

# NSF Proposal Route/Review/Submission Checklist

**Solicitation-specific instructions may supplement or deviate from these instructions.**  
Always read the solicitation carefully.

This checklist is intended to be used primarily for “Research ” proposal types in Research.gov. This does not address NSF’s use of the Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) and the associated Broad Agency Announcement Management System (BAAM).

Proposals must be submitted via Research.gov.

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE, once a proposal is created in Research.gov, the title CANNOT be changed\*\***

Official NSF Guidance effective for proposals with deadlines May 20, 2024, and later:

[Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\), 24-1](#)

[NSF PAPPG 24-1-supplement-2](#) **Policy Notice: Implementation of Policy Changes to Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG) 24-1, Supplement 2. Please see new guidance for the Data Management and Sharing Plan DMSP.**

**Please be sure to review any solicitation specific language on Intellectual Property.**

## New with PAPPG 24-1:

- **Biographical Sketch** has been revised to remove the 3-page limit and the **Synergistic Activities** section has been removed from the Biographical Sketch. This information must now be submitted by individuals designated as senior/key persons as part of the senior/key personnel documents in Research.gov.
- **Mentoring Plan** has been expanded to address a mentoring plan for postdoctoral researchers or graduate students supported on the project. This page limitation for the Mentoring Plan remains one page.
- **Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Programs (“MFTRP”)**, the AOR must certify that all individuals identified as senior/key personnel have been made aware of and have complied with their responsibility under that section to certify that the individual is not a party to a malign foreign talent recruitment program. Additional certifications are included in the Biographical Sketch and Current and Pending Support generated from SciENCv.
- **Research Security Training (“RST”)**, the AOR must certify that all individuals identified as senior/key personnel have completed research security training within 12 months prior to proposal submission. Additional certifications are included in the Biographical Sketch and Current and Pending Support generated from SciENCv.
- **Check KC validations early for compliance with RST training and MFTRP certification.** KC proposal validation will ERROR if NSPM-33 Research Security Training and/or MFTRP certification is missing or expired (over 12 months ago). KC proposals must validate without error to route for internal approval.

## Required Components for Lead vs. Non-Lead organizations

Use for simultaneously submitted Collaborative Research proposals (must be linked online prior to RAS review).

## Lead Organization

### *NSF REQUIRES*

Cover Sheet  
Project Summary  
Table of Contents (automatically generated)  
Project Description  
References Cited  
Biographical Sketches  
Synergistic Activities  
Budget and Justification  
Current and Pending Support  
Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources  
Data Management Plan  
Collaborators & Other Affiliations document(s)  
Mentoring Plan (if applicable)  
Other Supplementary documents (if applicable)

## Non-Lead Organization

### *MIT REQUIRES*

**All** MIT proposals must include a SOW. If MIT is non-lead, and Lead has not yet provided a full and complete project description, MIT PI **must** provide a description of MIT's role in the project for internal review.

### *NSF REQUIRES*

Cover Sheet  
Table of Contents (automatically generated)  
Biographical Sketches  
Synergistic Activities  
Budget and Justification  
Current and Pending Support  
Facilities, Equipment and Other resources  
Collaborators & Other Affiliations document(s)

### *SUBAWARDS UNDER MIT*

Need added as Organization in KC  
Must obtain a UEI when named in proposal  
Signed Letter of Commitment from Authorized Representative  
SOW  
Budget and Justification  
Biographical Sketches, C&P, Synergistic Activities and Collaborators & Other Affiliations documents for any subaward personnel named as Senior Personnel  
Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources

## Dates and Deadlines

- If a NSF deadline date falls on a [Federal Holiday](#) or weekend, the deadline is extended to the following business day.
- Requested start date should be at least 7 months after the deadline (See [PAPPG Exh III-1](#))

## Letters of Intent/Pre-proposals (Continued)

- Letters of Intent do not need to be routed to RAS in KC for approval unless specified in the solicitation that AOR approval is required and the Letter of Intent is binding. If a proposal in KC is not required, be sure to email your CA that the LOI needs to be processed.
- Preliminary proposals must be routed to RAS
  - KC proposal type "Pre-proposal" for submission
  - PI certification is not required
  - Subawardee/Collaborator certification letters not required

