

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

Sponsored Programs Office

Division or Department: Business Affairs

Prepared by: Carla Howell, Alysia Jones
and Terra Raupp

Date: June 30, 2023

Approved by: Mr. Patrick Jones

Date: June 30, 2023

Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

Sponsored Programs Office Mission. The mission of Northwestern State University's Sponsored Programs Office (SPO) is to nurture and grow the sponsored-programs enterprise at NSU in accordance with the University's overall mission. SPO offers faculty assistance in: (a) identifying funding opportunities; (b) developing grant applications for submission to external funding agencies; and (c) implementing funded projects. SPO will work with faculty to encourage the inclusion of undergraduate and graduate students in their sponsored projects and activities.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (direct & indirect and quantitative & qualitative) are collected and returned to the director and stored by the director in secure digital format.
- (2) The director and support staff will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met.
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff and reported to the Chief Financial Officer of Business Affairs.
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required to address identified concerns.
- (5) The director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine proposed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

Service Outcomes

SO1. SPO ensures a collaborative partnership with faculty and administration to increase the number of proposals submitted to external agencies. SPO will accommodate 100% of faculty requests for assistance and use funding search databases (Grants.gov, Grants Resource Center, program websites, etc.) to increase the number of proposals submitted. Monitored via Office calendar and/or email.

Measure 1.1. SPO complies with the university growth expectations of a 10% increase in proposal submission to external agencies, determined at fiscal year-end.

Finding: Target was met.

Number of Submitted Proposals		
Fiscal Year	Target	Actual
2019-2020	50	55
2020-2021	55	61
2021-2022	60	50
2022-2023	60	64
2023-2024	66	

Analysis.

In 2021-2022, the target of 60 proposal submissions during the fiscal year was not met. In 2022-2023, SPO allied with a Grant Coordinator from each the College of Education, College of Business and Technology, and College of Arts and Sciences to drive the cycle of improvement. At the end of the fiscal year, a final determination rendered the collaboration between SPO staff and the Grants Coordinators a success because it effectively served as an outreach initiative within departments as a (1) strategic dissemination of funding opportunities and (2) reinforcement of grant writing support from the designated Grant Coordinator and the Sponsored Programs Office.

These actions increased awareness of the responsiveness faculty members have from the Grants Coordinators located within their academic area. Although SPO has the necessary tools and resources to educate faculty/staff on proposal preparations and grant writing skills, we lack the interdepartmental insight to identify those individuals most likely to engage in applying for and managing external funding.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, the SPO staff made the following changes to drive the cycle of improvement. As funding opportunities arose, SPO solicited funding announcements to Grants Coordinators as well as the Deans and Department Heads before sending the announcement for global distribution on the university's Messenger platform. SPO has received a better response rate when sending targeted announcements to departments versus sending multiple opportunities that may or may not suit their departmental needs. SPO actively disseminated funding opportunities through Messenger announcements and targeted email correspondence.

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

During the fiscal year, the Director of the formerly referenced Office of Sponsored Programs assumed the role of the Director of Purchasing and Sponsored Programs Administration. This transition resulted in not only converting the office name to the Sponsored Programs Office but also realigned the office’s purview from Economic Development, Innovation and Outreach to the Office of Business Affairs. The organizational shift enabled personnel in both the pre-award and post-award facets of the grant life cycle to be housed in one centralized location, St. Denis Hall. The union of SPO and Accounting and Reporting has increased awareness of the policies and procedures for each department and has created a unified approach to process proposal and award documents effectively and efficiently.

The Director simultaneously served as the University of Louisiana Systems Research and Grant Content Expert until the completion of her term on December 31, 2022. This role stimulated system-wide discussions on various topics related to the pre-award process and resulted in informative webinar sessions that highlighted the multiple facets of the pre-award stage of the grant life cycle and strategies to increase the competitiveness of proposal submissions.

Decision.

