

Checklist and Recommendations for Proposal Preparation - UCFER Round 6

Receipt Deadline at PSU: 5 PM EDT June 10th, 2020 (Wednesday)

Receipt Deadline for WVU OSP for Completed Proposal: Wednesday June 3rd, 2020 @ 4:45 PM

All proposals from WVU must be submitted by OSP following the usual guidelines for internal approvals from College and Center/Institute directors and in compliance with OSP procedures regarding submission deadlines for OSP processing procedures.

Applicable F & A and Benefits Rates:

Research, On Campus: 52% Other Sponsored Activities, On Campus: 32.5% All Off Campus: 26%

F/T Benefits Eligible: 24% Non Benefits Eligible P/T: 7.4% Graduate Students: 7.0% Undergraduates: 1.9%

Bajura Ref. #	Title of Section	Required / Optional	Max. Pages	Comment for PI / OSP	Advisory Comments from Bajura
0	Checklist	Required	1	A checklist template is provided as Attachment E	Be careful to ensure that you have a check in all boxes. The Bajura check list includes one addition at the end of the PSU checklist, namely, letters of endorsement from industry . Such letters are recommended, but a reference to such letters is not on the PSU checklist.
1	Cover Sheet	Required	2	A template is provided. Please refer to Attachment F. <u>Note that the both PI and an OSP official must sign page two of the cover page section.</u>	Be sure to get your materials to OSP on time for their processing requirements. Early contact with OSP about your interest in submitting a proposal is recommended.

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2	Table of Contents	Required	1	Start the table with Executive Summary as the first item	Your table of contents will be pretty much what you have on the checklist. There is one section that is described on Page 6 of the RFP in Section J. Letters of support from industry or other organizations / universities are encouraged. There are no page limits on a letter of support and the number of pages of letters will not count against the Maximum Page limit, contrary to what might appear in Section J. If you have subcontractors on your proposal, their endorsements would be stated in the Collaborative Documentation from Subcontractors section which will be described below.
3	Executive Summary	Required	1	Section is to be used as a public announcement, so make it understandable to a lay person and avoid any statements that might be considered proprietary information.	Write your summary for a layman to understand, but remember to be technically correct. Tell us if you will have team partners from other universities or with industry. Describe the work you will undertake, tell what problem will be solved, briefly describe method, and tell what kind of results you expect to have when completed. <u>Proposal reviewers will get their first glimpse of what you are proposing to do in this section.</u> You have only one chance to make a good first impression that will color the reviewer's opinion of your proposal throughout the rest of their review of your review.
4	Project Description	Required	5	The RFP provides statements as to what, as a minimum, is expected in this section.	Note that references should be cited, but they will appear at the end of your 5 pages of text and will not be counted against your five page limit. Start your list of references on a new page to avoid references being counted as part of your five page technical discussion. Avoid being too technical and getting lost in the weeds in this section. Make sure you clearly state what you are going to do at the beginning and tell us what you will have accomplished at the end of the five pages.

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5	Project Schedule	Required	1	Hints are given in the text for the style(s) that are acceptable for a project schedule	You are given a whole page for this chart. Make a good presentation. You can also provide annotation to the chart to explain your milestones, so long as you stay within one page.
6	Anticipated Results and Impacts	Required	1	The RFP describes information recommended to be discussed in this section.	A summary statement of this section should appear in your Executive Summary in non-technical terms.
7	Description of Collaborative Work with NETL	Required	2	<u>This section is very important in the evaluation of your proposal.</u> Follow the instructions provided in the RFP.	While you are not required nor encouraged to identify an NETL collaborator in the proposal, you should do homework to see what kind of work is being done by in-house researchers at NETL so that you can describe the kind of collaboration you need from NETL in a better context.
8	<i>Description of Equipment</i>	<i>Optional</i>	2	<i>If you have specialty equipment in your lab or will have access to such equipment, please describe the equipment you will use. You need not spend much time discussing the usual equipment present in laboratories, but at least state that such equipment is available to you.</i>	<i>Please be concise if you attach this section to your proposals. The reviewers have enough to read as it is, and if your equipment is routine, you don't need to ask them to read two pages about topics that are commonly known or expected for a laboratory doing your kind of work.</i>

