NSF Proposal and Award Process

PHASE I – PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION – 90 DAYS

1 - Opportunity Announced. All funding opportunities are announced on the NSF website. Grants.gov is another source for finding and applying for NSF funding. Program Descriptions, Program Announcements and Program Solicitations are mechanisms used by NSF to generate proposals. Unsolicited proposals to specific NSF programs may be submitted at any time.

2 - Proposal Submitted. The Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) is the source for guidance on preparing and submitting a proposal to NSF. The GPG details formatting and submission requirements. Applicants using Grants.gov must follow the guidelines in the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide. The proposing organization submits the proposal to NSF via either the NSF FastLane System or via Grants.gov.

3 - Proposal Received. Proposals are received by the NSF Proposal Processing Unit and are assigned to the appropriate program for acknowledgement and, if they meet NSF requirements, for review. A proposal may be returned without review if it does not meet NSF proposal preparation requirements, such as page limitations, formatting instructions, and electronic submission, as specified in the GPG or program solicitation. The GPG identifies all of the reasons for which a proposal may be returned without review.

PHASE II – PROPOSAL REVIEW AND PROCESSING – 6 MONTHS

4 - Reviewers Selected. Reviewers are selected based on their specific and/or broad knowledge of the science and engineering fields; their broad knowledge of the infrastructure of the science and engineering enterprise, and its educational activities; and to the extent possible, diverse representation within the review group. Sources of reviewers can come from the program officer's knowledge of the research area; references listed in the proposal; recent professional society programs; computer searches of science and engineering journal articles related to the proposal; reviewer recommendations included in proposal or sent by email. Proposers are invited to suggest persons they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal, as well as identify persons they would prefer not review the proposal.

5 - Peer Review. All NSF proposals are reviewed through use of the two NSB-approved merit review criteria: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. Some solicitations may have additional review criteria. External reviewers' analyses and evaluation of the proposal provide information to the NSF Program Officer in making a recommendation regarding the proposal.

6 - Program Officer Recommendation. After scientific, technical and programmatic review, the NSF Program Officer recommends to the cognizant Division Director whether the proposal should be recommended for an award or declined for funding. Due to the large number of proposals received, the review and consideration process can take up to six months. Large or particularly complex proposals may require additional review and processing time.

7 - Division Director Review. If the decision is made to decline the award, the organization is notified and review information is available in the FastLane System. If the decision is to award, the recommendation is submitted to a Grants & Agreements Officer in the Division of Grants and Agreements (DGA).

PHASE III – AWARD PROCESSING – 30 DAYS

8 - Business Review. The Grants and Agreements Officer In the Division of Grants and Agreements (DGA) conducts a review of business, financial, and policy implications. Generally, DGA makes awards within 30 days after the program office makes its recommendation. Additional processing time may be required if: the organization has not received prior funding: if the award is a cooperative agreement; or it involves special situations (such as coordination with another Federal agency or a private funding source).

9 - Award Finalized. The award itself is comprised of an award notice, budget, proposal, applicable NSF conditions, and any other documents or requirements incorporated by reference into the agreement. Each NSF award notice specifically identifies certain conditions that are applicable to, and become part of, that award.