

# NSF Biographical Sketch and Current and Pending Support Fillable PDF Document FAQs

Updated October 16, 2020

**The requirement to use an NSF-approved format for preparation of the biographical sketch and current and pending support will go into effect for new proposals submitted or due on or after October 5, 2020.**

## Biographical Sketch Fillable PDF FAQs

### 1. Where can I access the NSF-approved fillable PDF format for the biographical sketch?

The NSF-approved fillable PDF format for the biographical sketch is available at <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/biosketch.jsp>.

### 2. How will I know if my biographical sketch document is in an NSF-approved format?

The list of NSF-approved formats for biographical sketch is available at <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/biosketch.jsp>.

The NSF-approved format for the biographical sketch PDF can be identified by viewing the title in the document properties. Right click anywhere in the document and select Document Properties; NSF-approved documents have the title "NSF Biosketch 20-1."

### 3. What is the preferred tool for Mac and Windows users to prepare documents using the NSF Fillable PDF format for Biographical Sketches?

For users who choose to use the fillable PDFs, NSF recommends Adobe Acrobat Reader in preparing their biographical sketch for an optimized experience.

In particular, Mac users are encountering upload and proposal printing issues when using software other than Adobe Acrobat Reader to complete NSF Fillable PDFs. Proposers should download and save the blank PDF document first, and then use Adobe Acrobat Reader to add content. The completed and saved PDF can then be uploaded via FastLane, Research.gov or Grants.gov.

### 4. When adding content to the Biographical Sketch NSF-fillable PDF, some of the text exceeds the field length or allowable space provided. How should I proceed?

NSF recommends proposers download and save the blank PDF document prior to adding content. Populating content directly into a web browser (e.g., Chrome or Safari) may result in formatting inconsistencies. The completed and saved PDF can then be uploaded via FastLane, Research.gov or Grants.gov. formatting requirements.

### 5. I am preparing prepared document using Apple Preview and see formatting issues with font size. How should I proceed?

When a user is preparing their form using Apple Preview and copies and pastes content that exceeds the available space in the form, Preview may reduce the font size to allow the content to fit in the space provided. Users can verify/adjust the font size for their content in the Tools -> Text Selection menu and/or streamline their content to fit within the space provided. If a submitted document does not meet the NSF

*Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* formatting requirement this could result in your proposal being returned without review.

**6. I am attempting to upload a Biographical Sketch, and am receiving an error that my document is not in an NSF-approved format. How should I proceed?**

If you populated the NSF-fillable PDF form directly in a web browser (e.g., Chrome or Safari) and selected the "Save to PDF" or "Print to PDF" function from that web browser, this could cause the data that NSF systems use to validate the NSF-approved format to become corrupted, resulting in errors when proposers attempt to upload the PDF document to NSF systems. NSF recommends proposers download and save the blank PDF document prior to adding content to avoid formatting inconsistencies. The completed and saved PDF document can then be uploaded via FastLane, Research.gov or Grants.gov.

**7. If I submit an older version of the NSF-approved fillable PDF format for biographical sketch, will that impact my proposal review?**

We encourage users to submit their biographical sketch using the format released May 1, 2020. Proposals may be submitted using the version released in March 2020 will also be accepted.

**8. What updates were made to the biographical sketch fillable PDF posted May 1, 2020?**

This version contains the following updates based on community feedback:

- Removed the NSF ID entry;
  - Replaced instructional text with links to the relevant PAPPG chapters to maximize available space;
  - Increased the space available for the Products section; and
- Adjusted the Synergistic Activities section to increase space for other sections

**9. I need guidance on what information I must provide when completing my biographical sketch. Where can I get more details?**

Detailed policy information about the content is available in the [Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\), Chapter II.C.2.f.](#)

**10. I do not have enough space to provide complete product citations in the space provided. How should I proceed?**

The PAPPG requires that publication citations "include full citation information, including (where applicable and practicable) the names of all authors..." Senior personnel that wish to include publications in the products section of the biographical sketch that include multiple authors may, at their discretion, choose to list one or more of the authors and then "et al." in lieu of including the complete listing of authors' names. See the [PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.f\(i\)\(c\)](#) for complete information.

NSF will continue to refine these formats based on feedback from the community, particularly around spacing. Feedback can be submitted via Research.gov using the <https://www.research.gov/research-web/feedback> tool. Under site area, select "Biographical Sketch." Note that [SciENCv](#) offers users more flexibility for the preparation of the biographical sketch.

**11. I do not have enough space to complete the synergistic activities section in the space provided. How should I proceed?**

Listed synergistic activities should be specific and must not include multiple examples to further describe the activity. See the [PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.f\(i\)\(d\)](#) for complete information.

