

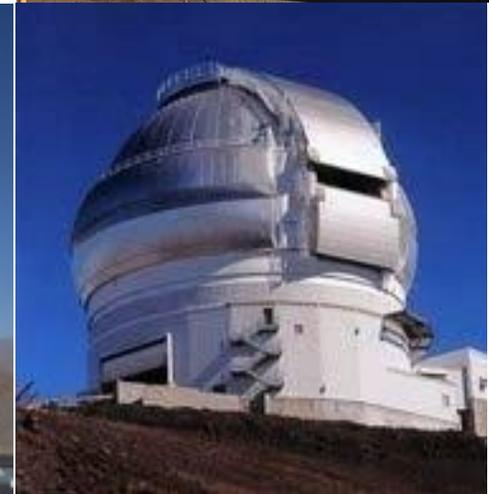


AST “No-Deadline” Pilot

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Motivation for a Pilot Study

- Years of level budgets and increasing proposal pressure led to historically low success rates
 - bottomed out in FY14 : 1 in 7
 - heavy workload on community and NSF when 6/7 declined!
- Many ideas to decrease workload and increase success rates
- Missing annual deadline could impose hardship on proposers
- Early results from elsewhere indicated deadlines might increase total number of proposals submitted
- Even though results were preliminary and context-dependent, pressure to experiment with “no-deadline” processes
- Is fewer proposals a good thing?



Design of SPG Pilot

- Need for “process” pilot more than social science experiment
 - Omnibus AAG program on annual cycle; we don’t preallocate funding
 - Spending authority coming later each year (lose Q1)
 - Spending close out ~1 Aug (lose Q4)
 - Community long accustomed to (pioneered) panel reviews & deadlines
 - NSF reliance on review panels for comparative/competitive guidance
 - Panel review requires threshold number of related proposals
- SPG solicitation 16-602 → 1 Oct 16 – 30 Sep 18
 - Also modified AAG solicitation; SPG funded from AAG pool
 - Clarified that proposals predominantly in support of NASA mission(s) would be returned without review – also decreased submissions
 - Gray areas between SPG, AAG, AGS, NASA, etc.
 - Kudos to Faith Vilas and Dave Boboltz and to our awesome staff!

