

School of Medicine Guidelines for Proposal Submission Timelines

Purpose:

The SOM Office of Research Administration (SOMRA) expects all faculty to be aware of internal timelines for proposal submission and make every effort to adhere to them. Adhering to timelines will help ensure university policy is followed, and allow staff supporting proposal submissions sufficient time to provide the best support possible to investigators. This guidance applies to all proposal submissions with sponsor published deadlines.

The guidelines outline expectations for timeliness in two areas of proposal development:

- I. Timely routing of proposals in RAMS-SPOT for school-level and institutional approval
- II. Timely notification of staff for administrative support to aid Principal Investigators (PIs) in developing the administrative and financial components of an application and routing it on time

Background:

VCU's Division of Sponsored Programs (DSP) in the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation (OVPRI) maintains VCU's policy on [Sponsored Programs Proposal Submission Deadlines](#). VCU uses RAMS-SPOT, an electronic proposal/award management system, to manage proposal routing and approval processes.

The policy noted above states that all proposals with sponsor deadlines must be received by DSP a minimum of 5 business days prior to the sponsor published deadline. VCU DSP requires that schools (Dean or designee) approve outgoing extramural proposal submissions *prior to* their arrival for final review and institutional approval by VCU DSP. When a PI routes a proposal for institutional approval in RAMS-SPOT, it first goes to each participating school for approval, then to VCU DSP once all school level approvals are received.

PIs often work with research administrators (RAs) or other staff on the administrative and financial components of a proposal submission. This includes preparation and finalization of the required proposal components in the RAMS-SPOT system *prior to* the PI routing the submission for institutional approval.

Allowing sufficient time for research administration and other staff to support PIs in application preparation is essential. Strong time management is necessary to allow sufficient time for all needed school-level approvals to be received, so that VCU DSP has 5 business days to review submissions prior to sponsor deadlines.

I. SOM Guidance: PI Routing of Proposals Submissions

The School of Medicine Office of Research Administration reviews and approves all outgoing proposal submissions involving SOM personnel in RAMS-SPOT on behalf of the Dean.

- **Proposal must be routed by the PI a minimum of 7 business days prior to sponsor deadline**
 - Allow 2 business days for school review and approval (includes all schools involved).
 - Allow 5 business days for DSP review per institutional policy.
 - Required elements to route:
 - Final budget and budget narrative, including any cost share
 - Draft science
 - All critical proposal elements as defined by DSP's ["SOFEW" guidance](#) must be in place and final/approved by appropriate parties at point of routing, including [Research Security Training \(RST\)](#), where applicable. (See "SOFEW" section below.)
 - All financial requests for waived or reduced F&A, voluntary cost share, institutional support, etc. must be documented and final/approved by appropriate parties. (See Section II. below.)
 - In the rare instance a proposal is due on a weekend, PIs must plan for their application to be submitted to the sponsor by 5pm on the Friday prior to the weekend deadline (routing 7 business days prior to Friday before weekend deadline).
- **Final Science is due 2 business days prior to sponsor deadline**
 - Final science and all other proposal documents should be uploaded in RAMS-SPOT and be considered final.
- **PIs are responsible for ensuring timely routing of proposals.** Failure to follow this proposal routing timeline guidance could affect the proposal submission. Potential consequences include:
 - Proposals not being submitted, or submitted after a sponsor published deadline.
 - Per VCU policy: Proposals are reviewed in the order they are received as compared to other proposals with the same deadline date.
 - SOM reserves the right to disapprove proposals where insufficient time is allowed for preparation and internal approvals.
 - SOM, other schools, and DSP may have insufficient time for a thorough review, increasing the chances of *not* identifying and correcting issues, which could result in proposals being administratively withdrawn (or rejected) by sponsors.

VCU DSP "SOFEW" Criteria:

The OVPRI Division of Sponsored Programs developed the "SOFEW" acronym to serve as a vital checklist when routing a funding proposal (FP record) in RAMS SPOT. The purpose of the "SOFEW"

check is to verify that the core institutional elements of a proposal are complete and final as early as possible in order to help prevent administrative delays. The “SOFEW” key elements below are expected to be final when a PI routes for school and university level approvals. Staff supporting PIs need sufficient lead time to ensure these items are complete.

