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

Effective January 2017

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 Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR). The Proposal File Update module, however, may not be used for submission of revised budgets. All budgetary revisions must be submitted through use of the FastLane Revised Proposal Budget Module. More information on and submission procedures for proposal file updates can be found in the *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter III.C.

Audit Reports

Where should copies of audits required by 2 CFR § 200, Subpart F be sent?

In accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance), grantees that are states, local governments or non-profit organizations must submit copies of their audit reports to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse (FAC). See 2 CFR § 200.512(b) for additional information.

Award Administration

Where can I find information regarding post-award issues?

Information regarding pre-award costs, required notifications and prior approvals, extensions, transfer of the award, 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 Part II of the *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG).

B

Biographical Sketches

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

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because of experience with citations that are not readily available, including web references that are inaccessible or out of date, and is intended to indicate that such mistakes have demonstrably downgraded a proposal in the judgment of reviewers.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

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

Yes. The proposer may include up to five products most closely related to the proposed project and up to five other significant products, whether or not related to the proposed project.

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. There are four categories of funding opportunities: Dear Colleague Letters, Program Descriptions, Program Announcements and Program Solicitations. For a description of each category and further information, see PAPPG Chapter I.C.

CFDA Numbers

What is the CFDA number and where can a proposer 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 (OMB) and the General Services Administration (GSA). 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 DIAS/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. **All components** of the collaborative proposal must meet any established deadline, and, failure to do so may result in the entire collaborative proposal being returned without review. PAPPG Chapter II.D.3 contains additional information and instructions regarding collaborative proposals.

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. Proposers may indicate on the Cover Sheet which NSF organizational unit(s) they 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). (Reference PAPPG Chapter IV.B).

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 PAPPG Chapter II.D.2).

Conference, Symposia and Workshop Proposals

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

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

Should I include conference speaker fees in the participant support costs section of the budget?

The participant support category of the budget is for the support of participants or trainees only. Speakers and trainers are not considered participants in the conference/ training event, therefore, the cost of speakers or trainers should not be included in the participant support cost section of the budget.

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 budget 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 the PAPPG Chapter II.D.1, *Proprietary or Privileged Information*.

Consultant Rate

Is there a limitation on payments to consultants under NSF awards?

No, there is no limitation on payments to consultants under NSF awards. Payment for consultant services should be comparable to the normal or customary fees charged and received by the consultant for comparable services, especially on non-Government contracts and grants. See PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g(vi)(c) and 2 CFR § 200.459, Professional Services, for additional information.

Cost Sharing

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

The National Science Board issued a report entitled "*Investing in the Future: NSF Cost Sharing Policies for a Robust Federal Research Enterprise*" (NSB 09-20, August 3, 2009),

which contained eight recommendations for NSF regarding cost sharing. In implementation of the Board's recommendations, NSF's revised guidance (see PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g(xii)) is as follows:

- Except where required by a program solicitation, inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

- When cost sharing is required by the Foundation, included on Line M of the proposal budget and accepted by NSF, the commitment of funds becomes legally binding and is subject to audit. Failure to provide the level of cost sharing required by the NSF solicitation and reflected in the approved award budget may result in termination of the NSF award, disallowance of award costs and/or refund of award funds to NSF by the grantee.

More information can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g(xii) and Chapter VII.C.

The *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter II.C.2.g.(viii) states that, "Except where specifically identified in an NSF program solicitation, the applicable US Federally negotiated indirect cost rate(s) must be used in computing indirect costs (F&A) for a proposal." Does this mean that organizations cannot request a reduced or waived rate because this would constitute voluntary committed cost sharing?

Yes. Unless required by an NSF program solicitation, the organization's current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement must be used in computing indirect costs for a proposal. Otherwise, foregoing full indirect cost rate recovery would be considered voluntary committed cost sharing and is therefore prohibited by NSF.

What is the distinction between voluntary committed cost sharing and voluntary uncommitted cost sharing?

As stipulated in 2 CFR § 200.99, "Voluntary committed cost sharing means cost sharing specifically pledged on a voluntary basis in the proposal's budget or the Federal award on the part of the non-Federal entity and that becomes a binding requirement of Federal award." As such, to be considered voluntary committed cost sharing, the amount must appear on the NSF proposal budget and be specifically identified in the approved NSF budget (inclusion in the budget justification also meets this definition). Unless cost sharing is required by a specific NSF program, inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited and Line M on the proposal budget will not be available for use by the proposer. NSF Program Officers are not authorized to impose or encourage cost sharing unless such requirements are explicitly included in the program solicitation. A complete listing of NSF programs that require cost sharing is available on the NSF website at: http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/.

