

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE GRANTSEEKING

CSU has many resources and services for faculty and staff seeking grant funding, including the identification of funding opportunities, professional development, funding and proposal strategy, compliance, proposal review and finalization, and grant management and renewal.

Long Odds...or Not?

Most major proposal success rates are one in five or less. However, studies show that nearly a third of proposals do not meet basic requirements for the program or application. For those that do, a sizable portion still lack a concise and compelling narrative. With a good fit, the right strategy, and attention to detail, PIs can raise their chances of success considerably. The resources and CSU units described here are designed to help give you this edge.

THE CSU PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMISSION PROCESS

1. **Find Opportunities**

Identifying Opportunities:

Federal opportunities are listed at grants.gov. Each federal agency also maintains its own grant listings and resources. Private funding opportunities are decentralized. CSU provides access to SPIN, the “world’s largest” database of sponsored funding opportunities (federal and private, <http://infoedglobal.com/>). The Philanthropy News Digest also maintains a database of foundation grants and giving interests (<http://philanthropynewsdigest.org/rfps>).

CSU and a number of its colleges produce proposal opportunity lists for faculty. Campus-wide resources include the following (all are available through the Office of the Vice President for Research’s website):

- Internal funding opportunities & Limited submissions (<https://colostate.infoready4.com>)
- Early Career Investigator RFPs (Contact us to join mailing list, or visit <https://vpr.colostate.edu/funding-opportunities/>)
- Foundation RFPs (Contact us to join mailing list, and visit <https://round-turret-3d0.notion.site/CSU-Foundation-Relations-RFP-List-3b18573840f04e20b392b54cae2c419d>)

Evaluating Opportunities: Quality and not quantity is the advisable tactic in finding grant support. When trying to decide upon the best federal funding mechanism, talk to the program officers that oversee the program with the strongest fit with your intended project. They can give you good advice about the suitability of their program and of others within their agency. The same holds true for private foundations that allow direct contact. Some questions to ask yourself regarding fit:

- Do I meet all of the eligibility requirements?
- What are the odds of success? What is the ratio of work to reward?
- How strongly does my project align with the funder’s mission, both present and future?
- How do my funding needs align with the funder’s timeline?

2. **Define the Request**

The project idea must be grounded in a defined scope of work that advances a funder’s goals in a clear and tangible way.

Basic Questions:

What do you want to do and what is the proposed work based upon?

Do you have the facilities and equipment available?

What are the measurable outcomes and indicators for success?

How much will it cost and are there other sources of support?

Do you plan on sustaining the work after the grant period?

Strategic Questions:

Does this make sense for you and your department?

How does this advance the mission of the sponsor?

So what? (Why should the sponsor give you a grant?)

What is the novelty or competitiveness of the research/program?

Getting early feedback is very important and often overlooked. Organize these answers into a project summary or outline and share it with an experienced colleague in your department, your peers, as well as colleagues in other disciplines.

3. Develop a Plan and Timeline

Developing a competitive proposal requires a lot more than sitting down to write. Independent of writing the proposal narrative, there is considerable outreach, planning, and administrative work that will need to be accomplished by you as the PI.

Even if you do not yet have time to focus intensively on your proposal narrative, start immediately on understanding the proposal submission process and get the administrative aspects of your proposal in place. You will much rather be spending the final days before the deadline perfecting the narrative and research plan than chasing down budget numbers or getting departmental or Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) reviews and approvals.

Sketch out a plan that includes what you'll need from others, a timeline with self-imposed deadlines for both the written components and administrative elements, and a list of potential reviewers/advisors who you can go to for questions and/or reviews of your proposal.

Who to Involve: The list below summarizes many of the participants in the proposal process, but your college may have different procedures for proposal development, approval, and submission.

Colleagues and Peers (within and outside of your discipline) for project development and review.

Department Chair and college Research Associate Dean for proposal approval and as a point of introduction to other CSU units.

Departmental/College Research Support for research, proposal, and budget development support.

