

First-Year Faculty Experience Workshop IV: The First-Year Faculty Experience of Grant Writing at UVM

Friday, December 12, 2025

12:00 – 1:30pm

Upcoming FYFE Sessions (all on Teams):

- First-Year Faculty Experience of Addressing Student Concerns at UVM. Friday, January 23, noon – 1:30pm
- First-Year Faculty Experience of Preparing for the First Reappointment Review Process at UVM. Friday, February 27, Noon-1:30pm

For information on upcoming FYFE workshops, please click on:

<https://www.uvm.edu/dofa/first-year-faculty-experience-fyfe-program>

First-Year Faculty Experience Workshop IV: The First-Year Faculty Experience of Grant Writing at UVM

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Presenters:

- Scott Lewins, Grant Proposal Developer – CALS, Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR)
- Brady Liss, Grant Proposal Developer – CAS, Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR)

Moderator:

- Lisa Holmes, Associate Professor of Political Science, College of Arts and Science; Kroepsch-Maurice Provost's Fellow for Faculty Affairs

The First-Year Faculty Experience of Grant Writing at UVM

Brady Liss

CAS Grant Proposal Developer
UVM Research Development

Scott Lewins

CALS Grant Proposal Developer
UVM Research Development



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Housekeeping & Ground Rules

We affirm all aspects of identity

- Neurotypes, gender, sexual orientations, race, disability, ethnicity, and all other forms of diversity

All forms of participation are okay

- Speak, gesture, emoticons/reactions, mix/match
- Walk, move around, fidget, eat/snack, take breaks

Purpose of the Presentation






Participants will:

- Learn about UVM services and tools to support you in finding funding, writing, and submitting grant proposals
 - Research Development
 - Sponsored Projects Administration
- Strategies and best practices for developing grant proposals



UVM FY24 Sponsored Research Snapshot

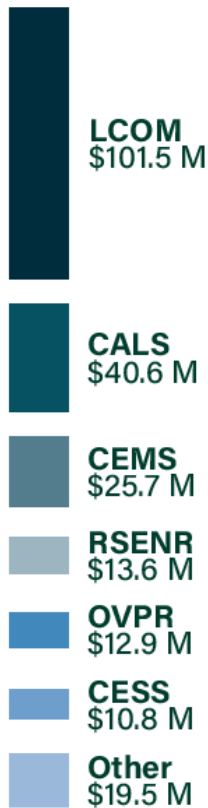
\$266.4M
In External Research Support

Source	Amount	Awards
 Federal Government	\$202.4 M	534
 Foundation & Nonprofit	\$11.3 M	83
 State and Local	\$6.5 M	29
 Industry	\$4.5 M	22
 Philanthropy	\$41.7 M	—
Total	\$266.4 M	668



UVM FY24 Sponsored Research Snapshot

Sponsored Award Funding by College



50

Number of awards worth \$1 million or more

Just 50 out of more than 660 sponsored awards at UVM accounted for over \$120 million in sponsored research funding, public service, instruction, and extension. These awards covered vast areas of research with projects like the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program, the Vermont Genetics Network, and the Climate Measurements Center of Excellence.

69.3%

Growth in sponsored research over the last 10 years

Sponsored Awards by Purpose



Getting to Know You...

What are the most **intimidating**
or stressful aspects of writing
grant proposals for you?



