Proposal Development & Submission

The Departmental Perspective                Michelle Grana
• First Steps
• Budget Development & Fiscal Considerations
• Potential Pitfalls

The OSR Perspective                     Jamie Young
• Common Errors and OSR Review
First Steps

• Communication
• Questions
• Timeline
• Division of Labor
First Steps: Communication

Communicate with Faculty
- Proactively reach out to faculty to query planned submissions
- Gather key info
  - Sponsor, RFA/PA # if NIH, Personnel & Effort
  - Checklists available at multiple sources

Communicate with OSR
- Notify OSR of your planned submissions
First Steps: Questions

• Grant vs. Gift
• PI Eligibility
  – University & sponsor requirements
• Other eligibility considerations
  – Effort commitment and restrictions
    • Especially concerning Career Development Awards (K’s)
  – Understanding dual appointments
  – Impact of external commitments (VA appointments)
First Steps: Questions

Grant vs. Gift

— Grant = Transaction (strings attached)
  • Has deliverables, reporting requirements, performance period
  • Must be routed through OSR. Subject to University policy concerning F&A.

— Gift = No string attached
  • No deliverables or reporting requirements beyond periodic progress reports/summary of expenditures.
  • Irrevocable; work with Development Office
First Steps: Questions

PI Eligibility

– University Requirements
  • Faculty (all tracks; full, associate, and assistant professors)
  • Instructors, Adjunct faculty, Emeritus faculty, Librarians, Curators
  • On a case-by-case basis: Visiting faculty, Visiting scholars
  • Research associates may seek approval from the VP for research
  • Postdoctoral fellows and research assistants (graduate students) may not serve as PIs.

– Sponsor Requirements
  • See guidelines
First Steps: Questions

Other eligibility considerations

• Current and proposed effort commitment; especially concerning Career Development Awards (K’s awards)
• VA appointments/impact
• Cost sharing
First Steps: Questions

Effort Commitments & Restrictions on NIH Mentored Career Development (K) awards

Almost all K’s require a full-time appointment at the applicant organization and minimum 75% effort commitment to the goals of the career award.

- Because salary recovery is limited to $75K, may need to cost share
- The effort commitment on a K-award may not be reduced by any amount without sponsor approval
- May reduce to no less than 50% in last 2 years if PI on independent research project grant and/or sub-project director role on multi-component program project/center grant, with prior approval.
First Steps: Questions
Effort Commitments & Restrictions on NIH Mentored Career Development (K) awards

A career award recipient meets the required commitment of total professional effort as long as:

1) the applicant has a full-time appointment with the applicant organization; and

2) the minimum percentage of the candidate's commitment required for the proposed career award is covered by that appointment.
First Steps: Questions

Effort Commitments & Restrictions

What does this mean for NU faculty with NMFF appointments?

- The basis for sponsored project effort commitment is NU and, if applicable, NMFF effort: NU+NMFF = 100% effort

- The effort an investigator may commit to sponsored research is typically exclusively from the NU side and may include research, teaching and administrative activities.
First Steps: Questions
Effort Commitments & Restrictions

If an investigator has two days/week clinic (40% NMFF), can s/he commit 75% effort to a K award?

• S/he will need to reduce their NMFF appointment.
• This has significant fiscal implications for the clinical unit, since this may either reduce the clinical income for a unit and/or these clinical sessions may need to be covered by another physician.
First Steps: Questions
Effort Commitments & Restrictions

What about VA (or other) external appointments?

• If the individual also has a VA appointment, the associated commitment is not included in the full-time NU appointment and may not be used to meet any minimum effort requirement.
  – HOWEVER, the number of eighths of the VA appointment does impact the NIH view of whether an investigator may be considered to have a full-time NU appointment.
For example...

- An investigator has a full time appointment at a university and a half time appointment with another organization (4/8 VA appt or other half-time independent clinical practice plan). Under NIH policy, the investigator can be supported because the university and candidate can commit at least 75% of the full time appointment to the award.

- Any investigator with 5/8 VA appointment or greater, should contact OSR in advance of K award submission (and possibly in advance of other research support applications if significant effort is committed).
First Steps: Questions
Cost Sharing?

Types of cost sharing

- Mandatory Cost Sharing/Matching
- Voluntary Committed Cost Sharing
- Salary Cap Cost Sharing
- Voluntary Uncommitted Cost Sharing
Salary Cap Cost Sharing

- NIH does not require cost sharing
- Most common type of cost sharing on the Chicago campus is the NIH statutory cap and the salary limitation on NIH career (K) awards
- This can have a huge impact for clinical units where salaries are in hundreds of thousands
  - DoM requires divisional & dept approvals for proposals that involve salary cap/salary limitation cost sharing
First Steps: Questions

Cost Sharing?