In order for NSF, and its reviewers, to assess the scope of a proposed project, all organizational resources necessary for, and available to, a project must be described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal (see PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.i for further information). While not required by NSF, the grantee may, at their own discretion, continue to contribute voluntary uncommitted cost sharing to NSF-sponsored projects. As noted above, however, these resources are not auditable by NSF and should not be included in the proposal budget or budget justification.

Where can the PI describe the time they'll spend if they don't request salary?

The Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section should contain an aggregated description of the resources that the organization will provide to the project (both physical and personnel), should it be funded. The description should be narrative in nature and must not include any quantifiable financial information.

D

Data Management Plan

Where can I find more information about the requirement for a data management plan?

PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.j reflects NSF's long standing data policy. All proposals must describe plans for data management and sharing of the products of research, or assert the absence of the need for such plans. FastLane will not permit submission of a proposal that is missing a Data Management Plan. The Data Management Plan will be reviewed as part of the intellectual merit or broader impacts of the proposal, or both, as appropriate.

For a separately submitted collaborative proposal, do non-lead organizations need to submit a data management plan?

No. The lead organization should submit one data management plan for all the collaborating organizations. A non-lead organization does not need to submit a data management plan for a separately submitted collaborative proposal. More information can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.D.3.

Deviation Authorization

What is the process for requesting authorization of a deviation from the *PAPPG* 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 approvals to deviate from NSF proposal preparation instructions may cover a particular program or programs or, in rare instances, an "individual" deviation for a particular proposal.

Proposers may deviate from these instructions only to the extent authorized. Proposals must include an authorization to deviate from standard NSF proposal preparation instructions 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. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.A).

Drug-Free Workplace Certification

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

The full text of the Drug-Free Workplace Certification can be found in PAPPG Exhibit II-3.

E

EArly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER)

What is an EAGER proposal, and where can I find information about submitting this type of proposal?

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

More information about the EAGER program can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.E.2.

Electronic Submission

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

Unless otherwise specified in the program solicitation, proposers may opt to submit a proposal electronically either via Grants.gov or via the NSF FastLane system.

Grants.gov provides a single Government-wide portal for finding and applying for Federal grants online. In determining which method to utilize in the electronic preparation and submission of a proposal, proposers should be aware that all collaborative proposals submitted as separate submissions from multiple organizations must be submitted via the NSF FastLane system. PAPPG Chapter II.D.3 provides additional information on collaborative proposals.

For proposers who cannot submit electronically, a deviation must be approved in advance of submission of the paper proposal in accordance with PAPPG Chapter II.A.

Must the awardee organization code and the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number be entered on the proposal Cover Sheet?

The awardee organization name, address, DUNS number and Employer Identification Number/Taxpayer Identification Number are derived from the login information and therefore do not need to manually be entered when preparing the Cover Sheet.

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

The box for "International Cooperative Activities: Country/Countries" on the Cover Sheet is used to assist NSF program staff in identifying the appropriate Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE) country-specific point of contact. OISE staff serve as a resource for NSF directorates with projects that involve international cooperative activities. An international activity is defined as research, training and/or education carried out in cooperation with foreign counterparts either overseas or in the US using virtual technologies. Proposers also should enter the country/countries with which project participants will engage and/or travel to attend international conferences. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.a)

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 specific Federal grant or cooperative agreement. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.C.1.d and Exhibit II-5).

Eligibility

Can an award be made to an individual?

Unaffiliated individuals in the US and US citizens rarely receive direct funding support from NSF. Recipients of Federal funds must be able to demonstrate their ability to fully comply with the requirements specified in 2 CFR § 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.* As such, unaffiliated individuals are strongly encouraged to affiliate with an organization that is able to meet the requirements specified in 2 CFR § 200.

Unaffiliated individuals must contact the cognizant Program Officer prior to preparing and submitting a proposal to NSF. (Reference PAPPG Chapter I.E.5).

Can an individual who is not a U.S. citizen serve as a Principal Investigator on a proposal?

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 is no general policy restricting involvement on NSF grants based on nationality. A proposing organization in the U.S. may designate as Principal Investigator anyone it believes to be capable of fulfilling the role.

Can an award be made directly to a foreign organization?

NSF rarely provides support directly to foreign organizations. NSF, however, will consider proposals for cooperative projects involving U.S. and foreign organizations, provided direct support is requested only for the U.S. portion of the collaborative effort. Foreign

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

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

There is no general prohibition against someone from a non-U.S. organization serving as a co-PI on an NSF project. NSF does allow subawards to non-U.S. organizations and per [PAPPG Chapter II.D.3.a](#), collaborators from the subaward organization may be named as co-PIs under the prime's proposal (although that is at the discretion of the prime). Proposers should check their organizational policies regarding PI/co-PI eligibility to determine whether the organization permits non-employees to serve in this capacity. In addition, proposers should review the relevant program solicitation, if applicable, to ensure that there are no additional eligibility requirements that restrict co-PI eligibility.

