National Science Foundation Update:
Revised GPG & Other Topics

OSR Brown Bag
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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.
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

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

General UG Guidance & NU Implementation Plan
http://www.northwestern.edu/asrsp/federal-initiatives/uniform-guidance.html