

MEMORANDUM

To: All Faculty

From: Jeri Muniz
Executive Director, DCG

Date: August 31, 2011

Re: DCG Service Commitment for Proposal Review and Submission

The Department of Contracts and Grants (DCG) is committed to supporting USC Investigators by assuring timely 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 announces a Service Commitment for Proposal Review and Submission, including an enhanced review for proposals ready for submission three days in advance of the sponsor's deadline and a simplified Proposal Approval Record (PAR).

1. Support for Proposal Review**Proposals Received Three Business Days in Advance**

For final proposals ready for submission and submitted to DCG three days in advance of the sponsor's deadline, the review will include:

- Comparing the proposal to the sponsors' guidelines, including:
 - Font type and size
 - Margins
 - Page limits for sections and proposal
 - Completeness for inclusion of all required sections
- Conducting a non-technical review of proposal for grammatical and spelling errors
- Verifying budget calculations, rates and cost-sharing
- Verifying institutional information (e.g., DUNS, contact information, etc.)
- Checking and clearing errors generated by Grants.gov and/or Sponsor's proposal submission system
- Verifying Proposal Approval Record (PAR) or PARiS equivalent
- Verifying regulatory reviews (e.g., human/animal subjects, conflict of interest)

Proposals Received Two Business Days in Advance

DCG will review, at minimum, the following:

- Budget for correct rates and cost sharing
- Institutional information (e.g., DUNS, contact information, etc.)
- Proposal Approval Record (PAR) or PARiS equivalent
- Regulatory reviews (e.g., human/animal subjects, radiation safety, conflict of interest)

For Proposals Received Less Than One Business Day in Advance

Due to time constraints, proposals received less than 24 hours in advance of the sponsor's deadline, will receive a minimum review with the goal to assure that it is not rejected from the electronic submission vehicle.

For all proposals, DCG staff will communicate with the Principal Investigator and his/her research administrator when a proposal will receive less than a complete 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.

2. Communication with DCG Staff During Deadlines

DCG Contracts and Grants Administrators 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 24 hours, Administrators will provide a vacation message indicating whom to contact during absence. Administrators 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 agreement, DCG is committed to providing a biweekly status update to the Principal Investigator and department/center research administrator, to be sent on Fridays.

3. Simplification of PAR Form

The Proposal Approval Record (PAR) has been redesigned to:

1. Reduce the number of questions by focusing on key proposal and regulatory information.
2. Streamline the approval process by *only* requiring the signature of the Principal Investigator (PI) and Dean.

3. Capture information and approvals of proposals involving multiple schools on an Addendum to the PAR streamlining the approval process for interdisciplinary projects.
4. Provide a choice of document types. Users may complete the PAR in one of two ways:
 - a.) An **Adobe Fillable Form (AFF)** or
 - b.) An **ePAR**, an electronic form utilizing the University's Administrative Information Service, AIS.

Effective September 6, 2011, the new PAR and Addendum will be available on the DCG website: <http://research.usc.edu/dcg/>. *The old PAR will be accepted through September 30th for proposals already under development.*

4. Tips to Facilitate the Proposal Approval Process

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

1. Your PAR or PARiS equivalent should be circulated for approvals at least five business days in advance of the proposal deadline. Please allow more time if your proposal requires signatures in multiple schools, departments, centers or divisions.
2. Forward the proposal guidelines and/or solicitation to DCG so staff can review the proposal along with the solicitation guidelines.
3. Allow time for corrections. Allowing time for corrections helps to ensure the proposal is at its best when it is submitted to the sponsor.
4. Ensure a point of contact is available to make corrections. The PI and/or a departmental contact should be available to make corrections until the proposal is ready to submit to the agency.

5. Additional Proposal Preparation Resources and Questions

The Office of Research through the Center of Excellence in Research offers proposal writing workshops and resources. Additional information, including Fall, 2011 workshops, can be located at: research.usc.edu/for-investigators/training/

Also, the USC research site (research.usc.edu) has been updated to provide additional 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.

For any questions regarding the DCG Service Commitment for Proposal Review and Submission, please contact Jeri Muniz, Executive Director, Department of Contracts and Grants.