

## 4.1 Application Procedures

Application for financial support from sponsoring agencies is accomplished by the submission of a formal grant proposal that has passed through the internal review process. The proposal is the document on which the university and the sponsor base their commitments of funds, facilities, and services for the performance of the research or project.

The written proposal may be the only contact that the funding agency's evaluation committee has with the project. It is essential that the proposal be technically sound and well composed. The proposal must address itself specifically to the requirements listed in the guidelines or request for proposal (RFP) and describe the project in the clearest possible terms. Funding agencies review and evaluate proposals with reference to four major considerations:

- a) The possibility of significant results to be obtained from the research project;
- b) The resources required to conduct the project are analyzed in terms of existing and projected commitments of the agency and the university;
- c) The request for funds is evaluated in reference to cost effectiveness and efficiency;
- d) The competency of the investigator to undertake the proposed research.

Most sponsors, particularly agencies of the Federal Government, furnish standard application forms. (The OSP can obtain these forms for you.) In the absence of specified forms and proposal formats, the model below is suggested. During preliminary planning, the PI should contact the OSP to determine whether the prospective funding agency has issued special requirements for proposal form, content, or style. The format offered below, with explanatory comments, covers all the major elements considered essential to a sound proposal. PI's may consider other standard formats or devise one of their own.

### SAMPLE FORMAT

#### 1. Title Page

This page should include the following information:

- a) short title that gives a clear indication of the essential nature of the project;
- b) name and address of the agency to which the proposal is being submitted;
- c) name, title, address, and telephone number of the PI;
- d) name and address of the university;
- e) date of project duration (the starting date being set no later than the date when the first formal commitment for equipment or personnel must be made);
- f) total estimated cost of the project;
- g) signature of the PI;
- h) signature and title of AASU's Vice President and Dean of Faculty.

#### 2. Abstract

The abstract should be written in simple language (no jargon). All pertinent aspects of the sponsored activity, including a summary of the objectives and a description of the results to be expected, should be contained in the abstract. Most abstracts for grants purposes run fewer than 350 words and are limited to one double-spaced typed page.

#### 3. Table of Contents

A separate page showing the major sections of the proposal, with referenced page numbers, is sufficient in most instances.

#### **4. Introduction**

The introduction should be a statement containing the objectives of the research and background information from the proposal.

#### **5. Project Description**

This section includes at least the following elements:

- a) a statement of the problem and objectives;
- b) a review of the literature and related research, in terms of present need for the project;
- c) hypotheses to be tested or results expected;
- d) research design and methodology.

The description section may vary considerably in its design, according to specific intentions of the proposal or the procedures and traditions of a particular discipline.)

#### **6. Project Evaluation**

A plan to evaluate the success of your project using both qualitative and quantitative measures. Pay particular attention to this section of the proposal; it is extremely important to public and private funders alike.

#### **7. Facilities**

List such items as laboratory equipment and apparatus, laboratory space, field resources, library services, data processing capabilities, and other institutional services. Be sure to include an explanation of any equipment which you propose to buy with the funds of the grant you are seeking. Include only those university facilities to be utilized in conjunction with the project being proposed. If appropriate, discuss handicapped access.

#### **8. Personnel**

Vitae and bibliographic information on the PI and other professionals is necessary in this section. (See Section 4.2 for a sample format.) Describe the number and academic level of any graduate and undergraduate assistants, as well as secretarial and clerical personnel who will work on the project. Frequently, a short description will be appropriate here with a full vitae included for all personnel in an appendix.

#### **9. Project Period**

Describe the entire length of the project from anticipated date of award through the final reporting period. Often the entire length of the project extends beyond the period for which initial funds are requested. Time lines, PERT charts, or other means of identifying time or utilities, are valuable in this section.

#### **10. Budget**

The budget must be a carefully considered, accurate cost statement, which is second in importance only to the central project idea. To assure conformity with university and sponsoring agency policies, the budget should be reviewed by the Business Office prior to final typing.

#### **11. Budget Explanation (Budget Narrative)**

Often the budget page is accompanied by additional sheets (budget narratives) explaining the distribution of salaries and wages, nature of fringe benefits, prices of equipment, categories of travel expenditures, major supply items, and computation of indirect costs. Both the Business Office and the OSP can provide assistance in the development and format of the budget and the budget narrative.

