TIGER TIPS
RESOURCES FOR AUBURN RESEARCHERS

Improving NSF Intellectual Merit & Broader Impacts

The Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts sections of an NSF proposal are some of the more troubling components of the proposal. So what exactly are they?

**Intellectual Merit (IM):** This section details the proposal's potential to advance knowledge, if awarded.

**Broader Impacts (BI):** This section details the proposal's potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes, if awarded.

**NSF Review Panel Questions**
1. What is the potential to:
   - Advance knowledge and understanding (IM)?
   - Benefit society/advance societal outcomes (BI)?
2. Do the activities explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan well-reasoned, well-organized, rational? How are results assessed?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization?
5. Are there adequate resources?

**Broader Impacts**
- The statement on broader impacts should describe the potential of the proposed activity to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.
  - Broader impacts may be accomplished…
    - through the research itself
    - through activities that are directly related to specific research projects
    - through activities supported by, but are complementary to the project

**Intellectual Merit – Ask yourself**
- Is the research generating new knowledge or improved understanding and how?
- Does the research use novel research methods or investigate a novel topic to better understand an aspect of STEM education?
- Is the research transformative, bringing about extraordinary or revolutionary change?

One tool you may find helpful is the **Broader Impact Wizard**, created by COSEE NOW, to help you develop a broader impact statement that will satisfy NSF Criterion II and fulfill your interest in communicating your science. The quick and easy five-step process will produce an outline of important points to include in your BI statement and will help frame discussions with your BI partners.

Please visit our website, [https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/psfs/tigertips](https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/psfs/tigertips), for more helpful tips and tools.