



Competitive Grant Application Review and Submission Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

1. Purpose

A research grant application is a formal request for financial assistance to a sponsoring agency in support of a proposed project or activity. Grant making sponsors, including the National Institutes of Health, require all grant applications to be reviewed, approved, and ultimately submitted by an eligible institution on behalf of their faculty. This requirement is supported by Weill Cornell Medicine's (WCM) internal process.

Principal Investigators (PIs), or their departmental administrators (DAs), or DA delegate on their behalf, must submit all applications for research support, whether to federal or state agencies, to private foundations, or to industry sponsors, to the Office of Sponsored Research Administration (OSRA) for full review and approval. OSRA is responsible for ensuring applications follow WCM and sponsoring agency policies prior to submission, regardless of the submission process or if official signature is required.

To fulfill this charge, OSRA requires sufficient time to thoroughly review applications in advance of submission deadlines. Failure to meet OSRA deadlines may result in submission complications and errors, which can cause late submission and/or possible application rejection from a sponsoring agency. While it is OSRA's goal to approve and submit all grant applications on time, priority is given to applicants that meet internal submission deadlines.

The following standard operating procedure defines the process by which grant applications are submitted to OSRA via the Weill Research Gateway (WRG) for review, approval, and submission.

2. Scope

This standard operating procedure (SOP) should be used by all PIs, Academic Departments, and OSRA at the time of grant application preparation and submission. It outlines the responsibilities of PIs and their departmental staff when an application is submitted to OSRA for internal review, and OSRA's responsibilities in the review and submission process.

This procedure should be used when a PI is preparing a grant application, which includes a new, renewal, resubmission, revision, supplemental and transfer application that will undergo full sponsor review. *Not included here is the non-competitive progress report submission process.*

3. Prerequisites

Any individual intending to serve as PI on a grant application must be a paid employee of WCM and have a primary appointment in a department.

Pre- and Post-Doctoral Fellows and Graduate Students may serve as PI only on grant applications targeted specifically to Fellows and Grad Students.

Individuals may serve as PIs before their official start date if:

1. A formal acceptance letter signed by all parties is on file with the Department; AND
2. The CWID for the person has been activated.



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4. Definitions

OSRA – Office of Sponsored Research Administration

WRG-SP – Weill Research Gateway Sponsored Programs Module

S2S – system to system proposal record for sponsors that require grants.gov submission packages (i.e., NIH, DOD, etc.). The interface allows applicants to prepare applications and submit directly from WRG to Grants.gov, from which the application is retrieved by the awarding agency and made available on the sponsor's system (eRA Commons, eBRAP).

Non-S2S – non-system to system proposal record.

Prime Site – Institution submitting grant application directly to Sponsor, when WCM is a consortium/subaward site. Documents approved by OSRA are submitted to a prime site for inclusion in their proposal. If successful, this relationship becomes an incoming subaward.

Consortium Site – Entities listed on WCM grant applications when WCM serves as the Prime Site. If successful, this relationship becomes an outgoing subaward.

5. Policy

Once a PI and/or their DA(s) identify interest in a funding opportunity, they must review the opportunity guidelines to ensure (a) the program announcement is open, noting the submission deadline (b) PI eligibility and (c) if NIH, participation of the specific NIH institute to which the PI would like to apply. This must be done well in advance of application deadline to accommodate Departmental and OSRA submission policies and timelines.

Should submission require a letter of intent, PI and DA must draft and submit letter directly to sponsor unless otherwise required by the program guidelines. For most NIH applications requesting more than \$500,000 direct cost (minus consortium F&A) in any one budget period, PI must obtain approval from the NIH Program Officer at least 6 weeks before the application deadline.

PI and DA will prepare application documents, following all sponsoring agency and departmental policies and deadlines. PI & department administrator must carefully review and ensure compliance with sponsor guidelines including specific formatting guidelines i.e., page limitations, font sizes, margins, etc.

All applications must be submitted through the Weill Research Gateway Sponsored Programs (WRG-SP) module.

A draft of the application must be submitted to OSRA within 7 business days of the submission deadline. The draft must meet minimum submission requirements as outlined in Appendix A. The final application must be submitted to OSRA within 2 business days of the submission deadline. Applications not received within this timeframe will be subject to a cursory review as outlined in Appendix B.

Department Financial Approvers and Department Head Approvers/Delegates are responsible for reviewing and endorsing proposals from faculty, researchers, fellows, and students under their purview. This administrative endorsement, recorded through the route path in WRG, indicates that the department approves the submission, confirms salary, facilities, and other information listed in the application, and reiterates Departmental commitment in the event of an award.



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Proposals pending approval by Department stakeholders will be reviewed only in specific circumstances.

6a. Procedure for System-to-System (S2S) Applications

S2S records have two review stages: Pre-Review route for draft applications and Final Review for the final application.



