



**National Science Foundation**  
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## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Science, Technology, and Society (STS) Program**

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1. I would like to submit a proposal to the STS program. Does my research fit with your program?
2. February 1st and August 1st are the deadline dates for the STS program. Is it possible to be a little late submitting a proposal?
3. My work fits both with STS and another program. Should I submit separate proposals to both programs?
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### **1. I would like to submit a proposal to the STS program. Does my research fit with your program?**

The [STS Program Solicitation](#) is the best place to start for getting a good sense for program goals. Another excellent source is [NSF's Awards Database](#); if you do an Advanced Search, then it is possible to restrict the search to STS awards by using the Element Code 7603. These sources together should provide a sufficient sense for the type of research that is funded by the program. If you are still unsure whether your research fits with the program after working with these sources, then you are welcome to email a one-page (single-spaced) description of your project idea to one of the STS program directors for additional insights.

### **2. February 1st and August 1st are the deadline dates for the STS program. Is it possible to be a little late submitting a proposal?**

Deadline dates are firm. Extensions are granted only in extenuating circumstances such as natural or anthropogenic disasters that prevent an on-time submission; in such cases, the PI must contact one of the STS Program Directors as soon as possible to request an extension. Barring such circumstances, proposals must be submitted by your Sponsored Projects Office representative by 5

PM, your local time. See the Grant Proposal Guide Chapter 1.F. for additional information.

**3. My work fits both with STS and another program. Should I submit separate proposals to both programs?**

The same proposal may be only be submitted to one program in a given cycle. It is important that you submit the proposal to the program that is most closely aligned with your research interests; this is the primary program that will manage your award if your proposal is funded. If you are not sure which program to select as primary, you should discuss your research idea with a program director from each program that you regard as most relevant. They will be able to guide you in choosing a primary program. Once the primary program is selected, you may request that the proposal be co-reviewed by the other relevant programs. You are welcome to suggest other programs that you believe to be relevant for co-review; you can do so in the Cover Sheet portion of the proposal. The (primary) program then decides whether to request a co-review from other programs that you indicate.

**4. How would I decide which program to select as "primary"? Does it matter that STS and another program have different deadline dates?**

If you are not sure which program to select as primary, you should discuss your research idea with a program director from the most relevant programs. They will be able to guide you in choosing a primary program. Proposals must be submitted following the guidelines specified by the program selected by the investigator as the primary. For example, the deadline date for the Political Science program is August 15th. If Political Science is selected as the primary program, the STS program (whose deadline date is August 1st) may still consider and co-review that proposal, even though it was submitted after that program's deadline.

**5. What sort of budget is typical in the STS program? I'm not sure what I should ask for.**

The STS program provides several different modes of support; budgetary guidelines are provided for each mode of support in the STS Program Solicitation. Working within those guidelines, you should request what will be needed to complete the proposed plan of research. There is substantial variability in award size and duration that are determined by the nature of the proposed project. Budgets are sometimes negotiated before a proposal is recommended for funding.

**6. Can I request release time in my budget?**

The STS Scholars Award is the designated mode of funding for individual investigators who are undertaking research projects and need full-time release for an academic year. Summer support (up to two months) may be requested each year for up to three years. Academic-year support may be up to nine months, and it may be spread over more than one academic year (such as the spring term of one academic year and the fall term of the following academic year). Release time in a research proposal grant is determined on a case-by-case basis and factors such as course load, availability of graduate teaching assistants and graduate research assistants, and appropriateness given the proposed work are factors that are taken into account when these proposals are evaluated.

**7. What kind of research has the STS program funded in the past?**

To obtain information about research projects that have recently been funded by the program, go to the [STS Program Web Site](#) and then activate the "What Has Been Funded" link at the bottom of the web page; the link is associated with a searchable database.

**8. Can I get a copy of a successful NSF proposal from you?**

Please do not contact the STS Program to request copies of proposals. Proposals contain confidential or proprietary information and cannot be released upon request by the program. However, it is acceptable practice for prospective proposers to contact the PI on a successful proposal to request a copy of his or her proposal. See the previous FAQs (1 and 7 above) for information on how to search for relevant proposals.

