

National Science Foundation Update: Revised GPG & Other Topics

OSR Brown Bag
Thursday, January 7th

Chris Beglinger
Grants Officer

Office for Sponsored Research

Kelly Morrison
Associate Director

Office for Sponsored Research



NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

National Science Foundation

- NSF is the funding source for approximately 20 percent of all federally supported basic research conducted by America's colleges and universities
- NSF is the only federal agency whose mission includes support for all fields of fundamental science and engineering



National Science Foundation

- In FY2014, Northwestern submitted proposals to NSF totaling more than \$222 million
- In FY2014, Northwestern received grant awards from NSF totaling over \$47 million
- While NSF proposal and award activity is heavily concentrated on the Evanston campus, the Chicago campus does apply for and receive NSF funding



Uniform Guidance (UG)

- The OMB “*Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*” was released on December 26, 2013
- The “Uniform Guidance” consolidates the eight federal circulars that govern financial assistance (grants), including A-21, A-110 and A-133, also effectively consolidating grantee communities
- Meant to ease administrative burden and strengthen oversight over Federal funds to reduce risks of waste, fraud and abuse
- Effective December 26, 2014



Grant Proposal Guide Update

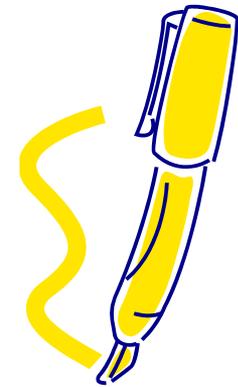
- NSF recently issued an updated Proposal and Award Policies & Procedures Guide
 - Part 1: Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)
 - Must be used for proposals submitted or due on or after December 26, 2014
- Includes NSF's implementation of Uniform Guidance
- Focusing today on the GPG portion

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf15001/gpg_print.pdf



Highlights of Changes

- Sections of the Proposal
- Proposals for Equipment & Conferences
- Biographical Sketches
- Letters of Collaboration
- Budget and Justification
- Post-Award Postdoc Mentoring Plans
- Project Description



» Results from Prior NSF Support

Sections of the Proposal

- Required sections of all research proposals clearly outlined in GPG
- Required unless solicitation specifically indicates not required and/or proposal type deviates from requirements
- Funding Mechanism (found on “Cover Sheet”)
 - E.g., RAPID, EAGER, Equipment, Conference, International Travel
 - FastLane will now use the rules associated with each proposal mechanism to check for compliance *prior* to submission



Required Sections – Research Proposals

Lead vs. Non-Lead

LEAD ORGANIZATION

- Cover Sheet
- Project Summary
- Table of Contents*
- Project Description
- References Cited
- Biographical Sketch(es)
- Budget & Budget Justification
- Current & Pending Support
- Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources
- Data Management Plan
- Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan**



NON-LEAD ORGANIZATION

- Cover Sheet
- Table of Contents*
- Biographical Sketch(es)
- Budget & Budget Justification
- Current & Pending Support
- Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources



*Automatically generated

** If applicable

Types of Proposals (“Funding Mechanism”)

- Equipment Proposals
 - “References Cited” section no longer required
 - “Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources” section needs to include a brief description of other support services available
- Conference Proposals
 - Explicitly clarifies that funds are not to be spent for meals and coffee breaks for intramural meetings of an organization or any of components
 - Appropriate reference to AAG regarding program income associated with conferences



– “Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources” now required

Biographical Sketches

- Language adjusted to emphasize that inclusion of personal information is not appropriate nor relevant
- Professional Preparation (Section A)
 - Location of undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral institutions must be provided
- Collaborators & Other Affiliations (Section E)
 - Collaborators & Co-Editors
 - Total number of collaborators & co-editors
 - Remember – in alphabetical order
- Inclusion for “Other Personnel”
 - Inclusion of bios for other personnel in certain categories is acceptable
 - postdoctoral associates, other professionals, and students



Letters of Collaboration

- Formerly referred to as “letters of commitment”
- Previously, focus on not including “letters of support”
 - Letters of support should not be included unless required by a specific program solicitation
- Differences between letters of commitment/collaboration and letters of support has not always been clear
- Guidance clarifies that letters of collaboration should be limited to stating the intent to collaborate and should not contain endorsements or evaluation of the proposed project



Misc. Updates

- Cover Sheet
 - Limit of 5 countries in International Activities section
- When to Submit Proposals
 - Updated guidance on “Special Exceptions to NSF’s Deadline Date Policy”
- Ideas Lab
 - New section which details the four-stage process used with this funding mechanism
 - Designed 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



