Proposal Assembly and Submission

Exploring the required components and business processes associated with sponsored proposal assembly and submission at the University of Minnesota.

START

Overview

Welcome to Proposal Assembly and Submission. The purpose of this course is to provide University employees with a basic overview of how to properly assemble and submit a proposal package to SPA.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

✓ Identify the commonly required proposal components.
✓ Articulate the common proposal requirements.
✓ Know how to develop an effective proposal plan.
✓ Assemble a proposal according to University policy and sponsor guidelines.
✓ Submit a completed proposal package to SPA on time.

Since the process of assembling and submitting a proposal package resembles the steps in authoring a book, this course is broken into four sections:

1. Plan  2. Write  3. Assemble  4. Submit to SPA

Click the first step in the process, Plan, to begin the process.
Proposition Assembly and Submission

Develop a Plan

What do all published books and funded proposals have in common?
They had an effective plan.

After a potential funding opportunity is located and the PI and department are both eligible to apply for it, a detailed plan must be developed to ensure all of the sponsor’s guidelines and deadlines are met.

This section will examine the topics listed in the box on the right to help you start developing a plan.

TOPICS

- Read and research the sponsor’s guidelines.
- Confirm roles and responsibilities.
- Determine proposal type and purpose.
- Determine compliance/protocol requirements.
- Determine subaward involvement.
- Establish internal deadlines.
- Verify proposal submission method.

Click on the first topic in the list to continue.

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Read and Research Sponsor’s Guidelines

As authors must follow their publisher’s rules, PIs must follow their sponsor’s guidelines to be funded.

A common reason for proposals not being funded is that the application instructions and sponsor guidelines were not followed perfectly.

Those responsible for the proposal must carefully read the sponsor’s guidelines to confirm the following:

- Who is eligible to apply and the range of award amounts
- Selection criteria
- Required formatting and submission method
- Budgetary guidelines
- Sponsor’s contact and general information
- Sponsor’s submission requirement deadline

Click on the next topic in the list to continue.

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Confirm Roles and Responsibilities

As a book needs an author, a proposal needs individuals to create its content.

While a Principal Investigator (PI) has ultimate responsibility for a proposal, the PI may delegate the completion of certain proposal pieces.

Individuals who commonly help create proposals include:
- Co-Investigator
- Researcher
- Pre-Award DRA
- Accountant
- HR/Payroll Administrator

Click on the next topic in the list to continue.

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Determine the Proposal Type and Purpose

The primary types of sponsored projects are grant, contract, and cooperative agreement. Once a potential funding source is found, determine the project type so expectations can be set, such as:
- Sponsor’s level of involvement: Grants have little to no sponsor involvement, while cooperative agreements have extensive sponsor involvement.
- Regulations/Requirements: Any mention of FARs typically means that it is a contract where detailed legal and reporting obligations must be followed.

The proposal purpose indicates what the work scope’s overall mission is and will typically determine which F&A rate and other budgetary requirements must be used.

Click on the next topic in the list to continue.

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Screen shots of SPECTRUM Proposal Budget Creation tutorial

**Determine Compliance/Protocol Requirements**

Compliance requirements must be considered at the beginning of the proposal process. If prior approvals or protocols are required, they can take a while for a department to plan, apply for, and to obtain them. Here are common compliance requirements for which University officials’ approval or protocols must be obtained. Click the links below to learn about them.

- **Human Subjects:** Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- **Animals:** Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
- **rDNA:** Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)
- **Chemicals:** Department of Environmental Health and Safety (DEHS)
- **Export Controls:** Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA)

**Determine Subaward Involvement**

Subawards must be considered at the beginning of the proposal process, because when involved, additional time will be needed to complete the required elements.

Subawardee:

- Makes programmatic decisions
- Must adhere to compliance requirements
- Uses sponsored funds to carry out a portion of the entire work scope

In addition, specific rules must be followed that pertain to the risk assessment, financial conflicts of interest, and financial management of this type of agreement.
Establish and Communicate Internal Deadlines

All individuals with roles must work together to set the proposal's various deadlines.

