



Pre-Award  
Sponsored Programs  
Handbook

## Overview

At Ramapo College we are fortunate to receive funding from federal and state agencies, as well as private organizations, to support scholarship, creative work, teaching, research, and student support services (“sponsored programs”). While Ramapo College is the legal recipient of the award on behalf of the institution, you as Project Lead (Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Director (PD)) are responsible for conducting the work (including fiscal management).

The central mission of the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs (OGSP) is to ensure that you have all of the necessary tools at your disposal to apply for and manage a successful sponsored project. To this end, we provide the following services:

- Understanding Ramapo College grants policies and procedures
- Locating potential funding sources
- Interpreting guidelines set forth by the funding agency
- Obtaining administrative approvals
- Obtaining documentation related to fringe rates, indirect cost rates, and audits
- Developing project goals and objectives
- Developing and justifying budgets
- Preparing, editing, and reviewing your proposal
- Finalizing and submitting your proposal
- Fiscal management
- Award Close Out
- Follow-up reporting required by the funding agency

### Sponsored Programs Lifecycle

The sponsored program life cycle begins when you identify a funding opportunity to support your work. The steps from the ideation stage, to responding to an award announcement, assembling the proposal, submitting the proposal package to the sponsor, and acceptance of the award is referred to as the pre-award phase.

Once you are notified of an award and the College accepts it, you enter into the post-award phase. Here, your award is set up in the College’s financial system allowing for day-to-day project costs to be charged to the award. This phase also includes all activities through final invoicing, reporting, and closeout of the project. The illustration below depicts the typical sponsored programs lifecycle.



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In this handbook, we will address the pre-award process. This is not intended as a complete guide to applying for sponsored project funding, nor will it include post-award compliance. A separate policies and procedures guide and in-person training is available once an award is received.

### **What might fund your project?**

Grants, subcontracts, gifts, and contracts are some of the many mechanisms by which you may fund your project.

#### **Grant\*:**

- No substantial involvement is anticipated between sponsor and recipient during the project period.
- The award comes with terms, conditions, and/or other contractual requirements that need to be met.
- Budgetary restrictions must be followed.
- Annual and/or final reports are required.
- Documentation of expenditures is required.
- Deliverables, including dissemination of results or products, are required.
- There is a start and stop date.

#### **Contract, Cooperative Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):**

- There is extensive input from the sponsor about the activities to be performed.
- There are contractual requirements that must be met.
- Budgetary restrictions must be followed.
- Annual and/or final reports are required.

#### **Gift:**

- Given by a donor who expects nothing of significant value in return, other than recognition and disposition of the gift in accordance with the donor's wishes.
- No/Few contractual requirements are imposed.
- There are no/few deliverables to the donor.
- It may be accompanied by an agreement that restricts the use of the funds to a particular purpose.

#### **Subcontract:**

- Agreement between the College and another where we are not the primary award recipient.
- You are performing a piece of a larger project that was awarded to another entity.
- Specifies the terms and outlines what you are expected to do, as well as providing the budget for your work.

\*For the purposes of this handbook, we will primarily consider grant funding.

## What kind of grant might be a good fit for Ramapo College?

A grant that is a good fit for Ramapo College is one that aligns with both our [strategic plan](#) and [comprehensive academic plan](#), contributes to the College in such a way that we are in a better position than before the grant award, and advances your professional growth and development.

We have developed a [fit matrix](#) for you to use to determine whether your project accomplishes these objectives, and where the project's strengths and weaknesses may lie. If it seems to have more weaknesses than strengths, the OGSP can work with you to make improvements.

## Roles and Responsibilities

As any award is an agreement between Ramapo College and the sponsor, many individuals and offices are involved with the preparation and submission of a proposal. Key offices and personnel involved in this process are outlined below.

Lifecycle Step	Office or Person Involved
<b>Proposal Initiation</b> – identify funding opportunities; gain approval to develop proposal	PI/PD, with support from OGSP, Supervisor, Dean, and/or appropriate Vice President
<b>Proposal Development</b> – writing, budget development, identify and get letters of support from partners and collaborators	PI/PD, with support from OGSP and Grants Specialist
<b>Proposal Submission</b> – gain approval to submit; submit to sponsoring agency	OGSP and Project Lead, with support from Supervisor, Dean, and/or appropriate Vice President
<b>Award Acceptance</b> – receive notice of award from funding agency; review, negotiate, and accept award	OGSP, with support from Supervisor, Dean, and/or appropriate Vice President
<b>Award Management</b> – establish the award account; execute the project; manage the award in alignment with relevant requirements	PI/PD, with support from Grants Specialist and OGSP
<b>Award Close Out</b> – file all required reports; close out the award account; retain all documents in alignment with records retention requirements.	Grants Specialist and PI/PD, with support from OGSP

## Important Considerations

In order to provide the highest quality support, the OGSP has implemented internal grant approval procedures. This will allow time to provide a thorough review of each proposal, guaranteeing accuracy, completeness, and compliance with sponsor guidelines and College policies. It will also mitigate impacts on other faculty and staff who may be asked to pivot to address last-minute proposal submissions.

