INFORMATION RELATIVE TO COMMUNICATING WITH NSF

This document contains information about: requesting information relative to programs and proposals; responding to requests from NSF Program Officers (PO) or their designated agents; and responsibilities as regards annual and final reports ending with a section on new requirements.

REQUESTING INFORMATION RELATIVE TO PROGRAMS AND PROPOSALS

So you have a great idea, are sure it justifies NSF support because it is such a great idea and pop into an NSF Division Directors office to discuss it or broadcast an email to sets of program officers asking their opinion. No not a good idea except in rare cases. Do some research first and then contact someone. Look through the NSF web site and find a program that fits your idea and read it through before asking questions, then choose an appropriate Program Officer and email them your questions. If you do not get an answer within a few days then call or send off to another appropriate officer as sometimes we are out of communication for some reason or the list of officers is not current. The quickest and easiest way to get an answer is to email the question or questions. If it is to pass an idea along to see if it is appropriate for a particular program send a **brief, concise, succinct description** along with an idea of why you need external funding to accomplish your purpose and then give some dollar amount so the NSF PO has some sense of what you plan to do.

Useful general information about preparing a proposal (aside from your grants office should you have one or someone else on campus that has successfully maneuvered submitting a proposal):

- **The Relevant Program Solicitation**: Enter the acronym for the program in the search box in the upper right hand corner of the NSF homepage and it should take you to a number of references to that program solicitation. Find the one that says it is the latest solicitation and hit on it. You may need a few more hits to get to the solicitation but you will get there and then you can find useful information such as the names of the cognizant Program Officers and the link to recent awards in the program—this can help you gain a better sense of what is funded under that program and might help you find collaborators.

- **The division at NSF that seems to fit closest to your idea**: On the left hand column of the homepage is a search box for Program Areas: Pull down the menu and go to the most likely one and then search through its offerings for their current programs. Hitting on the program name will get you to the Program Solicitation

RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FROM NSF PROGRAM OFFICERS (PO) OR THEIR DESIGNATED AGENTS

Request from a PO to answer questions relative to a submitted proposal or to change a budget:

- Answer as soon as possible as the PO cannot process your proposal without the information requested. Such a request indicates the PO is considering funding your proposal. It does not indicate they will do so, but you are a lot closer to funding than before you received such a request.

Request from a PO to supplement or explain material in your annual or final report:

- Again answer as soon as possible. The information was requested so that the PO could better understand your project. It is our way of managing the many projects we have in our portfolio when we do not have the time or money to actually do site visits. See below

ANNUAL AND FINAL REPORTS

Your reports in ejacket provide a mechanism for projects to inform NSF about project activities and impact. Program officers use these reports to learn about project activities, monitor progress the project is making relative towards its goals and objectives, and provide feedback to PIs. This information also helps in analysis of program impacts and production of program reports.

TYPES OF REPORTS, DUE DATES AND OVERDUE DATES AND NOTIFICATION MECHANISMS

**General Information**

There are two report types of importance (Annual and Final Reports). Note there are two key dates, the due date (when you start getting emails telling you the report is due) and the overdue date, the date the report is considered overdue and you and your co-PIs suffer various consequences if the report has not been submitted **and approved** by that date.

**Consequences of Overdue Annual or Final Reports**

No awards can be made to proposals under consideration for awards and, no NSF action can be taken on the award with the overdue report or on any other award for which you or your co-PIs are PIs or co-PIs (stopped actions include: PI changes, supplements, no cost extensions, or continuation funds). For more information see Awards and Administration Guidelines, Section E, Technical Reporting Requirements of the Grants and Proposal Guidelines document accessible through the NSF home page [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/aag_2.jsp#IIE3](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/aag_2.jsp#IIE3)

**Notification System**
Notices start piling up in your emails starting 90 days before the anniversary date of the award for annual reports or on the expiration date of the award for a final report, warning you that a report is due. They will keep arriving until you submit the report and it is approved. Since award dates are now either the 1st or the 15th expect to get notices starting then and continuing. Email notices are sent automatically and there is no way your Program Officer can stem the tide for you.

**Due Dates**

**Annual Report:** Due 90 days before the anniversary date of the award. Overdue the day after the anniversary date of the award.