## System Validations

- Has Sponsored Projects Office (AOR = RAS) Submit Access been allowed? PLEASE NOTE, ONLY PI can give SPO access, OAU cannot
- Please use the CHECK button to reveal any system errors or warnings

## Personnel, Project Roles

- [MIT PI status](#) is required for PIs, Co-PIs, and all other Senior Personnel for NSF proposals
- All MIT **faculty** funded by an NSF proposal **must** be listed as either a PI/Co-PI, or as Senior Personnel
- All MIT PIs/Co-PIs/Senior Personnel must have completed KC Proposal certification/COI screening
  - set COI Discl. Req to include Key Persons if any are listed
- All PIs and Co-PIs must have a Research.gov ID #s authorized for PI submission by MIT.
  - Research.gov registration is now self-service. RAS can no longer create new Research.gov accounts. If individual needs to request a role, they will need MIT's DUN's # 001425594. RAS will be notified of the request and will review it.

## Certifications & MIT Internal Attachment Requirements

- When a subaward is budgeted, MIT requires Institutionally Authorized subawardee assurances and certifications regarding NSF policy. This letter does not need to be submitted to the NSF unless specified in the solicitation.
- MIT requires a letter quoting any named consultant's role, expertise, and established consultant rate. See [RAS: Proposal Preparation Basics](#)

## Format of the Proposal

- Research.gov submissions are paginated automatically
- Margins 1" in all directions,
- Approved Fonts:
  - Arial6 (not Arial Narrow), Courier New, or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger;
  - Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger; or
  - Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger

## Locations

- Enter any subawardee or other performance sites in KC under Proposal > Basics > Organization and Location.
- For Research.gov, add Other organizations (subawards) in the Budget section only.

## PI/Co-PI Info

- In Research.gov, this feeds from PI information associated with each PI/Co-PI's Research.gov ID#. Does not print as part of the proposal.

## Cover Sheet

- Program Announcement/Solicitation completed in Research.gov & KC
- For consideration by NSF Organization Unit(s)
- Cover: Complete checkboxes and info regarding:
  - Previous award number if a renewal

- Other Federal agency(s) applying to
- Is this a Preliminary Proposal?
- Has MIT received a Special Deadline Exception
- Title Prefix: (per solicitation.)
- Watch for items requiring Compliance (aka “Special reviews”) for KC tab and NSF cover page
  - Human subjects: Enter “pending”.
  - Animals: Enter “pending” Enter Assurance# D-16-00078
  - International activities or **any budgeted international travel** (including conferences)
    - Up to five (5) countries may be selected.
    - If international destination unknown, enter Worldwide (displays as “XX”)

Additional Items to check if Foreign Involvement:

- New Box for Off campus or Off-Site Research. Lead organization is responsible for marking this checkbox on collaborative proposals. Simultaneously submitted collaborative proposals and proposals that include subawards are a single unified project and, as such, only one combined plan for the project should be developed, regardless of the number of non-lead collaborative proposals or subawards included.
- Funding of Foreign Organization or Individual
- Funding of an International Branch Campus of a U.S. IHE
  
- Select Funding Mechanism
- Select Collaborative Status
  - Note: Unfunded, parallel funded international, or MIT-internal collaborations should be marked “not a collaborative proposal.”
  - For collaborative proposals from multiple organizations where MIT is **not** the lead, and MIT’s role unclear from documents in Research.gov (or if the lead has not yet uploaded a complete proposal), please include an “internal use SOW” as Other Institutional Document in KC to allow review.
  - Once collaborative status of a proposal is selected, it cannot be changed. The proposal record will need to be restarted in order to change the status.
- Budget total \$ correctly stated in the “Total” box on Research.gov cover page
- Check solicitation for other special requirements

## Project Summary

- One page maximum
- For Research.gov: File upload must contain the following 3 headers:
  - Overview
  - Intellectual Merit
  - Broader Impacts

## Project Description

- Usually 15 Page Max – URLs must not be used
- Required Sections
- A)** separate section labeled “Broader Impacts” is required
  - B)** separate section labeled “Results from Prior NSF Support” is required for all PI’s and Co PI’s who have received NSF support with an end date in the past 5 years including active awards: includes conference, travel, and NSF fellowship awards. **The NSF policy is tied to the time period of the award, not to when the individual worked on the award. The Results from Prior NSF Support requires reporting on an award with an end date in the past five years**

Up to 5 pages is allowed for all PIs combined. The following information is required for **each** PI's most relevant award.

