Grant Resources & Information for Investigators

FUNDING FOR RESEARCH, SCHOLARLY AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

2023-2024

Northern Kentucky University

NKU

Research, Grants and Contracts

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Terms & Definitions

For purposes of this document, the term 'research' is utilized to reference any external funding activities related to research, scholarly or creative activities. "Principal Investigator" is a term that identifies the lead faculty/staff member on the project from NKU; "Senior Personnel" is a reference to key personnel on the project who have the ability to make decisions and give directions on the project's path; "Other Personnel" is an emphasis on individuals simply providing effort to a project and have no authority in steering the overall path of the project.

Funding Sponsors

NKU faculty are encouraged to review and submit sponsored funding proposals to assist in the operations of their chosen research discipline or scholarly/creative areas. A large segment of funding is available through various state and federal agencies, and also other organizations such as non-profits, foundations, industry and others.

> ✓***QUICK TIP***
>
> *When you decide to begin working on a funding proposal for submission, notify the RGC team immediately by using the online* ***Intent to Submit form*** *so the proposal is added to the submission schedule.*

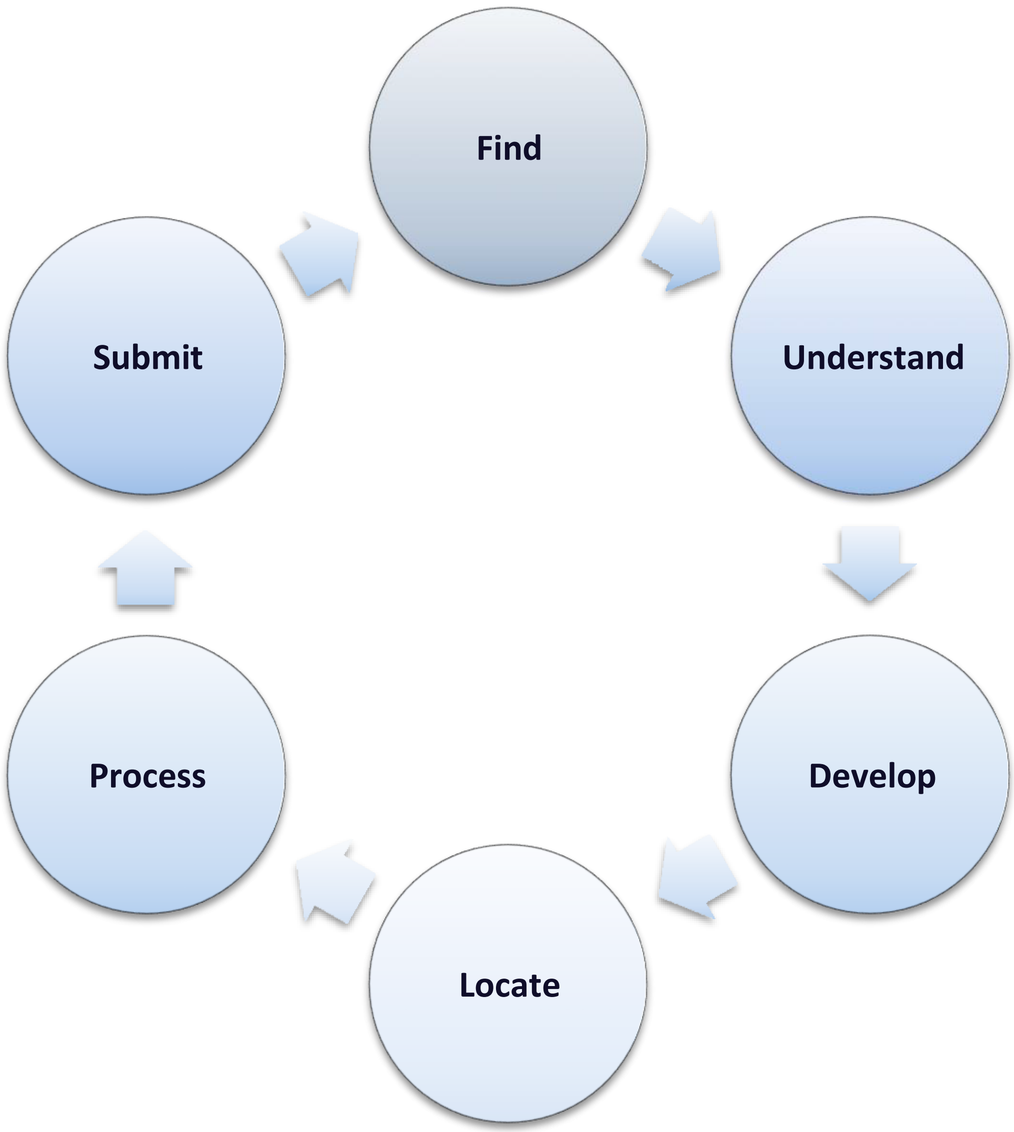
BEFORE YOU BEGIN: All new investigators should review the following required elements to be able to successfully process and submit a proposal to a funding agency:

