

**NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND REVIEW

EFFECTIVE 12-01-08, REVISED 12/26/2014

POLICY #3

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PURPOSE:

To establish policy and procedure to assist faculty members in the preparation and review of proposals for submission to external funding sources for the conduct of research, service, and teaching/training programs at the university.

DEFINITIONS:

Principal Investigator (PI): The individual whom the university designates to direct the scientific, technical, or programmatic aspects of a sponsored program, project, or activity. The PI is responsible and accountable to the university and the sponsor for the proper conduct of the project or activity. In addition to accepting the overall responsibility for directing the research or program activities, the PI also accepts responsibility for administrative/financial oversight of the award and for compliance with relevant university policies, federal regulations, and sponsor terms and conditions.

Project Director (PD): For the purpose of these policies, Project Director is a title synonymous with Principal Investigator for a non-research sponsored program.

POLICY:

Faculty members must prepare proposals for submission to an external funding source in compliance with the relevant application guidelines (i.e., Request for Proposal, Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement posted on Grants.gov, etc.), sponsoring agency guidelines and regulations, and university policies and procedures.

REFERENCES:

- OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, 2 CFR Part 200, <https://federalregister.gov/a/2013-30465>
- OMB Federal Awarding Agency Regulatory Implementation of Office of Management and Budget's Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/12/19/2014-28697/federal-awarding-agency-regulatory-implementation-of-office-of-management-and-budgets-uniform>
- NIH Grants Policy Statement, <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/policy.htm#gps>
- NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide, <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/>
- HHS Grants Policy Statement, <http://www.hhs.gov/grants/grants/policies-regulations/index.html>

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PROCEDURES:

General Requirements

The Principal Investigator/Project Director (PI/PD) is responsible for reviewing and adhering to sponsoring agency's application requirements (both fiscal and administrative) in the development of the proposal. The PI/PD should also discuss the development of the budget with the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) during the development phase to ensure compliance with fiscal requirements (Refer to *OSP Policy No. 4 – Proposal Budget Preparation and Review*). Each sponsor generally has specific criteria for evaluating proposals and the PI/PD is responsible for incorporating these criteria in the development of the proposal.

Proposal Format and Guidelines

1. The primary responsibility for the preparation of the proposal rests with the PI/PD.
2. Usually, the sponsor has provided format guidelines which must be followed. When a sponsor has not provided format guidelines, the proposal outline in (4) below can be considered as a guide. When the particular academic or research program does not comply with all sections, the outline should be adjusted accordingly. This outline will ensure the proposed program is described in the most favorable manner, and, consequently, will minimize the problems associated with proposal evaluation.
3. All federal grant proposal solicitations are published as Federal Funding Opportunity Announcements on *Grants.gov* and may also refer to additional materials on the agency's website. The requirements for the proposal and budget preparation and the evaluation criteria are provided in the Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement and any referenced regulations. These requirements must be followed for the application to be considered. See also *OSP Policy No. 10 - Electronic Research Administration (eRA)*.

4. Brief descriptions of the typical components of a proposal are provided below.

■ Title page

Unless otherwise specified, the title page of the proposal should contain the following information:

- a brief and descriptive title of the proposed project;
- the name of the university, and college/center;

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- the names and titles, with signature lines, for the PI/PD, Dean, and the appropriate university officer who must authorize the submission on behalf of the university (Refer to *OSP Policy No. 7 – Proposal Review, Approval, Signature and Submission on Behalf of NSU*); and;
- the Request for Proposal (RFP) or Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) number, following the title, if applicable.

This is typically captured on the sponsor's form provided for this purpose. Specific sponsors may require special information on the title page of proposals submitted to them. The OSP should be consulted in this regard. It is advisable to check with the OSP on specific recommended provisions.

■ Abstract

The proposal evaluation is often highly influenced by the title page and a concise abstract (typically no more than one page, refer to agency guidelines) of the proposal. PIs/PDs are advised to pay special attention in preparing a clear and concise title and abstract.

Using descriptive information, this statement should present the objective and scope of research, including anticipated results and their significance. This information will allow the reviewer to determine the essential points of the proposal. It is important that the abstract point out any originality in the research or methodology. The abstract must be complete and capable of standing alone as a separate document. No references to tables, illustrations, or literature appearing in the proposal should be made.

The abstract may be the only part of the proposal that is read by the reviewer or prospective sponsor. It should be written so anyone, regardless of his/her acquaintance with the research topic, will have a general understanding of the proposed program.