Confirm the sponsor’s deadline then work backwards in setting the central, collegiate, and departmental deadlines to ensure proper time is allowed for all approvals. Be sure to incorporate weekends and holiday dates.

Here is an example of the deadlines for a Grants.gov proposal:

- Oct. 1, 5 p.m. CST - Sponsor Deadline
- Sept. 24, 5 p.m. CST - Proposal Due to SPA
- Sept. 23, 5 p.m. CST - PRF Approved by Dean/Dept. Head
- Sept. 20, 5 p.m. CST - PRF Created
- Sept. 19, 5 p.m. CST - Proposal Reviewed and Finalized by PI
- Sept. 15, 5 p.m. CST - Proposal Components Due to PI

Verify Proposal Submission Method

Every sponsor's guidelines or application will state how the proposal must be submitted. The three most common submission methods are paper, electronic, and Grants.gov.

Knowing the submission method is critical, as it will determine the deadline for when the proposal must be received by SPA.

SPA’s deadlines are categorized by submission method:
- Electronic proposals (other than Grants.gov) must be received **24 hours** prior to the sponsor’s deadline.
- Paper proposals must be received by SPA **48 hours** prior to the sponsor’s deadline.
- Grants.gov proposals must be received by SPA **5 business days** prior to the sponsor’s deadline.
Screen shots of SPECTRUM Proposal Budget Creation tutorial

Checklist download
Proposal Assembly and Submission for Departments

SECTION 1: OVERALL SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Date Proposal is Due to SPA: ________________  Date Proposal is Due to Sponsor: ________________

PI: ______________________________________ Co-I(s): ______________________________________

Department(s): _________________________ Project Location(s): _________________________

Proposal/Project Title: ________________________________________________________________

Project Dates: _________________________ Sponsors _________________________

Solicitation Number (RFA, RFP): ________________

URL where Solicitation/Sponsor’s Guidelines may be located: ______________________________

Submission Method (circle one): Grants.gov | Paper (via U.S. Mail) | Email | Other: ________________

Type of Project (circle one): Grant | Contract | Cooperative Agreement:

Proposal Purpose (circle one):
Research (basic, applied, or development) | Instruction | Clinical | Trial Equipment | Other

Are there Compliance Considerations? (circle all that apply)
Animals | Human Subjects | Hazardous Chemicals | Export Controls | Other: _________________________

If there are Subawards, list the name(s) of the organization: _________________________________
## Proposal Assembly and Submission for Departments (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal Content</th>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
<th>Person(s) Responsible</th>
<th>Completion Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approval Documents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Work</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget Justification</td>
<td></td>
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<td>REPs for Key Personnel</td>
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<td>Biosketches or CVs for Key Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current and Pending Support for Key Personnel</td>
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<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Subjects, Animal, or Hazardous Materials Compliance Requirements (if applicable)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Export Controls Requirements (if applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subaward Documentation and Requirements such as FCOI (if applicable)</td>
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<td>Sponsor Specific Forms (if applicable)</td>
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<td>Other/Appendix Items (e.g., annual report)</td>
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**Proposal Assembly and Submission**

**Write the Proposal Contents**

Sponsors expect to see certain content in a proposal, just like you would expect to see multiple chapters in a book.

This section of the course will discuss the most commonly required pieces of a proposal, listed to the right.

- Click on the first item in the content list to continue.

**Proposal Documents**

Most proposals require a sponsor-specific form set or document to be completed by the applicant and submitted with the proposal.

Form sets typically include high level information such as the project's title, institution, PI, and capture the mandatory institutional signatures.

Carefully review the sponsor's application guidelines for specific instructions on which approval document is required, where to locate it, and how it must be completed and submitted.

Here is a Grants.gov approval document (SF424) [PDF](#) example.

- Click on the next item in the content list to continue.
Abstract

An abstract is an executive summary that describes the overall need for the project and its objectives.

Carefully read the sponsor's criteria for the abstract. Most abstracts must contain 200 words or less.

Proposals that do not meet the abstract’s criteria typically are returned without further review.

Here is an example of a proposal abstract.

▶ Click on the next item in the content list to continue.

