

# Proposal Preparation

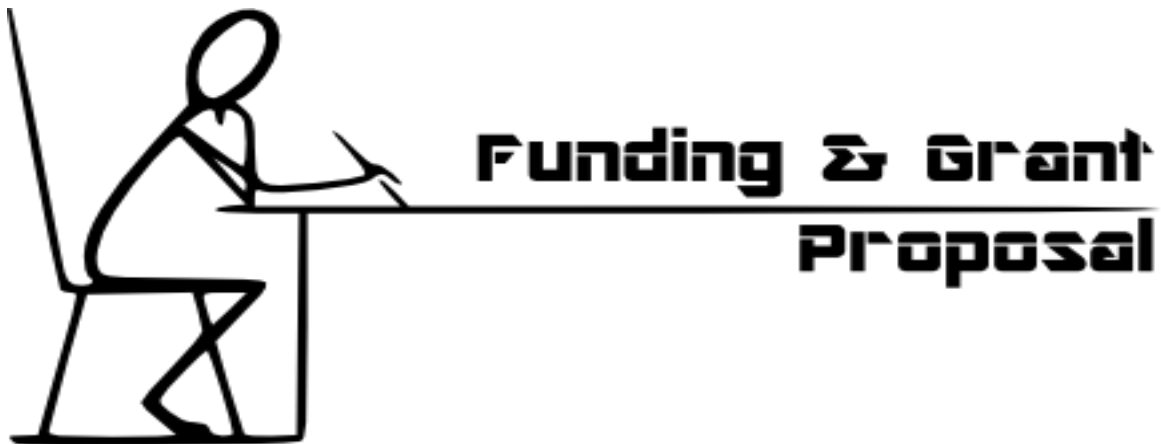
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## Introduction

Submitting proposals to secure outside funding is a core function of a school in a research university. The proposal requirements and submission process can be complicated and often change over time. BU Research Support is committed to supporting faculty research initiatives and helping all faculty and staff navigate these processes. This section is divided into eight sections, listed below, and discussed sequentially.

Eight elements that are key to a successful proposal submission

1. PI Project Plans and Checklists
2. Developing a Budget and Justification
3. CVs and Biosketches
4. Facilities and Other Resources
5. Multi-PI Plans
6. Subrecipient and Collaborator Agreements
7. Internal Proposal Submission
8. Special Permissions and Waivers



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## 1. PI Project Plans and Checklists

Timing is important. Proposals submitted without sufficient preparation and review are at high risk for failure. Electronic submissions have added last-minute challenges to the process including more stringent format requirements that may delay or prevent a proposal's submission through the electronic portal. It is recommended, particularly for new investigators, to start the writing process months in advance of any expected due date. Estimates of the total time devoted to producing a new application may range from two to three months or longer.

**NEED TO KNOW:** Are you the "Prime" applicant? Is this a "Sub-award" proposal? Is this a Fellowship or Scholar Application? What approvals are needed in advance?

To help you to plan, here is [BU's OSP Proposal Submission Policy](#) summarized below.

Five business days prior to sponsor deadline the following pieces are required

- A completed [Boston University Proposal Summary Form](#) signed by the investigator and appropriate administrators at the department, center, and college levels.
- A copy of the sponsor's proposal guidelines or program solicitation number.
- Sponsor forms/application package with all administrative information completed, biosketches (if applicable), all subaward documents (if applicable), facility/equipment pages (if applicable), project summary, and draft technical narrative.
- The final budget and budget justification in the format required by the sponsor. Note: in certain circumstances, OSP may ask for supporting budget documentation, if the sponsor's format is not consistent with institutional practice.

Three business days prior to sponsor deadline

- Final technical components: i.e. Final Narrative, Abstract, Bibliography, Specific Aims, Milestones, etc.

