

Grant Development and Management Guidelines

Taking an idea for a program or project and turning it into reality through the development of a competitive grant proposal is exciting, but can also seem like a daunting process. There are a number of stakeholders involved, and it requires everyone to be committed and work hard. The Grants Office will help you navigate the grant development process.

In order for this process to be successful, certain steps should be followed to confirm full support by the administration. These steps will ensure that the college is able to achieve the project requirements, should the proposal be funded. The Grants Office must be involved in the project development process, and our primary objective is to help you succeed in acquiring funding for your project.

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PRE-AWARD ACTIVITIES

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Who: Grants Office, Project Director

The Grants Office identifies potential grant funding opportunities as they arise and share with the appropriate departmental contact.

[Funding Opportunity](#)



PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Who: Grants Office, Grant Accountant, Project Director, etc.

Project team has initial meeting and approval is given by department or division administrator. Proposal and budget are drafted, revised, completed and approved prior to submission.

[Proposal Development](#)



PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Who: Grants Office

The Grants Office submits all application materials to the grantor at least two days prior to the due date and will notify the project team with updates.

[Proposal Submission](#)

POST-AWARD ACTIVITIES

AWARD ACCEPTANCE

Who: Grants Office, COD Administration

Once a grant is awarded, the Grants Office will process agreements and documentation through the proper channels. An announcement will be made to the wider COD community.

[Award Acceptance](#)



GRANT MANAGEMENT

Who: Grants Office, Grant Accountant, and Project Team

As project activities progress, the project teams are responsible for collecting data, submitting reports on time, and addressing issues as they arise.

[Grant Management](#) and [Reporting](#)



GRANT CLOSEOUT

Who: Grants Office and Grant Accountant

When the grant timeframe concludes and all reports are submitted, the Grants Office and Grant Accountant will close out and grant and keep relevant documents on file.

[Grant Close-Out](#)

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Funding Opportunity

The Grants Office searches daily for new funding opportunities across all government agencies and through several databases of private funding sources. If a potential opportunity is identified and aligns with the goals of the College, the information will be shared directly to the specific administrator, staff, or faculty member.

Details to consider before developing the idea into a proposal

External funding can enhance programs and provide resources not available in the college's operating budget. However, it is important to consider the following:

- Does the project align with the goals and objectives of COD and your Division?
- How will the project impact COD faculty, staff, facilities, and budget?
- What is needed for the project to be successful (personnel, equipment, venue)?
- What are the anticipated outcomes of the project?

It is important to consider the fiscal and personnel costs of running the project, should it be funded. While assistance can be built into a grant budget, it is the Project Director (or Principal Investigator, most often the faculty member, staff, or administrator who initiates the project) who will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the program, collecting necessary data, and meeting all reporting requirements.

Time is of the essence when preparing a proposal. The sooner the Grants Office is involved, and the project team is put together, the more time there is to develop a strong and competitive proposal.

Proposal Development

Creating the initial proposal and budget

Prior to any proposal being developed, the administrator in charge of the department or division (depending on the proposal level) must approve of the proposed project and planned submission. For example, a faculty member looking to fund a project for their department must be approved by the department dean.

After the initial discussion of the outline of the project and administrative approval, the Grants Office will contact the Grant Accountant office, where one will be assigned to the project. The assigned Grant Accountant will be included in every meeting and will work in conjunction with the rest of the proposal development team. Grant Accountants will craft and refine a project budget based on the work plan. Project Directors and other members of the team are not permitted to release a proposal or budget to anyone else without the expressed approval of the Grant Manager and Grant Accountant.

The preliminary draft of the proposal will be written by either the Grants Manager, Grants Specialist, Project Director, or a combination of these people, depending on the content expertise needed and the timeframe for completion. The initial draft will then be reviewed by all project team members, including the Grant Accountant, to determine if the content meets the guidelines specified in the RFP while also meeting expectations of both the project members and the budget.

Revising the proposal

In order for the proposal to be accurate and successful, all members of the project team must carefully review the preliminary draft and make suggestions for revision. Feedback on the preliminary proposal may be requested electronically, or in the case of large/complicated proposals, discussed in face-to-face meetings.

Once all feedback is collected, a second draft will be written by the Grants Manager or Grants Specialist, again for the approval of the team. When the content is approved, one final edit will take place and the proposal will be sent for a final read-through. At this point, it is expected that changes will be minor. The Grant Accountant will also continue to work with the project team to ensure everything mentioned in the proposal is represented in the budget and budget narrative.