**9. My proposal is a resubmission of an earlier version. Is there any special instruction for revisions? Do I get extra pages to respond to the reviewer feedback?**

NSF processes resubmissions as new submissions. There is no special mechanism in FastLane for identifying resubmitted proposals. However, such proposals are usually recognized as such by program officers and some reviewers. It should be noted that proposals are not necessarily reviewed by the same individuals the second time through; usually some reviewers are the same and some are new. If you want information about your responses to previous comments to be available to current reviewers, you may include them in your 15-page project description. You are under no obligation to mention the previous round of reviews. However, concerns raised in reviews of the original proposal should be adequately addressed in the revised and resubmitted proposal; some acknowledgment of previous concerns and a discussion of how they are addressed could serve to strengthen the proposal. There are several ways to do so in the Project Description. For example, some PIs include a brief introductory paragraph or page providing a sweeping overview of the changes, whereas others detail each comment or concern raised by previous reviewers at some pertinent place in the proposal and then addresses it at that point. The STS program has seen these and other approaches succeed; it is best to adopt an approach that is stylistically and substantially appropriate for you and for the proposed project.

**10. What is a data management plan?**

NSF now requires that all proposals include a Data Management Plan in the form of a supplementary document that is no more than two pages. The Plan should describe the data that are generated by the research, and the plans for managing that data, including storage, human subjects protection, data dissemination and level of aggregation. A valid Data Management Plan may include only the statement that no detailed plan is needed, provided that the statement is accompanied by a clear justification. The Data Management Plan will be reviewed as an integral part of the proposal, coming under Intellectual Merit or Broader Impacts or both, as appropriate for the scientific community of relevance. For more information, please consult the [Data Management Plan for SBE Proposals](#) web site.

Investigators are expected to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the primary data, samples, physical collections and other supporting materials produced in the course of work that is supported by an NSF grant. Grantees are expected to encourage and facilitate such sharing. Privileged or confidential information should be released only in a form that protects the privacy of individuals and subjects involved.

**11. What are the most common proposal compliance mistakes made by PIs?**

Common compliance mistakes are often seen in the biographical sketches. A biographical sketch that is no more than two pages is required for each individual identified as senior project personnel. Biographical sketches are not permitted to be placed in any other section of the proposal.

All biographical sketches MUST adhere to the biographical sketch guidelines. Biographical sketches can ONLY include the following sections:

- Professional Preparation: A list of the individual's undergraduate and graduate education and postdoctoral training including ONLY degree, major, institution, and year information.
- Appointments: A list of all the individual's academic/professional appointments. No descriptors of the position are permitted.
- Products: A list of: (i) up to five products most closely related to the proposed project; and (ii) up to five other significant products, whether or not related to the proposed project.
- Synergetic Activities: A list of up to five unique and succinct examples that demonstrate the broader impact of the individual's professional and scholarly activities that focuses on the integration and transfer of knowledge as well as its creation.
- Collaborators & Other Affiliations.
- Collaborators and Co-Editors. A list of all persons **in alphabetical order** (including their current organizational affiliations) who are currently, or who have been collaborators or co-authors with the individual on a project, book, article, report, abstract or paper during the 48 months preceding the submission of the proposal. Also include those individuals who are currently or have been co-editors of a journal, compendium, or conference proceedings during the 24 months preceding the submission of the proposal. If there are no collaborators or co-editors to report, this should be so indicated.
- Graduate Advisors and Postdoctoral Sponsors. A list of the names of the individual's own graduate advisor(s) and principal postdoctoral sponsor(s), and their current organizational affiliations.
- Thesis Advisor and Postgraduate-Scholar Sponsor. A list of all persons (including their organizational affiliations), with whom the individual has had an association as thesis advisor, or with whom the individual has had an association within the last five years as a postgraduate-scholar sponsor. The total number of graduate students advised and postdoctoral scholars sponsored also must be identified.

**NO additional Sections (such as Honors, Awards, Grants, etc) may be included.**

Additional information on the biographical sketch guidelines can be found in section II.C.2.F of the [Grant Proposal Guide](#) (GPG).

