

GRANT DEVELOPMENT *Handbook*



**NORTHWEST
STATE**

We're here to get you there



Adopted May 2023

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Introduction

The **Office of Grant Development (OGD)** endeavors to support the College mission to advance lifelong learning and strengthen the economic and social/cultural aspects of the community. This is achieved by providing institutional leadership and support for external funding opportunities, proposal development, and grants management assistance. External funding can allow Northeast State Community College (NeSCC) to test and potentially institutionalize innovative practices, invest in advanced instructional equipment, enrich student experiences, and build capacity beyond what is possible within the limits of the institutional budget.

Northeast State's Office of Grant Development is the College's resource hub for grant development and management. The Office is responsible for guiding the preparation and submission of all grant applications on behalf of the College, in accordance with TBR and institutional policy and in alignment with the College mission and strategic priorities.

OGD provides support services for grant proposal development, including but not limited to:

- Researching funding sources for proposed projects;
- Consulting on project design and assessing fit for identified funding opportunities;
- Assisting with preparation of required forms and approval processes;
- Proposal planning, writing, and editing;
- Developing grant budgets;
- Drafting of letters of support/commitment for project partners; and;
- Serving as primary point of contact with grantor during application and award negotiation processes;

This handbook is designed as a quick reference guide to Northeast State’s grant development (pre-award) process. It is NOT intended to take the place of TBR or institutional policies or procedures. See the following policies for additional detail and guidance:

- [2 CFR 200: Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#)
- [TBR Guideline G-030 - Contracts](#)
- [Northeast State Policy 04:10:01](#) – Grant Development
- [Northeast State Policy 04:10:02](#) – Grant Administration
- [Northeast State Policy 04:10:03](#) – Grant Program Income
- [Northeast State Policy 05:02:02](#) – Grant Project Personnel

SECTION 1: FINDING FUNDING AND PROPOSAL START-UP

1A: Finding Funding for Your Project

Forms: [Grant Development Research Request](#)

Faculty and staff are encouraged to seek grant funding to support innovative instructional or student support initiatives, with guidance from the Office of Grant Development (OGD) as appropriate. Faculty and staff with project ideas may choose to research funding sources independently and submit them to the OGD for further review and vetting. Alternatively, faculty and staff may submit a research request to the OGD to request assistance with identifying appropriate funding sources.

The ***Grant Development Research Request form*** provides the OGD with a description of the proposed project, identifies model programs at other institutions, and lists potential funding

sources that the submitter may already be aware of. The form should also identify the purposes for which grant funds would be used and clarify the level of support needed from the OGD.

1B: Grant Funding Sources

Grant funding opportunities may be available from a variety of sources including federal and state agencies, corporations, private foundations, and more. The Office of Grant Development can provide guidance on the appropriateness of each funding type for individual projects on a case-by-case basis. In general, the most common grant funding sources can be categorized as either “Government” or “Private.”

Government Funding Sources

Most Northeast State grant applications are submitted to government (federal, state, and local) funding agencies. Competitive funding opportunities issued by government agencies typically allow 30-60 days between the funding opportunity announcement and the submission deadline. However, the process of developing a responsive and competitive application may take much longer. Therefore, it is advisable to start planning as early as possible, even before the competition is announced.

The name of the application guideline document may vary depending on the funding agency, but common names include Request for Proposals (RFP), Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), and Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). These documents delineate the specific requirements of the competition which may include target populations, required outcomes, funding priorities, required partners, proposal formatting, submission instructions, and so on.

The time between proposal submission and award announcements will vary by funding agency. Federal awards may be announced within as little as three months but may take six months or longer in some cases. State and local agencies typically announce awards within one to three months.

Private/Foundation Funding Sources

Northeast State occasionally submits funding applications to private entities including corporate giving programs, private foundations, and charitable organizations. Requirements for private funding opportunities vary widely depending on the organization, but most organizations in this category have established specific program areas on which their grants are focused. For instance, a banking institution might focus its grant program on financial literacy education, or a corporation that employs individuals with skills in technical trades might focus its giving on career and technical education programs. Individual funding opportunity announcements will provide detailed guidelines for that specific opportunity, including funding priorities.

1C: Initiating a Grant Proposal

There are two options to initiate a grant proposal. Option 1 is used when Northeast State will be the lead applicant. Option 2 is used when Northeast State is asked to serve as a partner in an application submitted by another agency or organization.

Option 1: Northeast State is Lead Applicant

Form: [Preliminary Grant Approval Form](#)

If Northeast State will be the lead applicant, the faculty or staff leading the project should prepare and circulate a **Preliminary Grant Approval Form** for signature.

Approvers on the form include the Dean, Supervising Vice President, Director of Grant

Development, and the President. Final approval is at the discretion of the NeSCC President.

