



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Antarctic Artists and Writers (AAW) Program

The following set of questions and answers refer to Frequently Asked Questions about the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Antarctic Artists and Writers (AAW) Program. They are not intended to be a modification of the Program Solicitation. If there are any inconsistencies between the AAW Program Solicitation and these FAQs, the information in the Program Solicitation prevails.

Before preparing AAW proposals please read the AAW Solicitation and refer to the general information about NSF proposal submission including:

- **Antarctic Artists and Writers Program Solicitation** at: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf16542;
- **Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)** submission guidelines at: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg;
- **FastLane FAQ's** at: https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/NSFHelp/flashhelp/fastlane/FastLane_Help/fastlane_help.htm#fastlane_faqs_introduction.htm;
- **Grants.gov FAQ's** at: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>.

To find out more about the Office of Polar Programs (OPP) and the United States Antarctic Program (USAP) you can visit:

- **The Office of Polar Programs website** at: <https://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=PLR>;
- **Antarctic program FAQ** at: <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/plr/frequent.jsp>;
- **The USAP website** at: <https://usap.gov/>;
- **USAP Participant Guide** at: <https://www.usap.gov/travelAndDeployment/contentHandler.cfm?id=541>.

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A. ELIGIBILITY

1. Are foreign nationals allowed to apply?

Yes, but priority will be given to U.S. citizens and legal residents. Proposals are accepted from citizens of other Antarctic Treaty nations if the work will reach a significant audience in the U.S. or the project is otherwise in the U.S. interest as, for example, to help inform broad audiences of the role of the U.S. program in Antarctica in the context of international partnerships, particularly when the proposed activity would also be supported by the partner nation. The program welcomes such proposals and has supported non-U.S. participants in the past.

Non-U.S. residents who are selected are not provided airline tickets from their country to the Antarctic. NSF may require a participant to attend a planning meeting in the United States prior to deployment and will not cover air travel from outside the United States to that meeting. Lodging while attending the meeting will be provided. (See AAW Solicitation, Section II, What NSF Provides).

2. Is there an age limit to those who may apply?

Participants must be 21 years or older. There is no upper age limit, but every participant must be physically qualified by meeting medical standards set by NSF.

3. What does it mean to be physically qualified?

Medical and dental care in the Antarctic is limited. Field participants must pass screenings in the six months before the planned travel. Failure to meet medical and dental criteria results in disqualification for Antarctic travel, regardless of the merits of a proposal. NSF does not pay for examinations, follow-up visits, or remediation needed to pass the screenings.

B. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

4. How do I apply?

Proposals are submitted via FastLane (<https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/>) or Grants.gov

(<https://www.grants.gov/>). Details can be found in the program solicitation (https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf16542). Proposals are not accepted by email or mail.

5. **Can I apply as an individual or do I need to be affiliated with an organization?**

Individuals may apply directly or through their employing organizations.

6. **How do I fill out the Cover Page in FastLane?**

- o What is the Program Announcement/Solicitation Number? - This number is found in the Antarctic Artists and Writers Program Solicitation (e.g. https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf16542)
- o What is the NSF Unit of Consideration? - OPP - Antarctic Education
- o EIN or TIN? What if don't have one? - You can leave this blank
- o What Type of Proposal should I select? - Research
- o Is it a collaborative proposal if two people are applying together? - No

7. **What is the deadline for proposal submission?**

The deadline is June 1, 5:00 pm local time of applicant. Note, 5:01 pm is past the deadline and late submissions will not be accepted. Prospective principal investigators (PIs) are strongly encouraged to submit their proposals in advance of the deadline to allow time to correct any problems that may occur in the submission process. Increased activity on the day of the deadline may mean your proposal is not submitted on time.

A few things to be aware of:

- o If submitting through FastLane, PIs will receive an email with an official NSF proposal number once the proposal has been accepted. If an error message is received, the submission did not go through and the PI will be directed to upload the correct document(s) to proceed.
- o If submitting through Grants.gov, the process is 2-stage. After uploading the proposal, the PI will receive an initial email indicating the proposal is uploaded to Grants.gov and will need to be validated by the receiving agency. The uploaded proposal is transmitted to NSF for compliance checking. If accepted by NSF, the PI will receive a second email with an official NSF proposal number (e.g. 17xxxxx). If the proposal is not accepted by NSF, the second email will state what is missing and indicate that the proposal needs to be resubmitted by the deadline. The compliance check can take up to 24 hours if the proposal is submitted via Grants.gov.

8. **What if I am having trouble uploading a proposal?**

Issues and questions related to the NSF FastLane system should be directed to the FastLane User Support desk at (800) 673-6188. You can also send an e-mail message to fastlane@nsf.gov. For information on the availability of the NSF FastLane system, phone (800) 437-7408 for a recorded message. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov contact center by phone at (800) 518-4726 or by email at support@grants.gov.

