

NIH Grant Checklist

First:

Before starting your grant process it is **highly recommended** to talk to NIH Program Staff at the appropriate Institute/Center early. NIH recommends contacting a Program Official with your ideas (concept paper or project abstract) about 9 months in advance of the application deadline.

You may send the Program Official an abstract for the proposal (if you have one) or a recent publication. This will give them a better idea of your research interests. If they have enough time, the Program Official may even look at a draft of the research plan.

Another option is to provide the Program Officer with a concept paper (2-3 pages)

It can address:

- Grant purpose – Briefly, you want a grant from which institute/center to do what?
- Problem-Background – Explain why you think this topic needs study. Demonstrate you know the institute's priorities.
- Significance – Explain why this is important to the field.
- Research Question – What hypotheses will you test and what model will guide your hypotheses?
- Design/Analysis – What study design will enable testing your hypotheses? What statistical approach?

Next:

Contact the Grants and Contracts Manager (GCM), Mollie Lyon (mollie.lyon@dmu.edu) to schedule a meeting to discuss your proposal.

At this meeting we will briefly discuss the scope and purpose, the budget, the key personnel, and specific dates regarding the proposal.

Please email your Program Announcement or Request for Application announcement to GCM before the meeting.

A great reference to use while drafting your grant proposal is *The Grant Application Writer's Workbook*. If you do not have a copy of this workbook, please contact the GCM. It goes into a great deal of details about the technicalities of the proposal as well as grantsmanship.

Des Moines University uses a program called Cayuse to submit all NIH proposals to Grants.gov. The proposal must be submitted in its entirety through Cayuse to the Grants Office **7 days prior to the submission deadlines**.

Further information and instruction manuals on Cayuse can be found on [Research-Grants Pulse page](#).

The following will give you a better idea of what to expect when preparing the proposal:

—Proposal Title

There is an 81 character limit for all titles (this includes spaces). The title should capture the essence of goals and objectives and hook the reader.

—Project Dates

The earliest possible project start date for your project based on your submission date can be found below:

Grant Submitted in:	January-April	May-August	September-December
Earliest Project Start Date:	December 1	April 1	July 1

—Formatting Specifications

- **Font**
 - Use an Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia typeface, a black font color, and a font size of 11 points or larger. (A Symbol font may be used to insert Greek letters or special characters; the font size requirement still applies.)
 - Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch.
 - Type may be no more than six lines per inch.
- **Page Margins**
 - Use *standard paper size (8 ½" x 11)*.
 - Use at least one-half inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages. No information should appear in the margins, including the PI’s name and page numbers.
- **Page Formatting**
 - Since a number of reviewers will be reviewing applications as an electronic document and not a paper version, applicants are strongly encouraged to use only a standard, single-column format for the text. Avoid using a two-column format since it can cause difficulties when reviewing the document electronically.
 - Do not include any information in a header or footer of the attachments. A header will be system-generated that references the name of the PD/PI. Page numbers for the footer will be system-generated in the complete application, with all pages sequentially numbered.
- **Figures, Graphs, Diagrams, Charts, Tables, Figure Legends, and Footnotes**
 - You may use a smaller type size but it must be in a black font color, readily legible, and follow the font typeface requirement. Color can be used in figures; however, all text must be in a black font color, clear and legible.
- **Grantsmanship**
 - Use English and avoid jargon. Examples: core competencies, core values, best practice, etc.
 - If terms are not universally known, spell out the term the first time it is used and note the appropriate abbreviation in parentheses. The abbreviation may be used thereafter.
 - Reference *The Grant Application Writer’s Workbook* for more information.

The Office of Research recommends using Arial 10 or 11 on all documents. We have found that this font type and size gives the writer the most efficient use of space.

—Budget

- R03 – up to \$50,000 per year over two years: MODULAR
- R21 – less than \$200,000 total direct costs over two years: MODULAR; \$200,000-\$275,000 total direct costs: NON-MODULAR
- R15 – less than \$250,000 total direct costs over three years: MODULAR; \$250,000-\$300,000 total direct costs: NON-MODULAR
- R01 – less than \$250,000 per year up to five years: MODULAR; more than \$250,000 total direct costs per year: NON-MODULAR

MODULAR – Modular budgets are applicable to certain research grant applications requesting \$250,000 or less per year or project for direct costs. Note, consortium/contractual indirect costs are not factored into the direct cost limit. Subcontract indirect costs may be requested in addition to the \$250,000 limit. Modular budgets are simplified; therefore, detailed categorical information is not to be submitted with the application. The modular budget is applicable only to R01, R03, R15, R21, and R34 applications.