- **Individual Registrations –** A few federal submission systems require an individual registration prior to the submission of any proposal. The most common agencies and types of registration needed are shown below:
  - Grants.gov – Workspace – Registration
  - National Science Foundation – NSF registration
  - National Institutes of Health (NIH) – ASSIST – eRA Commons Registration
  - Dept. of Energy - PAMS – PAMS registration
  - NASA NSPIRES – NSPIRES registration

  For other submission systems, please verify within the solicitation announcements or guidelines about any individual registration or profiles required to successfully respond to a solicitation. (NOTE: These apply to any required individual PI registrations; **NKU already has most institutional registrations** as required by multiple sponsoring agencies).

The Research Grant Cycle

There are **six steps** to the research grant cycle which allow the investigator to find funding opportunities, understand the solicitation, develop the proposal, locate common information and resources, process the proposal for internal review, and submit the proposal to the sponsoring agency. Each of these steps consist of certain provisions that will assist investigators in developing a competitive and compliant research funding request.



Step 1: Find Funding Opportunities

There are multiple locations online to search for the availability of funding for your project. Naturally, each funding sponsor will host information about available funding opportunities on their respective websites; however, there are also other websites and subscriptions that provide an array of funding announcements from federal, state, local and other agencies. The most common sites/resources include the following:

- **Featured Funding Opportunities** – The RGC office will issue a listing of featured opportunities which are updated on a regular basis and distributed to the NKU campus monthly. You may also find Research Funding Opportunities on the RGC webpage.

- **Grants.gov** – This is an E-Government initiative that provides a centralized location for grant seekers to find and apply for research funding offered by a variety of government agencies. Link to Grants.gov.

- **FedConnect** – This is a web portal that provides information on grant opportunities from government agencies. It provides greater detail on funding opportunities to assist the investigator in doing business with the government. Link to FedConnect.

- **SPIN** – This system is available directly to all NKU faculty and is the world's largest database of funding opportunities that delivers specific information based on criteria and research focus areas. Link to SPIN.

✓QUICK TIP

*Be sure to subscribe to the online listservs provided by most funding agencies. This will allow you to receive direct notifications regarding **upcoming funding opportunities** and **solicitation updates** from the sponsoring agency. Most funding agencies have information on how to join a listserv located at each of their respective websites.*

Step 2: Understand the Request for Proposal (RFP) or Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)

As you review a Request for Proposal (RFP) or Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), pay close attention to the following sections to determine the suitability of submitting a grant application:

- **Eligibility.** This section will explain the type of entities eligible to submit a proposal, the limitations on the number of submissions (if any), and the eligibility requirements of the Principal Investigator and any Co-Investigators. **Carefully review the eligibility requirements for the institution, as well as the Principal Investigator**. In some cases, solicitations may limit the number of proposals that can be submitted on behalf of an institution. In this case, special consideration is required to determine which project will be approved for development and submission to the Sponsor. Otherwise, it is 'first come-first served'.

