

Subject: Approval Policy for External Funding of Grants and Contracts
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University of South Carolina Beaufort Faculty/Staff Guide to Submitting Grant Proposals

Proposal Development - where to find help:

The Program Director/Principal Investigator is responsible for developing, writing and submitting the proposal and ensuring that all applicable rules, formatting requirements, and deadlines are met. General assistance with several aspects of developing, writing and submitting proposals is available from the following:

General information on developing, writing and submitting proposals. Attend the Grants Office workshops (dates and locations to be announced each semester).

Assistance in identifying funding sources. Individuals or groups should call or email the Director of Grants (asears@gwm.sc.edu) to schedule a time for a discussion of your programmatic interests.

Assistance in developing budgets. Call or email the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations (bjhill@gwm.sc.edu) to schedule time for help with budgets. Please bring any program-specific forms or instructions. Early assistance is strongly recommended.

Information on the use of human subjects and necessary reviews. The local liaison of the USC Human Investigational Review Board is Lynn Mulkey (lmulkey@gwm.sc.edu). She is responsible for determining whether IRB approval is necessary for the proposed work. She is also available for consultation while you are writing your proposal; she can help to ensure that the proposed work meets federal standards for the use of human subjects, and that the sections documenting human subject involvement are properly written. Information on USC rules and procedures for the use of human subjects in research can be found at <http://www.orc.research.sc.edu/humansubjects.html> .

Gifts vs grants. Grants at USCB are defined as any award that includes a requirement for providing financial reports of expenditures to the donor. Please note that most local foundations do require financial reports, and therefore these awards must be defined as grants. Gifts include any award with no financial reporting requirement, and are handled by the Development Office.

Before you begin to write:

Develop the aims/goals of the project. Allow plenty of time for this process; the goals or specific aims establish the framework for the entire proposal.

Identify a source of funding and develop a preliminary budget. For federal awards, the best source of information on funding programs is www.cfda.gov. This searchable database contains information on all federal assistance programs. Assistance with developing a preliminary budget may be obtained from either the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations, or the Director of Grants.

Obtain pre-approval of your proposal. Because many proposals involve significant financial or programmatic commitments on the part of the University, approval by USCB officials is required for all proposals at the time of submission. In order to avoid last minute disapproval for financial or programmatic reasons after you have invested time and energy in preparing the proposal, obtain pre-approval from the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations and the appropriate supervisory Vice Chancellor (the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for faculty; the Vice Chancellor of Advancement or the Vice Chancellor of Student Development for staff).

The Director of Grants will route such requests for pre-approval to the proper offices. Submit the following by email to asears@gwm.sc.edu:

a) a 1 page abstract, including the goals/specific aims of the project and a brief description of the proposed work

b) the preliminary budget, including the following categories:

- (i) a list of all personnel to be paid from the grant, with percent effort (percent FTE), salary and fringe benefits listed for each,
- (ii) any cost-sharing expected from the University or outside sources,
- (iii) supplies
- (iv) any major equipment (more than \$5,000 per item) to be requested
- (v) other expenses (list in detail any requests in this category), and
- (vi) the total amount to be requested in direct costs

c) the CFDA number and title of the program for proposals funded by the federal government, or the funding agency and program title for other proposals, and the deadline for submission.

In some cases, the number of proposals permitted from USCB, or from the entire USC system, may be limited. In those cases, the proposal will also be routed to the administrative council as part of this process.

There is no specific deadline for this pre-approval, but PIs/program directors not obtaining pre-approval run the risk that the finished proposal will be disapproved during the final submission process. It is therefore recommended that pre-approval be obtained as soon as the goals of the project and a funding source are identified and a preliminary budget can be written...the earlier the better.

Writing and Formatting Your Proposal:

1. *Download the application package and instructions* from grants.gov or NSF (federal submissions) or obtain them from the funding agency. To find packages for most federal programs, go to www.grants.gov, click the “download grant application packages” link and fill in the CFDA number. Check the application package for specific instructions on fonts, margins, page limits, etc., as well as information on required sections, headings, and formatting your proposal.

For most NSF funded programs, you must use the FastLane web site for submission (note that for some NSF programs, you may use the grants.gov site). To learn to use FastLane, go to www.fastlane.nsf.gov/jsp/homepage/demo_site.html . This is an excellent demonstration site that will walk you through the steps necessary to prepare and submit an NSF proposal through FastLane. Detailed instructions for registering as a PI, preparing the proposal and submitting can be found on the demonstration site at www.fldemo.nsf.gov/a1/newstan.htm . Please note that because you will be submitting the same material simultaneously to USCeRA and to FastLane (see submission process below) it will be easiest to prepare the documents and forms in Word, Excel, or pdf format and upload them onto FastLane, rather than to write them directly on the FastLane site. In this way, the documents and forms will also be available on your computer for uploading onto USCeRA during submission.

Most federal agencies are switching to the grants.gov system. However, many other funding agencies will still require you to obtain the application package and/or instructions either by downloading them from the agency web site or by requesting that they be sent to you by mail.

2. *Sign up for any necessary registrations for electronic submissions.*

For all proposals, you must register with the USC Electronic Research Administration (USCeRA) system at <https://sam.research.sc.edu/uscera> to be able to submit proposals. Click on the “USCeRA registration” link, fill out the form, and submit.

