

# For Symposium Organizers

## SICB Symposium Proposal Preparation

Some of you have received commitments from your Divisions for support of your symposium and some of you have not. Some of you need additional funding and some do not. Unless your symposium needs no money, a way of obtaining additional funding is to submit a proposal for support of your symposium to the cognizant Program of the National Science Foundation, or to another appropriate funding body. One way we have of rewarding those who submit such a proposal is that we will provide complimentary registration to the Anaheim meeting for ALL of your symposium participants, EVEN IF THE PROPOSAL IS UNSUCCESSFUL. [This support is ordinarily not provided to those symposiums that do not submit proposals for extramural funding.]

This document takes you through the preparation of a proposal for external funding of a symposium. The advice it contains is most pertinent for proposals destined for the National Science Foundation, but some will be useful regardless of the destination of the proposal.

**Where to submit:** In the past, symposia have been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation [BIO Directorate, EHR (Education and Human Resources) Directorate, and Polar Programs], National Institutes of Health, Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Naval Research, several private foundations, and industry/the private sector. Duplicate submissions are both allowable and common as long as you notify the granting agency, except that NSF doesn't like duplicate submissions to NIH.

The BIO Directorate at NSF presently has 3 pertinent Divisions:

Environmental Biology (<http://www.nsf.gov/bio/deb/>)

Integrative Biology and Neurosciences (<http://www.nsf.gov/bio/ibn/>)

Molecular and Cellular Biosciences (<http://www.nsf.gov/bio/mcb/>)

Within each Division are numerous Programs, each with its own Program Director. NSF proposals are reviewed and funded by particular Programs.

**Your first step** should be to contact the person(s) in charge of any program(s) you are interested in and seek their advice. Tell them about your idea for a symposium and ask if it would be appropriate for their programs. The reason for this is that programs vary greatly in their interest in funding symposia. Some are eager to do so and others simply will not do so. If a program won't fund your symposium no matter how good it is, look for another source of funding. Another reason is that programs vary greatly in their requirements, deadlines, budget items they will/will not fund, etc. It pays to ask up front. In particular, find out when your proposal will be due at NSF. Some Programs have target dates (i.e., deadlines) twice a year, mid-June or mid-July and mid-December or mid-January. If you apply by the mid-December or mid-January deadline, you will not be wondering in November/December whether your January symposium will actually happen. Also, if your proposal doesn't fly the first time around, you can revise/resubmit it. Some Programs have target dates only once a year, however. Some Programs will instruct you to disregard the target dates. For example, it is the *present* policy of the Ecological and Evolutionary Physiology (EEP) Program to ask for SICB symposium proposals to be submitted by September 1st. One can imagine several possible reasons for this. [Symposium proposals are not sent out for mail review, and the program staff might not want to cope with symposium proposals when arranging mail reviews for so many others. Programs don't even receive their annual budgets until autumn - sometimes late autumn - and therefore can't allocate funds until then.] IT CANNOT BE EMPHASIZED TOO STRONGLY THAT THE RULES CAN VARY FROM PROGRAM TO PROGRAM AND SOMETIMES FROM PROGRAM DIRECTOR TO PROGRAM DIRECTOR. BE CERTAIN TO PHONE AND FIND OUT FOR SURE.

Programs will often resort to panel review when the proposed budget is large (\$20K or thereabouts). Proposals needing panel review should be submitted at the target date for regular research proposals. Check with the relevant Program Officer.

You must now make a choice. Grants are to institutions, not individuals, and you must choose a sponsoring institution. This could be your own academic institution, and you presumably already know about working with your sponsored research office or research administrator to submit proposals. It also means that you will need to cope with your own institutional bureaucracy to reimburse speakers, communicate with the granting agency, etc. This could be a good thing or a bad thing. Alternatively, you can submit the proposal through SICB. An advantage of SICB is that they do not charge indirect costs, which may significantly lower the proposal budget and improve its chances for funding. The SICB Business Office is most familiar with NSF and may require guidance on submitting to more exotic funding sources. It's up to you.

**DEADLINES:** If you are working with a sponsoring organization other than SICB, this is between you and them. If you are working with SICB, for 2002 Anaheim proposals please contact the Business Office as soon as possible and let them know when they can expect your proposal. They would like to receive proposals a week in advance for the target dates. In the future, they would like to receive proposals four weeks in advance. "Receive proposal" means that they receive a complete and final version of the proposal, which they can then check for accuracy and compliance with the granting agency's requirements, and revise in consultation with you if necessary.