Statement of Work

Similar to how an author must convince the publisher that his/her book will meet a specific audience's needs, a PI must use the statement of work (project narrative) to convince the sponsor that the proposed project will meet the goals and needs of the sponsor.

The PI is responsible for writing the statement of work.

While every sponsor will provide instructions on how the statement of work should be written, common requirements are:

• Purpose or need for the project
• Methodology
• Expected deliverables
• Overall project timeline

Here is an example of a statement of work.

▶ Click on the next item in the content list to continue.
**Budget**

A proposal budget is a breakdown of the costs needed to accomplish the project statement of work.

A primary component of a budget are direct costs:
- Exclusively benefit the specified project
- Must be allowable, allocable, and reasonable

These key elements must be confirmed before any work begins on the budget:
- Project period’s dates
- Specific dates for each budget period
- Sponsor required budget template
- Rates allowed by the sponsor (inflation and F&A)
- Cost share requirements, if applicable

Here is an example of a proposal budget created in EGMS. To learn more, enroll in the Proposal Budget Creation course.

- Click on the next item in the content list to continue.

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**Budget Justification**

Sponsors will require a budget justification, which is a narrative explanation of each budgetary cost identified in the budget.

In general, the justification must state why each cost is needed and how it will exclusively benefit the project.

Here is an example of a budget justification created in EGMS.

- Click on the next item in the content list to continue.
Biosketch

A biosketch is a brief summary of someone’s professional and educational accomplishments, publications, and affiliations.

Refer to your sponsor guidelines, as requirements may vary depending on the sponsor. Sponsors expect to see this information included in the proposal.

In general, sponsors rarely allow an individual’s biosketch to exceed four pages.

Here is a list of common biosketch components.

Here is an example biosketch.pdf.

► Click on the next item in the content list to continue.

Current and Pending Support

Most sponsors require key personnel listed on the proposal to disclose current projects and potential future funding.

This requirement helps ensure individuals are not overcommitted or overlapping on their effort, should the project be awarded funding.

An individual’s current and pending effort may not exceed 100%. Read the sponsor’s guidelines, as some sponsors also require the proposal’s effort to be included in the current and pending support.

Here is an example of an individual’s current and pending support.pdf.

► Click on the next item in the content list to continue.
Proposal Assembly and Submission

Other Commonly Requested Information

In application materials, sponsors commonly request basic information from the organization applying for funding.

Examples include:

- U of M Annual Financial Reports
  [www.finsys.umn.edu/controller/annualreports.html](http://www.finsys.umn.edu/controller/annualreports.html)
- U of M F&A Agreement
  [www.ospa.umn.edu/forms/rates/F&A.html](http://www.ospa.umn.edu/forms/rates/F&A.html)
- Sponsor Required Documents
  [www.ospa.umn.edu/sponsorrequireddocuments](http://www.ospa.umn.edu/sponsorrequireddocuments)
- U of M Forms and Rates
  [www.ospa.umn.edu/forms](http://www.ospa.umn.edu/forms)
- Standard Institutional Information
  [www.ospa.umn.edu/manual/InstitutionalInformation.html](http://www.ospa.umn.edu/manual/InstitutionalInformation.html)

► Click Next to continue.

Proposal Assembly and Submission

Write the Proposal Contents: Summary

- In general, be aware that most sponsors require common proposal pieces.
- Know who is responsible for each piece as there will likely be several hands touching the proposal.
- If you haven't already done so, you may download the checklist (pdf) designed to help you with proposal preparation. This section's content is located on Side B.

► Click Next to continue to assemble the proposal package.
Assemble the Proposal Package

After the proposal components are created, the department must assemble the proposal package according to the sponsor’s guidelines. In addition, departments must adhere to University policy by creating a Proposal Routing Form (PRF).

Once fully approved by the department/college, the PRF and completed proposal package must be routed to SPA for its review and approval.

This section will discuss:
• Creating a PRF
• Assembling the completed proposal package

► Click Next to continue.

PRF Creation

Per the Regents policy “Submitting and Accepting Sponsored Projects”, SPA must review and submit all proposals.

