

Grant Proposal Development Guide

The Office of Sponsored Research has developed this guide to provide faculty and administration with general guidelines and procedures when applying for a grant.

To make the task of proposal development more effective and efficient, we have developed this collection of helpful hints. It is important that all proposals approved for submission (the Prior Approval Acceptance Form) to any funding entity be consistent with the University's mission, goals and objectives.

Funding Sources

Faculty looking for funding should go to www.grants.gov, the portal to all federal agencies. If you are looking for foundation funding, you can go to www.fdncenter.org. However, you must check with the University Advancement Office before applying for any grant from a foundation.

Proposal Preparation

Once you have selected a funding source, you will need to fill out the Prior Approval Acceptance Form in order for your proposal to be approved for submission. Please submit a brief synopsis of your project along with the Approval Form at least 4 weeks before the proposal is due. All proposals must be submitted through the Office of Sponsored Research.

The following are steps you should take to develop your proposal:

Step One – Start Early

In order to write an effective proposal, you must start as early as possible – it is not unheard of that a proposal could take 6 months to write. Except for new opportunities, you can usually assume the same annual date for most proposals. New opportunities are usually out within 2 months of the deadline.

Step Two – Consultation

Discuss your ideas with your Department Head to be sure your proposal is aligned with departmental mission, goals and objectives. If you and your Department Head are in agreement, please notify the Office of Sponsored Research as soon as possible as we can assist you in all phases of proposal development.

Step Three – Prepare Your Proposal

To begin your proposal, identify the responsibilities of the individuals who will be involved in the project. Develop a timeline for activities within the project. This will identify resources for each activity. Then, a draft budget should be developed. These steps will provide the framework for your proposal. The final version of your proposal, letters of support, supplemental documents, quotes, bios, etc, should be submitted to the Office of Sponsored Research within 7 business days of submission.

Step Four – Budget

Your budget should be calculated based on hard numbers. It should be prepared on the grantor's budget form. It should include salaries and wages, fringe benefits, equipment, travel, supplies, dissemination, consultants, sub-awards and indirect costs.

Step Five – Proposal Submission

Most proposals are submitted on line through grants.gov or NSF fastlane. In the rare case of a paper submission, the Office of Sponsored Research will help you to assemble and make the necessary number of copies of your proposal.

General Proposal Format

A proposal is a comprehensive description of the project and usually consists of two main parts: a technical or narrative section and a budget. All federal agencies have specific guidelines that must be followed when submitting a grant. They also have specific forms that must be used.

A proposal generally includes the following sections:

Cover Page

A reference sheet that provides facts about the university, start and end dates, amount of the proposal, DUNS number, signature of the Director of Sponsored Research certifying that the information contained within the proposal is true. This information is provided by the Office of Sponsored Research.

Project Summary

This is usually limited to one page. But here is where you want to hook your reviewer to read the entire proposal. Make sure you write a compelling and concise summary and you should write it after you have written the proposal.

Project Narrative or Description

Sponsors normally put a page limit on the narrative, for NSF it is 15 pages. This is a complete description of the project including goals, objectives, methodology, significance, and dissemination. Let someone else read the proposal before submission for clarity and understanding.

References Cited

Provide a list of all references noted in the proposal.

Bibliography

Usually there is a two page limit on bios, so submit things that are relevant to the subject matter of your proposal as well as your credentials.

Supplementary Materials

This is not to be used to attach appendices rather it includes quotes for equipment, letters of support and other supporting documentation for the project.

Budget

The budget represents the PI's best estimate of costs for the project. It is broken down into several line items and if the proposal is funded, must be spent accordingly.

Budget Justification

Explains all of the reason for the expenditures and how you came up with the figures you did.

The Principal Investigator (PI)

The PI is the lead investigator that initiated the proposal and is responsible for all aspects of project. He/she will provide direction for the project and be responsible for the project meeting the goals and objectives as stated in the proposal. The PI will work with the Office of Sponsored Research in overseeing financial administration of the project. The PI will prepare all interim and final reports for the funding agency and send a copy to the Office of Sponsored Research to be placed in the file.

Co-PIs

CoPIs work with the PI to secure the goals and objectives of the project. Should, for any reason, the PI cannot fulfill his/her duty, the CoPI will step in and take over the direction of the project. There can be multiple CoPIs.