The PI or Delegate will initiate the S2S record and complete the required minimum components for Pre-Review route, as outlined in Appendix A.

When the draft application is ready, PI or delegate must navigate to the Pre-Review route tab and route the record for review. Pre-review route requires approval from (1) Department Financial Approver and (2) Department Head approver, before it reaches OSRA's queue. The PI and/or Delegate must monitor approvals to ensure it reaches OSRA's queue within the required timeframe.

OSRA will initiate review of the draft application and provide feedback within the Reviewer Checklist tab of the S2S record. Once review is complete, OSRA must approve the record out of Pre-Review route. The PI and Delegate will receive an automated email notification that Pre-Review is complete.

PI and/or Delegate must review feedback in the Reviewer Checklist and make the necessary modifications to the record.

When the final application is ready, PI or delegate must navigate to the Finalize tab and complete the following steps prior to routing the record for Final Review and Submission.

- Click on **XML validation** button to run check for Grants.Gov errors. If there are errors, update the record accordingly or reach out to wrg-support@med.cornell.edu for assistance.
- Click on **Attachment Filenames** to review the names for each file and ensure no file names are longer than 50 characters or include any special characters.
- **Build** the Grants.Gov package.
- For NIH applications, click the **NIH Validations** button to check for NIH errors and/or warnings. If there are errors and/or warnings, update the record accordingly.

Upon completion of these steps, PI or Delegate must route the record for Final Review. Final route requires approval from (1) PI and (2) Department Financial Approver, before it reaches OSRA's queue. The PI and/or Delegate must monitor approvals to ensure it reaches OSRA's queue within the required timeframe.

OSRA will initiate review of the final application and will provide feedback within the Reviewer Checklist tab. If no changes are required, OSRA will send a copy of the pdf to the PI/department and confirm approval to submit with the PI or Delegate. If simple changes are required (replacement of one document or non-budgetary information), OSRA will notify the PI or



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Delegate, and will open the record up for further edits. Once changes are finalized, PI or Delegate must notify OSRA. OSRA will finalize review of the changes and proceed with submission.

If other changes are required, such as revisions that impact budget and department commitments, the record will be returned for edits and need to be routed again for Final Review, to allow department approvers to record their approval.

Following submission OSRA will send PI and Delegate a submission confirmation notification. OSRA will monitor retrieval of the proposal in the sponsor's system (eRA Commons, eBRAP) and will update the PI and Delegate once accepted.

For NIH submissions, applications must reach the eRA commons system without error by 5pm on the deadline day. For DOD submissions, applications with final budget and project narrative must be submitted no later than 5pm on the deadline date; unlike NIH, the DOD allows for post submission modifications to all other application components in eBRAP during the validation period.

6b. Procedure for Non-System-to-System (Non-S2S) Applications

Non-S2S records have one review stage.



The PI or Delegate will initiate the non-S2S record and complete the required minimum components for route, as outlined in Appendix A.

When the draft application is ready, PI or delegate must navigate to the Finalize tab and route the record for review. Final review route requires approval from (1) Principal Investigator, (2) Department Financial Approver, and (3) Department Head approver, before it reaches OSRA's queue. The PI and/or Delegate must monitor approvals to ensure it reaches OSRA's queue within the required timeframe.

OSRA will initiate review of the draft application and provide feedback within the Reviewer Checklist tab of the record. Once review is complete, OSRA will notify the PI and Delegate via email. If changes are needed, OSRA will update the record status to "Final Development" to allow for additional changes and finalization of the proposal. However, if the changes are related to the budget, OSRA will return the record for edits where it will need to be re-routed and approved.

PI and/or Delegate must review feedback in the Reviewer Checklist and make the necessary updates to the record. Once changes are finalized and proposal is considered final, PI or Delegate must notify OSRA. Once OSRA approves the final application, OSRA will proceed with application submission or signature/approval in accordance with sponsor guidelines.



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7. *Process Metrics*

- PIs and Departments are expected to meet OSRA submission deadlines:
 - The draft application is due to OSRA at least 7 business days prior to the sponsor's submission
 - The final application is due to OSRA at least 2 business days prior to the sponsor's submission deadline

8. *Special Application Considerations*

Multi-Component Applications (U10s, U19s, U2Cs, U41s, U45s, UM1s, and all P series): Multi-project applications are Cooperative Agreements that support a broadly based, multidisciplinary, and often long-term research program. PIs and/or Delegates must inform OSRA as soon as they consider applying as these applications are developed and submitted directly through NIH's ASSIST platform.

Institutional Training and Career Development Grants (T32s, K12s, R25s, R38s): These proposals are heavy and complex in nature. They are prepared and submitted via WRG however due to the complexity, size, and institutional data required, PIs and/or Delegates must inform OSRA as soon as they consider applying.

