

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS– GRANTSEEKING AT VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY

Below, please find a list of frequently asked questions regarding grantseeking at Valparaiso University. Click on any question or simply scroll down to review the entire list of questions.

[What is the role of the Office of Sponsored Research \(OSR\)? What is the role of the Office of Institutional Advancement? If I have an idea for a project, what do I do? Should I write a prospectus for my project? If I identify a potential funding source, how do I proceed? What are the key components to a proposal? What are important items in a budget? How do I obtain institutional approval to submit the proposal? What do I do after I am awarded a grant?](#)

What is the role of the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR)? The Assistant Provost assists faculty in the development of projects and the search for funding sources. The Assistant Provost also acts as the University's Sponsored Research Officer (SRO) for all proposals to the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The assistance provided by the Assistant Provost can take many forms, and may include:

- providing general information about the grantseeking process and helping to identify and contact the funding source
- acting as a liaison with other offices on campus, especially the Office of Institutional Advancement
- facilitating discussions about the project concept and project implementation
- providing technical assistance in the writing of a proposal

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What is the role of the Office of Institutional Advancement? The primary responsibility of the Office of Institutional Advancement is to conduct fundraising efforts for university-wide initiatives. The Foundations and Corporations Coordinator in OIA works to obtain funds for the University from many of the same funding sources that individual faculty and departments want to pursue. As a result, communication with the Foundations and Corporations Coordinator is essential early in the grantseeking process, and the Assistant Provost is the formal liaison to facilitate this communication.

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If I have an idea for a project, what do I do? Talk to your colleagues, your department chair, or others in your professional network to see if the project is feasible and in line with the University mission and priorities. Then begin to look for funding sources. These may include government agencies, private foundations, corporations, individuals, or the University itself. The OSR has a list of Internet links on its web page that will help in your search.

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Should I write a prospectus for my project? Yes, most definitely. A prospectus is a 1 or 2 page summary of the project that highlights the nature of the project, the need for the project, your qualifications for doing the project, and an estimated budget. This document provides a basis for informing people about your project,

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and encourages them to seek more information. In addition, it can provide the basis for any full proposal that may be written at a later date. In a prospectus, you should provide details about the proposed project, including names of other campus partners, a brief description, budget estimate, project start date and duration, potential funding sources, and the level of support that may be needed from the OSR and/or OIA.

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If I identify a potential funding source for my project, how should I proceed? Forward the name of the funding source to the Assistant Provost. The Assistant Provost will check with OIA to determine if the University has any current or past relationship with the funding source that might be helpful in obtaining funding. The Assistant Provost will also check to be sure there is no conflict between your project and other current projects that may be presented to the same funding source. If there is a conflict, the Grants Management Group, comprised of representative from the Provost's Office, OIA and the OSR, will determine which project will be submitted to this funding source. Alternative funding sources may then be considered.

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What are the key components to a proposal? When writing the proposal, adhere strictly to the guidelines provided to you by the funding source. Tools to assist you in the research, writing and budget preparation process are available on the OSR web page and in the Christopher Center.

The key components in any proposal are:

- the problem or need statement and solution,
- the goals and objectives,
- the activities,
- the principal investigator's (PI) or project director's (PD) qualifications,
- the assessment and evaluation plan,
- and the budget.

Each of these should be clearly articulated and appropriate for the project. These components should be tied to each other. For example, do not put in an activity that has no budget to support it, and do not put money in the budget for things not needed to perform the activities. Also, each objective should have an assessment measure linked to it.

It is critical that other people beside yourself have an opportunity to read the proposal before it is submitted. These readers should include someone familiar with the project, as well as someone unfamiliar with the project. The Assistant Provost is available to assist with this process. Remember that these readers have not done their job correctly if they return the proposal and it has not been marked up--it's their job to find everything that a reviewer might misconstrue, misread, or misunderstand. Poorly conceived projects and projects presented poorly rarely get funded!

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What are important items in preparing a budget? Indirect costs, matching costs, and cost sharing are important items to know when preparing a budget.

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Indirect costs are the hidden costs that the University incurs while you are working on the project. They include, but are not limited to telephone and Internet usage, office space, furniture, heating, air conditioning, and lighting. Each funding agency has its own criteria concerning indirect costs. It is imperative that you follow them correctly. If you are in doubt, contact the Assistant Provost for assistance.

