

Proposal Submission Process  
DRAFT  
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The College of Engineering Research Office (COE-RO) is responsible for coordinating proposal (pre-award) activities between COE investigators and the USF Division of Sponsored Research (DSR). As such investigators will, in most cases, make the COE-RO the first point of contact, and proposal preparation will then proceed with the investigators, COE-RO and DSR working in unison. This preparation proceeds in accordance with the DSR proposal guidelines ([http://www.research.usf.edu/sr/proposal\\_preparation/](http://www.research.usf.edu/sr/proposal_preparation/)). This document summarizes particular aspects of the proposal process.

1. **Submission Deadlines:** Preliminary reviews of program solicitations, budgets, collaborations and other proposal material should be performed within the COE prior to sending to DSR. Accordingly, the following deadlines apply: **15 days** prior to agency submission deadline for providing notification to the COE-RO, along with the program announcement and/or other documents with solicitation information; **8 days** prior to agency submission deadline for providing budgets, cost-share agreements, proposal material and other required documents. With over 400 proposals submitted annually, it is typical that 5-15 proposals are in active preparation at any given time. Adequate time for preparation and review of proposals helps to ensure overall quality, adherence to agency guidelines and the likelihood of success.
2. **USF Internal Form:** As of July 1, 2011, the Division of Sponsored Research (DSR) will ask that a signed and fully-completed internal form accompany all proposals submitted. If you are not already registered to use DSR's online Internal Form, you may do so by visiting <http://www.research.usf.edu/login/register.asp>
3. **Working with Your Unit Research Administrator:** An active partnership between the investigator and unit research administrator, with clear and responsive communications, is the key to a successful proposal submission. Investigators are strongly encouraged to meet with the research administrator, in person, to discuss proposal plans in advance. During the development period, investigators should make an effort to respond as quickly as possible to requests for information, and to inform the research administrator on the status of items that may be lagging (e.g. letters of commitment from collaborators) so that the entire team stays "on the same page."
4. **Budgetary Issues:**
  - a. **Cost Share** – Investigators submitting proposals that involve cost-sharing should inform the COE-RO and the Associate Dean for Research, even in advance of the schedule outlined above. Assistance will be provided in coordinating cost-share commitments with the Office of Research, Academic Affairs and other relevant parties as needed.
    - i. **Mandatory versus Voluntary** – Mandatory cost-share is that which is required by the sponsoring agency and particular solicitation, e.g. NSF Major Research Instrumentation grants. The policies regarding contributions made by different sources (e.g. COE, Academic Affairs, Office of Research & Innovation) are in general transitory so investigators are encouraged to contact the Associate Dean for Research for guidance on prevailing policies. Voluntary cost-share, that which is

- not a required component for a particular solicitation, should be considered only in exceptional situations which are well-justified.
- ii. Departmental Release Time – It is typical that a portion of a faculty member’s academic-year assigned effort is committed to research-related activity. As the discretion of the department chair, this release time may be allocated toward cost-share requirements.
  - iii. Course Buy-Out – Another potential source that can be used to meet cost-share requirements is related to course buy-out. If a department allows a faculty member to buy out of a course at a level that is below the faculty member’s salary rate, the differential can be allocated toward the cost-share requirement.
  - iv. Out-of-State Tuition Waivers – Graduate student research assistants and students with fellowships are coded as “in-state” by the USF Graduate School. Accordingly, out-of-state tuition waivers can not be allocated toward cost-share requirements.
- b. Indirect Cost Rate – Prevailing indirect cost rates are available from the DSR website (<http://www.research.usf.edu/sr/indirectcost.htm#Chart>). Typical rates include 49% for on-campus research, and 27.5% for projects in which at least 50% of the effort is performed outside the commuting distance from Tampa. Other rates apply to certain state agencies, SUS universities, etc. Investigators should contact a COE-RO unit research administrator for guidance.
  - c. Graduate Student Tuition and Health: Investigators budgeting graduate assistants are obligated to comply with the provisions outlined in the current GAU Bargaining Agreement. <http://usfweb2.usf.edu/human-resources/pdfs/collective-bargaining/gau-agreement-08-11.pdf>
  - d. Equipment versus Supplies and Materials – Single items costing more than \$1,000 are considered to be equipment and do not incur indirect cost charges. Systems that require custom manufacturing services are also considered to be equipment, unless the University will not retain ownership in the manufactured system in which case indirect charges will be incurred.
5. **Faculty Assigned Effort:** This measure is used to report the allocation of faculty time during the academic year and summer months to activities such as teaching, research (by grant), academic service, etc. Investigators should be aware of agency-specific guidelines relating to this topic, and are encouraged to discuss this periodically with the COE-RO and their Resource Management fiscal analyst. University procedures on reporting faculty assigned effort are under review.
  6. **Special Considerations for Fellowship Proposals and REU Proposals:** Participant support costs are restricted funds and can only be budgeted for students or non-USF employees. Guidelines on the use of funds, indirect cost rate, etc. will vary depending on the solicitation, and investigators are encouraged to speak with a COE Unit Research Administrator for guidance.
  7. **Special Considerations for Curriculum Development Proposals:** Those proposals that will impact academic programs must be approved in advance by the relevant academic department(s), in consultation with the Associate Dean for Academics and/or the Associate Dean for Research.
  8. **Student, Post-Doc and Faculty Training in Research Compliance:** Beginning in the Fall 2010 semester, all undergraduate REU students, graduate students appointed as Teaching Assistants or Research Assistants, and post-doctoral fellows must complete the Responsible Conduct in Research training. Similar training requirements apply to investigators (faculty members, assistants in research, etc.) that are supported by NIH grants. Details on this training requirement are available from the COE-RO.

