

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

A

Administrative Corrections

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

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. 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). More information on and submission procedures for proposal file updates can be found in the Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) Chapter III.B.

Audit Reports

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

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

Award Administration

Where can I find information regarding post-award issues?

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

C

Categories of Funding Opportunities

What types of mechanisms does NSF use to generate proposals? In what scenario is each mechanism used?

NSF utilizes a variety of mechanisms 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 and Divisions, such as those included in NSF's Guide to Programs. 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*, as well as the National Science Board (NSB) approved merit review criteria. These funding opportunities do not require specific cost sharing beyond the required statutory (1%) amount, or specify additional award conditions or reporting requirements. (Additional information on NSF cost sharing requirements can be found in GPG Chapter II, Section C.2.g.xii and in the [Grant Policy Manual Section 330](#).) Proposals submitted in response to program descriptions are considered "unsolicited."

3. Program Announcement

The term "program announcement" refers to formal NSF publications that announce NSF programs. Program announcements and program descriptions (see above) are the primary mechanisms used by NSF to communicate opportunities for research and education support, as well as to generate proposals. Program announcements utilize the generic eligibility and proposal preparation guidelines specified in the GPG and incorporate the National Science Board (NSB) approved merit review criteria. These funding opportunities do not require specific cost sharing beyond the required statutory (1%) amount, or specify additional award conditions or reporting requirements. (Additional information on NSF cost sharing requirements can be found in GPG Chapter II,

Section C.2.g.xii and in the [Grant Policy Manual Section 330](#).) Proposals submitted in response to program announcements also are considered "unsolicited."

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. 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;
- Contains specific proposal deadline dates for the submission of full proposals;
- Requires submission of a letter of intent or preliminary proposal;
- Deviates from (or restricts) the standard categories of proposers specified in the GPG Chapter I.E;
- Limits the number of proposals that may be submitted by any organization and/or researcher/educator;
- Specifies additional award conditions or reporting requirements;
- Anticipates use of a cooperative agreement;
- Includes specific cost sharing requirements; or
- Permits inclusion of the payment of fees to awardees, when appropriate.

When a program solicitation is used, the proposals received compete directly with each other. Proposals submitted in response to program solicitations are considered "solicited." This means that the resulting awards are not subject to the statutory cost sharing requirement. Cost sharing is not required unless explicitly included in the solicitation.

CFDA Numbers

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

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

Collaborative Proposals

What is a collaborative proposal?

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

Submission of a collaborative proposal from one organization

The single proposal method allows investigators from two or more institutions who have developed an integrated research project to submit a single, focused proposal. A single investigator bears primary responsibility for the administration of the grant and discussions with NSF, and, at the discretion of the organizations involved, investigators from any of the participating institutions may be designated as co-PIs. By submission of the proposal, the organization has determined that the proposed activity is administratively manageable.

NSF may request a revised proposal, however, if it considers that the project is so complex that it will be too difficult to review or administer as presented. (See GPG Chapter II.D.3 for additional instructions on preparation of this type of proposal.)

Submission of a collaborative proposal from multiple organizations

In many instances, simultaneous submission of proposals that contain the same project description from each organization might be appropriate. For these proposals, the project title must begin with the words "Collaborative Research:" The lead organization's submission will include a Cover Sheet, project summary, project description, references cited, biographical sketches, budgets and budget justification, current and pending support, and facilities, equipment and other resources for their organization. Non-lead organization submissions will include all of the above for their organization except the project summary, project description, and references cited which are the same for all collaborating organizations. FastLane will combine the proposal submission for printing or electronic viewing. Given that separately submitted collaborative proposals constitute a "single" proposal submission to NSF, it is imperative that the proposals be submitted within a reasonable timeframe to one another. Failure to submit all components of the collaborative proposal on a timely basis may impact the review of the proposal.

What is the difference between a "Group proposal" and a "Collaborative Proposal"?