While the narrative is being completed, the Grants Office will work with the project team to compile any additional attachments, including an abstract, letters of support, resumes, or other requested materials. The Grants Manager and Grants Specialist will assemble the proposal, create a final PDF of all compiled materials, and send it to the project team for a final review and approval. All project team members are responsible for this final review and approval prior to officially submitting.

Approval of the proposal and budget

Once the budget is finalized, the Grant Accountant is responsible for obtaining approval from the Finance Office. The Grant Accountant also takes responsibility for completing the relevant budget forms and budget narrative prior to submission. Once the budget and budget narrative are approved by the Finance Office, no changes can be made. The budget serves as a foundation for a binding contract if the grant proposal is approved. The final approved draft of the proposal, along with the budget, is sent to the President's Office for signature before submission for the purposes of accountability.

Proposal Submission

The Grants Office strives to submit all proposals at least two days prior to the due date in case there are issues with submitting online or if there are multiple grants due simultaneously. Please note that when reviewing an RFP, do not consider the due date in the RFP to be the internal deadline.

All grants proposed on behalf of College of DuPage, its faculty, staff, or administration must be submitted through the Grants Office (per COD Administrative Procedure 10-100). No grants should be submitted by individuals or departments without the approval and involvement of the Grants Office, as this is a violation of official policy and oversight.

Award Acceptance

Once a new grant is awarded, the Grants Office will manage the approval process of all grant documents. The Grant Accountant will establish a new GL code to record all expenditures related to the grant project. Once the fully executed contract is received by the Grants Office, the Grants Office will announce the award to the greater COD community via appropriate channels. Shortly after, the Grants Manager, Grants Specialist, and Grant Accountant will meet with the project team to clarify requirements of the program, the scope of work, and the appropriate processes for expenditure of grant funds as outlined in the agreement.

If new to the grants process, an initial project team meeting will be scheduled and will include the Project Director, project personnel, administrator, Grants Manager, Grants Specialist, Grant Accountant, and the appropriate Dean when necessary. This initial meeting will provide the opportunity to review the funding agency's reporting needs and the college's established procedures in relation to the grant.

It is imperative that each person understands both internal and external policies, and the specific grant management responsibilities required by the funding agency. The Grants Manager may modify or waive the initial meeting depending on individual experience/need of the Project Director and the nature of the grant project.

Grant Management

Common issues that arise during the grant activity period may include:

- Funds not being expended according to the agreed-upon timeframe.
- Data has not been collected in a timely fashion.
- Other unforeseen issues or unintended consequences that come up, threatening the integrity of the project.

If such issues come up, the Grants Manager or Grants Specialist may request regular follow-up meetings with the Project Director and Grant Accountant in order to ensure compliance. In some cases, especially

for large multi-year grants or more complex projects, regular meetings will be scheduled throughout the term of the grant as a means of providing proactive assistance to the project team (see [Problem Mediation](#)).

Grant Close-Out

Once all funds are expended and the final reports submitted, the grant will be closed by the Grants Office and the Grant Accountant. All project files are kept for three, five, or seven years, according to the regulations of the funding agency.

Roles and Responsibilities

The successful management of a grant program relies on the collaborative efforts of the Project Director, project personnel, the Grants Office, and the Finance Office:

The Project Director is responsible for

- Day-to-day implementation, management, and assessment of the funded project.
- Maintenance of time sheets for all administrators, faculty, or operational personnel that are listed as in-kind services.
- Maintenance of detailed files of project activities.
- Regular updates to their immediate supervisor regarding the status of the project.
- Immediate updates to the Grants Office for any project concerns.
- Development of newsworthy stories of project activities or outcomes to be shared with Marketing, External Relations, and the greater community.
- Timely preparation and submission of all required reports, with assistance as needed or prescribed by the Finance or Grants Offices.

The Grants Office is responsible for

- Being the official contact and liaison with the funding agency. If the funder should contact the Project Director directly, it is essential that the Project Director inform the Grants Office immediately about the communication and any changes to the program resulting from it. Under no circumstances should the Project Director contact the funder directly.
- Training the Project Director and their team as needed so the grant program may be successful.
- Troubleshooting when issues arise with a grant program. If it appears that the program will not meet its objectives on time and within budget – or the Project Director perceives any other type of problem with the grant project – the Grants Office must be informed immediately. Problems are usually solved if caught early on, but if left to grow they can result in noncompliance and adverse consequences to the institution.
- Keeping a grant file with the RFP, proposal, correspondence, signed contracts, reports, budget or program amendments, news releases, and any other appropriate information.

