Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
On Proposal Preparation and Award Administration

May 2003

A

Administrative Corrections

What should I do if I notice an error in a proposal I just submitted via FastLane?

NSF recognizes that minor, non-content-related errors might occur in proposal development and that these errors may not be discovered until after the proposal submission to NSF. To enable organizations to correct such errors, FastLane provides a 60-minute "grace period," that begins immediately following proposal submission. This grace period does not extend the proposal deadline (e.g., if a proposal deadline is 5:00 p.m. proposer's local time, the proposal must be submitted by 5:00 p.m., and administrative corrections are allowed until 6:00 p.m., proposer local time). During this grace period, authorized sponsored project office personnel are allowed to make administrative corrections to Cover Sheet and Budget data. These corrections do not include changes to identified PIs, co-PIs, or other senior project personnel. Access to the Administrative Corrections utility is via the Research Administration module on the FastLane Website through the "Submit Proposals/Supplements/File Updates/Withdrawals" function.

Audit Reports

Where should copies of an A-133 audit report be sent?

Under OMB Circular A-133, *Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations*, for audits covering an accounting period which begins July 1, 1996 or after, a single audit format report should be sent to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse. If it is a program-specific format report, a copy of the report should be sent to the Clearinghouse as an archival copy and the report should be sent to the cognizant or oversight Federal agency for review (see under Section .235 (c)(2) of the Circular).

Award Administration

Where can I find information regarding post-award issues?

Information regarding pre-award costs, prior approvals, extensions, transfer of PIs, reporting requirements and other award administration requirements can be found by accessing the applicable award conditions on the NSF Website. Additional information regarding the award and administration of NSF grants and cooperative agreements may be found in the *Grant Policy Manual* also available electronically on the NSF Website.

C

CFDA Numbers

What is the CFDA number and where can an awardee find it?

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) profiles all Federal grant programs and is jointly issued by the Office of Management and Budget and the General Services Administration. The Catalog is available for reference in the government documents section of most major libraries and in the offices of State and local governments. The CFDA number is important for tracking and audit purposes. The applicable CFDA number is identified in the Summary section of NSF program announcements and solicitations. A complete listing of NSF CFDA numbers, by Division, is included on the Policy Office Website.

Collaborative Proposals

What is a collaborative proposal?

A collaborative proposal is one in which investigators from two or more organizations wish to collaborate on a unified research project. Collaborative proposals may be submitted to NSF in one of two methods: as a single proposal, in which a single award is being requested (with subawards administered by the lead organization); or by simultaneous submission of proposals from different organizations, with each organization requesting a separate award. In either case, the lead organization's proposal should contain all of the requisite sections as a single package to be provided to reviewers. All collaborative proposals should clearly describe the roles to be played by the other organizations, specify the managerial arrangements, and explain the advantages of the multi-organizational effort within the project description. PIs are strongly encouraged to contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer prior to submission of a collaborative proposal.

Submission of a single proposal

The single proposal method allows investigators from two or more institutions who have developed an integrated research project to submit a single, focused proposal. A single investigator bears primary responsibility for the administration of the grant and discussions with NSF, and, at the discretion of the organizations involved, investigators from any of the participating institutions may be designated as co-PIs. By submission of the proposal, the organization has determined that the proposed activity is administratively manageable. NSF may request a revised proposal, however, if it considers that the project is so complex that it will be too difficult to review or administer as presented. (See GPG Chapter II.D.3 for additional instructions on preparation of this type of proposal.)

Simultaneous submission of proposals from different organizations

In many instances, simultaneous submission of proposals that contain the same project description from each organization might be appropriate. For these proposals, the project title must begin with the words "Collaborative Research:" The lead organization's submission will include a Cover Sheet, project summary, project description, references cited, biographical sketches, budgets and budget justification, current and pending support, and

facilities, equipment and other resources for their organization. Non-lead organization submissions will include all of the above for their organization except the project summary, project description, and references cited which are the same for all collaborating organizations. FastLane will combine the proposal submission for printing or electronic viewing.

Given that separately submitted collaborative proposals constitute a "single" proposal submission to NSF, it is imperative that the proposals be submitted within a reasonable timeframe to one another. Failure to submit all components of the collaborative proposal on a timely basis may impact the review of the proposal.

Concurrent Proposals

Can a proposer submit the same proposal to different organizations within NSF for simultaneous review?

Only one submission should be provided to NSF even if review by multiple programs is envisioned. You may indicate on the Cover Sheet which NSF organizational unit(s) you believe would be most appropriate for proposal review. However, NSF will determine which program will evaluate each proposal.

The submission of duplicate or substantially similar proposals concurrently for review by more than one program without prior NSF approval may result in the return of the redundant proposal(s). (See GPG Chapter IV.B for the NSF return policy.)

Can the same proposal submitted to NSF be submitted to other agencies for simultaneous review?

Generally, proposals may be submitted to other agencies for simultaneous review. Research proposals (not proposals for conferences or workshops) to the Biological Sciences Directorate, however, cannot be duplicates of proposals to any other Federal agency for simultaneous consideration. The only exceptions to the rule for research proposals submitted to the Biological Sciences Directorate are: (1) when the proposers and program managers at relevant Federal agencies have previously agreed to joint review and possible joint funding of the proposal; or (2) proposals for PIs who are beginning investigators (individuals who have not been a principal investigator (PI) or co-principal investigator (co-PI) on a Federally funded award with the exception of doctoral dissertation, postdoctoral fellowship or research planning grants). For proposers who qualify under this latter exception, the box for "Beginning Investigator" must be checked on the proposal Cover Sheet. (Reference GPG Chapter I.A.)

Conference, Symposia and Workshop Proposals

Can I apply for NSF funding to conduct a conference, symposia or workshop?

NSF supports conferences, symposia and workshops in special areas of science and engineering that bring experts together to discuss recent research or education findings or to expose other researchers or students to new research and education techniques. NSF encourages the convening in the US of major international conferences, symposia and workshops. Conferences will be supported only if equivalent results cannot be obtained at regular meetings of professional societies. Requests generally should be made at least a year in advance of the scheduled date. See GPG Chapter II.D.7 for more information.

Conferences or meetings, including the facilities in which they are held, funded in whole or in part with NSF funds, must be accessible to participants with disabilities.

Confidential Budgetary Information

How do I indicate in my proposal if I do not want salary information to be released to people outside the Government?

The proposing organization may request that salary data on senior personnel not be released to persons outside the Government during the review process. In such cases, the item for senior personnel salaries in the proposal may appear as a single figure and the person-months represented by that amount omitted. If this option is exercised, senior personnel salaries and person-months must be itemized in a separate statement, and forwarded to NSF in accordance with the instructions specified in Chapter I, Section B, *Proprietary or Privileged Information*. Detailed instructions for submission of confidential budgetary information are available on the FastLane Website.

This statement must include all of the information requested on the Proposal Budget for each person involved. NSF will not forward the detailed information to reviewers and will hold it privileged to the extent permitted by law. The information on senior personnel salaries will be used as the basis for determining the salary amounts shown in the grant budget. The box for "Proprietary and Privileged Information" must be checked on the Cover Sheet when the proposal contains confidential budgetary information.

