

Proposal Approval and Submission

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RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE: Provost
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I. REASON FOR THIS POLICY

The purpose of the *Proposal Approval and Submission* policy is to ensure accurate and timely submission of all proposals for externally sponsored funding.

This policy will:

- Outline the review and approval process by university units and divisions
- Define the responsibilities of Principal Investigator, Sponsored Programs Office, Grants & Contracts Office, Dean and VP.
- Enhance pre- and post-award communication and reporting related to external funding opportunities
- Establish timelines to ensure sufficient time is available to review and audit proposal materials

II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Provost’s Office shall establish procedures that will enhance inter-departmental communication related to grant activity and allow adequate time for internal review of proposal submissions at every level.

III. DEFINITIONS

Proposal: “Proposal” refers to any type of request for funds, supplies, or equipment regardless of the funding source (federal, state, private or other) or request format (email, letter of intent, full proposal, etc.)

IV. PROCEDURES

Final proposals must be submitted (via email attachment) to the Sponsored Programs Office and final budget materials to the Grants & Contracts Office **at least one week prior to the funder deadline.**

The Sponsored Programs Office will initiate the *Proposal Endorsement Form* with SPO and GCO-approved documents at least three (3) business days prior to the funder deadline to secure dean and VP endorsement of final documents.

In cases where final documentation is submitted with less than the required lead time, the proposal is considered late. The Sponsored Programs and Grants & Contracts Offices will continue to make every reasonable effort to submit late documentation; however, full administrative approval and submission of late materials cannot be guaranteed. To account for emergency situations and/or other unforeseeable complications, exceptions to this lead time requirement may be issued on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions are authorized by the Vice President in the Principal Investigator's (PI) area.

To facilitate initial discussions with university leadership, determine if multiple PIs are interested in responding to the same RFP, and allow sufficient time to resolve potential research risks in the proposal planning stages, PIs will fill out a *Concept Approval Form* as a first step. Note: approval at the concept level does not guarantee the final proposal will be approved for submission.

Without exception, all final proposals will be reviewed and approved by the College Dean in the PI's academic area, the Research Dean, and relevant Vice President(s). Appropriate signatures must be secured in the *Proposal Endorsement Form* before the Sponsored Programs Office is authorized to submit a proposal on behalf of DSU.

A recommended timeline is provided in the *Pre-Award Processes & Procedures* manual in order to ensure the final proposal is submitted with the required lead time. Because individual units may have internal procedures related to proposal approval, PIs should consult their Dean to confirm whether or not they require additional time, particularly in cases where course buyout, institutional match, a waiver of indirect cost recovery (if allowed per federal regulations), or any university commitment beyond the term of the award is requested. Software to assist in automating the approval routing process is provided through DocuSign (see *Pre-Award Processes & Procedures* document for additional information).

Proposal Approval and Submission Responsibilities:

Principal Investigator:

- Finalizes all proposal documents, leaving sufficient time for all levels of administrative review (SPO/GCO, Dean and VP)

- Ensures all proposal documents are accurate, complete, and comply with funder instructions (see also SPO responsibilities)
- Initiates and routes *Concept Approval Form* to obtain appropriate signatures.
- Understands and certifies compliance with all institutional, SDBOR, and federal policy related to research compliance: including but not limited to Export Controls, Conflicts of Interest, Human Subjects Research, and Responsible Conduct of Research. PI must report all potential research risks to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research prior to submission of the proposal. SPO will work with PI and Dean of Graduate Studies and Research to resolve or report research risks.

VP & Dean:

- Deans review final versions of proposals for discipline-specific content, research merit and methodology, and/or approval of any department-level resource commitments.
- After proposal is approved by Dean(s), Vice President(s) will verify that the proposed project (and related budget) can be supported by the existing infrastructure (or that the new request is adequate/realistic given existing infrastructure) and that the proposal aligns with the DSU mission and that of their division. Once Vice Presidents have given their approval, no changes to the proposal will be allowed without subsequent VP approval.

Sponsored Programs:

- Director of Sponsored Programs will review* all final proposal documents, including, but not limited to:
 - Proposal/Project Description
 - Abstract/ Project Summary
 - Budget Justification
 - CVs/Biosketches
 - Current and Pending Support
 - Data Management Plan
 - References
 - Letters of Commitment/Support
- The SPO will evaluate all documents to confirm they comply with funder formatting instructions as well as federal guidance.
- The SPO identifies necessary administrative approvals and initiates *Proposal Endorsement Form* to obtain appropriate signatures and authorization to submit.
- As an authorized representative of the university, the Director of Sponsored Programs is responsible for submitting all proposals on behalf of DSU and its researchers.

Grants & Contracts:

- Director of Grants & Contracts will review* and approve final budgets associated with all proposals to ensure compliance with Uniform Guidance and other federal and institutional financial regulations. PI will receive written approval (via email) from the Grants & Contracts Office on all finalized budgets. Any changes to already approved budgets must be subsequently approved by GCO.

The project PI (or a co-PI with a direct knowledge of the proposal) is expected to be present for the submission and available for additional conversations between the time the proposal is submitted for internal approval and the time the proposal is submitted to the funder. Often, clarifications and edits will need to be made based on Dean, VP, GCO, or SPO review. If a PI knows they will be out of the office (or otherwise offline/unreachable), they are asked to inform the Sponsored Programs Office so that an alternate (and earlier) time can be scheduled to finalize submission materials.

* Note: While this policy is focused on the days immediately prior to a funder deadline, the Sponsored Programs and Grants & Contracts Offices are available as a resource to PIs at any time during the proposal and budget development process. Grant-seekers are strongly encouraged to contact SPO and GCO for assistance in document development in the weeks leading up to the deadline. However, one week prior to the funder deadline, GCO and SPO will need access to final, approved documents.

V. RELATED DOCUMENTS, FORMS AND TOOLS

[Concept Approval Form](#)

Pre-Award Procedures Manual (see Parts 4-6)