Central CSU Units, where applicable:

- Corporate Engagement (Advancement) & Industry Partnerships (Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR)), when working with corporations
- Foundation Relations (Advancement), when working with private foundations
- Office of Sponsored Programs (OVPR), when submitting proposals for sponsored research
- Research Acceleration Office (OVPR), when working on large, complex proposals

Recruit Reviewers and Determine Roles: There is a tendency to wait for “perfection” before sharing a proposal draft. It is highly recommended that PIs engage reviewers at several stages, such as: the consideration of the initial concept, an early draft, and at completion of the “final” proposal. Your internal reviewers should provide multiple perspectives to effectively address the dimensions of successful proposals required for a diversity of external reviewers. For example:

<u>Review Focus</u>	<u>Potential Reviewers</u>
Research feasibility and methodology, project design	Senior researchers, peers, Research Associate Dean
Narrative organization, clarity, and persuasiveness	Colleagues in other disciplines, OVPR, Advancement, Communications
Guidelines, compliance, technical details	College research coordinators, OSP Research Administrators, Advancement

3. For Limited Submission Opportunities

Limited Submissions are funding opportunities where the funders place a limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by CSU, either at the pre- or full proposal stage. CSU uses an internal submission, review, and selection process to determine nominees. Peruse opportunities and make submissions at: <https://colostate.infoready4.com>

4. Strategy and Proposal Development

Proposal writers have the challenging task of needing to be concise, compelling, and jargon-free while also providing necessary detail about complicated hypotheses and research plans. Then, the final product must be complete, compliant to the RFP guidelines, and error-free.

Leave plenty of time for review and revision. Applicants should circulate proposals for comment at least twice. On a three-month proposal development calendar, share the first draft two months before the deadline, even if it is incomplete. This review will help clarify a good fit with the funder and a strong research plan. Circulate a “final” draft one month before the deadline, which leaves ample time to perfect a strong narrative and take care of administrative details.

We have more resources available with tips and tricks for proposal writing, so please reach out.

5. Final Proposal Production and Submission

All proposals must be authorized by an appropriate university administrator to be submitted through the [Kuali Research Proposal Development Module](#) (KRPD). Please see the [OSP Proposal Submission Procedure](#) for complete guidance on the proposal submission process and resources for proposal production. Roles and process for private sector grantmakers vary and should be determined in advance.

GRANT FAQs

The **Advancement Investment Fee** of 5% applies to awards that are determined to be “gifts” and where indirect costs are allowed by sponsor policy. All external applications, whether through CSU or CSU Foundation must request the maximum allowable indirect cost rate (OSP will collect indirects).

The **CSU Foundation** will be the applicant organization when funder policy dictates that the award be made to a 501(c)(3) organization.

Cost sharing is a requirement for some opportunities; however, voluntary cost share beyond what is required by the sponsor is strongly discouraged. To explore cost sharing options, reach out first to your department chair and college’s research administration.

Priority/Managed Sponsors as identified in Kualii are private funders that require approval for new outreach and proposals. Our goal is to help faculty maximize their chances for success. In some cases, faculty may not apply to a Priority Sponsor due to sponsor limitations or other CSU priorities.

Reporting requirements come with most grant awards. PIs are responsible for preparing the report narrative and ensuring that program officers are proactively apprised of any changes to the project. OSP staff can help with providing the financial data for required reports. For foundation reporting, Foundation Relations staff can help review narrative content for consistency.

Renewals and extensions are possibilities with some awards. The funder often has procedures in place for requesting no-cost extensions. Work with Foundation Relations and OSP staff to facilitate.

Undergraduate and graduate scholarships and fellowships are tracked and supported through [CSU's Office of Scholarship and Fellowship Advising](#).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Foundation Relations

Peter Hartman, Director, 491.3251, Peter.Hartman@colostate.edu

Sam Ernst, Director, 491.3491, Sam.Ernst@colostate.edu

Dennis Bigelow, Assistant Director, 491.5279, Dennis.Bigelow@colostate.edu

Corporate Engagement

Greg Lewis, Executive Director, 491.7908, G.Lewis@colostate.edu

Research Acceleration Office

Dinaida Egan, Director, 491.2448, Dinaida.Lopez@colostate.edu

Office of Sponsored Programs

Vacant, Assistant Vice President for Research Administration

Ashley Stahle, Associate Director, 491.0974, Ashley.Stahle@colostate.edu

Kim Melville-Smith, Assistant Director, 491.7715, Kimberly.Melville-Smith@colostate.edu

(Updated 1/13/25)