

Proposal Compliance for NSF and NIH proposals

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Updated 09/14/2016

Overview

- **Proposal “Compliance” in context**
- **NSF background**
 - **resources**
 - **issues we have experienced**
- **NIH background**
 - **resources**
 - **issues we have experienced**



- **What does “compliance” mean in this context?**
 - **Using the correct *formatting***
 - **Having the correct/required *content***
 - **This is NOT about Human Subjects, Animal Subjects, etc.**



- **Reasons this is important**
 - **Reduces RISK for your proposal**
 - **What is this RISK?...**



- **RETURNED WITHOUT REVIEW (NSF)**
- **WITHDRAWN (NIH)**
- Proposal never even makes to the reviewers for consideration
- Time and effort spent on a proposal, and you don't even get valuable feedback from reviewers



- **STATS ON NUMBERS OF PROPOSALS/REVIEWS BY AGENCY**
- **NSF** for Federal FY 2014
 - 48,100 proposals evaluated
 - Note this is NOT the number of proposals submitted to NSF
 - 225,800 proposal reviews conducted (so, approx. 4.7 reviews per reviewed proposal)
 - 11,000 awards funded
- **NIH** for Federal FY 2014
 - 62,641 competing applications
 - 12,577 awards



NSF Background

- **Consistency across all proposals being reviewed**
- **Net effect: reducing the number of proposals they actually have to review**
- **NSF's view--If the submitter cannot follow our instructions, we are not going to spend our time on it.**



NSF

- **Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)**
 - http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf16001/gpg_index.jsp
 - It is **CRITICAL** to use the **CURRENT GPG**
- **Follow the instructions in the GPG **PLUS** any additional instructions in the Program Description, Program Announcement or Program Solicitation**



NSF

- **Table of NSF Automated Compliance Checks in Fastlane (handout)**
 - NSF Fastlane will check formatting (page counts, margins, presence of required files)
 - NSF Fastlane will **NOT** check **CONTENT**



NSF Content Issues

- **Project Description**
 - **“Broader Impacts”--REQUIRED**
 - **Prior NSF-funded Support--REQUIRED**
 - **PIs AND Co-PIs**
 - **NO URLs in proposals**



NSF Content Issues

- **Character Counts in Project Summary**
 - In Fastlane you are expected to enter info into three text boxes: Overview, Intellectual Merit, and Broader Impacts
 - The **COMBINED** character count cannot exceed 4,600 characters
 - Then, we must **VISUALLY CHECK** to make sure the Summary does not exceed 1 page
 - Carriage returns to separate paragraphs can often cause issues



NSF Biosketch

- Handout with notations
- Often the single most difficult item to deal with in terms of proposal compliance
- Get them done EARLY
- Follow format and content requirements EXACTLY



NSF Collaborators and Other Affiliations

- **REQUIRED Info**
- **Information regarding COLLABORATORS AND OTHER AFFILIATIONS must be separately provided for each individual identified as senior project personnel.**
- **Follow the Guidelines closely, details are in the GPG and/or the Program Announcement**



- **This is NOT a comprehensive list**
- **Follow the checklist**
- **If there is room for interpretation, always err on the most conservative side**
- **Don't put your proposal at RISK**



NIH

- **SF424 (R&R) Application Guide**
 - <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm>
- **Follow the Application Guide PLUS any instructions in the Program Announcement**



NIH Background

- **NIH Policy on Application Compliance (handout)**
 - <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-095.html>
- **Contains EXAMPLES of non-compliance**



- **NIH has not yet established a pattern of rejecting proposals based on close reading of format and content requirements**
- **NEW NIH Biosketch format and content adoption in May 2015**
- **“Be mindful that non-compliance can have serious consequences”**



NIH Biosketch

- **Sample (handout)**
- **As with NSF, follow format and content instructions exactly**
- **To date, we have not had an NIH application issue related to Biosketches**
- **But NIH has put the research community on warning**



NIH Appendices

- **New Policy eliminates most APPENDIX materials from NIH proposals effective 1/25/2017**
- ***Allowable appendix materials***
 - ***For applications proposing clinical trials (unless the FOA provides other instructions for these materials):***
 - **Clinical trial protocols**
 - **Investigator's brochure from Investigational New Drug (IND), as appropriate**
- ***For all applications:***
 - **Blank informed consent/assent forms**
 - **Blank surveys, questionnaires, data collection instruments**
 - **FOA-specified items.**
 - **If appendix materials are *required* in the FOA, review criteria for that FOA will address those materials, and applications submitted without those appendix materials will be considered incomplete and **will not be reviewed.****



NIH Appendices

- Applications submitted for due dates on or after January 25, 2017 will be **withdrawn and not reviewed** if they are submitted with appendix materials that are not specifically listed in this Notice or the FOA as allowed or required.



Takeaways

- **Sponsors WILL hold a proposal to format and content requirements**
- **Sponsors (especially NSF) WILL “kick out” proposals that are not compliant with instructions**
- **Talk to your PDS early and often**
- **ORSP can review for these format and content issues, but we need time to do so**

