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Policy or Procedure: Submitting Proposals for Extramural Funding				

Purpose

This procedure is written to outline the submission process for requesting extramural funding at Northern Illinois University.

Reason for Policy

When an investigator (referred to as Principal Investigator or PI) submits a proposal for extramural funding for a specified activity, a legal agreement is initiated between NIU and the sponsor. If the sponsor accepts the proposal, NIU as the grantee will be required to conduct the project that was proposed for the amount specified within the proposal. Therefore, the NIU Board of Trustees requires that grants and contracts for all instructional, research, public service and other academic-related activities (collectively referred to as “sponsored projects”) acquired from external sponsors undergo an institutional review to ensure that the activities are in line with the university’s mission and financial capabilities.

Sponsors also recognize that proposals constitute a legal agreement with the grantee and therefore often require that the proposal be endorsed by an individual with authority to commit the institution to undertake or participate in the proposed activities. Sponsors may also expect this individual to make a number of certifications as part of the proposal submission process. These certifications include, but are not limited to: declaring that any possible conflicts of interest by project personnel are addressed and properly managed, that the institution has research misconduct policies in place, and that any lobbying efforts are disclosed. At NIU, the Director of the Office of Sponsored Projects and the Vice President for Research are considered NIU’s authorized organizational officials (AORs) and have the authority to make these certifications and commit the institution to undertake a sponsored project. To ensure that all necessary parties approve the proposal and that all required certifications are secured before the proposal is endorsed by the AOR, it must be routed for institutional review.

The institutional review process is coordinated through the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP). Therefore, investigators **must** notify OSP any time a proposal for extramural funding is anticipated. The institutional review process involves routing *at least* a draft of the proposal, final budget, and System Tracking and External Project (STEP) form to the PI and any Co-PIs, their Chair(s), Dean(s), and the Director(s) of any interdisciplinary unit associated with the proposed project. The STEP form is a routing form that includes basic administrative information about the proposed project. An individual’s signature on the STEP form indicates endorsement of the project by each responsible party and signifies his/her approval for proposal submission.

Intended Audience

- Dean
- Senior Administration – Vice Provosts, Associate Deans
- Director, Department Chair, Division Head
- Faculty
- Departmental/Divisional Administrators
- Finance Personnel—Research Accounting, Accounting Services
- Grants & Contracts Personnel
- Research Compliance Personnel
- Research Integrity Personnel
- All Employees
- Information Technology Personnel
- Human Resources Personnel

Policy

All proposals for extramural funding must be coordinated through the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) **and** must undergo an institutional review prior to submission to the sponsor. “All proposals” means both those that will be submitted directly by NIU to the external sponsor and those where NIU will serve as a subcontractor on another organization’s proposal.

Investigators who anticipate submitting a proposal shall notify OSP at least **fifteen (15) business days** before the published sponsor deadline. Notification within this timeframe is necessary so that the institutional review process can begin at least **five (5) business days** before the published sponsor deadline to provide the responsible parties with adequate time for review and to address any questions about the project that may arise.

Procedure

This procedure describes the entire OSP proposal submission process. It is extremely important that this process be followed to ensure that all proposals are ready to begin the institutional review process *at least five (5) business days* prior to the published sponsor deadline.

1. Investigators **must** contact their appropriate OSP Research Development Specialist (RDS) *at least fifteen (15) business days* prior to the sponsor deadline. A listing of the specialists by their assigned disciplines can be found on the OSP website.
2. During the time before the start of institutional review, the RDS is available to work with the PI to develop the project budget and to review the proposal narrative to ensure that it meets the sponsor’s programmatic requirements. The RDS can also assist with completing any additional sponsor forms that may be required.
3. Once the budget is final and the proposal narrative is in solid draft form, the RDS will work with the PI to complete the System Tracking and External Project (STEP) form.

For proposals received in a timely manner, OSP will assist the PI with facilitating the institutional review process, including transmittal of the routing file to the appropriate parties on campus.

4. At least **five (5) business days** prior to the sponsor deadline, the institutional review process must begin. At minimum, the following shall be routed for institutional review:
 - project budget
 - budget justification
 - project narrative
 - sponsor guidelines (as applicable)
 - agency forms requiring institutional signature (as applicable)
 - signed consortium letters/budgets for subcontractors (as applicable); and
 - commitment letters from third-party/non-NIU cost share sources (as applicable).

A full copy of the proposal must be on file in OSP within five (5) business days after proposal submission.

5. Once all of the necessary parties have reviewed and approved the proposal (via his/her signature on the STEP form), OSP will either submit the proposal or communicate with the PI that they may proceed with submission.
6. OSP will provide a copy of the fully signed STEP form to the PI, Co-PI(s), their departments and any other centers or units that approved the proposal.

OSP cannot guarantee successful proposal submission if these deadlines are not met.

Special Considerations

Approval from the PI's department chair or unit director may be required in order for the RDS to review a proposal and initiate the institutional review process when notification of the pending submission is received less than **ten (10) business days** before the sponsor deadline.

If a PI fails to notify OSP of a proposal within the recommended timeframe and institutional review is not possible before the sponsor deadline, the OSP Director may agree to sign and submit the proposal without institutional review in order to meet the sponsor deadline but reserves the right to withdraw it from sponsor consideration if it is found not to meet University and sponsor requirements and/or regulations.

For proposals that require electronic submission (e.g. Grants.gov, NSF FastLane, e-Grants) OSP strongly urges PIs to have these proposals institutionally reviewed and ready for submission at least **two (2) business days** prior to the published sponsor deadline as systems can become overloaded during peak deadline periods.

OSP encourages Investigators seeking fellowship or other types of extramural funding that will be awarded directly to the individual (versus to NIU) to process their proposals through OSP. Doing so allows the Investigator, their department or unit, and their college to receive credit for the submission and if applicable, award.

Depending upon the level of detail requested from a sponsor for a letter of intent, institutional review may be necessary. Contact your OSP RDS for guidance.

Please refer to the table below for guidance and to ensure adequate proposal review.

Request/Action	Due Prior to Sponsor Deadline
Notify RDS of a pending proposal submission	at least 3 weeks (15 business days)
RDS submits Proposal and STEP form for institutional review	at least 1 week (5 business days)
Institutional review complete	1-2 days prior to the sponsor deadline (this ensures adequate time to coordinate mailings, electronic submissions, trips to the post office, etc).
Tuition Waiver Requests*	2-3 weeks (10-15 business days)
Cost Sharing Requests*	2-3 weeks (10-15 business days)
Course Buy-Outs*	2-3 weeks (10-15 business days)

***Please note: These requests should be discussed and approved well before the institutional review process begins as they impact the proposal budgeting process.**

Contact Information:

Subject	Contact	Phone	E-mail
Policy Questions	Dara Little, Assistant Director, OSP	(815) 753-9285	dlittle@niu.edu
Proposal-Specific Questions	Contact your responsible RDS at: http://www.osp.niu.edu/osp/audience/development_staff.shtml	OSP Main Line: (815) 753-1581	OSP Main E-mail: asosp@niu.edu

Policy Citations:

Northern Illinois University Regulations of the Board of Trustees

Section I. Academic Programs, Subsection E. Grants and Contracts

NIU Legal Services Contract Procedures