



# Directorate for Biological Sciences Virtual Office Hour

Welcome! We will begin the Virtual Office Hour soon.  
Please submit questions in the Zoom Q&A box.





# Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO) Welcome!

## Program Directors in attendance today:

- Anna Allen
- Amanda Simcox
- Gordon Burleigh
- Leslie Rissler
- Diana Chu

## Administrative Support & Technical Assistance:

- Jennifer Visosky



# BIO Virtual Office Hour

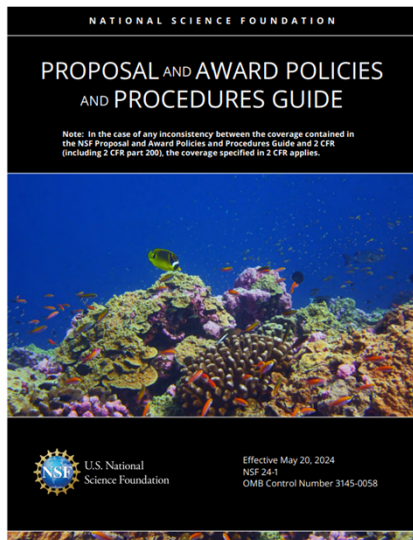
## Today's Topics

- Updates and Reminders
- Recent Solicitations
- Topic of the Day: Merit Review
- Q&A with Program Directors



# Reminders: General

## Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)



- Current version is NSF 24-1
- Latest version can always be found at: <https://www.nsf.gov/policies/pappg>
- Check for recent mini-updates (supplement)

## Implementation of Executive Orders

- Updates on NSF Priorities can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/updates-on-priorities>
- Updates on NSF's Implementation of Executive Orders can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/executive-orders>



# Reminders: Solicitations

**DBI:** Infrastructure Innovation (NSF 23-578)

**DBI:** Infrastructure Capacity (NSF 23-580)

**DBI:** Postdoctoral Research Fellowships in Biology (NSF 26-504)

**DEB:** Core solicitation (NSF 24-543)

**IOS:** Core solicitation (NSF 24-546)

**IOS:** Plant Biotic Interactions (NSF 20-576)

**IOS:** Plant Genome Research Program (NSF 24-547)

**MCB:** Core solicitation (NSF 24-539)

Be sure you refer to the most up-to-date PAPPG  
and most recent solicitation.



# BIO Thematic Areas and Contacts



## **Foundations of Life: [BIO-FL@nsf.gov](mailto:BIO-FL@nsf.gov)**

Exploring natural or synthetic molecules, cells and physiology that build living things



