




OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**To:** Deans, Department Chairs and Faculty  
**From:** Dr. Tom McCoy, Vice President for Research and Economic Development   
**Date:** September 11, 2014  
**Subject:** Implementation of "Best Business Practices" for grant and contract proposal submissions

The Office of Grants and Contracts Administration (OGCA), formerly known as the Office of Research Services, is the university unit responsible for the review and submission of grant and contract proposals to federal agencies and other sponsors. The OGCA is led by Ann Rodela, the new Assistant Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs, who in May joined UNT from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Ms. Rodela has significant experience in leading and managing the central administration of grants and contracts.

To aid our progress in reaching national research university status, as defined by the State of Texas, OGCA is adopting a standard of best business practices typical of our peer institutions and of those we aspire to emulate.

The purpose of this memorandum is to outline the implementation, effective September 15, 2014, of new practices and responsibilities for the proposal submission process. The new process, and timely submission of proposals to OGCA, will ensure sufficient time for the thoughtful consideration and review of the proposal for sponsor and institutional requirements prior to the submission to federal agencies and other sponsors.

**New Deadline for Research Proposal Review**

A complete and final proposal package ready for external submission must be received by OGCA at least four full business days prior to the sponsor's due date.

- The proposal package must be accompanied by the necessary College or Department-level approvals, as well as any other attachments or approvals required by the sponsor or the university
- The sponsor's due date is defined as the date and time after which the sponsor will no longer accept proposals. For cases in which UNT is a subcontractor, the sponsor's due date will be determined by the submitting institution.
- A complete proposal includes all internal forms, such as the routing form, internal budget, sub-recipient documents and other required documents and completed sponsor forms. All information must also be uploaded into agency electronic proposal systems (Fastlane, Grants.gov), if required.

The Vice President for Research and Economic Development and OGCA staff members will focus on professional, efficient and effective service to all faculty interested in submitting proposals for funding from external sponsors. Principal Investigators (PIs) who wish to have a department or college assist in preparation of the proposal should request such assistance far enough in advance to meet required deadlines. External grant writing assistance may also be provided on a case-by-case basis, especially for new or inexperienced investigators.

The following summarizes the roles and responsibilities of PIs, departments, colleges and OGCA based on best business practices for proposal submissions of our peer and aspirational institutions.

### **Principal Investigators**

PIs are responsible for

- Knowing and understanding the four-day submission deadline and for providing the completed proposal to the OGCA by that deadline.
- Reading the Request for Proposal (or Broad Agency Announcement, etc.) from the funding agency and for preparing a proposal in compliance with the requirements and objectives laid out in these calls. If the PI feels that grant writing assistance is necessary for preparation of her/his proposal, then assistance should be requested far enough in advance of the deadlines to enable such assistance to be effective.
- Engaging their department, college and OGCA as early in the process as possible and preparing the proposal in sufficient detail and sufficiently in advance to allow for adequate reviews.
- Identifying any need for cost sharing early in the proposal development process.
  - Cost sharing should most frequently be made via allocation of investigator time and effort or other in-kind exchange.
  - When the sponsor has other requirements for cost sharing, these requests should be made as early as possible in the development of a proposal and well before the four-day OGCA submission period.
  - A request for cost sharing in the form of a commitment of funds from ORED, a department, a college or other university unit should be made 10 days prior to the Agency Deadline and well before the four-day OGCA submission deadline. Matching funds from the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) ORED must be approved in advance by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development (VPRED).
- Knowing the elements of proposals that could necessitate review and approval by other UNT offices and obtaining those approvals before the OGCA deadline.
- Ensuring the proposal is complete, accurate, and meets all the programmatic, administrative and compliance requirements.

### **Departments and Colleges**

Departments and colleges are responsible for

- Ensuring the proposals are consistent with departmental and college policies and procedures
- Ensuring the proposals do not indicate commitments of time, funds, or facilities that have not been approved explicitly by the appropriate department or college, including those that may extend beyond the duration of the project.

- Assisting PIs in preparation of required documents needed to make the proposal complete.
- Assisting PIs, where needed, in drafting budgets, obtaining sub-recipient documents, filling out forms or inputting information into electronic systems and carrying out a preliminary review of the proposal.
- Reviewing a proposal, which typically includes an assessment and approval of the following
  - Budget
  - Allowable direct costs
  - Qualifications and availability of personnel
  - Availability and appropriateness of facilities
  - Proposed cost-share to ensure it is adequately documented and accurate
  - Appointment information to ensure it is accurate and the Institutional base salary is accurate
  - For experienced investigators, university departments and colleges generally will not perform evaluations of the statement of work in the proposal.

### **Office of Grants and Contracts Administration**

The OGCA is responsible for

- Reviewing the proposal documents for accuracy and compliance with all applicable guidelines and regulations (institutional, local, state, federal, etc.) pertinent to the specific submission.
- Facilitating the final submission of the proposal to the sponsor according to the agency requirements.
- Requiring any variance from the standard indirect cost recovery be approved in writing (e-mail or memo) by the Vice President for Research 10 days prior to the agency deadline.

As a reminder, all proposals requesting funding from an external sponsor must go through OGCA, the only office on campus that has the legal authority, delegated by the President, to submit proposals on behalf of the Institution.

### **Late Submission of Proposals**

All materials received after the four-day window (including required department and college approvals) will require

- Approval of the VP RED or the Associate VP RED before OGCA will submit the proposal.
- Explanation of the extenuating circumstances that resulted in the late proposal must accompany the request for such approval.

If approved, best efforts will be made to complete the proposal submission process as time and staff availability allows. However, late proposals will not receive priority over proposals complying with the required lead times.

OGCA does not guarantee the submission of proposals that do not allow for sufficient time to complete the necessary review and navigate an appropriate sponsor submission. If an award is made based on a late submission of a proposal, the PI and the department or other university unit will be responsible for covering costs incurred by UNT as a result of any proposal errors. Such costs might include cost sharing commitments, inaccurate rate calculations for indirect costs, or unallowable commitments of UNT resources.

UNT reserves the right to review and request changes prior to acceptance of an award or to decline an award, if the budget or other commitments contained in the proposal do not conform to UNT specifications or requirements.

The OGCA will continue to adopt best practices ensuring outstanding professional service and assistance to PIs, while providing the appropriate level of review of proposals and contracts. We also recognize the important partnership that departments and colleges play in reaching this goal.

Should you have questions about submission standards or deadlines, please contact Ms. Ann Rodela, e-mail: [ann.rodela@unt.edu](mailto:ann.rodela@unt.edu).