

NSF Data Management Policy Overview

At the May 5 National Science Board meeting, discussion took place about a change in the implementation of the existing policy on sharing research data. In particular, on or around October, 2010, NSF is planning to require that all proposals include a data management plan in the form of a two-page supplementary document

[http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=116928&WT.mc_id=USNSF_51, <http://news.sciencemag.org/scienceinsider/2010/05/nsf-to-ask-every-grant-applicant.html>]. The changes are designed to address trends and needs in the modern era of data-driven science, and echo the actions of other funding agencies, including NIH, NASA, NOAA and the EU Commission.

The current NSF data policy statement requires grantees to share their data within a reasonable length of time, so long as the cost is modest [NSF Proposal and Award Policy and Procedure Guide, Award and Administration Guideline

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf10_1/aagprint.pdf page 61]. However, this policy has not been widely enforced, with the exception of several programs in the OCE directorate.

NSF wants to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to the issue, and the new guidelines are intended to allow different disciplines to encourage the approaches to data-sharing as acceptable within those discipline cultures. But for all disciplines, the data management plans will be subject to peer review, and the new approach will allow flexibility at the directorate and division levels to tailor implementation as appropriate. It is envisioned that some direction will take place through directorate or division policies as well as in upcoming program solicitations. In fact, many recent program announcements have included preliminary requirements similar to what is envisioned to be put in place across NSF. Some recent solicitations that have offered such guidance include

- Arctic Research Opportunities (OPP) 10-503
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2010/nsf10503/nsf10503.pdf>
- Macrosystems Biology (BIO) 10-555
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2010/nsf10555/nsf10555.pdf>
- Ocean Acidification (GEO/OPP/BIO) 10-530
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2010/nsf10530/nsf10530.pdf>
- Basic Research to Enable Agricultural Development(BREAD) (BIO) 09-566
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2009/nsf09566/nsf09566.pdf>

It is also expected that applicants will request additional funding to implement their data management plan, making it another factor that reviewers will need to take into account in weighing the value of a proposal.