Effective Strategies for Developing Collaborative Proposals

Northern Illinois University
Office of Sponsored Projects
Chat Session
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Introduction

• Context of collaboration
• Forms, levels, and purposes of collaboration
• Developing the collaborative proposal
Context of Collaboration

Research questions and social needs drive the scope of work of a project.

The scope of work of the project you want to do drives the project structure, including whether collaboration is beneficial.

Funding agencies recognize and have responded to this shift.
Collaboration exists on a continuum

Where a collaborative effort falls on this continuum and the purpose it serves drives how it is structured
Hallmarks of Cooperation

• Specific and narrowly-focused support
• Limited impact on overall project
• Partner providing the support could be replaced by another entity
• Time-limited
Examples of Cooperation

• A specific service that NIU does not have in house (vendor agreement)
• Specific expertise or skill that you do not have (consultant)
• Setting, facility, or resource (MOU, vendor agreement)
Hallmarks of Collaboration

• Shared input into design of research project or program
• Same scope of work carried out at two locations (or in different time zones!)
• Shared project responsibility
• Collaborating partner is not easily replaceable – project may be damaged or delayed if they disappeared
Examples of Collaboration

- You and a colleague agree on research questions, develop a protocol to answer them, and run that same protocol at your respective locations.
- Research project conducting a shared, agreed-upon protocol at one remote location.
- Program requiring full input and activity by multiple partners inside and outside NIU.
- Museum exhibition of internal and external artifacts.
Collaboration on a Continuum

**Purely Cooperative**

- Specific service (e.g., wind tunnel maintenance, lab analysis)
- Individual consultant serving in an advisory capacity
- Complex statistical analysis

**Specific expertise or disciplinary contribution to larger project (e.g., survey research)**

**Fully Collaborative**

- Exact same research protocol at multiple sites
- Shared scientific or artistic input
- Shared project responsibility
- Subaward or collaborative submission

- Setting, facility, or resource
Meaningful collaboration contributes to a stronger proposal...

But sometimes we only learn things the hard way.
TEAMWORK
WHEN IT ALL GOES HORRIBLY WRONG
Don’t

• “Collaborate” at the last minute
• Try to collaborate because of outside pressure
• Assume your partners’ scope and budget will take care of themselves
• Dictate your partners’ scope and budget
• Forget to tell OSP
• Assume that somebody else will take care of X
• Assume that collaboration is administratively simple or easy
• Think that you have to do absolutely everything (or that OSP does)
Do

- Allow time for substantive input
- Collaborate when the question merits it
- Negotiate scope and budget well in advance with your partners
- Involve OSP as soon as you know you will be collaborating
- Have regular collaboration meetings & assign tasks
- Involve OSP as soon as you know you will be collaborating!
- Understand your role versus OSP’s role
Layers of Complexity

What is required for development of a collaborative proposal?

Layers of complexity – each with its own policies and procedures to navigate

- Individual
- Departmental
- Institutional

- Across NIU Departments and Colleges
- Between Universities
- Other External partners—businesses, non-profits, and other entities
- International Collaborators—universities, non-profits, and other research entities
PI Considerations and Responsibilities

• Negotiate scope and associated budget with collaborator(s) in advance
• Negotiate any agreements regarding intellectual property with collaborators if needed (IP/TT Office will help)
• Picking the right partner(s) (in advance – sense a theme here?)
• Assign writing tasks for getting the proposal done
• Set a time line for developing the proposal
OSP Considerations and Responsibilities

- Contact administrators at partnering institutions
- Work with those partners to
  - ensure required registrations are in place
  - gather or provide required documents
- Help to coordinate budget development among institutions/organizations
- Lend expertise to organizations with minimal grants experience to complete proposal documents appropriately
- Advise on or help scout out potential collaborators (may pull in the AVP)
- Coordinate with other NIU offices as necessary (e.g., Tech Transfer, International Programs, Centers)
Resources

- In4Grants
- Research Methodology Services Unit
- Grant writer?
- OSP
- Technology Transfer Office (NDA requirements, etc.)
- Connection to other NIU offices
Final Thoughts...

- Ensure collaboration is the right approach
- Ensure you have the right people at the table
- Work closely and early with your collaborators
- Collaborative proposals require additional skills & specific expertise that exceed the single investigator proposal
- Contact OSP early, trust our expertise, and let us help you
Questions?
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