### 1. Grant Initiation

**Pre-approval for full proposal development is required.** This will ensure that the sponsored project is consistent with the College's mission and strategic priorities. OGSP asks that you complete the [grant initiation form](#) and submit it to [grantsdesk@ramapo.edu](mailto:grantsdesk@ramapo.edu) **at least one month prior** to initiating efforts to obtain funding. The OGSP, along with your

Supervisor, Dean, Vice President, and/or the Provost, will review and approve the proposed project. Additional information or clarification may be requested. Once it is approved, you will be notified by email and the OGSP will work with you to finalize your proposal.

## **2. Grant Submission**

Once your team has completed the final drafts of all required proposal documents, in consultation with the OGSP, you will then share these with your Supervisor, Dean, and/or Vice President, along with the [grant submission approval form](#). All final drafts must then be transferred to the OGSP who will route it to the Grants Accountant and the Provost (if appropriate). Final drafts must be submitted **at minimum 7 working days before the submission deadline** in order to conduct a full review of the proposal. Please discuss with OGSP if this timeline is prohibitive based on a short-notice release of the RFP or the deadline imposed by the sponsor. This review consists of much more than a budgetary review. The OGSP will also review specific content and formatting required by the sponsor, and offer suggestions that will make the application more competitive. These guidelines are in place to ensure proposal applicants submit a compliant, high-quality, and competitive proposal.

## **3. Eligibility to Serve as a Project Lead**

All proposals submitted to sponsors for external support must designate a Project Lead, oftentimes referred to as the Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Director (PD). The Project Lead must be full-time faculty or staff of the College capable of overseeing the sponsored project at a high level and ensuring compliance with all programmatic and financial requirements.

## **4. Federal Guidance**

For federally sponsored projects, the College follows the requirements outlined in the Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards [2 CFR 200](#); commonly known as "OMB Uniform Guidance." There may also be additional agency award requirements. Please keep in mind that these guidelines may change over time and it is the Project Lead's responsibility to be aware of these changes and how they impact the project scope and objectives.

## Chapter 1. Project development

Crafting a grant application demands significant time and energy. Applications developed with careful planning in advance tend to yield much higher success rates than those done more hastily.

It is to your benefit to develop your project idea and define funding needs even before a sponsor is identified. These ideas can then be utilized during the proposal development process when an opportunity arises. This is especially beneficial should a funding call be released with a short turnaround time.

Project development may require input from multiple on- and off-campus partners, significant data collection and analysis by Ramapo College's Office of Institutional Research, and development of an evaluation plan. Hence, the project development process should commence at least one month, **if not earlier**, before any deadline to ensure all participants have adequate time to contribute their ideas and support.

The first step in project development is to articulate the overarching goal, that is, what you hope to accomplish in broad terms. This then provides a framework for you to develop measurable objectives or milestones, a reasonable plan of work, and any assurances to the sponsor that the award will be used to its fullest potential.

Next, take some time to consider the following questions as they relate to your project. The answers to these questions will be synthesized into a project summary.\*

- Based on what has already been done in the field, what is the potential for the project to advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different disciplines?
- Is the project creative, original, or potentially transformative, and why?
- What is the plan for completing the project? Is it well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale?
- How much time will it take to complete the project?
- How will you assess the project's success?
- What resources do you need to complete the work? Do you have adequate resources to carry out the proposed activities?
- What makes you qualified to lead this project? How well qualified are you, the team, and the institution to conduct the proposed activities?
- How does the project advance College programs and/or student support services, as well as contribute to your own professional growth and development?

### Helpful hint:

The project idea need not be tied to only one grant application – you may find multiple sponsors that will support different aspects of your work. In essence, your project idea can be the foundation for multiple proposals.

To help you develop a project summary, we have created a [template](#) for your use.

\*These questions are based on reviewers' directives from National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health.

## Chapter 2. Finding your funder

When looking for funding, keep in mind that you may find multiple sponsors that will support different aspects of your work. Generally, your choice of a sponsor will depend on how your project aligns with the sponsor's funding programs, your project timeline, and the budget required to carry out your project.

Having already defined your funding needs means that you can accomplish a more refined search and pinpoint agencies that fund the type of work you aim to do. Remember, you want to ensure that the sponsor will support the work you want to do. (The alternative is to “chase the money”, which may require you modify your project to align with what the sponsor will fund.)

