

Department of Contracts and Grants Service Commitment

The Department of Contracts and Grants (DCG) supports USC's investigators from proposal development to award closeout, ensuring that our grants and contracts are consistent with university standards for academic freedom, research ethics and fiscal responsibility.

The Department of Contracts and Grants:

- Reviews, approves and submits proposals to extramural sponsors.
- Negotiates and accepts awards on behalf of the University.
- Executes subcontracts.
- Coordinates pre-award and post-award actions.
- Develops and maintains positive sponsor relationships.
- Ensures institutional compliance with Federal and State regulations, sponsor policy and University policy.

1. Support for Proposal Review

The Department of Contracts and Grants (DCG) is committed to supporting USC Investigators by assuring timely review and submission of complete and accurate proposals that have the best chance possible of success in the sponsor review process.

To succeed in this goal, DCG offers an enhanced review for proposals ready for submission three business days in advance of the sponsor's deadline.

Proposals Received Three Business Days in Advance

For final proposals ready for submission and submitted to DCG three business days in advance of the sponsor's deadline or the USC Deadline, if earlier, the review will include:

- Comparing the proposal to the sponsors' guidelines, including:
 - Font type and size
 - Margins
 - Page limits for sections and proposal
 - Completeness for inclusion of all required sections
- Conducting a non-technical review of proposal for grammatical and spelling errors
- Verifying budget calculations, rates and cost-sharing
- Verifying institutional information (e.g., DUNS, contact information, etc.)
- Checking and clearing errors generated by Grants.gov and/or Sponsor's proposal submission system
- Verifying Proposal Approval Record (PAR) or KC equivalent
- Verifying regulatory reviews (e.g., human/animal subjects, conflict of interest)

Proposals Received Two Business Days in Advance

DCG will review, at minimum, the following:

- Budget for correct rates and cost sharing
- Institutional information (e.g., DUNS, contact information, etc.)
- Proposal Approval Record (PAR) or KC equivalent
- Regulatory reviews (e.g., human/animal subjects, radiation safety, conflict of interest)

For Proposals Received Less Than One Business Day in Advance

Due to time constraints, proposals received less than 24 hours (or one business day) in advance of the sponsor's deadline or the USC Deadline, if earlier, will receive a minimum review with the goal to assure (to the degree possible) that it is not rejected from the electronic submission vehicle. Unfortunately, proposals submitted less than 24 hours in advance risk rejection by sponsors, or potentially late submission.

For all proposals, DCG staff will communicate with the Principal Investigator and his/her research administrator when a proposal will receive less than a complete review due to time constraints.

Confirmation of Proposal Submissions

DCG will forward electronic confirmation to the Principal Investigator and his/her research administrator once the proposal is received and accepted by the sponsor.

2. Tips to Facilitate the Proposal Approval Process

The following are some tips to facilitate the proposal approval process:

1. Your PAR or KC equivalent should be circulated for approvals at least five business days in advance of the proposal deadline. Please allow more time if your proposal requires signatures in multiple schools, departments, centers or divisions.
2. Forward the proposal guidelines and/or solicitation to DCG so staff can review the proposal along with the solicitation guidelines.
3. Allow time for corrections. Allowing time for corrections helps to ensure the proposal is at its best when it is submitted to the sponsor.
4. Ensure a point of contact is available to make corrections. The Principal Investigator and/or a departmental contact should be available to make corrections until the proposal is ready to submit to the agency.

3. Negotiation of Sponsored Research Agreements

Sponsored Research Agreement negotiation timelines vary depending on agreement and sponsor; however, the DCG staff is committed to facilitating and completing negotiations in a professional and timely manner. Once DCG has all required information, including PI and School approvals, we are committed to initiating negotiations with the sponsor within five business days.

4. Negotiation of Industry Sponsored Clinical Trials through the Clinical Trials Office (CTO)

The Clinical Trials Office (CTO) facilitates clinical research by providing comprehensive administrative services that help move trials quickly from receipt of a protocol to study activation. The CTO provides budget development, Medicare Coverage Analysis (MCA) and contract negotiation and execution for industry-sponsored clinical trials. Once CTO has all required information, we are committed to initiating contract negotiations with the industry partner within five business days. The CTO will work closely with the PI to ensure that the budget agreed upon by the Sponsor will adequately cover all costs associated with conducting a clinical trial. All final budgets will be approved and signed by the PI and Department Chair/Center Director, or designee prior to contract execution and trial activation.

5. Communication with DCG and CTO Staff

DCG and CTO staff make every effort to be available to communicate with investigators and research administrators by telephone and email during heavy deadlines. When away from the office for more than 24 hours, staff will provide an out of office message indicating whom to contact during absence. Staff will otherwise normally respond to inquiries within 24 hours of when they are contacted, and usually much sooner.

In addition, during the negotiation of any sponsored research or clinical trial agreement, DCG and CTO are committed to providing a biweekly status update to the Principal Investigator and department/center research administrator, to be sent on Fridays.

6. Additional Resources and Questions

The Department of Contracts and Grants offers a comprehensive online training program developed to meet the needs of today's evolving research environment. The [C&G Curriculum](#) is a valuable resource for proposal preparation and ensures an overall standard level of expertise for research administrators working at a program, department or dean's office level.

The Office of Research through the Center of Excellence in Research offers proposal writing workshops and resources. Additional information can be located at: research.usc.edu/for-investigators/training/

The [Office of Research](#), [DCG](#) and [CTO](#) websites provide additional information on procedures for processing grants and contracts, support available from different research administration units of the university, and information tailored for both sponsors and investigators.

For any questions regarding the DCG Service Commitment, please contact Jeri Muniz, Executive Director, Department of Contracts and Grants.