## **Living Systems: [BIO-LS@nsf.gov](mailto:BIO-LS@nsf.gov)**

Understanding how species evolve, interact, and shape Earth's ecosystems



## **Bioinnovation & Infrastructure: [BIO-BI@nsf.gov](mailto:BIO-BI@nsf.gov)**

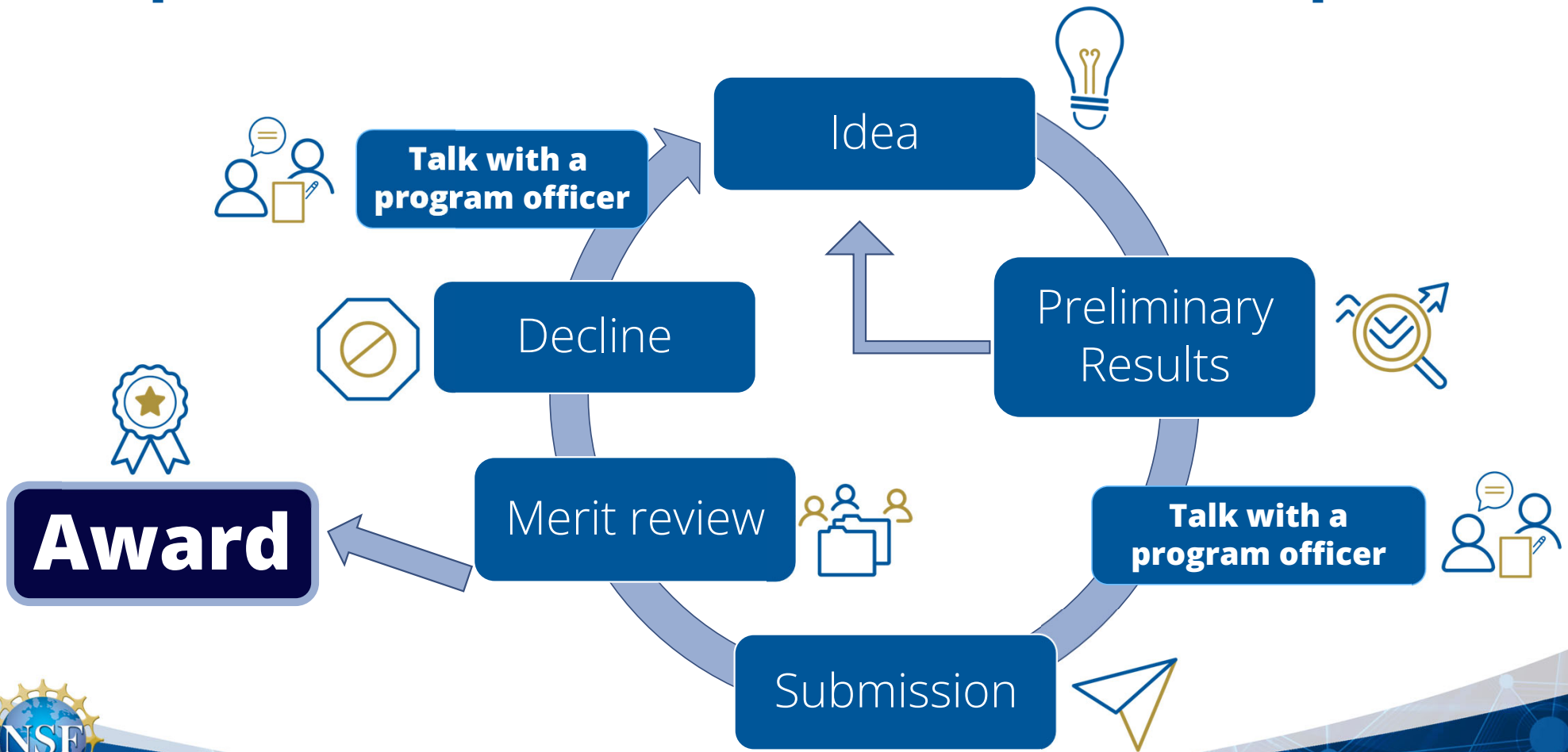
Investigating the functional genomic complexity of life and developing the tools, data, and technologies to drive biological discovery



# The Merit Review Process



# Proposal Submission Process: PI Perspective



# Merit Review Criteria

All NSF proposals are reviewed using two criteria:

**Intellectual Merit:** encompasses the potential to advance knowledge

**Broader Impacts:** encompasses the potential to benefit society



# Who Reviews NSF Proposals?



Panel

Ad Hoc

Internal

Combination

## Best practice for PI's

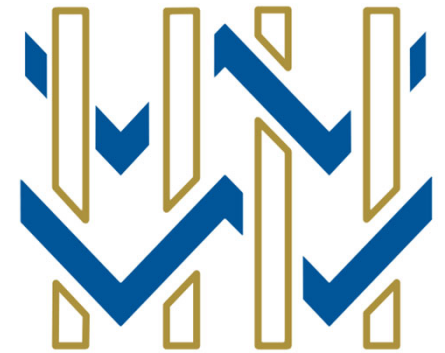
- Upload a “List of Suggested Reviewers” as one of your Single Copy Documents
- This can also include a list of reviewers you would prefer **not** review your proposal