A group proposal is one submitted by 3 or more investigators whose separate but related activities are combined into one administrative unit. A collaborative proposal is one in which investigators from two or more organizations wish to collaborate on a unified research project. Further information on group and collaborative proposals can be found in the GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.(v) and Chapter II.D.3 respectively.

Concurrent Proposals

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

Only one submission should be provided to NSF even if review by multiple programs is envisioned. You may indicate on the Cover Sheet which NSF organizational unit(s) you believe would be most appropriate for proposal review. However, NSF will determine which program will evaluate each proposal. The submission of duplicate or substantially similar proposals concurrently for review by more than one program without prior NSF approval may result in the return of the redundant proposal(s). (See GPG Chapter IV.B for the NSF return policy.)

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

Generally, proposals may be submitted to other agencies for simultaneous review. Research proposals (not proposals for conferences or workshops) to the Biological Sciences Directorate, however, cannot be duplicates of proposals to

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

Conference, Symposia and Workshop Proposals

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

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

Confidential Budgetary Information

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

The proposing organization may request that salary data on senior personnel not be released to persons outside the Government during the review process. In such cases, the item for senior personnel salaries in the proposal may appear as a single figure and the person-months represented by that amount omitted. If this option is exercised, senior personnel salaries and person-months must be itemized in a separate statement, and forwarded to NSF in accordance with the instructions specified in Chapter I, Section D.3, *Proprietary or Privileged Information*. Detailed instructions for submission of confidential budgetary information are available on the FastLane Website.

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

Privileged Information" must be checked on the Cover Sheet when the proposal contains confidential budgetary information.

Consultant Rate

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

The current maximum rate is \$524.00 per day (exclusive of indirect cost, travel, per diem, clerical services, fringe benefits and supplies) as specified in Article 5 of GC-1.

Cost Sharing

Where can I find more information on NSF's cost sharing policy?

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

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

To facilitate implementation of the policy, a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) has been developed for use by both NSF staff and its customer communities. The complete text of the FAQs is available electronically on the NSF Website. Any questions regarding the cost sharing policy or the Frequently Asked Questions should be directed to: costsharing@nsf.gov.

Further information on NSF's cost sharing policy can be found in the GPG Chapter II.C.2.g.(xii).

Is cost-sharing required as part of an award?

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

Proposals submitted in response to NSF solicitations may be subject to special cost sharing requirements. When cost sharing is required, it is considered an eligibility rather than a review criterion. In order to retain this concept, NSF has modified the FastLane system to ensure that Line M is masked from peer reviewers during the review process.

What constitutes acceptable cost sharing under an NSF award?

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

D

Deviation Authorization

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

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

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

Proposers may deviate from these instructions only to the extent authorized. Proposals must identify the deviation in one of the following ways as appropriate: (a) by identifying the solicitation number that authorized the deviation in the appropriate block on the Cover Sheet; or (b) for individual deviations, by identifying the name, date and title of the NSF official authorizing the deviation. Further instructions are available on the FastLane Website.

Drug-Free Workplace Certification

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

When the Authorized Organizational Representative (or individual applicant) electronically signs the Cover Sheet for Proposal to NSF, they are providing the necessary certifications.

The full text of the Drug-Free Workplace Certification can be found in Appendix C of the GPG.

E

Electronic Signatures

Does NSF require proposals to be "signed" electronically?

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

Electronic Submission

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

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

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

An organization should include the organization code, if known, on the proposal Cover Sheet. If the code is not known, the block should be left blank and NSF will assign a code to the institution. These codes are unique to the NSF database and in no way visible to the institutions. The DUNS number must also be included on the proposal Cover Sheet. If the organization does not have a DUNS number, Dun and Bradstreet should be contacted at (866) 705-5711 to obtain one. (See the GPG Chapter II.C.2.a for further information.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Eligibility

Can an award be made to an individual?

