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

Effective January 2017

A

B

Biographical Sketches

Instructions for the Biographical Sketch(es), Products section indicate that "acceptable products must be citable and accessible." Accessibility may be difficult to accomplish in the case of manuscripts submitted or accepted for publication and other documents and materials. Access may need to be provided through organizational or personal websites. Will that be sufficient to meet the proposal submission requirements?

The language was changed from "publications" to "products" in order to allow proposers to receive appropriate credit for research products that may not be traditional publications. The requirement that all products be "citable and accessible" is not a submission requirement, in the sense of blocking a proposal from consideration, but a definition of the standard to which proposers should adhere. It was introduced because of experience with citations that are not readily available, including web references that are inaccessible or out of date, and is intended to indicate that such mistakes have demonstrably downgraded a proposal in the judgment of reviewers. References to websites, even private ones, are appropriate, provided that the site is available for a reasonable percentage of the time. Such material is often the best way to demonstrate the applicant's ability to carry out the project.

For Biographical Sketch(es), now that "Publications" has become "Products," are proposers still limited to the same number of Products as they were Publications?

Yes. The proposer may include up to five products most closely related to the proposed

governments. The CFDA number is important for tracking and audit purposes. The applicable CFDA number is identified in the Summary section of NSF program

Conference, Symposia and Workshop Proposals

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

NSF supports conferences, symposia and workshops in special areas of science and engineering that bring experts together to discuss recent research or education findings or to expose other researchers or students to new research and education techniques. Requests generally should be made at least a year in advance of the scheduled date. See PAPPG Chapter II.E.7 for additional information. Conferences or meetings, including the facilities in which they are held, funded in whole or in part with NSF funds, must be accessible to participants with disabilities.

Should I include conference speaker fees in the participant support costs section of the budgfeev4 re f BT /CS0 cs 0 ude confhID 3 >>BDC -5.315 -1.141 Td-Tw T* [(8nf)ne DC -c orearch

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organizations can participate as subawards on an NSF award made to a domestic organization. (Reference PAPPG Chapter I.E.6).

Can a person from a non-U.S. organization be a co-PI on a project?

F

Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED)

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

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

> to reduce or remove barriers to participation in research and training by persons with physical disabilities by providing special equipment and assistance under awards made by NSF; and
>
> to encourage persons with disabilities to pursue careers in science and engineering by stimulating the development and demonstration of special equipment that facilitates their work performance.

Requests can be made in conjunction with regular competitive proposals, or as a supplemental funding request to an existing NSF award. Specific instructions for each type of request can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.E.6.

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Grants.gov

What is Grants.gov and where can I learn more about it?

Grants.gov provides a single Government-wide portal for finding and applying for Federal grants online. Proposals submitted via Grants.gov should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov*.

Group Proposals

May group proposals exceed the 15 page Project Description limitation?

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, group proposals are subject to the 15 page Project Description limitation established in

I

Grants for Ideas Lab

If, however, the rate agreement will be negotiated again in 2017 and the resulting rate agreement is more than what was previously approved, the higher rate cannot be applied to an award that was made before the effective date of the new F&A rate agreement. In accordance with 2 CFR § 200, Appendix III, paragraph C.7, a college or university cannot re-budget for indirect cost rate changes negotiated after the award was made.

PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g(viii) states, "Except where specifically identified in an NSF program solicitation, the applicable US Federally negotiated indirect cost rate(s) must be used in computing indirect costs (F&A) for a proposal." Does this mean that a college or university is required to claim the entirety of its negotiated indirect cost rate?

Yes. Unless

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

Part II of the *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) provides information regarding the NSF award cycle from issuance and administration of an award through closeout. See the Research Terms and Conditions included in the Award Notice for additional information. For those connected with institutions of higher education, the college or university's Office of Sponsored Programs is a good place to start gathering information.

Are there presentations and other materials available to help me with proposal preparation and award administration?

