

AUBURN UNIVERSITY AT  
MONTGOMERY

OFFICE OF  
SPONSORED PROGRAM AND  
RESEARCH (OSPR)

PROCEDURAL MANUAL

Revised 2025

## **SECTION I**

### **Mission Statement**

The Office of Sponsor Programs and Research is a service-oriented office prepared to assist faculty and staff in the steps necessary to secure and administer external funding.

The mission of OSPR is to promote external funding at Auburn University at Montgomery and to serve as the coordinating office for all external funding, exclusive of gifts and donations. This includes all grant/contract applications, and sub-contracts.

### **Objectives of the Office of Sponsor programs and Research (OSPR)**

The objectives of OSPR are to:

1. Ensure Auburn University at Montgomery's community understanding and knowledge of services and how external funding can assist them in achieving individual and institutional goals.
2. Provide services, which facilitate and expand access to external funding by the University and enhance success in acquiring such resources.
3. Ensure that the terms and conditions of grants and contracts are met and productive working relations are maintained with sponsoring agencies.
4. Support and assist faculty and staff to efficiently carry out the activities supported by grants and contracts within the complex environment of sponsor rules and requirements and university, state, and federal regulations.
5. Contribute to ensuring a university environment that is supportive of research, scholarship, and service to the larger community.

## **Functions of the Office of Sponsor Programs of Research (OSPR)**

OSPR is a service-oriented office prepared to assist faculty and staff in the steps necessary to secure and administer external funding. The office is responsible for the authorization of university commitments to and commitments on sponsored programs. This means that all the requests, applications, proposals, or other types of solicitations for sponsored programs funding must be coordinated through and submitted by OSPR.

1. **Liaison-** OSPR is the University unit through which local, state, and federal government and other prospective agencies and organizations channel their requests for assistance utilizing grants and contracts. In addition, it is the agent through which faculty and staff coordinate their efforts in the development of research and other sponsored programs. OSPR assists faculty and staff in making contacts with government and private foundations officials; works to stimulate the interests of these agencies in appropriate University programs; and provides a clearinghouse for information on faculty interests and University capabilities.
2. **Information Services-** Through established contacts with governmental agencies, private foundations, professional associations, OSPR maintains multiple databases sharing funding sources. Information about sources of program support – both public and private – proposal guidelines, new programs, and funding trends is shared with faculty, staff, administrators, and other persons affiliated with the University. OSPR supports access to databases and sources providing online information on funding sources.
3. **Proposal Preparation and Submission-** In most instances, faculty members and staff initiate proposals for specific program interests that require outside funding. The initial faculty interest, along with the department and school support, is important to successful proposal development. In order to facilitate the preparation for the proposal, OSPR offers assistance with:

- Identifying potential sources of funding.
  - Disseminating grant information.
  - Securing sponsors guidelines.
  - Provide assistance in proposal preparation and editing.
  - Assist with budgets and budgeting information.
  - Interpret applicable federal regulations, terms and conditions of sponsors relevant to carrying out and administering sponsored projects.
  - Proposal routing assistance in obtaining administrative approvals, prior to submissions to the external sponsors.
- 4. Award Administration** – Once a grant or contract is awarded to the University, OSPR maintains and coordinates review procedures necessary to ensure compliance with applicable University, State of Alabama, and grantors’ policies and guidelines; provides general administrative services to the PIs, including institutional support of the programs; provides academic and other administrative units with appropriate reports and current statuses of all sponsored programs and funded research activities; monitors compliance with both federal and state regulations; including revisions, on behalf of the University.

All funding being sought by the University is required to pass-through OSPR.

## **Section II**

OSPR supports pre-award administrative functions and limited post-award services, associated with grants, cooperative agreements and contracts.

### **Section II-1                      Sponsored Programs**

- Direct payments to individuals, such as faculty fellowships and sabbatical support.
- Students financial aid.
- Gifts and bequests to the university.

- Donations of equipment or property.

For all sponsored programs involving University employees or facilities, Auburn University at Montgomery is the official applicant and awardee. The faculty and staff members who will oversee or undertake the work are the principal investigators or directors of these sponsored programs.

## **Section II – 2           Types of Funding Sources**

### **1. Government**

Federal, state, and local government entities provide support for various sponsored programs. Examples of federal funding sources include the U.S. Department of Education (DOED), National Science Foundation (NSF), Health Services (HHS) including Nation Institute of Health (NIH), and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Examples of state funding sources include Alabama State Department of Education (SDE), Department of Economics and Community Affairs (ADECA), and the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR).

