PREPARATION OF A SPONSORED PROPOSAL

Following identification of a funding source or potential sponsor, the next important task is to prepare a strong proposal for submission to the agency. The proposal is the primary vehicle by which the prospective project director communicates an idea and plan to a sponsor. It informs why, how, when and by whom the activities being proposed will be done. Formats vary but a typical proposal would include the following parts outlined below.

Developing a Proposal

Cover Page
Most sponsoring agencies provide their official cover sheets. When none is provided, the Principal Investigator should develop a cover page that includes the following:

- Title of the proposed research;
- CFDA #
- Name and address of the sponsor;
- Name and address of Morgan State University;
- DUNS #
- Name and Title of the Principal Investigator;
- Total amount requested;
- Proposed duration of research, typically given in months;
- Authorizing signature of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development or Designee.

Samples of official cover pages (face sheets) for various agencies and a generic cover page can be found in the Appendix (A-2).
The Technical Aspects of a Proposal

Abstract/Executive Summary
The abstract provides a brief summary of the project, and in most cases, within a space limitation specified by the sponsor. It is important to use words economically and efficiently in writing the abstract. The abstract should be clear, and should accurately reflect and parallel the content of the proposal without exceeding the sponsor’s page limit. It should include the problem to be addressed, the objectives to be achieved, the approach to be used and the total cost of the project. Although it appears first in the proposal, the abstract should be written last with the thought that it may be the only part of the proposal that is read by some agency reviewers. It should be clear, succinct and effective in generating interest for the project.

Introduction/Background
This section of the proposal allows the investigator to briefly sketch the background for the proposal; demonstrate knowledge of the field by critically evaluating existing knowledge; specifically identify gaps the project is expected to fill; and persuasively and concisely state the importance of the project. It is useful in this section to relate the aims of the project to the broad long-term goal.

Goals & Objectives
In this section the Principal Investigator states the broad long-term goal and the expected outcome(s) of the proposal. This should be followed with a listing of specific objectives which should be clear, brief, realistic, and where possible, measurable.

Methodology
Having stated what is to be done in the specific objectives, the sponsor must now be told how these objectives will be achieved in this section of the proposal. The discussion should relate the specific approach to specific objectives and explain why the ones proposed are best suited to achieve the project objectives. In some proposals, this section may include the projected sequence or timetable for the project.

Key Personnel
This section answers the question, “who will do what is being proposed?” It should include a brief description of the qualifications, relevant experiences and specific roles of all the key personnel, listing the Principal Investigator first. Personnel critical to the successful completion of the project should be included even if no salary is requested. In the appropriate section, relevant publications of key personnel must be listed.

Evaluation
Most sponsored projects, especially training programs or demonstration projects, may require an evaluation component. The narrative in this section should relate the evaluation to the stated objectives; describe evaluation method and data to be used; give time frame and describe resources and personnel that will be involved; and discuss the intended use of the evaluation results.
Developing a Budget or Cost Proposal

The budget, also called a cost proposal (generally for contracts) by some sponsors, is just as important as the technical proposal. It is a comprehensive planning document that integrates all of the details for attaining the objectives of the proposal. The budgetary process should take into account preparation for the long-range goals, as well as the short-term objectives.

Practically all grant proposals are funded on the basis of a line-by-line budget, which typically includes both direct cost and facilities and administrative cost (indirect cost). The project budget is the instrument through which the cost of the project’s activities plans, priorities, and organization are expressed. One of its main characteristics is its lack of flexibility. The funding agency grants a certain amount of money to the project on the basis of the line-by-line budget estimate that is submitted as part of the grant proposal.

Direct Cost

Direct cost is defined as the cost of the project that will be paid directly to personnel or a vendor and is clearly assignable to a project activity.

Most government granting agencies expect that the project director will adhere to the budget, and may require prior approval before certain changes are made. A number of foundations also require prior approval for budget modifications subsequent to an award. Typically, such approvals must be requested and approved in writing.

Budget Elements

Included in the budget should be provisions for the following cost categories:

1. Salaries, wages, technical and special fees to cover personnel needs, honorariums, clerical assistance, and consultants. Salaries requested must be consistent with the regular practices of Morgan State University. In addition to making provisions for the above categories, it is imperative that the budget includes funds to cover fringe benefits for both regular and contractual employees.

NOTE: Proposed Guidelines for Processing Work-Based Awards & Financial Aid

On January 31, 2008 President Earl S. Richardson approved new guidelines for processing work-based awards and financial aid. Please see the addendum for details of the new policy.

2. Fringe Benefits (employee benefits such as social security, worker’s compensation, retirement, unemployment, health insurance, etc.) should be factored into this object using the appropriate rates, which currently are:
   - Regular employees: 43% of the gross salary
   - Contractual employees: 9% of the gross salary

3. Anticipated Consultant services should be justified. Daily compensation rate, number of days of expected service and per diem allowances should be included in the travel, consultant or “other” category of the budget.

