

SPONSORED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT MANUAL AND PROCEDURES

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-TEXARKANA

CHAPTER 1: SPONSORED PROGRAMS: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW AND WHY?

PURPOSE

Research and sponsored educational activities are an integral component in the mission of Texas A&M University-Texarkana. This manual is intended to provide information needed for faculty and staff on the procedures and requirements related to proposal development. Those already familiar with the University's process will find guidance for unusual problems or special considerations that may arise during the preparation of a proposal.

WHAT IS A "SPONSORED PROGRAM"?

Sponsored programs include research, instruction and training, public service, evaluative testing, and other scholarly and creative activities conducted under the direction of University faculty and staff and funded by organizations external to the University.

THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)

The term PI is used to indicate the single person responsible for managing the technical and financial aspects of a sponsored program in compliance with the terms and conditions of the award and with the University (<http://www.tamut.edu/administrative>) System, (<http://sago.tamu.edu/policy/>) and State (<http://www.window.state.tx.us/fm/pubs/>) policies and procedures. His/Her management responsibilities are to:

1. Become familiar with the sponsor's regulations which govern performance of the program;
2. Ensure compliance with all applicable University policies and regulations during the conduct of the sponsored research;
3. Oversee the staffing and performance of the program;
4. Authorize expenditures within the limits of the approved budget for personnel, goods, and services which directly benefit the program;
5. Ensure timely submission and tracking of technical reports to the sponsor.

The University has established procedures and support services to assist the PI in satisfying the administrative requirements applicable to sponsored programs.

Faculty and professional staff are eligible to submit proposals for research, public service, or educational support to agencies and organizations outside of the University. All applications/proposals for sponsored programs must be submitted through the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND SERVICES

Dean of Graduate Studies and Research Grant Specialist

The Dean of Graduate Studies and Research and the Grant Specialist provide pre-award services such as assistance during proposal and budget development, resource information for federal and non-federal agencies, institutions and industries that provide support for research and program development, assistance in meeting the guidelines of sponsoring agencies, and finally, submission of the completed application. They are also available for consultation and interpretation of sponsor guidelines and forms and general proposal development issues.

Office of Finance and Administration

The Office of Finance and Administration supports the faculty and staff in acquiring and administering external grants for research and other sponsored projects. It works collaboratively with a variety of offices in every phase of the process to ensure the stewardship of funds for externally funded grants and contract activities.

The Office has responsibilities for the fiscal oversight of funded projects and programs. They provide assistance in:

- ❑ Reviewing proposals and regulatory requirements and approving budget documents;
- ❑ Providing personnel services including payroll, the maintenance of time and effort records, benefit services and guidance in hiring procedures to conform to University and State policies and procedures;
- ❑ Establishing accounts;
- ❑ Purchasing;
- ❑ Monitoring expenditures;
- ❑ Providing account information;
- ❑ Preparing fiscal reports and billings.

The Grant Specialist tracks the required financial reporting to the sponsor and maintains conformity with the project administration policies of the various sponsors.

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CHAPTER 2: FINDING AND APPLYING FOR FUNDING

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SPONSORS

Every organization that sponsors research and other scholarly and creative activities has specific objectives which it hopes to achieve. Organizations such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) have objectives that are broadly drawn and change little from year to year. Others have very narrow and specific objectives that change yearly. It is absolutely essential that the proposed project conforms to the mission of the University and the goals of the individual(s) preparing the proposal. The next step is to identify those organizations which sponsor the type of project to be proposed. The following specific questions must be asked:

- ❑ **Does the organization support the program area of interest?**
- ❑ **Does the organization support the type of program?**
- ❑ **Does the project address one of the organization's priorities?** Every organization has priority areas of interest. They want to focus intellectual energy on addressing their priorities and either publish their priorities or willingly discuss them. You may discover the potential sponsor's priorities by reading current program publications or talking to program officials.
- ❑ **Can the organization afford the program?** Many organizations limit the funds made in support of any one project. It is pointless to submit a \$125,000 proposal to an organization that limits its awards to less than that even if it matches their priorities.

The right sponsor is the one which has an announced desire to support the type of program and activity in the area, and for the cost to be proposed. Submitting to the right sponsor will greatly increase the probability of funding for the project.

The Dean of Graduate Studies and Research has a resource library in Room 362. Funding resources can also be found on the Sponsored Research website located at <http://www.tamut.edu/staff/bterral/mysite2/index.htm> .

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CHAPTER 3: GETTING READY TO WRITE THE PROPOSAL

KNOW THE SPONSOR

There are three basic funding mechanisms used to support sponsored programs: grants, cooperative agreements and contracts. Sponsors run the gamut from government agency to private foundation to industry. Industry awards have begun to represent an ever-increasing percentage of program sponsors as federal, foundation and other traditional research funding streams have remained level or decreased.

