

OVERVIEW

NSF permits most applications to be submitted through Grants.gov. Applicants may submit using an institutional system-to-system (S2S) solution. Penn uses PennERA.

Exception – NSF requires **collaborative** proposals submitted separately from more than one applicant organization to be entered directly in FastLane/Research.gov. Collaborative projects submitted as a single application from one entity with collaborating subawardees may be submitted S2S via Grants.gov.

Important NSF Instructions

- [Grants.gov Application Guide February 2019](#)
- [Proposal Award & Policies & Procedures Guide \(2019\)](#)
- [Proposal Award & Policies & Procedures Guide \(2020\)](#)

Each form in the submission package has detailed completion instructions in the Grants.gov Guide. Use this document as your primary guide. It will refer you to sections of PAPPG as necessary for more detail about content.

Always review the announcement for special instructions.

Create Proposal and Complete Initial Setup

Follow all instructions in the [Proposal Development User's Guide](#) for creating a proposal record and initially completing Setup Questions.

- If the Funding Opportunity Announcement number (FOA) is not available, contact PennERAhelp@lists.upenn.edu.
- Answer "No" to the multiple PI question, which is NIH-related.

Do not create a proposal in FastLane/Research.gov.

Review and Select Optional Forms

On Setup Questions, review the optional forms available in the Grants.Gov Submission Information section. There are usually two forms that may be selected, if needed.

NSF_DeviationAuthorization-V1.1

NSF_SuggestedReviewers-V1.1

- Selected forms will be available on the S2S Forms screen.

When Setup Questions is complete, identify NSF Proposal Type before completing other screens:

- Navigate to S2S Forms, then open NSF Cover Page form.
- Select Proposal Type at Location 10 near the bottom.
- Click "Save"; other information in the form does not need to be completed at this time.
- Return to Setup Questions to view NSF validations now present in the record.

SPECIAL TOPICS

PennERA Profiles for Senior/Key Personnel

Check the PennERA Profiles for each Senior/Key Person to ensure that all information is complete, current, and correct. See [Profile Updates in PennERA](#).

- Add Sponsor Credential (NSF FastLane ID); do not add this information in the proposal record.
- Degree/Degree Year data is not used by NSF in Grants.gov submissions. This information should be in the user's Research.gov Profile (www.Research.gov).

Attachments

All uploads must be PDFs. PennERA automatically converts Word documents to PDFs, but it's recommended that users convert complex documents to PDFs prior to upload.

- For additional information, see [NSF's website](#) for creating PDFs acceptable for Grants.gov submissions to NSF.
- **There are links at this website for creating PDFs from multiple document types, including TeX/LaTeX.**

SCREENS/FORMS TO COMPLETE

The information below identifies or emphasizes critical requirements and issues.

SF424 R&R

- Verify that the PI's information is complete and correct.
- Field 8 Type of Application: Select only "New" or "Renewal".
- NSF does not use Fields 20 (Enter Pre-Application) or 21 (Cover Letter Attachment).

Performance Sites

Update the address, including the 9-digit zip code, for Performance Site 1. Add other sites as necessary.

- **Do not** add subcontract performance site information until after subcontractors have been added to Budget section.

S2S Forms

NSF-specific forms appear on this screen. Complete the data and any uploads and mark each form "Completed".

- Fields in yellow indicate minimum required information needed to mark the form completed.

Required Forms (already present on this screen)

Personal Data
NSF Cover Page

Optional Forms (selected on Setup Questions screen)

NSF Deviation Authorization
NSF Suggested Reviewers

SCREENS/FORMS TO COMPLETE (continued)

Other Project Information

Answer all questions on this form and upload identified documents.

- Uploads are required at locations 7-11.
- *Facilities & Other Resources and Equipment* should not be combined as one upload.
- If equipment is not applicable to the project, upload a document indicating that it does not apply.

Personnel

This section populates the NSF Key Person form.

All personnel may be added from the Personnel screen. Follow instructions in the [Proposal Development User's Guide](#).

- In addition to basic address and contact information, NSF requires these items for all Senior/Key Personnel:

NSF FastLane/Research.gov ID
Biosketch (upload)
Current/Pending Support (upload)
Collaborators & Other Affiliations (upload)

Budget

All personnel may be added on the Personnel screen; Key and Non-Key Personnel with measurable effort may also be added in the Budget section. Follow instructions in the [Proposal Development User's Guide](#).

- All staff identified as Key Personnel must have measurable effort with associated salary identified in the Personnel Budget unless specifically exempted by NSF.
- Key Personnel will also appear on the Senior/Key Person form (created from Personnel screen entries) to which biosketches and other required documentation can be attached.
- Do not list personnel who have no measurable effort. NSF expects these individuals to be discussed in Facilities & Other Resources.

Subcontracts:

- Verify that subcontractor entity name matches the name in NSF's Research.gov database.
 - Contact NSF Research.gov Support with the DUNS # to verify a name match.
1-800-381-1532
- Be sure to identify a valid department when subcontract personnel are added; this information cannot be changed later. "TBA", "N/A", or Penn ORG #s are not valid department names.

PENN-ONLY SCREENS

Approvals, Internal Documents, and Finalize are screens used for internal information and processing. Complete these screens according to the [Proposal Development User's Guide](#) instructions.

SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL TO NSF

After the PD record has been completed, reviewed, and approved in PennERA, a Signatory Official (SO) in the Pre-Award section of the Office of Research Services will electronically submit the PennERA record to Grants.gov.

What happens next?

- Grants.gov performs basic electronic validations to ensure the application does not have major technical flaws and that the funding opportunity is available to accept applications.
- Grants.gov notifies NSF that an application is ready for download to FastLane if the record passes validations.

OR --

- Penn's SO and PennERA Help Desk are notified that the application failed validations. These staff will work to correct the technical issues and may contact the department to assist, if necessary.

The initial Grants.gov validation takes about 5 minutes.

- FastLane downloads the application and performs more extensive electronic validations for missing documents or information, violations of page limits, and other NSF-specific requirements.
- Notification is sent to the SO and the PI about the status of the proposal after it completes these validations.

FastLane may not retrieve the application for an hour or so, but it's the Grants.gov submission time that counts as verification of on-time submission.

- FastLane will notify the PI and the SO that the application has passed all validations and has been inserted into FastLane, where it may now be viewed.

OR –

- FastLane will notify the PI and the SO that the application has failed NSF-specific validations.
- Details will be provided in the message about what failed and how to fix. The application will need to be resubmitted from PennERA **before the deadline**.

OR –

- FastLane will notify the PI and SO that the application has passed with warnings about issues that need to be fixed.
- Details will be provided in the message about how to fix these in FastLane. These warnings do not require resubmission of the application from PennERA.