

Required Documents

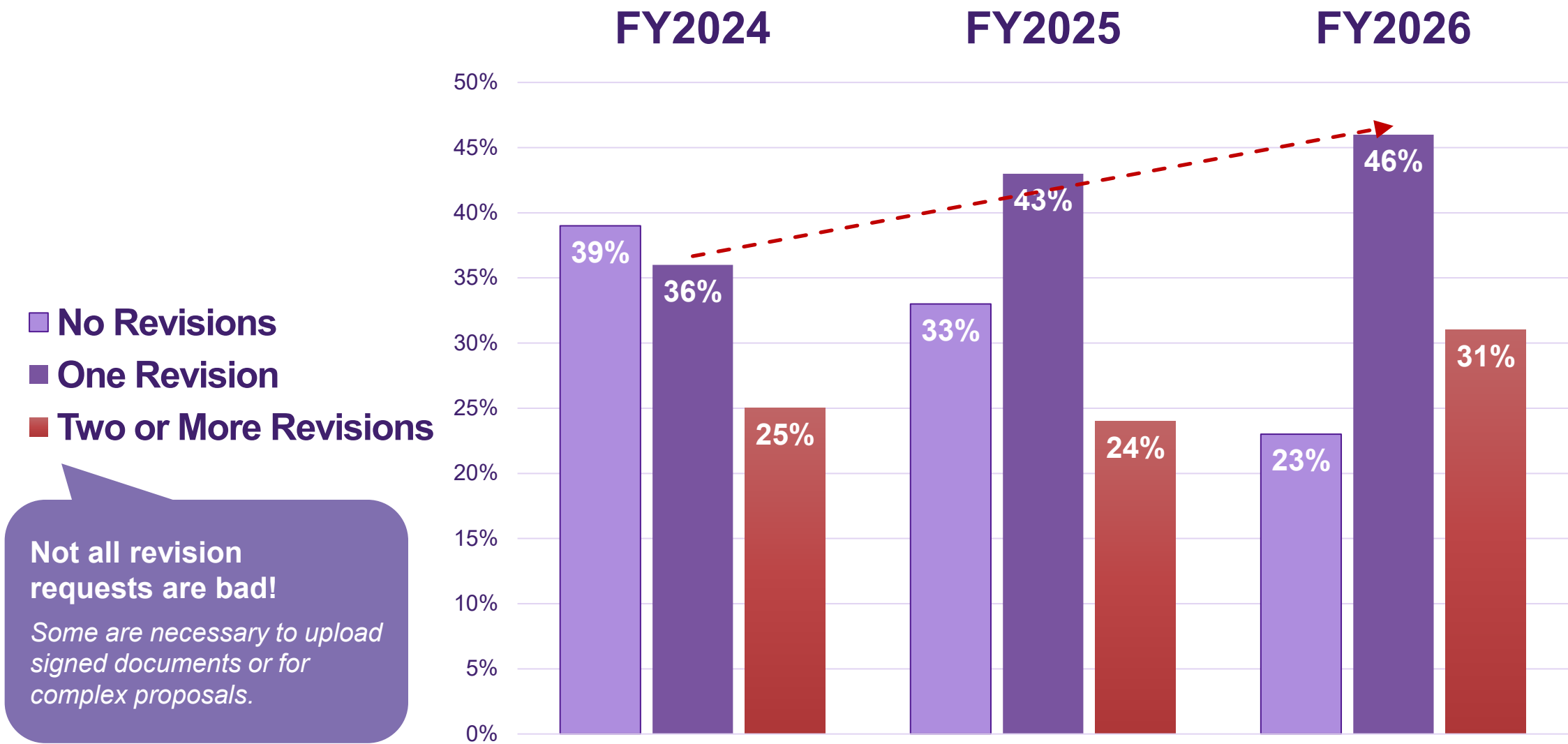
OCTOBER 2026

Deadline Policy

- **Complete** proposal routed at least **five (5) business days** before a deadline
- Proposals must be **complete, accurate, and compliant**
- All components must be final and **ready for submission**

