## Ask Early, Ask Often!

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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</table>
| Jean Feldman          | Head, Policy Office, Office of Budget, Finance & Award Management; Division of Institution & Award Support | jfeldman@nsf.gov  
|                       |                                                                       | policy@nsf.gov  
|                       |                                                                       | (703) 292-8243 |
| Rebecca Vandall       | Director of New Program Development & Strategic Partnerships; SRA International | rvandall@srainternational.org  
|                       |                                                                       | (703) 741-0140 |
Coverage

- The NSF Merit Review Process
- Award & Administration
The NSF Merit Review Process
Proposal Review and Processing

1. NSF Announces Opportunity
2. Research & Educational Communities Submit
3. NSF Program Officer:
   - Ad Hoc
   - Panel
   - Combination
   - Internal
4. Program Officer Analysis and Recommendations
5. DD Concur
6. Award Via DGA
   - Decline
   - Organization

90 Days Proposal Preparation
6 Months Proposal Receipt to DD Concurrence of PO Recommendation
30 Days DGA Review & Processing
NSF Merit Review Criteria

- NSB Approved Criteria include:
  - Intellectual Merit
  - Broader Impacts of the Proposed Effort
Intellectual Merit

Potential considerations include:

- How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields?

- How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project? (If appropriate, the reviewer will comment on the quality of prior work.)

- To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original or potentially transformative concepts?
Intellectual Merit (Cont’d)

• How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity?

• Is there sufficient access to resources?
Broader Impacts

Potential considerations include:

• How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training and learning?

• How well does the activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.)?

• To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks and partnerships?
Broader Impacts (Cont’d)

- Potential considerations include:
  - Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding?
  - What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society?

- Examples of Broader Impacts can be found at: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/broaderimpacts.pdf
Primary Review Methods

- Ad hoc review
- Panel Review
- Panel + Ad hoc Review
- Internal Review
Types of Reviews

- **Ad hoc:** proposals sent out for review –
  - Ad hoc reviewers usually have specific expertise a field related to the proposal.
  - Some proposals may undergo ad hoc review only.

- **Panel:** review jointly conducted by peers (most typically held at NSF) –
  - Panel reviewers usually have a broader scientific knowledge.
  - Some proposals may undergo a panel review only.
  - Some proposals may undergo reviews by multiple panels (especially for those proposals with a cross-cutting theme.)
Types of Reviews (Cont’d)

- Combination: some proposals may undergo a supplemental *ad hoc* review either before/after a panel review

- Internal: Review by NSF Program Officers only –
  - Examples of internally reviewed proposals
    - Proposals submitted to Rapid Response Research Grants (RAPID)
    - Proposals submitted to EArly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER)
    - Conference/symposia workshop proposals under specified thresholds
Reviewer Selection

- Types of reviewers recruited:
  - Reviewers with specific content expertise
  - Reviewers with general science or education expertise

- Sources of reviewers:
  - Program Officer’s knowledge of the research area
  - References listed in proposal
  - Recent professional society programs
  - Computer searches of S&E journal articles related to the proposal
Reviewer Selection (Cont’d)

Sources of reviewers (cont’d)

- Reviewer recommendations included in proposal or sent by email - proposers are invited to either:
  - Suggest persons they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal.
  - Identify persons they would prefer not review the proposal.

- Each proposal is reviewed by at least three individual peer reviewers
Role of the Ad Hoc Reviewer

- Review all proposal materials and consider the:
  - two NSF merit review criteria and any program specific criteria;
  - adequacy/appropriateness of the proposed project plan, including the budget, resources, and timeline; and
  - Potential risks and benefits of the project.

- Make independent written comments on the quality of the proposal content.
Role of the Peer Review Panel

- Discuss the merits of the proposal with other panelists who reviewed the proposal.

- Write a summary proposal review based on discussion.

- Make a panel recommendation to NSF on whether the proposal should be funded.

- Some panels may be supplemented with ad hoc reviewers if additional expertise is needed.
Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Review Process

- Primary purpose is to remove or limit the influence of ties to an applicant institution or investigator that could affect reviewer advice.