- Award number (including program prefix), amount, and period of support, the title of the project
- Summary of the results, separated into two distinct subheadings “Intellectual Merit” and “Broader Impacts”
- List of publications (include full citations or refer to References Cited) If none, state “No publications were produced under this award”
- Evidence of other research products and their availability, as described in the Data Management Plan of the prior award
- If proposal is for renewed support, describe relationship to current project and include information on human-resources development per
- If recently awarded and no results exist, describe major goals of project
- Check this section for references to human subjects, animals, collaborations, etc. that may need to be addressed in other sections.
- Other Criteria may be listed in solicitation & may impact NSF funding decision
- If the proposal has any sub-awards, this section must include a description of the work to be performed by the sub-award(s) if applicable.

## References Cited

- REQUIRED for all proposals:** if N/A, upload a document stating N/A
- Each reference must include the names of *all* authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication -- “et al” not allowed.
- If the document is available electronically, the website address (URL) should be identified (if readily available)

## Biographical Sketch

- Required to be separately uploaded for all named senior personnel. No page limit.
  - Use of an NSF approved format of SciENCv is required.
  - No** personal info: marital status, citizenship, home address/phone/email
  - The following sections are required. Inclusion of information beyond that specified may result in return without review.
    - A. Professional Preparation (include Institution(s), location, major/area, and year for undergrad thru postdoc)
    - B. Appointments (Appointments should include any titled academic, professional, or institutional position, whether or not remuneration is received.)
    - C. Products (includes publications, data sets, software, patents, or copyrights – not unpublished papers or invited lectures)
- (May be titled “publications” if only publications are included)
- i. Up to 5 most closely related to proposed project
  - ii. Up to 5 other significant products

- Information on exceptional qualifications of Postdocs, Other professionals, or student research assistants may be included. Clearly mark as “Other Personnel” and upload as a single Other Supplementary Document
- This section also has been updated to include reference to a **new table** entitled [NSF Pre-award and Post-award Disclosures Relating to the Biographical Sketch and Current and](#)

[Pending Support](#). The table has been developed to assist users in completion of these sections of the proposal.

## Synergistic Activities

- Each individual identified as a senior/key person must provide a document of up to one-page that includes a list of up to five distinct examples that demonstrates the broader impact of the individual's professional and scholarly activities that focus on the integration and transfer of knowledge as well as its creation. Senior/key personnel must prepare, save, and submit these documents as part of their proposal via Research.gov or Grants.gov. Examples may include, among others: innovations in teaching and training; contributions to the science of learning; development and/or refinement of research tools; computation methodologies and algorithms for problem-solving; development of databases to support research and education; broadening the participation of groups underrepresented in STEM; participation in international research collaborations; participation in national and/or international standards development efforts; and service to the scientific and engineering community outside of the individual's immediate organization

## Budget (Including Justification)

### Budget forms

#### *Salaries and Wages*

- Senior Personnel who are not budgeted for any effort must be removed from the budget pages
- Project Role for all Sr. /Key must be completed on each page of the Research.gov budget (recommended roles: "PI", "CoPI" or "Faculty Associate")
- Other Personnel: Budget detail for postdoctoral associates and other professionals must include the total number of persons for each position, with full-time equivalent person-months, and total salaries requested.
- For students, secretarial/clerical/technical positions, the total number of persons and amount of salary requested in each category is required.

