Funding Opportunities at the NSF

http://www.nsf.gov/

- Research support?

  RUI or ROA or RCN or special initiatives like Biocomplexity

- Student research support?

  REU site awards and supplements

- Curriculum?

  CCLI

- Equipment?

  MRI or CCLI or research division programs

- Pedagogical Research?

  ROL or talk with DUE program officers

Celebrate being at a RUI eligible institution

- Check out the RUI guidelines.
- Make sure R, U, and I are the first letters of your proposal title on the cover page.
- Be sure to include RUI certification.
- Take advantage of the extra 5 pages you get for your RUI impact statement.

More RUI information

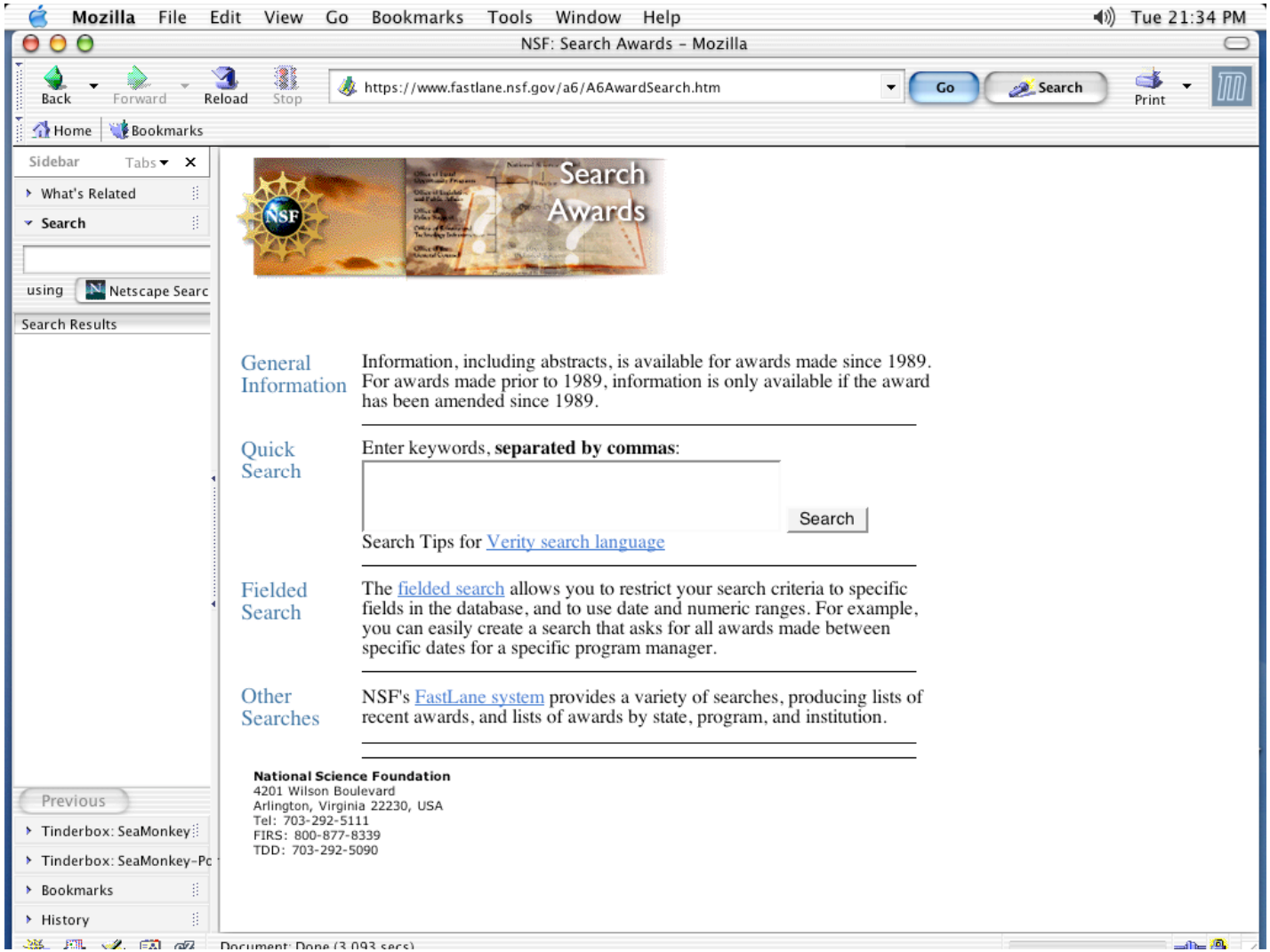
- If you're a social scientist check out this "Dear Colleague" letter - http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2001/nsf0175/nsf0175.html
- RUI frequently asked questions web site: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2000/faq0001/faq0001.htm

Before clicking on http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/

Have you talked with your SPO at Carleton?
(fastlane requires a password)

Checked out proposals currently funded by “your” program?

https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a6/A6AwardSearch.htm



E-mail your program director

- Does your question fit program guidelines?
- Offer to review proposals

What's all the fuss about broader impact statements in the project summary and project description?