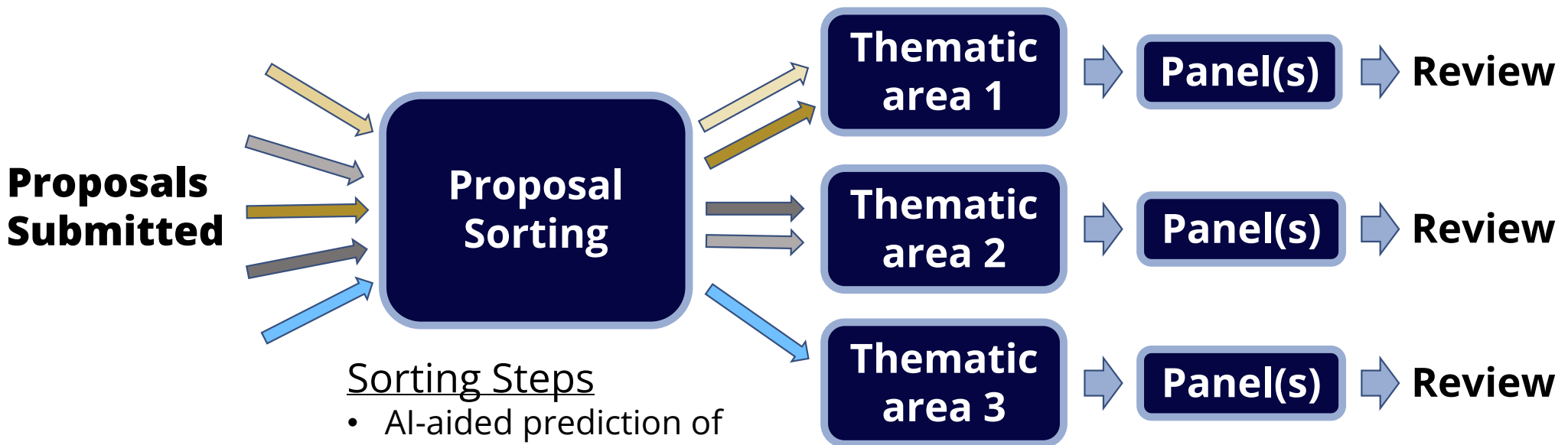
# Merit Review Reform

## Agency-wide initiative

- Overarching principles
  - Maintain agency's historical high standard for merit review
  - Maintain the two merit review criteria
- Increased efficiency, consistency, and transparency
  - More automation of routine tasks to save time
  - Less program-to-program variability across the agency
- At least two reviews per proposal
  - BIO will continue to seek external review from the research community
  - Merit Review Criteria (Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts) remain
- More use of return without review for inappropriate or insufficiently revised proposals



# BIO Assignment of Proposals to Panels



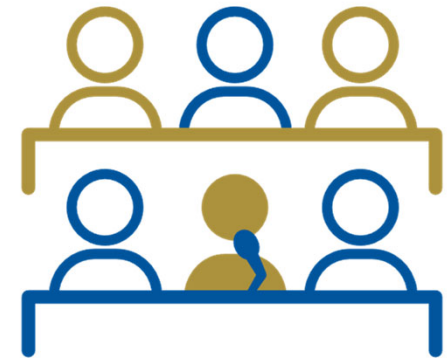
## Sorting Steps

- AI-aided prediction of Thematic Area
- Program Director-based verification



# Panel Updates

- More effective use of panel discussion time
  - Less discussion for proposals with uniformly high or low review scores
  - More discussion of proposals with divergent scores
- More succinct panel summaries



# What does NSF do with the reviews?

- Reviews and panel summaries are advisory to NSF
- Program Directors use the advice to make recommendations for award or decline
- Leadership must concur with the recommendations
- Awards are processed through NSF's Office of Awards Management