NON-MODULAR (Detailed) –Non-modular budgets are applicable to research grant applications requesting more than \$250,000 per year/project in direct costs. Non-modular budgets are not simplified and detailed categorical justification is submitted with the application.

For proposals that seek more than \$500,000 in direct costs per year must be granted special permission from NIH.

Some Questions to think about regarding your budget:

Personnel

- Do you plan on hiring a Research Technician or Post-Doctoral Researcher?
- Do you plan on hiring any Graduate Research Assistants?

Supplies and Equipment

- Will you need any specialized equipment, software or data sets?

If you are doing Primary Data Collection:

- If you are collecting primary data, how do you propose to collect the information?
- What do you have in mind for participant incentives?
- Do you have a timeline for the data collection?

Travel

- Will you be traveling anywhere to meet with collaborators?
- Do you or any other study personnel plan on attending any professional conferences?

Consultants

- Will you be working with consultants?
- What is the daily rate of pay and the amount of time they will be contributing?

—Helpful information we need to know to help finalize the proposal:

Who is working on the project?

Please let us know any Co-Investigators/Key Personnel/Consultants/Other Significant Contributors that you will be including in the proposal. All Co-Investigators/Key Personnel/Consultants/Other Significant Contributors will require a biographical sketch for the proposal.

Will the proposal have any subcontracts?

For all subcontracts to be complete and approved by the Grants Office they must include:

- A letter of institutional commitment from an authorized representative (NOT the PI of the subcontract)
- Budget
- Budget justification
- Statement of Work
- Resources Page
- Copy of F&A agreement

Please provide us with the name of the Principal Investigator of the subcontract as well as an administrative contact at the subcontracting institution.

—**Determining if subcontract vs. consultant**

Consultants

Consultants are experts outside the University hired to perform a service on the project for a short period of time. A consulting agreement is generally to an individual who is not using any institutional or organizational facilities and is acting as a direct agent. He/she usually bills by the hour, by invoice, and is paid directly. The consultant may also come to the main performance site (DMU) to carry out a certain piece of the project.

Subgrant/Subcontract/Subaward

Subcontracted work is generally conducted at another institution or company, and usually has a budget for salary/fringes, supplies, etc. The sponsor requirements/terms and conditions have to be passed down to the subcontract via written agreements. Compliance also has to be monitored. For each subgrant/subcontract included in a proposal, a scope of work to be performed and a separate budget provided by the organization receiving the subaward is to be provided to the Grants Office before the proposal is institutionally approved and forwarded to the sponsor. Submitting a proposal without a firm commitment from the subcontractor places the University at risk because if the proposal is awarded, the subcontracting organization may be unable to perform the work at the proposed price. It is best to obtain a firm quote/budget plus a statement of the work to be performed from the subrecipient before the proposal is submitted. Also, any terms or conditions from the sponsor flow down to the subcontract.

—**You will need to include the following to complete your grant proposal:**

- **Project Summary/Abstract***

More information can be found here, p. I-62

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424_RR_Guide_General_Adobe_VerB.pdf

*this can be no longer than 30 lines of text and must be written in third person.

Some reviewers may see only the title and the abstract so it serves as the second way to “hook” the reader.

- **Project Narrative**

Using no more than two or three sentences, describe the relevance of this research to **public** health. In this section, be succinct and use plain language that can be understood by a general, lay audience.

More information can be found here, p. I-63

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424_RR_Guide_General_Adobe_VerB.pdf

- **Specific Aims**

PI is responsible for this section. Specific Aims are limited to 1 page.

State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved.

List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology.

- **Research Strategy**

You are responsible for all sections of the Research Strategy which include the *Significance, Innovation and Approach*.

The page limits for this section for each mechanism are as follows unless specified otherwise in the

FOA: R01 – 12 pages; R15 – 12 pages. R03/R21 – 6 pages.

