[NSF](NSF)

1. Proposal Pagination Instructions

Proposers are advised that FastLane does not automatically paginate a proposal. Each section of the proposal that is uploaded as a file must be individually paginated prior to being uploaded to FastLane.

For proposals submitted via Research.gov, the system will automatically paginate a proposal. Each section of the proposal that is uploaded as a file should leave out page numbering unless otherwise directed within Research.gov.

2. Proposal Font, Spacing and Margin Requirements

The proposal must conform to the following requirements:

a. Use one of the following fonts identified below:

• Arial7 (not Arial Narrow), Courier New, or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger;

• Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger; or

• Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger.

A font size of less than 10 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figures, tables, or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters. Other fonts not specified above, such as Cambria Math, may be used for mathematical formulas, equations, or when inserting Greek letters or special characters. PIs are cautioned, however, that the text must still be readable.

b. No more than six lines of text within a vertical space of one inch.
c. Margins, in all directions, must be at least an inch. No proposer-supplied information may appear in the margins.
d. Paper size must be no larger than standard letter paper size (8 ½ by 11").

These requirements apply to all uploaded sections of a proposal, including supplementary documentation.

3. Page Formatting

Proposers are strongly encouraged to use only a standard, single-column format for the text.

The guidelines specified above establish the minimum font size requirements; however, PIs are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal. **Use of a small font size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the proposal; consequently, the use of small fonts not in compliance with the above guidelines may be grounds for NSF to return the proposal without review**. Adherence to font size and line spacing requirements also is necessary to ensure that no proposer will have an unfair advantage, by using smaller font or line spacing to provide more text in the proposal.

NIH

Font (size, color, type density) and Line Spacing

Adherence to font size, type density, line spacing and text color requirements is necessary to ensure readability and fairness. Although font requirements apply to all attachments, they are most important and most heavily scrutinized in attachments with page limits.

Text in your attachments must follow these minimum requirements:

- **Font size**: Must be 11 points or larger. Smaller text in figures, graphs, diagrams and charts is acceptable, as long as it is legible when the page is viewed at 100%.
    - Some PDF conversion software reduces font size. It is important to confirm that the final PDF document complies with the font requirements.
- **Type density**: Must be no more than 15 characters per linear inch (including characters and spaces).
- **Line spacing**: Must be no more than six lines per vertical inch.
- **Text color**: No restriction. Though not required, black or other high-contrast text colors are recommended since they print well and are legible to the largest audience.

We recommended the following fonts, although other fonts (both serif and non-serif) are acceptable if they meet the above requirements.

- Arial
- Georgia
- Helvetica
- Palatino Linotype

Legibility is of paramount importance. Applications that include PDF attachments that do not conform to the minimum requirements listed above may be withdrawn from consideration.

Format Pages

- Watch for form field instructions that refer you to specific format pages (e.g., biosketch, training data tables).

Headers and Footers

- Do not include headers or footers in your attachments. We will add headers, footers, page numbers, bookmarks and a table of contents when we assemble your grant application upon submission.
- Headings (e.g., Significance, Innovation) within the text of your attachments improve readability and are highly encouraged.
  - Some funding opportunity announcement and form instructions provide guidance on organizing the content of attachments including specific headings that must be present.

Hyperlinks and URLs

- Hyperlinks and URLs are only allowed when specifically noted in funding opportunity announcement (FOA) and form field instructions. The use of hyperlinks is typically limited to citing relevant publications in biosketches and publication lists. It is highly unusual for a FOA to allow links in Specific Aims, Research Strategy and other page-limited attachments.
- Hyperlinks and URLs may not be used to provide information necessary to application review.
- Reviewers are not obligated to view linked sites and are cautioned that they should not directly access a website (unless the link to the site was specifically requested in application instructions) as it could compromise their anonymity.
- When allowed, you must hyperlink the actual URL text so it appears on the page rather than hiding the URL behind a specific word or phrase.

  Examples:
  - NIH (http://www.nih.gov/)
  - http://www.nih.gov/

Images

- Digital images of material such as electron micrographs or gels must only be included within the page limits of the Research Strategy. The maximum size of images to be included should be approximately 1200 x 1500 pixels using 256 colors. Figures must be readable as printed on an 8.5" x 11" page at normal (100%) scale.

- Investigators must use image compression such as JPEG or PNG.

Language & Style

- Use English. (See [45 CFR § 75.111 - English language](#))
- Avoid jargon.
- Spell out acronyms the first time they are used in each application section/attachment and note the appropriate abbreviation in parentheses. The abbreviation may be used in the section/attachment thereafter.

Marking up Attachments

- Do not mark-up your PDF documents with comments, sticky notes or other features that are added on top of your PDF document content. This information may not be retained in your final application image.

Orientation

- Both portrait and landscape attachments are accepted. However, keep in mind that landscape can be difficult to read online and may require reviewers and staff to scroll to see all available text.

Page Limits

- Adhere to the page limits defined in the [Table of Page Limits](#) or within the text of the funding opportunity announcement (FOA) or NIH Guide notice (including Notices of Special Interest).
- Page limits defined in a FOA should be followed when different than those found in the [Table of Page Limits](#). Page limits defined in a related NIH Guide notice should be followed if different than either the [Table of Page Limits](#) or the FOA.
- If no page limit for an attachment is listed in either the Table of Page Limits, Section IV of the FOA under Page Limitations, or in a related NIH Guide notice you can assume the attachment does not have a limit.
- We systematically check many page limit requirements and provide error or warning messages to minimize incomplete or non-compliant applications. These systematic checks may not address all page limit requirements for a specific FOA and do not replace the checks done by staff after submission. You must comply with all documented page limits and should not rely solely on system validations.

- Some page limits apply to multiple attachments that when combined must stay within a designated limit. You may want to prepare your information in a single document to ensure you are within the page limit and later break-up the information into the various separate attachments. Our systems will accommodate a certain amount of white space resulting from splitting the information into the separate attachments when verifying compliance with a limit.
- When preparing an administrative supplement application, follow the Table of Page Limits using the activity code of the parent award and any additional limits specified in the FOA or a related notice.
- Do not use the appendix or other sections of your application to circumvent page limits (NOT-OD-11-080).

Paper Size and Margins

- Use paper size no larger than *standard letter paper size (8 ½" x 11")*.
- Provide at least one-half inch margins (½") - top, bottom, left, and right - for all pages. No applicant-supplied information can appear in the margins.

Scanning

- Avoid scanning text documents to produce the required PDFs. It is best to produce documents using your word-processing software and then convert the documents to PDF. Scanning paper documents may hamper automated processing of your application for agency analysis and reporting.
- We recognize that sometimes scanning is necessary, especially when including letters of support or other signed documents on business letterhead.

Security Features

- Our systems must be able to open and edit your attached documents in order to generate your assembled application image for agency processing and funding consideration.
- Disable all security features in your PDF documents. Do not encrypt or password protect your documents. Using these features to protect your documents also prevents us from opening and processing them.

Single vs. Multi-column Page Format

- A single-column page format easily adapts to various screen sizes and is highly encouraged.
- Multi-column formats, especially for information spanning multiple pages, can be problematic for online review.