

Proposal Submission: Avoiding Common Pitfalls

With ever-changing rules and regulations, revised proposal preparation guidelines and new application forms and/or systems -- it isn't always easy to stay on top of proposal compliance. Compliance in this context means that a proposal uses the correct formatting and includes the required content. It also means that a proposal follows internal University of Rochester policies. Submitting a non-compliant proposal is risky because the proposal could be withdrawn or returned without review. In addition to a potential loss of future funding, the applicant won't have the opportunity to receive valuable feedback on the proposal from reviewers.

Outlined below is a list of requirements to help avoid the common pitfalls ORPA sees most often for NIH, NSF and all proposals in general. Feel free to use this list while reviewing your proposal and before submitting it to ORPA (5 business days before the deadline).

NIH Requirements

- The abstract does not exceed 30 lines (including the heading)
- eRA Commons ID has been entered for all PD/PI(s)
- For multiple PD/PI proposals, the PD/PI role has been selected for each PI in the Sr/Key person profile form and in the R&R budget form if a detailed budget is being submitted
- Zip codes are entered throughout the application with 9 digits (e.g., 14627-0140)
- The biosketch meets NIH format requirements and is no more than 5 pages and includes the required headings for each section. Check to be sure there are no more than 4 publications under the Personal Statement and each Contribution to Science
- The budget justification for modular budgets should list personnel information only (name, role and number of person-months devoted to the project), and not any other budget information
- For multiple PD/PI proposals, ORPA's [required language](#) is included in the leadership plan (whether UR is the prime institution or a subcontractor)
- For applications requesting \$500K or more direct costs per year, the PD/PI has obtained permission from the Institute and the approval (e-mail is acceptable) has been included in the cover letter attachment
- Appendix material is included [only if required or allowed by the FOA](#). As of 1/25/17, the only allowable appendix materials are clinical trial protocols, Investigator's brochure from Investigational New Drug (IND), as appropriate, blank informed consent/assent forms, blank surveys, questionnaires, data collection instruments and/or FOA-specified items

NSF Requirements*

- The biosketch includes no more than 5 closely related publications, no more than 10 total publications, and no more than 5 synergistic activities (collaborators have been alphabetized)
- Information regarding collaborators and other affiliations has been separately provided for each individual identified as senior project personnel

- The budget justification does not contain voluntary cost share
- NSF forms have been used for current and pending support
- The current proposal has been included as pending in the current and pending support form
- Letters of commitment do not go beyond a brief statement confirming collaboration
- Project Description includes results from Prior NSF Support for PI and all Co-PIs
- Project Description includes a section – with a heading – for Broader Impacts of the proposed work
- A list of collaborators and other affiliations has been included for all project personnel

*Please review the [Common NSF errors document](#) for a comprehensive list

All Proposals

- Effort has been included for PI and all Investigators per the UR [effort reporting policy](#)
- If effort has been included but no salary has been requested, cost sharing has been noted on the internal signoff form and Dean's office approval has been obtained before submission to ORPA
- Dean's office approval has been obtained for proposals requesting more than \$250,000 direct costs per year
- All Investigators listed in a proposal have signed under Section A of the internal signoff form and their department Chair has signed under F
- Proposals involving multiple schools (e.g., School of Medicine and Dentistry, College of Arts and Sciences) require a completed [sharing of indirect cost recovery form](#) and Dean's office approval prior to submission to ORPA
- The budget justification matches the budget
- The maximum indirect costs allowed by Sponsor have been requested; otherwise Dean's office approval must be obtained prior to submission to ORPA
- Formatting requirements and page limits have been followed