For your sponsored project, you may seek out either public and/or private sector funding. Public sector funding is distributed by federal, state, county and local government agencies, while private sector funding includes grants distributed by foundations, trusts, and corporations.

### PUBLIC SECTOR

Public sector sponsors generally describes their funding opportunities in one of the following ways:

- Requests For Proposal (RFP)
- Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
- Program Announcement (PA)
- Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)
- Broad Agency Announcement (BAA)
- Notice Inviting Applications (NIA)
- Letters of Inquiry (LOI)
- Dear Colleague Letters (DCL)

These documents can be somewhat dense but they are full of valuable information. It is important for you to read through them very carefully, both before you initiate proposal development and again before submission. If the sponsor offers webinars or Q&A sessions, be sure to take advantage of these, as well.

### Helpful hint:

Protect your time! It can be very tempting to chase side projects that bring in money, especially if this money can support your primary project, too. This may lead to mission creep and ultimately reduce the amount of time you have available to devote to your primary project.

Of course, there are times when you might want to pursue side projects. For instance, as you near the end of a particular project or you develop new partnerships with others in your field, you may want to consider pursuing funding for side projects that could, with time, become a new focus.

Remember, the goal is to win an award that supports your research, scholarship, or creative work!

### How to find public sector funding

Public sector databases:

Federal funding: A good online database to find federal funding is [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). This is updated daily (except weekends) and is a thorough resource for finding federal government funding. There is no subscription required to search this database. You can also subscribe to receive daily announcements from the [Federal Register](https://www.federalregister.gov) which contains public notices from U.S. government agencies, including grant announcements.

State funding: For state funding in New Jersey, you can navigate to the websites for the various NJ State agencies. You can also sign up with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education ([OSHE](#)) to receive alerts about funding opportunities.

County and Local funding: Public grant opportunities are generally announced through the appropriate government office. (e.g., [Bergen County](#))

If you know of a public agency that is likely to support your project, perhaps because they have funded similar projects, you can directly search on their website for funding opportunities. For your convenience, OGSP has listed [links](#) to various state and federal agencies on its website.

The OGSP monitors the federal and state allocation of grant funding, liaises with federal, state, and local program officers to monitor the timing of funding opportunities, and engages in discussions regarding project priorities and interests. The Office has curated several current funding opportunities on its [website](#).

### **PRIVATE SECTOR**

Private sector funding includes foundations, trusts, and corporate grant making. These types of sponsors may require that their awards are received by a tax-exempt organization (under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code), such as the Ramapo College Foundation. Once you identify a private sector funder, you will need to seek approval from the Ramapo College Foundation to initiate proposal development. Policies and Procedures that govern receipt of private gifts and grants can be found [here](#).

#### **A few ways to find private sector funding:**

[Foundation Directory Online](#): This database lists private trusts, foundations, and corporate grant makers.

[Philanthropy News Digest](#), which is free to sign up for, will send you daily updates of RFPs that have been released.

[GrantWatch](#): This database is a grant discovery platform that has an extensive list of grants, including both public and private sector funding.

### **Helpful hint:**

When it comes to finding funding, it is to your benefit to contact the sponsor directly to discuss your project. Funding agencies want you to be successful! The program officer or sponsor representative is your advocate and is available to talk with you about your project as you prepare your proposal. They serve as valuable resources and can play a crucial role in the pre-award grant application process. These sponsor representatives can:

1. confirm the alignment of your project idea with the selected funding opportunity
2. offer valuable suggestions and guidance to enhance your proposal
3. provide insights into priorities or initiatives not explicitly stated in the funding opportunity
4. guide you to policies and procedures that you need to be aware of



## Chapter 3. Developing a budget

The budget can sometimes be the most daunting part of a grant application, yet it and the associated budget justification/narrative are key elements of a sponsored project proposal. Budgets outline the anticipated expenses for a project, including personnel, equipment, travel, supplies, and more. Justifications or narratives provide explanations for each expense, demonstrating the necessity and appropriateness of costs. Together, they ensure financial planning, accountability, and compliance with sponsor requirements, enhancing the competitiveness of the application.

A budget usually consists of a line item [budget summary and a budget justification](#) for both the request from the sponsor and the match. When developing your budget, you should ask yourself:

- What is needed to accomplish the objectives of the project?
- Do these costs align with what is being proposed?
- Have these costs been derived accurately and are they in line with sponsor and College limitations?
- If cost sharing/matching is required, have I captured this accurately?

Budget items must conform to the stipulations of both the sponsor and the College. They can include both direct and indirect costs, which together determine the total cost of the project. The OGSP and Grants Specialist will work with you to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to advance the work of the sponsored project.

This handbook reviews typical budget categories. Specific details about managing these funds can be found in the Grants Policies and Procedure manual.

