

VSU



OFFICE OF SPONSORED RESEARCH AND PROGRAMS

Grant Proposal
Development/Submission Guide

Grant Proposal Development/Submission Guide

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Grant Proposal Development/Submission Guide

I. Introduction

The Office of Sponsored Research and Programs has developed this Pre-award Handbook to provide faculty and administrative staff with general guidelines and procedures when applying for a grant.

This handbook is a source of helpful hints to make the task of proposal development more effective and efficient. It is important that all proposals approved for submission to a foundation, corporation, government agency or other organization be consistent with the University's mission, goals and objectives. The submission of a proposal must also conform to established policies and procedures.

Information contained in this handbook and personal consultations with staff in the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs will acquaint you with the procedures for submitting a grant.

Most pre-award functions are handled by the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs, while most post-award functions are the responsibility of the Office of Grants and Contracts. The Office of Sponsored Research and Programs may provide advises on many post-award faculty concerns. In general, the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs provides information on possible sources of support for a project and individual assistance in identifying appropriate sponsors; helps in preparing a proposal and developing a budget; oversees the institutional approval process; and transmits the proposal to the funding agency. The Grants and Contracts Office provides complete fiscal management of an award; assigns a budget number which allows access to the FRS accounting system; tracks grant balances; requests payment from funding agencies; assists in interpretation of grant regulations; and files required financial reports.

II. Funding Sources

Faculty members who wish to seek external funding for their projects should visit the Office of Sponsored Research website at <http://www.vsu.edu> to find the list of federal, state, and private agencies that request for proposals (RFP.) In addition, the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs periodically emails current RFPs to the VSU faculty.

III. Proposal Preparation and Submission

A. Proposal Guidelines and Procedures

There are a few general guidelines that can help you in your efforts. The following is a list of steps you should take when submitting a grant application on behalf of your department or division, or if you are working in cooperation with faculty at another institution.

Step I. Start Early

Most funding agencies will release their grant opportunity at least two months before the proposal deadline. This will give you an opportunity to review the agency guidelines and determine if this grant opportunity is right for you.

Step II. Consultation

Discuss your ideas with your department chair and dean. Once you have been given the "go ahead" by your department chair and dean, notify the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs (OSR&P) by completing the Grant Opportunity Notice of Intent Form. This notification will enable the OSR&P to inform each prospective faculty of the names of the other interested faculty and serve to eliminate multiple proposals in response to the same Request for Proposal (RFP), especially in cases where only one proposal per university is allowed by the funding agency. In addition, we will provide you with any other application forms and we can help you meet your proposal deadline.

Step III. Prepare Your Proposal

A good practice in developing a proposal is to identify the responsibilities of the individuals who will be involved in the project. Next, a time line table should be developed. This will identify the required resources for each activity. Then, a budget should be drafted. You should submit a copy of project summary along with the budget to the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs at least two to three weeks prior to the agency deadline. You may write your proposal after developing the above mentioned items. Final version of all materials, including forms and supporting documentation should be submitted to the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs at least seven business days prior to proposal submission deadline.

Step IV. Budget

Your budget should be presented in a cost sheet format; if the grantor has not provided their form. Items commonly included are: salaries and wages; fringe benefits; equipment; travel; supplies; travel; communication & publicity charges; consultants; and indirect cost. Determine whether cost-sharing is required.

Step V. Review and Approval

Once your proposal has been reviewed and approved by your department chair and dean and the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs, the proposal will be routed through administrative channels for review and endorsement.

Step VI. Proposal Submission

The grantor's guidelines will specify the number of copies to provide, the format and how the copies should be packaged (i.e. stapled, clipped, etc.).

It is the project director/principle investigator responsibility to make the required copies and mail the package to the granting agency. Keep in mind that the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs is here to assist you if you let the staff know in advance.

B. General Proposal Format

The proposal is a comprehensive description of the project and usually consists of two main parts: a technical or narrative section and a budget. Almost all funding organizations have guidelines which must be followed; most federal agencies supply their own forms, which may be available in the Office of Sponsored Research.