Execution of this form serves as an approval to proceed with preparation of an application. Factors considered during the preliminary approval process include, but are not limited to:

- Whether the project is aligned to the College's mission and strategic plan;
- Potential for sustainability beyond the grant period;
- Sufficiency of time and resources to prepare a competitive application;
- Cost sharing or matching requirements;
- Partnership requirements;
- Likelihood of an award; and;
- Sufficiency of human and other resources to implement the project;

The *Preliminary Approval Form* includes a general project description, the level of support needed from OGD, an estimated total budget, the submission deadline, and projected start and end dates for the project.

The *Preliminary Approval Form* also includes a Key Personnel table, in which the submitter must list the College employees that have been consulted on the project. This table MUST include ALL key personnel that will be involved with implementation and/or who will be significantly impacted by the project. It is the responsibility of the project lead (aka project director, principal investigator, etc.) to discuss the project with these key stakeholders PRIOR to submitting the preliminary approval form. By submitting the preliminary form, the submitter is certifying that he/she has consulted the individuals listed on the form and secured their support for proposal development.

The *Preliminary Approval Form* may be submitted with electronic signatures or wet signatures. The project lead may coordinate the signature process and submit the fully executed form to the Office of Grant Development. Alternatively, the project lead may submit the completed (but not executed) form to the OGD to coordinate the signature process using the College's electronic signature system.

Option 2: Another Institution is Lead Applicant (Northeast State is Partner)

Form: [Grant Partnership Pre-Approval Form](#)

Faculty and staff collaborating with external institutions and agencies may occasionally be invited to provide letters of support for grant applications being submitted by those agencies. These invitations for partnership **MUST** be submitted for review by the Office of Grant Development and the College President. **ONLY** the College President has the authority to provide letters of support, partnership, or commitment on behalf of the College.

If Northeast State is being asked to serve as a partner in a grant application being submitted by another entity, a ***Grant Partnership Pre-Approval Form*** must be completed. The intent of this form is to assess the level of resources and commitment being requested of the College, as well as the project's potential benefit to Northeast State or its students. The form includes a description of the project, level of support needed from OGD, level of support needed from Research, Analytics, and Planning, and other details. Approvers include the Supervising Vice President, Director of Grant Development, Vice President of Inclusive Excellence and Sponsored Programs, and the College President. Final approval is at the discretion of the President.

The *Partnership Pre-Approval Form* may be submitted with electronic signatures or wet signatures. The project lead may coordinate the signature process and submit the fully executed form to the Office of Grant Development. Alternatively, the project lead may

submit the completed (but not executed) form to the OGD to coordinate the signature process using the College's electronic signature system.

SECTION 2: PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

2A: Read (& Re-Read) the Application Guidelines

The first and most essential step in the proposal development process is to read the application guidelines (Request for Proposals, Funding Opportunity Announcement, etc.) to ensure complete understanding of all requirements.

After a first reading to capture an overall understanding of the application guidelines, the project lead should read the document a second time, highlighting or notating key information, including:

- Deadline dates – for letters of intent and/or proposal submission;
- Project implementation period;
- Minimum and maximum budget amounts;
- Scoring criteria;
- Required attachments (resumes, letters of commitment, etc.);
- Formatting requirements (page limits, font sizes, spacing, etc.)

OGD recommends creating a proposal development timeline with interim deadlines for key components of the proposal, allowing at least a week prior to submission for final editing and submission approvals. The Office is available to assist with this process if needed. If the project is large in scale, the OGD may also set up recurring planning meetings to ensure momentum in the writing process.

2B: Logic Model Development

Link: [Logic Model Template](#)

A [Logic Model](#) is a tool for project planning. It provides a visual representation of the theory of change, or rationale, for the proposal. Some funding agencies require applicants to submit logic models to document a clear rationale for the chosen project design and ensure a reasonable expectation that the project will be successful in achieving the intended goals.

Logic model formats may vary. Some funding agencies specify a preferred format. Others allow applicants some discretion in formatting. However, most include key elements, such as needs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. A sample logic model with typical headings is provided in Table 1 for reference.

Table 1: Sample Logic Model

Table 1: Sample Logic Model						
Need/Problem:						
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short Term Outcomes	Long Term Outcomes	Evaluation Method	Budget Items
Assumptions:			Evidence Base:			
External/Influential Factors:						

Even if a logic model is not required for a specific funding opportunity, Northeast State’s OGD recommends completing one during the proposal planning process to clarify the rationale for the project and provide a clear outline for the writing process.

The project lead or project team may complete a logic model independently and submit it to OGD for review, or they may request that the OGD facilitate a logic model development workshop.

2C: Typical Components of a Competitive Grant Proposal

While the required components of a grant proposal may vary by funding agency, the list below provides an overview of typical elements of a competitive proposal.

