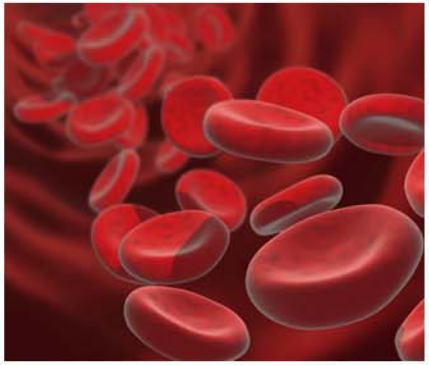
National Science Foundation

Updates to the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)

November 19, 2012



Webinar Housekeeping Items

- Audio via telephone
  - 1-866-844-9416; passcode: BFA
- Real time captioning at www.fedrcc.us/
  - confirmation number: 2052899
- Event is being recorded and will be archived
- Q&A session at conclusion of presentation
  - policy@nsf.gov if we don't get to you

Ask Early, Ask Often

- **Jean Feldman**
  - Head, Policy Office
  - Division of Institution & Award Support
  - Office of Budget, Finance & Award Management
  - policy@nsf.gov; 703.292.8243

NSF Merit Review Criteria Revision

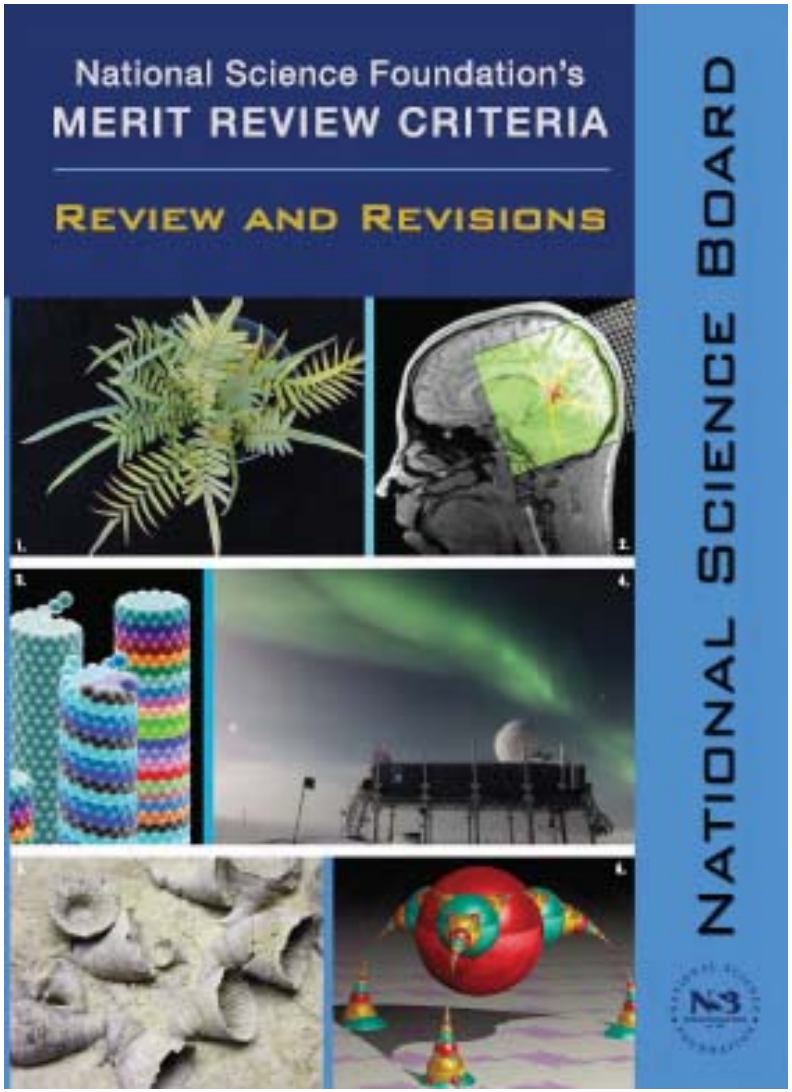
Background

NSB Task Force on Merit Review

- Established Spring 2010
- Rationale:
  - More than 13 years since the last in-depth review and revision of the review criteria
  - Opportunity to align review criteria with NSF's new Strategic Plan
  - Persistent anecdotal reports about confusion related to the Broader Impacts criterion, and inconsistency in how the criterion was being applied.

