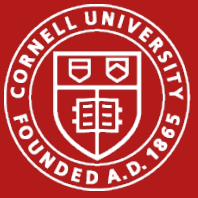# Proposal Preparation – Best Practices

Presented by

Su Ghosh – Team Lead, Pre-Award Research Operations (OSP)

Samantha Grace, Pre-Award Specialist, PRO

Jacob Kurtz – Grant Coordinator, CALS OSR

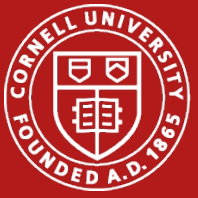Melinda "Mindy" McGill-Carlison, Sr. Pre-Award Specialist, PRO

You've been notified of a proposal, now what?

❖ **Proposal Notification System**
  ❖ PI Name
  ❖ Sponsor
  ❖ Solicitation/Call
  ❖ Co-PI's & Key Personnel
  ❖ Proposal Due Date
  ❖ Title
  ❖ Start Date & Duration
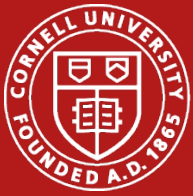 ❖ Compliances Expected
  ❖ Budget Information

Principal Investigator Eligibility

❖ PIs, Co-PIs, and PDs are responsible for **the conduct of a sponsored project**:
- intellectual direction
- resource allocation and fiscal stewardship
- representing the project to the sponsor
- administrative and personnel oversight
- adherence to relevant policies and regulations
- meeting the terms of the award

❖ Cornell University policy is that **only full-time faculty members** may routinely serve as Principal Investigators or Project Directors on sponsored programs.
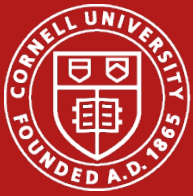
❖ Certain other titles are allowed to serve as Principal Investigators if they meet the eligibility requirements.

Principal Investigator Eligibility Requirements by Title

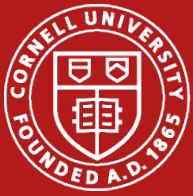| Eligibility Requirement (Documentation that requirements are met must be retained by the unit)	Select Other Academic Positions	Postdoc Fellows / Associates	Graduates / Undergrads	Other
Project related to official job duties*	◉			
The appointment extends through the life of the project or is eligible for renewal	◉	◉	◉	◉
The equivalent of actual time spent, but not less than 2 weeks, of annual salary per proposal charged to non-sponsored funds during proposal writing** (N/A for Emeritus faculty)	◉	◉	◉	◉
Minimum 5% of salary charged to non-sponsored funds for the duration of the project if the individual is performing any duties not allowed as direct costs to a sponsored project, in addition to proposal writing above*** (N/A for Emeritus faculty)	◉	◉	◉ (graduate students only)	◉
A full-time tenured faculty member with sponsored research/extension experience related to the intellectual scope of the project must serve as Faculty Sponsor and official PI on the project and PDA/PDF named as Key Personnel****		◉	◉	
Faculty Sponsor (see above) must oversee some or all aspects of the project and provide signature in RASS		◉	◉	◉
Faculty Sponsor must commit the use of lab and other infrastructure necessary to conduct the project		◉	◉	
Project's stated purpose is solely to support a student's education or the student's individual research			◉	

❖ Use this table to determine the eligibility requirements that must be met and documented

❖ The unit must keep this documentation throughout the lifetime of the project

❖ Faculty Sponsors are a key component for Postdocs and Graduates/Undergrads PI eligibility

Principal Investigator Eligibility by Policy, Exception, or Addt'l Aproval

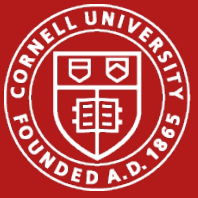|	PI Eligibility Authorized by Policy	PI by exception if approved by Department Chair, Center Director or Administrative Unit Vice President / Vice Provost	Additional Approval Required by Dean or Senior Associate / Associate Dean for Research
☑ = Allowed (with one-time approval) ☆ = Allowed for fellow/career awards (approved for each proposal) ✘ = Ineligible for exception			
Professor Tenured/Tenure Track (all ranks)	☑		
Research Professor (all ranks)**	☑		
University Professor	☑		
Senior Scholar	☑		
Senior Scientist, Principal Research Scientist, Research Scientist**	☑		
University Librarian	☑		