■ Table of Contents (and list of any illustrations/tables)

If the body of the proposal contains more than three sections, a table of contents should be included after the abstract page. A breakdown beyond a first subheading is not recommended under most conditions. The abstract is not to be listed within the table of contents.

■ Background Information/Introduction

The introduction should present a brief background with the appropriate references for the proposed area of research. Whenever possible, the relationship of the proposed research program to the interests of the potential sponsor should be introduced, either explicitly or implicitly. This

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section will demonstrate the author's familiarity with the subject and will indicate the impact of the expected results on the subject area.

The last paragraph of the introduction should function as a transition paragraph to introduce the next section, the description of the proposed research. The last paragraph should summarize the purpose of the proposal as follows:

- to define the scope and intent of the proposal;
- to show an understanding of the problems that make up the basis of the proposed study; and
- to demonstrate the author's confidence in his/her ability to solve the problems.

■ **Description of Proposed Project**

This is the main part of the proposal. It should be written clearly and to the point and should include references to past work that relates to the work now being proposed; the objectives of the proposed research; the methodology to be followed; and the significance of the proposed research. If the proposed study is highly mathematical and the description is lengthy, equations and formulas should be developed in an appendix rather than in the body of the proposal. The suggested outline for this section of the proposal is:

I. **Statement of Past Work**

Describe any preliminary investigations or past research that suggested the proposed study. If a thesis, dissertation, or publication has been completed as a result of the author's earlier work in this area, attach copies (or reprints) as appendices.

If the proposal being written is for the renewal of an existing research project, give a brief report of the past year's activity and reference the final technical report (either completed or forthcoming).

If the technical report is not too long (and is completed), it might be included as an appendix.

II. **Statement of Proposed Work**

Describe the problems that have been suggested by the author's past work in as much detail as possible, and where appropriate, refer to the work of other scientists who have suggested these problems. If the novelty of the research lies in the subject itself, this should be indicated.

III. **Method of Operation**

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Describe, in as much detail as is practical and known at this point, the approach to be used in studying the proposed program. Although detailed information may be limited at this stage, it is important that the approach for at least the first six months be described as thoroughly as possible. This will enable reviewers of the study to assess the author's capability, as well as the proposal's technical merit. If the novelty of the research lies in the approach to the problem, be certain to make this point with clarity. Do not hesitate to use figures and tables wherever they will help clarify a point. When figures are used, line art prepared with black ink and mechanical lettering is preferred. If photographs are used, clear and glossy prints are preferred. Also, if equipment is included in the proposed budget, this section of the proposal should justify the purchase of the equipment and its importance to the research project. If the proposed budget for the project includes unusual amounts within other cost categories (e.g., travel, publication costs), the reason for this should be explained.

IV. Significance of the Research

State anticipated results, if possible, and how they will contribute to the body of knowledge in this area. Describe why this contribution is important to the reviewer and sponsor. These statements are important in helping the reviewer/sponsor rationalize support for the project.

V. Facilities

Note: The facilities available for research and a list of specific facilities that will be available to the PI will help the reviewer ascertain capabilities of the university's physical plant. If the proposed budget includes a request for equipment already on campus, special justification should be made for duplicating such equipment.

VI. Personnel

Introduce this section with a brief statement of the personnel who will be involved in the proposed research program. A *curricula vitae* is usually required for the PI/PD.

VII. List of References

If there are three or fewer references, they are to be indicated as footnotes. If there are four or more, or any repetitions, make a list of references and refer to them by reference numbers in the text of the proposal. Number the references in the order in which they appear in the text and list them in that order in the list of references. To make it easy for the evaluator to locate the reference, each item in the list of references is to include the following information, as applicable:

- author;
- title;

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- publication or publisher;
- volume and issue number; and
- date of publication.

VIII. Bibliography

List material that has served as source material but which is not referred to directly in the text in this section. The listing should be alphabetical by author, following the same form as recommended for references.

IX. Appendices

Use appendices to present extensive and detailed calculations or explanations. Appendices can also be used for detailed descriptions of apparatus and other related material complementing the general presentation of the subject. The appendices should be referred to in the appropriate part of the text. If references are required in an appendix, they should be footnoted and not included in the list of references for the proposal.

X. Budget

See OSP Policy No. 4 – *Proposal Budget Preparation and Review*.