

Step 3 - Before Sending Your Proposal to NSF

Learning More About the Review Process

To gain expertise in NSF's proposal review system, volunteer to serve on a program review panel yourself. Each Division compiles names of appropriate individuals who can serve as reviewers. Contact the pertinent division to volunteer for reviewer status.

Encourage your professional organization to form a committee to help members review their proposals before submitting them to NSF.

Getting Advice

Consider asking someone who has served on an NSF program review panel to assess your proposal.

If possible, have someone not connected with the proposal read and comment on a draft of your proposal—with sufficient time allowed for changes prior to the submission of your proposal. This person can help identify omissions or inconsistent logic before reviewers see the proposal.

Some programs require a preliminary proposal. Check the *Program Solicitation* and with NSF staff.

When working on a proposal or award for several years, you may be transferred from one Program Director to another. Many Program Directors come to NSF from colleges and universities for one or two-year assignments and then return to their schools at the end of their rotational assignments.

Before Finishing the Proposal

When a checklist is provided in the *Program Solicitation or Announcement*, use it to ensure that all needed information and/or administrative details are included.

Look again at the goals and objectives and at your written plans and procedures for achieving the goals. Check to see that the goals are well-developed and realistic and that your plans are innovative and appropriate.

Consider using graphics to make your point stronger and clearer.

A time line to show when different components of your project are to take place can be particularly effective.

Little Things That Can Make a Difference

Use a spell checker before submitting the proposal.

Proofread carefully.

Be sure to follow the directions given in the *Program Solicitation*. In particular, follow any specific requirements such as page limitations.

In general avoid abbreviations. For example, use laboratory, not lab and mathematics, not math.

The first time you use an acronym, write out what it stands for and put the acronym in parentheses. For example, American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges (AMATYC). After that you can use the acronym.

Make sure all your references are correct.

Use page numbers in your proposal.

Print out a copy of your proposal from FastLane to ensure that all sections of the proposal are readable.

Step 4 - Awards and Declinations

If The Grant is Awarded

If the proposal is successful, make the best possible use of the funds awarded. Situations may arise that require changes in your plans to accomplish the goals of the project. Within broad limits described in the grant conditions (reference GC-1, FDP, and NSF's Grant Policy Manual) and within the overall budget, such changes may be possible. Consult your institution's sponsored research office or grant administration office for guidance.

In addition, let others know about your project. This may include providing advice or assistance to faculty developing similar projects. It clearly includes disseminating products and results. Make sure that other scientists and educators learn about your activities through correspondence, telephone conversations, presentations, and publications. Finally, reference the National Science Foundation as well as the sponsoring Division and/or program in all presentations and publications.