

# National Science Foundation

Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences  
Office of the Assistant Director

NOTICE TO PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

NSF 99-137, June 22, 1999

Dear Colleague:

As you may know, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has developed a system called FastLane that uses Web technology to receive and to process proposal and award material electronically. Information concerning this system is located on the World Wide Web at <http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/>. I hope to have your cooperation and help as the National Science Foundation, including the Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE), works toward complete implementation of the FastLane system.

The workload at NSF has grown dramatically over the past decade, while staffing numbers have remained relatively stable. With the enactment of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), and the emphasis on a more efficient, effective government, all agencies are being asked to improve processes and provide higher quality service to their customers. We believe that the use of modern information technology, such as FastLane, can help us respond to these increased demands. Based on experience to date with FastLane, electronic submission benefits both SBE staff and proposal submitters. It allows us to access data on proposals and respond to your inquiries more quickly and effectively.

More than a thousand institutions have used the Foundation's FastLane system, and SBE makes very few awards to any institutions that are not already participating in FastLane in some way. I am confident that your institution can offer you the support you need to submit your proposals via FastLane. The system includes provision for proposals from individuals, for example, for some postdoctoral fellowship opportunities.

If you are not already doing so, I strongly encourage you to begin submitting your proposals to the SBE Directorate via FastLane. The SBE Directorate includes the Division of Social and Economic Sciences (SES), the Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS), the Division of Science Resources Studies (SRS), as well as the Division of International Programs (INT), which deals with all fields of science and engineering at NSF.

Should you have any questions about using FastLane that are not answered by your Office of Sponsored Research, or at the FastLane website (<http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/>), please contact FastLane staff by email ([fastlane@nsf.gov](mailto:fastlane@nsf.gov)) for expert advice. You may also contact a FastLane expert in the relevant division of SBE: SES ([sesfl@nsf.gov](mailto:sesfl@nsf.gov)), BCS ([bcsfl@nsf.gov](mailto:bcsfl@nsf.gov)), SRS ([srsfl@nsf.gov](mailto:srsfl@nsf.gov)), or INT ([intfl@nsf.gov](mailto:intfl@nsf.gov)).

Please note the deadline for implementation in the attached notice and post or distribute this message to as many of your colleagues as possible. We look forward to working with you in this important endeavor. We believe that it will enhance the proposal process for everyone.

With best wishes,

Bennett I. Bertenthal  
Assistant Director

Attachment: NSF Important Notice #123

Title: Important Notice: Working Toward a Paperless Proposal and Award System  
Date: September 3, 1998

National Science Foundation  
Office of the Director  
Arlington, VA 22230

Notice No. 123

September 3, 1998

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO  
PRESIDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES  
AND HEADS OF OTHER NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS

Subject: Working Toward a Paperless Proposal  
and Award System

NSF has been exploring ways to redesign and streamline the way we do business with our customer communities. The NSF FastLane system, initiated in 1994, is helping to fulfill our vision of a fully-integrated electronic proposal and award system that will provide a quick, secure, paperless record and transaction mechanism for all NSF awards, from program announcement to award closeout, by October 2000.

This is a challenging goal, and we ask you to join us in achieving it. We believe that there are significant benefits associated with implementation of a paperless proposal and award process, by NSF and our customer communities. NSF will be able to respond more promptly and accurately to grantee requests, and our grantee community will be able to initiate and better manage their NSF business transactions.

Various components of the FastLane system already have been incorporated into routine NSF operations. It is important that your organization be prepared to operate in this changing environment. We strongly encourage your organization to take advantage of NSF electronic capabilities, where they currently exist. We will continue to support a paper process during this transition period.

Our upcoming revision of the NSF Grant Proposal Guide will include important guidance on use of FastLane in the proposal and award process. To assist in your planning, the listing on the reverse side identifies dates when use of specific components of the NSF FastLane system will be required. We also encourage your organization to visit the FastLane Web site <<https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/>> for supplemental information on specific NSF supported activities.

NSF also is a collaborating partner on the interagency development of a "common face" for Federal grants known as the "Federal Commons." The "Federal Commons" is an Internet-based point of entry for grant proposers and recipients to conduct

business electronically with Federal grant making agencies. NSF has also made the commitment that FastLane will integrate transparently with this "common face" approach.

To encourage the broadest possible comment and discussion, NSF has created a response box to provide the Foundation with your views and specific suggestions regarding our electronic vision and implementation strategy. You may access this box on the NSF Web site at <<http://www.nsf.gov/oirm/dis/flnotice/start.htm>>.

Rita R. Colwell  
Director

#### FastLane Implementation Dates

##### "Working Toward a Paperless NSF Proposal and Award System"

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To assist in your planning, the following identifies dates when use of specific components of the NSF FastLane system will be required. We also encourage your organization to visit the FastLane Web site at <<https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/>> for supplemental information on specific NSF supported activities.

#### NSF FastLane Component

##### Required Use:

Annual & Final Project Reporting

October 1999

Postaward Notifications & Requests

January 2000

Business Transactions (Payment and Financial Reporting)

October 2000

Submission of Peer Reviews

October 2000

Proposal Preparation & Submission

October 2000

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The National Science Foundation (NSF) funds research and education in most fields of science and engineering. Grantees are wholly responsible for conducting their project activities and preparing the results for publication. Thus, the Foundation does not assume responsibility for such findings or their interpretation.

NSF welcomes proposals from all qualified scientists, engineers and educators. The Foundation strongly encourages women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to compete fully in its programs. In accordance with federal statutes, regulations, and NSF policies, no person on grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin, or disability shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to

discrimination under any program or activity receiving financial assistance from NSF (unless otherwise specified in the eligibility requirements for a particular program).

Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASSED) provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities (investigators and other staff, including student research assistants) to work on NSF-supported projects. See the program announcement or contact the program coordinator at (703) 306-1636.

The National Science Foundation has Telephonic Device for the Deaf (TDD) and Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) capabilities that enable individuals with hearing impairments to communicate with the Foundation regarding NSF programs, employment, or general information. TDD may be accessed at (703) 306-0090 or through FIRS on 1-800-877-8339.

The National Science Foundation is committed to making all of the information we publish easy to understand. If you have a suggestion about how to improve the clarity of this document or other NSF-published materials, please contact us at [plainlanguage@nsf.gov](mailto:plainlanguage@nsf.gov).