# CHS Grantsmanship Guidance

Offices of Research Administration

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **College of Humanities and Sciences-Sponsored Programs Office (CHS-SPO)**: The College's sponsored programs office strives to provide exemplary service and actively engages with faculty, postdocs and students through expediting, assisting, and supporting with proposal development, submission and award management. Additionally, the CHS-SPO are the liaisons between the Principal Investigator and DSP and G&C.

- **Division of Sponsored Programs Office (DSP)**: The Division of Sponsored Programs is VCU's central office for managing all externally sponsored projects; authorized to submit extramural proposals to and accept awards from all funding sources on behalf of the university; the official contact for the university on administrative award-related matters; and negotiate confidentiality nondisclosure, material transfer and data use agreements.

- **Grants & Contracts Office (G&C)**: VCU's Grants & Contracts accounting office (G&C) oversees the post-award financial administration of sponsored projects. This encompasses providing financial reports to sponsored entities as well as depositing federal, nonfederal, and other externally sponsored funds. Additionally, G&C assists in interpreting policy, guidance and regulations relevant to the research administration community, provides documentation for external audit, and oversees the University's Effort Reporting System (ECC).

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Overview

- Pre-Proposal Preparations

- Pre Award Procedures

- Post Award Procedures

- Tips and Reminders

- Team Contacts
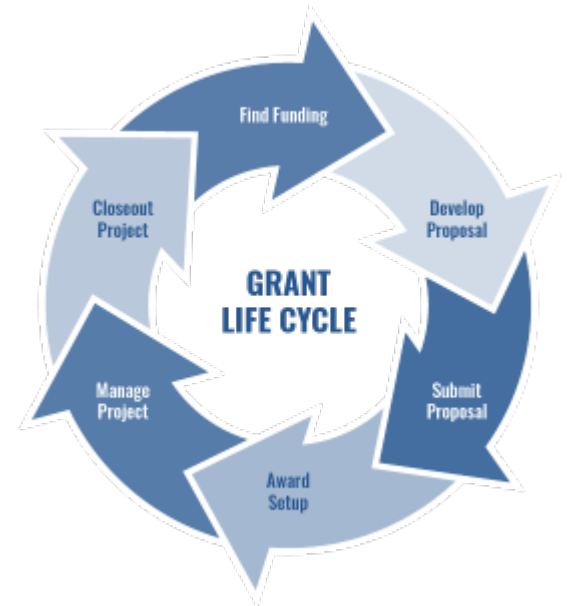
Pre-Proposal Preparations

Pre-Proposal Preparation

In order to be eligible to submit grant applications there are a number of actions and trainings that need to be completed before DSP will review and submit the application on your behalf.

HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR ANNUAL FIR UPDATE

A quick guide to AIRS and your financial interest report (FIR)

Mandatory training for PIs

Canvas course name: **Mandatory sponsored project and effort reporting training for principal investigators**

The offices of the Vice President for Research and Innovation and the Vice President for Finance and Budget, with the support of VCU's senior administration, have updated mandatory training programs in sponsored project compliance and effort certification to increase awareness and accountability and to reduce risk to the university. The inaugural requirements are addressed in the

s training program. Co-investigators training program is available on mplete.

aining self-enroll invitation link, or

hort@vcu.edu) to receive a self-

r reported financial interests. Click Finish in the nd corner of your screen to submit.

page, the current state will now be "Active" and your w that you've annual disclosure.

Current State
Active

Things to remember..

- Interests should be updated within 30 days of discovering or acquiring a new financial or non-financial interest.
- Contact AIRS@vcu.edu for questions about interest reporting.

CITI PROGRAM

CITI training

Access initial and continuing education on human research topics.

Pre-Proposal Preparation

Mandatory training for PIs

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The offices of the Vice President for Research and Innovation and the Vice President for Finance and Budget, with the support of VCU's senior administration, have updated mandatory training programs in sponsored project compliance and effort certification to increase awareness and accountability and to reduce risk to the university. The inaugural training program began in 2012. New regulations and requirements are addressed in the updated training, which was released in 2016.

All principal investigators are required to complete this training program. Co-investigators are encouraged to complete the program as well. The training program is available on Canvas and should take approximately one hour to complete.

