

Handbook of Operating Procedures

SPONSORED PROJECTS

A. Purpose

To outline the responsibilities and procedures related to proposal development, submission, acceptance, and management of Sponsored Projects, from pre-award to closure.

B. Persons Affected

This policy applies to all faculty, staff, and students who work in the preparation of the proposal, the Principal Investigator (PI) managing the Sponsored Project, and all individuals involved in the review, approval, or execution of a Sponsored Project at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV).

C. Policy

1. Proposals, contract requests, or award/contract transfers for Sponsored Projects must be consistent with the mission and vision of UTRGV and must be suitable to the academic or administrative unit(s) in which the project is to be conducted. UTRGV will not accept an award that is contrary to the best interests of UTRGV, The University of Texas System, and State of Texas.
2. Except as indicated in Section C.3 below, all proposals, contract requests, or award/contract transfers for Sponsored Projects on behalf of UTRGV must follow school/department expectations and be reviewed, submitted, and processed through the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP).
3. If the sponsor is a foundation or a non-profit entity recognized as tax-exempt under *Internal Revenue Code* Section 501(c)(3), proposals must then be reviewed, submitted and approved through the Office of Development, within the Division of Institutional Advancement.
4. Any Grant Award Agreement, Contract, or Cooperative Agreement for a Sponsored Project processed through the Office of Sponsored Programs and issued to UTRGV must be accepted by UTRGV. Authority for acceptance has been delegated to the Division of Research, where the authorized organizational representative (AOR) or designee serves as the duly authorized signatory on Grant Award Agreements, Contracts, or Cooperative Agreements.

D. Procedures

1. *Proposals*
 - a. Prior to the submission to an external sponsor, the proposal or contract request must be approved by the appropriate department chair(s), dean(s), center director(s), or other

university officers, as relevant, indicating to the Office of Sponsored Programs (or the Office of Development, as appropriate) that the proposed sponsored project, its budget, use of UTRGV resources, and level of effort committed by university personnel have the necessary institutional endorsements.

- b. Unsolicited proposals to foundations for Sponsored Projects must include a Request for Endorsement to Cultivate/Solicit Funds from Private Source form (available from the Development Office) with the proposal documentation.
 - c. If cost sharing is required by a potential sponsor, a "Cost Share Form" with appropriate approvals must accompany the documentation. Cost share source accounts must be identified and committed prior to setting up Sponsored Project accounts. See [ADM 07-302 Cost Sharing on Sponsored Projects](#).
 - d. The Director of Sponsored Programs certifies proposal/contract requirements have been met in accordance with UTRGV policies and procedures and submits the proposal/contract to the external sponsor with authorization from the AOR.
2. *Acceptance of the Proposal or Contract Execution*
- a. Acceptance of Sponsored Projects as per Section C.2 above are initiated and processed through the Office of Sponsored Programs.
 - b. Contracts with corporations or industry contracts/agreements must be entered into by UTRGV and not in the name of the department or PI. Neither the department, PI, nor any other external entity is permitted to accept payment for activities related to Sponsored Projects conducted at UTRGV. UTRGV's authorized representatives, as stated in the [Delegation of Authority](#), are the only individuals permitted to legally bind UTRGV into any agreement with external sponsors. If an individual other than a UTRGV authorized representative signs a Grant Award Agreement, Contract, or Cooperative Agreement for a Sponsored Project, the document is not legally binding for UTRGV.
3. *Management of Sponsored Projects*

In the administration of Sponsored Projects, the Office of Sponsored Programs, the Office of Grants and Contracts and the Office of Grant Accounting will abide by:

- a. The terms and conditions governing the Sponsored Project as per the Grant Award Agreement, Contract, or Cooperative Agreement;
- b. The sponsor-specific terms and conditions in the event of Grant Award Agreements or Cooperative Agreements;
- c. The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200);

- d. Other federal and state laws and regulations (as applicable); and
- e. Applicable UTRGV and UT System policies and procedures.