❖ No additional approval or exception needed

Principal Investigator Eligibility by Policy, Exception, or Addt'l Aproval

|	PI Eligibility Authorized by Policy	PI by exception if approved by Department Chair, Center Director or Administrative Unit Vice President / Vice Provost	Additional Approval Required by Dean or Senior Associate / Associate Dean for Research
☑ = Allowed (with one-time approval) ☆ = Allowed for fellow/career awards (approved for each proposal) ✗ = Ineligible for exception			
New tenured / tenure track professor prior to the appointment start date	✗	☑	
Departing Tenured/Tenure Track Professors	✗	☑	
Professor of Practice (all ranks)	✗	☑	
Clinical Professor (all ranks)	✗	☑	
Senior Research Associate	✗	☑	
Senior Extension Associate	✗	☑	
Senior Lecturer	✗	☑	
Director, Botanical Gardens	✗	☑	
Director, Johnson Museum of Art	✗	☑	
Associate Librarian	✗	☑	
Emeritus Faculty	✗	☑	

❖ The individual's Department Chair/Director or Center Director, and VP if in an administrative unit, *with no delegation*, must approve exceptions for the following position types.

❖ The approval signature will be provided in RASS. Other documentation may be provided by email (unit/dept specific).

Principal Investigator Eligibility by Policy, Exception, or Addt'l Approval

	PI Eligibility Authorized by Policy	PI by exception if approved by Department Chair, Center Director or Administrative Unit Vice President / Vice Provost	Additional Approval Required by Dean or Senior Associate / Associate Dean for Research
☑ = Allowed (with one-time approval) ☆ = Allowed for fellow/career awards (approved for each proposal) ✗ = Ineligible for exception			
Postdoctoral Associates/Postdoctoral Fellows***	✗	☆	
Graduate/Undergraduate Students***	✗	☆	
Modified Academic Titles (acting, adjunct, courtesy, visiting)****	✗	✗	✗
All other academic titles	✗	☑	☑
Non-Academic (full-time, regular exempt, managerial or leadership responsibility)	✗	☑	☑

❖ Postdoc Associates/Fellows and Graduate/Undergraduate Students may only serve as PIs for awards that
- support Postdoctoral education, research, or career development, or
- are specifically for a student's individual education or individual research.

❖ **Ineligible for blanket approval.**

❖ **Faculty Sponsors are required.**
  ❖ Faculty Sponsor: *A full-time tenured faculty member with sponsored research/extension experience related to the intellectual scope of the project*
  ❖ Must oversee some or all aspects of the project and provide signature in RASS
 ❖ Must commit the use of lab and other infrastructure necessary to conduct the project
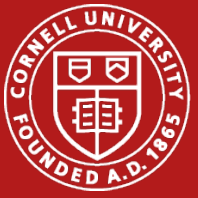
Proposal Checklist Development
Reviewing the Request for Proposal (RFP)

❖ Review the RFP and highlight pertinent information:
  ❖ Deadlines
  ❖ Budget Limitations
  ❖ Period of Performance
  ❖ IP-related issues that need to be brought up to the GCO
  ❖ Exceptions/additions to standard guidelines
  ❖ Eligibility of the PI/Institution
  ❖ Items that may result in return without review (RWR)

❖ Check expiration date and ensure most current version of the RFP
❖ Read related documents as linked in the RFP
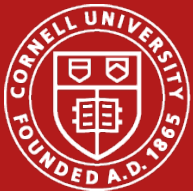
Proposal Checklist Development
Summary of Required Elements (SRE)

❖ Pull information from the RFP into a templated SRE
  ❖ Keep templates for different sponsors (e.g., NIH, NSF, DOE, DOD)
  ❖ Keep templates for specific solicitations (e.g., NIH R01, NSF CAREER)
  ❖ Update templates with each new solicitation
  ❖ Provide links to resources within the document
  ❖ Provide page numbers for quick reference

