NSF Astronomy and Astrophysics Postdoctoral Fellowships (AAPF) Instructions for Preparing and Submitting Proposals

Important Notes

- Proposals submitted to the NSF AAPF Program must be submitted electronically through either the NSF FastLane system or Grants.gov. All proposal materials must be submitted via FastLane or Grants.gov by the specified submission window. Materials sent via other means to NSF will not be reviewed, considered or accepted.
- Fellowships are awards to individuals. The fellowship applicant submits his or her proposal directly to NSF. Before starting proposal preparation, the applicant must be registered as an individual researcher.
- Fellowship proposals must be submitted by the fellowship applicant, not by the applicant's current or proposed institution. As an individual researcher, the applicant is also identified as the Authorized Organizational Representative.
- In addition to the NSF AAPF Program Solicitation, read the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG), as it pertains to all NSF proposals.
- Each applicant may submit only one AAPF proposal per annual competition. In addition, an applicant may not participate in more than two AAPF competitions. Proposals not reviewed (i.e. withdrawn before review or returned without review) do not count toward the two-competition limit.

Submission Window Dates:
- August 15, 2018 – October 24, 2018
- August 15, 2019 – October 15, 2019
- August 15 – October 15, annually thereafter

Eligibility: An individual is eligible to submit a proposal to the NSF AAPF program if the following criteria are met:

- The applicant is a citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident (Green Card Holder) of the United States.
- The applicant has earned the doctoral degree in an appropriate scientific field within five (5) years prior to the proposal submission deadline or will complete the doctoral degree by October 1 following the proposal deadline.

Upon selection for award, the following requirements apply:
- If the doctoral degree has not yet been received at the time of application, the individual must present evidence of having completed all academic requirements before beginning the fellowship at the host institution.
- Fellowship tenure must begin on or before October 1 following the proposal deadline.

How to Apply Guide

Document Preparation Guidelines:

Prepare all documents according to guidelines in the NSF AAPF Program Solicitation and the PAPPG. **In cases where requirements given in the Program Solicitation differ from those given in the NSF Proposal and Awards Policies and Procedures Guide, the Program Solicitation takes precedence.**

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

1. Use one of the following typefaces identified below:

    - 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
    - Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger

    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. Applicants are cautioned, however, that the text must still be readable.

2. No more than 6 lines of text within a vertical space of one inch; and

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

    These requirements apply to all uploaded sections of a proposal, including supplementary documentation.

NOTE: The following proposal preparation and submission instructions apply only to proposals submitted via FastLane. For proposal preparation and submission via Grants.gov, please refer to section V. of the NSF AAPF Program Solicitation**.**

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions:

1. **You must register as an Individual Researcher**. Access www.fastlane.nsf.gov. Select *Postdoctoral Fellowships and Other Programs*. Select *Individual Registration*. You will be redirected to research.gov. Follow the instructions on the screen. Confirm you do not have an NSF account. If you do not have an NSF account, create an NSF account. After creating an NSF account, add an Unaffiliated Investigator Role.

2. **Begin your proposal.** Access www.fastlane.nsf.gov. Select *Proposals, Awards and Status*. Select *Sign In to FastLane/Research.gov*. Log in using your NSF ID and password. Select Prepare & Submit Proposals. Select Prepare Proposals in FastLane. Select *Proposal Functions*. Select *Proposal Preparation*. A screen containing your information appears. Check that the organization has your name and that the institution ID begins with a P. Update if necessary. Select *Prepare Proposal*. On the Proposal Actions screen, select *Create Blank Proposal*.

3. **Prepare Cover Sheet. You must prepare this form first.** Select *GO* next to Cover Sheet. The Cover Sheet Components Form screen appears. Check that your name is listed as the Awardee and Performing organizations, not a university or college. Rather than using personal information, you are advised to use your current institutional mailing address and email address, if available, as the awardee organization address. (Correct if necessary. Return to the PI Information screen by selecting *Go Back*. Select *Edit PI Information*. Select *Change Institution*. Type your last name into box and select *Locate*. Select your name as an Independent Researcher with an institution code beginning with "P." Select *Save*.) Enter the host institution and its address information in the fields "NAME OF PRIMARY PLACE OF PERF" and "ADDRESS OF PRIMARY PLACE PERF, INCLUDING 9 DIGIT ZIP CODE."

   Select *GO* next to Program Announcement/Solicitation. Click on the Program Solicitation to highlight. Click on *Select*. The Coversheet Components Form screen reappears showing the Program Solicitation, "NSF Astronomy and Astrophysics Postdoctoral Fellowships (AAPF)" and the NSF Unit of Consideration "AST - NSF ASTRON & ASTROPHY PSTDC FE."

