NSF Proposal Preparation
Categories of Funding Opportunities
- Dear Colleague Letter
- Program Description
- Program Announcement
- Program Solicitation

Types of Submissions
- Letter of Intent
- Preliminary Proposal
- Full Proposal
Types of due dates
- Target Dates
- Deadline dates
- Submission window

Important Documents—read carefully
- Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)
- Solicitation or Program Description

Electronic Submission
- Fastlane
- Grants.gov
Proposal Components

- Cover Sheet—complete and check over what’s pre-filled
- Project Summary
- Table of Contents—generated automatically
- Project Description
- References Cited
- Biographical Sketch(es)
- Budget and Budget Justification
- Current and Pending Support
- Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources
- Special Information and Supplementary Documentation
- Data Management Plan
- Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable)
Not more than one page

Should contain a description of the project with statement of objectives and methods to be employed.

Must be written in third person and not be a proposal abstract

Must include, clearly separated:
  – Overview
  – Statement on Intellectual Merit
  – Statement on Broader Impacts
**Biographical Sketch(es)**

- Provide reviewers with your credential
- helps them evaluate whether you have appropriate background, knowledge and skills
- limited to two pages, for each PI/co-PI/senior project personnel;
- the following information must be provided in the order and format specified
  - Professional Preparation,
  - Appointments,
  - Publications, data sets, software, patents, and copyrights
  - Synergistic Activities
  - Collaborators and Other Affiliations
Budget

- How much can I ask for? How much do I need? How much will they fund?
- Financial plan should match the project plan
  - Project plan needs to be realistic within the constraints of the budget
  - Budget needs to be reasonable given the goals of the project
  - A proposal budget should anticipate most, if not all, costs necessary to perform the work described in the proposal
  - Use estimates
    - can be based upon quotations from vendors, consultants and collaborators
    - historical and current costs
    - or standardized projections of expenses, typically 3% inflationary increase is
    Calculations need to be accurate and rates correct
- OSP has templates and will help you develop your budget
NSF Budget—Standard Cost Categories

- **Senior Personnel** – salaries/wages and time commitment of PI, Co-PIs, and senior associates
- **Other Personnel** – salaries/compensation of others, including graduate students and undergraduate researchers
- **Fringe Benefits** – 26% at WPI; n/a Research Assistants
- **Equipment** – an item that costs $5,000 or more and has a useful life of at least one year
- **Travel** – all foreign and domestic travel (airfare, transportation, lodging, food)
- **Participant Support** – related costs for trainees in connection with NSF-sponsored workshops/meetings
- **Other Direct Costs** – materials and supplies, publication costs, consultant services, computer services, Sub-awards, tuition for research assistants, health fee
- **Indirect costs** – presently calculated at 57% of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC)
Budget Justification

- Amounts for each budget line item be justified Budget justification must be no more than 3 pages per proposal

- Key personnel:
  - Professor Smith will serve as PI on this project. An Associate Professor of the Department of Biotechnology, she has researched molecular biology extensively. She will oversee the project, analyze data and prepare publications.
  - Dr. Smith is committed to the project for 2 summer months per year.

- Travel:
  - Graduate student is expected to present results at the annual meeting of the American Society for Cell Biology, which will be held in San Francisco in 2016. It is expected that airfare will be $600, and $800 is requested for lodging and meals for three days.
Budget Justification

- As you are creating the budget justification, think about all the questions you would ask about these categories if you were spending your own money.
  - Why do you need so many people on the project, how is their contribution unique, why do they have to spend that much time on the project?
  - Why do you need to travel to those locations, why do so many people from the project have to go?
  - Why can’t you use your departmental computers?
  - Why are you paying your subjects at that rate?
  - If you have a subcontractor, why is their participation necessary—what is unique about their experience/qualifications?
Current and Pending Support

- Listing of external support for all key personnel
- Includes support currently in place and any support applied for
- Regardless of source
- Include the pending proposal
- List for each: amount of support, grant period, title, source of support, location of project, person-months per year committed to project
- You can use/create your own template
- OSP helps with creating a list of your current and pending grants/grant applications
Facilities, Equipment and other Resources

- Is used to address adequacy of resources
  - Laboratory
  - Major Equipment
  - Animal facility
  - Computing
  - Office
- Internal and external; list only what’s directly applicable
- Physical (infrastructure) and personnel
- Narrative format; must not include financial information
- What’s in this section is committed by the institution
- OSP may provide some standard language
Data Management Plan

- NSF now requires that all proposals include a data management plan (maximum of two pages).
- Describe how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results.
- Describe the data generated by the research, and your plan for managing that data,
  - storage,
  - human subjects protection,
  - data dissemination and level of aggregation.
- For help, sample plans and templates, contact Sia Najafi, Director of Academic and Research Computing
NSF Grant Proposals--Take Home Points

- Follow instructions carefully and to the letter (pagination, fonts, margins, spacing requirements, headers, sections, page limits)
- Non compliant proposals will be returned without review
- Check and double-check and triple-check
- OSP checks again; give us enough time to check!
- Deadlines are rigid—proposals submitted late will most likely be returned without review

OSP is here to help. Approach us early in the process.
Helpful Information

- OSP website: http://www.wpi.edu/offices/osp.html
- Gordon Library website: http://libguides.wpi.edu/content.php?pid=395982&sid=3242465
- OSP contact information: http://www.wpi.edu/offices/osp/staff.html