Can a Federal agency apply directly 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 [PAPPG Chapter I.E.7](#)).

Can different campuses of the same university system submit separate proposals in response to a program solicitation that limits the number of proposals to one per organization?

NSF's long-standing stance on the definition of "organization" is that, in addition to having its own DUNS number and being registered in FastLane, organizations must have separate Sponsored Projects Offices that have the ability to submit proposals directly to NSF. The campus would need to be listed as the awardee organization on the NSF Cover Sheet and if all of the above criteria are met, that organization would be considered independent for purposes of solicitations that have limited submissions.

Equipment Proposals

Does NSF fund proposals for the specific purpose of purchasing equipment or instrumentation?

Proposals for specialized equipment may be submitted by an organization. More information regarding how to apply for equipment proposals can be found in [PAPPG Chapter II.E.8](#).

F

Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED)

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

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

- to reduce or remove barriers to participation in research and training by persons with physical disabilities by providing special equipment and assistance under awards made by NSF; and

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

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

Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Costs (see Indirect Costs)

Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources

What should be included in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal?

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

Although these resources are not considered cost sharing as defined in 2 CFR § 200.99, the Foundation does expect that the resources identified in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section will be provided, or made available, should the proposal be funded.

If there are no Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources to describe, a statement to that effect should be included in this section of the proposal and uploaded into FastLane.

Is an organization obligated to provide the resources described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section, should an award be made? What should a grantee do if they cannot provide some of those resources?

The resources described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section are evaluated during the merit review process and, as such, NSF does have an expectation that they will be made available, should the proposal be funded. Therefore, organizations do need to ensure that they are provided if an award is made.

Should a grantee not be able to provide some of those resources, they should discuss the situation with the cognizant NSF Program Officer. Prior NSF approval is required for any change to the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of an approved proposal that would constitute a change in objectives, scope or methodology (Reference PAPPG Chapter VII.B.1 for further information).

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; and some post-award administrative activities. All project reporting and many post-award administrative activities have been moved from FastLane to Research.gov. All FastLane functions are available at: http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov. All Research.gov functions are available at: https://www.research.gov/.

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

Unless otherwise specified in a program solicitation, proposers may opt to submit proposals electronically either via Grants.gov or via the NSF FastLane system. Grants.gov provides a single Government-wide portal for finding and applying for Federal grants online. In determining which method to utilize in the electronic preparation and submission of a proposal, proposers should be aware that all collaborative proposals submitted as separate submissions from multiple organizations must be submitted via the NSF FastLane system. PAPPG Chapter II.D.3 provides additional information on collaborative proposals.

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 Help 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.

Final Project Report

Why does Research.gov say that my final report is due 90 days after the award end date? I thought I had 120 days.

The final project report and project outcomes report should be submitted no later than 120 days following the end date of the award for all new NSF awards and funding amendments to existing NSF awards made on or after January 25, 2016. If the award has not received a funding amendment since January 25, 2016, the final project report and project outcomes report is due no later than 90 days following the end date of the award. The reporting conditions relevant to the award are referenced in the award notice; the Research.gov system reflects the requirement applicable to the award.

Fringe Benefits

Can proposers use projected fringe benefit rates when submitting budgets to NSF?

Generally, proposers should be using their currently approved fringe benefit rate for budgeting purposes.

NSF policy does allow awardees to re-budget funds, within the award, to cover fringe benefit costs that are finalized higher than budgeted. Therefore, if funds under the award are available, the actual fringe rates may be charged.

G

Grant Opportunities for Academic Liaison with Industry (GOALI)

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

A GOALI type of proposal may be used to support projects that seek to stimulate collaboration between academic research institutions and industry. Under this proposal type, academic scientists and engineers request funding either in conjunction with a regular proposal submitted to a standing NSF program or as a supplemental funding request to an existing NSF-funded award. GOALI is not a separate program; GOALI proposals must be submitted to an active NSF funding opportunity and must be submitted in accordance with the deadlines specified therein. A proposer interested in submitting a GOALI proposal or a GOALI supplemental funding request to an existing NSF-funded award must contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer listed in the relevant funding opportunity prior to submission.

More information about the GOALI type of proposal can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.E.4.

Grants.gov

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

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

Group Proposals

May group proposals exceed the 15 page Project Description limitation?