- Second purpose is to preserve the trust of the scientific community, Congress, and the general public in the integrity, effectiveness, and evenhandedness of NSF’s peer review process.
Funding Decisions

- The merit review panel summary provides:
  - Review of the proposal and a recommendation on funding.
  - Feedback (strengths and weaknesses) to the proposers.

- NSF Program Officers make funding recommendations guided by program goals and portfolio considerations.

- NSF Division Directors either concur or reject the Program Officer’s recommendations.
Feedback from Merit Review

- Reviewers ratings (such as E, VG, G, F, P)
- Analysis of how well proposal addresses both review criteria: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts
- Proposal strengths and weaknesses
- Reasons for a declination (if applicable)

If you have questions, contact the cognizant Program Officer for clarification.
Documentation from Merit Review

- Verbatim copies of individual reviews, excluding reviewer identities.

- Panel Summary or Summaries (if panel review was used.)

- Context Statement

- PO to PI comments --written or verbal-- as necessary to explain a declination (if applicable)
Reasons for Declines

- The proposal was not considered to be competitive based on the merit review criteria and the program office concurred.

- The proposal had flaws or issues identified by the program office.

- The program funds were not adequate to fund all competitive proposals.
Revisions and Resubmissions

Points to consider:

- Do the reviewers and/or the Program Officer identify significant strengths in the proposal?
- Can the weaknesses identified by the reviewers and/or the Program Officer be addressed?
- Are there other ways the proposal can be strengthened?

As always, the Program Officer should be contacted with specific questions.
Issuance of the Award

- NSF’s Division of Grant and Agreements (DGA) reviews the recommendation from the program office for business, financial and policy implications.

- NSF’s Grants and Agreements officers make the award as long as:
  - The organization has an adequate grants management capacity.
  - The PI/co-PIs do not have overdue annual or final project reports.
  - There are no other outstanding issues with the organization and/or the PI.
NSF Reconsideration Process

- Explanation from Program Officer
- Written request for reconsideration to Assistant Director within 90 days of decline
- Request from organization to Deputy Director
NSF Merit Review Website

- The merit review website is available on the NSF Homepage.

- The goal of the Merit Review website is to help you better understand the NSF merit review process as well as identify resources for additional information (including applicable chapters in the GPG).
Merit Review Process

Click the square buttons to find out more information about the review process.

Download a printable version of the Merit Review Process Illustration. [PDF](21K)

**PHASE I**

1. OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCED
   - PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION
   - 90 DAYS

2. PROPOSAL SUBMITTED

3. PROPOSAL RECEIVED

**PHASE II**

4. REVIEWERS SELECTED
   - PROPOSAL REVIEW AND PROCESSING
   - 6 MONTHS

5. PEER REVIEW

6. PROGRAM OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

7. DIVISION DIRECTOR REVIEW

**PHASE III**

8. BUSINESS REVIEW

9. AWARD FINALIZED

9 - Award Finalized

The award itself is comprised of an award notice, budget, proposal, applicable NSF conditions, and any other documents or requirements incorporated by reference into the agreement.

Each NSF award notice specifically identifies certain conditions that are applicable to, and become part of, that award. When these conditions reference a particular Award and Administration Guide (AAG) section, that section becomes part of the award requirements through incorporation by reference.
Award & Administration
Award and Administration

1. NSF Announces Opportunity
2. Research & Educational Communities
3. Submit
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5. Ad Hoc, Panel, Combination, Internal
6. Program Officer Analysis and Recommendations
7. DD Concur
8. Award via DGA
9. Decline
10. Organization

Proposals can be returned without review/withdrawn.

- Proposal Receipt at NSF: 90 Days
- Proposal Receipt to DD Concurrence of PO Recommendation: 6 Months
- DD Concur: 30 Days
- Award: 30 Days

- FastLane: grants.gov
- Grants.gov: grants.gov
NSF Award Management Philosophy

- Assistance Agency
- Research Carried Out by Awardee
- Integrated Oversight Enterprise:
  - Program Oversight of Scientific Progress
  - BFA Oversight of Compliance and Business Assistance
- Audit Responsibility Resides with OIG
- End to End Award Management
- Risk Based Review
Types of Awards

- Grants & Cooperative Agreements
  - Relationship is of assistance
  - Principle purpose is to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation

- Contracts
  - Relationship is one of procurement
  - Principle purpose is for the direct benefit or use of the Federal government
Award Administration –
Relevant Roles of Awardee & NSF

- **Awardee Role**
  - Awardee has full responsibility for the conduct of project or activity and for adherence to the award conditions
  - Awardee agrees to comply with the applicable Federal requirements and for the prudent management of all expenditures and actions
  - Expenditures must be allowable, allocable, and reasonable, and all actions must be:
    - Consistent with award terms and conditions;
    - Consistent with NSF and awardee policies;
    - Represent effective utilization of resources; and
    - Do not constitute a significant project change.