What happens after I submit my proposal?

- Compliance checking
- Assigned to one or more programs
- Review process

  Ad hocs, panel, program director has some discretion
- 6 month turn around

My program director says an award has been recommended. Can I start spending dollars?

(not quite yet…)

Program Director

Division Director

Division of Grants and Agreements

Keep in touch with your program director after you're funded

- My start date was September 1. Why is is my PD asking for an annual report in the spring?

- I have a standard grant. Should I bother submitting interim reports?

Drats! I got an electronic declination!

- Photocopy your reviews. Rip up or stomp on the photocopies.
- Read your reviews carefully.
- Wait at least 48 hours to call your program director - have specific questions ready.
- Try again - persistence matters!!!!!!

Improving grant writing skills

- Have a successfully funded colleague read your proposal.
- Start early!
- Get involved as an ad hoc reviewer
- Volunteer to serve on panels - DUE is a good place to start
- Be a rotator

Final thought:

Grant writing helps you to clarify your research goals. Even if your first proposal isn’t funded you will have gained something valuable.

Maximizing Your Chances of Submitting a Fundable Proposal

Notes from a Former Insider

Finding a Successful Model

1. Go to http://www.nsf.gov and click on "funding," which is at the top of the screen.
2. Click on "NSF Awards."
3. Click on "search abstracts."
4. By this means you can find a funded proposal in your interest area.
5. Contact the principal investigator to ask for a copy of the proposal. Now you have a model of a successful proposal in your exact interest area.

Contact the Relevant Program Officer

1. Ask if you can send a “two-pager” describing your outstanding idea.
2. The program officer can tell you if your idea is relevant for that program. The program officer cannot tell you if it will be funded, so don’t ask this question.
3. If your idea is not relevant to that program, the program officer can direct you to a more appropriate program to which you might submit.

The Grant Proposal Guide

1. Its link is on the home page of NSF.
2. It contains the various rules for submission. Download a boring copy.
3. The most important feature of your proposal is the 15-page project description. (Some programs have different page limits, but whatever the limit is, don't violate it.)

The Project Description

1. Convince reviewers that you are up-to-date with regard to the relevant literature.
2. State why this research is very important. Don't leave it to reviewers to infer the importance level.
3. Clarity of writing counts for a lot. If a reviewer cannot understand your fine idea, it will not be deemed fine.
4. "Trust me" proposals are not funded. State exactly what you propose to do.

Summary Thus Far

1. You know what a funded proposal in your area looks like.
2. You've found the precise program whose program officer thinks your idea is relevant.
3. You've read the Grant Proposal Guide, so you know about formatting details (not less than 10 pt. font, etc.).
4. You've written a terrific proposal which has clearly stated exactly what you intend to do and why it is very important.
5. Just back the U-Haul up to the NSF loading dock and wait for the money.

The Evaluation Process

1. Programs differ, but most due ad hoc reviews plus panel reviews.
2. Five grades: excellent, very good, good, fair, poor.
3. Panel reviews, ad hoc reviews, and the panel recommendation are all advisory to the program officer, who makes the final decision.

What If My Proposal is Rejected?

1. Calm down.
2. Read the reviews and adjust your proposal accordingly, unless the scores are all in the bottom three categories, in which case a revision is probably not going to be successful.
3. If you have questions as to what some reviewer meant, call the program officer for his or her interpretation.
4. Re-submit. Don't ignore the review comments, because some of the new reviewers will be the old reviewers.

Wily Veterans Do These Things

- Surf the NSF website often to discover special initiatives and programs.
- Volunteer to be a reviewer. In this way you'll get to see the range of proposals being submitted.
- Do not get even a little bit intimidated by the forms you have to submit with your proposal. (We'll practice in a minute.)
- When you submit electronically, send a courtesy paper copy of the proposal to the program officer with a cover letter, especially if you want a joint review.

Bottom Line

Please remember that it's just a 15-page term paper, and any faculty member can do one of these. So if you need funds to buy equipment, pay participants, travel to anthropologically interesting places, obtain summer funding to do research, etc., I urge you to give NSF funding a try. The absolute worst thing that can possibly happen is that you'll get good feedback from experts in your field, which may be of immense benefit to your research program. Besides, just writing the proposal will help you organize your research program.

To prove the NSF forms that accompany any proposal submission aren't so bad, I'm going to do all of them now in about 5 minutes.