In 2022-2023, the target was met. To further assist faculty and staff with their grant writing inquiries, SPO will work towards adding a Frequently-Asked-Questions (FAQs) sections as a supplemental resource to their existing website. SPO will work with the Grant Coordinators to determine commonly asked questions and concerns so that they can be addressed accordingly in a readily accessible location. These actions will remain in place as there have been reports of faculty appreciation for the addition of a liaison between SPO and the respective departments. A discussion will be held at the end of June 2024 to determine the overall effectiveness of this additional reference tool and the Grants Coordinator collaboration. SPO will push the cycle of improvement forward as the Director and Associate Director expand upon their working knowledge of sponsored initiatives and utilize best practices to better serve our faculty. To comply with university’s growth expectation of a 10% increase, the 2023-2024 target goal will be 66 proposal submissions.

SO2. SPO ensures an increase in external dollars received from submitted proposals by faculty, staff, and administration.

Measure 2.1. SPO complies with a target goal of 15% increase of external dollars received at fiscal year-end.

Finding: Target has been met for fiscal year 2022-2023.

External Grant Funding Totals		
Fiscal Year	Target	Received
2019-2020	\$5.6m	\$5.6m
2020-2021	\$6.4m	\$8.9m
2021-2022	\$7.4m	\$2.4m
2022-2023	\$2.8m	\$8.5m
2023-2024	\$7.3m	

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

Analysis.

In 2021-2022, the target was not met. For 2022-2023, SPO (1) provided support to Grant Coordinators with periodically scheduled meetings and/or email correspondence for a needs assessment, and (2) solicited training and informative sessions as opportunities arose. These actions improved the faculty's accessibility to valuable resources and contributed to the growth in external funding.

NSU and the NSU Foundation collaborated efforts to optimize its chances of securing external funding by acquiring the services of a federal government relations agency, Merchant & McIntyre Associates, LLC. This agency promotes a strong Return on Investment of federal support through competitive and discretionary grant funding, congressionally directed spending or earmarks, federal appropriations and authorizations, legislative strategy, implementation, and monitoring, advocacy/issue monitoring and management, and serving as federal staff in Washington. Following Merchant & McIntyre's recommendation, the university submitted a proposal submission for the Title III – Strengthening Institutions program which helps eligible Institutions of Higher Education become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability of eligible institutions. SPO was involved in the preliminary stages when a Resource Inventory was discussed to determine a needs assessment for the university and continued to be involved throughout the grant writing process and implemented the submission of the project.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, SPO staff utilized the crucial Grants Coordinators roles as a support mechanism to link academic departments with the available services of SPO. The Research and Grants Content Expert role was also used as a promotional tool for soliciting funding opportunity announcements, for communicating and for encouraging system-wide initiatives to reach the goal of a 15% increase in external dollars received by the end of the fiscal year.

Decision.

In 2022-2023, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, SPO will (1) provide support to Grant Coordinators with periodically scheduled meetings for a needs assessment, and (2) solicit training and informative sessions as opportunities arise.

SPO will utilize the Grants Coordinators for supplemental support and for outreach initiatives. Also, SPO will actively participate in individualized communications and formalized sessions provided by the newly appointed Research and Grants Content Expert role to remain current on sponsored programs policies, procedures, and initiatives. It is uncertain whether the obtainment of the consultant agency's services will continue, but SPO will work in combination with administration, faculty, staff, and consultants to reach the goal of a 15% increase in external dollars received by the end of the fiscal year.

Measure 2.2. SPO enforces a 100% internal deadline date requirement on its internal routing form, managed by Office calendar and deadline reminders, thus providing timely review and feedback for quality assurance of proposals with 10 support meetings each fiscal year.

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

Finding: Target was met.

Proposal Meetings	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1 st Quarter	5	3	4	8
2 nd Quarter	4	4	2	4
3 rd Quarter	2	7	2	3
4 th Quarter	1	4	1	6

Analysis.

In 2021-2022, the target was met. To drive the cycle of improvement, S elected to permanently provide its internal routing forms in a fillable and digital format to secure electronic signatures in 2022-2023. Enforcing the use of this format has lessened the response time required to obtain administrative signatures, improved response time for corrective actions, and effectively secured copies of all necessary documentation required for administrative approvals.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, SPO strived to increase proposal opportunity meetings to 10, to instruct faculty staff on the importance of SPO forms and to notify faculty of the revised format of the internal routing form. As a result of these changes, in 2022-2023, the target was met.

