PROPOSAL FORMAT

A successful proposal is well-developed, clearly defined, and entails cooperation among colleagues and the administrative staff of the University. The Office of the Vice President for Research and the Office of Research Services provides technical assistance in proposal development and maintains up-to-date guidelines from numerous funding agencies. The proposal format should always adhere to the agency guidelines. Many funding agencies are moving towards electronic research administration and the submission of proposals via the Internet. In more cases, electronic submission may be mandatory. If the agency does not have specific guidelines, the principal investigator may want to use the following as a guide to preparing the proposal. Most government agencies and private/corporate foundations are receptive to proposals that follow a “standard” format with which their personnel are familiar. The components listed here are standard to most proposals, though not necessarily to all. Furthermore, the components may appear under different names:

Transmittal Letter — A letter printed on University letterhead, signed by the principal investigator indicating the contents of the proposal submission packet. This is not necessary for most Federal proposals.

Cover Sheet — Typically a form suggested by the agency. If one is not specified, use a “standardized” outline form.

Abstract — Usually a one-page summary of the proposal. The abstract presents the essential elements of the proposal. The agency may use it to disseminate the proposal idea for comment from individuals outside the primary review group.

Table of Contents — Appropriate for proposals of more than five pages of narrative.

Introduction — This may be appropriate to lead into a more complex proposal by briefly explaining the reason for, and the basic elements of, the proposal.

Narrative (Technical Proposal) — This describes the proposed project and details precisely what is being proposed:

*Background*: In reference to the proposal concept: 1) what has been accomplished to date; 2) what requires attention; and 3) what requires extra attention or refocusing.

*Statement of Need*: What is required to be done and why. Do not overstate the need or the problem(s). Be clear and concise.

*Project Goals*: General statements regarding proposed accomplishments.

*Project Hypothesis and Objectives*: Statements of precise and measurable outcomes.

*Project Implications*: The preliminary results and impact of the proposed project. Two questions that should be addressed here are “why?” and “what?”

*Methodology*: How will the problem be approached and what methods will be employed to accomplish the stated objective. Provide a solution methodology for each objective. Describe specific program activity, personnel, and data compilation.

*Time Frame*: A projected time frame with reasonable starting and ending dates for the proposed project.
Evaluation/Milestones Chart: A project program flow chart indicating anticipated accomplishments at specific times. This section might also include deliverables.

Dissemination/Utilization: How the findings or results will be disseminated and utilized. If practical, provide a plan for utilization of the findings; this component is often referred by government sponsors as “transferability.”

Literature Review: Cite familiarity with similar projects completed or in progress, as well as complementary studies that may have an impact on the proposed project. Indicate whether or not the PI has performed similar work.

Facilities: As appropriate, provide a statement of the physical facilities available and necessary to conduct the project.

Personnel: Describe the relationship of professional personnel to the project. Attach vitae of the principal project personnel as appendices.

Budget (Cost Proposal or Financial Plan) — A line-item budget to support the project costs, including any cost sharing or program income. Depending on the funding agency, provide a separate explanation or justification to help the agency understand the budget. This should be an explanation of individual cost items, not a restatement of the budget. Some sponsoring agencies require use of their own printed budget form. All amounts should be rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

Subawards — If any of the work will be done by an entity outside of UH, provide a scope of work (technical proposal) and budget for each subawardee. It will also be necessary to include a letter of commitment signed by the subawardee’s principal investigator and an authorized institutional official (usually from the sponsored projects office). Be sure to follow any other specific instructions including form preparation required by the sponsoring agency.

Appendices — 1) Bibliography - determine the requirement for bibliographical references. If appropriate, include a bibliography immediately preceding the other appendices; 2) Vitae - at a minimum, include vitae for the senior personnel; 3) Publication Lists - a current list of publications for each of the senior personnel should be included; 4) other current and pending support.

Note: Intellectual Property — All proprietary information in the proposal should be duly marked. For more information, see the guidelines at the OTTED website _______