Grants Pre-Award Procedures

After you have identified the grant announcement, or any externally funded project, and reading all the information about the requirements of a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), the very first step you should take is to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects (ORSP).

> *See the description of the various FOA types in the CIHRE home webpage under "Grant Application " → Research Proposal Categories.*

The following instructions apply to all submissions where you will be a Principal Investigator (PI), co-Principal Investigator (co-PI), co-Investigator, researcher, evaluator, or a participant in any activities under a sponsored/externally funded project, or other legally binding agreement.

This requirements listed here apply to grants/financing/contracts submitted to the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation (NSF), any other Federal or State or Local government agency, local, State and National Foundations and any private for profit or non-profit organization.

It also applies to grants/financing/contracts submitted to another public or private university in the U.S. or abroad, to all levels of a non-U.S. government agency, and non-U.S. private for profit or non-profit organization.

Section 1: Submit a Notice of Intent Form (NOI)

> *The NOI should be submitted as soon as you know you will follow through with writing the proposal— the earlier the better.*

Click here to access the NOI submission page at the ORSP home page under " Forms, *Tools, & Templates→: Notice of Intent (NOI) Form*

After you login with your ID and password (the one you use to access Outlook e-mail), please complete all fields of the form. The correct "Grant Program" identification and the "Solicitation URL" address are crucial. This information is used by ORSP staff to access the grant announcement and study all requirements for submission, and also to monitor any changes that may occur in the grant deadlines or submission procedures.

> ### Choosing your department/unit:
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> *Choose either your department or the CTR FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH RESEARCH AND EVALUATION (CIHRE) as the submitting Center or Department. Choosing CIHRE will still identify your department for the indirect cost return incentive. Your faculty incentive will not be affected. Please read comments in the CIHRE webpage under "Grant Application" →"Post-Award→ Faculty Incentives."*

Section 2. Research Administrator (RA) involvement with the process

Within two (2) days after completing the NOI, you will receive an e-mail from the ORSP Research Administrator (RA) requesting details regarding your grant submission.

The RA will contact you to make an appointment to discuss your preliminary budget and other proposal details. *See the next section on "Budget and Budget Justification" detailing some of the information you need to prepare for the RA.*

> *Presently the CHS' RA who is responsible for grant submissions is Jonathan Macias, a Grants and Contracts Specialist. He can be reached at jjmacias@utep.edu.*

At the initial budget meeting, please provide the names, contact information, and Department affiliation of all co-PIs/co-Investigators in the grant. This is very important, so that credit can be given individually to each co-PI /co-Investigator and also to the Department they are assigned to, and Center with which they are affiliated.

If there are any sub-contractors proposed on the project, the RA will provide you the "Subcontractor Information Package" that will capture all relevant scope of work, budget, and institutional information for each sub contractor.

> *If you are not contacted within two days, call the ORSP and speak to the RA (ORSP number is 915 -747-5680) to obtain an appointment to discuss the proposal. If you also requested assistance from ORSP Proposal Development Team (ORSPDevT) at that time, a representative from the ORSPDevT will contact you as well to discuss their assistance options. See section 4 for more details.*

During the appointment to discuss the initial budget, the RA will use a program (Research Tool) that will create a draft budget in the format that is required by the funding agency. The Research Tool automatically takes in consideration the pay scale for each participant, applicable fringe benefits, indirect rate, and any other standard and allowable budget requirements.

The information needed for the RA to complete the budget is included in the CIHRE webpage under "Grant Application" →"Pre-Award → "Information needed for budget".

As soon as your budget is reviewed and updated, the RA can "approve" the draft budget, which then allows the generating of your grant Transmittal Form, i.e., the document necessary to authorize the RA to submit your grant to the funding agency (i.e., "upload " your grant package to the agency server). An example of the transmittal forms is included in the CIHRE webpage under "Grant Application" →"Pre-Award →Transmittal forms.

> *Please see Section 5, in this write-up, for the requirements for completing the Transmittal Forms, before submitting it to the Departmental Chair and the CHS Dean for signature.*

The Transmittal Forms **have to be** signed by the Department Chair/Director, Center Director (if applicable) and the CHS Dean, before the RA is authorized to submit a proposal to the funding agency or organization.