Final Report

- Task Force used input from the community to revise the description of the review criteria and underlying principles
- Presented the final report to the National Science Board on December 13, 2011



Final Report: Conclusions

- The Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts review criteria together capture the important elements that should guide the evaluation of NSF proposals.

- Revisions to the descriptions of the Broader Impacts criterion and how it is implemented are needed.

- Use of the review criteria should be informed by a guiding set of core principles.

Final Report: Recommendations

1. Three guiding review principles
2. Two review criteria
3. Five review elements

Merit Review Criteria Guiding Principles

- All NSF projects should be of the highest quality and have the potential to advance, if not transform, the frontiers of knowledge.
- NSF projects, in the aggregate, should contribute more broadly to achieving societal goals.
- Meaningful assessment and evaluation of NSF funded projects should be based on appropriate metrics, keeping in mind the likely correlation between the effect of broader impacts and the resources provided to implement projects.

Merit Review Criteria

When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers should consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits would accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers are asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

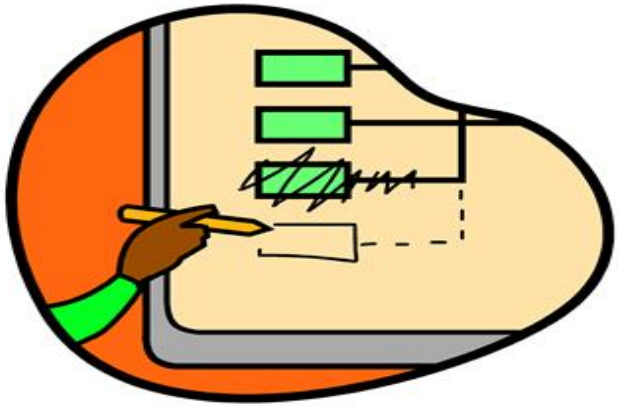
- **Intellectual Merit:** The intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
- **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

Five Review Elements

The following elements should be considered in the review for **both criteria**:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
   a. advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
   b. benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or institution to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home institution or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG) Changes & Clarifications



PAPPG Revision Process

- Federal Register Notices issued in January 2011 and May 2012 to alert the public to NSF's intent to revise PAPPG
- Disseminated draft document with changes highlighted to research community
- Comments submitted to OMB/NSF (were due July 12th)
- Updated PAPPG released October 4, 2012; effective for proposals submitted or due on or after January 14, 2013

PAPPG Changes Topic List

Significant Changes

- Implementation of revised Merit Review Criteria
- New Proposal Certifications
- Revised Biographical Sketch requirements
- Indirect Costs
- Proposals Not Accepted
  - Increased clarity on submission of required sections of the proposal
- NSF Award Cash Management $ervice (ACM$)

PAPPG Changes Topic List (Cont'd)

Clarifications

- Proposals that include High-Resolution Graphics
- Proposals for Conferences, Symposia & Workshops
- Proposal Preparation Checklist
- Conflict of Interest Policies
- Wildlife Research

Merit Review Criteria

Funding Opportunities

- Boilerplate text has been developed and is being incorporated into Program Announcements and Solicitations

- Program websites have been updated with important revision notes

Merit Review Criteria

For Proposers

- Project Summary will require text boxes in FastLane not to exceed 4,600 characters and will include
  - Overview
  - Statement on Intellectual Merit
  - Statement on Broader Impacts
- Proposals with special characters may upload Project Summary as a PDF document
- Text boxes must be filled out or a project summary must be uploaded or FastLane will **not** accept the proposal.

Merit Review Criteria

For Proposers (Cont'd)

- If you **submit your proposal** prior to January 14, 2013, you must prepare your one-page Project Summary in accordance with the revised guidance.

- If you **prepare your proposal** prior to January 14, 2013, but submit on or after that date, the Project Summary text will be inserted into the Overview text box. This text **must** be included in all three sections (overview; statement on intellectual merit; statement on broader impacts), or FastLane will not accept your proposal.

