

The College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, Cornell University

Grant Proposal Guide

The following grant proposal guidelines are provided to aid CALS principal investigators (PI) in preparing grant proposals for external funding.

1. CALS OFFICE FOR SPONSORED RESEARCH

Because the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) processes many grant proposals, CALs has an Office of Sponsored Research (CALs OSR) which is separate from the university Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP). **All proposals from CALs PIs must be submitted through CALs OSR.**

[Elizabeth Estabrook](#) and [Rose Hastings](#) are the Grant & Contract Officers (GCOs) for CALs. They should be notified of an intended grant proposal submission as early as possible:

[CALs Office of Sponsored Research](#)

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2. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS AND PRE-PROPOSALS

All proposals and pre-proposals must be approved and submitted to the sponsor through CALs OSR. PIs, co-PIs, and key personnel do not have the authority to submit proposals or pre-proposals directly to sponsors. After review and approval of proposals, CALs OSR will forward the proposal to the appropriate university office, either the [Office of Sponsored Programs](#), or, for foundation sponsors, the [Office of Foundation Relations](#). PIs working on proposals to foundations must begin with CALs OSR to be sure budget requirements are clear before engaging in specific discussions with Foundation Relations.

3. PROPOSAL DEADLINES

CALs OSR offers the following support based on when a complete proposal is submitted:

Submitted ≥ 5 business days before due date

Priority is given to proposals submitted ≥5 business days before it is due to the sponsor. If there are questions or comments about the proposal, CALs OSR will respond to the PI within 2 business days of receipt of the complete proposal. These proposals are reviewed for:

- Internal notifications
- Sponsor's guidelines
- Form 10
- PI eligibility
- Institutional, federal, and state compliances

- Proposal
- Sub award
- Negotiated F&A rate agreement
- Data security plans (if applicable)
- Intellectual property management plan (if applicable)
- Technology control plan (if applicable)
- Related agreements review (if applicable)

Submitted 2-5 business days before due date

Cornell retains the right to retract proposals submitted less than 5 days before a sponsor’s deadline or to refuse the award if the terms and conditions are later deemed unacceptable. Insufficient review time increases the possibility of a proposal being rejected due to non-compliance. Also, there is a very real possibility that late proposals that are to be submitted electronically will not meet the deadline for consideration due to system failures. Proposals submitted 2 - 5 days before a sponsor’s deadline will receive a limited review, which includes:

- Form 10
- PI eligibility
- Institutional, federal, and state compliances

Proposals Requiring Endorsement from Provost, President, or Dean

Occasionally a sponsor may require an institutional cover letter or letter of support from the President, Provost, or Dean. All such requests for letters of support to sponsors, including research agencies as well as corporations and foundations, must be coordinated with the CALS Senior Associate Deans’ Office. Such proposals and requests **should be received by the CALS Senior Associate Deans and CALS OSR at least 10 business days before the sponsor’s deadline**. In addition to the required internal review, extra time is necessary to obtain a signature due to the President's, Provost's, and Dean’s extensive travel schedules. Investigators are strongly urged to coordinate their proposal schedule with the CALS Senior Associate Deans’ Office and the CALS OSR as soon as the proposal deadline is known. These offices will then coordinate with university-level offices as needed.

4. BUDGET ESCALATION

Use the following escalation factors for budgeting purposes:

Faculty, non-professorial academics (e.g. Research Associates), and staff	3%
Postdocs	3.5%
Graduate student stipends	3%
Graduate student health insurance	10%
All other categories (except equipment) unless justified or limited by sponsor rules	2%

Additional Info: [OSP Budget Guidelines](#)

5. GRADUATE STUDENT TUITION, STIPEND, AND HEALTH INSURANCE

The **tuition** for contract college research degree programs (M.A., M.S., M.S./Ph.D., Ph.D.) is set at \$20,800. CALS waives 50% of the tuition (\$10,400) for assistantships paid on grants/contracts to CALS PIs. If mandatory cost sharing (matching) is required by a sponsor, the waived component may be listed as cost share (match) on proposals if it is necessary.