WHEN TO BEGIN

The timing of proposal preparation is one of the most persistent problems for PIs. How soon is soon enough? The answer varies by type of proposal. A proposal to develop a new direction in research takes considerably longer to prepare than a renewal or resubmission. PIs with proven track records will usually allow 6 to 8 months to prepare a major new proposal. They insist that anything less cuts down the chances that the proposal will be acceptable and funded. Collaborative proposals may take up to a year to develop fully. A renewal application for an ongoing project, however, may be put together in six weeks or two months. Obviously, he or she who lives by external support must be constantly thinking of the next upcoming deadline. Adequate time must be provided to enable review and final packaging of the proposal. There is a difference between postmark and receipt deadline and PIs must take this into consideration when planning their proposals.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PROPOSALS

A proposal for a new project or a new direction in research that has not been funded before is a **NEW** proposal. It competes with all other new or renewal proposals and is evaluated in all areas pertinent to that sponsor. A proposal for a **RENEWAL** competes with other proposals for approval and funding, even if it is a project that has been funded before, but in this case it will also be reviewed on its progress during the period of the original grant. Funding periods can last anywhere from less than a year up to five years. A proposal that has been approved for funding for more than one year but requires an annual submission for a non-competing review each year is called a **CONTINUATION**. A continuation is reviewed for evidence of progress and adherence to the original application before the allocation of money is made for the next year. A **SUPPLEMENT** is an addition made to an existing grant during the funding period and usually does not require competitive review.

Other differences in proposals are determined by the purpose of the project. The major kinds of projects by primary purposes are research projects, training and educational support projects, and community or public service projects. Research projects that may incidentally train students are still research projects. Community projects may provide training, but they are still public service projects if the training is to those other than students enrolled in academic credit bearing programs.

PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSAL

Every proposal is an exercise in persuasion. The proposal must convince the sponsor that the:

- ❑ proposed project is consistent with the sponsor's interests and priorities,
- ❑ PI has the training and expertise necessary to achieve the project's objectives,
- ❑ proposed project is feasible, and
- ❑ investment of the sponsor's limited resources will yield significant results.

Proposals often receive hurried readings by skeptical, critical reviewers; therefore, organization and clarity are of utmost importance. The proposal must be direct, complete, and convincing, but it must also be concise. The proposal is the PI's only agent in the highly competitive review process, and the reviewers will see it as a reflection of his/her abilities. The proposals most consistently funded by all types of sponsors are those which address an issue or problem of significance to the sponsor and offer the prospect of significantly advancing the field of study.

Proposal writing is among the most difficult of literary forms to master. It constitutes a blend of technical reporting, informed speculation, self-promotion, and fund raising. The form and content of proposals are dependent upon the type of program proposed and the prospective sponsor's priorities. There is no simple formula or outline that can be recommended. Beginners, or for those who have had proposals declined by a particular sponsor, should review a funded proposal. Having a draft proposal critiqued by a colleague who has been funded by the prospective sponsor can also be of enormous help.

PRELIMINARIES TO PREPARING THE PROPOSAL

Appropriateness

Be sure that the sponsor will consider the proposal. Read the information published by them regarding the areas of interest and the types of activities supported. Do not propose work in an area not of interest to the sponsor, or a type of activity that they do not support. Whenever possible, talk to the program officer. Outline the intended proposal and then listen to the response. These informal contacts can yield much useful information about the sponsor's current priorities. Even a brief conversation with the program officer can save time and effort and may improve the chances that the proposal will be funded.

Letters of Inquiry to Private Foundations

Most private foundations either prefer or require that initial contact be made by brief letter of inquiry rather than by telephone or submission of a full proposal. The letter of inquiry, which is addressed to the staff person responsible for the program area, explains the purpose of the project, why it needs to be done, how it relates to the foundation's interests, and what accomplishment of the objectives of the project will mean.

Every foundation receives many more requests for support than can possibly be funded. Except for very large national foundations, it is usually a small non-technical staff that makes foundation funding decisions. Peer review and standard criteria rarely determine which applications will be funded. The letter of inquiry must capture the imagination of the staff person who receives it. It must make a strong and compelling connection with the objectives of the foundation.

A carefully crafted letter of inquiry is essential to eliciting an invitation to submit a full proposal. Provide drafts for others' critical feedback. Good readers are colleagues who have succeeded in securing funding.

Proposal Guidelines

A sponsor's proposal preparation guidelines can generally be obtained directly from the sponsor. Read the guidelines carefully and completely. Plan the proposal so that all of the information requested by the sponsor will be provided in the format specified by the sponsor. Always use established application forms provide by the sponsor. All special instructions (e.g. page limitations, font size and density, characters per inch, lines per inch, margin), should be observed.

Most guidelines will include the criteria that will be used when reviewing and evaluating proposals. The criteria should be reviewed before beginning to write the proposal. The proposal should include information that explicitly addresses each of the review criteria.

Special Considerations

The PI should discuss any unusual components of the proposal (i.e., commitment of substantial effort by him/her, space and/or facilities not currently available, installation of major items of equipment, renovation of University space, effort by state employees, use of hazardous materials, etc.) with his/her College Dean, the Vice President for Finance and Administration, and the President, as appropriate. This will make preparation of the proposal easier and expedite the campus review process.

Institutional Approvals

All sponsored program proposals submitted on behalf of the University and its faculty and staff must comply with all applicable federal, state, and University policies and regulations before they are approved for submission. A Proposal Approval Form (Appendix A) must be completed and submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research 30 days before a proposal will be submitted to an external sponsor.