- **Funding Availability**. This section will indicate the **amount of funding available** for the project. In many cases, there may be a minimal limit, as well as a maximum limit. Review carefully for any specific annual budget limitations too (i.e., maximum per year is $150K).

- **Cost Share Requirements**. In some cases, a sponsor may require cost share to be included within the project. **Be certain to review and verify any specific cost share requirements** because cost share calculations are very diverse among federal agencies and may be based on a percentage of total project value, total funding awarded or some other pre-determined method. Cost share included within any project will be disclosed on the internal Grants Management System proposal file and identified on an internal Cost Share form.

✓***QUICK TIP***

Be sure to let your RGC Grants Administrator know if you plan to contribute cost share to the project budget. In most cases, the inclusion of cost share (in any form) is strictly prohibited unless required as part of the program submission requirements. This includes any "voluntary" cost share, cash contributions, and/or in-kind services.

- **Indirect Cost Limitations**. In some instances, a sponsor may prohibit or limit indirect charges allowed within a proposal. If the prohibition or limitation is stated within the solicitation document, then NKU will honor that request and there is no need for the PI to seek an exception to the F&A rate utilized. **In cases where there is a limited F&A rate provided which is lower than the published NKU rate, then the allowed rate is to be applied to Total Direct Costs.** When utilizing the official approved negotiated F&A rate of NKU, then that rate is to be applied to Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC).

- **Letter of Intent**. Some sponsors may require a Letter of Intent (LOI) as part of the submission process. A letter of intent is usually due to the sponsor 30 or more days prior to the submission deadline for full proposals. In some instances, an LOI may be submitted directly to the sponsor by the PI. **Pay close attention to any solicitations requesting a letter of intent so the proper submission procedures are followed**. Failure to do so may jeopardize the submission of a full proposal.

- **Pre-Proposal Requirements**. This section will provide instructions related to any pre-proposal documents required to be submitted. In many cases, a sponsor may require a pre-proposal submission prior to determining if a full proposal is warranted. **The individual requirements of a pre-proposal vary from agency to agency.** So, it is vital that the PI review any pre-proposal requirements and submit the requested documents as instructed. *NOTE: Sometimes a pre-proposal submission may not require the creation of a GMS Proposal Record. If you are uncertain, please contact your RGC Grants Administrator.*

- **Proposal Requirements**. This section will stipulate the specific elements required of the proposal document. **Pay careful attention to the requested format and outline structure of the proposal**. Some agencies require very specific conventions for file names, project titles and signature requirements. Any required authorized signatures will be provided by the RGC Director. *NOTE: Principal Investigators do not have authority to enter into any grants or contracts on behalf of the University.*

- **Special Conditions**. Any special conditions or requirements will be stipulated within the solicitation document. **Please note that an agency's solicitation document for a specific funding opportunity takes precedent over the agency's general guidelines**. Therefore, it is important to identify any special conditions required of your submission. The PI, if uncertain, should contact the RGC Grants Administrator for interpretation of any of these special requirements during development of the proposal.

✓***QUICK TIP***

The budget justification document should include the following language for all proposals with personnel costs included: "Northern Kentucky University is on a 9-month academic and 3-month summer calendar schedule." *Place this sentence at the top of the page, directly under the 'Budget Justification' title.*

Step 3: Develop the Proposal

- **Send an 'Intent to Submit' Form.** Every request for external funding must be entered into the NKU Grants Management System (GMS) database. In most cases, the level of detail needed is very minimum and will only require a draft budget, draft budget justification and a draft abstract/narrative to be uploaded to the system. This allows for the internal NKU proposal file to be developed and certified/approved by the Principal Investigator, any Senior Personnel, and respective Departmental Chairs and Deans. Link to Intent to Submit Notification.

- **Create a Submission File.** If applicable, you may also be required to create a submission file as stipulated by the Sponsor within the solicitation document (i.e., Research.gov, ASSIST, etc.); however, in most cases your RGC Grants Administrator will create the submission file on your behalf. This is the location that all required final proposal documents will be uploaded for "official" submission to the Sponsor.