[Proposal Deadline Policy FAQ](#)

Increase in Proposals Requiring Revision



Common Causes for Revision Requests

**TODAY'S
TOPIC!**

**Missing
Documentation**

**Lack of
Context**

**Incomplete
Ancillary
Reviews**

**Budget
Errors**

**Compliance
(RST/COI)**

**Validation
Errors**

**Understanding
of Sponsor
Policies**

Challenges



CONSTANT CHANGES & UPDATES

Policies, procedures, sponsor guidance, and institutional expectations continue to evolve.

STAFFING CONSTRAINTS

Limited capacity makes it difficult to balance workload, maintain coverage, and meet deadlines.

COMMUNICATIONS OVERLOAD

Staff must balance an influx of time-sensitive communications with their regular workload.

PRESSURE FROM ALL SIDES

New sponsors and tight submission timelines are stretching department and central teams.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Changes result in additional time for review, interpretation, documentation, and compliance.

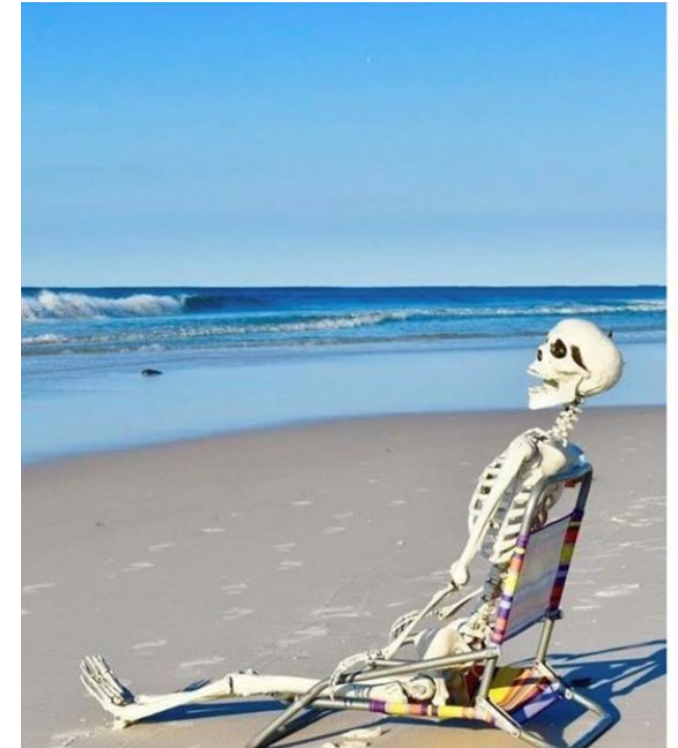
INCREASINGLY COMPLEX SOLICITATIONS

New opportunities require greater internal coordination, expertise, and review.

Other Challenges



Shared Goal



Website Resources

F & A Rates

Fringe Rates

Other Support

Proposal Preparation

Budgets

Cost Sharing

New Sponsor and Subcontractor
Requests

NIH Loan Repayment Program (LRP)

Proposal Deadline Policy FAQ

Required Documents

Proposal Review & Submission

Just-In-Time

Pre-Proposals

Proposal Preparation

If your PI is planning to submit a new proposal, take the following key actions as early as possible in the proposal preparation development process:

Create a funding proposal record in CERES

A CERES funding proposal record is required for all new, revision (supplement) and renewal proposals, even if the sponsor does not require institutional signature. Each record must include a completed smart form reflecting the necessary proposal details, including an accurate deadline (Sponsored Research uses this basic information to track upcoming proposals), and all **required documents**. Incomplete records will be returned without review.

Review the **proposal development and submission job aid** and **sample proposal checklist** for details.

Review the solicitation

A careful review of the solicitation (or notice of funding opportunity) is critical to ensuring a complete and compliant proposal submission. Be sure to also review any supporting documents, such as a sponsor FAQ or a notice of special interest, etc. and highlight any unusual requirements in the CERES record.



