Funding for Anthropologists: Common Myths and Tips for Prospective Applicants

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Presentation Outline

1. Common myths about NSF funding
2. Prospective PI Preparation Timeline
3. Review of the Program
Common myths about NSF funding

1. NSF only funds scholars at elite institutions

2. NSF only funds (students of) “famous” academics

3. Once declined, always declined

4. Advisory committees make funding decisions

5. NSF is only interested in quantitative approaches

6. Qualitative and quantitative approaches are mutually exclusive

7. NSF proposals must have hypotheses
Preparation timeline for prospective students

1 year before applying

6 months before applying

3 months before applying

• Not exhaustive
• Not meant to be a rigid schedule
Get to know the “language of NSF”…

1. Find **copies of proposals** – both funded and unfunded
   - NSF cannot provide these
   - Read them alongside a relevant solicitation

2. Sign up for **SBE email updates**

   - 1 year before applying
   - 6 months before applying
   - 3 months before applying
While developing your research ideas...

1. Read the **NSF 101** blog series

2. Get to know your **SRO** & the process of submitting grants at your institution, including ethical approvals
   - Understand your institution’s workflow process

3. Identify what makes your research idea **unique** and consider how to best convey this in your proposal

4. Read program descriptions to determine **best fit** for your research

- **1 year before applying**
- **6 months before applying**
- **3 months before applying**
Funding Search

628 results

Filter:

- Limited Submissions
- Award Type
- Advancing Diversity
- Directorate
- Division
- Education Level

Show only NSF-wide/cross-directorate opportunities (73)
Explore program page

How do I know if my research is a good fit with the program?
Find funded projects and read abstracts

What has been funded through a particular program?

You can review the abstracts of awards made through a particular program.
Cover your bases…

1. Keep track of your **collaborators**
   - Prepare your Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information (COA) form early

   - 6 months before applying

   - 3 months before applying
Cover your bases….

1. Keep track of your collaborators
   - Prepare your Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information (COA) form early

2. Work with your IRB; work on your biographical sketch, data management plan, letters of support, budget, justification

   1 year before applying → 6 months before applying → 3 months before applying
Cover your bases…..

1. Keep track of your collaborators
   • Prepare your Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information (COA) form early

2. Work on ancillary documents

3. Have a question? Contact the program officer
   • Prepare a one-page synopsis of your project and submit to program officers for feedback

1 year before applying → 6 months before applying → 3 months before applying
Example One-Pager

1. Overview
   • Background/Situate your study
   • Research questions/hypotheses

2. Intellectual Merit
   • Potential to advance knowledge
   • Theoretical contribution to Cultural Anthropology

3. Broader Impacts
   • Potential to benefit society
   • Contribution to achievement of specific societal outcomes
While polishing your proposal...

1. Read and re-read the program solicitation
   - Identify solicitation-specific preparation instructions & review criteria

V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

Full Proposal Preparation Instructions: Proposers may opt to submit proposals in response to this Program Solicitation via FastLane, Research.gov, or Grants.gov.

- V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS
  7. Project Summary
     • This section must include a separate section on the Intellectual Merit and the Broader Impacts of the proposed activity.
  3. Project Description
     • This section is limited to 10 single-spaced pages of text with one-inch margins. In one of the forms approved by the NSF/PAPPG, and no more than six lines per vertical inch of text. The Project Description must have page numbers; note that FastLane does not automatically paginate.
     • If the proposal is a resubmission, the first paragraph of the Project Description must summarize how the proposal has responded to previous reviewer concerns.
     • The Project Description must include:
       • a statement of the research problem and its scientific importance, specific aims, expectations, or hypotheses;
       • a section labeled Intellectual Merit, that describes the project’s potential contribution to advancing anthropological theory beyond the site and context of the project itself, a focused review of what is thought to be known already, and a clear statement of what the project’s original contribution will be and why that contribution would be significant. A section labeled Broader Impacts of the Proposed Work, that discusses the broader impacts of the proposed activities and the pathways by which those broader impacts will be realized. Broader impacts are significant effects beyond basic science. They might include communicating results to policy makers, contributing to the knowledge base to solve an important social problem; engaging students of any age in the research enterprise, doing outreach to the public; producing data that contribute to scientific infrastructure; strengthening international research collaborations; broadening the scientific participation of underrepresented communities and/or strengthening research capacity in developing nations;
       • a discussion of any preliminary studies performed by the student, the results of those studies, and how they inform the project;
       • an account of whether the student has the relevant technical training, language competence, and other preparation necessary to make the project feasible. This must also include an explanation of how the student has obtained the relevant methodological training (at their institution or elsewhere) to conduct a scientific research project;
       • a research design that includes a discussion of the research objectives and sources of data, the methods by which data will be collected, and the reasons those methods are the most appropriate;
       • a developed data analysis plan (usually at least a page in length) that explains how the data will be analyzed to address the research questions, aims, and hypotheses;
       • a research schedule or timeline.
     • The Project Description must describe the project’s potential contribution to advancing anthropological theory beyond the site and context of the project itself. Projects that are focused narrowly on the sociological or cultural context of a particular site, and fail to frame the project in terms of a larger, generalizable set of questions, will be returned without review.
     • The research questions or hypotheses must be empirically-driven. Projects that are motivated solely by philosophical or humanistic questions, or that source information in service of a particular theoretical position (without putting that theoretical position at risk of falsification through data collection and analysis), will be judged to be unsuitable for funding and returned without review.
     • The CA program discourages projects that return to a previous site of employment or volunteer work unless a strong justification is made for the scientific suitability of that particular site, with an explanation of why the co-PI’s previous experience will not jeopardize objectivity and impartiality.
     • The Research Schedule should indicate the date that funds are required.
     • The “Other NSF Direct Support” section is NOT required for DROS proposals.
While polishing your proposal…continued

2. Make sure **biosketch** is updated

3. Make sure all **ancillaries** are completed
   - Facilities, Equipment, & Other Resources (FER); Current & Pending Support, etc.

4. Make sure **ethical approvals** are in the works
   - You do not need to have approval at the time of proposal submission

5. Get any **letters of collaboration** in order
   - Follow directions in the solicitation and PAPPG

6. Work with your **research office** and pay attention to **internal deadlines**

   - 1 year before applying
   - 6 months before applying
   - 3 months before applying
Of Note…

• If solicitation and PAPPG are in conflict, go with solicitation
• $20,000 in direct costs, max, DDRI
• Two-time submission rule
• Two “target dates” per year (1/15, and 8/15)
• Review is typically by panel (DDRI), combo panel/ad hoc/ internal (senior)
• Make project feasible in light of COVID-19
Good habits

• Case for *scientific generalizability* must be clear
• Make research design and data analysis plan work for your project
• Speak to your narrow audience and the broader CA audience
Bad habits

- Foregone conclusions/arguments
- “Laundry-list” research questions, literature reviews, methods
- Jargon
- Poor definitions/operationalization of variables
- Advocacy/activist objectives
- Subjectivity
Co-Review

• You suggest
• We suggest internally
• HEGS, Biological Anthropology, Archaeology, STS, Arctic Social Science
Odds and Ends

• Sign up to be a reviewer or panelist
• Consider sharing your demographic data
• Sign up for NSF notices: https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNSF/subscriber/new
• Ask us for outreach/meetings
Questions?

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