

CHAPTER 8

HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR APPLICATION'S PROGRAMMATIC RELEVANCE TO NSF

You may not realize this, but program officials at every funding agency periodically inventory their portfolio of funded grants. They do so to assure that their funds have been distributed optimally to accomplish their overall mission; they want to avoid over-funding some areas and under-funding others, because all are important in terms of accomplishing their overall mission. Areas that they discover to be under-funded or that represent emerging areas of importance become future priorities. Ideally, your application should be in a priority area, not in one that is already well- or over-represented in their existing portfolio.

***TIP:** One of the most important things that you can do to position your proposal for success is to maximize its programmatic relevance to the NSF program you are targeting.*

The person who is most able to help you determine whether or not your idea is programmatically relevant is the one who is in charge of the NSF program you have identified as your target. It is s/he who you should query at this stage in the development of your application. You have just completed the *Overview and Objectives* and *Expected Significance* sections, which constitute the 'template' or 'master plan' for your application. We recommend that you seek feedback on it from the relevant program officer.

You can identify your program officer through a number of different approaches. Unless you know specifically which program you are targeting, e.g., through a solicitation, you will most likely have to do a little detective work, drilling down to the "Guide to Programs / Browse Funding Opportunities" part of the NSF Web site, as was described in chapter 3. There, we told you how to reach the part of each program's Web site that would tell potential applicants which active funding opportunities were available at that time. By clicking on the title of one that is thought to be relevant to your idea you will reach the page that gives the contact information for the program official who is responsible for that funding opportunity. An example is given at the top of the next page. There, you will see that the relevant program official for the Engineering Program's Dynamical Systems funding opportunity is Dr. Eduardo A. Misawa. To the right of his name you have his e-mail address, telephone number and his room number at the National Science Foundation. The name, itself, is a hyperlink. In such cases, by clicking on the name you will acquire additional information about the individual. In this case, you would obtain Dr. Misawa's fax number and learn that he is a Program Director in two different areas and a Member of a third. You would also get a summary of his programmatic responsibilities. All of these things can be of importance to you.