If you choose to work with the SICB Business Office, contact information for them is:

Toll-free phone: 800-955-1236

E-mail: [SICB@BurkInc.com](mailto:SICB@BurkInc.com)

Direct inquiries to Mr. Brett Burk, our executive director. He is at extension 20 and his direct email is [BBurk@BurkInc.com](mailto:BBurk@BurkInc.com)

Other:

Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology

1313 Dolley Madison Blvd # 402

Mc Lean, VA 22101-3926

Fax: 703 790-2672

These days NSF requires that proposals be submitted electronically via an internet-based system called Fastlane. If you've not used it before, instructions are available at <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/>. If you have not used FastLane in the past, or if you need a refresher, the "10 Steps to Prepare a Proposal" are listed at <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a0/about/10steps.htm>. **Other reference sources:**

**Sample successful proposals:** <http://pondside.uchicago.edu/~feder/SICB/symposiumorgs.html>

**Detailed Instructions for proposal submission:** <http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a1/newstan.htm>

**PI Tipsheet for Proposal Preparation (good resource)**

<http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a0/about/pitips.htm>

**Overview of SRO submission process** <http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a0/about/submission.htm>

Assuming that you will be submitting an NSF proposal with SICB as the sponsoring institution, you first need a PIN. If you already have a Fastlane PIN from your home institution, you don't need another. If you don't have one, you should send the following information to Brett Burk at the SICB Business Office – <mailto:BBurk@BurkInc.com>:

*Name*  
*Highest Degree*  
*Year Conferred*  
*Present Institution*  
*Department*  
*Street Address*  
*City*  
*State*  
*Zip Code*  
*Social Security Number (SSN)*  
*Email Address*  
*Business Phone Number*  
*Business Fax Number*

## **PROPOSAL COMPONENTS**

The following sections contain advice or boilerplate that can be used in completing each section in Fastlane. Obviously they don't need to be completed in the order given.

### **Cover Sheet**

If you already have a Fastlane PIN from your home institution, when you edit the Cover Page in Fastlane, you will need to change the "Awardee Organization" from your home institution to SICB. Just click on the Awardee Organization Search button and, when prompted, enter Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology. Follow the instructions thereafter. At this point, Fastlane may move your usual Awardee Organization into the Performing/Research Organization field. If it does this, click on the Performing/Research Organization Search button, again enter Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology, and follow the instructions thereafter.

Otherwise, fill out the cover sheet as in any NSF proposal.

Proposal duration and starting date: A year is probably a good duration, and December 1 preceding the symposium a good starting date. This will give you plenty of time to spend out the grant and reimburse participants.

**Project Summary:** as in any NSF proposal.

**Classification Form:** as in any NSF proposal, this needs to be filled out if the proposal will go to one of the BIO Programs.

**PI CoPI Information:** as in any NSF proposal.

### **Project Description**

a. Progress on Prior NSF Award must still be included for PIs even though the symposium may be not directly related to the prior NSF award.

b. See examples of previous and current project descriptions at:  
<http://pondside.uchicago.edu/~feder/SICB/symposiumorgs.html>

c. Usual formatting restrictions apply.

d. This section is obviously the main event of the proposal, and is the primary determinant of whether or not your proposal will be funded. Some hints:

i. Review criteria. In addition to the usual criteria, reviewers will ask:

**Is there a real need for this symposium? Is it critical to do it now?**

**Will this symposium move or shape its field? How so? What will be its impact on the field?**

**Has a symposium like this one been done within the past two years? In what way is it unique?**

**Would the symposium bring together groups of researchers that don't normally interact?**

**Does the symposium program respond to diversity issues by including young investigators (grads & post docs), women, under-represented minorities?**

Remember that symposium funding and regular research grants all come out of the same pot, and that many reviewers will oppose diversion of funds from research grants. Thus, the proposal had best provide superb answers to these questions and be truly exciting. Rest assured that SICB symposia have had a good track record of being funded. Thus, it is not impossible to produce a fundable proposal.

ii. Choosing symposium participants: Funding organizations don't like to support symposia that have been done recently. If you choose only the 'usual suspects' to be in your symposium, reviewers will wonder what's novel about it. Funding organizations like to see a balance of speakers, including 'usual suspects' and people new to a field, speakers who facilitate links to other fields, speakers who wouldn't ordinarily attend, international speakers, women and underrepresented minorities, and young and old investigators. Rumor has it that NSF is becoming reluctant to fund travel of those symposium speakers who would attend the meeting anyway. You may therefore want to include few SICB members or, if you do, include an airtight justification of why their travel needs to be supported. There is no prohibition against including 'usual suspects' or those who routinely attend SICB meetings as long as their presence is overwhelming.

iii. Symposium proposals to BIO are exempt from ad hoc (i.e., mail) review. Some Programs will have people who work at NSF review them, and other Programs will ask their Advisory Panels (i.e., the group that convenes at NSF to review proposals) to review them. Programs will often resort to panel review when the request is large (\$20K or thereabouts). Proposals needing panel review should be submitted at the target date for regular research proposals. Check with the relevant Program Officer.

