**Generic Research Administration Process Document**

Each Viterbi Department should have their own process document; this is for use in creating a process document in a new department or updating existing department process documents.

**PROPOSAL PREPARATION**

Research administrator consults with faculty on a monthly basis on potential proposal submissions. Below is a sample memo to be sent out to faculty that includes USC proposal submission timelines and information required for the TARA routing packet.

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Dear Faculty,

Please inform us of any prospective proposal submissions due within the next 2 months. The standard notification should be a minimum of four weeks, with longer notification needed for larger scale proposals with subawards. This will allow me to assist in avoiding delays with the USC proposal approval processes and submitting your proposals to agencies on time.

The following items are required:

1. Agency Name
2. Solicitation/Funding Opportunity Announcement Number (if applicable)
3. Proposal Title
4. Period of Performance (Start and End dates)
5. Summary (Draft OK)
   * Note: For NSF submissions, the draft Summary must address the following before VBA can proceed with their reviews/approvals:
     + Overview
     + Intellectual Merit
     + Broader Impacts

*\*Refer to NSF’s Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide for additional Project Summary formatting guidelines when preparing your finalized abstract.*

1. Budget outline (Budget and budget justification will be created by Research Administrator based on the information provided)

7. For proposals that include other universities as subawards, the following are also needed: (amount of time required to obtain the following documents depends on the other university’s timelines)

* + Contact information for subaward PI and admin staff
  + Subaward Budget
  + Subaward Institutional Commitment (Subrecipient Certification Form Preferred)
  + Subaward Statement of Work
  + Subaward Budget Justification
  + Biosketch and/or other forms (Depending on agency)

8. PIs who are proposing to receive support from the US DHHS, including NIH, CDC, HRSA and AHRQ, must also make an annual Conflict of Interest (COI) disclosure, complete COI training (training requirement is needed every 4 years), and report all financial interests related to the institutional responsibilities to USC, regardless of whether any of these interests give rise to COI related to their research, through USC diSClose. **Proposals that require diSClose will NOT be submitted by the University unless diSClose has been completed.**

While you are working on the technical portion of your proposal, the above items will allow us to begin the USC approval processes. It will also help us generate all other documents required by the agencies for your submissions.

The standard USC proposal approval turnaround is 6 business days (3 day for Viterbi and 3 days for DCG).

This timeframe is subject to be extended if proposals involve faculty from other schools (both within and/or outside of USC).

Please Note: If a budget (or satellite budget) needs to be revised after it has received School approval in TARA, it will be rerouted for updating and re-approvals.

\*Research administration in Viterbi and USC’s Contracts and Grants not only provides required approvals, but also, if allowed adequate time, assists in reviewing all non-technical proposal components for submission accuracies per agency solicitations, taking into consideration agency policies and guidelines. This eliminates possible submission errors and increases the success rate of your proposals.

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**Departmental Proposal Preparation Process Outline**

1. Notify VBA and DCG of the upcoming proposal submission
2. Review Solicitation
3. USC Approval: TARA
   * + Title
     + Agency
     + Solicitation
     + Period of Performance
     + Summary (draft OK)
     + Budget
     + Regulatory Compliance including Conflict of Interest
     + Mandatory Cost Sharing approval request (if applicable) must be submitted 30-14 business days in advance depending on level and number of schools involved
4. Submission to the Agency(depends on the requirements detailed in the solicitation)

*Roadmap to proposal submission*

* Project Summary
* Project Description
* References Cited
* Budget
* Budget Justification
* Data Management (NSF)
* Postdoc Mentoring Plan (NSF)
* Biosketch
* Current and Pending Support
* Collaborators & Other Affiliations Information (NSF)
* Facilities, Equipment, & Other Resources

USC approval and agency submission preparation can develop simultaneously.

**USC Average Approval** timeline:

* Viterbi 3 business days
* DCG 3 business days
* If multiple schools are participating, add 3 business days to gather all the PI and School Approvals

**Cost Sharing**

* Mandatory cost sharing is cost sharing which is required by the sponsor as a condition of obtaining an award. It must be included or the proposal will not receive consideration for funding by the sponsor. The cost share contribution may be a fixed amount of money or percentage of the total project costs. In either case, the obligation must be met using non-sponsored funds.
* All cost sharing and “institutional support” requests must be approved prior to proposal submission, by submitting a request through Viterbi’s Research Administration online Cost Sharing portal at <http://viterbi.usc.edu/intranet/vba/contracts_grants/>

**Cost Sharing Timeline**

* For center proposals, or other large proposals, which are interdisciplinary with multiple schools and/or universities, cost-sharing requests that are in the range of 25% or less will be considered. These need to be made at least **30** business days prior to the due date of the proposal.
* For NIH above the cap, young investigator, or other smaller proposals, which are not interdisciplinary, cost-sharing requests need to be made at least **14** business days prior to the due date of the proposal.