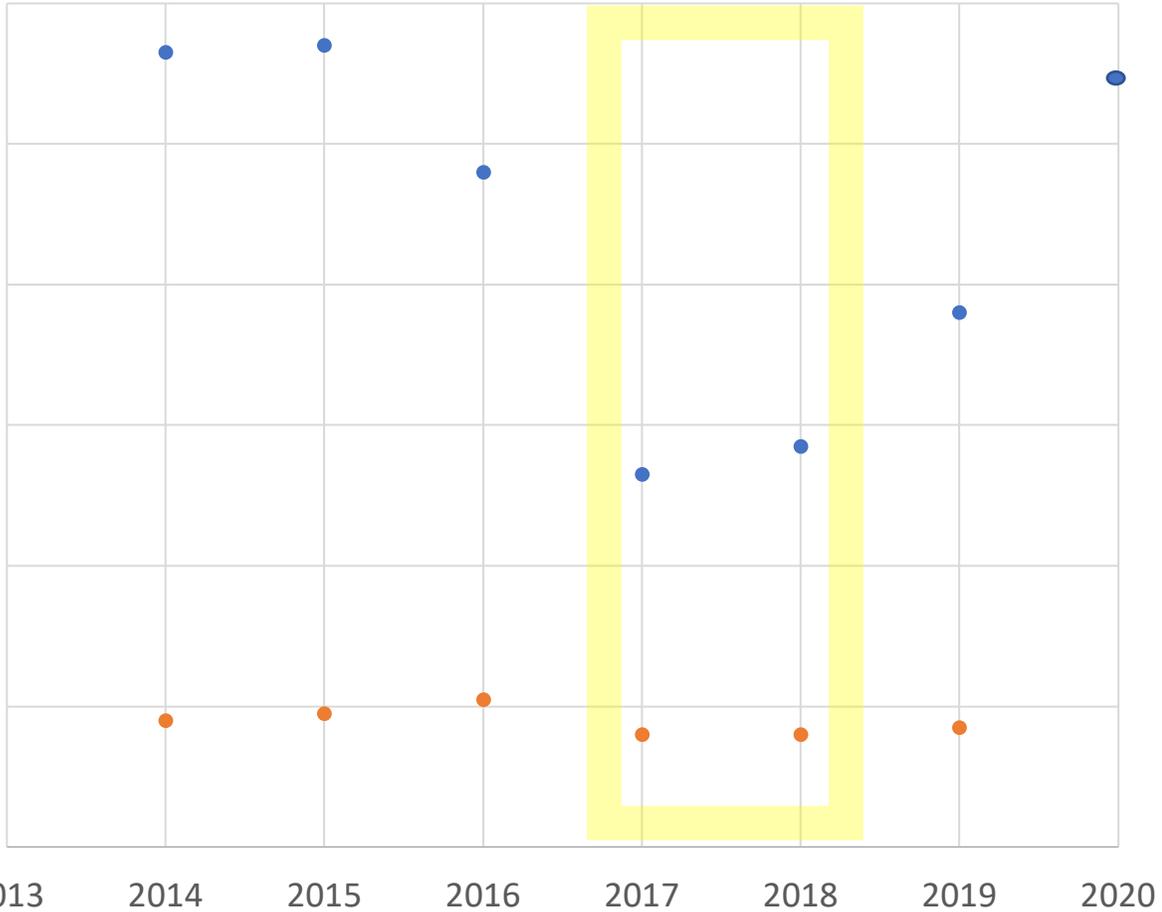


Implementation Results and Lessons

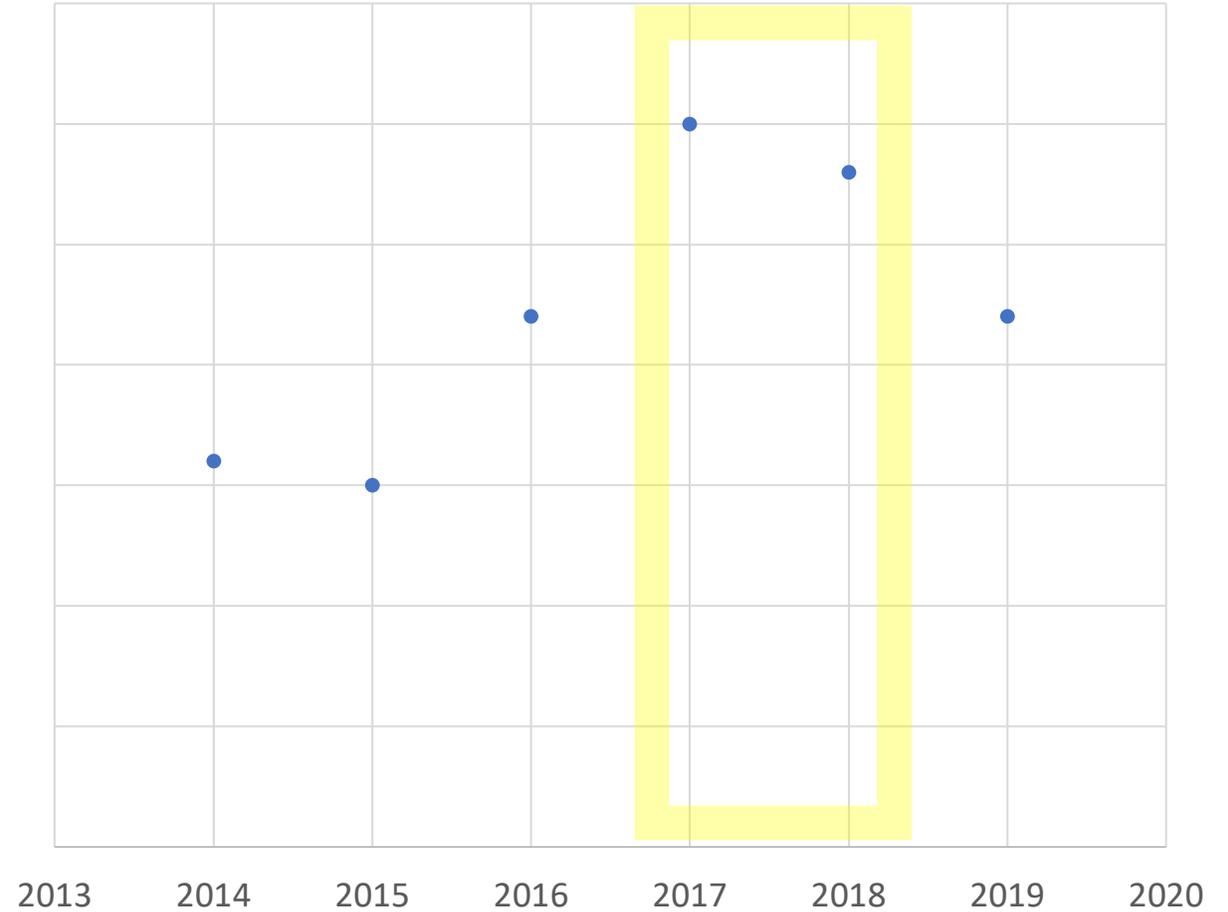
- First year, nearly all came on by 11/15. 2nd year more spread out
- Early submissions met thresholds for topical panels. Later submissions reviewed in smaller, broader panels, often after long delay.
- Heavier reliance on ad hoc reviews
- PO and support staff workload increased and expanded throughout the year. Administrative efficiency decreased (economies of scale lost)
- Budget interleaved over 3 years with AAG program overall. Complex process to ensure solar and planetary program success rate benefits appropriately from decreased proposal pressure (but can't measure this in real time)
- Proposers skeptical about uniform treatment over the year
- Panelists like smaller workload per panel, but rely more heavily on ad hoc input, and proposals must appeal to a broader audience



