

Frequently Asked Questions

On Grants and Contracts

The University of Texas of the Permian Basin promotes research and sponsored programs to serve the needs of Texas and the nation. Grant work is a partnership between the Principal Investigator(s), the University, and the funding agency to conduct a program of research, instruction, initiatives or services that meets the goals of all entities. Thus, UTPB supports its faculty and staff in grant development and implementation.

This FAQ is designed to help faculty and staff with grants by sharing in a concise form the information needed in the grant development process. It will also reflect common professional and university practice. It addresses the issues you may be asking as you work on a grant proposal or program. If you find an answer to be unclear, if you have further questions, or if you are not sure an answer fits your unique situation, please contact Graduate Studies and Research. This office will meet your needs in grant development and administration.

Graduate Studies and Research MB 1208 432-552-2530

sponsoredresearch@utpb.edu

GRANT PREPARATION

1. Where do I get information about grant programs that might fund the type of research work I am interested in doing?

Let our office know of your research interest and any specific program ideas you may have. This can lead to two things. The research office receives a number of announcements on new grant opportunities daily and can notify you if an opportunity that might fit your program or research ideas arises. Secondly, the research office can direct you to websites maintained by funding agencies, so you can have notices sent directly to you or you can check for requests for proposals on a regular basis. Ten minutes a day reviewing announcements from key agencies can give you great insight into the opportunities that may be available in your field of interest. Regular email newsletters are sent by us highlighting a selection of funding opportunities.

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2. When do I take a grant idea to Graduate Studies and Research and when do I take it to the University's development office?

Before you do any work on it! The research office works with grants where the funding agency--a government agency, a research foundation, or a private business--has issued a general notice, usually known as a "request for proposals" (RFP). Faculty or staff members prepare a proposal stating how the University will undertake a specific work program that meets the specific requirements stated in the RFP. Almost all grants from government agencies (federal, state, and local) will go through Graduate Studies and Research. Some foundation and private business grants will also go through Graduate Studies and Research when specific tasks are to be performed, those proposals must be coordinated with the Development Office. Graduate Studies and Research can advise you when the Development Office should be involved with your project.

The Development Office importantly handles gifts to the University. These may be for a general use such as scholarships or support of a particular program. In all cases of foundation grants, any effort to raise money from private or foundation sources must be coordinated with them.

Development Office MB 4230 432-552-2800

3. I see that the agency or program is going to hold a workshop out of town for individuals interested in preparing proposals to them. Can I get travel support to attend that workshop?

Yes. Contact your dean or line manager. There is funding available for this specific purpose.

4. In the program of research I want to propose to a funding agency, I need some work done by another unit of in the University. How can I put this in a proposal?

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Talk to your dean and/or Graduate Studies and Research for contacts, and then talk to the faculty and/or staff of the unit involved. You cannot commit a University office or personnel to participate in a grant without the approval of those involved.

5. Who is a Principal Investigator for a grant?

The Principal Investigator (PI) is typically the major person conducting the research or project funded by a grant. There may be multiple Principal Investigators for some grants. In many cases the Principal Investigator is the term for the person who administers the grant and the term co-investigator(s) (CoPI) is used for others with a major role in the grant. Not everyone who helps to author parts of a team developed proposal or who works on a grant will be a Principal Investigator or co-investigator. These are terms typically reserved for those with the major roles in the grant preparation and operation.

Some funding agencies will require that the Principal Investigators be named in the grant proposal and/or distinguished from other grant participants. In such cases the University will use the agency definition for Principal Investigator. Even if it is not required, it is always good to name the Principal Investigator(s) in the grant proposal or in supporting documents filed with the research office when the proposal is submitted.

GRANT PROPOSAL

6. What are key elements of the grant proposal?

The major element of a successful grant proposal is specifically addressing the priorities and requirements listed in the RFP. Few grant programs have discretion to fund any good idea that comes along. Government grant programs are established to meet specific goals. Successful proposals demonstrate how the work proposed will address those specific goals better than the other responses to the RFP. Evaluation methods and resultant permanent impact are important in all proposals.

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National Science Foundation (NSF) requirements are also applicable to many other such agencies: what is the intellectual merit? What is the broader applicability? What is the transformative result?

7. In preparing my proposal, I need information regarding the University's students, personnel, or budgets. I need information on the demographics of the region. Where would I find this type of information?

The Office of Institutional Research maintains the databases and past reports on the University's students and faculty. Start there first. If they do not have the data, they may be able to direct you to where to find it or help you produce the data they need. Please contact this Office early in the proposal writing process if you think you will need this type of data. The specific information in the format needed to meet your RFP may have to be custom produced and it takes time.