Merit Review Criteria

For Proposers (Cont'd)

- Project Description
  - Must contain a separate section with a discussion of the broader impacts of the proposed activities
  - Results from Prior Support (if any) must address intellectual merit and broader impacts
- New certification regarding Organizational Support
  - Requires AOR certification that organizational support will be made available as described in the proposal to address the broader impacts and intellectual merit activities to be undertaken
- Annual and Final Project Reports
  - Must address activities intended to address the Broader Impacts criterion that are not intrinsic to the research
- FastLane help to be updated for proposers

Merit Review Criteria

Reviewers

- Guiding Principles, Revised Review Criteria, and five review elements incorporated into GPG Chapter III
- Reviewer and Panelist Letters
  - Give due diligence to the three Merit Review Principles
  - Evaluate against the two Merit Review Criteria
  - Consider the five review elements in the review of both criteria
- Panel and Proposal Review Form in FastLane
  - Updated to incorporate consideration of review elements in addressing the two criteria
  - Text box added for reviewers to address solicitation-specific criteria

Merit Review Criteria

Reviewers (Cont'd)

- Examples document has been deleted
- FastLane help to be updated for reviewers

Merit Review Criteria

Resources

- NSF Merit Review Website
  - www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/

- Resources for the Proposer Community
  - www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/resources.jsp

- Webcast on Revisions to the Merit Review Criteria
  - http://bahstream.mediasite.com/mediasite/Play/75bb36a1f83e48f0a4af12999853105e1d

Merit Review Criteria
FAQ Development

- We need your assistance in development of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)!!

- Please submit questions to policy@nsf.gov.

New Proposal Certifications

- Proposal Certifications have been updated to include:
  - a new Organizational Support Certification to address Section 526 of the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act (ACRA) of 2010.
  - additional certifications on tax obligations/liability and felony conviction. These certifications were added to implement provisions included in the Commerce, Justice, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2012.

- Parallel language also will be added to the award terms and conditions on tax obligations/liability and felony conviction.

Biographical Sketch(es)

- The “Publications” section to of the Biosketch has been renamed “Products”.
  - This change makes clear that products may include, but are not limited to, publications, data sets, software, patents, and copyrights.

Indirect Costs

- Except as noted in the *Grant Proposal Guide:*
  - Participant support section;
  - International Travel Grants Section; or
  - In a specific program solicitation.

  Institutions must use the applicable indirect cost rate (F&A) that has been negotiated with the cognizant federal agency.

- Foreign grantees and foreign subawardees also are generally not eligible for indirect cost recovery.

Proposals Not Accepted

- Formally recognizes a new category of non-award decisions and transactions: Proposal Not Accepted
- Is defined as “FastLane will not permit submission of the proposal”
- This new category applies to:
  - Data Management Plans
  - Postdoctoral Mentoring Plans
  - Project Summaries

Required Sections of the Proposal

- Cover Sheet – including certifications
- Project Summary
- Project Description – including Results from Prior NSF Support
- References Cited
- Biographical Sketch(es)
- Budget & Budget Justification
- Current and Pending Support
- Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources
- Supplementary Documentation
  - Data Management Plan
  - Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (where applicable)

Awardee Cash Management $ervice (ACM$)

- ACM$ will replace the current FastLane Cash Function
- When implemented, NSF will discontinue payments under the cash pooling method where awardee institutions request funds on a lump sum basis to cover the cash requirements for their awards
- Requires award level detail with each payment request
- Implemented in Research.gov with all awardees required to use by April 2013.

ACM$ Payment Request Screen

Research.gov

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  - User Management
  - Policy Library
- Award Cash Management $ervice (ACMS)
- NSF Services
  - Inside FastLane

- Who We Are
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FEEDBACK

Tell us what you think

Award Cash Management $ervice (ACMS)

< Back to Organization

New Payment Request (Open Awards)

Organization Name: <Name of the organization>

Organization ID: 0000000000

1. Payments | 2. Adjustments | 3. Review & Submit

Save | Delete

Brief instructional text brief instructional text brief instructional text brief instructional text brief instructional text. View online help for this process.

Show 25 per page.