4. *Responsibilities*

- a. The Office of Sponsored Programs is responsible for:
 - i. Reviewing and submitting proposals on behalf of UTRGV.
 - ii. Verifying that a PI is eligible to submit a proposal as per the section on PI eligibility described in the [Office of Sponsored Programs' Handbook](#).
 - iii. Coordinating with the Office of Institutional Development for proposals subject to Section C.3 above.
 - iv. Conducting internal competitions for Limited Submissions.
 - v. Negotiating/accepting Grant Award Agreements or Contracts, to include a review of terms and conditions. This encompasses consulting with University Marketing and Communications Office when the Sponsored Project agreement includes marketing and communication related terms, or with other UTRGV departments to make sure that terms and conditions of the proposed project are consistent with UTRGV policies.
 - vi. Initiating the award/contract set up process and briefing the PI of their responsibilities.
 - vii. Communicating with the sponsor on behalf of UTRGV for award/contract modifications, including changes in the scope of work or key personnel, re-budgeting, or no-cost extensions requests.
 - viii. Collaborating with the Office of Grants and Contracts and Grants Accounting for a seamless operation of grant award/contract management activities (i.e., subrecipient monitoring, budget revisions, close-outs).
 - ix. Guiding faculty and staff in the interpretation of university, federal, state, and sponsor policies related to the management of Sponsored Projects at UTRGV.
- b. A Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for:
 - i. Submitting proposals in a timely manner to ensure efficiency, expediency, and quality of the proposal review process.

- ii. Managing the Sponsored Project in accordance with the grant award or contract terms and conditions, the requirements of the sponsoring entity, the policies and procedures established by UTRGV, and applicable federal and state laws, rules and regulations. In the event of inconsistencies within applicable terms, rules, regulations, or policies, the PI will abide by the most restrictive requirement.
- iii. Communicating with the Office of Sponsored Programs and submit corresponding documentation during the following instances:
 - iii.i The receipt of an award/contract or notification of potential award/contract for a Sponsored Project;
 - iii.ii The receipt of a request to submit additional information for award considerations (i.e., Just in Time Requests);
 - iii.iii The need to request budget revisions;
 - iii.iv The need to request change(s) in the scope of work and effort;
 - iii.v The submission of reports as requested by the sponsoring entity;
 - iii.vi The notification of a desk review or audit into the Sponsored Project; and
 - iii.vii Promptly after discovering a deviation from the project's sponsored-approved scope of work, budget, or level of personnel effort.
- iv. Managing the Sponsored Project budget:
 - iv.i In accordance with what was approved by the sponsor.
 - iv.ii Ensuring that expenditures are allowable, allocable, reasonable and do not exceed the approved budget.
 - iv.iii Conducting monthly account reconciliations, process necessary corrections, and any other required documentations in accordance with [ADM 10-703 Accounting Policy](#) and ADM 07-303 Cost Transfers for Sponsored Projects.
- v. Documenting all transactions, approvals, and internal/external communications related to the Sponsored Project and to retain such documents (regardless of the format) for the period stipulated by the sponsor or the UTRGV's records retention policy (whichever is longer).
- vi. Securing research oversight approval(s), as applicable, before starting with sponsored project-related activities (i.e., by the Institutional Review Board, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, Institutional Biosafety Committee, or Export Controls Office).
- vii. Disclosing all potential conflicts of interest of project personnel prior to submission and during the period of the Sponsored Project.
- viii. Complying with any technology control plan(s), conflicts of interest management plan(s), data security control plan(s), or any other measure deemed necessary by UTRGV to conduct the Sponsored Project in accordance to UTRGV policies and procedures.

- ix. Complying with any reporting requirements as required by the sponsor or the Office of Sponsored Programs and the Office of Grants and Contracts.
- c. Department Chairs, Center Directors, Deans, and other relevant university officers endorsing proposals are responsible for:
 - i. Before submission to sponsor, determining that the proposed project is consistent with the goals of the department, college, school, center, and UTRGV; specifically, the approving department where the project will reside, must endorse the proposal only if the proposed project does not disrupt the established research and teaching programs of UTRGV and department, that is, if teaching obligations can be met or rearranged as needed, if appropriate space, equipment or facilities can be made available to the project; and, if the university can provide for continuation of support for a project's new positions, if required.
 - ii. Certifying that the faculty/staff level of effort dedicated to the project is compatible with the unit's needs, and that any cost sharing commitments are both, possible and suitable.
 - iii. Ascertaining to what degree the project commits the college or school to long-term support of project personnel or resources beyond that of the Sponsored Project period.
- d. Office of Grants and Contracts is responsible for:
 - i. Managing the financial post-award (accounting) process by:
 - i.i Completing account project set-up.
 - i.ii Monitoring for financial compliance and monitoring subrecipients.
 - i.iii Approve financial transactions.
 - i.iv Invoicing/billing for contracts.
 - i.v Initiating the request for drawdown of funds for awards.
 - i.vi Submitting financial reports as requested/required.
 - i.vii Closing out sponsored projects accounts with the sponsor.
 - ii. Ensuring financial compliance with the terms and conditions of the award, as well as federal and state laws and regulations and university policies and procedures.
 - iii. Collaborating with the OSP and other UTRGV departments during audits, desk reviews and close-out of sponsored projects.
 - iv. Certifying the accuracy of the final financial report to the sponsor (if applicable).
- e. Office of Grants Accounting is responsible for:

- i. Monitoring the expenditure ratio of Sponsored Projects and advise PIs on the need for action plans.
 - ii. Completing the request for drawdown of funds of Sponsored Projects.
 - iii. Reviewing, collecting, and processing the account receivables for Sponsored Projects.
 - iv. Certifying the annual institutional financial report with regards to Sponsored Projects by source of funding.
 - v. Closing out the Sponsored Project account in the UTRGV financial systems.
 - vi. Verifying the appropriateness of financial codes used.
- f. The Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) is responsible for:

Approving the submission of proposals and legally bind the institution through the acceptance of grant awards/contracts for Sponsored Projects consistent with the UTRGV Delegation of Authority.

5. *Indirect Cost Recovery Rate*

UTRGV maintains a negotiated indirect cost recovery (ICR) rate with the federal government for the purpose of identifying allocable general and administrative costs and applying those costs to externally funded projects. Unless otherwise stipulated by the sponsor (except when the sponsor is a for-profit entity) in a published policy, uniformly applied, UTRGV will apply this rate to the full extent allowable for every proposal. If the sponsor is a for-profit entity, full ICR will be applied.

E. Definitions

1. Contract - a legal instrument different from a grant award agreement or cooperative agreement between a sponsor and UTRGV to carry out activities that do not qualify as assistance supporting a public purpose authorized by a law.
2. Cooperative Agreement - is distinguished from a grant award agreement in that it provides for substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award.
3. Grant Award Agreement - a legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and a non-Federal entity, used to enter into a relationship the principal purpose of which is to transfer anything of value from the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity to the non-Federal entity to carry out a public purpose authorized by a law of the United States (see 31 U.S.C. 6101(3)); and not to acquire

- property or services for the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity's direct benefit or use.
4. Limited Submission - a request for proposals that limit the number of applications that may be submitted per designated area or per institution.
 5. Principal Investigator - the individual (whether referred to in the contract, cooperative agreement or grant award agreement as Principal Investigator, Project Director or other similar term) designated by UTRGV to lead the project and be responsible for ensuring compliance with the academic, scientific, technical, financial, and administrative aspects and for the overall management of the sponsored project.
 6. Sponsored project - a project or program that is partially or wholly supported by external funding, that has a defined scope of work or set of objectives, which provides basis for sponsor expectations. A sponsored project may include, but it is not limited to the following activities: research, demonstration, professional development, instruction, training, curriculum development, community and public services, or other forms of compensation, or exchanges of in-kind efforts under a grant award agreement, contract, or cooperative agreement. A project is considered a "sponsored project" if any of the following conditions apply:
 - a. The project is awarded based on a proposal request;
 - b. The university commits to a statement of work for a specified project;
 - c. The project involves a set of objectives which provides the basis for sponsor expectations;
 - d. The project includes a detailed budget;
 - e. The project designates a specific principal investigator to be responsible for the implementation of the project;
 - f. There is a written agreement for commitment of resources between the sponsor and UTRGV, there is a specific period of performance, requires deliverables (i.e., reports, financial accounting, or intellectual property ownership);
 - g. The award, contract, cooperative agreement provides for the disposition of tangible or intangible property that may result from the project (i.e., equipment, records, formal activity reports, rights in data, software, copyrights, inventions or research related materials);
 - h. The sponsor is involved in the decision-making regarding project performance;
 - i. The project involves one or more of the following: the use of human subjects, laboratory animals, radioactive or hazardous materials, recombinant DNA, export-controlled items/data, and/or proprietary materials.

F. Related Statutes or Regulations, Rules, Policies, or Standards

31 USC 6101, Government Funding Transparency Act of 2008, Definitions

2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards

The University of Texas System Board of Regents' *Rules and Regulations Rule 10501*, Delegation to Act on Behalf of the Board

[UTRGV HOP Policy ADM 07-302 Cost Sharing on Sponsored Projects](#)

[UTRGV HOP Policy ADM 07-303 Cost Transfers on Sponsored Projects](#)

[UTRGV HOP Policy ADM 10-703 Accounting Policy](#)

G. Dates Reviewed or Amended

Not applicable.