NSF's Broader Impacts Criteria

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Caution

Most of the information presented in this workshop represents the opinions of the individual program offices and not an official NSF position.

2

Warning on Generalizations

- NSF has several programs supporting undergraduate education
  - Different requirements
  - Different slants
- Proposal improvement ideas apply to all
  - But in varying degrees
- Choose ideas based on
  - Program solicitation
  - Judgment

3

Overview of Workshops

Goal: **Prepare you to write more competitive proposals**

Three separate but related workshops
- Proposal strategies
- Broader impacts
- Project evaluation

4

Framework for the Workshop

5

Framework for the Workshop

- Learning situations involve prior knowledge
  - Some knowledge correct
  - Some knowledge incorrect (i. e., misconceptions)
- Learning is
  - Connecting new knowledge to prior knowledge
  - Correcting misconception
- Learning requires
  - Recalling prior knowledge – actively
  - Altering prior knowledge

6

Active-Cooperative Learning

- Learning activities must encourage learners to:
  - Recall prior knowledge -- actively, explicitly
  - Connect new concepts to existing ones
  - Challenge and alter misconception
- The think-share-report-learn (*TSRL*) process addresses these steps

7

Workshop Format

- "Working" Workshop
  - Short presentations (mini-lectures)
  - Group exercise
- Exercise Format
  - *Think → Share → Report → Learn*
    - *(TSRL)*
- Limited Time – May feel rushed
  - Intend to identify issues & suggest ideas
    - Get you started
    - No closure -- No "answers" – No "formulas"

8

Group Behavior

- Be positive, supportive, and cooperative
  - Limit critical or negative comments
- Be brief and concise
  - No lengthy comments
- Stay focused
  - Stay on the subject
- Take turns as recorder
  - Report for group not your own ideas

9

Workshop Format

- "Working" format
  - ½ to ¾ of time in team activities
- Limited time to complete activities
  - Frequently feel you need more time
- Purpose: identify, consider & discuss ideas
  - Get you started
  - No "answers"
  - No "formulas"

10

Workshop Background
NSF Review Criteria

- NSF proposals evaluated using two review criteria
  - Intellectual merit
  - Broader impacts
- Most proposals
  - Intellectual merit done fairly well
  - Broader impacts done poorly

11

Workshop Goal

- To increase the community's ability to design projects that respond effectively to NSF's broader impacts criterion

12

Workshop Background NSF Strategies

- NSF proposals also evaluated relative to two principal strategies
  - Integrating research and education
  - Integrating diversity into NSF programs, projects, and activities
- Both reflected in the broader impacts criterion

13

Workshop Objective

- At the end of the workshop, participants should be able to
  - List categories for broader impacts
  - List activities for each category
  - Evaluate a proposed broader impacts plan
  - Develop an effective broader impacts plan

14

Conceptual Framework for the Workshop – Constructivist Model

- Learning situations involve prior knowledge
  - Some knowledge correct
  - Some knowledge incorrect (I. e., misconceptions)
- Learning is
  - Connecting new knowledge to prior knowledge
  - Correcting misconception
- Learning requires
  - Recalling prior knowledge – actively
  - Altering prior knowledge

15

Constructivist Model and Active-Cooperative Learning

- Learning activities must encourage learners to:
  - Recall prior knowledge – actively, explicitly
  - Connect new concepts to existing ones
  - Challenge and alter misconceptions
- The think-share-report-learn (*TSRL*) process addresses these steps

16

Participation "Rules"

- In small group discussion
  - Be positive, supportive, and cooperative
    - Limit critical or negative comments
  - Be brief and concise in discussions
    - Avoid lengthy comments, stories or arguments
  - Stay focused
  - Get everyone involved
- In reporting to large group
  - Rotate reporters
  - Report group's views not your own
  - Be brief and concise in discussions

17

Workshop Approach

Information in "Learn" Phase, represents-

  - ✓ "official" NSF positions
  - ✓ NSF suggestions
  - ✓ program officers' opinions

18

Broader Impacts Categories and Activities

Exercise -- Broader Impacts Categories

TASK:
- – Identify the categories of activities responding to NSF broader impacts criterion
  - e, g., Increase participation of underrepresented groups

PROCESS:
- – Think, share, report, learn

Statement of Broader Impacts Merit Review Criteria

- What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?

  - How well does the activity advance *discovery and* understanding while promoting teaching, training, and *learning*?

  - How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of *underrepresented groups* (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.)?

  - To what extent will it enhance the *infrastructure* for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks, and partnerships?

Statement of Broader Impacts Merit Review Criteria (cont'd)

  - Will the results be *disseminated* broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding?

  - What may be the *benefits* of the proposed activity to *society*?

"Relative Ease Quotient"

What, in your opinion, is the easiest activity to address in a typical proposal? What is the most difficult?

- ➢ Discovery and learning
- ➢ Broadening participation
- ➢ Infrastructure enhancement
- ➢ Dissemination
- ➢ Societal benefits

Exercise -- Dissemination Activities

TASK:
Identify activities that "broadly disseminate results to enhance scientific and technological understanding"

PROCESS:
- – Think, share, report, learn

Dissemination -- NSF's Representative Activities I

- Partner with *museums, nature centers, science centers*, and similar institutions to develop exhibits in science, math, and engineering.

- *Involve the public or industry*, where possible, in research and education activities.

- Give science and engineering *presentations to the broader community* (e.g., at museums and libraries, on radio shows, and in other such venues).

