



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 20-130

Dear Colleague Letter: Removal of target dates for the Biological Oceanography Program in the Division of Ocean Sciences in the Directorate for Geosciences

September 30, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

The Biological Oceanography Program in the Division of Ocean Sciences will eliminate target dates and accept proposals for consideration at any time after January 1, 2021. This action is being taken to enable greater flexibility for the community and reduce the burden on investigators, reviewers, and submitting institutions. Proposals requesting ship time should allow for at least 18 months of lead time for those projects requiring Academic Research Fleet Global- or Ocean-Class vessels and at least 12 months for all other ship requests.

The Biological Oceanography Program will maintain a high-quality merit review system using ad hoc mail reviews and panels, as appropriate. For those unfamiliar with how no-submission deadline processes work, FAQs and other relevant information can be found on the [NSF Division of Ocean Sciences webpage](#).

Evidence from other NSF programs that have eliminated deadlines shows that proposal pressure is reduced and success rates increase with more highly-ranked proposals being funded. The Geosciences Directorate expects the change will reduce the burden on institutions and the community by spreading out proposal submission requests over the course of the year, as opposed to having submissions limited to two specific time windows. The Program hopes that investigators will have more time to build strong collaborations; be more creative without the pressure of a deadline; and propose more complex, interdisciplinary projects.

The Biological Oceanography Program will continue its current practice in which a proposal is ineligible for resubmission until a minimum of one year has passed since its initial submission. A proposal on the same general topic by the same PI team is considered a resubmission. This moratorium allows investigators the time required to thoughtfully consider the results of the merit review and revise or restructure their proposal accordingly. As a

reminder, proposals that have been declined need to be revised to be reconsidered by the Program. Submissions that have not been changed substantially will be returned without review as outlined in the [NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\)](#).

Only proposals submitted to the Biological Oceanography Core Program in the Division of Ocean Sciences are affected by this change. Submissions to other Programs and funding opportunities in the Division of Ocean Sciences will continue to follow the deadlines outlined in their respective solicitations and webpages. The Program will continually assess the impact of this change on the merit review goals outlined above.

Sincerely,

William E. Easterling
Assistant Director for Geosciences