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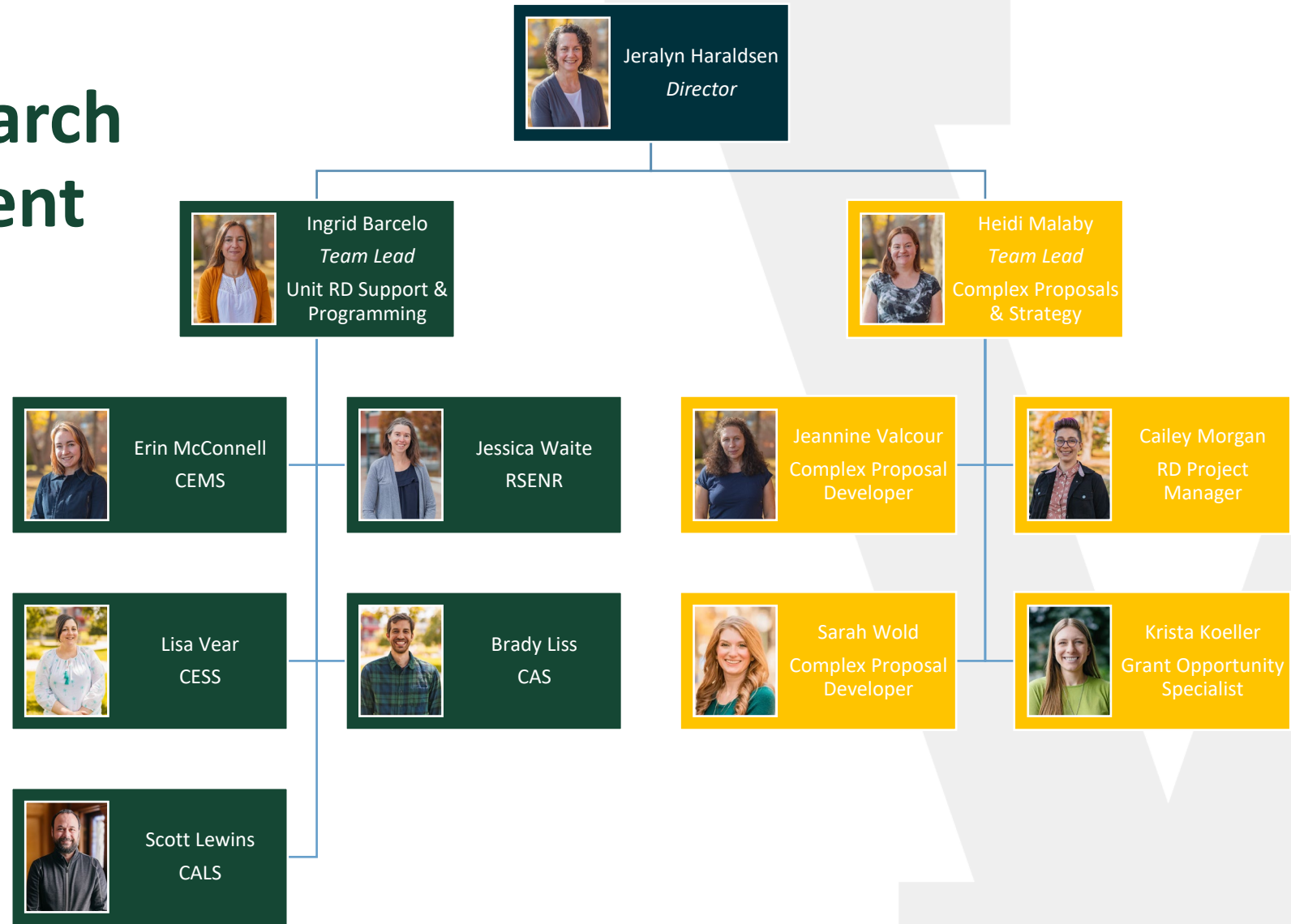
Research Development



