

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

# PROPOSAL AND AWARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES GUIDE

**Part I - Grant Proposal Guide**

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**Significant Changes and Clarifications to the *Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)*,  
Effective February 2014**

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**Significant Changes to the GPG**

- **Chapter I.A, NSF Proposal Preparation and Submission**, has been revised to describe, at the beginning of the chapter, proposal preparation and submission via FastLane and Grants.gov.
- **Chapter I.G.3, Requirements Relating to Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Numbers and Registration in the System for Award Management (SAM)**, has been updated to include language that SAM will become the NSF system of record for organizational financial information as of October 1, 2014. The section also emphasizes that organizations are responsible for updating SAM registration information as it changes.
- **Chapter II.B, Format of the Proposal**, has been revised to add instructions that, upon entering the proposal preparation module in FastLane, the PI will be prompted to select whether or not the proposal is a collaborative proposal and the type of proposal being developed.
- **Chapter II.C.1.e, Proposal Certifications**, includes an addition to the Certification Regarding Conflict of Interest. The language states that if research proceeds without the imposition of conditions or restrictions when a conflict of interest exists, this must be disclosed to NSF via use of the Notifications and Requests Module in FastLane.
- **Chapter II.C.2, Sections of the Proposal**, has been augmented to include a list of required sections for a full proposal submitted via FastLane. The section also clarifies that, if the submission instructions do not require a section to be provided, the proposer should insert text or upload a document in that section of the proposal that states, “Not Applicable.”
- **Chapter II.C.2.b, Project Summary**, clarifies that a Project Summary containing special characters that is submitted as a PDF file in the Supplementary Documentation section must be formatted with separate headings for the overview, statement on intellectual merit, and statement on broader impacts.

- **Chapter II.C.2.d(iii), Results from Prior NSF Support**, has been amended to make clear that in the summary of results of the completed work, the accomplishments related to Intellectual Merit and Broader Impact activities must be separately described under two distinct headings.
- **Chapter II.C.2.d(iv), Unfunded Collaborations**, has been revised to explain that any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal and documented in a letter of commitment from each collaborator.
- **Chapter II.C.2.f(i), Biographical Sketches**, has been updated to state that inclusion of information beyond that specified may result in the proposal being returned without review.
- **Chapter II.C.2.f(i)(c), Products**, has been supplemented with language stating that, if only publications are included, the heading “Publications” may be used for this section of the Biographical Sketch.
- **Chapter II.C.2.g(v), Participant Support**, has been revised to emphasize that indirect costs are not allowed on participant support costs.
- **Chapter II.C.2.g(vi)(f), Other**, has been updated to include guidance on the allowability of visa costs on an NSF proposal.
- **Chapter II.C.2.g(viii), Indirect Costs**, has been expanded to make clear that NSF formally negotiates indirect cost rates for the organizations for which NSF has rate cognizance. NSF does not negotiate rates for organizations that are not direct recipients of NSF funding (e.g., subrecipients). The prime recipient is responsible for ensuring that proposed subrecipient costs, including indirect costs, are reasonable and appropriate.
- **Chapter II.C.2.g(xi), Cost Sharing**, has been amended to state that, for purposes of budget preparation, the cumulative cost sharing amount must be entered on Line M of the first year’s budget. Should an award be made, the organization’s cost sharing commitment, as specified on the first year’s approved budget, must be met prior to award expiration.
- **Chapter II.C.2.j, Special Information and Supplementary Documentation**, has been revised to move language regarding letters of support to be co-located with information on letters of commitment. The section also was modified to clarify that, in order for NSF to comply with federal environmental statutes (including, but not limited to, the National Environmental Policy Act [42 U.S.C. §§ 4321, et seq.], the National Historic Preservation Act [16 U.S.C. § 470, et seq.], and the Endangered Species Act [16 U.S.C. §§ 1531, et seq.]), the proposer may be requested to submit supplemental post-proposal submission information to NSF in order that a reasonable and accurate assessment of environmental impacts by NSF may be made. NSF intends to pursue the pilot use of a new Institution/Organization Environmental Impacts Checklist in a small number of programs, prior to implementation Foundation-wide.

- **Chapter II.D.1, Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID)**, has been updated to indicate that the “RAPID” proposal type must be selected in the proposal preparation module in FastLane.
- **Chapter II.D.2, EARly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER)**, has been updated to indicate that the “EAGER” proposal type must be selected in the proposal preparation module in FastLane.
- **Chapter II.D.4.b, Submission of a collaborative proposal from multiple organizations**, has been supplemented to clarify required sections of the proposal for lead organizations versus non-lead organizations.
- **Chapter II.D.5, Proposals for Equipment**, has been revised to explain what information should be included in different sections of the proposal.
- **Chapter II.D.8, Proposals for Conferences, Symposia and Workshops**, has been augmented to explain that such proposals should include a description of plans to identify resources for child care and other types of family care at the conference site to allow individuals with family care responsibilities to attend.
- **Chapter II.D.13, Projects Requiring High-Performance Computing Resources, Large Amount of Data Storage, or Advanced Visualization Resources**, has been updated to describe NSF-supported resources at University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign, and National Center for Atmospheric Research, which are in addition to XSEDE.

#### **Clarifications and Other Changes to the GPG**

- **Chapter II.C.2.d(iii), Results from Prior NSF Support**, has been amended to clarify that in cases where the PI or co-PI has received more than one award (excluding amendments) they need only report on the one award most closely related to the proposal.
- **Chapter II.C.2.f(i), Biographical Sketch(es)**, has been modified to add that, if a biographical sketch(es) is not required, the proposer should insert text or upload a document in this section of the proposal that states, “Not Applicable.” In FastLane, if biographical sketches for all senior personnel are uploaded in a single PDF file associated with the PI, the proposer should insert text or upload a document that states, “Not Applicable” for any co-PI or Senior Person.
- **Chapter II.C.2.g, Budget**, has been modified to include “Budget Justification” in the section heading. The language has been amended to clarify that, if a program solicitation does not require a budget, and there is no budgetary information to justify, the proposer should insert text or upload a document in the budget justification section that states, “Not Applicable.”

- **Chapter II.C.2.h, Current and Pending Support**, has been modified to add that, if Current and Pending Support information is not required, the proposer should insert text or upload a document in this section of the proposal that states, “Not Applicable.” In FastLane, if Current and Pending Support information for all senior personnel are uploaded in a single PDF file associated with the PI, the proposer should insert text or upload a document that states, “Not Applicable” for any co-PI or Senior Person.
- **Chapter II.D.8, Proposals for Conferences, Symposia and Workshops, and Chapter II.D.9, Proposals to Support International Travel**, have been amended to state that, if any section is not required, the proposer should insert text or upload a document in that section of the proposal that states, “Not Applicable.”
- **Exhibit II-1, Proposal Preparation Checklist**, has been updated to conform to the *Grant Proposal Guide* revisions.
- **Chapter IV.B, Proposal Not Accepted or Returned Without Review**, has been revised to include references to relevant sections of the *Grant Proposal Guide* and to clarify the language.

# GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDE

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## Chapter I: Pre-Submission Information

### A. NSF Proposal Preparation and Submission

Unless specified in an NSF program solicitation, proposals submitted to NSF must be submitted electronically via use of either the NSF FastLane System or Grants.gov. Further information on each system is provided below.

- **Proposal Preparation and Submission via the NSF FastLane System.** The policy and procedural guidance contained in the *Grant Proposal Guide* relates specifically to proposals submitted via the NSF FastLane System. Fastlane may be used for proposal preparation, file update, submission and status checking, and post-award administrative activities. All FastLane functions are accessed by using a Web browser on the Internet. Detailed information about the FastLane System is available from the FastLane website at <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov>.
- **Proposal Preparation and Submission via Grants.gov.** The policy and procedural guidance contained in the NSF *Grants.gov Application Guide* relates specifically to proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Grants.gov was established as a governmental resource to electronically find grant opportunities as well as to apply for federal awards. Grants.gov is a central storehouse for information on over 1,000 grant programs from the 26 Federal grant-making agencies and provides access to approximately \$500 billion in annual awards. Detailed information about Grants.gov is available from the Grants.gov website at <https://grants.gov>.

Contact with NSF program personnel prior to proposal preparation and submission is encouraged. Some NSF programs have program solicitations that modify the general provisions of the GPG and/or the *Grants.gov Application Guide*, and, in such cases, the guidelines provided in the solicitation must be followed. (See GPG Section C.4 below for further information on NSF program solicitations.)

### B. NSF Programs and Funding Opportunities

NSF does not normally support technical assistance, pilot plant efforts, research requiring security classification, the development of products for commercial marketing, or market research for a particular project or invention. Research with disease-related goals, including work on the etiology, diagnosis or treatment of physical or mental disease, abnormality, or malfunction in human beings or animals, is normally not supported. Animal models of such conditions or the development or testing of drugs or other procedures for their treatment also are not eligible for support. However, research in bioengineering, with diagnosis- or treatment-related goals, that applies engineering principles to problems in biology and medicine while advancing engineering knowledge is eligible for support. Bioengineering research to aid persons with disabilities also is eligible. For further information about the National Science Foundation, see the *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* Introduction Section A, *About the National Science Foundation*.

The NSF website provides the most comprehensive source of information on NSF Directorates (including contact information), programs and funding opportunities. Use of this website by potential proposers is strongly encouraged. In addition, "NSF Update" is an information-delivery system designed to keep potential proposers and other interested parties apprised of new NSF funding opportunities and publications, important changes in proposal and award policies and procedures, and upcoming NSF Grants Conferences. Subscribers are informed through e-mail or the user's Web browser each time new publications are issued that match their identified interests. "NSF Update" is available on NSF's website at: [https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNSF/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=USNSF\\_179](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNSF/subscriber/new?topic_id=USNSF_179).

Grants.gov provides an additional electronic capability to search for Federal government-wide grant opportunities. NSF funding opportunities may be accessed via this mechanism. Further information on Grants.gov may be obtained at <http://www.grants.gov>.

## C. Categories of Funding Opportunities

NSF utilizes a variety of mechanisms to communicate opportunities for research and education support, as well as to generate proposals. A brief description of each category of funding opportunity follows.

### 1. Dear Colleague Letter

Dear Colleague letters are intended to provide general information to the community, clarify or amend an existing policy or document, or inform the NSF proposer community about upcoming opportunities or special competitions for supplements to existing awards. In addition, they are often used to draw attention to an impending change in NSF policies or programs.

### 2. Program Description

The term "program description" includes broad, general descriptions of programs and activities in NSF Directorates/Offices and Divisions. Program descriptions are often posted on Directorate/Division websites to encourage the submission of proposals in specific program areas of interest to NSF.

Program descriptions, like program announcements, utilize the generic eligibility and proposal preparation instructions specified in the *Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)*, as well as the National Science Board (NSB) approved merit review criteria. See GPG Chapter III for additional information.

### 3. Program Announcement

The term "program announcement" refers to formal NSF publications that announce NSF programs. Program announcements utilize the generic eligibility and proposal preparation guidelines specified in the GPG and incorporate the NSB approved merit review criteria.

### 4. Program Solicitation

The term "program solicitation" refers to formal NSF publications that encourage the submission of proposals in specific program areas of interest to NSF. They generally are more focused than program announcements, and normally apply for a limited period of time. Competition among proposals is more precisely defined than with program announcements, and proposals received compete directly with each other for NSF funding. Program solicitations are issued when the funding opportunity has one or more of the following features:

- Provides supplemental proposal preparation guidance or deviates from the guidelines established in the *Grant Proposal Guide*;
- Contains additional specially crafted review criteria relevant to the program;
- Requires submission of a letter of intent or preliminary proposal;
- Deviates from (or restricts) the standard categories of proposers specified in Section E. below;
- Limits the number of proposals that may be submitted by any organization and/or researcher/educator;<sup>1</sup>
- Specifies additional award conditions or reporting requirements;
- Anticipates use of a cooperative agreement; or
- Permits inclusion of the payment of fees to awardees, when appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise specified, the term "organization" refers to all categories of proposers.

## **D. Types of Submissions**

### **1. Letter of Intent**

Some NSF program solicitations require or request submission of a letter of intent (LOI) in advance of submission of a full proposal. A LOI is not binding. The predominant reason for its use is to help NSF program staff to gauge the size and range of the competition, enabling earlier selection and better management of reviewers and panelists. In addition, the information contained in a LOI is used to help avoid potential conflicts of interest in the review process.

A LOI normally contains the PI's and co-PI's names, a proposed title, a list of possible participating organizations (if applicable), and a synopsis that describes the work in sufficient detail to permit an appropriate selection of reviewers. A LOI is not externally evaluated or used to decide on funding. The requirement to submit a LOI will be identified in the program solicitation, and such letters are submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane System.

### **2. Preliminary Proposal**

Some NSF program solicitations require or request submission of a preliminary proposal in advance of submission of a full proposal. The two predominant reasons for requiring submission of a preliminary proposal are to:

- reduce the proposers' unnecessary effort in proposal preparation when the chance of success is very small. This is particularly true of exploratory initiatives where the community senses that a major new direction is being identified, or competitions that will result in a small number of actual awards; and
- increase the overall quality of the full submission.

The NSF program solicitation will specify content and submission requirements when preliminary proposals are to be utilized. Preliminary proposals are prepared by the PI using the Proposal Preparation Module in FastLane. On the Cover Sheet, the PI clicks on the "Preliminary Proposal" check box. The PI completes only the sections appropriate to the preliminary proposal. The PI then forwards the proposal to his/her Sponsored Projects Office, which then submits the preliminary proposal to NSF.

One of the following two types of decisions may be received from NSF upon submission of a preliminary proposal. The program solicitation will specify the type of decision to be rendered for a particular program.

#### **a. Invite/Not Invite Decisions**

This type of mechanism is used when the NSF decision made on the preliminary proposal is final, affecting the PI's eligibility to submit a full proposal. Only submitters of favorably reviewed preliminary proposals are invited and eligible to submit full proposals. Invite/Not Invite decisions are generally used where large, complex, or limited-award competitions are contemplated, such as those used for "Centers." The PI and the organization's Sponsored Projects Office will be electronically notified of NSF's decision to either invite submission of a full proposal or decline NSF support.

#### **b. Encourage/Discourage Decisions**

This type of mechanism is used when the NSF decision made on the preliminary proposal is advisory only. This means that submitters of both favorably and unfavorably reviewed preliminary proposals are eligible to submit full proposals. Encourage/Discourage decisions are typically used when the preliminary proposal is very short, focused on the activity to be proposed, and where use of the preliminary proposal is intended to improve the overall quality of the full proposal. The PI and the organization's Sponsored Projects Office will be notified of NSF's decision to either encourage or discourage submission of a full proposal.

### **3. Full Proposal**

The full proposal should present the (1) objectives and scientific, engineering, or educational significance of the proposed work; (2) suitability of the methods to be employed; (3) qualifications of the investigator and the grantee organization; (4) effect of the activity on the infrastructure of science, engineering and education; and (5) amount of funding required. It should present the merits of the proposed project clearly and should be prepared with the care and thoroughness of a paper submitted for publication. The requisite proposal preparation instructions are contained in GPG Chapter II. Sufficient information should be provided to enable reviewers to evaluate the proposal in accordance with the two merit review criteria established by the National Science Board. (See GPG Chapter III for additional information on NSF processing and review of proposals.)

NSF expects strict adherence to the rules of proper scholarship and attribution. The responsibility for proper scholarship and attribution rests with the authors of a proposal; all parts of the proposal should be prepared with equal care for this concern. Authors other than the PI (or any co-PI) should be named and acknowledged. Serious failure to adhere to such standards can result in findings of research misconduct. NSF policies and rules on research misconduct<sup>2</sup> are discussed in the AAG Chapter VII.C, as well as 45 CFR Part 689.

The Metric Conversion Act of 1975, as amended, and Executive Order 12770 of 1991 encourage Federal agencies to use the Metric System (SI) in procurement, grants and other business-related activities. Proposers are encouraged to use the Metric System of weights and measures in proposals submitted to the Foundation. Grantees also are encouraged to use metric units in reports, publications and correspondence relating to proposals and awards.

#### **Proprietary or Privileged Information**

Patentable ideas, trade secrets, privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, disclosure of which may harm the proposer, should be included in proposals only when such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project. Such information must be clearly marked in the proposal and be appropriately labeled with a legend such as,

"The following is (proprietary or confidential) information that (name of proposing organization) requests not be released to persons outside the Government, except for purposes of review and evaluation."

Such information also may be included as a separate statement. If this method is used, the statement must be submitted electronically as a single-copy document in the Proposal Preparation Module in the FastLane system. (See also GPG Chapter II.C.1 for further information regarding submission of single-copy documents.)<sup>3</sup>

The box for "Proprietary or Privileged Information" must be checked on the Cover Sheet when the proposal contains such information. While NSF will make every effort to prevent unauthorized access to such material, the Foundation is not responsible or in any way liable for the release of such material. (See also GPG Chapter III.G.)

### **E. Who May Submit Proposals**

NSF welcomes proposals on behalf of all qualified scientists, engineers and educators. The Foundation strongly encourages women, minorities and persons with disabilities to participate fully in its programs. In accordance with Federal statutes, regulations and NSF policies, no person on grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin or disability shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination, under any program or activity receiving financial assistance from NSF, although some programs may have special requirements that limit eligibility.

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<sup>2</sup> Research misconduct refers to fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing or performing research funded by NSF, reviewing research proposals submitted to NSF, or in reporting research results funded by NSF. Institutions involved in international collaborations might find materials provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) "Research Integrity: preventing misconduct and dealing with allegations" useful. See: <http://tinyurl.com/l76p3b>

<sup>3</sup>Detailed instructions for submission of proprietary or privileged information is available on the FastLane Website at <http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/help/proprietary.htm>.

Scientists, engineers and educators usually initiate proposals that are officially submitted by their employing organization. Before formal submission, the proposal may be discussed with appropriate NSF program staff. Graduate students are not encouraged to submit research proposals, but should arrange to serve as research assistants to faculty members. Some NSF divisions accept proposals for Doctoral Dissertation Research Grants when submitted by a faculty member on behalf of the graduate student.

## Categories of Proposers

Except where a program solicitation establishes more restrictive eligibility criteria, individuals and organizations in the following categories may submit proposals:

**1. Universities and Colleges** — Universities and two- and four-year colleges (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in, the U.S. acting on behalf of their faculty members. Such organizations also are referred to as academic institutions. Institutions located outside the U.S. fall under paragraph 6. below.

**2. Non-profit, non-academic organizations** — Independent museums, observatories, research laboratories, professional societies and similar organizations located in the U.S. that are directly associated with educational or research activities.

**3. For-profit organizations** — U.S. commercial organizations, especially small businesses with strong capabilities in scientific or engineering research or education. An unsolicited proposal from a commercial organization may be funded when the project is of special concern from a national point of view, special resources are available for the work, or the proposed project is especially meritorious. NSF is interested in supporting projects that couple industrial research resources and perspectives with those of universities; therefore, it especially welcomes proposals for cooperative projects involving both universities and the private commercial sector.

**4. State and Local Governments** — State educational offices or organizations and local school districts may submit proposals intended to broaden the impact, accelerate the pace, and increase the effectiveness of improvements in science, mathematics and engineering education in both K-12 and post-secondary levels.