Additional Info: [Tuition Rates by Field](#)

For academic year 2017-2018 the graduate student **stipend** has been set at \$25,780 (9 mo.) and \$34,373 (12 mo.). The maximum academic year stipend that a graduate student may receive when any portion of the stipend comes from Cornell funds is \$43,500. The increase may be from the same funding source as the basic stipend (an “adjustment”) or from a different source (a “supplement”). The limit applies to support from any combination of fellowships or assistantships when part of the stipend is paid by Cornell; this includes awards from external sources that are supplemented by Cornell funds. When a department awards summer stipends and fellowships from its own resources, there is no restriction on the amounts.

The current **health Insurance** rate for graduate students is \$2,816 (2017-2018).

6. TUITION WAIVERS

CALS waives 50% of the tuition for graduate assistantships that are supported on research grants, external fellowships, and new faculty start-up funds. Tuition is not waived for students funded on Cornell-based endowments. For those graduate assistantships funded by federal, state, or non-government sponsored agreements, the 50% tuition waiver can be reported as cost sharing, if necessary. The remainder of the tuition and health insurance must be paid by the grant or from other sources. Requests to waive these remaining expenses are requests for monetary support (subsidy) from the college. Payment of these costs centrally is very rare. However, if there are such requests, they should come to the appropriate Senior Associate Dean via the department chair and the chair is expected to articulate the priority of the request. Direct requests to the Graduate School for graduate student financial aid for a graduate student in CALS is not allowed.

7. FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE (F&A) COST RATES

The cost of conducting research consists of two broad types of costs – direct costs and facilities and administrative costs (F&A), also known as indirect costs. Direct costs are those research costs that can be identified easily and with a high degree of accuracy specifically with a sponsored project. F&A costs are costs incurred for common or joint objectives as a part of sponsored activities but that cannot be identified with a particular sponsored project. Cornell and CALS policy is that sponsored projects should pay full (F&A) cost rates.

The current federally determined contract college F&A rate is 57.0% of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). MTDC consists of all direct costs minus the following exclusions: equipment costs \$5,000 or greater, subcontract costs in excess of \$25,000, participant support, rental of off-campus property, graduate student tuition, and graduate health insurance. This rate has been negotiated and accepted by the Federal government. However, not all agencies, foundations, or other donors agree to this rate. F&A rates for some categories of sponsors are shown in the table below. For sponsors not included in the table or if you have questions about an appropriate rate, consult with CALS OSR.

Sponsor	F&A rate effective 1 July 2017
NIH, NSF	57% of MTDC unless otherwise noted in solicitation
USDA-NIFA (IDC Allowable)	42.857% of TDC unless otherwise noted in solicitation

New York State (NYS) agencies, including New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI)	18% of TDC
State agencies outside of New York	57% of MTDC
NYS commodity groups and national commodity groups that NY farmers contribute to	18% of TDC
State commodity groups outside of NY	57% of MTDC
Corporations* 1. Scope of work within guidelines for a standard product testing agreement 2. Scope of work outside guidelines for a standard product testing agreement 3. Scope of work for a sponsored research agreement	1. 18% of MTDC 2. 37% of MTDC 3. 57% of MTDC
Life Sciences incubator funds received by CALS faculty for startup companies physically located at the McGovern Center	18% TDC
Foundations	If required by the foundation to be less than 57%, the rate is to be negotiated with the investigator, Sr. Assoc. Dean, and foundation.
Subcontracts	57% of the first \$25,000 of each subcontract for those sponsors that calculate F&A costs on MTDC. For agencies where F&A costs are based on TDC, there are no exclusions on the subcontract.

Additional Info: [OSP Facilities & Administrative Costs](#)

Special considerations for foundations

When working with foundations or other philanthropic donors, it is important to identify whether the funding will be a restricted gift or a sponsored contract. Usually the criteria listed by the sponsor in the RFP or invitation to apply for funding will help the CALS OSR make this determination. In addition, the wording in the proposal can assist in determining whether an award will be considered a restricted gift or a sponsored project, specifically, the description of activities and deliverables contained in the proposal.

If an award is a “restricted gift,” University policy requires a 10% F&A charge on the award. All other awards from foundations or other donors should assume the full F&A rate will be required, unless the procedures for requesting permission for “variances” to the F&A rates described in the next section are followed.

