

# 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



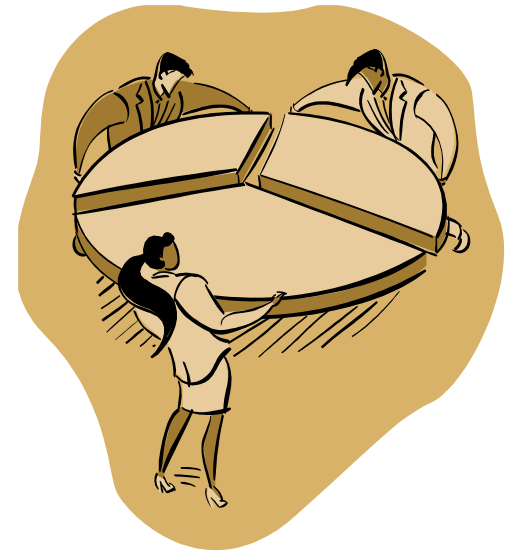
# Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources

- 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](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!



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