**5. Unaffiliated Individuals** — 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 proposer has demonstrated the capability and has access to any necessary facilities to carry out the project; and
- the proposer agrees to fiscal arrangements that, in the opinion of the NSF Division of Grants & Agreements, ensure responsible management of Federal funds.

Unaffiliated individuals should contact the appropriate program before preparing a proposal for submission.

**6. Foreign organizations** — NSF rarely provides support to foreign organizations. NSF 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.

**7. Other Federal agencies** — 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). Under unusual circumstances, other Federal agencies and FFRDCs may submit proposals directly to NSF. A proposed project is only eligible for support if it meets one or more of the following exceptions, as determined by a cognizant NSF Program Officer:

- Special Projects. Under exceptional circumstances, research or education projects at other Federal agencies or FFRDCs that can make unique contributions to the needs of researchers elsewhere or to other specific NSF objectives may receive NSF support.

- National and International Programs. The Foundation may fund research and logistic support activities of other Government agencies or FFRDCs directed at meeting the goals of special national and international research programs for which the Foundation bears special responsibility, such as the U.S. Antarctic Research Program.
- International Travel Awards. In order to ensure appropriate representation or availability of a particular expertise at an international conference, staff researchers of other Federal agencies may receive NSF international travel awards.

Proposers who think their project may meet one of the exceptions listed above should contact a cognizant NSF Program Officer before preparing a proposal for submission. In addition, a scientist, engineer or educator who has a joint appointment with a university and a Federal agency (such as a Veterans Administration Hospital, or with a university and a 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. Preliminary inquiry should be made to the appropriate program before preparing a proposal for submission.

## F. When to Submit Proposals

Proposers should allow adequate time for NSF review and processing of proposals (see GPG Chapter I.H for further information). Many NSF programs accept proposals at any time. Other programs, however, establish due dates for submission of proposals. The following types of due dates are utilized by NSF:

1. **Target Dates:** dates after which proposals will still be accepted, although they may miss a particular panel or committee meeting.
2. **Deadline Dates:** dates after which proposals will be returned without review by NSF. The deadline date will be waived only in extenuating circumstances. Such a deviation may be authorized only in accordance with GPG Chapter II.A.

### Special Exceptions to NSF's Deadline Date Policy

In the event of a natural or anthropogenic disaster that interferes with an organization's ability to meet a proposal submission deadline, NSF has developed the following guidelines for use by impacted organizations.

Flexibility in meeting announced deadline dates because of a natural or anthropogenic disasters may be granted with the **prior approval** of the cognizant NSF Program Officer. Proposers should contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer in the Division/Office to which they intend to submit their proposal and request authorization to submit a "late proposal." Such contact should be via e-mail (or telephone, if e-mail is unavailable). Proposers should then follow the written or verbal guidance provided by the cognizant NSF Program Officer. Generally, NSF permits extension of the deadline by 5 business days. The Foundation, however, will work with each impacted organization on a case-by-case basis to address their specific issue(s).

3. **Submission Windows:** designated periods of time during which proposals will be accepted for review by NSF. It is NSF's policy that the end date of a submission window converts to, and is subject to, the same policies as a deadline date.

These target dates, deadlines, and submission windows are published in specific program descriptions, program announcements and solicitations that can be obtained from [pubs@nsf.gov](mailto:pubs@nsf.gov) or electronically through the NSF website.<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise stated in a program announcement or solicitation, proposals must be received by the specified date. If the deadline date falls on a weekend, it will be extended to the following Monday; if the date falls on a Federal holiday, it will be extended to the following business day. Unless otherwise specified in a program solicitation that has an identified deadline date, proposals must be received by 5 p.m. submitter's local time on the established deadline date.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>A listing of upcoming target dates and deadlines, sorted by date and by program area is available electronically on the NSF Website at: [http://nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_list.jsp?org=NSF&ord=date](http://nsf.gov/funding/pgm_list.jsp?org=NSF&ord=date).

<sup>5</sup> Letters of intent or preliminary proposals, unless otherwise specified, also follow the 5 p.m. submitter's local time standard.

## **G. How to Submit Proposals**

### **1. Electronic Requirements**

Proposals to NSF must be submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane System or via use of Grants.gov. For proposals prepared and submitted via Grants.gov, the guidelines specified in the NSF *Grants.gov Application Guide* apply.

For proposers who cannot submit electronically, an authorization to deviate from the electronic submission requirements must be approved in advance of submission of the paper proposal in accordance with GPG Chapter II.A.

### **2. Submission Instructions**

The same work/proposal cannot be funded twice. If the proposer envisions review by multiple programs, more than one program may be designated on the Cover Sheet. 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.)

**Research proposals to the Biological Sciences Directorate ONLY** (not proposals for conferences or workshops) cannot be duplicates of proposals to any other Federal agency for simultaneous consideration. The only exceptions to this rule are: (1) when the proposers and program officers 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 Cover Sheet.

In submission of a proposal for funding, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) is required to provide certain proposal certifications. (See GPG Chapter II.C.1e for a listing.) This process can occur concurrently 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.<sup>6</sup>

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

### **3. Requirements Relating to Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Numbers and Registration in the System for Award Management (SAM)**

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a policy directive (September 14, 2010, 75 FR 22706) which requires proposers<sup>7</sup> to provide a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying for a new award or renewal of an award under Federal grants or cooperative agreements. In accordance with this mandate, each proposer must have a DUNS number prior to submitting a proposal to NSF. Any subawardees named in the proposal must be registered in FastLane, which requires that they obtain a DUNS number.

Each proposer must also be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database prior to submitting their proposal. Subawardees named in the proposal, however, do not need to be registered in SAM. The SAM is the primary registrant database for the U.S. Government. SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of agency acquisition missions, including Federal agency contract and assistance

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<sup>6</sup>Further instructions for this process are available on the FastLane Website.

<sup>7</sup> Unaffiliated individuals are exempt from both the requirement to obtain a DUNS number as well as to register in SAM.

awards. This SAM registration must be maintained with current information at all times during which the organization has an active award or a proposal under consideration by NSF. Failure to comply with the SAM registration requirement prior to proposal submission may impact the processing of the proposal. To register in the SAM, go to <https://www.sam.gov>. Proposers are advised that entity registration will become active after 3-5 days when the IRS validates your Tax ID Number.

Effective October 1, 2014, SAM will become the NSF system of record for organizational financial information. Banking information contained within FastLane will not be used after September 30, 2014. The Legal Business Name and Physical Address information are automatically input into the proposer's SAM registration from D&B, and it is the organization's responsibility to keep this information updated at D&B.

The organization also is responsible for updating all SAM registration information as it changes. Once an award is made, failure to maintain current and complete financial information within SAM will affect the correct account from receiving funding. To maintain an active status in SAM, an organization's registration must be renewed and revalidated at least every 12 months from the date of the previous registration. If the registration is not renewed, it will expire. An expired registration will impact the organization's ability to submit proposals or receive grant payments.

#### **4. NSF ID**

The NSF ID is a unique numerical identifier assigned to FastLane users by NSF. It is a random nine-digit number beginning with three zeroes. (Note: actual Social Security Numbers (SSNs) do not begin with three zeros.) The NSF ID will be used throughout FastLane as a login ID and identification verification.

SSN submission will only be requested where it is necessary for business purposes, e.g., financial reimbursement. SSN is solicited under NSF Act of 1950, as amended.

#### **5. Proposal Receipt**

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](mailto:fastlane@nsf.gov).

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.

#### **H. Proposal Processing**

Proposers should allow up to six months for programmatic review and processing (see GPG Chapter III for additional information on the NSF merit review process). In addition, proposers should be aware that the NSF Division of Grants and Agreements generally makes awards to academic institutions within 30 days after the program division/office makes its recommendation. Grants being made to organizations that have not received an NSF award within the preceding five years, or involving special situations (such as coordination with another Federal agency or a private funding source), cooperative agreements, and other unusual arrangements may require additional review and processing time. Proposals that are time-sensitive (e.g., conference, group travel, and research involving ephemeral phenomena) will be accepted for review only if, in the opinion of the cognizant Program Officer, they are received in sufficient time to permit appropriate NSF review and processing to support an award in advance of the activity to be supported. Every effort is made to reach a decision and inform the proposer promptly. Until an award is made, NSF is not responsible for any costs incurred by the proposing organization.



## Chapter II: Proposal Preparation Instructions

Each proposing organization that is new to NSF or has not had an active NSF assistance award within the previous five years should be prepared to submit basic organization and management information and certifications, when requested, to the applicable award-making division within BFA. The requisite information is described in the *NSF Prospective New Awardee Guide*. The information contained in this Guide will assist the organization in preparing documents which the National Science Foundation requires to conduct administrative and financial reviews of the organization. This Guide also serves as a means of highlighting the accountability requirements associated with Federal awards.

To facilitate proposal preparation, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding proposal preparation and submission are available electronically on the NSF website.<sup>8</sup>

Proposers should also be aware of core strategies that are essential to the fulfillment of NSF's mission, as articulated in *Empowering the Nation Through Discovery and Innovation: NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2011-2016*<sup>9</sup>. These strategies are integrated in the program planning and implementation process, of which proposal review is one part. NSF's mission is particularly well-implemented through the integration of research and education and broadening participation in NSF programs, projects, and activities.

One of the core strategies in support of NSF's mission is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects, and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions provide abundant opportunities where individuals may concurrently assume responsibilities as researchers, educators, and students, and where all can engage in joint efforts that infuse education with the excitement of discovery and enrich research through the variety of learning perspectives.

Another core strategy in support of NSF's mission is broadening opportunities and expanding participation of groups, institutions, and geographic regions that are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, which is essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.

### A. Conformance with Instructions for Proposal Preparation

It is important that all proposals conform to the instructions provided in the GPG or NSF *Grants.gov Application Guide*. Conformance is required and will be strictly enforced unless an authorization to deviate from standard proposal preparation requirements has been approved. NSF may return without review proposals that are not consistent with these instructions. See GPG Chapter IV.B for additional information. NSF must authorize any deviations from these instructions in advance of proposal submission. Deviations may be authorized in one of two ways:

1. through specification of different requirements in an NSF program solicitation; or
2. by the written approval of the cognizant NSF Assistant Director/Office Head or designee. These approvals to deviate from NSF proposal preparation instructions may cover 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 include an authorization to deviate from standard NSF proposal preparation instructions has been received 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.<sup>10</sup> Further instructions are available on the FastLane website.

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<sup>8</sup>FAQs regarding FastLane proposal preparation and submission also are available electronically on the FastLane Website.

<sup>9</sup>The NSF Strategic Plan is available at: [http://www.nsf.gov/news/strategicplan/nsfstrategicplan\\_2011\\_2016.pdf](http://www.nsf.gov/news/strategicplan/nsfstrategicplan_2011_2016.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>Requests for approval of a deviation from NSF's electronic submission requirement must be forwarded to the cognizant NSF program for review and approval prior to submission of the paper proposal.

## **B. Format of the Proposal**

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 or NSF *Grants.gov Application Guide*. GPG Exhibit II-1 and NSF *Grants.gov Application Guide*, Chapter VII contain a proposal preparation checklist that may be used to assist in this review. The 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.

Upon entering the proposal preparation module in FastLane, the PI will be prompted to select:

1. Whether the proposal is:
  - A collaborative proposal from one organization (see GPG Chapter II.D.4.a);
  - A collaborative proposal from multiple organizations (see GPG Chapter II.D.4.b); or
  - Not a collaborative proposal.
2. The type of proposal being developed:
  - RAPID (see GPG Chapter II.D.1);
  - EAGER (see GPG Chapter II.D.2);
  - Research - other than RAPID or EAGER (see GPG Chapter II);
  - Equipment/Instrumentation (see GPG Chapter II.D.5);
  - Conference, Symposium, Workshop (see GPG Chapter II.D.8);
  - International Travel (see GPG Chapter II.D.9);
  - Fellowship (see relevant funding opportunity);
  - Facility/Center (see relevant funding opportunity).

The information noted above will be used by FastLane to determine the applicable proposal preparation business rules that must be followed. Fastlane will then use these rules to check for compliance prior to submission to NSF.

### **1. Proposal Pagination Instructions**

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 prior to upload to the electronic system.

### **2. Proposal Margin and Spacing Requirements**

The proposal must be clear and conform to the following requirements:

- a. Use one of the following typefaces identified below:
  - Arial<sup>11</sup>, Courier New, or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger;
  - Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger; or
  - Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger.

A font size of less than 10 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figures, table or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters. PIs are cautioned, however, that the text must still be readable.

- b. No more than six lines of text within a vertical space of one inch.
- c. Margins, in all directions, must be at least an inch.

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<sup>11</sup> In addition to the typefaces identified above, Macintosh users also may use Helvetica and Palatino typefaces.

These requirements apply to all uploaded sections of a proposal, including supplementary documentation.

While line spacing (single-spaced, double-spaced, etc.) is at the discretion of the proposer, established page limits must be followed. Individual program solicitations, however, may require different type size, margin or line spacing requirements.

### **3. Page Formatting**

Proposers are strongly encouraged to use only a standard, single-column format for the text. Avoid using a two-column format since it can cause difficulties when reviewing the document electronically.

The guidelines specified above establish the **minimum** type size requirements; however, PIs are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal. **Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the proposal; consequently, the use of small type not in compliance with the above guidelines may be grounds for NSF to return the proposal without review.** Adherence to type size and line spacing requirements also is necessary to ensure that no proposer will have an unfair advantage, by using smaller type or line spacing to provide more text in the proposal.

## **C. Proposal Contents**

### **1. Single-Copy Documents**

Certain categories of information that are submitted in conjunction with a proposal are for "NSF Use Only." As such, the information is not provided to reviewers for use in the review of the proposal. With the exception of proposal certifications (which are submitted via the Authorized Organizational Representative function<sup>12</sup>), these documents should be submitted electronically via the Proposal Preparation Module. A summary of each of these categories follows:

#### **a. Information About Principal Investigators (PIs)/Project Directors (PDs) and co-Principal Investigators (co-PIs)/co-Project Directors (co-PDs)**

NSF is committed to providing equal opportunities for participation in its programs and promoting the full use of the Nation's research and engineering resources. To aid in meeting these objectives, NSF requests information on the gender, race, ethnicity and disability status of individuals named as PIs/co-PIs on proposals and awards. Except for the required information about current or previous Federal research support and the name(s) of the PI/co-PI, submission of the information is voluntary, and individuals who do not wish to provide the personal information should check the box(es) provided for that purpose.

#### **b. Authorization to Deviate from NSF Proposal Preparation Requirements (if applicable)**

Instructions for obtaining authorization to deviate from NSF proposal preparation instructions are provided in GPG Chapter II.A.

#### **c. List of Suggested Reviewers or Reviewers Not to Include (optional)**

Proposers may include a list of suggested reviewers who they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal. Proposers also may designate persons they would prefer not review the proposal, indicating why. These suggestions are optional. GPG Exhibit II-2 contains information on conflicts of interest that may be useful in preparation of this list.

The cognizant Program Officer handling the proposal considers the suggestions and may contact the proposer for further information. However, the decision whether or not to use the suggestions remains with the Program Officer.

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<sup>12</sup>Further instructions for this process are available electronically on the FastLane Website.

**d. Proprietary or Privileged Information (if applicable)**

Instructions for submission of proprietary or privileged information are provided in GPG Chapter I.D.3.

**e. Proposal Certifications**

With the exception of the *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF LLL)* identified below, the procedures for submission of the proposal certifications differ from those used with other single-copy documents. The AOR must use the "Authorized Organizational Representative function" in FastLane to electronically sign and submit the proposal certifications. It is the proposing organization's responsibility to assure that only properly authorized individuals sign in this capacity.<sup>13</sup>

The required proposal certifications are as follows:

- **Certification for Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) or Individual Proposer:** The AOR is required to complete certifications regarding the accuracy and completeness of statements contained in the proposal, as well as to certify that the organization (or individual) agrees to accept the obligation to comply with award terms and conditions.  
  
**Certification Regarding Conflict of Interest:** The AOR is required to complete certifications stating that the organization has implemented and is enforcing a written policy on conflicts of interest (COI), consistent with the provisions of AAG Chapter IV.A.; that, to the best of his/her knowledge, all financial disclosures required by the conflict of interest policy were made; and that conflicts of interest, if any, were, or prior to the organization's expenditure of any funds under the award, will be, satisfactorily managed, reduced or eliminated in accordance with the organization's conflict of interest policy. Conflicts that cannot be satisfactorily managed, reduced or eliminated, and research that proceeds without the imposition of conditions or restrictions when a conflict of interest exists, must be disclosed to NSF via use of the Notifications and Requests Module in FastLane.
- **Drug-Free Workplace:** The AOR is required to complete a certification regarding the Drug-Free Workplace Act. See GPG Exhibit II-3 for the full text of the Drug-Free Workplace Certification.
- **Debarment and Suspension:** The AOR is required to complete a certification regarding Debarment and Suspension. See GPG Exhibit II-4 for the full text of the Debarment and Suspension Certification.
- **Certification Regarding Lobbying:** When the proposal exceeds \$100,000, the AOR is required to complete a certification regarding lobbying restrictions. The *Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans and Cooperative Agreements* is included in full text on the FastLane submission screen as well as in GPG Exhibit II-5. The box for "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities" must be checked on the Cover Sheet only if, pursuant to paragraph 2 of the certification, submission of the SF LLL is required.<sup>14</sup>
- **Certification Regarding Nondiscrimination:** The AOR is required to complete a certification regarding compliance with NSF Nondiscrimination regulations and policies. See GPG Exhibit II-6 for the full text of the Nondiscrimination Certification. This certification sets forth the nondiscrimination obligations with which all grantees must comply. These obligations also apply to subrecipients, subgrantees, and subcontractors under the award. The proposer, therefore, shall obtain the NSF Nondiscrimination Certification from each organization that applies to be, or serves as a subrecipient, subgrantee or subcontractor under the award (for other than the provision of commercially available supplies, materials, equipment or general support services) prior to entering into the subaward arrangement.
- **Certification Regarding Flood Hazard Insurance:** Two sections of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (42 USC §4012a and §4106) bar Federal agencies from giving financial assistance for acquisition or construction purposes in any area identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as having special flood hazards unless the:

<sup>13</sup>Detailed instructions for completion of this process are available electronically on the FastLane Website.

<sup>14</sup>Detailed instructions for submission of the SF LLL are available on the FastLane Website.

- (1) community in which that area is located participates in the national flood insurance program; and
- (2) building (and any related equipment) is covered by adequate flood insurance.

By electronically signing the Certification Pages, AORs for prospective grantees located in FEMA-designated special flood hazard areas are certifying that adequate flood insurance has been or will be obtained in the following situations:

- (1) for NSF grants for the construction of a building or facility, regardless of the dollar amount of the grant; and
- (2) for other NSF grants when more than \$25,000 has been budgeted in the proposal for repair, alteration or improvement (construction) of a building or facility.<sup>15</sup>

Prospective grantees should contact their local government or a federally-insured financial institution to determine what areas are identified as having special flood hazards and the availability of flood insurance in their community.

- **Certification Regarding Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)<sup>16</sup>:** The AOR is required to complete a certification that the institution has a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who will be supported by NSF to conduct research.

