Pre-Award Proposal Checklist

The Office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPR) is responsible for the review and submission of all materials included in a proposal or other compensation agreements from outside sources. As such, OSPR conducts a thorough review of all external funding proposals submitted by Clark University faculty, researchers, schools, and centers. Many considerations in this checklist are assessed during the review process.

Principal Investigators (PIs) and Grant Support Staff should review this list prior to beginning work on a proposal to help identify institutional and compliance issues that may need to be addressed early in the proposal development stage. OSPR recommends a pre-proposal meeting to review the solicitation and discuss the proposal preparation and review schedule.

Use this checklist to confirm that required forms, documents, budgets, approvals, and proposal elements have been fully addressed before submitting your full application package to OSPR (or Corporate and Foundation Relations (CFR) if foundation or corporation funding is sought).

**Institutional Considerations**

1. **Proposed Project**
   - Does the proposed project conflict in any manner with university policies, mission, or strategic plans?

2. **Department/Center/University Resource Approvals**
   - Has the department chair reviewed the proposal and approved the levels of effort, course buyouts, and commitment of space and other departmental resources required for the project?
   - Has all departmental cost sharing been approved and the Fund to be charged been identified?
   - Has cost sharing to be funded by other offices of the university (i.e., Provost, Dean of Research, etc.) been approved? If so, has the Fund to be charged been identified?
3. Curricular Programs
- Does the proposal involve a new curricular program?
- If so, has this new proposed curricular program been approved?

Proposal Considerations

4. Type of Application
- Is the application for a government or non-government grant or contract?
- Have you contacted OSPR and CFR (if a foundation or corporation funder) to let them know of the pending submission?
- Have you scheduled a pre-meeting with OSPR or CFR, if needed?
- Is this proposal a pre-proposal, Letter of Intent, new application, resubmission, renewal, or supplement?

5. Electronic Submittals and Funder Application Portals
- Does the principal investigator have the required electronic access (i.e., user ID, password) to the sponsor proposal system?
- Will the documents contained in each section of the proposal be viewed by the sponsor/funder the same as they are viewed locally?
- Can the proposal be submitted sufficiently prior to the deadline date/time to allow for possible problems with the internet, submission portal, or other delays or interruptions?

6. Principal Investigator (PI)/Project Director (PD)
- Is the PI/PD clearly identified in the proposal?
- Does the PI/PD or any other named collaborator have an actual or perceived conflict of interest in their relationship to the external sponsor? If so, has the potential COI been disclosed to OSPR to review ahead of proposal submission?

7. Other Personnel Involvement
- Are any other people participating in the proposed project? If so, in what capacity (i.e., co-investigator, research associate, consultant, research assistant, post-doctoral researcher, etc.)?
- Do you have commitments from Key Personnel or organizations that have agreed to be involved in the project (email confirmation from Clark faculty and staff, or letters of commitment from represented institutions, organizations, and businesses)?
- Have Key Personnel provided required documents as applicable to the funder/solicitation, e.g., CV, Bio Sketch, Current & Pending Support, etc.?
- Are all persons for whom salaries are being requested employees or students of Clark?
- Will new employees be hired for this project only? Will they be temporary, part-time, full-time hires in Massachusetts?
- If not a Clark employee, does the person require a subcontract with another institution/organization, or are they an independent consultant?
- If an independent consultant, do you have a written scope of work, cost, and timeframe for the estimated level of effort?
If an independent consultant, have you reviewed Clark’s Policy on Independent Contractors to preliminarily assess the person’s classification? In the event of an award, Human Resources must approve Independent Contractor status through SmartBuyPlus prior to engagement of services.

Does the proposal promise any institutional commitments to personnel beyond the proposed period of the award?

8. Period of Performance

- Have the proposed start and end dates been clearly stated and held consistent throughout the proposal; do they match related documents, e.g., budget justification, Current & Pending Support, etc.?
- Is the proposed start date reasonable and appropriate given the funder’s decision timeline?

9. Space and Facilities

- Is adequately equipped space available to conduct the project?
- Will additional space and/or facilities need to be made available?
- If so, have the appropriate institutional officials approved the commitment of space and/or facilities?

10. Level of Effort

- What level of effort has each investigator committed to the project?
- Is the stated level of effort reasonable and available given the other commitments of the investigators?
- If more than two months of summary salary is being requested, has this been pre-approved by OSPR / Dean of Research?
- If a course-buyout(s) is requested, has this been pre-approved by the Department Chair?
  - If a course buyout is requested by an early career tenure-track faculty, pre-approval must be obtained from the Department Chair, AND from the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs.
- If additional compensation is requested for staff, has this been pre-approved by the Department Chair?

11. Human Subjects

- Does the project involve the use of human subjects?
- If so, have you indicated this in the proposal and supplied IRB review (approved or pending) and Clark’s Federal Wide Assurance number (00000262) if requested?

12. Use of Animals in Research

- Does the project involve the use of vertebrate animals?
- If so, have you indicated this in the proposal and supplied Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review status (pending or approved) and Clark’s Animal Welfare Assurance number (A3113-01) if requested?

