Checklist-Steps for Proposals

The Grants Committee oversees the grants process at UMF. Members of this committee, the University Grants Writer and Director for Human Resources and Finance, serve as your resources for seeking funding from any potential external grant source.

There are several steps involved in the grant-seeking, preparation and stewardship process. To help clarify and simplify this process, the following checklist of steps has been developed to help you get started, navigate the clearance and approval process, craft and submit a competitive proposal, and provide appropriate notifications, acknowledgements and reporting after you have received a response to your proposal:

1. Idea and Planning Stage

Most successful grant proposals are the result of months of planning and preparation, so plan ahead to give yourself adequate time. Ideally, start planning and looking for funding 18 to 24 months prior to the planned start date for your project.

- Begin with discussing your idea with members of your department.
- Consider the interests other departments may have in your idea and/or contributions they could make to developing, strengthening or expanding your idea.
- Draft a summary of your project idea.
- Develop a timeline for your project (this may be very general at this point – i.e., start and completion dates – and it may be tentative/flexible based on funding, etc.).
- Consider the budget categories, institutional resources (release time, matching funding, in-kind contributions, etc.) that would be needed to support the project.
- Consider other requirements your project would need, such as IRB review and approval for using animal or human subjects, etc.

2. Department/Division Review and Approval

Review your project idea with the appropriate department head or division chair to verify the idea is consonant with the department’s goals and priorities and with the resources available. Secure their approval to proceed with seeking external funding support.

- Complete the External Funding Request form. Please indicate if you have identified a prospective funder and their deadline – if not, you can note that you are “seeking research assistance” on this line.
- Secure the signature of your division or department head or chair indicating their approval to proceed.
- Submit the completed, signed form to the University Grants Writer. Please provide as much lead time as possible – 8 to 12 weeks is recommended.
3. Grants Committee Review

The Grants Committee will review your request and others that have been received. This review will take into consideration institutional priorities and ensure requests will not compete with a current grant award, pending submission, or another request to submit to the same foundation or donor.

Following this review you will be notified (typically within one week) as to whether you have been authorized to proceed with planning and submitting your proposal.

- If you are given authorization to proceed and are seeking assistance to research potential funding sources at this point, the University Grants Writer will contact you to schedule a meeting to initiate this process.
- If you are given authorization to proceed and had identified a funding source in your request, you may begin preparing your submission.
- If you are not given authorization to proceed, you will be provided with the rationale for this decision.

4. Drafting the Full Proposal

For assistance with any aspect of preparing your grant proposal, please contact the University’s Grants Writer.

The following are a few general tips to consider as you begin. More in-depth information on preparing your proposal is available on the Proposal Writing Resources page.

- Before you begin, READ – then RE-READ – the funder’s guidelines or the program announcement and all instructions regarding required content, formatting and submission. Keep a copy of this on hand as your reference as you proceed.
- Set internal deadlines to ensure the work on the grant proceeds in a timely fashion. Allow sufficient time for:
  - Thoroughly developing your project idea into a viable plan
  - Conducting research that may be required to support and/or strengthen your plan
  - Outlining, writing and rewriting
  - Review and editing (by yourself and others);
  - Review and approval of the budget; and
  - Final formatting, printing, and assembling for mailing or for electronic submissions.
- Have the draft of your complete proposal finished well ahead of time – including the budget and all required supporting documentation:
Review the Proposal Writing Resources page for tips on preparing your budget (the University Grants Writer and Director of Human Resources and Finance can also assist with your budget).

Much of the supporting documentation generally required for grant submissions is available on the “Required Information for Proposals” page. Please note that some of this information is provided via links to the UMS System (i.e., Board list, Annual Financial Reports, etc.). The University Grants Writer maintains updated copies of these documents in pdf formats for easy inclusion with your proposal, as well as other supporting documentation which may be required by your particular funder, such as institutional profile, history or statistics, UMF’s annual operating budget, etc.

5. Invite Editing, Reviews and Comments from Others

You have an array of resources at UMF to assist you by reviewing and editing your proposal when it’s in the near-final draft stage. Please consider choosing one or two experienced colleagues and/or the University Grants Writer to read your draft and provide comments to you.

6. Final Review and Approval for Submission

Provide a copy of your complete proposal to the University’s Grants Writer and Director of Human Resources and Finance for final review and budget approval prior to submission. It is recommended that you do this at least two (2) weeks prior to the submission deadline.

7. Submission

Submit your proposal to the funder. Assistance will be provided by the University Grants Writer as needed and requested. If you are submitting your proposal yourself, please be sure the Grants Writer has a copy of the final version as submitted and is notified of the date your proposal was submitted.

**NOTE: Do not wait until the deadline date to submit online applications!** All applications through grants.gov must be coordinated through authorized university personnel. This needs to be done well in advance of the deadline date to ensure they will be available to submit your proposal in a timely manner.

Also, be aware that there are frequently glitches in the systems, servers, internet, etc. that can cause a delay in your proposal being submitted. It is recommended that submissions via government sites such as grants.gov be scheduled with authorized personnel a minimum of 3 to 5 days prior to the deadline date.

8. Outcomes of Your Submission

When you hear back from the funder, please notify others immediately:
• If your submission was declined, provide a copy of the notification letter or email to the University Grants Writer and Director of Human Resources and Finance. You are expected to send an acknowledgement letter. The Grants Writer can assist you in preparing this acknowledgement. When you prepare this letter, please provide a copy to the Grants Writer for the grant file. Please also notify your department head or division chair of the outcome of your submission.

• If you receive an award letter or email, provide a copy of this notification to the University Grants Writer, the Director of Human Resources and Finance, and your department head or division chair. A “thank you” letter is required to be sent. This letter response may need to include confirmation of statements or conditions that were included in your award notification. The Grants Writer can assist you in preparing this letter. If you prepare this letter, please ask the Grants Writer to review it before sending it out. Please provide the Grants Writer with a copy of this letter for the grant file.

• If you are asked to make adjustments to the proposal or budget, please discuss any requested changes with your department head or division chair and the Director of Human Resources and Finance before responding. A copy of the response indicating any approved changes should be forwarded to the University Grants Writer for the grant file.

9. Post-Award Reporting

To develop and maintain good relationships with external funding sources, timely and responsive reporting as required by the individual funder is imperative.

The Grants Committee will track and monitor the required reporting of all secured grants to ensure that appropriate stewardship is performed for all grant activity.

The Principal Investigator or Project Director is expected to maintain up-to-date financial and programmatic data as appropriate to prepare and fulfill the grant reporting requirements on or prior to all due dates.

The University Grants Writer can provide administrative support to assist principal investigators and project directors in preparing reporting documents. Such assistance can include:

• Reviewing financial reports, reimbursement requests, budget revisions, amendments, etc.
• Reviewing and editing program/project progress reports
• Reviewing and editing final program and financial reports

The Director of Human Resources and Finance can provide assistance with reviewing financial reporting.

Please provide your draft documents to these personnel in advance of your report due date to ensure they are able to schedule time to assist you.
10. Try Again!

Be prepared to resubmit your proposal if it is turned down.

Remember – notification that the funder declined to support your proposal is not personal! Virtually every funding source typically receives significantly more proposals than they are able to support. Not only the volume, but the variety of the proposals they receive – the competition for your project – can vary dramatically from deadline to deadline.

Many proposals are not funded on the first, the second, or even the third try. Write or call the program officer to get reviewers’ comments. The perspectives of the reviewers can give you valuable ideas for improving your project plans. Then consider your project in light of those comments and decide if you want to incorporate any of the suggested changes and begin preparing for resubmission. The odds of success can improve greatly on the second try.