



# NSF PROPOSALS: HOW NOT TO GET FUNDED\*

NSF Division of Astronomical Sciences

## THE FAST PATHS TO RETURN-WITHOUT-REVIEW:

### GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDE AND PROGRAM SOLICITATION: BOOOORRR-RIIINNNGGG!

Don't waste your time reading these documents. They're nothing but detailed descriptions of program objectives, proposal requirements, and formatting guidelines, all of which you can ignore. If you must read the GPG, get an old copy from your colleague down the hall, because it never changes.

### BROADER IMPACTS: SOMEBODY ELSE'S PROBLEM

Just because you're asking a federal agency for taxpayer dollars, that's no reason to address the agency's review criteria. Your brilliance transcends such petty concerns. Don't write about them in the 1-page project summary; nobody reads this page anyway.

### RESULTS FROM PRIOR NSF SUPPORT: WHO CARES?

Everybody knows past performance is no guarantee of future returns. So what if the GPG says it's required and that there's no difference between PIs and co-PIs? You know better than to waste valuable space. Put it in a figure caption. Better yet, leave it out. Any diligent reviewer can look it up.

## EIGHT FUN WAYS TO ANNOY REVIEWERS AND PROGRAM DIRECTORS:

### WRITE FOR YOUR FRIENDS

Everybody is either already working in your area or wishing they could--and there's no need to impress the latter. Jargon can be taken for granted. If reviewers can't see the far-reaching implications of your work, that's their problem.

### IT'S NOT A PROPOSAL, IT'S A REVIEW ARTICLE

Your knowledge of the literature and technical intricacies of your field are sufficient to earn you funding. Reviewers are impressed by what you know, not what you don't. Discussion of work yet to be done is best scattered through the proposal, hidden inside lengthy paragraphs, or confined to the bottom of page 15.

### MAKE 'EM EARN IT

Reviewers should put as much effort into reading your proposal as you put into writing it. Section headings, paragraph breaks, and logical flow are just crutches. Format each page for maximum information density!

### EDUCATION: YOU'RE THE FIRST

Nobody has ever attempted to teach astronomy, so there is no literature on the subject for you to be aware of.

### SHOW YOU CARE

For a personal touch, refer to female graduates of your Ph.D. program as "Ms." instead of "Dr." to emphasize your inclusiveness.

### USE THAT SERIES OF TUBES

Honestly, your web page is all the Broader Impact you need, as long as you've updated it since 1998.

### PROOFREADING IS FOR WMIPS

Nobody equates typos and other errors with being sloppy. It's not like your trying to convince anyone you can carry out a complex project.

### AVOID UNPLEASANTNESS

Did you just get an Email advising you to fix a problem in your submitted proposal? Ignore it! NSF gets so few proposals that they'll be grateful for yours, no matter how non-compliant it is. Besides, program directors are sad, lonely people who used to be scientists. If you respond you're only encouraging them.

\*May contain traces of sarcasm.