University of Vermont

Sponsored Project Administration

Procedure:	**Proposal Preparation, Review and Submission**
Owner:	**Sponsored Project Administration**
Effective Date:	**11/01/2026**
Last Updated:	**10/27/2026**

Background

The Sponsored Project Administration Proposal Submission and Award Administration (RA) team, on behalf of the University of Vermont, has an institutional responsibility to review and approve all new sponsored project proposals, resubmissions, competing renewals, supplemental proposals, and pre-proposals requiring detailed budgets and/or institutional signature, before submitting proposals to a sponsor, as initiated by a Principal Investigator.

Purpose

This document outlines the Proposal Review and Submission process and sets forth roles and responsibilities of the parties involved.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal Investigator (PI):

PIs have responsibility for all aspects of a proposal and are expected to provide a complete proposal to the SPA RA Team no later than 5 business days prior to sponsor's published deadline. PIs may coordinate and delegate certain components of the proposal preparation to designated department or college support staff, where available. PIs must be up to date with any training or other individual certifications required for proposal submission.

Unit Administrator (UA):

Department, Center, College or School Unit Administrators who are delegated responsibility for various aspects of the proposal process and assist in coordinating the review and submission to SPA.

Department Chair or Designee:

In coordination with the College, assign department staff to assist Principal Investigators with proposal preparation. Reviews and approves proposals for consistency with department policies and procedures and University requirements.

College Dean or Designee:

Provide direction, resources, and oversight to ensure that the college and UAs provide PIs support towards preparing, reviewing, routing and approving proposals for submission. Reviews and approves proposals for consistency with college policies and procedures as well as various institutional requirements.

Sponsored Project Administration Research Administrator (RA):

Performs a final review of the proposal with a particular focus on areas that would result in the proposal not being accepted by the Sponsor and institutional issues that could create financial, audit, and/or policy risks for the University.

Acts as university signing official to provide institutional endorsement and certifications on all proposals. Submits proposals directly to sponsors using electronic submission systems where required.

Provides ongoing consultation and assistance in interpreting sponsor and university guidelines as related to proposal submissions, both during the proposal development process and after a proposal has routed.

Sponsored Project Administration (SPA):

SPA is responsible for developing institutional policies, procedures, and systems to ensure efficient and effective proposal preparation and submission practices; developing and maintaining training materials on proposal preparation and submission to assist PI/UA; and providing and maintaining a UVM electronic research administration system used for creating, routing and submitting proposals and provide guidance for using these systems.

Definitions

UVMClick:

UVMClick is the eRA system the University of Vermont uses to manage proposal submission and award administration. Every proposal submitted by the University of Vermont must have a complete corresponding UVMClick Funding Proposal Record and that record must be approved by a department reviewer, a college reviewer, and SPA prior to proposal submission.

Complete Proposal:

A complete proposal means an accurate proposal that meets all sponsor and UVM requirements.

- All UVMClick smart forms and sponsor forms should be complete and accurate.
- All administrative documents should be fully final.
- Technical documents should be final or solid working drafts.
- All training required for grant personnel prior to submission should be complete
- Any applicable auxiliary internal approvals (for IBB Deviation, F&A waiver, PI eligibility, etc) should be received and documented.

Administrative Documents:

Administrative documents are the non-technical documents required in a research proposal. Administrative documents must be fully final and received by the RA Team 5 days prior to the sponsor's deadline. These include, but are not limited to the:

- Budget
- Budget Justification
- Biosketches
- Current and Pending Support
- Facilities and Resources
- Representations and Certifications

- All subaward documentation should be complete and final on or before the 5-day deadline.