### **2. Foundations**

According to the Foundations Center, private and community foundations are nonprofit organizations with its own funds (usually from a single source, either an individual, family or corporation) and a program managed by its own trustees and directors that was established to maintained or aid educational, social, charitable or other activities serving the common welfare, primarily by making grants to other non-profit organizations. Foundations are divided into four categories:

**Independent Foundations** – A fund or endowment designated by the Internal Revenue Service as a private foundation under the law, the primary function of which is the making of grants.

**Company-Sponsored Foundation** – A private foundation under the tax law deriving its funds from a profit-making company or corporation but independently constituted the purpose of

which is to make grants, usually on a broad basis although not without regard for the business interest of the corporation.

**Operating Foundation** – A fund or endowment designated under the tax law by the Internal Revenue Service as a private operating foundation, the primary purpose of which is to operate research, social welfare, or other programs determined by its governing body or charter.

**Community Foundation** – It is much like a private foundation; its funds, however, are derived from many donors rather than a single source.

### **Section II – 3                   Types of Sponsored Programs**

Sponsored programs fall into several general categories, which could serve as guides for the particular design of proposed projects. The types of sponsored programs include:

**Research**, involving any activity specifically organized to produce research outcomes.

**Education and Training**, involving any activity that is part of an institution's formally organized instruction program.

**Public Service**, involving any activity that provides non-instructional services beneficial to individuals and groups external to the institution.

**Scholarships and Fellowships**, involving any scholarship or fellowship in the form of grant, trainee stipends, prizes, and awards for individuals enrolled in formal course work.

**Other**, involving any activity that does not fall into the above categories.

### **Section II – 4                   Types of Funding Awards**

**Grants** – A grant is a pledge of support where the sponsor has little involvement in conducting the project. Grant recipients make no guarantees other than the work will be done as described in the proposal and all relevant policies and procedures will be followed. A funded proposal already incorporates the condition outlined in the sponsor's guidelines, and the sponsor will typically make no or few further restrictions.

Grants are generally made for a specific period. For multi-year projects funds may be disbursed on annually by the sponsor. The sponsors expect to receive reports and do not supervise the project. The PI/PD may be required to submit a continuation application, or an annual report as each subsequent grant year approaches in order to report program activity and assure the agency the work is on track with the plan outlined in the original proposal. On the other hand, getting the grant renewed, as opposed to continued, usually requires submission of another proposal which is competitively peer-reviewed.

**Contracts** – are commonly used by sponsors when they have specific products in mind. A contract is an agreement where the sponsor has more involvement and uses the project to achieve a specific outcome or deliverables. These deliverables are often tangible items and/or services rather than basic research outcomes. Through contracts, sponsors stipulate their needs, and the PI/PD and the sponsors come to an agreement. The process may involve bidding or competitive negotiations. Contract negotiations may involve discussion of proposed provisions restricting the publication or other use of research data and clauses affecting potential patent rights and licensing agreements. Contracts also generally require frequent, detailed reporting. In an arrangement, the sponsor is actively involved in overseeing the progress and direction of the project.

One type of contract is the **fixed fee contract**. The sponsor pays a fixed amount regardless of whether the actual costs of the activities involved turn out to be higher or lower. If the project ends up costing more than originally estimated, the university must cover the extra expense.

Another type of contract is the **cost-reimbursement contract**. Under this arrangement, the sponsor reimburses the university for the actual costs of the sponsored program, up to the amount originally awarded.

In both fixed-fee and cost-reimbursement contracts, prior approval from the sponsor is required in order to increase the amount of the award.

**Sub-Contract** - (also sub-grant, sub-agreement) is a document issued under the authority of and consistent with the terms and conditions of an award that transfers a portion of the research or effort of the project to another institution or organization. Like contracts, sub-contracts may be either fixed-fee or cost-reimbursement arrangements.

Cooperative Agreement – An agreement that combines elements of both grant and contract is known as a cooperative agreement. The sponsor has substantial involvement in the project and works together with the grantee to achieve a specific objective. Because the degree of sponsor involvement and the segregation of responsibility require specification, the cooperative agreement usually involves more detail than grant, though perhaps less than a contract. In *A Guide for Managing Federal Grants for Colleges and Universities*, some federal officials have characterized the distinction between grants and cooperative agreement as follows:

In a grant, the federal role is that of “patron”, while in a cooperative agreement, the federal role is that of “partner.”

