

DEPARTMENT OF CONTRACTS AND GRANTS SERVICE COMMITMENT

The Department of Contracts and Grants (DCG) supports USC's investigators from proposal development to award closeout, ensuring that sponsored projects are consistent with university standards for academic freedom, research ethics and fiscal responsibility. The DCG team:

- Reviews, approves and submits proposals to extramural sponsors.
- Negotiates and accepts awards on behalf of the University.
- Executes subcontracts.
- Coordinates pre-award and post-award actions.
- Develops and maintains positive sponsor relationships.
- Ensures institutional compliance with federal and state regulations, sponsor policy and University policy.

Support for Proposal Review

DCG is committed to supporting USC investigators by assuring timely review and submission of complete and accurate proposals that have the best chance possible of success in the sponsor review process. To succeed in this goal, DCG offers an enhanced review for proposals ready for submission three business days in advance of the sponsor's deadline.

Proposals Received Three Business Days in Advance: Enhanced Review

For proposals where (1) Cayuse SP proposal approvals are in place and (2) the proposal is final and ready for submission at least three business days in advance of the sponsor's deadline or the USC Deadline, if earlier, the Principal Investigator may request an Enhanced Review. The Enhanced Review will include:

Comprehensive review of proposal in comparison to the sponsor's proposal guidelines, including:

- Confirm a scope of work is included.
- Font type and size.
- Margins.
- Page limits for sections and proposal.
- Completeness for inclusion of all required sections.
- Non-technical review of proposal for grammatical and spelling errors

Review of Institutional Information:

- Verify institutional information (e.g., UEI, contact information, activity type etc.).
- Check and clear errors generated by Grants.gov and/or Sponsor's proposal submission system.
- Verify completeness and accuracy of Cayuse SP package.
- Verify regulatory reviews (e.g., human/animal subjects, conflict of interest).

Review of Budget:

- Verify a budget and budget justification are included.
- Verify budget calculations, rates and cost-sharing.
- Verify costs are categorized correctly and have appropriate justification.
- Verify unallowable costs are not included.

Review of Proposed Subawards:

- Verify a scope of work, budget and budget justification are included.
- Verify a subawardee institutional commitment is included.
- Verify compliance with FCOI, when applicable.

Proposals Received Two Business Days in Advance: Standard Review

For proposals where (1) Cayuse SP approvals are in place and (2) the proposal is final and ready for submission at least two business days in advance of the sponsor's deadline or the USC Deadline, if earlier, DCG will perform a Standard Review. The Standard Review will include, at a minimum:

Review of proposal for adherence to the sponsor's proposal guidelines.

Review of Institutional Information:

- Confirm that a scope of work is included.
- Verify institutional information (e.g., UEI, contact information, activity type etc.).
- Check and clear errors generated by Grants.gov and/or Sponsor's proposal submission system.
- Verify completeness and accuracy of Cayuse SP package.
- Verify regulatory reviews (e.g., human/animal subjects, conflict of interest).

Review of Budget:

- Verify that a budget and budget justification are included.
- Verify budget calculations, rates and cost-sharing.
- Verify all costs are categorized correctly and have appropriate justification.
- Verify unallowable costs are not included.

Review of Proposed Subawards:

- Verify that a scope of work, budget and budget justification are included.
- Verify that a subawardee institutional commitment is included.
- Verify compliance with FCOI, when applicable.

For Proposals Received Less Than One Business Day in Advance

Due to time constraints, proposals received less than 24 hours (or one business day) in advance of the sponsor's deadline or the USC Deadline, if earlier, will receive a minimum review with the goal to ensure that the proposal is not rejected from the electronic submission system. Unfortunately, proposals received by DCG less than 24 hours in advance risk being submitted late or rejected by sponsors.

Proposals Routed through DCG Without Time to Review or After Submission

In the event a proposal is submitted without a review due to time constraints or because the proposal

was submitted to the sponsor without going through DCG, DCG will conduct a Standard Review upon receipt of (1) Cayuse SP approvals and (2) the submitted proposal. DCG will work with the PI and the School to secure any additional approvals and make any additional corrections that are identified after submission.

For all proposals, DCG staff will communicate with the Principal Investigator and his/her research administrator when a proposal will receive less than a Standard Review due to time constraints.

Confirmation of Proposal Submissions

DCG will forward electronic confirmation to the Principal Investigator and his/her research administrator once the proposal is received and accepted by the sponsor.

Tips to Facilitate the Proposal Approval Process

The following are some tips to facilitate the proposal approval process:

- Proposals should be circulated for approvals within Cayuse SP at least five business days in advance of the proposal deadline. Please allow more time if your proposal requires reviews and approvals by multiple schools, departments, centers or divisions.
- Provide the proposal guidelines and/or solicitation as a link or attachment in Cayuse SP so DCG can review the proposal along with the solicitation guidelines.
- Allow time for corrections. Allowing time for corrections helps to ensure the proposal is at its best when it is submitted to the sponsor.
- Ensure a point of contact is available to make corrections. The Principal Investigator and/or a departmental contact should be available to make corrections until the proposal is ready to submit to the sponsor.

Negotiation of Sponsored Research Agreements

Sponsored Research Agreement negotiation timelines vary depending on agreement and sponsor; however, the DCG staff is committed to facilitating and completing negotiations in a professional and timely manner. Once DCG has (1) a Cayuse SP package containing Principal Investigator and School approvals and the submitted proposal or, if no proposal was submitted, at a minimum, a scope of work, budget and budget justification and (2) a draft agreement, we are committed to initiating negotiations with the sponsor within five business days.

Communication with DCG Staff

DCG staff make every effort to be available to communicate with investigators and research administrators by telephone and email during heavy deadlines. When away from the office for more

than one business day, staff will provide an out of office message indicating whom to contact during their absence. Staff will otherwise normally respond to inquiries within 24 hours of when they are contacted, and usually much sooner.

In addition, during the negotiation of any sponsored research or non-industry clinical trial agreement, DCG is committed to providing a biweekly status update to the Principal Investigator and department/center research administrator.

Additional Resources and Questions

The Department of Contracts and Grants offers a comprehensive online training program developed to meet the needs of today's evolving research environment. The [C&G Curriculum](#) is a valuable resource for proposal preparation and award management and ensures an overall standard level of expertise for research administrators working at a program, department or dean's office level.

Cayuse SP is the USC's system for proposal, award and subcontract management. Training and assistance is available for the Cayuse system:

- [Cayuse SP Pre-Award Resources](#)
- [Cayuse SP Post-Award Resources](#)
- [Cayuse SP: Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- Trojan Learn: [Preparing Proposals in Cayuse SP](#)

In addition, Grants Management Training programs (GMT) for Faculty and Staff are online training modules required for new faculty, Principal Investigators, Co-Principal Investigators, and Research Administrators. Faculty and Staff should take the GMT training appropriate for their role on the sponsored project:

- [Grants Management for Faculty](#): Required for all faculty and staff serving in a PI/PD role on sponsor funded Agreements.
- [Grants Management for Staff](#): Required for staff seeking approval privileges on sponsored project accounts

The [DCG](#) website also provides information on procedures for processing grants and contracts, support available from different research administration units of the University, and information tailored for both sponsors and investigators.

The Office of Research through the [Center of Excellence in Research](#) also offers proposal writing workshops and resources.

For any questions regarding the DCG Service Commitment, please contact Jeri Muniz, Executive Director, Department of Contracts and Grants (jeri.muniz@usc.edu).