

# National Science Foundation: How to Write a Successful Proposal to NSF

NSF grants provide funds based on *merit*, not need.

The following tips are provided to help the proposal writer understand the process that goes into preparing a proposal and to share some advice that others have found useful.

## **5 Key Questions:**

- 1) Do you have a good idea?
- 2) Are you the right person to do the research?
- 3) Do you have a solid proposal for conducting the research?
- 4) Do you have all of the resources to do what you propose to do?
- 5) Do you know how to evaluate your results?

## **Hints:**

- Read the program announcement
- Work on projects you care about deeply
- Develop measurable goals and objectives
- Realistically assess your needs and determine your available resources
- Develop preliminary date
- Speak with a NSF program director about your proposal project
- Find out specific program requirements and limitations
- Think about target audience
- Research current program patterns
- Build on what others have done
- Think teamwork with internal and external advisors
- Work with your organization's Sponsored Research Officer (SRO)
- Consult the program solicitation and follow the requirements carefully

## **Causes for a Declined Proposal:**

- No innovative, cutting edge ideas
- Provides only an incremental advance to the knowledge base
- Unclear goals and activities
- Qualifications and expertise of the principal investigator not evident
- Target audience of the grant not clearly explained
- Lacks a focused plan to achieve goals
- Fails to follow the Program Solicitation Guidelines

## **If Your Proposal Is Declined:**

- Learn from the criticisms of your proposal
- Contact your program director with any questions about the review or possible submission of a revised proposal at a later time
- Take time to self-evaluate the proposal and the project