## **4.2 Sample Biographic Data Sheet**

(Not all items listed below are appropriate or necessary for all proposals; make judicious choices.)

Name:

Title in the Project: (eg. Associate Director)

Academic Rank:

Institutional Address:

Telephone Number:

Education:

Institution	Degree	Field	Date
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Teaching Experience:

Institution	Field	Date
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Previously Funded Projects:

Institution	Funding Agency	Project Period
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Publications Related to this Project:

Papers Presented:

Other Work Related to this Proposal:

Professional Affiliations:

Honors and Awards:

University Service:  
(as appropriate)

### **4.3 Deadlines**

It is the responsibility of the PI to know the deadlines for submission of the proposal and to allow adequate time for the institutional review process and for proposal preparation, printing, and mailing.

At least a week is normally required for the review process. The OSP will make every effort to expedite the local review process and can often help the PI obtain the necessary local approvals quickly. Time to review is essential to the completion of a competitive proposal.

## 4.4 Institutional Approval Policy

The institutional approval process is a necessary step which must be taken before mailing your proposal to the granting agency. *The Armstrong Atlantic State University Faculty Handbook*, Article III, Section A.1 refers.

### **Regulations, Article 3, SECTION A.1. Submission of Proposals for External Funding**

The policy for submission of proposals for external funding contained in the *Grants and Contracts Manual for Research and Sponsored Programs* exists to expedite, not to impede, proposal submission by guiding project directors through the application process. The approval process is designed to ensure that the individual grant-writer does not make commitments financial or otherwise, which cannot be honored by the university. All individuals who seek external funding must follow the procedures and policies contained in the *Grants and Contracts Manual for Research and Sponsored Programs*.

All externally funded grants and contracts must conform to the stated purposes of the institution. Because the university is committed to maintaining institutional control and a balance between grants/contracts and instruction, all grants/contracts must have institutional approval. (Revised 5/00)

Completion of a two-page form entitled "Approval to Submit Proposal for External Funding" is required by the university. Submit the completed form, a copy of the complete proposal and evidence of approval if F&A costs (indirects) are not being recouped, to the OSP no later than four working days before the proposal must be mailed. Signatures by your department head and college dean should be obtained before the proposal is sent to the OSP. These signatures show that your proposal is not at odds with university/college goals or departmental goals, that any university/college or departmental cost-sharing is approved and that you have not committed more than 100% of your time without an approved overload.

If the four-day deadline cannot be met, an essentially complete proposal, with all approval signatures from Sponsored Programs, the department head, and the dean, may be delivered to the Vice President and Dean of Faculty 48 hours prior to the mailing deadline. The dean of the college involved will guarantee that the final proposal will not differ in substance to the draft.

Once in the OSP, your proposal will be reviewed for compliance with various government regulations. Next, your proposal will be reviewed by both the Vice President and Dean of Faculty and the Vice President for Business and Finance. The signatures of these two senior administrators signifies that the university approves your proposal, and that it is not at odds with institutional goals. The people reviewing your proposal have knowledge of various laws and regulations governing public colleges. The approval procedure is designed to ensure that the individual grant-writer does not make commitments, financial or otherwise, which cannot be honored by the university.

Once all required signatures have been obtained, the OSP will notify you. The OSP is required to keep a copy of all grant proposals on file, as well as a copy of any award notification.

A copy of the full proposal, with all attachments and all approval signatures must be submitted to the OSP at least 24 hours before the mailing deadline if the OSP is to mail, and on the day of mailing if you are mailing the proposal yourself. **Under no circumstances should a proposal be mailed without first being approved.** Changes to the proposal after the approval process is complete will mean that the proposal will need to be rerouted. (Proposals which must be submitted electronically are due in their entirety at least one week before the deadline, otherwise the OSP cannot guarantee submission.)

The internal review process has been streamlined as much as possible. For instance, the approval form also serves to document your compliance, or lack thereof, with certain federal regulations, thus making a separate memo for each assurance unnecessary. Please remember that, with the exception of fellowships, every grant you receive as an employee of this university will be a grant to the university, not to you as an individual. The recipient of a grant may have certain intellectual property responsibilities to the university and should discuss those issues with the Vice President and Dean of Faculty.