**NIH Proposals**

When submitting a proposal where the USC IBS exceeds the NIH salary cap, a cost sharing request is submitted online. The Viterbi School will cost share the difference of salary during the academic year; for summer salary, it is expected that the Department and/or the PI will cover the difference.

**Space Requests**

If it is deemed that additional space will be needed, a request must be made to the department chair. If they cannot accommodate, then a request is made to the Vice Dean of Administration.

**PI’s Role and Responsibilities in Proposal Preparation**

* Identifies funding sources
* Notifies research administrator in a timely fashion of proposal submission per above
* Develops and prepares proposals in accordance with sponsor guidelines and University policies
  + Secures required space and cost share commitments
  + Works with administrators on developing a budget
  + Reviews and approves TARA
* Work with Research Administrator to submit complete proposal package with all necessary approvals to DCG in a timely manner for institutional review and endorsement. Per above, this would be three business days prior to the due date.
* As PI, you are assuming primary responsibility for scientific/technical and administrative management of sponsored projects

**Department Administrator’s Role and Responsibilities in Proposal Preparation**

* Assists PI in identifying funding opportunities and developing proposal submission timelines/plans
* GIST – USC Viterbi Vice Dean of Research
* Agency Websites
* COS.com (Community of Science): searchable national database, needs very specific keywords
* Grants.gov
* SPIN (Sponsored Projects Information Network): more than 2,500 sponsoring agencies
* Pivot Community of Science
* Serves as an information resource regarding sponsor guidelines and University policy
* Assists PI with proposal preparation in accordance with USC policy and sponsor guidelines
* Assists in developing the proposal budget
* Assists PI with routing TARA or PAR
* Assists PI with submission to DCG
* Acts as a liaison between PI and DCG
* Assists PI with communicating with other institutions for proposals that involve multiple universities

**AWARD MANAGEMENT**

**Lifecycle of an award**

1. Pre-Award
   * Agency Review
   * Award Negotiation and Acceptance (revise budget, pre-award costs if allowed by agency)
   * Award/Account set-up
2. Post Award
   * 1st budget period
   * 2nd budget period
   * 3rd budget period
   * Additional budget periods depending on the award
   * No-Cost Extension
   * Closeout

*\** ***IMPORTANT***

* *Spend per budget! Increased burn rates towards the end of the project raise red flags with funding agencies. Monitor subaward invoicing*
* *All expenses and purchases funded by a sponsored project account must directly and fully benefit the project*
* *Any expense in the last 30 days of a grant expiration date requires an additional justification on how the expense benefits the project at that point and purchased items must arrive on-sight prior to project expiration date*
* *Carefully review effort certification. If, for any reason, payroll transfers are planned in the near future that affect the certification period, these efforts must be certified even though they have not been paid on those sponsored accounts at the time.*

**Post-Award Activities: Financial and Administrative Management of Awards with Timelines**

*\*all post-award activities must be in accordance with negotiated terms and condition of the award*

**Advance Funding and No-Cost Advance Funding (timeline varies)**

* + - Advance Funding is requested in cases where we have confirmation of a new award / award transfer / incremental funding from the agency (contract office) with a definitive start date, but where the funding distribution is delayed due to administrative complexities. The timeline from submitting the advance to receiving an account varies. VBA often approves advance funding requests the same day. Most of the processing time occurs at DCG and / or SPA.
      * EXAMPLE
      * 08/20/2013 - advance funding request submitted to VBA for review and approval
      * 08/20/2013 - VBA approved advance funding request and forwarded to DCG
      * 08/20/13-09/01/13 - we do not have insight on the developments during this period
      * 09/04/2013 - advance funding account established

\*Similar process for “No-Cost Advance Funding” (previously known as “Administrative No-Cost Extensions”)