Technical Documents:

Technical documents are the main documents in which a Principal Investigator outlines their project plan. Technical documents must be final or solid working drafts and received by SPA 5 days prior to the sponsor's deadline. Final versions of all technical documents must be received by the RA Team no later than 2 days prior to the sponsor's deadline. The technical documents in a proposal may include the:

- Project Narrative
- Specific Aims
- Bibliography

Complex Proposal:

Complex proposals take longer to review and/or submit and should be ready for SPA review earlier than the 5-day deadline. Some characteristics that complicate review include:

- subawards
- multiple project budgets or components
- significant cost-share
- direct costs over $2M/year
- international collaborations
- international sponsors
- construction awards
- proposals to build an institute or center
- proposals that are likely to result in a contract (as opposed to a grant)

This list is not exhaustive. A PI working on a proposal that appears complex or unique should reach out to their SPA contacts early. They can advise on the best strategy for a successful submission.

Late Proposal:

Proposals are considered late if the RA Team receives a proposal less than 5 business days before the sponsor's published deadline, if the proposal is not complete at the time of routing, or if final drafts of technical documents are received less than 2 days prior to the sponsor's deadline.

The RA Team's responsibility regarding late proposals is to make every attempt to meet the submission deadline. This may mean the assigned RA cannot provide the customary review of the proposal and may not be able to resolve technical issues that may prohibit submission of the proposal to the sponsor.

As time allows, proposals submitted without review may be reviewed post-submission. If considered to be in non-compliance with university standards, SPA may take the following actions:

- Administratively withdraw the proposal.
- Submit a revision if allowed.
- Wait until the time of award to correct any issues.

If any issues cannot be corrected or resolved, this may preclude UVM from accepting the award.

Procedures

Note: PI and UA are used interchangeably in this document since many aspects of the proposal process detailed below can be delegated to a department or college unit administrator.

Proposal Development

- PI coordinates and may delegate certain components of proposal preparation to designated department or college support staff where such resources are available.
- PI/UA initiates UVMClick record for new proposals, resubmissions, competing renewals, supplemental proposals, or pre-proposals requiring a detailed budget and/or authorized signature.
- PI/UA coordinates communication and escalates proposal development questions, concerns, and issues well in advance of the deadline to allow sufficient time for appropriate university offices to respond.
- PI is responsible for the development of the proposal's statement of work to be accomplished within the project period proposed, for funding being requested.
- PI/UA coordinates and assembles administrative and technical components of the proposal.
- PI/UA coordinates with subrecipients to ensure timely availability of all subaward materials, including budget, budget justification, and scope of work.
- Once complete, PI/UA will initiate the route of the UVMClick Funding Proposal Record for review and approval. Route initiation must be timed to ensure the record reaches the SPA RA team at least 5 business days prior to the sponsor's deadline.

PI Certification

All UVMClick Funding Proposal records must be certified by the PI within the UVMClick system. PI Certification can happen at any time during the proposal review process.

Department Review

After the PI/UA initiates the route of the UVMClick Funding Proposal record, a pre-designated department reviewer will review and approve a proposal for consistency with department policies and procedures and university requirements. Department reviews include, but are not limited to, an assessment and approval of the following:

- Budget is accurate
- Costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the project
- Department personnel listed are available and qualified to participate in the project
- Institutional Base Saary is accurate
- Any proposed cost-share is accurate and documented
- Facilities are available
- PI meets UVM's PI Eligibility requirements

College Dean or Designee Review

After the designated department reviewer approves a UVMClick Funding Proposal record, the College Dean or designee must review and approve for consistency with college policies and procedures and university requirements.
College reviews include, but are not limited to, an assessment and approval of the following:

- College personnel listed are available and qualified to participate in the project
- Institutional Base Salary is accurate
- Any proposed cost-share is accurate and documented
- F&A is accurate
- Facilities are available
- PI meets UVM's PI Eligibility requirements

Sponsored Project Administration RA/Specialist Review
After the designated college reviewer approves a UVMClick Funding Proposal record, the record routes to the UVM SPA RA currently supporting the PI. RA reviews focus on areas that would result in the proposal not being accepted by the sponsor and institutional issues that could create financial, audit, and/or policy risks for the university.