Additional information on NSF's RCR policy is available in the AAG, Chapter IV.B. While training plans are not required to be included in proposals submitted to NSF, institutions are advised that they are subject to review upon request.

- **Certification Regarding Organizational Support:** The AOR is required to complete a certification that there is organizational support for the proposal as required by Section 526 of the *America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010*. This support extends to the portion of the proposal developed to satisfy the Broader Impacts Review Criterion as well as the Intellectual Merit Review Criterion, and any additional review criteria specified in the solicitation. Organizational support will be made available, as described in the proposal, in order to address the broader impacts and intellectual merit activities to be undertaken.
- **Certification Regarding Federal Tax Obligations:** When the proposal exceeds \$5,000,000, the AOR is required to complete a certification regarding Federal tax obligations. By electronically signing the Certification pages, the AOR certifies that, to the best of their knowledge and belief, the proposing organization:
  - (1) has filed all Federal tax returns required during the three years preceding this certification;
  - (2) has not been convicted of a criminal offense under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; and
  - (3) has not, more than 90 days prior to this certification, been notified of any unpaid Federal tax assessment for which the liability remains unsatisfied, unless the assessment is the subject of an installment agreement or offer in compromise that has been approved by the Internal Revenue Service and is not in default, or the assessment is the subject of a non-frivolous administrative or judicial proceeding.
- **Certification Regarding Unpaid Federal Tax Liability:** If the proposer is a corporation, the AOR (or equivalent) is required to complete a certification that the corporation has no unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability.

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<sup>15</sup> See Article 2.b.2., of the NSF *Agency Specific Requirements to the Research Terms and Conditions*, and Article 11 of the *Grant General Conditions* (GC-1) for additional information.

<sup>16</sup> A wide array of information exists to help inform development of an institution's RCR training plan. For example, many professional societies as well as governmental licensing authorities for professional scientists and engineers have adopted policies or best practices that might be usefully considered. In addition, research is illuminating existing practices surrounding ethical issues, and providing an evaluation of pedagogical innovations in ethics education.

- **Certification Regarding Criminal Convictions:** If the proposer is a corporation, the AOR (or equivalent) is required to complete a certification that the corporation has not been convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the 24 months preceding the date on which the certification is signed.

## 2. Sections of the Proposal

The sections described below represent the body of a proposal submitted to NSF. Except where noted in the GPG or a program solicitation, all sections are required parts of the proposal, and must be submitted electronically via the Proposal Preparation Module in FastLane or via Grants.gov.<sup>17</sup> Failure to submit the required sections may result in the proposal not being accepted<sup>18</sup>, or being returned without review. See GPG Chapter IV.B for additional information.

A full proposal submitted via FastLane<sup>19</sup> must contain the following sections:

- a. Cover Sheet
- b. Project Summary
- c. Table of Contents
- d. Project Description
- e. References Cited
- f. Biographical Sketch(es)
- g. Budget and Budget Justification
- h. Current and Pending Support
- i. Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources
- j. Special Information and Supplementary Documentation
  - Data Management Plan
  - Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable)

Submission instructions for conference, symposium, or workshop proposals, international travel grant proposals, or program solicitations may deviate from the GPG instructions. If the submission instructions do not require a section to be provided, insert text or upload a document in that section of the proposal that states, "Not Applicable."

**All proposals to NSF will be reviewed utilizing the two merit review criteria described in greater length in GPG Chapter III.**

### a. Cover Sheet

There are four major components of the Cover Sheet. A number of the boxes contained on the Cover Sheet are electronically pre-filled as part of the FastLane login process. The information requested on the Cover Sheet is as follows:

- (1) Awardee & Project/Performance Site Primary Location

The information on the Awardee Organization is pre-filled on the Cover Sheet based on the login information entered.

- (2) Program Description/Announcement/Solicitation Number

<sup>17</sup>Requests for approval of a deviation from NSF's electronic submission requirement must be forwarded to the cognizant NSF program for review and approval prior to submission of the paper proposal.

<sup>18</sup> Proposal Not Accepted is defined as FastLane will not permit submission of the proposal.

<sup>19</sup> See also the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide*. Grants.gov may use different naming conventions, and sections may appear in a different order than in FastLane, however the content is the same.

Proposers are required to select the applicable program description, announcement, or solicitation. If the proposal is not submitted in response to a specific program description, announcement, or solicitation, proposers should select "Grant Proposal Guide." Compliance with this requirement is critical in determining the relevant proposal processing guidelines.

Proposals submitted with "Grant Proposal Guide" selected that are directed to Division/Program combinations with active program descriptions will default to the nearest target date for that program. Proposers are advised to select "No Closing Date" when the proposal is not submitted in response to any relevant NSF funding opportunity (which includes program descriptions, announcements, or solicitations).

(3) NSF Unit of Consideration

Proposers must follow instructions for selection of an applicable NSF Division/Office and Program(s) to which the proposal should be directed.

(4) Remainder of the Cover Sheet

(a) Title of Proposed Project

The title of the project must be brief, scientifically or technically valid, intelligible to a scientifically or technically literate reader, and suitable for use in the public press. NSF may edit the title of a project prior to making an award.

(b) Budget and Duration Information

The proposed duration for which support is requested must be consistent with the nature and complexity of the proposed activity. Grants are normally awarded for up to three years but may be awarded for periods of up to five years. The Foundation encourages PIs to request awards for durations of three to five years when such durations are necessary for completion of the proposed work and are technically and managerially advantageous. Specification of a desired starting date for the project is important and helpful to NSF staff; however, requests for specific effective dates may not be met. Except in special situations, requested effective dates must allow at least six months for NSF review, processing and decision. Should unusual situations (e.g., a long lead time for procurement) create problems regarding the proposed effective date, the PI should consult his/her organization's sponsored projects office.

(c) PI Information and co-PI Information

Information (including address information) regarding the PI is derived from login information and is not entered when preparing the Cover Sheet. The proposal also may identify up to four additional co-Principal Investigators.

Each individual's name and either NSF ID or primary registered e-mail address, must be entered in the boxes provided.

(d) Previous NSF Award

If the proposal is a renewal proposal, or an accomplishment-based renewal proposal, the applicable box must be checked. If yes, the proposer will be requested to select the applicable previous award number.

Some NSF program solicitations require submission of both a preliminary and full proposal as part of the proposal process. In such cases, the following instructions apply:

(i) During the preliminary proposal stage, the proposing organization should identify the submission as a preliminary proposal by checking the block entitled, "Preliminary Proposal" on the Cover Sheet;

(ii) During the full proposal submission stage, the proposing organization should identify in the block entitled, "Show Related Preliminary Proposal Number", the related preliminary proposal number assigned by NSF.

(e) Other Federal Agencies

If the proposal is being submitted for consideration by another Federal agency, the abbreviated name(s) of the Federal agency(ies) must be identified in the spaces provided.

(f) Awardee Organization Information

The awardee organization name, address, DUNS number and Employer Identification Number/Taxpayer Identification Number are derived from the login information and are not entered when preparing the Cover Sheet via FastLane.

Profit making organizations must identify their status by checking the appropriate boxes on the Cover Sheet, using the following guidelines:

- A small business must be organized for profit, independently owned and operated (not a subsidiary of or controlled by another firm), have no more than 500 employees, and not be dominant in its field. The appropriate box also must be checked when the proposal involves a cooperative effort between an academic institution and a small business.
- A minority business must be: (i) at least 51 percent owned by one or more minority or disadvantaged individuals or, in the case of a publicly owned business, have at least 51 percent of the voting stock owned by one or more minority or disadvantaged individuals; and (ii) one whose management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more such individuals.
- A woman-owned business must be at least 51 percent owned by a woman or women, who also control and operate it. "Control" in this context means exercising the power to make policy decisions. "Operate" in this context means being actively involved in the day-to-day management.

(g) Project/Performance Site Primary Location

If the project will be performed at the awardee organization, check the designated box. If the project, however, will be performed at a location other than the awardee, provide the following information (where applicable):

- Organization Name (identify the organization name of the primary site where the work will be performed, if different than the awardee);
- Street;
- City;
- State;
- Country; and
- 9-digit Zip Code.

For projects that support research infrastructure and tools, such as vessels, facilities, and telescopes, the project/performance site should correspond to the physical location of the research asset. For research assets or projects that are geographically distributed, the proposer should report information for the primary site, as defined by the proposer. For example, proposals for the operations and maintenance of research vessels may list the project/performance site as the vessel's home port.

(h) Other Information

Should any of the following items on the Cover Sheet apply to a proposal, the applicable box(es) must be checked.

- Beginning Investigator (See GPG I.G.2)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (See GPG II.C.1.e)
- Proprietary or Privileged Information (See GPG I.D.3 & II.C.1.d)
- Historic Places (See GPG II.C.2.j)



- Vertebrate Animals<sup>20</sup> (See GPG II.D.6)
- Human Subjects<sup>21</sup> (See GPG II.D.7)
- International Activities Country Name(s) (See GPG II.C.2.j)

## **b. Project Summary**

Each proposal must contain a summary of the proposed project not more than one page in length. The Project Summary consists of an overview, a statement on the intellectual merit of the proposed activity, and a statement on the broader impacts of the proposed activity.

The overview includes a description of the activity that would result if the proposal were funded and a statement of objectives and methods to be employed. The statement on intellectual merit should describe the potential of the proposed activity to advance knowledge. The statement on broader impacts should describe the potential of the proposed activity to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The Project Summary should be written in the third person, informative to other persons working in the same or related fields, and, insofar as possible, understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader. It should not be an abstract of the proposal.

**Proposals that do not contain the Project Summary, including an overview and separate statements on intellectual merit and broader impacts will not be accepted by FastLane or will be returned without review.**

If the Project Summary contains special characters it may be uploaded as a Supplementary Document. Project Summaries submitted as a PDF must be formatted with separate headings for the overview, statement on the intellectual merit of the proposed activity, and statement on the broader impacts of the proposed activity. Failure to include these headings may result in the proposal being returned without review.

Additional instructions for preparation of the Project Summary are available in FastLane.

## **c. Table of Contents**

A Table of Contents is automatically generated for the proposal by FastLane. The proposer cannot edit this form.

## **d. Project Description (including Results from Prior NSF Support)**

### **(i) Content**

The Project Description should provide a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and must include: objectives for the period of the proposed work and expected significance; relation to longer-term goals of the PI's project; and relation to the present state of knowledge in the field, to work in progress by the PI under other support and to work in progress elsewhere.

The Project Description should outline the general plan of work, including the broad design of activities to be undertaken, and, where appropriate, provide a clear description of experimental methods and procedures. Proposers should address what they want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified. These issues apply to both the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions.

<sup>20</sup> If the proposal includes use of Vertebrate Animals, supplemental information is required. See GPG Chapter II.D.6 for additional information.

<sup>21</sup> If the proposal includes use of Human Subjects, supplemental information is required. See GPG Chapter II.D.7 for additional information.

The Project Description must contain, as a separate section within the narrative, a discussion of the broader impacts of the proposed activities. Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to the achievement of societally relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); improved STEM education and educator development at any level; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the United States; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

Plans for data management and sharing of the products of research, including preservation, documentation, and sharing of data, samples, physical collections, curriculum materials and other related research and education products should be described in the Special Information and Supplementary Documentation section of the proposal (see GPG Chapter II.C.2.j. for additional instructions for preparation of this section).

**(ii) Page Limitations and Inclusion of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) within the Project Description**

Brevity will assist reviewers and Foundation staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description (including Results from Prior NSF Support, which is limited to five pages) **may not exceed 15 pages**. Visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation. PIs are cautioned that the Project Description must be self-contained and that URLs that provide information related to the proposal should not be used because 1) the information could circumvent page limitations, 2) the reviewers are under no obligation to view the sites, and 3) the sites could be altered or abolished between the time of submission and the time of review.

Conformance to the 15-page limitation will be strictly enforced and may not be exceeded unless a deviation has been specifically authorized. (GPG Chapter II.A contains information on deviations.)

**(iii) Results from Prior NSF Support**

If any PI or co-PI identified on the project has received NSF funding (including any current funding) in the past five years, information on the award(s) is required, irrespective of whether the support was directly related to the proposal or not. In cases where the PI or co-PI has received *more than one award* (excluding amendments), they need only report on the one award most closely related to the proposal. Funding includes not just salary support, but any funding awarded by NSF. The following information must be provided:

- (a) the NSF award number, amount and period of support;
- (b) the title of the project;
- (c) a summary of the results of the completed work, including accomplishments, supported by the award. The results must be separately described under two distinct headings, Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts;
- (d) the publications resulting from the NSF award;
- (e) evidence of research products and their availability, including, but not limited to: data, publications, samples, physical collections, software, and models, as described in any Data Management Plan; and
- (f) if the proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

Reviewers will be asked to comment on the quality of the prior work described in this section of the proposal. Please note that the proposal may contain up to five pages to describe the results. Results may be summarized in fewer than five pages, which would give the balance of the 15 pages for the Project Description.

#### **(iv) Unfunded Collaborations**

Any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal (see GPG II.C.2.i) and documented in a letter of commitment from each collaborator. Such letters should be provided in the supplementary documentation section of the FastLane Proposal Preparation Module. Collaborative activities that are identified in the budget should follow the instructions in GPG Chapter II.D.4.

#### **(v) Group Proposals**

NSF encourages submission of proposals by groups of investigators; often these are submitted to carry out interdisciplinary projects. Unless stipulated in a specific program solicitation, however, such proposals will be subject to the 15-page Project Description limitation established in Section (ii) above. PIs who wish to exceed the established page limitations for the Project Description must request and receive a deviation in advance of proposal submission. (GPG Chapter II.A contains information on deviations.)

#### **(vi) Proposals for Renewed Support**

A proposal for renewed support may be either a “traditional” proposal in which the proposed work is documented and described as fully as though the proposer were applying for the first time; or, an “Accomplishment-Based Renewal” (ABR) proposal, in which the Project Description is replaced by copies of no more than six reprints of publications resulting from the research supported by NSF during the preceding three to five year period, plus a brief summary of plans for the proposed support period. (See GPG Chapter V for additional information on preparation of Renewal Proposals.)

#### **e. References Cited**

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.<sup>22</sup> 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.

**If there are no references cited, insert text or upload a document in this section of the proposal that states, “Not Applicable.”**

#### **f. Biographical Sketch(es)**

##### **(i) Senior Personnel**

A biographical sketch (limited to two pages) is required for each individual identified as senior project personnel. (See GPG Exhibit II-7 for the definitions of Senior Personnel.) The following information must be provided in the order and format specified below. Inclusion of additional information beyond that specified below may result in the proposal being returned without review.

**Do not submit** personal information such as **home** address; **home** telephone, fax, or cell phone numbers; **home** e-mail address; date of birth; citizenship; drivers’ license numbers; marital status; personal hobbies; and the like. Such personal information is irrelevant to the merits of the proposal. If such information is included, NSF will make every effort to prevent unauthorized access to such material, but the Foundation is not responsible or in any way liable for the release of such material. (See also GPG Chapter III.G).

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<sup>22</sup>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.

If biographical sketch(es) are not required, insert text or upload a document in this section of the proposal that states, "Not Applicable." In FastLane, if biographical sketches for all senior personnel are uploaded in a single PDF file associated with the PI, insert text or upload a document that states, "Not Applicable" for any co-PI or Senior Person.

**(a) Professional Preparation**

A list of the individual's undergraduate and graduate education and postdoctoral training as indicated below:

Undergraduate Institution(s)	Major	Degree & Year
Graduate Institution(s)	Major	Degree & Year
Postdoctoral Institution(s)	Area	Inclusive Dates (years)

**(b) Appointments**

A list, in reverse chronological order, of all the individual's academic/professional appointments beginning with the current appointment.

**(c) Products**

A list of: (i) up to five products most closely related to the proposed project; and (ii) up to five other significant products, whether or not related to the proposed project. Acceptable products must be citable and accessible including but not limited to publications, data sets, software, patents, and copyrights. Unacceptable products are unpublished documents not yet submitted for publication, invited lectures, and additional lists of products. Only the list of 10 will be used in the review of the proposal.

Each product must include full citation information including (where applicable and practicable) names of all authors, date of publication or release, title, title of enclosing work such as journal or book, volume, issue, pages, website and Uniform Resource Locator (URL) or other Persistent Identifier.

If only publications are included, the heading "Publications" may be used for this section of the Biographical Sketch.

**(d) Synergistic Activities**

A list of up to five examples that demonstrate the broader impact of the individual's professional and scholarly activities that focuses on the integration and transfer of knowledge as well as its creation. Examples could include, among others: innovations in teaching and training (e.g., development of curricular materials and pedagogical methods); contributions to the science of learning; development and/or refinement of research tools; computation methodologies, and algorithms for problem-solving; development of databases to support research and education; broadening the participation of groups underrepresented in science, mathematics, engineering and technology; and service to the scientific and engineering community outside of the individual's immediate organization.

**(e) Collaborators & Other Affiliations**

- **Collaborators and Co-Editors.** A list of all persons in alphabetical order (including their current organizational affiliations) who are currently, or who have been collaborators or co-authors with the individual on a project, book, article, report, abstract or paper during the 48 months preceding the submission of the proposal. Also include those individuals who are currently or have been co-editors of a journal, compendium, or conference proceedings during the 24 months preceding the submission of the proposal. If there are no collaborators or co-editors to report, this should be so indicated.
- **Graduate Advisors and Postdoctoral Sponsors.** A list of the names of the individual's own graduate advisor(s) and principal postdoctoral sponsor(s), and their current organizational affiliations.
- **Thesis Advisor and Postgraduate-Scholar Sponsor.** A list of all persons (including their organizational affiliations), with whom the individual has had an association as thesis advisor, or with

whom the individual has had an association within the last five years as a postgraduate-scholar sponsor. The total number of graduate students advised and postdoctoral scholars sponsored also must be identified.

The information in section (e) above of the biographical sketch is used to help identify potential conflicts or bias in the selection of reviewers. See GPG Exhibit II-2 for additional information on potential reviewer conflicts.

**(ii) Other Personnel**

For the personnel categories listed below, the proposal also may include information on exceptional qualifications that merit consideration in the evaluation of the proposal.

- (a) Postdoctoral associates
- (b) Other professionals
- (c) Students (research assistants)

**(iii) Equipment Proposals**

For equipment proposals, the following must be provided for each auxiliary user:

- (a) Short biographical sketch; and
- (b) List of up to five publications most closely related to the proposed acquisition.

**g. Budget and Budget Justification**

Each proposal must contain a budget for each year of support requested, unless a particular program solicitation stipulates otherwise. The amounts for each budget line item requested must be documented and justified in the budget justification as specified below. The budget justification should be no more than three pages.

**If the program solicitation does not require a budget and therefore there is no budgetary information to justify, insert text or upload a document in the budget justification section of the proposal that states, "Not Applicable."**

The proposal may request funds under any of the categories listed so long as the item and amount are considered necessary, reasonable, allocable, and allowable under the applicable cost principles, NSF policy, and/or the program solicitation. Amounts and expenses budgeted also must be consistent with the proposing organization's policies and procedures and cost accounting practices used in accumulating and reporting costs.

A discussion of the budget and the allowability of selected items of cost is contained in both the GPG (from a budget preparation perspective) and in the *Award & Administration Guide (AAG)* (from an allowability and administration perspective), as well as NSF program solicitations. In preparation of the budget, however, proposers are encouraged to consult the AAG to determine whether a certain category of cost is allowable under an NSF award.