The Policy Office in the Division of Institution & Award Support (DIAS) frequently posts presentations from recent events such as the NSF Grants Conference. Presentations are available at: http://nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/outreach.jsp#present.

Where can a proposer obtain copies of the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide*?

The *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov*, is available through Grants.gov as well as on the NSF website.

M

Margin and Spacing Requirements

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

The proposal must be clear, readily legible and conform to the requirements contained in PAPPG Chapter II.B.2.

The typefaces that may be used are identified below:

> Arial, 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
> Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger

In addition to the typefaces listed above, Macintosh users also may use Helvetica and Palatino typefaces.

A font size of less than 10 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figure, table or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters.

The PAPPG guidelines 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.

If a proposer uses a prescribed typeface and font size, will their proposal comply with formatting requirements?

It is the responsibility of the proposing organization to thoroughly review each proposal prior to submission. Use of a particular typeface and font size are simply two of the required formatting elements. A proposer should also ensure that there are no more than six lines of text within a vertical space of one inch and that margins, in all directions, are at least an inch. Formatting requirements are described in PAPPG Chapter II.B.

Mentoring (see Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan)

Merit Review Criteria

Where can a proposer find information related to NSF's merit review criteria?

All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of two National Science Board approved merit review criteria. Some program solicitations, however, employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities.

The two NSB-approved merit review criteria are te-9.6(e)-3.3(rd-3.34Tc 0.00(e)-3.3(rn 0 Tw 2.043 0 T8)T

§200.202 Financial Management
§200.305 Payment
§200.318 General Procurement Standards
§200.333 Retention Requirements for Records
§200.430 Compensation for Personal Services

Potential awardee organizations should be aware that NSF funding is discretionary and that proposals which have passed peer or other review and have been recommended for funding (scientifically and technically meritorious) can be declined for administrative and financial considerations.

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

The "Prospective New Awardee Guide" includes information on: Administration and Management Information; Accounting System Requirements and Auditing Information; and Payments to Organizations with Awards. This information will assist an organization in preparing documents which the NSF requires to conduct administrative and financial reviews of an organization. The guide also serves as a means of highlighting the accountability requirements associated with Federal awards.

See also 2 CFR Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

Nondiscrimination Certification

Where can I find the complete text of the Nondiscrimination Certification?

See PAPPG Exhibit II-6

O

Outreach

Where can a proposer find information about NSF outreach opportunities?

In addition to visits by NSF Program Officials and Grants Officers, NSF conducts two grants conferences per calendar year. These grants conferences are held in the spring and fall each year and are announced on the NSF Events Calendar, and on the DIAS/Policy Office website.

These conferences cover topics such as: proposal preparation; merit review; award administration; electronic initiatives; new programs and cross-disciplinary initiatives; and future directions and strategies for the Foundation. NSF representatives also participate in educational and professional development seminars, webcasts, meetings and workshops, which focus on current issues and developments, frequently with such organizations as the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) and the Society of Research Administrators International (SRA). See the DIAS/Policy Office website for additional information.

NSF also focuses outreach for different organization types and has coordinated or is planning workshops for Tribal Colleges and Universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). For further information about these and other opportunities, contact the DIAS/Policy Office at: policy@nsf.gov.

Will the NSF Update or Updates to the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures

appointment equals 1.2 months). Organizations may have internal policies and procedures that relate specifically to the type of appointment under which an individual is employed. PIs, co-PIs, or other senior personnel should, therefore, confirm with their Sponsored Projects Office that this simplified methodology is consistent with organizational policy.

Points of Contact

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

Proposers should contact the office with responsibility for submitting the proposal on behalf of the organization. The Sponsored Projects Office, or equivalent, should be the first point of contact. For general policy-related questions regarding proposal preparation, the DIAS/Policy Office may be contacted on (703) 292 8243 or by e-mail to policy@nsf.gov. When responding to a specific program announcement/solicitation, contact the applicable Program Office. The Division of Grants and Agreements or the Division of Acquisition and Cooperative Support should be contacted regarding questions related to award or administration of an award (e.g., terms and conditions of an award or special award conditions).