RA reviews include, but are not limited to:

- Proposal contains complete and correct administrative data (university name, identifiers, address, etc)
- Proposal includes completed forms and all required components
- Proposal budget in UVMClick matches the sponsor's budget forms
- Proposal budget justification is accurate and follows all sponsor and university policies
- Proposal meets cost sharing requirements and includes approvals
- Proposal includes correct F&A rates and includes IBB F&A Allocation – Calculation Tool
- Proposal includes proper disclosure of compliance factors (animal research, human subjects, FCOI, sponsor-required training)
- Proposal includes required representations, certifications, and other organization-specific forms
- Confirm all subrecipient information is included and accurate
- Review non-negotiable terms and confirm necessary institutional approvals
- Sponsor guidelines are present
- Exception letters generated to negotiate terms at the time of proposal

The RA Team will prioritize reviews for proposals received on time. Proposals that reach the RA team fewer than 5 days prior to a sponsor's published deadline or that are not complete upon arrival may not be reviewed. PIs must provide fully final versions of any technical documents to the SPA RA team no later than 2 days prior to the sponsor's deadline. This allows the RA Team time to perform validations, address errors and warnings, and if needed, troubleshoot technical issues that may arise within a sponsor portal. If any components are received late, the RA team will make every effort to meet the submission deadline but may not be able to resolve issues that may prohibit submission of the proposal to the sponsor.

Proposal Submission
Proposals may only be submitted after the corresponding UVMClick Funding Proposal record has been PI Certified and approved by all three required reviewers (department, college, and SPA).

PI Submits Directly to Sponsor

In cases where a PI must submit a proposal directly to a sponsor, the PI should wait until all approvals have been given before doing so. No changes to the proposal may be made after final approval. When possible, the PI should provide a copy of the submitted proposal for the UVMClick record.

RA Submits to Sponsor

In cases where an RA submits, either system-to-system via UVMClick or using a sponsor's submission portal, the RA must confirm with the PI that they are ready before finalizing a submission. When possible, the RA should provide a copy of the submitted proposal for the UVMClick record.

It is the PI's responsibility to be available on submission day to answer any last-minute questions and/or address issues that arise.

Once a proposal has been submitted, the SPA RA will update the corresponding UVMClick Funding Proposal Record to "Pending Sponsor Review" and ensure that the PI/UA are aware that submission has been completed.

FAQs

1. **What is a Business Day?**
   A business day is a standard working day at the University of Vermont. Weekends and Official UVM Administrative Closures are not considered business days and should not be included when determining routing deadlines.

2. **How does SPA handle deadline times outside of normal business hours?**
   SPA business hours are from 8:00am until 4:30pm Monday through Friday, excluding any posted UVM Administrative Closures. Proposals with sponsor deadlines outside of normal business hours that require SPA involvement in the submission process must be submitted within normal business hours. For example, a proposal with a sponsor deadline at 11:59pm must be submitted by 5:00pm that same day.

3. **When can I expect to receive comments from my SPA RA on my proposal?**
   Once a proposal is routed within UVMClick, it must be reviewed and approved by a department approver, a college approver, and the SPA RA team. The RA Team receives a proposal only after department and college reviews have been completed. On average, an RA should be able to complete a review and provide comments 2-3 days after they've received a proposal. Some complex proposals may require more time. High proposal volume and emergent issues may delay an RA response. SPA understands that there could be circumstances that warrant expediting a specific review. The RA Team endeavors to prioritize tasks in a manner that best serves the UVM Research Community. We are always happy to discuss individual proposal timelines and welcome any information a researcher may have that can help us to plan more effectively.

4. **Why does SPA require 5 full business days for the RA Team to review the proposal before the deadline?**
   One reason is the number of proposals SPA submits. On any given deadline date, your SPA RA will likely need to balance several proposal submissions from several departments and PIs, possibly to different

sponsors using different proposal submission systems. Even if everything goes perfectly, reviewing multiple proposals and submitting them on time requires advance planning.