- **Prepare Proposal Documents.** Most sponsors include specific instructions about the type of information and documents required to consider a proposal complete and compliant. Although each funding agency may have differing requirements, there are some commonalities between all agencies in the type of information requested on most funding announcements. The elements shown below are the most common requirements to be included in a funding application:
    - Cover Page
    - Project Summary or Abstract
    - Project Narrative or Description
    - Biographical Sketch
    - Current and Pending Projects
    - Collaborators
    - Detailed Budget
    - Budget Justification
    - Supplementary Documents
        - Data Management Plan
        - Letters of Collaboration (commonly requested)
        - Letters of Commitment (if cost share is involved)
        - Letters of Support (rarely requested)

Step 4: Locate Commonly Used Application Information and Other Resources

- ## Organizational Information

Legal Name:	Northern Kentucky University
Authorized Signatory:	Craig Holloman, Director Office of Research, Grants & Contracts
DUNS Number:	07-287-9760
UEI Number:	LN53C9E23GH6
EIN Number:	61-1010545 (DHHS EIN: 1611010545A1)
Congressional District:	KY-004
Cage Code:	3DZN0
Cognizant Agency:	Department of Health & Human Services, Ernest Kinneer, 214-767-3261 Date of F&A Rate Agreement: 10/19/2020

- ## Faculty Resources – RGC Website

The Office of Research, Grants & Contracts maintains a significant amount of grant resources online for faculty reference. Most all information needed for a grant application can be found at this location which includes agency-specific forms and links, templates, university rates for tuition, fringe benefits and suggested minimum wage/salary limitations, and other applicable grant information.

- ## Office of Research, Grants & Contracts - RGC@nku.edu

The RGC provides full administrative support to all faculty and staff requesting grant assistance and serves as the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) on behalf of the university for all grants, contracts and agreements related to research funding and initiatives. In addition to the Director, the RGC is currently staffed with a Research Development Manager, Research Compliance Manager, two Sr. Grants & Contracts Administrators, a Project Specialist, and a Grants & Contracts Officer.

- Please reach out via the main RGC email address for any inquiries related to:
  - General questions **NOT** related to a specific proposal;
  - Questions related to internal processes or approval requirements.
- Please reach out to your assigned RGC Grants Administrator regarding any proposal-specific questions and/or programmatic needs.

Step 5: Process the Proposal for Internal Review

Prior to the submission of any external application for funding, the proposal must go through a series of reviews and checks in order to be certain that the information complies with the requirements of the Sponsor and of NKU. This series of reviews and checks assists the investigator in submitting a competitive proposal and increases the probability of a funding award.

All requests for federal funding (regardless of the Sponsor and required submission system) are required to be created and routed for internal approval via the NKU Grants Management System. Your RGC Grants Administrator will initiate the proposal file for you (once all preliminary data has been received). Once the required data is entered, then it is processed through the following steps for preliminary review and approval.

- **Investigator Review**
  At this step, verify the entered data is correct and the internal proposal file includes all relevant information related to the project. Answer the "Grant Questions" and certify a current FCOI Disclosure is on file and accurate.

- **College Review**
  At this step, the GMS proposal file is routed to each respective department chair and dean (or equivalent) for review and electronic approval.

- **RGC Review**
  The next step includes the routing of the GMS proposal file to the RGC office. Once the file is received and approved at the RGC level, then your RGC Grants Administrator will reach out regarding any last steps to finalize and prep your proposal for submission. *NOTE: The RGC Grants Administrator will always ask the PI for confirmation prior to the submission of any proposal.*

✓*QUICK TIP*

The Office of Research, Grants & Contracts encourages faculty to use an established internal timeline for planning purposes and to access all available services provided through the RGC staff. Some RGC services may not be available for any late or untimely requests for assistance.

Check out the interactive timeline tool on the RGC webpage and PLAN AHEAD!!

