

Proposal Components Outline

- I. Cover Sheet/Title Page**
- a. *Title* - Select a title that is descriptive of the project; expresses the end result of the project, not the methods; describes benefits to clients; and is short and easy to remember.
 - b. *Sponsor Name and Address*
 - c. *TCNJ Name, Address, Telephone Number, e-mail address*
 - d. *Name, Department, Address, Telephone Number, e-mail address of Principal Investigator*
 - e. *Duration of Project with Start and End Dates*
 - f. *Amount Requested*
 - g. *Submission Date*
 - h. *Institutional information.*
 - i. *Signature of Principal Investigator*
 - j. *Name, Title, and Signature of Authorized Institutional Representative.* All grant applications and proposals must have the signature of the authorized institutional representative. The authorized institutional representative signs grant proposals only after the budget has received preliminary approval and the Proposal Routing Form has been completed in EGRANTS. The Proposal Routing Form, approved by the chair and dean (or their equivalents) must be received at OAGSR at least five (5) business days before the proposal deadline in order to allow sufficient time for proposal review, including time needed to ask and answer questions about the proposal, address concerns, finalize negotiation of College commitments, and make any necessary changes in the proposal before the deadline.
- II. Proposal Narrative**
- a. *Abstract or Project Summary.* The abstract or summary and the title of the proposal are the first items a program officer or reviewer will read. This is usually between 50 and 2000 words long.

The abstract is a condensed description of the project, stating clearly and concisely the significance of the project, project goals and objectives, and the plan for accomplishing them. If the sponsor funds the project, the abstract may be used for reporting or publicity purposes. Therefore, the abstract should stand alone as an independent document, and it should be directed toward the intelligent general reader rather than toward experts in the field. Make no references in the abstract to other portions of the proposal such as figures, tables, charts, or the narrative.

The abstract should give readers a favorable first impression. Sponsors begin evaluating projects based on the main idea. A program officer may determine priorities for the agency's proposal review or assign the proposal to a specific panel or set of reviewers after reading only the abstract. Thus, the abstract is very important.

- b. *Table of Contents.* The Table of Contents can make the proposal coherent by showing the organizational pattern and how the various sections of the proposal are related to one another. An effective Table of Contents will help reviewers find specific information without scanning the entire document.

It should include the major divisions of the narrative as well as major subdivisions of the project description such as: Summary of Previous Work, Statement of Proposed Project, and Methods or Procedures. Read the agency's proposal review criteria to find the specific information they will look for in the proposal. Use the Table of Contents and topical headings to make sure that information is easy to find.

- c. *Introduction/Statement of Purpose.* What problem or issue is addressed by this project? Why is it important? The introduction should be used to reinforce the connection between the applicant's interests and those of the sponsor. The introduction should be interesting and brief, offer statistics, statements, and/or endorsements to support credibility in the project area, lead logically into the problem statement, and emphasize anything unique or unusual about the project.
- d. *Needs Statement or Impact of the Study.* Who will benefit? Document the compelling need of the prospective client population, or through a review of the research, justify the need for research in the intended area of this proposal. Describe why this proposal and project staff are uniquely suited to solve this problem.
- e. *Description of Project.* The project description explores the general background of the current or previous research. It also describes the approach to be used in the performance of the project, which should convince the reviewers at the funding agency that the procedure has been carefully worked out and that it will succeed. The inclusion of a realistic project timetable indicates careful planning.

The narrative (often technical) must be a concise and coherent explanation of a research or training plan which has specific and reasonable goals. It should establish the significance and objectives of the proposed work, its relation to the larger field of which it is a part, the rationale and suitability of the methods to be employed, the abilities and qualifications of the investigator(s) and institution, and a procedure for evaluating the progress and outcomes of the project.

- i. *Goals and Objectives.* Goals are the overall accomplishments the proposal expects to achieve. Objectives are measurable and/or observable steps the project will take to close the gap between needs and goals.
- ii. *Methods.* This section should be a detailed description of the research protocol or project activities. It should include many of the following, as appropriate:
 1. Describe program activities in detail and explain how they fulfill objectives;
 2. Describe the sequence and interrelationship of activities;
 3. Describe planned staffing of the program and assignment of responsibilities to specific individuals;