A proposal usually includes the following sections:

- 1. Cover page:** a quick reference sheet containing selected information about the proposal. The signature of an authorized organizational representative (President or his designee) commits the College to carry out the project if funding is received and certifies that statements contained in the proposal are true.
- 2. Abstract or project summary:** this is normally a one-page summary.
- 3. Statement of work:** a full and detailed description of the project, including background, goals and objectives, methodology, significance, personnel, etc. Some funding sources specify page limits.
- 4. Supplementary materials:** bibliography, curriculum vita(e), resources and facilities, other support, appendices (where appropriate).
- 5. Budget and budget justification.**

IV. The Principal Investigator (PI)

The Principal Investigator (or project director) is an individual who direct all aspects of a project; serve as focus for project contact with university administration and the funding agency; conduct periodic project status review; oversee the project's progress; prepare all interim and final reports to the funding agency; maintain and track the budget and expenditures associated with the project; recommend and, where appropriate, approve all personnel, contracts for services, final evaluations of products, all expenditures, etc.

V. Collaboration with Colleagues at Other Institutions

Faculty who apply for funding with colleagues at other institutions will normally have to choose whether to submit the proposal through VSU or through their collaborator's institution, ordinarily on the basis of where the majority of the project will take place. The two most common scenarios are described below. Any faculty member planning to prepare a proposal with a colleague should consult with the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs as early as possible.

1. If the proposal is submitted by VSU, the other PI's expenses may be included as line items on the proposal budget or may be included as a subcontract to the co-PI's home institution. In either case, any inclusion of Co-PI summer salary or released time must be approved by the home institution.
2. If the proposal is submitted by the other PI's institution, the VSU PI's expenses may be treated in either of the two ways already described. Ordinarily VSU's fringe benefits and indirect costs should be included in any subcontract budget.

Occasionally a funding agency will suggest that Co-PIs at different institutions submit separate proposals, with identical text but individual budgets, for separate grants to the individual institutions.

VI. Budget

The budget represents the PI's best estimate of the costs of doing the work described in the proposal. The general rule of thumb is that a budget should include all costs necessary to carry out the project in a cost-effective manner. A "padded" budget is usually obvious to reviewers, who themselves have an idea of the approximate cost of doing the proposed research. An artificially small budget may seem to indicate a PI who doesn't have enough knowledge to know what resources will be necessary to complete the work.

Direct costs are costs that can be specifically identified with a particular project. They include items such as salaries, fringe benefits, equipment, supplies, travel, and publication charges. Indirect costs are costs that can not be directly associated with a particular project. They include general operating costs such as library services, maintenance, etc. Direct costs should be explained in the budget justification, which usually follows the budget itself. Justification of indirect costs is not necessary in each proposal, since the appropriate rate is negotiated with the federal government or is determined by the guidelines of the funding agency.

The Office of Sponsored Research and Programs can help with preparation of an accurate budget. Keep in mind that projects lasting more than one year usually require a budget request for each year in addition to an overall total. Multiyear budgets should provide for inflation.

Often, a funding agency will notify an applicant that an award will be made at a reduced level of funding. The PI may then be asked to submit a revised budget, which should be drawn up according to the same agency and College guidelines used to construct the original proposal budget.

Common budget categories include:

1. Salaries and wages. Salaries and wages for all personnel who will be working on the project should be included. Internal Revenue Service regulations require that anyone contributing effort to the project must be considered a temporary employee of the University, unless the person being paid is in a business which normally provides the services being performed.

For each person, indicate the time to be spent on the project (e.g. full-time 12 months, ten hours/week for academic year, etc.) and the amount to be paid by the funding agency. Where appropriate, indicate the base salary and the method used to arrive at the requested amount. Include estimates of salary increases and explain in the budget justification.

- PI academic year salary (released time): ordinarily the amount budgeted is calculated so that % of salary equals the % of release (e.g. 25% of salary is included for a 1/4 reduction in teaching load).

- Summer salary for faculty members on academic-year appointments is limited to no more than two-ninths of their regular academic-year salary. This limit includes summer salary received from all NSF-funded grants (National Science Foundation Guideline http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/nsf04_23/2.jsp#IIC2gi).

