

5. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

5.1 Introduction

Every proposal being submitted to an external sponsor--whether new, continuation, supplemental, renewal, or revision--must be reviewed and approved by OR. If the proposal is a hard copy, or paper submission, OR will review, approve and return the proposal to the principal investigator for forwarding to the sponsor. All electronic proposal submissions will be made by OR, unless a sponsor specifically requires that the proposal be submitted directly by the PI.

The review/approval process also applies to pre-proposals or other preliminary applications, e.g. concept papers, if they involve detailed budget figures or a commitment of university resources.

5.2 Limited or restricted proposal submissions

When a sponsor limits the number of proposals or letters of intent it will accept from an institution, a broad announcement will be sent out by the Assistant Vice President for Research to all campuses of the university asking for notification if a researcher or group of researchers is interested in submitting a proposal. If the number of proposed submissions exceeds the sponsor's limit, an internal competition will take place, and the chosen proposers will be notified to route their proposals through the normal review/approval process. If the number of proposed submissions does not exceed the sponsor's limit, each proposal will be reviewed/approved in the normal process.

5.3 Principal Investigator(s) - Is the Proposal Ready for Review?

5.3.1 Principal Investigator(s)

If a proposed submission is in response to a formal "Request for Proposal" (RFP) or "Request for Quotation" (RFQ), the PI should notify OR Sponsored Programs staff as far in advance of the actual proposal submission as possible, so staff can thoroughly review the program requirements and any proposed contractual clauses.

Any direct costs cost sharing approval must be secured in advance of actual proposal submission, and supporting documentation (e.g. letter of commitment from department head, approval of SARIF funds, etc.) must be routed along with the proposal through the normal review/approval process.

Any cost sharing of facilities and administration costs (F&A) must be approved by OR. If a sponsor's written policy is to pay limited or no F&A, the PI should attach a copy of the policy's page that alludes to payment of F&A. However, if a sponsor will pay full F&A but the PI wishes for the university to cost share a portion of the F&A, the PI should e-mail the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research in advance of the actual proposal submission. If approved and notified via e-mail, the PI should forward a copy of the e-mail approval along with the proposal through the normal review/approval process.

If a PI's proposal budget contains salary for a graduate student(s), it must also include the in-state maintenance fee for each student [link to maintenance fee], unless (1) the graduate student will hold a fee waiver by virtue of his/her also being a graduate assistant or graduate teaching assistant during the project's duration, or (2) the graduate student's percentage of effort is less than quarter-time. A graduate student working less than quarter-time does not normally qualify for a fee waiver and health insurance. However, if a student has at least one quarter-time appointment, insurance charges will be prorated based on payments from each distribution maintained for the student. Maintenance fees may also be assessed unless the payment is specified in the Student System - CSA (see Bursar's Office).

5.3.2 Research Compliances

The PI is responsible for ensuring that institutional approval of all research compliance matters has been or will be obtained prior to beginning work on the project.

Each PI is responsible for ensuring that he/she is, at the time of proposal submission and thereafter, in full compliance with the University's Conflict of Interests Policy available at <http://www.tennessee.edu/policy> and search for "conflict of interest."

5.4 Proposal Review by Department Head and Dean/Director

As noted in the Document Review/Approval Sheet Directions:

“NOTE DEPARTMENT HEAD(S)/DEAN(S)/DIRECTOR(S): Your signature hereon indicates you have reviewed this proposal/agreement to whatever extent you deem appropriate, and that you concur with its entire contents and the obligations associated therewith, including any cost sharing indicated in an attached written request for cost sharing.”

Each department head and dean/director whose faculty/staff or other resources will be utilized in the performance of the proposed project must sign the Document Review/Approval Sheet.

5.4.1 Department Head

The department head’s review of the proposal and subsequent signature on the Document Review/Approval Sheet signifies approval of all aspects of the proposal, including but not limited to:

- the project’s adherence to and furtherance of the department’s academic and/or research goals;
- commitment of the PI and other researchers, when combined with his/her other commitments to research, instruction and service, are within University guidelines;
- adequate space is either available for performance of the project or requires renovations, or additional space is required;
- the department has all resources needed to support the project, either directly or indirectly;
- any explicit or implicit commitment by the department to continue the project after the funded project ends; and
- any cost sharing of direct costs being assumed by the department is available to the project.