Edit Awards List | Upload/Download

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Federal Award Number	Recipient Account Number	PI/PD Name	From	To	Total Federal Funds Authorized	Previous Cumulative Cash Disbursement	Net Available Funds	Payment Amount Requested	Expected Close Date	Final Flag
0000000	12345678	Lastname, FI	mm/yy	mm/yy	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00		mm/dd/yyyy	☐
0000000		Lastname, FI	mm/yy	mm/yy	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00		mm/dd/yyyy	☐
0000000		Lastname, FI	mm/yy	mm/yy	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00		mm/dd/yyyy	☐
0000000	12345678	Lastname, FI	mm/yy	mm/yy	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00		mm/dd/yyyy	☐
0000000	12345678	Lastname, FI	mm/yy	mm/yy	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00		mm/dd/yyyy	☐
0000000		Lastname, FI	mm/yy	mm/yy	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00		mm/dd/yyyy	☐
0000000		Lastname, FI	mm/yy	mm/yy	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00		mm/dd/yyyy	☐
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High-Resolution Graphics

- Coverage regarding submission of proposals that contain high-resolution graphics has been deleted due to small usage by the research community.

- The Proposal Cover Sheet also will be modified to remove the checkbox.

Conferences, Symposia & Workshops

- Coverage on Proposals for Conferences, Symposia, and Workshops, was supplemented to:
  - clarify what information should be included in different sections of the proposal; and
  - provide greater consistency, where necessary, with instructions provided for preparation of research proposals.

Proposal Preparation Checklist

- The Proposal Preparation Checklist was modified for consistency with changes made to the Grant Proposal Guide.

Conflict of Interest Policies

- When the NSF Office of General Counsel (OGC) is notified of an unmanageable conflict of interest, the OGC will:
  - Examine a copy of the institution's COI policy;
  - Contact the awardee institution's representative to determine what actions the institution plans/has taken;
  - Request confirmation from awardee when proposed actions have been accomplished.

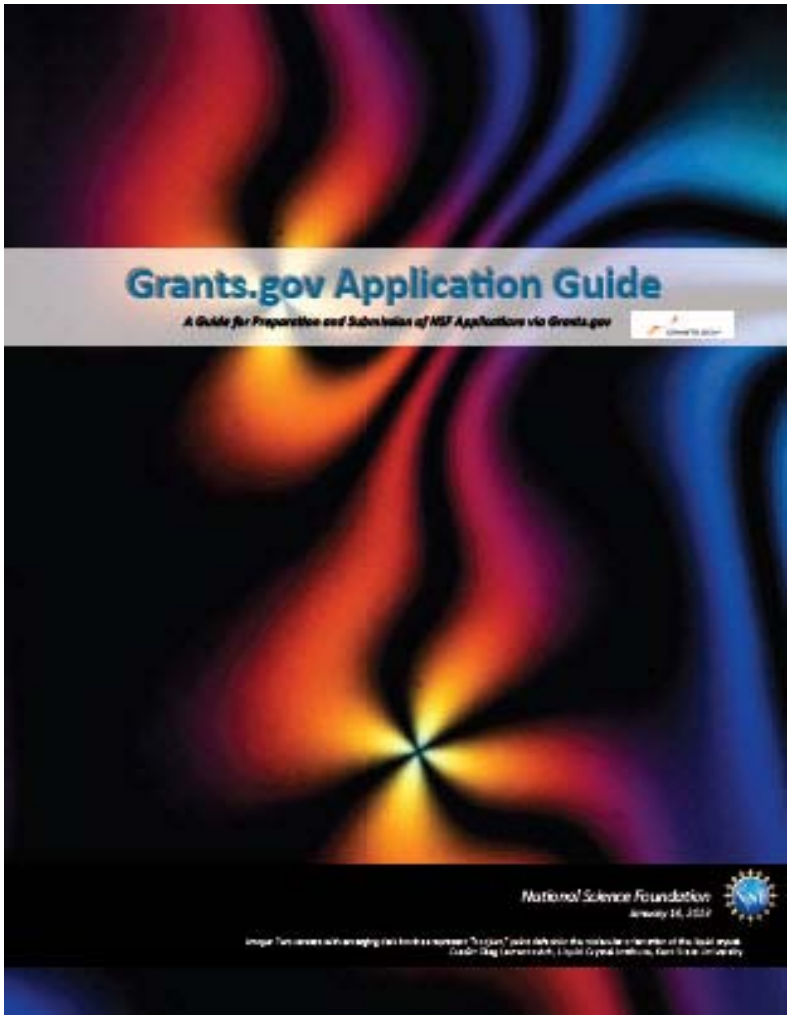
Proposals Involving Vertebrate Animals

- Coverage included in both the GPG and AAG was revised to include language regarding proposals involving the study of wildlife
  - Organizations must establish and maintain a program for activities involving animals in accordance with the National Academy of Science publication, Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals.