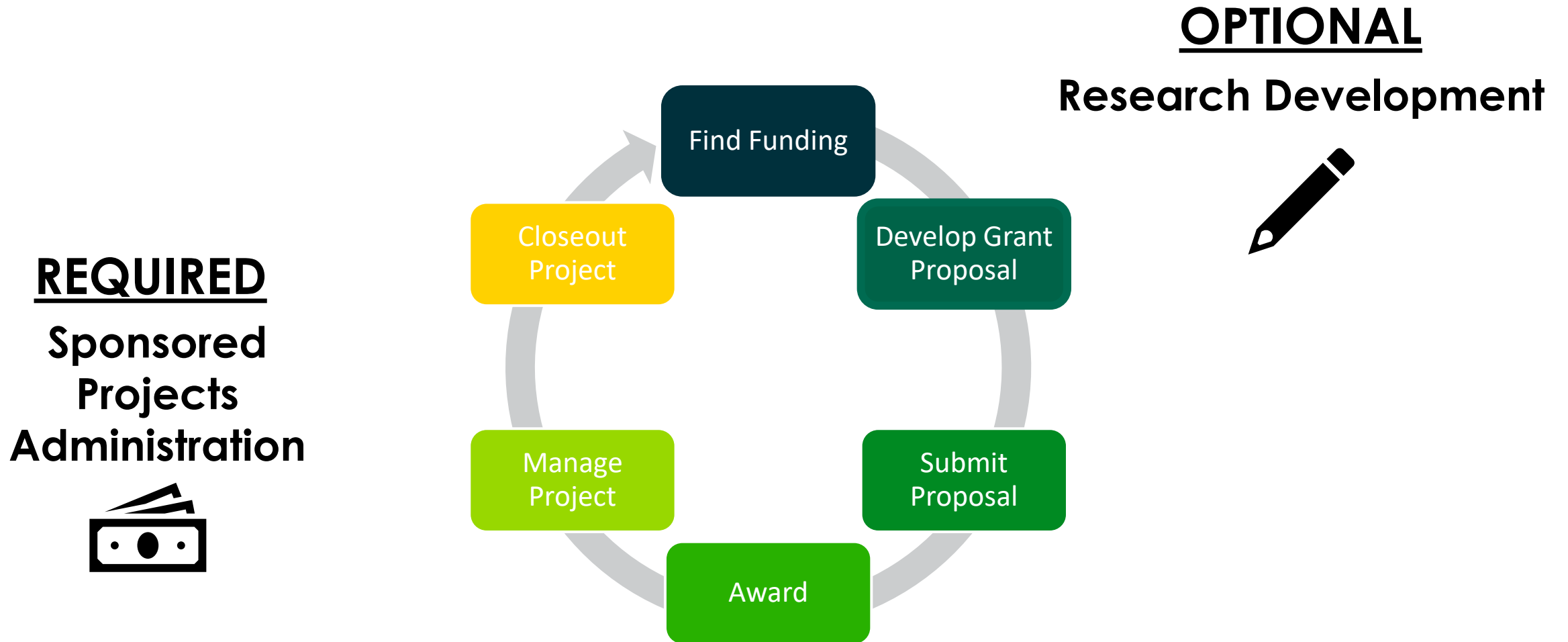
Research Development Support

Research Development offers a suite of services to assist scholars in their pursuit of extramural funding. Our team of trained researchers provides support during the grant development process to help proposals reach their full potential and conveys skills and experience to the UVM community to create highly competitive proposals.

UVM Research Development Team



What Support Does Research Development Offer?





RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

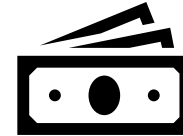
RD

People- & Idea-focused
Pre-pre-award
Strategic, Big-picture
Resource Development
Grant Writing & Editing
Large-scale Proposal Support
Team Science
Research & Opportunity Communication

RA

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

Policy-focused
Pre- & Post-award
Submission Process
Application Components
Budgets & Contracts
Financial Management
Streamlining Processes
Compliance



**FUNDING
SUCCESS**



CFR

CORPORATE & FOUNDATION RELATIONS

Relationship-based
Partner/Sponsor Prospecting
Alignment & Pitch Strategy
Relationship Management
Stewardship

Research Development

- Communicate Funding Opportunities
- Manage Limited Competition Process
- Provide Grant Writing/ Development Support
- Offer Grant Writing Resources, Programs, Tools



Research Development Support for New Faculty

- Regular Meetings
- Strategic Planning
- Tailored checklists
- Tailored timelines
- Custom outlines for the main proposal document
- Templates for supporting documents

Date	Deliverable(s)
March 19 – April 1	Write Specific Aims
April 2	Specific Aims (1st Draft) Completed
April 3 - 29	Write Research Strategy
By April 20	Begin budget development with business manager support
April 30	Research Strategy (1st Draft) Completed
May 3 - 19	Iterative revisions to Research Strategy (<i>as needed</i>)
By May 7	Enter grant information into UVM Click
May 10 - 24	Write/update Supporting Documents
By May 11	Complete first draft of full budget (in UVM Click)
May 19	Revise Budget if needed, write Budget Justification
May 20	Full, "near final" Project proposal completed
May 21 - 26	PI, grant developer, colleagues review of text
May 26	All final, signed Letters of Support due (<i>if applicable</i>)
May 26	All final biosketches and Other Support due
May 26 – June 1	Finalization of all documents
Wed, June 2	Upload all final documents into <u>UVMClick</u> and ROUTE proposal
On or before Fri, June 4	GOAL: proposal submission
Mon, June 7	NIH Proposal submission deadline

Research Development Resources



Research Development

The screenshot shows the 'Resource Library' page of the University of Vermont. The header includes the university's logo and name. The main title is 'Resource Library' with the subtitle 'Resources for research professionals'. A navigation bar contains an 'Explore' button and a menu icon. The breadcrumb trail reads: 'OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH (OVPR) / RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT / RESOURCE LIBRARY'. The main content area has a heading 'Resources for research professionals' followed by a paragraph: 'Explore our suite of templates and checklists covering multiple federal agencies.' Below this is another heading 'Resources for research professionals' with a paragraph: 'Explore our suite of templates and checklists covering multiple federal agencies. These resources are best used by those pursuing common funding opportunities and those familiar with the agency to which they are applying. If you are writing a proposal to an agency for the first time, we suggest you request grant writing support for additional guidance.' This is followed by a paragraph: 'See something missing? Please let us know at research.development@uvm.edu.' The final paragraph states: 'To view resources for UVM Affiliates, visit our Sharepoint site. There you can find content from past programs and the UVM Equipment, Facilities, and Other Resources "Boilerplate" Text which includes descriptions of common or shared resources for UVM researchers. If you would like to download the Boilerplate document, click the lower right menu icon and select *Download a Copy*.'

<https://www.uvm.edu/ovpr/resdev/resource-library>

Finding Funding Opportunities

[Internal funding opportunities](#)

- OVPR
- InfoReady

[External funding resources](#)

- Pivot-RP (UVM subscription)
- Grants.gov - Funding opportunities for 26 federal agencies
- Individual federal agencies (e.g., NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts, National Science Foundation Update)
- Candid. Philanthropy News Digest (and Foundation Directory Online*)



Pivot-RP Database

- Searchable – funding database and expertise
- Updated daily
- Sources:
 - Federal and regional governments
 - Foundations
 - Professional societies, associations
 - Corporations
- Can create customized, saved searches, e-alerts
- **Pivot-RP training available through Research Development**

<https://www.uvm.edu/ovpr/resdev/external-funding>



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Testing you a little bit...