In most cases, the RA (or other RA's within ORSP) is the only authorized individual to submit proposals to funding agencies. When applicable, the RA will have already downloaded the grant proposal "package", which is an electronic form specific to the grant

to which you will be applying and that contains all the requirements from the granting agency. This "package" is completed by the RA, however, it is your proposal narrative and documentation that populates the information in the package. This package is then submitted to the funding agency—hopefully 5 days before the grant due date to avoid last-minute problems.

> *There have been instances in the past when last minute submissions were not accepted, or submissions were not possible due to technical submission issues; computer problems, server crashes, internet or power outages, etc.*

> *An annotated example of the SF424 package that the RA has to submit to specific Federal agency is available in the CIHRE webpage under "Grant Application" → NIH Submission Forms."*

To complete a grant for submission, you will have to provide to the RA a number of documents: the grant narrative, the budget justification, proof of IRB submission (when required), Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with agencies, Institutional Letter of Commitment, letters of support from stakeholders, biographical sketches for you and collaborators, and any other attachments that the agency may require. **You** have the responsibility to fulfill all the scientific requirements of the grant, and to provide the RA with all the necessary documentation needed to complete the application package, regardless of agency type.

> *It is important to **read the grant announcement many times** to make sure that you are not missing any requirements. Grants have been rejected because of the lack of what the applicant thought was minor document, or because a letter of support from a crucial agency was not included, or a required Appendix was mislabeled or not included.*

Provide the RA with all the information <u>as you complete it</u>, so that the "package" can be assembled accurately and on time. Communicate with your RA regularly and ask questions. —you are not alone in this process. Forms that are completed at the last moment may contain serious flaws and the RA will not have the time to review all of them prior to submission. Should serious flaws occur <u>due to last moment submission,</u> the failure to submit the grant becomes your responsibility.

> *Even after the grant is submitted and <u>before the <u>grant due date</u></u> and time, the RA may be able to retrieve a submitted grant or upload a corrected version to an agency without penalty— this should be reserved for extreme situations and should not be a common practice.*

> *If you want to make changes in the budget, or are waiting for the curriculum vitae from a consultant, you can let the RA know that changes are pending. The earlier you submit your grant to the ORSP, the smoother the process, and the earlier you can relax. Do not wait until the last minute to submit grant documentation to ORSP*

Section 3. Budget and Budget justifications

Assisting with the development of a budget is the RA expertise. It starts with a draft budget after the first interaction with the RA, which is subject to changes that will inevitably occur as the proposal write-up process unfolds. You will probably change your mind about what you need many times, and so will your co-PIs, The ORSP RA's are used to that.

If your budget involves a subcontract to or from another University or another agency or community-based organization (CBO), there will be other requirements that may delay the process. The earlier you contact the RA and start working on the subcontractor budget and scope of work, the better it will be for all parties involved.

Your grant budget should reflect the financial resources you need to accomplish the scope of the project that you are proposing. Be aware of a common tendency of overpromising activities and results, and asking for less funding then what is necessary. Reviewers and the agency project officers are savvy and experienced and will know if you are overpromising to impress the review panel. It is better to over deliver than over promise.

The RA will pay particular attention to "cost sharing" guidelines. Under no circumstances you should offer or commit to voluntary cost sharing or commit the University to financial support of part of your project, unless it is mandated in the RFP or agency proposal guidelines

The inclusion of doctoral, graduate, and undergraduate students from the College is an important as part of your grant. If you are mentoring some students, by all means give them preference, but if you do not manage to obtain the right student with the right skills from your department, please look into other CHS departments and the university at large.

In your budget, do not forget to include (if allowable)
- Supplies
- Participant incentives
- Local Travel funds
- Administrative support—when allowed by the agency. The RA will contact the person in charge of the financial aspects of the grant and will advise you.

The budget justification has to include an explanation of each of the items that are included in the budget. An example can be found in the CIHRE webpage under "Grant Application" →"Pre-Award → Example of the Budget Justification."

Section 4. Grant Narrative

It is important to have the Chair/Director informed of your work in the grant from the very beginning. The involvement of the Chair/Director can help you obtain letters of support, memorandum of understanding (MOUs), and other support. Moreover, it will allow you to obtain the needed signatures in the transmittal forms more quickly; if the Chair/Director has been helping you edit the various iterations of the grant narrative and methodology. She/he will not be surprised when you bring the transmittal forms for signature.

