

NSF CAREER Proposal Production Schedule (2022)

By the end of March

- Have your research topic chosen. You should have already published on the topic, and you should have generated the preliminary data you feel you need to make a strong argument in your proposal.
- Identify which NSF program to which you plan to apply (or candidate programs if you're unsure or are considering more than one topic), and program officer(s). A list of program officers can be found [here](#).
- Write a short summary of your proposed research project, including: 1) your project goal; 2) research questions/hypotheses/challenges; 3) main objectives and short summary of your approach (and how it's innovative, if applicable); 4) expected outcome and impact.
- Write an email to the program officer, asking if you can schedule a time to talk to her/him (either on the phone or in person), and include your short summary, included in the body of your email. Tips for contacting a program officer can be found [here](#).
- Begin work on your education component. Talk to potential collaborators. Research the literature related to your education component topics. Work on logistics.
- Let ORD, your SRA contact, and your department head or chair know that you plan to submit a CAREER proposal.
- Complete outline of your Project Description. Think about what arguments you need to make in each section. You may identify literature you need to find and additional preliminary data you need to generate.

April:

- Determine the deadline to have your draft ready for peer review. ORD will provide those deadlines. The deadline should be around mid-June.
- Start writing the first draft of your Project Description. This draft may be pretty rough, but it will allow you to put your ideas on paper and identify gaps.
- Work on addressing gaps and questions. This may require thought, research on the literature, more experiments, or discussions with mentors.
- Develop a first draft of your budget. Work with your departmental rep. This first budget draft will allow you to determine if you've scoped your project appropriately. Don't forget to include funding to support your education and outreach activities.

May:

- Finish writing the first draft of your Project Description. Focus especially on refining the first section of the Project Description, which provides an overview of your project, including intellectual merit (typically 1.5 – 2 pages). Ask for feedback from mentors and colleagues.
- Meet with your department head/chair regarding the departmental letter. Provide them with a summary of your research and education plans so that those details can be included in the letter.
- Ask collaborators to provide a letter of collaboration, if applicable. For NSF

CAREER, the letter of collaboration is a very short form letter saying they will do what is described in the Project Description. For this reason, it's a good idea to also provide your collaborators with a draft of the text describing their activities that will go in the Project Description.

- Finalize other required documents. These include your biosketch, current & pending form, list of collaborators and other affiliations, and postdoctoral mentoring plan (if applicable). Be sure to follow PAPPG directions!

June:

- Write your second draft of the Project Description. This draft should include all required information.
- Set up your mock review with ORD and consider contacting others in your area to review your proposal. Give them a week to provide feedback.
- Finalize your budget. Be sure to make sure your budget aligns with your Project Description. If you include an activity, be sure you include funding to support that activity.
- Write your budget justification. The budget justification should provide enough detail to demonstrate to reviewers that you have thought out your project thoroughly.
- Obtain the final version of the departmental letter.
- Write your Project Summary. Look for the best sentences in your Project Description to include in your Summary.

July:

- Finalize the Project Description.
- Collect all required documents.
- Work with your Sponsored Research to obtain required approvals and check and upload all documents. When uploading through Fastlane, Grants.gov, or Research.gov, be sure to check that all figures and tables look good after uploading. Remember, you must have your documents to SRA three working days prior to the NSF deadline.
- Give your Sponsored Programs office the OK to submit.
- Try to submit to NSF at least 1 day before your deadline. If you find some problem with the proposal after submission, you can retract and change if it's still before the deadline.
- Celebrate and sleep! Now you can enjoy the rest of your summer!

Many of these tips were taken from an article provided by: [Research Development & Grant Writing News](#)