Sponsored Project Services Lead Times Guide

INTRODUCTION

Collaborative Grant Services (CGS) and the Office of Sponsored Projects Administration (OSPA) provide research support services. This guide outlines typical times for key research administration tasks.

Understanding the Timelines

Two timeframes are provided for most tasks:

- Minimum time: Assumes complete, accurate documentation with minimal revisions and timely communication from all parties (PIs, departments, CGS, OSPA, and central offices).
- Typical time: Reflects normal workload conditions and review cycles.

Important factors affecting timelines:

- CGS Grant Specialists and OSPA Research Administrators manage multiple proposals and awards or projects simultaneously with varying complexity levels.
- New staff may require additional review time (add 2-3 days to stated timelines) since their work is reviewed by more senior staff.
- Work is managed first-come first-served but may be reprioritized based on deadlines and workload.
- Complexity increases with external collaborators, human subjects research, cost sharing, and unique sponsor requirements.

TIMELINE SUMMARY

Use this table for initial planning. Detailed information for each activity appears in the sections below.

ACTIVITY	TYPICAL TIMELINE COMBINED BUSINESS DAYS FOR CGS AND OSPA (INCLUDES RFS TIME FOR ACCOUNT SETUPS)
Proposals	
Proposal Submission – Simple proposal (no subawards/special requirements)	15 to 20 days
Proposal Submission – Complex proposal (subawards, human subjects, cost share)	20 to 30 days
NIH RPPR and Other Progress Report	6 to 18 days
Account Establishment	
Account setup	8 to 18 days
e-Account setup	6 to 9 days
Contract or Clinical Trial Agreement	10 to 25 days
Post-Award	
Budget revision	5 to 15 days
No-cost extension	4 to 13 days
Prior approval request	6 to 11 days
Subaward setup	5 to 21 days
Cost Transfers or Journal Vouchers	3 to 6 days

Timelines assume complete documentation and timely communication. See detailed sections below for factors that may extend these timeframes.

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMISSION

Proposal and Budget Development

CGS Timeline: 15 to 30 days
Faculty should initiate contact with CGS at least 30 days before the sponsor deadline for complex proposals, or as soon as the funding opportunity is identified.

OSPA Timeline: Included in CGS timeline; varies depending on proposal complexity.
CGS responsibilities include:

- Acknowledge receipt of Proposal Initiation Form (PIF)
- Review funding opportunity and prepare submission guidance
- Meet with PI to discuss budget needs
- Prepare an initial budget draft and meet with OSPA to review
- Request and collect subrecipient materials
- Compile proposal components and coordinate PI review
- Prepare and route Internal Approval Form (IAF)
- Prepare proposal package (e.g., Cayuse)
- Ensure sponsor and institutional compliance prior to OSPA review

OSPA will:

- Consult with CGS to confirm interpretation of sponsor guidelines CGS (typically beginning 15 days before the deadline)
- Confirm appropriate indirect (F&A) rate, on/off-campus determination, cost allowability, and compliance approvals
- Review and approve indirect cost waivers and voluntary cost share requests

Final Proposal Preparation, Review, and Submission

CGS Timeline: 4 to 6 days (included in proposal development and submission timeline above, driven by sponsor deadline)

OSPA Timeline: 1 to 3 days (after CGS provides final proposal to OSPA)

Internal proposal deadlines: 6 days prior to sponsor deadline for receipt by CGS (includes receipt of final scientific components 4 days prior to sponsor deadline) and 3 days prior to sponsor deadline for receipt of the final proposal by OSPA.

CGS will:

- Finalize proposal components based on PI and OSPA feedback
- Prepare final proposal package
- Confirm compliance approvals (e.g., COI, IRB, IACUC)
- Complete CGS proposal checklist
- Ensure proposal is complete and compliant

OSPA responsibilities include:

- Review CGS proposal checklist and follow up as needed*
- Confirm accurate institutional information
- Provide institutional certifications as required
- Submit proposal to sponsor
- Notify CGS and PI of any submission errors

Clarifications and edits may require back-and-forth communication between CGS, PI and OSPA.

Post-Submission Materials and Just-In-Time Requests

CGS Timeline: 2 to 4 days; varies depending on sponsor deadline.
These requests are prioritized to meet sponsor deadlines, which often provide for a short turnaround time. Staff may be reallocated based on workload and complexity.

OSPA Timeline: 1 to 2 days (may be expedited to meet urgent sponsor deadlines)

CGS will:

- Prepare and/or collect the required documents
- Review materials for sponsor requirements and compliance
- Submit finalized materials to OSPA

OSPA will:

- Consult with CGS to clarify sponsor requests
- Provide institutional certifications or information if needed
- Review request for allowability and adherence to sponsor and university policies
- Send response to sponsor

ACCOUNT ESTABLISHMENT

Standard Account Setup (with receipt of award notice)

CGS Timeline: 2 to 3 days

Estimate includes typical time for back-and-forth communication with PI and unit business office. Completion time may be extended if there are delays in receiving or revising the required documentation.