Consultant Rate

What is the limitation on payments to consultants under NSF awards?

The current maximum rate is $513.00 per day (exclusive of indirect cost, travel, per diem, clerical services, fringe benefits and supplies) as specified in Article 5 of GC-1. The current rate (as well as prior archived rates) is available on the NSF Website at: http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dga/policy/start.htm.

Continuing Grant Increments

What is the basis for approving incremental funding and who indicates approval?

Incremental funding for continuing grants within the total duration of the project is based on NSF review of annual project reports and does not require submission of a new proposal. NSF must receive an annual project report for each increment of funding at least three months prior to the end of the current funding period. See Chapter VI, Section G.1 for information on NSF's electronic reporting system available via the FastLane system. Effective June 2003, continuing grant increments will be approved by the cognizant Program Officer. The sponsored projects office and PI will be notified by the cognizant NSF Program Officer of NSF's approval via an electronic notification. The grantee community can access award notifications immediately after NSF's approval via the FastLane system.

Cost Sharing

What is NSF's policy regarding cost sharing?

The National Science Board revisited the NSF cost sharing policy and implemented a revision to that policy through issuance of Important Notice 128, dated January 24, 2003.

In accordance with Important Notice 128, *Revision of the NSF Cost Sharing Policy*, for unsolicited proposals submitted in response to the Grant Proposal Guide and, for proposals submitted in response to NSF program announcements, only the statutory cost sharing amount (1%) is required. In such cases, proposers are advised **NOT** to identify cost sharing amounts on Line M of the proposal budget.

Proposals submitted in response to NSF solicitations may be subject to special cost sharing requirements. In cases where cost sharing is required, NSF has determined that proposals submitted in response to the solicitation provide a tangible benefit to the award recipient(s) (normally beyond the immediate term or scope of the NSF-supported activity). Benefit is defined in terms of capacity building, potential dollar revenues, time frames, or third party users. NSF-funded activities that are characterized by such benefits are awards for infrastructure-building purposes (instrumentation/equipment/centers/facilities) or for awards where there is clear potential to make profit or generate income (e.g. curriculum development). In accordance with Important Notice 128, proposers are advised not to exceed the cost sharing level or amount specified in the solicitation.

When cost sharing is required, it is considered an eligibility rather than a review criterion. In order to retain this concept of an eligibility rather than a review criterion, NSF has modified the FastLane system to ensure that Line M is masked from peer reviewers during the review process.

To facilitate implementation of the policy, a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) has been developed for use by both NSF staff and its customer communities. The complete text of the FAQs is available electronically on the NSF Website at http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dga/policy/start.htm. Any questions regarding the cost sharing

policy or the Frequently Asked Questions should be directed to: costsharing@nsf.gov. Further information on NSF's cost sharing policy can be found in the GPG Chapter II.C. g.(xii).

Is cost sharing required as part of an award?

For research proposals submitted solely in response to the *Grant Proposal Guide*, only the statutory cost sharing amount (1%) is required. Such amounts should not be entered on Line M of the proposal budget.

Proposals submitted in response to NSF solicitations may be subject to special cost sharing requirements. NSF-required cost sharing is considered an eligibility rather than a review criterion.

Proposers are advised that all proposed cost sharing commitments, if incorporated into the award, are subject to audit. When applicable, the estimated value of any in-kind contributions should be included on Line M. An explanation of the source, nature, amount and availability of any proposed cost sharing also must be provided in the budget justification. It should be noted that contributions derived from other Federal funds or counted as cost sharing toward projects of another Federal agency may not be counted towards meeting the specific cost sharing requirements of the NSF grant. Failure to provide the level of cost sharing reflected in the approved grant budget may result in termination of the NSF grant, disallowance of grant costs and/or refund of grant funds to NSF by the grantee.

What constitutes acceptable cost sharing under an NSF award?

If cost sharing is incorporated as a special condition in the grant, cost sharing becomes a legal condition of the award and, as such, is an auditable item for the grantee organization. A thorough examination of the cost-sharing proposal is a part of the detailed Division of Grants and Agreements' budgetary and administrative review of the proposal. In order for cost sharing to be acceptable, the cost-sharing amount must be listed on Line M of the NSF Budget, must be in accordance with Section .23 of OMB Circular A-110 and authorized by the organizational representative.

Cover Sheet for Proposal to NSF and Proposal Certifications

Must the awardee organization code and the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number be included on the *Cover Sheet for Proposal to the National Science Foundation*? Where can a proposer find the awardee organization code and DUNS number?

An organization should include the organization code, if known, on the proposal Cover Sheet. If the code is not known, the block should be left blank and NSF will assign a code to the institution. These codes are unique to the NSF database and in no way visible to the institutions. The DUNS number must also be included on the proposal Cover Sheet. If the organization does not have a DUNS number, Dun and Bradstreet Information Services should be contacted at 800-333-0505 to obtain one. (Reference GPG Chapter II.C.2.a)

What is the box for "International Cooperative Activities: Country/Countries" used for on the Cover Sheet?

Proposals for travel support for US participation in international scientific and engineering meetings held abroad are handled by the NSF organizational unit with program responsibility for the area of research interest. In addition to the international projects funded and managed by the disciplinary divisions, the Office of International Science and Engineering (INT) provides support for bilateral and regional cooperative science and engineering projects to foster and facilitate cooperation between US investigators and their foreign colleagues in joint activities of mutual interest and benefit. Grants may be made for the US portion of the costs of the initial phases of cooperative research, joint seminars and workshops, planning visits, programs to enhance the international perspectives of the next generation of US scientists and engineers, and for fellowships, summer programs and research participation. Information on proposal requirements and award selection procedures is contained on the Office of International Science and Engineering Website. The box for "International Cooperative Activities" should be checked and the countries identified on the proposal Cover Sheet.

When should a SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, be submitted?

The Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form, SF LLL, is required when the proposal exceeds $100,000 and the conditions in paragraph (2) of the certification are met: specifically, if any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence a government employee, Member or employee of Congress in connection with a Federal grant or cooperative agreement. (Reference GPG Chapter II.C.1.e) The full text of the *Lobbying Certification* can be found in Appendix E of the GPG.

D

Deviation Authorization

What is the process for requesting authorization of a deviation from the *Grant Proposal Guide* proposal preparation instructions?

Deviations from NSF proposal preparation and processing instructions may be authorized in one of two ways:

1. through specification of different requirements in an NSF solicitation; or

2. by the written approval of the cognizant NSF Assistant Director/Office Head or designee. These deviations may be in the form of a "blanket deviation" for a particular program or programs or, in rare instances, an "individual" deviation for a particular proposal.

Proposers may deviate from these instructions only to the extent authorized. Proposals must identify the deviation in one of the following ways as appropriate: (a) by identifying the solicitation number that authorized the deviation in the appropriate block on the Cover Sheet;

or (b) for individual deviations, by identifying the name, date and title of the NSF official authorizing the deviation. Further instructions are available on the FastLane Website.

Drug-Free Workplace Certification

Where can I find the complete text of the Drug-Free Workplace Certification?