Decision.

In 2022-2023, the target goal of providing 10 proposal opportunity meetings was met. Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, SPO will increase the proposal opportunity meeting goal to 12 and promote the sole use of the electronic version of the SPO routing form to efficiently monitor sponsored programs activities. SPO will adhere to its committal to have 100% of internal deadlines met as well as those established by external funding agencies to continue to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SO3. SPO promotes collaboration and disseminates opportunities among departments for institutional-wide projects and proposals.

Measure 3.1. SPO will monitor attendance and participation of collaborative focus groups supporting institutional-wide projects and/or proposals for a minimum of 4 opportunities annually.

Finding: Target was met.

Collaboration Sessions	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1 st Quarter	2	2	0	3
2 nd Quarter	0	2	0	2
3 rd Quarter	0	3	3	1
4 th Quarter	2	0	2	2

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

Analysis.

In 2021-2022, the target was met as opportunities for collaboration developed. SPO staff maintain encouragement of interconnectedness among campus entities through collaborative focus groups in 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement.

This action improved the faculty’s ability to receive numerous benefits from grant writing projects and initiatives. Beyond the financial incentive, collaborative efforts provided opportunities for professional development and created a clearer vision of the mission and goals of individual departments as well as the university.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, OSP staff made all efforts to advise Deans/Department Heads, Grant Coordinators, and faculty by email of any collaborative opportunity notices.

The partnership with the grant writing consultants deemed advantageous as the consultants regularly meet with Congressional staff and federal program officers to remain current on funding priorities which decreases the burden on faculty and staff. This strategy aligns with SPO’s promotion of identifying a shared need and matching it with a prospective funding source to create a system-wide competitive proposal to secure increased external funding. As a result of these changes, in 2022-2023, the target was met.

Decision.

In 2022-2023, the target was met as combined efforts of university personnel and the external consultants led to a successful obtainment of Congressional Earmark Initiatives that increased the external dollars received. Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, SPO staff will keep these efforts in motion and work towards pushing the cycle of improvement forward.

Measure 3.2. SPO will achieve a target goal of a 30% return rate with 80% of participants at 100% Satisfaction or better. Survey is administered at the end of Spring semester. Appendix A

Finding: Target was not met.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Quality of OSP	*survey not submitted	*survey not submitted	*ineffective response return	
Response Time to Questions	N/A	N/A	N/A	52% Strongly Agree
Satisfied Responses		N/A	N/A	N/A
Increased Skills/Knowledge		N/A	N/A	52% Increased
Quality of Information	25% Excellent	N/A	N/A	52% Excellent
Overall Quality	33% Excellent	N/A	N/A	48% Excellent

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

Analysis.

In 2021-2022, the target was not met as a year-end survey was distributed but resulted in an ineffective return rate. In 2022-23, SPO staff addressed the low return rate by harnessing the influence of Academic Deans and Department Heads to emphasize the need for their participation. Receiving a request from a direct supervisor generally raises awareness and carries a greater impact. SPO additionally urged Deans and Department Heads to reiterate that this was an opportune time for faculty and staff to anonymously voice their concerns and to afford the Sponsored Programs Office a greater understanding of their needs as grant writers and representatives of the university. A copy of the revised survey is referenced in Appendix A.

Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, OSP will: (1) utilize the revised Evaluation Survey another year to evaluate its effectiveness, (2) assess the calculation of a targeted response rate, and (3) increase the distribution of surveys as opportunities become available.

SPO actively disseminated funding opportunities from external sponsoring agencies and promoted available services through Messenger announcements and targeted email correspondences. Largely in part due to the organizational transition, there were more individual and smaller group web-based sessions administered than broad topic sessions solicited university wide resulting in fewer opportunities to solicit surveys to a large, targeted audience. With supportive efforts from Department Heads and Deans, the evaluation survey disseminated in mid-April generated an increased number of participants and provided SPO with beneficial feedback. As a result of these changes, SPO will seek assistance from administration to increase survey participation to continue to push the cycle of improvement forward. Results of the survey are referenced in Appendix B.

