

NSF Merit Review Process: Funding Decisions

by

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Funding Decisions

- **The peer review panel summary provides:**
 - Review of the proposal and a recommendation on funding
 - Feedback (strengths and weaknesses) to the proposers
- **NSF Program Officers make funding recommendations guided by program goals and portfolio considerations.**
- **NSF Division Directors either concur or reject the program officer's funding recommendations.**
- **NSF's grants and agreements officers make the official award – considering issues such as:**
 - The institution has an adequate grant management capacity.
 - The institution/PI do not have overdue annual or final reports.
 - There are no other outstanding issues with the institution or PI.



Reasons for Declining a Proposal

- The proposal was not considered competitive by the peer review panel and the program office concurred.
- The proposal had flaws or issues identified by the program office.
- The program funds were not adequate to fund all competitive proposals.

Notes:

- Peer reviews, panel summaries, and program officer comments are available via FastLane once funding decisions are final for proposers to review.
- Use all of this information to improve your proposal competitiveness.



Feedback to PI Documentation from Merit Review

- Verbatim copies of individual reviews, excluding reviewer identities (in most cases, at least three reviews)
- Panel Summary (if panel reviewed)
- Context Statement
- PO to PI Comments (written or verbal) as necessary to explain a declination



Feedback to PI

Information from Merit Review

- Reviewer ratings (E, VG, G, F, P)
- Analysis of how well proposal addresses both review criteria: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts
- Proposal strengths and weaknesses
- Reasons for a declination

If questions, contact the cognizant program officer.



Should you revise and resubmit?

- Do the reviewers and NSF program officer identify significant strengths of your proposal?
- Can you address the weaknesses that reviewers and program officer identified?
- Are there other ways you or colleagues think you can strengthen a resubmission?

If questions, contact the cognizant program officer.



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Reasons For Funding a Competitive Proposal

- Likely high impact
- PI Career Point (tenured?/“established”/“young”)
- Place in Program Portfolio
- Other Support for PI
- Impact on Institution/State
- Special Programmatic Considerations (CAREER/RUI/EPSCoR)
- Diversity Issues
- Educational Impact
- “Launching” versus “Maintaining”

