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NSF Update

Federal Demonstration Partnership Meeting

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Ask Early, Ask Often

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Coverage

- Update on revision of NSF Merit Review Criteria by the NSB
- ARRA Expenditure Acceleration
- Award Condition Update



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NSB Task Force on Merit Review

- Established Spring 2010
- Rationale:
 - More than 13 years since the last in-depth review and revision of the review criteria
 - Opportunity to align review criteria with NSF's new Strategic Plan
 - Persistent anecdotal reports about confusion related to the Broader Impacts criterion, and inconsistency in how the criterion was being applied.



Issues

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current criteria?
- How are the two merit review criteria used by PIs, reviewers, NSF staff?
- What is the role of the PI's institution?
- Have the criteria had an impact on the way PIs think about shaping their research projects?
- How can the outcomes of activities relevant to each criterion be assessed?



Stakeholder Input

- Interviews
 - 20 NSF senior leaders (BIO, CISE, EHR, ENG, GEO, MPS, SBE, OCI, OIA, OISE, OGC, BFA)
 - Representatives of a small set of diverse institutions
- Surveys
 - NSF POs, DDs, AC members (NSF Officials)
 - ✓ 520 responses, 61% response rate
 - NSF PIs and reviewers
 - ✓ 3989 responses, 51% response rate
- NSF website
 - 611 people provided responses to one or more questions (>2200 total comments)



Additional Sources of Data

- 195 Committees of Visitors reports (from 2001-2009)
 - What issues were raised related to the two review criteria?
- ~100,000 proposals submitted between 2006 and 2009
 - How did PIs define “Broader Impacts”?



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Sec. 526 of America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010

- Instructs NSF to have a Broader Impacts review criterion to address several societal goals
- Further instructs NSF to develop and implement a policy for this criterion related to:
 - Strategies and approaches employed to address the Broader Impacts criterion
 - Assessment and evaluation
 - Institutional engagement
 - Education of NSF staff and potential NSF-supported investigators about new policies



First Revision

- Task Force proposed a set of principles and revised review criteria at May 2011 NSB meeting
- Dear Colleague Letter released on June 14 requesting input on the revised criteria
- ~280 comments received, nearly two-thirds from university faculty
 - Concerned that intent of broader impacts concept was weakened, with particular concern expressed about role of broadening participation
 - List of national goals was problematic



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Final Report

- Task Force used the input from the community to revise the description of the review criteria and underlying principles
- Presented the final report to the National Science Board on December 13, 2011
 - Background and Context
 - Conclusions
 - Recommendations
 - Implementation Guidance to NSF



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Final Report: Conclusions

- The Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts review criteria together capture the important elements that should guide the evaluation of NSF proposals.
- Revisions to the descriptions of the Broader Impacts criterion and how it is implemented are needed.
- Use of the review criteria should be informed by a guiding set of core principles.



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Final Report: Recommendations

1. Three guiding review principles
2. Two review criteria
3. Five review elements



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Final Report: Implementation

- NSF is charged to develop an implementation plan for applying the two merit review criteria
 - Provide a clear and consistent understanding of the underlying principles inherent in the criteria and how they should be used
 - Address several issues (described in the report) related to implementation that were identified during the data gathering and analysis phases



Status and Next Steps

- NSB approved report on December 14, 2011
- Published on January 10, 2012:
 - <http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/publications/2011/meritreviewcriteria.pdf>
- Next Steps:
 - NSF will develop implementation plan
 - Revised criteria and principles will be included in the next revision of the Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (external), and the Proposal and Award Manual (internal)