4. Describe the subject/client population and method of determining selection;
 5. Present a reasonable scope of activities, stating specific time frames for completion;
 6. Make reference to the cost/benefit ratio of the project;
 7. Include a discussion of risk (why the success of this project is probable);
 8. Describe the uniqueness of the methods for each part of the project
- iii. *Project Timeline/Planner*. This is the time-management chart or plan that spells out how, when and by whom each objective and every activity of the project will be carried out.
- f. *Bibliography*. A listing of references cited in the body of the proposal should appear at the end of the narrative.
 - g. *Facilities and Equipment*. This section of the proposal should itemize all accessible facilities and all equipment pertinent to the project. One possible way of organizing this section is to itemize, and annotate if necessary, facilities and equipment based on accessibility. Include a list of items requested for sponsor purchase and a list of resources available to the project at the College. Include resources such as the amount and kinds of studio, laboratory, and office space; field resources; library resources; greenhouse space; controlled environment facilities; computing equipments and services; and animal care facilities.
 - h. *Evaluation*. This is a critical, often ignored section of the proposal. Evaluation of the project often includes both formative and summative evaluations. All evaluations should be based upon project objectives and should be written in sufficient detail. It is often advisable to use external evaluators (sometimes it is required).
 - i. *Dissemination*. Possible means of dissemination include mailing or publishing the final report to the field; newsletters; sponsoring seminars or conferences on the topic; speaking at national or international conferences; production of films, videos, and slide/tape presentations.
 - j. *Curriculum Vitae*. Curriculum Vitae for all key personnel should be submitted with every proposal to indicate their background, professional interests, research capabilities, and publications.
- III. **Budget**. The budget section of the proposal generally includes the budget and accompanying justification, and should reflect a reasonable estimate of the expenses necessary to conduct the project. The budget is a vital part of your proposal because agencies evaluate proposals based on funding requests and how well the budget matches and supports the proposed project plans.
- a. *Create the budget first on EGRANTS*. The EGRANTS budget template serves as a category checklist, it provides all necessary TCNJ rates (fringe, F&A, etc.), and it calculates automatically.
 - b. *Budget Components and Effective Budget Preparation*
 - i. *Direct Costs*. Costs incurred obviously vary from project to project. But, the following categories are often included.
 - ii. *Salaries and Wages*. Using the Budget Template in EGRANTS, list salaries and wages for all positions, indicating for each individual the

percentage of time allocated to the research project and the amount of salary or wage to be paid from the grant. Make separate entries for academic year and summer for all personnel who are compensated on an academic year basis. All personnel involved in the project, whether faculty, professional staff, clerical, or student research assistants, must be paid in accordance with college salary and wage guidelines. For more information about categories of personnel and salary ranges, contact the Pre-Award Specialist in OAGSR (X3255). For positions for which personnel have not been appointed, use the average salary for that specific rank or category.

Project personnel may not be paid more than the College rate. In other words, the total allocation of time to College duties and the sponsored project may not exceed 100%, nor may the monthly compensation for all duties exceed 100% of the College salary rate. Payment of faculty summer salary is allowable as long as total College/sponsored project work time does not exceed 100% (based on a 40-hour, 5-day work week) and the payments do not exceed 20% of the preceding academic year salary.

- iii. *Fringe Benefits.* Funding agencies allow for payroll assessments such as Federal Insurance Compensation Act (FICA), Workers' Compensation, insurance benefits, and retirement expense. These rates are calculated automatically by the EGRANTS budget template and changed annually.
- iv. *Consultant Services.* If your project requires consultants (calls for expertise of a well-defined nature for a fixed period of time), estimate their fees and travel expenses separately from the Salaries and Wages section. The general policy is to obtain written verification of the consultant's willingness to serve on the project. If you have not chosen your consultants when you are preparing the budget, you should include appropriate, competitive rates for services to be rendered. Consultant fees cannot exceed what the individual can command in the public market.

It is often difficult to determine whether certain outside services needed by a grant project should be treated as a consultant or as a subaward. The following list of criteria was developed to assist in distinguishing between the use of a Consulting Agreement or a Subaward:

1. *Consulting Agreement*
 - a. Given to independent individual contractors or consulting organizations for professional services
 - b. Tasks are specific, well-defined and of limited scope
 - c. A hired service
2. *Subaward* (see procedures for Subawards below)
 - a. Given to colleges and universities, other institutions and organizations
 - b. Usually has a partnership role, even when it is a small one