**Award/Increment Set-up**

* Administrator receives an auto email (from KC) indicating the award was funded
* Review TARA and print/download award documents (if not included, contact DCG)
* Administrator should then locate the proposed agency approved budget
* Send approved detailed budget to SPA using SPA’s detailed budget form or simply the internal detailed budget if it is a new award. If receiving an increment use SPA’s detailed budget form. (This can be submitted via email or KFS edoc, per SPA’s website)
* Will need to use SPAs detailed form for set-up of satellite accounts per approved budget
* Once SPA has completed account set-up, review to ensure it was set-up as requested

**Projection/planning**

* + - Staff meets and communicates on a regular basis with PIs on the sponsored project projection and planning. The regularity of meetings is tailored to each faculty, account expiration dates, semester support planning, planned buyouts, travel plans, etc.
    - Minimum frequency of meetings is quarterly

**Account Reconciliation and Account Status Reports**

* + - All expenses are entered in shadow reports
    - Accounts are reconciled on a monthly basis
    - Initiate expense transfers for corrections and/or unauthorized expenses
    - Monthly accounting and/or ASR reports are sent to faculty for their review
    - Annually request IDC worksheets from SPA to ensure no indirect costs and fringe benefit shortfalls prior to fiscal year end

\**With shortfalls, obtain any required agency approvals and initiate budget reallocation*

**Purchases (timeline varies and is subject to change)**

All purchase requests by PIs, postdoctoral fellows and RAs are addressed by the staff within 1-2 business days. Below is the outline of the process:

* + - * Review account for funding availability and expense allowability
        + *If funds are not available, initiate a budget reallocation*
        + *Budget reallocation timeline depends on the award, terms and conditions, and the response time from the agency on requested approvals. VBA turnaround on submitted budget reallocation is within 1-2 business days.*
        + *In cases where the cost of one item is shared on multiple accounts, an expense cost distribution worksheet / justification is required from the PI*
        + *Budget reallocations can significantly delay the completion of the purchasing process in cases where purchasing items that were not previously budgeted for and where there are insufficient funds for the purchase.*
      * Identify if the purchase can be made by P-card or if it needs to go through eMarket
      * Identify if the Vendor is set up in eMarket
        + *If the vendor is not set up in eMarket, initiate a new Vendor set-up*
        + *Timeline for a Vendor to be set up in eMarket varies depending on the Vendor and Purchasing response time*
      * Initiate a PO in eMarket or place an order with a P-card
      * If purchasing components for a fabrication of an equipment system, request a TAG number from Equipment Management in order to link all the components together as one system

**Reimbursements (timeline varies and is subject to change)**

All reimbursement requests by PIs, postdoctoral fellows and RAs are addressed by staff within 1-2 business days. PIs and students are encouraged to submit travel reimbursements no later than 5 business days after travel has concluded. Below is the outline of the process:

* + - * Review account for funding availability and expense allowability
        + *If funds are not available, initiate a budget reallocation*
        + *Budget reallocation timeline depends on the award, terms and conditions, and the response time from the agency on requested approvals. VBA turnaround on submitted budget reallocation is within 1-2 business days.*
        + *Budget reallocations can significantly delay the completion of the process*
      * Review all receipts and convert to pdf
        + If receipts are missing, complete a Missing Receipt Declaration form, obtain signatures, and adhoc SBO when routing.
        + If proof of payment is missing, request it from reimbursee
      * Complete and submit the DVQE on Kuali
        + Timeline depends on the route log and response time of all approvers included in the log

**New-Hires**

PI needs to inform the administrator regarding any new hires to their group. Please allow enough time to process paperwork prior to the anticipated start date. When preparing or processing new-hire documents, please remember the following:

* + Check in with Viterbi HR to ensure there are no approvals needed for the position and/or the posting of the position.
    - Ensure you review the individual’s visa (if applicable), and verify s/he is able to work at USC.
    - Set up an appointment with your department payroll office/administrator for completion of documents. If Glacier paperwork is applicable to the new-hire, ensure it is completed prior to the payroll office/administrator appointment.
    - For a complete checklist of new-hire documents please review the Document Checklist file within the myViterbi document repository found here: <https://myviterbi.usc.edu/>.

**Payroll (RA, student wages/effort) - timeline follows VBA payroll deadlines**

* Communicate with the PI on plans for RA support prior to the beginning of the semester, following the VBA payroll calendar deadlines.
* Identify any students that require employment eligibility verification.