Required Documents

At a minimum, the following documents must be uploaded to the Attachments tab of the CERES Funding Proposal (FP) for all proposals, including those for in-kind support and after-the-fact submissions.

If these are not present, the record may be returned without review.

- > Solicitation
- > Internal Budget
- > Budget Justification
- > Assembled Proposal
- > Other Required Documents

**Upload to the Attachments
tab in CERES!**

Note: personal information such as an individual's driver's license, passport, or social security number, as well as salary documentation should not be uploaded to CERES. Be sure to redact documents as needed before routing your proposal to Sponsored Research.

Solicitation

- AKA **RFP** (request for proposals), **FOA** (funding opportunity announcement) or **application guidelines**
- Outlines **deadline**, **method** of submission, **eligibility** requirements, **format** (required documents or content, page limits, etc.), and parameters for **project length and cost**
- **PDF** must be provided for all proposals, even common ones like an R01
- If there is no formal written solicitation, provide **relevant e-mail correspondence** so that SR can see exactly what the sponsor has requested
- If NU is a subawardee, include **communication with the PTE** that confirms required documents, due dates, project title, and approved budget allocation
- Any **unusual requirements** that a department notes should be flagged in a CERES comment for the SR reviewer

Internal Budget

- Must align with Northwestern's **standard cost categories**
- Must use correct **fringe and indirect cost rates**
- Not sent to the sponsor but required for **institutional use/account code** set up
- **All items must be categorized** (e.g. nothing listed as “other”, “misc” or “contingency”)
- For budgets in a **foreign currency**, internal budget must use U.S. dollars and confirmation of the exchange rate must be provided

Budget Justification

- **Always required for internal use** even if not sent to the sponsor
- Exceptions only for **NIH fellowships** and **equipment proposals** (allowable costs are limited and do not include fringe or F&A)
- Must directly **align with the budget categories** requested and explain any **non-standard increases, decreases, caps, cost share**, etc.
- Especially important for full documentation of the **type of fringe and F&A rates** used, the **dates** for which they are applicable, and any **exclusions, reductions or waivers**, etc.
- Helps **streamline award set up**
- Supports successful **post-award management**
- Assists with responses to **future audit inquiries**

Assembled Proposal

- SR must review **exactly what the sponsor will see**
- For S2S proposals, **SF424 tab** includes a link to the full, assembled application
- For non-S2S proposals, a **full copy of the proposal** including a printout or screenshot of any web forms must be provided
- Technical documents included in the assembled application (biosketches/facilities/etc.) **do not need to be separately uploaded** to the Attachments tab
- When NU is a subrecipient, a **Statement or Scope of Work (SOW)** is required (note this will be part of the resulting subaward agreement so must provide sufficient detail on the research activities and deliverables that Northwestern is committing to undertake)

Other Documents

- **Forms for SR signature** (LOIs, face pages, reps & certs)
- **Documents/information** referred to or **linked in the solicitation** (FAQs, notices of special interest, sponsor terms and conditions, IP policies, etc.)
- **Subaward packages** (must include a compliant/signed LOI, SOW, budget in the sponsor's required format, and justification)
- **Consultant** documentation
- **Equipment quotes**
- **Cost Share** approvals

Post-Award Activity

- Correspondence with sponsor to provide **context**
- Verification of **unobligated balance calculations**
- Revised budget and budget justification, with an **explanation of what has changed**
- **Full subk packages** for new collaborators (or if funding is being increased)
- **Required forms** for SR signature
- Copies of reports/documents from **external systems** SR cannot access

Questions for discussion

Why do the proposal, budget, justification, and subk packages/other documents have to be uploaded to the Attachments tab?

How can we keep the Attachments tab from displaying old versions?

Do we really need to “bundle” subaward packages?

What is needed for consultants? Why does SR push back if a consultant is from another university?

THANK YOU!

Questions?

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