OMB Memorandum M-11-34

NSF Implementation

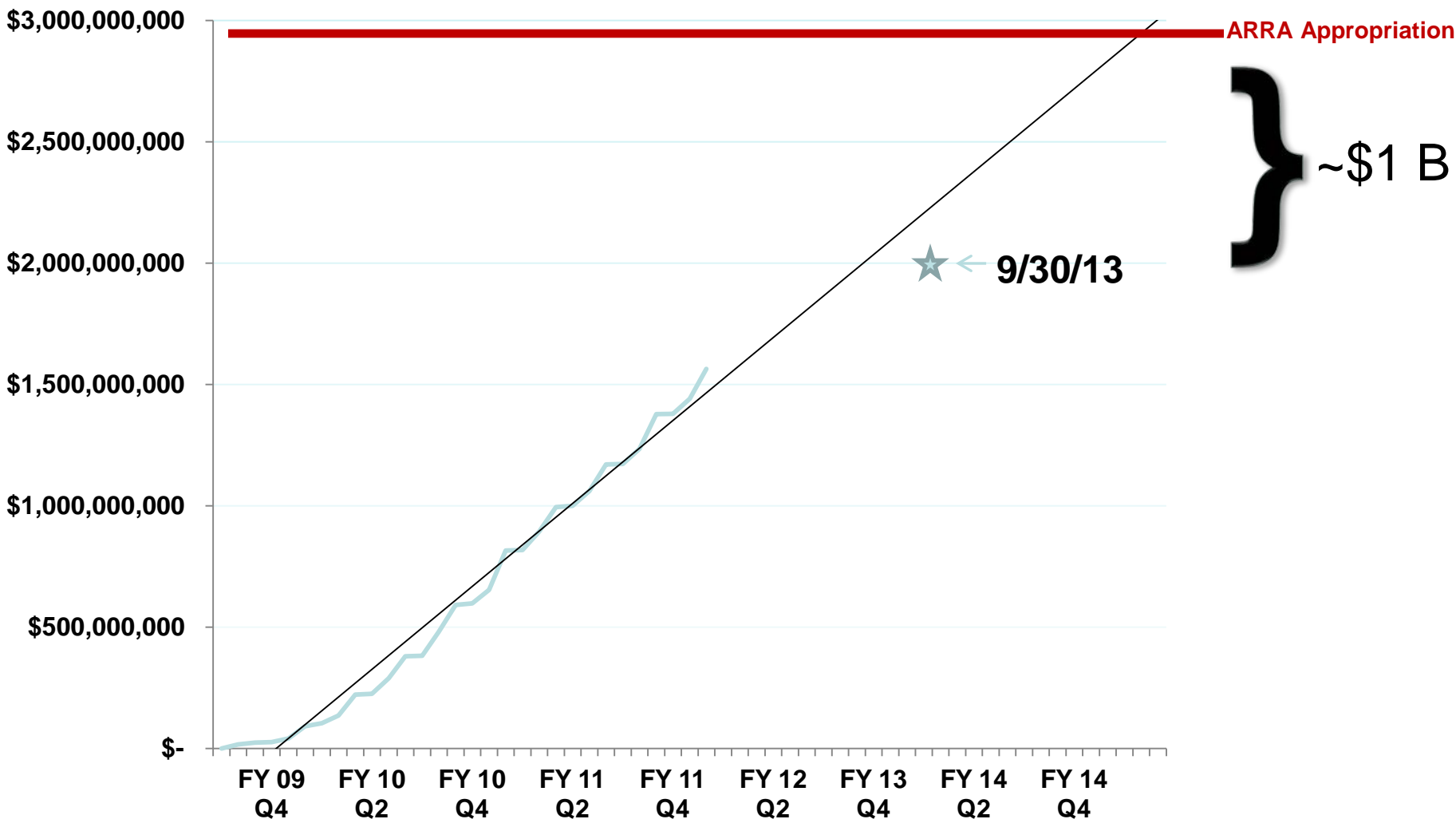
- Federal agencies directed to accelerate spending of remaining ARRA funds in discretionary grant programs
- Funds not spent by 9/30/2013 will be reclaimed to the extent permitted by law
- Waiver requests (where special circumstances exist) but should be requested sparingly in case of:
 - Contractual commitments;
 - Complex environmental review;
 - Programs that are long-term by design and acceleration would compromise core programmatic goals; and/or
 - Special circumstances or risk to vertebrate animals or human subjects.



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Current NSF ARRA Expenditures total \$1.44 billion Projections for 9/30/13 Total Just Over \$2 billion





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NSF Implementation of OMB M-11-34

- **Interagency coordination** – Continuously seek OMB guidance; coordinate implementation strategy with NIH & other agencies.
- **Aggressive stratification** – Analyze NSF ARRA portfolio to determine all areas where we can encourage responsible acceleration.
- **Waiver application** – Request OMB waivers as appropriate.
- **Award modification** – Modify policies for ARRA awards as necessary; modify no-cost extension policies for all ARRA awards terminating during FY 2012 or later.
- **Aggressive communication** – increased communication within NSF, between other agencies and to ARRA recipients.



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NSF Implementation of OMB M-11-34

What YOU Need to Know!

- Responsible acceleration now!!
 - Award specific: Look to your program plan and the Ts & Cs and facts and circumstances of YOUR award
 - Communicate with your NSF program officer and check the NSF ARRA web page for guidance
 - <http://www.nsf.gov/recovery/>
- Grantee approved no-cost extensions (NCE)
 - ARRA grantees may ONLY issue themselves NCE through 9/30/2013, but NOT beyond 9/30/2013
- Waiver requests
 - NSF will only go forward with requests that have a compelling and defensible rationale in accordance with the OMB waiver criteria.



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Terms and Conditions Revision

- Entire suite of NSF terms and conditions revised to implement new requirements, some of which were mandated by regulation or legislation. New terms were published October 2011
- Applies to all new NSF awards and funding amendments to existing NSF awards issued on or after February 1, 2012
- Award notices will begin referencing new terms and conditions on February 1, 2012



Significant Changes

Expansion of Open Skies Agreement

- Travel article updated to incorporate revised circumstances when a foreign-flag air carrier can be used
- If traveler is leaving from the U.S., can fly anywhere a European Union (EU) member airline is authorized to fly, including outside the EU
- If flying between points outside the U.S., traveler can use an EU member airline if there is no GSA City Pair contract for that route. If City Pair exists, have to use U.S. flag air carrier



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Significant Changes Academic Technology Transfer and Commercialization of University Research

- New article which originated in the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act (ACRA)
- Requires higher education institutions that meet a certain Federal research grant dollar threshold to submit to NSF a URL that has information on their technology transfer and commercialization of research results information
- Requirement is exclusively for higher ed institutions



ACRA Section 520

- “Any institution of higher education (as such term is defined in section 101(A) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)) that receives National Science Foundation research support and has received at least \$25,000,000 in total Federal research grants in the most recent fiscal year shall keep, maintain, and report annually to the National Science Foundation the universal record locator (URL) for a public website that contains information concerning its general approach to and mechanisms for transfer of technology and the commercialization of research results...”



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Academic Technology Transfer (cont'd)

- To meet threshold, both NSF and Federal research grants must have been active at some point during most recently completed Federal fiscal year
- Awardees will electronically submit their URLs to, and info will be posted on, the Science, Engineering and Education (SEE) Innovation section of Research.gov
- Institutions will not be required to reveal confidential, trade secret, or proprietary information on their websites



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Other Grant Condition Updates

- Expenditure Reports article modified to reflect that all Federal Financial Reports (FFR) must now be submitted via Research.gov
- New article on Indirect Costs reminds awardees subject to A-21 that they must use the F&A rate(s) in effect at the time of initial award, throughout the life of the award



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Questions

