

Northwestern State University of Louisiana

SPONSORED PROGRAMS OFFICE

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS

Sponsored Programs refers to grants, contracts, Memorandums of Understandings with financial obligations, and/or cooperative agreements. Sponsored programs have characteristics that distinguish them from gifts or donations such as: statements of work, detailed financial accountability, and specified deliverables. These agreements are enforceable by law, tracked and auditable, and require performance completion within a specified period.

PURPOSE

The university supports scholarly activities of faculty and staff but must rely on outside sources for funding of those initiatives. Faculty and staff are highly encouraged to seek external funding by submitting applications and/or proposals identifying a need and requesting support to execute research and special projects. The Sponsored Programs Office (SPO) assists faculty and staff throughout the duration of the pre-award and award phases of the grant lifecycle.

Grant Lifecycle Phases	
Pre-Award	Funding Search/Funding Opportunity Announcement Verify Eligibility/Registration Requirements Application Preparation/Obtain University Approvals Submission to Funding Agency
Award	Award Decisions/Notifications Contract Negotiations/Execution
Post-Award	Implementation of the Project Reporting and Closeout

FORMS

Notice of Intent refers to a non-binding, internal form that should be submitted electronically to SPO as soon as a faculty member decides to develop a proposal. SPO will use collected information from this form to ensure the applicant's proposal meets eligibility requirements, is responsive to the agency's guidelines, and meets the agency's deadline. Additionally, it serves as an indicator for the reservation of time and services of SPO and other university offices required to review the proposal.

Routing Form - refers to the **required** internal form used to secure all administrative approvals before an application or proposal is submitted to an external agency. This two-page form is intended to accompany all required proposal materials including, but not limited to, the project narrative, budget, budget justification, and cost-sharing contributions. This form gives internal reviewers relevant information about the investigators, the proposed project, required resources, and the funding agency. **This is an internal document and will not be submitted to funding agencies or collaborators.**

OVERVIEW OF SERVICES

The Sponsored Programs Office is a professional service office that reports to the Executive Vice President and Provost. Activities of SPO are designed to assist investigators and to facilitate the overall grant process, while balancing the need for institutional and sponsor regulatory compliance. This office serves as a starting point for investigators as they begin writing and preparing a grant proposal as assistance is provided in, but not limited to, the following areas:

Funding Opportunity Information

- SPO distributes information about external funding opportunities electronically via email and Messenger announcements.

- NSU provides access to multiple resources to support faculty in their grant writing and research activities including [InfoEd SPIN](#), [Grants Resource Center](#), and [Grants.gov](#).

Proposal Development, Review, Approval, and Submission

- SPO staff assists with proposal preparation, including but not limited to, budget development, preparation of forms, editing, review (i.e., comparison with funding agency guidelines and requirements, compliance with university policies and procedures, and State and Federal regulations.)
- SPO serves as an agency liaison during the pre-award stage.
- SPO obtains necessary institutional approvals for proposals which includes cost sharing/match. In all cases, whether the cost-sharing commitments are mandated by the funding agency or are volunteered by the institution, NSU has the obligation to monitor and account for all its cost-share commitments as described in the text of a proposal or included in the project budget. **All cost share/match requests will be reviewed and approved as part of the internal proposal review process before the university will agree to commit funds or other resources as cost sharing/match.**
- SPO manages the electronic or print submission of applications.

Award Notification, Contract Negotiation, and Execution of Awards

- SPO maintains a database of all restricted grants with reporting requirements and works closely with the Accounting and Reporting Department in Business Affairs.
- Funding decisions from sponsoring agencies should be provided to SPO for accurate recordkeeping.
- **Award documents** (i.e., Memorandum of Understanding, Cooperative Agreement or Endeavor, Contract, Amendment) **must be presented to SPO for review and approval before an authorizing official signature is obtained.**
- SPO processes award documents to fulfill internal requirements and corresponds with the external funding agency to achieve a fully executed award. The Principal Investigator and the Accounting and Reporting Department are provided with copies of the fully executed award to begin the post-award phase of the grant life cycle.

Education and Training

- SPO provides web based or personal instruction on its available services, proposal preparation, internal approval processes, and locating funding opportunities.
- SPO disseminates federal, state, and private agency program announcements of online training and professional development as they become available.
- SPO distributes professional development training session opportunities hosted by other universities and funding agencies as they become available.

GLOSSARY OF GRANT RELATED TERMS

Authorizing Official Representative (AOR)/Signature of Authority - refers to the individual(s) authorized to enter into an agreement or act on behalf of the university. **Currently, NSU's President is the only person with signature authority to execute a contractual agreement on behalf of the university.**

Cost-Sharing/Matching Funds - refers to when an applicant contributes resources to a sponsored project beyond the amount funded by the sponsor. Matching funds are generally identified by the following three categories:

- **In-Kind Contribution** – the use of existing personnel, equipment, or facilities, which will not require additional expenditure, but will require allocation and approval of the budget unit head responsible for the personnel, equipment, or facility.

- **Cash/Budgeted Cash Match** – an actual expenditure for which there is an existing budget (restricted or non-restricted) and which requires allocation and approval of the budget unit head for that account.
- **Un-budgeted Cash Match** – an actual expenditure that will require allocation of new funds or re-allocation of existing funds, and which requires the approval of the President.

Direct Costs - refers to costs that can be specifically and easily identified with a particular project or activity and are allowable under the sponsoring agency’s guidelines.

Indirect Costs - refers to costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives and cannot be easily and specifically identified with a particular project. These are often called overhead expenses or Facilities and Administrative Costs (e.g., building usage, general administration, equipment usage.)

Principal Investigator (PI) - refers to the NSU faculty or staff member designated by the university and recognized by the funding agency as the person directly responsible for the project or programs supported by the award.

Proposal - refers to an application for funding that describes the project, capabilities, and associated costs.

Request for Proposals (RFP)/Notice of Funding Opportunity - refers to the funding agency’s publication or solicitation of its detailed program guidelines on funding available for specific projects or goals. Information includes, but is not limited to, the funder’s purpose, eligibility requirements, maximum amount of funding available, proposal formatting, project start and end dates, and submission guidelines.

Restricted Account - refers to resources or funding available that are limited by the granting agency for specific purposes of the project and are subject to accounting and reporting in accordance with state procurement regulations.

PRE-AWARD/AWARD FLOW CHART