- **NIH statutory cap** - the NIH salary cap is a statutory limitation imposed by Congress on any individual’s rate of pay directly chargeable to NIH awards.
  - The NIH budget approved December 23, 2011 reduces the salary cap from the Executive Level I federal pay scale ($199,700) to Executive Level II ($179,700).

- **K-award salary** cap - varies by institute, but typically limited to only $75K allowable salary recovery (for min. 75% effort) and typically provides only ~$20K for research support.
First Steps: Questions
Cost Sharing Impact

Financial Impact

- Redirection of resources
- Forfeit not only the direct cost, but also the associated F&A cost

F&A Calculation Impact

- The University's total Cost Sharing is included in the F&A rate calculation. This serves to decrease the University's overall F&A rate.

Administrative/Compliance Impact

- Cost Sharing commitments must be met and tracked for sponsor verification in the University's records.
First Steps: Timeline

• When do I ask my PI’s about planned submissions?
• When do I require minimal info for administrative portions?
  – RFA/PA#, list of personnel and % effort, subaward info, project title, etc.
• When is the latest we can make budgetary changes?
First Steps: Timeline

OSR-CH November 5 Deadline: Time of Submission to Grants.gov

- Number of Proposals
- Proposals with corrected errors

Day/Time of Submission

Number of Proposals
Sample Timeline
Internal Review Committee

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<th>6</th>
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<tr>
<td>Present at WIPM Meeting</td>
<td>WIPM Deadline: 10 Weeks before Grant Submission Date</td>
<td>Submit to ISRCAR to initiate review process</td>
<td>ISRCAR Deadline: 8 Weeks before Grant Submission Date to OSR – FINAL LIST OF PERSONNEL, EFFORT, ETC.</td>
<td>ISRCAR “Study Section” Meeting: 4 Weeks before Grant Submission to OSR</td>
<td>Grant Submission Date to OSR (at least 7 business days in advance of NIH deadline!)</td>
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WIPM=Works in Progress and Methods Meeting
ISRCAR=Internal Scientific Review Committee on Aging Research
First Steps: Understanding the Division of Labor

PI Responsibility

- Notify administrator
- Provide required info
  - RFA/PA#
  - Personnel/% Effort
  - Subcontract Info
  - Project Title
  - Aims/Abstract/Draft Methods
- Write the research plan
First Steps: Understanding the Division of Labor

Admin Responsibility

- Prepare OSR forms (InfoEd)
- Prepare budget and justification
- Prepare resources/institutional commitment pages
- Collect, prepare, edit biographical sketches
- Collect, prepare, edit letters of support
Budget Considerations

Budget Development
- Budget calculation
- Budget narrative (justification)
- Determining reasonable effort

Fiscal considerations
- Can it be done?
- Fiscal health of the department
  - Utilization of dept resources
  - F&A recovery; F&A sharing
Budget Considerations
Developing the Budget

• Choosing a template (NURAP/OSR websites)
  ➢ Federal
    ▪ SF 424 Regular
    ▪ SF 424 Modular
      ▪ see OSR modular budget tabulator:
        http://www.research.northwestern.edu/osr/forms.html#NIH
    ▪ PHS 398
  ➢ Non-Federal
• Completing the budget
• Writing the budget narrative
• Determining reasonable effort
Budget Development
Choosing a budget template

No need to recreate the wheel!

Departmental Resources
- OSR
- Colleagues (NURAP)
- Schools
- Web

Do you have to take sick leave? We have a grant deadline.
Budget Development
Completing the budget template
Regular updates to any template
  • RFA requirements (such as requirements/restrictions on max no. years of support, direct costs, salary cap, effort requirements, etc.)
  • NIH salary cap
  • Fringe benefits
Other considerations (common mistakes)
  • Subcontracts
  • Items excluded from F&A calculation
  • Math check (always!)
NIH SF424 REGULAR Budget Worksheet

Project Begin Date: 12/01/12
Project End Date: 11/30/17
Number of years: 5

Personnel Inflation Rate: 3.0%
Non-Personnel Inflation Rate: 0%

NIH Salary Cap: $179,700

Please make sure to provide the NIH Salary Cap or the Personnel Calculations will not work!