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

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

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

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

Except for NSF fellowships, which by statute can be made only to citizens, nationals, or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens of the United States, there generally are no nationality restrictions in any NSF program. A proposing institution in the US may designate as Principal Investigator anyone it believes to be capable of fulfilling the role.

Can an award be made to a foreign organization?

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

Can a Federal agency apply for an NSF award?

NSF does not normally support research or education activities by scientists, engineers or educators employed by Federal agencies or Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). A scientist, engineer or educator, however, who has a joint appointment with a university and a Federal agency (such as a Veterans Administration Hospital, or with a university and an FFRDC) may submit proposals through the university and may receive support if he/she is a bona fide faculty member of the university, although part of his/her salary may

be provided by the Federal agency. Under unusual circumstances, other Federal agencies and FFRDCs may submit proposals directly to NSF. Preliminary inquiry should be made to the appropriate program before preparing a proposal for submission. (Reference GPG Chapter I.E.7.)

Equipment Proposals

Does NSF fund proposals for the purpose of purchasing equipment?

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

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

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

F

Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASSED)

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

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

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

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

Individuals with disabilities eligible for facilitation awards include principal investigators, other senior project personnel, and graduate and undergraduate students. The cognizant NSF Program Officer will make decisions regarding what constitutes appropriate support on a case-by-case basis. The specific nature, purpose, and need for equipment or assistance should be described in sufficient detail in the proposal to permit evaluation by knowledgeable reviewers. There is no separate program for funding of special equipment or assistance. Requests are made in conjunction with regular competitive proposals, or as a supplemental funding request to an existing NSF award. Specific instructions for each type of request can be found in GPG II.D.2.

FastLane System

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

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

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

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

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

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

Questions related to use of the NSF FastLane system may be directed to the FastLane User Support desk at (800) 673-6188 or (703) 292-8142 or by sending an e-mail message to fastlane@nsf.gov.

In addition, for information on the availability of the NSF FastLane system, phone (800) 437-7408 for a recorded message.

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

G

Grants.gov

What information can be accessed at Grants.gov and where can I learn more about it?

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

Group Proposals

What is a group proposal?

A group proposal is one submitted by 3 or more investigators whose activities are combined into one administrative unit. In general, group proposals that contain up to ten pages of overall project description (including overall progress under the appropriate prior award) plus up to five pages (per person) of individual project descriptions will be acceptable. In addition, PIs who intend to submit a group proposal that uses the page limitations identified above are strongly encouraged to contact the cognizant program officer prior to submission. (See also GPG Chapter II. D.3 for instructions on preparation and submission of collaborative proposals.)

What is the difference between a "Group proposal" and a "Collaborative Proposal"?

A group proposal is one submitted by 3 or more investigators whose separate but related activities are combined into one administrative unit. A collaborative proposal is one in which investigators from two or more organizations wish to collaborate on a unified research project. Further information on group and collaborative proposals can be found in the GPG Chapter II.C. 2.d.(v) and Chapter II.D.3 respectively.

H

High-resolution graphics and Color Representations

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

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

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

Human Subjects

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

Projects involving research with human subjects must ensure that subjects are protected from research risks in conformance with the relevant federal policy known as the Common Rule (*Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, 45 CFR 690*). All projects involving human subjects 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 or an appropriate knowledgeable authority previously designated by the organization (not the Principal Investigator) has declared the research exempt from IRB review, in accordance with the applicable subsection, as established in section 101(b) of the Common Rule. The box for "Human Subjects" must be checked on the Cover Sheet with the IRB approval date (if available) or exemption subsection from the Common Rule identified in the space provided. If IRB approval has not been obtained prior to submission, the proposer should indicate "Pending" in the space provided for the approval date. Additional information, including Frequently Asked Questions and Vignettes, for use in interpreting the Common Rule for Behavioral and Social Science Research, is available on the NSF Website

at <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/start.htm>. (Reference GPG Chapter II.D.6)

I

Information Sources

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

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

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

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

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

Where can a proposer find guidance on proposal preparation?

