

Office of Research & Sponsored Programs (ORSP) Frequently Asked Questions

The Research Foundation of CUNY (RF) website (www.rfcuny.org) provides a great deal of information on the grant process.

1. FINDING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

a. Can you help me find grants for _____ (fill in research or project)?

ORSP will conduct a preliminary search into grant opportunities in your field on request. In order to do this, we will need a brief statement on your work, including the following “keywords”/concepts:

- Target population – who are the beneficiaries of your research/project?
- Disciplinary context – within your field, what is your specialty?
- Type of funds needed – e.g., equipment, travel, research, award, salaries
- Geographic focus area – e.g., CUNY-wide, NYC, national, international

In addition, ORSP will keep your needs in mind when reviewing grants bulletins and notify you via email of any relevant opportunities.

b. Should I be looking for funding opportunities?

Yes. Queens College encourages faculty to take an active role in grant seeking. Speak to colleagues about the sources from which they have obtained grants. Identify the larger government agencies funding your field (e.g., National Endowment for the Humanities, National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health), and visit their websites periodically to become familiar with deadlines and program focus areas. The Sponsored Programs Information Network (SPIN) (www.infoed.org/new_spin/spinmain.asp) database, which can be accessed free from any CUNY computer, provides information on private and public grant agencies; search using your keywords (see 1a) to locate opportunities in your field. Subscribe to the Foundation Center’s electronic Request for Proposals (RFP) grants alert bulletin at <http://fdncenter.org> (→ Philanthropy News Digest→ RFP Bulletin→ bottom of page→ subscribe). Professional journals, ethnic or cultural groups, consulates or government-sponsored offices of international cooperation can be additional sources of grants or grant announcements.

c. Are there grants out there to support _____ (fill in with institutional support needs like books, publication, travel, student interns)?

Awards for these needs are very unlikely as some foundations, corporations or government agencies may perceive them to be part of the institution’s operating budget. A professional society or special interest group might be a better choice for such funding needs.

d. How do I know what amount would be appropriate to request of a funder?

Check the funding agency’s website, which may list recent sample grants. Or, in the case of foundations, access the agency’s IRS 990 Form through the Foundation Center (<http://fdncenter.org>). Click on Finding Funders; click on Foundation Finder; enter the

agency's name; load the PDF file; click on most recent year; and scroll toward the last pages of the form to find past grantees with grant amounts listed. In the case of government agencies, the grant size is usually found in the application guidelines; sometimes data is provided on the total funds available for distribution and the number of grants to be awarded.

2. PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

a. What does a proposal look like?

Usually, proposals to private or public agencies will have these standard components:

- Brief overview/background
- Statement of need, supported by literature review and hard data
- Project request
- Project description/Research methodology:
 - Geographic focus
 - Targeted population
 - Goals and measurable objectives
 - Activities
- Key personnel
- Evaluation
- Collaborators/Institutional resources

In your narrative these components should be clearly delineated in bold. Usually the funding agency will specify in its guidelines the order of these components and the overall length. In some cases margins and font sizes are specified as well. If the agency does not set a page limit, a proposal to a private funder is typically 3 - 4 pages. Federal sources are usually very clear about length limit. ORSP can help you edit your narrative in accord with the agency's guidelines.

b. Where can I find "boilerplate" statements on the College's mission, institutional resources, accomplishments, statistics, etc.?

Visit the following websites for:

- Queens College Mission Statement:
<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/provost/Queens%20College%20Mission.htm>
(When quoting the statement, highlight for the funder how your project/research furthers the institution's mission.)
- QC's top stories, accomplishments in your field and college rankings:
 - QC Homepage: *<http://www.qc.cuny.edu/index.php>*
 - Q Magazine or Q Webzine archives from Office of Communications:
http://www.qc.cuny.edu/nis/news_services.php
- Sample QC boilerplates, see the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies webpage:
<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/provost/Grad/index.html>
- Latest Queens College statistics:
 - Office of Institutional Research, accessible via the provost's website or at

http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/Institutional_Research/
--National Center for Education Statistics (provides financial aid percentages and other data): *http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool/index.asp*

3. PROPOSAL BUDGET

a. What are the fringe benefit rates?