Canvas course self-enroll options:

1) Click on the following self-enroll invitation link: PI training self-enroll invitation link, or

2) Email Cathy Short (Training Manager, DSP/G&C, cfshort@vcu.edu) to receive a self-enroll link, or

Mandatory PI Training (Canvas)

https://research.vcu.edu/training/sponsored-programs/

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Pre-Proposal Preparation

CITI Training

VCU fulfills the federal mandate to ensure all researchers involved in human subjects research are trained by requiring initial and continuing education through the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative.

https://research.vcu.edu/training/citi-training/

Pre-Proposal Preparation

For NIH specific grants each person will have to request an NIH account through DSP, this will take anywhere from 3-5 business days.

[NIH eRA Commons Account Request Form](#)

Pre-Proposal Preparation

For the NSF applicants must register for a Research.gov account

Pre-Proposal Preparation

Financial **I**nterest **R**eport (also known as **FIR**)

Access this report using RAMS-AIRS (AIRS Stands for **A**ctivity and **I**nterest **R**eporting **S**ystem) http://airs.research.vcu.edu

Required to be completed every year after May 10th

Pre-Proposal Preparation

http://airs.research.vcu.edu

Funding Opportunities

Principal Investigators can search for funding to support their research in a number of ways.

Funding opportunities can be found through the following VCU OVPRI website below which lists grant search databases, limited submission, federal and foundation funding sources:

Funding Opportunities

Internal Funding Opportunities

There are a number of internal funding opportunities that are outlined through the [One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan](). Dr. Angela Reynolds ([areynolds2@vcu.edu]()) is the point of contact for questions and guidance.

*The CHS-SPO grants research administrator for your department can assist with the budget, however, preparation and submission of the application in RAM-SPOT is the PI's responsibility.

Sponsored Programs Office: Proposal Submission Procedures

February 2024

What CHS-SPO can do for you!

Assist you with...

Pre-Award →→→ Post-Award

Pre-Award	Post-Award
Development and preparation of budgets.	Award set-up.
Obtaining cost share authorizations.	Financial grant management guidance.
Coordinating obtaining documents.	Post-award actions, modifications, re-budgeting, carry forward, subaward set up and modifications, no cost extensions, grant close-out.
Completing sponsor forms.	
Coordinating with external collaborators.	
Coordination of large scale/complex proposals (e.g. Center Grants)	

Email chsresearch@vcu.edu with questions and requests about these topics.

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Overview of How to Submit a Proposal

Step 1

- Principal Investigators/Project Directors must complete the [online proposal processing form](#) as soon as possible but at least **30 to 60 days before the sponsor deadline.**

Step 2

- The *final* budget and budget justification should be submitted to the assigned SPO Grants Research Administrator (SPO-GRA) a minimum of **13 business days before the deadline** to ensure timely review of the budget.

Step 3

- A minimum of **10 business days before the deadline:** All *draft* (research plan and human subjects section, if applicable) documents and *final* documents *(*other project information, particularly bio-sketch/CV) should be sent to the assigned SPO-GRA for review and upload to SPOT. Principal Investigator/Project Director should be available to route the proposal in RAMS-SPOT for internal processing. **See slide 26 for instructions on how to route your proposal** to ensure review/approval by all units.

Step 4

- Final versions of all science documents should be submitted no later than **3 business days before the deadline (no editing can occur after this point)** to ensure compliance with RFA (Request for Funding Announcement).

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Step 1: Notify CHS-SPO

- **At least 30 to 60 days before the deadline** complete the online proposal processing form. This form provides the CHS-SPO with vital information needed to submit your proposal in a timely, accurate, and efficient manner.

- Faculty will receive an email entitled **Proposal Notification Received by CHS-SPO** from the grants research administrator assigned to your proposal.

- Proposals including collaboration with outside entities (ex: subawards, etc.) need extra processing time. Please send the outside entities' grant research administrator contact information **as soon as possible**.

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Proposal Notification Form Submitted at ≥1 Month

- Faculty can request assistance with **budget development**. Email chsresearch@vcu.edu to arrange a time to speak to or meet with a grants research administrator

- Proposal documents will be reviewed to ensure they meet *all* requirements as dictated by the sponsor and university guidelines

- <u>**NOTE:**</u> For proposals with complex elements (e.g. sub-awards, cost sharing/matching, foreign collaborators, industry partnerships, and external submission systems, federal entities, etc.) the CHS-SPO team <u>**requires**</u> submission of the form at least one month in advance

Forms requiring Chair Review and Approval

- [PI Eligibility Exception form](#) – required for individuals who are not eligible to serve as a principal investigator on a research grant, requesting an exception

- [F&A Exemption form](#) – required when there is a request to reduce or waive all F&A costs of a sponsored project

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Budget Development

Reminders:

- Please submit your final budget and budget justification by the deadline date provided by your assigned grant research administrator.