- **NSF Role**
  - Hands off project and minimal monitoring (except for CAs)
The NSF Award

- Grants
  - Award notice, award terms and conditions, occasional special conditions, and other documents incorporated by reference
  - Electronic dissemination of Award Notice to AOR
  - Grantee Distribution of Terms & Conditions
  - Also available electronically via FastLane

- Cooperative Agreements
  - Financial & Administrative Terms and Conditions
  - Programmatic Terms and Conditions
Grantee-Approved Notifications to NSF

- **Single** 12 Month No Cost Extension
  - note that this is not to be used for awards that contain a zero balance
  - does not include CAs
- Significant Changes in Methods & Procedures*
- Unusual Occurrences*
- Short Term Absences (less than 90 days)*
- Conflict of Interest Not handled by Organization

* Note that these three items are notifications that are sent directly from PI to the AOR and then to NSF.
Grantee-Authorized Approvals

- Virtually All Budget Changes are PI’s Prerogative - Subject to Organizational Approval
  - Note: unless such changes constitute a change in objective or scope
  - Exception for Participant Support

- 90 Day Pre-Award Costs
NSF Prior Approval Requirements (Technically Related)

- Change in Objective or Scope

- Change in Expiration Date (no cost extension)

- PI/Co-PI Changes
  - Withdrawal or Change of PI/Co-PI
  - Long-term Absence
    - Defined as 90 days or more
  - Reduction in PI Level of Effort
    - Defined as a reduction of 25% or more in time devoted to project
NSF Prior Approval Requirements (Financially Related)

- Transferring the Project Effort via:
  - Subaward
  - Transfer of the Award to a New Organization
- Reallocation of Participant Support
- Alterations and Renovations over $25,000 (Construction)
- Change in Cost Sharing Amount Identified on Line M of the Cumulative Award Budget
- Pre-award costs more than 90 days prior
Award Transfers

- The award is made to the organization; as such, the organization has the discretion of appointing a substitute PI.

- If willing to transfer the award to another university be sure to reconcile final expenditures and accurately determine what funds are to be transferred; NSF cannot intervene or redo a transfer after it is made.

- Consider making a subaward rather than transferring the whole award.

Note: ARRA award may not be transferred!
Prepare a New Notification or Request for Award #: 0707551

**Award Amount:** $0.00  
**Expiration Date:** 12/31/2011  
**Division:** DIVISION OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS  
**Award Title:** PRS 11/18/06 Release Functional Verification 15  
**Award Organization:** National Science Foundation  
**PI/PD:** Alphaman, Alan

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### Select the Notification or Request Type:

#### GRANTEE NOTIFICATION TYPES

- Anticipated Residual Funds in excess of $5,000 or 5%  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Grantee Approved No Cost Extension  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Significant Changes/Delay or Events of Unusual Interest  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Cost Sharing Equal To or Greater Than $500,000  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Conflicts of Interests  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Significant Changes in Methods/Procedures  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Short-Term Absence of the PI/PD (Up to Three Months)  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG

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#### GRANTEE REQUEST TYPES (Requires NSF Approval)

- Addition of SubAward  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Withdrawal of PI/Co-PI  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Long-Term Absence of the PI/PD (Over Three Months)  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- NSF Approved No-Cost Extension  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- PI Transfer  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Pre-award Costs in Excess of 90 Days  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Rearrangement/Alteration $25,000 or over (Follow these links for more information on [Non-FDP Organizations](#) or [FDP Organizations](#). They will open a PDF file in new window.)  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Change PI and Add/Change Co-PI  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Significant Change in Person-Months Devoted to Project  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Changes in Objective or Scope  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG  

- Reallocation of Funds Budgeted for Participant or Trainee Support Costs  
  - **Topic Guidance:** AAG