Full-time employees (35 hours or more per week): 35.5% (effective 1/1/07)

Part-time A employees (20 to 34 hrs/wk): 35.5% (effective 1/1/07)

Part-time B employees (19 hrs/wk or less): 10%

Faculty academic year: 33%

Faculty summer: 25%

For information on what the fringe benefits provide, please refer to the RF website.

b. How much does course release cost?

Course release time must factor in a percentage of your salary plus fringe benefits. Please use the following guide for your calculations:

1 course	\$5,529 plus fringe
2 courses	33% of your salary plus fringe
3 courses	50% of your salary plus fringe
4 courses	66% of your salary plus fringe
5 courses	75% of your salary plus fringe
6 or more	100% of your salary plus fringe

c. Why must we factor indirect costs into our budget?

Indirect costs, also termed Overhead or Facilities and Administrative costs (F&A), are charged because grants at the college incur costs, such as utilities and facilities maintenance, which must be defrayed by charging a percentage of the grant funds. The indirect cost also includes the fiscal agent's fee for administering a grant. The fiscal agent is the 501c3 institution authorized to accept grants; at Queens College, that is either the RF or the QCF.

d. What are the current indirect cost rates?

For federal grants, Queens College indirect cost rates are currently set at 54% for on-campus work and 26% for off-campus work. The on-campus rate will increase to 55% as of July 1, 2007. Proposals being submitted for a start date on or after this time should use the 55% rate for the budget. These rates are federally negotiated for 4 year periods with the Department of Health and Human Services. For private grants, the current administrative fee is 15% for the Research Foundation and 7.5% for the Queens College Foundation. These rates must be applied to a grant unless restricted by the funding agency. Review a funding agency's guidelines to determine if its grants have caps on or prohibit indirect costs. In such a case, alert ORSP when you prepare your budget.

e. Can I reduce the indirect/overhead?

Only if the sponsor limits the amount that can be charged. Otherwise, the appropriate rate (see 3d) must be charged.

4. PROPOSAL APPLICATION

a. What is the process for submitting a grant proposal?

Contact ORSP for assistance in generating a budget as soon as possible (preferably, no less than one week prior to the proposal deadline). ORSP also serves as a clearing house for grant submissions. Some funding agencies will accept only one proposal submission per institution in a given timeframe. Funding sources may already be earmarked for a project on campus. Therefore, it is imperative that you contact this office *prior* to a submission so that existing grant-grantee relationships or other fundraising efforts are not jeopardized. ORSP can also help you with: checking agency guidelines; editing your proposal; informing you about internal sign-offs; and providing proposal attachments relevant to the fiscal conduit (e.g., 501c3 letter, 990 Form, Financial Statement, etc.). Prior to proposal submission, you will also need to complete a Financial Disclosure Statement, and obtain a cover letter from either the RF or the QCF endorsing your project.

b. When do I use the Queens College Foundation rather than the Research Foundation?

The RF is the fiscal applicant for all CUNY proposals submitted to a federal, state, or local government agency. The RF is also the applicant if release time or the use of human or animal subjects is proposed. In addition, the QCF does not handle payroll. If you submit a grant involving payroll through the QCF, funds can be transferred to the RF. However, the RF must charge a 10% payroll service fee, which can not be waived.

c. What is our legal organization or applicant name?

For grants, the legal organization/applicant name should be listed as either:

Queens College of CUNY and the Research Foundation of CUNY; or
Queens College Foundation

For contracts, the organization must be listed as:

Research Foundation/CUNY on behalf of Queens College/CUNY

See question 4b for when to use the RF rather than the QCF.

d. What is the EIN number?