Cost principles governing the allowability of costs are contained in 2 CFR §220 (OMB Circular A-21) for Colleges & Universities, 2 CFR §225 (OMB Circular A-87) for State, Local, & Indian Tribal Governments and 2 CFR §230 (OMB Circular A-122) for Non-Profit Organizations, and are available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/index.html>. Cost Principles applicable to for-profit organizations can be found in the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), Part 31.

**(i) Salaries and Wages (Lines A and B on the Proposal Budget)**

**(a) Senior Project Personnel Salaries & Wages Policy**

NSF regards research as one of the normal functions of faculty members at institutions of higher education. Compensation for time normally spent on research within the term of appointment is deemed to be included within the faculty member's regular organizational salary.

As a general policy, NSF limits salary compensation for senior project personnel to no more than two months of their regular salary in any one year. This limit includes salary compensation received **from all NSF-funded grants**. This effort must be documented in accordance with the applicable cost principles. If anticipated, any compensation for such personnel in excess of two months must be disclosed in the proposal budget, justified in the budget justification, and must be specifically approved by NSF in the award.<sup>23</sup>

These same general principles apply to other types of non-academic organizations.

NSF award funds may not be used to augment the total salary or salary rate of faculty members during the period covered by the term of faculty appointment or to reimburse faculty members for consulting or other time in addition to a regular full-time organizational salary covering the same general period of employment. Exceptions may be considered under certain NSF programs, e.g., science and engineering education programs for weekend and evening classes, or work at remote locations. If anticipated, any intent to provide salary compensation above the base salary must be disclosed in the proposal budget, justified in the budget justification, and must receive the prior written approval of the cognizant NSF Program Officer.

**(b) Administrative and Clerical Salaries & Wages Policy**

In most circumstances, particularly for institutions of higher education, salaries of administrative or clerical staff are included as part of indirect costs (also known as Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A) for Colleges and Universities). Salaries of administrative or clerical staff may be requested as direct costs for a project requiring an extensive amount of administrative or clerical support and where these costs can be readily and specifically identified with the project with a high degree of accuracy. Salaries for administrative or clerical staff shall be budgeted as a direct cost only if this type of cost is consistently treated as a direct cost in like circumstances for all other projects and cost objectives. The circumstances for requiring direct charging of these services must be clearly described in the budget justification. Such costs, if not clearly justified, may be deleted by NSF. See 2 CFR Part §220 (OMB Circular A-21), for examples of where direct charging of administrative salaries may be appropriate.

Additional information on the charging of salaries and wages to an NSF award is available in AAG Chapter V.B.1.

**(c) Procedures**

The names of the PI(s), faculty, and other senior personnel and the estimated number of full-time-equivalent person-months for which NSF funding is requested and the total amount of salaries requested per year must be listed. For consistency with the NSF cost sharing policy, if person months will be requested for senior personnel, a corresponding salary amount must be entered on the budget. If no person months and no salary are being requested for senior personnel, they should be removed from section A of the budget. Their name(s) will remain on the Cover Sheet and the individual(s) role on the project should be described in the Facilities, Equipment and other Resources section of the proposal.

For postdoctoral associates and other professionals, the total number of persons for each position must be listed, with the number of full-time-equivalent person-months and total amount of salaries requested per year. For graduate and undergraduate students, secretarial, clerical, technical, etc., whose time will be charged directly to the project, only the total number of persons and total amount of salaries requested per year in each category is required. Salaries requested must be consistent with the organization's regular practices. The budget

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<sup>23</sup>NSF awardees remain subject to the provisions of OMB M-01-06, "Clarification of OMB A-21 Treatment of Voluntary Uncommitted Cost Sharing and Tuition Remission Costs," regarding requirements for committing and tracking "some level" of faculty (or senior researcher) effort as part of the organized research base.

justification should detail the rates of pay by individual for senior personnel, postdoctoral associates, and other professionals.

The budget may request funds for support of graduate or undergraduate research assistants to help carry out the proposed research. Compensation classified as salary payments must be requested in the salaries and wages category.

**(d) Confidential Budgetary Information**

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 GPG Chapter I.D.3. 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 or Privileged Information" must be checked on the Cover Sheet when the proposal contains confidential budgetary information.<sup>24</sup>

**(ii) Fringe Benefits (Line C on the Proposal Budget)**

If the proposer's usual accounting practices provide that its contributions to employee benefits (social security, retirement, other payroll-related taxes and time off including vacation, sick, and other leave, etc.) be treated as direct costs, NSF grant funds may be requested to fund fringe benefits as a direct cost. These are typically determined by application of a calculated fringe benefit rate for a particular class of employee (full time or part-time) applied to the salaries and wages requested. Although, they also may be paid based on actual costs for individual employees, if that institutional policy has been approved by the cognizant federal agency.

**(iii) Equipment (Line D on the Proposal Budget)**

Equipment is defined as an item of property that has an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more (unless the organization has established lower levels) and an expected service life of more than one year. It is important to note that the acquisition cost of equipment includes modifications, attachments, and accessories necessary to make the property usable for the purpose for which it was purchased. Items of needed equipment must be adequately justified, listed individually by description and estimated cost.

Allowable items ordinarily will be limited to research equipment and apparatus not already available for the conduct of the work. General-purpose equipment, such as a personal computer and office furnishings, are not eligible for support unless primarily or exclusively used in the actual conduct of the proposed research.

Additional information on the charging of equipment to an NSF award is available in AAG Chapter V.B.2.

**(iv) Travel (Line E on the Proposal Budget)**

**(a) General**

Travel and its relation to the proposed activities must be specified and itemized by destination and cost. Funds may be requested for field work, attendance at meetings and conferences, and other travel associated with the proposed work, including subsistence. In order to qualify for support, however, attendance at meetings or conferences must be necessary to accomplish proposal objectives, or disseminate its results.

Allowance for air travel normally will not exceed the cost of round-trip, economy airfares. Persons traveling under NSF grants must travel by U.S.-Flag Air carriers, if available.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Detailed instructions for submission of confidential budgetary information are available on the FastLane website.

<sup>25</sup> See Article 14 of the NSF *Agency Specific Requirements to the Research Terms and Conditions*, and Article 10 of GC-1 for additional information on use of U.S.-Flag Air Carriers.

Additional information on charging travel costs to an NSF award is available in AAG Chapter V.B.4.

**(b) Domestic Travel**

For budget preparation purposes, domestic travel includes travel in the U.S., its possessions, Puerto Rico, and travel to Canada and Mexico.

**(c) Foreign Travel**

For budget purposes, travel outside the areas specified above is considered foreign. The proposal must include relevant information, including countries to be visited (also enter names of countries on the proposal budget), dates of visit, if known, and justification for any foreign travel planned in connection with the project. Travel support for dependents of key project personnel may be requested only when all of the following conditions apply:

- (i) the individual is a key person who is essential to the research on a full-time basis;
- (ii) the individual's residence away from home and in a foreign country is for a continuous period of six months or more and is essential to the effective performance of the project; and
- (iii) the dependent's travel allowance is consistent with the policies of the organization administering the grant.

**(v) Participant Support (Line F on the Proposal Budget)**

This budget category refers to costs of transportation, per diem, stipends and other related costs for participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with NSF-sponsored conferences, meetings, symposia, training activities and workshops.<sup>26</sup> (See GPG Chapter II.D.8) For some educational projects conducted at local school districts, however, the participants being trained are employees. In such cases, the costs must be classified as participant support if payment is made through a stipend or training allowance method. The school district must have an accounting mechanism in place (i.e., sub-account code) to differentiate between regular salary and stipend payments.

The number of participants to be supported must be entered in the parentheses on the proposal budget. These costs also must be justified in the budget justification section of the proposal. Some program solicitations may have special instructions for treatment of participant support.

Indirect costs (F&A) are not allowed on participant support costs. Additional information on charging participant support costs to an NSF award is available in AAG Chapter V.B.8.

**(vi) Other Direct Costs (Lines G1 through G6 on the Proposal Budget)**

Any costs proposed to an NSF grant must be allowable, reasonable and directly allocable to the supported activity. The budget must identify and itemize other anticipated direct costs not included under the headings above, including materials and supplies, publication costs, computer services and consultant services. Examples include aircraft rental, space rental at research establishments away from the grantee organization, minor building alterations, payments to human subjects, service charges, and construction of equipment or systems not available off the shelf. Reference books and periodicals may be charged to the grant only if they are specifically allocable to the project being supported by NSF.

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<sup>26</sup> Proposers are advised that Article 13 of the NSF *Agency Specific Requirements to the Research Terms and Conditions* and Article 7 of GC-1, require the grantee to obtain written authorization from the cognizant NSF program officer prior to the reallocation of funds budgeted for participant support.



**(a) Materials and Supplies (Line G1 on the Proposal Budget)**

The proposal budget justification should indicate the general types of expendable materials and supplies required. Materials and supplies are defined as tangible personal property, other than equipment, costing less than \$5,000, or other lower threshold consistent with the policy established by the proposing organization. Cost estimates must be included for items that represent a substantial amount of the proposed line item cost.

**(b) Publication/Documentation/Dissemination (Line G2 on the Proposal Budget)**

The proposal budget may request funds for the costs of documenting, preparing, publishing or otherwise making available to others the findings and products of the work conducted under the grant. This generally includes the following types of activities: reports, reprints, page charges or other journal costs (except costs for prior or early publication); necessary illustrations; cleanup, documentation, storage and indexing of data and databases; development, documentation and debugging of software; and storage, preservation, documentation, indexing, etc., of physical specimens, collections or fabricated items.

Additional information on charging publication/documentation/dissemination costs to an NSF award is available in AAG Chapter V.B.7.

**(c) Consultant Services (Line G3 on the Proposal Budget)**

Consultants are members of a particular profession or possess a special skill and who are not officers or employees of the performing organization. Costs of professional and consultant services are allowable when reasonable in relation to the services rendered. Payment for consultant services should be comparable to the normal or customary fees charged and received by the consultant for comparable services, especially on non-government contracts and grants.

Anticipated services must be justified and information furnished on each individual's expertise, primary organizational affiliation, normal daily compensation rate, and number of days of expected service. Consultants' travel costs, including subsistence, may be included. If requested, the proposer must be able to justify that the proposed rate of pay is reasonable.

Additional information on charging consultant costs to an NSF award is available in AAG Chapter V.B.6.

**(d) Computer Services (Line G4 on the Proposal Budget)**

The cost of computer services, including computer-based retrieval of scientific, technical and educational information, may be requested only where it is institutional policy to charge such costs as direct charges. A justification based on the established computer service rates at the proposing organization must be included. The proposal budget also may request costs for leasing of computer equipment. General purpose (word processing, spreadsheets, communication) computer equipment should not be requested. Special purpose or scientific use computers or associated hardware and software, however, may be requested as items of equipment when necessary to accomplish the project objectives and not otherwise reasonably available.

Additional information on charging computer services to an NSF award is available in AAG Chapter V.B.5.

**(e) Subawards<sup>27</sup> (Line G5 on the Proposal Budget)**

Except for the procurement of such items as commercially available supplies, materials, equipment or general support services allowable under the grant, no significant part of the research or substantive effort under an NSF grant may be contracted or otherwise transferred to another organization without prior NSF authorization. The intent to enter into such arrangements must be disclosed in the proposal, and a separate budget should be provided for each subawardee, if already identified, along with a description of the work to be performed. Otherwise, the disclosure should include a clear description of the work to be performed, and the basis for selection of the subawardee (except for collaborative/joint arrangements).

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<sup>27</sup>The term "subaward" also includes contracts, subcontracts and other arrangements.

Foreign subawardees are not eligible for indirect cost recovery unless the subawardee has a previously negotiated rate agreement with a U.S. Federal agency that has a practice of negotiating rates with foreign entities.

See GPG Chapter II.C.2j for special proposal preparation requirements for proposals that request funds to support postdoctoral researchers.

**(f) Other (Line G6 on the Proposal Budget)**

Any other direct costs not specified in Lines G1 through G5 must be identified on Line G6. Such costs must be itemized and detailed in the budget justification.<sup>28</sup>

**Visa Costs**

One particular category of “other” direct costs that NSF receives a significant number of inquiries about concerns the allowability of visa costs on NSF budgets. Guidance regarding inclusion of visa costs is as follows:

Short-term, travel visa costs (as opposed to longer-term, immigration visas) are generally allowable expenses that may be proposed as a direct cost on an NSF proposal. Since short-term visas are issued for a specific period and purpose, they can be clearly identified as directly connected to work performed on an NSF-related project. For these costs to be included on an NSF budget, they must:

- be critical and necessary for the conduct of the project;
- be allowable under the applicable cost principles;
- be consistent with the organization’s cost accounting practices and organizational policy; and
- meet the definition of “direct cost” as described in the applicable cost principles.

**(vii) Total Direct Costs (Line H on the Proposal Budget)**

The total amount of direct costs requested in the budget, to include Lines A through G, must be entered on Line H.

**(viii) Indirect Costs (also known as Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A) for Colleges and Universities) (Line I on the Proposal Budget)**

Except as noted in GPG II.C.2.g.(v) and II.D.9, or in an NSF program solicitation, the applicable indirect cost rate(s) negotiated by the organization with the cognizant negotiating agency must be used in computing indirect costs (F&A) for a proposal. The amount for indirect costs should be calculated by applying the current negotiated indirect cost rate(s) to the approved base(s). Indirect cost recovery for colleges, universities, and other organizations of higher education are additionally restricted by 2 CFR §220 (OMB Circular A-21). 2 CFR §220 stipulates in Appendix A, Section G.7.a. that Federal agencies are required to use the negotiated F&A rates that are in effect at the time of the initial award throughout the life of the sponsored agreement. Additional information on the charging of indirect costs to an NSF award is available in AAG Chapter V.D.

For proposing organizations that do not have a current negotiated rate agreement with a cognizant Federal agency, its business officer should prepare an indirect cost proposal based on expenditures for its most recently ended fiscal year. If the proposal is recommended for funding, the proposing organization will be required to provide its indirect cost proposal to support the budgeted indirect rate. The contents and financial data included in indirect cost proposals vary according to the make-up of the proposing organization. Instructions for preparing an indirect cost rate proposal can be found at: <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/caar/docs/idcsubmissions.pdf>. Proposing organizations submitting a proposal to NSF for the first time are encouraged to request guidance from the Cost Analysis & Audit Resolution Branch of NSF’s Division of Institution & Award Support at (703) 292-8244.

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<sup>28</sup> See AAG Chapter V.C.4 for specific instructions and requirements regarding the allowability of relocation costs under NSF awards.

NSF formally negotiates indirect cost rates for the organizations for which NSF has rate cognizance. NSF does not negotiate rates for organizations that are not direct recipients of NSF funding (e.g. subrecipients). The prime recipient is responsible for ensuring that proposed subrecipient costs, including indirect costs, are reasonable and appropriate.

Foreign grantees are not eligible for indirect cost rate recovery unless the foreign grantee has a previously negotiated rate agreement with a U.S. Federal agency that has a practice of negotiating rates with foreign entities.

**(ix) Total Direct and Indirect Costs (F&A) (Line J on the Proposal Budget)**

The total amount of direct and indirect costs (F&A) (sum of Lines H and I) must be entered on Line J.

**(x) Amount of This Request (Line L on the Proposal Budget)**

The total amount of funds requested by the proposer should be the same as the amount entered on Line J. If disapproved, Line L will be equal to Line J minus Line K.

**(xi) Cost Sharing (Line M on the Proposal Budget)**

The National Science Board issued a report entitled “*Investing in the Future: NSF Cost Sharing Policies for a Robust Federal Research Enterprise*” (NSB 09-20, August 3, 2009), which contained eight recommendations for NSF regarding cost sharing. In implementation of the Board’s recommendation, NSF’s revised guidance<sup>29</sup> is as follows:

**Voluntary Committed Cost Sharing**

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited and Line M on the proposal budget will not be available for use by the proposer.<sup>30</sup> In order for NSF, and its reviewers, to assess the scope of a proposed project, all organizational resources necessary for, and available to a project, must be described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal (see GPG Chapter II.C.2.i for further information). NSF Program Officers may not impose or encourage cost sharing unless such requirements are explicitly included in the program solicitation.

**Mandatory Cost Sharing**

Mandatory cost sharing will only be required for NSF programs when explicitly authorized by the NSF Director, the National Science Board, or legislation. A complete listing of NSF programs that require cost sharing is available on the NSF website at: <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/>. In those rare instances, cost sharing requirements will be clearly identified in the solicitation and must be included on Line M of the proposed budget. For purposes of budget preparation, the cumulative cost sharing amount must be entered on Line M of the first year’s budget. Should an award be made, the organization’s cost sharing commitment, as specified on the first year’s approved budget, must be met prior to award expiration.

Such cost sharing will be an eligibility, rather than a review criterion. Proposers are advised not to exceed the mandatory cost sharing level or amount specified in the solicitation.<sup>31</sup>

When mandatory cost sharing is included on Line M, and accepted by the Foundation, the commitment of funds becomes legally binding and is subject to audit. When applicable, the estimated value of any in-kind contributions also should be included on Line M. An explanation of the source, nature, amount and availability of any proposed cost sharing must be provided in the budget justification<sup>32</sup>. It should be noted that contributions

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<sup>29</sup> See NSF’s Revised Cost Sharing Policy Statement for the Foundation’s overarching policies on cost sharing.

<sup>30</sup> While not required by NSF, awardee organizations may, at their own discretion, continue to contribute voluntary uncommitted cost sharing to NSF-sponsored projects. These resources are not auditable by NSF and should not be included in the proposal budget or budget justification.

<sup>31</sup> For further information on procedures for inclusion of programmatic cost sharing in an NSF solicitation, see <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/csdocs/principles.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> 2 CFR § 215.23 describes criteria and procedures for the allowability of cash and in-kind contributions in satisfying cost sharing and matching requirements.

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 award.

Failure to provide the level of cost sharing required by the NSF solicitation and reflected in the approved award budget may result in termination of the NSF award, disallowance of award costs and/or refund of award funds to NSF by the awardee.

**(xii) Unallowable Costs**

Proposers should be familiar with the complete list of unallowable costs that is contained in the applicable cost principles. The following categories of unallowable costs are highlighted because of their sensitivity:

**(a) Entertainment**

Costs of entertainment, amusement, diversion and social activities and any costs directly associated with such activities (such as tickets to shows or sporting events, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation and gratuities) are unallowable. Travel, meal and hotel expenses of grantee employees who are not on travel status are unallowable. Costs of employees on travel status are limited to those allowed under the governing cost principles for travel expenses.

**(b) Meals and Coffee Breaks**

No NSF funds may be spent on meals or coffee breaks for intramural meetings of an organization or any of its components, including, but not limited to, laboratories, departments and centers.

**(c) Alcoholic Beverages**

No NSF funds may be spent on alcoholic beverages.

Additional information on charging certain types of costs generally associated with meetings and conferences to NSF awards is available in AAG Chapter V.C.5.

