National Science Foundation
Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)
Summary of Significant Changes
Effective December 26, 2014

Part 1: Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)

Chapter II.C.2.g Budget and Budget Justification – Revised to limit the budget justification to no more than three pages imposing the same requirement to proposals containing subawards.

Chapter II.C.2.g (i) (a) Senior Personnel Salaries & Wages Policy – Per suggestions from the membership, NSF amended this section noting that compensation for personnel in excess of two months must be disclosed in the proposal budget, justified in the budget justification, and must be specifically approved by NSF in the award notice budget. Under normal re-budgeting authority, as described in AAG Chapters II and V, an awardee can internally approve an increase or decrease in person months devoted to the project after an award is made, even if doing so results in salary support for senior personnel exceeding the two month salary policy. No prior approval from NSF is necessary as long as that change would not cause the objective or scope of the project to change. NSF prior approval is necessary if the objective or scope of the project changes. These same general principles apply to other types of non-academic organizations.

Chapter II.C.2.g(i)(b) Administrative and Clerical Salaries and Wages - The new revision removes references to A-21, and language regarding consistently treated, like circumstances and replaces with the following conditions which must be met:

(1) Administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;
(2) Individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;
(3) Such costs are explicitly included in the approved budget or have the prior written approval of the cognizant NSF Grants Officer; and
(4) The costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

Chapter II.C.2.g (iv) Travel - All travel, both domestic and foreign require justification. Additional language is added to address temporary dependent care costs - Travel support for dependents of key project personnel may be requested only when the travel is for a duration of six months or more either by inclusion in the approved budget or with the prior written approval of the cognizant NSF Grants Officer. Temporary dependent care costs above and beyond regular dependent care that directly result from travel to conferences are allowable costs provided that the conditions established in 2 CFR § 200.474 are met.

Chapter II.C.2.g (vi) (a) Materials and Supplies - The new amended section adds language to indicate that computing devices are consider supply items and may be included as direct costs for devices that are essential and allocable, but not solely dedicated, to the performance of the NSF award.
Chapter II.C.2.g (vi) (e) Subawards - The Uniform Guidance requires proposing organizations to make case-by-case determinations regarding the role of subrecipients vs contractors. NSF has stated that inclusion of a subaward or contract in the proposal budget or submission of a request after issuance of an NSF award to add a subaward or contract will document the organizational determination required. This is a positive change to the grantee community.

Chapter II.D.8 Proposals involving Human Subjects: This section clarifies that the only acceptable IRB approval documents are those that approve a human subject research protocol and approvals “in concept” or conditional IRB documents are not acceptable. Additional guidance is given if IRB approval cannot be obtained at the awarding stage because the development of a human subject’s research protocol requires preliminary or other conceptual work to take place.

Chapter II.C.2.d, Project Description – This section now requires a separate section within the narrative entitled, “Broader Impacts of the Proposed Work.”

Chapter II.D.3, Ideal Lab - New funding mechanism added and details four-stage process used. Currently under pilot, has launched another funding mechanism titled “Integrated NSF Support Promoting Interdisciplinary Research and Education (INSPIRES).

Part II. Award and Administration Guide (AAG)

Chapter II.A.2. Grantee Notifications to NSF and Requests for NSF Approval and ExhibitII-1, Consolidated Listing of Program and Cost Related Grantee Notifications to and Requests for Approval from, the National Science Foundation - Revised to reflect three (3) new requests for NSF approval including salaries of administrative or clerical staff, travel costs for dependents, and additional categories of participant support costs (incentives, gifts, souvenirs, t-shirts, and memorabilia).

Chapter II.C, Cost Sharing - Requires that awards with any mandatory cost sharing must document such cost sharing (on an annual and final basis), the Authorized Organizational Representative must certify that the amount is correct, and the cost sharing must be reported to NSF via use of NSF’s electronic systems.

Chapter III.D.4, Program Income – The language has been revised to reflect that registration fees collected for NSF supported conferences are considered program income. License fees and royalties for copyrighted material, patents, patent applications, trademarks, and inventions produced under an award are not considered program income.

Chapter V.D, Indirect Costs – Provides updated guidance addressing organizations with and without federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreements (e.g., de minimis rate 10% or less of MTDC)

The full text of the PAPPG is available at the following link: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf15001/index.jsp