- Make *data available* in a timely manner by means of databases, digital libraries, or other venues such as CD-ROMs

25

Dissemination -- NSF's Representative Activities II

- *Publish in diverse media* (e.g., non-technical literature, and websites, CD-ROMs, press kits) to reach broad audiences.

- Present research and education results in formats useful to *policy-makers, members of Congress, industry*, and broad audiences.

- Participate in *multi- and interdisciplinary conferences*, workshops, and research activities.

- Integrate research with education activities in order to *communicate in a broader context*.

26

Converting Activity to Impact I

- Don't just list activities
  - More is not better
  - Describe the *impact* of activities

- Develop a *strategy* (a plan)
- Approach with same *detail* as intellectual content

27

Converting Activity to Impact II

- Develop a strategy (a plan)
  - Make *coherent* and consistent with
    - Institution's mission and culture
    - PI's interest and experience

  - *Integrate* with
    - Project activities
    - Intellectual merit

  - Include metrics and *evaluation*

28

Reviewing and Enhancing a Project's Broader Impacts

29

Exercise – Review Proposal's Broader Impacts

TASK:
  - Write broader impacts section of a review
    - Outline format

PROCESS:
  - Think, share, report, learn

30

Sample Proposal

- Real proposal
  - Project Summary
  - Excerpts from Project Description
- Assume
  - CCLI/Phase 1
  - $150k (total) for 2 years
  - Technical merit considered meritorious

31

Program Officers' Views – Review Comments I

- Scope of activities
  - Overall-very inclusive and good
  - Well done but "standard things"
  - Did not address the issue of quality
  - No clear-cut plan
  - Activities not justified by research base
- Dissemination
  - Limited to standard channels
  - Perfunctory

32

Program Officers' Views – Review Comments II

- Industrial advisory committee a strength
- Collaboration with other higher ed institutions
  - Institutions appear to be quite diverse but use of diversity not explicit
  - Interactions not clearly explained
  - Sends mixed message – raises questions about partnership effectiveness
- High school outreach
  - Real commitment not evident
  - Passive -- not proactive
  - High school counselors and teachers not involved

33

Program Officers' Views – Review Comments III

- Modules are versatile
- Broader (societal) benefits
  - Need for materials not well described
  - Value of the product not explained
  - Not clear who will benefit and how much
- Assessment of broader impacts not addressed

34

How would you rate this proposal?

- Excellent-   2 hands up
- Very Good-   1 hand up
- Good-   2 hands on head
- Fair-   1 hand on head
- Poor-   forearms crossed

35

Exercise -- Enhancing Broader Impacts Effort

TASK:
  Identify additional or enhanced broader impacts activities that will strengthen the project

PROCESS:
  – Think, share, report, learn

36

NSF Program Officer's Suggestions -- Enhancing Broader Impacts Effort I

- **Make activities appropriate to project**
  - Establish a mentoring program for high school students
  - Use undergraduate students to interact with high school students
  - Connect to other projects if appropriate

37

NSF Program Officer's Suggestions -- Enhancing Broader Impacts Effort II

- **Utilize entire PI team in development process**
- **Take better advantage of institutional diversity (e.g., assessment of impacts of materials on diversity**
- **Improve Dissemination**
  - Add faculty workshops
  - Prepare exhibit for local museum

38

REFLECTION

39

Exercise -- Characteristics of Broader Impacts Plans

TASK:
  - Identify desirable features of a broader impacts plan or strategy
    - General aspects or characteristics

PROCESS:
  - Think, share, report, learn

40

NSF Program Officer's Suggestions -- Characteristics of Broader Impacts Plan I

- **Include strategy to achieve impact**
  - Have a well-defined set of outcome objectives
  - Make results meaningful and valuable
  - Make consistent with technical project tasks
  - Have detailed tasks for implementation and evaluation (did it work & why?)
  - Have a well stated relationship to the audience or audiences

41

NSF Program Officer's Suggestions -- Characteristics of Broader Impacts Plan II

- **Don't use "tack on" evaluation and dissemination plans**
- **Investigate and discuss other broader impacts plans**
- **Include target group(s) in development**
- **Be creative!**

42

Exercise -- Reflection on Broader Impacts

TASK:
- Identify the most interesting, important, or surprising idea you encountered in the workshop

PROCESS:
- Think, share, report, learn

43

WRAP-UP

44

Summary-Broader Impacts I

- Use and build on NSF suggestions
  - List of *categories in solicitations*
  - *Representative activities on website*
    - Not a comprehensive checklist
    - *Expand* on these -- be creative
- Develop activities to show *impact*
- *Integrate and align* with other project activities

45

Summary-Broader Impacts II

- Help reviewers (and NSF program officers)
  - Provide sufficient *detail*
    - Include objectives, strategy, evaluation
  - Make broader impacts *obvious*
    - Easy to find
    - Easy to relate to NSF criterion

46

Summary-Broader Impacts III

- Make broader impacts *credible*
  - Realistic and believable
    - Include appropriate funds in budget
  - *Consistent* with
    - Project's scope and objectives
    - Institution's mission and culture
    - PI's interest and experience
- Assure *agreement* between Project Summary and Project Description

47

REFERENCES

Grant Proposal Guide
  http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/nsf04_23/

Broader Impacts Activities
  http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/broaderimpacts.pdf

48

Thanks for your active participation!

Questions?

49