

UNC Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Proposal Submission Process (adopted Nov 2022; Revised Dec 2024)

UNC is comprised of a strong community of teacher-scholars providing all students with strong educational experiences setting them up for future success and forwarding the development of new knowledge support the local, state, national, and global community. The mission of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) is to support UNC investigators in the development of competitive funding proposals to external sponsors to secure the resources necessary to pursue their scholarly endeavors. In support of these activities, ORSP is the central nexus providing and coordinating support for research and scholarly activities at UNC.

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs is comprised of three collaborative units that support proposal development and submission, post-award monitoring, and compliance with federal and sponsor policies and regulations: Research Development; Sponsored Programs, and Research Compliance.

Research Development encompasses a set of strategic, catalytic, and capacity-building activities that advance research. UNC Research Development assists researchers to become more successful communicators, grant writers, and advocates for their research, supporting the earliest stages of proposal development through proposal submission.

Sponsored Programs supports activities, sponsored whole or in part, by external agencies for which there is an expectation on the part of the sponsor for performance or outcome. Sponsored programs are awarded through various mechanisms, including grants, contracts, fee-for-service or percent-deliverable contracts, cooperative agreements, and/or other legally binding means of transfer and may or may not provide actual funding to the institution. Sponsored Programs at UNC provides **pre-award** support to ensure successful proposal submission and compliance with federal and sponsor regulations. **Post-award** supports investigators upon receipt of external funding. Post-award support at UNC is spread across several offices and divisions, including ORSP, the Controller's Office/Accounting, Purchasing and Contracts, Payroll, and Human Resources, Facilities, and the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE). ORSP post-award serves as a nexus to manage post-award support and to assist investigators in maneuvering the post-award structures and processes at UNC to ensure the success and compliance of all externally funded programs.

Research Compliance is responsible for ensuring compliance with all federal, state, local, and institutional regulations related to the pursuit of research and scholarly activities at UNC.

As ORSP supports the campus community in proposal preparation and submission to external funders/sponsors, it is important that ORSP staff and the campus community work together to meet sponsor guidelines and submission deadlines. Prior to submission of any external application, ORSP is responsible for ensuring that all mandated requirements are met at the time of submission, and that all necessary compliance needs will be met should the award be made. Transmission of a proposal to ORSP for review and submission to a sponsor without sufficient time for a thorough review impedes ORSP's ability to perform all required checks for fulfillment of federal, state, and institutional requirements such as approval of commitments and budgets by the colleges and academic or research units. College and unit-level entities also face challenges in meeting the increased volume of grant submissions. Submissions received near the sponsor deadline may also hinder review and submission of other proposals that are received by ORSP well before sponsor deadlines, jeopardizing the successful submission of all proposals in the pipeline at the same time.

To mitigate all these difficulties, it is best practice to require submission of proposals to the sponsored projects office with sufficient time in advance of sponsor deadlines to ensure a thorough and complete review of all application and compliance factors. Internal deadlines balance the requirement of sufficient time for university and unit review and approval with the need for proposal preparers to produce the best proposal possible given their other wide-ranging commitments.

The timely submission of proposals for review allows for the identification of any elements of a proposal that are at variance with UNC or sponsor policies and federal regulations. This lead time is necessary to clear the electronic submission systems of the institution, grants.gov, and other non-federal sponsors. There are risks involved with late or last-minute submissions which could impact post-award direct costs. Any application errors (budgetary, administrative, or other) that may have inadvertently been made will need to be corrected once the award is issued and may result in returning funds to the sponsor if commitment or compliance needs cannot be met.

Statement of Policy:

UNC is subject to numerous requirements, including but not limited to those set forth in specific sponsor solicitations and guidelines, federal regulations including 2 CFR 200 Uniform Guidance, Colorado statutes, as well as UNC institutional policies. Sufficient time is necessary for ORSP personnel to verify a proposal's compliance with those requirements and to ensure the overall level of quality of a submission prior to the application's deadline. Therefore, ORSP must conduct a thorough review of all extramural grant proposals prior to submission to sponsors. The policies set forth below ensure adequate time for all internal reviews and approvals to occur prior to submission deadlines.

Preparing/planning to submit a proposal:

In your search for funding opportunities, reach out to the Research Development team regularly. They are available to help you identify relevant funding opportunities and in the preparation of your application.

Once you have identified a potential funding opportunity **Submit a Quick Proposal**. A Quick Proposal, submitted through Streamlyne, is ORSP Pre-award's mechanism for managing the grant submission queue. The information in the Quick Proposal provides valuable information, including the funding opportunity announcement (if available), sponsor details, deadlines, budget information, and other critical details that allow us to plan pre-award staff workload to best support the successful submission of your proposal. Once you submit a Quick Proposal, a pre-award grant specialist will reach out to you to discuss your proposal and will work with you to develop a timeline to support the successful submission of your proposal.

Your Quick Proposal should be submitted as soon as you consider submitting for an opportunity; you don't need to know with certainty that you will be submitting—the more lead time the better. Ideally, Quick Proposals will be submitted at least 1 month in advance of the submission deadline. We understand that this may not always be feasible. ORSP staff will do their best to accommodate all faculty and staff seeking to submit proposals for external submission. If for any reason you decide not to submit, simply let your pre-award specialist know that you will not be submitting, and they will remove your proposal from the queue. If you decide to wait to submit for a subsequent deadline, they can move your proposal forward in the queue so that they are ready to support you when the time comes. Submitting a Quick Proposal also allows for our Research Development staff to better plan to support you in the preparation of your submission.