- Please apply tuition and fees to full-time graduate students. Stipend is determined per department but tuition and fees are a set amount and not optional. Please verify with your assigned grant research administrator.

- On your budget justification, please ensure personnel effort is listed in person months (academic, summer or calendar) as well as percent effort. Please ensure totals for each category item is listed as well.

- Subaward budgets- If you have asked another entity to be a subaward on your grant proposal submission, please ensure the amount of funding per year is discussed and agreed upon before you submit the grant proposal request in the proposal notification form. Please communicate this with your GRA so they can input these numbers into the internal, RAMS-SPOT, SF424 or sponsor portal. If the budget is modular, please be aware that the budget is $250,000 of directs costs per year (in modules of $25,000, excluding the consortium (subaward) F&A costs). To determine how many modules you should request, subtract any consortium F&A from the total direct costs, then round to the nearest $25,000 increment.

Budget Development

Cost sharing academic and summer effort:

- *When PI's are not budgeting their effort in grant proposals or if the grant announcement doesn't allow personnel effort, the PI (and Co-PI's if applicable) should have at minimum 1% effort cost shared. For 9 month appointment faculty, 1.33% academic effort should be cost shared.

- **Academic effort cost share** is moving already budgeted CHS funds to the cost share index and typically come from the CHS E&G research index. In SPOT, a cost share authorization form is not necessary. The Associate Dean for Research will work with the PI to explain that cost shared effort is not eligible to be used towards a course buyout.

- **Summer effort** can be budgeted in grant proposals, however, it requires additional approval and a secondary assignment request. In SPOT, **a signed cost share authorization form is needed.**

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Proposal Notification Form Submitted at 15 Days

- Faculty must independently submit a finalized budget and budget justification

- Proposal documents will be reviewed to ensure they meet the *minimum* requirements as dictated by the sponsor and university guidelines

- <u>**NOTE:**</u> Depending on the volume of proposals, your assigned CHS-SPO grants research administrator may not be able to assist in a short time window; the faculty should contact CHS-SPO Leadership for further guidance.

Proposal Notification Form Submitted at <10 Days

- Proposal notification forms received for requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis by CHS-SPO Leadership and considered only if the faculty member can submit final documents with minimal errors to CHS-SPO in a timely manner.

- **NOTE:** Faculty who cannot meet the set timelines for submission should contact CHS-SPO Leadership for further guidance.

Step 2: Submit Initial Documents

- **13 business days before the deadline** save your *final* budget and budget justification to the google drive shared by your assigned grants research administrator.
  - The final budget is needed for the GRA to enter into SPOT (and if applicable, to generate the SF-424 or the sponsor portal). It is highly preferred for the budget to not have any further changes beyond this point.

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Step 3: Internal Review and Route in RAMS-SPOT

- **10 business days prior to the deadline** route the proposal in RAMS-SPOT for internal processing:

1. Log into RAMS SPOT: https://spot.research.vcu.edu

2. Enter your log in information (eID username and password). Upon entering your log in information, your workspace should come up. You will see your proposal title and number (**FP0000XXXX**). Click on the proposal.

3. On the next screen, on the left hand side, you will see a "My Current Actions" header. Under the header, click Route for approval.

4. Finally, click "Ok". By clicking "Ok" you are electronically signing off on the proposal. That's it! Your proposal should now be routed for CHS approval.

5. Please note, if there's personnel from external CHS departments in the proposal, this may require additional school/unit approvals (this may take additional time – usual review time is 5 days for CHS; 5 days for DSP)

If off-campus this will require the ability to access VPN! Please note that proposal documents do NOT have to be final at time of routing, with the exception of the budget.

Step 4: Submit Final Documents

- **3 business days before the deadline** submit final science and all other proposal documents via email to your assigned grant research administrator:
  - Final science documents typically consist of: specific aims, research strategy/project description/research plan, human subjects, data management/sharing plan, etc.
  - Other documents typically consist of: evaluation plan, work plan, logic model, letters of support/collaboration, current and pending support, etc.