- c. Often has more autonomy in the completion of the work, within the parameters of the agreed-upon work plan, timeline, and budget
 - v. *Permanent Equipment*. List each major item of equipment. Permanent equipment is defined as an item with a value greater than \$1,000 with a useful life expectancy of one year or longer. Describe each equipment item and list the item's estimated cost including freight charges and installation costs, based whenever possible on a 90 day price quotation. Specify the manufacturer and the model number. The departmental Information Technology liaison must be contacted for all computer-related equipment.
 - vi. *Expendable Supplies*. Categorize and itemize in this section supplies and expendable equipment. Allowable items will ordinarily be limited to research equipment and apparatus not already available for the conduct of the work.
 - vii. *Travel*. Follow the EGRANTS budget template to indicate the type and extent of travel that may be required to perform the project. Separate travel costs into Domestic and Foreign. Consult agency instructions for allowable travel methods and costs and for definitions of foreign and domestic travel. Foreign travel generally requires special permission from the funding agency and requires clear and convincing justification. In most cases, travel to professional meetings may be included when such meetings are justifiably related to the project, such as dissemination of results.
 - viii. *Publication Costs*. Indicate and itemize costs for copying, reprinting, duplications, plate preparation or publishing. Include any publication costs connected with dissemination and evaluation. It is generally viewed favorably by reviewers to suggest publication in a journal that has an outstanding reputation because of the quality of the merit review process. Check journal page charges and reprint rates for a correct and current estimate.
 - ix. *Other Direct Costs*. Since budget requirements vary from agency to agency, items included in Other Direct Costs are defined as those costs that fit in none of the other categories for a particular agency. Other direct costs may include space rentals away from the College, service charges, equipment rental, maintenance contracts, library acquisitions, communications (telephone, mail, fax), and subcontracts.
- c. *Facilities and Administration (F&A or Indirect Costs)*. F&A charges to a sponsored project reflect a carefully calculated estimate of the true cost to the College of research and sponsored projects. Based on negotiations with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the F&A costs rates are established at regular 3-year intervals. TCNJ uses a Salary and Wage Basis for calculation of F&A. F&A is automatically calculated on the Budget Template of EGRANTS. The negotiated rate agreement and the date of the agreement are often required for submission along with the proposal. The full negotiated F&A rate is included in the budget, except when it is restricted or disallowed by the sponsor.

- d. *Cost Sharing*. TCNJ policies on cost sharing can be found in Chapter I. When cost sharing is required for a project, documentation of the cost share is necessary and must be approved in advance of the submission by the department chair, the dean, and the Vice Provost for Research. The use of direct costs for cost sharing purposes requires the written consent of the College. The exact source of the cost share must be identified and the person responsible for authorizing its use must approve the commitment.
- e. *Other Budget Considerations*
 - i. Is each category of expenditure that was described and justified in the narrative itemized in detail? Does it match the Project Timeline/Planner?
 - ii. Is any unusual expenditure in the narrative (e.g., use of a helicopter for local travel) explained?
 - iii. Will the reviewer understand how the totals for each category (eg., PI at 25% time @ \$60,000 = \$15,000) were obtained?
 - iv. If some items are unusual, and the agency form permits, is the budget keyed to pages in the narrative?
 - v. Is each college contribution to the project (including indirect cost on cost share portion of budget) itemized?
 - vi. Was the budget objectively reviewed to determine that the request is a sufficient, but not excessive, sum for each expense category to permit the project to be properly executed?
 - vii. Were the cost-share contributions discussed with those responsible for specific cost share contributions and approved by them? (The Proposal Routing Form should accommodate this.)

IV. **Compliance Issues.** Federal regulations stipulate that institutions applying for federal funds assure the appropriate federal agency that certain conditions and policies are in place at the applicant institution. Federal funding is at risk college wide if individuals do not comply with these assurances. Questions regarding the assurance process may be addressed to OAGSR. Some of the most common compliance issues include:

- a. *Human Subjects*. The use of human subjects in a research proposal must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This is accomplished by submission of a human subjects protocol to the IRB.

Protocol approvals must be obtained either before the proposal is submitted or before a deadline set by the sponsor. IRB information can be obtained online at the [OAGSR Website](#) or by contacting the IRB Chair.

College policy requires that the use of human subjects in research regardless of funding (College funds, gifts, federal, etc.) must receive IRB approval prior to the PI initiating the research.

- b. *Animal Welfare*. Proposals which involve the use of live vertebrate animals, regardless of the funding source, must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Prior to proposal submission, an initial contact must be made with the Chair of the IACUC Committee. Review IACUC policies and procedures online through the [OAGSR Website](#).

- c. **Bio-Safety.** Proposals and laboratory teaching activities which employ the use of recombinant DNA (which are not exempt from NIH guidelines), infectious agents, teratogens, mutagens, carcinogens, biohazards, hazardous waste, and radioactive material must be reviewed by the TCNJ Occupational Safety Specialist, Mr. Brian Webb. Contact him at bwebb@tcnj.edu for information.
- d. **Radiation Safety.** Anyone considering the procurement, use and/or disposal of radioactive material and other sources of ionizing radiation, lasers, and other non-ionizing sources of radiation must contact Mr. Brian Webb, Occupational Safety Specialist, at bwebb@tcnj.edu.
- e. **Audits.** TCNJ undergoes an A-133 audit annually; the College will furnish a funding agency a copy of the annual audit if the agency so desires. The College's independent audit is also available to a funding agency upon request. Contact the Pre-Award Specialist in OAGSR.
- f. Some agencies require that special forms be signed and submitted with an application assuring the College's compliance with certain regulations. The following checklist reflects TCNJ's status with regard to the most frequently included assurances.

i. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504	Yes
ii. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Yes
iii. Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972	Yes
iv. Age Discrimination Act of 1975	Yes
v. Misconduct in Science assurance filed annually	Yes
vi. Delinquent on federal debt	No
vii. Debarred or suspended	No
viii. Drug-Free Workplace	Yes
ix. Lobbying with federal funds	No