**h. Current and Pending Support**

This section of the proposal calls for required information on all current and pending support for ongoing projects and proposals, **including this project**, and any subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. All current project support from whatever source (e.g., Federal, State, local or foreign government agencies, public or private foundations, industrial or other commercial organizations) must be listed. The proposed project and all other projects or activities requiring a portion of time of the PI and other senior personnel must be included, even if they receive no salary support from the project(s). The total award amount for the entire award period covered (including indirect costs) must be shown as well as the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the project, regardless of source of support. Similar information must be provided for all proposals already submitted or submitted concurrently to other possible sponsors, including NSF. Concurrent submission of a proposal to other organizations will not prejudice its review by NSF. The Biological Sciences Directorate exception to this policy is delineated in GPG Chapter I.G.2.

If the project now being submitted has been funded previously by a source other than NSF, the information requested in the paragraph above must be furnished for the last period of funding.

**If Current and Pending Support information is not required, insert text or upload a document in this section of the proposal that states, “Not Applicable.” In FastLane, if Current and Pending Support information for all senior personnel is uploaded in a single PDF file associated with the PI, insert text or upload a document that states, “Not Applicable” for any co-PI or Senior Person.**

**i. Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources**

This section of the proposal is used to assess the adequacy of the resources available to perform the effort proposed to satisfy both Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts review criteria. Proposers should describe only

those resources that are directly applicable. Proposers should include an aggregated description of the internal and external resources (both physical and personnel) that the organization and its collaborators will provide to the project, should it be funded. Such information must be provided in this section, in lieu of other parts of the proposal (e.g., budget justification, project description). The description should be narrative in nature and must not include any quantifiable financial information. Reviewers will evaluate the information during the merit review process and the cognizant NSF Program Officer will review it for programmatic and technical sufficiency.

Although these resources are not considered cost sharing as defined in 2 CFR § 215.23 (OMB Circular A-110), the Foundation does expect that the resources identified in the Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources section will be provided, or made available, should the proposal be funded. AAG Chapter II.B.1 specifies procedures for use by the awardee when there are postaward changes to objective, scope or methodology.

**If there are no Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources to describe, insert text or upload a document in this section of the proposal that states, “Not Applicable.”**

#### **j. Special Information and Supplementary Documentation**

Except as specified below, special information and supplementary documentation must be included as part of the Project Description (or part of the budget justification), if it is relevant to determining the quality of the proposed work. Information submitted in the following areas is not considered part of the 15-page Project Description limitation. This Special Information and Supplementary Documentation section also is not considered an appendix. Specific guidance on the need for additional documentation may be obtained from the organization’s sponsored projects office or in the references cited below.

- Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan. Each proposal<sup>33</sup> that requests funding to support **postdoctoral researchers**<sup>34</sup> must include, as a supplementary document, a description of the mentoring activities that will be provided for such individuals. If a Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan is required, FastLane will not permit submission of a proposal if the Plan is missing. In no more than one page, the mentoring plan must describe the mentoring that will be provided to all postdoctoral researchers supported by the project, irrespective of whether they reside at the submitting organization, any subawardee organization, or at any organization participating in a simultaneously submitted collaborative project. Proposers are advised that the mentoring plan may not be used to circumvent the 15-page project description limitation. See GPG Chapter II.D.4 for additional information on collaborative proposals. Mentoring activities provided to postdoctoral researchers supported on the project will be evaluated under the Broader Impacts review criterion.

Examples of mentoring activities include, but are not limited to: career counseling; training in preparation of grant proposals, publications and presentations; guidance on ways to improve teaching and mentoring skills; guidance on how to effectively collaborate with researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary areas; and training in responsible professional practices.

- Plans for data management and sharing of the products of research. Proposals must include a supplementary document of no more than two pages labeled “Data Management Plan”. This supplement should describe how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results (see AAG Chapter VI.D.4), and may include:
  1. the types of data, samples, physical collections, software, curriculum materials, and other materials to be produced in the course of the project;

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<sup>33</sup> For purposes of meeting the mentoring requirement, simultaneously submitted collaborative proposals, and, collaborative proposals that include subawards, constitute a single unified project. Therefore, only one mentoring plan may be submitted for the entire project.

<sup>34</sup> In situations where a postdoctoral researcher is listed in Section A of the NSF Budget, and is functioning in a Senior Project personnel capacity (i.e., responsible for the scientific or technical direction of the project), a mentoring plan is not required.

2. the standards to be used for data and metadata format and content (where existing standards are absent or deemed inadequate, this should be documented along with any proposed solutions or remedies);
3. policies for access and sharing including provisions for appropriate protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, or other rights or requirements;
4. policies and provisions for re-use, re-distribution, and the production of derivatives; and
5. plans for archiving data, samples, and other research products, and for preservation of access to them.

Data management requirements and plans specific to the Directorate, Office, Division, Program, or other NSF unit, relevant to a proposal are available at: <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>. If guidance specific to the program is not available, then the requirements established in this section apply.

Simultaneously submitted collaborative proposals and proposals that include subawards are a single unified project and should include only one supplemental combined Data Management Plan, regardless of the number of non-lead collaborative proposals or subawards included. FastLane will not permit submission of a proposal that is missing a Data Management Plan. Proposals for supplementary support to an existing award are not required to include a Data Management Plan.

A valid Data Management Plan may include only the statement that no detailed plan is needed, as long as the statement is accompanied by a clear justification. Proposers who feel that the plan cannot fit within the supplement limit of two pages may use part of the 15-page Project Description for additional data management information. Proposers are advised that the Data Management Plan may not be used to circumvent the 15-page Project Description limitation. The Data Management Plan will be reviewed as an integral part of the proposal, coming under Intellectual Merit or Broader Impacts or both, as appropriate for the scientific community of relevance.

- Rationale for performance of all or part of the project off-campus or away from organizational headquarters. (See AAG Chapter V.D.1)
- Documentation of collaborative arrangements of significance to the proposal through letters of commitment. (See GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.(iv).) While such letters of commitment are allowable, unless required by a specific program solicitation, letters of support should not be submitted as they are not a standard component of an NSF proposal. Letters of support are typically from a key stakeholder such as an organization, collaborator or Congressional Representative, and are used to convey a sense of enthusiasm for the project and/or to highlight the qualifications of the PI or co-PI. Letters of support submitted in response to a program solicitation requirement must be unique to the specific proposal submitted and cannot be altered without the author's explicit prior approval. NSF may return without review proposals that are not consistent with these instructions.
- In order for NSF to comply with federal environmental statutes (including, but not limited to, the National Environmental Policy Act [42 U.S.C. §§ 4321, *et seq.*], the National Historic Preservation Act [16 U.S.C. § 470, *et seq.*], and the Endangered Species Act [16 U.S.C. §§ 1531, *et seq.*], the proposer may be requested to submit supplemental post-proposal submission information to NSF in order that a reasonable and accurate assessment of environmental impacts by NSF may be made.
- International Activities
  1. International Research/Education/Training Activities. For each proposal that describes an international activity, PIs should list the primary countries involved on the Cover Sheet. An international activity is defined as research, training, and/or education carried out either in the U.S. (using virtual technologies) or abroad, in cooperation with foreign counterparts.

2. International Conferences, Symposia, Workshops. Proposers should also enter on the Cover Sheet the country/countries with which project participants will engage and/or travel to attend international conferences, symposia and/or workshops.
3. Work in foreign countries. Some governments require nonresidents to obtain official approval to carry out investigations within their borders and coastal waters under their jurisdiction. PIs are responsible for obtaining the required authorizations and for advising NSF that they have been obtained or requested. Advance coordination should minimize disruption of the research. (See AAG Chapter VI.B.4 and VI.G.3 and Article 34 of the NSF *Agency Specific Requirements* to the *Research Terms and Conditions*, and Article 45 of the NSF *Grant General Conditions*.)

- Antarctic proposals to *any* NSF program require operational worksheets by the first Wednesday of June in the year before any proposed fieldwork. See “proposals with fieldwork” in Chapter V.A, of the Antarctic Research solicitation. Special budget considerations also apply. See also Chapter V.B, of the Antarctic Research solicitation.
- Research in a location designated, or eligible to be designated, a registered historic place. (See AAG Chapter VI.K). Where applicable, the box for “Historic Places” must be checked on the Cover Sheet.
- Research involving field experiments with genetically engineered organisms. (See AAG Chapter VI.B.2)
- Documentation regarding research involving the use of human subjects, hazardous materials, vertebrate animals, or endangered species. (See AAG Chapter VI.B and GPG Chapter II.D.6 and II.D.7).
- Projects that involve technology utilization/transfer activities, that require a management plan, or that involve special reports or final products. Please note that some program solicitations provide specific guidance on preparation and inclusion of management plans in proposals submitted to NSF.
- Special components in new proposals or in requests for supplements, such as *Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED)*, *Research Opportunity Awards (ROAs)* or *Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REUs)*. (See GPG Chapter II.D.3 for information on FASED, and for the other programs identified, consult the relevant program solicitation.)
- *Research in Undergraduate Institutions*. (See RUI program solicitation for information.)
- *Research Experiences for Undergraduates*. (See the REU program solicitation for information.)

In addition, the supplementary documentation section should alert NSF officials to unusual circumstances that require special handling, including, for example, proprietary or other privileged information in the proposal, matters affecting individual privacy, required intergovernmental review under E.O. 12372 (*Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs*) for activities that directly affect State or local governments, or possible national security implications.

## k. Appendices

All information necessary for the review of a proposal must be contained in Sections A through I of the proposal. **Appendices may not be included unless a deviation has been authorized.** GPG Chapter II.A contains further information.

## D. Special Guidelines

### 1. Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID)

The RAPID funding mechanism is used for proposals having a severe urgency with regard to availability of, or access to data, facilities or specialized equipment, including quick-response research on natural or anthropogenic disasters and similar unanticipated events. PI(s) must contact the NSF program officer(s) whose

expertise is most germane to the proposal topic before submitting a RAPID proposal. This will facilitate determining whether the proposed work is appropriate for RAPID funding.

- The Project Description is expected to be brief (two to five pages) and include clear statements as to why the proposed research is of an urgent nature and why a RAPID award would be the most appropriate mechanism for supporting the proposed work. Note this proposal preparation instruction deviates from the standard proposal preparation instructions contained in this Guide; RAPID proposals must otherwise be compliant with the GPG.
- The “RAPID” proposal type must be selected in the proposal preparation module in FastLane.
- Only internal merit review is required for RAPID proposals. Under rare circumstances, program officers may elect to obtain external reviews to inform their decision. If external review is to be obtained, then the PI will be so informed in the interest of maintaining the transparency of the review and recommendation process. The two standard NSB-approved merit review criteria will apply.
- Requests may be for up to \$200K and of one year duration. The award size, however, will be consistent with the project scope and of a size comparable to grants in similar areas.
- No-cost extensions and requests for supplemental funding will be processed in accordance with standard NSF policies and procedures.
- Renewed funding of RAPID awards may be requested only through submission of a proposal that will be subject to full external merit review. Such proposals would be designated as “RAPID renewals.”

## **2. EARLY-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER)**

The EAGER funding mechanism may be used to support exploratory work in its early stages on untested, but potentially transformative, research ideas or approaches. This work may be considered especially "high risk-high payoff" in the sense that it, for example, involves radically different approaches, applies new expertise, or engages novel disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspectives. These exploratory proposals may also be submitted directly to an NSF program, but the EAGER mechanism should not be used for projects that are appropriate for submission as “regular” (i.e., non-EAGER) NSF proposals. PI(s) must contact the NSF program officer(s) whose expertise is most germane to the proposal topic prior to submission of an EAGER proposal. This will aid in determining the appropriateness of the work for consideration under the EAGER mechanism; this suitability must be assessed early in the process.

- The Project Description is expected to be brief (five to eight pages) and include clear statements as to why this project is appropriate for EAGER funding, including why it does not “fit” into existing programs and why it is a “good fit” for EAGER. Note this proposal preparation instruction deviates from the standard proposal preparation instructions contained in this Guide; EAGER proposals must otherwise be compliant with the GPG.
- The “EAGER” proposal type must be selected in the proposal preparation module in FastLane.
- Only internal merit review is required for EAGER proposals. Under rare circumstances, program officers may elect to obtain external reviews to inform their decision. If external review is to be obtained, then the PI will be so informed in the interest of maintaining the transparency of the review and recommendation process. The two standard NSB-approved merit review criteria will apply.
- Requests may be for up to \$300K and of up to two years duration. The award size, however, will be consistent with the project scope and of a size comparable to grants in similar areas.
- No-cost extensions and requests for supplemental funding will be processed in accordance with standard NSF policies and procedures.



- Renewed funding of EAGER awards may be requested only through submission of a proposal that will be subject to full external merit review. Such proposals would be designated as “EAGER renewals.”

### **3. Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED)**

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 are provided below.

#### **a. Requests as part of a competitive proposal submission**

Funds may be requested to purchase special equipment, modify equipment or provide services required specifically for the work to be undertaken. Requests for funds for equipment or assistance that compensate in a general way for the disabling condition are not permitted. For example, funds may be requested to provide: prosthetic devices to manipulate a particular apparatus; equipment to convert sound to visual signals, or vice versa, for a particular experiment; access to a special site or to a mode of transportation (except as defined below); a reader or interpreter with special technical competence related to the project; or other special-purpose equipment or assistance needed to conduct a particular project. Items, however, such as standard wheel chairs, prosthetics, hearing aids, TDD/text-phones, or general readers for the blind would not be supported because the need for them is not specific to the proposed project. Similarly, ramps, elevators, or other structural modifications of research facilities are not eligible for direct support under this program.

No maximum funding amount has been established for such requests. It is expected, however, that the cost (including equipment adaptation and installation) will not be a major component of the total proposed budget for the project. Requests for funds for special equipment or assistance to facilitate the participation of individuals with disabilities should be included in the proposed budget for the project and documented in the budget justification. The specific nature, purpose and need for such equipment or assistance should be described in sufficient detail in the Project Description to permit evaluation of the request by knowledgeable reviewers.

#### **b. Supplemental funding requests to existing NSF grants**

Supplemental funds for special equipment or assistance to facilitate participation in NSF-supported projects by persons with disabilities may be provided under existing NSF grants. Normally, title is vested in the grantee organization for equipment purchased in conjunction with NSF-supported activities. In accordance with the applicable general terms and conditions<sup>35</sup>, the grantee organization guarantees use of the equipment for the specific project during the period of work funded by the Foundation, and assures its use in an appropriate manner after project completion. In instances involving special equipment for persons with disabilities, the need for such may be unique to the individual. In such cases, the grantee organization may elect to transfer title to the individual to assure appropriate use after project completion.

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<sup>35</sup> The *Research Terms and Conditions* and the *Grant General Conditions* are available on the NSF website at: <http://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp>, and [http://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/general\\_conditions.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/general_conditions.jsp), respectively.

Supplemental requests should be submitted electronically by using the "Supplemental Funding Request" function in FastLane and should include a brief description of the request, a budget and a budget justification. Requests must be submitted at least two months before funds are needed. Funding decisions will be made on the basis of the justification and availability of program funds with any resultant funding provided through a formal amendment of the existing NSF grant.

#### 4. 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 must contain all of the requisite sections as a single package to be provided to reviewers (that will happen automatically when procedures below are followed). All collaborative proposals must 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.

##### a. Submission of a collaborative proposal from one organization

The single proposal method allows investigators from two or more organizations 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 organizations may be designated as co-PIs. Please note, however, that if awarded, a single award would be made to the submitting organization, with any collaborators listed as subawards.

If a proposed subaward includes funding to support postdoctoral researchers, the mentoring activities to be provided for such individuals must be incorporated in the supplemental mentoring plan outlined in GPG Chapter II.C.2j.

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.C.2g.(vi)(e) for additional instructions on preparation of this type of proposal.)

##### b. Submission of a collaborative proposal from multiple organizations

Simultaneous submission of proposals allows multiple organizations to submit a unified set of certain proposal sections, as well as information unique to each organization. The lead organization is required to submit a Project Summary, Project Description, References Cited, Data Management Plan, and Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable) for all organizations in the collaborative. Other sections must be submitted by each organization in the collaborative. All collaborative proposals arranged as separate submissions from multiple organizations must be submitted via FastLane. For these proposals, the project title must begin with the words "Collaborative Research:". If funded, each investigator bears responsibility for a separate award.

Required sections of the proposal differ based on the organization's role. The following sections are required for a collaborative proposal submitted by:

##### Lead Organization

- Cover Sheet
- Project Summary
- Table of Contents (automatically generated)
- Project Description
- References Cited
- Biographical Sketch(es)

##### Non-Lead Organization

- Cover Sheet
- Table of Contents (automatically generated)
- Biographical Sketch(es)
- Budget and Budget Justification
- Current and Pending Support
- Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources

- Budget and Budget Justification
- Current and Pending Support
- Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources
- Data Management Plan
- Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable)

See GPG Chapter II.C.2.j for additional guidance on mentoring and data management plan requirements for collaborative proposals. FastLane will combine the proposal submission for printing or electronic viewing.

To submit the collaborative proposal, the following process must be completed:<sup>36</sup>

- (i) Each non-lead organization must assign their proposal a proposal PIN. This proposal PIN and the temporary proposal ID generated by FastLane when the non-lead proposal is created must be provided to the lead organization before the lead organization submits its proposal to NSF.
- (ii) The lead organization must then enter each non-lead organization(s) proposal PIN and temporary proposal ID into the FastLane lead proposal by using the "Link Collaborative Proposals" option found on the FastLane "Form Preparation" screen. Given that such separately submitted proposals constitute a "single" proposal submission to NSF, it is imperative that the proposals be submitted within a reasonable timeframe to one another.
- (iii) **All components** of the collaborative proposal must meet any established deadline, and, failure to do so may result in the entire collaborative proposal being returned without review.

## 5. Proposals for Equipment

Proposals for specialized equipment may be submitted by an organization for: (1) individual investigators; (2) groups of investigators within the same department; (3) several departments; (4) organization(s) participating in a collaborative or joint arrangement; (5) any components of an organization; or (6) a region. One individual must be designated as PI. Investigators may be working in closely related areas or their research may be multidisciplinary.

An equipment proposal must contain all of the following proposal sections:

- Cover Sheet
- Project Summary: GPG Chapter II.C.2.b should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal.
- Project Description (not to exceed 15 pages) that includes:
  - (1) an overall acquisition plan which discusses arrangements for acquisition, maintenance and operation. Equipment to be purchased, modified or constructed must be described in sufficient detail to allow comparison of its capabilities with the needs of the proposed activities;
  - (2) a description, from each potential major user, of the project(s) for which the equipment will be used. This description must be succinct, not necessarily as detailed as in a full research proposal, and must emphasize the intrinsic merit of the activity and the importance of the equipment to it. A brief summary will suffice for auxiliary users; and
  - (3) a description of comparable equipment already at the proposing organization(s), if applicable, and an explanation of why it cannot be used. This includes comparable government-owned equipment that is on-site.

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<sup>36</sup>Detailed instructions for the electronic preparation and submission of collaborative proposals are available on the FastLane website at [https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/NSFHelp/flashhelp/fastlane/FastLane\\_Help/fastlane\\_help.htm#proposal\\_functions\\_introduction.htm](https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/NSFHelp/flashhelp/fastlane/FastLane_Help/fastlane_help.htm#proposal_functions_introduction.htm).

