formats and can convert material in PDF to PDF/A, should the need arise."

**15. Does the NSF public access policy cover data as well as publications?**

Yes. All proposals submitted to NSF must include a supplementary document of no more than two pages labeled “Data Management Plan.” (DMP). For further information, see the [GPG Chapter II.C.2.j](#) and <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>.

**16. What repository does NSF require PIs to use for depositing data?**

Data management requirements and plans specific to the Directorate, Office, Division, Program, or other NSF unit, relevant to a proposal are available at: <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>. If guidance specific to the program is not available, then the requirements established in the [GPG, Chapter II.C.2.j](#) apply.

**17. Are repositories going to be linked? If multiple repositories are acceptable for a particular discipline, how do PIs know which one to use?**

NSF requires principal investigators to deposit a copy of their peer-reviewed journal publications or juried conference papers in the public access repository hosted by the Department of Energy, which will become available by the end of calendar 2015. Deposit of data and software should be addressed in the data management plan (DMP), which is a required element of every proposal and is evaluated as part of the merit review process. NSF encourages investigators to seek guidance from the cognizant program officer on selection of an appropriate repository.

**18. Does NSF require PIs to deposit software, code, etc.?**

The scope of material covered by the DMP (for example, whether it includes software or code) is governed by guidance at the directorate, division, and program levels. Investigators are encouraged to consult with the cognizant program officer.

19. **How does NSF handle situations in which the journal that has accepted a paper requires the PI to submit the data on which the paper is based in a specified repository? Does NSF require the PI to deposit the data in another repository, as well?**

Data resulting from the award should be managed according to the data management plan that accompanied the proposal. If the repository identified by the journal is different from the one in the DMP or if the principal investigator is only depositing a subset of the data collected by the award, then the PI should consult the cognizant program officer about appropriate deposit.

20. **Does NSF allow for an embargo or delay for access to journal publications? And if so, how long is it?**

NSF allows an embargo or administrative delay for access of up to 12 months from the date of publication for journal articles or juried conference papers. Individual journal titles (or proceedings or transactions) may institute shorter periods. If a publisher's embargo exceeds 12 months, NSF will make available the version deposited in the NSF public access repository.

21. **How can the public search material resulting from NSF's awards?**

NSF offers several ways to search for publications resulting from NSF awards. Through [Research.gov](https://www.research.gov) and the [NSF website](https://www.nsf.gov), the public can search active and expired awards by keywords. The results of those queries provide a list of relevant awards, abstracts and other information about the awards, and publications that have been reported. Search capability will also be provided in the NSF public access repository hosted by the Department of Energy (DOE). Finally, commercial search services, such as [Google](https://www.google.com) and [Bing](https://www.bing.com), also provide access to NSF-funded research. More information and guidance on searching for publications resulting from NSF awards is provided at: [https://www.research.gov/research-portal/appmanager/base/desktop?\\_nfpb=true&\\_eventName=viewQuickSearchFormEvent\\_so\\_rsr](https://www.research.gov/research-portal/appmanager/base/desktop?_nfpb=true&_eventName=viewQuickSearchFormEvent_so_rsr).

22. **Why does NSF use the term "public access" (instead of "open access")?**

NSF is following the practice established by the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](https://www.nih.gov) in using the term "public access" to characterize the policy that implements the objectives of the OSTP memorandum of February 22, 2013.

## II. FROM THE INVESTIGATOR'S PERSPECTIVE:

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23. **Do NSF's public access requirements apply to me?**

It depends. Are you a principal investigator of research that is funded, wholly or in part, by NSF? Is it a new award that resulted from a proposal that was submitted or due on or after January 25, 2016? If your answer to both questions is "Yes," the public access requirements apply to you.

24. **I am working on an article supported by an award that was made prior to January 25, 2016. Is this work subject to the public access requirements?**

No, material resulting from awards made prior to the January 2016 effective date is not subject to

public access requirements for publications. However, the data resulting from your award should be managed according to the data management plan included in your proposal.

**25. May I submit an article to NSF's designated public access repository on a voluntary basis?**

Yes. NSF encourages principal investigators to make their peer-reviewed journal publications and juried conference papers available to the public through the public access repository.

**26. What repository must I use for depositing publications?**

NSF requires principal investigators who publish peer-reviewed journal articles or juried conference papers to deposit a copy of the item (either the final accepted version or the version of record, as defined in NSF's public access plan) in the NSF public access repository hosted by the Department of Energy (DOE). It is expected to be available for voluntary compliance by the end of the 2015 calendar year.

**27. Do I have to deposit an article into NSF's designated public access repository in order to report it in my annual or final project report?**

Yes. You must deposit a copy of any peer-reviewed journal publication (either the [final accepted version](#) or the [version of record](#)) or any juried conference paper in NSF's designated public access repository for articles (eligible publications or conference papers) resulting from an award made for a proposal submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016 in order to report that publication or conference paper in your annual or final project report. We are developing a streamlined process to support the entry of publications and related metadata in annual and final project reports.

**28. I am publishing an article in an Open Access journal; do I still have to deposit a copy of the article in a designated repository?**

Yes. You must deposit a copy of any peer-reviewed journal publication (either the [final accepted version](#) or the [version of record](#)) or any juried conference paper in NSF's designated public access repository for articles (eligible publications or conference papers) resulting from an award made for a proposal submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016, even if the article was published in an Open Access journal, in order to report that publication or conference paper in your annual or final project report..

