How to Get NSF to Fund Your Social Science Research

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Outline

• Background on the National Science Foundation
• Social Science Research Opportunities
• Submission Procedures
• Separating Awards from Declinations
NSF in a Nutshell

- Independent Agency
- Supports basic research
- Uses grant mechanism
- Low overhead; highly automated

- Discipline-based structure
- Cross-disciplinary mechanisms
- Use of Rotators/IPAs
- National Science Board
Why Do You Want NSF Funding?

- Funds curiosity-driven research
- Pays full overhead (no match)
- Provides summer salary support
- Uses the grant mechanism
Opportunities

- Unsolicited competitions
- Special solicitations
- Rapid response research (RAPID)
- Early-concept grants for exploratory research (EAGER)
- CAREER grants
- Dear Colleague Letter
- Doctoral dissertation improvement grants
Where to Start?

- Check awards by program, keyword, etc. ([www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/](http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/))
- Read solicitation carefully (if not unsolicited competition)
Social and Economic Sciences (SES)

FY09 Program Allocations (millions of dollars)

- Cross-Directorate Activities $3.8
- Decision, Risk, & Management Sciences $7.52
- Economics $25.81
- Innovation and Organizational Sciences $3.37
- Law and Social Science $5.08
- Methodology, Measurement & Statistics $4.03
- Political Science $9.95
- Science and Society $8.99
- Sociology $9.46

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SES Target Dates

January 15 & August 15
Law and Social Science
Political Science
Sociology

January 16 & August 16
Methodology, Measurement, and Statistics

January 18 & August 18
Decision, Risk, & Management Sciences
Economics

February 1 & August 1
Science and Society

February 2 & September 3
Innovation and Organizational Sciences
Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS)

FY09 Program Allocations (millions of dollars)

- Archaeology & Archaeometry $6.5
- Cultural Anthropology $3.5
- Cognitive Neuroscience $7.0
- Developmental & Learning Sciences $6.3
- Geography & Regional Science $6.4
- Linguistics $7.5
- Perception, Action, & Cognition $6.4
- Physical Anthropology $3.8
- Social Psychology $5.9
January 14 & July 14
Cognitive Neuroscience

January 15 & July 15
Developmental & Learning Sciences
Linguistics
Social Psychology

January 15 & August 15
Cultural Anthropology
Geography & Regional Science

January 20 & August 20
Physical Anthropology

February 1 & August 1
Perception, Cognition and Action

July 1 & December 1
Archaeology
Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Awards

- Archaeology
- Cultural Anthropology
- Decision, Risk, & Management Science
- Economics
- Geography & Regional Science

- Law and Social Science
- Linguistics
- Physical Anthropology
- Political Science
- Science and Society
- Sociology

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Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program

- Untenured faculty (or comparable)
- Single scholar award
- $400,000, 5-years minimum award
- Three proposals lifetime limit
- July 1 deadline
- “Walk on Water” expectation
Rapid Response Research (RAPID)

- Research when data are ephemeral
- $200,000 maximum; 1 year
- 5-page project description
- Internal review only
- Contact program officer first
Early-concept grants for exploratory research (EAGER)

- Exploratory work on untested, potentially transformative ideas
- High-risk, high-potential payoff
- $300,000 maximum; 2 years
- 8-page descriptive
- Internal review only
- Contact program officer first
Dear Colleague Letter

Example: Environmental, Society, and Economics

- Co-reviews in GEO and SBE
- No separate deadline or program
- Front offices pick up 70 percent of cost
Climate, Energy, and Sustainability

- Social science friendly solicitations:
  - Water sustainability and climate
  - Climate change education partnership
- Science, Engineering and Education for Sustainability is FY2011 focus
Special Program: Science of Science & Innovation Policy

- **Understanding:**
  develop usable *knowledge* and *theories*

- **Measurement:**
  improve and expand science *metrics, data sets* and *analytical models and tools* that are replicable and generalizable

- **Community development:**
  cultivate a *community of practice* focusing on SciSIIP across the academy, the public sector and industry both nationally and internationally

Program Officer: Julia Lane
Special Program: Dynamics of Coupled Natural and Human Systems (CNH)

- Funds quantitative, interdisciplinary analyses of relevant human and natural system processes and complex interactions at diverse scales
- First permanent inter-directorate program

Program Officer: Tom Baerwald
NSF’s Future?

• Stimulus funds are gone
• But, excluded from budget freeze plans
• Proposal numbers increasing greatly
• Popular across the spectrum
• More interdisciplinary competitions
ADVANCE

Increasing the Participation and Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers

In 2009-2010, NSF is supporting the following:

- Institutional Transformation (IT)
- Institutional Transformation Catalyst (IT-Catalyst)
- Partnerships for Adaptation, Implementation, and Dissemination (PAID)
IGERT

Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship Program

- Focused training in specific topical areas for graduate students—pre- and post-doctoral
- Currently a handful in the social sciences
STEM* Initiatives

• NSF Graduate STEM Fellows in K-12 Education (GK-12)
• National STEM Education Distributed Learning (NSDL)
• Alliances for Broadening Participation in STEM (ABP)

As three examples . . . .

* Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
NSF Sources of Reviewers

- Program Officer’s knowledge
- References listed in the proposal
- Google
- Community of Science and other databases
- Reviewer’s recommendations
- Investigator’s suggestions
Human Subjects

- No award for a project involving human subjects can be made without prior Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the research activity.

- IRB approval is not needed at the time of proposal submission.
Funding Decisions

- Program Officer decision
- Feedback to PI
- Informal and formal notification
- Scope of work and budget discussions
Two Funding Criteria

• Intellectual merit
• Broader impacts
Intellectual Merit?

• NSF funds basic research
• NSF funds basic research
• Intellectual merit means increasing knowledge through developing and examining basic theories or methods
Broader Impacts

- Promote teaching, training and learning
- Broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.)
- Enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks and partnerships
- Disseminate results broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding
- Benefit society
Budget Tips

• **Amounts**
  - Reasonable for work -- Realistic
  - Well justified -- Need established
  - In-line with program guidelines

• **Eligible costs**
  - Personnel
  - Equipment
  - Travel
  - Other Direct Costs, Subawards
  - Facilities & Administrative Costs
Myths about NSF

- Only funds scholars at elite graduate institutions
- Only funds “famous” academics
- Once declined, you are likely always to be declined
- Only funds “normal science”
- Advisory committees make funding decisions
Reasons for Declinations

- “Trust-me” proposal
- Not feasible
  - Expertise gaps
  - Insufficient funding
  - Too ambitious
- Incremental contribution
- Bad luck
How to Put Together an Interdisciplinary Team

• Commit for the long haul
  - Be wary if untenured
  - Expect a long development period

• Find a wise and strong leader
  - Proposals need coherence
  - Leaders need to listen and then decide

• Meet for intellectual as well as task-related purposes
NSF vs. NIH

- NSF tends to be smaller
- NSF is more open to risky, exploratory, paradigm-challenging work
- NSF stresses basic research
- NSF has no scoring system, percentile system
- NSF program officers make funding decisions
- NSF uses “revision encouragement” loosely
Advice

- Learn to love rejection
- Team up
- E-mail or call Program Officer with specific questions
- Encourage dissertation improvement grant proposals (check program first)
Useful to submit even if declined

• Revise and resubmit
• Discover other funding sources
• Forces thinking
• Build relationships
• Receive reviews from experts
QUESTIONS?

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