**References Cited:** as in any NSF proposal.

**Biographical Sketches:** as in any NSF proposal. Note that these are for PIs, not for symposium participants.

## **Budget**

General comment: Funding agencies routinely fund proposals in part. On the one hand, don't be afraid to include all justifiable costs; if a funding agency doesn't like your budget, they'll not hesitate to ask for a revision. On the other hand, exorbitant or even very large requests can give reviewers "sticker shock" and color their view of a proposal's "science". Typical budgets are included in the model proposals available to you elsewhere.

- A. Senior Personnel
- B. Other Personnel
- C. Fringe Benefits

Ordinarily these are not part of an NSF symposium proposal. If they are not part of yours, just enter your name and those of any Co-PIs and assign yourself zero months of salary support.

If your institution insists on recovery of salary, then THEY (and not the SICB Business Office) will need to serve as the grant institution and help you with this. In our experience, NSF takes a dim view of attempting to recover salary for symposium organization.

D. Equipment

Ordinarily this is not part of an NSF symposium proposal.

E. Travel

Ordinarily this is not part of an NSF symposium proposal. Travel for symposium participants is ordinarily included in "F. Participant Support Costs"

F. Participant Support Costs

1. Stipends

Ordinarily this is not part of an NSF symposium proposal. In rare cases (e.g., for underrepresented minority students or really impoverished foreign visitors, honoraria for distinguished speakers), it may be appropriate to request funds. Historically, SICB has not provided honoraria for speakers, but it may be possible to deviate from precedent if a participant is a Nobel Prize winner.

2. Travel

Sometimes this is the ONLY part of a budget request that NSF will fund, so better make it good. Put together a list of your proposed participants and their gateway airports. Either contact a travel agent or use one of the web services (e.g., [www.travelocity.com/](http://www.travelocity.com/)) to estimate the roundtrip airfare for exact dates of the meeting. Customarily our meetings straddle a Saturday night, and proposals ask for "SuperSaver" airfares that require a Saturday night stayover. So be certain your price quotes are for a Saturday night stayover. Often you can "search by price", and the web service will return a whole lot of price options. While you should budget for reasonably cheap fares, it is best to discard real outliers, which may represent special fares that won't be available when it comes time to put on the symposium. Everybody understands that some speakers will drop out of a symposium and be replaced by other speakers with slightly different airfares. Just do the best you can, and try not to substitute expensive speakers for cheap ones.

It is also legitimate to ask for ground transportation (e.g., \$50 per speaker).

Model budget justification:

**Air transportation is needed to enable symposium participants to travel to the symposium venue. Airfares are estimated from the current fares for roundtrip SuperSaver flights between each participant's local airport and the symposium city's airport. \$50 per participant is requested to defray the cost of ground transportation.**

Participant	Origin	Airfare	Ground transport
Watson	LGA	\$230	\$50
Crick	San Diego	\$456	\$50
Romer	Boston	\$123	\$50
Cope	Philadelphia	\$145	\$50

Marsh	Gainesville	\$333	\$50
Krogh	Copenhagen	\$995	\$50
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$4567</b>	<b>\$300</b>

### 3. Subsistence

This is the cost of lodging, meals, and meeting registration, typically exclusive of alcoholic beverages. You should budget for this, but it may not be forthcoming from the funding agency. There are several ways to estimate these costs:

(a) The actual cost, available from the SICB Business Office. For the 2002 Anaheim meeting this will be:

\$107 single/double

The taxes in Anaheim for rooms are 15% (plus \$6 in fees).

The name of the hotel is the Anaheim Marriott

Previous year's registration fees:

Category	Early	Late
Member	\$195	\$250
Non-Member	\$320	\$350
Postdoctoral / Emeritus Member	\$150	\$175
Non-Member Postdoctoral	\$205	\$205
Student / High School and Community College Teachers	\$70	\$100
Non-Member Student	\$130	\$130
One Day Fee	\$150	\$175

(b) The U.S. government's own per diem rates. These are available at <http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/perdiem/perdiem.cfm?st=CALIFORNIA&yr=2001> and for Anaheim are \$99 for lodging and \$46 for meals and incidental expenses.

Funding agencies may look askance at requesting a whole week's lodging when the symposium runs only 1 day.