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

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

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

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

The complete text of the GPM and GPG are available electronically on the NSF Website. Organizations or individuals unable to access the GPM or GPG electronically may order paper copies (maximum of 5 per request) from NSF, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Suite P-60, Arlington, VA 22230; Telephone:(703) 292-7827; e-mail: pubs@nsf.gov.

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

Grant General Conditions are available electronically on the NSF, Website under Funding or they may be ordered from NSF 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Suite P-60, Arlington, VA 22230; Telephone:(703) 292-7827; e-mail: pubs@nsf.gov.

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 following four requirements:

- a. The height of the letters must not be smaller than 10 point, unless otherwise specified in the program solicitation to which the proposal is being submitted;
- b. Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per 2.5 cm. For proportional spacing, the average for any representative section of text must not exceed 15 characters per 2.5 cm;
- c. No more than 6 lines of type within a vertical space of 2.5 cm.; and
- d. Margins, in all directions, must be at least 2.5 cm.

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 eliminate this proposer option by requiring other type size, margin or line spacing requirements.)

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.

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. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities. For example, proposals for large facility projects also might be subject to special review criteria outlined in the program solicitation.

The two merit review criteria are listed in Chapter III.A of the *Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)*. The criteria include considerations that help define them. These considerations are suggestions, and not all will apply to any given proposal. While proposers must address both merit review criteria, reviewers will be asked to address only those considerations that are relevant to the proposal being considered and for which the reviewer is qualified to make judgments.

In addition, Chapter II of the GPG specifies that Principal Investigators (PIs) must address both merit review criteria in separate statements within the one-page Project Summary. This chapter also reiterates that broader impacts resulting from the proposed project must be addressed in the Project Description and described as an integral part of the narrative.

N

New Grantees

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

Because of the volume of proposals submitted to NSF, it is not practical, nor possible, for NSF to review and negotiate indirect cost rates for all organizations that submit grant proposals. Therefore, NSF will only review and negotiate indirect cost rates for those organizations that NSF seriously considers funding. Since the grant proposal budget is an organization's estimate of total grant project costs, and is one of NSF's considerations in determining appropriate funding amounts, organizations should include estimated amounts for both direct and indirect costs on their proposal budgets. The indirect cost rates that should be used in arriving at estimated indirect costs should be reflective of the organization's financial operations as determined in the preparation of an

indirect cost proposal based on historical and/or budgeted expenditure data. More detailed information on indirect cost rates, preparing indirect cost rate proposals, and where to direct questions in this area can be accessed electronically on the NSF Website at <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/caar/start.htm>.

What if an organization has never received NSF funding?

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

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

The "Prospective New Awardee Guide" includes 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. The Prospective New Awardee Guide can be accessed electronically at: <http://www.nsf.gov/pubsys/ods/getpub.cfm?pnag>.

Notification of Proposal Receipt

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

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

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

O

Outreach Opportunities

Where can a proposer find information about NSF outreach opportunities?

In addition to campus visits by NSF Program Officials, NSF usually conducts two regional grants conferences per calendar year. These regional grants conferences are announced on the NSF Website under "Grants and Awards"/"Outreach Programs" and on the Grants Bulletin Board. These conferences cover topics such as: proposal preparation; merit review of proposals; electronic initiatives and special issues; grant administration; new programs and cross-disciplinary initiatives; and future directions and strategies for the Foundation. NSF representatives also participate in educational and professional development seminars, meetings and workshops, which focus on current issues and developments, frequently with such organizations as the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) and the Society of Research Administrators (SRA). Also see the Policy Office home page for a listing of scheduled outreach events.

P

Person-Months

What is the definition of "person-months"?

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

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

Multiply the percentage of your effort associated with the project times the number of months of your appointment (i.e. 10% of a 9 month AY appointment equals .9 person months; 10% of a 12 month calendar appointment equals 1.2

months). Your employer may have internal policies and procedures that relate specifically to the type of appointment under which you are employed. You should, therefore, confirm with your sponsored projects office that this simplified methodology is consistent with the policy at your organization. Person months shown in the current and pending support section should usually equal the number of months on the NSF proposal budget.