9. **Collaborative Proposals:** Proposals that involve partnerships with other institutions or companies require additional preparation time and should be scheduled accordingly. The minimum requirements of the sponsoring agency typically include: 1) a letter of commitment from the collaborator's institutional representative, 2) a template for a Memorandum of Understanding that is expected to be finalized at the time of an award, and 3) curriculum vitae and similar information on the collaborating investigators. In some cases information from each collaborating institution may be submitted to the sponsoring agency separately, while in other cases the "lead institution" is responsible for the submission of all documents.
10. **Conflict of Interest:** The University's conflict of interest policy is available at [http://usfweb2.usf.edu/usfgc/gc\\_pp/genadm/gc309.htm](http://usfweb2.usf.edu/usfgc/gc_pp/genadm/gc309.htm). According to the policy, *a USF system employee who is responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of a sponsored research project under the auspices of the USF system must disclose financial or other interests that are, or may be perceived to be, related to the project. Existing or potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed prior to the submission of a proposal for funding. Actual or potential conflicts of interest that develop during the conduct of a funded project must be disclosed as soon as the conflicts occur. If the USF system determines that such interests may affect the design, conduct, or reporting of the project, steps will be taken to manage or eliminate the conflict.*
11. **Export Control:** Export control is an issue of growing concern within the academic community and is one that is receiving considerable attention by Office of Research and the Office of the General Counsel. University policies can be found at <http://www.research.usf.edu/sr/export/>. It is the responsibility of every investigator to be aware of relevant export control guidelines, and to recognize the projects that are potentially subject to export control are likely to undergo a thorough review by DSR before submission, and at the time of an award. Investigators should plan and schedule accordingly.
12. **Letters of Support/Commitment:**
  - a. When preparing a collaborative or joint proposal with an outside entity (e.g. a company or another university) investigators should inform a COE unit research administrator and DSR for review of the solicitation. Generally, when the proposal will be submitted solely by the outside entity, DSR will provide a letter of commitment to the outside entity stating the University's intent to support the project if awarded. This is a common practice in the case of Small Business Innovative Research proposals, for example.
  - b. Proposals prepared in collaboration with an outside entity typically require that a Memorandum of Understanding between the parties be signed, or at least reviewed, in advance of the submission. Investigators should discuss this with a COE unit research administrator.
  - c. It is not absolutely necessary to coordinate with a unit research administrator or DSR when exchanging preliminary (white paper type) information with a potential sponsor. However, in this case detailed budgetary information outlining indirect cost, etc. should not be provided – this level of detailed information should be approved in advance by DSR.
  - d. Proposals that require, or will be enhanced by including a letter of commitment, support or cost-share from a University administrator (from the College, Office of Research & Innovation, the Provost, etc.) should be discussed well in advance of the submission deadline with the unit research administrator. It can often take several days to prepare, review and process these letters.

**13. Once the Grant/Contract is Awarded:**

- a. New Project meetings with Resource Management Staff – After a grant proposal is awarded, investigators are strongly encouraged to arrange meetings with their fiscal analyst from Resource Management and a unit research administrator familiar with the proposal. The primary purpose of this meeting is to review budget planning, and also to familiarize the fiscal analyst with the specifics of the grant.