Collaboration with Colleagues at Other Institutions

Collaborative proposals can be set up in two different ways. They can be set up as a linked proposal between 2 or more institutions or it can be submitted as a subcontract on one lead institution. Once this decision is made, it is then time to consider who will be the lead institution. This is usually determined by where the bulk of the work will be performed. The expenses to be incurred at the collaborative institutions should be entered as a subcontract in the lead institution's budget or budgeted out separately and submitted on its own.

Budget

It is important that the PI estimate to the best of his/her ability the costs that must be incurred to carry out the project. Reviewers have a good idea what a proposal should cost and if the cost seems out of portion for the project, they will know it.

A budget usually has two parts: indirect and direct costs. Indirect costs are overhead costs that the University has negotiated with the federal government. Our current rate is 54% of salaries only. Direct costs are costs such as salaries and wages, travel, equipment, supplies, subcontractor or consultant costs, dissemination and publication costs.

Salaries and Wages: All compensation for those working on the project will be paid at their normal hourly rate based on 2080 hours in a year or 2/9th of your salary for two months during your off-term. You must justify the compensation by documenting actual salary. Salary for other personnel (research scientist post-doc, technician, research assistant, grad assistant will be paid the wages that the University normally pays for these positions. Research Scientist = \$70k/yr, Post Doc =\$50k/yr, Technician \$20-25/hr, Research Assistant = \$15/hr, Grad Assistant = \$1k/mo

Fringe Benefits: Are only calculated for Research Scientist and Post Doc at the rate of 21% of their total salary. All others are not subject to Fringe Benefits.

Equipment: The federal government defines permanent equipment as property with a purchase price of \$5,000 or more and a useful life of more than 2 years. Also, if you are building a piece of equipment and the parts (costing less than \$5,000), in the aggregate, total \$5,000, then the parts are considered equipment. The equipment must be readily accessible for the research project at all times. Each piece of equipment will have a red tag on it issued by Supply.

Travel: In most cases domestic and international travel are listed separately. In the justification, you must indicate who is traveling, why they are traveling and where they are traveling. Travel is subject to federal per diem rates which can be found for individual cities at the following website: www.gsa.gov and click on Per Diem Rates. Costs for airfare, registration, hotel and meals should be estimated.

Materials and Supplies: Include consumable items costing under \$5,000 needed for the project. They may include everything from chemicals to printer cartridges.

Publication and Dissemination: Costs for publications, page fees etc. and to disseminate the results of the project are included here.

Other: Other allowable expenses that do not fit in the other budget categories should be included here. Miscellaneous items like subscriptions to periodicals.

Consultants and Subcontracts: Consultants are used when an individual or company comes in to provide expert, practical advice on the project. Subcontractors are used to perform a portion of the work on the project. Both will have a statement of work and a budget.

Indirect Costs: Indirect costs are negotiated with the Department of Health and Human Services and are meant to cover administrative costs. Our current negotiated rate is 54% of salaries only (this does not include salaries from a subcontract or consultant).

Definitions:

Cash Match – cash from the University or other entity other than the federal government that is used to match federal funds in a project.

Contract – legal document between an external entity and the University stating the terms of the agreement, statement of work and budget.

Cooperative Agreement - a transaction between the government for the transfer of money, property, services, or anything else of value to the University in order to accomplish a public purpose, with substantial involvement of the federal government in the project or transaction.

Direct Costs – costs that are charged directly to the grant like salaries, supplies, equipment, etc.

Grant – an award made to the University for the support of programs or research projects based on a compelling grant proposal.

Indirect Costs (F & A costs) – costs incurred by University that are not a direct cost to the grant. Indirects are identified as Facilities and Administration. For example, facilities cover things like depreciation and use allowances on buildings, capital improvement, interest on debt associated with buildings, and operations and maintenance. Administration is defined as general expenses such as a director's office, accounting, personnel, etc.

In-Kind Contribution – a contribution of the University's assets to a project. It would include things like the donation of space, personnel, equipment, graduate students.

Matching Grant – a grant that is used to match another grant. Some funders require matching funds and getting industry or another entity to fund the match. You cannot match federal money with federal money.

Solicited Grant – the funder sends out a Request for Proposals (RFP) and invites the Universities or other entities to respond to the request. The RFP explains the details of the funder's needs and directs you in how to write the proposal.

Unsolicited Grant – refers to requests for funding that do not directly respond to any published program announcement or RFP.

Subcontract – refers to a contract that comes to the University from another institution that has been awarded a grant or contract from a funding agency.