Starting Your Application – Grant Proposal Process

Proposal Development

Departmental Policies

Any faculty member who wishes to apply for funding must ensure that they have the ability to fulfill the requirements and objectives of the proposed project.

Before starting your grant application, it is recommended that you meet with your Department Head/Chair to ensure that the proposed project fits into the overall mission of the College and there are no departmental concerns that may limit the scope of the activities.

If institutional resources (cost share, space, equipment, etc.) are needed, then it is recommended that a discussion be held with your Department Head and Academic School Dean to ensure that the resources are available for commitment to the grant.

If human subjects are involved in your grant application, you must request Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before proceeding with your study. The IRB website contains the appropriate forms and policy statement. **No research project, which involves human subjects, may begin prior to receiving IRB approval.**

Grant Guidelines and Application Requirements

Through the various types of grant solicitations, sponsors communicate the grant guidelines and requirements for preparing a proposal. The following should be confirmed before preparing your application:

- The eligibility criteria are met for submitting an application.
- The project that is being developed is compatible with the sponsor's funding priorities.
- The resources needed are available to carry out the proposed project.
- The deadline for submitting an application is still open and there is ample time to prepare the application.

It is standard practice to reach out to a program official at the sponsor agency to ask questions and obtain clarification on whether your proposed research fits into the funding goals. The program official can provide guidance and help to determine if your application will be reviewed favorably.

Putting Together Timelines

It is important that sufficient time be allocated for developing the proposal before the deadline. A good rule of thumb is to begin working on your proposal at minimum, 2-3 months prior to the deadline. For large, multi-center grants, that may require considerable collaboration across disciplines or institutions, the process should begin at minimum, 5-6 months before the deadline. Always set up a meeting with an authorized organizational representative (AOR). They will provide assistance with developing realistic timelines, putting together the budget and preparing the proposal.

If subcontract arrangements are a part of the grant application, allow additional time for the subcontract entity to adhere to their institutional requirements and supply any documentation that confirms the negotiated terms of the agreement. It would be wise to inquire with the subcontractor at the onset of negotiations about their institutional timeframes and factor them into the submission timelines that are developed.

The final and completed application must be submitted to the AOR seven (7) business days prior to the deadline. The AOR will review the completed proposal to ensure the contents adhere to all requirements set forth by the sponsor.

Staring a Proposal

The proposal process can begin in one of two ways:

1. A faculty member identifies an external funding opportunity/solicitation, or
2. The Office of Research and Grants sends out a Funding Alert notification.

The Office of Research and Grants (ORG) creates a Funding Alert every month. The alerts can be found on our Monthly Funding Alert page.

Once a funding opportunity is identified, contact the AOR who will provide assistance with the preparation of the grant application. The preparation includes developing reasonable timeframes; constructing the budget; and the review of the proposal content for submission by the prescribed deadline.

The Citadel has an AOR who is available to provide assistance with the preparation of grant applications. Please review the Who may submit a grant proposal? to determine the best point of contact. If you have a general question or would like to notify us about a potential grant submission, you can send an email to grantsinfo@citadel.edu.

There are numerous online government and foundation how-to guides and tools for writing comprehensive and successful grant proposals that can be referenced. Please see Proposal Content for an overview of common components of a grant application. In addition, the one page proposal submission guideline is a brief overview of the grant proposal process.

Proposal Content

The contents of each proposal will vary depending on the sponsor requirements. Each proposal must conform to the grant guidelines and be formatted as requested. Any deviation or non-compliance from the requested format may result in the application being rejected on a technical merit. Some, not all, of the standard components of a proposal are detailed below:

Abstract/Summary

Usually, no more than one page, the abstract or executive summary is a brief overview of the project and the expected outcomes.

Narrative

The Project Narrative is the section of the grant application where the applicant gives a clear and brief definition on the relevance of the proposed research project.

Research Plan

The research plan or program plan is where the Principal Investigator (PI) provides concrete and detailed information on the intended population to be served, the program design, and the plan for obtaining the proposed outcomes. The description should discuss the Principal Investigator's goals, objectives, and innovative activities for

developing a strong program with solid results. It should address how the activities parallel with the sponsor's priorities. The plan should also highlight how the proposed staffing configuration and other costs will help to achieve the desired goals. The sponsor needs to see that the amount of money being requested will adequately cover the cost of the project.