If there is a glitch, whether an error comes to light in the proposal materials or the proposal submission system doesn't function properly, the SPA RA needs time to address it and a direct line of communication to the PI/UA to get timely input on decisions that must be made about the proposal. Though the accuracy of the proposal is up to the PI, SPA RAs routinely find during their review small errors or omissions that could cause a proposal to be rejected or not reviewed at all, even after Chairs and Deans have given their approval. If the PI doesn't give the "ok to submit" until a couple of hours before the deadline, that leaves very little time to review the proposal and respond effectively to unexpected developments.

5. **What happens if a proposal is received by the RA Team 5 days prior to the sponsor's deadline but does not meet the definition of a complete proposal?**
   The SPA RA will return the proposal to the department without review if the proposal does not meet the definition of a complete proposal which is required to provide sufficient information for an institutional review. The department can re-route for reviews and approvals when the proposal is complete.

6. **Do the deadlines apply to all proposals submitted to SPA?**
   Yes, the deadline policy applies to all proposals submitted to SPA. This includes standard proposals, subawards, proposals for internal grant competitions that require routing, and pre-proposals/LOIs that meet the requirements for routing.

7. **Can a PI submit a proposal to SPA earlier than the internal deadlines listed to accommodate the PI's schedule?**
   Yes, The PI can submit a proposal earlier than the internal deadline. SPA does not automatically assume that a proposal routed early requires an early review. SPA encourages anyone who might need a review or proposal submission to take place prior to the internal routing deadline to initiate a discussion with their primary SPA contact prior to routing the proposal.

8. **What is the difference between a "hard deadline" and a "soft deadline?"**
   A hard deadline is a date and time beyond which a sponsor will no longer accept a specific proposal. A soft deadline is a target date set by a sponsor. Whether hard or soft, the deadline entered into a UVMClick Funding Proposal smartform should always be a date determined by the direct sponsor and in line with the accompanying guidelines. This avoids unnecessary delays and allows the RA Team to prioritize tasks in the manner that best serves everyone.

9. **When UVM is a subrecipient and our proposal is being submitted to a lead institution, what date does SPA use to determine if the proposal is late—the lead institution's deadline to submit the full proposal, or when the lead institution requires the receipt of UVM's proposal?**
   In this situation, SPA considers the date the lead institution requires receipt of our proposal documents to be the sponsor's deadline. The corresponding UVMClick Funding Proposal record should be received by the RA Team 5 days prior to that date, and that date should be entered as the deadline date in the record, usually as a soft deadline.

10. I am aware of the deadline, but extenuating circumstances are preventing me from meeting it. Is there any way to request an exception to the policy and receive a full review?

If you are planning a proposal submission and know you cannot meet the internal submission deadline, it is best to communicate the situation as soon as possible. SPA is aware that it may not be possible to meet the internal deadline in all cases and will do our best to support researchers when we are able.

Some exceptions may include:

- A solicitation is released 30 days or less prior to the due date
- The sponsor accepts a pre-proposal for full application with a substantially short turnaround period
- Personal or family emergency, natural disaster, or considerable technical difficulties

Exceptions should not include:

- PI travel (work or personal)
- PI teaching schedule
- PI Clinical schedule
- PI choosing to apply for an opportunity that has been posted for some time

Helpful Links

SPA Pre-Award Services Matrix

Document Change Record

Date	Version	Author	Change Details
05/23/2018	1	SPA	Initial release
06/27/2018	1.2	SPA	Grammatical Edit
08/02/2018	1.3	SPA	UVMClick Name Update
10/31/2018	1.4	SPA	Finalize Budget Text Update
03/16/2020	1.5	SPA	Edited for UVMClick Implementation
11/01/2023	1.6	SPA	Review
10/21/2025	1.7	SPA	Updated Helpful Links that were broken

10/27/2026	2.0	SPA	Updated deadline, added FAQs, combined information from appendices into primary document, added link to Pre-Award Matrix