***\*New hire documents are required for new PhD students or fellows that are starting the assistantship portion of their support.***

* Initiate new hire process ASAP (Glacier, SS card, RCR training, new hire packet)
* Ensure the offer letter is signed at the start of the semester
* Project support for the entire semester based on communication with the PI
* Review accounts for funding availability
* Initiate budget reallocations if required
* Contact and verify that students have completed RCR training
* Verify students are enrolled for the semester
* Submit PA-1’s for the entire semester
* Enter Graduate Assistant Aid (i.e., health center, health insurance, dental insurance, tuition credits) in SIS or provide information to department person who enters the award
* All faculty, postdoctoral, research staff, and RA efforts are entered in shadow reports that are used for effort certification preparation and effort reconciliation.
* When hiring a postdoctoral scholar, PI is advised to allocate sufficient lead time of no less than two months to complete hiring process. From the time PI places an ad recruiting a postdoc and selecting the best candidate, the staff should already be informed. The staff must submit the pre-approval form with terms of the offer and draft offer letter with salary information to the Dean’s Office. On-boarding of a postdoctoral scholar includes on-line certification of effort and use of Kuali as a shopper.
* PI must plan and communicate with the postdoctoral fellow and research staff/faculty to take vacation time prior to leaving USC. If any vacation accrual is owed to the employee at the time of termination, the use of an unrestricted or other department account is required. Sponsored accounts are not be used to pay out vacation time owed.

**No-Cost Extension**

* + - Prior to account closeout initiation (90 days prior to the expiration date), communicate with PI if a No-Cost Extension (NCE) will be requested or is anticipated
    - If a NCE will be requested, work with DCG on submitting the request to the agency

**Budget Reallocation (timeline varies and is subject to change)**

* + - At projection and planning stage, identify if a budget reallocation is required
    - If a budget reallocation is required, review the award and communicate with DCG if agency approvals are required
    - Budget reallocation timeline depends on the award, terms and conditions, and the response time from the agency on requested approvals
    - VBA turnaround on a submitted budget reallocation is within 1-2 business days, depending on volume
    - Please pay attention to the memo sent out in early June regarding reallocations at fiscal year-end deadlines. There is a deadline to adhere to prior to the fiscal year-end and once this passes, VBA will not be able to process again until late July.

**Subaward Monitoring**

* During the proposal stage where a subaward is included and budgeted, it is required to have the subawards budget, budget justification, statement of work, and institutional commitment letter or signed subrecipient form.
* When a new award is established, staff initiates a subaward PO in eMarket.
* If the subaward institution is not set up as a vendor in eMarket, a new vendor set-up process is initiated.
* Once the subaward institution is set up as an active vendor in eMarket, initiate a PO request and upload all documents collected during the pre-proposal stage.
  + Please refer to the subaward training slides for set-up steps provided in pre-award training.
* Reminder: Even if full funding is received from the sponsor, the subaward PO can only be setup for the increment and period received or a maximum of one year at a time.
* All subaward invoices require the PI’s review and approval prior to payment.
* Changes to subawards deviating from proposed budget require appropriate approvals.
* Staff monitors subawards invoice submissions and payments.
* When initiating account closeout, communicate with subaward regarding the upcoming expiration date and request subawards final invoice submission.

**Independent Contractor/Consultant set-up and monitoring**

* + - If known at proposal stage that the project will have an independent contractor (IC) or consultant, the proposal must have a letter of commitment from the IC/Consultant that includes the rate and/or a separate budget.
    - Verify funding is available and allowable by the agency
    - Complete the WSE (Work Status Evaluation) form and get the required signatures from PI and VBA HR
    - Complete the ICA (Independent Contractor Agreement) form or, if consultant is incorporated, a PSA (Professional Services Agreement) and get required signatures from PI and independent contractor
    - Complete the Sole Source Justification form and get required signature from PI if needed
    - Initiate New USC Supplier Request online
    - Follow-up with independent contractor that they completed their online questions/profile in order for their profile to appear in eMarket
    - Complete the Independent Contractor Service Request form in eMarket and attach the completed and signed WSE / ICA / Sole Source Justification forms and independent contractor’s CV
    - Route in eMarket to DCG’s Subaward Team, etc. for approvals and processing
    - Contractor may not begin work or invoice for work done prior to above document completion.