When the Authorized Organizational Representative (or individual applicant) electronically signs the Cover Sheet for Proposal to NSF, they are providing the necessary certifications. The full text of the Drug-Free Workplace Certification can be found in Appendix C of the GPG.

E

Electronic Signatures

Does NSF require proposals to be "signed" electronically?

All proposals to NSF are required to be electronically signed by the Authorized Organizational Representative. To facilitate understanding regarding NSF's electronic signature policy, a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) has been developed for use by both NSF staff and its customer communities and is available on the Policy Office Website.

Electronic Submission

Am I required to use FastLane to prepare and submit my proposal to NSF?

ALL proposals to NSF must be submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane system. For proposers who cannot submit electronically, a deviation must be approved in advance of submission of the paper proposal in accordance with GPG Chapter II.A.

Where should questions be directed on use of the NSF FastLane system?

Questions related to use of the NSF FastLane system may be directed to the FastLane User Support desk at 800-673-6188 or (703) 292-8142 or by sending an e-mail message to fastlane@nsf.gov. In addition, for information on the availability of the NSF FastLane system, phone 800-437-7408 for a recorded message.

Can I use any other electronic method to transmit my proposal to NSF?

In addition to FastLane, NSF does accept proposals in the EDI format. NSF currently supports Versions 3060 and 4010 of the 194 transaction set. For further information on how to transmit an EDI proposal to NSF, see the instructions on the FastLane web site.

Eligibility

Can an award be made to an individual?

Scientists, engineers or educators in the U.S. and U.S. citizens may be eligible for support, provided that the individual is not employed by, or affiliated with, an organization and:

- the proposed project is sufficiently meritorious and otherwise complies with the conditions of any applicable proposal generating document;
- the proposer has demonstrated the capability and has access to any necessary facilities to carry out the project; and
- the proposer agrees to fiscal arrangements which, in the opinion of the NSF Division of Grants and Agreements, ensure responsible management of Federal funds.

Unaffiliated individuals should contact the appropriate NSF program prior to preparing a proposal for submission. (Reference GPG Chapter I.C.5)

If an individual is not a U.S. citizen, can the individual apply for a grant? Can a permanent resident serve as a Principal Investigator at a U.S. institution?

Except for NSF fellowships, which by statute can be made only to citizens, nationals, or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens of the United States, there generally are no nationality restrictions in any NSF program. If applying to an NSF program solicitation, proposers should consult the Eligibility Information section of the Summary for information on who may apply to that particular program. Unless stated otherwise in a solicitation, a proposing institution in the US may designate as Principal Investigator anyone it believes to be capable of fulfilling the role.

Can an award be made to a foreign organization?

NSF rarely provides support to foreign organizations. NSF, however, will consider proposals for cooperative projects involving U.S. and foreign organizations, provided support is requested only for the U.S. portion of the collaborative effort. For further information, contact the Office of International Science and Engineering. (Reference GPG Chapter I.C.6.)

Can a Federal agency apply for an NSF award?

NSF does not normally support research or education activities by scientists, engineers or educators employed by Federal agencies or Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). A scientist, engineer or educator, however, who has a joint appointment with a university and a Federal agency (such as a Veterans Administration Hospital, or with a university and an FFRDC) may submit proposals through the university and may receive support if he/she is a bona fide faculty member of the university, although part of his/her salary may be provided by the Federal agency. Under unusual circumstances, other Federal agencies and FFRDCs may submit proposals directly to NSF. Preliminary inquiry should be made to the appropriate program before preparing a proposal for submission. (Reference GPG Chapter I.C.7.)

Equipment Proposals

Does NSF fund proposals for the purpose of purchasing equipment?

Proposals for specialized equipment may be submitted by an organization for:

- individual investigators;
- groups of investigators within the same department;
- several departments;
- organization(s) participating in a collaborative or joint arrangement;
- any components of an organization; or
- a region.

One individual should be designated as PI. It should be noted that many organizations within NSF have formal instrumentation programs that may include special guidelines such as cost sharing or other requirements. It is important to use the applicable guidelines in these competitions. More information regarding how to apply for equipment proposals can be found in GPG Chapter II. D.4.

F

Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED)

What are the Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED) and how can a proposer/awardee apply for one?

As part of its effort to promote full utilization of highly qualified scientists, mathematicians, and engineers, and to develop scientific and technical talent, the Foundation has the following goals:

- to reduce or remove barriers to participation in research and training by physically disabled individuals by providing special equipment and assistance under awards made by NSF; and

- to encourage disabled individuals to pursue careers in science and engineering by stimulating the development and demonstration of special equipment that facilitates their work performance.

Individuals with disabilities eligible for facilitation awards include principal investigators, other senior project personnel, and graduate and undergraduate students. The cognizant NSF Program Officer will make decisions regarding what constitutes appropriate support on a case-by-case basis. The specific nature, purpose, and need for equipment or assistance should be described in sufficient detail in the proposal to permit evaluation by knowledgeable reviewers.

There is no separate program for funding of special equipment or assistance. Requests are made in conjunction with regular competitive proposals, or as a supplemental funding request to an existing NSF award. Specific instructions for each type of request can be found in GPG II.D.2.

FastLane System

What is FastLane? Where can a proposer find more information?

The NSF FastLane system uses Internet/Web technology to facilitate the way NSF does business with the research, education, and related communities. The NSF FastLane system is available for proposal preparation; submission and status checking; project reporting; and post-award administrative activities. All FastLane functions are accessed by using a Web browser on the Internet.

Access to proposal and post-award functions is limited to staff from FastLane-registered organizations. To register an organization, Authorized Organizational Representatives must complete the registration form that is available through the Registration Information hyperlink on the FastLane Web site.

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Format of the Proposal

What are the proposal margin and spacing requirements that need to be followed when developing an NSF proposal?

Proposals must have 2.5 cm margins at the top, bottom and on each side. The page number should be placed above the 2.5 cm margin. The type size must be clear and readily legible, and conform to the following three requirements: 1) the height of the letters must not be

smaller than 10 point; 2) type density must be no more than 15 characters per 2.5 cm (for proportional spacing, the average for any representative section of text must not exceed 15 characters per 2.5 cm); and 3) no more than 6 lines must be within a vertical space of 2.5 cm. The type size used throughout the proposal must conform to all three requirements. While line spacing (single-spaced, double-spaced, etc.) is at the discretion of the proposer, established page limits must be followed. (Individual program solicitations may eliminate this proposer option.)

While the guidelines specified above establish the **minimum** type size requirements, PIs are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal.

How can proposers ensure compliance with NSF proposal preparation guidelines?

Prior to electronic submission, it is strongly recommended that proposers conduct an administrative review to ensure that proposals comply with the proposal preparation guidelines established in the GPG. A *Proposal Preparation Checklist* has been developed to aid in this process and is available as <u>Appendix A</u> of the GPG. This checklist is not intended to be an all-inclusive repetition of the required proposal contents and associated proposal preparation guidelines. It is, however, meant to highlight certain critical items so they will not be overlooked when the proposal is prepared.

H

High-resolution Graphics and Color Representations

Are there special instructions for proposals that contain high resolution graphics or other color representations?

