Frequently Asked Questions
about SPA’s Proposal Deadline Policy
Effective January 4, 2016
(Updated 11/04/2015)

1. Why does SPA have a proposal deadline?
   Both Regental policy as well as agency requirements expect that proposals will be reviewed prior to submission to ensure conformity with both institutional requirements and with the fiscal and administrative guidelines of the sponsor. SPA is the office at the University of Minnesota that holds the delegated institutional authority to review and submit sponsored projects proposals to external funding agencies. An internal deadline ensures adequate time for SPA’s review and any associated proposal corrections by the PI or department. The internal deadline also allows time to deal with issues that arise related to electronic submission (including problems with agency electronic submissions systems or system errors that arise during the submission process.)

2. What does SPA review?
   At a minimum, SPA:
   ● Reviews the proposal for compliance with the sponsor’s funding opportunity announcement, forms and guidelines
   ● Checks the accuracy of administrative and institutional information (DUNS number, EIN number, institutional contact and payment information, etc.)
   ● Ensures that all regulatory requirements have been satisfied (e.g. REPA, FCOI)
   ● Reviews the budget;
   ● Reviews matching and cost sharing requirements and commitments;
   ● Ensures accurate F&A (indirect cost) classification and calculations;
   ● When needed, makes certain that proposed contract award language conforms with University policies or submits requests for changes to the agency’s boilerplate;
   ● Evaluates potential export control issues; and
   ● Ensures required representations and certifications are included and signed by SPA if needed.

3. Why is SPA changing its proposal deadlines?
   The five-days-in-advance deadline established eight years ago for a then-new category of proposals - “Grants.Gov” - was imposed because of extensive early issues with that government submission system and the steep learning curve needed by investigators and administrators to successfully prepare and submit this type of proposal. Over time, this major category of proposals has lost its novelty and become more routine, justifying a decrease in time needed to review and submit this type of proposal. At the same time, agency regulations and proposal submission requirements have become more extensive and more stringent, and there continues to be a broad proliferation of electronic systems and system edits imposed by other funding agencies – some of which don’t work smoothly. Investigators have requested that SPA consider imposing an early morning deadline (e.g., 8:00 or 9:00 a.m.) instead of 5:00 p.m. the night before, so that they might have one additional evening to work on their science, and SPA is supportive of that need. It was also noted that having different deadlines for different types of applications can be confusing – especially when some agencies offer two or more mechanisms to submit a proposal.
for the same Funding Opportunity deadline. Given the high volume of proposals processed for each application deadline and the desire to simplify and streamline the process, SPA chose to re-examine and adjust the current deadlines in order to better serve the university research community.

4. **What is an "on-time" proposal?**
   In its simplest form, this means the proposal has received all necessary internal approvals and is in a “submit ready” status when it arrives at SPA for review. See SPA’s “On-Time Proposals: Review-and-Submit-Ready Criteria” statement located at http://www.ospa.umn.edu/documents/ProposalSubmission.html.

5. **What if I submit a proposal early? Will SPA hold it until the due date?**
   SPA is committed to processing proposals in a timely manner and will not hold an early submission until the due date. Aside from unforeseen circumstances, SPA strives to review proposals within two business days.

6. **Does SPA include "target dates" in its late proposal data?**
   It depends. The PRF must reflect a sponsor deadline that allows at least three business days for review or else the proposal will be considered late and included in late proposal data.

   A proposal that indicates a “target date” will not be included in the late proposal data provided the proposal meets all of the following criteria:

   - The Sponsor does NOT have a published or stated deadline.
   - The PRF is marked as a target date.
   - The target due date listed on the PRF is at least three business days in the future

   “Target date” proposals not meeting these criteria will be considered the same as “regular” due dates and included in the late proposal data.

7. **Will revised budgets or other requests be included in the late proposal data?**
   Revised budgets, PI changes, Pre-Proposals, Proposal/Award Concurrents, No-Cost Extensions, and other requests for agency approval will not be included.

8. **What proposals are included in the late proposal data?**
   New, continuations, renewals, and supplements.

9. **Does SPA include late proposals on continuations in its late proposal data?**
   As the majority of continuations have a deadline from the Sponsor, they will be included in the late proposal data.

10. **What information will be provided in the late proposal notifications? Who will receive the late proposal notifications?**
The late proposal notifications will include the PI name, PRF #, proposal title, the sponsor name, and the SPA tracking number (CON#).

Depending on the frequency of late proposals, notifications will be sent to the principal investigator, departmental pre-award contact, department head/chair and dean. The email templates, indicating who will receive the notice, can be found on SPA’s website at http://www.ospa.umn.edu/documents/ProposalSubmission.html.

The “Kevin late proposal” emails previously sent at the time SPA becomes aware of a late proposals will be discontinued as of January 4, 2016, and replaced with the monthly notification process.

11. What happens to proposals submitted after the SPA deadline?
All proposals that meet the deadline will be processed first. All late submissions will be processed after on-time submissions are completed. SPA staff will do its best to submit late proposals but cannot guarantee that late proposals can be processed in time to meet a deadline. In addition, late proposals means that there will be less time to correct any errors identified by the agency’s electronic systems or to grapple with system delays.

PIs and their departments do not routinely need to provide explanations to SPA about why their proposals are late, though they may be asked to provide such explanations to their department head or collegiate research office. See also the FAQ about “emergency situations” below.

12. What if there is an emergency situation beyond the control of the principal investigator (PI) that delays a timely submission of a proposal to SPA?
SPA is aware that legitimate emergency situations arise (e.g., hospitalization of the PI or a family member, a death in the family right before a deadline, a request from a funding agency for a proposal less than two weeks before the time it is needed by the agency), and SPA staff will continue to do everything possible to help investigators facing situations beyond their control to be successful with their proposal submissions. In these instances, PIs should communicate with their departmental staff and GA as soon as possible.

SPA would not include in the definition of “emergency situations” such issues as international travel of the PI, departmental or project team staffing shortages, signatures missing on the PRF, or the failure of subrecipients to return documents/proposals timely to the University, as these and other similar issues are expected to be managed when planning for the proposal. SPA does not in these types of instances need to be informed of the reason the proposal is being submitted late.

13. Why is SPA tracking late proposal data?
This data is periodically reviewed by university officials to identify trends in late proposal submissions. As trends are identified, SPA works to find solutions to better serve the university research community. SPA also compares similar data with other Big 10 schools to ensure policies and procedures are aligned.
Have a question that is not answered here? Contact your SPA Grant Administrator.