### Helpful hint:

To ensure the budget is sufficient to carry out your project, especially for multi-year projects, first draw up a plan of work. Based on this, draft a budget **before** the rest of the proposal.

### Personnel

All compensation to Ramapo College employees (faculty, staff and students) are to be included here. This category includes the hours or percentage of time dedicated to the project and appropriate pay rates in order to calculate total direct personnel expenses for each individual working on the project. Some sponsors have salary limits that should be applied to all awards, so you need to be aware of these limitations and the projects that your other team members are working on. Project personnel may not work more than 100% of their time, nor can they be paid more than 100% of their institutional base salary (IBS) rate as is specified under [Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200.430](#).

**Please refer to the Sponsored Programs Policies and Procedures Manual for detailed explanations on allowable charges to this category.**

1. Full-time Faculty
  - a. Course Release: Full-time faculty may apply to the College for release time from their regular teaching load in order to carry out grant-funded activities if allowed by the sponsor. Release time from courses is calculated based on the faculty rank (see [Overload and Adjunct rates](#)). Generally, one four-credit course release during the academic year is equal to 13% of a faculty member's IBS.

- b. Summer Salary: Faculty can be paid for up to two months in the summer for work done on grant-funded projects at a rate of no more than 10% of their IBS per month. To determine your IBS, you can contact People Operations and Employee Resources (POER). For salary increases across a multi-year project, the Grants Accountant will work with the Budget Office to project these increases.
  - c. Both course releases and summer salary require pre-approval by your Dean. Please use this [form](#) during the grant submission approval process to ensure that you have their support.
- 2. Full-time Staff

Full-time staff on a 12-month contract may charge the grant a portion or all of their salary dependent on their contribution. Fringe expenses are included in this expense. Full-time personnel on a 10-month contract may charge the grant a portion or all of their summer salary not to exceed their IBS.
- 3. Part-time Staff (hourly)

Part-time personnel can be hired to work on a grant and paid at an hourly rate. Fringe expenses are included in this expense.
- 4. Cross-departmental Consulting

Cross-departmental consulting by faculty or staff is allowed if the work performed is in addition to their regular responsibilities. Charges for such work represent additional compensation above their IBS and are allowable provided that such consulting arrangements are specifically approved in writing by the College and the sponsor. The rate of pay must be pre-approved by People Operations and Employee Resources (POER) prior to award proposal submission.
- 5. Student Assistant

Undergraduate or graduate students can be paid an hourly wage of at least \$15.49 per hour for work on your sponsored project, depending on the status and experience of the student. Students can work a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year, and 40 hours per week during the summer and breaks.
- 6. Graduate Assistant (GA)

GAs are a specific title reserved for salaried graduate students hired under the Ramapo College [GA Policy](#). The cost to hire a GA is always \$18,000 per year, which includes a \$10,000 stipend and \$8,000 tuition credit for the student. GAs work 20 hours per week for 10 months (September - June). (Note, a GA is different from a graduate student who is serving as a student assistant.)
- 7. Fringe Rate

Fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by Ramapo College to their faculty and staff as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages. They [include](#), but are not limited to, health insurance, unemployment benefit plans, workers compensation, FICA, and retirement. The allocation of fringe benefits in your budget is proportionate to the salaries and wages charged to the grant and is based on the rate negotiated with the federal government (Health and Human Services). For federal and state grants the federally negotiated fringe rate is 33.4% (effective July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2028). For all other grants, the College's fringe rate as determined through the state of New Jersey applies. In

some cases, sponsors do not allow fringe rates to be charged to the grant, or may limit them.

### **Other Direct Costs**

Direct costs are those that can be identified specifically with a particular sponsored project objective and are directly assigned to such activities easily, with a high degree of accuracy.

1. **Equipment:** Equipment is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost of greater than \$10,000. If an equipment purchase exceeds the Ramapo College's bid threshold, please be aware that a board approval waiver will be required, which will require additional lead time. In addition, specific equipment vendors must be approved by the Ramapo Purchasing Department.
2. **Materials and Supplies:** Materials and supplies are all tangible personal property other than equipment. For example, a computing device is a supply if the acquisition cost is less than \$5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life.
3. **Participant Support Costs:** These costs are direct costs for items such as student scholarships, stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees in connection with conferences, or training projects. They are typically incurred for projects that have an education or outreach component. It may also include support paid to external participants who are not employees of Ramapo College, e.g., teachers, trainees, fellows, and student stipends and associated travel, subsistence, and other allowable, supported costs.