Decision.

In 2022-2023, the rating scale for the quality of SPO services was revised to provide a choice of Poor, Satisfactory, Good or Excellent. A 47% Excellent rate was reported for the value of services provided with 26% reporting Good. A 52% Excellent rate was reported for the quality of information provided by SPO with 26% reporting Satisfactory. This is only partial reporting and a fully copy of the survey results are provided in Appendix B. Since the survey was disseminated to all faculty/staff through Messenger and later distributed by Deans and Department Heads, it was undetermined how many faculty and staff received the survey to calculate a response rate considering only 23 responses were collected. Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, SPO will (1) drive engagement by incorporating Dean and Department influence to increase survey participation, (2) distribute an Evaluation survey following SPO sponsored workshops/webinars and in mid-April, and (3) recalculate the method of determining a target goal and response rates. By monitoring feedback from future trainings and question-and-answer sessions throughout the fiscal year, OSP will thereby continue to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

SO4. OSP will ensure opportunities for quality professional development for faculty and staff.

Measure 4.1. OSP will comply with a minimum of 15 professional development opportunities for faculty annually.

Finding: Target was not met.

PD Workshops/Webinars	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1 st Quarter	6	4	3	6
2 nd Quarter	0	3	8	1
3 rd Quarter	0	2	5	0
4 th Quarter	1	1	10	3

Analysis.

In 2021-2022, the target was exceeded due largely to the transitioning to virtual based training and informational sessions. In 2022-2023, SPO expected that trend would continue and anticipated that raising the minimum offerings of professional development for faculty and staff would be reasonably achieved. The combination of fewer applicable professional development opportunities being available from external sources and SPO's transition to the Business Affairs division resulted in a missed target goal.

The Director's role as the ULS Grants Content Expert led SPO staff to encourage faculty and staff to participate in the Bridging the Divide Summer Series of virtual workshops and to review the recording if they were unable to actively participate at the following link: <https://www.ulsystem.edu/content-experts/research-grants-expert-2022/>. Although this role has been relinquished, it remains a valuable professional development resource as sessions are geared towards mental health, online teaching and learning, financial literacy, research and grant writing, and open educational resources at the following link: <https://www.ulsystem.edu/content-experts/>.

Additionally, SPO frequently advises faculty and staff to navigate external funding sources websites to view webinars and trainings to familiarize themselves with the agency's resources and to identify if their project aligns with the mission of the agency. Although guided by SPO, those individual professional development opportunities are incapable of being tracked. As a result of the overprojection in 2022-23, the target was not met.

Decision.

In 2022-2023, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, SPO staff will decrease the target goal to 12 for the next fiscal year. SPO will continue to communicate professional opportunities with faculty as they arise, increase university-hosted sessions, and encourage participation with timely notifications and reminders.

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

Measure 4.2. SPO staff will participate in a minimum of 9 professional development sessions to advance their professional knowledge base.

Finding: Target was met.

Professional Development for SPO	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1 st Quarter	5	15	4	2
2 nd Quarter	2	11	3	5
3 rd Quarter	4	13	5	2
4 th Quarter	2	4	6	11

Analysis.

In 2021-2022, the target was met by SPO participating in job specific trainings from well-established funding sources as well as recently discovered funding agencies. Following last year's surge in the presentation of professional development sessions through virtual platforms, SPO's staff met the target goal and increased their knowledgebase and ongoing learning practices. Changes to online submission databases occur regularly, so it is imperative to attend training sessions to stay abreast of the requirements and regulations of federal, state, and private agencies. SPO searched for further professional development opportunities as they became available in 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement forward.

SPO participated in the 2023 Grants Resource Center (GRC) Virtual Funding Summit held in April 2023 which addressed the latest on funding opportunities and policy updates. SPO was able to attend the following nine sessions:

- "Update on GLS Campus Suicide Prevention Program,"
- "USDA Rural Development,"
- "Postsecondary Education Grants Policies at ED,"
- "NEH Preservation and Access,"
- "ED's Institutional Service Programs,"
- "Social Science Research with the Russell Sage Foundation,"
- "Update on HRSA Nursing Programs,"
- "Member-Led Session: Building a Sponsored Programs Office at a PUI," and
- "Member-Led Session: Proposal Development Triumphs and Tragedies."

