

Policy on Proposal Routing: Frequently Asked Questions

1. When should I begin working with OSP on a proposal submission?

Submission of an Internal Processing Form (IPF) signifies that the final phase of the pre-award process has commenced; it should not be the first notification or discussion with key stakeholders. Please work with an OSP Grants & Contracts Specialist prior to submitting an IPF, at least 10 business days prior to the sponsor deadline is recommended.

Be aware of additional lead times that may be required by the department and/or college. In addition, more complex proposals such as multiple collaborators, subawards, mandatory cost share, etc. should be agreed upon with key stakeholders prior to routing an IPF.

2. The policy references a five-day deadline and a two-day deadline. What is the difference?

The IPF, including final administrative documents and draft technical/programmatic documents, must be submitted for routing no fewer than five (5) full business days prior to the application deadline. To support the most compelling proposal possible, the Lead Principal Investigator (PI) may continue to refine the technical/programmatic components of a proposal with submission of these final documents due to OSP no fewer than two (2) full business days prior to the sponsor deadline.

The additional window for refinement is not required; the Lead PI may choose to complete all final documents when the IPF is submitted, including technical/programmatic elements.

3. How does the Office for Sponsored Programs (OSP) calculate the internal deadlines?

An IPF and final administrative documents must be submitted for routing no fewer than five (5) full business days prior to the application deadline. Therefore, if the IPF and applicable documents are submitted at 2:00 pm on Monday, the first full business day is the following day, Tuesday. If an IPF and applicable documents are submitted by 8:00 am on Monday, then the first full business day is Monday.

To further clarify, the deadline to submit the IPF and documents are the same, regardless of the time indicated on the sponsor deadline. For example, whether or not the sponsor deadline is 11:59 pm or 5:00 pm on the same day – the IPF, including final administrative documents, must be submitted for routing no fewer than five (5) full business days and final technical/programmatic documents are due to OSP no fewer than two (2) full business days prior to the sponsor deadline.

4. What are examples of “final administrative documents” that must be routed with the IPF?

Requirements for proposal submission documents vary by sponsor; only those documents required by the solicitation must be completed and routed in the IPF for review and approval.

Common examples of final administrative elements may include, but are not limited to: key project information (title, period of performance, performance locations, etc.); project summary; budget (including mandatory cost share, if applicable); budget justification; biographical sketch; current and pending support; collaborators and other affiliations; facilities and resources; data management

plan; postdoctoral mentoring plan; all subaward documentation; resource sharing plan; multiple PI leadership plan; letters of support; etc.

5. The sponsor calls for mandatory cost sharing, is internal approval required before I submit the IPF for routing?

Yes. Before submitting an IPF for review, the Lead PI should have preliminary discussions regarding mandatory cost share commitments with applicable stakeholders. This includes department chair(s) and Associate Dean(s) for Research, as well as any proposed subrecipients who may be contributing cost share, if applicable.

The final budget must include a pre-approved cost share budget by cost category. The IPF should not be the first notification to stakeholders that you are requesting mandatory cost share support.

6. I am planning to include subrecipient(s) in my proposal, when are their documents due?

Plan ahead for proposals that include external collaborators and organizations. Sufficient information regarding their proposed budget must be received in advance so the UA Lead PI can work with OSP to finalize the total budget. Proposed subrecipients must send all final administrative documents, including, but not limited to: letters of intent; budget (including mandatory cost share, if applicable); budget justification; subrecipient commitment forms; statement of work; etc., prior to the five-day internal deadline established by this policy.

7. I would like to continue refining the technical/programmatic portion of my proposal. If all of the other administrative documents are submitted within the five-day deadline, is this acceptable?

To support the most compelling proposal possible, the Lead PI may continue refining technical/programmatic components of the proposal, if needed. Submission of final technical/programmatic documents to OSP is required no fewer than two (2) full business days prior to the sponsor deadline. Examples of technical/programmatic documents may include: specific aims; research strategy; project description; vertebrate animals; protection of human subjects; and references.

8. How do I route the final technical/programmatic documents to OSP after an IPF has already been submitted?

Collaborate with the OSP Grants & Contracts Specialist to determine the most appropriate method for communication and receipt of final documents. Some PIs may prefer to upload documents directly into Cayuse 424 or the sponsor submission portal (if applicable), while others may prefer to send documents to the OSP Grants & Contracts Specialist via e-mail.

9. What is the definition of a complete and “FINAL” proposal?

Proposals are considered complete and final once OSP has received all final proposal documents and all applicable parties responsible for IPF review have completed the approval process in Cayuse.

10. Will OSP begin reviewing my proposal as soon as it is received?

OSP Grants & Contracts Specialists will prioritize review of proposals based on sponsor deadlines and on a “first come, first served” basis, assuming the IPF and final proposal documents are received within the deadlines established by the Policy on Proposal Routing, Review and Approval for Externally Sponsored Grants & Contracts.

