

Basic Requirements for NSF Proposals

Electronic Requirements – All proposals to NSF must be submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane System. Rensselaer is registered and has authorized the appropriate RA&F staff to submit proposals utilizing this system. In order to submit a proposal through the FastLane, the PI must be a registered user. The PI is responsible for initiating the proposal in the FastLane and must provide access to RA&F in order to complete the administrative portions and submit the proposal to NSF. If you need to have an NSF FastLane account set up or need help utilizing the system, please contact Pat Gray (grayp@rpi.edu) for assistance.

Format of the Proposal – FastLane does not automatically paginate a proposal; each section of the proposal that is uploaded as a file must be individually paginated prior to upload to the electronic system. The proposal must be clear, readily legible, and conform to the following four requirements: (a) an 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; or Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger must be used; (b) the margins must be at least one inch on all sides; (c) no more than 6 lines of type within a vertical space of 1 inch. 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. PIs are cautioned, however, that the text must still be readable. A standard, single-column format should be used in the body of the proposal.

Information About Principal Investigators/Project Directors and Co-Principal Investigators – this form gathers information relative to gender, race, ethnicity and disability status of individuals named as PIs/co-PIs. Submission of this information is voluntary and if you do not wish to provide the personal information, you should check the box(es) provided for that purpose. The information requested about current or previous Federal research support and the names of the PIs/Co-PIs is required.

Cover Sheet – In order to be sure that your proposal is reviewed by the proper NSF program, the applicable program announcement/solicitation and the program(s) you wish to have the proposal directed to must be selected in the appropriate places on the cover page.

Project Summary – This portion of the proposal should be a summary of the proposed activity suitable for publication and not more than one page in length. The Project Summary must clearly address (within the one page limit) the intellectual merit of and the broader impacts resulting from the proposal activity. Proposals that do not separately address both merit review criteria within the one-page Project Summary will be returned without review.

Project Description – The Project Description (including the Results from Prior NSF Support, which is limited to five pages) may not exceed 15 pages. Visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation. **Conformance to the 15 page limit will be strictly enforced and may not be exceeded unless a deviation has been specifically authorized in writing by NSF.** The Project Description must be self contained and URLs that provide information related to the proposal should not be used because 1) the information could circumvent the 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.

References Cited – Reference information is required and 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. Also, the use of et. al. is not allowed. There is no established page limitation for the references, however, this section must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the 15-page project description.

Biographical Sketches – A biographical sketch is limited to two pages and is required for each individual identified as senior project personnel. The bio should not include personal information such as home address or telephone, date of birth, citizenship, marital status, hobbies, etc. The following information must be provided in the order specified: (a) Professional Preparation (undergraduate and graduate education); (b) Appointments; (c) Publications (up to five closely related and 5 other significant publications); (d) Synergistic Activities; and (e) Collaborators and Other Affiliations.

Budget and Budget Justification – Each proposal must contain a budget for each year of support requested and the amounts for each budget line item should be documented and justified in the budget justification. The budget justification should be no more than three pages and should provide detail for each of the items requested on the budget. NSF does not expect that proposals submitted for funding will include a cost sharing component. Unless a specific program announcement contains a mandatory requirement for cost sharing, no cost sharing should be reflected on Line M of the proposal budget.

Current and Pending Support – Information about current projects and pending support for ongoing projects and proposals is required for each individual identified as senior project personnel.

Special Information and Supplementary Documentation –

Postdoctoral Research 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. This plan is limited to one page and should describe the mentoring that will be provided to all postdoctoral research supported by the project. The mentoring plan cannot be used to circumvent the 15-page project description limitation.

Any other special information and supplementary documentation must be included as part of the project description if it is relevant to determining the quality of the project work. This section is not considered an appendix and, in fact, appendices may not be included unless a deviation has been authorized in writing by the appropriate NSF official. Unless required by a specific program solicitation, letters of support should not be submitted as supplementary documentation as they are not a standard component of the NSF Proposal and, if included, a reviewer is under no obligation to review these materials. Letters of support submitted in response to a program solicitation requirement must be unique to the specific proposal submitted and cannot be altered without the author's explicit prior

approval. NSF may return without review proposals that are not consistent with these instructions.

Additional Information

In addition to the items above, there are several other components to the proposal that are not required. These components are single copy documents and a summary of each is below:

List of Suggested Reviewers or Reviewers Not to Include

Authorization to Deviate from NSF Proposal Preparation Requirements – Conformance to the instructions in the GPG is required for all proposals submitted to NSF. Any deviation from the standard proposal preparation requires advance authorization which is provided in two ways: through specification in the program solicitation or written approval of the cognizant NSF Assistant Director/Office Head or designee. Proposals must include this authorization by identifying the solicitation on the Cover Sheet or providing the name, date and title of the NSF official authorizing the deviation.

Proprietary or Privileged Information – Any proprietary or confidential information contained in the proposal must be clearly marked in the proposal and be appropriately labeled with a legend. The box for “Proprietary or Privileged Information” must be checked on the Cover Sheet when the proposal contains such information.

Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources – This section should describe the organizational resources available to perform the effort proposed and should include only those resources that are directly applicable.

Cost Sharing

NSF does not require that proposals submitted for funding include a cost sharing proponent. Therefore, unless specifically required by the NSF solicitation, cost sharing should not be included in the budget justification or recorded on Line M of the proposal budget. Once cost sharing is proposed on Line M and accepted by NSF, the commitment of funds becomes legally binding and is subject to audit. Failure to provide the level of cost sharing reflected in the approved grant budget may result in termination of the NSF grant, disallowance of grant costs and/or refund of grant funds to NSF by the grantee.