UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
Office for Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP)

Proposal Development and Review Procedure

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I.   OVERVIEW

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs 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.

II.   DEFINITIONS

Applicant: Usually refers to the institution submitting the proposal. In most cases it does not refer to the individual researcher who wrote the proposal or who will serve as PI.

Application: A request for financial support of a project or activity usually submitted in a specified format and in accordance with a sponsor's guidelines and instructions.

Assurance of Compliance: Refers to certifications that applicant institutions must file before they can qualify for funding from government agencies.

Authorized Signature: The signature of a University official who is designated to give assurances, make commitments, and execute such documents on behalf of UNF as may be required by federal and state agencies and other organizations which provide financial assistance to the University; the signature of an authorized official certifies that commitments made on grant proposals or contract agreements can be honored; and ensures that all sponsored agreements conform to federal regulations, agency guidelines, and College policies.

III.   WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS PROCEDURE

This procedure applies to all new sponsored projects and programs as of March 1, 2012. It should be understood by Principal Investigators (PIs), Department Managers and Staff, Department Chairs, Deans, and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

IV.   PROCEDURES

A. Proposal Submission Deadline Recommendations

ORSP recommends providing your final proposal to your RDC at least three (3) business days in advance of the sponsor's deadline which allows your RDC adequate time to conduct a thorough review of your proposal and budget, and to make corrections, if necessary. This time also allows ORSP to transmit the proposal before the last day of a deadline, thus avoiding transmission problems that could prevent the successful submission of your proposal. Most proposals are now submitted electronically, so the University is dependent on the reliability of these sponsor systems. Sponsors' systems sometimes crash or experience slowdowns. Experience tells these situations typically occur on the day proposals are due (last minute submissions). A system slow down can result in delayed notification by the sponsor if there is an error in your application and a revision is required before it will be accepted. In an extreme case this could mean a missed deadline. The best way to avoid these problems is to submit your proposal to us as early as possible. It is also imperative that you make your intentions known to both your chair/director and dean as soon as you decide to submit a proposal. This will allow them to make provisions for hiring adjuncts or rescheduling classes should you ask to reassign your time to a sponsored project.

B. 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.

- **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 / Internal Routing Form" (routing sheet) must be completed and routed for signature. While ORSP will provide most of the required information, the PI assumes primary responsibility for its completion. Required approvals, indicated by electronic 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, cost sharing commitment, 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 ORSP for compliance with University and agency guidelines.

- **Compliance Certifications**
  In addition to its function as the documentation of University approval of a proposal, the routing sheet 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, (4) radiation safety, and (5) export control.

- **Program Income**
  Some applications ask the investigator to describe and estimate expected program income. Program income refers to income generated by activities of a project, where part or all of the cost of the activity is either borne as a direct cost of the grant or counted as a direct cost towards meeting a cost sharing or matching requirement of a grant. Examples of program income include: collection of fees for services performed during the grant, proceeds from sale of property (e.g., tee shirts, instruction materials), usage or rental fees, and conference fees. There are several options for the accounting treatment of program income. The award document will identify which option applies to your project.

- **Additional Space Requirements**
  If additional space is needed to conduct the project, the investigator must make arrangements at the department/college level for the additional space before the proposal is routed. If off-campus space is required, and, if no space is available on campus, the project may be proposed at the off-campus indirect cost rate and the budget should include a line item for rental of facilities. In rare circumstances it is preferable for central administration to cover the facilities rental if there is a

significant cost advantage to the University in proposing the project at the on campus indirect cost rate.

- **Conflict of Interest**

  Employees of the University must be aware that outside obligations, financial interests, or other employment may result in a conflict of interest and affect the objectivity of their decisions and effectiveness of their performance. A conflict of interest exists when an employee is in a position to influence any University business transaction, research activity, or other decisions in ways that could lead to any manner or form of personal gain for the employee or for his/her family members, other than salary from the University, regardless of source. A conflict of interest exists when a significant financial interest could directly and significantly affect the design, conduct, or reporting of funded research.

  The principal investigator and co-principal investigators of a proposed project must determine whether a potential or actual conflict of interest exists. If a potential or actual conflict of interest exists, as defined by University policy, the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form must be completed and forwarded to ORSP. Disclosure forms and the complete conflict of interest policy are available in HR.

  Proposals involving a potential or actual conflict of interest are routed according to the normal procedure, independent of the conflict of interest disclosure process. Funded activity will proceed only after resolution of the conflict. Examples of conditions or restrictions that might be imposed to manage conflicts of interest include: public disclosure of significant financial interests; monitoring of research by independent reviewers; modification of the research plan; disqualification from participation in all or a portion of the research funded by the sponsor; divestiture of significant financial interests; or severance of relationships that create actual or potential conflicts.

- **Representations and Certifications**

  Representations and certifications that are required for submission with the proposal vary, depending on the Federal agency and the contract amount. Generally, the grant application or the RFP will clearly specify which certifications are required. Examples of commonly required certifications and the appropriate University signatory are:

  - Lobbying Certificate
  - Debarment and Suspension
  - Drug Free Workplace

  Other types of representations and certifications vary by agency. Most federal sponsors require that these forms be submitted with the application, but some do not require them until the time of award.