Budget

Every application will require a financial plan that shows how funds will be allocated and spent during each budget period. The budget is normally separated into two categories - direct and indirect costs. When developing the figures for your budget, it is important to be mindful of the cost principals that govern direct and indirect cost on a grant. Both categories have costs that are considered **unallowable** and therefore cannot be charged to the grant without violating federal guidelines. The grant guidelines may also detail additional unallowable costs that are prohibited on the grant.

Direct costs are those costs that are needed to carry out the project and achieve the projected outcomes. An itemized listing should be prepared for each of the following categories that are considered direct costs:

Salaries and wages - A listing of the personnel needed to carry out the project, the percentage effort and the estimated number of months to be devoted to the project each year. Some budgets will require the salaries and wages in person months (**Percent of Time & Effort to Person Months Calculator**) format. Person months is defined as the metric for expressing the effort (amount of time) PI(s), faculty and other senior personnel devote to a specific project.

Materials and Supplies - These are general purpose consumable items which commonly have a short life span in use, less than one year. General office supplies are not normally allowed in this category as most institutions factor in the costs of general office supplies into the indirect cost calculation rate.

Equipment – Large pieces of equipment or machinery that cost $5,000 or more and have a useful life of more than one year.

Travel – A breakdown of costs associated with domestic and foreign travel that directly relates to the project. Information on travel should include the destination (if known), who is traveling, and the number of trips. For grant submissions to the federal government, federal regulations require (with some exceptions) travelers who are funded by federally sponsored projects to use U.S. flag air carrier service. This regulation is called "the Fly America Act."

Consultant costs – the costs for expert professional services provided by an individual who is not employed or affiliated with the institution. The compensation provided is normally an hourly or daily fee that is negotiated based on the service to be provided. A letter stating the terms of the agreement is usually required for the application (see sample Consultant Letter Template).

Sub-contract/sub-award agreements – These are negotiated agreements that allow another organization to perform some of the activities for the grant under the supervision of the Principal Investigator. These types of agreements enable collaborations that can be of great benefit to the project or provide the principal investigator with the ability to secure services that might not be available at his/her institution.

Publications – Books, research papers, journals, catalogs, teaching aids, authored by an expert in the field.

Alterations/Renovations – Large scale structural upgrades that are needed to maintain a buildings infrastructure and/or utility systems.

Other Costs – This category includes other direct costs that are not described above such as tuition and health insurance fees for graduate students or incentives paid for participating in a study.

Indirect costs also known as facilities and administrative (F&A) costs are expenses incurred for the common or joint objective of the institution (e.g., utilities, rent, audit and legal, administrative and clerical staff.) The funds received from the indirect recovery helps to support research and infrastructure costs across the campus, therefore, indirect costs will only be waived, if the sponsor guidelines specifically prohibit the inclusion of such costs.

Budget Justification

A budget justification is a well-written explanation of the numerical figures provided in the requested budget. The narrative should support the proposed program and should provide enough information to justify all potential costs identified in the budget (see Sample Budget Justification).

Biographical Sketch (aka Biosketch)

A biosketch is a brief summary of all professional/educational accomplishments, publications, and affiliations. It is abbreviated curriculum vitae meant to highlight important aspects of the training, experience, and areas of interest of key staff working on the project (see NSF Biosketch Template or NIH Biosketch Template).

Current and Pending Support (Other Support)

All key staff on the project provide a current and pending support form. This information includes all of the financial resources such as Federal, non-Federal, commercial or institutional, of any and all research endeavors, including but not limited to grants, cooperative agreements, contracts, and/or institutional awards (see Current and Pending Support Template).

Appendix

An appendix is supplementary material at the end of a grant proposal. The material is usually of an explanatory, statistical, or bibliographic nature. Some sponsors have restrictions on how appendix material may be utilized in the proposal. Always review the grant guidelines to ensure adherence to the requirements for use of appendix material.

Letter of Support

Document(s), which endorse the work in the proposed project by the co-investigator, sub-awardee and other participants, included in the grant application. A good support letter includes the nature of the relationship and the type of support that is being provided. The letters of support should reinforce the commitments made in the program description and support the project outcomes. Each letter should be customized by the individual who is writing the letter to fully convey the reason why that individual is in full support of the project. (See Letter of Support Template).