NSF will continue to refine these formats based on feedback from the community, particularly around spacing. Feedback can be submitted via Research.gov using the <https://www.research.gov/research-web/feedback> tool. Under site area, select "Biographical Sketch." Note that [SciENcv](#) offers users more flexibility for the preparation of the biographical sketch.

**12. When will NSF begin enforcing the use of an NSF-approved format for the biographical sketch?**

The requirement to use an NSF-approved format for preparation of the biographical sketch will go into effect for new proposals submitted or due on or after October 5, 2020. In the interim, proposers must continue to prepare these documents in accordance with the guidance specified in the PAPPG (NSF 20-1).

Prior to enforcement of an NSF-approved format, biographical sketches must still comply with the content requirements specified in [PAPPG \(NSF 20-1\), Chapter II.C.2.f.](#)

**13. On October 5, 2020, will non-compliant Biographical Sketch documents receive an error message in FastLane, Research.gov, and Grants.gov?**

Yes. Biographical Sketch documents will be tagged with identifiers indicating they were prepared in an NSF-approved format. When NSF begins enforcing the use of an NSF-approved format, Biographical Sketch documents not uploaded in an NSF-approved format will trigger a compliance error that will prevent proposal submission in FastLane, Research.gov, and Grants.gov.

**14. Where can I provide feedback on the NSF-approved PDF formats for the biographical sketch?**

Feedback can be submitted via Research.gov using the <https://www.research.gov/research-web/feedback> tool. Under site area, select "Biographical Sketch."

For immediate response about technical issues or IT system-related questions regarding the NSF fillable PDF formats, please contact the NSF Help Desk at 1-800-673-6188 (7:00 AM - 9:00 PM ET; Monday - Friday except federal holidays) or via [fastlane@nsf.gov](mailto:fastlane@nsf.gov).

**15. Who do I contact if I have questions?**

Policy-related questions should be directed to [policy@nsf.gov](mailto:policy@nsf.gov). If you have technical or IT system-related questions regarding the NSF fillable PDF formats, please contact the NSF Help Desk at 1-800-673-6188 (7:00 AM - 9:00 PM ET; Monday - Friday except federal holidays) or via [fastlane@nsf.gov](mailto:fastlane@nsf.gov).

## **Current and Pending Support Fillable PDF FAQs**

**16. Where can I access the NSF-approved fillable PDF formats for current and pending support?**

The NSF-approved fillable PDF format for current and pending support is available at <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/cps.jsp>.

**17. What is the preferred tool for Mac and Windows users to prepare documents using the NSF Fillable PDF format for Current and Pending Support?**

For users who choose to use the fillable PDFs, NSF recommends Adobe Acrobat Reader in preparing their current and pending support documents for an optimized experience.

In particular, Mac users are encountering upload and proposal printing issues when using software other than Adobe Acrobat Reader to complete NSF Fillable PDFs. Proposers should download and save the blank

PDF document first, and then use Adobe Acrobat Reader to add content. The completed and saved PDF can then be uploaded via FastLane, Research.gov or Grants.gov.

**18. I have noticed that the font sizes in the NSF fillable PDF do not appear to be in compliance with the font requirements set forth in the PAPPG. Should I be concerned that my proposal will not be accepted by NSF?**

The NSF-approved formats available on <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/cps.jsp> will be accepted by NSF systems. Identified font sizing updates will be addressed in a future enhancement of this form.

**19. How will I know if documents are in an NSF-approved format?**

The list of NSF-approved formats for current and pending support is available at <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/cps.jsp>.

The NSF-approved format for current and pending support can be identified by viewing the title in the document properties. Right click anywhere in the document and select Document Properties; NSF-approved documents have the title "NSF CPS 20-1."

**20. When adding content to the Current and Pending Support NSF-fillable PDF, some of the text exceeds field length or allowable space provided. How should I proceed?**

NSF recommends proposers download and save the blank PDF document prior to adding content. Populating content directly into a web browser (e.g., Chrome or Safari) may result in formatting inconsistencies. The completed and saved PDF can then be uploaded via FastLane, Research.gov or Grants.gov.

**21. I am preparing prepared document using Apple Preview and see formatting issues with font size. How should I proceed?**

When a user is preparing their form using Apple Preview and copies and pastes content that exceeds the available space in the form, Preview may reduce the font size to allow the content to fit in the space provided. Users can verify/adjust the font size for their content in the Tools -> Text Selection menu and/or streamline their content to fit within the space provided. If a submitted document does not meet the NSF *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* formatting requirement this could result in your proposal being returned without review.