Release Time Requests

Requests for time released from teaching to perform sponsored program activities must be negotiated with the College Dean and countersigned by the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Equipment Matching

The University will provide cost share according to sponsor policy and/or within certain guidelines. You may want to request equipment matching funds from the University for any specialized equipment required by the project..

Institutional Review Board

All research involving participation or data from human subjects must be approved by the IRB before data collection begins. See http://www.tamut.edu/~allard/irb/IRB_index.htm for the University's policy for research involving human subjects.

Physical Space for the Sponsored Project

The PI must detail the need for space and what space he/she believes would be most appropriate on the Proposal Approval Form (Appendix A) if he/she anticipates that a sponsored project will require more space within the College or University than is now available. The request must be approved by the Dean.

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CHAPTER 4: WRITING THE PROPOSAL

There is no uniform proposal format accepted by all funding agencies. Many sponsors have specific guidelines or instructions and/or printed forms to be used in preparation of proposals. Use their forms and follow their instructions. The outline below is offered as general preparation guidance as well as for those few cases when no sponsor-specific guidelines exist.

PROPOSAL CONTENT

All proposals should include the following basic elements in order to provide the sponsor with information adequate for review:

Cover Page

A cover page is used to summarize key elements of the proposal and to indicate that the University has approved submission of the proposal. For many sponsors the PIs signature on the face page certifies that he/she is familiar with and will accept the conditions published by the sponsor that will govern any award resulting from the proposal. The following basic information should be included:

- 1. Sponsor identification:** The complete official name of the organization from which funds are requested.
- 2. The title of the proposed project:** This should be descriptive of the specific project proposed, while being as concise as possible.
- 3. Name and address of the organization that will act as fiscal agent:**

Texas A&M University-Texarkana
Vice President for Finance and Administration
P.O. Box 5518
Texarkana, TX 75505-5518

- 4. The name, academic title, address, and phone number of the PI.**
- 5. The proposed starting date for the project.**
- 6. The proposed duration of the project.**

7. **The total amount of money requested** from the sponsor in both direct and Facilities and Administrative (F&A or indirect) costs for the entire period of requested support.
8. **The date on which the proposal is submitted.**
9. **PIs signature.**
10. **The signature of the appropriate University Official.** At Texas A&M University-Texarkana the President or designee provides the signature indicating that the proposal has official University endorsement and approval.

Abstract

Every proposal should include an abstract of 50-250 words on a separate page immediately following the cover page. The abstract describes the objectives of the project, the methods to be used, and the significance of the anticipated results. Sponsors use an abstract to determine the relevance of the proposal to the sponsor's mission, to determine eligibility for specific programs, and/or to assign it for review. It may be the only part of the proposal actually read by some members of the review group and is generally the first thing read by those who read the entire proposal. It often shapes the reviewer's first impression of the proposal. It will almost certainly be the part of the proposal read by reviewers immediately before discussion by the review group. While brief, it is an important part of the proposal and should be prepared with considerable care.

Table of Contents

Include a table of contents for other than very brief proposals. Only major topic headings need be listed for proposals of moderate length. In lengthy proposals, subheadings as well as lists of tables and figures should be included.

Problem Statement/Needs Assessment

The project to be undertaken should be described and the specific objectives to be achieved stated clearly. The need for the study and/or the significance of its outcomes should be presented convincingly and realistically. A sound rationale for the project, which relates the objectives of the study to larger issues in the field, should be included.

Related Studies/Review of the Field

Almost every proposed project will extend, correct, or improve upon work that preceded it. Each project should be placed in the context of earlier, directly related work. This part of the proposal should demonstrate the PIs command of

and ability to critically assess the field. This section takes on greater significance when the PI does not have a body of published work in the field, as it is here that the ability to identify critical issues is established.

Study Design/Methods/Time Lines

The PI provides evidence of ability to plan and conduct a study that will achieve the specific objectives. The material should be organized logically, and in the order in which the study will be conducted. Protocols, procedures, techniques, methods, data to be collected, data analysis, and anticipated outcomes and problems should be discussed. Detail should be sufficient to demonstrate that the design and methods are appropriate and have been carefully thought through.

Preliminary Results

Whenever the PI has not demonstrated through published work that he/she has mastered the proposed methods or that a particular method can be adapted or applied to the work proposed, it is very useful to include preliminary results. Sufficient data should be included only to demonstrate that the approach has been successful.

Evaluation

Many sponsored research programs require an evaluation of the implementation and outcomes, especially in education and the social sciences. Evaluation may be appropriate at critical points during the study and/or at its completion. It may be appropriate for project staff to conduct the evaluation or use outside, independent consultants. The design of the evaluation and the persons responsible should be detailed, as should the form and method for dissemination of the results of the evaluation.

Key Personnel/Management Plan

Identify all professional and technical personnel who will participate in the project by name and title whenever possible. Include brief biographies of key personnel if called for by the proposal guidelines. Do not provide full curriculum vitae unless expected by the funding agency. If selected publications by key personnel are requested, include those which are most relevant to the work proposed. Clearly identify the expertise of any independent contractors (consultants) that will be used on the project.

Include a management plan which specifically delineates who will do what and when it will be done if the proposed project is a large one.

Facilities Available

The PI should describe University and/or other facilities that are available to conduct the study, or which will be made available, if an award is made. These should include facilities that are under the PIs direct control, as well as university facilities, which will be used in the proposed project. All needed facilities should either be available, or funding should be requested to obtain them.