What is/are some of the first things you should check after you find a potential funding opportunity?

Eligibility Considerations

Individual eligibility (can you be the “principal investigator”)

- Restricted to a particular career stage? Graduate students, postdocs, early-career faculty
- Citizenship requirements

Institutional eligibility

- Is UVM an eligible institution



Limited Competitions

Limited Submission: Funders sometimes **restrict the number** of applications an institution can submit to a particular program.

UVM Internal Competition: Internal process to ensure we do not exceed a stated limit, jeopardizing multiple applications.

- Announced in weekly newsletter
- Brief LOI (Letter of Intent)
- Convert to pre-proposal and internal review, if needed

<https://www.uvm.edu/ovpr/resdev/limited-submissions>



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“Flavors” of Federal Funding Opportunities

Unsolicited (investigator-initiated) Opportunities:

Recurring opportunities with relatively predictable submission deadlines

Broad areas of interest

- Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs)
- “Core” programs
- “Parent” Announcements



“Flavors” of Federal Funding Opportunities

Solicited Opportunities:

RFAs or RFPs requesting projects in response to a **specific** topic of interest

Depending on the agency, there may be

- only **one** deadline (or a few)
- a short “drop” between announcement and submission deadline



Foundations Have MANY “Flavors”



Unsolicited Opportunities (most common/challenging):

- Typically only fund pre-identified entities
- Will not accept proposals unless invited

Solicited Opportunities:

- RFAs or RFPs requesting proposals for research or projects
- Often require a Letter of Intent first
- Deadlines may be annual, rolling or anything in between
- May or may not be recurring

Takeaway: You May Not Need to Find a “Specific” RFA

Many funding agencies have a mechanism for accepting **unsolicited (investigator-initiated)** grant applications

- Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs)
- “Core” programs
- “Parent” Announcements

You need to understand that process at YOUR funding agency of interest

- Full proposal?
- Pre-proposal or white paper?

Develop a Process for Identifying Funding Opportunities

Many funders have recurring opportunities with relatively predictable due dates

Process should:

- provide **early/timely** notification
- cover your target funding agencies
- cover a range of other potential funders
- meet your needs (i.e., doesn't overwhelm)



Testing you a little bit...

When a grant is awarded,
whose money is it?



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Sponsored Project Administration (SPA) & SPA 2.0 Support

What Is A Sponsored Project?

Externally-funded activity in which a formal written agreement, i.e., a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement, is entered into by recipient (UVM) and Sponsor (e.g. federal or state agency, other university, foundation, industry partner)

Can support research, scholarship, public service, creative endeavors, instructional efforts, etc.



Fundamentals

Whose grant is this?

- Awards are generally made to the **institution**

Who gets to call the shots?

- A Principal Investigator (PI) is the lead researcher for the grant project
- PIs and Central and Department administrators form a partnership
 - PIs direct the science
 - Administrators manage the business processes and compliance functions

Who answers to whom?

- Scientists without administrators would not receive grant funding (in most cases)
- Administrators without scientist would not receive grant funding



What Is Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA)?

A full-service research administration and compliance office committed to assisting faculty, staff, and sponsors navigate the lifecycle of a sponsored project.

Provides institutional approval for all proposal submissions, accepts awards on behalf of UVM, and facilitates award administration.