- **Human Subjects Section**

Is your project Human Subjects research? If NO, you do not need Section E.

If YES, you will need the following:

Section E (the Human Subjects section) consists of four parts

1. Protection of Human Subjects
2. Inclusion of Women and Minorities
3. Targeted/Planned Enrollment Table (if the application involves the inclusion of women and minorities complete this table)
4. Inclusion of Children

More information on completing this section can be found here, Part II - Supplemental Instructions for Preparing the Human Subjects Section of the Research Plan

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424_RR_Guide_General_Adobe_VerB.pdf

If your research can fall under Exemption Category 4 research, then you will need only the Protection of Human Subjects Section. If your research is not Exempt Category 4, you will need all four sections.

Consult the Director of Research Regulatory Affairs, Diane Ament (diane.ament@dmu.edu) for more information or if you have questions about this section.

The Human Subjects Section has no page limit.

For RESUBMISSION applications:

You must include an introduction to the resubmission application

R01/R15/R03/R21-maximum of 1 page

- **Bibliography and References Cited**

- **Budget Justification**

For MODULAR budgets the budget justification will consist of personnel descriptions only.

For NON-MODULAR budgets, the budget justification will be a full detailed categorical description.

- **Biographical Sketches**

NIH biosketches are limited to four pages. See an example of an NIH biosketch [here](#).

Publications should be limited to the top 15 most relevant to the proposed project. Listing more than this is discouraged.

- **Resources Document**

This document is used to highlight both the University and also the PI and laboratory. The Office of Research has a sample document on file. Please request it if you would like to use this and make changes specified to your research and lab.

- **Cover Letter**

Applicants are encouraged to include a cover letter with the application. The cover letter is only for internal use and will not be shared with peer reviewers. The letter should contain any of the following information that applies to the application:

- Application title.
- Funding Opportunity (PA or RFA) title of the NIH initiative.

- Request of an assignment (referral) to a particular [awarding component\(s\)](#) or [Scientific Review Group \(SRG\)](#). The PHS makes the final determination.
- List of individuals (e.g., competitors) who should not review your application and why.
- Disciplines involved, if multidisciplinary.
- For late applications (see Late Application policy in [Section 2.14](#)) include specific information about the timing and nature of the cause of the delay.
- When submitting a Changed/Corrected Application **after** the submission date, a cover letter is **required** explaining the reason for the Changed/Corrected Application. If you already submitted a cover letter with a previous submission and are now submitting a Changed/Corrected Application, you must include all previous cover letter text in the revised cover letter attachment. The system does not retain any previously submitted cover letters until after an application is verified; therefore, you must repeat all information previously submitted in the cover letter as well as any additional information.
- Explanation of any subaward budget components that are not active for all periods of the proposed grant.

More information can be found here, p. I-93

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424_RR_Guide_General_Adobe_VerB.pdf

- **Appendices (if applicable)**
Please read your specific program announcement to get information regarding appendix material.
- **Letters of Support**
Letters of support include any letters necessary to demonstrate the support of subcontract participants and collaborators such as Senior/Key Personnel and Other Significant Contributors included in the grant application. Letters are not required for personnel (such as research assistants) not contributing in a substantive, measurable way to the scientific development or execution of the project. **For consultants, letters should include rate/charge for consulting services.**

The proposal must be submitted in its entirety to the Grants Office **7 days prior to the submission deadlines.**

Des Moines University uses a program called Cayuse to submit all NIH proposals to Grants.gov. At times, Grants.gov servers become backlogged when they are overwhelmed with grant submissions on the deadline date for each cycle. We encourage all Principal Investigators to complete all portions of the grant proposal on time (for the 7 day prior Grants Office deadline) to ensure that their proposal is successfully routed to Grants.gov/NIH before the 5pm deadline. Grants.gov can be unpredictable. Complete proposals, submitted prior to deadline days, are more likely to be transmitted to NIH on time.

Please email (mollie.lyon@dmu.edu) or call (x1657) with any questions. The Office of Research looks forward to working with you!

Complete SF424 instructions for NIH electronic submissions can be found here:

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm>

Complete Cayuse instructions for electronic submissions can be found here:

<https://pulse.dmu.edu/academics/research/Pages/Grants.aspx>