Grants.gov Application Guide - Revisions

- Revisions made for consistency with those released in the PAPPG

- For applications submitted or due on or after January 14, 2013



Grants.gov Application Guide - Revisions

- Project Summary/Abstract contents must include three separate statements covering (1) Overview; (2) Intellectual Merit; (3) Broader Impacts
- Revised instructions for attachments
  - Facilities & Other Resources
  - Equipment Documentation
  - Other Attachments – Data Management Plan
  - Biographical Sketch
  - Current & Pending Support
- Budget – Total Direct Costs modified per PAPPG changes
- Other Information – High Resolution Graphics

Cost Sharing at NSF

Progress Update

Cost Sharing Update

- As recommended by the National Science Board and implemented by NSF, inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited in solicited & unsolicited proposals, unless approved in accordance with agency policy.
- Only 6 programs have been approved to require cost sharing:
  - Major Research Instrumentation Program (MRI);
  - Robert Noyce Scholarship Program;
  - Engineering Research Centers (ERC);
  - Industry/University Cooperative Research Centers (I/UCRC);
  - Experimental Programs to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR); and
  - Innovation Corps (I-Corps)

Cost Sharing Update

- **Removal of PI from Budget**
  - If no person months are requested for senior personnel, they should be removed from the budget.
  - Their names will remain on the coversheet
  - Role should be described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal.

Cost Sharing Update

- **Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources**
  - New format will assist proposers in complying with NSF cost sharing policy and is a required component of the proposal.
  - Provides an aggregated description of the internal and external resources (both physical and personnel) that the organization and its collaborators will provide to the project.
  - No reference to cost, date of acquisition, and whether the resources are currently available or would be provided upon receipt of award
  - If there are no resources to describe, a statement to that effect should be included in this section of the proposal and uploaded into FastLane.

Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) at NSF

Progress Update

RPPR Background

- The Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) is the result of a government-wide effort to create greater consistency in the administration of federal research awards by streamlining and standardizing reporting formats
  - The RPPR is the product of Research Business Models (RBM) Subcommittee of the Committee on Science (CoS), a committee of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)
  - One of the RBM Subcommittee's priority areas is to create greater consistency in the administration of federal research awards through streamlining and standardization of forms and reporting formats
  - Upon implementation, the RPPR will be used by federal agencies that support research and research-related activities. It is intended to replace other performance reporting formats currently in use by agencies

www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rppr/

Agency RPPR Implementation Plans

- DHHS/NIH (and Other PHS Agencies)
  - January 2012 update
- DHS
- DOC
- DOD
- DOE
- DoEd/Institute of Education Sciences
- DOJ
  - Office of Justice Programs
  - National Institute of Justice/Office of Justice Programs
- EPA
- NASA
- NEH
- NSF
- USDA
  - Forest Services
  - NIFA

OSTP/OMB Policy Letter

RPPR Format

- RPPR Format as approved by OMB/OSTP
- RPPR Format associated with the second Federal Register Notice
- RPPR Draft Format

RPPR Data Dictionary

- RPPR Data Dictionary
- RPPR Data Dictionary Guide

Federal Register Notices on Research Performance Progress Reporting

- Final Notice of a Uniform RPPR Format
- Request for Public Comment on Standardized RPPR Format

RPPR Data Dictionary

- NSF has led research agencies in the development of a draft RPPR data dictionary based upon the OMB RPPR approved policy
- Goal is more uniform implementation across agencies
- The data dictionary is now available on the NSF RPPR website at:

  www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rppr/

NSF Implementation of RPPR Components

- NSF plans to implement the RPPR as a new service in Research.gov, utilizing the following components as part of an NSF-wide standard format:
  - Mandatory Category:
    - Accomplishments: What was done? What was learned?
  - Optional Categories:
    - Products: What has the project produced?
    - Participants & Other Collaborating Organizations: Who has been involved?
    - Impact: What is the impact of the project? How has it contributed?
    - Changes/Problems
    - Special Reporting Requirements (where applicable)
    - ~~Budgetary Requirements~~
    - Appendix 1: Demographic Information for Significant Contributors