**** As of summer 2018, this document is under annual review; as of 6/2018 corporate F&A rates have been published here so that they are immediately available to faculty as less substantial textual changes are considered.***

All proposals to foundations and corporations must be submitted to CALS OSR with a Form 10. CALS OSR will then send the proposal to either the Office of Sponsored Research or the Office of Foundation Relations.

8. VARIANCES FOR F&A RATES

Some sponsors use an F&A rate different from the approved rates above. If a sponsor prohibits the CALS rate and is not specifically named in the chart in Section 7. The should consult their department administrator to determine if a variance is required and if any IDC recovery will be expected . The PI should discuss their situation with their Department Business Administrator. It will need to be balanced against initiatives (renovations, equipment, positions, bridging funds) desired by the department as a whole. When budgeting proposals using reduced F&A rate, as many “direct” administrative costs as allowable should be included in the project budget to receive funding from the sponsor. CALS OSR can advise which direct costs may be allowable. This is particularly important for foundations and other sponsors with relatively low allowable F&A rates.

Please refer to the [IDC Approval Decision Tree](#) to determine if a formal request for IDC approval is required.

Please follow posted [IDC Approval Procedures](#) if approval is required.

CALS Minimal F&A Recovery Policy

CALS is required to pay a university charge on all external funds received in CALS accounts. For awards that have an F&A rate that is less than 18%, the unit will be required to pay to the college the difference between 18% of total direct costs and the actual F&A recovered. This minimum does not apply to foundations or other philanthropic groups where F&A rates are to be negotiated. This cost recovery does not represent the full cost that CALS pays to the university, nor the full indirect costs for the research.

9. FRINGE BENEFIT RATES

The current and projected contract college fringe benefit rates are as follows:

Fiscal Year	Federal Funds	Non-Federal Funds	
2015 – 2016	56.10%	59.84%	0%
2016 – 2017	57.30%	62.98%	0%
2017 – 2018	62.50%	65.77%	0%
2018+	65.10%	68.63%	0%

Endowed Fringe Rate Option

A current pilot program allows postdoctoral associates, research associates, and temporary employees to be budgeted and appointed under the endowed benefit plans. This option is only available for new appointments. The current endowed fringe rate is 34.90%. This represents a significant cost savings over the contract college fringe rates. However, departments should be aware of potential costs and should discuss their plans with OSR staff or department administrative managers.

Additional Info: [Endowed Appointment Options](#)

Additional Info: [OSP Employee Benefit Rates](#)

10. COST SHARING FUNDS

Cost sharing is any quantified commitment of university resources to the project and must be formally documented. Requests for cost sharing (or matching) funds are important to several different types of proposals. Cost sharing under a federal grant is subject to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) [Uniform Guidance \(2 CFR §200.306\)](#), which stipulates that cost sharing must come from non-federal sources and contribute directly to the proposed project. Proposals listing cost sharing should explain how the cost-sharing commitments will be met. Cost share commitments must be reflected in the Form 10 and approved by all parties. All cost sharing must be separately recorded and tracked in the financial system and is subject to audit and verification.

A. VOLUNTARY COMMITTED

Voluntary committed cost sharing represents resources offered by Cornell in sponsored project proposals even though it was not required by the sponsor. Voluntary cost share has a negative impact on the university's research base and as a result, on the F&A costs that can be recovered from sponsors. **Any request to include voluntary committed cost share must be conveyed to the Senior Associate Dean by the department chair at least 2 weeks in advance of the sponsor's deadline.**

Note: Some sponsors force the college into "voluntary cost share" by requiring a PI's effort to be quantified either in the proposal or most commonly, in the budget justification. NIH's R01's are a good example (see specific program solicitations). In this instance, to avoid the voluntary cost share issue, we recommend that the percent effort listed be based on the salary requested. If this is not possible the resulting cost share must be listed on the Form 10 and is auditable. Prior approval from the Senior Associate Dean is not required in situations such as this "forced" voluntary cost share because of the requirement of the sponsor to quantify effort.

B. MANDATORY

Some sponsors or RFPs require a mandatory commitment of university resources as part of their terms and conditions.

(i) If mandatory cost sharing can be met by the department through any combination of:

- department resources
- faculty salaries
- "automatically-waived" F&A (the value of F&A above the specified maximum a sponsor will pay compared with the current Cornell standard rate)
- 50% of the waived tuition for a GRA,

The PI should document cost-sharing within the proposal budget and include the sources of cost-share, the specific cost-share requirements of the sponsor to CALS OSR.