Matching costs (also called cost-sharing) are the University's contribution to the project and are usually a required element of most Federal grants. Matching costs can either be in the form of actual money or in-kind dollars. If the match is in actual money (funded by either donations or University funds), you will need to make arrangements for accessing these funds. If the match is in-kind dollars (represented by such things as release time, housing for students, indirect costs, etc.), you will need to document the detail of the arrangement or expenditure since matching costs usually need to be reported to the funding agency.

In the proposal guidelines, there are usually expectations about the University's contribution to the project. The amount or percent may vary and whether it is required (matching) or simply anticipated (shared cost). As the budget is developed, the source for any internal funds needs to be identified and checked. For small projects, this may simply mean checking with your chairperson on the availability of departmental funds. On other projects, it may involve assistance from the Dean's Office, the Provost's Office, the Office of Admission, Conference Services, and others. It is important to begin conversations with the various individuals early on in the development of the project. An internal version of the budget should identify the source of each of the University's contributions to the project.

Commencing with grant proposals submitted to the Provost on October 1, 2009, 25% of indirect funds (sometimes called *overhead* costs or funds) received from any outside grants will be transferred to an account under the control of the Dean of the college or the Vice President of the administrative unit from which the grant proposal originated. The Dean or Vice President may use these funds at his or her discretion. The remaining 75% of the indirect funds will remain in the University's general operating budget for costs associated with administering grants including, but not limited to, accounting, administration, utilities, and facilities maintenance. If a grant originated from more than one college or administrative unit, the 25% return of indirect funds will be divided equally unless the Dean(s) and/or Vice President(s) mutually decide otherwise.

For grants from the Lilly Foundation or any agency that both allows indirect costs and, in addition, pays the grant up-front thus allowing the grant-seeker to earn and retain interest on the balance, the University will retain all indirect funds in the general operating budget. However, the Provost in consultation with the Vice President for Administration and Finance will determine the disposition of the interest associated with the grant.

In an effort to make a grant proposal more attractive or improve its chances of success, the originator of a grant application may not reduce the amount that a granting organization allows for indirect costs nor deviate from the University's standard allowance for indirect costs without the explicit approval of the Provost.

Such cases will be considered exceptional. In these cases, the grant proposal's originator will first present convincing evidence to the appropriate Dean or Vice President that waiving or reducing indirect costs will improve the proposal's

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chances for success or are somehow in the best interests of the University. If the Dean or Vice President supports the request for exception, he or she will forward the proposal to the Provost with appropriate supporting documentation. If such a grant is awarded, all indirect costs will normally remain in the University's general operating budget.

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How do I obtain institutional approval to submit a proposal? At the very least, you need the approval of every faculty and staff member involved with providing funding, facilities, services, or personnel as part of the University's contribution to the project. If a project requires a significant commitment of University resources, ongoing conversations with the Administration should begin early in the proposal development process.

Approximately two weeks before the submission of a proposal, a final draft of the proposal needs to be circulated on campus with a copy of the "[Grant Proposal Approval Form](#)." The GPAF requires six signatures: the Department Chair; the appropriate Dean, Associate Provost, or Vice President for non-academic areas; the Accountant/Grant Specialist, Michelle Scott, in the Finance Office; Assistant Provost and Sponsored Research Officer, David M. ("Mike") Owens, or the Foundations and Corporations Coordinator, Kathy Groth (OIA); the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Mark Schwehn, and the Vice-President for Administration and Finance, Charley Gillispie.

While administrators may recommend small editorial changes be made in the text or budget before it is submitted, they will also check the following areas:

- curricular or scholarly merit of the project
- organization and feasibility of the project
- project's match with the University's mission and/or priorities
- potential conflicts with other proposals being sent to the same funding source
- writing and presentation quality
- budget accuracy
- level of contribution of University resources

If concerns are identified in any of these areas, the PI or PD will be strongly urged to address these before the proposal is submitted to a funding source. Please note that if you engage the appropriate people with the project early in the development process, this is not likely to occur.

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What do I do after I am awarded a grant? A copy of the proposal, the budget, and any contractual documents must be forwarded to the Accountant/Grant Specialist in the Finance Office. You will also need to inform the Assistant Provost and the Foundations and Corporations Coordinator in OIA about the details of the grant, including periodic reports that may be required. Inform anyone else who assisted in the proposal development, and inform the Office of University Relations so that appropriate publicity may be arranged. Make sure that you visit the Managing Your Grant link on the OSR web page for specific information regarding internal and external grants management.

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