

## **Basic Requirements for NSF Proposals**

**Electronic Requirements** – All proposals to NSF must be submitted electronically either via the NSF FastLane System or Grants.gov. Rensselaer is registered and has authorized the appropriate RA&F staff to submit proposals utilizing these systems. 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](mailto: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; (d) type density including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per 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.

**Cover Page** – 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. 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.

For proposals that request funding to support postdoctoral researchers, a separate section within the 15 page limit, must be included which describes the mentoring activities that

will be provided for such individuals. **Proposals that do not address mentoring in a separate section within the Project Description will be returned without 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.

Special Information and Supplementary Documentation – Except in certain circumstances, 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.