Points of Contact

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

For those connected with institutions of higher education, the college or university's Sponsored Projects Office should be the first point of contact. For general policy-related questions regarding proposal preparation, the Policy Office may be contacted on 703-292- 8243 or by e-mail to policy@nsf.gov. When responding to a specific program announcement/solicitation, contact the applicable Program Office. The Division of Grants and Agreements should be contacted regarding questions related to award or administration of a grant (e.g., terms and conditions of an award or special award conditions).

Post Award Considerations

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

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

Prior Approval Requirements

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

Prior written authorization from NSF is required only for the following:

1. transfer of the project effort;
2. change in objectives or scope;
3. change in PI or co-PI;
4. a substantial change in PI effort;
5. reduction in a cost sharing amount identified on Line M of the grant budget;
6. reallocation of funds budgeted for participant support; or
7. renovation/alteration (construction) activities costing \$25,000 or more.

Changes in participant support costs require only Program Officer approval; all the other changes listed above require Program Officer and Grants Officer

approval. (See also the [Grant Policy Manual Exhibit III-1](#), which highlights grantee notifications to, and requests for approval from, NSF.) All requests for prior approval to NSF must be submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane system.

Program Announcements and Solicitations

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

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

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

Instructions in an NSF program solicitation can modify general guidance in the GPG. Proposal preparation guidance contained in program solicitations has precedence over instructions in the GPG and should therefore be followed closely. The cognizant program office should be consulted with questions regarding compliance with specific programmatic requirements. (Reference GPG Chapter I.A.)

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

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

Proposal File Updates

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

It is the responsibility of the proposing organization to thoroughly review each proposal prior to submission. On occasion, however, a problem is identified with a portion of the proposal after the proposal has been 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. 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 specified in a program solicitation;
- initiation of external peer review in cases when a target date is utilized; 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.

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.

Proposal Preparation

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

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

Is there a salary cap for proposals submitted to NSF?

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIs are advised that the project description must be self-contained and are cautioned that URLs (Internet addresses) that provide information 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.

What are the guidelines concerning collaborative proposals?

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

Submission of a collaborative proposal from one organization

The single proposal method allows investigators from two or more institutions who have developed an integrated research project to submit a single, focused proposal. A single investigator bears primary responsibility for the

administration of the grant and discussions with NSF, and, at the discretion of the organizations involved, investigators from any of the participating institutions may be designated as co-PIs. By submission of the proposal, the organization has determined that the proposed activity is administratively manageable. NSF may request a revised proposal, however, if it considers that the project is so complex that it will be too difficult to review or administer as presented. (See GPG Chapter II. D.3 for additional instructions on preparation of this type of proposal.)

Submission of a collaborative proposal from multiple organizations

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

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

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

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

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

What is the NSF policy on submission of appendices?

All information necessary for the review of a proposal should 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 information on deviations.

Proposal Submission

How does a proposer submit a proposal to NSF?

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

The same work cannot be funded twice, so a proposal should be submitted only once to NSF. If the proposer envisions review by multiple programs, more than one program may be designated on the proposal 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 Chapter IV, Section B, Return Without Review, for further information.)

In submission of a proposal for funding, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) is required to provide certain proposal certifications. (See Chapter II, Section C.1.e for 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.

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

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

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

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

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

R

Receipt Dates

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

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

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

The following types of due dates are utilized by NSF:

- **Target dates:** dates after which proposals will still be accepted, although they may miss a particular panel or committee meeting.
- **Deadline dates:** dates after which proposals will not be accepted for review by NSF. The deadline date will be waived only in extenuating circumstances. Such a deviation only may be authorized in accordance with GPG, Chapter II, Section A.
- **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 in specific program descriptions, program announcements and solicitations that can be obtained from the NSF Clearinghouse at pubs@nsf.gov or electronically through the NSF Website. 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. (Reference GPG Chapter I.F.)

