Revised NSF Merit Review Criteria
(Effective for Proposals Submitted or Due on or After January 14, 2013)

Merit Review Criteria Guiding Principles
• All NSF projects should be of the highest quality and have the potential to advance, if not transform, the frontiers of knowledge.
• NSF projects, in the aggregate, should contribute more broadly to achieving societal goals.
• Meaningful assessment and evaluation of NSF funded projects should be based on appropriate metrics, keeping in mind the likely correlation between the effect of broader impacts and the resources provided to implement projects.

Merit Review Criteria
When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers should 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 would 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 are asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:
• Intellectual Merit: The intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
• Broader Impacts: The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

Five Review Elements
The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:
• What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
  o advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
  o benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
• To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
• 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?
• How well qualified is the individual, team, or institution to conduct the proposed activities?
• Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home institution or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?