OSPA Timeline: 3 to 10 days, plus 3 to 5 days for Research Financial Services (RFS) review and SAP setup
Receipt of all documentation may take 1 to 2 weeks or more. Awards requiring negotiation vary in duration based on complexity and sponsor responsiveness. Once complete, OSPA transfers the account data from the OSPA database to RFS within 1 to 3 days.

CGS gathers and provides the following information to OSPA:

- Revised budget and justification to match award amount (if needed)
- Revised IAF (if needed)
- IACUC and/or IRB approvals
- Updated subrecipient documentation
- Current COI disclosures
- Research security training, nepotism, or other compliance items (if needed)

OSPA activities include:

- Mark proposal with "N" status in OSPA database
- Mark status of required documents on account setup checklist within 3 days of award receipt
- Review award for alignment with proposal (scope, PI, budget)
- Verify acceptable terms and university compliance ability and negotiate terms of award if necessary
- Gather missing information from sponsor (e.g., payment terms)
- Determine spending restrictions and reporting requirements per award terms and sponsor policy
- Identify additional documentation, negotiation or sponsor clarification needs (may require back-and-forth communication with CGS and PI)

Common documents required by OSPA in order to set up the account:

- COI disclosure(s)
- PI approval of scope and budget (if changed)
- IACUC and/or IRB approvals
- Export control or other compliance documentation
- Revised budget and/or justification
- Cost share documentation
- Revised IAF

PIs can begin spending on most awards once the account is established in SAP. For awards with spending restrictions, OSPA will notify the PI through the PADR.

e-Account Setup

CGS Timeline: 2 days (similar to standard account setup)

OSPA Timeline: 1 to 2 days (plus 3 to 5 days for RFS review and SAP setup)

e-Account setups are faster than standard accounts but may require additional time if documentation (e.g., COI disclosures) is missing.

CGS will:

- Complete the e-Account request form
- Develop and obtain approval for the required budget
- Obtain necessary signatures

OSPA will set up e-Account as follows:

- Similar to standard account setup with fewer SAP attributes
- Requires completed IAF and confirmation of compliance disclosures and approvals

CONTRACT OR CLINICAL TRIAL AGREEMENT

CGS Timeline: 3 to 5 days

OSPA Timeline: 7 to 20 days

Negotiation time varies based on sponsor and complexity of contract terms. Redlined contract or agreement is sent to sponsor within 7 days of receipt. Time from redline to account setup may be 20+ days (depends on negotiation time).

CGS will:

- Contracts: Provide budget and justification to OSPA (with copy of proposal or communication with sponsor if available)
- Prepare and route Internal Approval Form (IAF)
- Confirm compliance approvals (e.g., COI, IRB, IACUC)

OSPA completes:

- Process contracts using UKRF template with minimal negotiation when possible
- Negotiate contract terms with sponsor (time varies based on complexity)
- Obtain final signature once IAF is completed, budget is finalized and IRB approval or no-IRB letter is received
- Coordinate receipt of fully executed contract from sponsor (may take 2+ weeks depending on sponsor responsiveness)

- Establish an account in SAP within 3 to 5 days of receipt of the fully executed contract and compliance approvals (see Account Establishment section)

NIH RPPR OR OTHER SPONSOR PROGRESS REPORTS (with financial and/or administrative components)

CGS Timeline: 5 to 15 days (dependent on required components)

OSPA Timeline: 1 to 3 days (within OSPA 3-day proposal deadline)

CGS completes:

- Alert PI of upcoming deadline (45 days in advance)
- Request PI completion of programmatic sections and routing to Grant Specialist
- Complete sections on participant support and expected remaining balance
- Obtain PI review and concurrence
- Review PI-completed sections for compliance and completeness
- Advise on justification for balance above 25% as needed
- Route to OSPA (if required) or back to PI for submission

OSPA will:

- Work on submissions first-come, first-served based on sponsor deadline
- Communicate with CGS to clarify information and make edits as needed

POST-AWARD MANAGEMENT

Budget Revision

CGS Timeline: 3 to 10 days
Requests may originate from CGS, PI, or unit business staff. Routing for signatures may add time. Additional discussion with PI may be needed.

