

Standard Operating Procedures: Limited Submissions Internal Competitions

1. Purpose

These procedures outline how the Research Development (RD) department manages limited submission funding opportunities in order to ensure that timely, high quality proposals are selected to represent the university. These guidelines support the University's Limited Submissions Policy.

2. Identifying and Posting Opportunities

- **Proactive Search:** RD monitors funding opportunity announcements to identify those with institutional limits.
- **Website Listings:** RD posts select opportunities on the Limited Submissions website, particularly federal and foundation opportunities that are known to recur annually and are likely to have interest from South researchers.
- **Timeline:** RD aims to post opportunities **12 to 16 weeks** before the sponsor's deadline to provide adequate time to collect notices of intent and conduct an internal competition if necessary.

3. Unlisted Opportunities

If a researcher identifies a limited submission funding opportunity that is not listed on the USA website, they must take the following steps:

- **Action:** Email RD immediately with a link to the solicitation.
- **Standard Notification Timeline:** Researchers must notify RD no later than **eight weeks (60 days)** before the sponsor's deadline. This timeframe allows RD to run a standard internal competition if multiple researchers want to apply.
- **Late Notification:** If a researcher submits a notification fewer than eight weeks before the sponsor's deadline, it will be handled under the short-notice rules (Section 7).

4. Notice of Intent (NOI) Process

Before opening a full internal competition, RD uses a Notice of Intent (NOI) process to gauge interest.

- **Submission:** Interested researchers must submit a brief NOI through the university's submission portal by the posted NOI deadline (typically ten to no later than eight weeks before the sponsor's deadline).
- **Outcomes:**
 - **Under the Limit:** If the number of NOIs is equal to or less than the sponsor's limit, RD will bypass the internal competition. RD will issue formal written approval to the applicants, designating them as the official institutional nominees if they are

eligible.

- **Discretionary Deadline Extensions:** In certain cases—such as highly strategic awards or when institutional slots remain open—RD may extend the NOI deadline and issue an additional call for applications.
- **Over the Limit:** If RD receives more NOIs than the sponsor allows, RD will launch a formal internal competition.

5. Internal Competition Pre-Proposal Requirements

When an internal competition is triggered, applicants must submit a pre-proposal through the internal portal. All pre-proposals must follow these formatting and structure rules:

- **Formatting:**
 - Use 1" margins on all sides.
 - Use single spacing.
 - Use a font size of 11 point or larger.
 - Combine all parts into a single PDF document.
- **Page Constraints and Structure:**
 - **Pages 1 & 2 (Project Description):** Describe the project's objectives, methods, analysis, significance, and anticipated impact. This description must directly address the key requirements of the sponsor's funding opportunity. This section must not exceed two pages total.
 - **Page 3 (Budget and Justification):** Provide a draft budget and a brief justification of major expenses. This section must not exceed one page.
 - **Pages 4 & 5 (Biosketch/CV):** Provide a brief biosketch or CV of one to no more than two pages for the lead researcher.
 - **TOTAL PAGE LIMIT:** The entire pre-proposal package must not exceed five pages.

6. Pre-Proposal Review

- **Review Panel:** RD assembles an ad hoc internal review panel of faculty and/or administrators with relevant expertise.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** Reviewers score and rank pre-proposals using the following criteria:
 - Scientific, scholarly, or creative merit.
 - Alignment with the sponsor's priority areas and specific solicitation requirements.
 - Feasibility of the proposed project plan and budget.
 - Qualifications and track record of the project team.
- **Selection:** Review panel recommendations are submitted to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development for final approval.
- **Notification:** RD notifies all applicants of the outcome. The institutional nominees receive formal written approval to proceed with their full proposals to the sponsor.

7. Short-Notice Opportunities

"Short notice" refers to any limited submission opportunity with less than eight weeks remaining before the sponsor's deadline. RD manages these situations according to the cause for short notice:

- **Sponsor-Driven Short Notice:**
 - *Definition:* The sponsor releases a new solicitation or makes an unexpected call with a very short turnaround time.
 - *Process:* RD will issue an accelerated internal call with a truncated timeline (e.g., requiring a one-page summary, budget, and CV within five business days). If time does not allow for a shortened competition, RD will coordinate an expedited administrative review with relevant Deans or Department Chairs to select the nominee.
- **Researcher-Driven Short Notice (Late Notification):**
 - *Definition:* A researcher identifies a limited submission opportunity late or fails to notify RD at least eight weeks prior to the sponsor's deadline.
 - *Process:*
 - **First-Come, First-Served:** If the institutional limit is not met and no other researchers have expressed interest, RD may award the slot on a first-come, first-served basis. This is subject to RD verifying the applicant's eligibility and the viability of the project.
 - **Competing Interest:** If the limit is already met, or if other researchers express interest within 48 hours of the late notification, RD will make a rapid administrative decision. Late-notifying researchers cannot displace previously approved nominees.
 - *Policy Note:* Failing to follow the standard limited submission timeline may result in sanctions under the Limited Submissions Policy.

8. Post-Selection Requirements and Policy Alignment

- **Pre-Submission Checks:** Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA) staff check for limited submissions and verify written approval from RD as part of their standard pre-submission checks. SPA will not submit a limited proposal without this documentation.
- **Nominee Commitment:** Selected nominees must submit a high-quality, timely proposal to the sponsor.
- **Late Withdrawals:** Nominees who withdraw late without a compelling reason will be flagged as a risk for future competitions, and RD will notify their relevant Deans and Department Chairs.
- **Sanctions:** PIs who bypass this process may be prohibited from submitting to the current opportunity, and repeated violations will result in a ban from future limited submission opportunities.