

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**
 - Versioning strategy needs to be established
 - Make use of Google docs folders for each PI
 - Allows support documents with update to track changes
 - Check for all *required* forms and attachments
 - Prior to submission, perform a final proofread of the entire grant application

- **Document formatting**
 - Deprotect 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
 - 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
 - Have PIs learn how to attach figure legends to the images so they don't separate
 - Have PIs build their tables in Excel with legends and paste special as objects into grant
 - Have PIs use PMIDs in all bibliography references so as not to have to go back and fix their pubs
 - Have PIs insert more white space for readability and room for last minute edits

- **Endgame**
 - Plan to submit at least 1 day early
 - Need **advanced** administrative help committed ahead of time to work until the project is done – advanced word processing and document editing skills needed.
 - 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

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