Tips for Better Grant Submissions (Major Proposals)

- **Planning**
  - Carefully read the funding opportunity announcement (FOA) for any special instructions
    - Gain full understanding of sponsor’s requests
    - Contact senior administration for institution commitment early
    - Review for cost or budgetary limitations
    - Check due date
  - Create a checklist or follow recommended check list
  - Develop a feasible timeline with draft application deadlines
    - Have weekly planning meetings starting 2 months before the deadline
    - Use Google calendar to plan meetings (check to insure people use)
    - Accommodate all schedules, so may need to meet at night
    - Make sure people reply to meeting invites
    - Meet every other week with drafts due prior to meeting
    - Time control meetings for productive use
    - Food and/or beverages need to be served at the planning meetings
  - Use Google site as helpful repository for planning documents and examples
  - Identify realistic deadlines for Project Outlines, Rough Drafts & Final Drafts
  - Clarify writing roles for the support documents - Cores, budget justifications, etc. - who does what.
  - Prepare Checklists as a reminder to PIs
  - FAQ list might be helpful for duplicate questions
  - Have someone else read proposal

- **Collaborators**
  - Determine expertise needed for research study team (individuals, organizations, etc)
    - Requests letters at least one month in advance of deadline
      - Include programmatic, fiscal, and administrative arrangements
      - Application require signed letter from each collaborator that lists the contribution of commitment to the work
    - Paid Consultants letters should include rate/charge for services

- **Budgets**
  - Work with BMRA
  - Match budget with goals and objectives
  - Draft budgets due 1 month ahead of deadline
  - Determine firm budget allocations early so not to delay critical documents preparation
  - Explain budget rationale that is fair to all participants
  - Budgets have to be justified by the PI of the section
  - Include budget justifications that justify the funding requested in each year (variations from year to year should be explained)
  - If project involves subawards, communicate with subawardee PI and subaward research administration office items needed (LOI, SOW, budget, etc.) and date needed

- **Deadlines**
  - Identify realistic deadlines for Project Outlines, Rough Drafts & Final Drafts
  - Staged preparation helps everyone, especially Junior PIs
  - Outside readers should have time to read the entire document, not just the PI
  - Letters of support
    - Ask for legislative letters 1 month before deadline
    - Ask for hospital letters 1 month ahead of time. This requires the budget to be finalized 1 month ahead of time.
• **Processing of review**  
  o Versioning strategy needs to be established  
  o Make use of Google docs folders for each PI  
    ▪ Allows support documents with update to track changes  
  o Check for all **required** forms and attachments  
  o Prior to submission, perform a final proofread of the entire grant application

• **Document formatting**  
  o Deprotection problematic NIH documents for editing/numbering  
    ▪ Instruct PIs not to manipulate forms that are constrained by NIH as they have to be fixed back to their original constraints, sometimes at the loss of text.  
    ▪ For example Form 2, page 1 cannot break to a second page  
  o Put all drafts on the right forms, do not just wait until the end  
    ▪ Prevents formatting issues and numbering issues  
    ▪ Make sure that the proper forms are used  
  o Have PIs learn how to attach figure legends to the images so they don't separate  
  o Have PIs build their tables in Excel with legends and paste special as objects into grant  
  o Have PIs use PMIDs in all bibliography references so as not to have to go back and fix their pubs  
  o Have PIs insert more white space for readability and room for last minute edits

• **Endgame**  
  o Plan to submit at least 1 day early  
  o Need **advanced** administrative help committed ahead of time to work until the project is done – advanced word processing and document editing skills needed.  
  o Everyone should be on "high alert" the week before the internal deadline so quick turn-around can be obtained.

### Sample Key Dates and Proposed Timeline for February 21 Deadline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Proposed Schedule</th>
<th>PI Schedule</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First drafts due to PI and Core Directors/PIs</td>
<td>Monday December 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>First draft revision suggestions back to Investigators</td>
<td>Week of December 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second drafts due to PI and Directors</td>
<td>Monday January 7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Second draft revision suggestions back to Investigators</td>
<td>Monday January 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter of Intent Due Date</td>
<td>January 21 – 4 weeks prior to deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Drafts due to PI</td>
<td>January 28 – 2 weeks prior to deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grant due to BMRA/OSP</td>
<td>February 13 – 6 days prior to deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application Due Date(s)</td>
<td>February 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scientific Merit Review</td>
<td>May/June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advisory Council Review</td>
<td>October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earliest Start Date(s)</td>
<td>December</td>
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