Regulatory Requirements

Human Subjects

The institution must certify that it acts in accordance with the requirements of federal policy, that a research project or activity involving human subjects has been reviewed and approved by an institutional review board (IRB) in

accordance with an approved assurance. The institution must have a statement of principles that govern the institution in the discharge of its responsibilities for protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects of research conducted at or sponsored by the institution, regardless of whether the research is subject to federal regulation.

This may include an appropriate existing code, declaration, or statement of ethical principles, or a statement formulated by the institution.

Relevant Documents:
Code of Federal Regulations, Department of Health and Human Services
The Citadel IRB policies and procedures

Debt, Debarment, and Suspension

Institutions must certify that any faculty member or staff applying for a grant is not excluded from participating in grants and other non-procurement awards government-wide. If debarred or suspended, the person or organization may not receive financial assistance (under a grant, cooperative agreement, or subaward, or contract under a grant) for a specified period of time. (See Debt, Debarment, and Suspension Certification form)

Drug-free Workplace

The institution is required to certify that compliance is met with the Drug-Free Workplace Act. (See Drug-free Workplace policy)

Lobbying

The institution is required to complete a certification regarding lobbying restrictions. The institution must certify that it does not use federal funds (grant, cooperative agreement and contract funds) for lobbying of any state legislation or appropriations pending before the Congress or any state legislature.

Misconduct in Science

The institution is required to certify that it has a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who will be supported by the grant.

Conflict of Interest

The institution is required to certify that it has a written policy on conflicts of interest disclosure that is being enforced. (See Conflict of Interest Certification form)

Civil Rights, Handicapped Individuals, Sex Discrimination, Age Discrimination

The institution is required to complete a certification regarding compliance with nondiscrimination regulations and policies. This certification sets forth the nondiscrimination obligations with which all grantees must comply. These obligations also apply to subrecipients, subgrantees, and subcontractors under the award. (See Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy)

Inventions and Patents

The institution must certify that it has a policy in place regarding ownership of intellectual property, including conflict of interest issues. The institution shall instruct employees through employee agreements or other suitable

educational programs on the importance of reporting inventions in sufficient time to permit the filing of patent applications prior to U.S. or foreign statutory bars.

The internal policy that lists the Federal regulations that pertain to all federal funds can be found at Federal General Grant Requirements.

Proposal Submission Procedure

Sponsor Deadlines

Adherence to the deadline is crucial when dealing with grants. Most sponsors, unless otherwise noted, will not consider or review your application for possible funding if you do not meet the deadline stated in the grant guidelines.

Citadel Review and Approval

The Internal Routing Process enables the appropriate administrative entities to review each proposal and attest that all work being performed through the proposed grant activities are in accordance with university and sponsor policies and follow commonly accepted scientific practices in conducting, recording, and interpreting research. The Citadel review process requires the budget, budget narrative and project summary be reviewed and approved by the following individuals before a proposal can be submitted to a sponsor:
1. Department Head/Chair
2. Dean of Academic School
3. Director of the Office of Research and Grants
4. Grants Accountant
5. Vice President of Finance (*with prior review from the Grants Accountant and Director of Financial Services)*
6. Provost and Dean of the College

Submission to Sponsor
Before a proposal can be submitted to the sponsor, it must be provided to the AOR in final form for review **a minimum of seven (7) business days prior to the deadline** (See Internal Deadline Policy). A proposal in final form consists of:
1. Successful review and approval of the budget, budget justification and the project summary with appropriate signatures (Department Head/Chair; Dean of Academic School; Director of the Office of Research and Grants; Grants Accountant; Vice President of Finance; and Provost and Dean of the College.)
2. The final version of all proposal elements per the grant guidelines.
3. Other forms or documents required (i.e. letters of support, statements of institutional commitments, etc.).

The AOR will review the proposal contents and if no corrections are needed, the AOR will submit the grant application via the appropriate web-based system or by mail, based on the grant guidelines. Depending on the submission mechanism, the AOR may allow the principal investigator to submit the application directly to the sponsor.

Post Award

For post award instructions click here.