

Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts

When evaluating National Science Foundation (NSF) proposals, reviewers are asked to consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to evaluate all proposals against Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. Intellectual Merit. The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge.

The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes. Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project.

Consider the following questions when writing your Broader Impact statement:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

AVOID:

- 1) Only stating your past successes
- 2) Listing the impacts without providing a convincing plan
- 3) Presenting plans that are not reasonable