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9	Budget	Required	Variable	A budget template is provided in the RFP as Attachment G. This budget page is required for the proposal and may be different from any internal budget you provide to your Department or to OSP for their records. Note the requirements for travel funds to the Annual UCFER meeting.	The budget template is structured such that Cost Sharing Funds, if any, appear on the far right hand column of the budget template and funds requested from UCFER are in the column in the center of the page. You should list dollar values for your costs on the Attachment G page and provide justifications on additional sheets as necessary.
10	Cost Share Commitments	Required if Cost Share is Proposed	As Needed	Any cost share commitments for the proposal must be well documented, whether from WVU or from external participants (co-investigator organizations or interested parties providing funding). The cost share commitment letter from a partner organization can be a simple statement identifying the monetary value of the cost share and a short statement that describes what the commitment will consist of. For example, \$5 K in money provided to WVU and \$20 K in staff time as in-kind cost share for research on (whatever they will do). The total value of the cost share should be entered in the Joint Collaboration location on the Budget template (Attachment G). See the RFP for details.	Be sure to contact your partners early in the process to ensure that you can have their commitments on hand to meet the deadline for OSP review of your completed proposal.
11	Biographical Sketches	Required	2 Pages per Investigator	Consult the RFP for information requested. Note that publications are limited to 10 in number.	The standard NSF template may be sufficient for preparing your bio.

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12	Collaborative Documentation	Required if Collaboration is Proposed	As Needed	This section will contain statements from each collaborator on your project that describe the work to be performed and any resources they provide. The collaborator should provide a budget for their work (if receiving funds from UCFER) and describe any cost share commitments they make such as in-kind services. This section is a Statement of Work from the collaborator and provides more detail than the cost share number described in #10 above.	My recommendation is that you seek two letters from each collaborator. The letter submitted for cost share commitments (Bajura #10 above) would be a short letter stating that they will provide cost share of a certain value and describe the cost share as money or in-kind contribution that can be summarized in a few words. The Collaborative Documentation (Bajura #12) would be a longer letter that is a Statement of Work from the collaborator describing what they will do on their part of the proposal, including budgets for sub-awards and deliverables for their share of the work on the project.
13	Logistical Information	Optional	As Needed	Refer to Section J, Page 6 of the RFP. Only the first sentence is relevant. The second sentence will be removed in future solicitations	NETL and UCFER encourage letters of support from entities that are not participants in the proposal (e.g., subcontractors who get UCFER money or Industry members who provide cost share). If you have contacts who are willing to write a letter endorsing your work as being worthwhile or beneficial to future commercialization of their product, for example, ask them to write a letter in support of your work. Their letter should be factual and not patronizing.
14	Environmental Questionnaire	Required	Form Provided	The environmental questionnaire is available at the WVU Energy Institute web site for the UCFER program. Click on Programs, then on Learn More about UCFER, and look at the bottom of the UCFER home page for the Round 6 Reference Documents hot link. The Environmental Questionnaire will be inserted as the last section at the end of the proposal.	THIS FORM WILL TAKE CONSIDERABLE TIME TO COMPLETE, SO GET STARTED EARLY. You need to complete this form even if you are doing a paper study.

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Notes					
1	Your proposal will eventually be put together in a PDF format that is required to be less than 15 Megabytes in size. Start each section as a new page since your page limits are fixed for each section as opposed to an overall page limit for the proposal.				
2	Do a good job on your executive summary. It sets the tone for what the reviewer will interpret from your comments in the remainder of the proposal. Tell them what you will do and why up front so that they don't have to figure out what you want to do or what you will achieve.				
3	Note that you will be required to submit the names and contact information for five persons who would be candidates for reviewing your proposal. This information will be presented to UCFER on the Submittal Page, which will be completed by OSP. You will be responsible for preparing the text for the Submittal Page so that OSP folks need only spend the time copying from your version of the Submittal Page to the electronic Submittal Page that will be completed on the PSU web site. Please refer to the Submittal Page tab in this Excel File and to the WVU Energy Institute web site for UCFER to obtain a copy of the Submittal Page for your use in preparing this information.				

Tab: Submittal Page

Submittal Page

All proposals must be submitted by the OSP.

The proposals are submitted electronically to PSU

PSU requires a Submittal Page that must be completed by OSP to upload your proposal to the Penn State site. However, Principal Investigators or their designee must prepare the text for the Submittal Page so that OSP can upload this information "on-line" to the PSU site when the proposal is ready for submission.

A copy of the proposal submission information form is available on the Energy Institute web site for UCFER. To find this page, please go to the WVU Energy Institute web site and click on the Programs tab. Under Programs tab, click on the UCFER tab to get to the UCFER home page. Go to the bottom of the page to find the hot link for Round 6 Reference Documents. The Submittal Page has the file name: PI Template for Submittal Page.