Letters of Support/Endorsement/Commitment

Whenever a proposed project requires assistance, cooperation, financial support, or collaborative effort by another individual or organization, a letter from that individual or organization identifying the contribution and their willingness to provide it should be included in the proposal as an appendix.

Proposals should be prepared well before the deadline for submission. Those prepared hurriedly generally lack clarity and organization, which, aside from a brilliant idea, are the PIs strongest allies in the review process. Whenever possible, arrange for a draft of the proposal to be read and critiqued by a colleague.

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CHAPTER 5: THE PROPOSAL BUDGET

INTENT OF THE BUDGET

The PI demonstrates his or her background, experience, expertise in the field, and the ability to develop an implementable plan to achieve a goal and make a significant contribution to his/her field in the technical portions of the proposal. In the budget, the PI demonstrates not only his or her abilities as a researcher and theorist, but as a financial planner and resource manager. Sponsors are not simply shopping for the cheapest proposal. They are looking for the most realistic proposals, which offer possibilities for significant advancements within the field. Presenting a pragmatic rather than an overly optimistic budget is no less important than having a brilliant idea.

The budget (also called the cost or business proposal by some sponsors) is the PI's best estimate of the total cost to conduct the proposed project and of the funding which will be required from the sponsor. It is important to keep in mind that, upon submission of the proposal, the budget becomes a firm commitment on the part of the University to perform the proposed work at the proposed cost. The budget must, therefore, reflect all of the activities included in the technical proposal, and anticipate all of the costs that will be incurred in carrying it out.

All proposed budgets are reviewed in detail by the Controller in the Department of Finance and Administration to ensure compliance with the policies of the sponsor and the University. Last minute changes to the budget could put timely submissions in jeopardy; therefore, PIs are encouraged to contact fiscal staff in the early stages of proposal development.

BUDGET FORMS AND FORMATS

The first step in preparing a proposal budget should always be a review of the application materials and guidelines provided by the sponsor. Budget forms or formats provided by the sponsor should always be used. In the absence of guidance from the sponsor regarding form or format, the format that follows is recommended.

Sponsor guidelines will also provide information concerning limitations, if any, on funds which the sponsor will provide, allowability of specific types of costs, requirements for cost sharing or matching, and any other special financial

information. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may jeopardize funding of the proposal.

COST OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS

It is important for PIs to remember that two distinctly different types of cost comprise the total cost of any sponsored program: direct costs and Facilities and Administrative (F&A or indirect) costs. Direct costs are those costs which the University's accounting system can easily and accurately identify and charge to specific projects. F&A costs, in contrast, are incurred while providing facilities and support services simultaneously to many or all of the University's sponsored programs.

DIRECT COSTS

Direct costs include:

Salaries and Wages – Salaries and wages of faculty and staff are a direct cost of the proposed project and must be budgeted in proportion to the fraction of full time effort each member will devote to the project. Only project staff that are or will be employees of the University must be included in this section of the budget. Other types of project staff are discussed under independent contractors.

All personnel who will work on the project must be included in this section of the budget. The PI will appear first, followed by other senior personnel, research assistants, technical assistants, administrative, and clerical staff. Include the following information for each person or position for each budget period:

1. the best estimate of the percentage of effort each will devote to the program;
2. the best estimate of annual salary; and
3. total salary support requested from the sponsor.

Anticipated annual increases and discretionary increases must be factored into salary estimates. Salary for graduate and post-doctoral employees must be budgeted no lower than the base amounts established by the University for such positions. The PI should consult with the Payroll Office for up to date salary information.

Funds provided in a sponsored program award may not otherwise be used to increase the salary of any person employed by the University.

Fringe Benefits - Fringe benefits provided to project employees are included in project budgets as a direct cost. Fringe benefit charges should appear in a separate budget category from salaries.

Fringe benefit rates for project staff vary depending upon the appointment (i.e., faculty or staff vs. graduate student, undergraduate). Information is available in Appendix B. Contact the Payroll Office for any additional assistance.

Equipment – Included in this category are two types of equipment:

1. Capital Equipment - All items of tangible property having an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more and a useful life expectancy of two or more years.
2. Controlled Equipment – All items of tangible property having an acquisition cost of \$500.00 - \$4,999.99.

Both types of equipment must be inventoried. Each item must be identified in the proposed budget by type, manufacturer, model number, number of units to be purchased, estimated cost, and the basis for the estimate (vendor quotation or catalog price). The cost estimate must be supported by written documentation that will be retained by the PI in the event of a pre-award audit.

Materials and Supplies – These are consumable items used in the everyday performance of a person’s job.

Computer Programs/Software – Operating systems and other computer programs, which must be loaded in a computer’s memory before any application or task can be performed, are classified as “equipment”. Application software is classified as “supplies”.

Travel – Include a current best estimate of cost of travel by project staff to meet the aims, objectives and/or performance requirements, or to disseminate the results of the project. Each trip should be listed separately and include the destination, duration and purpose of the trip, the persons traveling, round trip coach airfare, surface transportation charges, per diem or actual hotel and meal costs as allowed by the sponsor, and any other related expenses such as conference registration costs.

