

Lessons from the past NSF CAREER proposal submissions

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Common Mistakes & Good Practices for NSF CAREER Proposals

Things to do:

□ Writing style

- Proposal style and structure
- Content: Previous work / Proposed research / Absolutely new ideas versus continuing work
- Equations and figures
- Education/diversity/outreach
- Evaluation Plan
- Intellectual merit: Be specific - only 2-4 points.
- Broader impact: Could be ambitious, but stick to 2-3 believable, concrete items.

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Things to do:

- Get yourself on an NSF panel !!!***
- Get copies of both successful and unsuccessful proposals in your area.**
- Visiting NSF and talking to your program chair.**
- GET SOMEONE TO READ YOUR PROPOSAL EARLY.**
- Attend NSF CAREER workshop.**
- Don't be afraid to trash the entire proposal and start over from scratch.**
- Make your grant office happy: get the budget/justification/facilities etc. in early.**

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Things NOT to do:

- ✗ *Too narrow or overly ambitious scope.*
- ✗ *Vague education plans.*
- ✗ *Ignoring NSF merit review criteria.*
- ✗ *Don't rush the education plan – it's half the proposal.*
- ✗ *Don't submit a regular research proposal and just call it CAREER.*
- ✗ *Don't use vague buzzwords without substance (e.g., “transformative,” “inclusive” with no context).*
- ✗ *Don't assume reviewers will “get it” — explain clearly.*
- ✗ *Don't overlook the importance of broader impacts.*

**Thank you for your
attention!**

Question?