SPA 2.0

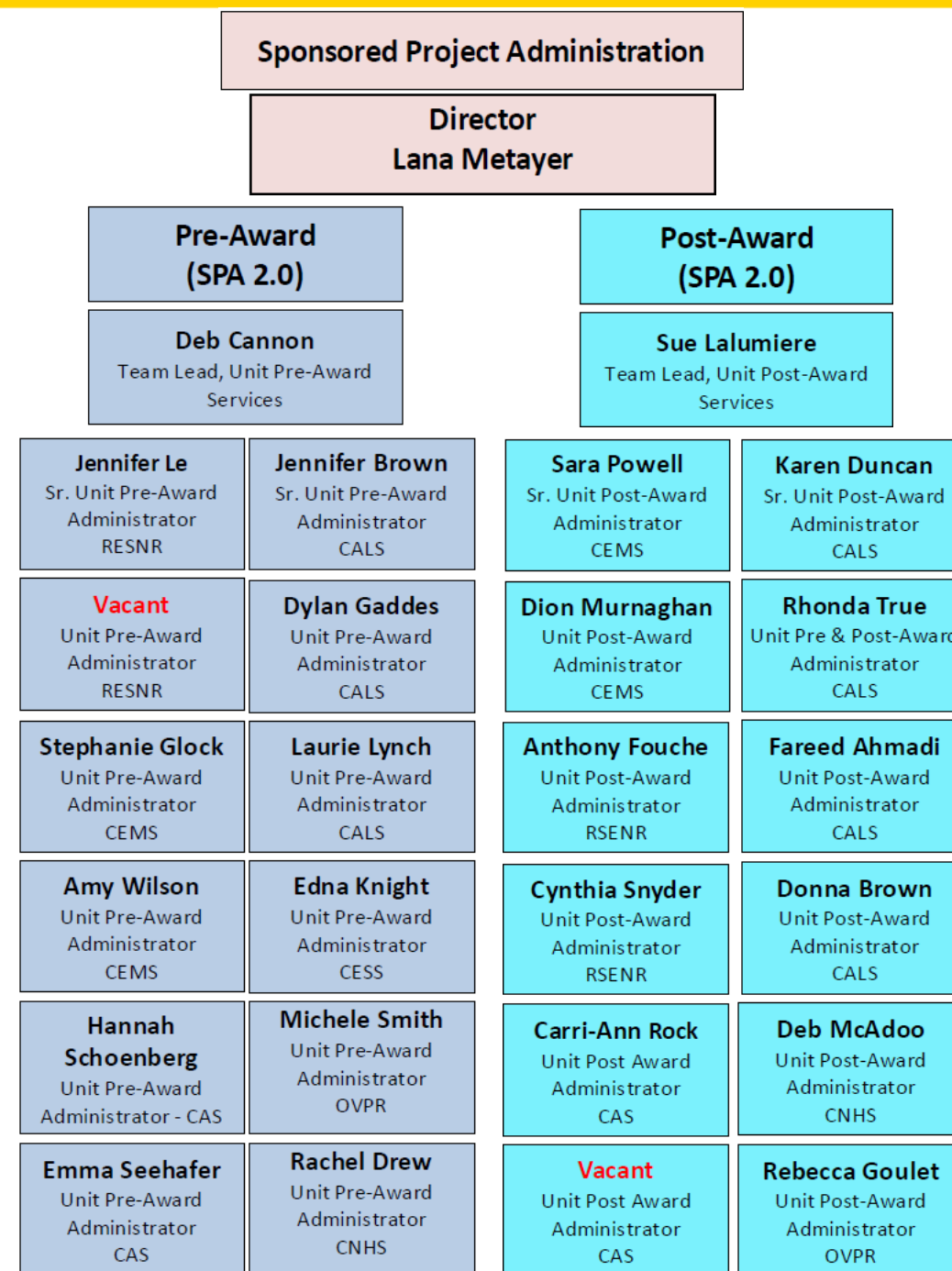
A partnership program that created a framework for a consistent and coordinated approach to sponsored project administration at UVM by having college research administration services become a unit of SPA

Research administrators placed at every level synchronized in regulations, process and procedures, generates a more efficient and effective path for getting administration done, allowing researchers to do more research.

[Find Your Admin!](#)



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A Few Budget Definitions

Cost-Share - Occurs when UVM contributes quantifiable resources to a sponsored project beyond the amount paid for by the sponsor.

Fringe - Fringe Benefits include such items as FICA, Worker's Compensation, Unemployment Compensation, insurance, pensions, tuition remission and employee assistance programs.

Equipment - is defined as that which has a useful life of more than one year *and* an acquisition cost of \$10,000 or more.

F&A / Indirect Costs / Overhead - fund services and items needed in order to conduct a project, that cannot be specifically allocated to a single project.



F&A: Why up to 53% of your budget isn't "yours"