NSF encourages submission of proposals by groups of investigators; often these are submitted to carry out interdisciplinary projects. Unless stipulated in a specific program solicitation, group proposals are subject to the 15 page Project Description limitation established in PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.d. PIs who wish to exceed the established page limitations for the Project Description must request and receive a deviation in advance of proposal submission. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.A).

H

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 has declared the research exempt from IRB review, in accordance with the applicable subsection, as established in section 101(b) of the Common Rule.

For projects lacking definite plans for the use of human subjects, their data or their specimens, pursuant to 45 CFR 690.118, NSF can accept a determination notice that establishes a limited time period under which the PI may conduct preliminary or conceptual work that does not involve human subjects. An NSF-approved format for submission of these determination notices is available on the NSF website. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.D.5).

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.

I

Grants for Ideas Lab

What is an Ideas Lab proposal and where can I find information about submitting this type of proposal?

"Ideas Lab" is a type of proposal to support the development and implementation of creative and innovative project ideas that have the potential to transform research paradigms and/or solve intractable problems. An Ideas Lab may be run independently, or in parallel, with the issuance of an NSF funding opportunity on the same topic. These project ideas typically will be high-risk/high-impact, as they represent new and unproven ideas, approaches and/or technologies.

More information about the Ideas Lab type of proposal can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.E.5.

Indirect Costs (Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Costs)

If the fixed predetermined indirect cost rate changes during the life of the award, may a grantee charge indirect costs to NSF awards based on newly negotiated rates in effect at the time the charges were incurred?

Colleges, universities and other institutions of higher education are subject to 2 CFR § 200, Appendix III, paragraph C.7, which specifies that Federal agencies are required to use the negotiated F&A rate that is in effect at the time of the initial award throughout the life of the award.

Other proposing organizations, however, are not bound by this restriction on the use of a fixed rate in effect at the time of the initial award. These organizations may charge indirect costs based on newly negotiated rates in effect at the time the costs are incurred, provided this will not affect the scope, increase award costs, decrease the period of support, or otherwise be inconsistent with the indirect cost rate provisions of the award.

Given the complex nature of the above question, can an example be provided to better illustrate the correct application of the indirect cost rate for a college or university?

A college or university submits a proposal to NSF for consideration in April and at that time, their approved predetermined indirect cost rate is 45%. In June of that year, they negotiate a new rate with their cognizant agency. The new agreement contains the following rates:

Predetermined   July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 47%

Predetermined   July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019 50%

If the proposal is funded in September, they can use the 47% rate. In fact, for any award made after July 1, 2017, they can re-budget and claim indirect costs at the 47% rate.

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

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

Yes. Unless specified in an NSF program solicitation, an organization must use its current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement in computing indirect costs for a proposal.

Information Sources

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

Information on a variety of funding opportunities is located on the NSF home page under "Funding."

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

What is the NSF Update service and what is the process for signing up?

The NSF Update 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). Subscribers receive notifications about publications that match their identified interests. To subscribe to NSF Update, go to the NSF Website, scroll half way down the page, and click on the yellow circle icon with a white envelope inside of it on the right-hand side of the page.

Where can a proposer find guidance on proposal preparation?

NSF's proposal preparation and submission guidelines – Part I of the *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)* and the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* -- provide guidance for the preparation and submission of proposals to NSF, whether by the NSF FastLane System or Grants.gov. Some NSF programs have program solicitations that modify the general provisions of these Guides, and, in such cases, the guidelines provided in the solicitation must be followed. 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?

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

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

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

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

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

M

Margin and Spacing Requirements

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

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

The typefaces that may be used are identified below:

- Arial, Courier New, or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger
- Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger
- Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger

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

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

The PAPPG guidelines establish the minimum type size requirements; however, PIs are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal. Small type size makes it difficult

for reviewers to read the proposal; consequently, the use of small type not in compliance with the above guidelines may be grounds for NSF to return the proposal without review.

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

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

Mentoring (see Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan)

Merit Review Criteria

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

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

The two NSB-approved merit review criteria are listed in PAPPG Chapter III.A. Further information about the review process can be found on the NSF Merit Review Website.

N

New Awardees

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?

In accordance with 2 CFR § 200.414(f), a proposer that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). No supporting documentation is required for proposed rates of 10% MTDC or less.

Domestic proposing organizations that do not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a cognizant Federal agency, and who are requesting more than a *de minimis* 10% recovery of modified total direct costs should prepare an indirect cost proposal based on expenditures for its most recently ended fiscal year. Based on information provided in the indirect cost proposal, NSF may negotiate an award-specific rate to be used only on the award currently being considered for funding. The contents and financial data included in indirect cost proposals vary according to the make-up of the proposing organization. Instructions for preparing an indirect cost rate proposal can be found on the NSF website.