**22. I am attempting to upload a Current and Pending Support NSF-fillable PDF, and I am receiving an error stating that my document is not in an NSF-approved format. How should I proceed?**

If you populated the NSF-fillable PDF form directly in a web browser (e.g., Chrome or Safari) and selected the "Save to PDF" or "Print to PDF" function from that web browser, this could cause the data that NSF systems use to validate the NSF-approved format to become corrupted, resulting in errors when investigators attempt to upload the PDF document to NSF systems. NSF recommends proposers download and save the blank PDF document prior to adding content to avoid formatting inconsistencies. The completed and saved PDF document can then be uploaded via FastLane, Research.gov or Grants.gov.

**23. If I submit an older version of the current and pending support document, will that impact my proposal review?**

We encourage users to submit their biographical sketch using the format released May 1, 2020. Proposals may be submitted using the version released in March 2020 will also be accepted.

**24. What updates were made to the current and pending support fillable PDF posted May 1, 2020?**

This version contains the following updates based on community feedback:

- Removed the NSF ID entry;
- Increased the number of Project/Proposal entries from 10 to 15 to support the majority of proposals submitted to NSF;
- Updated the Award Number field to allow the entry of both numbers and letters; and
- Updated “Calendar Year” labels and text to “Year” for consistency with the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide.

**25. When will NSF begin enforcing the use of an NSF-approved format for current and pending support?**

The requirement to use an NSF-approved format for preparation of current and pending support will go into effect for new proposals submitted or due on or after October 5, 2020.

Prior to enforcement, current and pending support must still comply with the content requirements specified in the *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) (NSF 20-1), and we encourage the use of an NSF-approved format when documenting your current and pending support information (please visit the [NSF Current and Pending Support Policy](#) page for a list of available formats), as they include all the information required for NSF to assess the capacity of the individual to carry out the research as proposed as well as to help assess any potential overlap/duplication with the project being proposed.

**26. I need guidance on what information I should provide when completing my current and pending support documentation. Where can I get more details?**

Detailed information about the content is available in the [Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\), Chapter, II.C.2.h](#). An updated [set of frequently asked questions related to current and pending support](#) also is available.

**27. In lieu of an NSF-approved format, may I use a Word, PDF or other document I have already created that provides the current and pending support information?**

The requirement to use an NSF-approved format for preparation of current and pending support will go into effect for new proposals submitted or due on or after October 5, 2020.

When NSF begins enforcing the use of an NSF-approved format, current and pending support documents not uploaded in an NSF-approved format will trigger a compliance error that will prevent proposal submission in FastLane, Research.gov, and Grants.gov.

Prior to enforcement, current and pending support must still comply with the content requirements specified in the *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) (NSF 20-1), and we encourage the use of an NSF-approved format when documenting your current and pending support information (please visit the [NSF Current and Pending Support Policy](#) page for a list of available formats), as they include all the information required for NSF to assess the capacity of the individual to carry out the research as proposed as well as to help assess any potential overlap/duplication with the project being proposed.

**28. I have fewer than 15 projects/proposals to include in the NSF fillable format. Is it permissible to delete some of the blank pages to reduce the overall size of my current and pending support document?**

The NSF fillable format is a static document and blank pages should not be deleted. Any edits to this document will result in a non-compliant document that will prevent proposal submission in FastLane, Research.gov or Grants.gov

Note that [SciENCv](#) offers users more flexibility in preparing current and pending support for submission with proposals. The document generated by SciENCv will be compliant with current proposal submission requirements as well as the NSF approved format requirements effective October 5, 2020.

**29. I need more than 15 project/proposal or 10 in-kind contribution entries. How should I proceed?**

The NSF fillable format allows for a maximum of 15 projects/proposals to be reported on current and pending support. If you need to report more than 15, please use the [SciENCv](#) format where you can report an unlimited number of projects/proposals and/or in-kind contributions.

**30. In the current and pending support form, I am unable to enter 0 as a value in the person months committed field for one of my entries. How should I proceed?**

Individuals should only include projects to which they are committing time/person months. Please remove this entry from your current and pending support documentation and re-generate your PDF document so your proposal contains the accurate support information. For additional information, see the updated NSF-issued set of [FAQs on Current and Pending Support](#).

**31. On October 5, 2020, will non-compliant current and pending support documents receive an error message in FastLane, Research.gov, and Grants.gov?**

Yes. Current and pending support documents will be tagged with identifiers indicating they were prepared in an NSF-approved format. When NSF begins enforcing the use of an NSF-approved format, current and pending support documents not uploaded in an NSF-approved format will trigger a compliance error that will prevent proposal submission in FastLane, Research.gov, and Grants.gov.

**32. Where can I provide feedback on the NSF-approved PDF formats for current and pending support?**

Feedback can be submitted via Research.gov using the <https://www.research.gov/research-web/feedback> tool. Under site area, select "Current & Pending Support."

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**33. Who do I contact if I have questions?**

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