Office of Institutional Research MB 4202 432-552-3110

8. I need information in my proposal or grant related report that appeared in an earlier proposal or grant report here at UT Permian Basin. May I use that information?

The intellectual property in all proposals and grant material produced does belong to the University and to the Principal Investigator(s) that created the intellectual property. One should not assume that such material can simply be used. Common professional ethics and practice requires that authors must be contacted to grant permission to use the material. The original authors may be planning on using the material themselves in a subsequent proposal. The Principal Investigator(s) should give permission if the material requested is to be used. If the author(s) does not want it to be used, look for an alternative source of information. If the Principal Investigator(s) are not easily contactable because they are no longer employed by the University, you should seek permission from Graduate Studies and Research to use the material.

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If no alternative source of information exists, Graduate Studies and Research will request permission from the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, noting the objection of the authors. The Provost will try to mediate a resolution. If a resolution cannot be agreed to by both parties, the Provost will determine if the material can be used based on the best interests of the University.

In all cases the work of others should be appropriately attributed in the proposals using normal bibliographic and citation style of your profession. Extensive use of material from others may mean that you should add the original P.I. as a co-author.

9. The RFP sets a limit for the total funds that the grant will award. I cannot do the work within the budget limitations. May I reduce the indirect costs in the budget?

No. The indirect costs rates are negotiated between the funding agencies and the University well before proposals are prepared. There are other budget elements, importantly fringe benefits, which also are not arbitrary but rather follow predetermined University rates. If you need institutional funds in addition to the grant funds to make a project successful, talk to your dean/director and/or Graduate Studies and Research about the possibilities to obtain the necessary support from other University resources.

Some are under the misconception that funding agencies buy work based on the price of the proposal. That is, if your proposal is cheaper than a competitor's, that will lead to its acceptance. Experience here and elsewhere shows that is not the case. Funding agencies award grants based on value. If a proposal presents the best value in terms of meeting the goals stated in the RFP and is within the budget limits of the RFP, it should be funded if it is a good, well organized proposal. Reviewers look to see whether the proposal addresses the specific criteria listed in the RFP. As long as you have made reasonable estimates of costs and your budget reflects both the reasonable estimates and is connected to the RFP and goals of the project, the grant should be acceptable if funds are available.

GRANT SUBMISSION

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10. How soon before submission of a proposal should I contact Graduate Studies and Research about a specific grant?

It is recommended that you contact the research office very early in the grant development process. You should also involve your Dean or line manager. This office can help you in finding information for the proposal and with budget guidelines. The Request for Proposal (RFP) to which you are responding will allow the research office to be sure all required forms and certifications are prepared that must accompany most government proposals. These forms vary with different agencies and with different types of grant activities.

All proposals in final draft form must be submitted to Graduate Studies and Research at least one week before the final due date for submission.

11. I see from the RFP (request for proposal) that the funding agency requires a number of certifications regarding the personnel, accounting, and research practices of the institution. Do I have to prepare these? Where do I get this sort of information?

You will generally NOT be required to develop the certifications and forms required by most agencies. Graduate Studies and Research has these on file or can produce them.

12. Graduate Studies and Research asks for grant proposals one week before they are due to the funding agency. I am not able to meet that deadline. Should I stop and not submit the proposal, even if I think I can get it all ready by the agency deadline.

Of course, you should let Graduate Studies and Research know you are working on a proposal when you first start to develop it. If you are not going to meet the one week target prior to the date of submission deadline, let the office know. It may be possible to work with a draft or with key parts of the proposal that are completed while you finish work on other parts. It is essential to have a draft budget completed by University internal deadlines.

The research office has to perform several steps on a grant before it can be submitted as an official proposal of the University. The budget must be checked by the Financial Services

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Office. Compliance with all research regulations and University policies must be verified. There are a number of signatures that must be obtained on the proposal before it can be submitted. These signatures are not a pro forma act. Key elements of the proposal must be reviewed, so time must be allowed for review.

University of Texas regulations require that the University president approve the grant proposal. Graduate Studies and Research will present the finished proposal to the president and the president alone can approve a submission. Only Graduate Studies and Research can actually send the final product to the federal agency by electronic means of Fastlane, FedConnect, grants.gov or by overnight delivery. There must be the time to do this before the final agency deadline; **almost all agencies will refuse to accept a submission that is late.**

The UTPB Sponsored Project Review Form may be found at: <http://www.utpb.edu/research-grants/>

Graduate Studies and Research will work with you and try to submit any approved proposal in the final form. It does take time, however, for all parties to complete the tasks required. If you do need more time than is available to you for preparing your proposal, there may be another due date for submission in the future. Plan your work in advance to meet it.

