# NSF Project Description

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

You can (and should) include subsections within the Project Description to help organize the content, but how you subdivide the Project Description is up to you.

It’s good to include a description of the need(s) right up front!

Start with an Introduction subsection followed by a Background & Significance subsection. Like this:

Introduction - including a statement of the problem/need and rationale for why the project is important; then an overview of the objectives. The overview can include a brief discussion of approach and tasks.

Basically, this whole Intro section prepares the reviewer for the content that lies ahead, because it presents the basic structure and the main objectives right up front so they can relax and enjoy the proposal and not spend time, focus and patience) trying to figure out what you're proposing to do. Properly written, the Intro gets them excited about the project.

The Intro section should include the most important points of the project which otherwise tend to get buried in the proposal behind a bunch of background and other material. And it should give the reviewers an idea of what is novel or unique about it.

Most people tend to start out with (and spend way too much time on) "background" material not directly relevant to the proposal. It's important to include background to (a) illustrate that you know the landscape and what others have done and (b) provide context and a comparison to your project, but be sure the background is related back to your project.

After the Introduction subsection, you should include a Background and Significance subsection, in which you summarize the relevant background related to the proposed project and describe the significance in terms of existing gaps in research/knowledge/education and how filling the gap(s) will move the field forward (or other reasons why it is important).

Then you can launch into the details of the project description.

NSF expects that you will describe:

- what you will do,
- why you want to do it,
- how you plan to do it,
- how you will know if you succeed, and
- what benefits or outcomes there will or could be.

The Project Description should provide a clear statement of work, outline the general plan, including the activities to be undertaken and (where appropriate) a description of experimental methods and procedures. It must describe the following:

- objectives for the period of the proposed work and expected significance,
- the relation of the proposed work to the longer-term goals of the PI's project; and
- the relation of the proposed work to the present state of knowledge in the field, to work in progress by the PI under other support, and to work in progress elsewhere.

For NSF, the Project Description must include as a separate section a discussion of the **broader impacts** of the proposed activities. Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities directly related to specific research projects, or through activities supported by but complementary to the project.

In addition a separate section labeled "Results from Prior NSF Support" is required for all PI's and Co PI's who have received NSF support in past 5 years including active awards. Up to 5 pages is allowed for all PIs combined. The following information is required for each PI's most relevant award:

- Award number (including program prefix), amount, and period of support, the title of the project
- Summary of the results, separated into two distinct subheadings "Intellectual Merit" and "Broader Impacts"
- List of publications (include full citations or refer to References Cited) If none, state "No publications were produced under this award"
- Evidence of other research products and their availability, as described in the Data Management Plan of the prior award

And finally, NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to achieving socially relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities; improved STEM education and educator development; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the United States; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.