NSF Grants Conference

NSF Policies and Procedures Update

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Hosted by Howard University, Arlington, Virginia
Panelist

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Ask Early, Ask Often!
Coverage

- Revisions to the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)
- Automated Compliance for Required Proposal Sections
- NSF Grants.gov Application Guide updates
- Cost Sharing Update
- Implementation of the Award Cash Management Service in Research.gov
- National Science Board Task Force on Administrative Burdens
Highlights of Significant Changes

• October, 4 2012 Release

• January 14, 2013 Implementation
PAPPG Revision Process

- Federal Register Notices issued in January 2011 and May 2012 to alert the public to NSF’s intent to revise PAPPG
- Disseminated draft document with changes highlighted to research community
- Comments submitted to OMB/NSF (were due July 12th)
- Updated PAPPG released October 4, 2012; effective for proposals submitted or due on or after January 14, 2013
Merit Review Criteria – For Proposers

• Project Summary requires text boxes in FastLane not to exceed 4,600 characters and will include
  – Overview
  – Statement on Intellectual Merit
  – Statement on Broader Impacts
• Proposals with special characters may upload Project Summary as a PDF document
• Text boxes must be filled out or a project summary must be uploaded or FastLane will *not* accept the proposal.
Merit Review Criteria – For Proposers

• Project Description
  – Must contain a separate section with a discussion of the broader impacts of the proposed activities
  – Results from Prior Support (if any) must address intellectual merit and broader impacts

• New certification regarding Organizational Support
  – Requires AOR certification that organizational support will be made available as described in the proposal to address the broader impacts and intellectual merit activities to be undertaken

• Annual and Final Project Reports
  – Must address activities intended to address the Broader Impacts criterion that are not intrinsic to the research

• FastLane help updated for proposers
Merit Review Criteria – For Reviewers

• Guiding Principles, Revised Review Criteria, and five review elements incorporated into GPG Chapter III

• Reviewer and Panelist Letters
  – Give due diligence to the three Merit Review Principles
  – Evaluate against the two Merit Review Criteria
  – Consider the five review elements in the review of both criteria

• Panel and Proposal Review Form in FastLane
  – Updated to incorporate consideration of review elements in addressing the two criteria
  – Text box added for reviewers to address solicitation-specific criteria
Merit Review Criteria – Resources

• NSF Merit Review Website

• Resources for the Proposer Community
  – www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/resources.jsp
  • Fact Sheets
  • Webcast
  • Presentations
  • FAQs
Biographical Sketch(es)

• The “Publications” section to of the Biosketch has been renamed “Products”.
  – This change makes clear that products may include, but are not limited to, publications, data sets, software, patents, and copyrights.
  – If only publications are identified, the heading “publications” may be used in this section of the biosketch.
Proposals Not Accepted

- Formally recognizes a new category of non-award decisions and transactions: Proposal Not Accepted
- Is defined as “FastLane will not permit submission of the proposal”
- This new category currently applies to:
  - Data Management Plans
  - Postdoctoral Mentoring Plans
  - Project Summaries
GPG-Required Sections of the Proposal

- Project Summary *
- Project Description
- References Cited
- Biographical Sketch(es)
- Budget
- Budget Justification
- Current and Pending Support
- Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources
- Supplementary Documentation
  - Data Management Plan *
  - Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (where applicable) *

* These proposal sections are already being auto-compliance checked.
What FastLane Will / Will Not Check

- FastLane will check for the presence of GPG required sections of the proposal
- If a section is not included, FastLane will not permit submission of the proposal
- FastLane will not check:
  - Formatting
  - Page Length (except for Project Summary)
  - Content
Auto-Compliance Checking

- Biographical Sketches & Current and Pending Support
  - FastLane permits the biosketch and current and pending support sections to be uploaded as a single PDF for the PI, co-PI and senior project personnel.
  - For FastLane to accept the proposal, proposers must insert text or upload a document that states, “Not Applicable” for any co-PI or senior person.
Auto-Compliance Checking

• Proposal submission instructions that deviate from the GPG will require special attention:
  – Conferences, symposia or workshops
  – International travel grants
  – Program solicitations, where applicable

• If solicitation submission instructions do not require one of the sections, proposers will need to insert text or upload a document in that section of the proposal that states, “Not Applicable”
  – This will enable FastLane to accept the proposal.
### Separately Submitted Collaborative Proposals

**Lead Organization:**

- Project Summary
- Project Description
- References Cited
- Biographical Sketch(es)
- Budget
- Budget Justification
- Current and Pending Support
- Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources
- Supplementary Documentation
  - Data Management Plan
  - Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable)

**Non-Lead Organization:**

- Biographical Sketch(es)
- Budget
- Budget Justification
- Current and Pending Support
- Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources
Auto-Compliance Checking

- Principal Investigators (PI)
  - Will receive warning messages if any of the GPG required sections are missing
  - Will be able to forward proposal to their institution’s SPO
- Sponsored Projects Office (SPO)
  - FastLane will prevent submission from the SPO if any of the GPG-required sections is missing
Auto-Compliance Checking

• Automated compliance checking will not be applied to:
  – Preliminary Proposals
  – Supplemental Funding Requests
What is the impact on Grants.gov proposals?