# What PI's Receive from the Review

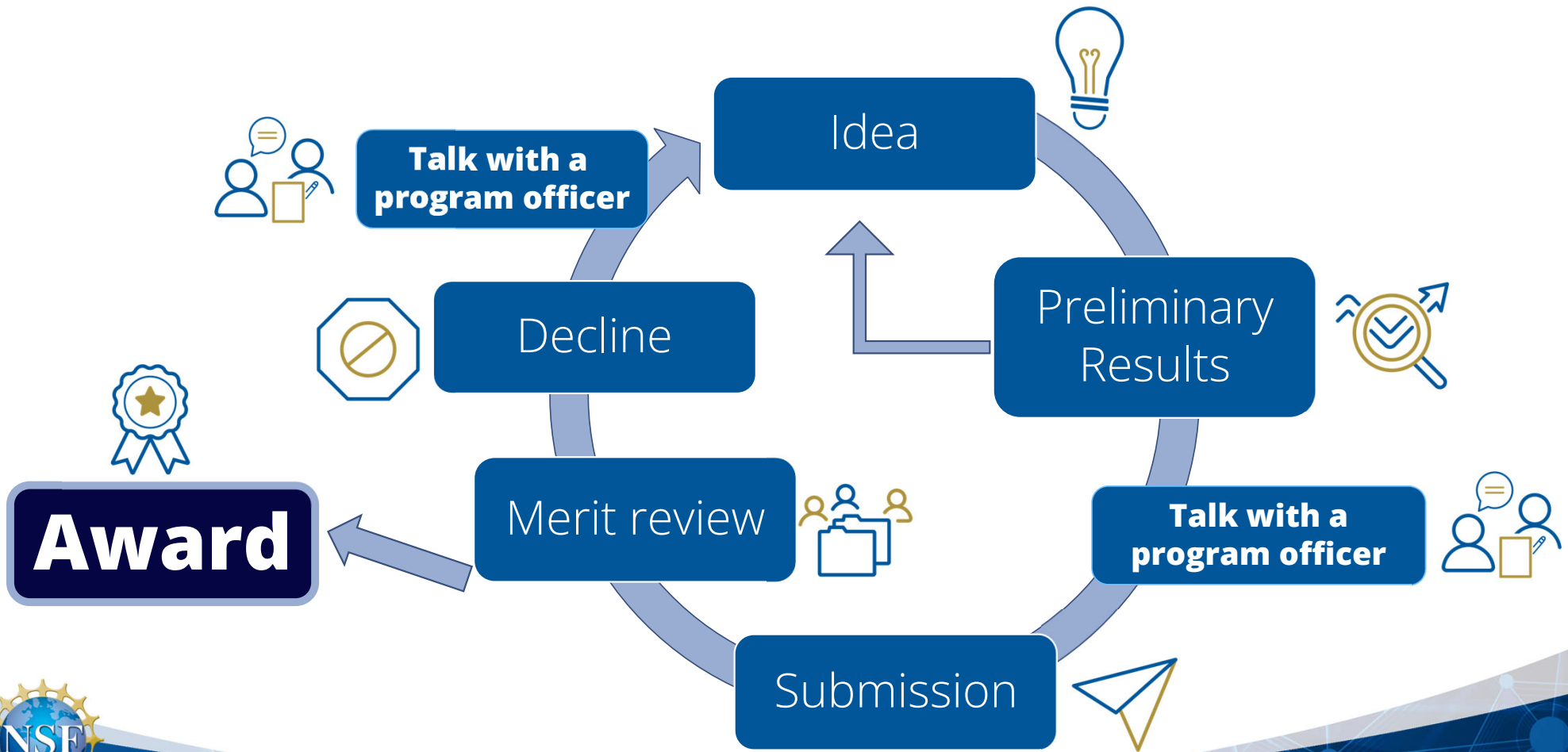
- *Verbatim* copies of the individual reviews
- If the proposal was discussed in panel
  - Panel summary
  - PO Comment with additional information
- If the proposal was not discussed in panel
  - No panel summary
  - PO Comment with additional information



## • **Contact information for your Program Director**



# Proposal Submission Process: PI Perspective



# New Postdoc Funding Opportunity

- Postdoctoral Research Fellowships in Biology, [NSF 26-504](#)
- Focus area: Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Biological Sciences to Strengthen and Safeguard Biotechnology Innovations
- Deadline: September 29, 2026
- Virtual Office Hour: June 17, 2026



# BIO REU Sites

- Research Experiences for Undergraduates, NSF 23-601
- Supports cohorts of students to conduct research in summer programs
- Deadline: August 19, 2026
- Virtual Office Hour: June 10, 1-2 pm ET



# BIO Virtual Office Hour Reminders

- Submit questions in the Zoom Q&A box
- Project-specific questions are best addressed individually by contacting a Program Officer
- Next BIO Virtual Office Hour:
  - May 21, 2026
  - Topic: Submitting to the Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER)



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# For more info:

Sign-up for emails on new solicitations; events; due date reminders; and BIO's quarterly newsletter, including information on new priorities and solicitations, highlights from the community, and more!

Visit [www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov) and scroll down until you see the Sign up and social media banner, click on the yellow box, and follow the prompts.

