Funding from the Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences

Robert E. O’Connor, Director
Program in Decision, Risk and Management Sciences

Division of Social and Economic Sciences
Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences
National Science Foundation

Pittsburgh 2016
Outline

• Social Science Research Opportunities
• Submission Procedures
• Separating Awards from Declinations
Why Do You Want NSF Funding?

- Funds curiosity-driven research
- Pays full overhead (no match)
- Provides summer salary support
- Uses the grant mechanism
Opportunities

- Unsolicited competitions
- Special solicitations (e.g., CRISP)
- Rapid response research (RAPID)
- Early-concept grants for exploratory research (EAGER)
- CAREER grants
- Dear Colleague Letter
- Doctoral dissertation improvement grants
- Research Coordination Networks
Where to Start?

- www.nsf.gov
- Check awards by program, keyword, etc. (www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/)
- Read solicitation carefully (if not unsolicited competition)
Social and Economic Sciences (SES)

FY 2016 budget: approximately $100 million

- Decision, Risk, & Management Sciences
- Economics (Big Dog)
- Science of Organizations
- Law and Social Science
- Methodology, Measurement & Statistics
- Political Science
- Science, Technology and Society
- Sociology

Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences
SES Target Dates

January 15 & August 15
Law and Social Science
Political Science
Sociology

January 16 & August 16
Methods, Measures, and Statistics

January 18 & August 18
Decision, Risk, & Management Sciences
Economics

February 1 & August 1
Science and Society

February 2 & September 3
Science of Organizations
Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS)

FY 2016 budget: $100 million

- Archaeology & Archaeometry
- Cultural Anthropology
- Cognitive Neuroscience
- Developmental & Learning Sciences
- Geography & Regional Science
- Linguistics
- Perception, Action, & Cognition
- Biological Anthropology
- Social Psychology
BCS Target Dates

January 14 & July 14
Cognitive Neuroscience

January 15 & July 15
Developmental & Learning Sciences
Linguistics
Social Psychology

January 15 & August 15
Cultural Anthropology
Geography & Regional Science

January 20 & August 20
Biological Anthropology

February 1 & August 1
Perception, Cognition and Action

July 1 & December 1
Archaeology
Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program

- Untenured faculty (or comparable)
- Single scholar award
- $400,000, 5-years minimum award
- Three proposals lifetime limit
- July 1 deadline
- “Walk on Water” expectation
Rapid Response Research (RAPID)

• Research when data are ephemeral
• $200,000 maximum; 1 year
• 5-page project description
• Internal review only
• Contact program officer first
Early-concept grants for exploratory research (EAGER)

- Exploratory work on untested, potentially transformative ideas
- High-risk, high-potential payoff
- $300,000 maximum; 2 years
- 8-page descriptive
- Internal review only
- Contact program officer first
Dear Colleague Letter

Example: Stimulating Research Related to the Science of Broadening Participation

- Submit to relevant SBE program
- Front office to pay half of award
Research Coordination Networks

- Support groups of scholars focused on a theme
- Submit to a program
- Limited to 5-years, $500,000
Special Program: Dynamics of Coupled Natural and Human Systems (CNH)

- Funds quantitative, interdisciplinary analyses of relevant human and natural system processes and complex interactions at diverse scales
- First permanent inter-directorate program (BIO, GEO, SBE)
- November 15, 2016 deadline
Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Energy, and Water

- New program to replace Water Sustainability and Climate
- FY2017 is the second year
- Probably late winter, 2017 deadline
- Disciplines from three directorates required
- Systems framework required
- NIFA of USDA involved
- Big future
Critical Resilient Interdependent Infrastructure Systems and Processes

- Integration of engineering, computer science, and social science
- Three PIs
- February 8, 2017 deadline; $22,900,000
- Big Future
National Science Foundation Research Traineeship Program

- The new IGERT
- December 9, 2016 letters of intent
- $3M for 5 years in interdisciplinary graduate education
NSF’s Future?

• FY2017 NSF’s Continuing Resolution runs out December 7, 2016
• The eternal conflict: disciplinary v. inter-disciplinary priorities
• Threats to social science and geoscience
Proposal Structure 1

- Summary (1 page; overview, intellectual merit, broader impacts)
- Description (15 pages)
- References (no limit, but....)
- Biographical sketches (2 pages each)
- Budget
- Budget justification (3 pages)
- COI Matrix
Proposal Structure 2

• Current and pending support (twice)
• Data Management Plan
• Post-Doc Mentoring Plan
• Reviewing Suggestions (optional)
Proposal Process

NSF Proposal Generating Document

Organization submits via FastLane

Proposal Processing Unit

NSF Program Officer

Research & Education Communities

Returned as Inappropriate/Withdrawn

Award via DGA

Division Director Concur

Decline

Organization

Proposal received by NSF

Proposal Preparation Time

4 months

Review of Proposal

Div. Dir. Concur

30 days

P.O. Recommend

Award

DGA Review & Processing of Award
NSF Sources of Reviewers

- Program Officer’s knowledge
- References listed in the proposal
- Google
- Community of Science and other databases
- Reviewer’s recommendations
- Investigator’s suggestions
Human Subjects

- No award for a project involving human subjects can be made without prior Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the research activity.
- IRB approval is not needed at the time of proposal submission.
Funding Decisions

• Program Officer decision
• Feedback to PI
• Informal and formal notification
• Scope of work and budget discussions
Two Funding Criteria

• Intellectual merit
• Broader impacts
Intellectual Merit?

- NSF funds basic research
- NSF funds basic research
- Intellectual merit means increasing knowledge through developing and examining basic theories or methods
Broader Impacts

- Definition changed 2 or so years ago
- New definition is essentially the utility of the new knowledge for society
- Weak intellectual merit implies weak broader impacts as significant new knowledge is unlikely to emerge
- Remnants of old definition remain (education, outreach, infrastructure, diversity) in some places
Budget Tips

• Amounts
  - Reasonable for work -- Realistic
  - Well justified -- Need established
  - In-line with program guidelines

• Eligible costs
  - Personnel
  - Equipment
  - Travel
  - Other Direct Costs, Subawards
  - Facilities & Administrative Costs
Myths about NSF

- Only funds scholars at elite graduate institutions
- Only funds “famous” academics
- Once declined, you are likely always to be declined
- Only funds “normal science”
- Advisory committees make funding decisions
Reasons for Declinations

- “Trust-me” proposal
- Not feasible
  - Expertise gaps
  - Insufficient funding
  - Too ambitious
- Incremental contribution
- Bad luck
How to Put Together an Interdisciplinary Team

• Commit for the long haul
  - Be wary if untenured
  - Expect a long development period

• Find a wise and strong leader
  - Proposals need coherence
  - Leaders need to listen and then decide

• Meet for intellectual as well as task-related purposes
NSF vs. NIH

- NSF tends to be smaller
- NSF is more open to risky, exploratory, paradigm-challenging work
- NSF stresses basic research
- NSF has no scoring system, percentile system
- NSF program officers make funding decisions
- NSF uses “revision encouragement” loosely
Advice

• Learn to love rejection
• Team up
• E-mail or call Program Officer with specific questions
• Encourage dissertation improvement grant proposals (check program first)
Useful to submit even if declined

• Revise and resubmit
• Discover other funding sources
• Forces thinking
• Build relationships
• Receive reviews from experts
QUESTIONS??

Contact Bob O’Connor
(703) 292-7263
roconnor@nsf.gov