Tab: Comments on Score Sheet

Comments on Proposal Scoring		
The rating categories are discussed first. Then comments about the Review Process. Please refer to Page 6, Section M of the RFP for a discussion of the evaluation criteria and to Attachment H for the rating choices for each of the criteria.		
<u>Rating Categories</u>		
<u>Rating Category</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Merit of Proposed Collaboration with NETL	20	You can see by the points allotted (20% of total score) that this category is considered very important in the rating. Both NETL and the reviewers who are UCFER members give considerable weighting to this category. Please put effort into describing your collaboration in a meaningful format that reflects understanding of what capabilities and interests there are on the part of in-house researchers at NETL regarding your proposed area and where their programs are going.
Meeting Objectives of the Subtopic	10	Please read the descriptors about each subtopic - RFP Sections W, X, Y, and Z to understand what is requested. Proposals that do not address the kind of information described in these Sections will score poorly in terms of responsiveness.

Tab: Comments on Score Sheet

Idea and Approach	20	This section is also weighted heavily. Be sure to describe your proposed work carefully and tell why you think your work will be successful and why it will advance the field in a big step rather than an incremental change. Make sure that the readers know of your expertise in this area by virtue of previous work you have done that relates to the project.
Project Achievability	10	Show that you have the resources available to achieve the results you propose. Do you have the equipment you need? Is your staffing adequate to get the work done? Can the work be done in the time frame available to you in terms of the length of the award program? Are you realistic in terms of what you can get done from the NETL collaboration?
Research Impacts	20	It is difficult to tell what the future will be, but since there are 20 points allocated to this section, please give this topic some thought. Be realistic in what you say will be the impacts of your work.
Qualification of Key Personnel	15	Most proposers are qualified in their field of work. Doing a good job in listing your credentials in the field of your proposed work is important. Likewise doing a good job in the proposal of describing your approach will be a big plus in getting a favorable score for this section. Give the reviewers a reason to score you higher than others in this category.

Tab: Comments on Score Sheet

Project Management and Budget	5	While this category is not much in terms of points, it is worthwhile to do a good job on your budget - like realistic personnel allocations and avoid padding the budget with excessive trips or excessive "supplies" which are not clearly understood. A point or two on your overall score can be the difference between being funded or an also-ran.
<u>Discussion of Review Process</u>		
UCFER relies on external reviewers and internal reviewers. A minimum of three reviews are sought.		
Two reviewers for each proposal are UCFER members from the Technical Advisory Council (TAC) or the Core Competency Advisory Board (CCAB) or other UCFER members who are not on either the TAC or CCAB. All UCFER reviewers are evaluated to avoid conflict of interest in reviewing proposals in which their institution is a participant. Some of the UCFER experts in a field may be disqualified due to conflict of interest because of their own proposal in the competition or another faculty member in their institution having submitted a proposal in the area the reviewer is asked to participate. So, there may be few viable reviewers among the UCFER members who are really experts who could review your proposal when you get down to options. Therefore, do a good job technically in writing your proposal, but remember that it may be reviewed by a person who is not intimately familiar with your work. Therefore, make it easy for a reviewer to understand what you are trying to do.		
UCFER also tries to get one external reviewer outside of the UCFER membership to get a review that is not in the Coalition.		
UCFER wants you to nominate five reviewers because it is hard to get a reviewer to agree to do, say, four or five proposals from UCFER. Reviewers are asked to do a number of reviews from a the same topical area so that we have one person doing a number of reviews to ensure some uniformity of rating rather than finding a different specific reviewer for each proposal. So, recommend some external reviewers who will likely understand what you are proposing so that there can be at least one solid external reviewer on the panel of three reviewers.		

Tab: Comments on Score Sheet

Proposals are ranked at the bottom line by each reviewer as follows:
Funding Recommended
Funding may be Considered
Do Not Fund
So, you have a system that develops numbers as in the first section above and a section that develops an overall assessment as per the three rating factors listed immediately above.
My observations are that the scores are tabulated and averaged and the TAC then discusses funding recommendations without questioning if the reviewers may have misunderstood the proposal or have contradictory statements in their report, or may be not partial to a given technology and as a result are a "poison pill" reviewer. The numerical scores are averaged to come up with an overall number. The overall evaluation assigned to each proposal is then studied as well. The Technical Advisory Council discusses each proposal and tries to come to a consensus opinion. If there are varied opinions, that data is also recorded. This input goes to the UCFER Executive Committee. The UCFER Executive Committee then considers all of these inputs and recommends proposals to NETL. NETL then reviews all the inputs and chooses proposals to fund from the list provided by the Executive Committee. Bottom line here is that your objective is to write a proposal that explains things well enough to be understood by all the reviewers and fulfills all the requirements in the RFP regarding information requested.
You need to make a good enough impression with your reviewers so that you can get a rating of Funding Recommended from each reviewer. Each reviewer's scoring may be slanted differently, but their overall assessment is a kind of equalizer that ensures that the numerical averages are normalized independently of the standards of each reviewer.