

NSF Proposal & Award and Procedures Guide

- Part 1: Proposal preparation and submission guide
- Part 2: Award and administrative guide

Overall Document – Previously, the *NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)* was a standalone document. It has now been incorporated as Part I of the new *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)*.

The *NSF Grant Policy Manual (GPM)* has also been incorporated into the Guide as Part II and has been renamed the *NSF Award & Administration Guide (AAG)*. Previous GPM references in the text of the GPG have been updated with references to the applicable AAG section. In addition, a Subject Index has been added to the GPG, internal references and links have been updated as necessary, and minor editorial changes have been made throughout the document to either clarify or enhance the intended meaning of a sentence or section.

Format of the NSF Proposal

Prior to electronic submission, it is strongly recommended that proposers conduct an administrative review to ensure that proposals comply with the proposal preparation guidelines established in the GPG. GPG Exhibit II-1 contains a proposal preparation checklist that may be used to assist in this review. This checklist is not intended to be an all-inclusive repetition of the required proposal contents and associated proposal preparation guidelines. It is, however, meant to highlight certain critical items so they will not be overlooked when the proposal is prepared.

1. Proposal Pagination Instructions

Proposers are advised that 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.

2. Proposal Margin and Spacing Requirements

The proposal must be clear, readily legible, and conform to the following four requirements:

a. An Arial, Helvetica, Palatino, Computer Modern, or Georgia typeface, a black font color, and a font size of 10 points or larger must be used. (A Symbol font may be used to insert Greek letters or special characters; however, the font size requirement still applies.)

b. Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch;

c. No more than 6 lines of type within a vertical space of 1 inch; and

d. Margins, in all directions, must be at least an inch.

3. Page Formatting

Since many reviewers will be reviewing proposals electronically, proposers are strongly encouraged to use only a standard, single-column format for the text. Avoid using a two-column format since it can cause difficulties when reviewing the document electronically.

While line spacing (single-spaced, double-spaced, etc.) is at the discretion of the proposer, established page limits must be followed. (Individual program solicitations, however, may eliminate this proposer option by requiring other type size, margin or line spacing requirements.)

The guidelines specified above establish the **minimum** type size requirements; however, PIs are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal. **Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the proposal; consequently, the use of small type not in compliance with the above guidelines may be grounds for NSF to return the proposal without review.** Adherence to type size and line spacing requirements also is necessary to ensure that no proposer will have an unfair advantage, by using smaller type or line spacing to provide more text in the proposal.

Exhibit II-1: Proposal Preparation Checklist

It is imperative that all proposals conform to the proposal preparation and submission instructions specified in this Guide. Proposals also must comply with NSF font, spacing and margin requirements. The guidelines specified in GPG Chapter II.B establish minimum requirements; however, readability is of utmost importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font. Conformance with all preparation and submission instructions is required and will be strictly enforced unless a deviation has been approved in advance of proposal submission. NSF may return without review proposals that are not consistent with these instructions. See GPG Chapter IV.B for additional information.

Prior to electronic submission, it is strongly recommended that an administrative review be conducted to ensure that proposals comply with the instructions, in the format specified. This checklist is not intended to be an all-inclusive repetition of the required proposal contents and associated proposal preparation guidelines. It is, however, meant to highlight certain critical items so they will not be overlooked when the proposal is prepared.

General:

- Proposal is responsive to the program announcement/solicitation or to the GPG.
- If a proposal has been previously declined and is being resubmitted, proposal has been revised to take into account the major comments from the prior NSF review.
- Proposed work is appropriate for funding by NSF, and is not a duplicate of, or substantially similar to, a proposal already under consideration by NSF from the same submitter.

Single Copy Documents:

- Information about Principal Investigators/Project Directors (except for the required information regarding current or previous Federal research support and the name(s) of the PI/co-PI, submission of the information is voluntary).
- Authorization to Deviate from NSF Proposal Preparation Requirements (if applicable).
- List of Suggested Reviewers, or Reviewers Not to Include (optional).
- Proprietary or Privileged Information Statement (if applicable).
- Proposal Certifications (submitted by the Authorized Organizational Representative within 5 working days following the electronic submission of the proposal.) (See GPG Chapter II.C.1e for a complete listing of proposal certifications.)
- SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable). (One copy only, scanned as a single copy document.)

Cover Sheet:

- Program Announcement/Solicitation No./Closing Date (If the proposal is not submitted in response to a specific program announcement/solicitation, proposers must enter "NSF Grant Proposal Guide.")
- Specific NSF program(s) identified (if known).
- For renewal proposal, previous award number entered.
- Related preliminary proposal number entered (if applicable).
- Check Appropriate Box(es), and provide requisite information, if the proposal includes any of the items identified. Note in particular, proposals that include use of human subjects or vertebrate animals require additional information to be submitted with these types of proposals.