There is another team at ORSP— the Grant Development Team (ORSPDevT) — that assists researchers during the grant review process. Please note that the Grant Development Team **is not a grant writing** team, but was created to assist the researcher during the proposal development, with enough time they will:

By appointment, they will assist with the analysis of the funding announcement to help the researcher understand all agency requirements. If needed, especially in large interdisciplinary proposals, they will, with a **three months advanced notice** assist investigators with proposal planning and development meetings to help coordinate the writing process.

Two weeks before a grant is due*,* but preferably before, the Development Team will review specific content areas of the grant narrative and assist with sections of the proposal such as project management, evaluation, and dissemination, and will help obtaining institutional supporting documents and letters

One week before the due date, but preferably before, they will reviews the proposal final draft and provide edits to the proposals (and supporting documents) and will provide grammar and stylistic suggestions

The Development Team staff is not tasked to write research grants. They are tasked to read a draft and look for any deviations of internal logic in the grant. For instance, if you have three objectives/hypothesis, they will see if you have proposed the mechanisms on how to accomplish them, what quantitative or qualitative instruments will you use to collect data to test the hypothesis, if you have proposed an analysis for each hypothesis, etc.

The Grant Development Team input may make a difference between having a grant approved or not. The Team members are trained to think like grant reviewers and to find the flaws that most likely will get a grant rejected.

Section 5. Transmittal forms

After you have completed all of the above and your grant narrative is completed, and before the RA can submit your grant to the funding agency, you will have to complete the transmittal forms and have them submitted to the CHS RA at ORSP.

Transmittal Forms Completion Process:

a) After you have complete the grant narrative, have finalized the budget and budget justification, and submitted all ancillary the documentation to the RA, you will have to provide two documents to have the transmittal form ready by the RA:
   - The abstract of your grant
   - A copy of the budget justification (The RA will prepare the budget)

b) The RA will prepare the transmittal forms and will send them to you, so that you can obtain the signature of the Department Chair/Director.

   The CHS Director of Research and the CHS Dean assume that the Department Chair/Director signature in the transmittal form, signifies that he/she has read the grant narrative.

   It is important to submit a copy of the grant narrative to the Department Chair/Director with enough time to obtain support and editorial suggestions. A Chair /Director may refuse to sign the transmittal forms if this is the first time she or he is made aware of the grant's existence, and may demand more time to evaluate the grant.

c) The transmittal forms with both signatures will then be given to the Dean Executive Assistant who will route them to the CHS Director of Research.

d) The Director of Research will review the forms for the signatures, abstract, budget and budget justification and, if no discrepancies are detected, will route it to the CHS Dean for signature.

e) After the Dean approves the grant and signs the forms, the Dean's Executive Assistant will scan the forms, send one copy to the RA, one to the researcher, and will keep one for the Dean's official records.

f) Upon receiving the signed transmittal forms, the RA will complete the upload of the documents and submit the grant to grants.gov, if that is the required procedure.

> *Although we have been using the NIH procedures as an example, in many cases the National Science Foundation (NSF) uses FastLane as their submission portal, and the Department of Education uses their own portal. Not every grant submitted by ORSP goes through grants.gov. Again, the RA is the person that can guide you.*

g) When a proposal is submitted through grants.gov, the funding agency will acknowledge to the RA the receipt of the grant. If no fatal errors are detected, it will be forwarded to the specific agency that requested the proposal. If errors are found, the RA will forward the notice to the PI, who will have to address non-administrative errors. All administrative errors are handled by the RA.

> *Of course, this process can only work if proposals are submitted before due date and on time. A "just in time" submission does not leave room for notifications of revisions and actual revision time.*

h) The agency will then send the RA a notice stating that the grant has been received, and a tracking number will be furnished to the RA for future reference.

i) The RA will forward the notice to you stating that everything is under control and will furnish you with the grant tracking number.

j) As soon as the project is funded the RA will receive a Notice of Award (NOA), and the RA will contact the researcher to initiate the post award activities.

> *Please allow a minimum of 4 to 6 months (in general) before agencies are contacted if no feedback has been provided on a submitted proposal at the Grants.gov webpage.*

Section 6. How to check on the status of a submitted grant

Go to www.grants.gov and under "*Applicants*" click *"Track My application"* and enter up the application tracking number and click the "Submit Tracking Number(s)" button.

The system will return the status of the application: "assigned to an agency", "assigned to a review panel", "under review", and (hopefully) "approved".

Other agencies will have other mechanisms to help you keep track of the grant status. Your RA will help you with the correct procedures