

Frequently Asked Questions

SPONSORED PROJECTS – EXTERNAL AWARDS

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What should I do after locating a likely granting source?

Talk to colleagues who have prior experience dealing with the agency or foundation. Check with the ORA about previous or pending applications submitted to that organization by the University.

Should I call the program officer before I begin writing?

Yes! Direct contact with the sponsor(s), usually via telephone or e-mail, is highly recommended. Most program officers want to discuss a proposal's feasibility with an applicant. This contact also provides an opportunity to clarify guidelines and get any up-to-the-minute information. Statistics show that applicants who have consulted an agency in advance are far more likely to receive funds than those who have not. The ORA staff can assist PIs in locating agency contact information.

Do you have any advice for preparing a draft proposal and outline budget?

A proposal should follow the application guidelines and budget forms provided by the funding agency precisely. Templates for many standard federal agency forms are posted on the ORA web site or can be accessed through the Internet. If forms are not provided, the ORA has sample formats that may be used as models. Check with the program officer to ensure that the generic ORA budget format is acceptable to the agency.

What should I keep in mind when planning the budget?

- Give the best estimates possible — a padded budget will be detected, but an inadequate budget will reflect the applicant's inexperience.
- Indirect costs should be included at the federally negotiated rate (see [Indirect Costs](#)). Any waiver of indirect costs must be approved in writing by the Institutional Official, Dr. Nasser Arshadi (314-516-5899).
- You must submit your budget to [Ginny Schodroski](#) (314-516-5284) **at least 2 weeks before the proposal submission deadline**. Any exception must be approved by Vice Provost Nasser Arshadi (314-516-5899).

What are some other key points to consider during proposal preparation?

- When writing your proposal, clearly state:
 - The problem to be investigated and its significance; i.e., an abstract that is clear, concise and specific. It may be the only part of the proposal that some reviewers read.

- The specific activities planned and the measurable accomplishments to be realized.
- The appropriateness of the proposed design and methods. An emphasis on the importance of your work and your ability to complete the project.
- The stature of your institution and its facilities.
- The cost efficiency of the project and the justification of budget items.
- Cost-sharing or matching funds require letters of commitment.
- The possibility of continued support after the initial grant period ends.
- Make certain that all organizational aspects of your proposal (typing, referencing, copying, editing, etc.) are without error.

Is it necessary to follow all the details in the guidelines?

Yes — follow the guidelines meticulously. Reviewers and panel members look at hundreds of applications. If the application is not prepared in accordance with the guidelines, essential information may not be readily accessible and the probability of funding will be reduced. In some cases, the proposal may be returned without review.

Can I suggest reviewers?

This is a good question to ask the program officer. Some agencies allow you to suggest reviewers to include or exclude, but others do not. Please keep in mind that your suggestions are just that — suggestions. A successful proposal must be prepared as carefully as a manuscript submitted for publication. Most proposals will be subject to peer review by the funding agency and may go through additional reviews before a determination on funding can be made. Therefore, pre-submission screening by your colleagues is essential.

How early should I give ORA my final draft?

Submitting a final draft to the ORA as early as possible minimizes the possibility of delays at the time of submission due to errors or missing information.

How do I apply for regulatory approval?

Review of the use of human subjects, animals, radioactive material or recombinant DNA in research is mandated by federal regulations and University policy. The responsibility for this review belongs to the University Regulatory Committees. Please allow enough time for Committee turnaround and resubmission if necessary. Call the ORA for more information or visit the “Compliance” section of the ORA web site.

Can you explain the PeopleSoft Signature Page?

The University requires that a completed PeopleSoft Signature Routing Sheet, or “Signature Page,” be filed with the ORA prior to submitting a grant proposal. **This applies to ANY grant being submitted to ANY agency.**

Access to the Signature Page is available from most campus computers for users who have completed PeopleSoft training. By completing the Signature Page, applicants provide the information and obtain sign-offs needed to register and track proposals in the PeopleSoft System. The Signature Page is used to assign credit for the project. ORA staff can assist with the completion of the information, but applicants are required to obtain signatures from their department chair and College/School dean. If the proposal involves committing resources from another College/School or University Extension, the respective dean/director must also sign. These signatures indicate agreement to honor any commitments made in the proposal.

If you are going to be away from the University at the time of submission, you must arrange for signatures before leaving.

Contact [Ginny Schodroski](#) at 314-516-5284 if you have questions.

How do I transmit the proposal to an agency?

The number of proposal copies required by the funding agency (plus one additional copy for the ORA), along with the original PeopleSoft Signature Page with required signatures, should be submitted to the ORA for transmittal to the agency. The ORA will review the proposal for conformity to sponsor guidelines, enclose the appropriate federal assurances, obtain institutional signatures on proposal face pages, and send the proposal to the funding agency.

What are the methods of transmitting proposals?

The ORA will forward your proposal to the funding agency in one of the following ways:

- Electronic submission.
- Federal Express: used if the funding agency has a received date deadline and there is not enough time for U.S. mail delivery. An advantage of this method is access to online package tracking.
- U.S. mail with proof of postmark: used if the funding agency requires a postmarked date.
- U.S. mail: allow at least 10 days for delivery.

Should I reapply to an agency that rejected an earlier proposal?

YES! For many programs, the success rate of first-time applicants is very low, but a significant number of those proposals are funded upon resubmission. Contact the ORA to discuss strategies for resubmission.