## Helpful Links *(coming soon)*

Helpful Tips When Preparing a Proposal

Checklist for BU as Prime Applicant

Checklist for BU as Subcontractor or Subrecipient

Checklist for Outside BU Subcontractors or Subrecipients on a BU Prime

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## 2. Developing a Budget and Justification

The proposal budget should accurately reflect the costs necessary to complete the project and it should reflect the methodology described within the proposal narrative. Reviewers should be able to determine whether sufficient funds are being requested to complete the project successfully and that those requests are reasonable given the scope of work.



Direct costs are those costs that can be directly assigned to a particular project, an instructional activity, or any other institutional activity with a high degree of accuracy. Typical costs charged directly to a sponsored project may include but are not limited to: compensation of employees working on the project; employee benefits; supplies and equipment used solely in the performance of the project; travel; subaward costs; service center charges; and human subject fees.

Facilities and Administrative costs (also called "indirect costs") are those costs that cannot be directly assigned to a particular project, an instructional activity, or any other institutional activity with a high degree of accuracy. Typical F&A costs include but are not limited to building utility costs, building and equipment depreciation, compensation of central administrative employees such as those working in Sponsored Programs or Human Resources, Department Administrators.

### [Use Current Institutional Numbers and Rates \(including Fringe Benefits and F&A Rates\)](#)

Sponsor guidelines will dictate budget restrictions by item or cost. Review the Funding Announcement for allowable costs and rates.

#### IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

- Modular Budgets NIH uses a modular budget format to request up to a total of \$250,000 of direct costs per year (in modules of \$25,000, excluding consortium F&A costs) for some applications, rather than requiring a full detailed budget.
- Cost Sharing is a financial commitment toward the total cost of a project from a source other than the granting organization. Cost sharing of expenses must be treated in a consistent and uniform manner when preparing proposals, requesting University approval, negotiating awards, transferring cost share funds, and financial reporting to Sponsors. It is important to determine when cost sharing is appropriate and how to accurately record and report cost share expenses. Cost sharing must only be included when required by the Sponsor.
- Consultants are provided only for tasks where on-campus technical expertise does not exist or is not readily available. Consultants are generally not considered to be employees of the University and should be accounted for separately in the budget. Some sponsors limit the rate at which consultants can be paid. Generally, consultants are paid a fee, plus travel and other expenses. Some sponsors do not permit payments to consultants, and some restrict or limit such payments. If in doubt as to the allowability of or rates paid to consultants, check the sponsor's program literature or contact Sponsored Programs. Conflict of interest and nepotism issues sometimes arise in the hiring of consultants.

- Outgoing Subcontracts/Subawards are agreements by which some scientific or programmatic aspects of a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement made to BU are contracted out to another organization. The sub-recipient is expected to work with great autonomy and take full responsibility for its portion of the work. However, the BU PI/PD still bears the ultimate responsibility for the programmatic progress and financial oversight of the award. This level of independence and participation in the development and execution of the project distinguishes a sub-recipient from the provider of a purchased service (vendor). The primary proposal submitted to the sponsor must include evidence of commitment from the subcontractor, if the sub-recipient has been identified, as well as a statement of work and proposed budget. Sponsored Programs will require evidence of the agreement of the sub-recipient institution before approving a proposal submission.
- A Budget Narrative or Budget Justification serves two purposes; it explains how the costs were estimated and explains the need for the cost. The level of detail required is determined by the Sponsor.

## PROPOSAL BUDGET REMINDER

Review your budget to make sure that all costs are allowable, accurately calculated, and properly presented on sponsor forms. Confirm that:

- Salaries are based upon current actual salaries for Boston University employees, sponsor salary caps, or standard BU rates
- You have correctly applied current fringe benefit and F&A (indirect) cost rates
- Budget justification notes are consistent with the budget and provide a level of detail required by sponsor
- Annual increases have been estimated at reasonable rates

## Helpful Links

[BU Policy on Direct Costs](#)

[How to Write an NIH Modular Budget Justification](#)

[Policies and Procedures for Administration and Monitoring of Subrecipient Agreements Issued to Third Parties](#)

**TIP:** Explain why each of the items in the budget are needed to accomplish the proposal research and provide additional details about significant items summarized on the budget page.