Approved Council of Deans, 9/15/98, Draft Revision 2/03/03

## 4.5 Sponsor's Evaluation

Sponsors usually outline the criteria used to evaluate proposals. An applicant has a better probability of receiving an award if the agencies' criteria are considered in the preparation of a proposal. In most cases, the prospective sponsor considers:

- a) **Significance.** The project should focus on problems of major importance. The anticipated outcome of the project should produce communicable results of potential value to others. There should be a clear prospect of accomplishing the proposed project. The PI should either be concerned with the development of new knowledge applicable to the problem or testing previous assumptions or conclusions.
- b) **Design or Operational Plan.** The problem to be dealt with should be well defined. The purpose and value of the project, its plan of development, method of approach, expected outcome, and need for implementation should be clear. The proposal should reflect a familiarity with the historical background of the problem, an awareness of similar projects that have been previously undertaken, and an adequate knowledge of other related activities. The questions to be answered and hypotheses to be tested should be well formulated and clearly stated. The proposal should fully outline the procedure to be followed and include information on applicable points such as sampling techniques, controls, types of data to be gathered, and statistical analyses to be completed.
- c) **Personnel and Facilities.** The role of all professional personnel involved in the project should be clearly stated. The applicant should have facilities available which are adequate for carrying out the project. The PI should have a history of professional experience in the project area or a clearly demonstrated competence for conducting work in that area.
- d) **Economic Efficiency.** The proposal should be reasonable in terms of overall costs, with emphasis given to the favorable relationship between probable results and total expenditures. The period of time required for efficient production should be clearly stated and a general timetable provided. Any parallel requests for support from other agencies for the same project should be indicated. Many agencies require matching funds. The ratio of requested or matching (in-kind or otherwise) contributions must be addressed in the budget and budget narrative.
- e) **Evaluation Plan.** The plan to evaluate the degree to which the program is successful is an extremely important part of any proposal. Both public and private funders, are placing increasing emphasis on the evaluation component of the proposals they review. Procedures should be clearly stated and related to each stated activity goal.

## 4.6 Proposal Rejections

It is usually helpful to request a critique of any proposal not accepted for funding. Reviews provide valuable information for investigators and for Armstrong Atlantic State University in any subsequent proposals which the university might submit to the same agency. Please provide the OSP with a copy of any critique you receive. They will be filed with the original grant proposal for future reference.

Besides a sponsor's lack of funds for project support, the most common reasons for proposal rejections are:

- a) Guidelines were not followed.
- b) The project did not respond directly to the sponsor's priorities or mission.
- c) The research plan and objectives were not clear.
- d) The proposal contained poor methodology or research design.
- e) The applicant displayed a lack of knowledge or did previous work in the field which duplicates the proposal.
- f) The applicant's qualifications and experience were not sufficient or appropriate to the planned activity.
- g) The budget request was unreasonable in terms of the projected outcomes or proposed timetable.
- h) The project could not reasonably be completed in the time proposed.

## 4.7 Deciding to Resubmit

It is important to keep in mind that rejections are far more common than awards and are often not a reflection of a poor proposal or a bad project idea. Rejections are often simply the result of insufficient funds. It is important to consider resubmitting.

After analyzing reviewer's comments, the principal investigator needs to decide whether or not to resubmit. If your analysis leads to the decision that the idea is not significant or is too problematic, a fresh start may be warranted. However, if problems identified by reviewers and program officials are minimal, it is appropriate to prepare the proposal for resubmission.

As with the original proposal, the OSP is available to assist with the resubmission. In many cases, since the proposal has already been approved in its initial form, the institutional approval process will be faster.

Try requesting copies of winning proposals before rewriting your own. If you ask, many PI's from other institutions are willing to share copies of their winning proposals. These will give you valuable insight into what the agency will fund and help stimulate your new ideas.

If you decide to resubmit to another agency there are several points to remember:

- Submission requirements between agencies often vary widely, and a proposal written to conform to the standards of one agency may need major revision to fit the guidelines of another agency.
- The funds available from an alternate agency may differ from those offered by the original agency.
- Some revision to the overall plan of your project and its budget may be necessary in order to meet funding limits of a different agency.