of Proposals & Awards - SPG

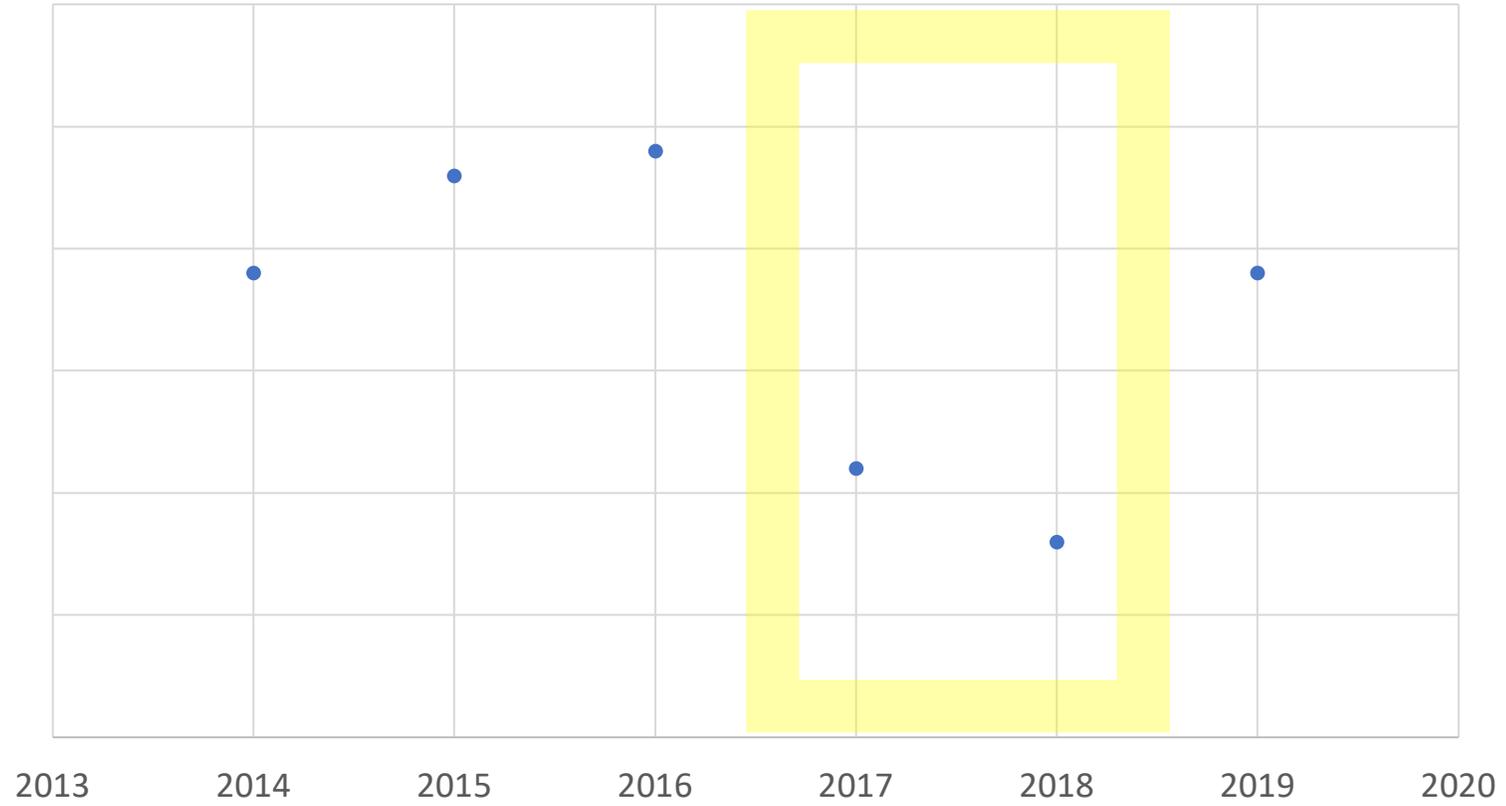


Success Rate - SPG





Proposals/Panel - SPG





AST Concerns, Impacts, and Response

- As in other studies, proposal numbers go down at first. Not clear why or if they eventually return to normal.
- No change to quality of proposals noted by reviewers. Not clear that “missing proposals” are the ones that wouldn’t be funded anyway.
- Less efficient and higher NSF workload
- Smaller, more frequent panels. More ad hoc reviews. Less comparative advice – decrease quality of merit review?
- Planned all along as a 2-year process pilot. Continue to discuss our results and monitor larger pilots across NSF.