Funding Opportunity

Finding an opportunity of funding is the first place to start. Faculty can search funding database, sponsor website, join research and funding related listservs, such as Pivot, check our Special Program Glossary, or talk to COE Contracts and Grants Office to find the opportunities of funding resources.

Once you have a funding opportunity you would like to apply to, pay attention to the submission deadlines. Try to give yourself a couple of month lead-time, and allow additional time for collaborative, international, or complex proposal.

Talk to Program Officer and Department Chair

Talk to the program officer when possible. Many sponsors encourage or allow prospective applicants to contact a program officer before applying. Program officers can usually advise as to whether a project idea is a potential fit for their program or whether there are other programs they are aware of that may be a better fit. Some may even give feedback on draft narratives or project abstracts.

Talk to your chair when you have identified a funding opportunity you would like to pursue, especially if it may involve course release time, commitments of University resources (space, equipment, staff) beyond those provided for in the funding request presented to the sponsor, or if cost sharing or matching is required.

Contact COEN Contracts and Grants Office

Once you have talked with the program officer and your department chair, you also need to contact the COE Contracts and Grants Office to let them know which fund you are interested in. They will give you some suggestions and help you go through the application.

Develop the Proposal

Read the funding opportunity guidelines (e.g., Call for Applications) closely and follow all sponsor requirements. At times, sponsors will suggest rather than require the use of a particular form or format. Generally it is the best to follow their suggestions as well as their requirements.

Develop the Budget

Pay close attention to the sponsor’s budget guidelines, such as what can or cannot be included, specific budget line items, and limitations. The budget should be developed concurrently with the proposal.
narrative and other application components since what you include in the budget will be affected by the project plans and vice versa.

We strongly encourage faculty to work with COE Contracts and Grants Office staff to develop the budget and budget justification documents to facilitate and expedite the process.

Allow extra time for budgets that involve subcontracts (even more time if foreign), consultants, or cost share/matching funds.

Most collaborations between institutions outside of the University are handled via subcontracts or consulting agreements. These subcontracts or agreements need to be reviewed and approved both by Office of Research & Economic Development and by the collaborating institution before your proposal can be submitted.

**Initiate the Proposal in NORM**

NORM (Niner On-Line Research Management) is our University’s system of record for externally funded research proposals and awards. All proposals for external funding need to be fully approved in NORM prior to being submitted to the prospective sponsors.

With few exceptions (mostly the fellowship programs), grant proposals and contracts for sponsored projects are submitted on behalf of the University, not in the name of individual faculty members, and they must be reviewed and approved by University administrators before submission. We encourage you to contact COE Contracts and Grants Office whenever you are submitting any type of proposals or even pre-proposal to discuss whether it will need to be entered and approved in NORM in advance of submission.

**Start Routing in NORM**

Once a proposal is submitted in NORM, it is automatically routed for approvals by the Department Chairs, Center Directors, and Deans (or their designees) who are responsible for the units and staff who will be involved in the project. The NORM approval process also involves the PI(s) certifying the proposal as entered accurately and completing a proposal-specific conflict of interest disclosure.

For pre-proposals, letters of intent and proposal with limited submissions (e.g. only one or two application allowed from each university), or proposals with unusual guidelines, please contact COE Contracts and Grants Office for guidance on how to proceed.

**The Notification from Sponsor**

The notifications from sponsors vary. It is common with federal funds, such as the NSF and NIH, that it takes six to nine months to receive the notification after the application deadline. The sponsor’s guidelines may provide additional information regarding notification timeline.

If you receive a notice declining an award for your proposal, check to see if they sent reviewers’ comments and if not, request for them. Based on reviewers’ comments, revise your proposal and start planning to resubmit for the next application cycle. It is very common for a proposal not to get funded the
If you receive an award notice, feel free to celebrate, and then contact COE Contracts and Grants Office to determine the next steps. In some cases, a revised budget or other additional documents may be required before the award can be processed by the University. It normally takes 1-2 weeks from the time an award announcement is received for the funds to be fully available to start spending.

In the event that you need to start spending more quickly or if you receive notice of an incoming award but the official award notification will take some time to arrive and you need to get started, please contact the COE Contracts and Grants Office and ask if Assumption of Risk (AOR) may be possible or appropriate.

### Three Main Types of Awards-Gifts, Grants, and Contracts

1. **Gifts**
   - A donation for tax purposes (no strings attached)
   - May have basic reporting requirements
   - Can also be referred to as a “grant”
   - Funding is non-governmental
   - Often managed through our organization’s Foundation Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gifts</th>
<th>Sponsored Projects (Grants)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Sponsor requires specific deliverables (e.g. final technical report, evaluation).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The donor may provide support for a particular activity, program area or purpose. These can include professorships, endowed chairs, scholarships, non-federal building projects, fellowships, research and instructional programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reporting</strong></td>
<td>The sponsor requires performance of specific duties such as research, budget report, and progress report.</td>
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<td>The donor may require or request a brief summary of the results from the participant.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unused Fund</strong></td>
<td>The sponsor requires return of unexpended funds or written approval to spend beyond the project period of re-budget funds between line items.</td>
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<td>Donor does not require return of unspent funds at end of gift period.</td>
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**Intellectual Property**
The donor makes no claims on the patents, copyrights and other intellectual property rights that may result from activities associated with the gift.

The sponsor may impose restrictions on intellectual property rights, such as prior review of publications or on use of results.

### University Process

| Managed through NIU Foundation or NIU Research Foundation. | Managed through university GCA office and the COE Contracts and Grants Office, and department admins who manage grants. |

2. **Grants (also includes cooperative agreements)**
   - Federal or non-federal sponsors
   - Solicited and unsolicited
   - Usually unilateral
   - Office of Grants and Contracts Administration Oversight

3. **Contracts**
   - Federal or non-federal sources
   - An agreement between two or more parties that creates an obligation to perform
   - Always bilateral (a two way transaction) requiring binding signatures from both parties
   - Office of Grants & Contracts Administration oversight

### Cost Reimbursement versus Fixed Price

**Cost Reimbursement**: Costs are incurred and then invoiced the sponsor for reimbursement.

**Fixed Price**: Costs are based on deliverables. Payment is made on a schedule.