- **Executive Summary or Abstract** - An overview of the project, which highlights the most important elements of the proposal, including project goals and objectives and key deliverables. This section is usually only 1 or 2 pages in length. Some funders require a specific format for the abstract.
- **Organizational Capacity** - An overview of the institution and its mission. This section typically includes a description of the institution's experience effectively managing grants of a similar nature and scope to the one being requested. It should highlight internal capacity and expertise, including fiscal accountability.
- **Statement of Need or Need Assessment** - An explanation of the problem or need that the grant is designed to address, as well as the potential consequences of not addressing the need. This section should include institutional, local, state/regional, and national data to illustrate the need and support the request for funds. The Office of Research, Analytics, and Planning may provide institutional data to support the proposal. OGD may advise on other useful sources of data external to the College.
- **Project Description** - A detailed description of the whole project, including goals (what you hope to accomplish) and specific objectives. These objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (S.M.A.R.T) and reflective of the needs statement.
- **Implementation/Work Plan and Timeline** - A detailed roadmap for project implementation, including specific tasks, milestones, and responsible parties. It is typically presented as a table by month or by quarter, depending on the length of the implementation period.

- **Evaluation Plan** - A plan for how the project will be monitored for continuous improvement (formative evaluation) and/or how success of the project will be determined at the end of the project period (summative evaluation). The plan should outline what types of data will be collected, who will collect it, what methods will be used to collect it, and when collection will be done. If the project is very large in scale, the College will typically engage an external evaluator to develop and execute the evaluation plan.
- **Budget and Budget Narrative** - Budgets are typically presented as a table broken down by budget categories, with a supporting narrative justification that includes sufficient detail to demonstrate that estimates are reasonable and necessary.

2D: Budget Development

Grant proposal budgets should reflect the project team's best estimate of the financial resources that will be required to implement the project as presented in the narrative. The budget must be structured in alignment with funding agency requirements, including designated budget categories and headings. If the funding agency does not specify a format for the budget, OGD recommends using standard federal budget categories, as follows:

- Direct Costs
 - Personnel
 - Fringe Benefits
 - Travel
 - Equipment
 - Supplies
 - Contractual
 - Other
- Indirect Costs

The budget narrative, or budget justification, should include sufficient detail to demonstrate how estimates were derived and assure the funder that the proposed costs are reasonable and necessary. Table 2 provides examples of justification statements for a contractual budget line to support an external program evaluation. One option lacks sufficient detail, while the other provides detail on how the cost estimates were calculated. This provides the funder with some level of assurance that estimates are reasonable.

Table 2: Examples of Budget Justification Statements

DON'T	DO
NeSCC will hire an independent evaluator for this project. Funding is requested at \$23,000.	NeSCC will engage an independent evaluator to conduct a program evaluation to verify program impact. This cost is estimated at \$200/hour for approximately 100 hours of work, and \$3,000 for travel costs associated with three site visits during the grant period. Total Requested: \$23,000

Draft budgets should adhere to any limitations outlined in the application guidelines, including minimum or maximum request amounts, caps on personnel or administrative costs, matching percentages, and/or unallowable costs. For example, most federal grants prohibit food-related expenses and items used as giveaways (t-shirts, pens, etc.).

Grant proposal budgets should be developed in collaboration with the OGD to ensure accuracy, completeness, and compliance with funding agency requirements, federal uniform guidance (2 CFR 200), and TBR and institutional policy.

Direct vs. Indirect Costs

Direct Costs are those costs associated with the project that can be directly attributed and charged to the project. As noted above, Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, and Contractual costs are all considered direct costs.

Indirect Costs, commonly called “overhead” or “facilities and administrative” costs, are the costs of operation for a common purpose (such as Human Resources, Payroll, Utilities, etc.) which are not easily attributed to any one program or project. It is Northeast State policy to include indirect costs, calculated based on the institution’s federally-approved indirect cost rate, in all grant proposals to the extent allowed by the funding agency. If the funder does not allow the College to apply the full federally-approved rate, any unclaimed indirect costs should be included as cost-share for the project. The OGD can provide assistance with interpretation of indirect cost guidelines and calculations for proposal budgets.