Post Award Considerations

Where can a grantee find information related to post award administration?

Part II of the *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) provides information that follows the NSF award cycle from issuance and administration of an award through closeout. The guide is available electronically via the NSF website. Information on post award administration also can be found by accessing the applicable award conditions on the NSF website.

Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan

Where can I find more information about NSF's requirement for a postdoctoral researcher mentoring plan?

Each proposal that requests funding to support postdoctoral researchers must include, as a supplementary document, a description of the mentoring activities that will be provided for such individuals. Please be advised that if required, FastLane will not permit submission of a proposal that is missing a Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan. 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., res

After my proposal was submitted, I discovered that my postdoctoral mentoring plan needs to be corrected. FastLane is not allowing me to do a Proposal File Update to make the correction. What should I do?

If a proposer discovers that a postdoctoral mentoring plan needs to be corrected, the proposal must be withdrawn and resubmitted prior to the deadline. The postdoctoral mentoring plan cannot be corrected through the Proposal File Update module.

I would like to add a postdoctoral researcher after the award has been made. Do I need to notify NSF or request approval?

If your original proposal did not include a mentoring plan, then you must send the cognizant NSF Program Officer the requisite mentoring plan, as described in PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.j. If you are requesting supplemental funding to support the postdoctoral researcher, the guidance in PAPPG Chapter VI.E.4.f should be followed. In either case, the PI must report on the mentoring activities provided to the individual in the annual and final project reports.

Primary Place of Performance Zip Code Field

What is the Primary Place of Performance?

The Primary Place of Performance is the location at which the research is actually being conducted. Many projects are performed at a location other than the Awardee Organization. As a result, NSF requires applicants to list a Primary Place of Performance for each proposal (PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.a).

Do I have to enter an address for the Primary Place of Performance if it's the same as the address for the Awardee Organization?

Yes. Proposers may select to make the Primary Place of Performance name the same as the Awardee Organization name; however, they must re-enter the full address in the Primary Place of Performance address fields.

Why is it necessary to enter a 9-digit zip code for the Primary Place of Performance?

A 9-digit zip code is required for consistency with the requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA). The 9-digit zip code is validated against the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS) database, which ensures that the location can be accurately identified and aligns with the correct Congressional district.

Do I need to enter a dash ("-") in my 9-digit zip code?

No, do not enter a dash. Enter only the digits of the zip code.

How do I enter a foreign address for the Primary Place of Performance?

proposal is not prohibited by the PAPPG, however, PIs should be advised that reviewers are under no obligation to view the site(s).

What are the guidelines concerning collaborative proposals?

The guidelines relevant to collaborative proposals can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.D.3. 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. **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.

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

Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers and year of publication. If the document is available electronically, the website address also should be identified. Proposers must be especially careful to follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the proposal. If there are no references cited, a statement to that effect should be included in this section of the proposal and uploaded into FastLane. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.e).

What is the NSF policy on submission of appendices?

All information necessary for the review of a proposal should be contained in Sections a through j of the proposal. Appendices may not be included unless a deviation has been authorized. PAPPG Chapter II.A contains information on deviations.

If the project will be performed at a location other than the awardee organization, how should that be reflected in the proposal?

If the project will be performed at the awardee organization, the designated box on the Cover Sheet should be checked. If the project, however, will be performed at a location other than the awardee, the following information (where applicable) should be provided:

> 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 further information, see the PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.a(1).

Proposal Submission

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

All proposal forms and data requirements for submission of a proposal to NSF are available in Grants.gov or the NSF FastLane system. All sections of the proposal listed in PAPPG Chapter II.C.2 are required parts of the proposal, and must be included with the proposal. Failure to submit the required sections may result in the proposal not being accepted or being returned without review. Detailed information about proposal preparation and submission is available from the Grants.gov and FastLane websites.