Benefits of the New Project Report Format

- The implementation of the RPPR format at NSF will result in benefits to NSF staff and grantees, including:
  - A consolidated project reporting dashboard that includes Annual, Final, Interim, and Project Outcomes Report
  - The reduction of PI and co-PI burden through use of more innovative mechanisms to pre-populate parts of the report
  - A more structured collection of the project reports data for enhanced NSF use
  - The adoption of a federal-wide data dictionary to increase consistency of implementation across agencies

Benefits of the New Project Report Format (Cont'd)

- The implementation of the RPPR format on Research.gov also will:
  - Feature a rich text editor that supports common scientific characters and symbols
  - Allow PDF uploads of images, charts, and other complex graphics
  - Offer grantees access to Thomson Web of Science

Key Differences in Project Report Format

- Project reporting dashboard
- Pre-populated report sections
- Structured collection of data
- Rich text editor
- PDF upload to support images, charts, and other complex graphics
- Improved citation search through Thomson Web of Science
- Special reporting requirements are controlled by solicitation
- PI no longer provides demographic information on significant participants

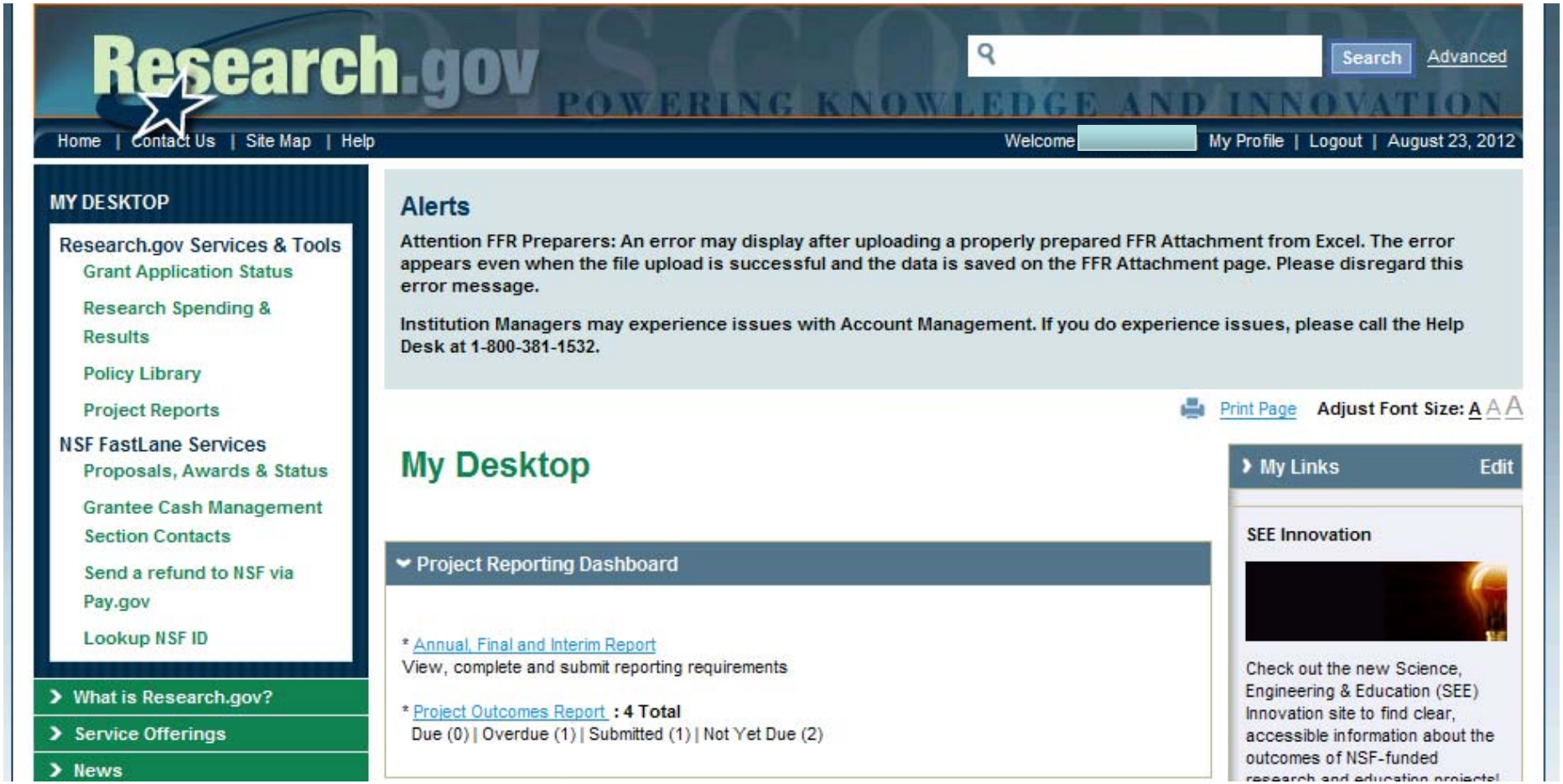
Key Implementation Dates

- Phase I Pilot – Begins October 22
  - Six organizations
  - FastLane freeze 10/1-10/21
- Phase 2 Pilot - Begins in November
  - Additional 25 organizations
  - Preceded by a FastLane freeze
- Final Target Launch Date: March 2013
  - All NSF awards and institutions
  - NSF-wide FastLane freeze

Detailed Timeline and Activities

October 2012	November 2012	December 2012	January 2013
Pilot Phase 1	**Pilot Phase 2**	**Full FastLane FREEZE**	**Full Operations**
6 Pilot Institutions	*Expand to 25 additional Pilot institutions*	*Institute NSF-wide freeze on new project reporting in FastLane*	*All institutions migrated to Research.gov*
