Policy 20.3: Pre-Proposals for Sponsored Projects

**Effective Date:** January 6, 2020  
**Last Updated:** August 31, 2022  
**Responsible Office:** Office of Research Services and Outreach (ORSO)  
**Contact:** Director, Research Services and Outreach

### Reason for Policy

In some instances, sponsors ask for a pre-proposal as the first stage of the proposal review process to conduct preliminary screening of potential applicants for a sponsored project. This policy establishes the guidelines for the submission of pre-proposals in order to authorize commitments on behalf of the University, ensures that UNC Charlotte does not submit more than the allowed number of pre-proposals for limited submission funding opportunities, and enhances data collection on research productivity.

### Policy Statement

A pre-proposal establishes communication between the sponsor and the applicant to determine whether a full proposal should be submitted and, in some instances, to obtain advice that will improve the proposal’s chance of success. Pre-proposals can take many forms, including a shortened version of the proposal, a letter of intent (LOI), or a white paper, the specifics of which are either outlined in the funding opportunity announcement or otherwise communicated by the sponsor. Occasionally a pre-proposal may result in an award without the need to subsequently submit a full proposal. Other times, an invitation to submit a full proposal follows a pre-proposal.

The pre-proposal must be routed for internal approval before being submitted to a sponsor if any of the following circumstances apply:

- Limited submission: the number of pre-proposals and/or full-proposals either from the University or from a College/School/Center is limited. In these instances, the PI must request and receive approval from the Center for Research Excellence to submit;
- An authorized signatory is required or the pre-proposal is submitted through an electronic system that requires submission by an Authorized Signing Official (e.g. Fastlane, Grants.gov, etc.);
- The pre-proposal commits the University to cost sharing of any kind;
- The sponsor requests project budget information of any kind as part of the pre-proposal, except when the pre-proposal includes only a total proposed amount that matches the maximum award amount cited in the call for proposals, or when the sponsor requires the amount requested from all applicants to be listed as a specific, predetermined amount.
**Procedures**

Pre-proposals requiring internal approval are prepared and routed for internal approval via the University’s electronic research administration system. If applicable, **PI eligibility status** may need to be confirmed and an **F&A waiver** may need to be requested and approved as part of the pre-proposal approval process. The **5-day rule for institutional review** process applies to pre-proposals that require internal approvals.

If the sponsor approves the pre-proposal for submission of the full application, the full application should also be prepared and routed for internal approval via the University’s electronic research administration system.

**Exclusions/Exceptions**

None

**Failure to Comply**

Failure to obtain required approvals prior to the submission of a pre-proposal can result in the University declining to approve a resulting full proposal submission, or significant changes being required to the full proposal submission.

**Related Information**

Policy 20.1: PI Status  
Policy 20.2: Deadline for Proposal Submissions to University Offices  
Policy 50.3: Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Costs  
Guidelines for Charging Facilities and Administrative Costs