

## FastLane Proposal Preparation at Boston University

- (1) Go to the FastLane web site at <http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov>.
- (2) Select "Proposals, Awards, and Status" from the top left side of the page.
- (3) Enter your Last Name, FastLane User ID, and password in the "PI/CO-PI Login" box, and click the "Log-In" button.
- (4) If you are a newly registered FastLane user or if you have not logged on to the system for several months, you will be prompted to change your password.
- (5) Select "Proposal Functions."
- (6) Select "Proposal Preparation."
- (7) You will see a screen with general information about you. If you would like to change this information, select the "Edit PI Info" button. If you don't want to change the information, click the "Prepare Proposal" button.
- (8) At this point, you will reach a screen called "Proposal Actions." Here, you can work on a proposal already in progress (listed in the "proposals in progress" box if you have anything currently in progress) or you can scroll down a bit and select "Create Blank Proposal" to begin a brand new proposal.
- (9) In either case, the "Edit" button will allow you to get into the proposal and work on the various forms. Once you select "Edit," you will see the "Forms Selector" screen. You can click the "Go" button next to the form you want to work on to access each form. You should work on the Cover Sheet first. All Co-PIs need to be registered as FastLane users in order for their names to appear on the cover sheet. Senior Personnel do not need to be registered.
- (10) The Project Description cannot simply be typed into the on-screen FastLane forms as can the other sections of the proposal. It must be uploaded to the system in one of the file formats supported by NSF. Several other sections of the proposal may also be transmitted in this way, although one is not required to do so. Visit <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a1/A1AcceptableFileExtensions.html> to see a list of supported file formats. The FastLane system will automatically convert your file to a PDF file. You will be given the opportunity to review and either accept or decline the converted file. Please note that in order to view the converted file, you will need to have the Adobe Acrobat Reader software installed on your machine. The software can be downloaded for free from Adobe's web site at <http://www.adobe.com>.
- (11) Be sure to save your work on each form by hitting the "Okay" button at the bottom of each screen. If you simply hit the back button on your browser, you will lose your data.
- (12) You will also notice that you have the option to "Provide SRO Access" to the proposal. This function allows the Office of Sponsored Programs to view, print, and finally submit your proposal to NSF.
- (13) Once you create a new proposal, the FastLane system assigns a temporary proposal ID number to the document (even if you haven't actually entered any information into the forms yet). Using the "Proposal PIN" button, you have the option to assign a PIN to the proposal itself (entirely separate from your own personal password). These two pieces of information (the temporary proposal ID and proposal PIN) are necessary for anyone other than a PI or Co-I to be able to work on the proposal. For example, if you have a departmental administrator who normally fills out forms or puts together your budget, you will need to provide him or her with the temporary proposal ID and the proposal PIN. The individual will also need to be a registered FastLane user.

(14) The general method of preparing and submitting a proposal by FastLane is roughly the same as preparing a proposal on paper--you and/or your departmental administrator work on the proposal on screen using the FastLane forms and your word processing program. You should, as soon as possible, push the "Allow SRO Access" button to allow the OSP staff member assigned to your school or department to review the proposal and make changes if necessary, print out a copy, and eventually submit the proposal. Please be advised that the proposal will also have to go through the standard internal routing process for signatures in paper form.

(15) When you are certain that your proposal is ready for submission, the Office of Sponsored Programs submits the proposal via FastLane and coordinates the electronic certification of the proposal.