For cost and technical reasons, the Foundation cannot, at this time, reproduce proposals containing color. PIs, therefore, generally should not rely on colorized objects to make their arguments. PIs who must include in their project descriptions high resolution graphics, or other graphics where exact color representations are required for proper interpretation by the reviewer, must submit the required number of copies of the entire paper proposal, including a paper copy of the proposal Cover Sheet, for use in the review process. This submission is in addition to, not in lieu of, the electronic submission of the proposal via FastLane. Given that some NSF programs have converted to use of a primarily electronic review process, PIs are strongly encouraged to contact the cognizant program officer prior to submission of the paper copies of a proposal. The cognizant NSF Program Officer is ultimately responsible for reviewing the color materials submitted and making a determination of whether or not to send the paper copies out for merit review.

Upon submission of the proposal, the proposing organization will be notified of the required number of paper copies of the proposal that must be submitted to NSF. The exact number of copies required will appear in an electronic message at the time of FastLane submission and will depend on the NSF Division selected. Such proposals must be postmarked (or provide a legible proof of mailing date assigned by the carrier) within five working days following the electronic submission of the proposal.

Human Subjects

What is NSF's policy on the use of human subjects in research?

Projects involving research with human subjects must ensure that subjects are protected from research risks in conformance with the relevant Federal policy known as the Common Rule (*Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects*, 45 CFR 690). All projects involving human subjects either must have approval from the organization's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before issuance of an NSF award or affirm that the IRB has declared the research exempt from continued oversight, in accordance with the applicable subsection of section 101(b) of the Common Rule. The box for "Human Subjects" must be checked on the Cover Sheet with the IRB approval date (if available) or exemption subsection from the Common Rule identified in the space provided. If IRB approval has not been obtained prior to submission, the proposer should indicate "Pending" in the space provided for the approval date.

Additional information, including Frequently Asked Questions and Vignettes, for use in interpreting the Common Rule for Behavioral and Social Science Research, is available on the NSF Website at: http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dga/policy/start.htm. (Reference GPG Chapter II.D.6)

I

Information Sources

Where can a proposer find general information about NSF programs and funding opportunities?

The NSF Guide to Programs contains funding opportunities for research and education in science, mathematics and engineering. Additional information on a variety of funding opportunities is located on the NSF home page under Funding.

Individual program announcements/solicitations and program descriptions address specific areas that NSF is interested in funding. These funding opportunities may be accessed electronically on the NSF Website.

What is the Custom News Service and what is the process for signing up?

The NSF Custom News Service is an information-delivery system designed to keep potential proposers and other interested parties apprised of the issuance of new program announcements and solicitations (as well as other NSF publications and policies) through Internet e-mail or the user's Web browser. Subscribers are informed each time new publications are issued that match their identified interests. To subscribe to the Custom News Service, go to the NSF Website and click on "Custom News Service" on the toolbar.

Where can a proposer find guidance on proposal preparation?

The *Grant Proposal Guide* (GPG) provides guidance for the preparation of unsolicited proposals to NSF. It contains instructions for proposal preparation and submission, information on NSF proposal processing and merit review, award and continued support, and grant administration highlights. NSF also issues program announcements and solicitations for areas that NSF is specifically interested in supporting. For those connected with institutions of higher education, the college or university's Office of Sponsored Programs is a good place to start gathering information.

Where can a proposer find guidance on administration of an NSF award?

The *Grant Policy Manual* (GPM) provides information regarding the NSF award cycle from issuance and administration of an award through closeout. See also the Grant and Agreement Conditions, such as GC-1 and the Federal Demonstration Partnership Terms and Conditions, for additional information. For those connected with institutions of higher education, the college or university's Office of Sponsored Programs is a good place to start gathering information.

Where and how can a proposer obtain copies of the *Grant Policy Manual* (GPM) and *Grant Proposal Guide* (GPG)?

The complete text of the GPM and GPG are available electronically on the NSF Website. Organizations or individuals unable to access the GPM or GPG electronically may order paper copies (maximum of 5 per request) from the NSF Clearinghouse, PO Box 218, Jessup MD 20794-0218, Telephone: (301) 947-2722, e-mail: paperpubs@nsf.gov.

Where can a proposer obtain copies of the NSF Grant General Conditions?

Grant General Conditions are available electronically on the NSF Website under Funding or they may be ordered from the NSF Clearinghouse, PO Box 218, Jessup MD 20794-0218, Telephone: (301) 947-2722, e-mail: paperpubs@nsf.gov.

M

Merit Review Criteria

How are proposals submitted to NSF evaluated?

The National Science Board approved revised criteria for evaluating proposals at its meeting on March 28, 1997 (NSB 97-72). All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of the two National Science Board approved merit review criteria. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities. For example, proposals for large facility projects also might be subject to special review criteria outlined in the program solicitation. For more information on the NSF Merit Review criteria, see GPG Chapter III.A.

N

New Grantees

An organization is preparing a grant proposal for submission to NSF but does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate. Can the organization submit a grant proposal without a negotiated indirect cost rate, and if so, what indirect cost rate should be used in the grant proposal budget?

Because of the volume of proposals submitted to NSF, it is not practical, nor possible, for NSF to review and negotiate indirect cost rates for all organizations that submit grant proposals. Therefore, NSF will only review and negotiate indirect cost rates for those organizations that NSF seriously considers funding.

Since the grant proposal budget is an organization's estimate of total grant project costs, and is one of NSF's considerations in determining appropriate funding amounts, organizations should include estimated amounts for both direct and indirect costs on their proposal budgets. The indirect cost rates that should be used in arriving at estimated indirect costs should be reflective of the organization's financial operations as determined in the preparation of an indirect cost proposal based on historical and/or budgeted expenditure data. More detailed information on indirect cost rates, preparing indirect cost rate proposals, and where to direct questions in this area can be accessed electronically on the NSF Website at: http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dacs/oversite/start.htm.

What if an organization has never received NSF funding?

An in-depth review of the organization's accounting, management, and financial practices must be undertaken and certification completed prior to finalizing a pending award. The Division of Grants and Agreements (DGA) will mail the requisite forms and the listing of information which needs to be completed and returned, upon notification from programs that an award is imminent for a new performer organization. By examining the documents, DGA, along with the Division of Acquisition and Cost Support (DACS), will be able to determine if the grantee organization is capable of directly receiving NSF funds and thereby is eligible to be a recipient of an NSF award. In addition, an indirect cost rate may also need to be negotiated by the Cost Analysis/Audit Resolution Branch/DACS. If the new performer materials are approved, the submitting organization's name and address will be added to the NSF award database and the award processing will proceed.

Where can a new proposer find information on the types of documents required to be completed and submitted to NSF in order for NSF to conduct the necessary administrative and financial reviews of the organization?

The "Prospective New Awardee Guide" includes sections on: Administration and Management Information; Accounting System Requirements and Auditing Information; and Payments to Organizations with Awards. This information will assist an organization in preparing documents which the NSF requires to conduct administrative and financial reviews of an organization. The guide also serves as a means of highlighting the accountability requirements associated with Federal awards. The Prospective New Awardee Guide can be accessed electronically at: http://www.nsf.gov/pubsys/ods/getpub.cfm?nsf02044.