❖ Highlight important information in **bold** or red (e.g., items that will result in return without review)
❖ Use SRE as you obtain final documents/upload to submission system
❖ Include last updated date in the margins of the SRE

Remember, the SRE is as much for you as the research administrator as it is for the PI!
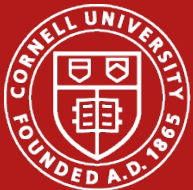
Simple NSF Summary of Required Elements (SRE) Checklist

- ❖ Links to pertinent templates and documents (RFP)
- ❖ List out deadline dates and times
- ❖ Developer Tool allows for checkable boxes in Word
- ❖ Include important info (see Project Summary)
- ❖ Set expectations and roles
- ❖ Sr./Key Personnel Documents – checkbox for each person
- ❖ Formatting Information
- ❖ Budget Information, as collected at the start of the process
- ❖ Other Notes
  - ❖ Highlight other important information (e.g., RWR)

Sponsor: NSF
Title: [TITLE]
RFP: PD 20-1417 (Follow the PAPPG 22-1)
Research.gov Proposal ID: [ID]

Deadlines (no deadline for sponsor, operating on PI deadline)

OSP (Full Review): 6/28/2022 4PM	OSP (Limited Review): 7/1/2022 4PM	Sponsor: 7/6/2022 5PM (COB)

Elements		Notes
☐	Cover Sheet	PI to Start; PRO to Complete
☐	List of Suggested Reviewers	Optional; PI to provide if wanted
☐	Project Summary (1 page max)	PI to provide
	• Be sure to put headings on their own separate lines	
☒	Table of Contents	Automatically Generated
☒	Project Description (15 page limit), including sections: DRAFTED	PI to provide
	☐ Results from Prior NSF Support	
	☐ Broader Impacts	
☒	References Cited DRAFTED	PI to provide
☒	Biosketch (Cornell Only)- using sciENcv format or NSF fillable format	PRO Drafted; PI/Co-PIs to confirm
	☒ LAST, FIRST	
☒	Budget	PRO to Draft; PI to confirm
☒	Budget Justification	PRO to Draft (once budget is final); PI to confirm
☒	Current & Pending (Cornell Only) - using sciENcv format or NSF fillable format	PRO Drafted; PI/Co-PIs to confirm
	☒ LAST, FIRST (DRAFTED 6/22)	
☒	Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources	PRO Drafted; PI/Co-PIs to confirm
☒	Data Management Plan (2 pages max)	PI to provide
☒	Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (1 page max, N/A)	PI to provide; if applicable
☒	Letters of Collaboration (limited in scope, see directions here)	PI to provide; if applicable N/A
☒	Collaborators & Other Affiliations (COA) (Cornell Only) - using the NSF format	
	☒ LAST, FIRST	

Formatting:
Fonts Allowed:
- ○ Arial (not narrow), Courier New, Palatino Linotype – 10pt +
- ○ Times New Roman or Computer Modern Family – 11pt +
- ○ 10pt or less allowed for mathematical formulas or equations, figures, tables, or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters.

Spacing: No more than 6 lines of text within a vertical inch
Margins: 1" on all sides, no proposer supplied information may appear in the margins
Paper Size: 8.5" x 11"
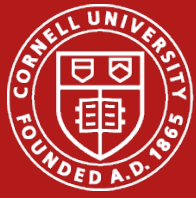**URLS:** PIs are cautioned that the Project Description must be self-contained, and that URLs must not be used.

