Agency Update: Developments at the National Science Foundation

Michelle Christy, Director, Office of Sponsored Programs
Developments at NSF: Today’s topics

- Changes resulting from the new Grant Proposal Guide
  - Data management plans
  - Cost sharing
  - Primary place of performance
  - Project Outcomes Reports for the general public
- Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)
  - Policy, training, and new reports
- Merit review: Call for comments
NSF Roles in OSP

• NSF proposal review and submission, new awards, award management:
  – Bill Barrett; Laureen Horton; Kim Mann; Nancy Sahagian

• Policy issues
  – Michelle Christy

• Credentialed CAs
  – Gail Powderly authorized to submit proposals
New Data Management Plan requirements

- Data management plan must be submitted as a Supplementary Document
  - Effective for proposals submitted, or due, on or after January 18, 2011
- Plan should …
  - Describe how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on dissemination and sharing of research results
  - Or include the statement that no detailed plan is needed, as long a clear justification is provided
New Data Management Plan requirements, cont’d.

- Plan **may not exceed two pages**, except where specified in a solicitation
  - Proposers who feel that the plan cannot fit within the two-page limit may use part of the 15-page Project Description for additional data management information
- **Does not supersede specialized solicitation requirements** regarding data management plans
- **FastLane will not permit submission** of a proposal that is missing a data management plan.
New Data Management Plan requirements, cont’d.

• Plan **will be reviewed** as part of the intellectual merit and/or broader impacts of the proposal.

• **Data management requirements specific** to the Directorate, Division, Office or other unit available at:

• FAQs have been developed to assist with compliance

• The MIT Libraries have developed data management resources that can be found at
New Data Management Plan is the beginning

- A first step in what will be a more comprehensive approach to data
- National Science Board (NSB) Task Force considering a variety of additional recommendations
- The changes are designed to address trends and needs in the modern era of data-driven science
Revised cost sharing policy

• In response to statutory requirements and, as recommended by the NSB, **mandatory cost sharing has been implemented** for:
  – Major Research Instrumentation Program
  – Robert Noyce Scholarship Program
  – Engineering Research Centers
  – Industry/University Cooperative Research Centers
  – Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research

• Must be identified on Line M of the approved budget
Revised cost sharing policy, cont’d.

• Inclusion of **voluntary committed cost sharing will be prohibited** in solicited & unsolicited proposals
  – Line M will be “grayed out” in FastLane
Revised cost sharing policy, cont’d.

- Mandatory NSF-required programmatic cost sharing will rarely be approved for an NSF program
  - To request consideration of mandatory programmatic cost sharing requirement in an NSF solicitation, the program must develop a **compelling justification regarding why non-Federal financial support and commitment is considered foundational to programmatic success**
  - Such requests to require cost sharing must be explicitly approved by the NSF Director
Revised cost sharing policy, cont’d.

- The Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources section should be used to provide a comprehensive description of all resources (*both physical and personnel*) necessary for, and available to a project, without reference to cost, date of acquisition, and whether the resources are currently available or would be provided upon receipt of the grant.
Revised cost sharing policy, cont’d.

- NSF program officers…
  - May discuss the “bottom line” award amount with PIs but,
  - May not renegotiate or impose cost sharing or other organizational commitments
  - May not impose or encourage programmatic cost sharing requirements
Revised cost sharing policy implementation

• Significant effort made in scrubbing existing cost sharing requirements in funding opportunities:
  – Both in the five solicitations that require cost sharing and,
  – Language changed from “cost sharing is not required” to “Voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited” in all other announcements and solicitations.

• Cost sharing FAQs issued, and, updated
Primary place of performance: Manual entry required

• Proposers are now required to enter a Primary Place of Performance
  – Before, this information was automatically derived from proposing organization data
• The information is based on FFATA requirements
  – Nine-digit zip-code is validated against USPS data
  – Proposals that fail this validation cannot be submitted
  – Cambridge MA 02139-4301
Primary place of performance: Resolving an error

• If the proposer receives an error message, they will be required to:
  – Log onto the USPS website
  – Enter the address
  – Retrieve the zip code provided
  – Enter it in FastLane
  – Cambridge MA 02139-4301
Project Outcomes Report for the general public submitted through Research.gov

- PIs are required to prepare a brief summary (200-800 words) specifically for the public on the nature and outcomes of the award.
- Effective for new awards, funding amendments to existing awards, made on or after January 4, 2010.
- Report is prepared in, submitted through, and published on Research.gov.
Project Outcomes Report, Cont’d

• Reports are meant to be only 2-3 paragraphs
• Reports are due within 90 days of the expiration of the award
• PIs and co-PIs will receive an e-mail when a report is due, pointing them to the Research.gov website to complete the report.
• Your NSF Fastlane password will provide you with the proper access to Research.gov.

In addition, reports:
• Should not include any unpublished information, data, inventions or any other confidential information
• Should not include any personally identifiable information such as names of participants.
Project Outcomes Reporting implementation

- Developed “How to Prepare and Submit NSF Project Outcomes Reports” (See Research.gov)
- Developed Project Outcomes Reports FAQs
- Conducted internal and external outreach to update NSF staff and community on new requirement
- Updated email notification to more clearly articulate new requirement to PIs
Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR): Policy

• All MIT undergraduate students, graduate students and postdoctoral researchers paid by NSF research awards subject to the America COMPETES Act MUST complete RCR training made available by MIT no later than sixty days after salaries are charged to the account.

• Salary costs for individuals who have not completed the required training within 60 days are unallowable and will be removed from the account. This requirement does not apply to non-research awards such as conference grants, but does apply to fellowships.
Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR): Roles and responsibilities

- **Principal Investigators** are responsible for ensuring that all students and postdoctorals supported on their research awards subject to the America COMPETES Act complete the required training.
- **Departmental Administrators** play a key role in ensuring compliance with this requirement, consistent with all compliance activities.
Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR): Training records

Training records

- Maintained in the SAP module that tracks all employee and student training records
- Transmitted from CITI directly to SAP
  - PIs and their administrators will not need to track training completion locally
Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR): Reports

Reports available on OSP website

- A list of all MIT individuals who are required to have RCR training
- A list of all MIT individuals who have taken RCR training
- A list of all MIT awards requiring RCR training
NSB Task Force on Merit Review

• Established Spring 2010, charged with “examining the two Merit Review Criteria and their effectiveness in achieving the goals for NSF support for science and engineering research and education”

• Focusing on:
  – How criteria are being interpreted and used by PIs, reviewers, and NSF staff
  – Strengths and weaknesses of criteria
  – Impact of criteria on how PIs develop projects
  – Role of the institution
NSB Task Force on Merit Review, cont’d.

- Soliciting input
  - NSF senior managers and Program Officers
  - Members of NSF Advisory Committees
  - NSF PIs and reviewers
  - Institutional representatives
  - University associations
  - Scientific societies

- Dear Colleague Letter from NSB Chairman published January 21, 2011

- Comment form