**Final Reports:** Due on the expiration date of the award. Overdue 91 days after that date.

**PREPARATION OF REPORTS—CLEAR AND SUCCINCT ARE THE OPERATIVE WORDS HERE**

Note that details of what is needed can vary from one program to another to reflect the goals and structure of that program; however, there are some basic rules to follow. Be clear and succinct. For example, when listing participants give a one or two sentence description of what they do. If a number of the participants listed all do the same thing just note that all the participants below are involved in….. Suggestions below are based loosely on the needs of programs such as TUES. Most programs have specific suggestions if they are appropriate. Also note that for all reports you must provide information in the relevant FastLane text boxes. Attached PDF files should only be used for certain types of information, such as evaluation reports, confidential information, charts and graphs, pictures, and texts of publications.

**Part I. Participants:**

Include in this section only those people and organizations that have made major contributions to the project or spent significant time on the project. What people have worked on your project? What other organizations have been involved as partners? Have you had other collaborators or contacts? If you include them, briefly describe their contributions.

**Part II. Activities and Findings**

It is usually more convenient to prepare these sections in a word processor and then copy-and-paste the relevant section into the appropriate FastLane text box.

**Section 1: Research and Education Activities**

1. Executive Summary: The Executive Summary includes:
   - A brief overview of your project goals and expected outcomes.
   - A short description of major accomplishments.
   - Specific outcomes for students, faculty, and employers. (What difference has your project made and how do you know?)
2. Describe what was proposed to be done during the reporting period and explain any differences (e.g., changes in schedule, significant modifications in the project).

**Section 2: Major Findings**

1. Describe the accomplishments and findings for items you described in Section 1, Part 2, including results of evaluations.
2. Describe additional support from non-NSF sources (industry, academic, government).

**Section 3: Training and Development:** Describe the opportunities for training and development for faculty, students and others associated with the project.

**Section 4: Outreach Activities**

1. List project related presentations to professional societies, community organizations, and other relevant groups.
2. List outreach activities to students, educators, parents, administrators, and others in schools, colleges, and community organizations.
3. Describe any work with industry.

**Part III: Publications and Products:**

Provide dissemination activities such as books, articles, videos, software, and project web sites.

**Part IV: Contributions**

Many of you may not have anything additional to report here, but you have the opportunity to discuss unique contributions, major accomplishments, innovations, and successes relative to: 1) your discipline, 2) other disciplines, 3) human resource development, 4) resources for research and education, and 5) other aspects of public welfare beyond science and engineering.

**Attachments**

You must put relevant information into the appropriate text boxes and ONLY attach PDF files as backup documentation. PDF files sent as attachments are not searchable or accessible for automated NSF monitoring. Among the things that are appropriate to send as PDF attachments are:

1. Evaluator reports.
2. Charts, graphs, data tables, pictures, news articles, and like material that cannot be represented in text-only format.
3. Documents that are too long to be included in the text boxes, such as modules or short publications.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

**Project Outcomes Report for the General Public**

This is a recently added requirement affecting all new awards and projects receiving any funding amendments subsequent to January 4, 2011. Within 90 days following expiration of the grant, a project outcomes report must be submitted electronically via Research.gov. This report serves as a brief summary, prepared specifically for the public, of the nature and outcomes of the project. It will be posted in the Research Spending and Results section of the Research.gov website **exactly as it is submitted** and will be accompanied by the following disclaimer: “This Project Outcomes Report for the General Public is displayed verbatim as submitted by the Principal Investigator (PI) for this award. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this Report are those of the PI and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation; NSF has not approved or endorsed its content.”

**NSF Data Management Plans (DMP)**

All proposals submitted on or after January 18, 2011 must include a supplementary document of no more than two pages labeled “Data Management Plan”. This supplement should describe how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results. FastLane will not permit submission of a proposal that is missing a DMP. The plan will be reviewed as part of the intellectual merit or broader impacts of the proposal, or both, as appropriate. For more information see [http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp).

**NOT TRUE FOR ALL PROGRAMS BUT AN IMPORTANT PART OF SOME**

(these items help a program determine its aggregated outcomes)

**Program Monitoring Reports**

Some programs have instituted systems to aggregate data from each of their projects in order to gain a good sense of the outcomes of the program in terms of such items as numbers of faculty and students affected and numbers of new courses, electronic and hard copy products produced etc.

**Program Evaluation Studies**

Studies designed to help a program determine its effectiveness in terms of its goals. For TUES for example that would include determining the program’s effect on participants and their colleagues and on the quality of undergraduate STEM education.