Budget
    Start Date: 1/1/2023
    Duration: 36 months
   **Total Amount:** $360,000

Other Notes:
- • Proposals should be submitted through Research.gov, *PI to start in system,* PRO to upload docs

Subcontract Checklist Example (NSF)

Subaward: [NAME] University		
Subaward PI:	[NAME]; [PHONE]; [EMAIL]	
Admin Contact:	[NAME]; [PHONE]; [EMAIL]	
Due to PRO:	MM/DD/YYYY	
Elements		**Notes**
☐	Scope of Work	Detailed scope required; only for work to be done at the subaward institution
☐	Institutional LOC or Subaward Commitment Form	If your institution is a part of the FDP, please provide a signed letter on letterhead. Otherwise, please use Cornell's Subcontractor Commitment Form

☐	Budget
	
	    Start Date: 1/1/2023
	    Duration: 4 Years
	    Amount: $567,032 (direct+indirect)
		Detailed Budget required

☐	Budget Justification	Detailed Justification required
☐	Biosketch ☐ [NAME]	Please provide using sciENcv format or NSF fillable format
☐	Current & Pending ☐ [NAME]	Please provide using sciENcv format or NSF fillable format
☐	Facilities, Equipment & Other Resources	Please send a a word document so we can merge into one file
☐	Collaborators & Other Affiliations (COA) ☐ [NAME]	Please provide using the NSF format
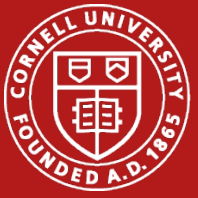
Proposal Checklist Development
Sending the SRE & Draft Documents

❖ Subject Heading Example:
    ❖ OSP 146051 | PRO Assignment & SRE | PI: Alabi, C. | NIH Proposal Target Date 8/10/2022 5PM

❖ Keep email brief

❖ Have a call to action for the PI

❖ Include any draft documents that may be available
    ❖ Previous submissions
    ❖ Templates
    ❖ Draft budget based on proposal notification
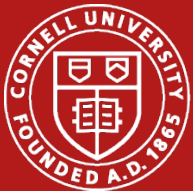
Proposal Checklist Development
Sending the SRE & Draft Documents – Example Email

Hi Chris,

Attached please find the summary of required elements (SRE) for your upcoming NIH proposal titled, "Development and Delivery of Peptide-Based Protein Degraders" (OSP 146051). I have also included some of the final documents from the previous submission that we have on record as Word documents. The NIH biosketch is a more recent version, submitted to your last NIH application with CUMC (7/14/2022).

I have also included a first pass at the budget ($125k Year 1; $150k in Year 2), with materials adjusted to meet the target direct costs. The personnel and additional justifications are included from last submission but updated to include the most up to date verbiage and rates.

The NIH ASSIST record for this has been started, you likely received an automated email from eRA, but no action is needed by you at this time within the record.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can do at this time, or if any of the attached can be considered final. I look forward to working with you on this proposal!
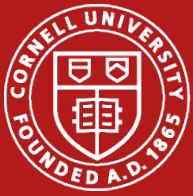
Kind Regards,
Mindy
Melinda "Mindy" McGill-Carlison, MBA (*she | her | hers*)
Sr. Pre-Award Specialist – Pre-Award Research Operations (PRO)
Office of Sponsored Programs
Cornell University | 373 Pine Tree Rd | Ithaca, NY 14850
T (607) 246-7907| T (607) 254-9700 x52942| F (607) 255-5058| E mmc328@cornell.edu

# BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS A PROPOSAL BUDGET?

A budget is the formal **estimated** description of the total costs (direct and indirect) necessary for the PI to conduct the activities described in the Scope of Work

- The budget is an indicator of the magnitude of the project.

- Serves to identify the cost of the project to the sponsor.

- The budget is used as a measurement of the PI's capabilities to manage the project. A well-developed budget may strengthen the proposal by demonstrating management ability.
  - Budgets that are too high or too low can alert a reviewer to the possibility that the PI does not have a realistic grasp of project needs
  - Must be a reasonable correlation between the project as described and the assessment of the various cost elements

WHAT TO CONSIDER…

- A budget must include…
    - ➢ Detailed **estimate** that reflects the cost required to perform the work
        - o Should be prepared for all proposals
        - o At a minimum, even when the sponsor does not require a detailed budget (e.g. fixed price agreement, modular), a high level budget should be prepared for OSP review
    - ➢ Budget Justification. Sponsors typically request detailed information in support of the budget request.

- For Multi-year projects, annual budgets *and* a summary budget must be prepared.

