

Workload Issues

MPS Advisory Committee
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Context: Agency Reform

- Required by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- Goal is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of the agency
- Initial outline due to OMB on June 30
- Final version to be submitted as part of the FY 2019 budget request



Context: Internal Agency Issues

- Workload is an ongoing issue for NSF staff as measured by the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)
- Recruitment of qualified staff (especially rotators) can be challenging
- It is becoming more difficult to recruit panelists/reviewers due to overall demands on scientists
- Other demands on scientific community – committees, workshops, etc.

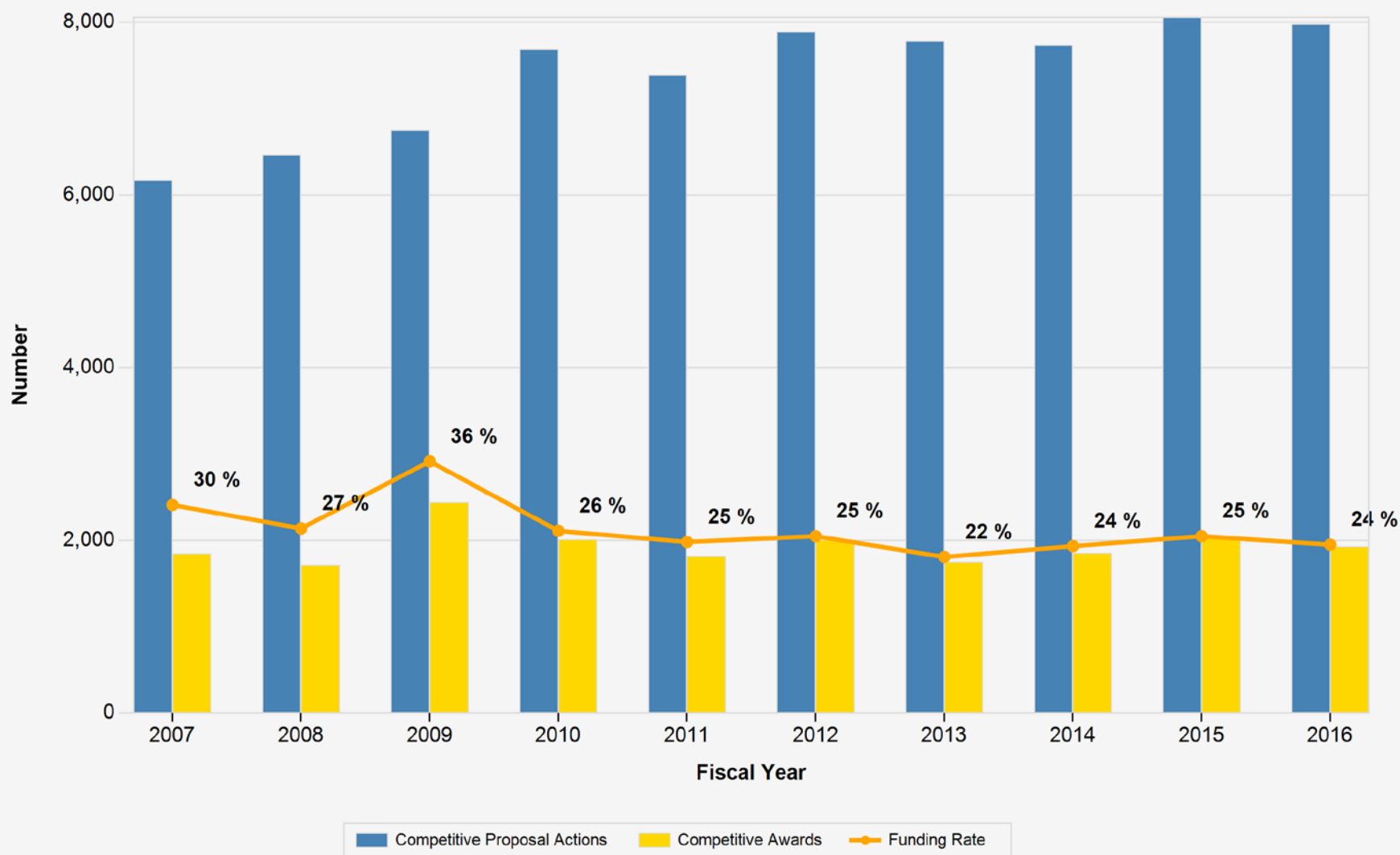


Workload Issues for MPS

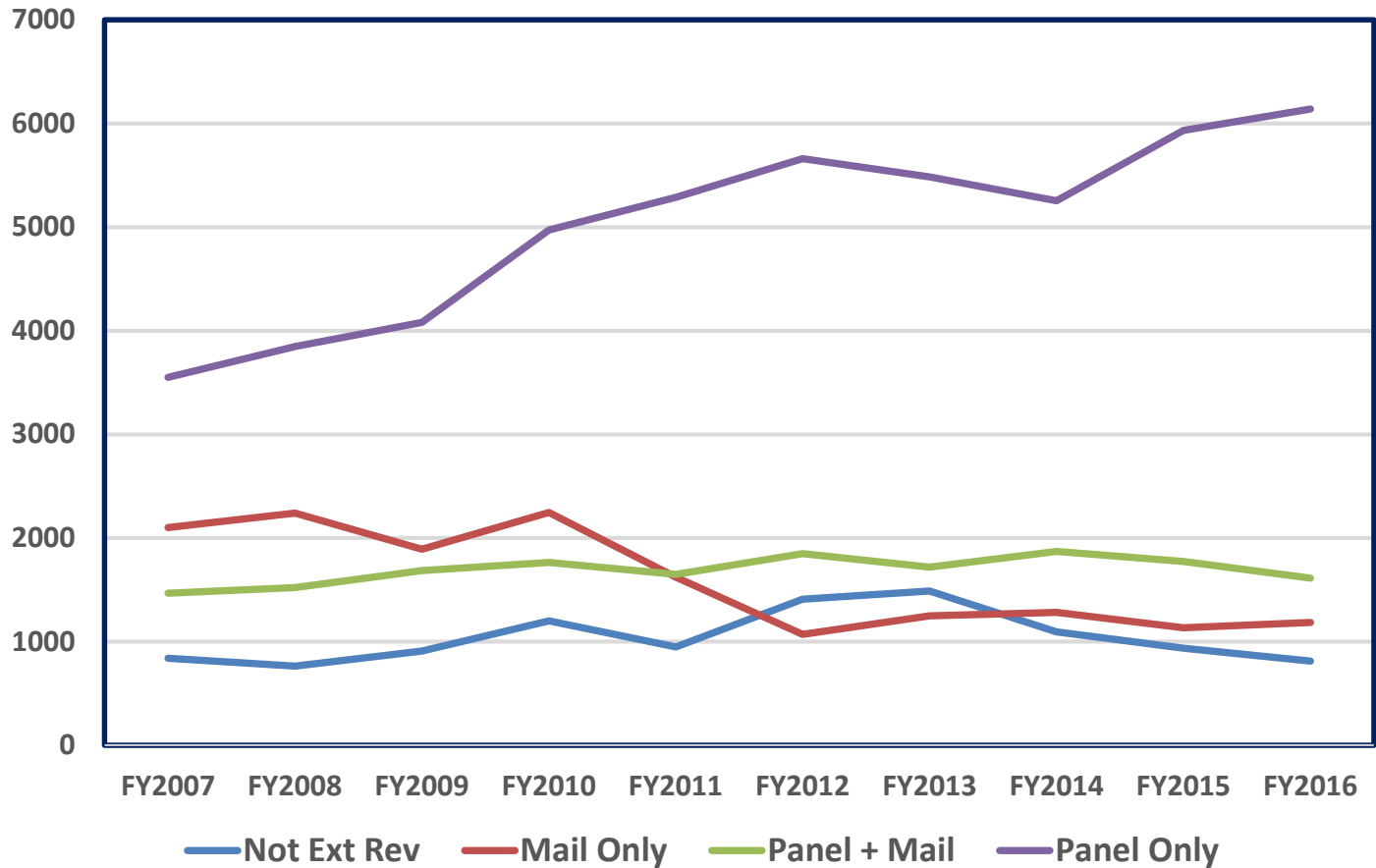
- Large number of proposals (grown significantly over last decade)
- Number of staff relatively constant
- Many competitive proposals declined
- Greater complexity of proposals
 - Collaborations: Joint review with other NSF partners is often needed
 - Cross-agency/NSF-wide/Cross-directorate competitions
 - Conflicts of interest become more common because of more collaborations and larger projects
- More accountability and oversight required (for all kinds of projects: facilities, centers, IIAs)



MPS Competitive Proposal Submissions and Awards for Research Grants, FY 2007-2016



MPS TYPE OF REVIEW FY 2007-2016



Who is affected?

How do we manage the workload for

- NSF staff?
- PIs/Institutions?
- Reviewers/Panelists?



Various pilots are in progress in MPS and other Directorates

- No deadlines: proposals may be submitted at any time – being tried in several programs in MPS (AST and DMR this year) and Geosciences – some evidence so far (in GEO) that submissions have decreased
- Hold competitions less frequently: every two years?
- Greater use of virtual panels
- Limits on proposal submission by PI and/or institution in programs where limits had not been used



Adopt practices used more broadly elsewhere in NSF?

- Streamline review process
 - More use of proposal mechanisms not requiring external merit review (e.g., RAPID, EAGER, RAISE, workshops, etc.) where appropriate?
 - More standard review analyses (except for awards and highly rated declinations)?
 - Program officer (PO) comments only in special cases
 - Panel triage (proposals with low ratings not discussed) with agreement of panelists and NSF staff



A Conundrum

- Doing nothing is not an option
- Doing something will disadvantage a particular group, category of institution, individuals at a particular career stage, different scientific subfields, etc.
- The question is: How do we balance all of these competing priorities, provide important funding opportunities, and maintain high quality merit review and award management?



QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

PROS AND CONS OF APPROACHES