The “Employer Identification Number” (EIN) identifies an entity as a business or corporation; it is used for tax purposes. Both the Queens College Foundation and the Research Foundation are 501(c)3 corporations. Please contact the Development Office for the QCF’s EIN number and ORSP for the RF’s EIN number.

e. What is the DUNS number?

The “Data Universal Numbering System” (DUNS) is a number issued to institutions by Dun and Bradstreet (D&B). The federal Office of Management and Budget has adopted DUNS numbers as the way of tracking how federal grant money is dispersed. Please contact ORSP (ext. 5400) for the DUNS number.

f. What should I know about electronic submission, FastLane, and my password?

Most federal agencies and some privates now use electronic submission. Please inform ORSP well in advance if the grant that you are applying for requires electronic submission. Different agencies require different levels of access for the institution and the applicant, and these can take time to set up. For most electronic submissions, only ORSP can submit your proposal. There is usually a learning curve, so do not put off learning how to do the electronic submission until the day before your grant is due. Take the time to read the instructions or use the tutorial.

The National Science Foundation’s web-based system, FastLane, is typical. It is used for all proposal submissions, awards, submission of progress reports and requests for changes to an award. ORSP must initially set up your account. You must call or email us to request one. After the initial set-up, you choose a password and can then upload all your documents to the FastLane server. If you forget your password, ORSP can reset it for you. Examples of funding programs that require ORSP assistance with electronic submission include: <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/servlet/faq.Faq>; <https://v2.ramscompany.com/> and <https://ies.constellagroup.com>

g. Do electronic submissions require ORSP approval?

Yes. Follow the same procedure for paper proposal submission (see 4a). Some organizations only recognize one user, and you must coordinate all applications with ORSP.

h. Who signs the cover page?

Usually, the Director of ORSP signs, but this can be done only after the “Internal Approval for External Proposals” has been checked and signed by the PI’s chair and dean as well as any other required institutional signatories. Please make an appointment with an ORSP grants officer to review your proposal and budget *at least* a week before you plan to submit. If you are collaborating with other institutions, or the competition is limited, you should contact ORSP as far in advance as possible. CUNY has new requirements regarding collaborative grants. The requirements are posted on the ORSP website; see “submission requirements;” or call ORSP for more information.

5. SITE VISITS

a. What is a site visit?

If a funding agency is interested in your proposal, they may request a site visit to meet you and learn more about your proposed work. The visit serves to establish understanding on the direction and needs of both parties. The visit may be with a program officer, or in the case of corporations, with a community affairs representative, as well as allocations

committee members, executive directors, or even board members. Some federal agencies (NIH, DOE, USDOE, etc.) will conduct a site visit after a proposal is awarded and active for a period of time; the visit serves to measure the progress of project implementation. Contact ORSP as soon as you become aware of an agency's request for a site visit.

b. What should I do to prepare for a site visit?

If an agency requests a site visit, please contact ORSP immediately. We can assist with the logistics (e.g., parking, meeting room, etc). During the visit, they may ask you about the targeted population of your project, your funding needs, and how your project furthers the college's mission. To prepare, you should review your proposal and especially your budget. Be aware that if you have requested of the potential funder only a portion of the total cost of your project, the funder will likely ask you where you will get the remainder of the funds you need for the project. If applicable, it can be helpful to put together a status of fundraising sheet and a population served profile. Do NOT bring a video.

c. What happens after a site visit?

During the visit, you may ask the program officer when a decision will be reached; this usually will involve a meeting of the funder's board. The site visit does not guarantee that your proposal will make it to the board. However, if the program officer feels that the proposal is a good fit with the agency's current funding strategies and priorities, he/she will bring it before the board that will vote on whether to award a grant and for what amount. After the site visit, you should write a thank you letter to the person(s) who visited.

6. POST-AWARD ADMINISTRATION

a. What happens to a grant once I receive it?