- References Cited: GPG Chapter II.C.2.e should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal. If there are no references cited, insert text or upload a document in this section of the proposal that states, “Not Applicable.”
- A biographical sketch of the person(s) who will have overall responsibility for maintenance and operation and a brief statement of qualifications, if not obvious (GPG Chapter II.C.2.f should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal; also see GPG II.C.2.f(iii)).
- Proposal Budget and Budget Justification: An annual budget for operation and maintenance of the proposed equipment, a brief description of other support services available and the annual budget for their operation, maintenance and administration (GPG Chapter II.C.2.g should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal).
- Current and Pending Support: GPG Chapter II.C.2.h should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal.
- Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources that includes a description of the physical facility, including floor plans or other appropriate information, where the equipment will be located; a narrative description of the source of funds available for operation and maintenance of the proposed equipment; and a statement of why the equipment is severable or non-severable from the physical facility (GPG Chapter II.C.2.i should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal).
- Data Management Plan: GPG Chapter II.C.2.j should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal. And,
- Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable): GPG Chapter II.C.2.j should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal.

These proposals normally compete with proposals for research or education projects.<sup>37</sup>

## 6. Proposals Involving Vertebrate Animals

a. Any project proposing use of vertebrate animals for research or education shall comply with 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] pertaining to the humane care, handling, and treatment of vertebrate animals held or used for research, teaching or other activities supported by Federal awards. In accordance with these requirements, proposed projects involving use of any vertebrate animal for research or education must 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 Public Health Service (PHS) Approved Assurance.

In the case of research involving the study of wildlife in the field or in the lab, for the provision in the PHS Assurance for Institutional Commitment (Section II) that requires the organization to establish and maintain a program for activities involving animals in accordance with the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (Guide), the organization has established and will maintain a program for activities involving animals according to the Guide. The organization will follow recommendations specified in the Guide for details involving laboratory animals, and taxon-specific guidelines approved by the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the American Society of Mammalogists, and the Ornithological Council, as is appropriate for the taxon to be studied<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> See AAG Chapter IV.D for additional information on the administration of equipment awards.

<sup>38</sup> Guidelines to the Use of Wild Birds in Research: <http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/guide/index.html>

Guidelines of the American Society of Mammalogists for the Use of Wild Mammals in Research:

<http://www.mammalsociety.org/articles/guidelines-american-society-mammalogists-use-wild-mammals-research-0>

Guidelines for the Use of Fishes in Research: [http://fisheries.org/docs/policy\\_useoffishes.pdf](http://fisheries.org/docs/policy_useoffishes.pdf)

Guidelines for the Use of Live Amphibians and Reptiles in Field and Laboratory Research:

<http://www.asih.org/files/hacc-final.pdf>

b. 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.

c. Research facilities subject to the Animal Welfare Act using or intending to use live animals in research and who receive Federal funding are required to register the facility with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), U.S. Department of Agriculture. A current listing of licensed animal dealers may also be obtained from APHIS. The location of the nearest APHIS Regional Office, as well as information concerning this and other APHIS activities may be obtained at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/>.

d. Projects involving the care or use of vertebrate animals at a foreign organization or foreign field site also require approval of research protocols by the U.S. grantee's IACUC. If the project is to be funded through an award to a foreign organization or through an individual fellowship award that will support activities at a foreign organization, NSF will require a statement of compliance that the activities will be conducted in accordance with all applicable laws in the foreign country and that the *International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals* (see <http://www.cioms.ch/>) will be followed.

e. The following information regarding the organization's intention to utilize vertebrate animals as part of the project should be provided on the NSF Cover Sheet:

(1) The box for "Vertebrate Animals" must be checked on the Cover Sheet if use of vertebrate animals is envisioned.

(2) The IACUC approval date (if obtained) must be 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. If a decision is made to fund the proposal, the organization must provide a signed copy of the IACUC approval letter to the cognizant program. The letter should indicate approval of the proposed activities and must be submitted prior to an award being issued.

(3) The PHS Approved Animal Welfare Assurance Number must be entered in the space provided.

f. For fellowship proposals submitted by individuals that involve use of vertebrate animals, a copy of the approval letter from the IACUC (including Assurance Number and organizational signature) should be included in the Supplementary Documentation section of the proposal or sent directly to the cognizant program. The letter should indicate approval of the proposed activities.

If IACUC approval has not been obtained prior to submission, the proposer should indicate "Pending" in the space provided for the approval date. If a decision is made to fund the proposal, the organization must provide a signed copy of the IACUC approval letter to the cognizant program. The letter should indicate approval of the proposed activities and must be submitted prior to an award being issued.

See also AAG Chapter VI.B.3 for additional information on the administration of awards that utilize vertebrate animals.

## **7. Proposals Involving Human Subjects**

a. 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 must either (1) have approval from the organization's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before issuance of an NSF award or, (2) must affirm that the IRB has declared the research exempt from IRB review, in accordance with the applicable subsection, as established in section 101(b) of the Common Rule. If certification of exemption is provided after submission of

the proposal and before the award is issued, the exemption number corresponding to one or more of the exemption categories must also be included in the documentation provided to NSF.

If the project involves human subjects and is to be performed outside of the U.S., evidence of IRB approval also is required. If there is no IRB approval provided, and the foreign country is not included in the 2008 HHS OHRP International Compilation of Human Research Standards (<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/international/intlcompilation/intlcompilation.html>), nor is an Assurance on file with OHRP, NSF may decline to support the project.

b. The following information regarding the organization's intention to utilize human subjects as part of the project should be provided on the NSF Cover Sheet:

(1) The box for "Human Subjects" must be checked on the Cover Sheet if use of human subjects is envisioned.

(2) If human subject activities are exempt from IRB review, provide the exemption number(s) corresponding to one or more of the exemption categories. The six categories of research that qualify for exemption from coverage by the regulations are defined in the Common Rule for Protection of Human Subjects.

(3) If the research is not designated as exempt, the IRB approval date should be identified in the space provided. This date, at minimum, should cover the period at which the project is initiated. If IRB approval has not been obtained prior to submission, the proposer should indicate "Pending" in the space provided for the approval date. If a decision is made to fund the proposal, the organization must provide a signed copy of the IRB approval letter to the cognizant program. The letter should indicate approval of the proposed activities and must be submitted prior to an award being issued.

(4) Enter the Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) Number that the proposer has on file with the Office for Human Research Protections, if available.

See also AAG Chapter VI.B.1 for additional information on the administration of awards that utilize human subjects.

## **8. Proposals for Conferences, Symposia and Workshops**

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 U.S. of major international conferences, symposia and workshops. Conferences will be supported only if equivalent results cannot be obtained at regular meetings of professional societies. Although requests for support of conferences, symposia and workshops ordinarily originate with educational institutions or scientific and engineering societies, they also may come from other groups. Shared support by several Federal agencies, States or private organizations is encouraged. Because proceedings of such conferences normally should be published in professional journals, requests for support may include publication costs. Proposals for conferences, symposia and workshops should generally be made at least a year in advance of the scheduled date. 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.

A conference, symposium or workshop proposal<sup>39</sup> (that complies with the page and font size instructions in GPG Chapter II.B) must contain the elements identified below. Note the proposal preparation instructions for these types of proposals deviate from the standard proposal preparation instructions contained in this Guide. If any section is not required, insert text or upload a document in that section of the proposal that states, "Not Applicable."

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<sup>39</sup> Costs associated with conferences, symposia, workshops or other meetings supported by an NSF grant must be specifically and clearly identified in the proposed scope of work and budget, and approved by NSF. Additional information on the charging of conference, symposia and workshops is contained in the AAG Chapter V.C.5.

- Cover Sheet
- Project Summary (GPG Chapter II.C.2.b should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal).
- Project Description (not to exceed 15 pages) that includes:
  - (1) A statement of the need for such a gathering and a list of topics;
  - (2) A listing of recent meetings on the same subject, including dates and locations;
  - (3) The names of the chairperson and members of organizing committees and their organizational affiliations;
  - (4) Information on the location and probable date(s) of the meeting and the method of announcement or invitation;
  - (5) A statement of how the meeting will be organized and conducted, how the results of the meeting will be disseminated and how the meeting will contribute to the enhancement and improvement of scientific, engineering and/or educational activities; and
  - (6) A plan for recruitment of and support for speakers and other attendees, that includes participation of groups underrepresented in science and engineering (e.g., underrepresented minorities, women, and persons with disabilities).
  - (7) A description of plans to identify resources for child care and other types of family care at the conference site to allow individuals with family care responsibilities to attend. Attendance for some participants will be dependent on the availability of such resources. This information should help enable attendees to make arrangements for family care, as needed.
- Proposal Budget: An estimated total budget for the conference, together with an itemized statement of the amount of support requested from NSF. The NSF budget may include participant support for transportation (when appropriate), *per diem* costs, stipends, publication and other conference-related costs. Note: participant support costs must be excluded from the indirect cost base; see GPG Chapter II.C.2g(v). GPG Chapter II.C.2g should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal.
- Current and Pending Support: The support requested or available from other Federal agencies and other sources. GPG Chapter II.C.2h should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal. And,
- Data Management Plan: Plans for management and sharing of any data products resulting from the activity. GPG Chapter II.C.2.j should be consulted to prepare this portion of the proposal.

For additional coverage on allowability of costs associated with meetings and conferences, proposers should consult AAG Chapter V.C.5.

## **9. Proposals to Support International Travel**

Proposals for travel support for U.S. participation in international scientific and engineering meetings held abroad are handled by the NSF organizational unit with program responsibility for the area of interest.

Group travel awards are encouraged as the primary means of support for international travel. A university, professional society or other non-profit organization may apply for funds to enable it to coordinate and support U.S. participation in one or more international scientific meeting(s) abroad. Proposals submitted for this purpose should address the same items as those indicated for conferences, symposia, and workshops (see Section 8 above), with particular attention to plans for composition and recruitment of the travel group. Information on planned speakers should be provided where available from the conference organizer.

Similar to proposals for conferences, symposia, or workshops, if any section is not required, insert text or upload a document in that section of the proposal that states, "Not Applicable."

Group travel proposals may request support only for the international travel costs of the proposed activity. However, in addition, group travel proposals also may include as compensation for the grantee, a flat rate of \$50 per traveler for general administrative costs of preparing announcements, evaluating proposals and handling travel arrangements customarily associated with this type of project. (See AAG Chapter VI.G.5)

Group travel grantees are required to retain supporting documentation that funds were spent in accordance with the original intent of the proposal. Such documentation may be required in final reports and is subject to audit.

#### **10. Proposals for Doctoral Dissertation Research**

NSF awards grants in support of doctoral dissertation research in some disciplines, primarily field research in the environmental, behavioral and social sciences. Support may be sought through those disciplinary programs and, in cases involving research abroad, through the Office of International and Integrative Activities. The thesis advisor or concerned faculty member submits proposals on behalf of the graduate student. Further information can be obtained from the cognizant program office. Deadlines for these programs vary by Directorate. Consult the NSF website for additional information.

#### **11. Support for Development of NSF Centers**

NSF provides support for a variety of individual Centers and Centers programs that contribute to the Foundation's vision as outlined in the NSF Strategic Plan. Centers exploit opportunities in science, engineering and technology in which the complexity of the research problem(s) or the resources needed to solve the(se) problem(s) require the advantages of scope, scale, change, duration, equipment, facilities, and students that can only be provided by an academic research center. They focus on investigations at the frontiers of knowledge not normally attainable through individual investigations, at the interfaces of disciplines and/or by incorporating fresh approaches to the core of disciplines. Centers focus on integrative learning and discovery and demonstrate leadership in broadening participation through focused investments in a diverse set of partner organizations and individuals. In doing so, they draw upon, and contribute to, the development of the Nation's full intellectual talent. Most Center awards are limited to a maximum duration of ten years and are often subject to mid-course external merit review. Proposers interested in learning more about current or future NSF Centers are encouraged to contact the appropriate disciplinary Program Officer.

#### **12. Support for Development of Major Research Facilities and Equipment**

As an integral part of its stewardship of the science and engineering infrastructure of the country, NSF provides support for major research equipment and facilities construction. NSF depends on the research communities to provide input for the planning, development, and implementation of Large Facility Projects. This normally occurs through National Academies, studies, community workshop reports, professional society activities, and many other methods to ensure community input funded by interested NSF programs on the basis of merit-reviewed proposals. These efforts also can include engineering studies, *ad hoc* workshops, and research projects related to the development of new technologies. Proposers are strongly encouraged to contact the appropriate disciplinary program officer to discuss potential funding and mechanisms in advance of proposal submission.

#### **13. Projects Requiring High-Performance Computing Resources, Large Amounts of Data Storage, or Advanced Visualization Resources**

Many research projects require access to computational, data storage or visualization resources in order to complete the work proposed. For those projects that require such resources at a scale that is beyond that typically available locally, NSF supports a number of resources. For the most computationally intensive projects, the Blue Waters system at University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign, is the most suitable. Blue Waters is designed to support a small number (~50) of research teams involved with projects requiring the most advanced computational and data resources. Currently, the allocation process for that resource is done directly via proposal submission to the cognizant program director. Proposals are reviewed for both their scientific and computational needs. The Blue Waters supercomputer provides sustained performance of 1 petaflop on a range of real-world science and engineering applications. It is one of the most powerful supercomputers in the world. Those interested should visit the Blue Waters portal (<http://www.ncsa.illinois.edu/BlueWaters>) for more details of the system's hardware and capabilities.



Yellowstone, which is part of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, is a significant resource, 1.5 petaflop peak speed, but one that is designed to meet the needs of the atmospheric and related-sciences communities. Yellowstone operates its own allocations process and those interested in obtaining time and/or storage should consult the cognizant program director in the Division of Atmospheric and Geospace Sciences within the Geosciences Directorate.

The most general set of computational and data resources funded by the NSF is operated by the XSEDE project (<https://www.xsede.org>). XSEDE provides the integrating fabric for a collection of very powerful supercomputers, a high-throughput computing environment, high-volume data storage facilities, advanced visualization services, connected by a high-bandwidth private network, a training education and outreach program in how to use its services and an extended collaborative support program to assist researchers in using the advanced computational resources. The physical resources themselves are provided by Service Providers (SP) via separate awards from the NSF. Allocations of XSEDE resources for large projects are done through the XSEDE Resource Advisory Committee, which meets quarterly, using an external set of experts. Smaller requests do not require a proposal or review and a simple on-line process may be used to request such an allocation. NSF encourages prospective users to seek more information at <https://www.xsede.org>, where they can also register for a portal account.

## Exhibit II-1: Proposal Preparation Checklist

Unless otherwise specified in an NSF program solicitation, it is imperative that all proposals conform to the proposal preparation and submission instructions specified in this Guide. Proposals also must comply with NSF font, spacing and margin requirements. The guidelines specified in GPG Chapter II.B establish minimum requirements; however, readability is of utmost importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font. Conformance with all preparation and submission instructions is required and will be strictly enforced unless a deviation has been approved in advance of proposal submission. NSF may not accept<sup>40</sup> or may return without review proposals that are not consistent with these instructions. See GPG Chapter IV.B for additional information.

Prior to electronic submission, it is strongly recommended that an administrative review be conducted to ensure that proposals comply with the instructions, in the format specified. 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.

### General:

- Proposal is responsive to the program description/announcement/solicitation or to the GPG.
- If a proposal has been previously declined and is being resubmitted, proposal has been revised to take into account the major comments from the prior NSF review.
- Proposed work is appropriate for funding by NSF, and is not a duplicate of, or substantially similar to, a proposal already under consideration by NSF from the same submitter.
- Ensure that the proposal contains all required sections. (See GPG Chapter II.C.2 for a listing of required sections.)
- If the submission instructions do not require a section to be provided, insert text or upload a document in that section of the proposal that states, "Not Applicable."

### Single Copy Documents:

- Information about Principal Investigators/Project Directors (except for the required information regarding current or previous Federal research support and the name(s) of the PI/co-PI, submission of the information is voluntary).
- Authorization to Deviate from NSF Proposal Preparation Requirements (if applicable).
- List of Suggested Reviewers, or Reviewers Not to Include (optional).
- Proprietary or Privileged Information Statement (if applicable).
- Proposal Certifications (submitted by the Authorized Organizational Representative within five working days following the electronic submission of the proposal.) (See GPG Chapter II.C.1.e for a complete listing of proposal certifications.)
- SF LLL, *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities* (if applicable).

### Cover Sheet:

- Program Description/Announcement/Solicitation No./Closing Date selected. (If the proposal is not submitted in response to a specific program announcement/solicitation, proposers must enter "NSF Grant Proposal Guide.")
- Specific NSF program(s) identified (if known).
- For renewal proposal, previous award number entered.
- Related preliminary proposal number entered (if applicable).
- Check Appropriate Box(es), and provide requisite information, if the proposal includes any of the items identified. Note in particular, proposals that include use of human subjects or vertebrate animals require additional information to be submitted with these types of proposals.
- Indicate if the proposal is a collaborative being submitted from one or multiple organizations, or if it is not a collaborative. Indicate the type of proposal being developed.

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<sup>40</sup> Proposal Not Accepted is defined as FastLane will not permit submission of the proposal.

- [ ] **Project Summary:**
  - [ ] Note limitation of one page.
  - [ ] Ensure that overview, intellectual merit and broader impacts statements text blocks are completed.
  - [ ] Note special instructions for Project Summaries that contain special characters. Include separate headings for overview, statement on intellectual merit, and statement on broader impacts.
  
- [ ] **Project Description:**
  - [ ] Note limitation of 15 pages.
  - [ ] Merit Review Criteria: Ensure both merit review criteria are addressed, including a separate section within the narrative that discusses the broader impacts of the proposed activities.
  - [ ] Inclusion of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs): PIs are advised that the Project Description must be self-contained and are cautioned that URLs that provide information necessary to the review of the proposal should not be used because reviewers are not obligated to view such sites.
  - [ ] Results from Prior NSF Support: Required only for PIs and co-PIs who have received NSF support within the last five years. Describe results related to Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts under two separate, distinct headings.
  
- [ ] **References Cited:**
  - [ ] No page limitation, however, this section must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the 15-page Project Description. Each reference must be in the specified format.
  
- [ ] **Biographical Sketch(es):**
  - [ ] Note limitation of two pages per individual; required for all senior project personnel. The required information must be provided in the order and format specified.
  - [ ] In FastLane, if biographical sketches for all senior personnel are uploaded in a single PDF file associated with the PI, insert text or upload a document that states, "Not Applicable" for any co-PI or Senior Person.
  
- [ ] **Proposal Budget:** (annual and cumulative)
  - [ ] Budget Justification (Note limitation of three pages **per proposal**.)
  
- [ ] **Current and Pending Support:** Required for all senior project personnel.
  - [ ] Ensure that the proposal being submitted is included on each current and pending support document.
  - [ ] In FastLane, if Current and Pending Support information for all senior personnel are uploaded in a single PDF file associated with the PI, insert text or upload a document that states, "Not Applicable" for any co-PI or Senior Person.
  
- [ ] **Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources**
  - [ ] This section should include an aggregated description of the internal and external resources (both physical and personnel) that the organization and its collaborators will provide to the project, should it be funded.

- [ ] Ensure that no quantifiable financial information is provided.
- [ ] If there are no facilities, equipment or other resources identified, a statement to that effect should be included in this section of the proposal and uploaded into FastLane.