Participant support costs do not include the following:

- Costs for the PI/PD or other employees, such as salaries and wages, fringe, or travel
  - Costs for a consultant or trainer providing services to the College project
  - Costs of a guest speaker
  - Conference/workshop support costs (e.g., expenses associated with attending conferences, workshops, seminars or similar events)
4. **Travel, including Meals and Incidentals:** Both domestic and international travel can be included when allowed by the sponsor. Ramapo College travel policies and procedures regarding reimbursement rates must be followed unless otherwise specified by the sponsor (e.g., gsa.gov rates might be required).
  5. **Consultants, Vendors, and Contractors:** Consultants provide technical support for your project. Their support should be identified in the budget and explained in the budget justification. If there is a specific individual or contractor that you intend to work with, they should be named directly in the grant when possible, with their rates clearly described. Vendors/consultants must follow the College's [procurement policies](#).
  6. **Dissemination:** Oftentimes, you are required to disseminate the results of the sponsored project. This cost includes the expense of documenting, preparing, and publishing work conducted under your award.
  7. **Subawards:** If a significant portion of the work conducted on your project will be performed by a subrecipient (e.g., a collaborating university or business/corporation or

other external entity), OGSP requires completion of the [Subrecipient Commitment Form](#). This form is to be completed at the proposal stage. It, along with the budget, budget justification, and a statement of work, must be submitted no later than five business days before the sponsor deadline.

8. Professional/ Consulting Services - Consultants provide technical support for an award. Their support should be identified in the budget and explained in the budget justification/description.
9. Human Subjects: Research projects may require the participation of human subjects. These individuals may receive payments or incentives for their participation but must be consistent with the approved IRB protocol and Ramapo College policies.

### **Indirect Costs**

Indirect costs, also referred to as facilities and administrative costs (F&A) or indirect costs, are those costs that cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project objective, such as shared building space.

When allowed, indirect cost charges should be the maximum amount allowed by the sponsor. As of July 1, 2024, the indirect cost rate for the on-campus projects is 63%, while the off campus rate is 22%. These rates are effective through June 30, 2028. These costs are charged to salaries and wages only.

### **Cost Sharing or Matching**

Cost sharing is a portion of necessary project costs that are not reimbursed by the sponsor. Some sponsors have mandatory cost sharing requirements where they require the College fund a portion of the overall project. This may also be referred to as “matching” costs. It includes both in-kind or cash contributions. In-kind contributions are non-cash contributions in the form of committed effort, equipment, and supplies, wherein the value can be readily determined, verified, documented, and justified. Cash cost sharing involves an outlay of funds specifically allocated to the project.

Voluntary committed cost sharing is when a Project Lead includes necessary costs in the overall project budget but does not request the sponsor to fund those costs.

Whether cost sharing is mandatory or voluntarily committed, in-kind or cash, it becomes a commitment to the award once funded. Keep in mind that sponsors do not allow award recipients to double count matching funds used for other purposes. For example, if Project A has a \$5,000 cost sharing commitment, you cannot count those same dollars a second time for Project B that may also have a \$5,000 cost sharing commitment.

**Here are common examples of cost sharing:** The project lead proposes a percentage of their effort without asking for funding to support that effort; student workers will work on the project without requesting the sponsor to pay their stipends; software is purchased for the study by the College, but is not included in the project budget justification.

Leadership must be cognizant of the commitment of College funds. Accordingly, sponsored project applications that include mandatory and voluntary committed cost sharing must be approved by the Dean/Unit Head and Provost and/or respective Vice President as part of the grant submission approval process. A budget and budget description/justification that outlines this cost sharing should also be submitted.

## Chapter 4. Writing the proposal narrative

One of the most important and satisfying pre-award activities you will do is to write your proposal narrative. This is also where you will let your expertise, passion, and interests shine. Every other piece of the grant application will depend on this document- your budget, the team you put together, how you measure the success of the project, etc.

The OGSP will provide feedback regarding required edits as they relate to formatting, required application components, and budget, as well as suggestions to make your proposal more competitive. We will be in a better position to provide more thorough feedback if you share your works in progress, or submit your final proposal to the OGSP well in advance of the deadline. If proposals are submitted shortly before the application deadline, we cannot guarantee approval and/or submission of the proposal, and that proposal will undergo a limited review.

### **Important consideration:**

Sponsor guidelines supersede anything described in this handbook. The sponsor should let you know what they require in the narrative, detailed in their funding announcement.

***Following the sponsor guidelines is one of the most important things to do when writing your narrative!*** Reading and re-reading the RFP before, during, and after you write your proposal is a way to ensure that you have addressed all of their requirements.