If you are applying for an NSF funded award, you must register as a FastLane PI. This is done through the USC Sponsored Awards Management (SAM) office (call Jeff Tipton at SAM at 803-576-5554 or email jatipton@gwm.sc.edu .

If you are applying for most other awards funded by the federal government, you will be using www.grants.gov for access to application packages containing forms, instructions, etc. Registration with grants.gov as an individual is not necessary. However, the software (PureEdge) necessary to view the package documents, along with any current upgrades, must be downloaded from <http://www.grants.gov/DownloadViewer>.

3. *Write the proposal* in the format dictated by the application instructions, saving various sections into separate computer files as necessitated by the instructions. Failure

to follow formatting instructions may result in rejection by the funding agency without review of your proposal.

4. *Write the budget.* Help with the budget is available from the Vice Chancellor for Operations and Finance – contact him early and be sure he has the instructions so that he can check for any program specific requirements (caps on direct or indirect costs, restrictions on allowable expenditures, etc.). Problems with the budget in the submitted proposal may result in last minute revisions or disapproval of submission. Changes in the budget may require corresponding changes in the plan of work and can take a significant length of time to correct.

5. *Gather all letters of support, consortia, CVs, etc.* If necessary, save them in the format required by the funding agency (in most cases, letters may be scanned and saved as pdf files).

6. *Fill out any forms required* by the grants.gov package, the NSF FastLane web site, or instructions from the funding agency. Some of these assurances and certifications will be filled out by the SAM officer in Columbia. However, you should check them all carefully to be sure you have completed any that contain proposal specific information.

7. *For federally funded grants, upload all files onto the grants.gov application package or onto FastLane* for electronic submission. Please note that you, as the PI, do not have the authority to submit the proposal to the funding agency. It must go through the USCeRA process (see "Submitting Your Proposal" below), and it will actually be submitted by the SAM officer.

Submitting your proposal:

Submission of all proposals must go through the Sponsored Awards Management (SAM) office in Columbia. Because the University of South Carolina, as the applicant, is required to abide by government accounting standards and other guidelines, approval by SAM is required by all government agencies and many large foundations. SAM, in turn, requires that several USCB officials approve the application before it is transmitted to Columbia. The USCeRA system is designed to route your proposal electronically through this process and obtain all the necessary approvals.

1. *At least 3 business days before the proposal due date, the proposal should be uploaded onto the USCeRA system and submitted.* Instructions for using USCeRA, uploading documents, and filling out USCeRA forms can be found at <https://sam.research.sc.edu/pdf/QuickReferenceGuide.pdf>.

Please note that if the proposal must be mailed in, more time will be required for the entire process; it is best in this case to submit the proposal via USCeRA at least 5 business days before it is due.

For grants.gov submissions: upload the entire grants.gov submission package onto USCeRA. Fill out the USCeRA Proposal/Award Processing form and any additional forms that are generated by your responses.

For NSF FastLane submissions: upload all proposal files (including forms) onto the USCeRA web site. Fill out the USCeRA Proposal/Award Processing form and any additional forms that are generated by your responses. The files should also be uploaded onto NSF's FastLane site at this time. In the proposal actions section of the FastLane site, be sure to click the "Allow SRO access" button, and highlight "Allow SRO to view edit, and submit the proposal" so that the SAM officer can submit your proposal to NSF.

For all other submissions: upload all proposal files (including any forms and files required by the funding agency instructions) onto the USCeRA web site. Fill out the USCeRA Proposal/Award Processing form and any additional forms that are generated by your answers.

2. Click the "Start approval process" button. The proposal will then be routed first to the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations and then to either the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs or the Chancellor for approval before transmission to SAM for final approval and submission. Check the USCeRA site to determine whether these approvals have been obtained.

3. If the proposal is disapproved for any reason, the PI will be notified as to any changes necessary for approval. Make any changes and upload the revised file(s) onto USCeRA. For NSF submissions, be sure to make changes in the documents that have been loaded onto FastLane as well. When all approvals have been obtained, SAM will submit the grant electronically through grants.gov or FastLane, or will submit a paper copy to the funding agency if necessary. If the proposal must be submitted electronically via any other route, please see the Director of Grants for assistance.

Post-award Assistance:

Questions concerning financial matters should be addressed to the office of the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations.

Questions regarding human subjects should be addressed to the local liaison of the Human Investigational Review Board (Lynn Mulkey).

Questions concerning other non-financial matters should be addressed to the Director of Grants.

Summary:

1. *Giving yourself plenty of lead time, develop the goals/specific aims of the proposed work.*
2. *Identify a source of funding.* Obtain the application package and/or instructions.
3. *Develop the budget* (the details may change later, but the major categories of expenditures and personnel should be set at this time).
4. *Obtain any necessary pre-approvals* (email an abstract and budget to the Grants Office for routing).
5. *Register with USCeRA* and with NSF, if applicable.
6. *Write the proposal and detailed budget.*
7. *Obtain any necessary approvals for the use of human subjects.* Some funding agencies may require approval for the use of human subjects before proposal submission. Note that approval may take a considerable length of time to obtain.
8. *Submit the proposal via USCeRA at least **3 days** before it is due at the funding agency (5 for submissions that must be mailed).*
9. *Continue to check your USCeRA inbox* until all approvals have been obtained and submission is complete. If necessary, make revisions and resubmit.
10. *If appropriate, obtain any necessary approvals for the use of human subjects.* Some funding agencies allow these approvals to be obtained after funding of the project is approved, but before an award is actually made.