- The *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* specifies the same general content requirements for proposal submission.
- Grants.gov may allow a proposal to be submitted even if one of the required sections is missing.
- If a section is missing, a proposal may be returned without review.
Grants.gov Application Guide - Revisions

• Revisions made for consistency with those released in the PAPPG

• For applications submitted or due on or after January 14, 2013
Grants.gov Application Guide - Revisions

- Project Summary/Abstract contents must include three separate statements covering (1) Overview; (2) Intellectual Merit; (3) Broader Impacts
- Revised instructions for attachments
  - Facilities & Other Resources
  - Equipment Documentation
  - Other Attachments – Data Management Plan
  - Biographical Sketch
  - Current & Pending Support
- Budget – Total Direct Costs modified per PAPPG changes
- Other Information – High Resolution Graphics
**Cost Sharing Update**

- As recommended by the National Science Board and implemented by NSF, inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited in solicited & unsolicited proposals, unless approved in accordance with agency policy.

- Only 7 programs have been approved to require cost sharing:
  - Major Research Instrumentation Program (MRI);
  - Robert Noyce Scholarship Program;
  - Engineering Research Centers (ERC);
  - Industry/University Cooperative Research Centers (I/UCRC);
  - Experimental Programs to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR);
  - Innovation Corps (I-Corps); and
  - Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU)

NEW
Cost Sharing Update

• Removal of PI from Budget
  – If no person months are requested for senior personnel, they should be removed from the budget.
  – Their names will remain on the coversheet
  – Role should be described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal.
Cost Sharing Update

- Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources
  - New format will assist proposers in complying with NSF cost sharing policy and is a required component of the proposal.
  - Provides an aggregated description of the internal and external resources (both physical and personnel) that the organization and its collaborators will provide to the project.
  - No reference to cost, date of acquisition, and whether the resources are currently available or would be provided upon receipt of award.
  - If there are no resources to describe, a statement to that effect should be included in this section of the proposal and uploaded into FastLane.
NSF Implementation of the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR)

- Compliant with new RPPR format and data dictionary
- New service in Research.gov for PIs, co-PIs, SPOs
- Replaces annual, interim, and final project reports in FastLane
- Structured data collection
- Minimal changes for NSF staff
NSF Report Components

• Accomplishments: What was done? What was learned?
• Products: What has the project produced?
• Participants & Other Collaborating Organizations: Who has been involved?
• Impact: What is the impact of the project? How has it contributed?
• Changes/Problems
• Special Reporting Requirements (where applicable)
• Appendix 1: Demographic Information for Significant Contributors
Key Differences of the New Project Report System

- Project reporting dashboard
- Pre-populated report sections
- Structured collection of data
- PDF upload to support images, charts, and other complex graphics
- Improved citation search through Thomson Web of Science
Key Differences of the New Project Report System

- Special reporting requirements are controlled by solicitation
- PI no longer provides demographic information on significant participants
  - Pilot: 53% of participants are entering demographic information compared to 43% in FastLane (for calendar year 2012).
Key Implementation Dates

- Project Report Pilot currently underway with 19 research organizations submitting project reports on Research.gov
- Final Target Launch Date: March 18, 2013
  - All NSF awards and institutions
  - NSF awardees were asked to stop submitting project reports in FastLane starting on February 1, 2013
  - Program Officers must approve all FastLane-submitted reports by March 15, 5 PM EST
More Information and Help

- Research.gov Webinar Series
  - For directions, email webinars@research.gov

- Research.gov Website: Project Report Info Page (for PIs and SPOs)

- Research.gov Help Desk
  - Rgov@nsf.gov or 1-800-381-1532
The Award Cash Management Service (ACM$) is a new approach to award payments and post-award financial processes.

- ACM$ will transition financial processing of award payments from the current “pooling” method and transition to submission of award level payments.
- This will require the submission of award level payment amounts each time funds are requested.
- End of the current “pooling” method and transition to submission of award level payment amounts each time funds are requested.
- Eliminates quarterly Federal Financial Reports (FFR).
Key Implementation Dates

- ACM$ was released on January 4th to pilot organizations, a group comprised of 38 research organizations including small and large organizations and "large facility" organizations.
  - These 38 research organizations represent 20% of the total award base for NSF
  - ACM$ will be released to all NSF awardees April 2013 on Research.gov
National Science Board (NSB)
Task Force on Administrative Burdens

- Charged to examine administrative burden imposed on federally supported researchers and identify opportunities to reduce burden.
- Request for Information will ask for feedback covering:
  - Sources of administrative work and recommendations for reductions;
  - IRB and IACUC processes;
  - Proposal preparation;
  - Agency specific requirements;
  - Reform efforts currently proposed by OMB
- Breakout session immediately following led by Dr. Alan Leshner, Member of the NSB and Chief Executive Officer, AAAS and Executive Publisher, Journal of Science.
For More Information

Ask Early, Ask Often!

nsf.gov/staff
nsf.gov/staff/orglist.jsp
nsf.gov/about/career_opps/rotators/index.jsp