Additional Information on indirect costs is provided in 2 CFR 200 by type of awardee organization:

- Institutions of Higher Education

- Non-profit Organizations

- State and Local Governments

For Profit Organizations should consult the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).

There are a number of other references from both NSF and other Federal Agencies that potential awardee organizations can use to assist in the preparation of an indirect cost rate proposal:

https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/caar/indirect.jsp

https://rates.psc.gov/

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/intro.html

While there are some differences between agencies these can provide an explanation of what indirect costs are and sample calculations.

Foreign organizations that do not have a current US Federally negotiated indirect cost rate(s) are limited to a *de minimis* indirect cost rate recovery of 10% of modified total direct costs. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g(viii)).

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) or the Division of Acquisition and Cooperative Support (DACS) will send 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 and DACS, 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.

Potential awardee organizations should be prepared to demonstrate and document that they have an acceptable accounting system (project cost accounting system) adequate to manage cost reimbursable awards. This should include adequate internal controls and segregation of duties. The organization also should be prepared to document that they are financially viable so there is a low risk that NSF funds would be used to meet other organizational expenses not related to the NSF award, and that the organization will remain in business over the term of the NSF award. Lastly, there are requirements in the Uniform Guidance for documented or written policies and procedures that awardee organizations must have in place prior to award.

These include, but are not limited to, the following sections of the Uniform Guidance:

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

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

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

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

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

Nondiscrimination Certification

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

See PAPPG Exhibit II-6 for the full text of the Nondiscrimination Certification. These obligations also apply to subrecipients and contractors under the award.

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. This information is also available through the Research.gov "Grants Application Status" for both PIs and SPOs. Communications about the proposal should be addressed to the cognizant NSF Program Officer with reference to the proposal number. Proposers are strongly encouraged to use FastLane or Research.gov to verify the status of their submission to NSF. (Reference PAPPG Chapter I.G.5).

O

Outreach

Where can a proposer find information about NSF outreach opportunities?

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

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

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

Will the NSF Update or Updates to the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG) presentations be made available?

Yes. Please see the Recent Presentations section of the DIAS/Policy Office website.

P

Person-Months (for "2 month rule" information, see Senior Personnel)

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 20% effort will be devoted to the project, a total of 2 months should be listed in the academic or calendar-year block (10 months x 20% = 2 months). (Reference PAPPG 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?

An individual serving as PI, co-PI, or other senior personnel should multiply the percentage of effort associated with the project by the number of months of his/her 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). Organizations may have internal policies and procedures that relate specifically to the type of appointment under which an individual is employed. PIs, co-PIs, or other senior personnel should, therefore, confirm with their Sponsored Projects Office that this simplified methodology is consistent with organizational policy.

Points of Contact

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

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

Post Award Considerations

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

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

Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan

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

Each proposal that requests funding to support postdoctoral researchers must include, as a supplementary document, a description of the mentoring activities that will be provided for such individuals. Please be advised that if required, FastLane will not permit submission of a proposal that is missing a Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan. In situations where a postdoctoral researcher is listed in Section A of the NSF Budget, and is functioning in a Senior Project personnel capacity (i.e., responsible for the scientific or technical direction of the project), a mentoring plan is not required.

More information about this requirement can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.j.

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

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

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

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

Primary Place of Performance Zip Code Field

What is the Primary Place of Performance?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Enter the street address in the Street Address field, and then select the appropriate country. Zip code and state are not applicable for non-US addresses, therefore, those fields should be left blank.

I received an error message "a valid zip code is required" when entering a zip code for the Primary Place of Performance. How do I correct it?

If this error message appears, a proposer must enter the correct 9-digit zip code for the Primary Place of Performance in order to submit the proposal. The 9-digit zip code for the Primary Place of Performance can be found through the USPS website (http://usps.com) by selecting "Look Up a Zip Code" under the "Quick Tools" menu on the homepage and entering the street address for the performance location.

Why won't FastLane recognize my organization's 9-digit zip code?

Some organizations assign unique 9-digit zip code combinations within the organization, which are not registered with the USPS. To verify that the correct USPS-recognized 9-digit zip code for an organization is being used, visit the USPS website at http://usps.com, select "Look Up a Zip Code" under the "Quick Tools" menu on the homepage, and enter the street address for the performance location.

Why is FastLane only allowing me to enter 8 of the 9 digits of my zip code?

Verify that only digits are being entered for the zip code. Do not enter a dash. If only digits are being entered and issues continue to occur, contact the FastLane Helpdesk (fastlane@nsf.gov or 1-800-673-6188, 7AM-9PM EST Monday – Friday except Federal holidays).