Note that in exchange for your submitting a proposal for extramural funding, SICB will provide complimentary registration for all symposium speakers. This holds whether or not your symposium proposal is funded. Note also that funds used to provide complimentary registration are funds that cannot be used to support student attendance at meetings, reduce dues, or other good things. Some funding agencies routinely pay registration expenses; proposals to them should include registration fees in the budget. Some funding agencies (e.g., NSF) do not, and including registration fees will simply aggravate the agency. If you don't know what to do, ask the SICB Business Office for advice. If you decide NOT to ask for registration fees, you should certainly then exploit SICB's generosity by mentioning the waiver of registration fees in the proposal.

Model budget justification (assuming 10 participants, making up rates, and seeking reimbursement of registration costs):

Subsistence costs are requested to defray the actual costs of participating in the symposium and lodging, meals, and incidental expenses in the host city. These are figured as follows:

2 nights lodging X \$140 per night X 10 participants: \$2800

3 days X \$46 meals/incidental expenses per diem X 10 participants: \$1380

Registration:

2 SICB members @\$195 \$390

10 non-members @\$320 \$3200

TOTAL \$3590

1 extra day lodging and per diem for international participant: \$186

**TOTAL SUBSISTENCE COSTS: \$7956**

Lodging rate is the cost (room rate plus tax) of a single room at the convention hotel. Per diem and incidental rate is the U.S. government GSA rate for Anaheim. Registration rates are estimated from the corresponding rates for SICB's annual meeting in the previous year. An extra day per diem is sought for the international participant because international air schedules necessitate an extra night's stayover.

Model budget justification (assuming 10 participants, making up rates, and seeking **NO** reimbursement of registration costs):

Subsistence costs are requested to defray the actual costs of participating in the symposium and lodging, meals, and incidental expenses in the host city. These are figured as follows:

2 nights lodging X \$140 per night X 10 participants: \$2800

3 days X \$46 meals/incidental expenses per diem X 10 participants: \$1380

1 extra day lodging and per diem for international participant: \$186

**TOTAL SUBSISTENCE COSTS: \$4366**

Lodging rate is the cost (room rate plus tax) of a single room at the convention hotel. Per diem and incidental rate is the U.S. government GSA rate for Anaheim. Registration rates are estimated from the corresponding rates for SICB's annual meeting in the previous year. An extra day per diem is sought for the international participant because international air schedules necessitate an extra night's stayover.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT IT IS THE POLICY OF THE SOCIETY FOR INTEGRATIVE AND COMPARATIVE BIOLOGY TO REIMBURSE THE REGISTRATION EXPENSES OF PARTICIPANTS IN SYMPOSIA THAT RECEIVE EXTRAMURAL FUNDING.**

**In the case of the proposed symposium, this represents a direct contribution of \$3590 as follows:**

2 SICB members @\$195 \$390

10 non-members @\$320 \$3200

TOTAL \$3590

## G. Other Direct Costs

### 1. Materials and supplies

It is not unusual to ask for a modest amount (e.g., \$200) to pay for the organizers' expenses. The corresponding budget justification might read: "**Funds (\$200) are requested to offset postage, phone and photocopying costs incurred by the symposium organizers.**"

### 2. Publication costs

If your symposium is slated for publication in *American Zoologist*, then your symposiasts will be assessed \$135/page in **voluntary** page charges for the first 12 pages and \$135 in **mandatory** page charges

for any additional pages. As with registration fees, some funding organizations will willingly pay these charges and some (typically NSF) will not. If you think you can get page charges paid, please give it a try. In that case, you would budget

# of participants X 12 pages per participant X \$135 per page

A budget justification might read:

**The proposed symposium is slated for publication in the *American Zoologist*. The *American Zoologist* is the official journal of the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology. It enjoys a world-wide distribution and is among the most-cited journals in its category. Thus publication in this journal will considerably enhance the dissemination of the results of the proposed symposium. Manuscripts in the journal are typically 12 pages long, at a cost of \$135 per page. Funds are sought to defray this cost.**

If you have special needs (e.g., color publishing, archiving of symposium materials), you can request funding for these as long as you can justify it.

**H. Indirect costs**

SICB does not charge indirect costs. Please state this in the budget justification if your proposal is being submitted by SICB.