- Salary for other key personnel or support personnel (e.g. faculty collaborator, postdoc, technician, research assistant, and interviewer): salary included should be adequate to cover the current average compensation for the level of expertise and the degree of experience required for the position. Amounts can be estimated by consulting with colleagues at VSU and other Richmond area institutions and the Human Resources Office. Allowance for appropriate annual increases should be made.

- Student assistants paid hourly wages: Request for student contract should be submitted to the Financial Aid Office. Consult with Office of Human Resources to determine hourly wage for student employment.

-Graduate student stipend: In the absence of a guideline from a founding agency, the NSF guide for graduate student stipend may be use to draft a budget. The URL for this guideline is <http://www.nsf.gov/od/lpa/forum/colwell/rc01calstate/ts1d006.htm>

- Summer stipends for student research assistants: the amount of the stipend is generally recommended by NSF in its Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program and covers ten weeks of full-time work. The URL for this recommendation may be found at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2000/nsf00125/nsf00125.htm>.

2. Fringe benefits. Fringe benefits are calculated as a percentage of salaries and wages and include all benefits: retirement, health and life insurance, social security, etc. The fringe benefit rate is negotiated periodically with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and is subject to change. The current rate for VSU is 30%. The current rate may be obtained from the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs.

Wages of (a) employees not eligible for full benefits and (b) students working during the summer are subject to a reduced rate of 7.65%. The reduced fringe benefit rate can also be obtained from the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs.

Student wages during the academic year are not subject to fringe benefits.

3. Equipment. The federal government defines permanent equipment as property with a purchase price of \$5000 or more and a useful life of two or more years. Equipment purchased under a grant must be necessary to the research and not available or easily accessible. It is the PI's responsibility to determine the lack of availability or accessibility before including an equipment request in the budget.

Each item of equipment requested should be listed separately (with as much specific information about name, model number and manufacturer as possible) and justified in the budget justification. The cost of shipping and installation should also be included.

Ordinarily, the purchase of general purpose equipment (e.g. office furniture, data processing equipment, word processors, etc.) is not allowed.

4. Travel. Domestic and foreign travel are listed separately. The budget justification should indicate who will travel, where, and why, estimated air fare (or other cost of transportation), cost of meals and lodging, meeting registration fees, etc. Unless further restricted by federal regulations, all travel is subject to VSU (State) policy.

5. Materials and supplies. Materials and supplies include consumable items (e.g. chemicals, laboratory breakables, stationery, printer ribbons, etc.) required for the project. The amount requested should be supported by descriptions of the items included and estimates of their costs.

6. Publication costs. Publication costs include handouts, journal charges, cost of illustrations, and costs of preparing and reproducing reports required by the agency. They should be itemized in the budget.

7. Other. Other allowable expenses include such items as postage, telephone, photocopying, animal care, equipment repair, and subscriptions to periodicals. These expenses should be itemized in the budget.

8. Less frequently used budget categories include consultant services and subcontracts to collaborating colleges and universities. PIs including such items in the budget should consult the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs.

9. Indirect costs. Indirect costs are expenses that are related to the conduct of research but that can not be directly attributable to a particular project. The indirect cost rate used by VSU is negotiated periodically with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in accordance with federal regulations. Current VSU negotiated indirect cost rate is 46.9% of salaries. It is expressed as a percentage of salaries and wages in the budget. Only wages of regular VSU employees are included in total salaries and wages when calculating the amount of indirect costs.

VII. Appendix

A. Proposal Processing and Approval Form (PPAF)

The Proposal Processing and Approval Form (PPAF) is a document intended to provide information in the pursuit of support for and the management of sponsored programs at VSU.

The PPAF is a planning instrument. Its contents should clarify many, if not all, concerns as to whether a proposal or application should be developed to request support for activities which are consistent with the mission of the University.

The PPAF serves as the in-house approval for participation in externally funded projects. The Principal Investigator (Project Director) is responsible for securing the signatures from his/her department chair and dean for the PPAF.

