BEST FEET FORWARD:
PREPARING THE STRONGEST PROPOSALS FOR NSF AND OTHER AGENCIES

Nili Tannenbaum
Director, Sponsored Research Administration
Internet2
NSF PROPOSAL BASICS

• What is the problem you have identified?
• What are you proposing to address it?
• Why are you well-suited to do this?
• How does this leverage NSF investments?
• What qualifications/resources will help this?
• What is the long-term endpoint?
PROPOSAL BASICS (continued)

Solicitations address these basics by requesting:

- **Project description** (what is the problem/how are you addressing it, qualifications/resources)
- **Results from prior NSF support** (how are you suited to doing this)
- **Intellectual Merit/Broader Impact** (how this leverages NSF investments, long-term endpoint)
PROPOSAL REVIEW

NSF Review process considers technical aspects and broader contributions re:

- What proposers want to do
- How they want to do it
- How they plan to do it
- How they will know if they succeeded
- What benefits will accrue
MERIT REVIEW (continued)

• Two overarching criteria:
  – Intellectual Merit
    (potential to advance knowledge)
  – Broader Impacts
    (potential to benefit society and help achieve specific, desired societal outcomes)
GENERAL REVIEW ELEMENTS

• Potential for proposed activity to
  – Advance knowledge within its own field or across multiple fields (intellectual merit)
  – Benefit society or advanced desired societal outcomes (broader impacts)
GENERAL REVIEW ELEMENTS (continued)

• Extent to which proposed activities explore creative, original, or transformative concepts
  – Reasonable, well organized, research deployment plan based on a sound rationale
  – Qualifications/track record of team/institution
  – Resources of team/collaborators
  – Mechanism to assess success
  – NSF-funded research to be enhanced
Additional Review Criteria

• Solicitation-specific criteria
• Those addressing Campus CI usually require Campus CI plan, sustainable commitment
• Proposals should specifically mention criteria and explain how project plan accommodates them
• Campus CI proposals should demonstrate cost efficiencies with this investment
• Use solicitation-specific language, including merit criteria
Be Careful!

• Pay attention to page limits, font size specifications, required components, limits on supplementary documents (including Letters of Support)

• Proposals that do not accommodate “housekeeping” restrictions will be triaged and not forwarded for review
PROPOSAL SUPPORT/ADVOCACY

• Many solicitations require Letters of Intent with deadlines prior to proposal submission

• This is done to create a smaller subgroup of invitees for actual applications and/or allow NSF to create review panels/resource allocations
LETTERS OF INTENT

• Usually to be submitted by SPO
• Requested to gauge size/range of competition and prevent potential conflict of interest in review process
• Usually cannot exceed 2 pages
• Not Binding
• Frequently must enter Research Keyword list
LETTERS OF INTENT(continued)

• PI/Co PI Names
• Title of Proposal
• Participating institutions
• Brief Synopsis of Project
LETTERS OF SUPPORT

• Many smaller solicitations limit supplementary documents, including Letters of Support
• Frequently limited to Letters of Collaboration from listed partners committing resources
• Larger solicitations (CC-NIE, CC*IIE, EPSCoR) encourage them
INTERNET2 LETTERS OF SUPPORT

• 100+/year (40+ for CC-IIE alone)
• Require draft of project description/summary, name/title/mailing address of PI, solicitation link, and proposal title
• Cannot guarantee letters for requests submitted 48 hours or less before deadline
OTHER INITIATIVES

• EPSCOR Research Infrastructure Improvement Program Track 1 (RII Track 1)
• NSF 14-558
• Letter of Intent deadline: July 8, 2014
• Proposal Deadline: August 5, 2014
• 8 awards from $32M pool
EPSCoR RII Track-1

• Eligible institutions in jurisdictions committed to improving quality of STEM research with lower recent level of NSF research support
• Must have received planning grant and developed Science and Technology (S&T) plan prior to proposal submission
• Letters of Intent and follow up meetings required
AWARD COMPLIANCE

• OMB Uniform Guidance changes effective December 26, 2014
• Will consolidate/change administrative, accounting, and audit requirements in OMB circulars A-21, A-110, and A-133
Uniform Guidance (continued)

• Will affect regulations re:
  – Allowable costs
  – Cash management
  – Procurement
  – Program income
  – Property management
  – Effort
  – Reporting/accountability/transparency
  – Subrecipient monitoring
QUESTIONS?

• Contact Nili Tannenbaum (ntannen@internet2.edu)