FOUNDATION RELATIONS
Writing a Foundation Proposal | Colorado State University

A successful foundation grant proposal requires simultaneously navigating university and funder processes and requirements, developing a compelling project, and writing an effective proposal. To help you do so, take advantage of university resources that will save you time and elevate your proposal!

What Are the Steps for Submitting a Proposal?

1) Reach out early to internal partners for assistance:
- Many colleges and units have established proposal processes and research support staff who can help guide you through pre-award budgeting and Kuali proposal entry.
- In the absence of dedicated research support staff for your unit, reach out to your Sponsored Programs team for their guidance and review, particularly in regard to budgets and requirements.
- Foundation Relations is available to assist and advise you throughout the foundation grantseeking process in a way that complements the role of research and Sponsored Programs staff.
- For large, complex, and multidisciplinary proposals, the Research Acceleration Office is a valuable resource.

To summarize, please work with all of us as appropriate—doing so will make your proposal more competitive and streamline award processing!

2) Develop a Strategy & Timeline
- Read the guidelines to understand what is required for the proposal, identifying what you need to supply and what you'll need from others. Plan ahead to avoid last-minute hurdles.

3) Write & Rewrite
- Start early and circulate drafts (even partial) to peers and Foundation Relations for feedback. Iteration will improve your proposal!

4) Submit!
- In some cases, the PI will be responsible for submitting the proposal to the private foundation. Other times, Foundation Relations or Sponsored Programs will assist. Clear communication on the front end of the process will establish roles and expectations.

How Do I Create a Budget?

Work with your research support and Sponsored Programs staff to create your budget. That said, be aware that private foundations often have more flexibility as to what can be included in your budget compared to a typical federal proposal. Loop in Foundation Relations during budget review to be sure you are maximizing your request.

What About Indirects & Overhead?

Most private foundations have a set rate at which they will allow indirects and overhead costs/fees. The majority allow 0%-15%. Whatever the case, CSU is obligated to abide by funder restrictions.

What is a Limited Submission?

Some foundations limit the number of proposals that can be submitted from an institution for a given opportunity. In these cases, CSU runs internal "limited submission" competitions through InfoReady. Selected applicants then move forward with external proposals.

What is the CSU Foundation?

The CSU Foundation is the 501(c)(3) affiliated with CSU that receives gifts and contributions on behalf of the faculty, students, and programs of the university. All awards received by CSUF are subject to the 5% Advancement Investment Fee (unless expressly forbidden by the funder). Some foundations specifically require awards be received by 501(c)(3) organizations. In these cases, work with Foundation Relations to coordinate review and submission via CSUF.

General Proposal Writing Tips & Resources

Review and Revision: When it comes to writing the proposal itself, it can feel a bit overwhelming staring at a blank page. What's more, every proposal process is different, with unique requirements and areas of emphasis. What's the best way to get momentum? To quote our friends at CSU Writes: "Write early and write often!" Reach out and engage with CSU Writes to make the most of their writing groups and resources.

Writing Guides: Along with leveraging the review resources available to you, Foundation Relations has developed a detailed document which explains the principles of effective grantseeking in more detail. Reach out! There are further writing guides, links to resources, and tips documents available through the Research Acceleration Office.

Have More Questions? Reach Out to Foundation Relations!

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