Notification of Proposal Receipt

How will a proposer know whether NSF has received his/her proposal?

Once the proposal is submitted, PIs can access the number assigned to the proposal via the "Submitted Proposals" list in the FastLane Proposal Preparation module. If a proposal number is not reflected in the FastLane System, contact the FastLane Help Desk at (800) 673-6188, or (703) 292-8142 or by e-mail to fastlane@nsf.gov.

When the proposal is assigned to an NSF program, the cognizant program information is available through the FastLane "Proposal Status Inquiry" function for PIs and through the "Recent Proposals" report for sponsored projects offices. Communications about the proposal should be addressed to the cognizant Program Officer with reference to the proposal number. Proposers are strongly encouraged to use FastLane to verify the status of their submission to NSF. (Reference GPG Chapter I.E.3.)

O

Outreach Opportunities

Where can a proposer find information about NSF outreach opportunities?

In addition to campus visits by NSF Program Officials, NSF usually conducts two regional grants conferences per calendar year. These regional grants conferences are announced on the NSF Website under NSF Outreach and on the Grants Bulletin Board. These conferences cover topics such as: proposal preparation; merit review of proposals; electronic initiatives and special issues; grant administration; new programs and cross-disciplinary initiatives; and future directions and strategies for the Foundation.

NSF representatives also participate in educational and professional development seminars, meetings and workshops, which focus on current issues and developments, frequently with such organizations as the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) and the Society of Research Administrators (SRA). Also see the DGA home page for a listing of scheduled outreach events.

P

Person-Months

What is the definition of "person-months"?

The term "person-months" refers to the effort (amount of time) that PI(s), faculty and other senior personnel will devote to a specific project. The effort is based on the organization's regular academic-year, summer or calendar-year. For example, if the regular schedule is 10 months and 30% effort will be devoted to the project, a total of 3 months should be listed in the academic or calendar-year block (10 months x 30% = 3 months). (Reference GPG Chapter II.C. 2.g.(i))

How do I calculate the person-months per year committed to the project for completion of the current and pending support section of the proposal?

Multiply the percentage of your effort associated with the project times the number of months of your appointment (i.e. 10% of a 9 month AY appointment equals .9 person months; 10% of a 12 month calendar appointment equals 1.2 months). Your employer may have internal policies and procedures that relate specifically to the type of appointment under which you are employed. You should, therefore, confirm with your sponsored projects office that this simplified methodology is consistent with the policy at your organization. Person-months shown in the current and pending support section should usually equal the number of months on the NSF proposal budget.

Points of Contact

Who should a proposer contact when seeking guidance on proposal preparation?

For those connected with institutions of higher education, the college or university's Sponsored Programs Office should be the first point of contact. For general policy-related questions regarding proposal preparation, the Policy Office may be contacted on 703-292-8243 or by e-mail to policy@nsf.gov. When responding to a specific program announcement/solicitation, contact the applicable Program Office.

The Division of Grants and Agreements should be contacted regarding questions related to award or administration of a grant (e.g., terms and conditions of an award or special award conditions).

Post Award Considerations

Where can an awardee find information related to post award administration?

The *Grant Policy Manual* (GPM) provides information to follow the NSF award cycle from issuance and administration of an award through closeout. The Manual is available electronically via the NSF Website. Information on post award administration also can be found by accessing the applicable award conditions on the NSF Website.

What is the review and approval process for NSF-approved no-cost extensions?

If additional time beyond the extension provided by the grantee is required, and exceptional circumstances warrant, a formal request must be submitted to NSF. The request must be submitted to NSF at least 45 days prior to the expiration date of the grant. The request must explain the need for the extension and include an estimate of the unobligated funds remaining and a plan for their use. As indicated above, the fact that unobligated funds may remain at the expiration of the grant is not in itself sufficient justification for an extension. The plan must adhere to the previously approved objectives of the project. All requests for NSF-approved extensions must be submitted via the FastLane system. Effective June 2003, the first no-cost extension request will be subject to the approval of the cognizant Program Officer. The sponsored projects office and PI will be electronically notified of the disposition of this request by the cognizant NSF Program Officer. The second no-cost extension will

continue to be subject to the approval of an NSF Grants Officer, and, if approved, will be in the form of an amendment to the grant specifying a new expiration date. Grantees are cautioned not to make new commitments or incur new expenditures after the expiration date in anticipation of a no-cost extension.

If no funds remain on the project, neither a grantee-approved no-cost extension notification nor a no-cost extension request for NSF approval may be submitted. The status of all post-award requests submitted to NSF can be tracked on FastLane by the sponsored projects office as well as by the principal investigators.

Prior Approval Requirements

What types of post-award actions require prior approval from NSF and which can be submitted via FastLane?

Written prior approval from the NSF Grants Officer is required for:

1. Significant Project Changes

(a) Transfer of the project effort;
(b) Change in objectives or scope;
(c) Absence or change of PI;
(d) Change in the amount of cost sharing reflected on Line M of the award budget; or

2. Rearrangements/Alterations aggregating $25,000 or over (Construction).

Written prior approval from the NSF Program Officer is required for reallocation of funds provided for participant or trainee support.

The prior approval requirements identified above (as well as other types of award related notifications stipulated in GPM Exhibit III-1) must be submitted electronically to NSF through use of the NSF FastLane system at https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/.

Program Announcements and Solicitations

Where can a proposer obtain copies of program announcements and solicitations?

Program announcements and solicitations are available electronically on the NSF Web site or on individual Directorates' web pages.

If there is a conflict between the *Grant Proposal Guide* (GPG) and a program solicitation, which document should be followed?

Instructions in an NSF program solicitation can modify general guidance in the GPG. Proposal preparation guidance contained in program solicitations has precedence over instructions in the GPG and should therefore be followed closely. The cognizant program

office should be consulted with questions regarding compliance with specific programmatic requirements. (Reference GPG Chapter I.A.)

Is a proposal submitted in response to an NSF program announcement considered unsolicited?

Proposals submitted in response to specific NSF program announcements are considered unsolicited, and are therefore subject to statutory cost-sharing requirements. In addition, unless otherwise specified, proposals are to be prepared in accordance with GPG formatting and other requirements. (Reference GPG Chapter II.B.)

Proposal File Updates

Can files associated with a previously submitted proposal be replaced and if so, what procedure should be followed?

It is the responsibility of the proposing organization to thoroughly review each proposal prior to submission. On occasion, however, a problem is identified with a portion of the proposal after the proposal has been electronically submitted to NSF.

The FastLane Proposal File Update module allows the organization to request the replacement of files associated with a previously submitted proposal. Proposal file update requests must be submitted by an individual who is authorized to submit proposals on behalf of the organization, and electronically signed by the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR). Update requests must contain a justification that addresses:

1. why the file replacements are being requested; and

2. any changes between the original and proposed replacement files.

