

National Science Foundation Proposals: How to Prevent the Dreaded Return Without Review

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PAPPG INSTRUCTIONS

It is important that all proposals conform to the proposal preparation instructions contained in Part I of the PAPPG or the NSF *Grants.gov Application Guide*. Conformance is required and will be strictly enforced unless an authorization to deviate from standard proposal preparation requirements has been approved. NSF will not accept or will return without review proposals that are not consistent with these instructions. See Chapter IV.B for additional information. NSF authorization to deviate from these instructions must be received prior to proposal submission.¹

COMMON ERRORS BY SECTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Cover Sheet

- The title must be exactly as requested in the solicitation.

Project Summary

- If uploading as a pdf in the Supplementary Docs with special characters, the headings are mandatory (Overview, Intellectual Merit, Broader Impacts).

Project Description

- Separate “Broader Impacts” Section.
- No URLs may be used.** The Project Description must be self-contained because 1) the information could circumvent page limitations; 2) the reviewers are under no obligation to view the sites; and 3) the sites could be altered or deleted between the time of submission and the time of review.
- “Results from Prior NSF Support” must be listed for **any PI or co-PI** identified on the proposal that has received NSF support with a start date in the past five years (including any current funding and no cost extensions).
- The “Results from Prior NSF Support” section must be separately described under two distinct headings: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts.

References Cited

- Each reference must include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publication. Do not use “et.al.”
- Make sure the title is included.

Biographical Sketch

- Do not include personal information.
- Do not include more than 10 Products or Publications.
- Do not include more than 5 Synergistic Activities.
- Do not include Collaborators here.
- Include a biographical sketch for all senior personnel in this section.

Budget and Justification

- Justification limited to 3 pages per institution (if subawards are included in the proposal).

Current and Pending Support

- List the current project as pending.

Facilities Equipment & Other Resources

- Include any information about unfunded collaborations in this section. Any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be described.

Other Supplementary Docs

- No letters of support. Ever.
- No additional documents unless you receive a deviation authorization.
- Letters of Collaboration must follow the template in the PAPPG.
- The biographical sketches or other personnel (postdocs, other professionals, and students) must be in Supplementary Docs and identified as “Other Personnel.”
- Unfunded collaborator letters should be included in the Supplementary Docs section.



Collaborators and Other Affiliations

The template must be used.

Effective April 24, 2017, NSF requires the use of a template for identifying collaborators and other affiliations. The FastLane Collaborators and Other Affiliations screens will include a link to the new template and instructions. The template has been developed to be fillable, however, the content and format requirements must not be altered by the user, i.e., additional columns must not be added. This template can be saved in .xlsx or .xls format, and directly uploaded into FastLane as a Collaborators and Other Affiliations Single Copy Document.²

¹PAPPG: https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg17_1/nsf17_1.pdf
<https://www.nsf.gov>

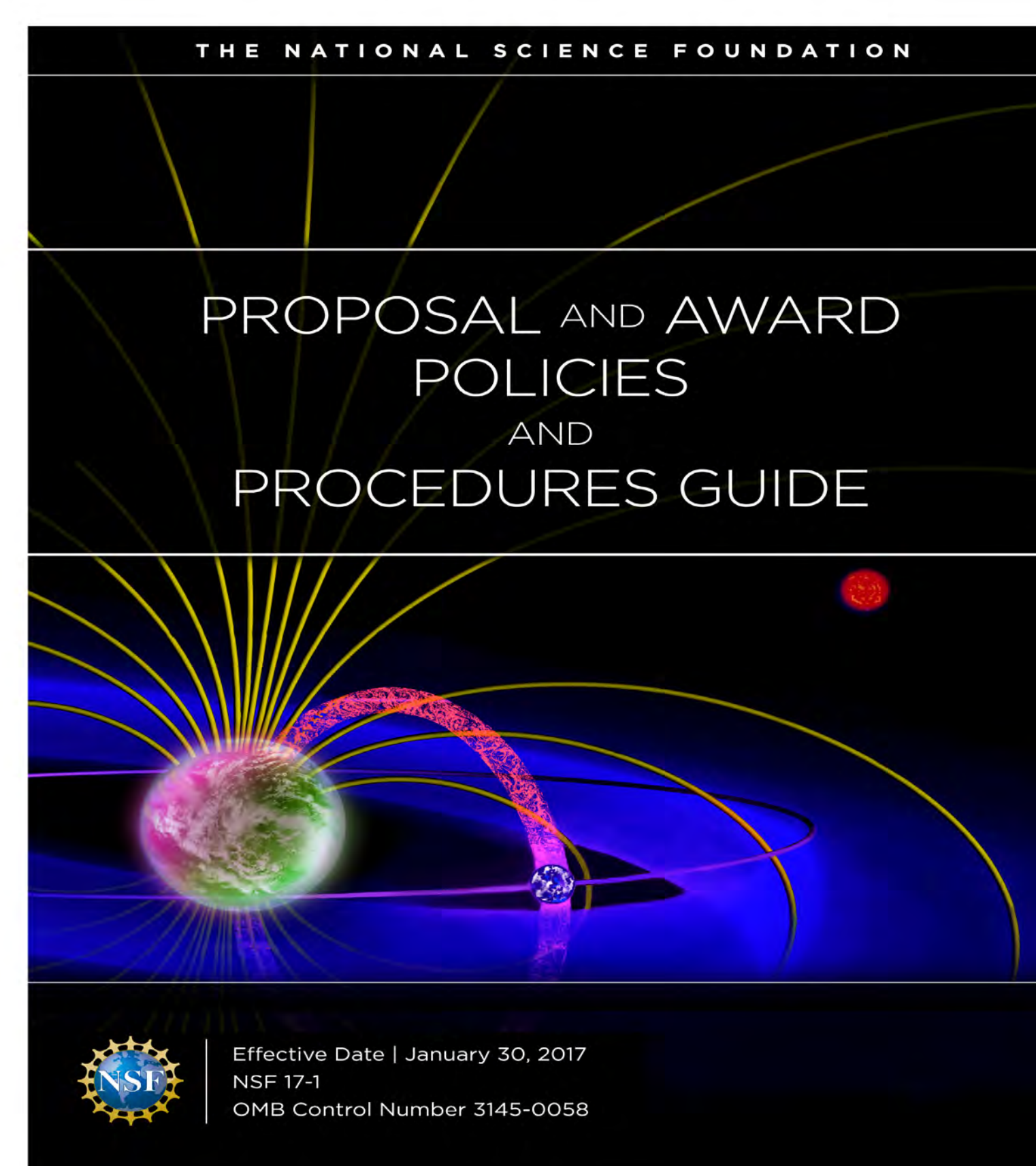
GENERAL ERRORS

Margins/Fonts/Spacing - Make sure these conform to the PAPPG. NSF is not afraid to get out the ruler.

Do not circumvent page limits.

Cost share, unless required by the solicitation, is prohibited by NSF.

Pay close attention to solicitation specific requirements.



Your Best Friend