Prior Approval Requirements

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

All NSF prior approval requirements can be found in PAPPG Chapter VII and Exhibit VII-1. While most notifications and requests should be submitted in Research.gov, a few functions still remain in FastLane. A complete listing of notifications and requests, including where they should be submitted, is located on the Research.gov website.

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 website and on individual Directorates' webpages.

If there is a conflict between the PAPPG and a program solicitation, which document should be followed?

Instructions in an NSF program solicitation can modify general guidance in the PAPPG. Proposal preparation guidance contained in program solicitations takes precedence over instructions in the PAPPG and should, therefore, be followed closely. The cognizant program office should be consulted with questions regarding compliance with specific programmatic requirements contained in a program solicitation. (Reference PAPPG Chapter I.C.4).

Project Outcomes Report for the General Public

How does the Project Outcomes report differ from the Annual and Final project reports?

Annual and final project reports provide NSF Program Officers and administrative offices with information on the progress of supported projects and the way these funds are used. Annual, final and interim project reports must be submitted via Research.gov.

The Project Outcomes report is a brief summary (200-800 words), prepared specifically for the public, of the nature and outcomes of the project, and is not reviewed or approved by NSF Program Officers. The Project Outcomes report is submitted in Research.gov. Additional information is available on the Project Reports page of Research.gov.

What should be included in a Project Outcomes report?

PAPPG Chapter VII.D.3 describes the required contents of a Project Outcomes report.

For a collaborative project, who should submit a Project Outcomes Report?

For a collaborative project where a single award is made to one lead organization (which administers subawards to other organizations), the PI for the lead organization is responsible for submitting the Project Outcomes Report. For a collaborative project where a separate award is made to each organization in the collaborative, the PI for each separate award is responsible for submitting a Project Outcomes Report.

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. PAPPG Chapter III.C contains the procedures to be followed for proposal file updates.

The Proposal File Update module, however, may not be used for submission of revised budgets. All budgetary revisions must be submitted through use of the FastLane Revised Proposal Budget Module. The postdoctoral mentoring plan also cannot be corrected through the Proposal File Update module. If a proposer discovers that a postdoctoral mentoring plan needs to be corrected, the proposal must be withdrawn and resubmitted prior to the deadline.

Proposal Not Accepted

What does "proposal not accepted" mean?

Proposal not accepted is defined as FastLane will not permit submission of the proposal because a required component of the proposal is missing, not in compliance with NSF proposal preparation instructions, or the deadline has passed. FastLane will not permit submission of any proposal that fails an automated compliance check resulting in an error. A complete listing of automated proposal compliance checks performed by the system is available on the NSF website. More information is available in PAPPG Chapter IV.B.

Proposal Preparation

Is there a salary cap for proposals submitted to NSF?

There is no salary cap for proposals submitted to NSF. Salaries, however, are to be based on the individual faculty member's regular compensation for the continuous period which, under the policy of the organization concerned, constitutes the basis of his/her salary. Except as provided in PAPPG Chapter X.B.3 "Intra-University (IHE) Consulting," charges to Federal grants, irrespective of the basis of computation, will not exceed the proportionate share of the base salary for that period.

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 one inch. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.B.2).

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 PAPPG Chapter II.B.1).

May Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) be included within the Project Description? What about in other sections of the proposal?

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 must 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. Inclusion of URLs in other sections of the

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

What are the guidelines concerning collaborative proposals?

The guidelines relevant to collaborative proposals can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.D.3. A collaborative proposal is one in which investigators from two or more organizations wish to collaborate on a unified research project. Collaborative proposals may be submitted to NSF in one of two methods: as a single proposal, in which a single award is being requested (with subawards administered by the lead organization); or by simultaneous submission of proposals from different organizations, with each organization requesting a separate award. **All components** of the collaborative proposal must meet any established deadline, and, failure to do so may result in the entire collaborative proposal being returned without review.

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

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

What is the NSF policy on submission of appendices?

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

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

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

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

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

Proposal Submission

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

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

R

Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID)

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

A RAPID type of proposal is used for proposals having a severe urgency with regard to availability of, or access to data, facilities or specialized equipment, including quick-response research on natural or anthropogenic disasters and similar unanticipated events. PI(s) must contact the NSF Program Officer(s) whose expertise is most germane to the proposal topic before submitting a RAPID proposal. This will facilitate determining whether the proposed work is appropriate for RAPID funding.

More information about the RAPID type of proposal can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.E.1.

Receipt Dates

What happens if a deadline date 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 Federal holiday, it will be extended to the following business day. (Reference PAPPG Chapter I.F).

