Types of Sponsored Research Proposals

Most of the research conducted at universities nationwide is performed with funds from federal or private sponsoring agencies that support research, training and public service through various types of agreements. Principal Investigators (PIs) submit proposals to sponsors through their institutions to request funding for clearly defined sponsored activities. At UCSF, PIs work with RMS and GBC to prepare these submissions.

Types of Proposals

Two types of proposals — Solicited Proposals and Unsolicited Proposals — are submitted on behalf of PIs in search of sponsored funding.

Solicited Applications/Proposals

Requests for Applications (RFAs) are stand-alone requests for applications. The RFAs provide sufficient information to allow prospective applicants to determine whether the solicitation is relevant to their funding needs and/or field of research. The RFA may include the amount of funding available, the number of awards anticipated, the application deadline and other information that describes the nature of the effort desired and the obligations of recipients.

Occasionally, RFAs limit the number of proposals that an institution may submit. The UCSF Limited Submission Program page has more information.

Solicitations or Requests for Proposals (RFPs), are issued by agencies or private funding sources to make requests for a specific project. The RFPs may also be listed as Program Announcements (PAs). PAs are used to describe new, continuing or expanded program interests of the sponsor or to announce the availability of a new mechanism of support. The resulting agreement usually takes the form of a contract between the funding agency and the institution.

Common NIH Mechanisms

(for a comprehensive list, please visit http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/ac_search_results.htm)

R-series: "Research Programs" - support for individual projects/initiatives

K-series: "Research Career Programs" - support for career development programs

P-series*: "Research Program Projects and Centers" - support for multi-disciplinary programs and centers; usually involve multiple investigators and projects/cores under a single administrative framework
T-series: "Training Programs" - support for training programs. For additional UCSF T32 resources go to UCSF Accelerate.

U-series*: "Cooperative Agreements" - support for multi-project initiatives that, upon funding, involve Federal scientific or programmatic involvement

*Preparing a large, multi-investigator grant proposal? The Large Grant Development Program (LGDP) of the RDO offers a wide range of assistance.

Unsolicited Proposals

Unsolicited proposals are submitted to a potential sponsor in accordance with general guidelines and statements of interest rather than as the result of a specific solicitation. For example, most National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant support is the result of unsolicited proposals.

If the sponsor decides to fund the proposed plan of work, the funding may take the form of a grant, contract or cooperative agreement. Most large sponsors have set deadlines for the submission of unsolicited proposals, as well as published schedules for the review and notification process.