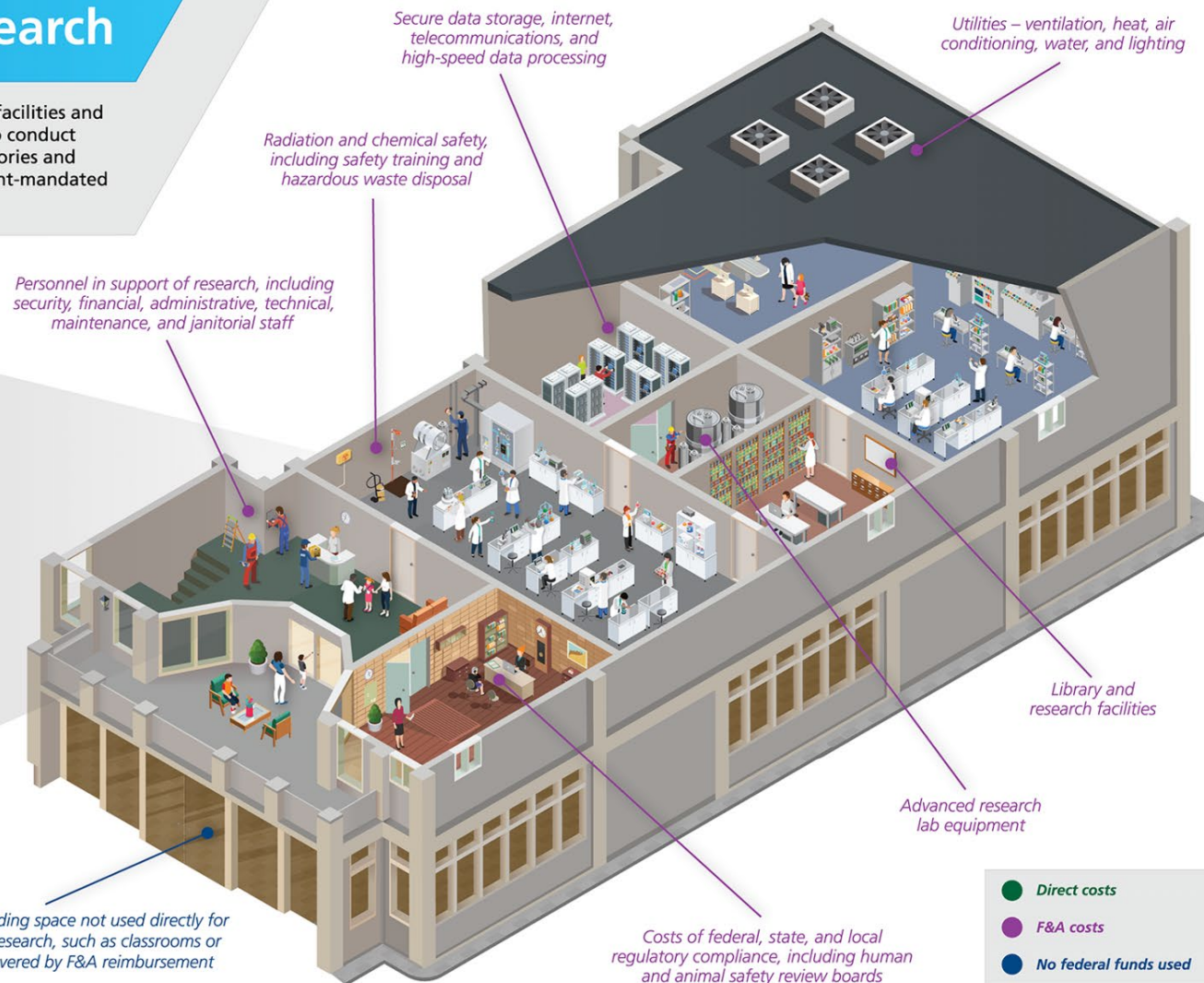
Costs of Federally Sponsored Research

The total cost of federally sponsored research includes a combination of both direct and facilities and administrative (F&A) costs. Both types of expenditures are key to an institution's ability to conduct cutting-edge research. F&A consists of the construction and maintenance costs of laboratories and high-tech facilities; energy and utility expenses; and safety, security, and other government-mandated expenses. These costs are real and research cannot be conducted without them.



Direct costs - These expenses solely cover research and include lab supplies and equipment; salaries and stipends for researchers and graduate students; and travel costs for conducting and sharing research

*Upkeep of any building space not used directly for federally funded research, such as classrooms or lobbies, is **not** covered by F&A reimbursement*



- Direct costs
- F&A costs
- No federal funds used

Systems for Managing Sponsored Projects

Used during pre-award to:

- Initiate proposal in
- Prepare budgets
- Upload proposal documents
- Route proposals for internal approvals
- System-to-system proposal submissions



Used post-award to:

- Track & report – current & pending support data
- Store finalized documents relating to proposals, awards and subawards

Systems for Managing Sponsored Projects

Dashboard

Grants

Agreements

COI

IRB

IACUC

Safety

...

Funding ProposalComplex ProjectsAwardsReportsHelp Center

Grants > Callahan Draft Proposal Demo

Help

Draft

FP00004273Funding Proposal

Next Steps

Edit Funding Proposal

Printer Version

COI Disclosure Status

Submit For Department Review

Certify

Withdraw Proposal

Send to COI

Manage Ancillary Reviews

Manage Relationships

Manage Tags

Create Agreement

UVM Add Attachments

Copy

Create Additional Budget

Export Budget

Send Email

Manage Access

Add Comment

View Related IRB Protocols

View Related IRB Protocols

Callahan Draft Proposal Demo

Proposal Information

Pi:Christopher Callahan

Submitting Department:Ext - Programming & Fac Sup

College:EXTENSION

Direct Sponsor:Food and Nutrition Service/FNS/USDA

Prime Sponsor:

Application Deadline:6/1/2024 Sponsor Deadline (Hard)

SPA Deadline:5/30/2024

Department Administrative Contact:Christopher Callahan

SPA Administrator:Amy Santos

SF424 Link (if applicable):

Budget Information

Project Period:8/1/2024 - 7/31/2029

Number of Periods:5

Sponsor Total Direct:\$0

Sponsor Total F&A:\$0

Sponsor Total Cost:\$0

Proposal Activity:RESEARCH - Basic - 311

Cost Share Direct:\$0

Cost Share F&A:\$0

Cost Share Total:\$0

Draft

Department Review

Specialist Review

Sponsor Review

Awarded

Not Funded

Clarifications Requested

Clarifications Requested

Changes Required

BudgetsHistoryReviewersAttachmentsFinancialsReviewer NotesRelated ProjectsChange LogSF424 Summary

Working Budgets

Name	SmartForm	Date Modified	State	Funding Source	Total	In Financials?
Food and Nutrition Service/FNS/USDA	[Edit]	4/15/2024 2:55 PM	Draft	Federal	\$0	yes

1 items

page 1 of 1

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<https://www.uvm.edu/ovpr/uvmclick>

Grant Proposal Development



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Getting to Know You...