• Communication with affected PIs and Institutions • FastLane freeze for 6 pilot institutions • POs approve all pending FastLane project reports for 6 pilot institutions • Overdue dates will be extended to 3/15 for all reports due between 9/15-12/3	• Communication with affected PIs and Institutions • FastLane freeze for 25 additional pilot institutions • POs approve pending FastLane project reports for 25 pilot institutions • Due dates extended to 1/22 for all reports due 12/4-1/21 with overdue date of 4/30	• Communication with all NSF PIs and Institutions • POs approve all pending FastLane project reports • Provide regular reports to Divisions with status of pending reports	• Turn off FastLane and migrate all users to Research.gov • Resume regular project report review and approval activities

Reporting on Research.gov



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Project Reports

What is the difference between an Annual, Final, Interim and Project Outcomes Report?

Reports Due | Reports Due < 12 Months | All Awards

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Award Number	Award Title	Report Type	Status	Days Until Overdue	Report Overdue Date	Action
0830294	NEESR-SG: Smart and Resilient Steel Walls for Reducing Earthquake Impacts	Annual	Returned	OVERDUE	10/01/2011	Create/Edit
0723064	MRI: Acquisition of Equipment to Simulate Collapse of Engineered Systems under E...	Final	Due	OVERDUE	05/01/2012	Create/Edit
0421577	NEESR-SG: Seismic Behavior, Analysis and Design of Complex Wall Systems	Final	Due	OVERDUE	06/30/2012	Create/Edit
1000440	Collaborative Research: Machine Vision Enhanced Post Earthquake Inspection and ...	Annual	Due	OVERDUE	07/27/2012	Create/Edit

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Award 0723064 - Final Project Report

< All Reports for this Award

Available Actions:
Preview Report | View Previous Annual Report | View Help

Show Report Summary

Report Content

Cover | Accomplishments | Products | Participants | Impact | Changes/ Problems | Special Requirements