The granting agency sends a check made out to the RF or QCF, and a corresponding account will be set up. You will be given the account number for you to administer the funds in accordance with the grant agreement, scope of work, and budget submitted with the proposal. Some agencies allow you to change the original proposal budget slightly, but normally that requires *prior* approval from the agency. Always inform ORSP before contacting the agency about the proposed change.

b. How do I put someone on payroll?

If the employee has never been on Research Foundation (RF) payroll before at Queens College or at another college, or if it has been 3 years or more since the employee was on the RF payroll, he/she will need to fill out a new hire packet, which consists of the following: Personnel Action Form (PAF); Emergency Contact Form; Personal Data Form; Application for Employment; W-4 Form (federal tax form); IT-2104 (state tax form); Direct Deposit Form and E-fund form (choose one); Employment Eligibility Form (I-9 Form); Job Duties and Qualifications Form; and Background Check Form. Rehires (less than 3 years since last employment) can be entered online using the e-PAF system on the RF website (www.rfcuny.org).

c. What is the procedure for summer salary submissions?

Enter PAFs on the “Summer Salary PAF” screen on the RF website (www.rfcuny.org). This is not the same as the e-PAF screen. Certifications must be submitted biweekly for each summer month of salary requested (i.e., if you submitted a PAF for summer salary in June, then you will need to submit two certifications, one for the period June 1-June 15 and the other for June 16 –June 30). For further guidance, please contact ORSP.

d. How do I use my grant award to purchase supplies, buy equipment or travel?

You can either order supplies using a Small Order Form and have the vendor issue an invoice, or pay for them yourself and request reimbursement. In the latter case, however, make sure you use a Tax Exempt Form as the RF will not reimburse sales tax. This form is available at ORSP in Kiely Hall, Room 306. Once you have the invoice or the receipts, fill out an RF Payment Request Form, sign, attach all receipts/invoices, and forward to ORSP, where we will log them and send them to the RF for processing.

To purchase equipment under \$5,000, fill out a Small Order Form, which you can obtain at the ORSP office (you will need to sign for the form). You must obtain three quotes. You may assign your own purchase order number, send the order form to the vendor, and then follow the instructions for reimbursement of supplies. To purchase equipment over \$5,000, you must first submit a Purchase Requisition Form, attaching three bids or justification of sole source, and an equipment screening certificate, and send all of this to ORSP. The Research Foundation will process your purchase requisition and send a purchase order to the vendor it chooses. When you have received your equipment and the invoice, follow the instructions for purchase of supplies.

Please note that ALL equipment purchased from grants will be tagged once received and becomes the property of Queens College. To purchase a computer or printer, you must obtain approval from the Office of Converging Technology (OCT) at Queens College before ordering.

For travel, you may request an advance or file for expenses after your trip. *It is advisable to fill out a Travel Advance Form prior to the travel date, regardless of whether you are requesting a travel advance, because the RF will use the notice to secure travel insurance.* To request an advance, fill out a Travel Advance Form prior to your trip. Keep the yellow portion of the form for later. Remember that travel advances take about 3 - 4 weeks to process, so allow enough time before your trip to receive the advance. Enter all hotel, transportation and other pertinent information on the form. You can request an advance of up to 80% of the travel costs, including hotel, per diem expenses, local travel, meals and registration fees. During your travel, keep all receipts. Within three days of your return, fill out the Travel Expense Form, providing actual expenses, and attach all receipts/bills and the yellow copy of the Travel Advance Form. Submit the Travel Expense Form to ORSP.

e. How do I access my account on the web?

Faculty members should email the RF at weblogonid@rfcuny.org to obtain their user ID and instructions on creating a password. These will enable you to view your reports, make changes to existing PAFs, and enter timesheets.

f. When will I receive my first paycheck?

It takes approximately 2 - 3 weeks for your paperwork to be processed at the RF. Once ORSP is notified that your appointment has been entered into the system, you can input timesheets. You should receive your first check within the next two weeks.

g. Who has to sign my PAF?