## **Section II – 5      Responsibilities**

Each proposal for external funding has the potential to become a legal document binding the University to fulfill the conditions specified in the proposal and accepted by the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR). When a proposal is submitted to sponsor, it is submitted by the University on behalf of the PI/PD and co-investigators or co-directors.

Thus, the author of a proposal must seek, secure, substantiate the University’s commitment to issues of compliance, support, and concurrence with fiscal and programmatic statements. To do so, the author must ensure that the proposal conforms to the University’s policies, mission, and obligations; must inform relevant administrators of potential commitments of time and resources and obtain their written consent to these commitments; and must document the University’s compliance with applicable regulations.

Responsibilities associated with proposal development and submissions and the conduct of resulting sponsored programs are outlined in the following sections.

**Principle Investigator/project Director** – University policy requires that the principal investigator/project director (PI/PD) of external grants and contracts be a permanent employee (faculty member or staff member) of the University at the time of proposal submission. The responsibilities of the PI/PD include the following:

- Develop programs plans consistent with mission of submitting department/unit and college/school/division.

- Write and prepare proposal narrative and budget.
- Submit a completed and signed Proposal Transmitted Form (PTF) to department head/unit director, college or school dean/division head, and OSPR for administrative approvals.
- Send copy of final proposal to OSPR for submission to sponsor.
- Upon award, assumes responsibility for:
  - Implementation and management of program consistent with all university and sponsor policies.
  - Proper technical, programmatic, procurement, and fiscal management.
  - Appropriate maintenance of records.
  - High quality of performance.
  - Preparation of all technical or programmatic reports.
  - Reporting of equipment location for inventory purposes, as appropriate.

**Department Head/Unit Director** – If an academic department is involved, the head is the designated responsible person at the department level. If non-academic unit is involved, the unit director is the responsible party. The responsibilities of the department head/unit director include the following:

- Reviews planned project to address availability and commitment of human and support resources, including time, space, and finances.
- Assures that all faculty/staff and department/unit proposal obligations will be met.

**College/School Dean or Division Head** – The dean of the PI/PD’s college or school (or division head of non-academic unit) is the responsible party at the college/school/division level; or, if co-PI/PDs are involved from different schools, the respective deans (or division heads) are the responsible parties at this level. Their responsibilities include the following:

- Review proposal for consistency with college/school/division and University missions.
- Review planned project to address availability and commitment of college/school/division support services, including time, space and finances.

- Assure that all department/unit and college/school/division obligations, as delineated in the proposal, will be met.
- Verifies that all appropriate arrangements have been made and documented for projects involving extra space allocation, or use of major facilities. (Dean)

**Office of Sponsored programs and research** – The office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPR) performs a variety of pre-award and post-award sponsored program activities. OSPR responsibilities include the following:

- Reviews proposals for consistency with university mission and policies.
- Review budgets and financial commitments.
- Verifies that all required committee reviews have been conducted on proposals that involve research using human subjects; animal subjects; or etc.
- Reviews certifications regarding conflict of interest, lobbying, debarment and suspension for lower tier transactions, and make sure all assurances are in Compliances with federal regulations.
- Reviews and approves proposal budgets.
- Maintains official university files for sponsored projects.
- Transmits award materials to Financial Services for accounts.
- Assumes responsibility for oversight of administration of programmatic aspects of grants and contracts.
- Serves as liaison between university and external sponsors on grants and contracts.

### **Section III**

#### **Information Resources for Sponsored Programs**

The Office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPR) serves as a resource on campus for information on funding opportunities through external sponsors. Information is collected, maintained, and disseminated to faculty and staff concerning available funding opportunities and a variety of self-help resources is also provided. Online searching for potential funding sources using various resources is also available via the OSPR website page. The OSPR website provides links to Pivot, InfoEd Global SPIN, Foundation Center, grants.gov, NIH, NSF, and other



A **pre-proposal** is one requested when a sponsor wishes to minimize an applicant's effort in preparing a full proposal. Pre-proposals are usually in the form of a letter of intent or brief abstract. After a pre-proposal is reviewed, the sponsor notifies the institution if a full proposal is warranted.

A **continuation or non-competing** proposal confirms the original proposal and funding of a multi-year project for which the sponsor has already provided funding for an initial period. Continued support is usually contingent on satisfactory program/project performance and sponsors availability of funds.