4. Communications include postage, mailing service and telecommunication charges.

5. Travel includes in-state and out-of-state trips for fieldwork, attendance at conferences and seminars needed by the investigator to enhance his/her ability to perform the work of the proposal, or to present the results of the project.

   Domestic travel includes travel in the United States, its possessions, and travel to Puerto Rico and Canada. All other travel is considered foreign travel. Government
sponsors generally require persons traveling under a grant or contract to travel by U.S. flagged carriers, if available.

The current 2014 reimbursable rates under the State of Maryland are:

- Use of personal automobile - $.565 per mile.
- Portage is $1 per bag.
- For meals –

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>$ 9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total per Day</td>
<td>$ 45.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gratuities are included in the above rates for meals. Due to price fluctuations from state to state, the employee who travels out-of-state and is entitled to meal reimbursement may receive an adjusted amount depending upon geographical location.

6. Contractual Services include hiring a consultant, data processing, equipment rentals and supplies, film and other equipment rentals.

7. Supplies and materials include items such as printing instructional materials, office supplies and audiovisual and computer supplies. The budget should indicate in general terms the type of expendable materials and supplies that are required to meet the goals of the project.

8. Generally, equipment refers to an item of property that has the acquisition cost of $5,000 or more and an expected service life of more than one year. A brief description and justification to show the purpose, function, and cost of the equipment is necessary.

9. Grants, scholarships and awards are provided for support of graduate or undergraduate research assistants to help carry out the proposed research. Tuition remission is not taxable. Stipends are taxable and should be filed as a source of income for the tax year in which the funds were received.

10. Facilities and Administrative cost (formerly indirect cost) appears as a single separate item in the budget. This item is not University profit; rather, it represents the total real costs to the university in support of the project, which cannot be directly attributed to a project activity. This includes a portion of the University’s overall administrative cost, such as purchasing and procurement, personnel, payroll, building and equipment maintenance, office space, utilities, maintenance of the library and research administration. Facilities and Administrative cost is 48.5% of the modified total direct cost at Morgan State University, approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Cost Allocation, Region III. The modified total direct cost (MTDC) is the total direct cost excluding capital expenditures, charges for patient care, student tuition remission, rental costs of off-site facilities, scholarships, and fellowships as well as the portion of each subgrant and subcontract in excess of $25,000.

11. In-kind contribution is the value of such items as equipment, facilities, and supplies that a grantee contributes as its share of project costs. The value of these services must be approved by the Principal Investigator’s or project director’s Department Head and Dean of the College or School because funding of such expenses comes from that departmental budget. Explanation for the source(s) of funds to cover this item should be clearly spelled out and a copy of the explanation attached to the proposal when forwarded for review and signature to OSPR. Principal Investigators should contact OSPR staff for assistance with in-kind contribution or cost-sharing issues. All in-kind time and services must be documented. PI’s should not volunteer in-kind contributions or matching unless explicitly required by the sponsor.
12. **Matching funds** are funds equal to some percentage of the total project cost. Some funding agencies may require that the applicant institution provide matching funds. The costs of such items as travel, computer time, supplies, printing or telecommunications may also be used for matching under some circumstances. Contributions of salaries and fringe benefits must be approved by the Dean of the College or School and the Vice President for Research and Economic Development. Contributions of facilities and administrative cost (indirect cost) must be approved by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development. Principal Investigators should contact OSPR for assistance or clarification on matching funds.

**Note:** Voluntary matching or cost sharing is prohibited. PIs should contact OSPR for assistance or clarification where such matching is required by the funder.

13. **Third Party in-kind contribution** means the value of non-cash contributions provided by non-Federal third parties. Third party in-kind contributions may be in the form of real property, equipment, supplies, and other expendable property, and the value of goods and services directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to the project or program.

Since the budget format and allowable costs vary from one funding agency to another, it is advisable to obtain a copy of the application guidelines, program brochure, or grant policy manual from the appropriate agency to ensure that all criteria have been satisfied. Pertinent sections of the sponsor guidelines should also be submitted along with the completed budget to OSPR to prevent processing delays if questions should arise regarding the cost proposal.

**Subawards or Subcontracts:** A subward is an award to a subrecipient when the prime award is assistance (grant or cooperative agreement). It may be in the form of money, or property in lieu of money.

A subcontract is an award to a subrecipient when the prime award is procurement (contract). A subaward or subcontract constitutes an agreement between the University and another party to transfer a portion of the University’s obligations under an award to that party.

Principal Investigators must make clear provisions in the budget to pay for such sub-agreements if they are included in the proposal. Each sub-agreement should be identified separately, and followed with a brief explanation of the services that the sub-awardee or subcontractor will provide, and the appropriateness and reasonableness of the cost.

Sub-agreements, sub-awards, and subcontracts are not executed until the award or contract is received by the University. **Project directors should contact OSPR for assistance in developing appropriate sub-grant or subcontract instruments following their award.**