11. Will OSP wait until the day of the sponsor deadline before submitting the proposal?

Not necessarily. In order to successfully manage a high volume of proposal submissions, the PI should expect that OSP may formally submit any complete and final proposals to the sponsor in advance of the deadline.

12. What happens if I do not meet the internal deadlines outlined in this policy?

To ensure appropriate review and consideration are given to PIs who prepare in advance and meet the internal deadlines, OSP will not accept proposals that do not comply with the required policies and procedures. OSP also reserves the right to submit a proposal with minimal or incomplete review; withdraw an application; attempt to submit a correction; or decline an award if unfavorable award terms and conditions cannot be successfully negotiated.

13. A sponsor released a Rapid Response Research (RAPID) announcement with fewer than five days' notice until the submission deadline. Would this be considered an extraordinary circumstance in which OSP would make an exception to the internal deadlines?

It depends. In extraordinary circumstances, the Lead PI may submit a written request to ospua@ua.edu, directed to the Associate Vice President for Research, detailing the mitigating circumstances. The Associate Vice President may consult with other key stakeholders and reserves the right to approve or deny exceptions.

14. Does this policy apply to SBIR and STTR proposals?

Yes.

15. I am collaborating with an external organization and The University of Alabama is considered a proposed subrecipient. What is the deadline to route an IPF and submit documents to OSP?

Incoming subawards are considered a formal proposal submission to the prime organization; internal deadlines outlined in this policy will apply to this proposal type. In this scenario, the sponsor deadline is the due date specified by the prime organization. Please note, this date will be earlier than the deadline of the sponsoring agency, in order to ensure the prime organization has enough time to review and submit the overall proposal.

16. What happens if the sponsor requires a formal proposal submission but does not establish a set deadline?

The IPF and final administrative documents must be submitted with a sponsor "due date" at least five (5) full business days from the date the IPF is submitted internally. Final technical/programmatic documents related to the proposal will then be due two (2) full business days prior to the "due date" specified in the IPF.

17. I have informally discussed a scope of work and estimated total budget with a potential sponsor who wants to contract with the University. When do I initiate an IPF and contact OSP?

Grants and Contracts that do not have a formal proposal submission process or specified deadline typically advance in three phases as noted below. An employee serving in the Lead PI role, or their designee, must initiate the IPF prior to Phase 3.

- Phase 1 generally includes proposal development and informal discussions with a potential sponsor.
- Phase 2 may include informal negotiations with the sponsor resulting in acceptance of the proposed scope of work and budget.

- Phase 3 involves formal contracting of terms and conditions between the sponsor and University. The length of time for Phase 3 to be completed is dependent on the type of sponsor, previous experience with a sponsor, complexity of proposed terms and conditions, and level of OSP engagement prior to Phase 3.

Once informal negotiations have ceased and the potential sponsor requests documentation, such as a budget, contact your OSP Grants & Contracts Specialist to finalize the budget and other applicable documents. Any prior informal agreements between the Lead PI and sponsor may be subject to modification by OSP. Externally sponsored agreements will not be signed by an Authorized Organizational Representative of the University if an IPF has not been completed.

18. OSP is authorized to submit proposals on behalf of the University. What if the sponsoring agency requires PI submission of the proposal rather than OSP; is the proposal routing policy still applicable?

Yes. Regardless of who the sponsor designates as the submitter, University approvals are still required through the IPF review and approval process. This also ensures your proposal submission efforts are captured on institutional reports. In addition, OSP will have all of the appropriate documentation in Cayuse, should an award be granted.

19. The sponsor sent me a contract for competitive renewal of annual funding (e.g., state contracts). What is required next?

The Lead PI, or their designee, must initiate the IPF, including the contract, statement of work, budget, and other applicable documents. Next, contact the OSP Grants & Contracts Specialist who will then initiate internal contract review by the Office for Research & Technology Agreements and/or Office for Research Compliance, as needed.

20. What type of funding requests require compliance with this policy?

The IPF routing requirement applies to all types of external funding requests (a-c below), whether a grant, fellowship, or contract; to all types of application systems, whether paper or electronic; and to all external funding sources, whether governmental, nonprofit, or industry.

- Preliminary or Pre-proposal applications** that include a budget and/or require signature of an authorized organizational representative;
- Full applications** that represent new, revised, competitive renewal or supplemental funding requests (includes incoming subawards); and
- Contracts and Agreements** that represent new, revised, competitive renewal or supplemental funding requests.

21. Who should complete and submit the IPF in Cayuse?

An employee serving in the Lead PI role, or their designee (e.g., departmental grant administrator), must submit an IPF for routing. Please note, IPF submission and certification are two distinct steps in Cayuse. A designee may submit the IPF; however, they are not permitted to certify on behalf of the PI.

22. Is there a step-by-step training guide to complete the IPF?

Yes. An "IPF Training Guide" is available under the Cayuse Research Suite section at <https://research.ua.edu/resources/training/>.