Please review everything carefully! No editing of your documents should occur after this point!

Grant Information and Guidelines

Questions, requests, concerns can be directed to
 chsresearch@vcu.edu

CHS-SPO Leadership and Grant Research
 Administrators can access this email directly.

Proposal Timeline

30-60 Business Days (Maximum)

- Inform CHS-SPO Office of intent to submit
- Allow additional time when including mentors/ sponsors external to CHS

10-15 Business Days

- Finalize biosketches, letters of support and all other non-scientific documents
- Drafts of all research/scientific documents
- Route for school approval

<10 Business Days

- Review for CHS (and other school/unit if applicable) approval
- Review for DSP approval

** Final research plan, all documents, etc. should be submitted 3 business days before deadline!

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Proposal Development

All grants and contract proposals, subaward proposals, student fellowships and letters of intent that require an AOR signature from [Division of Sponsored Programs (DSP)](#) must be submitted to the College of Humanities and Sciences, Sponsored Programs Office.

YES

NO

MAYBE

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Overview of VCU RAMS-SPOT Database

Research **A**dministration **M**anagement **S**ystem – **S**ponsored **P**rograms **O**nline **T**racking

- Database for sponsored projects administration and submission

- Replaced Info-Ed as of May 2015 for pre-award processing

- System of record

- All records are electronic
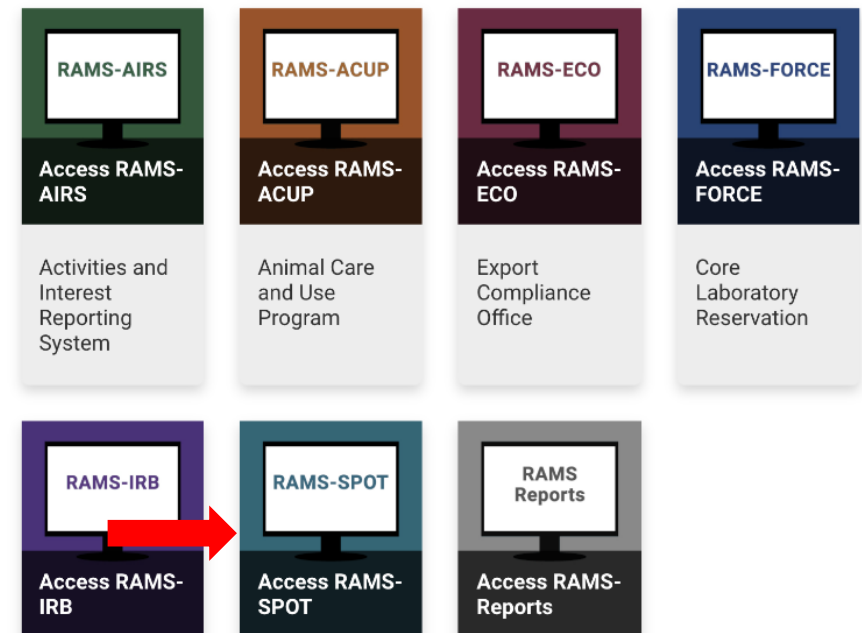
RAMS SPOT: Proposal Processing

- Login information is same as e-ID

- ALL external proposals for funding must be initiated in RAMS-SPOT:
  Even if submitted through sponsor site? **YES**

  Even if no forms require AOR signature? **YES**

  RAM-SPOT proposal initiation should be via **the grants research administrator ONLY.**

  Exceptions (Proposals that do not have to go into RAMS-SPOT):
  - Program announcements that specifically states proposals does not need institutional approval and review.
  - Funds being sent directly to individual bank accounts
  - Individual Fellowships do not go into RAMS-SPOT when submitted but if awarded they will have to go into RAMS-SPOT
  - Faculty fellowships- dependent on the program announcement instructions
  - Letters of Intent (Pre-proposals) that do not require AOR approval

  When in doubt please ask your grants research administrator

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Grant Submission Systems

- For Grants.gov: proposals that utilize SF-424, SPOT will generate the forms and submit directly to the system.

- For Research.gov: Both RAMS-SPOT and Research.gov should be completed with all documents, budget information, etc. together before routing to DSP.