A proposal file update request will be automatically accepted if submitted prior to the deadline/target date of the program announcement or solicitation, or anytime prior to review in the case of an unsolicited proposal. A request for a proposal file update after an established target or deadline date will require acceptance by the cognizant NSF Program Officer. Such requests only may be submitted in cases where a technical problem has been identified with the proposal (i.e., formatting or print problems). Therefore, changes to the content of a previously submitted proposal after the established deadline or target date should not be requested. When a request is accepted, the proposed files will immediately replace the existing files and become part of the official proposal.

PIs can access the proposal file update utility via the "Proposal Functions" section of FastLane. Authorized individuals in the organization's sponsored projects office (or equivalent) can initiate or review proposal file update requests using the "Submit Proposals/Supplements/File Updates/Withdrawals" module via the FastLane "Research Administration Functions".

NSF will consider only one proposal file update request per proposal at a time. It is anticipated that it will be a rare occurrence for more than one file update request to be submitted for a proposal.

Proposal Preparation

Can a PI request more than two months salary for the summer?

Summer salary for faculty members on academic-year appointments is limited to no more than two-ninths of their regular academic-year salary. (Reference GPG Chapter II.C.2.g.(i))

Is there a salary cap for proposals submitted to NSF?

There is no salary cap for proposals submitted to NSF. Academic Year Salaries, however, are to be based on the individual faculty member's regular compensation for the continuous period which, under the policy of the institution concerned, constitutes the basis of his/her salary. Except as provided in GPM 616.2, "Intra-University Consulting," charges to Federal grants, irrespective of the basis of computation, will not exceed the proportionate share of the base salary for that period. (Reference GPM 611)

What are the requirements for preparation of the Project Summary?

The proposal must contain a summary of the proposed activity suitable for publication, not more than one page in length. It should not be an abstract of the proposal, but rather a self-contained description of the activity that would result if the proposal were funded. The summary should be written in the third person and include a statement of objectives and methods to be employed. It must clearly address in separate statements (within the one-page summary): (1) the intellectual merit of the proposed activity; and (2) the broader impacts resulting from the proposed activity. (See Chapter III for further descriptive information on the NSF merit review criteria.) It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and, insofar as possible, understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader. **Proposals that do not separately address both merit review criteria within the one page Project Summary will be returned without review.**

Are there specific line spacing requirements that must be used for preparation of a proposal?

While line spacing (single-spaced, double-spaced, etc.) is at the discretion of the proposer, established page limits must be followed and there also must be no more than 6 lines in a vertical space of 2.5 cm. (Individual program solicitations may eliminate this proposer option.) (Reference GPG Chapter II.B.)

Are there any specific page numbering requirements that should be used in preparation of a proposal?

Proposers are advised that FastLane does not automatically paginate a proposal. Each section of the proposal that is uploaded as a file must be individually paginated before upload to FastLane. (Reference GPG Chapter II.B.)

May Universal Resource Locators (URLs) be included within the Project Description?

PIs are advised that the project description must be self-contained and are cautioned that URLs (Internet addresses) that provide information necessary to the review of the proposal should not be used because reviewers are under no obligation to view such sites.

What are the guidelines concerning collaborative proposals?

A collaborative proposal is one in which investigators from two or more organizations wish to collaborate on a unified research project. Collaborative proposals may be submitted to NSF in one of two methods: as a single proposal, in which a single award is being requested (with subawards administered by the lead organization); or by simultaneous submission of proposals from different organizations, with each organization requesting a separate award. In either case, the lead organization's proposal should contain all of the requisite sections as a single package to be provided to reviewers. All collaborative proposals should clearly describe the roles to be played by the other organizations, specify the managerial arrangements, and explain the advantages of the multi-organizational effort within the project description. PIs are strongly encouraged to contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer prior to submission of a collaborative proposal.

Submission of a single proposal

The single proposal method allows investigators from two or more institutions who have developed an integrated research project to submit a single, focused proposal. A single investigator bears primary responsibility for the administration of the grant and discussions with NSF, and, at the discretion of the organizations involved, investigators from any of the participating institutions may be designated as co-PIs. By submission of the proposal, the organization has determined that the proposed activity is administratively manageable. NSF may request a revised proposal, however, if it considers that the project is so complex that it will be too difficult to review or administer as presented. (See GPG Chapter II.D.3 for additional instructions on preparation of this type of proposal.)

Simultaneous submission of proposals from different organizations

In many instances, simultaneous submission of proposals that contain the same project description from each organization might be appropriate. For these proposals, the project title must begin with the words "Collaborative Research:" The lead organization's submission will include a Cover Sheet, project summary, project description, references cited, biographical sketches, budgets and budget justification, current and pending support, and facilities, equipment and other resources for their organization. Non-lead organization submissions will include all of the above for their organization except the project summary, project description, and references cited which are the same for all collaborating organizations. FastLane will combine the proposal submission for printing or electronic viewing.

Given that separately submitted collaborative proposals constitute a "single" proposal submission to NSF, it is imperative that the proposals be submitted within a reasonable

timeframe to one another. Failure to submit all components of the collaborative proposal on a timely basis may impact the review of the proposal.

What information should be included in the "References Cited" section of the proposal?

Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. If the document is available electronically, the Website address also should be identified. Proposers must be especially careful to follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the proposal.

While there is no established page limitation for the references, this section must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the 15-page project description. (Reference GPG Chapter II.C.2.e)

What is the NSF policy on submission of appendices?

The sections of the proposal described in GPG Chapter II.C.2 represent the required parts of a proposal submitted to NSF. Appendices may not be included unless a deviation has been authorized. GPG Chapter II.A contains information on deviations.

Proposal Submission

How does a proposer submit a proposal to NSF?

Proposals to NSF must be submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane system. For proposers who cannot submit electronically, a deviation must be approved in advance of submission of the paper proposal in accordance with GPG Chapter II.A.

Upon receipt of the proposal by NSF, proposals are generally converted to hard copy for distribution to the reviewer community. The rationale for this step is that the wide variance of equipment available to reviewers may not, at this time, assure that an all-electronic review process would be successful or totally fair to proposers. In the near future, NSF envisions that it will be possible to avoid this printing step and send proposals out for review solely by electronic means.

A proposal needs to be submitted only once to NSF, even if the proposer envisions review by multiple programs. The submission of duplicate or substantially similar proposals concurrently for review by more than one program without prior NSF approval may result in the return of the redundant proposals. (See GPG Chapter IV.B. for further information on proposal return.) Unless stated otherwise in a proposal-generating document, proposals should not be addressed or sent directly to the cognizant Program Officer.

In submission of a proposal for funding, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) is required to provide certain proposal certifications. This process can concurrently occur with submission of the proposal for those organizations where the individual authorized to submit a proposal to NSF also is a designated AOR, or as a separate function for those

organizations that choose to keep the certification process separate from the submission function. For those organizations that designate separate authorities in FastLane for these functions, the AOR must provide the required certifications within 5 working days following the electronic submission of the proposal. Further instructions for this process are available on the FastLane Website.

A proposal may not be processed until NSF has received the complete proposal (including the electronic certifications from the AOR.)

What forms do I need to complete for an NSF proposal?

