# Office of Sponsored Programs and Research

**Contact information: 410 951-3809**

**Website: https://www.coppin.edu/ospr**

**SAMPLE PROPOSAL CHECKLIST:**

**A STARTING POINT WHEN CONTEMPLATING PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

This document addresses typical components of a proposal to be submitted to a federal or private sponsor. **Please note that every sponsor has different requirements and review criteria; therefore, this document should be viewed as only a STARTING POINT.** We have provided this in Microsoft Word format to allow you to modify as needed to meet the specific sponsor requirements. *Always read and follow the sponsor proposal guidelines specific to the competition to which you are submitting.*

**PROPOSAL FORMATTING ITEMS:**

*When reviewing the program announcement, request for applications, funding opportunity announcement or other instructions provided by the sponsor, be certain to note **all** formatting requirements at the outset. Most sponsors return proposals without review when the formatting requirements are not met.*

**Page Limits** – Does the sponsor have specific page limits for the entire proposal or specific page limits for each proposal section? Are copies to be single or double-sided? Note the specifics.

**Font(s)** – What fonts and font sizes are allowable? Are there different font and/or font size requirements for graphics, tables, figures, diagrams?

**Word or Character Limits** – Some sponsors specify the number of words or characters allowed for specific proposal sections such as abstracts. When the sponsor denotes number of characters allowed, ascertain if the sponsor includes spaces as characters.

**Margins and Spacing** – What margins does the sponsor stipulate? Does the sponsor specify single or double line spacing?

**Required Forms** – Many sponsors use their own form sets with which you will need to become familiar. Others have requirements for the information to be included but do not supply specific forms.

**OTHER SPONSOR REQUIREMENTS:**

*Most sponsors provide detailed information about specific requirements that will guide you when developing your proposal strategies. Some critical information pieces are listed here.*

**Proposal Deadline(s)** – Be sure to check both the deadline date and **the exact time** and time zone by which the proposal must be received by the sponsor.

**Letters of Intent (LOI)** – Some sponsors request or require letters of intent prior to submission of full proposals. Note deadlines and LOI requirements.

**Award Period** – Look for the number of years a project will be funded as well as the project start date. This information is critical as you begin to develop your project scope, timelines and budget.

**Budget Constraints** – Has the sponsor set aside funds for this particular announcement (often characteristic of a Request for Applications) or will it be funded out of the sponsor's general budget? Are there limits placed on the funding? Are these limits characterized as **total** costs or **direct** costs? Does the sponsor set limitations on Facilities and Administrative Costs? Does the sponsor require or encourage cost sharing? If so, at what level?

**Submission Process** – Are proposals to be submitted as hard copy, electronically or some combination of the two? If hard copy, in addition to the original, how many copies are required? For electronic submission, what system will be used – Grants.gov, FastLane, sponsor-specific system, e-mail, etc.? If the sponsor requires electronic submission but also wants items delivered to them, what form are these items to take?

**Sponsor Contact Information** – Note whether sponsor contact is encouraged. Most federal sponsors strongly encourage investigators to contact the program officer or program staff well before the submission deadline with questions about proposal fit, how best to situate the project to be competitive at that agency, etc. Other sponsors may limit contact, at least at the proposal stage. When sponsor contact is encouraged, be ready to talk to the program officer about your specific project in a concise, knowledgeable manner.

**Eligibility Criteria** – Are institutions eligible to apply or does the sponsor limit proposal submission to individuals? What types of institutions are eligible? When an institution is the applicant, sponsors sometimes set specific requirements for the principal investigator, especially in conjunction with new investigator or mid-career opportunities. Does the sponsor stipulate that the individual principal investigator be: at a certain academic rank, only a certain number of years beyond doctorate or residency, in specific disciplines or research fields, US citizens or permanent residents?

**TYPICAL PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:**

*Every sponsor requires you to supply information about the proposed project for which you seek funding. Some sponsors are extremely detailed in their requirements while others give more responsibility to you as the investigator to determine the appropriate information to supply. Many sponsors require at least some form of the following components:*

**Project Summary/Abstract** – Depending on the sponsor, this is either a brief overview of the project contemplated or a summary of the end results you expect to report to the sponsor. This particular component is often the first item program officers and reviewers see. For example, at the National Science Foundation program officers are provided with all the project summaries received for a particular grant competition so they may review them and select peer reviewers as appropriate. Your abstract is also often what sponsors post on their websites after awards are made.

**Project Description/Research Plan** – This proposal section is the area in which you will detail your project. Typical sections within the project description (aka, research plan) include Project Objectives, Anticipated Results, Proposed Approach and Applicability.

**References** – Each sponsor and every discipline approaches the reference section of a proposal differently. Be certain to use all available resources to identify pertinent bibliographical references for your proposal including campus reference librarians and on-line databases.

**Description of Facilities, Equipment and Programs** – Provide the sponsor and the proposal reviewers with an understanding of the institutional resources including facilities, equipment and relevant ongoing programs available at the University or a partner institution for this project. Some sponsors have particular formats for this section.

**Subcontractors/Collaborators** – Carefully explain collaborative relationships within the project description/research plan section or a separate section of the proposal as dictated by the sponsor. Multi-investigator and multi-institutional projects necessitate that you outline how such arrangements will be effectively managed. [Also see Letters of Commitment]

**Detailed Budget** – Within the budget parameters you noted when reviewing the sponsor application materials, begin to put together your budget request for the project. *Development of your budget and budget justification should be an ongoing activity, not one left as the last detail.* Your budget will serve a number of purposes including illustrating your business management skills to the sponsor and proposal reviewers. If you plan to request equipment, be certain to obtain price quotes from the appropriate manufacturer to include in your proposal. [See ORDE Proposal Budget Checklist]

**Budget Justification** – Utilize this section to make your case for every budget item you are requesting for this project. Give as many details as possible within the sponsor guidelines and page limits. For example, if the sponsor allows, itemize your supply request, indicate the need for each item and provide details concerning your travel plans such as specific conferences you wish to attend to disseminate information about the ongoing project.

**Current/Pending Support** – Some sponsors (for example, the National Institutes of Health) collect information about your current and pending projects when they are contemplating an award rather than at time of proposal. Most sponsors have specified formats for provision of this information. Current and pending support details are usually needed for all key personnel, not just the principal investigator, so you will want to request this information from your collaborators **early** in the proposal process, if required.

**Letters of Commitment** – If the proposed project requires evidence of institutional support or there are outside partners or collaborators involved, you may need to provide documentation of commitment in the form of letters. Request these types of documents **early** in the proposal development process to insure you have the originals well before the deadline.

**Other Required Items as Applicable to Your Project** – You will be required to provide documentation concerning approval from the appropriate University officials for use of human and animal subjects, radiation safety, rDNA research, select agents and other biosafety concerns. Some sponsors require that you address these points in your proposal and will then follow up for the specific approval documentation at time of award. Please visit the Research Office homepage to locate the appropriate offices to assist you in these processes.

***Be certain to begin working early in the proposal process with your designated departmental grant coordinator to manage proposal submission through required University processes.***