SPA will know a department’s proposal is ready for review once a Proposal Routing Form (PRF) is submitted.

The PRF is created in EGMS (1) and is used for internal proposal review. It is not submitted to the sponsor.

Departments must contact SPA via email when the PRF is fully signed and the proposal is complete (Email: proposal@umn.edu / Subject Line: PRF #, PI, LName, Sponsor) OR hand deliver a completed PRF and proposal to SPA’s front desk.

► Click Next to continue.
**Proposal Assembly and Submission**

**PRF Purposes**

Per policy, the PRF is required with all proposals in order to:

- Provide basic information (e.g., location, PI, and project dates).
- Flag compliance considerations for SPA, including:
  - An F&A waiver is needed.
  - Protocols are required (e.g., human subjects, animals).
  - Conflicts of interest are identified.
  - Inventions or patents will result from the project.
  - International or export controls components will be involved.
  - Outgoing subawards will be involved.
- List required resources such as:
  - Effort of key personnel.
  - Facilities and equipment.
- Serve as a communication and approval tool by:
  - Providing required University approvals.
  - Identifying multiple departments/colleges and outlining any [Indirect Cost Recovery (ICR)] sharing.
  - Declaring cost sharing and which account(s) will pay for it.

► Click Next to continue.

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**Proposal Assembly and Submission**

**Assemble the Proposal Package: Summary**

- Per policy, departments must create and submit a PRF for each proposal.

- SPA will not review a proposal until its PRF and the entire proposal package are complete.

- For more information on how to create a PRF, enroll in the [EGMS Proposal Preparation course](#).

► Click Next to go to Submission by SPA.
**Proposal Assembly and Submission**

**Formal Submission**

After the PRF is created and approved, the department must submit the completed proposal package to SPA.

As discussed earlier, SPA has various deadlines based on the submission method.

This final section will highlight the possible deadlines a department must prepare for in order to initiate the formal submission process. The deadline is always based on when the sponsor must have it in-hand.

Click on each calendar time period to learn more.

► Click Next to go to the next topic.

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**Proposal Assembly and Submission**

**Summary**

- SPA has established minimum deadlines for the various submission methods:
  - Email or electronic (non-Grants.gov): 24 hours before sponsor’s receipt deadline
  - Paper: 48 hours before sponsor’s receipt deadline
  - Grants.gov: 5 business days before sponsor’s receipt deadline
  - Foreign sponsors, unique sponsor guidelines, or combination of paper/electronic submission: more than 5 days than sponsor’s receipt deadline

- SPA welcomes completed proposal packages to be submitted prior to the deadlines.

- Departments must consider deadlines that span around weekends or holidays.

- Plan several days in advance if a proposal must be mailed to a foreign country.

► Click Next to continue.
Proposal Assembly and Submission

Conclusion

Now that you know how to assemble and submit a proposal, here is a summary of what happens after a proposal is submitted:

- SPA will review, approve, and submit the proposal to the sponsor. The sponsor will review the proposal according to the procedures outlined in the application materials.
- When appropriate, SPA will negotiate terms on behalf of the PI and the University (e.g., publication rights, intellectual property rights, rights in data, adequate indemnification, payment terms).
- If the proposal is funded, SPA will accept the award on behalf of the University.
- Once awarded, SPA sets up the project account information in the financial system.
- SPA creates and distributes the internal Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) for the department to summarize the award terms and conditions.

Click Next to review a summary of resources and complete the course.

Proposal Assembly and Submission

Resources

Here are some resources to help you in your own proposal process:

- **PDF** Proposal Assembly and Creation for Departments Job Aid
- **WWW** Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA)
- **WWW** Electronic Grants Management System (EGMS)
- **WWW** Office of Vice President for Research (OVPR)
- **WWW** Research Subjects Protection Program (RSPP)
- **WWW** Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
- **WWW** Institutional Biosafety Committee
- **WWW** Grants.gov
- **WWW** Proposal Budget Creation Course
- **WWW** EGMS Proposal Preparation Course

Need a secret decoder ring for all of the sponsored acronyms? **PDF** Click here for a list of acronyms commonly used in proposals.