Special Considerations by Budget Category

- **Personnel & Fringe Benefits** – If the proposed budget includes personnel of any kind, Human Resources must be consulted to ensure accurate projections for salaries, wages, and fringe benefit costs. Care should be taken to account for anticipated salary increases or other adjustments that might occur during the grant period;
- **Travel** – All project-related travel should be itemized, including both local mileage and out-of-state travel. Cost estimates should be calculated using current State of Tennessee mileage rates and lodging, meal, and incidental rates as documented by the U.S. General Services Administration (www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates) for the specified travel destination. If the destination of travel has not been identified, OGD recommends using standard rates for Washington, D.C. for estimation purposes;

- **Equipment** – Equipment is usually defined as items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more;
- **Contractual** – Costs associated with critical components of the project that will be contracted out to a third party. A common example might be program evaluation costs associated with a third-party evaluation;
- **Other** – Items that are not easily allocated to other budget categories may be categorized as “Other.” One example might be scholarships or other direct assistance to students;

Cost Sharing or Matching

Commitment of cost sharing or matching resources in grant budgets is permitted when it is in the best interest of the institution and only to the extent required by the funding agency. If the funding agency requires cash match, the resources must come from the College’s existing budget allocation or other *eligible* funding sources. The supervising Dean or Vice President must determine how matching requirements will be met. OGD is available to advise on appropriate sources of matching funds.

If cash or in-kind matching resources are to come from external partners, letters of commitment must be secured in a timely manner and submitted with the proposal.

Grant Program Income

[NeSCC Policy 04:10:03](#)

Grant Program Income is gross income earned by the grantee that is directly generated by a grant supported activity or earned as a result of the grant award during the period of performance.

Examples of Program Income include:

- Income from fees for services performed;
- Funds generated from the use or rental of real or personal property acquired under awards (including supplies and equipment);
- Proceeds from the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award;
- Fees from participants at conferences or symposia;
- Proceeds from the sale of publications or software; and
- License fees and royalties on patents and copyrights related to research project funded by a grant award.

If the proposed grant is expected to generate program income, this should be clearly stated in the budget narrative. Finance staff should be consulted to develop a strategy to expend program income in compliance with institutional policy and federal uniform guidance (2 CFR 200). This strategy should be clearly delineated in the proposal.

SECTION 3: PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

3A: Responsibility for Submission

Except in rare cases, the Office of Grant Development will submit all grants on behalf of the College. OGD maintains institutional accounts and login credentials for most major grant-related portals and management systems. Individual faculty and staff members *SHOULD NOT* create new accounts or logins without consulting the OGD.

3B: Final Editing

Project leads should plan for proposals to be substantially complete **at least one week prior** to the submission deadline to allow sufficient time for final editing, completion of administrative forms, and processing of submission approvals. The OGD recommends that project leads have multiple individuals review the draft proposal throughout the proposal development process to improve clarity and minimize errors. The Director of Grant Development retains authority for final proposal editing based on professional expertise and judgement.

3C: Submission Approval

NeSCC's submission approval process is conducted electronically. Final drafts of the proposal narrative and budget are circulated for executive-level review and approval. Required approvers include, at minimum, the supervising Vice President, the Vice President of Inclusive Excellence and Sponsored Programs, the Chief Financial Officer, and the College President. Final approval is at the discretion of the President.

DEFINITIONS

Allocable ([2 CFR 200.405](#)) – A cost is allocable if the goods or services involved are incurred specifically for the federal award, and are necessary to the overall operation of the award.

Allowable ([2 CFR 200.403](#)) – Costs must conform to any limitations or exclusions stated in generally accepted accounting principles or in the sponsored agreement.

Cost Sharing or Matching ([2 CFR 200.306](#)) – The portion of project costs not paid by federal funds. Common examples are salary costs in excess of the Federal award cap or donated

supplies. Any shared costs or matching funds, including third party in-kind contributions, cannot be included from any other federal award.

Equipment ([2 CFR 200.439](#)) – Equipment is defined as an item of property that has an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more and an expected service life of more than one year. If the item meets this criterion, then all federal procurement policies and procedures must be followed. If an item does not meet these criteria, it is considered a supply.

Fringe Benefits ([2 CFR 200.431](#)) – Allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages. Fringe benefits include, but are not limited to, vacations, holidays, and sick leave.

Indirect Costs ([2 CFR 200.414](#)) – Costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project, e.g., accounting, payroll, HR, processing, and depreciation of buildings and equipment.

Subaward ([2 CFR 200.1](#)) – An award provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient to carry out part of a federal award to perform a public good. It does not include payments to a contractor. A subaward needs a written agreement or MOU between the pass-through entity and the subrecipient.

Subrecipient ([2 CFR 200.1](#)) – A non-federal entity that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a federal program.

Supplies ([2 CFR 200.1](#)) – Indicates general categories (other than equipment) such as pens and paper, flash drives, books, and binders, and includes an amount for each category. These costs are considered essential for carrying out the project. A computing device is a supply if the cost is less than \$5,000.

Travel Costs ([2 CFR 200.474](#)) – Include the destination, number of people traveling, and dates or duration of your stay for all anticipated travel. Expenses include airfare and/or vehicle transportation, lodging, and meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). Such costs are charged on an actual, per diem, or mileage basis.