(ii) If cost sharing is mandatory but cannot be met through the sources noted above, a request must be submitted to the Senior Associate Dean via the department chair and include the following:

- Agency requirements
- Proposal budget
- Department resources (a pledge of dept. resources is expected)
- If multiple departments: endorsement/involvement of the other CALS units
- If multiple colleges: commitment of resources from the other colleges

The request for the remainder of the cost-share should be submitted to the Senior Associate Dean by the chair no less than 2 weeks before the sponsor's deadline date.

Note: NSF and other major equipment programs often require matching funds from the institution. These should be conveyed per above to the Senior Associate Dean.

11. PRE-PROPOSALS

Pre-proposals which contain either detailed budgets or a general, total projected budget, are treated the same as full proposals. They require a Form 10 and they must be reviewed and approved by the CALS OSR before they are submitted to the sponsor.

12. LETTERS OF INTENT

If the Letter of Intent contains a detailed budget, it must be submitted to the CALS OSR for approval and submission to the sponsor. If the Letter of Intent does not contain a budget, it can be submitted directly to the sponsor by the PI/department with a copy sent to the CALS OSR.

13. INTERNAL PROPOSALS AND LIMITED SUBMISSIONS

Internal proposals and Limited Submissions (e.g., Biotechnology CAT, Federal Formula Funds, President's Council of Cornell Women, Sun Grant Initiative, etc.) do not need to be submitted through CALS OSR or OSP. They can be submitted directly to the department/person listed on the Request for Proposals. However, it is recommended that the budgets be reviewed by CALS OSR for accuracy.

Additional Info: [Limited Submission Opportunities](#)

14. INTERNAL ACADEMIC APPROVAL OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS / FORM 10

The Office of Sponsored Program's "Internal Academic Approval of Sponsored Programs," known as [Form 10](#), must accompany every proposal. The Form 10 provides information on where to submit the proposal and identifies what compliance issues exist and what institutional resources are required for the project. Investigators are responsible for completing the Form 10 and, by signing it, accept full responsibility for the project.

The Form 10 is required:

- For all new proposals, including pre-proposals and Letters of Intent with budgets
- For any change in PI
- For all changes in the scope of work
- Whenever there are any changes in compliances, including no longer applicable
- For all budget revisions that impact cost share, both increase and decrease
- For all supplemental funding requests
- To enter into a non-disclosure agreement and/or a teaming agreement

The Form 10 must be signed by PI(s) and department head(s) or designee(s). CALS GCOs sign on behalf of the college.

Note: PIs requiring signatures for cross-unit or interdisciplinary proposals should take into consideration the additional time needed to obtain the cross-unit signatures.

Addenda

- NIH NRSA proposals require an [addendum](#) that needs to be included with the Form 10

15. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR ELIGIBILITY

The policy of Cornell University is that only full-time faculty members may routinely serve as Principal Investigators or Project Directors on sponsored programs. Exceptions to this policy may only be made with the prior approval of the Vice Provost for Research. Proposals for external funding will not be submitted by the University if they do not comply with this policy. Please consult the full policy here: [OVPR Principal Investigator Eligibility](#)

[Additional info: Grant Writing Effort Policy](#)

16. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

In accordance with the Cornell University Conflicts of Interest Policy and University By-laws, all faculty and academic personnel are required to submit an annual disclosure statement regarding their external interests and time commitments. **In addition, OSP requires anyone named on a proposal to complete COI disclosure before the proposal is submitted.** The obligation to disclose the circumstances surrounding real or potential conflicts of interest stems from the public trust vested in a university and fulfills legal reporting requirements to funding agencies. Any questions regarding the conflict of interest disclosure statement can be found at the [Office of Research Integrity and Assurance](#).

Additional resources:

[Cornell Office of Sponsored Programs \(OSP\)](#)

[CALS Office for Sponsored Research \(CALS OSR\)](#)

[Cornell Office of Foundation Relations](#)

[Cornell Office of Research Integrity and Assurance \(ORIA\)](#)

[Cornell Office of the Vice Provost for Research \(OVPR\)](#)