What is the difference between target dates, deadline 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 PAPPG Chapter II.A or in the circumstances outlined in Chapter I.F.

- **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 through the NSF website. Proposals must be received by 5 p.m. submitter's local time on the established deadline date. (Reference PAPPG Chapter I.F).

If a proposer needs to request extension of a deadline due to a disaster (hurricane, flood, etc.), what process should be followed?

In the event of a natural or anthropogenic disaster that interferes with an organization's ability to meet a proposal submission deadline, proposers should contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer in the Division/Office to which they intend to submit their proposal and request authorization to submit a "late proposal." Such contact should be via e-mail (or telephone, if e-mail is unavailable). Where possible, such requests should be submitted in advance of the proposal deadline. Proposers should then follow the written or verbal guidance provided by the cognizant NSF Program Officer. Further information can be found in PAPPG Chapter I.F.

How do I submit a proposal after the deadline date if an extension has been granted due to a natural or anthropogenic disaster?

When an exception to the deadline date has been granted, proposers must check the "Special Exception to the Deadline Date Policy" box on the NSF Cover Sheet in FastLane. This will indicate to the system that NSF approval has been obtained. A statement identifying the nature of the event that impacted the ability to submit the proposal on time should be uploaded under "Nature of Natural of Anthropogenic event" in the Single Copy Document section in FastLane. If available, written approval from the cognizant NSF Program Officer also should be uploaded under "Additional Single Copy Documents" in the Single Copy Document section in FastLane. (Reference PAPPG 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. Consult PAPPG Chapter IV.D 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 NSF guidelines on References Cited are available in PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.e.

If the proposer has a website address readily available, that information should be included in the citation. It is not NSF's intent, however, to place an undue burden on proposers to search for the URL of every referenced publication. Therefore, inclusion of a website address is optional.

Renewal Proposals

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Lines of research promise transformational advances.

- Prospective discoveries reside at the interfaces of disciplinary boundaries that may not be recognized through traditional review or co-review.

To receive funding as a RAISE-appropriate project, all three criteria must be met. RAISE is not intended to be used for projects than can be accommodated within other types of proposals or that continue well established practices. Prospective PI(s) must receive approval to submit a proposal from at least two NSF Program Officers, in intellectually distinct programs, whose expertise is most germane to the proposal topics.

More information about the RAISE type of proposal can be found in PAPPG Chapter II.E.3.

Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR)

What is the Research Performance Progress Report?

The [Research Performance Progress Report](#) is the result of a Government-wide effort to create greater consistency in the administration of Federal research awards by streamlining and standardizing reporting formats. The RPPR is used by agencies that support research and research-related activities for use in submission of progress reports.

NSF has developed the RPPR as a service within Research.gov. PIs and co-PIs use Research.gov to meet all NSF project reporting requirements, including submission of annual, final, interim and Project Outcomes Reports.

Where can I find more information about the RPPR?

More information may be found on the [Project Reports](#) page of Research.gov.

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)

Where can a proposer find more information about NSF's RCR policy?

Information about NSF's RCR policy, including links to important documents, is available on the [DIAS/Policy Office webpage](#).

Resubmissions

Can a proposer resubmit a previously declined proposal?

A declined proposal may be resubmitted, but only after it has undergone substantial revision. Resubmissions that have not clearly taken into account the major comments or concerns resulting from the prior NSF review may be returned without review. NSF will treat the revised proposal as a new proposal, subject to the standard review procedures. (Reference [PAPPG Chapter IV.E](#)).

Returns

For what reasons does NSF return a proposal without review?

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

Reviewer

How can I volunteer to be a reviewer for NSF?

In order to become an NSF reviewer, the individual should identify the program(s) that most closely fit their expertise and send an email to the responsible NSF Program Officer(s). Additional information on how to become a reviewer can be found on the NSF website.

S

Senior Personnel

How is the term "senior personnel" defined?

The term "senior personnel" includes:

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

2.   Faculty Associate (faculty member) (or equivalent) -- an individual other than the Principal Investigator(s) considered by the performing institution to be a member of its faculty (or equivalent) or who holds an appointment as a faculty member at another institution, and who will participate in the project being supported. (Reference PAPPG Exhibit II-7).

Does the "2 month" salary rule apply to all senior personnel or only to faculty on academic appointments?

Yes, the salary policy contained in PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g.(i) does apply to all senior personnel listed on the NSF budget, not just faculty on academic appointments. The policy does, however, allow for flexibility to request more than two months of salary per year, when applicable. If proposers request more than two months, the needed salary support should be put on the proposal budget and will need to be very well justified in the budget justification. If more than 2 months is approved by NSF, it will be included on the award budget.