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*Topic Guidance is provided through Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) and Award & Administration Guide (AAG) references.*
Technical Reporting/Monitoring

- Required Technical Reports
  - Annual Project Reports
    - Due 90-days prior to Expiration Date
    - Required for **ALL** Standard & Continuing Grants and Cooperative Agreements

  - Final Project Reports
    - Due Within 90-days after the Expiration of an Award
    - Required for **ALL** Standard & Continuing Grants and Cooperative Agreements
    - Required for Individual Research Fellowships per Program Solicitation
Technical Reporting/Monitoring (Cont’d)

- Annual and Final Report Contents Include:
  - Participants
  - Activities & Findings
  - Publications & Products
  - Contributions
  - Special Requirements

- Technical Monitoring
  - Program Officer Site Visits
  - Participation in required Outreach activities

- Interim Project Reports
  - Significant Events
  - Per special conditions of the award
Technical Reporting/Monitoring (Cont’d)

- Project Outcomes Report for the General Public

  - Due within 90-days after the expiration of an award
  - Cover the entire duration of the NSF-funded activity
  - Required for **ALL** Standard & Continuing Grants and Cooperative Agreements
  - Submitted via Research.gov
  - Will be posted on the NSF website exactly as it is submitted
Publication & Data Sharing Requirements

- Acknowledgement of Support
- Disclaimer
- Copyrightable Material
- Sharing of Data
Data Sharing by NSF Awardees

- Data access:
  - Helps promote scientific research by permitting other qualified scientists to replicate results.
  - Scientists reinterpret data or extend research methods to new areas.
  - Scientists thus build upon an existing base of scientific knowledge.
Implementing Data Sharing

- Effective January 2011, proposals will require a data management plan, as a supplementary document, be included as part of each proposal.

- Investigators are expected to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the primary data, samples, physical collections and other supporting materials created or gathered in the course of work under NSF grants.
  - Grantees are expected to encourage and facilitate such sharing.

- NSF programs may implement this sharing policy in ways appropriate to the scientific field and to specific circumstances.
  - Programs, Divisions and Directorates may have data sharing requirements appropriate for that discipline.
  - A page will be available on the NSF website that serves as a repository of these specialized requirements.
Other Administrative Requirements

- Use of Consultants
- Equipment
- Program Income
- Travel
Use of U.S. Flag Air Carriers

- Any air transportation to, from, between, or within a country other than the U.S. of persons or property, the expense of which will be assisted by NSF funding, must be performed by, or under, a code-sharing arrangement with, U.S.-Flag air carrier if service provided by such a carrier is “available.”
- Deviations from the U.S.-Flag air carrier policy are described in detail in the Award and Administration Guide at: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf10_1/aag_6.jsp#VIG1b
And Lots of Other Statutory & Regulatory Stuff.....

- Nondiscrimination
- Animal Welfare
- Recombinant DNA Molecules
- Clean Air and Water
- Human Subjects
- Investigator Financial Disclosure
- Debarment and Suspension
Audit Requirements

- Research Terms and Conditions Section .26
- Grant General Conditions (GC-1) Article 23
- Award & Administration Guide Chapter II.F
- NSF Office of Inspector General Activities
Award Suspension & Termination

- The award may be suspended or terminated in whole or in part in any of the following situations:
  - By NSF when:
    - The awardee has materially failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the award.
    - The Foundation has other reasonable cause.
    - It is ordered by the Deputy Director under NSF’s Regulation on Research Misconduct (45 CFR 689.)
  - NSF and the awardee mutually agree that termination would be in both parties’ best interest.
  - By the awardee via written notice to NSF.
NSF Outreach/Learning Opportunities

- NSF Regional Grants Conference
  - Two-day, bi-annual conference
    - October 25-26, 2010 in Salt Lake City
    - March 21-22, 2011 in Nashville, TN
  - NSF Representatives from:
    - All NSF Directorates
    - Office of Budget, Finance & Award Management
    - Office of International Science & Engineering
    - Office of the General Counsel
    - Office of the Inspector General

- SRA & NCURA Conferences
  - Annual and regional conference participation
  - NSF-Updates and Workshops

- Focused Outreach
  - Tribal Colleges, HBCUs, HSIs
For More Information....

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www.nsf.gov