

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION**Submission for OMB Review:
Comment Request**

Title of Proposed Collection: National Science Foundation Proposal Evaluation Process.

In compliance with the requirement of Section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 for opportunity for public comment on proposed data collection projects, the National Science Foundation (NSF) will publish periodic summaries of proposed projects. Such a notice was published at Federal Register 42371, dated August 14, 1996. No public comments were received.

The materials are now being sent to OMB for review. Send any written comments to Desk Officer: OMB No. 3145-0060, OIRA, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC 20503. Comments should be received by November 18, 1996.

Comments are invited on (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Proposed project. Proposal Evaluation Process. The missions of the NSF are to: increase the Nation's base of scientific and engineering knowledge and strengthen its ability to support research in all areas of science and engineering; promote innovative science and engineering education programs that can better prepare the Nation to meet the challenges of the future; and promote international cooperation in science and engineering. The Foundation is also committed to ensuring the Nation's supply of scientists, engineers, and science educators. In its role as leading Federal supporter of science and engineering, NSF also has an important role in national policy planning.

The Foundation fulfills this responsibility by initiating and supporting merit-selected research and education projects in all the scientific and engineering disciplines. This support is made primarily through grants, contracts, and other agreements awarded to approximately 2,800 colleges, universities, academic consortia, nonprofit institutions, and small businesses.

The Foundation relies heavily on the advice and assistance of external advisory committees, ad-hoc proposal reviewers, and to other experts to ensure that the Foundation is able to reach fair and knowledgeable judgments. These scientists and educators come from colleges and universities, nonprofit research and education organizations, industry, and other Government agencies.

In making its decisions on proposals the counsel of these merit reviewers has proven invaluable to the Foundation both in the identification of meritorious projects and in providing sound basis for project restructuring.

Review of proposals may involve large panel sessions, small groups, or use of a mail-review system. Proposals are reviewed carefully by scientists or engineers who are expert in the particular field represented by the proposal. About one-fourth are reviewed by mail reviewers alone. Another one-fourth are reviewed exclusively by panels of reviewers who gather, usually in Washington, to discuss their advice as well as to deliver it. The remaining one-half are reviewed first by mail reviewers expert in the particular field, then by panels, usually of persons with more diverse expertise, who help the NSF decide among proposals from multiple fields or sub-fields.

Use of the Information. The information collected is used to support grant programs of the Foundation.

The information collected on the proposal evaluation forms is used by the Foundation to determine the following criteria when awarding or declining proposals submitted to the agency: (1) Research performance competence; (2) Intrinsic merit of the research; (3) Utility or relevance of the research; and (4) Effect of the research on the infrastructure of science and engineering.

The information collected on reviewer background questionnaires is used by managers to maintain an automated data base of reviewers for the many disciplines represented by the proposals submitted to the Foundation. Information collected on gender, race, ethnicity is used in meeting NSF needs for data to permit response to congressional and other queries into equity issues. These data are also used in the design, implementation, and monitoring of NSF efforts to increase the participation on various groups in science, engineering, and education.

Confidentiality. Verbatim but anonymous copies of reviews are sent to the principal investigators/project directors. Subject to this NSF policy and applicable laws, including the Freedom

of Information Act, reviewers' comments will be given maximum protection from disclosure.

While listings of panelists' names are released, the names of individual reviewers, associated with individual proposals, are not released to anyone.

Because the Foundation is committed to monitoring and identifying any real or apparent inequities based on gender, race, ethnicity, or disability of the proposed principal investigator(s)/project director(s) or the co-principal investigator(s)/co-project director(s), the Foundation also collects race, ethnicity, disability, and gender. This information is also protected by the Privacy Act.

Burden on the Public. The Foundation estimates that anywhere from one hour to twenty hours may be required to review a proposal. It is estimated that approximately five hours are required to review an average proposal. Each proposal receives an average of seven reviews.

Dated: October 15, 1996.

Herman G. Fleming,

Reports Clearance Officer.

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Advisory Committee for Biological Sciences (BIO); Notice of Meeting

In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463, as amended), the National Science Foundation announces the following meeting:

Name: Advisory Committee for Biological Sciences (BIO) (1110).

Date and Time:

November 7, 1996; 8:45 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

November 8, 1996; 8:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Place: National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22230, Room 1235.

Type of Meeting: Open.

Contact Person: Dr. Mary E. Clutter, Assistant Director, Biological Sciences, Room 605, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22230 Tel No.: (703) 306-1400.

Minutes: May be obtained from the contact person listed above.

Purpose of Meeting: The Advisory Committee for BIO provides advice, recommendations, and oversight concerning major program emphases, directions, and goals for the research-related activities of the divisions that make up BIO.

Agenda: Long-term Planning and Discussion of BIOAC Workshops.

M. Rebecca Winkler,

Committee Management Officer.

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