



## MCEC Pre-Award Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

### Proposal Preparation and Submission Workflow

Version Date: April 14, 2026

#### Purpose

To outline the required steps, responsibilities, and timeline for preparing, reviewing, and submitting proposals or letters of intent in MCEC.

#### Scope

This SOP applies to all faculty and staff preparing external sponsored research proposals requiring USC authorization to submit.

#### Overview Timeline

Time Before Deadline	Required Actions
8 Weeks	Notify MCEC Office of Research; RED Team kickoff meeting
6 Weeks	Develop budget, timeline, checklist; review solicitation
2 Weeks	Submit draft narrative and documents to RED Team
10 Days	Finalize budget and justification; provide supporting documents
3 Days	Upload final budget, justification, narrative, and contractual documents to USCERA; upload finalized documents to submission system
2 Days	Final touch-base meeting; complete USCERA approvals; release all documents to RED Team
1 Day	Final review and preferred submission by Director of Research

#### Detailed Procedure

##### 1. Initial Notification and Planning (8 Weeks Before Deadline) Actions

- The Principal Investigator (PI) notifies the **MCEC Office of Research** of the intent to submit a proposal or letter of intent.
- The **RED Team** schedules a kickoff meeting to:
  - Review the funding opportunity.
  - Discuss project scope, collaborators, and submission requirements.
  - Establish communication expectations and next steps.

## 2. Early Proposal Development (6 Weeks Before Deadline) Actions

- The PI collaborates with the RED Team to:
  - Develop a **project budget** aligned with sponsor guidelines.
  - Create a **proposal development timeline**.
  - Establish a **submission checklist**.
  - Conduct a detailed **review of the solicitation** to confirm all requirements.

## 3. Draft Document Submission (2 Weeks Before Deadline) Actions

- The PI and Collaborators provide the RED Team with draft versions of:
  - Proposal narrative
  - Abstract
  - Any additional required documents (biosketches, facilities, data plans, etc.)
- RED Team begins reviewing and provides feedback for revisions.

## 4. Budget Finalization and Supporting Documents (10 Days Before Deadline) Actions

- PI, Collaborators and RED Team finalize:
  - **Budget**
  - **Budget justification**
- PI and Collaborators provide all required **supporting documents**, including:
  - Letters of support or commitment
  - Vendor quotes
  - Subcontractor documentation:
    - Subrecipient letter of intent
    - Scope of work
    - Budget and justification
    - IDC Rate Agreement
    - Subrecipient commitment form

## 5. Internal Routing and System Uploads (3 Days Before Deadline) Actions

- RED Team (or PI with RED Team coordination) uploads into **USCERA**:
  - Final budget
  - Budget justification
  - Draft narrative
  - All contractual or subcontract documents
- RED Team (or PI with RED Team coordination) uploads **finalized proposal documents** into the sponsor's required submission system (e.g., Research.gov, Grants.gov, ASSIST, etc.).

- Internal approval workflow begins.

#### **6. Final Coordination and Approvals (2 Days Before Deadline) Actions**

- PI and RED Team hold a **touch-base meeting** to confirm:
  - All documents are complete
  - All sponsor requirements are met
- **USCERA approvals** must be fully completed.
- PI releases all finalized proposal documents to the RED Team **by close of business**.

#### **7. Final Review and Submission (1 Day Before Deadline) Actions**

- The **Director of Research** conducts a final review of all proposal materials.
- Preferred submission of the proposal to the sponsor occurs at least **one day before the official deadline** to avoid system delays or technical issues.

#### **Compliance**

Failure to adhere to this timeline may result in delays, reduced review quality, or inability to submit the proposal by the sponsor deadline in adherence to University Policy RSCH 1.07.

#### **Exceptions/Expedited Submissions**

An **expedited submission** is any proposal that does not meet the standard timeline outlined in this SOP (i.e., less than 8 weeks' notice to the MCEC Office of Research). Expedited submissions carry increased risk and should be avoided if at all possible.

To request an expedited submission, the PI must:

- Notify the **MCEC Office of Research and RED Team immediately upon identifying the opportunity** and provide, at minimum:
  - Funding opportunity announcement (FOA)
  - Proposal deadline
  - List of key personnel and collaborators

For expedited submissions, services provided by the RED Team will be limited due to time constraints and limited resources so the PI will assume increased responsibility for proposal completeness, quality, and adherence to sponsor guidelines. The RED Team will provide as much support as possible, but submission is not guaranteed if the proposal has not been approved in USCERA and final documents are not provided the day before the sponsor deadline.