If FastLane or Grants.gov is unable to resolve the submission problem and you cannot submit your proposal by the deadline, please make sure to get documentation that you contacted the support center before your deadline. For NSF to consider a deadline extension you must provide supporting documentation from FastLane or Grants.gov that there was a problem at the time of submission that could not be resolved in time. A possible slowdown of these systems due to volume is not a valid reason for an extension.

9. **Is there an advantage to apply months before the deadline?**

No, proposals are reviewed only after the deadline. Submitting in advance of the deadline is advantageous only to insure that proposers can resolve any difficulties with the submission

process.

10. How much detail should be in the proposal?

The project description is limited to 15 pages and must address the intellectual merit and broader impacts of the project as well as include a full description of the project. The proposal must justify the need to go to Antarctica to complete the work as envisioned. Proposals submitted without full descriptions of the proposed work do not review well during the merit review process.

11. How can I find out what science projects will be in the field in the upcoming season? How do I contact researchers?

Information about awarded science projects, including contact information for the researchers, can be found in the current Science Planning Summaries (<https://www.usap.gov/scienceSupport/>) or by using the NSF.gov award search (<https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/>).

12. What may be included in Supplementary Documents?

Supplementary Documents are limited to 30 pages and are only used if needed.

Supplementary Documents can be used to include letters of collaboration, e.g. with researchers or others. Note that letters of recommendation or letters of endorsement are not permissible.

PIs may also include electronic samples work, published reviews of work, and letters of commitment (e.g. publishers or exhibit venues). These documents help reviewers assess the PI's achievements and their ability to disseminate work. These materials should be regarded as an electronic portfolio, demonstrating the scope, quality, and impact of previous work that puts the proposal into context, whether or not that work is specifically related to the proposed Antarctic project.

13. What advice does the NSF program manager give most often to prospective applicants?

Read the solicitation carefully and follow all the instructions! Proposals that do not have the proper formatting will be returned without review.

14. How are proposals reviewed?

The AAW program manager will convene a panel of peers, typically including scientists, artists, and writers who cover a range of disciplines. Members of the panel write reviews and meet as a group to discuss and rate the proposals. Highly competitive proposals go through an additional logistical review. The program manager will then recommend each proposal for award or decline. The Antarctic Sciences Section Head approves all final recommendations. After the review process is completed, proposers have access to the written reviews and program manager comments pertaining to their proposal.

C. ANNOUNCEMENT OF AAW AWARDS

15. When will I hear the results of my submission?

Most proposers will be notified within six months of submission. You can check the status of your proposal by accessing the FastLane website. If you have not received notification of a decision on your proposal within six months of its submission and your proposal status is shown as "pending" in FastLane, you can contact the program manager for the AAW Program to inquire about the status of your proposal.

Highly competitive AAW proposals go through a thorough logistic review which can take additional

time.

16. Who owns copyright to the materials produced?

The AAW participant owns copyright to the material he or she produces.

D. ANTARCTIC DEPLOYMENT

17. How long are AAW deployments?

The length of deployment will depend on the nature of the work proposed. A typical deployment lasts approximately 6 weeks but can be longer or shorter.

18. Can AAW participants spend the austral winter in Antarctica?

In general, AAW participants do not winter over. Spending one austral winter month may be possible at McMurdo Station.

19. How should environmental stewardship be considered when proposing AAW projects?

Protection of the Antarctic environment is a fundamental consideration in all activities in Antarctica as described in the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. To this end, projects should be planned to limit adverse impact on the Antarctic environment. The U.S. Antarctic Conservation Act (ACA) requires an environmental impact assessment (EIA) in advance of all U.S. Antarctic Program activities, including those in the AAW program. Permits may be required for some AAW projects. For further information contact the AAW program officer and visit the [U.S. Antarctic Environmental Stewardship](#) web page.

For more information about U.S. Environmental Stewardship, see:
<https://www.nsf.gov/geo/plr/antarct/eas/start.jsp>.

For more information about the ACA and permits, see:
<https://www.nsf.gov/geo/plr/antarct/aca/aca.jsp>.

20. Are drones permitted to be used?

Applications to employ unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, require a separate review of that portion of the application to ensure that the proposed use meets NSF's safety and environmental guidelines.

Any request to use drones as part of an Artists and Writers deployment should, at minimum, clearly indicate why this is necessary to achieve the proposed work in Antarctica and contain documentation of the training and experience of the person or persons who will be designated as the operator of the aircraft.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), regardless of size, weight or form, are all subject to approval by NSF prior to use in the USAP.

21. Can an AAW participant dive?

All diving under NSF auspices in Antarctica requires prior approval from the NSF. Artists and Writers Program award recipients have been granted permission to dive but this does not occur frequently. The [USAP Participant Guide](#) outlines strict diving qualifications and requirements and these should be carefully considered before proposing to dive in Antarctica. Requirements include submitting a dive plan and having it reviewed. There must be strong justification that diving is necessary.