Must grantees request prior NSF approval if making a change post-award to the amount originally budgeted for senior personnel salary?

NSF has not changed the terms and conditions or any of our post-award prior approval requirements (See PAPPG Exhibit VII-1). Therefore, under normal rebudgeting authority, a grantee can internally approve an increase in person months devoted to the project after an award is made, even if doing so results in salary support for senior personnel exceeding the 2 month salary rule. No prior approval from NSF is necessary. The caveat is if the change would cause the objectives or scope of the project to change, then the grantee would have to submit an approval request via Research.gov. Since salary can amount to a large part of the budget, there may very well be a scope change with addition of salary, especially if, for example, the PI decided not to hire a graduate student in order to have enough money to cover the salary increase.

Is it possible to remove the PI or other senior personnel from the proposal budget in FastLane?

For consistency with the NSF cost sharing policy, if person months will be requested for senior personnel, a corresponding salary amount must be entered on the budget. If no person months and no salary are being requested for senior personnel, they should be removed from section A of the budget. Their name(s) will remain on the Cover Sheet and the individual(s) role on the project should be described in the Facilities, Equipment and other Resources section of the proposal. See PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.i for additional information.

If PIs can be taken off the budget in FastLane, does this mean that there is no minimum effort requirement for PIs on NSF-sponsored projects?

The PAPPG coverage reminds recipients that they remain subject to the provisions of OMB M-01-06, "*Clarification of OMB A-21 Treatment of Voluntary Uncommitted Cost Sharing and Tuition Remission Costs*," regarding requirements for committing and tracking "some level" of faculty (or senior researcher) effort as part of the organized research base.

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 organizational conflicts of interest policy? Who should a proposer contact if there are questions?

The PAPPG Chapter IX.A provides information on NSF's conflicts of interest policy. NSF does not provide written samples of such policies. Questions regarding the NSF conflicts of interest policy should be directed to the Office of the General Counsel on (703) 292 8060.

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 has declared the research exempt from IRB review, in accordance with the applicable subsection, as established in section 101(b) of the Common Rule.

For projects lacking definite plans for the use of human subjects, their data or their specimens, pursuant to 45 CFR 690.118, NSF can accept a determination notice that establishes a limited time period under which the PI may conduct preliminary or conceptual work that does not involve human subjects. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II D.5).

Special Programs

Does NSF fund projects for targeted or special programs?

NSF sponsors many funding programs for special purposes. Examples include Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants and Research Experiences for Undergraduates. Information about these and other programs can be found on the NSF website.

Subawards

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 and budget justification for each subaward. (Reference PAPPG 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. It is NSF's policy that the end date of a submission window converts to, and is subject to, the same policies as a deadline date. (Reference PAPPG Chapter I.F).

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.

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. Grantees should contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer prior to submitting a request for supplemental funding. (Reference PAPPG Chapter VI.E.4).

System for Award Management (SAM)

Does a proposer have to be registered in SAM?

Each proposer must be registered in the SAM database prior to submission of the proposal. Subawardees named in the proposal, however, do not need to be registered in SAM. SAM is the primary registrant database for the US Government. SAM collects, validates, stores and disseminates data in support of agency assistance and acquisition missions, including Federal agency grant and contract awards. This SAM registration must be maintained with current information at all times during which the organization has an active award or a proposal under consideration by NSF. Failure to comply with the SAM registration requirement prior to proposal submission may impact the processing of the proposal. To register in SAM, go to https://www.sam.gov. Proposers are advised that it takes approximately three-to-five business days to complete the registration process.

T

Technology Expenses

Can technology devices such as Smartphones, iPhones, iPads, etc. be charged directly to an NSF award?

A computing device is considered a supply if the acquisition cost is less than the lesser of the capitalization level established by the proposer or $5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life. As such, the cost of computing devices are allowable, so long as the devices are essential and allocable, but not solely dedicated to the performance of the NSF project. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g(vi)(a) and 2 CFR § 200.453).

Transfer of the Award

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

If a PI plans to leave an organization during the course of an award, the organization has the prerogative to nominate a replacement PI, request that the award be terminated, or transfer the award (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, an award transfer request shall be submitted via the Notification and Request module in the FastLane system.

See PAPPG Chapter VII.B.2.f for additional information on award transfers.

Travel

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tuition Remission

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

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

Types of Submissions

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

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

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

V

Vertebrate Animals

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

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

Consistent with the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act [7 USC 2131 et seq] and the regulations promulgated thereunder 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 Public Health Service (PHS) Approved Assurance. (Reference PAPPG Chapter II.D.4 and Chapter XI.B.3).

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. Further information regarding proposal withdrawal procedures can be found in PAPPG Chapter IV.A.