Reconsideration

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

A PI whose proposal for NSF support has been declined generally will receive information and an explanation of the reason(s) for declination along with copies of the reviews considered in making the decision.

If the explanation provided does not satisfy the PI, he/she may request that the cognizant NSF Assistant Director or Office Head reconsider the action to determine whether the proposal received a fair and reasonable review, both substantively and procedurally. A PI whose proposal has not been accepted because it is inappropriate for consideration by NSF also may request reconsideration of this determination. The request for reconsideration must be in writing and must be received within 90 days after the date of the declination letter or return. If the proposing organization is still not satisfied after reconsideration by the responsible Assistant Director/Office Head, it may, within 60 days after the determination by the Assistant Director/Office Head, request further reconsideration by the NSF Deputy Director. Consult [GPM Section 900](#) for additional information on the NSF reconsideration process, including the categories of actions that are subject to the NSF reconsideration policy.

References Cited

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

The GPG References Cited guidelines (Chapter II.C.2.e.) stipulate that:

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

Resubmissions

Can a proposer resubmit a previously declined proposal?

A declined proposal may be resubmitted, but only after it has undergone substantial revision. Resubmittals that have not clearly taken into account the

major comments or concerns resulting from the prior NSF review may be returned without review. The Foundation will treat the revised proposal as a new proposal, subject to the standard review procedures. (Reference GPG Chapter IV.E.)

Returns

For what reasons does NSF return a proposal?

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

1. is inappropriate for funding by the National Science Foundation;
2. is submitted with insufficient lead-time before the activity is scheduled to begin;
3. is a full proposal that was submitted by a proposer that has received a "not invited" response to the submission of a preliminary proposal;
4. is a duplicate of, or substantially similar to, a proposal already under consideration by NSF from the same submitter;
5. does not meet NSF proposal preparation requirements, such as page limitations, formatting instructions, and electronic submission, as specified in the *Grant Proposal Guide* or program solicitation;
6. is not responsive to the GPG or program announcement/solicitation;
7. does not meet an announced proposal deadline date (and time, where specified); or
8. was previously reviewed and declined and has not been substantially revised.

S

Senior Personnel

How is the term "senior personnel" defined?

The term "senior personnel" includes:

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

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

Small Grants for Exploratory Research (SGER)

Can SGER grants be extended beyond their initial funding period?

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

Special Considerations

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

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

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

Projects involving research with human subjects must ensure that subjects are protected from research risks in conformance with the relevant federal policy known as the Common Rule (*Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, 45 CFR 690*). All projects involving human subjects 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 or an appropriate knowledgeable authority previously designated by the organization (not the Principal Investigator) has declared the research exempt from IRB review, in accordance with the applicable subsection, as established in section 101(b) of the

Common Rule. The box for "Human Subjects" must be checked on the Cover Sheet with the IRB approval date (if available) or exemption subsection from the Common Rule identified in the space provided. If IRB approval has not been obtained prior to submission, the proposer should indicate "Pending" in the space provided for the approval date. Advice is available at <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/start.htm>. (Reference GPG Chapter II D.6.)

Special Programs

Does NSF fund projects for targeted or special programs?

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

Subawards

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

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

What documentation is needed for subawards?

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

Submission Windows

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

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

Target dates, deadlines, and submission windows are published in specific program descriptions, program announcements and solicitations that can be obtained from NSF at pubs@nsf.gov or electronically through the NSF Website. Unless otherwise stated in a program announcement or solicitation, proposals must be received by the specified date. If the deadline date falls on a weekend, it will be extended to the following Monday; if the date falls on a holiday, it will be extended to the following business day. 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.

Supplements

How do I apply for supplemental funding?