5.4.2 Dean's/Director's Review

The dean's/director's review of the proposal and subsequent signature on the Document Review/Approval Sheet signifies approval of all aspects of the proposal, including but not limited to:

- the project's adherence to and furtherance of the college/unit's academic and/or research mission;
- space outside the control of the department but within the college/unit's control is identified and allocated to the project, if funded;
- cost sharing, if requested, is warranted; and
- any explicit or implicit commitment on behalf of the department/college/unit to continue the project after the funded project ends.

5.5 Review and Approval by the Office of Research, Sponsored Programs

OR's final review includes the following:

- the project's adherence to and furtherance of the university's goals and mission;
- all necessary signature approvals are present on the Document Review/Approval Sheet;
- the proposal contains only those obligations the university is willing to assume;
- all proper sponsor forms or prescribed formats have been used;
- if direct costs cost sharing is proposed, the person(s) committing the cost sharing has signed a cost sharing memorandum/letter and it is attached;
- the proposed budget accurately reflects the proposed statement of work, includes appropriate rates (such as salary, fringe benefits, F&A, etc.), and is mathematically accurate;
- if regulatory compliances are involved in the proposed project, the appropriate university committee(s) has reviewed and approved the proposed research or the review is pending;
- translation of proposed budget into university commitment items or general ledger codes;
- upon recommendation by Sponsored Programs staff, an authorized organizational representative signs the proposal on behalf of the university; and

- if the proposal is being submitted on paper, or sponsor requires electronic submission by the researcher, the proposal is returned to the PI for submission to the sponsor; if the proposal is an electronic submission from an authorized organizational representative, Sponsored Programs staff submits the proposal after securing signature approval on the Document Review/Approval Sheet.

5.6 Electronic Proposal Submission

The Office of Research, Sponsored Programs, has registered with numerous, on-line proposal submission systems, including:

- Army
- American Heart Association
- BIDS – HSARPA
- Fastlane (NSF)
- Grants.gov
- IIPS (DOE)
- NSPIRES (NASA)
- proposalCENTRAL (RAMS)
- US Department of Justice
- US Department of Education (e-grants.ed.gov, ies.constellagroup.com)

If a specific sponsor is not included in the list above but submission by an authorized organizational representative is required by the sponsor, contact a staff member in Sponsored Programs.

Please note that Central Contractor Registration (CCR) is required in the federal proposal submission systems, and registration is handled centrally. Do not register in CCR separately. Also, do not register in grants.gov separately. Access to grants.gov proposal opportunities and forms does not require registration. Yet, other systems, e.g. National Science Foundation's Fastlane, require that passwords for individual researchers be set by an institution's primary organizational user. For such systems, contact Sponsored Programs staff.

5.7 Proposal Revision and Resubmission

Even through the best efforts of a researcher, not every proposal gets funded on its first attempt. If your proposal does not get funded and the sponsor provides you with a critical review of your proposal, consider those review comments and if you agree, make the suggested changes. Then, resubmit the proposal. It may also be beneficial to discuss your proposal with a colleague who has been funded by that sponsor, or talk with the sponsor's program officer.

If you resubmit the proposal, you should prepare a Document Review/Approval Sheet and mark the proposal type as being a "Proposal" and "Revision". Route the proposal through the usual review/approval process. If you change the focus of your proposal, thus necessitating a change in project title, please provide the new title in item 1. on the Document Review/Approval Sheet; and in a comment in the margin or an attached note, provide the old title.

If you receive notice directly from a sponsor advising you that it either plans to fund a proposal as submitted or it plans to fund an amended proposal/budget, please contact the appropriate Sponsored Programs staff member to begin negotiations with the sponsor. Likewise, if a Sponsored Programs staff member receives such notice directly from the sponsor, the staff member handling that sponsor's awards will contact you to begin the negotiation process.

If you receive notice directly from a sponsor advising you that your proposal will not be funded, please forward a copy of that notice to Sponsored Programs so that we can update our Coeus database.