Domestic and foreign travel should be grouped separately. Most sponsors are reluctant to fund foreign travel and some have special approval procedures even if it is included in an awarded budget. Foreign travel must be very well justified.

Independent Contractors/Consultants – Independent contractors are engaged to provide essential services to a sponsored program that cannot be provided by an employee. Generally, the services are to be provided either during a short period of time or intermittently throughout the project. Whatever the exact nature or timing of the services provided, it is without direct day-to-day supervision by the PI.

Independent contractors should be named and/or their specialty identified in the budget, which should also detail the individual's daily or job rate, number of days employed, travel costs, and any related expenses.

Other Direct Costs – All direct costs that do not fit into the previous categories are included here. These include:

- Publication Costs – Costs which are placed in a separate budget category by some sponsors are limited to the costs of printing, distribution, etc. of technical reports. Estimate the number of pages, the cost per page, and the total cost.
- Tuition – scholarships that cover costs of students tuition and fees
- Communication Costs – includes long distance telephone charges, postage, photocopying, network communication charges, etc., necessary for performance of the project.
- Equipment Repair and Maintenance – costs of repairing and maintaining equipment used in performance of a sponsored program.
- Freight and Delivery Charges – costs for delivery of equipment or shipping of materials.
- Memberships/Subscriptions – Special memberships or subscriptions which are required to meet the project objectives or which will clearly benefit the project are allowable and should be specifically budgeted. Memberships and subscriptions of a general nature are not allowable.

Total Direct Costs – the sum of the subtotals of each of the preceding budget categories.

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

A budget justification must accompany each proposal budget. It ties each cost element to a specific aspect of the proposed program and provides a bridge between the proposal narrative and the budget. Drawing such connections is critical since personnel, equipment, supplies, and other cost items which appear in the budget but are not tied to the technical program, will be eliminated in the review process. Aspects of the technical program which are not reflected in the budget or in the facilities available section of the proposal will call into question the PIs abilities as a project manager.

UNIVERSITY COST SHARING

Cost sharing occurs in those instances where the University agrees to commit resources to make up the difference between the actual cost of performing a project and the funding being sought from or provided by a sponsor. It may be in either direct or F&A costs, or both. Cost sharing commitments require the approval of the appropriate dean and/or Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs prior to submittal of a proposal committing University resources as a cost share (Appendix C).

Cost sharing can only be proposed when required by the sponsor and can not exceed the levels required by the sponsor. Voluntary cost sharing must be avoided. Cost sharing consumes scarce University resources and also places a heavy administrative burden on the University because it must be extensively documented.

Cost sharing will be limited to salaries and wages and the fringe benefit and F&A costs attributable to those salaries and wages whenever possible. Items of equipment that are purchased for and used exclusively by the project may be used as cost sharing with appropriate supporting documentation.

Cost sharing information must be detailed on the Cost Sharing Statement (Appendix C).

MATCHING FUNDS

Sponsors occasionally award funds for a project in fixed multiples of funds provided for the project by other funding sources. The funds provided by other funding sources are referred to as matching funds. When required by a sponsor, matching funds become a condition of any award that is made based upon the proposal. If the matching funds do not materialize after the award is made, the award may be canceled or expenditures disallowed. In either of these circumstances, the financial consequences for the University can be dire.

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CHAPTER 6: SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL

THE PROPOSAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

The PI should begin the budget process as early as possible in the proposal development. He/She should be prepared to provide information on all personnel listed in the budget in addition to the draft budget and budget justification. The PI must complete the Proposal Approval Form and obtain necessary approvals once the draft proposal has been developed. He/She must route the approval form with a copy of the completed proposal to the PI's and the Co-PIs College Dean(s). Once all appropriate approvals are obtained, the proposal and completed approval form must be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research for review and submission.

The appropriate College Dean must review and certify that the effort proposed by faculty members is compatible with the balance of ongoing responsibilities. He/She must certify that available space and facilities are adequate for the college's role in the proposed project, that any proposed commitment of cost sharing is acceptable and will be met, that the project is consistent with programs and objectives, that the credit for the project is appropriate for the degree of participation in the project, and that submission to the sponsor is appropriate.

The Dean of Graduate Studies and Research must review the proposal to ensure that it conforms to the policies of the University and sponsor regulations and requirements.

The Office of Finance and Administration must review all budgetary documents for conformance with appropriate regulations and to assure that all necessary costs are included in the proposal document.

The President of the University must sign each proposal as the authorized representative of the University. Some sponsors also require signature by the PI or other University official.

TRANSMISSION TO THE SPONSOR

Deadlines and Delivery

Most sponsors have established dates by which proposals must be received or postmarked in order to be considered during a particular review cycle. When these dates are firm and must be met precisely, they are referred to as deadlines. A **receipt deadline** is the date by or before which the sponsor must receive proposals. A **postmark deadline** is the date on or before which the proposal must be postmarked by the United States Postal Service (USPS). **NOTE: Private express carriers are not acceptable alternatives to the**

USPS for postmark deadlines, nor is a date from a postal meter. Target dates have previously been treated as soft, imprecise deadlines. They supposedly are dates by which the sponsor would like to receive proposals and begin preparing them for the review process. National Science Foundation has begun treating target dates as hard deadlines. The PI is encouraged to submit their proposals by the target date indicated in the program announcement.