All proposal formats and data requirements for submission of a proposal to NSF are available in the NSF FastLane system. Now that electronic submission via FastLane is required, the paper-based Proposal Forms Kit has been eliminated. Detailed information about proposal preparation is available from the FastLane Website.

How do I obtain a Cover Sheet to submit to NSF?

The proposal Cover Sheet is available in and must be electronically generated via the NSF FastLane System.

R

Receipt Dates

What happens if a program announcement/solicitation deadline falls on a weekend or Federal holiday?

If the deadline date falls on a weekend, it will be extended to the following Monday; if the date falls on a holiday, it will be extended to the following business day. (Reference GPG Chapter I.D.)

What is the difference between deadlines, target dates and submission windows?

Unless otherwise stated in a program announcement or solicitation, proposals must be received by the specified date (and time, where indicated). Deadlines are dates after which proposals will not be accepted for review by NSF. The deadline date will be waived only in extenuating circumstances. Proposals received after a target date will be reviewed although they may miss a particular panel or committee meeting. Submission windows are designated periods of time during which proposals will be accepted for review by NSF. A listing of upcoming target dates and deadlines, sorted by date and by program area is available electronically on the NSF Website. (Reference GPG Chapter I.D.)

Reconsideration

What is the process for requesting reconsideration of an NSF funding decision?

A PI whose proposal for NSF support has been declined generally will receive information and an explanation of the reason(s) for declination along with copies of the reviews considered in making the decision. If that explanation does not satisfy the PI, he/she may request additional information from the cognizant NSF Program Officer or Division Director.

If the explanation provided does not satisfy the PI, he/she may request that the cognizant NSF Assistant Director or Office Head reconsider the action to determine whether the proposal received a fair and reasonable review, both substantively and procedurally.

A PI whose proposal has not been accepted because it is inappropriate for consideration by NSF may also request reconsideration of this determination. The request for reconsideration must be in writing and must be received within 90 days after the date of the declination letter or return. If the proposing organization is still not satisfied after reconsideration by the responsible Assistant Director/Office Head, it may, within 60 days after the determination by the Assistant Director/Office Head, request further reconsideration by the NSF Deputy Director. Consult GPM Section 900 for additional information on the NSF reconsideration process, including the categories of actions that are subject to the NSF reconsideration policy.

References Cited

Will a proposal be returned if a Website address is not included in a reference citation?

The GPG References Cited guidelines (Chapter II.C.2.e.) stipulate that: "Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. If the document is available electronically, the Website address also should be identified." If the proposer has a Website address readily available, that information should be included in the citation, as stated above. It is not NSF's intent, however, to place an undue burden on proposers to search for the URL of every referenced publication. Therefore, inclusion of a Website address is optional. A proposal that includes reference citation(s) that do not specify a URL address is not considered to be in violation of NSF proposal preparation guidelines and the proposal will still be reviewed.

Resubmissions

Can a proposer resubmit a previously declined proposal?

A declined proposal may be resubmitted, but only after it has undergone substantial revision. Resubmittals that have not clearly taken into account the major comments or concerns resulting from the prior NSF review may be returned without further review. The Foundation will treat the revised proposal as a new proposal, subject to the standard review procedures. (Reference GPG Chapter IV.E.)

Returns

For what reasons may NSF return a proposal?

Proposals may not be considered by NSF for the following reasons.

The proposal:

1. is inappropriate for funding by the National Science Foundation;

2. is submitted with insufficient lead-time before the activity is scheduled to begin;

3. is a full proposal that was submitted by a proposer that has received a "not
1. invited" response to the submission of a preliminary proposal;

4. is a duplicate of, or substantially similar to, a proposal already under consideration by NSF from the same submitter;

5. does not meet NSF proposal preparation requirements, such as page limitations, formatting instructions, and electronic submission, as specified in the *Grant Proposal Guide* or program solicitation;

6. is not responsive to the GPG or program announcement/solicitation;

7. does not meet an announced proposal deadline date (and time, where specified); or

8. was previously reviewed and declined and has not been substantially revised.

S

Senior Personnel

How is the term "senior personnel" defined?

The term "senior personnel" means:

(Co) Principal Investigator(s) - the individual(s) designated by the grantee and approved by NSF who will be responsible for the scientific or technical direction of the project. If more than one, the first one listed will have primary responsibility for the project and the submission of reports.

Faculty Associate (faculty member) - an individual other than the Principal Investigator(s) considered by the performing institution to be a member of its faculty or who holds an appointment as a faculty member at another institution, and who will participate in the project being supported. (Reference GPG Appendix F)

Small Grants for Exploratory Research (SGER)

Can SGER grants be extended beyond their initial funding period?

At the discretion of the Program Officer, and with the concurrence of the Division Director, a small fraction of especially promising SGER awards may be extended for a period of six additional months and supplemented with up to $50,000 in additional funding. The SGER award extensions will be possible for awards of two-year initial duration as well as for those of shorter initial duration. Requests for extensions must be submitted one to two months before the expiration date of the initial award. A project report and outline of proposed research, not to exceed five pages, must be included. For more information about the SGER program, see GPG Chapter II.D.1.

Special Considerations

Where can a proposer find information on conflicts of interest (investigator financial disclosure policy)? Does NSF provide a written sample of an institution conflict of interest policy? Who should a proposer contact if there are questions?

The *Grant Policy Manual* provides information on the conflicts of interest policy. This section also contains references to university associations and scientific societies that have issued guidance on conflicts of interest policies. NSF does not provide written samples of such policies. Additional information in the form of Frequently Asked Questions has been developed and issued jointly with the Department of Health and Human Services. Questions regarding the NSF conflicts of interest policy should be directed to the Office of General Counsel on 703-292-8060. (Reference GPM Section 510.)

Are there any special requirements for proposals that involve the use of human subjects?

Projects involving research with human subjects must ensure that subjects are protected from research risks in conformance with the relevant Federal policy known as the Common Rule (*Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects*, 45 CFR 690). All projects involving human subjects either must have approval from the organization's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before issuance of an NSF award, or affirm that the IRB has declared the research exempt from continued oversight, in accordance with the applicable subsection of section 101(b) of the Common Rule. The box for "Human Subjects" must be checked on the proposal Cover Sheet with the IRB approval date (if available) or exemption subsection from the Common Rule identified in the space provided. If IRB approval has not been obtained prior to submission, the proposer should indicate "Pending" in the space provided for the approval date.

Additional information, including Frequently Asked Questions and Vignettes, for use in interpreting the Common Rule for Behavioral and Social Science Research, is available on the NSF Website at: http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dga/policy/start.htm. (Reference GPG Chapter II D.6.) Special Programs

Does NSF fund projects for targeted or special programs?

NSF sponsors many funding programs for special purposes. Examples are doctoral dissertation research grants, international travel grants and cooperative activities and research experiences for undergraduates. Information about these and other programs can be found on the NSF Website.

Subawards

If a proposer is including a subaward in their proposal, should the budget from the subawardee be signed by the subawardee?

Signed subaward budgets do not need to be submitted to NSF. Submission of a paper budget signed by the AOR of the subawardee organization is no longer necessary.

What documentation is needed for subawards?