The department chair and the project director must sign new hire PAFs, which you must then forward to ORSP for final signature.

h. What paperwork is necessary for purchase orders over \$5,000?

Please refer to question 6d.

i. How do I make changes to an existing PAF (i.e. extension of appointment; change in hours; change in pay rate or status change; termination)?

To make changes to an existing PAF, go to “managing your awards” → E-services → personnel action → Select Current Project ID (this is your RF Account #) → Select Project Action (Modify/Terminate Existing PAF’s) → Choose type of modification/termination. Then enter the change and click on modify → Accept → Display Modified PAFs → Submit Notification. This last step must be completed in order for ORSP to approve the modification/termination. Once we have approved it and sent it to the RF for final approval, we will notify you via e-mail.

j. How do I enter timesheets?

If you are an employee, check with your project director as to how he/she wants to handle timesheets. If the project director is entering your timesheets, then you should submit those to him/her. If you, the employee, are entering timesheets, then you will need to obtain your employee ID number (either from ORSP or the RF Client Services contact). Timesheets can be entered using the RF website (www.rfcuny.org) → managing your awards → e-services → timesheets → choose employee → enter your employee # and create password if this is your first time; if not, enter your password and click on Create/Edit/Submit timesheets. Choose the pay period for which you are submitting timesheets, enter hours (Regular, Sick, Annual, etc.) → Save and Submit. The project director will then need to go into the E-timesheets system and approve the timesheets. Once approved, the Research Foundation will process the timesheet.

If the project director will be submitting timesheets, he/she will have to follow the above steps, clicking on Principal Investigator/Authorized Approver. The same applies for timekeepers and authorized approvers.

k. When will I get paid? Can you enter timesheets for me? How/When do I get my pay stubs?

Follow the payroll calendar to determine when timesheets are due and a schedule of pay dates. The payroll calendar can be found on the RF website (www.rfcuny.org) → Managing Your Awards → Calendars. If you are a new hire, you must allow 2 - 3 weeks

for the Research Foundation to process your paperwork. Once the RF notifies us that your paperwork has been processed we will upload the information onto the PAF system. *Within 24 hours*, you will be able to enter timesheets (current and retroactive up to three prior pay periods). ORSP cannot enter timesheets for you as we have no way of knowing whether an employee worked. (Overhead accounts are an exception; check with ORSP on those.)

Pay stubs are no longer mailed out; they are now online. Access your pay stubs on the RF website (www.rfcuny.org); go to E-services → E-pay stubs. You will need to enter your six digit employee number; this appears on your first check stub, which is mailed to you. If this is your first time using the E-pay stub system, you will need to create an account. The online user's guide explains how to set up an account and print out stubs.

l. Can I receive my check in the mail?

No. If your appointment is longer than 2 months, you must choose either direct deposit or e-fund.

m. When do I get my health insurance packet, and when do my insurance benefits go into effect?

The RF will send postcards to employees eligible for health insurance. Bring this card to ORSP at Kiely Hall, Room 306 to pick up an insurance packet. The date your paperwork was processed determines when your insurance benefits will go into effect. For more information, please contact the Client Services Representative at the Research Foundation, Cecilia Paxtot, (Tel: 212-417-8643).

7. OTHER

a. Can ORSP provide information on the IRB approval process and related issues?

No. Current federal guidelines to limit conflicts of interest do not permit ORSP to provide such information. Please contact the Assistant Director for Regulatory Compliance, Ms. Barbara Lermant, at ext. 5415 for any questions regarding research involving human subjects or animals.

b. Where can I obtain information on PSC-CUNY grants?

These grants, while modest, are relatively easy to obtain and can be a good way to secure seed funds to initiate a new research program and prepare for external funding. For more information see: www.rfcuny.org/PSCCUNY/Guidelines/guidelinstoc.html

c. Does the College provide matching funds when agencies request them?

The College encourages matching grants for equipment, and has been able to provide matching funds for substantial equipment grants. Please contact ORSP and your dean or chairperson before beginning the application process.