The Grant Accountants Office is responsible for

- Maintenance of official internal fiscal records as required by the funding agency.
- Assurance that all federal, state, and college financial requirements are followed in the expenditure and accounting procedures for external funds.
- Review of grant expenditure requests for compliance and available funding. Questions regarding allowable expenditures should be checked with the Grant Accountant prior to incurring the expense.
- Review of the grant budget and related expenditures to assure accurate accounting.
- Preparation of requests for reimbursement.
- Arrangement of audits in a timely manner as required for the grant project.
- Keeping a grant file containing a copy of the proposal, copies of official documents, budget, and program amendments.

Ensuring Compliance

Grants and contracts received from government and private agencies are legally binding agreements and grant recipients must fully comply with their terms. When a grant is awarded to COD, the college receives a contract which requires project personnel to fully comply with the terms set out in the contract, even if they are modified from the original proposal.

Noncompliance can result in:

- Termination of the contract
- The requirement to refund money
- Adverse publicity
- A higher level of scrutiny in the future
- Reduced likelihood of future funding from this or other sources

Data Collection and Reporting

Timeframe

Data collection should begin with the first project activity. All project activities and data should be documented according to the plan prescribed in the proposal, or according to funder guidelines. Timely collection and entry of data ensures issues are caught early and the subsequent reports are accurate. Project data can then be used to inform decisions about later activities or program components.

Meeting project requirements

It is the Project Director's responsibility to be aware of the types of data required for the funding agency. Most often this will be built into the proposal and/or contract, but whether or not it has been specified ahead of time, it is necessary to begin collecting the required data immediately. In some instances, this will require establishing systems for data collection and entry. The Grants Office is able to assist with this effort as needed.

Meeting reporting deadlines

Grant reports usually require recording of project data on a quarterly basis. Reporting deadlines are noted by the Grants Office and included on the team's production calendar. It is important for all stakeholders of the project team to be aware and comply with these deadlines. The Grants Office will also set internal dates for receiving report drafts or data so that appropriate approval signatures can be obtained and the reports may be submitted on time. Please be aware with multiple grant projects on campus, there are often many reports due at the same time. The Project Director is responsible for meeting the internal dates set by the Grants Office in order to expedite the process of filing the required reports.

All reports must be submitted by the Grants Office (or in the case of financial reports, the Grant Accountant). Under no circumstances should the Project Director individually submit reports to the funder.

Problem Mediation

Despite best efforts, occasionally certain aspects of a project do not go according to the original plan. When a Project Director has challenges meeting objectives, collecting data, or expending funds, they must inform the Grants Office immediately. Often, if caught early enough, problems can be easily solved. When too much time has passed and deadlines approach, tasks and compliance become more difficult.

When an issue arises, a meeting is called between the Grants Manager, Grants Specialist, Project Director, Grant Accountant, and other project personnel as necessary. Using the documentation of the project, the team will work out what has happened and why, and what the next steps are. In most cases, steps can be taken to get the project back on track, preventing further involvement with the funding agency. However, should a revision to the project or budget become necessary, the Grants Office will contact the funding agency and make the appropriate request. Contact made outside the Grants Office leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding about how to continue the project, therefore it is imperative that only the Grants Office be in communication with the funder.

Requests for project revision

Grant projects are funded based on the activity plan submitted with the proposal. It is expected the project will be implemented as planned. Program changes resulting in a modification of the scope of work or the objectives of the approved project require prior approval of the Finance Office and the funding agency. The Grants Office will coordinate the request for program change with all internal and external departments or agencies as appropriate.

Requests for a project revision should not occur except in extraordinary circumstances and should follow the funding agency's requirements. The requests should explain the desired revision, reasons for the revision, potential outcomes if the revision does not occur, how the revision will affect the project, and when the revision will be completed. The Grants Office will submit the request to the funding agency. If approved, the original document from the funder will be retained in the official project file, with copies shared with the project management team. If the original is sent to the Project Director, it should be forwarded immediately to the Grants Office for processing.

Requests for budget modifications

Project Directors may expend grant funds only in the amounts listed in the final proposal negotiated with the funding agency. Federal guidelines are flexible enough to allow minor line item changes within the total award without prior approval from the agency. If a change is anticipated, the Project Director and Grant Accountant should determine what is allowable. No expenditures outside the original budget should be made without the approval of the Grant Accountant.