The PI should keep in mind that express delivery carriers provide a very limited on-time delivery of express packages. In the event of a late delivery, the express carrier refunds only the express charges—not the amount of any value assigned to the package. Express carriers ship by air, using their own aircraft which are subject to the weather and equipment failure just as scheduled airlines.

The federal government will accept late delivery by an express carrier only if it is to the government's advantage to do so. The University, therefore, has no right of appeal if the express carrier makes a late delivery. The government is required to accept submissions that arrive late if they have been mailed (USPS) registered or certified, five working days prior to the sponsor's deadline, or express mailed (USPS) two working days prior to the sponsor's deadline.

Note: Sponsors are serious about announced deadline dates. Proposals received after the deadline or target date will either be returned or held for the next review cycle. Occasionally, a sponsor will agree to accept a proposal after a deadline. If such arrangements have been made with the sponsor, inform the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research of the name of the sponsor's representative who made the commitment to accept the proposal.

Number of Copies of the Proposal to be Submitted

Almost every sponsor requires the submission of one signed original and one or more exact photocopies of the proposal. The number of copies required by each sponsor will be found in the sponsor's proposal preparation guidelines. Some sponsors make additional copies from the original proposal. Only material that can be photocopied (i.e. graphs, diagrams, tables and charts in black ink) should be included in the application. Glossy photographs or other materials (such as color images of gels or micrographs) that cannot be photocopied must be submitted as appendix material.

PROPOSAL REVIEW

Federal Agencies

The process of review and award in Federal agencies making research grants or contracts usually follows the same format. Staff makes a preliminary review of the proposal to determine adherence to their policies and guidelines. The proposal is assigned to a review panel, study section, or other reviewing body. This merit review body meets to review all applications assigned to it in that round, sometimes after outside reviewers have

commented on each application. The group or panel will rank the applications according to predetermined criteria, often part of the guidelines. The task of matching budgets with available dollars then begins.

The peer review group may make recommendations to change aspects of the budget, but the agency staff makes the major budgetary changes. They have both the written guidelines and the budgetary restrictions imposed by the level of funding that they must balance. It is to their advantage to make the money go as far as possible, and they will question any costs that are out of line.

PIs will find differences between various agencies. Some will negotiate with the PI to decide the final award level. He/She has some chance to affect the outcome in this case. The award notice will be sent with the dollar amount fixed and accompanied by a request for a revised budget to fit the amount of the award in other cases. The PI has to decide if he/she can still perform the scope of work within the limits of the amount awarded or if the scope of the project must be changed. Cost sharing comes into focus here and must be negotiated.

Private Agencies

Private agencies, foundations and trusts generally rely less upon peer review and more upon staff or trustee/board of directors' review. Staff will make the preliminary decision about the relevance of the proposal to the agency's funding priorities and determine if the guidelines have been followed. The criteria for the actual review process are made available by some private agencies but not by all.

Review by a private agency usually takes less time. Notice of rejection of your proposal at the level of initial staff review may come almost immediately when they determine that it is not of sufficient interest to them to warrant a full review. Unlike federal agencies, they are not required to submit every complete proposal to full review.

Many private agencies follow a procedure that involves essentially a preliminary proposal, usually a letter about three pages in length. If they feel that the proposal is of sufficient merit and interest they will request a full proposal. The negotiation and award process remains essentially the same as federal agencies.

Corporate Organizations

The review process for corporate organizations (including corporate foundations) is similar to other private agencies. A small in-house staff screens the proposals for those that best meet their criteria and they feel have sufficient merit to warrant a full review. Corporate organizations almost always look at two particular criteria, location of the proposer and relevancy of the activity to corporation's interests. These organizations may support community activities in the area of company holdings, usually public service and arts organizations. They will usually consider out-of-area proposals only when they directly benefit the goals of the parent company, and research proposals will most often

fit into this category. The research will almost always be in some area of interest to the company. Training proposals in areas where the company anticipates hiring can also be of interest to them.

Site Visits

Site visits by staff of the funding agency to the campus can occur during the review process, during the negotiations of award, or at any time during the life of the funded project. Scientific research projects may receive a site visit early on in the proposal submission and review stage to determine if the facilities and equipment are truly capable of sustaining the proposed research. Training and public service projects may be visited after the initial funding period to determine if there is adequate progress before renewal or continuation. As a rule site visits offer no particular threat and may be viewed as an opportunity to interact with the staff of the agency and explain any unique features of the particular project or capabilities of the staff and University. Once in a while a site visit is made to a project that is perceived to be slipping in order to ascertain the true reasons for the slippage and whether the project can be salvaged.

Declined Proposals

Less than one-third of sponsored program proposals are funded on the first submission. PIs should not be discouraged if a sponsor declines a proposal. The appropriate response is reflective persistence.

Upon being notified that a proposal will not be funded, the PI should request the written comments submitted by all reviewers, read the comments, and consider them carefully. The proposal and the comments should be shared with colleagues who are willing to offer their own candid critique of the proposal. In cases where readers base their reservations on reparable flaws in the proposal, rather than on lack of intrinsic merit, rethinking, rewriting, and resubmission are in order. In rewriting, the critiques of colleagues and reviewers should be treated not as attacks to be defended but as resources to be used in clarifying and strengthening the proposal both as a scholarly work and as a communications tool. The cycle of writing, rejection, rewriting, and resubmission may be repeated more than once. If the criticism is taken seriously and used positively, the probability of funding increases with each resubmission.