**29. I am publishing an article in an Open Access Journal that is a member of the publisher coalition CHORUS. Do I still have to deposit a copy of the article in a designated repository?**

Yes. You must deposit a copy of any peer-reviewed journal publication (either the [final accepted version](#) or the [version of record](#)) or any juried conference paper in NSF's designated public access repository for articles (eligible publications or conference papers) resulting from an award made for a proposal submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016, even if the article was published in an Open Access journal that is a member of CHORUS, in order to report that publication or conference paper in your annual or final project report. CHORUS: Clearinghouse for the Open Research of the United States is a coalition of publishers that provides a set of services to increase access to the publicly funded journal literature.

**30. I am publishing an article in a journal that does not have a public or open access policy. Am I still required to comply with the public access deposit requirement?**

Yes. You must deposit a copy of any peer-reviewed journal publication (either the [final accepted version](#) or the [version of record](#)) or any juried conference paper in NSF's designated public access repository for articles (eligible publications or conference papers) resulting from an award made for a proposal submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016 in order to report that publication or conference paper in your annual or final project report.

**31. My university maintains an institutional repository. If I deposit a copy of my article there, do I still have to deposit a copy in the NSF-designated repository?**

You may deposit a copy of your juried article in your institution's repository. But depositing a copy of your article in the institutional repository does not satisfy NSF's deposit requirement. You must also submit a copy (either the final accepted version or the version of record) to NSF's public access repository.

**32. If I deposit a copy of my article in my university's institutional repository, do I still have to deposit a copy of the article in a repository designated by NSF?**

Yes.

**33. I am required to deposit a copy of my article in my university's institutional repository. Do I still have to deposit a copy in a repository designated by NSF?**

Yes.

**34. May I post a copy of my article to my personal webpage?**

NSF's public access policy permits you to post to your personal webpage a copy of the article version that has been deposited in the public access repository. You should consult your journal publisher to determine what restrictions may be imposed on the publisher's version of record.

**35. If I post a copy of my article to my personal webpage, am I still required to deposit a copy in a repository designated by NSF?**

Yes.

**36. Who owns the copyright to my journal articles arising from NSF grants?**

Unless otherwise provided in the award, grantees own or may permit others to own copyright, subject to the Federal Government's license.

**37. What is the Federal Government's license?**

The Federal Government has a non-exclusive, irrevocable, worldwide, royalty-free license to exercise or authorize others to exercise all rights under copyright to use a federally-funded work for Federal purposes. The Federal Government license includes the right to have the copyrighted material included in a repository where the public can search, read, download, and analyze the material in digital form.

**38. Am I required to use a license to allow others to use my journal article?**

You should consult with your publisher or the repository in which the article is housed to ascertain conditions that may be imposed on future uses of the article. The Federal Government has a non-exclusive, irrevocable, worldwide, royalty-free license to exercise or authorize others to exercise all rights under copyright to use a federally-funded work for Federal purposes. The Federal Government license includes the right to have the copyrighted material included in a repository where the public can search, read, download, and analyze the material in digital form.

**39. My article has been submitted but is not yet accepted. How do I report this article in my annual or final project report?**

If the article does not result from an award made for a proposal submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016, refer to current [Research Performance Progress Report \(RPPR\)](#) requirements for reporting instructions.

**40. My article has been accepted but is not yet published. How do I report this article in my annual or final project report?**

If the article does not result from an award made for a proposal submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016, refer to current [Research Performance Progress Report \(RPPR\)](#) requirements for reporting instructions.

**41. I have deposited a copy of my article in one of the disciplinary repositories (e.g., SSRN, arXiv, etc.). How do I report this paper in my annual or final project report?**

Juried articles deposited in one of the disciplinary repositories must also be submitted to NSF's public access repository. These should be reported in annual and final reports during the period of performance with a unique persistent identifier that provides links to the full text of the publication as well as other metadata elements.

**42. Do I have to deposit the data that support findings in my article in a public access repository?**

Mandatory deposit of data on which an article is based may be required by the journal publisher or other funders. Data collected as part of NSF-funded research, whether or not they are used to support a given publication, should be managed according to the data management plan.

**43. I am not the lead author on an article that has been partially supported by research funding provided by NSF. Does NSF still require a copy of the article to be deposited in the NSF-designated repository?**

Yes. The principal investigator of the award is responsible for ensuring deposit in the NSF-designated repository of all articles based on research funded under that award.

**44. More than one Federal funding agency, in addition to NSF, has supported the research on which an article is based. Where do we deposit a copy of the article? Do we need to deposit a copy at every agency that has supported the research?**

Deposit of a copy, either the final accepted version or the version of record, in the designated NSF repository is required if NSF has supported part of the research. You should consult the policies of the other funders to determine if deposit in another repository is also required.

45. **Funding for the research supporting an article is provided by several sources, including NSF and private philanthropies. Do I need to deposit a copy at every organization that has supported the research?**

Deposit of a copy, either the final accepted version or the version of record, in the designated NSF repository is required if NSF has supported part of the research. You should consult the policies of the other funders to determine if deposit in another repository is also required.

46. **May I use funds from my NSF award to pay for article processing charges, publication or page charges, or charges for preparing data for deposit?**

You may request funds to cover costs of publication, page charges, or preparation of data as a direct cost in your budget proposal, which is evaluated as part of the merit review process. See the [Grant Proposal Guide II.C.2.g.\(vi\) b., Publication/Documentation/Dissemination](#) for additional information.