**Renewal of no competing** proposal is a request for continued support for an existing program that is about to terminate and from the sponsor's viewpoint, generally have the same status as an unsolicited proposal.

## **Special V – 2                      Proposal Development**

Office of Sponsored programs and Research (OSPR) is available to assist with proposal development, OSPR services include assisting with guideline interpretation budget development, editing and reviewing proposals for readability and compliance with guidelines. Faculty members are encouraged to contact OSPR, during the early stages of proposal development.

Some terms that are being used in proposal developments are:

**Request for proposals or applications (RFPs or RFAs)** are announcements in which potential sponsors predetermine activities to be funded along with methodology and related technical matters. A "statement of work", guidelines, instructions, agency contact personnel, and submission deadlines are also included in the RFP.

When responding to an RFP/RFA with the proposed terms and conditions stated in the solicitation, the investigator should notify and forward a copy of the solicitation to OSPR as soon as possible. Please be sure to discuss and review your proposal concepts with directors, department heads, and/or deans.

### **University Cost-Sharing**

Cost-sharing should be included in the budget accompanying the proposal submission only if such arrangements are required or strongly encouraged by sponsor's program guidelines. During the early stages of proposal development, prospective Principal Investigators/Project Directors (PIs/PDs) anticipating a need for cost-sharing should work closely with OSPR to identify sources for cost-sharing and should begin the process of securing agreements to cost-sharing. If the product is funded, the cost-sharing included in the proposed budget must be carefully documented throughout the program period. Potential sponsors may require that the expenses of a sponsored program be shared by the University. The University's agreement to any such cost-sharing must be secured by the prospective PI/PD during the proposal development process. Completion of the Proposal Transmittal Form (PTF) requires signatures confirming any cost-sharing agreements. Common items for University cost-sharing include major equipment or infrastructure, salaries, fringe benefits, and indirect costs related to AUM direct costs.

### **Section V – 3                      Transmittal Process**

The Office of Sponsored Programs and Research is responsible for reviewing all proposals and budgets submitted to external sources. The Director of Sponsored Programs and Research is the Auburn University at Montgomery's authorizing official for grants and contracts.

The PTF is the official University form for the documentation of plans and commitments contained in proposals for externally funded programs is the internal mechanism to:

- Inform all affected parties of the proposal.
- Document their knowledge of an support for the proposal.
- Document any needed and committed cost-sharing for the program.
- Document other institutional reviews that may be necessary because of the specific nature of the program in particular, use of human subjects, use of animal subjects, export controls, use of biohazardous materials, and/or other campus resources.

The PTF should be completed for all projects for which external funds are sought or received by the University, excluding gifts to the University.

To begin the approval process, the faculty or staff member who will serve as the PI/PD on the project should first complete the PTF and obtain the signatures of all co-PIs/co-PDs, their department head(s) or unit direct(s), dean(s), and regulatory committee chair(s) as applicable.

The PI/PD should then forward the complete proposal, along with all necessary certifications, to the OSPR for internal review and approval. The PI/PD should allow at least **SEVEN** working days for this internal review.

The OSPR reviews proposals for compliance with Auburn University at Montgomery and agency/sponsor regulations. Upon approval of the proposal, OSPR will route the proposal and remaining administrative approval.

#### **Section V – 4                      Award Notification**

OSPR, working with the PI/PD, negotiates the terms and conditions of applicable grants and contracts with granting agencies and organizations. Negotiations of Sponsored Programs and Research may be conducted between the agency and OSPR's staff and the PI at the University. The Director of OSPR is ultimately responsible for the University negotiations in all matters affecting the substance of the project to be conducted and associated fiscal matters with the approval of the PI who, in turn, must have departmental and college concurrence.

All potential proposed contracts and grants are examined for appropriateness and legal compliance prior to their execution. Any prospective contract or grant that would unduly obligate the University in any way or which has questionable aspects will be referred to the University legal counsel for review, revision, approval, or further referral if necessary.

#### **Notification of Award**

The Office of Sponsored Programs and Research has the responsibility of reviewing award documents and conditions of award. OSPR Director makes recommendations for acceptance to the PI, secures appropriate additional signatures if required, and notifies the appropriate department head or dean of the award. OSPR, also, notifies Financial Services of the award, so a new account can be established. When the University receives an award, the award notification

must be forwarded to OSPR for processing. When the account has been established by Financial Services, the PI will be notified and forwarded the new account information.