- For JustGrants: Both RAMS-SPOT and JustGrants should be completed with all documents, budget information, etc. together before routing to DSP.

- NIH ASSIST: Both RAMS-SPOT and NIH ASSIST should be completed with all documents, budget information, etc. together before routing to DSP.

- Proposal Central: Both RAMS-SPOT and Proposal Central should be completed with all documents, budget information, etc. together before routing to DSP.

- SAM (Simons Award Manager): Both RAMS-SPOT and SAM should be completed with all documents, budget information, etc. together before routing to DSP.

- It is the PI's responsibility to create and upload documents all systems except the budget section.

- ***Please ensure you have an account with these grant systems to make sure you are able to input your grants, track your grant submission progress and receive communication about your grant submission. Please make sure to give OAU (Other Authorized User for Research.gov) access or edit access for all systems to your grants research administrator as well as Felicia Harris, Laniece Jones, and Suzanna Levey. Also, please ensure you give DSP (formerly OSP) shared, edit, or submission access for all systems as well. ***

Post-Award: Grant Proposal Awarded/Funded

Congratulations! Your research idea has been funded! What are the next steps?

- Once a new research grant has been awarded, the Division of Sponsored Programs will send out an "Award Processed for Funding Proposal" notice

- A congratulatory email will be sent by the Director of CHS-SPO to include the assigned grant research administrator, finance and HR team contacts

Post-Award: PI Responsibilities

Principal Investigator Responsibilities:

- Review your grant award agreement in detail to understand the terms and conditions (and any restrictions, if applicable)

- If the budget is reduced, work with the assigned grant research administrator (SPO team member) contact to revise the budget for submission to the sponsor

- Review your grant in the PI dashboard to ensure the awarded budget is reflecting correctly

- Check to ensure all personnel working on the research project are being charged to the grant; if not, contact the assigned grant research administrator

- Each month the PI should review and sign off on monthly expenditure reports (MER). It is the PI's responsibility to ensure expenditures are correctly being charged to their award. If any discrepancies are discovered, please contact your grant research administrator assigned.

Post-Award Actions: Grants Monitoring

Financial grants monitoring - Throughout the life of the grant, both the PI and assigned grants research administrator should monitor the expenses for allowability, allocability, reasonableness and consistency.

Monthly Expenditure Reports

- The PI should access their monthly expenditure reports (MER) monthly to review and certify in the PI dashboard

- If the PI notices any errors or expected charges not present, they should contact their assigned grants research administrator as soon as possible for correction

- Even if errors are identified on the grant index, the PI certifying the MER means that they have reviewed and communicated the errors needed for correction and acknowledge that the corrections will be made

- When MERs are generated every month, they will not regenerate with correct data after corrections have been made. The grants research administrator should communicate with the PI to confirm when corrections have been processed.

- Certifying MERs is a [university policy](#). Not complying will result in non-compliance and possible audit violations.

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Post-Award: CHS-SPO Responsibilities

CHS-SPO Team Member Responsibilities (GRA):

- Review the awarded grant agreement in detail
- Determine if the budget has been cut by the sponsor
- Work with the PI to revise the budget (if applicable)
- Ensure that a grant index has been set up by the grant accountant
- Initiate the creation and set up of subaccount index(es) for internal CHS departments
- Initiate the subaward process in SPOT (if subawards will be participating on the research project)
- Ensure that effort for all personnel are charging to the grant index
- Initiate the set up of a cost share index (if applicable)

Grant funded teaching release – Course Buy Out

- A grant can fund academic effort (Fall/Spring) to reduce teaching duties (course buy-out).

- If the grant is funded, the individual faculty members works with their unit chair or director with approval by the Associate Dean for Research to determine which semester a course can be bought-out.

- Typically, a grant-funded teaching release applies when a faculty member pays a portion of their salary from a grant, contract, or external source. The rate is based off of the cycle teaching load in your unit for a tenure-track eligible faculty member.

- Fringe on this effort is at the full-time rate (38.1%)

- *Internal CHS grant mechanisms may allow for reduced course release cost.*

Reference Link for Course Buy Out:

https://intranet.chs.vcu.edu/chs-offices/sponsored-programs/resources/guidance-and-procedures/grant-funded-teaching-release/

Post Award Actions

- Deficit removal - Deficits are never allowed. The assigned grant research administrator will research the cause of the deficit and work with the grant accountant to develop a plan to clear.

