So, You’re Submitting a Proposal?
What You Need to Know About Research Administration

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What is Research Administration?

. . . the management, support and facilitation of research activities primarily related to externally-funded (“sponsored”) projects.

Externally funded awards are typically received as grants or contracts from government agencies, foundations and corporations.
Introduction - Sponsored vs. Non-Sponsored Activity

Sponsored

• Externally-funded activities in which a formal written agreement, i.e., a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement, is entered into between Stanford University and the sponsoring organization that provides funding.
• A sponsored project has a specific statement of work and an estimated budget for that work; indicates the conditions under which the work must be performed and a related, reciprocal transfer of something of value.

Non-Sponsored

• Research or other activity that is funded using University-managed funding sources. This may include both externally- and internally-funded gifts, start-up funds, operating budgets, and department-owned endowments.
Introduction – Research Administrators (RA)

RAs are staff who manage and guide administrative, fiscal, and customer service activities during all stages of the award (both pre- and post-award). In the School of Engineering, ERA:

- Assists in the preparation and submission of contract and grant proposals on behalf of PIs. ERA works with the central Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) to submit proposals to sponsors.
- Liaises between the PI and central campus partners, sponsors, and subrecipients.
- Guides faculty in interpreting policies and award terms and conditions.
- Ensures compliance with university and sponsor requirements for each award in the PI's research portfolio.
- Monitors financial activity and reports on the fiscal status of each award to both PIs and sponsors.
- Supports day-to-day research activity and makes recommendations for life-of-the-award management.
- Works with department/faculty administrators to facilitate student and faculty funding.
Introduction - Roles and Responsibilities

Principal Investigator (PI):

- Develops and directs technical proposal and activity
- Manages technical and financial progress, including that of collaborators/subrecipients
- Ensures compliance with federal, sponsor, and university requirements regarding conduct of work
Introduction – Roles and Responsibilities

ERA (and individual RAs):
• Reviews and assists with solicitation
• Prepare administrative proposal components
• Develops budgets and budget justifications
• Prepares and uploads application components to sponsor systems (e.g., grants.gov)
• Reviews all application components to ensure compliance with agency and/or solicitation-specific requirements
• Routes proposal to the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR)
• Manages life-of-the-award financial activity, including transaction review, expenditure reconciliation, re-budgeting, reporting, and closeout
Introduction: Roles and Responsibilities

OSR:

• Reviews proposals for institutional compliance and submits through sponsor portals
• Has signatory authority for institution
• Negotiates agreements
• Manages invoicing, closeout, and institutional compliance requirements
Sponsored Research Lifecycle

- Generates Your Idea
- Find Funding
- Develop Your Proposal
- Proposal Routing and Submission
- Sponsor Review, Scoring, JIT
- Award Negotiation and Setup
- Managing Your Award
- Spending, Reporting, Monitoring
- Award Closeout

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Generate Your Idea

• Schedule brainstorming sessions with your faculty peers and department chair.
• Attend national conferences in your discipline.
• Read the scholarly literature on research topics that intrigue you and that pose unsolved problems, needing further inquiry.
• Reach out to potential collaborators in other disciplines to synergize efforts
• Speak to your program director at the NSF or other federal agency to understand national funding priorities
• Visit a national or international laboratory that performs research and experimentation linked to your own interests (Sandia, Lawrence Livermore, etc.)
PIs are responsible for determining and managing the intellectual direction of the research and scholarship, and for the training of graduate students. In order to act as a principal investigator (PI) or co-principal investigator (Co-PI) on externally funded projects, you must be a member of the Academic Council or MCL faculty.

Waivers: Staff, research staff, postdocs, and students are typically NOT eligible to serve as PI on sponsored awards. However, there are a few situations where a PI waiver for these roles may be appropriate.

Exceptions: Case-by-Case (Department Chair → ERA RFA → ERA Director → SoE Senior Associate Dean)

| Conferences, Exhibits, Workshops, or Public Events | Large Interdisciplinary Programs | Career Development Awards | Pending Appointments for New Faculty |
Find Funding - Pivot

• Once you have narrowed your research focus, you can begin searching for funding opportunities to which you can apply.

• The best place to start is with the ProQuest database, **Pivot**.
  - Pivot is the largest, most comprehensive database of available grant opportunities. Sign up, establish your profile and begin your search.
  - Learn more about key word searching in this [video by Grace Baysinger](#), Chemistry Librarian at Stanford.
A limited submission program is an externally sponsored project which limits the number of applications that can be submitted from the university. Since the number of applications is limited, an internal selection process is required for each program. View a complete list of limited submission opportunities at DoResearch. Limited submission applications are uploaded using InfoReady, which consolidates all documents into one package. Please submit through the DoResearch engagement hub.
Find Funding – Federal Funding Agencies

- Additional subject-specific funding opportunities are available through the following:
  - National Science Foundation (NSF)
  - Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)
  - Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR)
  - Office of Naval Research (ONR)
  - Army Research Office (ARO)
  - National Institute of Health (NIH)
  - Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (DoD CDMRP)
Develop Your Proposal