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## 3. CVs and Biosketches

Sponsors will require a Curriculum Vitae (CV) or Biographical Sketch for Principal Investigators and Key Personnel. These documents include all background information including funding and publications. Most sponsors accept the NIH Biosketch format. As NIH routinely updates their biosketch format and form, it is important to double-check for the most current version.



## Helpful Links

[NIH Advice on Creating Your Biosketch](#)  
[This current NIH Biosketch Format is approved for use through October 31, 2018.](#)

**TIP:** The recent tool [SciENCv](#) (Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae) developed by NIH will help users convert biosketches from the former NIH format to the latest.

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## 4. Facilities and Other Resources

The information provided in this section of a grant proposal allows the applicant to expound upon factors and features available to ensure the success of the project. These include the variety of resources designed to help faculty, researchers, and staff perform their jobs with the highest degree of success. This narrative will assess the capability of the organizational resources available to perform the effort proposed.

Describe how the scientific environment in which the research will be done contributes to the probability of success (e.g., institutional support, physical resources, and intellectual rapport). In describing the scientific environment, discuss ways in which the proposed studies will benefit from unique features of the environment or from unique subject populations or how studies will employ useful collaborative arrangements. If there are multiple performance sites, describe the resources available at each site.



### Helpful Links *(coming soon)*

Example of Facilities and Other Resources Section  
For early stage investigators (ESIs), describe institutional investment in the success of the investigator. See [NIH's New and Early Stage Investigator Policies](#).

**TIP:** A narrative of your environment should include a description of your team, your supportive network, your intellectual community as well as equipment and availability of resources.

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## 5. Multi-PI Plans

NIH's multiple-PD/PI model supplements, and does not replace, the traditional single-PD/PI model. However, increasingly, health-related research involves teams that vary in terms of size, hierarchy, location of participants, goals, disciplines, and structure.

The selection of the multiple-PD/PI versus single-PD/PI option is the decision of the applicant institution and investigators based on the needs of the research proposed. Although the number of applications submitted using the multiple-PD/PI model is relatively small compared with those within the traditional single-PD/PI format, the impact of the research supported through multidisciplinary efforts can be significant.



The multiple-PD/PI option extends to most research grant applications. If the multiple-PD/PI model is not allowed, the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) will state, "Multiple Principal Investigators are not permitted."

What is required

- Rationale and justification for choosing the multiple PI approach
- Governance and organizational structure of the team
- Procedures for resolving conflicts
- Process for making decisions on scientific direction and allocating resources and funds

## Helpful Links

[Example of Multi-PI Leadership Plans](#)  
[Science Magazine on Navigating Collaborative Grant Research](#)

**TIP:** The possibility of conflict between PIs must be addressed in a multi-PI plan. Reviewers like to see a carefully considered conflict resolution plan, which preferably includes the involvement of well-respected people outside of the project to mediate disputes if the PIs are unable to resolve the issues by themselves.

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## 6. Subrecipient and Collaborator Agreements

A subaward is financial or other support from a prime awardee issued to a qualified organization for the performance of a significant portion of the research program.