Procurement Contracts, Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) or Other Transaction Agreement (OTA): These are complex proposals that differ from a standard grant application and require several institutional representations and certifications. PIs and/or their Delegate must inform OSRA as soon as they consider applying.

Proposals submitted through proposalCENTRAL: To allow access to OSRA, Aleta Gunsul must be listed as the Signing Official with the email address grantsandcontracts@med.cornell.edu under the "Institution and Contacts" tab and granted administrator access (view and edit).

Opportunities requiring letter-of-intent or pre-application: Except when a budget is required, Letters of Intent (LOI) and pre-applications are not subject to OSRA's review and can be submitted directly to the sponsor by the PI or Department. If the LOI or pre-application require institutional signature, the PI or Department staff should contact OSRA to facilitate.

Limited Opportunities: The Office of the Research Dean sends out calls for submission for internal review and selection for these opportunities. Should a PI/Department come across an opportunity that limits the number of submissions by the applicant organization, the Department should communicate with OSRA, and they will facilitate the communication with the Office of the Research Dean.



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APPENDIX A

Application Submission Requirements

Draft Application – 7 business day deadline

S2S records must include, at a minimum:

- ✓ Complete and final budget and budget justification, including all subawards.
- ✓ Signed SOI form for participating subawards.
- ✓ Completed senior/key personnel profiles, Biosketches, and other support, when applicable
- ✓ Cover letter, if required or applicable
- ✓ Facilities and Equipment descriptions
- ✓ Multiple PD/PI Leadership Plan, when applicable
- ✓ PHS Assignment request form for NIH applications (not applicable for IC-specific opportunities)
- ✓ Any other administrative sections

Non-S2S records must include, at a minimum:

- ✓ Sponsor guidelines in pdf format. If only available online, please provide a document with the hyperlink.
- ✓ Complete and final budget and budget justification
- ✓ Complete and final subaward budget and budget justification for all subawards
- ✓ Consortium statement(s) for participating subawards with all required signatures.
- ✓ Completed senior/key personnel information and Biosketches, as requested by the sponsor.
- ✓ The pre-populated application in pdf format*
**Many systems allow for a pdf of the application to be generated. When this is not possible, print and save the application as pdf and provide for review.*

Proposals missing any of the documents listed above will still receive a detailed review of the documents if routed by 3pm 7 business days before the deadline. Documents not included will be subject to a cursory or rapid review, according to the review timeline in Appendix B, and compliance to sponsor and institutional policies are the responsibility of the Department.

Final Application – 2 business day deadline

A final version of the application, including final versions of all components as outlined in the program announcement and guidelines are required for OSRA final review and must be submitted at least 2 business days prior to the submission deadline.



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APPENDIX B

Application Review Criteria

S2S Records

Proposals received for pre-review by 3pm 7 business days before deadline	Proposals received for pre-review by 3pm 2 business days before deadline	Proposals received for pre-review after 3pm 2 business days before deadline
Detailed pre-review: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Eligibility requirements•Budget and budget justification•Key personnel profiles, biosketches and other support•Human Subject/Clinical Trials information and documents•All documents and information against RFP and sponsor guidelines•Review formatting of science attachments•Assistance obtaining letters, documents, and institutional information for the proposal	Cursory pre-review: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•IC participation based on PHS assignment form•Budget and budget justification•Cursory review of key personnel profiles, biosketches, and other support information, for <u>format</u> compliance•Cursory review of all other available documents for any clearly identifiable issue that may prevent submission	Rapid pre-review: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Received for pre-review by noon on the date of deadline: budget and budget justification for prime and subawards (if applicable) will be reviewed for compliance and record will be returned for final development•Received for pre-review after noon on the date of deadline: returned for Final Development
	Detailed Final Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Revisions in record to address pre-review comments•Compiled application for content and format compliance•Hyperlinks and urls•Validation errors and warnings	Rapid Final Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Received by noon on the date of deadline: cursory review of revisions to address reviewer comments, hyperlinks, format compliance, validations errors and warnings•Records received after noon: Validation errors that prevent submission



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Non-S2S Records

Proposals received for review by 3pm 7 business days before deadline	Proposals received for review by 3pm 2 business days before deadline	Proposals received for review after 3pm 2 business days before deadline
<p>Detailed review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eligibility requirements• Budget and budget justification• Senior/key personnel profiles, biosketches and other support• Complete review of all documents and information against RFP and sponsor guidelines• Assistance obtaining letters, documents, and other institutional information needed for the proposal	<p>Cursory review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eligibility requirements• Budget and budget justification• Cursory review of key personnel profiles, biosketches, and other support information, for <u>format</u> compliance• Cursory review of all other available documents for any clearly identifiable issue that may prevent submission	<p>Rapid review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of budget documents and information for accuracy, compliance and consistency, including subawards, when applicable• Accuracy of institutional information on the application