Typically, proposal narratives include the following information in a format determined by the sponsor:

1. Project Overview or Summary
2. Introduction to the Organization
3. Needs Statement and/or Research QuestionGoals and Objectives
4. Expected Outputs and Outcomes
5. Methods (including Timeline)
6. Roles and Responsibilities
7. Evaluation Plan
8. Sustainability Plan

### 1. Project Overview or Summary

This section contains a brief overview of your project. You should include a description of the activities that would result if you are funded and how these activities would be accomplished. Some of the factors you should address in this summary include:

- Name of the College and School or Program
- Title of the proposed project
- Goal(s) and objectives
- Project significance
- Target population or audience that will be impacted by the project (if applicable)
- Expected major outcomes of the project
- Past successes that speak to why the project should be done by you at Ramapo College

## 2. Introduction to the Organization

In this section, you will describe Ramapo College and the School or Program that will house the sponsored project. Some descriptions to include:

- Mission, Values, and/or Strategic Plan of the College, School, and/or Program
- Student population (ex. demographic breakdown)\*
- Significant milestones that the College has achieved (ex. Middle States accreditation)
- Program accomplishments (ex. program accreditations, new academic program offerings)
- How the proposed project fits within the College, and School or Program

\*The [Office of Institutional Research](#) at Ramapo College is an amazing resource for certain types of data. They are also experts in thinking about how you might use the data they collect to enhance your proposal.

## 3. Needs Statement and/or Research Question

A needs statement or research question is key to all sponsored projects. It should be well-supported by the literature, the work you have already done, and/or evidenced by any gaps and weaknesses in current programs or structures at the College. In this section you should:

- Provide a compelling description of your project
- Identify the specific needs or gaps that your project addresses
- Include data or evidence that showcases the significance of addressing the specific needs or gaps
- Showcase your past successes and expertise in implementing similar projects
- Be very clear - not all reviewers will have the exact expertise to assess the project
- Make the connection between the needs statement or research question and the College, School, and/or Program to demonstrate institutional capacity and readiness to support the project

## 4. Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal(s) of your project will describe the long-term purpose of the project, while measurable and realistic objectives are the means by which you will achieve this goal. When differentiating goals and objectives, consider the following comparisons:

Goals are broad → Objectives are narrow  
Goals are long-term → Objectives are shorter-term  
Goals are general intentions → Objectives are precise actions  
Goals are often intangible → Objectives are tangible  
Goals are abstract → Objectives are concrete  
Goals are difficult to measure → Objectives are measurable

## 5. Expected Outputs and Outcomes

While outputs demonstrate what will be produced or accomplished (tangible), outcomes reveal the impact of these outputs on achieving your goals and objectives (intangible). Both of these tell the funder what you think success looks like. In the proposal narrative frame these in light of the:

- target population or audience
- time frame of the project
- direction and degree of change, including baseline data and/or preliminary work
- your expertise and that of your team

In some cases, a [logic model](#) may be required by the funder. Whether required or not, it can be useful because it allows you to visualize the project from a broader lens.

#### 6. Methods (including Timeline)

This section is a detailed explanation of your approaches, including methodologies, to meet each of the objectives. These should be described in sufficient detail so that the sponsor understands how you will accomplish your objectives. Including a timeline will show them that you have thoughtfully considered how you will accomplish the major activities during the period of funding.

#### 7. Roles and Responsibilities

You will likely not be the only person working on the sponsored project. Whether it is student assistants, other faculty, or College staff, you will want to describe who will be involved in achieving the objectives and what they bring to the project. In many cases, their expertise will be exemplified in a CV or résumé. If they are yet to be hired, their expected role can be outlined in a job description.

#### 8. Project Evaluation

If an evaluation is required, the funder is asking you to describe how you know the project was a success. For example, if you expect an increase in the number of students who have a positive experience in Calculus I because of your proposed intervention, how will this gain be measured as it relates to this intervention? Outcomes may be measured in various ways, such as surveys, focus groups, comparisons to baseline evidence or data, etc.

Depending on the timeline and nature of the project, you may need to complete both a formative and summative evaluation:

- Formative Evaluation (Assessment): This type of evaluation is more process-focused. By carrying out a formative evaluation, you will be monitoring the progress of the project as it happens. Because it is carried out throughout the project, formative evaluations will allow you time to course correct.
- Summative Evaluation: This type of evaluation measures overall project impact, including outcomes and outputs.

If the sponsor can answer the following questions after reading your evaluation plan, you are in good shape!

- What key questions will the evaluation address?
- Is there sufficient time to course correct based on the evaluation reports?
- What types of data will be gathered and what methodologies or instruments will be utilized?
- If the study involves a selected sample of participants, how will this sample be defined and constructed?
- Who will be responsible for carrying out the evaluation? What is their expertise?
- To whom will the evaluation reports be disseminated and how?

The evaluation plan is often one that many project leads have difficulty with. You may need to work with an independent or external evaluator during proposal development. Final project budgets generally reflect their contribution, with 7-10% of direct costs dedicated to their compensation for many federal grants.