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

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

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

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

T

Transfer of Principal Investigator

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

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

Special terms and conditions, as appropriate, cited in the original award automatically will convey to the new grantee organization. Note that if the PI's original award was submitted in response to a program solicitation that required

cost sharing as part of the award, this cost sharing requirement also must be addressed by the new organization in the budget portion of the transfer request. The cost sharing will be reflected as a condition in the award at the new grantee organization.

Upon transfer of the grant to the new organization, any monetary discrepancies must be resolved between the original and the new grantee, and NSF will not intervene in any disputes between the two organizations regarding the transferred amount. See GPG VI.D and GPM 312.8 for additional information on PI transfers.

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 established indirect cost rate methodology and negotiated rate agreement. If tuition remission is budgeted as a direct cost, it should be listed in the "Other" category of the Budget under "Other Direct Costs."

Types of Submissions

What types of submissions may be required under NSF program solicitations and under what circumstances would they be used?

NSF utilizes two types of submissions under program solicitations – Letters of Intent and Preliminary proposals.

1. Letter of Intent

Some NSF program solicitations require or request submission of a Letter of Intent in advance of submission of a full proposal. 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 Letter of Intent is used to help avoid potential conflicts of interest in the review process.

A Letter of Intent 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 Letter of Intent is not externally evaluated or used to decide on funding. The requirement to submit a Letter of Intent 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. For more information on types of submissions, see the GPG 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 U.S.C. 2131 et seq] and the regulations promulgated there under by the Secretary of Agriculture [9 CFR, 1.1-4.11], NSF requires that proposed projects involving use of any vertebrate animal for research or education be approved by the submitting organization's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) before an award can be made. For this approval to be accepted by NSF, the organization must have a current Institutional Animal Welfare Assurance established with the Public Health Service (PHS).

If the organization does not have such an Assurance in place, then approval of the project by the IACUC of an organization with a current PHS Assurance will be acceptable, if the IACUC agrees to provide the required oversight of facilities and activities during the award.

Alternatively, the submitting organization may create its own IACUC by establishing a single-project Institutional Animal Welfare Assurance with NSF. In any case, IACUC approval must be received prior to an award. Proposers with questions regarding this requirement should contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer.

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

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

W

Withdrawal of a Proposal

What is the procedure for the withdrawal of a proposal?

A proposal may be withdrawn at any time before a funding recommendation is made by the cognizant NSF Program Officer. Proposals must be electronically withdrawn via the FastLane Electronic Proposal Withdrawal System. This module in FastLane automates the proposal withdrawal process and provides a mechanism that will help organizations to more effectively manage their proposal portfolio, as well as to help eliminate the submission of duplicate proposals to NSF. The Electronic Proposal Withdrawal System includes three processes:

- *Principal Investigator's Proposal Withdrawal* allows a PI to initiate a proposal withdrawal and forward it to the organization's sponsored projects office (or equivalent) for submission to NSF.
- *Sponsored Projects Office (SPO) Proposal Withdrawal* allows an authorized individual in the organization's sponsored projects office (or equivalent) to initiate a proposal withdrawal for submission to NSF.
- *Proposal Submission Duplicate Withdrawal* prevents a SPO official from submitting a new proposal if a duplicate (a proposal from the same organization with the same title and same PI and co-PIs) already has been submitted to NSF within the last two weeks prior to the current submission. If these conditions are met, the system will allow the authorized SPO official to either withdraw the previous duplicate and then proceed with the

submission of the new proposal, or to modify the new proposal so it is different from the previous proposal.

In cases where NSF already has made a funding decision, proposals will not be permitted to be withdrawn via the electronic proposal withdrawal system. When a PI or SPO representative attempts to prepare a proposal withdrawal for such a proposal, a message will be displayed to contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer for further assistance. NSF must be notified if any funding for the proposed project is received from another source or sponsor. If it is brought to NSF's attention that funding for a proposal to NSF has been accepted from another sponsor, NSF will send a withdrawal confirmation to the PI and the SPO without waiting for the official withdrawal notification.

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

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