**12. What should letters of commitment from unfunded collaborators say?**

Letters of commitment must ONLY indicate a willingness to work with the PI or PIs on a project. They must not use any evaluative language, including language that identifies the purported quality of the proposed work or the PIs. This letter should describe a willingness to cooperate, but not evaluate, the proposed work or PIs.

**13. Are letters of support permitted?**

The PAPPG states that, unless required by a specific program solicitation, letters of support should not be submitted as they are not a standard component of an NSF proposal, and, if included, a reviewer is under no obligation to review these materials. Letters of support submitted in response to a program solicitation requirement must be unique to the specific proposal submitted and cannot be altered without the author's explicit prior approval. NSF may return without review proposals that are not consistent with these instructions.

**14. I am submitting a proposal for a Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (DDRIG), are there any specific guidelines I should follow?**

A DDRIG proposal will have a few different requirements from a standard research proposal. Be sure to consult the STS Program Solicitation's section on DDRIG proposals for specific

requirements. Additional DDRIG proposal preparation guidance is listed below.

Outstanding proposals are those that will generate new knowledge and new interpretations. Such projects should advance our understanding of the topic as well as make an important contribution to the discipline as a whole.

Use a clear and concise writing style. Reviewers will include scholars from a variety of specialty areas. It is possible that no specialist from your particular area of research will be on the panel. Defining key terms and keeping your proposal free of jargon will ensure that all reviewers will be able to understand your proposal and evaluate it fairly. One of the areas in which the proposal will be evaluated is "Research Competence of the Student." You can provide information to reviewers in the body of the proposal as well as in your CV. Be sure to include any other information which can help reviewers evaluate how well prepared you are to conduct the research.

The Project Description section should describe the significance of the work, including its relationship to other current research, and the design of the project in sufficient detail to permit evaluation. It should also present and interpret progress to date if the research is already underway. The following are suggested criteria for the Project Description. These are not hard-and-fast rules but indicate what reviewers carefully consider when reading and evaluating a proposal.

- o A clear statement of the research problem, hypothesis or theory, and your aims and expectations.
- o Research plan or design. Based on the research question that you are asking, what are the important topics, themes or issues that you will be examining? Readers should be able to gain a clear understanding of what the researcher is going to do. The major research question, the plan or means for addressing that question, and the method employed should all be tightly linked.
- o Describe the research site(s) where you will be working, and how and why they are relevant to the project.
- o Describe the methodology you will be employing, and be specific. If you are doing archival research describe the collections you will be examining and explain their relevance to the project. If you will be conducting interviews describe the questions you will be asking. If you will be conducting a survey or doing ethnographic research, define the populations you will be studying. As one example the term "participant observation" is extraordinarily general and should be unpacked into its specific components and related to the information you are seeking to obtain and to the research design.
- o Engage with pertinent literature; reviewers want to know that you are engaged with the literature and can situate your work in relation to that literature.
- o A detailed work plan that includes a research schedule.

Reviewers are well aware that there are no perfect strategies for conducting research, but will be looking for evidence that you understand the strengths and weaknesses of the approach selected. In a competitive review process where only a subset of excellent proposals can be funded, reviewers need to be told how your particular study will advance our understanding of the topic, yield new knowledge, and significantly contribute to the discipline.

## 15. What is the Project Outcomes Report?

This report serves as a brief summary, prepared specifically for the public, of the nature and outcomes of your project. It can include photos, links to other pages, or other materials that would be of interest to the general public. Submission of a Project Outcomes Report for the General Public is now required within 90 days following the expiration date of your award.

Please prepare and submit your report using Research.gov. You can log in with your NSF ID to get started. Be advised that failure to submit Project Outcomes Reports will impede your ability to receive new funding.

This report will be posted on the NSF website exactly as it is submitted and will be accompanied by the following disclaimer: This Project Outcomes Report for the General Public is displayed verbatim as submitted by the Principal Investigator (PI) for this award. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this Report are those of the PI and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation; NSF has not approved or endorsed its content.