SOFEW refers to:

- **Subaward mini-packages signed by proposed subawardee Authorized Official.** If subaward packages are not complete and signed at routing the PI/RA/Department must include a comment in RAMS SPOT to provide status. SOM will return Funding Proposals where required elements are missing and/or there is no explanation provided.
- **Other support (if needed at proposal time).** If Other Support and/or other required training (like Research Security Training) is required and missing at the point of routing, SOM will return the Funding Proposal if there is no explanatory comment in RAMS-SPOT from PI/RA/Department explaining status of Other Support being finalized and/or training completion.
- **Financial interest reports (FIRS) for all Conflict of Interest (COI) investigators.** SOM will notate in the SPOT record if any COI Investigators have FIRs that are not up-to-date per VCU’s Activities and Interest Reporting System (AIRS). The AIRS opens for the annual FIR update on May 10th of each year. DSP will not move proposal submissions forward until the update has been completed by all COI investigators. See: “Date FIR Last Updated” report at <https://rams.research.vcu.edu> to check investigator FIR statuses before the PI routes in RAMS-SPOT.
- **Eligibility - PI eligibility and/or VCUHS employee sign off as applicable.** SOM will return the FP record if all PI, Department, and School-level signatures are not complete.
- **Waiver - F&A, as applicable (for Exemptions 2 and 3).** SOM will return the FP record if any PI, Department, or School level signatures are pending.

II. SOM Guidance: PI Timelines for Requesting Research Administration Support

The table below outlines the amount of advanced notice that should be provided to the RA or other department staff in assisting with proposal development support.

Adhering to the timelines below will help ensure university policy is followed for routing proposals in a timely fashion (see Section I. above) and allow staff supporting proposal submissions sufficient time to provide optimal support to investigators *prior to* routing for approval in RAMS-SPOT.

Submission Type	Subawards	Clinical Trial/ Research	Multi-Component	Training Grant	Notify RA support
Routine Submission - Basic	No	No	No	No	4 weeks
Routine Submission - Moderate	Maybe	No	No	No	6 weeks
Program, Center, Multi-Component Submission - Complex	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	No	16 weeks
VCU Lead - Clinical Trial/Research Proposals	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	No	16 weeks
VCU Sub - Clinical Trial/Research Proposal	No	Yes	Maybe	No	12 weeks
Training Grant - <u>Includes</u> Data Table Support	No	No	No	Yes	16 weeks
Training Grant - <u>No</u> Data Table Support	No	No	No	Yes	12 weeks

- **Routine Submissions - Basic:** Includes routine federal grant mechanisms (R01, R21, F-series, etc.), plus supplements, foundations, state agencies, etc. Submission *does not* include subawards or other support documents.
- **Routine Submissions - Moderate:** Includes above granting mechanisms/sponsors when subawards to other institutions are planned. Moderate submissions also include others sponsors such as the Department of Defense (DOD) or the National Science Foundation (NSF) that require other support documentation at the time of proposal submission.
- **Program, Center, Multi-Component Submissions:** Complex funding mechanisms, often cooperative agreements vs. grants (e.g., NIH P-series including P20, P30, P50, NIH U-series including U01, U54).
 - Large-scale, administratively complex projects often have multiple projects, cores, and subrecipients that must be budgeted for individually. This requires significantly more time to coordinate and develop the administrative, programmatic, and financial plan (and associated administrative and scientific documentation) for the proposal.
 - Faculty should work with their RA to closely review the funding opportunity announcement, discuss project scope (including the number of external partners by component), and then determine when budgets should be in final form in accordance with proposal complexity (e.g., 3 weeks to 4 weeks in advance of the sponsor deadline).
- **VCU Lead – Clinical Trial/Research Proposal** – all sponsors. Additional time is necessary to conduct cost analysis on the protocol and/or schedule of events for accurate budgeting. Also, often involves subaward coordination for participating sites.
- **VCU Sub – Clinical Trial/Research Proposal** – all sponsors. Additional time is necessary to conduct a cost analysis on the protocol and/or schedule of events for accurate budgeting.
- **Training Grants** – Require additional lead time for preparation due to their requirements. Further additional lead time is needed for research administration if support in populating required tables is needed.

Proposal Budgets & Prior Approvals Affecting Budget

- Faculty should begin assessing their proposed projects for cost and working with their Research Administration or other staff as soon as possible on budget development.
- **Budgets must be in final form when the PI routes for internal approvals** (*minimum of 7 business days prior to a sponsor deadline*).
 - Includes final subaward budgets and subaward institutional approvals.
 - Also includes any required SOM pre-approvals such as cost share, PI eligibility exceptions, VCU Health System (VCUHS) Employee Approval Forms, and/or Facilities and Administrative (F&A) waivers, as the budget will be affected if either of the above pre-approvals are not granted.
 - Requests for above mentioned pre-approvals should be submitted to SOM no later than 3 weeks prior to a sponsor published deadline. SOM requires at least 5 business days to review such requests. Proposals should not be routed prior to SOM pre-approvals being received.

Failure to Follow Timeline Guidance:

- Reduces the level of support that can be provided, thus increasing chances for error or omissions.
- Data on timeliness of routing proposals in RAMS-SPOT will be monitored and provided to Chairs. Repeated non-compliance may impact performance ratings.
- As noted above, could result in proposals not being approved for submission at either the school or institutional level.

Questions?

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