[ ] **Special Information and Supplementary Documentation:**

- [ ] See GPG Chapter II.C.2j for the types of information appropriate for submission in this section, as required.
- [ ] Each proposal<sup>41</sup> that requests funding to support **postdoctoral researchers** must include, as a supplementary document, not to exceed one page, a description of the mentoring activities that will be provided for such individuals.
- [ ] Each proposal must include a supplementary document of no more than two pages labeled "Data Management Plan". This supplementary document should describe how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results.
- [ ] Any additional items specified in a relevant program solicitation.

[ ] **Special Guidelines:**

- [ ] Note that GPG Chapter II.D contains special proposal preparation instructions for certain types of proposals.

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<sup>41</sup> For purposes of meeting the mentoring requirement, simultaneously submitted collaborative proposals, and, collaborative proposals that include subawards, constitute a single unified project. Therefore, only one mentoring plan may be submitted for the entire project.

## **Exhibit II-2: Potentially Disqualifying Conflicts of Interest**

Unless a waiver has been granted by NSF, a reviewer cannot review a proposal if:

- the reviewer, the reviewer's spouse, minor child, or business partner;
- the organization where the reviewer is employed, has an arrangement for future employment or is negotiating for employment; or
- the organization where the reviewer is an officer, director, trustee, or partner,

has a financial interest in the outcome of the proposal.

Unless a waiver has been granted by NSF, a potential reviewer also may be barred from reviewing a proposal, if it involves individuals with whom he/she has a personal relationship, such as a close relative, current or former collaborator, or former thesis student/advisor.

Unless a waiver has been granted by NSF, a disqualifying conflict may exist, if a proposal involves an organization or other entity with which the potential reviewer has a connection. Such potentially disqualifying connections include:

- a reviewer's recent former employer;
- an organization in which the reviewer is an active participant;
- an institution at which the reviewer is currently enrolled as a student, or at which he/she serves as a visiting committee member; or
- an entity with which the reviewer has or seeks some other business or financial relationship (including receipt of an honorarium).

## **Exhibit II-3: Drug-Free Workplace Certification**

### **Instructions for Certification**

1. By electronically signing the NSF Cover Sheet and submitting this proposal, the grantee is providing the certifications set out below.
2. The certification set out below is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when the agency determined to award the grant. If it is later determined that the grantee knowingly rendered a false certification, or otherwise violates the requirements of the Drug-Free Workplace Act, the agency, in addition to any other remedies available to the Federal Government, may take action authorized under the Drug-Free Workplace Act.
3. For grantees other than individuals, Alternate I applies.
4. For grantees who are individuals, Alternate II applies.

### **Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements**

#### **Alternate I (Grantees Other Than Individuals)**

The grantee certifies that it will or will continue to provide a drug-free workplace by:

- (a) Publishing a statement notifying employees that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of a controlled substance is prohibited in the grantee's workplace and specifying the actions that will be taken against employees for violation of such prohibition;
- (b) Establishing an ongoing drug-free awareness program to inform employees about --
  - (1) The dangers of drug abuse in the workplace;
  - (2) The grantee's policy of maintaining a drug-free workplace;
  - (3) Any available drug counseling, rehabilitation and employee assistance programs; and
  - (4) The penalties that may be imposed upon employees for drug abuse violations occurring in the workplace;
- (c) Making it a requirement that each employee to be engaged in the performance of the grant be given a copy of the statement required by paragraph (a);
- (d) Notifying the employee in the statement required by paragraph (a) that, as a condition of employment under the grant, the employee will --
  - (1) Abide by the terms of the statement; and
  - (2) Notify the employer in writing of his or her conviction for a violation of a criminal drug statute occurring in the workplace, no later than five calendar days after such conviction;
- (e) Notifying the agency in writing, within 10 calendar days after receiving notice under subparagraph (d)(2) from an employee or otherwise receiving actual notice of such conviction.

Employers of convicted employees must provide notice, including position title, to every grant officer or other designee on whose grant activity the convicted employee was working, unless the Federal agency has designated a central point for the receipt of such notices. Notice shall include the identification number(s) of each affected grant;

- (f) Taking one of the following actions, within 30 calendar days of receiving notice under subparagraph (d)(2), with respect to any employee who is so convicted--
  - (1) Taking appropriate personnel action against such an employee, up to and including termination, consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; or
  - (2) Requiring such employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a Federal, State, or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency;
- (g) Making a good faith effort to continue to maintain a drug-free workplace through implementation of paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f).

**Alternate II (Grantees Who Are Individuals)**

- (a) The grantee certifies that, as a condition of the grant, he or she will not engage in the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of a controlled substance in conducting any activity with the grant.
- (b) If convicted of a criminal drug offense resulting from a violation occurring during the conduct of any grant activity, he or she will report the conviction, in writing, within 10 calendar days of the conviction, to every grant officer or other designee, unless the Federal agency designates a central point for the receipt of such notices. When notice is made to such a central point, it shall include the identification number(s) of each affected grant.

For NSF, grantee notification should be made to the Cost Analysis & Audit Resolution Branch, Division of Institution & Award Support, NSF, Arlington, VA 22230.

## **Exhibit II-4: Debarment and Suspension Certification**

### **Instruction on Certification Regarding Debarment and Suspension**

1. By electronically signing and submitting this proposal, the prospective primary participant is providing the certification set out below.
2. The inability of a person to provide the certification required below will not necessarily result in denial of participation in this covered transaction. The prospective participant shall submit an explanation of why it cannot provide the certification set out below. The certification or explanation will be considered in connection with the department or agency's determination whether to enter into this transaction. However, failure of the prospective primary participant to furnish a certification or an explanation shall disqualify such person from participation in this transaction.
3. The certification in this clause is any material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when the department or agency determined to enter into this transaction. If it is later determined that the prospective primary participant knowingly rendered an erroneous certification, in addition to other remedies available to the Federal Government, the department or agency may terminate this transaction for cause or default.
4. The prospective primary participant shall provide immediate written notice to the department or agency to whom this proposal is submitted if at any time the prospective primary participant learns that its certification was erroneous when submitted or has become erroneous by reason of changed circumstances.
5. The terms covered transaction, debarred, suspended, ineligible, lower tier covered transaction, participant, person, primary covered transaction, principal, proposal, and voluntarily excluded, as used in this clause, have the meanings set out in the Definitions and Coverage sections of the rules implementing Executive Order 12549. You may contact the department or agency to which this proposal is being submitted for assistance in obtaining a copy of those regulations.
6. The prospective primary participant agrees by submitting this proposal that, should the proposed covered transaction be entered into, it shall not knowingly enter into any lower tier covered transaction with a person who is debarred, suspended, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this covered transaction, unless authorized by the department or agency entering into this transaction.
7. The prospective primary participant further agrees by submitting this proposal that it will include the clause titled "Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion - Lower Tier Covered Transaction", provided by the department or agency entering into this covered transaction, without modification, in all lower tier covered transactions.
8. A participant in a covered transaction may rely upon a certification of a prospective participant in a lower tier covered transaction that it is not debarred, suspended, ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from the covered transaction, unless it knows that the certification is erroneous. A participant may decide the method and frequency by which it determines the eligibility of its principals. Each participant may, but is not required to, check the Nonprocurement List.
9. Nothing contained in the foregoing shall be construed to require establishment of a system of records in order to render in good faith the certification required by this clause. The knowledge and information of a participant is not required to exceed that which is normally possessed by a prudent person in the ordinary course of business dealings.
10. Except for transactions authorized under paragraph 6 of these instructions, if a participant in a covered transaction knowingly enters into a lower tier covered transaction with a person who is suspended, debarred, ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction, in addition to other remedies available to the Federal Government, the department or agency may terminate this transaction for cause or default.



## **Certification**

- (1) The prospective primary participant certifies to the best of its knowledge and belief, that it and its principals: (a) Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from a covered transaction by any Federal department or agency; (b) Have not within a three-year period preceding this proposal been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State or local) transaction or contract under a public transaction; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property; (c) Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State or local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (1)(b) of this certification; and (d) Have not within a three-year period preceding this application/proposal had one or more public transactions (Federal, State or local) terminated for cause or default.
- (2) Where the prospective primary participant is unable to certify to any of the statements in this certification, such prospective participant shall include an explanation with this proposal.

## **Exhibit II-5: Lobbying Certification**

### **Instructions on Certification Regarding Lobbying**

This certification is required for an award of a Federal contract, grant or cooperative agreement exceeding \$100,000 and for an award of a Federal loan or a commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan exceeding \$150,000. The *Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans and Cooperative Agreements* also is included in full text on the FastLane submission screen.

### **Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans and Cooperative Agreements**

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

- (1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.
- (2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.
- (3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by Section 1352, Title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

## **Exhibit II-6: Nondiscrimination Certification**

### **Instructions for Nondiscrimination Certification**

1. In accordance with NSF policy, by electronically signing the proposal, the Authorized Organizational Representative is providing the requisite Certification of Compliance with National Science Foundation Nondiscrimination Regulations and Policies. This Certification sets forth the nondiscrimination obligations with which all awardees must comply. These obligations also apply to subrecipients, subgrantees, and subcontractors under the award. The proposer therefore, shall obtain the NSF Nondiscrimination Certification from each organization that applies to be, or serves as a subrecipient, subgrantee or subcontractor under the award (for other than the provision of commercially available supplies, materials, equipment or general support services) prior to entering into the subaward arrangement.

2. The proposer shall provide immediate notice to the Foundation if at any time the proposer learns that its certification was erroneous when submitted, or has become erroneous by reason of changed circumstances.

### **Certification of Compliance with National Science Foundation Nondiscrimination Regulations and Policies**

By electronically signing the proposal, the Authorized Organizational Representative hereby certifies that the organization will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 USC § 2000d), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 USC §§ 1681 *et seq.*), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC § 794), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 USC §§ 6101 *et seq.*) and all regulations and policies issued by NSF pursuant to these statutes.

To that end, in accordance with the above-referenced nondiscrimination statutes, and NSF's implementing regulations and policies, no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the Proposer receives Federal financial assistance from the Foundation; and HEREBY CERTIFIES THAT it will immediately take any measures necessary to effectuate this agreement.

If any real property or structure thereon is provided or improved with the aid of Federal financial assistance extended to the Proposer by the Foundation, this Certification shall obligate the Proposer, or in the case of any transfer of such property, the transferee, for the period during which the real property or structure is used for a purpose for which the Federal financial assistance is extended or for another purpose involving the provision of similar services or benefits. If any personal property is so provided, this Certification shall obligate the Proposer for the period during which it retains ownership or possession of the property. In all other cases, this Certification shall obligate the Proposer for the period during which the Federal financial assistance is extended to it by the Foundation.

THIS CERTIFICATION is given in consideration of and for the purpose of obtaining any and all Federal grants, cooperative agreements, loans, contracts, property, discounts or other Federal financial assistance extended after the date hereof to the Proposer by the Foundation, including installment payments after such date on account of applications for Federal financial assistance which were approved before such date. The Proposer recognizes and agrees that such Federal financial assistance will be extended in reliance on the representations and agreements made in this Certification, and that the United States shall have the right to seek judicial enforcement of this Certification. This Certification is binding on the Proposer, its successors, transferees, and assignees.

## **Exhibit II-7: Definitions of Categories of Personnel**

The personnel categories listed on parts A and B of the Proposal Budget are defined as follows:

### **A. Senior Personnel**

1. (co) Principal Investigator(s) -- the individual(s) designated by the proposer, and approved by NSF, who will be responsible for the scientific or technical direction of the project. NSF does not infer any distinction in scientific stature among multiple PIs, whether referred to as PI or co-PI. If more than one, the first one listed will serve as the contact PI, with whom all communications between NSF program officials and the project relating to the scientific, technical, and budgetary aspects of the project should take place. The PI and any identified co-PIs, however, will be jointly responsible for submission of the requisite project reports.
2. 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.

### **B. Other Personnel**

1. Postdoctoral (Scholar, Fellow, or Other Postdoctoral Position) -- An individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path. Postdoctoral scholars not identified under Senior Personnel above should be listed as Other Personnel.
2. Other Professional -- a person who may or may not hold a doctoral degree or its equivalent, who is considered a professional and is not reported as a Principal Investigator, faculty associate, postdoctoral scholar or student. Examples of persons included in this category are doctoral associates not reported under B1, professional technicians, physicians, veterinarians, system experts, computer programmers and design engineers.
3. Graduate Student (research assistant) -- a part-time or full-time student working on the project in a research capacity who holds at least a bachelor's degree and is enrolled in a degree program leading to an advanced degree.
4. Undergraduate Student -- a student who is enrolled in a degree program (part-time or full-time) leading to a bachelor's or associate's degree.
5. & 6. These categories include persons working on the project in a non-research capacity, such as secretaries, clerk-typists, draftsmen, animal caretakers, electricians and custodial personnel regardless of whether they hold a degree or are involved in degree work.

Any personnel category for which NSF funds are requested must indicate, in the parentheses provided on the Proposal Budget, the number of persons expected to receive some support from those funds and, where called for in the budget format, person-months to the nearest tenth.

## Chapter III: NSF Proposal Processing and Review

Proposals received by NSF are assigned to the appropriate NSF program and, if they meet NSF requirements, for review. All proposals are carefully reviewed by a scientist, engineer, or educator serving as an NSF Program Officer, and usually by three to ten other persons outside NSF either as *ad hoc* reviewers, panelists, or both, who are experts in the particular fields represented by the proposal. Proposers are invited to suggest names of persons they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal and/or persons they would prefer not review the proposal. These suggestions may serve as one source in the reviewer selection process at the Program Officer's discretion. In addition, Program Officers may obtain comments from site visits before recommending final action on proposals. Senior NSF staff further review recommendations for awards. A flowchart that depicts the entire NSF proposal and award process (and associated timeline) is included as GPG Exhibit III-1.

A comprehensive description of the Foundation's merit review process is available on the NSF website at: [http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit\\_review/](http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/).

Proposal review is one step in the NSF program planning and implementation process. Embedded in this process are core strategies that are fundamental to the fulfillment of NSF's mission. More information about NSF's mission and strategies can be found in *Empowering the Nation Through Discovery and Innovation: NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2011-2016*. NSF's mission is particularly well-implemented through the integration of research and education and broadening participation in NSF programs, projects, and activities.

### A. Merit Review Principles and Criteria

The National Science Foundation strives to invest in a robust and diverse portfolio of projects that creates new knowledge and enables breakthroughs in understanding across all areas of science and engineering research and education. To identify which projects to support, NSF relies on a merit review process that incorporates consideration of both the technical aspects of a proposed project and its potential to contribute more broadly to advancing NSF's mission "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes." NSF makes every effort to conduct a fair, competitive, transparent merit review process for the selection of projects.

#### 1. Merit Review Principles

These principles are to be given due diligence by PIs and organizations when preparing proposals and managing projects, by reviewers when reading and evaluating proposals, and by NSF program staff when determining whether or not to recommend proposals for funding and while overseeing awards. Given that NSF is the primary federal agency charged with nurturing and supporting excellence in basic research and education, the following three principles apply:

- All NSF projects should be of the highest quality and have the potential to advance, if not transform, the frontiers of knowledge.
- NSF projects, in the aggregate, should contribute more broadly to achieving societal goals. These broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified.
- Meaningful assessment and evaluation of NSF funded projects should be based on appropriate metrics, keeping in mind the likely correlation between the effect of broader impacts and the resources provided to implement projects. If the size of the activity is limited, evaluation of that activity in isolation is not likely to be meaningful. Thus, assessing the effectiveness of these activities may best be done at a higher, more aggregated, level than the individual project.

With respect to the third principle, even if assessment of Broader Impacts outcomes for particular projects is done at an aggregated level, PIs are expected to be accountable for carrying out the activities described in the

funded project. Thus, individual projects should include clearly stated goals, specific descriptions of the activities that the PI intends to do, and a plan in place to document the outputs of those activities.

These three merit review principles provide the basis for the merit review criteria, as well as a context within which the users of the criteria can better understand their intent.

## 2. Merit Review Criteria

All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of 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.

The two merit review criteria are listed below. Both criteria are to be given full consideration during the review and decision-making processes; each criterion is necessary but neither, by itself, is sufficient. Therefore, proposers must fully address both criteria. (GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.(i) contains additional information for use by proposers in development of the Project Description section of the proposal.) Reviewers are strongly encouraged to review the criteria, including GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.(i), prior to the review of a proposal.

When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers will be asked to consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

- **Intellectual Merit:** The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
- **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
  - a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
  - b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

## B. Selection of Reviewers

The NSF guidelines for the selection of reviewers are designed to ensure selection of experts who can give program officers the proper information needed to make a recommendation in accordance with the NSB approved criteria for selection of projects. Optimally, reviewers should have:

1. Special knowledge of the science and engineering subfields involved in the proposals to be reviewed to evaluate competence, intellectual merit, and utility of the proposed activity. Within reasonable limits, reviewers' fields of specialty should be complementary within a reviewer group.
2. Broader or more generalized knowledge of the science and engineering subfields involved in the proposals to be reviewed to evaluate the broader impacts of the proposed activity. Reviewers with broad expertise are required for proposals involving substantial size or complexity, broad disciplinary or multidisciplinary content, or significant national or international implications.
3. Broad knowledge of the infrastructure of the science and engineering enterprise, and its educational activities, to evaluate contributions to societal goals, scientific and engineering personnel, and distribution of resources to organizations and geographical areas.
4. To the extent possible, diverse representation within the review group. The goal is to achieve a balance among various characteristics. Important factors to consider include: type of organization represented, reviewer diversity, age distribution and geographic balance.

### C. Proposal File Updates

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 submitted electronically to NSF.

The FastLane Proposal File Update Module allows the organization to request the replacement of files or revision of other Proposal Attributes, associated with a previously submitted proposal. (Note: The FastLane Proposal File Update module may not be used for submission of revised budgets. All budgetary revisions must be submitted through use of the FastLane Revised Proposal Budget Module. See Paragraph D. below for further information.) A request for a proposal file update 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). An update request must contain a justification that addresses:

1. why the changes or file replacements are being requested; and
2. any differences between the original and proposed replacement files.

A request for a proposal file update automatically will be accepted if submitted **prior to**:

- the deadline date;
- initiation of external peer review in cases when a target date is utilized;<sup>42</sup> and
- initiation of external peer review in the case of an unsolicited proposal.

A request for a proposal file update **after** the timeframes specified above will require acceptance by the cognizant NSF Program Officer. Such requests may be submitted only to correct a technical problem with the proposal (i.e., formatting or print problems). Changes in the content of the proposal should not be requested after the timeframes specified above. When a request is accepted, the proposed files or revisions to proposal attributes will immediately replace the existing files and become part of the official proposal.

PIs can access the Proposal File Update Module via the "Proposal Functions" section of FastLane. Authorized individuals in the organization's Sponsored Projects Office (or equivalent) can initiate or review requests for proposal file updates using the "Submit Proposals/Supplements/File Updates/Withdrawals" Module via the FastLane "Research Administration Functions."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup>The status of a proposal may be found via the "Proposal Functions" section of FastLane.

<sup>43</sup>Detailed instructions on submitting proposer-initiated proposal file updates are available on the FastLane website at <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/documents/pfu/pfu.jsp>.

NSF will consider only one request for a proposal file update 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.

