Guide to Grant-seeking for Early Career Faculty

Three important groups to know about:

**Sponsored Programs**
This office provides administrative oversight for all University grant requests. Sponsored Programs must review and approve all BU proposals prior to submission. For all schools except the School of Medicine, the department administrator can facilitate this review process. (For BUSM, either Proposal Development or Foundation Relations assists with pre-award activities.) Final applications are requested for review five business days before the funder’s deadline. When funding is committed, Sponsored Programs must review, approve, and sign all grant agreements. This office also provides online and classroom training to support pre-award activities.

**Foundation Relations**
With eight team members across the Charles River and Medical Campuses, Foundation Relations advances relationships with private institutional funders that have the capacity to make six-figure gifts. Customizing assistance needed on a case-by-case basis, Foundation Relations staff work with faculty members, chairs, and deans to 1) identify well-aligned funders and funding opportunities, 2) introduce relevant initiatives to foundation leaders and follow up accordingly, and 3) assist faculty members in developing responsive, clear, compelling applications.

**Proposal Development**
This School of Medicine group assists BUSM faculty members in ensuring that their applications, mainly federal funding requests, are complete and approved for submission by Sponsored Programs. Proposal Development, a centralized pre-award service with expertise in interpreting funder guidelines, offers a wide range of administrative support, including budget creation, sub-award setup, and component checklist creation for task management. Proposal Development staff also lead several training programs for faculty designed to enhance grant success.
How are FR services different from what my Grant Administrator does? The unique function we perform is to help identify and approach new potential funders for your work. FR does not replace any function performed by a Grant Administrator. We add value to the process and work as a team to help PIs submit the highest quality, most responsive applications maximize competitiveness.

Several FR staff members have been in the field for a decade or more and have extensive experience connecting faculty member interests with foundation priorities. In addition, FR staff have strong writing and editing backgrounds, especially in terms of effectively communicating complex ideas to foundation officers, who range from laypeople to area experts.

I spoke with a foundation program officer at a recent conference who seemed interested in my work. What should I do? Great networking! Contact the Assistant Vice President of FR, Tristan Barako (tbarako@bu.edu), and he will refer you to the FR team member who works with your school or department. The FR team member will contact you to learn more and devise a plan for following up with the foundation.

A current or prospective foundation funder contacted me and wants to visit BU or has invited me to an event. Should I tell the FR team? Yes! We can provide background information on funders that want to learn more about your work. We can also help you host a site visit to highlight your work and BU’s strengths. Looping us in has the added benefit of taking the burden of meeting planning off your plate. We also strive to include University leadership when appropriate to maximize the opportunity.

Key steps to ensuring a smooth submission

✓ Allow at least a month to develop a thoughtful, well-articulated, complete, competitive proposal.

✓ Keep in mind that your proposal needs to clearly reflect the goals of the foundation to which you are applying.

✓ Alert your Sponsored Programs pre-award contact of your plans to submit well before the deadline.

✓ Carefully review guidelines and instructions before getting started, especially those regarding eligibility. If any questions arise as you are developing the proposal, one of the above groups can contact the funder for clarification.

✓ Request letters of support as early as possible; often references/signers will request draft letters.

✓ Seek budgeting assistance from your department administrator or any of the above groups assisting you with the application. If your budget entails a subcontract, additional forms will be needed.

✓ Know the funder’s policy regarding indirect costs and BU’s current fringe (employee benefits such as health insurance) and indirect cost (facilities and administration expenses) rates.

✓ Double-check that you have followed all instructions to the letter, responding fully to the application section prompts.

✓ Ask a mentor in your field to review your proposal narrative.

✓ Ask a skilled communicator to copyedit your proposal (Foundation Relations has extensive experience editing proposals).

✓ Submit your final proposal to Sponsored Programs at least five business days in advance of your deadline for their review and approval along with the complete required internal documents:
  • A Proposal Summary Form signed by the PI, department chair, and dean’s representative
  • The online Financial Conflict of Interest module, which can be initiated by whoever is assisting you on the proposal.

For more information on Foundation Relations and the grant-seeking process, visit bu.edu/foundations or contact Tristan Barako, Assistant VP of Foundation Relations, at tbarako@bu.edu or 617-358-2501.