- Many sponsors provide budget-related guidelines and sponsor-specific budget forms.
    - ➢ The proposal budget needs to conform to the sponsor requirements, while still retaining the ability to map to Cornell's financial systems.
    - ➢ Some sponsors or solicitations may not pay for certain expenses.
    - ➢ PLEASE NOTE: We cannot deliberately propose in one category with the intention of spending in another

- Funds being requested must be sufficient to perform the work proposed.

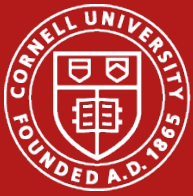- Sponsors typically request detailed information in support of the budget request.
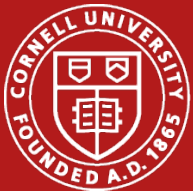
WHAT GOES INTO THE BUDGET?

A sponsored project budget is generally comprised of the following elements:

- **Direct Costs**
- **Indirect (Facilities and Administrative [F&A]) Costs**
- **Cost Sharing** (if applicable)
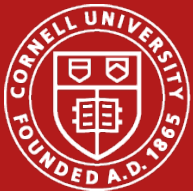- **Budget Justification**

Direct Costs **+** Indirect Costs **(+** Cost Share **)** = Total Project Budget
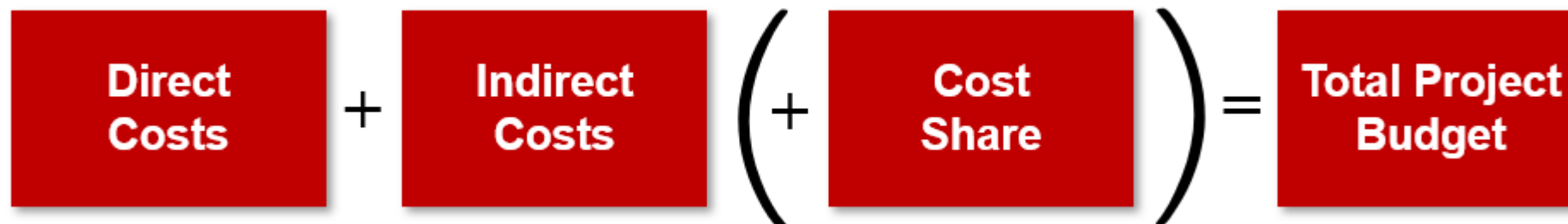
Direct Costs

Direct Costs:

- With only rare exceptions, budgets must conform to the OMB Uniform Guidance, for **allowability, allocability, reasonableness, and consistency**
- Costs that can be identified with a specific sponsored project, and that can be directly assigned to such a project with relative ease and a high degree of accuracy
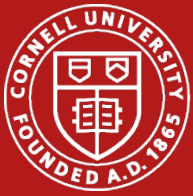
Indirect Costs

Indirect (F&A) Costs:

- Are requested to cover real costs to the University
- These costs are incurred for common or joint objectives and cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project
- Based on **Total Direct Costs (TDC)** or **Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC)** (Total direct costs less modifiers)
- Cornell's Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA): https://www.dfa.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/dhhsrateagreement.pdf

DIRECT COSTS

STANDARD DIRECT COST BUDGET CATEGORIES

- Salary & Wages
- Compensation, Graduate & Sabbatical
- Employee Benefits
- Capital Equipment & Fabrication in Progress
- Travel
- Participant Support Costs
- Graduate Student Tuition/Health Insurance
- Materials & Supplies
- Publication Costs
- Services
- Subawards
- Other Direct Expenses (e.g. Shared Facilities fees, hosting conferences/seminars, etc.)
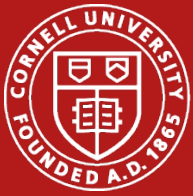
INDIRECT COSTS (IDC)

- Use rate specific for the division/campus and the proper time period
  - ➢ Use multiple rates (e.g. Endowed IDC rates, Contract College IDC rates, off-campus rates, etc.) and prorate if necessary.

- Cornell's Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) must be used for all proposal budgets, unless the sponsor requires a different rate/base and/or an exception is approved by College/OVPR.

- All Cornell federally negotiated rates are based on Modified total direct costs, including off-campus and the Other Sponsored Agreement (OSA) Rates.
  - ➢ Per 2 CFR 200.68, "MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). **MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000**."

