



Approving University Official(s): Assistant Vice
President for Sponsored Research
Responsible Office: Sponsored Research
Effective date: April 3, 2023
Next review date: April 3, 2024

Sponsored Research Proposal Deadline Policy

Policy Statement

Northwestern University has developed specific criteria for on-time review and submission of proposals. Proposals are required to be complete and submitted to the Sponsored Research office at least five business days before the sponsor deadline. Late or incomplete proposals submissions will risk not being approved or successfully submitted. Federal and non-federal policy regulations as it relates to proposal review and submission are expanding. It is necessary for Northwestern University to be compliant with sponsor guidelines. Adequate time is required for Northwestern staff involved in the preparation and submission of proposals to meet these expectations.

Purpose

As an organization submitting proposals for external funding, Northwestern University is subject to sponsor requirements, including but not limited to those set forth in specific solicitations, sponsor guidelines, the OMB Uniform Guidance, and Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), in addition to Northwestern University institutional policy.

Sufficient time is necessary to verify a proposal's compliance with those requirements, as well as ensure an overall level of quality assurance, prior to the sponsor's application deadline.

Allowing adequate time for review, based on established review criteria, will provide opportunities for corrections to be made timely, if necessary, and will maximize the opportunity for successful proposal submission.

Every effort is made to ensure successful proposal submission. Despite this, there are several challenges beyond the control of the University, which can be mitigated when proposals are submitted sufficiently in advance of the sponsor deadline, including:

- Grants.gov has a stated processing time of up to two (2) days with no tolerance if errors exist and cannot be corrected before the deadline.

- Alternative proposal submission pathways add complexity to proposal submission and can require additional assistance to ensure successful submission.
- Sponsor-specific submission platforms often have a firm cutoff time after which applications will not be accepted.

Audience

Faculty, Deans, Center Directors, Department Heads, Research Administrators, Sponsored Research Office Staff.

Definitions

On-Time Proposal: Complete Proposals submitted to Sponsored Research office five (5) business days before the sponsor deadline date.

Late Proposals: Proposals not in compliance with the 5-day deadline policy. Late proposals risk not being successfully submitted.

Complete: A proposal in which all required technical and administrative components are present, accurate, and in final format for acceptance by the sponsor. A complete submission cannot contain empty required fields or placeholder or draft documents. The proposal must be ready for submission without needing any additional confirmation from the PI to submit. A complete proposal application is comprised of the final technical, administrative, and supplementary documents for an application that are ready for submission. This includes all necessary department, school, institutional approvals and requirements, such as cost share approvals, Conflict of Interest (COI) certification, etc.

Accurate: A proposal that can be submitted to the sponsor without requiring corrections or returns to the PI/Department.

Compliant: All internal and external requirements are satisfied. The University will not submit non-compliant proposals due to timing or refusal to address requirements.

Policy Implementation

To guarantee on-time sponsor submission:

- A complete proposal application needs to arrive in Sponsored Research, ready to submit to the sponsor, at least five (5) business days or earlier before a deadline. This includes proposals that require correction or revision.
- Proposals submitted to the Sponsored Research office are required to be complete, accurate, and compliant.

- All technical and administrative components must be in final format and ready for submission.

Proposals routed to the Sponsored Research office that do not meet these criteria will be considered late and risk not being successfully submitted. Proposals will be submitted on a first-in, first-out basis. Any late proposals remaining at the end of the business day on the deadline cannot be guaranteed submission.

Proposals that require corrections should be addressed and corrected and not require additional returns. On-time proposals will not be deprioritized by late or same-day arrivals. Proposals will be submitted in order of receipt, not sponsor due date.

Once successfully submitted to the sponsor, applications will not be withdrawn and resubmitted unless it is to address or correct valid compliance-related issues, identified by SR or the sponsor.

Consequences of Non-Compliance

Late proposal applications may not be successfully submitted.

Non-compliant proposals may be withdrawn or rejected by the sponsor.

Proposals deemed non-compliant may be withdrawn by Northwestern University Sponsored Research.

Related Information

- [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) Uniform Guidance](#) (2 CFR Part 200)
- [Federal Acquisition Regulations](#)
- [Grants.Gov: Tracking an Application](#)
- [NIH: Dealing with System Issues](#)
- [Northwestern Sponsored Research Proposal Review](#)
- [Sponsored Research Proposal Review Criteria](#)
- [Proposal Policy FAQ](#)

Contacts

[Our Teams: Sponsored Research - Northwestern University](#)

Policy URL:

<https://sponsoredresearch.northwestern.edu/docs/sr-proposal-deadline-policy.pdf>