

**From:** [Mikesell, Melissa](#)  
**To:** [Plimpton, Suzanne H.](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] - PAPPG 20-1 Comment  
**Date:** Thursday, May 30, 2019 11:27:07 AM

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Dear Ms. Plimpton:

I am writing to comment on the following changes to the NSF PAPPG (20-1):

1. Changes to Biographical Sketches: "upload of a PDF file will no longer be accepted."

Comment: as Research Administrators, we are responsible for preparing a massive volume of NSF proposals each year. The inability to upload a PDF file for a biosketch will create an undue increase in time needed to prepare each of these proposals. This is something we have already experienced with the Project Summary.

Simply stated, copying and pasting into the Project Summary form is rarely without its problems. What fits into one page on a Word document doesn't always fit in the Project Summary form. Additionally, there are issues of special characters, loss of italicization (for bacteria names, animal species, etc.), and punctuation being changed to question marks. We would experience a significant increase in occurrence of these problems if the same protocol (or similar) were used for the Biosketches. For instance, many PIs have special characters in their names or in the names of the universities they have attended, not to mention the punctuation marks used in the Products and Synergistic Activities sections.

Furthermore, there is the issue of the number of biosketches uploaded for each project. The issues we face on the Project Summary form are for a single document on each proposal submission. However, those issues would be compounded exponentially with the inability to upload biosketch PDF. It is not unusual to work on proposals where there are 20 total PIs, co-PIs, and Senior Personnel. That is 20 biosketches that had to be uploaded. Now, imagine copying and pasting the biosketch material for each of those 20 people and having to scan the Fastlane/Research.gov formatted text for characters or grammar that had been turned in to question marks. The resulting increase in preparation time would be excessive and unnecessary.

If NSF would like to move toward a more streamlined version of the biosketch that obliges PIs to comply with guidelines, I recommend a fillable PDF form (much like the PHS SF 424 forms). Such a fillable form would allow for total compliance with guidelines since they can be "locked down" for editing anything other than adding text in the allowable fields. Furthermore, this would streamline the preparation process for Research Administrators and PIs that would not be available if copying and pasting were the method of choice.

2. Changes to Current and Pending Support: "new electronic format (or formats) will be implemented to collect current and pending information. Upload of pdf will no longer be permitted."

Comment: My comment on the Current and Pending is very similar to the concerns I have regarding the biosketch changes. To reiterate, each project may have many, many personnel listed. Each of these personnel may have anywhere from 3-4 to upwards of 15 (or more) entries for a single person's Current and Pending. Using the existing form available Fastlane/Research.gov to list each person's projects is unwieldy and time consuming. That is why the preferred method at my institution is to upload a PDF list. Uploading a PDF is quick and efficient, especially considering that each proposal submission requires a Current and Pending file for each senior personnel listed on the project, which can be quite a lot of people in some cases.

Additionally, using the existing Current and Pending form in Fastlane is inefficient because we cannot save that data to be updated for the next proposal. Instead, it must be reentered again from scratch for each person's projects on each new proposal submission, which places an undue burden on the individual filling out that information for the personnel on the project, be it the PI or the Research Administrator.

Again, if NSF would like to move toward a more streamlined, all-inclusive version of the Current and Pending, I recommend a fillable PDF form, which could be "locked down" and would streamline the proposal preparation process and compel PIs to follow a specific format.

Thank you for taking time to read these comments and consider the concerns I have presented. If you need further information on any of the points presented above, do not hesitate to contact me at [melissa.mikesell@okstate.edu](mailto:melissa.mikesell@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

--Melissa Mikesell

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