

Effective Communication

OSR-Evanston
Proposal Development Series

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Elements of a Proposal

- Background
 - Introduction to Sponsors & Award Mechanisms
 - Reading and Evaluating the Solicitation
 - Administrative Shell
 - Developing Budgets
- Understanding the process and the concepts surrounding proposal development is necessary, but communication surrounding this process enables successful proposal development



Proposal Development – Context & Challenges

- Complex regulatory environment
- High stakes, inflexible deadlines
- Various processes and requirements
- Different perspectives, different roles & responsibilities
- Relationship element of proposal development is critical
- Strong communication a must between
 - PI and RA
 - RA and OSR
 - OSR and RA
 - OSR and other central offices



Internal Deadlines

- Initial proposal notification and timeline
- 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
- Timeline and internal deadlines are important, but recognize that the timeline is not as straightforward/linear as it may appear



Use of the 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
- Notes section of the routing form



Principles of Communication

- Concepts of communication underlie all successful interactions
- Inherent feedback loop in all communication processes
- Basic elements of all communication
 - Sender
 - Receiver
 - Message
 - Medium
 - Context



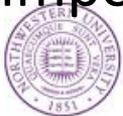
Principles of Communication

- Medium & context can be the most variable – and critical – elements to successful communication in the proposal environment
- Knowing your audience
 - Understanding the roles of the sender vs. the receiver influences medium
- Context – the situation at hand
- Communication cycles
 - Each response/reaction influences the future responses/reactions
 - Ability to positively influence transactions



Mediums of Communication

- Spoken
- Written
- Visual
- Electronic
- What's the best way to communicate? Must evaluate
 - Individuals involved
 - Nature of the information being shared
 - Complexity of information being shared
 - Level of formality or approval required
- Importance of listening



Elements of Strong Communication

- Understand what exactly you are intending to communicate
- Should be tailored to the recipient
 - What they do know about the subject
 - What they do not know about the subject
 - Anticipating the recipient's questions and response
- Word choice
- Identifying questions, problems, or issues – as well as a proposed solution
- Accommodating different viewpoints – give and take
- Importance of repetition
- Explaining inconsistencies



Roles and Responsibilities

- PI
- Department
- School
- OSR
- Understanding the different roles and responsibilities influences the manner in which you communicate with different groups
- Research administrator serves as the primary contact for both PIs and OSR – and those are two very different audiences
- OSR serves as the primary contact for RAs and the sponsor
- Balance between customer service and compliance



Communicating with Faculty

- Understanding what you need and how to get that information is critical for success
- Relationship element
- Medium and context become very important here
- Outlining what is needed, and when it is needed
- Preparing items in advance where possible – the partnership element
- Effectively asking questions that allow you to get to the bottom of any items that are outstanding



• **KEEP IT BRIEF!**

Different Mediums of Communication in Proposal Development

- When to call, when to email
- The value of the face-to-face interaction
- Importance of factoring in the timeline piece here
- Knowing your role and decision-making authority
- Considering the formality of the message being communicated
- Importance of the written record of decision-making



Evaluating Information

- Competing information
 - From Pls
 - From Chairs
 - From RAs
 - From OSR
- Importance of thoroughly evaluating all information received
- Taking information and developing a solution
 - Honing problem-solving skills



Dealing with Communication Breakdowns

- All roads lead to the relationship and understanding the person at the “other end of the line”
- Stressful situations, late (and late-breaking) proposal items
- Separating emotional responses from business information
- Focusing on the positive – diffusing the situation
- Working through the situation at hand
- Feedback loop to evaluate what happened, and how it can be prevented/go better in the future
 - The value of the appropriate time and place



Summary

- Understanding sponsor and internal guidelines and process is important, but it's not the only part of proposal development that is relevant
- Effective communication enables all proposal development activities
- Understanding medium and context, as well as differing roles and responsibilities
- Feedback loops to evaluate communication breakdowns influence future successful interactions
- Communication skills are critically important to your professional skill set



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
- **Future Series**
 - Refresh on Proposal Development topics
 - Post-Award – Financial Accounting & Management
- We value your feedback!



Questions?

Thank you!



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