4. **Prepare Remainder of Cover Sheet.** Select *GO* next to Remainder of the Cover Sheet. Under Title of Proposed Project, type in the title of your research project. Scroll down to Budget and Duration Information. Leave the box next to Requested Amount as is (00.00). Type 36 in the box next to Duration. Type in requested starting date in format MM/DD/YYYY. Scroll down to Announcement and Consideration Information. Click the down arrow to select Closing Date. You cannot update your information on the Cover Sheet. You must access the PI Information screen. No Co-PIs are allowed on this proposal. Scroll down to Other Information. Click the down arrow and select "Fellowship" for the *Type of Proposal*. Select "Not a Collaborative Proposal" for *Collaborative Status*. Scroll down and select *OK* to save the Remainder of the Cover Sheet. When the screen states, "Your Cover Sheet has been saved," select *OK*. You will be returned to the Form Preparation screen.

5. **Prepare Project Summary.** One-page limit. Read the PAPPG for the requirements on separate statements addressing both NSF merit review criteria.

   The Project Summary should describe the proposed research and education plan and must also identify:
   a. The proposed sponsoring scientist(s), and
   b. The proposed host institution(s).

   Select *GO* next to Project Summary. Copy and paste your Project Summary into the text boxes.

Information must be entered into all three text boxes or the proposal will not be accepted. If you need to use special characters, upload the Project Summary as a Supplementary Document and check the box, "Check here if your Project Summary is uploaded as a Supplementary Document," to indicate this. Select *Save,* then select *OK* to return to the Form Preparation screen.

6. **Prepare Project Description.** 10 single-spaced page limit. (See Document Preparation Guidelines above.) The Project Description must include the following information:
   a. A coherent plan for research and education, articulated to a level of detail suitable to an NSF grant proposal;
   b. A detailed justification for the choice of the host institution(s) that:
      1) Identifies collaborating scientist(s) and educational mentor(s),
      2) Relates the proposed work to current research and educational efforts at the host institution(s), and
      3) Describes available facilities and resources and the suitability of the host institution(s); and
   c. A description of the applicant's long-term career goals and the role of this postdoctoral experience in achieving them.

   Select *GO* next to Project Description. Select *Browse* and find your document. Select *Upload File*. A screen will tell you when the document has been successfully uploaded. Select *Proofread PDF*. View the converted file, and then select either *Accept* or *Cancel*. If you accept the document, you can now either select *Display Current Project Description* to view the document or select *Go Back* and return to the Form Preparation screen.

   The Project Summary and the Project Description must clearly address in separate statements both NSF merit review criteria of Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. See the PAPPG for instructions.

7. **Prepare References Cited.** Read the PAPPG for the required format. Select *GO* next to References Cited. Either copy and paste into the text box or select *Transfer File* and upload the file. To upload the file, select *Browse* and find your document. Select *Upload File*. A screen will tell you when the document has been successfully uploaded. Select *Proofread PDF*. View the converted file, and then select either *Accept* or *Cancel*. If you accept the document, you can now either select *Display Current References Cited* to view the document or select *Go Back* and return to the Form Preparation screen.

8. **Prepare Biographical Sketch.** 2-page limit. Read the PAPPG for the required format.

   In addition to the PAPPG requirements, the Biographical Sketch must clearly include all information necessary to certify the applicant's eligibility, including identification of U.S. citizenship or permanent resident status, as well as all components described in the PAPPG.

   Select *GO* next to Biographical Sketches. Select *GO* next to your name. Select the *Browse* button and find your document. Select the *Upload File* button. A screen will tell you when the document has been successfully uploaded. Select the *Proofread PDF* button. View the converted file, and then select either the *Accept* or *Cancel* button. If you accept the document, you can now either select the *Display Current Biographical Sketch* button to view the document or select the *Go Back* button and return to the Form Preparation screen.

9. **Prepare Collaborator List.** Collaborator and Other Affiliations (COA) information previously required on the Biographical Sketch must now be provided as a Single Copy Document. Select *GO* next to Collaborators and Other Affiliations. Download the NSF template for identifying COA

information by clicking on the link, Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information Form. After completion, select *GO* next to your name and upload the file.

