

**National Science Foundation  
Office of the Director  
Arlington, VA 22230**

**Notice No. 137**

**January 13, 2015**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE TO  
PRESIDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES  
AND HEADS OF OTHER NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS**

**Subject:** New steps to enhance transparency and accountability at the National Science Foundation

Over the last year, the National Science Foundation has taken new steps to enhance transparency and accountability. This notice focuses on efforts to clarify NSF's award abstracts, which serve a different purpose than the project summary that is submitted as part of a proposal.

Effective December 26, 2014, NSF's updated *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)* ([NSF 15-1](#)) includes the following statement about award abstracts: "Should a proposal be recommended for award, the PI (Principal Investigator) may be contacted by the NSF Program Officer for assistance in preparation of the public award abstract and its title. An NSF award abstract, with its title, is an NSF document that describes the project and justifies the expenditure of Federal funds."

While our update to the PAPPG clarifies the possible role of the PI in helping NSF prepare award abstracts, NSF would like to share the Foundation's guidelines about NSF award abstracts with the science, engineering and education communities to help improve communication about the nature of the award to the public.

The NSF public award abstract consists of both a nontechnical and technical component. The nontechnical component of the NSF award abstract must:

- explain the project's significance and importance; and
- serve as a public justification for NSF funding by articulating how the project serves the national interest, as stated by NSF's mission: to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity and welfare; or to secure the national defense.

By sharing these guidelines, NSF is clarifying the nature of requested assistance from PIs in this valuable effort in helping the agency adhere to its newly established guidelines. This collaborative effort also helps foster stronger public communication about the value of federal investments in fundamental research.

France A. Córdova  
Director

To learn more about NSF's transparency and accountability efforts, visit <http://www.nsf.gov/od/transparency/transparency.jsp>.