

Federal Grant Proposal Checklist

A guide for preparing proposals for submission to federal funding agencies (e.g., NSF, NIH, DOE, DOD, ED, USDA, NEH).

How to use this checklist: Work through each section below before routing your proposal for internal sign-off. Confirm agency-specific instructions in the funding opportunity announcement (FOA/NOFO) always supersede general guidance here. Contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) early — most federal agencies require institutional review at least 5 business days before the deadline.

1. PRE-SUBMISSION PLANNING

- ☐ Funding opportunity announcement (FOA/NOFO) identified and reviewed in full
- ☐ Eligibility requirements confirmed (institutional, PI, and project eligibility)
- ☐ Internal Notice of Intent to Submit filed with ORSP (send to cbranch@cai.edu)
- ☐ Agency deadline and CAU internal routing deadline both confirmed
 - CAU typically requires final documents in the routing system 5 business days prior to the agency deadline.*
- ☐ SAM.gov registration and Grants.gov account active and current
- ☐ eRA Commons / agency-specific portal account active (if applicable, e.g., NIH, NSF Research.gov)

2. ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS

- ☐ Cover letter / face page completed and signed
- ☐ Application/cover forms (SF-424 family or agency equivalent) completed
- ☐ Table of contents (if required by agency)
- ☐ Project abstract / summary (within agency word or page limit)
- ☐ Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) signature obtained

3. PROJECT NARRATIVE

- ☐ Statement of need / significance
- ☐ Goals, objectives, and specific aims clearly stated
- ☐ Research design, methodology, or approach described
- ☐ Project timeline / work plan with milestones included
- ☐ Evaluation plan and success metrics defined
- ☐ Dissemination plan (publications, presentations, broader impacts)
- ☐ Narrative complies with agency page limit, margins, and font requirements

4. BUDGET & BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

- ☐ Detailed line-item budget completed (SF-424A or agency form)
- ☐ Budget justification narrative for each line item
- ☐ Correct current federally negotiated indirect cost (F&A) rate applied
- ☐ Cost-share / matching funds documented and approved (if required)
- ☐ Subaward or consortium budgets and justifications included, if applicable
- ☐ Budget reviewed and approved by ORSP / Grants & Contracts Accounting

5. PERSONNEL & BIOGRAPHICAL DOCUMENTS

- ☐ Biographical sketches / CVs for all key personnel (agency-specific format)
- ☐ Current & Pending Support (or Other Support) forms for all senior personnel
- ☐ Letters of commitment from co-investigators and collaborators
- ☐ Effort levels and salary support consistent across narrative, budget, and forms

6. COMPLIANCE & INSTITUTIONAL ASSURANCES

- ☐ Human subjects determination made; IRB approval or exemption obtained/pending
- ☐ Animal subjects protocol approved by IACUC, if applicable
- ☐ Data Management and Sharing Plan included, if required
- ☐ Conflict of interest disclosures completed by all senior/key personnel
- ☐ Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training documented, if required
- ☐ Biosafety, export control, or other regulatory approvals addressed, if applicable

7. FACILITIES, RESOURCES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- ☐ Facilities, equipment, and resources statement
- ☐ Letters of support from partner organizations or community collaborators
- ☐ Institutional letters of support / endorsement
- ☐ References / bibliography formatted per agency guidelines
- ☐ Appendices assembled and within any page or count limits

8. FINAL REVIEW & SUBMISSION

- ☐ All required forms completed in Grants.gov / agency portal without validation errors
- ☐ Full proposal proofread for consistency across narrative, budget, and forms
- ☐ Internal ORSP routing and sign-off completed (send to cbranch@cau.edu)
- ☐ Proposal submitted ahead of the agency deadline (accounting for portal/system delays)

- ☐ Confirmation of successful submission received and saved
- ☐ Copy of final submitted proposal archived with ORSP

Questions? Contact the CAU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) for guidance on agency-specific requirements, budget development, and compliance approvals.