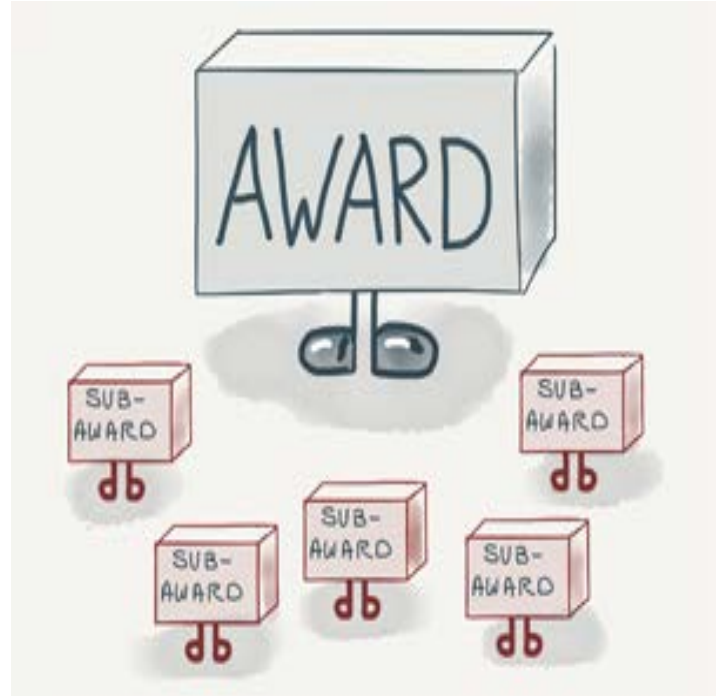
Once a subaward agreement has been executed, the subawardee invoices Boston University on a monthly basis. The subrecipient agreement indicates that all invoices are sent to PAFO via email where the invoices are re-directed to the appropriate Principal Investigator for review and approval. Each invoice must be reviewed by the PI to ensure that adequate technical progress has been made to support the charges listed. Any issues with the invoice should be brought to the attention of both the department administrator and the PAFO Research Administrator. Is responsible for the subrecipient agreement for resolution.

Complete documentation for each proposed subaward will include

- Letter of intent to subcontract signed by institutional official of subcontract site
- Scope of work
- Budget/budget justification
- Biosketches for key personnel (if applicable)
- Subrecipient's most recent negotiated rate agreement (if applicable)
- Facilities/resources pages (if applicable)
- IRB and IACUC approvals (if applicable)
- Any other documents required by prime sponsor

### Helpful Links *(coming soon)*

Checklist for Subaward Proposals (BU is Subawardee)  
Checklist for Subaward Proposals (BU is Prime)



**TIP:** Attach appropriate letters from all consultants and collaborators confirming their roles in the project. For consultants, letters should include rate/charge for consulting services.



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## 7. Internal Proposal Submission

Internal approval process links

[Registration for Federal Agencies](#) (through BU OSP)

[Policy on BU PI Status](#)

PI Status is required for an investigator whose Boston University appointment does not automatically confer that status.

[Proposal Summary Form \(PSF\)](#)



**TIP:** Allow sufficient time to put the completed application aside, and then read it from a fresh vantage point yourself. Also, try proofreading by reading the application aloud.

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## 8. Special Permissions and Waivers

Facilities and Administrative Costs (or Indirect Costs) are a critical component of our research resources as they support the operation, maintenance and administration of our research infrastructure. On rare occasions, a reduction in or waiver of F&A may be requested and approved.

**F&A Policy:** It is the policy of Boston University to apply the University's full relevant F&A rate to all externally sponsored projects.

The University will accept a lower F&A rate whenever there is an established written policy of the sponsor that limits the allowable indirect costs. In those cases, Boston University will charge the maximum allowed rate, which is published in the sponsor's funding program information. Examples include private not-for-profit foundations, and certain federal grants (training grants, etc.).

**Cost Sharing Requests** (also referred to as "in-kind contribution" or "matching funds") must be approved in advance; this information (including the calculation of the financial commitment) is reflected on the Boston University Proposal Form, and must include Dean approval.

**Cost Sharing Policy:** Cost sharing is a financial commitment by the University toward the total cost of a project from a source other than the granting organization. Cost sharing of expenses must be treated in a consistent and uniform manner when preparing proposals, requesting University approval, negotiating awards, transferring cost share funds, and financial reporting to Sponsors.

Please contact SPH or OSP early in the process if the application you are submitting may require additional approvals or materials such as

- Institutional Commitment Statement
- Letters of Institutional Support
- Limited Submission
- Certificates of Confidentiality
- Other permissions, materials, or letters

**TIP:** Prior to submission, look over the entire grant application one final time. Remember, you want a convincing proposal that is presented according to the application guidelines, punctuation error-free, clear to read, and is to the point!

## Helpful Links

[BU Guidelines on F&A Reductions or Waivers](#)

[BU Treatment of Cost Sharing for Sponsored Awards](#)