Project Summary:

Note limitation of one page, and the requirement that both merit review criteria be separately addressed within the body of the Summary.

Project Description:

Note limitation of 15 pages

Merit Review Criteria: Ensure both merit review criteria are described as an integral part of the narrative.³¹

Inclusion of Universal Resource Locators (URLs): PIs are advised that the Project Description must be self-contained and are cautioned that URLs (Internet addresses) that provide information necessary to the review of the proposal should not be used because reviewers are not obligated to view such sites.

Results from Prior NSF Support: Required only for PIs and co-PIs who have received NSF support within the last 5 years.

Human-resource information: Required for renewal proposals from academic institutions only.

References Cited:

No page limitation, however, this section must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the 15-page Project Description. Each reference must be in the specified format.

Biographical Sketch(es):

Note limitation of 2 pages per individual; required for all senior project personnel. The required information must be provided in the order and format specified.

Proposal Budget: (cumulative and annual)

Budget Justification (Note limitation of 3 pages per proposal.)

Current and Pending Support: Required for all senior project personnel.

Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources

Special Information and Supplementary Documentation:

See GPG Chapter II.C.2 for the types of information appropriate for submission in this section, as required.

Any additional items specified in a relevant program solicitation.

Special Guidelines:

Note that GPG Chapter II.D contains special proposal preparation instructions for certain types of proposals.

³¹ Examples illustrating activities likely to demonstrate broader impacts are available electronically on the NSF Website at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/broaderimpacts.pdf>.

Re: [RESADM-L] NSF fonts - from another perspective.

Subject: Re: [RESADM-L] NSF fonts - from another perspective.
From: Lise Schioler <lschioler@ALUM.MIT.EDU>
Date: Thu, 20 Sep 2007 13:28:38 -0400
To: RESADM-L@hrinet.org

To all,

Pease allow me to provide some feed back from "the other side". As a former NSF program officer, it was my responsibility to make sure the proposals submitted met the guidelines in the GPG. I never enjoyed calling or emailing a PI to tell him/her that their proposal was not accepted for review because of font size or line spacing, but you would be amazed how many PIs tried to bend those rules.

The latest version of the GPG (dated April 2007, to be effective June 1 2007) states (green color and underline mine):

"The guidelines specified above establish the **minimum** type size requirements; however, PIs are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal. **Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the proposal; consequently, the use of small type not in compliance with the above guidelines may be grounds for NSF to return the proposal without review.** Adherence to type size and line spacing requirements also is necessary to ensure that no proposer will have an unfair advantage, by using smaller type or line spacing to provide more text in the proposal."

The message to the PI is that they should do *everything* and *anything* they can to make the proposal easy for the reviewer to read. Think about it: if you had to read 10 to 20 proposals in a short amount of time (as many reviewers on panels are asked to do), which ones would you unconsciously give extra points to? The ones that were easiest to read, of course. Ultimately it is in the PI's best interest to make the proposal as easy to read as possible.

Thus, I would highly recommend that the fonts in tables and figures be made large enough to be easily read by the reviewer, whether it says so in the GPG or not.

My last recommendation would be to make sure you and the PI read the GPG each year and pay special attention to any changes. I once had a PI, who had been funded by NSF for twenty years, have his renewal proposal declined for funding because there had been some changes in the GPG in the review criteria that he had not addressed in his proposal. I got an outraged phone call from this person, as you can imagine. But when I asked him how long it had been since he had read the GPG, he admitted that it had been many years, and he admitted he had not been aware of the changes in the GPG. The PI submitted a revised proposal which addressed the changed review criteria for the next target date, and was funded.

Lise Schioler
Former Program Officer
Division of Materials Science
NSF

At 04:32 PM 9/19/2007, you wrote:

Dlane, et al,

To those of you who responded to my question last week about the NSF font requirements, I never did resolve the question. What I ended up doing was submitting the narrative and all attachments that I prepared in the required font and font size. For figures and tables, I set them up in Arial, but allowed them to appear in whatever font size resulted when I cut and pasted. Perhaps I'll get some feedback from NSF when they provide the reviewers' comments!

Vitas, letters of support were included as I received them.

Wayne

From: Research Administration List [mailto:RESADM-L@hrinet.org] On Behalf Of Diane Schmitz
Sent: Wednesday, September 12, 2007 1:33 PM
To: RESADM-L@hrinet.org
Subject: Re: [RESADM-L] NSF fonts - again