SEE HANDOUT: SF424 REGULAR NIH BUDGET
Budget Development
SF424 Regular Budget Template

Fringe Benefits Calculation

Budget Period Begins in Fiscal Year: 13
Fringe Rate 25.80%
current budget period months 9.0
next budget period months 3.0
prorated fringe rate/budget period 25.83%

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SEE HANDOUT: SF424 REGULAR NIH BUDGET
### Budget Development

**SF424 Regular Budget Template**

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**SENIOR/KEY PERSONNEL SUBTOTAL**

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**SEE HANDOUT: SF424 REGULAR NIH BUDGET**
Budget Development
Writing the Budget Narrative
(Regular NIH Budget)

Key Requirements

• Follow general guidelines (SF424) and RFA instructions precisely
• List each line item separately in the order it appears on the budget
• For personnel costs, list name, role, % effort and/or person months (calendar, academic, summer). Is effort reasonable?
  – See NIH percent effort/person months conversion chart at OSR website: http://www.research.northwestern.edu/osr/budget.htm
• For consultants, list name, organizational affiliation, rate and role. Provide letter of collaboration from each consultant.
• Itemize general non-salary costs (materials and supplies, etc.)
Budget Development

Writing the Budget Narrative:
(Modular NIH Budget)

Key Requirements

• Follow general guidelines (SF424) and RFA instructions precisely

• Personnel (including consultants)

• Consortium/Contractual

• Additional justification – provide as needed for unusual items and/or variations in the number of modules requested.
Fiscal Considerations
Can it be done?
Fiscal Considerations

Can it be done?

Can the work that is promised in the application be accomplished within the proposed budget?

- Does budget match research plan?
- Is the budget reasonable and fully justified?
- Are other resources not included in budget being committed? Do you have approvals, letters of commitment, etc.

Upon award, has the budget been reduced?

- Will award reduction require reduced scope of work?
- Work with OSR and sponsor to determine/negotiate appropriate actions.
Fiscal considerations

- Utilization of dept resources
- F&A recovery; F&A sharing
- Cost sharing
- Effort commitments/restrictions
Fiscal considerations: Utilization of dept resources

- Personnel
  - Does the application propose use of current staff? Are they available? What are the implications for their current work?
  - If TBN positions are included, is recruitment possible? If there are obstacles, how will you address?

- Other resources
  - Are other departmental resources promised in the application? If so, are these resources available? Do you have necessary approvals from dept chair?
Fiscal Considerations
F&A recovery

F&A cost recovery on sponsored projects represents a vital part of the University's operating budget

- NU does not generate a surplus from its research activities.
- F&A costs are recovered at a rate and an amount lower than the University’s actual incurred cost of doing research.
- Research infrastructure and administrative personnel are subsidized by the University due to the lack of full recovery from sponsors.
Other Considerations

Multi-PIs

• Management Plan
• Review Committee Reaction

Just-in-Time

• Regulatory Approvals
• Documentation of Training in Protection of Human Subjects
• Other Support
  – Addressing potential overlap
  – Proposal and/or award stage questions
Other Considerations

Multiple PI’s

• Management Plan
• Review Committee Reaction
  • Adds extra layer of review for qualifications, resources, etc. for multiple PIs as well as review of the management plan
  • Current data demonstrates increasing acceptance, but still less multi-PI applications funded than not
Other Considerations
Multiple PI’s

Management Plan
• Not allowed on all applications – check the RFA/PA
• NIH strongly encourages applicants to contact the PO named in RFA/PA at earliest possible date to discuss the appropriateness of the multiple-PD/PI model
• Multi-PI Leadership Plan
  • Roles and areas of responsibility of the named PD/PIs
  • Process for making decisions on scientific direction
  • Allocation of resources
  • Methods for dispute resolution
Other Considerations

Other Support

Addressing potential overlap
  • Especially with K’s
  • Work with OSR to get agency approval

Proposal and/or award stage questions
  • Especially for K’s
  • Contact OSR to address potential issues
Other Considerations
Other Support and Overlap

Overlap, whether scientific, budgetary, or effort commitment is not permitted.