- **Credit for Awards**
  For projects with more than one principal investigator and/or more than one department, credit for the award will be distributed according to the Proposal Routing Sheet.

- **Distribution of Indirect Cost Revenue**
  For projects involving more than one department, indirect cost revenue will be allocated according to the credit indicated on the Proposal Routing Sheet.

- **Signature and Authorizations**
  An award is made to the University not an individual. Therefore the ultimate responsibility is assumed by the University. This is why the government and most sponsors require certifications and assurances signed by the president of the University or his representative. In addition, ORSP strives to ensure that the best quality proposal is submitted to the funder. Proposals must be accompanied by ORSP's "Request for Proposal Approval and Submission" form (also called the "internal routing form"). This electronic form is created by ORSP and specifies the approval requirements for a number of items, some of which are:

  - faculty buy-out (release time)
  - additional space for the project
  - use of animals in the project
  - use of human subjects in the project
  - use of hazardous materials
  - cost-sharing (allocation of University funds)

  The form also requires general information regarding the proposal, such as type of project, PI(s) and Co-PI(s) names, departments and/or center or institute, title of project, sponsor and prime sponsor (if applicable), period of project, anticipated costs (both direct and indirect) of the project, and a brief two to three sentence summary of the project suitable for publication. The PI needs to provide this form to ORSP with the appropriate signatures already obtained at the time that the proposal is being submitted for review.

  ORSP reserves the right to withdraw a proposal if there is not adequate time to review/revise prior to submission to the agency. Additionally, the University may choose not to accept awards in cases where proposals have been submitted without institutional authorization.

- **Information Technology Support**
  All sponsored project proposals with a significant information technology component should be reviewed by Information Technology Services (ITS) early in the proposal preparation process. This review ensures that proper technical support will be planned and provided. Specifically, the review enables ITS to assist faculty and research staff in:

- Identifying ways in which technology can further research aims;
- Ensuring that proposed computing uses take advantage of state-of-the-art technology;
- Ensuring that the costs of significant information technology components are identified and accurately estimated;
- Determining any permanent funding that may be required from University sources to support significant information technology components following
- The end of a sponsored project funding period; and,
- Identifying any acquisition and/or ongoing expenses, including those related to moving, storage, space requirements, and other special conditions, associated with the significant information technology components of gifts proffered by private sources in support of UNF.

"Significant information technology components" are defined as computing hardware, software, and services that require ITS technical support services, connection to the network, or the purchase of nonstandard hardware or software. ITS does not approve proposals prior to submission, but they should be consulted during proposal development and notified upon submission so they can prepare appropriately in case the project is funded. (See appendix for information requested by ITS prior to commencement of projects.)

C. University Review and Approval

All proposals submitted to external agencies involving sponsored research and training activities must be reviewed by ORSP and approved by the Assistant Vice President for Research before they are submitted to the funding agency. The President has delegated his authority under Florida Statutes 1004.22 "to negotiate, enter into, and execute research contracts; to solicit and accept research grants and donations" to the Assistant Vice President for Research.

PROCEDURES FOR PRIOR APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE OF AWARDS FOR CONTRACTS & GRANTS

Proposal completed by PI/PD in consultation with college/unit administrators and ORSP.
Personnel assignments, financial commitments, and resource commitments are negotiated at this time.
The proposal process should be started as soon as the PI/PD decides to go forward with a proposal submission.

Prior approval and clearance completed utilizing the Signature Routing Form prepared by ORSP.
If an award is received without a proposal having been institutionally endorsed, then an Internal Proposal must be completed prior to the award being accepted.

Required approvals:

For proposals/contracts originated in Academic Affairs..........................PI*/Chair*/Dean* and ORSP Director/AVPR

For proposals/contracts originated in Student Affairs ....PD*/Immediate Supervisor*/
Administrative Affairs or University Relations   Appropriate VP* and ORSP Director/AVPR

Special Approvals:

For proposals/contracts requesting more than $250,000..........................Vice President for Research [requires 24 hours for review]

For proposals/contracts requesting more than $500,000..........................Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs [requires 24 hours for review]

For proposals/contracts requesting more than $1,000,000.....................President [requires 24 hours for review]

For proposals which require cash or in-kind resource ....Appropriate unit administrator*
commitment from a unit of the university other than
the unit originating the application

*PI/PD is responsible for securing these approvals

ORSP submits proposal to sponsor. ORSP requests the proposal be completed at least one week prior to the deadline.

Notification of award received in ORSP. The terms and conditions of the award are reviewed by ORSP in consultation with PI, Chair, Dean, VP and Legal Counsel as appropriate. The PI/PD must read and agree to the award terms prior to ORSP accepting the award.

Reviewed for:

- Consistency with internal approvals of the statement of work, budget, personnel assignments and commitments of university resources
- Compliance with State of Florida's indemnification, liability, and other statutory requirements
- Compliance with state and federal restrictions applicable to public, postsecondary institutions
- Congruency of reimbursement restrictions of funding source with cash flow limitations of the Sponsored Research Trust Fund
- Protection of PI/institutional publication, copyright, and patent rights
- Other special conditions of award

ORSP accepts award and transmits Notification of Account Number and copy of award documents to PI/PD

KEY:
PI/PD – Principal Investigator/Project Director
ORSP – Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
AVPR – Assistant Vice President for Research

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