#### *Other Costs*

- Equipment should include only major equipment (over \$5,000) and each item of equipment must be specified in the budget detail.
- Domestic and foreign travel costs should be budgeted separately
- Participant Support Costs separately budgeted and includes number of supported participants
- Other Costs (line G6) should be used for RA Tuition, Human Subjects incentive payments, and any other costs that do not fall in another category. Itemize in budget justification
- NSF has clarified that costs related to a service agreement/contract are NOT participant support costs and should be under Other Direct Costs.

#### *Calculated and Indirect Costs:*

- MIT Allocation costs:
  - Include S&W allocation under B.6 ("Other Personnel")
  - Include M&S allocation under G.6 ("Other direct costs")
  - Justify thoroughly, including rates and bases used.
- MIT's Federal F&A Rate is only applicable to Organized Research. For non-research, MIT applies 10% MTDC using the [MIT Federal Non-Research Award Rate](#), unless there is a

specific exception in the solicitation. Applicants are required to list the amount of total indirect costs, along with the current negotiated indirect cost rate(s) applicable per year.

## Budget Justification

### General

- For additional guidance and template language, see [RAS: Budget Justification Templates](#)
- 5 Page Limit to each Budget Justification (lead and subaward budgets)
- Separate budget detail & justification required for each known subawardee organization.
- Justification(s) should be clearly labeled, follow each line item in the budget, and accurately describe purpose of costs and basis of estimates.

### Personnel

- “MIT fully supports...” statement is *prohibited* in the budget justification for NSF proposals. NSF considers this cost sharing. Do not include.
  - If no effort/salary is committed for any personnel, their role should be included under Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources instead.
- Any senior personnel at more than 2 months/year? If so must be disclosed in the justification.
- Rate of pay for senior personnel, postdoctoral associates, and other professionals must be included in the budget justification.
- Need to define and apply the term “year”. Example-MIT’s Fiscal Year goes from July 1 to June 30.

### Travel

- Domestic and foreign travel costs should be justified separately. Trips must be specified by destination and cost. Include dates of visit if known
- Conference attendance costs are only allowable if justified in terms of proposal objectives and/or dissemination of results.

## Subawards

NSF does not negotiate rates for organizations that are not direct recipients of NSF funding (e.g., subrecipients). Consistent with 2 CFR §200.332 (b)(4), NSF grantees must use the domestic subrecipient’s applicable U.S. Federally negotiated indirect cost rate(s). If no such rate exists, the NSF grantee must determine the appropriate rate in collaboration with the subrecipient. The appropriate rate will be: a negotiated rate between the NSF grantee and the subrecipient; a prior rate negotiated between a different pass-through entity and the same subrecipient, or the Federal de minimis indirect rate of 15% of modified total direct costs.

### Participant Support

- Participant support should be separately justified and described adequately in the justification to determine allowability. Number of participants to be supported must be entered.
- Usually only allowed in “Conference Grants” or for educational/training.
- Stipends should not be paid as payroll expenses: contact RAS for details
- No direct support for MIT employees, including students, is allowed; MIT persons may participate in provided conference meals and coffee breaks
- Participant support costs are exempt from indirect cost
- NSF has clarified that speakers and trainers are not considered participants and should not be included under Participant Support Costs.

## Related Validations

- If Postdoctoral researchers are budgeted, a mentoring plan is required

- If Foreign travel is budgeted, the International Activities field on the NSF cover page should indicate the relevant countries. If international destinations are TBD, select “Worldwide” on the cover sheet. (displays as “XX”)

