

SECTION II: PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND AWARD PROCESSING

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) is the unit at the University of North Florida (UNF) responsible for planning, organizing, and administering the University's grant and contract activities. When a faculty or staff member is interested in submitting a proposal for external funding, they should contact ORSP to receive proposal preparation assistance, to ensure their proposal is in compliance with agency and University policies, and to secure University approvals prior to submission.

ORSP assists University faculty and staff interested in pursuing external funding for research and training projects in the proposal development process by:

- Identifying funding sources;
- Obtaining funding agency applications and guidelines;
- Reviewing proposals for adherence to University and agency guidelines and clarifying proposal requirements;
- Assisting in the preparation of proposals to include: reviewing proposals for consistency with the funding announcement as well as providing feedback on proposal language, editing assistance, providing standard wording regarding the University and its policies and procedures, and assisting with standard application forms;
- Developing proposal budgets in accordance with University and agency policies by providing data regarding salaries, fringe benefits, facilities and administrative costs, etc.;
- Initiating the internal approval process by preparing the internal approval forms;
- Preparing the proposal package for submission to the funding agency in compliance with the agency's requirements, making copies, and forwarding to the funding agency.

SOLICITATION OF CONTRACTS AND GRANTS

The Director of ORSP or other authorized persons may solicit research and training support, but all requests for support through contracts and grants must conform to the University policy and must have the approval of the Director of ORSP and other appropriate University officials prior to submission.

FUNDING SOURCES AND AGENCY GUIDELINES

ORSP maintains current data and information on the availability of support for potential sponsored projects and the application packages and guidelines for applying for funding from granting agencies and organizations. ORSP distributes funding announcements to faculty and staff either electronically via e-mail or in printed format. ORSP maintains copies of Requests for Proposals (RFPs), proposal forms, annual reports and other information from federal and state agencies, and private foundations and corporations to aid proposal preparation. ORSP houses a library including proposal writing handbooks and grant management handbooks, along with copies of federal, state, and University regulations.

SOLICITATION OF FUNDING RESOURCES

ORSP maintains subscriptions to several online and print catalogs of funding resources. ORSP performs individualized searches for University faculty and staff for area- or interest-specific funding

sources upon request. Faculty and staff can also receive regular funding announcements via e-mail based on key interests.

FACULTY PROFILES

ORSP maintains a faculty interest profile of those faculty and staff who submit information regarding their research and training interests to the Office. The profile is used by ORSP staff to search for and distribute funding opportunity notices to UNF faculty and staff. The interest profile system is used in conjunction with an electronic database of funding sources that sends faculty e-mail notices regarding relevant funding opportunities. ORSP provides those interested with access to the database as well as additional information about the funding opportunities identified by the system such as application forms and guidelines.

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Proposal Documents

ORSP staff members are available to play an active role in development of proposal documents. ORSP reviews proposals and makes comments and suggestions for improvements, provides editing assistance, furnishes information regarding the University for inclusion in proposals, forges collaborative relationships with other faculty on and off campus, and develops proposal budgets. Should a faculty or staff member desire assistance with the document preparation or development of the budget, staff in ORSP must be notified in sufficient time, usually three (3) weeks in advance of the mail due date, in order to make arrangements to provide the assistance requested.

Proposal Budgets

ORSP assists in the development of or, at a minimum, reviews and approves all project proposal budgets prior to submission and acceptance. ORSP provides assistance during the proposal preparation process by helping investigators draft a budget using appropriate calculations for salaries, fringe benefits rates, state travel and equipment rates, and Facilities and Administration (F&A) (indirect cost) rates. ORSP must review all proposal budgets for compliance with funding agency, state and University policies. The review pays particular attention to salaries and fringe benefits, F&A (indirect) costs, cost-sharing requirements, purchase of equipment, and the reasonableness and adequacy of proposed expenses as they relate to the proposal narrative.

Facilities and Administrative (Indirect) Costs

ORSP recoups the general costs incurred by the University in the course of conducting sponsored programs by charging F&A costs to grant and contract projects. These are real costs of supporting grants and contracts and thus are included in proposal budgets for external funding.

F&A costs, formally known as indirect costs, are defined by the [U.S. Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) Circular A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions](#), as costs “that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project, an instructional activity, or any other institutional activity.”

[F&A cost rates](#) for the University are calculated using the federal cost principles detailed in OMB Circular A-21. The proposed rates are audited by the federal government and negotiated by the University Controller with the government’s representative at the Department of Health and Human

Services, the University's federal cognizant agency. The calculation results in an F&A rate that is applied to a base calculation.

Commitment of Cost Sharing

UNF is willing to consider cost sharing based upon review of the project. Cost sharing is the portion of the grant or contract cost not borne by the sponsor. Whenever cost sharing is explicitly set forth and committed in a proposal and an award is made based on that proposal or cost sharing is required as a condition of an award, the cost sharing must be [documented](#) in the University's records and included in the grant file.

Sources of Cost Sharing

It is the Principal Investigator's (PI's) responsibility to secure cost sharing from University chairs, deans, department heads, vice presidents and/or from external sources. Common forms of cost sharing include salary related to faculty and staff effort, matching funds for equipment, or cash or in-kind contributions from external sources. When cost sharing is required, and if allowable by the funding agency, the University may contribute the difference between the F&A rate allowed by the agency and its federally negotiated F&A rate, if the agency rate is less, as in-kind cost sharing to the project. When cost sharing is required, and if allowed by the funding agency, the University may calculate the F&A costs on its cash cost-sharing portion of the project and contribute them as in-kind cost sharing.

