Anatomy of the Administrative Shell

OSR-Evanston
Proposal Development Series

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Elements of a Proposal

• Background
  – Introduction to Sponsors & Award Mechanisms
  – Reading and Evaluating the Solicitation
• Proposals have two sets of documents
  – Technical documents
  – Administrative documents
• Both sets of documents are necessary and critical to submission of a proposal
What is the Administrative Shell?

• Consists of all proposal elements that are non-technical in nature
• Certain components of the administrative shell are required in all full proposal situations
• Solicitation and/or sponsor guidelines may request additional documents
• Administrative shell represents the majority of the items that research administrators and OSR are involved in developing, editing, and evaluating at the proposal stage
What is the Administrative Shell?

• What influences the elements of the administrative shell?
  – Internal guidelines
  – Sponsor solicitation and/or guidelines
  – Decision to include certain items in a proposal submission

• Administrative shell should be considered complete before OSR performs initial review of a proposal
Overview of Administrative Shell Elements

• Required
  – Proposal Routing Form
  – Statement of Work (SOW)/Abstract
  – Budget
  – Budget Justification
  – Solicitation

• Required Documents *as applicable, e.g.*
  – Biographical Sketch(es)
  – Current and Pending document(s)
Solicitation

• Solicitation review is critical to begin evaluating what items are technical vs. administrative

• Solicitation (and/or sponsor guidelines) influence which elements are part of the administrative shell

• A copy is not necessarily required to be provided to OSR in all situations (e.g., when responding to a parent R01 announcement)

• Best practice to include a copy with proposal— at minimum, solicitation number is required
Statement of Work (SOW) / Abstract

• Understanding the scope of work is relevant in every area of administrative proposal development –
  – Evaluating solicitation requirements
  – Required documents
  – Budget

• Required as part of the administrative shell as this influences review of other administrative elements

• Draft is acceptable
Proposal Routing Form

• Serves as introduction to the proposal from the administrative perspective

• Flags relevant units (and OSR) on basic information related to proposal
  – Sponsor
  – Overall budget & project period
  – Effort commitments of involved investigators

• Also flags areas related to compliance & risk
  – Conflict of Interest
  – Humans/Animals
    – Cost sharing
Proposal Routing Form

• Certain questions require input from investigators prior to completion
• Notes section can – and should – be utilized to flag items to relevant approvers and/or OSR
• Appropriate investigator, department, and/or school approvals are important, and are considered part of the administrative shell
Budget

• In many ways, the most critical element of the administrative shell

• Budget elements can include costs for personnel, materials and supplies, capital equipment, travel, consultants, subrecipients

  • F&A rate

• In addition to internal budget, keep in mind sponsor specific guidelines
  – NIH modular budget
  – DoD cost proposal
Budget Justification

• Narrative to accompany the budget
• Explains each component of the budget, to justify the cost in terms of the proposal work
  – All line items must be captured
• A budget cannot be effectively evaluated without a corresponding justification
• Sponsor-specific guidelines must be followed
  – NIH modular budget - Personnel, Consortium, Additional
  – DoD cost proposal
Budget & Justification

• Note that certain items in the budget may require additional explanation or justification that is not submitted to the sponsor

• These items should be flagged for initial review, and additional documentation provided as appropriate
  – Significant salary increase
  – Capital equipment purchases
  – Consultants
Required Documents As Applicable

- Some elements of administrative shell are consistent across all proposals
- Others are relevant when required
  - By the Sponsor
  - When they are part of a proposal submission
- A reminder that the solicitation is the roadmap for the proposal – and will provide guidance in these areas
Biographical Sketch(es)

• Brief summary of professional/educational
  – Appointments
  – Accomplishments
  – Professional activities
• Abbreviated curriculum vitae (CV)
• Some sponsors may have elements of what is typically viewed as “current and pending” support within the biographical sketch
Current and Pending Document(s)

• Document representing involved investigator(s) completed sponsored portfolio
• Generally utilized by sponsor to evaluate
  – the individual is overcommitted
  – there is overlap in the individual’s portfolio connected to proposed scope of work
• Template Document available
• Cognos Reports
  – GM060 – Current
  – GM085 - Pending
Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources

- Provides an aggregated description of the internal and external resources that are, or will be, available to the project (both physical and personnel)
- Generally narrative in nature; no quantifiable financial information
- Often, there are required certifications that connect to the items represented in the facilities section
Cost Sharing Documentation

• When included, cost sharing is considered a budget element
  – Mandatory
  – Voluntary

• Documentation of appropriate commitments
  – Email approvals
  – OSR-EZ

• Additional documentation may be required by sponsor
Subrecipient Commitment Package(s)

• Working with a third-party organization for their programmatic involvement in a portion of research
• Subrecipient typically performs work at their site using their personnel and resources
• At minimum, this includes
  – Letter of Intent (LOI)
  – Statement of Work (SOW)
  – Budget
  – Budget Justification
• Important to understand all requirements of the solicitation – many administrative documents required of the lead are also required of the sub
Other Documents as Applicable

• All administrative shell elements must be captured in appropriate external submission platforms when ready for review

• Solicitation guidelines may require additional administrative elements

• What are some examples?
  – Internal Northwestern documentation
  – Required letters of support
  – Preliminary proposal documents
Internal Deadlines

• Administrative Shell
  – 5 business days prior to proposal deadline
• Complete Proposal
  – 2 business days prior to proposal deadline
• Administrative shell should be complete prior to OSR performing initial review of the proposal
• What if only one element is missing? Will OSR still review the administrative elements of my proposal?
Summary

• Administrative shell represents the proposal elements that are non-technical in nature
• Reading the solicitation thoroughly is crucial to understand the elements of the administrative shell
• Certain items are always required, but others may be required depending on the proposal and/or sponsor guidelines
• A complete administrative shell is important for an initial thorough review of a proposal
• OSR Tool Available:

http://www.research.northwestern.edu/osr/docs/Admin_Shell_Checklist.pdf
Proposal Development Series

• Focused on the pre-award process for research administrators
• Covers topics relevant to successful proposal development and submission from the administrative point of view
  • Introduction to Sponsors & Award Mechanisms (7/18)
    • Reading and Evaluating Solicitations (8/18)
    • Anatomy of the Administrative Shell (8/25)
      • Developing Budgets (9/12)
      • Effective Communication (9/30)
Questions?

Thank you!