What has **your experience** been so far with grant writing or developing proposals?



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What Drives Success?

- Knowing your “audience” – who are your reviewers?
- Alignment between your goals and the funder’s goals/mission
- Significance/relevance of your idea
- FEASIBILITY and technical approach
- YOU – your potential
- Credentials and track record (publications, productivity, awards)
- Leaving enough TIME to write – it takes longer than you think!



Strategies for Developing Grant Proposals – Best Practices

- Serve as a **Reviewer**:
 - Many agencies are eager for reviewers
 - Provides valuable insight into the process
 - Access to a collection of funded and unfunded proposals
- Find **mentor**(s) that you trust
- Read the RFA/RFP/FOA:
 - In full detail and multiple times
 - Paying special attention to what they want to fund
- Contact **Program Officers**



It Starts with a Good Idea!



when I think it



when I say it



when I try to write it down



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It Starts with a Good Idea!

- This can be the hardest part, so **don't be hard on yourself**
- **Ideas are the product of preparation:**
 - Learn the literature
 - Where does your research fit within this ongoing “conversation” or debate within your field?
 - Finding the gap
 - In order to participate in this conversation, you must:
 - Understand prior work
 - Understand methodology, techniques, tools
 - Synthesize this information and make connections between your own work and that of others



FIND THE GAP



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Start with a High-Level Overview of the Entire Project



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Use the RFA as Your Writing Roadmap

Mirror the language in the Program Description

- Agency's objectives and vision for the program
- Links to publications and help documents

Narrative structure

- Required sections
- Required or suggested subheadings
- Organization

Glean Additional Subheadings from the Review Criteria

Note Special Sections Required

- Other sections besides the main narrative
- Required letters of support or collaboration



Maximizing Your Potential to Get Funded

- Review **examples** of successful proposals (ask mentors, classmates, sponsor websites)
- Develop Professional **Relationships**
- Assess **Competitiveness**:
 - Do you have preliminary data?
 - Have you been publishing in your field?
 - Compare yourself with PIs that are being funded
 - Do you understand the Program to which you are applying?
 - Have you talked to colleagues funded by the Program?
 - Have you talked to the Program Officer at the funding agency?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EXCELLENT
<input type="checkbox"/>	GOOD
<input type="checkbox"/>	AVERAGE



How Can an Award Database Help Me?

- Compare your work with funded projects – assess “fit” and competitiveness
- Has something similar been funded already?
- Where is my “home” within the funding agency?
- Identify funded colleagues
- Determine number of grants awarded in the previous funding cycle

Use Sponsor Award Databases to Find Out What's Being Funded - What is Competitive?

- Keyword search
- Search a specific, existing Program funding opportunity announcement number (FOA, PA, RFA number)
 - Abstracts - publications
 - Project team
 - Awarded budget
 - Assigned Program Officer
 - Funding program - Institute/Directorate



An open repository of funding proposals

<https://www.ogrants.org/>



U.S. National Science Foundation

Awards Simple Search

[Overview of Award Search Features](#)

Search award for:

Search

Use double quotes for exact search. For example "water vapor".

☒ Active Awards

☐ Expired Awards

What do you think are typical reasons that proposals don't score well?

- Mis-alignment with program/sponsor
- Over-ambitious – scope too large
- Significance
- Team expertise – collaborators needed
- Disagree with approach/methods
- *All of these are determined by the Reviewers!*

So...How Do I Write for My Reviewers?

First, remember that your reviewers are human....



... and very busy, like you!

Before You Write You Must Understand Your Audience



- Reviewers take the role seriously
- Make a genuine effort to provide fair review, but... busy, over-committed, tired
- Inherently skeptical and critical mindset
- Perhaps only peripherally interested in your research

When the Review Meeting is Convened

- Reviewers convene for 1-2 days
- One reviewer serves as chair and assists the PO in running the meeting



Your Writing Has to be Engaging

- The first page is critically important.
- Grab their attention with a hook.
- Tell the reviewer why they should be excited about your work.
- Make the reviewer want to keep reading.
- What is the gap in knowledge that your work addresses?



How will your work move the field forward?



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Writing a Proposal is NOT like Writing a Publication!