#### 9. Sustainability Plan

Sustainability describes how the project will be continued or supported beyond the life of the grant. It doesn't necessarily mean the project will continue "as is" beyond the funding period, but can also mean how the **impact** of the project is continued beyond the funding period. This

section shows that you have thought about the long-term outcomes. It can also show, once again, that the institution supports your work.

It is not always intuitive to think about a project in terms of its sustainability. Instead, think about building capacity, resource development, collaborating with partners, dissemination, developing a training program, and marketing the project's outcomes. These are all important ways one can create a sustainability plan. Don't forget the obvious- applying for future funding!



## Chapter 5. Pre-Award Compliance Areas

The OGSP carefully reviews each funding announcement to protect the College from a compliance standpoint, but more importantly, to give you the best opportunity for a successful proposal.

Most federal grants include four common certifications, which the OGSP will complete:

- Certification Regarding Lobbying– Certifies no federally appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of the federal agency or a member, officer or employee of Congress, in connection with the award.
- Debarment and Suspension– Certifies that the institution is not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for disbarment, ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from transactions with a federal department/agency.
- Drug-free Workplace– Certifies that the applicant is and will continue to provide a drug-free workplace.
- Certification Regarding Civil Rights Compliance- Certifies programs will be offered to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, political beliefs, religion, marital status, or familial status.

Some agencies may require additional certifications and representations at the time of proposal submission. More information about these can be found in the complete Grants Policies and Procedures guide, as well as the RFP.

[SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), or the System for Award Management, is an official registry of the U.S. government. Registration is required as part of the application process for public sector funding. The College submits annual updates to the SAM. OGSP can provide you with required documentation of that registration.

You may also need to ensure compliance with other laws and regulations governing the conduct of the work. Included below is a list of some of the most common compliance issues that you may encounter. If there are any questions or concerns about any other compliance issues please contact OGSP directly.

<b>Human Subjects Protections</b>	All human subjects research, federally funded or not, must be reviewed by Ramapo College's <a href="#">Institutional Review Board</a> (IRB). The IRB assures that the rights of determination, privacy, and confidentiality are maintained through its procedures, and it strives to protect subjects from undue harm by upholding the minimum risk requirement. The IRB will review applications for the use of human subjects and it will evaluate each within the guidelines of the Ramapo College Human Subjects Policy. Many proposal applications will ask if the research proposed involves human subjects and, if so, request the IRB approval date.
<b>Animal Protections</b>	Any research involving animals, regardless of federal funding, must undergo review by the campus Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) or a departmental representative. Proposal applications often inquire about animal involvement, requesting the IACUC approval date if applicable.
<b>Conflict of Interest</b>	“Conflict of Interest” is defined as the use by an employee of the authority of his or her position at the College, or any confidential information received through employment by the College, for private pecuniary or other personal benefit including benefit for an immediate family or a business with which the employee or an immediate family member is associated. “Organizational Conflict of interest” means a situation where because of relationships with a parent company, affiliate, or subsidiary organization, Ramapo College is unable or appears to be unable to be impartial in conducting a procurement action involving a related organization, unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the federal Government, or the person's objectivity in performing the contract work is or might be otherwise impaired, or a person has an unfair competitive advantage.
<b>Responsible conduct of research (RCR)</b>	Ethical and responsible conduct of research is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in science and engineering. It is defined as "the practice of scientific investigation with integrity," and involves the awareness and application of established professional norms and ethical principles in the performance of all activities related to scientific research. Consequently, education in the responsible and ethical conduct of research is considered essential in the preparation of future scientists and engineers.

Be aware that training may be required in areas such as research security, conflict of interest, and Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research. Sometimes these are required pre-award, while others are required post-award. These trainings will be offered through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program. OGSP will verify that you have completed them through the CITI platform in order to accurately certify with the U.S. government that the appropriate persons have received the training.

How to gain access to the CITI courses:

1. Create an account at <https://about.citiprogram.org/>. If you already have an account, you can simply sign in.
2. For new users, affiliate with “Ramapo College of New Jersey”.

3. To add a course in CITI, select "View Courses", and then click "Add a Course" under "Learner Tools". You will then be presented with enrollment questions that will lead to the addition of the appropriate courses.

## **AVAILABLE COURSES**

### **1. Conflict of Interest: Other Federal Sponsors**

Who should take it?

Those who 1) are responsible for the purpose, design, conduct or reporting of research funded by the federal government; 2) negotiate or execute agreements for research funded by the U.S. Government; or 3) support compliance for the financial reporting of federally funded research projects. This is to be done pre-award.

Complete the following **two modules** and take the quiz following each.

- Overview of Conflicts of Interest (ID 21282)
- Overview of Conflicts of Interest and Commitment (ID 21283)

Following the COI training modules, please complete this [form](#) and return it to [grantsdesk@ramapo.edu](mailto:grantsdesk@ramapo.edu).