Cost Sharing Guidelines

All cost sharing resources must meet the following criteria as outlined in [OMB Circular A-110](#):

- They must be verifiable from the contributor's accounting records.
- They may not be included as contributions for any other federally-assisted project or program in either the current or any prior period.
- They must be necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of project or program objectives.
- They must be allowable under the applicable cost principles ([OMB Circular A-21](#)). This is true even if the asset is derived from a third party contribution. Therefore, a matching contribution must be for something for which the organization or institution could have spent federal funds.
- They may not consist of federal funds. Funds from one federal program may not be used to match or cost share with another.
- They must be provided for in the approved project budget.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposal Review

ORSP functions as a central clearinghouse for all outgoing proposals and all incoming grants and contracts. Only those proposals conforming to the University's role and scope and which promote teaching, research, and public service of the highest caliber are transmitted to prospective granting agencies and organizations. Further, University research must be conducted only for purposes that are consistent with the University's principal missions of preservation, pursuit, dissemination, and application of knowledge.

Approvals

All proposals submitted to external agencies involving sponsored research and training activities must be reviewed by ORSP and approved by the Director of ORSP before they are submitted to the

funding agency. The President has delegated her authority under [Florida Statutes 1004.22](#) “to negotiate, enter into, and execute research contracts; to solicit and accept research grants and donations” to the Director of ORSP.

Definition of Sponsored Research and Training: Sponsored research and training activities are defined as “research or training conducted by University employees using any University space, facilities, materials, equipment, or property, and financed by contract payments, grants, or gifts from any source.”

Collaborations and Cooperative Applications

The University encourages faculty and staff to collaborate with their colleagues at other institutions. The requirements that apply to internal review of proposals submitted solely by the University also apply to collaborative activities. Internal review is also required when the University is a proposed subcontractor or participant on a proposal submitted through another institution.

Internal Approval Process

Before a proposal may be submitted or a contract executed, a [Request for Proposal Approval and Submission or Contract/Award Acceptance Internal Routing Form](#) must be completed and routed for signature. The Principal Investigator (PI) assumes primary responsibility for its completion. [Required approvals](#), indicated by signature and secured in sequence, must be denoted on the form before certification and submission of the proposal by ORSP. This form outlines personnel assignments, resource commitments, as well as regulatory compliance and other issues related to the proposal.

Investigators interested in pursuing external funding for a particular project should begin the internal approval process as soon as possible to allow adequate time for review by all individuals involved. Prior to initiation of the internal routing form, all proposals must be reviewed by the Assistant Director for Pre-Award Services in ORSP who has the responsibility of reviewing proposals for compliance with University and agency guidelines.

Compliance Certifications

In addition to its function as the documentation of University approval of a proposal, the [Request for Proposal Approval and Submission or Contract/Award Acceptance Internal Routing Form](#) also documents certification of proposal compliance with various regulations. By signing this document, the PI(s), Chairpersons, Deans, and other administrators certify that the proposal is in compliance with the following internal and external guidelines listed on the document which may include but are not limited to (1) conflict of interest, (2) protection of human subjects/IRB review, (3) animal care and use/IACUC review, and (4) radiation safety.

Space Requirements

The [Request for Proposal Approval and Submission or Contract/Award Acceptance Internal Routing Form](#) certifies that adequate space is available for the project prior should it be awarded.

AWARD NEGOTIATION

Negotiations and Execution of Sponsored Research and Training Contracts and Grants

ORSP negotiates the terms and conditions of applicable grants and contracts with granting agencies and organizations. Negotiations of sponsored contracts and grants may be conducted

between the agency and ORSP staff and the PI at the University. The Director of ORSP is ultimately responsible for University negotiations in all matters affecting the substance of the project to be conducted and associated fiscal matters with the approval of the PI who, in turn, must have departmental and college concurrence.

Legal Aspects of Contracts and Grants

All potential proposed contracts and grants are examined for appropriateness and legal compliance prior to their execution. Any prospective contract or grant that would unduly obligate the University in any way or which has questionable aspects will be referred to the University legal counsel for review, revision, approval, or further referral if necessary.

Grant Acceptance

The President “is authorized to negotiate, enter into, and execute research contracts; to solicit and accept research grants and donations” ([Florida Statutes 1004.22](#)). The President has [delegated](#) this authority to the Director of ORSP.

AWARD PROCESSING

Notification of Award

ORSP has the responsibility of reviewing award documents and conditions of award. ORSP staff make recommendations for acceptance to the Director, secure appropriate additional acceptance signatures if required, set up meetings with the PI and their chair and/or dean if it is deemed advisable, and notify other appropriate ORSP staff that the award has been received so that files might be created, a new account established, and other tasks necessary to implement a new award can be completed.

Award Notification Packet

When an award is received by the University, the award letter must be forwarded to ORSP for processing. ORSP reviews the award conditions and establishes an account for the project in the University’s accounting system. *[Further information about account establishment will be discussed in the following section, [Account Establishment](#).]* When the account has been established, ORSP forwards an Award Notification Packet to the PI. An award notification packet, at a minimum, includes: an announcement of the grant award to campus officials (including Marketing and Publications); a Notification of Account Number form; and special instructions applicable to individual awards (such as cost sharing instructions) if necessary.

GUIDANCE FOR NEW INVESTIGATORS AND SUPPORT STAFF

The Assistant Director for Post-Award Services meets with all new PIs to explain the policies and procedures related to the administration of grants and contracts at the University; the responsibilities of the PI and of ORSP in the administration of grants and contracts; the assistance that ORSP provides to the PI in the administration of grants and contracts; and any restrictions and regulations related to a specific grant or contract. It may also be necessary for project support staff to meet with [ORSP staff](#) to review procedures for processing travel, hiring personnel, purchasing items for the project, etc.