10. **Budget.** Select the *GO* button next to Budget. Select the *Add Year* button. On the Budget Year screen, highlight *1* and select the *Add* button to create Year 1 budget. On the Project Budget screen, Select *Funds.*
    a. Under A. SENIOR PERSONNEL, click on "Add/remove senior personnel" and remove yourself from this section.
    b. On the budget screen, scroll down to F. PARTICIPANT SUPPORT COSTS. Under 1. Stipends, type 69000 in the box.
    c. Under F. PARTICIPANT SUPPORT COSTS, 4. Other, type 31000 in the box.
    d. Under F. PARTICIPANT SUPPORT COSTS, Number of Participants, type 1 in the box.
    e. Scroll to the bottom of the screen and select the *Calculate & Save* button. You will be directed to the top of the screen.
    f. Scroll back to the bottom of the screen. Under L. AMOUNT OF THIS REQUEST, $100,000 should show.
    g. Select the *Go Back* button to return to the Budget Year Selection screen.
    h. Create budget pages for Year 2 and Year 3, as instructed below.

    To create Year 2 and Year 3 for the budget, on the Project Budget screen select *Add Year*. On the Budget Year screen, highlight 2 and select the radio button next to 1 under "If you want to copy the date FROM an existing year, please check the year you want copied below (optional)." Select the *Add* button. Repeat for Year 3. On the Project Budget screen, three budget years should now show, each with the amount of $100,000.

    Check that the total request for three budget years is $300,000. Confirm that this amount shows on the Cover Sheet as the Requested Amount.

11. **Current and Pending Support.** Select the *GO* button next to Current and Pending Support. Select *New Form.* Use the form FastLane creates or prepare on a word processor and upload. Include applications to other fellowship programs.

    This proposal is considered pending support.

12. **Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources.** See the PAPPG for instructions. Select *GO* next to Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources. Select *Upload File.* Prepare on a word processor and upload.

13. **Data Management Plan.** 2-page limit. Select *GO* next to Data Management Plan. Prepare on a word processor and upload. All proposals must include a Data Management Plan that describes plans for data management and sharing of the products of research, or asserts the absence of the need for such plans. FastLane will not permit submission of a proposal that is missing a Data Management Plan. See the PAPPG and http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmpdocs/ast.pdf.

14. **Letter(s) of Commitment from the Prospective Host Institution(s).** Submit as Supplementary Documentation (see below). Work with the prospective host institution to prepare each letter. You must submit the letter(s) with your proposal in FastLane. If you propose to hold the fellowship concurrently or sequentially at more than one institution during your three-year tenure, Letters of Commitment must be provided for all institutions involved.

    The Letter of Commitment from each prospective host institution must be signed by the department

chair (or equivalent) and the proposed sponsoring scientist. You must scan the signed letter into a Portable Document Format (PDF) file and upload it into Supplementary Documents. (Instructions can be found below within the Supplementary Docs section.) No other supplementary documentation or appendices are permitted.

This letter must indicate that:
   a. Your proposal has been read and approved by the proposed scientific mentor(s),
   b. Adequate facilities and support will be provided for you to accommodate the proposed research and/or education activities.
   c. Your plan for teaching and/or education is aligned with the institution's educational plans and goals, including a description of how any proposed course or seminar will complement existing curricula.
   d. You will be fully integrated into the educational and research activities of the host institution.

The letter must also include a discussion of:
   e. The role the proposed scientific and/or education mentor(s) will play in your professional development.
   f. The opportunities for training and research at the host institution that will be of particular benefit to you.

15. **Letters of support will not be considered.** This program relies on reviewed proposals rather than applications. Hence, letters of support will not be considered. **A letter of commitment should not reflect a letter of support and should make *no subjective statements* regarding either the candidate or the proposed research and education plan.**

16. **Supplementary Docs.** More than one document can be uploaded with this module. DO NOT include any documents not specifically required.

Select *GO* next to Other Supplementary Docs. Select *Transfer File* and then upload your Letter of Commitment file. Select *Go Back* and return to the Form Preparation screen. Do not upload any other documents.

17. **Submit Proposal.** When your proposal is completed, print out all of the submitted documents. When you are satisfied that all documents are within the page limits and print out well, return to the Proposal Actions screen.
   a. Select the *Submit* button. If you do not see the *Submit* button, call or e-mail the FastLane Help Desk.
   b. Read the Certification Information and continue scrolling down the screen.
   c. Click on the *Sign and Submit* button to submit your proposal.
   d. The next screen will give you your NSF proposal number. Use this number on all correspondence with NSF about your proposal.
   e. After the deadline date, check Proposal Status. If you cannot see the status of this proposal number within one week of the deadline date, contact the NSF program office.

18. **Do NOT** mail any signed cover sheet or budget forms to NSF. Your proposal has been signed electronically.

Last Modified: 31 August 2018