PLEASE NOTE:

All required documents in their FINAL form must be received by the RGC office at least 5 business days prior to the scheduled submission date, with the exception of the final summary/narrative/project description document (which can be provided 1 business day prior to the submission deadline). See the 'Internal Timeline' information on Page 12 of this document.

Step 6: Submit the Proposal to the Sponsor

There are a variety of submission systems used each day to submit funding proposals to sponsors. In most all cases, the RGC office is the unit that will be submitting the proposal on behalf of the Principal Investigator. The most common submission systems include the following:

- **ASSIST** – *National Institutes of Health (NIH)*
  This system is exclusive to NIH and is the preferred mechanism for submission of NIH grant applications. Creation of an ASSIST file is initiated by RGC staff, and final submission to the Sponsor is the responsibility of RGC office.

- **Research.gov** – *National Science Foundation (NSF)*
  This system is exclusive to NSF and is the preferred mechanism for submission of NSF grant applications. Creation of a Research.gov file must be initiated by the PI, and final submission to the sponsor is the responsibility of the RGC office.

✓QUICK TIP

Regardless of the submission system being used to submit a federal funding proposal, faculty must always have an NKU GMS proposal file – since it is the University's internal routing mechanism for proposal processing and recordkeeping.

- **NSPIRES** – *National Aeronautics & Space Administration (NASA)*
  This system is exclusive to NASA and is the mechanism for submission of NASA grant applications. Like some others, file creation is the responsibility of the PI, with the RGC office conducting the final submission to the sponsor.

- **Grants.gov Workspace** – *Multiple Federal Agencies*
  This online submission system is the preferred mechanism for submission of Grants.gov applications and requires the investigator to register (username/password) in advance of accessing a Workspace file. The creation of the file will be initiated by RGC staff, and submission of a Grants.gov Workspace file to the sponsor is the responsibility of the RGC office.

- **Other** – *Sponsor Online Portal or Email Submissions*
  Please coordinate with your assigned Grants Administrator if the submission process is to be via a sponsor's electronic portal or via email from the Authorized Organizational Representative. The GA will be able to provide guidance on whether the PI may submit or if the RGC office will be completing the submission.

Other General Information

- **Roles.**
  It is important to know that the RGC team is a support unit for all faculty/staff throughout the proposal development process, negotiation of award, and receipt of funding. Faculty should begin their proposal development process by submitting a *Notification of Intent to Submit* to the RGC. At that point, an RGC Grants Administrator will be assigned to the project and roles will be established as to who is responsible for the various elements of the proposal during the development stage.

- **Internal Timeline.**
  To be able to provide a proper and thorough review for compliance, the University has an internal timeline to assist the PI in submitting required documents to the RGC office in a timely manner. Failure to meet the posted RGC timeframes will jeopardize the internal review process and some support may not be available to you. An interactive timeline management tool is available for your reference and use.

- **Responsibilities.**
  Please be reminded that regardless of the resources and support staff made available to PIs, it is ultimately the responsibility of the PI to assure all required documents are completed and provided to the RGC Grants Administrator, and the respective submission system to allow for review and final submission of the proposal by the RGC office to the sponsoring agency. **Under no circumstances should the PI assume someone else is completing tasks on his or her behalf unless communications have been established directly with those individuals.** The RGC office is available to provide resources and support to all research faculty and staff; however, PIs are required to understand the process for submitting proposals and to understand how to utilize the identified submission systems of various federal agencies.

- **Human Subjects, Animal Use and Biohazards.**
  The RGC office provides guidance on any research proposals planning to use human subjects, animal use, and/or biohazards as a part of their research plan. Investigators should make their RGC Grants Administrator aware if you plan to use either of these within your project because additional steps will be needed in collaboration with our Research Compliance unit in order to submit any funding requests utilizing human subjects, animals or biohazards.

✓QUICK TIP

Take advantage of the multiple opportunities for training available via RGC's workshops, agency webinars and NKU training sessions. Locate this information on the Faculty Training Resources page of the RGC website.