As your submission deadline approaches, ORSP requires that all grant proposals are reviewed prior to submission to the external sponsor. In addition, all proposals must be approved by unit leaders (chairs and directors) and the colleges dean's office or unit AVPs *prior to submission*. This is necessary to ensure that the units understand what is being proposed and are prepared to support the activities if the proposal is funded. It is important to note a proposal will not be submitted without all necessary approvals in place. To ensure a thorough review, the following are necessary:

- Conflict of Interest (COI) declarations for all relevant personnel named in the grant (transactional on all PHS proposals)
- Final budget with justification. *Budgets as submitted to ORSP are considered in draft form until ORSP pre-award staff perform their final review to ensure compliance with sponsor regulations.*
- Near-final version of all administrative sections
- Near-final scientific narrative, including specific aims, human subjects and animal sections
- If appropriate, letters of support and/or commitment

- If appropriate, all subcontractors/subawards authorized documents (documents from subrecipients are due in their complete form). *Note that subawards/contracts add a level of complexity that will impact the submission timeline. Subawards add considerable time and complexity to the pre-award process. The more subawards/contracts, the more complex the submission. Also note that UNC pre-award staff are responsible for ensuring that all compliance needs are met by subaward participants.*
- Any additional documents as may be required by the sponsor or Prime Institution

Pre-award staff will work with all PIs at the beginning of the submission process to identify internal deadlines to ensure the complete proposal including all administrative components are ready for submission by the sponsor deadline. It is important to meet all internal deadlines as developed in collaboration with the ORSP pre-award team to support successful submission of external proposals. Internal deadlines are defined relative to the sponsor's deadline defined as the date and time for the submission as shown in the funding announcement. As a general rule, sponsors will not accept late submissions.

What follows is a typical submission timeline. Deadlines are for the submission of the indicated documents to ORSP.

- Fourteen (14) full business days or sooner prior to the sponsor submission deadline
 - All Subaward materials
 - A summary of all cost share agreements
- Ten (10) full business days or sooner prior to the sponsor submission deadline:
 - The final DRAFT budget including all justifications
- Five (5) full business days prior to the sponsor submission deadline:
 - The final, complete required supporting documents, including but not limited to: Extramural Checklist; final RFP or Funding Opportunity Announcement; all letters of support including cost share agreements.
 - The final Specific Aims/Goals section
 - A working draft of the narrative section(s).
 - All administrative sections of the proposal, including but not limited to Other Support; Facilities; CVs/Biosketches for all Key Personnel; timelines; Human Subjects; and Animal Subjects, as applicable. IRB or IACUC approval not required for agencies using Just In Time processing (i.e., NIH)
- Three (3) full business days prior to sponsor submission deadline, the following must be received by ORSP:
 - The final narrative section(s) of the proposal.

All proposals components must be complete and uploaded into Streamlyne for routing to unit leaders minimally three (3) days prior to the submission deadline to ensure unit leaders have sufficient time to review, resolve questions, and approve for submission to the sponsor.

Note that there are additional compliance needs that external sponsors require for submission and award, including but not limited to Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI), IACUC (for animal studies), IRB (for human studies), Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR), etc., ORSP staff will work with PIs to identify all compliance needs that must be met and ensure that they are in place to facilitate accepting the award and beginning the funded project.

Many sponsors, and all federal sponsors (i.e., NIH, NSF, DOE, etc.), utilized online portals for grant submission. Uploading all proposal components and passing all validations takes time. As deadlines approach, the time it takes for these activities increases as more investigators upload their proposals. A proposal must be uploaded, passed all sponsor validations, and be accepted by the system prior to the sponsor deadline in order for them to be considered by the sponsor for review. Most sponsors will not accept proposal submissions after the submission deadline, even if they were in process at the time of the deadline.

A submission timeline such as that outlined above will be defined regardless of whether you are working with our Research Development team. It may be possible to amend/update deadlines in extenuating circumstances. ORSP strongly suggests that you work with ORSP staff well in advance to ensure that your proposal is complete and ready for submission to meet all internal and external deadlines.

If an exception to the timeline is needed, the PI should contact pre-award staff in ORSP to discuss an alternative timeline for submission of materials to ORSP. Exceptions to internal deadlines will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Extensions are not guaranteed and will be dependent on the volume of concurrent grant submissions and availability of staff to ensure timely submission of the proposal to meet sponsor deadlines. When deadlines are missed, the proposal will be inserted behind those in the queue with similar/same sponsor deadlines. Existing proposals in process will be given priority to ensure timely submission.

If permitted by the sponsor, once routing is complete and all approvals and signatures have been secured, the PI has the option of submitting the proposal directly to the sponsor, or ORSP can submit the proposal. Please note: all federal submissions must be submitted by ORSP. Regardless of who submits the proposal, check your email for a submission confirmation; it may come directly to you from the sponsor or from ORSP. In some instances, the sponsor will request additional materials or information related to your proposal; please monitor your e-mail for further instructions and communicate with ORSP.

ORSP will continue to adopt best practices and deliver continuous attention and improvement to our processes to ensure a proper balance of customer service and professional sponsored projects administration. We fully recognize the importance of maintaining a close partnership with campus grant seekers, the academic units, and ORSP in order to provide the service required for success of sponsor project activity and UNC's research enterprise.

We are here to support your success!