13. How do I find out if my proposal is funded?

This varies with funding agencies. Sometimes the notice of award comes to the president. Sometimes it goes to the Principal Investigator of the grant. At other times the notice goes to Graduate Studies and Research. **If it comes to you, please share the information with Graduate Studies and Research immediately, so the implementation of the grant can start in a timely fashion.** If the notice of award goes to Graduate Studies and Research or another office, you will be notified immediately.

Similarly, if you receive a notice that a proposal will not be funded, please share that information with Graduate Studies and Research immediately. It is important to consider very seriously any reviewer comments that are made available to you. The comments can be crucial for revising a proposal to remove identified weaknesses, to provide additional information as requested, and to re-enforce strong points that received recognized merit. You

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should provide copies of reviewer comments to Graduate Studies and Research for future references. This helps identify trends and areas where we need to improve.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

14. I just received notice that my proposal will be funded—what do I do now? How can I spend the grant funds?

Contact Graduate Studies and Research as soon as possible. There may be a sensitive issue regarding public announcement, as federal agencies often notify the congressional representative(s). They may want to make the initial notice about the grant award. The Graduate Studies and Research staff will work with Financial Services so that an account is set up specifically for your grant with a budget that matches the budget in the proposal. The office will also help take care of any final terms of negotiation and regulatory details that often still have to be done when the grant is awarded.

15. Who administers the grant?

Normally, the Principal Investigator will administer the grant. This individual is usually identified in the grant proposal. In some programmatic grants, a program administrator is hired specifically to administer the grant. In all cases a single individual will have signature authority on a grant account. This person will also be responsible for seeing that all administrative procedures are followed and required reports are filed. The P.I. will certify the effort for all individuals on grants paying salary and wages, and educational training will be scheduled for many of them as well.

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16. I hear there are federal rules, state rules, university rules, and possible others rules governing grant expenditures. Whose rules do we follow for hiring grant-related personnel, buying equipment, or travel? How do I know the rules?

In the absence of specific regulations of the funding agency, all state and University rules for hiring, purchasing, staff evaluation, travel, and other administrative issues are followed. Regular University forms and procedures are followed unless an explicit exception is provided in the grant contract or funding agency regulations and the University concurs.

There are many cases when grant funding carries more restrictions than a normal state or University fund account. In all cases, expenditures must be for items spelled out in the proposal or contract or approved in advance by the funding agency program officer.

In a few cases grant funding will have larger limits on travel expenses or purchases than normal University regulation allow. The Offices of Purchasing and/or Financial Services should be consulted in advance about exceptions before encumbering the grant funds.

17. If the grant administrator/Principal Investigator leaves the University before the grant activity ends, what happens to the grant?

This depends on the nature of the grant. In some cases where the P.I. is the primary researcher, the grant might go with the P.I. to another institution. With programmatic grants the selection process for the grant administrator/P.I. may be outlined in the grant proposal. Whatever the situation, Graduate Studies and Research must be informed and must be involved in the resolution of the issue.

In all cases, a change in the P.I. must be reviewed and approved by the funding authority **BEFORE** any official action to transfer authority can be taken by the University. The recommendation for a new P.I. must follow the University chain of command up to the president. Normally, the new P.I. will be selected from those involved with the project, but if no one there can assume responsibility, other candidates will be reviewed and a finalist chosen.

18. Can the University replace a Principal Investigator or grant administrator?

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It is rare that the University might take such a step. Remember, a grant contract is between the University and the funding agency. The University is thus responsible for meeting the terms of the contract. The grant research or program is a University sponsored activity. The University is thus responsible for the grant meeting all legal and regulatory expectations.

The University may have to take action, including a change in grant administration, if the grant administrator/P.I. leaves the University, if the grant administrator is violating the law, if the program of work as outlined to the funding agency is not being followed, or if practices leave the University liable for potential legal action. Situations that might require a change in the grant administration are rare, but the University remains responsible for the fulfillment of the grant contract.

19. The grant requires regular reports. Who files those?

The report is typically prepared by the grant administrator/P.I. Graduate Studies and Research will help you get the appropriate accounting information on the grant if it is needed for the report. Graduate Studies and Research should review any report to the funding agency, as it is officially a University report since the contract is officially between the University and the agency.

20. When a grant comes to an end, what happens?

Hopefully another grant has been awarded to keep the research program going, and/or you move on to the next stage of your research agenda. Graduate Studies and Research and Financial Services will help you with all official matters of the grant completion and close out.

If you have a question that has not been addressed here, please contact Graduate Studies and Research. Every attempt will be made to get you the information that you need in a timely manner. For now, UTPB hopes that you have found the above information to be useful.

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