Requests for extensions or carryover of funds

It is possible to request an extension on a grant and to carry over unexpended funds into the following year in order to complete unfinished program objectives. However, this should only occur under extraordinary circumstances, and a project should never be conducted on the assumption that an extension will be approved by the funding agency.

In order to request a project extension, adequate notice must be given to the funding agency at least 90 days before the expiration of the grant. If the need for an extension is anticipated, the Project Director should inform the Grants and Finance Offices to review the program guidelines and determine if an extension of funds is possible. The Grants Office will coordinate the request for an extension or carryover of funds with the agency. While waiting for a response, the Grants Manager will call the entire project team together to plan for how to complete the project successfully if the extension is approved, and how to proceed if it is not.

Glossary

Compliance — Following the requirements of the grant contract once it is awarded. All grant projects at COD are expected to be in full compliance at all times. Any deviation from the grant contract must first be discussed with the Grants Office, and approved by the funding agency. The funding agency will be contacted by the Grants Office prior to any change in action taken by the project team.

Contract — A legal document specifying the scope of work, budget, and timeframe for the grant project. When a grant is funded, a contract is issued and COD is bound by the terms of that contract.

Cost Sharing — A financial contribution by the grantee. For a grant proposal at COD it is imperative that approval is received to provide cost sharing before the grant is developed or submitted. Cost sharing can be anywhere from 25% to 100%, and may or may not include “in-kind” cost matching.

Data Collection — The ongoing collection of documentation that will be used to determine whether, and the extent to which, project objectives have been met. When a grant is funded, data collection should be ongoing and will be used to meet reporting requirements established by the funding agency.

Direct Costs — Expenses which can be itemized in a grant budget. This often includes salaries and wages, fringe benefits, supplies, travel, communication, equipment, rentals and consultation, marketing, etc. As a grant is developed, the project team will work closely with the Grant Accountant to determine appropriate and allowable direct costs.

Evaluation — A formative and summative look at project data to determine whether, and the extent to which, project objectives have been met. Formative data is used to inform subsequent programming decisions, and summative data is used as a definitive snapshot of performance for reporting to the funding agency or to the college.

Grant personnel — Personnel employed via grant funds must be hired in accordance with college policies. Grant employees are not considered permanent employees, in that they will have no implied or guaranteed employment beyond the official grant-funding period. If grant positions are available, the Project Director will work with Human Resources to determine the final job description. The Human Resources Office will be responsible for:

- Advertising and posting all grant-funded positions as defined in the grant guidelines proposal.
- Maintaining hiring records of all grant personnel.
- Offering guidance and instruction as needed to the Project Director should personnel issues arise.

In-Kind Contribution — A service or item donated in lieu of cash to the operation of a funded project. As a proposal is developed, the project team will work with the Grant Accountants to determine allowable in-kind contributions and their value for inclusion in the proposal. In-kind contributions may include volunteer hours, materials, or other services.

Indirect Costs — The expenses indirectly associated with the funded project. This includes administrative expenses, utilities, maintenance, library facilities, etc., and is usually expressed as a percentage of total costs. Allowable indirect costs are often prescribed in the guidelines and will be ultimately determined by the Grant Accountant.

Letter of Intent/Inquiry (LOI) — A brief letter containing a description of a proposed project, estimated budget, and information on the applicant. This is typically used to screen out ineligible or inappropriate projects before the full proposal is developed and submitted. Letters of Intent will be developed and submitted by the Grants Office in collaboration with the project team.

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) — A document that publicly releases a grant opportunity. The document has all of the information needed to complete a grant application, including funding scope, goals, funding amounts/caps, evaluation criteria, eligibility requirements, and components that need to be submitted to the funder for consideration. Also see Request for Proposal.

Priorities — Annual program plans developed by funders include objectives and areas of emphasis. Priorities may be “absolute,” meaning if the project does not include specific elements in a certain way, it will not be considered for funding. The Grants Office will work with project teams to ensure proposals with specific priorities have the required elements to be most competitive.

Restricted Funds — Funds for operation that are restricted for use by the grant, contract, or agreement to a specified purpose or timeframe. The Grant Accountant will determine whether activities proposed for restricted funds meet the criteria, and no funds will be expended without their approval.

Request for Proposal (RFP) — RFPs are released on a regular basis and the Grants Office will ensure that each division is made aware when a relevant funding opportunity becomes available.