**M. Cost-sharing**

Unless you are requesting these items as part of the budget, please place the following, adjusting figures where necessary but otherwise verbatim, in your budget justification:

**M. Cost-sharing**

**IT IS THE POLICY OF THE SOCIETY FOR INTEGRATIVE AND COMPARATIVE BIOLOGY TO WAIVE THE REGISTRATION EXPENSES OF PARTICIPANTS IN SYMPOSIA THAT RECEIVE EXTRAMURAL FUNDING. In the case of the proposed symposium, this represents a direct contribution of \$3590 as follows:**

2 SICB members @\$195	\$390
10 non-members @\$320	\$3200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3590</b>

The proposed symposium is slated for publication in the *American Zoologist*. The *American Zoologist* is the official journal of the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology. It enjoys a world-wide distribution and is among the most-cited journals in its category. Thus publication in this journal will considerably enhance the dissemination of the results of the proposed symposium. Manuscripts in the journal are typically 12 pages long, at a cost of \$135 per page. For the proposed symposium, SICB's contribution in the form of waived page charges is thus:

10 participants X 12 pages X \$135 per page = \$16,200

In the past, SICB has requested \$500 per symposium to defray office expenses. This expense will now be contributed by SICB. In addition, SICB will furnish audiovisual equipment for the symposium at no charge. Thus SICB's total contribution will be:

Waived registration expenses	\$3590
Waived page charges	\$16,200
Waived office expenses	\$500
Waived audiovisual expenses	??
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$20,290</b>

**Current and Pending Support:** as in typical proposals.

**Facilities, Equipment And Other Resources:** suggest the following

As this proposal is for support of a symposium rather than research, the setting, audience, resources, and dissemination of the proceedings of the symposium are relevant. The sponsoring organization, the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology (SICB), is a scientific society of about 2200 members. It is the premier society for integrative and comparative biology in this country, and among the leading such societies in the world. It sponsors an annual meeting in North America, at which member-originated symposia are a major feature. In recent years this meeting has attracted approximately 1200 attendees, both SICB members and non-members. A noteworthy feature of this meeting is its emphasis on young investigators. Typically more than half of those in attendance are Ph.D. students, postdoctoral fellows, and young faculty. Qualified undergraduates and high school teachers from the surrounding community are welcomed. SICB mounts an extensive program of discounted registration and subsistence support for Ph.D. students; literally every graduate student member who presents at the meeting and asks for such support is supported. Thus SICB symposium speakers receive exposure to a cross-section of the relevant scientific community and a strong representation of young scientists. An extensive program of plenary and social events provides ample opportunity for one-on-one interaction of meeting attendees and symposium participants. The annual meeting is held at a convention center or major hotel. Both classical and computer-based audiovisual equipment is routinely available for use by symposium participants, with more exotic equipment available on request. SICB has an active Public Affairs Committee, which oversees the development of media kits, publicizes the annual meeting (including an annual advertisement in *Science*), and hosts a reception for the media. As a result, the meeting has enjoyed extensive media coverage in recent years (e.g., features in *Science* and *Nature*). Most SICB symposia culminate in manuscripts that are prepared by the participants and, subject to peer review, are published in *American Zoologist*, SICB's scientific journal. The *American Zoologist* enjoys a world-wide distribution and is among the most-cited journals in its category.

**List of Suggested Reviewers(optional):** as in typical proposals.

**WHAT TO DO NEXT?** Assuming that you have prepared a competitive proposal, if time permits you should ask colleagues, students, your Divisional Program Officer, or whomever for constructive criticism, and revise accordingly. Note that Fastlane lets you give others electronic access to the proposal if you wish.

If you are submitting an NSF proposal through the SICB Business Office: In Fastlane, click on the "Allow SRO Access" button. This will notify the SICB Business Office to begin processing the proposal. Additionally, please email Brett Burk <BBurk@BurkInc.com> directly that you have done this. The Business Office will check your proposal for accuracy, computational errors, compliance with the granting agency's requirements and the like, contact you about potential revisions if necessary, and submit the proposal. In Fastlane it is possible for you to be working on a proposal while the Business Office is checking it. To avoid mistakes such as the Business Office submitting the proposal before you are ready or the Business Office not submitting a proposal because they think you're not ready, PLEASE COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND REPEATEDLY WITH THE BUSINESS OFFICE ABOUT WHEN THE PROPOSAL SHOULD BE SUBMITTED, AND THEY WILL TRY TO DO THE SAME.

If you are submitting some other kind of proposal through the SICB Business Office, please contact them and ascertain how they would like to receive it and how they will handle it.

Please keep the Business Office and the Society Program Officer well-informed about the status of your proposal(s). The reason for this is that SICB has some discretionary funds available to support symposia. If your symposium is funded, SICB can thus release any committed funds to a less-fortunate symposium. Conversely, if your symposium proposal is not funded, SICB may be able to arrange some funding if it is notified enough in advance.

IF the proposal is funded and you are working through the Business Office, the Business Office will handle the administration of the finances of the grant. Generally, the non-financial reporting will be the responsibility of the PI.

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