## Current & Pending

- Required to be separately uploaded for all named senior personnel
- Use of an NSF approved format of SciENCv.
- This document has been updated to require that information on objectives and overlap with other projects be provided, to help NSF and reviewers assess overlap/duplication
  - If an individual PI did not request salary on a prior submission, but will be expending effort on the project (i.e., will be spending time working on the project), then a number greater than zero must be entered in current and pending support, please enter .01 annual effort for these projects.
  - NSF has clarified that Pre-Proposals, regardless of the sponsor, should also be included
  - All support dedicated to a particular project, regardless whether the source is internal or external to MIT, must be listed.
  - An item or service given with the expectation of an **associated time commitment and is an in-kind contribution** and must be reported to NSF. If the in-kind contribution is not intended for use on the project/proposal being proposed to NSF but has an associated time commitment, the information must be included as part of the Current and Pending Support section of the proposal. If the in-kind contribution is intended for use on the project/proposal being proposed to NSF, the information must be included as part of the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal and need not be replicated in the individual’s Current and Pending Support submission.
  - Do not need to report gifts or start-up packages.
  - Be sure **“THIS”** proposal is included, with the correct budget amount
  - Total active support may not exceed 100% (for example, more than 3 months summer salary).
  - If this project was previously supported by a source other than the NSF, this support must be listed for the most recent period of funding even if expired.
  - This section also has been updated to include reference to a **new table** entitled [NSF Pre-award and Post-award Disclosures Relating to the Biographical Sketch and Current and Pending Support](#). The table has been developed to assist users in completion of these sections of the proposal.

## Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources

- Required for all proposals:** If N/A, upload a document stating N/A
- This section should include an aggregated description of the internal and external resources (both physical and personnel) that the organization and its collaborators will provide to the project, should it be funded.
- If any participating MIT employees are unbudgeted, list them in this section. Describe their role in the project.
  - For unbudgeted faculty, include the statement “MIT fully supports the academic year salary of Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors, but makes no specific commitment of academic year time or salary to this particular research project”.
  - For unbudgeted non-faculty staff, state that they are “supported by other sources” and provide MIT Internal documentation that these other sources do not represent a conflict of commitment.

- Any substantial collaboration with (non-employee) individuals not included in the budget should be described in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources, **and** documented in a letter of commitment from each collaborator in the Supplementary Documents.
- If PI or Senior Personnel have in-kind contributions and it's intended for use on the project/proposal being proposed to NSF, the information must be included as part of the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal

## Data Management Plan

- REQUIRED for all proposals:**
- As of April 27, 2026, Proposals must include a **DMSP created using the tool implemented on Research.gov**. This document should describe how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results (see Chapter XI.D.4).
  - Data management and sharing requirements and plans specific to the NSF unit; relevant to a proposal are available on the NSF website. If guidance specific to the **unit** is not available, then the requirements established in this section apply. Additional guidance is available at
    - [MIT Libraries: Data Management Plans](#) and
    - <https://dmptool.org/>

A valid **DMSP** may include only the statement that no detailed plan is needed, for example, if no data, samples, physical collections, software, curriculum materials, or other materials are to be produced in the course of the project. However, such a statement must be accompanied by a clear justification.

## Mentoring Plan

- REQUIRED if budgeted:** Mentoring plan (1 page limit)
  - required for any proposals requesting support for postdoctoral researchers or graduate students.
  - This document includes the description of the mentoring activities that will be provided for such individuals. In no more than one page, the mentoring plan must describe the mentoring that will be provided to all postdoctoral scholars or graduate students supported by the project, regardless of whether they reside at the submitting organization, any subrecipient organization, or at any organization participating in a simultaneously submitted collaborative proposal. Please note that separate plans are not required for postdoctoral scholars or graduate students

## Other Supplementary Documents

- Other** supplementary documents types allowed:
  - Letters of Collaboration permitted, but should be limited to stating the intent to collaborate and should not contain endorsements or evaluation of the proposed project. Detail of collaboration should be documented elsewhere in the proposal. See [RAS Website](#) for a recommended template for these letters.
  - Letters of Support *allowed only when required* by the solicitation
  - Letter quote from consultants if budgeted (**Note: Also required by MIT in KC**)
  - Any Solicitation-specific documents, such as department head or advisor letter, list of participants, etc. Be sure to review solicitation for any special requirements.

## Collaborators & Other Affiliations Information

- Collaborators & Other Affiliations (COA) document required for all named senior personnel
  - See the required COA template available at [NSF Policy Website](#)
  - This document is now required for all Equipment proposals and Conference Proposals over \$50,000
  - Instructions at top of template may be deleted and rows may be inserted as needed to provide additional names

## Additional Document Uploads

- List of Suggested Reviewers or Reviewers Not to Include optional, include email and affiliation.
- Other Personnel Biographical Information