SPONSORED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT MANUAL AND PROCEDURES

CHAPTER 7: AWARD ACCEPTANCE AND ACCOUNT AUTHORIZATION

ACCEPTANCE OF AWARDS

Sponsors will generally send an award notice to the University when it determines it will fund a program proposal. If the original award document is sent to the PI, please immediately forward it to the Vice President for Finance and Administration.

The award document is reviewed by the Grant Specialist and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. Once accepted, it is forwarded to the President of the University for signature. This indicates the University has accepted the terms and conditions of the award and authorizes the Grant Accountant to assign an account number and make the funds available for expenditure. All actions and communications by the PI relating to the project must include this account number.

NEGOTIATION OF AWARDS

Negotiations begin when a sponsor offers an award which is not immediately acceptable to the University due to non-conformance with policy or an unacceptable budget or work plan. The negotiations are always between an authorized representative of the sponsor and the PI. Assistance is also provided to the PI by fiscal personnel.

These negotiations follow a general pattern. Terms and conditions offered by the sponsor are provided to the PI for review and simultaneously reviewed by appropriate fiscal personnel. The PI is responsible for determining whether the terms that affect program performance are acceptable. Fiscal personnel are responsible for determining acceptability of all other terms and conditions. If there are terms that are not acceptable, the PI will develop a counter offer that is transmitted to the sponsor by the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. The process is repeated, until terms and conditions acceptable to both parties are reached.

Faculty or staff members are not authorized to accept grant awards, negotiate the terms and conditions of a sponsored program award, or sign binding contracts on behalf of the University. The results of any such unauthorized negotiations will not be binding on the University. Formal acceptance of the award must be by the Vice President for Finance and Administration and the President. The PI must approve and sign off on all contracts before the University executes them.

AT-RISK AWARD EXPENDITURE AUTHORIZATION

The award document is the only legal authority the University has to recover funds from the sponsor that are expended at the direction of the PI. This document gives the University authority only for the project period. Expenditures made prior to the awarded start date or after the awarded termination will not be paid by the sponsor. Any action during these times puts the University at financial risk.

There are circumstances when award documents are delayed beyond the time it is necessary to begin the work that will be authorized by the award. When this happens, the PI must request authorization from the College Dean and the Finance and Administration Department. This request must identify the anticipated award, state the need for funds to be advanced to the project, allocate the requested funds to appropriate budget categories, and indicate the time period for which advance funding is requested (usually one month).

Since funds available for advance expenditure are extremely limited and at risk, authorization will be restricted to amounts that will allow minimal functioning of the project and will generally be approved for personnel or other essential expenses.

The following guidelines apply to approval of At Risk Authorizations:

- ❑ The PI must be able to confirm with an authorized representative of the sponsor that the anticipated award will be made for a period of performance that covers the entire period for which the advance expenditure authority has been requested and for an amount at least equal to the amount of the requested advance. This confirmation will be in the form of a letter of intent from the sponsor;
- ❑ Authorizations will be approved for limited periods, generally not more than a month;
- ❑ The PI must be prepared to terminate the project on short notice, even possibly before the approved advance has been fully expended, if it is determined that the anticipated award will not be made;
- ❑ Expenditures made under an At Risk Authorization must conform to the sponsor's regulations, the fiscal agent's policies and procedures, and the budget submitted to the sponsor;
- ❑ At Risk authorizations require "backstopping". Before the authorization is approved, the PI must identify a source of funds that will reimburse the fiscal agent in the event that the advanced funds have been expended and the anticipated award is not made

PRE-AWARD COSTS FOR FEDERAL GRANTS

Federal grants allow the University, at its own risk, to incur obligations and expenditures prior to the anticipated start date of an award. These costs may generally be incurred within 90 days prior to the beginning date of the award without sponsor prior approval. Pre-award costs incurred more than 90 days prior to the beginning date of the award

require written prior approval. The costs concerned must be considered necessary for the conduct of the project, and the costs must be allowable under the potential award. It should be noted that even though the federal sponsor allows this flexibility, it is still at the University's risk and requires backstopping, as the incurrence of costs prior to the award of a grant imposes no obligation on the federal agency to make the award. The guidelines for approval of At Risk Expenditures apply to pre-award costs. PIs wishing to exercise this flexibility should contact their College Dean and the Finance and Administration Department.

POST AWARD PROCEDURE

Assignment of Account Number

The grant accountant will establish an account number for the research project when the Finance and Administration Department has received the original Notice of Award or fully executed contract. The Grant Specialist will send a FAMIS account setup memo to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. Copies will be sent to the PI, the grant accountant and other fiscal personnel who will have responsibility for processing paperwork for expenditures (example is at Appendix D). Employees cannot be hired nor expenditures made until the notice of award has been received.