< Save / Previous Section Save Save / Next Section >

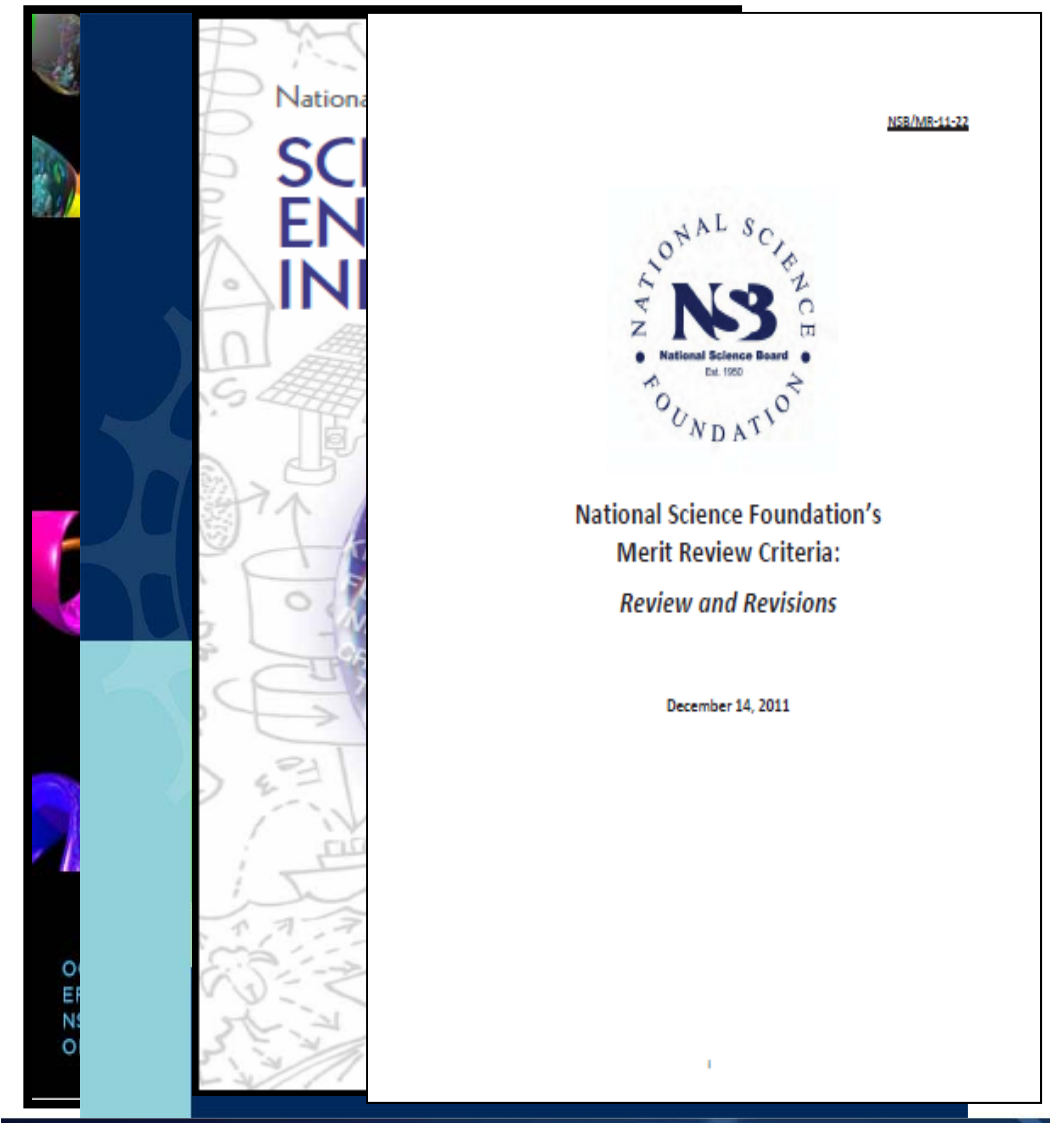
Impact - What is the impact of the project? How has it contributed?

INSTRUCTIONS - This component will be used to describe ways in which the work, findings, and specific products of the project have had an impact during this reporting period.

For NSF purposes, include, where appropriate, discussion of data resources and the acquisition of data skills. Include the emergence of new career paths, such as data scientists, or new disciplines.

If there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, please check "Nothing to Report" if applicable.

Key Documents



- **Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)**
- **FY 2013 Budget Request to Congress**
- **Science & Engineering Indicators**
- **Report to the NSB on NSF Merit Review Criteria**

Key Document Sites

- **Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide**
  www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=papp

- **Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Request**
  www.nsf.gov/about/budget/fy2013/index.jsp

- **NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2011-2016**
  www.nsf.gov/news/strategicplan/nsfstrategicplan_2011_2016.pdf

- **NSB Report on Merit Review**
  www.nsf.gov/nsb/publications/2011/meritreviewcriteria.pdf

- **Presentations from Recent Events**
  http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/outreach.jsp#present

policy@nsf.gov