- Budgetary Overlap
- Commitment Overlap
- Scientific Overlap
Other Considerations

Other Support and Overlap

Budgetary Overlap
- duplicate budgetary items (e.g., equipment, salary) are requested in an application but are already provided for by another source

Commitment Overlap
- effort commitment exceeds 100 percent or 12 person months, whether or not salary support is requested in the application
Other Considerations
Other Support and Overlap

Scientific Overlap

- substantially the same research is proposed in more than one application/submitted to multiple funding sources
- a specific research objective and the research design for accomplishing that objective are the same or closely related multiple applications or awards, regardless of the funding source
- potential scientific overlap is to be addressed by the **SRG only** by its identification in an Administrative Note in the Summary Statement
Other Considerations
Other Support and Overlap

Resolution of Overlap

- Resolution of overlap occurs at the time of award in conjunction with applicant institution officials, the PD/PI, and awarding agency staff.
- Work with OSR at PROPOSAL stage and at AWARD stage
General Advice

• Work closely with PI and OSR on proposal preparation (start early, submit early!)

• Ask relevant questions for budgeting and larger fiscal considerations (F&A, cost sharing, effort commitments)
  – Utilize available resources (OSR) for budget process

• Work with OSR to resolve questions/ address concerns
Break/Questions?
Proposal Planning & Development: OSR Perspective

Communicate with OSR

- Notify OSR of your PIs’ planned submissions
  - Proposal Deadline, Sponsor, RFA/RFP/Specific Guidelines
- Ask questions
  - OSR staff are friendly people and a valuable resource to you
  - We know (almost) everything about sponsored projects
  - We want to aid in the successful submission of every proposal

We love to hear from you!
Proposal Planning & Development: OSR Perspective

A successful research administrator is one who works closely with OSR.
OSR can provide the highest level of service...

- When contacted early in the process
- When alerted to any potential issues
- When questions are asked early—e.g., is the progress report for a competing renewal application included as part of the 12 page research strategy?
- When provided adequate time for review—submit as complete as possible, as early as possible
How to Minimize Unexpected Problems

• Review sponsor’s general proposal guidelines and if applicable their award policies
• If in response to an RFA, PA or RFP, carefully read the specific announcement for any unique requirements and then address
• Notify OSR of any unusual sponsor requirements—If you contacted the sponsor to find out an answer to a specific question, forward that communication to OSR
• Plan ahead
How to Minimize Unexpected Problems

• OSR closes at 5 p.m., regardless of any later sponsor-allowed deadline time
  – Proposals must be received by OSR in time to submit the proposal by 5 p.m. of the due date even when the sponsor deadline is later than 5 p.m.
  – OSR is not open on the weekend either!

• Be available
  – It is critically important that once your proposal has been submitted to OSR, you are readily available to respond to questions from OSR
First Steps: Timeline
Common Errors Reported by NIH

From OER website:

• DUNS number on the SF424 (R&R) doesn’t match registration
• Wrong Type of Submission (box #1), Federal Identifier (box #4), and Type of Application (box #8) information on the SF424 (R&R) cover form
• Did not include eRA Commons ID in the Credential field of the R&R Sr/Key Person Profile form for all PD/PIs
• For Multiple-PD/PI applications, did not include the PD/PI role on the Sr/Key Person Profile form for all PIs
First Steps: Timeline
NIH Common Errors (Con’t)

- Did not include Organization name for all Sr/Key Personnel
- Missing required attachments; attachments not in PDF format
- Exceeded page limits specified in the FOA and application guide
- Effort must be > 0 for all Sr/Key listed on the R&R Budget form
- Did not follow special instructions from RFA/PA announcement
- Role of Co-PD/PI not used by NIH (Warning only)
- No degrees submitted for PD/PI (Warning only)
Common Proposal Errors

- With the use of Infoed PD, many of the types of errors previously seen have become obsolete
- Standard information is hardcoded into PD
- However, with the mandatory use of S2S, OSR has seen new types of errors
Commons Errors for NU

1. Set up questions filled out incorrectly/adjusting the pre-selected NIH form

2. PDF attachment format issues (has editable fields, file size too big, blank last page, file names use special characters/ too long, etc.) Also, .pdf form should not be protected.

3. Inconsistencies between the budgets and justification

4. Use of PI role with non-MPI proposals
Discussion Points

SAMPLE QUESTION:
One of my Investigators submitted a proposal with the [FILL IN THE BLANK]* and lo and behold the project was funded with a 10/01 start date.

However, the proposal didn't go through my office, nor OSR. What does OSR need to process this award?

P.S. The PI is really anxious to get started and we need a chart string ASAP!

* Not all sponsors require institutional sign off, but per NU policy, all proposals should come through OSR before submission
Discussion Points

Answer:

1. Complete a PD submission
2. Include the a copy of the final proposal submitted to the sponsor
3. Budget – reviewed to ensure appropriate costs and rates have been included, e.g., FB, F&A, effort for the PI...etc
4. Award letter/notification, with PI signature if required