**30-60-90 account expiration notices day notices**

* Notices are sent out to faculty at 90, 60, and 30 days prior to the account expiration date with current balances and inquiring on any planned future expenses.
* Inform SPA of any expenses pending to post
* Request IDC worksheets from SPA to ensure there are no indirect cost and fringe benefit shortfalls.
  + - *If there are shortfalls, then obtain any required agency approvals and initiate budget reallocation*
* Account closeout is initiated at 90 days prior to account expiration date

**Effort Certification**

Faculty, postdocs, and exempt research staff are responsible for reporting and certifying percentage of effort charged to a sponsored project. Certification includes making corrections and adjustments between estimates and actual effort.

Under federal law, USC is obligated to ensure percentages of effort charged to grants and contracts represent (and never exceed) the actual time that supported research personnel devoted to sponsored projects.

*Note: Faculty certifies their own effort and for their RAs. Postdocs and exempt research staff certify their own effort.*

Recommended that staff email their faculty, post-docs, and exempt research staff when they receive the eCert Preparer email to not certify until the staff member has prepared the certification and let them know it is ready for their review and certification.

Staff prepares effort certifications based on faculty pay instructions for postdocs, exempt research staff, and RAs, notifies faculty, postdocs and exempt research staff to review and approve their eCert, and checks eCerts are all approved prior to eCert deadlines to assist faculty with ensuring accounts are not frozen.

Faculty and postdocs are responsible for reviewing and certifying effort by logging into the **Kuali Effort Certification Dashboard (**[**https://fbs.usc.edu/depts/ofa/page/4118/policies/**](https://fbs.usc.edu/depts/ofa/page/4118/policies/)**)**

* + - * RA and Faculty (IBS/9) effort 🡨 certified per semester
      * Postdoc and Faculty (IBS/12) effort 🡨 certified quarterly

Kuali Effort Certification Training: <http://fbs.usc.edu/depts/ofa/page/7687/ec_training/>

Kuali Effort Certification Quick Instructions: <http://fbs.usc.edu/depts/ofa/page/8441/quick-instruction-guides/>

Kuali Effort Certification Known Issues: <http://fbs.usc.edu/depts/ofa/page/8122/help-and-faqs/>

**Student Employment at USC**

There is a *minimum* enrollment requirement for students to qualify for employment with USC. Students must *maintain at least a half-time status* in order to qualify as employees of USC. Student pay must adhere to minimum wage requirements.

Half-Time Status:

* + - * Undergraduate student – 6 units
      * Graduate student – 4 units
      * Doctoral candidate – 3 units

Enrollment in certain courses creates full-time status (at the graduate and PhD level). If students fall below half-time enrollment status during the Fall or Spring semester, they are ***no longer eligible*** to retaintheir USC employment status. University Payroll determines student enrollment by monitoring the Student Information System (this is an automated process). To maintain student status in the summer, students need to be enrolled in the upcoming Fall semester.

In addition to enrollment restrictions, there are other restrictions related to student employment eligibility (i.e., all students are required to have a social security card) and are ***not eligible*** for employment prior to the date they complete their employment paperwork process.

Please have students make an appointment with Research Services for employment verification and to complete the employment paperwork process ***before*** students start working.

***\*****The date students complete their employment paperwork process is their* ***official hire date*** *with USC.*

**Most Restrictive Terms Apply**

* Federal Law, regulation policy and guidance
* State law, policy, guidance
* USC Policy
* Sponsor terms and conditions

The pyramid is as follows:

* Award Document
* University policy
* Sponsor Policy
* Federal Policy

Why do we have policies?

* Productivity
* Wise investment of sponsor funds
* Public Benefit
* Stewardship/integrity/compliance
* Advancement of knowledge (Federal)
* Economic Development (State)
* Sharing of information protection of property and full recovery of costs (USC)

**Funding Mechanisms**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Funding** | **Gift** | **Grant** | **Contract** |
| Performance Period | Not Specified | Specific Start and End Date | Specific Start and End Date |
| Revocability | Irrevocable | Revocable | Revocable |
| Use of Funds | Unrestricted | Terms and Conditions | Specific Terms and Conditions |
| Type of Agreement | Financial Assistance | Financial Assistance | Purchase of Service |
| Origination | PI Idea and scope of work | PI Idea and scope of work | Agency idea and scope of work |
| Review Criteria | None | Peer Reviewed | Project Design and low Bid |
| Budget Option | Lump Sum | Cost Reimbursable | Cost Reimbursable or fixed price |
| Reporting Requirements | None | Technical and financial | Specific Milestones and deliverables |