The basic items are a clear description of the work to be performed, the basis for selection of the subawardee (except for collaborative/joint arrangements) and a separate budget for each subaward. (Reference GC-1 Articles 8.a. and 9, and GPG Chapter II.C.2.g.(vi)(e))

Submission Windows

I'm familiar with deadlines and target dates, but what is the definition of a submission window?

Submission windows are designated periods of time during which proposals will be accepted for review by NSF.

Target dates, deadlines, and submission windows are published in specific program announcements and solicitations that can be obtained from the NSF Clearinghouse at paperpubs@nsf.gov or electronically through the NSF Website.

Unless otherwise stated in a program announcement or solicitation, proposals must be received by the specified date (and time, where indicated.) If the deadline date falls on a weekend, it will be extended to the following Monday; if the date falls on a holiday, it will be extended to the following business day. The deadline date only will be waived in extenuating circumstances. Inquiry about submission also may be made to the appropriate NSF program office.

Supplements

How do I apply for supplemental funding?

In unusual circumstances, small amounts of supplemental funding and up to six months of additional support may be requested to assure adequate completion of the original scope of work. The grantee must submit a request for supplemental funding at least two months before funds are needed.

Requests for supplemental funding must be initiated in the FastLane system by using the "Supplemental Funding Request" function. Such requests must include a summary of the proposed work, a brief justification, and a budget for the requested funds.

Note: A signed paper copy of the supplemental funding request budget is no longer required to be submitted to NSF because all necessary certifications are provided at the time of submission of the supplemental funding request.

Program Officers may make decisions regarding whether or not to recommend a small supplement without merit review of the supplemental request. Requests for larger supplements, or for more than six months, may require additional merit review. Supplemental funding requests will not be approved for such purposes as defraying costs associated with increases in salaries or additional indirect cost reimbursement. Grantees should contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer prior to submitting a request for supplemental funding.

T

Transfer of Principal Investigator

What procedure should be followed if a PI plans to leave an organization during the course of an active grant?

If a PI plans to leave an organization during the course of a grant, the organization has the prerogative to nominate a replacement PI, request that the grant be terminated, or transfer the grant (via NSF) to the PI's new organization. Replacement PIs are subject to NSF approval. In those cases where a particular PI's participation is integral to a given project and the PI's original and new organizations agree, a grant transfer request shall be submitted via the Notification and Request module in the FastLane system.

Special terms and conditions, as appropriate, cited in the original award automatically will convey to the new grantee organization. Note that if the PI's original award was submitted in response to a program solicitation that required cost sharing as part of the award, this cost sharing requirement also must addressed by the new organization in the budget portion of the transfer request. The cost sharing will be reflected as a condition in the award at the new grantee organization.

In those rare instances where:

- there are no funds remaining in the award account, but, outyear increments remain; or

- the award is to be transferred to a foreign organization or to a Federal agency,

the Authorized Organizational Representative of the original award must contact the cognizant Program Officer.

Upon transfer of the grant to the new organization, any monetary discrepancies must be resolved between the original and the new grantee, and NSF will not intervene in any disputes

between the two organizations regarding the transferred amount. See GPG VI.C and GPM 312.8 for additional information on PI transfers.

V

Vertebrate Animals

What is NSF's policy on the use of vertebrate animals in research?

For proposals involving the use of vertebrate animals, sufficient information must be provided within the 15-page project description to enable reviewers to evaluate the choice of species, number of animals to be used, and any necessary exposure of animals to discomfort, pain, or injury.

Consistent with the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act [7 U.S.C. 2131 et seq] and the regulations promulgated thereunder by the Secretary of Agriculture [9 CFR, 1.1-4.11], NSF requires that proposed projects involving use of any vertebrate animal for research or education be approved by the submitting organization's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) before an award can be made. For this approval to be accepted by NSF, the organization must have a current Institutional Animal Welfare Assurance established with the Public Health Service (PHS).

If the organization does not have such an Assurance in place, then approval of the project by the IACUC of an organization with a current PHS Assurance will be acceptable, if the IACUC agrees to provide the required oversight of facilities and activities during the award. Alternatively, the submitting organization may create its own IACUC by establishing a single-project Institutional Animal Welfare Assurance with NSF. In any case, IACUC approval must be received prior to an award. Proposers with questions regarding this requirement should contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer.

The box for "Vertebrate Animals" must be checked on the proposal Cover Sheet with the IACUC approval date (if available) identified in the space provided. If IACUC approval has not been obtained prior to submission, the proposer should indicate "Pending" in the space provided for the approval date.

These same rules apply to awards to individuals (fellowships) for activities that involve use of vertebrate animals. The "Vertebrate Animals" box should be checked on the proposal Cover Sheet. Evidence of IACUC approval can be provided in a letter giving the date of IACUC approval with the appropriate organizational signature. (Reference GPG Chapter II.D.5.)

W

Withdrawal of a Proposal

What is the procedure for the withdrawal of a proposal?

A proposal may be withdrawn at any time before a funding recommendation is made by the cognizant NSF Program Officer. Proposals must be electronically withdrawn via the FastLane Electronic Proposal Withdrawal System. This module in FastLane automates the proposal

withdrawal process and provides a mechanism that will help organizations to more effectively manage their proposal portfolio, as well as to help eliminate the submission of duplicate proposals to NSF. The Electronic Proposal Withdrawal System includes three processes:

- *Principal Investigator's Proposal Withdrawal* allows a PI to initiate a proposal withdrawal and forward it to the organization's sponsored projects office (or equivalent) for submission to NSF.

- *Sponsored Projects Office (SPO) Proposal Withdrawal* allows an authorized individual in the organization's sponsored projects office (or equivalent) to initiate a proposal withdrawal for submission to NSF.

- *Proposal Submission Duplicate Withdrawal* prevents a SPO official from submitting a new proposal if a duplicate (a proposal from the same organization with the same title and same PI and co-PIs) already has been submitted to NSF within the last two weeks prior to the current submission. If these conditions are met, the system will allow the authorized SPO official to either withdraw the previous duplicate and then proceed with the submission of the new proposal, or to modify the new proposal so it is different from the previous proposal.

In cases where NSF already has made a funding decision, proposals will not be permitted to be withdrawn via the electronic proposal withdrawal system. When a PI or SPO representative attempts to prepare a proposal withdrawal for such a proposal, a message will be displayed to contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer for further assistance.

NSF must be notified if any funding for the proposed project is received from another source or sponsor. If it is brought to NSF's attention that funding for a proposal to NSF has been accepted from another sponsor, NSF will send a withdrawal confirmation to the PI and the SPO without waiting for the official withdrawal notification.

If a proposal withdrawal is submitted for a proposal that is part of a collaborative effort, regardless of whether the organization is the lead or non-lead, the electronic proposal withdrawal system will withdraw that proposal along with the other remaining proposals that are identified as part of the collaborative effort. If the remaining organizations in the collaborative determine that the project can still proceed, a new collaborative proposal must be submitted.

Copies of reviews received by NSF before a proposal is withdrawn will be provided to the PI. NSF provides notice of a withdrawal, return, declination, or reconsideration to both the PI and the SPO. (Reference GPG Chapter IV.A.)