• After generating your idea and identifying a specific funding opportunity, you can begin developing the grant application, your proposal.
• Contact your Research Administrator early in the process, so they can guide you through each phase, and direct you to various tools that make the process more efficient.
• When you have a draft of the proposal narrative, also contact the Research Proposal Editor to obtain helpful suggestions for the writing.
Develop Your Proposal

All proposals include:
- Statement of Work
- Budget
- Budget Justification
- Institutional Commitment

Many proposals also require:
- Abstract/Project Summary
- CV/Biosketch
- Bibliography/References
- Facilities, resources, and equipment
- Human subject and/or vertebrate animal information (if applicable)

If Stanford resources or commitment (including authorized signature) are required, your proposal must be routed through ERA and OSR.
Proposal Routing and Submission

Proposals are submitted via the Stanford Electronic Research Administration (SeRA) system using the Proposal Development Routing Form (PDRF). ERA will initiate the PDRF, and your RA will work with you to provide comprehensive information for institutional approval.

Stanford has a Proposal Deadline Policy, which requires proposals to be routed to OSR at least 5 full business days prior to the date of the sponsor deadline. This means that any preparatory work you do must be in complete and final form before that deadline—so get started early!

• https://doresearch.stanford.edu/research-scholarship/about-proposals/submitting-proposal

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Sponsor Review, Scoring, JIT

• Proposals are reviewed and evaluated by different methods, depending on the sponsor. In the example of the National Science Foundation (NSF), a proposal can be reviewed *ad hoc* or by a panel.

• Ad hoc reviewers are individuals who have specific expertise in a field related to the proposal.
  • Some proposals may undergo ad hoc review only.

• Panel reviewers usually have a broader scientific knowledge and may even include “educated lay persons.”
Sponsor Review, Scoring, JIT

Ad Hoc

Reviewers’ Ratings
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Panel

Panel Recommendations
- Highly Recommended
- Recommended
- Do Not Recommend
Sponsor Review, Scoring, JIT

Reviewers do not make funding decisions. NSF Program Officers make recommendations to fund or decline a proposal.

Program Officers are encouraged to recommend funding high-risk projects.

Most funded projects do not receive all “excellent” ratings. Proposals that do get all “excellent” ratings, often aren’t funded.
JIT is an acronym for Just-In-Time and refers to the application timeframe requiring applicants to send information to the NIH when an award is likely.

- When the PI receives a JIT notification, it signifies that their application has completed the peer review process and has received a rank for which funding may be possible.

- This process decreases the administrative burden for the 75%-80% of the applications that will not receive funding and provides NIH with the most current information “just-in-time” for award.

- JIT information includes up-to-date Other Support, IACUC, IRB, and Human Subjects Education Documentation.
Award Negotiation and Setup

• ERA will help you navigate the terms and conditions of your award, plan for life-of-the-award management, understand and plan spending, and make changes where needed.

• Many sponsors allow for some flexibility to navigate the progress of research. The degree to which they will do so is delineated in the terms and conditions of individual awards.

• Generally, there are some sponsors and award mechanisms that are more or less restrictive, and we can plan our approach with that knowledge.
Award Negotiation and Setup

Most sponsors allow for a reasonable amount of variance between the proposed budget and actual expenditures. The degree of variance allowed is determined by the sponsor type, the award mechanism, and the terms and conditions of the individual award.

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Managing Your Award

- Once a PI has an award in-hand, ERA will help navigate the rules and regulations to make sure work can proceed as planned.

- With all life-of-the-award activity, please be sure to utilize your Research Administrator.

- RAs can connect PIs with appropriate compliance resources on campus, help interpret and navigate terms and policies, create and assist with a spending plan, and make adjustments when the research takes an unpredictable turn.
  - RAs also have ready access to a variety of job aids and tools that ensure the process is smooth and complete from initiation to closeout.
Spending, Reporting, Monitoring

• At Stanford, the Principal Investigator (PI) has overall responsibility for the technical and fiscal management of a sponsored project.

• This includes the management of the project within funding limitations, adherence to reporting requirements and assurance that the sponsor will be notified when significant conditions related to project status change.

• RAs role includes approving transactions charged to sponsored account; verifying that expenses adhere to applicable policies; keep PIs apprised of account balances and spending practices through routine and custom reports; facilitating rebudgeting requests and obtain both internal and sponsored approvals; and closing out accounts and confirming final expenditures.
Award Closeout

• Closeout is a post award activity that officially ends the award relationship. The closeout process is complete when the awarding agency determines that all applicable administrative actions and all required work with the award have been completed by the recipient.

• The Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) reviews sponsored projects at closeout to ensure that costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and consistent. OSR then prepares the final financial report and submits it to the sponsor.

Quick Tips

- Get your RA involved early!
- Know who is responsible for what
- Read the solicitation and understand the proposal requirements
- Every award is different
- Plan ahead!
- Set a timeline
- Ask questions
Questions?

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Please see the ERA website for specific RFA assignments for your faculty and department, as well as many useful resources and tools:
HTTPS://ERA.SITES.STANFORD.EDU/