A Paper is: NONFICTION	A Proposal is: FICTION
A scholarly pursuit – individual passion	Aimed at funder goals – service attitude
Past oriented, work that has been done	Future oriented, work that <i>should</i> be done
Theme centered; theory and thesis	Project centered; objectives and activities
Expository rhetoric: explaining to the reader	Persuasive rhetoric: “selling” to the reader
Impersonal tone, objective, dispassionate	Personal tone, conveys excitement
Fewer length constraints (sometimes)	Strict length constraints, brevity rewarded
Specialized terminology, “insider jargon”	Accessible language, easily understood

Use Logical Organization to Guide the Reviewer

- Follow expected structure (RFA, example proposals)
- “Active” headings and subheadings tell the reviewer the main point
- Tell them how preliminary data relates to the new proposal
- Led to a new question, new hypothesis
- Shows feasibility
- Use figures to improve understanding

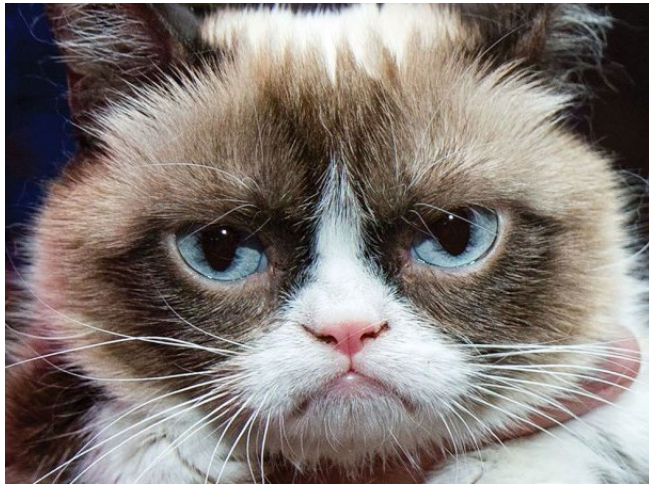


Make Their Job Easy



- Use language directly from the RFA
- Understand the review criteria
- Use **explicit** statements
- Give reviewers the words they need to defend your proposal to the rest of the review panel

Respect Reviewers and their Time



- Unclear writing – don't make them reread
- Figures too small, or don't "stand alone"
- Wall-to-wall text (Justified)
- Grammatical errors and typos
- Unnecessary jargon

Grumpy reviewers start mentally "taking points off"





“Agreed. We fund only those proposals
we can understand.”

What Are They Looking For?

NIH	USDA	NEH	NSF
Significance	Relevance	Significance	Intellectual Merit
Investigators	Investigators	Applicant	Broader Impacts
Approach	Scientific Merit	Feasibility	
Environment	Facilities	Design and Work Plan	
Innovation		Cost	
		Clarity of Expression	



Don't Take Negative Reviews Personally

Distinguishing between **excellent science/ scholarship** and *slightly less* **excellent science/ scholarship** is exceedingly difficult



Res Dev Training Opportunities

Both tailored to early-career faculty:

- ***NSF CAREER Commit to Submit Program***
 - Seven weekly in-person meetings
 - Additional 1:1 support available

- ***Write Your First NIH Grant Program***
 - Previously recorded eight weekly virtual sessions.
 - Available to all UVM Faculty

<https://www.uvm.edu/ovpr/resdev/resource-library>

Resources for research professionals

Explore our suite of templates and checklists covering multiple federal agencies.

These resources are best used by those pursuing common funding opportunities and those familiar with the agency to which they are applying. If you are writing a proposal to an agency for the first time, we suggest you request grant writing support for additional guidance.

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[View UVM Specific Resources](#)

How to Request Research Development Support:

- Initiate contact early – **ideally 4-8+ weeks in advance** of your proposal deadline.
- **Complete intake form** on website with info about **funding opportunity** and **deadline**.

[Request support here!](#)



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What We Offer

- **Finding Funding:** consultations, Pivot-RP tutorials, weekly funding opportunity newsletter. [*Request a funding opportunity and/or Pivot-RP consultation or subscribe to the newsletter*](#)
- **Limited Competitions:** management of internal competition and selection process for limited submission funding opportunities. [*View and apply for open limited competitions*](#)
- **Grant Writing Support:** grantsmanship and writing feedback and assistance. [*Request grant writing support*](#)
 - [*Grant proposal review and grantsmanship critique*](#): annotated feedback and suggestions to enhance competitiveness; proposal review for responsiveness to funding program solicitation and/or reviewer critiques
 - [*Grant proposal writing assistance and editing*](#): substantive editing of draft text; editing to improve clarity, flow, formatting, and presentation; assistance with drafting non-technical proposal components; suggested outlines, checklists of required documents, and timelines
- **Project Management for Large Proposal Preparation:** addition of skilled, flexible capacity to your team for developing large and complex proposals. [*Request complex project management support*](#)
- **Grant Writing Programs and Resources:**
 - View [*calendar of events*](#) or [*list of ongoing programs*](#)
 - Access [*grant writing resources*](#)
[*Request a UVM Research Impacts consultation*](#) for broadening and amplifying the impact of your research
- **Strategic Planning:** positions faculty for funding and leadership opportunities. [*Request a consultation with Lewis-Burke Associates*](#)



Questions?

Thank you!

Brady Liss, PhD

CAS Grant Proposal Developer

UVM Research Development

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Scott Lewins

CALS Grant Proposal Developer

UVM Research Development

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