13. Assurances and Certifications

- Are all required assurance and certification forms included as part of the proposal?
  - If this is an NSF proposal, have you completed and submitted to OSPR the required Plan for Safe & Inclusive Off-Campus or Off-Site Working Environments? (if applicable).
- Have all required assurance and certifications been completed correctly and signed by the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) (or will be signed upon submission). This could include representations and certifications, lobbying, debarment and suspension, drug-free workplace, etc.
14. Patents, Inventions, and Copyrights
□ Does the proposal contain any potentially patentable or copyrightable material?
□ If so, has the Office of General Counsel reviewed the proposal Intellectual Property language and provided feedback?

15. Publishing
□ Does the sponsor or agency impose any restrictions on investigators or graduate students from freely publishing research results?
□ If so, does the PI have a plan in place to adhere to any such restrictions?

16. Ancillary Documents
□ Are all ancillary documents required by the funder current and in the format required by the funder proposal guidelines (biographical sketches, CVs, rate agreements, university financial reports, Board of Trustees lists, etc.)?

17. Proposal Content and Formatting
□ Does the proposal formatting follow sponsor guidelines (i.e., number of pages, page numbering, spacing, margins, font size, table of contents, readability issues, narrative reflects timeline and tables/graphs, etc.)?
□ Is the heading structure (numbering, header name, and formatting) clear and consistent throughout the proposal?

Budgetary Considerations

18. Budget
□ Has an internal Budget Proposal Spreadsheet (OSPR Standard Spreadsheet-TBD) with budget justification been prepared for OSPR review?
□ Is the proposed budget complete and mathematically correct?
□ Have the correct budget categories been used, and do the categories follow the funders guidelines and/or template?
□ Are all budgeted costs allowable and allocable in accordance with sponsor guidelines and/or the appropriate federal cost principles?
□ Are estimated costs proposed in the manner that they will be expended?
□ Have appropriate cost of living increases been applied to subsequent years if allowed (generally 3% annually)?
□ Do annual salary increases align with the correct start/end dates per year, and do they consider projected SSI and promotion increases?
  o Faculty summer salary and Graduate Student wages are based on salary if effect in the month of May (increases begin at the start of the Fall semester).
  o Staff salary increases begin in the month of June.
□ Do all budget forms agree – budget spreadsheet/form and budget justification?

19. Fringe Benefits
□ Have the current approved rates been used (see Fringe Benefit Rate Schedule) and correctly applied to the proper salary base?
20. Indirect Costs
□ Has the appropriate indirect cost rate been used and applied to the correct Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) base?
□ If the sponsor has a written policy which limits indirect cost recovery, can the difference be used for any required cost sharing?
□ If the sponsor has a written policy which limits indirect cost recovery, do they allow direct administrative salaries/fringe to be included in the proposal budget?
□ If less than the full indirect cost rate has been applied, has OSPR/DOR approved the lower indirect cost rate (based on the sponsor’s restriction, or PI’s written justification for requesting a lower rate)?

21. Travel and Other Direct Costs
□ Are the proposed costs necessary for the successful conduct of the project?
□ Are the proposed costs reasonable, allowable, and allocable?
□ Are the travel costs based on federal per diem rates or some other known and/or accepted source of information? If the funder does not have set per diem rates, then Clark University's per diem rates included in the Travel Policy must be used.
□ Does the project propose International Travel? If so, are there any travel restrictions for the proposed international locations and is the PI aware of Clark’s International Travel Policy.

22. Equipment Costs
□ What is the basis for the estimated equipment costs (e.g., vendor quotes, prior purchases, experience, etc.)?
□ Are there additional costs associated with the installation or maintenance of the proposed equipment, or is it “plug & play”?
□ If there are additional associated costs, does the sponsor allow such costs? If not, has the source of funding the additional costs been identified?
□ If there are additional needs for the equipment, has Facilities been notified of the potential for associated construction or installation costs?

23. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds
□ Does the proposed project require the financial support of Clark?
□ If so, have the sources of this funding been identified, and approved in writing, by the appropriate source (e.g., Department, Provost, Research Center)?
□ Do any matching funds have to be raised during the life of the project? If so, is University Advancement aware of the need and have they been involved in the development of the proposal and plans to secure outside funding?

24. Subcontractors or Consultants
□ Is a budget included for each proposed subcontractor? Is this budget accurate and reasonable?
□ Does the proposal contain a letter of commitment (intent) from each subcontractor organization, indicating their willingness to participate in the project, if funded?
□ Is there a scope of work included for each subcontractor?
□ Are letters of intent included for each consultant on the project, paid or otherwise?
If the proposal is to a federal sponsor, is the subcontractor or consultant currently debarred or suspended and, therefore, ineligible to receive federal funding?

For consultants see #7.

**Other Considerations**

**25. Investigator’s Current or Previous Awards**

Is the principal investigator (and Clark) up to date on required reporting on current and/or expired awards (not being current could result in rejection of proposals)?

**Internal Forms and Approvals**

**26. OSPR Forms**

Has the *Proposal Summary and Approval Form* been submitted to OSPR with all necessary signatures?

Has the *Financial Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form* (FCOI) been submitted for each Clark person who will be involved in the design, conduct or reporting of the grant?

Has the internal *Budget Proposal Spreadsheet* (TBD) been submitted?

If applicable to NSF proposals, has the *Plan for Safe and Inclusive Off-Campus or Off-Site Working Environments* been submitted?

If applicable, have course buyouts for early career faculty been pre-approved by the *Department Chair* and *Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs*?