Post Award Actions to be processed in SPOT (work with GRA)

- Carryforward

- Re-budgeting

- No cost extension

- Change of PI requests

- Award modifications

- Effort change requests

- Progress Report – Submitted either quarterly, semi-annually or annually, must be entered both in SPOT and the sponsor portal
    - NIH – eRA Commons
    - NSF – Research.gov
    - NIJ – JustGrants
    - Other sponsors – see the terms and conditions of the award agreement

- Award Close-out

Compliance

- Cost sharing - The portion of the costs of a [sponsored project](#) that is borne by the university. Applicable reasons below:

  – Over the salary cap

  – 1% PI minimum effort: [VCU Minimum Effort for Principal Investigators and Key Personnel on Sponsored Programs Policy](#).

  – Required cost sharing per the funding announcement: [Cost share Policy](#)

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F&A vs. FACR: What's the difference?

Facilities & Administrative Costs (F&A)

- Costs incurred in support of many activities that cannot be identified with a single sponsored project.
- Building operating and maintenance costs, use of equipment, general and departmental administrative expenses, sponsored projects' administration, library costs are usually considered to be examples of F&A costs.
- Costs that are essential in support of sponsored program activities
- Also referred to as "indirect costs".

Facilities & Administrative Cost Recovery (FACR)

- The university retains a portion of the facilities and administrative cost recoveries centrally; the remainder is allocated to the schools
- The dean of each school or college determines the allocation of the school's share
- For more information, please contact the CHS Director of Finance
- Policy

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Forms requiring Chair Review and Approval

- PI Change Authority - prior approval letter (on VCU letterhead) signed by new PI and VCU person authorized to appoint the replacement PI (dept. chair) to sponsor grants management; chair approval is required if the current PI is stepping down from the role as principal investigator of a sponsored program grant or transferring to another university (and the main grant is to remain at VCU)

Last tips and reminders....

- CHS-SPO is a liaison between the college and DSP; please allow your grants research administrator to communicate with DSP on your behalf.

- Please be aware that other VCU schools/units may need to approve the proposal before it gets to DSP for final review and submission.

- Please submit your grant requests at least 30-60 days **before** the deadline date. Last minute requests that are made the day of will not be granted. Requests that are made within 5-15 days will require CHS leadership review and approval.

- Please make **every effort** to make sure you are available on the day of your grant deadline. If you will not be available the day of your grant deadline, please inform us so we can plan ahead of time to submit your grant before you become unavailable.

- Please remember the Division of Sponsored Programs office (DSP) signs off at 5 pm and proposals will not be reviewed, approved and submitted after 5 pm (even if the proposal deadline is at midnight). Please plan ahead with your grant research administrator for a timely submission (grants, progress reports, JITs, RPPRs, etc.).

- If the program announcement requires cost sharing, please plan as early as possible and speak with Dr. Reynolds.

- Please reach out to CHS Human Resources regarding hiring personnel (persons being added to payroll) or anything HR related at chshr@vcu.edu. CHS-SPO and CHS-Finance cannot handle HR related questions, issues, or transactions.

- We are here to assist you with your grant and financial needs. And to provide the best customer service to our faculty. We ask for your patience as we undergo several transitions. Please communicate with us and we will do our best to assist you.

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Helpful Links

- [VCU](#)
- [RAMS-SPOT Updates & Training](#)
- [Proposals & Awards](#)
- [Office of Research and Innovation Forms](#)
- [Grants and Contracts](#)
- [Research Dashboard Training](#)
- [CHS-SPO Website](#)

CHS-SPO Team Contacts

CHS-SPO Team Email – chsresearch@vcu.edu

CHS-SPO Leadership

Associate Dean for Research – Dr. Angela Reynolds – areynolds2@vcu.edu

Director of Sponsored Programs – Felicia Harris – s2fmharr@vcu.edu

Assistant Director of Sponsored Programs – Laniece Jones – ljones8@vcu.edu

CHS-SPO Grant Research Administrators

Suzanna Levey (Senior GRA) – leveys@vcu.edu

Melissa Yancey – yanceym@vcu.edu

Ayana Clayton-Brooks – claytonai@vcu.edu

Krista McDonald – mcdonaldkl2@vcu.edu

Questions ???