Employment of Personnel on Externally Funded Projects

To initiate the employment of faculty, staff, or graduate students, the PI must consult with the Human Resources/EEO Office and the Payroll Office. Once the position has been filled or a current employee has been assigned, a Request for Form 500 must be completed and routed through the appropriate Dean, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Finance and Administration, and the President for approval and authorization (<http://www.tamut.edu/payroll/>). To initiate the employment or assignment of an undergraduate student worker, the PI must consult with the Office of Financial Aid.

Purchasing

The university's procurement procedures are subject to a complex set of State and Federal statutes, Texas A&M University System policies and regulations, Texas A&M University-Texarkana policies and procedures and, in the case of research agreements, sponsor contractual conditions. The University has developed specific procedures to assist researchers in expediting the delivery of goods and services. All PIs or other faculty and staff involved in externally funded projects are encouraged to visit the Purchasing Office to discuss procurement needs and to come to a better understanding of how the system works.

Travel

Travel expenses incurred by faculty, staff, and graduate students on externally funded projects will be reimbursed in accordance with University (<http://roo.tamut.edu/travel/>), State, and sponsor guidelines. Completed travel vouchers must be approved and signed by the individual and appropriate supervisor and forwarded to the Inventory Control/Travel Specialist for processing. Travel expenditures incurred by undergraduate students are reimbursed with a Request for Expenditure. The PI should review the grant or contract conditions for any travel restrictions prior to initiating travel arrangements. The PI should also verify the existing status of the account to determine if sufficient funds are available for travel.

Project Management

PIs are responsible for the day-to-day administration and direction of their projects. He/She will be provided with a copy of the grant or contract, management requirements and any paperwork deemed important to the management of the project. The Controller's Office will provide monthly fiscal summaries. The PI or account manager is responsible for reconciliation of his/her account. The grant specialist will assist PIs in clarifying or resolving budgetary issues.

Project Changes

Granting agencies have numerous and differing restrictions on deviations from both the approved project scope and budget. PIs must inform the grant specialist of proposed project changes requiring grantor approval. Correspondence with the sponsor requesting such changes must be authorized and signed on behalf of the institution by the Finance and Administration Department.

Reports

The PI is responsible for compliance with requirements for reporting specified by the granting agency. The PI should read the sponsor's guidelines carefully to determine what reports are required, their frequency, and preparation instructions. Many federal agencies refuse to review proposal submissions if the PI is delinquent in submitting reports on currently funded projects. The Controller's Office will prepare the financial reports. A copy will be provided to the PI.

Transfer to Another Institution

Controller's Office and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research should be contacted immediately when a PI terminates his/her association with the University. Disposition of the grant will be made in accordance with an agreement between Texas A&M University-Texarkana, the granting agency and other institutions involved.

SPONSORED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT MANUAL AND PROCEDURES

CHAPTER 8: ADMINISTERING THE AWARD

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS OF FEDERAL AWARDS

Every award from the Federal government carries with it a set of administrative requirements. These requirements are either specifically stated on the award document or incorporated by reference.

RECIPIENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The recipient of federal awards has the full responsibility for the conduct of the project or activity supported under the award and for adherence to the award conditions. Although the recipient is encouraged to seek the advice and opinion of the federal agency on special problems that may arise, such advice does not diminish the recipient's responsibility for making sound scientific and administrative judgments and should not imply that the responsibility for operating decisions has shifted to the awarding agency.

THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- ❑ Carrying out the approved scope of work;
- ❑ Submitting required technical reports in a timely manner;
- ❑ Ensuring that expenditures charged to the award are allocable to the program;
- ❑ Notifying the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research if a significant project change is contemplated.
- ❑ Acknowledging the federal support of the program in all publications relating to the project.

THE UNIVERSITY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT:

- ❑ Costs charged to a federal award are allowable, allocable, and reasonable;
- ❑ Federal funds are not used to support lobbying of state or federal legislatures;
- ❑ U.S. made products are purchased to the greatest extent practicable;
- ❑ A procurement policy acceptable to the federal government is used for all purchases;
- ❑ The University meets the federal requirements for Non-Discrimination; and
- ❑ The University implements an Affirmative Action Plan for hiring personnel.

Recipients of federal funds are, in general, allowed a certain degree of latitude in making post-award programmatic changes and budget revisions in research and training grants. The amount of flexibility given to the recipient is dependent upon the type of federal award.

POST-AWARD CHANGES

There is no single list of post-award changes that require approval. Almost every sponsor has a unique set and there is considerable variation in the changes which sponsors allow grantees to approve. Some of the more significant:

- ❑ Change in scope or objective;
- ❑ Expenditures that deviate from the approved budget. This includes transfer of funds between direct and indirect costs, and from participant costs. It also includes expenditures for equipment not in the approved budget, publication, printing costs, and audiovisual materials over \$25,000 not in the original budget, and capital expenditures;
- ❑ Change in Principal Investigator
- ❑ Subcontracting;
- ❑ No cost extensions;
- ❑ Deviation from the Special Terms and Conditions on the Grant Award;
- ❑ Carryover of Unobligated funds.

If approval is required, it must be obtained before the Principal Investigator takes any action which would obligate him/her. The request for approval must be made in writing and approved in writing. Approval requests must include the award number, the grantee number, the exact nature of the change, including specific budget categories affected, the benefit to the project, any significant effect which the change might have on the scope or direction of the project, and any other information requested by the sponsor.