## **D. Revisions to Proposals Made During the Review Process**

In the event of a significant development (e.g., research findings, changed circumstances, unavailability of PI or other senior personnel, etc.) that might materially affect the outcome of the review of a pending proposal, the proposer must contact the cognizant Program Officer to discuss the issue. Submitting additional information must not be used as a means of circumventing page limitations or stated deadlines.

Before recommending whether or not NSF should support a particular project, the NSF Program Officer may, subject to certain constraints outlined below, engage in discussions with the proposing PIs.

Negotiating budgets generally involves discussing a lower or higher amount of total support for the proposed project. The NSF Program Officer may suggest reducing or eliminating costs for specific budget items that are clearly unnecessary or unreasonable for the activities to be undertaken, especially when the review process supports such changes; however, this would generally not include faculty salaries, salary rates, fringe benefits, or tuition. Note: indirect cost rates are not subject to negotiation. The NSF Program Officer may discuss with PIs the “bottom line” award amount, i.e., the total NSF funding that will be recommended for a project. NSF Program Officers may not renegotiate cost sharing or other organizational commitments.

When such discussions result in a budget reduction of 10% or more from the amount originally proposed, a corresponding reduction should be made in the scope of the project. Proposers must use the FastLane Revised Proposal Budget Module to submit this information.<sup>44</sup> A revised proposal budget also must include a Budget Impact Statement that describes the impact of the budget reduction on the scope of the project.

Revised proposal budgets must be electronically signed by the AOR.

## **E. Award Recommendation**

After scientific, technical and programmatic review and consideration of appropriate factors, the NSF Program Officer recommends to the cognizant Division Director whether the proposal should be declined or recommended for award. Normally, final programmatic approval is at the division/office level. Because of the large volume of proposals, this review and consideration process may take up to six months. Large or particularly complex proposals may require additional review and processing time. If the program recommendation is for an award and final division/office or other programmatic approval is obtained, then the recommendation goes to the Division of Grants and Agreements for review of business, financial and policy implications and the processing and issuance of a grant or cooperative agreement. The Division of Grants and Agreements generally makes awards to academic institutions within 30 days after the program division/office makes its recommendation. Grants being made to organizations that have not received an NSF award within the preceding five years, or involving special situations (such as coordination with another Federal agency or a private funding source), cooperative agreements, and other unusual arrangements may require additional review and processing time.

Proposers are cautioned that only an appointed NSF Grants and Agreements Officer may make commitments, obligations or awards on behalf of NSF or authorize the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of NSF or the Government should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with an NSF Program Officer. A PI or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the NSF Grants and Agreements Officer does so at its own risk.

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<sup>44</sup> Note: All preaward budgetary revisions must be submitted through use of the Revised Budget Module in Fastlane.



## **F. Review Information Provided to PI**

When a decision has been made (whether an award or a declination), the following information is released electronically to the PI through FastLane:

- description of the context in which the proposal was reviewed;
- copies of all reviews used in the decision (with any reviewer-identifying information redacted);
- copy of panel summary, if the proposal was reviewed by a panel at any point in the process;
- site-visit reports, if applicable.

In addition, if not otherwise provided in the panel summary, the PI is provided an explanation (written or telephoned) of the basis for the declination. A PI also may request and obtain any other releasable material in NSF's file on his/her proposal. Everything in the file, except information that identifies either reviewers or other pending or declined proposals is usually releasable to the PI.

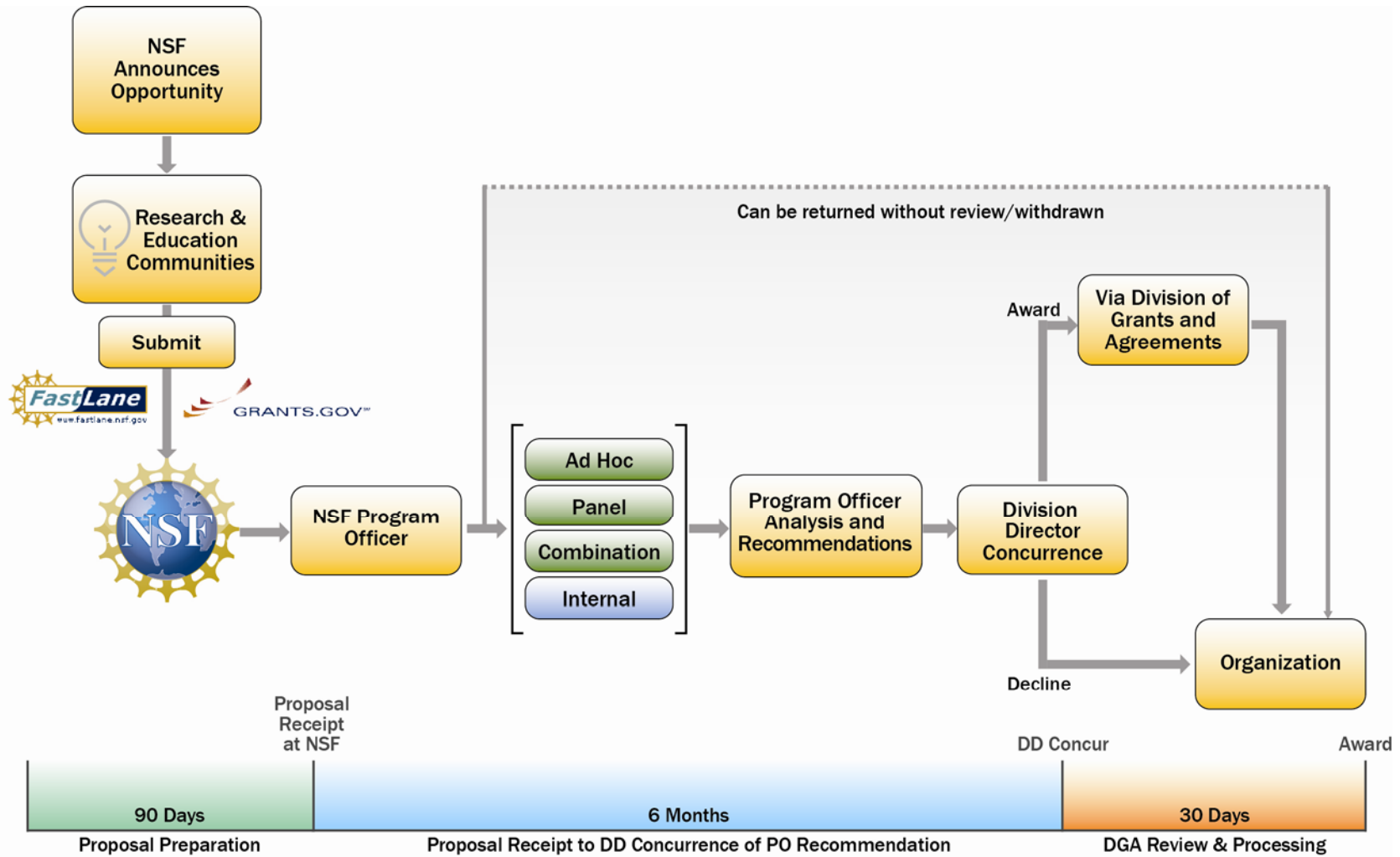
Reviews are made available directly to the PI, to provide feedback for the purpose of improving proposed research and research methods, and to assist in preparation of future proposals. They are not intended for any other purpose.

## **G. Release of Grantee Proposal Information**

A proposal that results in an NSF award will be available to the public on request, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the proposal aids identification of what may be specifically exempt. (See GPG Chapter I.D.3) Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, NSF will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and to outside reviewers when necessary for merit review of the proposal, or as otherwise authorized by law.

Portions of proposals resulting in grants that contain descriptions of inventions in which either the Government or the grantee owns a right, title, or interest (including a non-exclusive license) will not normally be made available to the public until a reasonable time has been allowed for filing patent applications. NSF will notify the grantee of receipt of requests for copies of funded proposals so the grantee may advise NSF of such inventions described, or other confidential, commercial or proprietary information contained in the proposal.

# Exhibit III-1: NSF Proposal & Award Process & Timeline



## Chapter IV: Non-Award Decisions and Transactions

### A. Proposal Withdrawal

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.

Principal Investigators can access the Proposal Withdrawal utility via the "Submitted Proposals" screen under the FastLane Proposal Preparation Functions Module. Authorized individuals<sup>45</sup> in the organization's sponsored projects office (or equivalent) can initiate or review a proposal withdrawal using the "Submit Proposals/Supplements/File Updates/Withdrawals" Module via the FastLane "Research Administration Functions".<sup>46</sup>

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.

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<sup>45</sup> Authorized Organizational Representatives with "submit" permission also can initiate a proposal withdrawal.

<sup>46</sup> Detailed instructions on the Electronic Proposal Withdrawal System are available on the FastLane website at <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/documents/epw/epw.jsp>.

## **B. Proposal Not Accepted or Returned Without Review**

A proposal may not be accepted<sup>47</sup> or may be returned without review by NSF for the following reasons.

The proposal:

1. is inappropriate for funding by the National Science Foundation (see GPG Chapter I.B);
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 invited” response to the submission of a preliminary proposal (see GPG Chapter I.D.2.a);
4. is a duplicate of, or substantially similar to, a proposal already under consideration by NSF from the same submitter (see GPG Chapter I.G.2);
5. does not meet NSF proposal preparation requirements, such as page limitations, formatting instructions, and electronic submission, as specified in the *Grant Proposal Guide* (see GPG Chapters II.A, II.B, and II.C), the NSF *Grants.gov Application Guide*, or program solicitation;
6. is not responsive to the NSF funding opportunity;
7. does not meet an announced proposal deadline date;
8. was previously reviewed and declined and has not been substantially revised (see GPG Chapter IV.E);
9. duplicates another proposal that was already awarded; and/or
10. does not contain each of the required sections of the proposal, as described in GPG Chapter II.C.2.

## **C. Declinations**

A PI whose proposal for NSF support has been declined 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. See GPG Chapter III.F for additional information.

PIs and co-PIs may access review information electronically via FastLane after the decision has received the concurrence of the cognizant Division Director, when all the review information has been released for their proposal.

## **D. Reconsideration**

### **1. Overview**

a. A proposer whose proposal has been declined may ask the cognizant NSF Program Officer or the cognizant Division Director for information over and above the explanatory materials received with the declination notice. If the PI/PD is not satisfied that the proposal was fairly handled and reasonably reviewed, he/she may request reconsideration by the responsible Assistant Director (AD) or Office Head. An organization (or an unaffiliated PI/PD) still not satisfied after reconsideration by the responsible AD/Office Head may request further reconsideration by the Deputy Director of the Foundation. The decision made by the Deputy Director is final.

b. If a proposal has been declined after review by the NSB, only an explanation will be available.

c. The aim of any reconsideration is to ensure that NSF’s review has been fair and reasonable, both substantively and procedurally. The scientific and technical merits may be examined within the context of budget availability and program priorities. Reconsideration also may address any procedural errors in peer review or other aspects of proposal review, including unaccounted-for conflict of interests or inappropriate consideration of records, information or rumor.

d. Award of NSF assistance is discretionary and reconsideration is not an adversarial process. A formal hearing, therefore, is not provided. Because factors such as program budget and priorities factor into the decision on a proposal, NSF cannot ensure proposers that reconsideration will result in an award even if error is established in connection with the initial review.

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<sup>47</sup> Proposal Not Accepted is defined as FastLane will not permit submission of the proposal.

e. No revisions made to the proposal after declination will be considered in connection with the original proposal. A substantially revised proposal, however, may be submitted for review as a new proposal under standard procedures. NSF reserves the right to return without review a proposal that is substantially the same as one that was previously reviewed and declined whether or not a request for reconsideration was made.

## 2. Applicability

NSF's reconsideration process is available to individuals and organizations concerning proposals for grant funding. It does not apply to:

- a. "discourage" (i.e., non-binding) decisions resulting from submission of a preliminary proposal;
- b. proposals for:
  - (1) fellowships;
  - (2) travel grants;
  - (3) Rapid Response Grants;
  - (4) EARly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER); or
  - (5) Phase I proposals submitted under the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program.
- c. proposals returned without review by NSF for failure to:
  - (1) be submitted with sufficient lead time before the activity is to begin;
  - (2) meet an announced proposal deadline date; or
  - (3) meet NSF proposal preparation requirements, such as page limitations, formatting instructions, and electronic submission, as specified in the *Grant Proposal Guide*, the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* or program solicitation.

## 3. Reconsideration Process

The following paragraphs highlight the various stages of the NSF Reconsideration Process, including the necessary procedural aspects of each stage of the process:

- a. Explanations by the NSF Program Officer or Division Director

When a proposal is declined, the PI/PD receives verbatim but unattributed copies of any *ad hoc* reviews and the panel summary (if applicable), a description of how the proposal was reviewed, and, if not otherwise provided in the panel summary, an explanation (written or telephoned) of the basis for the declination. A returned proposal also will be accompanied by an explanation. A PI/PD who is considering asking for reconsideration should first contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer or Division Director, who will afford the PI/PD an informal opportunity to seek further clarification.

- b. Reconsideration by the Cognizant Assistant Director

(1) If dissatisfied with the explanation provided by the NSF Program Officer or Division Director, the PI/PD may request in writing that NSF reconsider its action. Such a request will be considered only if the PI/PD has first sought and obtained further clarification from the cognizant NSF Program Officer or Division Director, and only if the request is received by the Foundation within 90 days after the declination or the return. The request should be addressed to the AD/Office Head for the directorate or office that handled the proposal and should explain why the PI/PD believes that the declination or return was unwarranted.

(2) The AD/Office Head will reconsider the record to determine whether NSF's review of the declined proposal was fair and reasonable, substantively and procedurally, taking into account availability of funds and the policies and priorities of the program and NSF. In the case of a returned proposal, the record will be reviewed to determine whether the proposed project was inappropriate for NSF consideration. The AD/Office Head may request additional information from the PI/PD and may obtain additional reviews. If additional reviews are sought, they are subject to standard review procedures (e.g., instructions must be provided to

reviewers and conflicts-of-interest policies must be followed). The AD/Office Head may conduct the reconsideration personally or may designate another NSF official who had no part in the initial review to do so. As used here, "AD/Office Head" includes such a designated official.

(3) Within 45 days after the date of the request, the AD/Office Head will furnish the results of the reconsideration, in writing, to the PI/PD. If results cannot be furnished within 45 days, the AD/Office Head will send the PI/PD a written explanation of the need for more time, indicating the date when the results can be expected. If the AD/Office Head reaffirms the declination or return, he/she will inform the PI/PD that the PI/PD's organization may obtain further reconsideration by the Deputy Director of NSF as provided below.

c. Further Reconsideration by the Deputy Director

(1) Within 60 days after the AD/Office Head has notified the PI/PD of the results of the reconsideration, the proposing organization or an unaffiliated PI/PD may request further reconsideration by the Deputy Director of NSF.

(2) A request for further reconsideration need not be in any particular format, but it must be in writing, and must be signed by the organization's president or other chief executive officer and by the PI/PD. For declinations, it should explain why the organization believes that an error may have occurred in the initial evaluation and why it is not entirely satisfied with the reconsideration by the responsible AD/Office Head. For returned proposals, it should explain why the organization believes that an error may have occurred in the initial determination that the proposal was inappropriate for NSF consideration.

(3) The Deputy Director will review the request for further reconsideration and the record of earlier NSF actions, including the original review and the reconsideration by the AD/Office Head, to determine whether NSF's review of the declined proposal was fair and reasonable, or, in the case of a returned proposal, whether the proposed project was inappropriate for NSF consideration. The Deputy Director may request additional information from the PI/PD or the proposing organization and may obtain additional reviews. If additional reviews are sought, they are subject to standard review procedures (e.g., instructions must be provided to reviewers and conflicts-of-interest policies must be followed).

(4) The Deputy Director may conduct the further reconsideration personally or may designate another NSF official who had no part in the initial evaluation of the proposal or the earlier reconsideration to do so. As used here, "Deputy Director" includes such a designated official.

(5) Within 30 days after a request for further reconsideration is received at NSF, the Deputy Director will furnish the results of the further reconsideration, in writing, to the organization. If results cannot be furnished within 30 days, the Deputy Director will send the organization a written explanation of the need for more time, indicating the date when the results can be expected.

(6) The decision made by the Deputy Director is final.

## **E. Resubmission**

A declined proposal may be resubmitted, but only after it has undergone substantial revision. 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. The Foundation will treat the revised proposal as a new proposal, subject to the standard review procedures.

## Chapter V: Renewal Proposals

A renewal proposal is a request for additional funding for a support period subsequent to that provided by a standard or continuing grant. A renewal proposal competes with all other proposals and must be developed as fully as though the proposer is applying for the first time. Renewal proposals must be submitted at least six months before additional funding is required or consistent with an established deadline, target date or submission window. In preparing a renewal proposal, proposers should assume that reviewers will not have access to previously submitted versions of the proposal. Please note the National Science Board strongly endorses the principle that all expiring awards are to be recompeted.<sup>48</sup>

All proposals for renewed support of research projects, from academic institutions *only*, must include information on human resources development at the postdoctoral, graduate and undergraduate levels as part of Results from Prior NSF Support.<sup>49</sup> This may involve, but is not limited to, the role of research in student training, course preparation and seminars (particularly for undergraduates). Special accomplishments in the development of professional scientists and engineers from underrepresented groups should be described. Graduate students who participated in the research should be identified by name. This requirement does not apply to non-academic organizations.

PIs are encouraged to discuss renewal proposals with the program prior to submission of a proposal. Unless precluded by individual program requirements, PIs may choose either of the following two formats for preparation of a renewal proposal. Both types of renewal proposals must be submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane System.

**A. Traditional Renewal.** The “traditional” renewal proposal is developed as fully as though the proposer were applying for the first time. It covers all the information required in a proposal for a new project, including results from the prior work. The 15-page limitation on the project description applies.

**B. Accomplishment-Based Renewal.** In an "Accomplishment-Based Renewal" (ABR) proposal, the Project Description (including the Results from Prior NSF Support) is replaced with the following items:

1. copies of no more than six reprints<sup>50</sup> of publications resulting from the research supported by NSF (including research supported by other sources that is closely related to the NSF-supported research) during the preceding three to five year period. Of the six publications, two preprints (accepted for publication) may be included;
2. information on human resources development at the postdoctoral, graduate and undergraduate levels; and
3. a brief summary (not to exceed four pages) of plans for the proposed support period.

All other information required for NSF proposal submission remains the same.

It must be clearly indicated in the proposal that it is an ABR submission and the box for "Accomplishment-Based Renewal" must be checked on the Cover Sheet. ABR proposals may not be submitted for consecutive renewals.

PIs are advised that the ABR is a special type of renewal proposal appropriate only for an investigator who has made significant contributions, over a number of years, in the area of research addressed by the proposal. Investigators are strongly urged to contact the cognizant Program Officer prior to developing a proposal using this format.

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<sup>48</sup> Reference National Science Board Resolution (NSB 08-12) entitled, *Competition and Recompetition of NSF Awards*.

<sup>49</sup> This requirement applies to both types of renewal proposals: Traditional Renewal and Accomplishment-Based Renewal.

<sup>50</sup> Reprints should be provided as supplementary documentation and should be submitted electronically via the Proposal Preparation Module in the FastLane System.

Descriptions of other forms of additional funding support, including continuing grants and supplemental funding requests, are contained in AAG Chapter I.



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**X**

XSEDE