Budgets & Justifications

- Updates to reference appropriate UG updates
- Budget justification limit for proposing organization is limited to 3 pages
 - Clarifies that for proposals that contain a subaward(s), each subaward must include a separate budget justification limited to 3 pages
 - No change to NU approach



Administrative & Clerical Salaries & Wages

- Normally treated as indirect costs
- May now be included if the following conditions are met-
 - Integral to the project or activity
 - Individuals can be specifically identified with project or activity
 - Costs are explicitly included in the approved budget or have the prior written approval of NSF Grants Officer
 - Costs are not also recovered as indirect costs



Senior Personnel Salaries & Wages

- General policy limits salary compensation requested in the proposal budget to no more than 2 months
- If more than 2 months are anticipated, this must be
 - Disclosed in the budget
 - Justified in the budget justification
 - Approved by NSF in the award notice budget
- Under normal rebudgeting authority, grantee may internally approve an increase or decrease in person months devoted to project
 - No approval from NSF is necessary as long as that change would not cause the objective or scope of the project to change



Materials and Supplies

- GPG incorporates changes on coverage of computing devices
- Computing device is considered as supply if acquisition cost is less than \$5,000
- Allowable for devices that are allowable and allocable, but not solely dedicated, to the performance of the NSF award
- Appropriate justification must still be included



Participant Support Costs

- Costs for items such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees)
- Any additional categories of PSC other than those described must be justified in the budget justification
 - NSF emphasizes that these costs will be closely scrutinized
 - 2 CFR § 200.75
- Indirect costs remain unallowable
- Funds provided for PSC may not be used for other categories without explicit NSF prior approval



Travel

- All travel (both foreign and domestic) must be justified
 - Specified, itemized, and justified by destination and cost
- Domestic travel now limited to travel between U.S., its territories and possessions
- Temporary dependent care costs above and beyond regular dependent care that directly result from travel to conference are allowable costs assuming appropriate conditions are met
 - Costs are a direct result of travel for the Federal award; temporary during travel period; consistent with grantee's travel policy



- 2 CFR § 200.474

Subawards

- If known at the time of proposal submission, intent to enter into subaward arrangement must be disclosed
- If added at award stage, request must be approved by NSF
- F&A Rate for Subrecipients
 - Domestic subrecipients should use their applicable U.S. federal negotiated indirect cost rate(s)
 - If no such rate exists, Grantee may either negotiate a rate or use a de minimus indirect cost rate recovery of 10% MTDC
 - Foreign subrecipients should use applicable U.S. federal negotiated indirect cost rate(s)
 - If no such rate exists, Grantee must use a de minimus indirect cost rate recovery of 10% MTDC



Postdoc Mentoring Plan

- No change to proposal requirement – if any postdocs are supported, “Postdoc Mentoring Plan” is required
- Changes
 - If supplemental funding is requested to support postdocs and no mentoring plan was provided at original proposal stage, one must be submitted
 - If funds are rebudgeted to support a postdoc and no mentoring plan was included in the original proposal, the grantee must send the Program Officer the requisite monitoring plan
- Mentoring activities must also be reported in annual and final project reports



Project Description

- Must contain, as a separate section in the narrative, a section dedicated to broader impacts
 - Section must now be explicitly labeled “Broader Impacts of the Proposed Work”
- Results from Prior NSF Support
 - Clarification to “Publications” section
 - Complete bibliographic citation for each publication should be included in the “Results from Prior NSF Support” section or in “References Cited”



Results from Prior NSF Support

- Note that Results from Prior NSF Support includes *current* NSF funding
- Maximum of 5 pages (within 15-page Project Description)
- The following information must be included –
 - Award Number, Amount, and Period
 - Title of Project
 - Summary of the Results (***separate sections on Broader Impacts & Intellectual Merit***)
 - Publications
 - Evidence of Research Products
 - If proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work



NSF's Risk Management Framework and Decision to Award or Decline Proposals

- New section describing framework that NSF uses to evaluate the risks posed by proposers prior to issuance of an NSF award
- Outlines the appeal process that a proposer may utilize if NSF declined their proposals for financial or administrative reasons



Returning Proposals w/o Review

- GPG update indicates that a proposal will not be accepted or will be returned without review for specific reasons outlined
 - Removal of language indicating “may”
- Most common rejections and proposal file updates
 - **NSF Results from NSF Prior Support**
 - Missing certain required information (e.g., total award amount)
 - Missing two separate sections discussing intellectual merit and broader impacts



Questions?

Grant Proposal Guide

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf15001/gpg_print.pdf

General UG Guidance & NU Implementation Plan

<http://www.northwestern.edu/asrsp/federal-initiatives/uniform-guidance.html>



NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