OSPA Timeline: 2 to 5 days (excluding sponsor approval time if required)

CGS responsibilities include:

- Prepare revision request and calculations
- Verify funds available in SAP
- Review sponsor guidelines for allowability
- Assist PI with prior approval request to sponsor if required
- Provide advice on justification for revision
- Route for required approvals

OSPA responsibilities include:

- Review request within 2 to 3 days of receipt from CGS
- Request sponsor prior approval if required
- Verify funds available in SAP, proper sponsor class codes used, and sufficient justification
- Enter budget revision in SAP and generate PADR within 1 to 3 days after all required actions are completed*

* Adjustments to encumbrances and the budget may take 1 month if payroll changes are required. If funds are not available, the department must unencumber commitments before revision can be entered.

Cost Transfers/Journal Vouchers (JVs)

CGS Timeline: 3 to 6 days

OSPA Timeline: Varies. Role is primarily consultative. Sponsor approval may extend completion time.

CGS will:

- Receive request from department or PI or identify need during monthly account review
- Prepare JV explanation form and gather required backup documentation
- Prepare JV form in SAP
- Track approval process through RFS posting

OSPA will:

- Provide guidance regarding sponsor restrictions and cost allowability if needed
- Obtain sponsor approval if needed prior to completion of JV by CGS

No-Cost Extensions (NCE)

CGS Timeline: 3 to 10 days
Process may start with CGS, PI or department staff and require additional back-and-forth communication.

OSPA Timeline: 1 to 3 days
Timing depends on sponsor approval if required. Additional time may be needed if a revised budget is included (see Budget Revision section).

CGS tasks include:

- Follow similar process to budget revision
- Obtain additional departmental or ADR/Dean approvals as needed

OSPA tasks include:

- Obtain sponsor approval if require
- Update project end date of sponsored project account
- Generate and distribute PADR

Prior Approval Requests

CGS Timeline: 5 to 8 days

OSPA Timeline: 1 to 3 days
Timing depends on sponsor approval if required. Additional time may be needed if a revised budget is included (see Budget Revision section).

CGS completes:

- Gather details to prepare request (varies by type: adding project components, changing key personnel, budget modifications)
- Draft request document (memo, letter, etc.) and any associated backup
- Obtain required approvals to send to OSPA
- Track OSPA submission to sponsor and follow up for completion

OSPA completes:

- Confirm the allowability of the request based on award terms and sponsor policy
- Send request to sponsor and obtain their approval, respond to any questions from sponsor
- Update account to reflect approval as needed
- Generate and distribute PADR

Subaward Requests

CGS Timeline: 3 to 10 days
Obtaining additional documents or revised budget from the subrecipient may extend completion time.

OSPA Timeline: Varies by subrecipient type (see estimated times below)
Times assume funds are available, budget is allowable, period of performance is within award dates, justification is sound, and risk assessment reveals no issues.

CGS activities include:

- Upon receipt of PADR at account establishment, review documents submitted with proposal
- Confirm with PI that the proposal details remain accurate
- Prepare a revised budget and/or collect updated subrecipient documents if changes exist

- Enter request in OSPA's subaward request system with accurate attachments
- Track PI approval, execution through OSPA and subrecipient, and establishment of PO by OSPA

OSPA responsibilities include:

- Obtain sponsor approval of subaward if required by award terms
- Review subaward request to verify funds are available, budget is allowable, period of performance is within award dates, and justification is sufficient
- Process budget revision if needed (see Budget Revision section)
- Conduct risk assessment and compliance checks
- Draft subaward agreement according to prime award terms
- Negotiate subaward terms as needed
- Create purchase order in UK purchasing system
- Provide subrecipient with executed subaward agreement and PO number

Estimated completion times *(based on typical subrecipient response times; delays at subrecipient may extend times)*:

- Risk assessment and compliance checks:
  - FDP subawards and entities in federal clearinghouse: 2 to 3 days
  - Small nonprofits and entities without audit reports: 5 to 7 days
- Negotiation of terms:
  - FDP template subawards: 4 to 6 days
  - Entities are not in the federal clearinghouse or requiring additional risk-based terms: 8 to 11 days

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR FACULTY

Plan ahead: Contact CGS as early as possible when planning to submit a proposal.

Know your internal deadlines: Proposals are due to CGS 6 days before the sponsor deadline (final scientific components 4 days prior), and final proposals must reach OSPA 3 days before submission.

Provide complete information: Accurate, complete documentation upfront minimizes delays and back-and-forth communication.

Communicate promptly: Timely responses from all parties (PI, department/college, CGS, OSPA and sponsor) are essential to meeting deadlines.

Understand workload realities: CGS and OSPA staff manage multiple proposals, awards and projects simultaneously. Internal deadlines and prioritization help ensure timely submission and completion of tasks.

Ask questions early: If you are unsure about requirements, timelines or processes, contact your CGS Grant Specialist or OSPA Research Administrator as soon as possible.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about this guide or to find your assigned CGS Grant Specialist or OSPA Research Administrator, visit https://research.uky.edu/sponsored-project-services.