### **2. Research Security (Combined)**

Who should take it?

Senior/key personnel within 12 months prior to submitting a proposal.

### **3. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research Full Course**

Who should take it?

Undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, and other senior/key personnel who have not previously taken the Full Course.

### **4. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research Refresher**

Who should take it?

Undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, and other senior/key personnel who have previously taken the Full Course.

## Chapter 6. Finalizing and Submitting the proposal

There will undoubtedly be additional documentation and data required in your grant proposal application, all of which will be described in the RFP or learned through communication with a program officer. Because procuring these documents or data can take time, be sure to reach out as soon as possible during the project development process.

A few of the requirements you may come across include:

1. Biosketch, CV, or Résumé\*
2. Current and Pending Support\*
3. Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA)/ Potential Conflict documentation
4. Collaboration letter(s) from external partners
5. Institutional Resources/ Facilities documentation
6. Support letters from campus stakeholders
7. IRB documentation
8. Animal Use documentation
9. Data management plan
10. Subaward, MOU, etc documentation
11. Institutional Research data

\*You will want to check with the sponsor about the format of these documents. For instance, the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health requires that the Biosketch and Current and Pending support be done using [SciENCv](#), so a standard CV or résumé will not suffice.

Once your team has completed all required proposal documents, you will then share these with your Supervisor, Dean, and/or Vice President, along with the grant submission approval form and approval for course release/summer salary form (if appropriate). After you gain their approvals, all final drafts must then be transferred to the OGSP who will route it to the Grants Accountant and the Provost (if appropriate) for final submission approval.

In some cases, the College may decide not to approve a proposal for submission. The decision not to submit a proposal may be based on various factors (e.g., alignment with the College's research priorities, available resources, and potential risks). The primary goal of the OGSP is to support high-quality work and ensure compliance with applicable regulations and guidelines. In such cases where a proposal is not approved for submission, the PI/PD can work with OGSP to gain feedback on areas to revise the proposal to meet submission standards and prepare for resubmission.

The Director of Grants and Sponsored Programs is the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) and is the only office that may submit a proposal on behalf of the College for government grants. The PI/PD is not authorized to submit grant proposals.

If the sponsor, prior to issuing the award, requires modifications that result in changes to the project activities and/or budget, the PI/PD and the OGSP will work to expedite approvals as needed. An updated copy of all proposal modifications, along with associated approvals, will be maintained as a distinct version by the OGSP.

Awards are reviewed and, if necessary, negotiated by the AOR to ensure the terms and conditions are acceptable to the College. The OGSP is responsible for reviewing the terms and conditions and confirming that the award and budget are acceptable.

### **Congratulations!**

Once an award notice is received and you can begin the project, you will receive individualized help from OGSP along the way to ensure your project is a success.

For detailed descriptions of compliance regulations, please refer to the [Grants & Sponsored Programs Compliance Manual](#).

## Chapter 7. Post-Award Overview

**Award Agreement/Acceptance:** After notification of the award, Ramapo College may be asked to acknowledge acceptance of the award. If so, the College's President or Provost (or their designee) will sign the award agreement to signify that Ramapo College accepts the legal and fiduciary responsibility of the award. If instead you or someone else is asked to certify the award, please consult with the Grants Office before doing so.

**Financial Management of the Award:** Once the award is accepted, the Grants Specialist will assist you in setting up the financial aspects of the award. She will also be available to assist you with financial questions as they arise during your project, including how to submit requests for payments, invoicing, time and effort reporting, Banner access, etc.

**Subrecipient Management:** Should there be any documents requiring legal review, such as contracts, MOUs, etc, please reach out to OGSP. This should be done promptly to allow for appropriate review of these documents

**Publicizing Your Grant Award:** It is important to check with the funding agency regarding the timeline for publicizing the award. In some cases, the agency will want to announce the award before it is publicized by the College. Please reach out directly to me, and we will work together with the Office of Communications & Public Relations to accurately convey the project details to the campus community and the public.

**Reporting:** You will undoubtedly be required to submit reports to the funding agency regarding the progress of your project. In some cases, these reports will need to be submitted by the Grants Office, while in other cases, the reports can be submitted without administrative approval. In either case, please forward all of your reports and the program officer's responses to me.

**Closeout:** There are times when your project was not completed for reasons that were beyond your control. You may be allowed to request a no-cost extension with the funding agency in such a case. This, too, should be communicated to the OGSP. If your project is completed, please notify the Grants Specialist so she can proceed with the closeout.

### The Value of Becoming a Reviewer

Serving as a reviewer for a funding agency provides invaluable insight into how the proposal process operates, and allows you to develop an understanding of what separates successful proposals from those not chosen for funding. You can usually find information on how to serve as a reviewer on the agency's website.