Below is a guide to assist you in submitting proposal to the National Science Foundation:

PROPOSAL FORMAT

- You must add your own page numbers to the proposal. Fastlane will not automatically add these for you.
- Acceptable fonts and sizes:
  - Arial, Courier New, or Palatino 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 size of 11 points or larger
- A font size of less than 10 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figure, table or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters. Text must still be readable.
- MARGINS, in all directions, must be at least an INCH.
- Avoid using a two-column format.
- Line spacing is at the discretion of the proposer.

COVER SHEET

There are four major components of the Cover sheet. A number of the boxes contained on the Cover Sheet are electronically pre-filled as part of the FastLane login process.

- Program Announcement/Solicitation/Description Number: You must provide your grants administrator with the necessary program announcement/solicitation.description number in order to respond to the appropriate program. (Ex. NSF 11-568) If it is a general solicitation then there may not be a specific number but it may be in response to the general Grant Proposal Guide – NSF 11-1.
- NSF Unit of Consideration: You must also provide the correct unit of consideration – whether it is to AST – Astronomy and Astrophysics, PHY – Physics, etc.
- Title: a title must be provided. If this is a collaborative effort where we will be linking to other institutions, “Collaborative Proposal” will precede the actual title. NSF may edit the title of the project prior to making an award.
- Budget and Duration: the Foundation encourages PIs to request awards for durations of three to five years when such durations are necessary for completion of the proposed work and are technically and managerially advantageous. Specification of a desired starting date
for the project is important and helpful to NSF staff; however, requests for specific effective dates may not be met. Requested effective dates must allow at least six months for NSF review, processing and decision.

- **Co-PIs**: Up to four co-principal investigators may be added – an email or NSF ID# must be supplied to add them to the proposal. Additional non co-pi senior personnel may be added along with their current and pending and biosketches above the 4 Co-PIs.
- **Previous NSF Award**: If this is a renewal proposal, the applicable box must be checked and the previous award number must be supplied.
- **Preliminary Proposal**: Some NSF program solicitations require submission of both a preliminary and a full proposal. The “Preliminary Proposal” box must be checked on the cover sheet. When it becomes a “Full Proposal”, the related primary proposal number provided by NSF must be identified.
- **Other agencies**: If this proposal is being submitted to other agencies, the names must be provided.
- **Project/Performance Site Primary Location**: If the project will be performed at the awardee organization, check the designated box. If the project, however, will be performed at a location other than the awardee, you must provide the below. If the project supports research infrastructure and tools, such as vessels, facilities, and telescopes, the project/performance site should correspond to the physical location of the research asset. If a ship, then provide the ship’s home port.
  - Organization Name (where work will be performed)
  - Street
  - City
  - State
  - Country
  - 9-digit Zip Code

**PROPOSAL ELEMENTS**

- **Project Summary**: 1 page in length. Should NOT be an abstract of the proposal. See specifics regarding the project summary on the *Project Summary Guide* sheet.
- **Table of Contents**: Automatically generated – no need to create your own.
- **Project Description**: 15 page limit. See the *Project Description Guide* for specifics on content for this section. Includes Results from Prior NSF Support
- **References**: Each reference must include the names of all the authors, the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers and year of publication. Web address if available. Not included in the 15-page limit of the project description.
• **Biographical Sketch(es):** Limited to two pages for each individual identified as senior project personnel. They will also be needed if you add non co-pi senior personnel. See the *Biographical Sketch Guide* for additional requirements on elements to include.

• **Budget:** Must provide a budget for each year and the budget justification can be no more than **three pages**.
  - **Voluntary Cost Sharing:** Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited for proposals submitted or due on or after January 18, 2011, unless otherwise specified in a solicitation. While senior project personnel may be listed with zero person-months and $0 salary, specifying person-months but requesting no salary support on the budget would constitute voluntary committed cost sharing, and therefore is not allowed. In such situations, co-PIs may still be listed on the cover sheet, but their name must be removed from the NSF budget. A biographical sketch and current and spending support information are still required for them and, the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section should contain an aggregated description of the resources that the organization will provide to the project (both physical and personnel), should it be funded.
  - **Principal Investigator Salary:** Since the PI cannot currently be removed from the budget and specifying person-months but showing $0 dollars for salary would constitute voluntary committed cost sharing, the PI will need to request some amount of salary support in order to comply with NSF’s revised policy. For proposals requesting no effort and salary on the budget, awardees must be aware that should an award be made, they remain subject to the provisions of OMB M-01-06 “Clarification of OMB A-21 Treatment of Voluntary Uncommitted Cost Sharing and Tuition Remission Costs,” regarding requirements for committing and tracking “some level” of faculty (or senior researcher) effort as part of the organized research base.
  - **Unallowable costs:**
    - Entertainment
    - Meals and Coffee Breaks (for intramural meetings of an organization or any of its components, including, but not limited to, laboratories, departments and centers.
    - Alcoholic Beverages

• **Current & Pending Support**

• **Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources:** This section is used to assess the adequacy of the organizational resources available to perform the effort proposed. Proposer should only describe those resources that are directly applicable. Should be narrative in nature and must not include any quantifiable financial information. **ALL** organization resources necessary for, and available to a project, must be described in this section – this includes unfunded collaborators resources. Letters supporting these resources must be provided as
described below under supplementary documentation. These resources will not be considered voluntary cost sharing. See above under BUDGET for additional information on voluntary cost sharing rules and regulations.

- **Special Information & Supplementary Documentation:**
  - **Postdoctoral Research Mentoring Plan:** Each proposal that requests funding to support postdoctoral researchers must include, as a supplementary document, a description of the mentoring activities. This mentoring plan may not be used to circumvent the 15-page project description limitation. See the *Mentoring Plan Guide* for additional specific on what to include in the mentoring plan.
  - **Data Management Plan:** This MUST be included in every proposal and may not exceed two pages. See the Data Management Guide for additional details. Only ONE Data Management plan is necessary for a proposal, whether collaborative or not.
  - **Collaboration Letters:** Any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be described and documented with a letter from each collaborator which would be provided in the supplementary documentation section.