R

Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID)

What is a RAPID proposal and where can I find information about submitting this type of proposal?

A RAPID type of proposal 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.

More information about the RAPID type of proposal can be found in

Submission windows: designated periods of time during which proposals will be accepted for review by NSF. For purposes of NSF, the end date of a submission window converts to, and follows the same policies as, a deadline date.

These target dates, deadlines and submission windows are published inubaR6(r)dea

References Cited

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

The NSF guidelines on References Cited are available in PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.e.

If the proposer has a website address readily available, that information should be included in the citation. 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.

Renewal Proposals

What guidelines are important to know when submitting a renewal proposal?

A traditional renewal application competes with all other applications and must be developed as fully as though the applicant is applying for the first time. In preparing a renewal proposal, proposers should assume that reviewers will not have access to previously submitted versions of the proposal. In addition, the National Science Board strongly endorses the principle that all expiring awards are subject to recompetition. See PAPPG Chapter V for more information on renewal proposals and a link to the NSB resolution.

Grants for Research Advanced by Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering (RAISE)

What is a RAISE proposal and where can I find information about submitting this type of proposal?

A RAISE type of proposal may be used to support bold, interdisciplinary projects whose:

> Scientific advances lie in great part outside the scope of a single program or discipline, such that substantial funding support from more than one program or

Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR)

What is the Research Performance Progress Report?

The Research Performance Progress Report is the result of a Government-wide effort to

Returns

For what reasons does NSF return a proposal without review?

The various reasons why NSF may return a proposal without review are listed in PAPPG Chapter IV.B.

Reviewer

How can I volunteer to be a reviewer for NSF?

In order to become an NSF reviewer, the individual should identify the program(s)3121.696.24 (G)-o E

Requests for supplemental funding must be initiated in the FastLane system by using the "Supplemental Funding Request" function. Grantees should contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer prior to submitting a request for supplemental funding. (Reference PAPPG Chapter VI.E.4).

System for Award Management (SAM)

Does a proposer have to be registered in SAM?

Each proposer must be regi

Travel

I will be flying to a location that does not have a City Pair fare with my starting destination, but I will change planes in a city that does have a City Pair fare with my final destination. Am I required to fly an American carrier for the part of the trip that has a City Pair fare?

No. The requirement is only that the grantee determines if there is a City Pair fare between the starting airport and the final destination airport. If there is no city pair between the starting airport and the final destination, the traveler could fly the entire way on a foreign flag air carrier or part of the way on a U.S. flag air carrier and part of the way on a foreign flag air carrier.

Can I charge temporary dependent care costs to my NSF grant?

Temporary dependent care costs are only allowable on a Federal award if the charging of these costs is consistent with the organization's documented travel policy for all organizational travel. The other conditions in 2 CFR § 200.474(c)(1) must also be met.

Are visa fees allowable as a direct cost on NSF grants?

NSF's position on the allowability of direct charging visa costs is consistent with 2 CFR § 200.463(d). This section specifically makes the distinction between short-term, travel visa costs, which may be directly charged to a grant if they meet the criteria outlined in section 200.463(d), and longer-term immigration visas, which may not.

Tuition Remission

What is NSF's policy on treatment of tuition remission?

Tuition remission is generally treated as part of an organization's fringe benefit rate or as a direct cost. NSF's policy is that colleges and universities should budget tuition remission consistent with its negotiated indirect cost rate agreement. If tuition remission is budgeted as a direct cost, it should be listed in the "Other" category of the NSF budget under "Other Direct Costs."

Types of Submissions

What types of submissions may be required under NSF program solicitations?

NSF utilizes three types of submissions – Letters of Intent, Preliminary proposals and Full proposals. A program solicitation can require any of these types of submissions.

More information on these types of submissions and the circumstances under which they are used can be found in the PAPPG Chapter I.D.

V

Vertebrate Animals

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

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

Consistent with the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act [7 USC 2131 et seq] and the