

## SCIENCE MISSION DIRECTORATE POLICY

### REQUESTING RECONSIDERATION OF NRA PROPOSAL DECLINATION SMD POLICY DOCUMENT 09 (SPD-09)

Approved by SMD Science Management Council on September 18, 2006  
Approved by SMD Associate Administrator, Mary Cleave, on February 12, 2007  
Responsible SMD Official: Chief Scientist

#### Purpose

This document describes the SMD process for requesting reconsideration of the declination of a proposal submitted in response to an SMD NASA Research Announcement. Reconsideration may be requested if the PI believes that the proposal was not handled correctly. Only the SMD process is described here; proposers will be informed of the availability of the Ombudsman review process in the Guidebook for Proposers Responding to a NASA Research Announcement (NRA) and in all future SMD NRAs.

#### Section 1: Notification of Declination of Proposals

- (a) Program Officers are responsible for providing a written explanation of the basis for a decision to decline a proposal; this written explanation satisfies the requirements of NFS §1852.235-72(k)(1) for explaining generally why the proposal was not selected. A Principal Investigator (PI) whose proposal has been declined may request an oral debriefing by the Program Officer following receipt of the written explanation.
- (b) The following language, or similar language adapted for the individual circumstances of each competition and decision process, should be included in the declination letter that is sent to the PI.
  - (i) The consensus comments of the peer review panel are enclosed for your information. If you have any questions about this review, please contact me via e-mail at myname@nasa.gov or by telephone at 202-358-XXXX.
  - (ii) The scientific merit of this proposal was evaluated to be insufficient to make it competitive for selection; or
  - (iii) The scientific merit of this proposal was evaluated to be competitive for selection, but there was insufficient funding to support it once other higher priority proposals had been selected. Prioritization within the competitive range was based on .....(e.g. the degree to which proposals offered direct benefit to NASA future mission planning).

## Section 2: General Policies regarding the Reconsideration of Proposals

- (a) A PI who is not satisfied with the explanation of the basis for the declination of his/her proposal must contact the cognizant Program Officer for an oral debriefing regarding his/her reasons for requesting reconsideration of the declination before initiating a formal Request for Reconsideration. The Program Officer must provide the oral debriefing as soon as possible, generally within two weeks of the request.
- (b) Following an oral debriefing, a PI whose proposal has been declined may request reconsideration of that decision if he/she is not satisfied that the review on which the decision was based was fair and reasonable, substantively and/or procedurally.
- (c) PIs should understand that, because factors such as program budget and priorities factor into the decision process, reconsideration will not necessarily result in an award even if it is established that there was an error in the review.
- (d) PIs should understand that reconsideration will be based on the material in the original proposal. Requests for reconsideration based on results obtained after the proposal was submitted, for instance, are not appropriate.

## Section 3: Process for Handling a Request for Reconsideration

- (a) Request for Reconsideration
  - (i) If a PI is not satisfied with the Program Officer's initial response (Section 2(a)), he/she may then submit a Request for Reconsideration to the Selecting Official of the competition to which the proposal was submitted. This Request, which should summarize the reasons for the Request for Reconsideration, must be made in writing within 60 calendar days of receipt of the declination letter, or within 30 days of the oral debriefing, whichever is later. The Program Officer should be copied on the Request for Reconsideration.
  - (ii) The Selecting Official must respond in writing to the Request for Reconsideration by the Selecting Official within 30 calendar days. If additional time is required to prepare a response, then an explanation of the need for more time should be given to the PI before the end of the 30 calendar days. The written response should respond to the reasons used to justify the Request for Reconsideration, and, if an independent assessment was conducted, should include the results of the independent assessment of the decision. The Program Officer must be copied on the response of the Selecting Official.
- (b) Appeal to the Mission Directorate Associate Administrator
  - (i) If the PI is not satisfied with the Selecting Official's written response, and if the Associate Administrator for Science Mission Directorate is not the Selecting Official, then he/she may submit an Appeal to the Associate Administrator for

Science Mission Directorate. This Appeal, which should summarize the reasons for the Appeal to the Associate Administrator, must be made in writing within 30 calendar days of receipt of the Selecting Official's response. The Program Officer should be copied on the Appeal to the Associate Administrator.

- (ii) The Associate Administrator must respond in writing to the Appeal to the Associate Administrator within 30 calendar days. If additional time is required to prepare a response, then an explanation of the need for more time should be given to the PI before the end of the 30 calendar days. The written response should include the results of the review of the Appeal to the Associate Administrator. The Program Officer must be copied on the response of the Associate Administrator.

#### Section 4: Record Keeping

- (a) Upon receipt of a written Request for Reconsideration, the Program Officer shall create a file containing the records of the reconsideration. These records must include all written requests from the PI and all written responses from the Science Mission Directorate.
- (b) The written records associated with a Request for Reconsideration must be maintained for one year, or until any appeals and other determinations concerning the decision for proposal declination are completed, whichever is longer. This includes appeals and determinations both within the Science Mission Directorate and external to the Science Mission Directorate.