



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for NSF 20-130 Removal of Target Dates for the Biological Oceanography Program in the Division of Ocean Sciences in the Directorate for Geosciences

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1. **What does "Removal of Target Dates" mean?**

Starting January 1, 2021, the Biological Oceanography Program will accept proposals at any time. There will no longer be any restriction on when a proposal can be submitted. Proposals requesting ship time will still need to 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.

**2. Why is this change being made?**

This action is being taken to enable greater flexibility for the community, and reduce the burden on investigators, reviewers, and submitting institutions. This change will also allow investigators to develop compelling proposals at any time of year, adding flexibility to work around other commitments. Many NSF Programs have now moved to no target dates or deadlines. In those instances proposal pressure had declined and success rates have improved.

**3. Will proposals still be reviewed by panelists and ad hoc reviewers?**

Yes. As is the present practice, all proposals will be sent out for mail review and be considered by a panel of experts.

**4. How will this work?**

Program Officers will schedule panels as needed depending on the submissions received.

**5. Will the community be told the dates of panels?**

No, as is normal under NSF practice.

**6. Will it take longer to receive a decision on my proposal?**

No change in the average time to decision and release of reviews is expected.

**7. How will this affect proposals that are to be co-reviewed with core Programs that have target dates or deadlines?**

The Biological Oceanography Program will continue to work with other Programs to co-review in the same manner as is currently done for proposals that are shared between Programs, many with no-deadline policies. If a proposal is submitted for co-consideration with another Program that operates with deadlines, PIs are encouraged to consult with Biological Oceanography and the other Program to seek guidance on the best time to submit the proposal. This should help avoid delays in review.

**8. Can I resubmit a declined proposal right away or do I have to wait a certain period of time to resubmit it?**

There is no change in the current resubmission practice. Any declined proposal is subject to a 12-month moratorium period from its submission date.

In addition, when proposals are resubmitted to the Biological Oceanography Program, they should be substantially revised in accordance with the policy outlined in Chapter IV.E of the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG): "A resubmitted proposal that has not clearly taken into account the major comments or concerns resulting from the prior NSF review may be returned without review". After the second submission and decline, a letter to the program justifying resubmission is required. This should come to the Program via email; it will not be made available to the panel.

**9. If there is a compelling reason for a rapid resubmission of a declined proposal, can there be an exception to the moratorium rule?**

Exceptions to the moratorium are at the discretion of the Program but will only be allowed if the Program finds a compelling reason related to time sensitivity of the science goals. Reasons related to personnel or facility availability are not generally considered compelling reasons to grant an exception. This is a continuation of current program practice.

**10. How will this change affect proposals requesting the use of UNOLS assets?**

The scheduling of UNOLS assets is not affected by this change. PIs should follow the current guidelines, with respect to lead time for ship and asset scheduling as indicated above. More information can be found at [https://www.nsf.gov/news/news\\_summ.jsp?cntn\\_id=191729&org=OCE](https://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=191729&org=OCE).

**11. Is there a limit to how many proposals I can have pending as lead PI at the same time?**

There is no limit to the number of proposals a PI can have pending in the Biological Oceanography Program at any given time.

**12. Does the change to no target dates also apply to special programs such as the Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) or Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) Programs?**

No. Program solicitations for special programs should be checked for specific submission guidelines. The [CAREER Program](#) will continue to accept proposals once a year by the deadline stated in the solicitation. The [LTER Program](#) will continue to release solicitations, e.g. for renewal proposals, with deadlines and as needed.

**13. Do I need to alert the Program if I intend to submit or when I submit a proposal?**

No, there is no requirement, although as is currently the case, PIs should contact a Program Officer if they have questions or are proposing a large or complex proposal that may need special consideration.