B. Proposal Routing

Administrative review and approval:

1. Office of Sponsored Research and Programs
2. Grants and Contracts
3. Provost/VP for Academic and Student Affairs
4. President or Designee

The approved proposal will be returned to the principal investigator (project director) for submission to the funding agency.

C. Related Policies and Federal Regulations

I. Space Use

PI should consult with the chair of the department to identify space suitable for a research project that is in the proposal.

II. Human Subjects

Any research conducted by VSU faculty, staff and students and involving human subjects (whether externally funded or not) must be approved by the VSU Human Subject Committee (HSC) for the Protection of Human Subjects.

For funded research by faculty, a request for HSC approval of procedures for research with human subjects should be submitted to the HSC for approval once funding is granted, unless the funding agency requires approval at the proposal stage.

III. Animal Welfare

Any research conducted by VSU faculty, staff and students and involving animal welfare (whether externally funded or not) must be approved by the VSU Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC).

D. Terms

Cash Match – represents the recipient’s cash outlay including the outlay of money contributed to the recipient by non-federal third parties, and that portion of project or program costs, in cash, not borne by the federal government.

Contract – a procurement instrument under a grant; or when used as a synonym for Grant, an award of financial assistance in the form of money or property in lieu of money, by the federal government to an eligible recipient.

Cooperative Agreement – a transaction with the government for the “transfer of money, property, services, or anything of value to the recipient in order to accomplish a public purpose, with the substantial involvement of the federal government in the project or transaction.”

Grant - a grant is an award made to an individual or institution for the support of a program or project. The project can focus on anything imaginable, from scientific research costing millions of dollars to a Saturday afternoon workshop where the request can simply be for the donation of goods and services. Whatever your desire, there is a funding source out there willing to listen and to support your cause -- provided you can develop a compelling argument in the form of a grant proposal.

Indirect Costs (F&A cost) – costs incurred for common or joint objectives, and cannot be identified readily identified with a particular final cost objective. Indirect costs shall be classified within two broad categories: *Facilities and Administration*. *Facilities* is defined as depreciation and use allowances on buildings, equipment and capital improvement, interest on debt associated with certain buildings, equipment and capital improvement, and operations and maintenance expenses. *Administration* is defined as general administration and general expenses such as the director’s office, accounting, personnel, library expenses and all other types of expenditures not listed specifically under facilities

In-Kind Contribution – a contribution of equipment, supplies, or other tangible resource, as distinguished from a monetary grant. Some corporation contributors may also donate the use of space or staff time as an in-kind contribution.

Matching Grant – a grant that is made to match funds provided by another donor.

Seed Money – a grant or contribution used to start a new project or organization. Seed grants may cover salaries and other operating expenses of a new project.

Solicited Grant - refers to requests for funding based on a pre-developed program by the funding source. In this instance, the funding source usually will publish a description of the program and will distribute a request for proposals (RFP) to a range of pre-selected organizations. The RFP will provide details of the program, the types of projects sought for funding, a projected funding amount or range, as well as other pertinent information. The RFP will also detail information that should be included in the proposal.

Unsolicited Grant - refers to requests for funding that do not directly respond to any published program announcement. For example, you may have a unique idea about how to teach using technology or to encourage minorities to pursue careers in science through production of a music video. In this instance, it is the prospective grantee's (your) responsibility to identify an appropriate agency which may be interested in this type of project.

Sub-grant or subcontract- refers to grant or contract that comes to the VSU from another institution that has been awarded a grant or contract from a funding agency. The rules and conditions described for grants and contracts generally apply to sub-grants and subcontracts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we encourage you to refer to this Pre-award Handbook when preparing your proposal. This handbook is not intended to replace any of the grantor's guidelines, policies or procedures, but to serve as information only.

USEFUL INFORMATION

<u>Authorized University Official</u> President Eddie N. Moore, Jr.	<u>Indirect Cost Rate</u> (effective 07/01/03 – 06/30/06) 46.9% salaries & wages
<u>Taxpayer ID Number</u> 546001811	<u>DUNS Number</u> 074 744 624
<u>Congressional District:</u> 4 th	<u>Virginia House District:</u> 63 rd

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