As a result of these changes in 2022-2023, the target of SPO staff participating in a minimum of 9 professional development endeavors was met. These changes had a significant impact on SPO's ability to meet the needs of faculty and to abide by the sponsoring agency's guidelines.

Decision.

In 2022-2023, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, SPO will increase the minimum of participating in professional development endeavors to 15. As a centralized service office, SPO must remain current with modifications in grant administration systems and program regulations. SPO will

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

attend professional development sessions as availabilities are announced thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results. The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2022-2023. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results.

Increase in Grant Proposals

- Effectiveness of Grant Coordinators partnership increased awareness of pre-award processes and grant writing productiveness. There was a total of 64 proposal submissions

Increase External Dollars

- Shared training and informational sessions as they became available
- Performed periodic consultations with Grants Coordinators for needs assessment and disseminated targeted funding information to optimize faculty engagement in grant opportunities
- Collaborated with external grants consultant agency and NSU Foundation and select NSU faculty members on projects focused on optimizing funding on federal and congressionally directed spending levels
- Utilized the Research and Grants Content Expert Role as a catalyst to increase external funding through system-wide initiatives

Promotes Collaboration and Disseminate Opportunities

- Successfully maintained interconnectedness among campus entities through collaborative focus groups to drive the cycle of improvement creating opportunities for professional development and clearer vision of the mission and goals of individual departments as well as the university
- Survey success was not achieved. SPO
 - (1) disseminated an Evaluation Survey in mid-April to faculty/staff
 - (2) requested assistance from academic leaders in response to the low participation rate of previous years
 - (3) increase distribution of surveys as opportunities become available

Quality Professional Development

- 10 Professional Development opportunities were offered
- Recorded presentations from ULS Bridge the Divide Summer Series could be viewed at later times as a convenience to the participants
- Virtual offerings for staff professional development encouraged more participation. 20 total Professional Development sessions attended by SPO staff

Plan of action moving forward

Increase in Grant Proposals

Move forward with the collaboration with Grants Coordinators to push productiveness in grant submissions. This interdepartmental outreach encourages grant writing within departments and strengthens proposal preparation and submission.

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

- (1) upload a document to the SPO website that provides commonly used terms, stages of the grant life cycle, and flowchart of the routing form process to increase awareness of the proposal preparation process
- (2) consult with Grant Coordinators to ensure that commonly asked questions and concerns are included in a newly created Frequently-Asked-Questions document

Increase External Dollars

To improve faculty's knowledge of available internal and external resources thus increasing the number of competitive proposals needed to secure financial support.

- (1) provide support to Grant Coordinators with periodically scheduled meetings for a needs assessment
- (2) solicit training and informative sessions as opportunities arise
- (3) work closely with the hired external grant consultants to secure external funding
- (3) increase proposal opportunity meeting goal to 12

Promotes Collaboration and Disseminate Opportunities

Push forward with another year of monitoring the success of these goals:

To improve the faculty's ability to receive numerous benefits from grant writing projects and initiatives.

- (1) persist on encouraging interconnectedness among campus entities through collaborative focus groups
- (2) promote participation in the ULS Bridge the Divide Summer Series to foster connections with other universities within the UL system that could lead to collaborative efforts

To measure participants feedback throughout the fiscal year.

- (1) increase the distribution of surveys as opportunities become available
- (2) create a realistic means of measuring an effective response rate since it's challenging to determine how many faculty are in receipt of the surveys sent through Messenger announcements

Distribution of Survey

- (1) distribute surveys and process responses following an SPO hosted webinar or workshop
- (2) seek annual assistance from academic supervisors to encourage faculty participation in surveys to analyze the quality of SPO services and to identify areas needing improvement
- (3) push forward with another year of using the Evaluation survey to monitor its effectiveness

Quality Professional Development

To improve the faculty's competency in their fields.

- (1) increase faculty and staff professional development offerings to 12
- (2) increase SPO professional development sessions to 15