- IDC Rate: Percentage applied to IDC base. Amount derived = indirect costs to be recovered.

- IDC Base: The portion of total direct costs that IDC rate is applied to.

Indirect Costs Base x Indirect Cost Rate = Total Indirect Costs
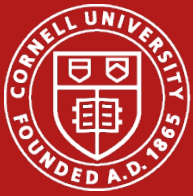**(typically MTDC or TDC)**   **(Percentage)**

COST SHARE

Cost Sharing...

- Is a portion of the costs of a project (direct or indirect) that is not borne by the sponsor.

- Is sometimes referred to as "matching funds" or "in-kind support".

- May be mandatory or voluntary. Mandatory cost-share is required by the sponsor, and will typically be mentioned in the RFP. Voluntary cost-sharing is not required, but PIs sometimes elect to cost-share anyway.

- May include:
  - Faculty salary
  - Graduate Research Assistant Tuition
  - Unrecovered indirect costs
  - Donated equipment, supplies, time, or other outside entity commitments (third party or external cost share)

- Requires specific approval from each cost-sharing party to be included in a proposal budget. Units at Cornell University (e.g. Departments, Colleges, etc.) can approve via RASS. Third party cost-share approval is typically in the form of a cost-share commitment letter.

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

The budget justification…

- Must "tie" to the detailed budget and prepared in the same order as the budget cost categories.

- Is typically a written narrative that explains the various items included in the detailed budget.

- Describes why those items are allocable to the project.

- Is the key element of documenting "thoughts" behind the budget development.

- Includes rates (ex: benefits, indirects, escalations), bases, exclusions, etc., and include details on each category.
  - ➤ Annual escalation rates can be found at https://researchservices.cornell.edu/rates/escalation-rates

- Identifies any normally indirect costs that will be charged directly.

- Can be vital for resolving audit issues years after project completion.
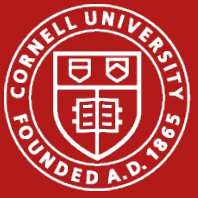
Working With Subcontracts

❖ Request Co-PI and/or administrative contact information as soon as possible

❖ Determine from your SRE what documents you will need from subaward institution

❖ Determine date you will need documents back
    ❖ Best Practice: At least one week prior to OSP Full Review deadline

❖ Draft email to co-PI

❖ Weill Cornell and Cornell Tech are *not* subawards

Subcontract Sample email
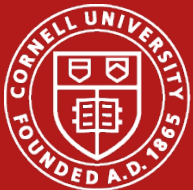
Good Morning Dr. Co-PI,

I am assisting Dr. Joe PI on their submission of "Proposal Under Development" to the NSF. We are requesting the following documents to include your institution on this proposal:

- Budget
  - Start Date: 1/1/2023
  - Duration: 2 Years
  - Amount: $250,000 (direct + indirect)
- Budget Justification
- Statement of Work
- Collaborators & Affiliates (template attached, or provide most recent)
- BioSketch (template attached, or provide most recent)
- Current & Pending (template attached, or provide most recent)
- Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources (please send in a Word document so it can be merged easily)

Please return these documents to me no later than 12:00pm on Friday August 26th. If you need assistance or have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Best,

Samantha

Samantha K. Grace (she/her)
Pre-Award Specialist – Pre-Award Research Operations (PRO)
Office of Sponsored Programs
Cornell University | 373 Pine Tree Rd | Ithaca, NY 14850
T (607) 255-2528 | F (607) 255-5058 | E skr54@cornell.edu

Cornell Research

- Be as detailed as possible

- Include a firm due date

- Include links to templates for requested documents if you are able, or attach them

- CC Cornell PI
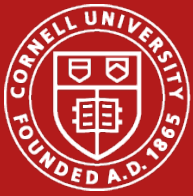
Communication Skills
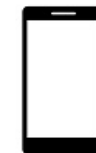
❖ **Choosing A Method of Communication**
  ❖ Various ways to communicate (e.g., email, phone, slack, zoom, in-person)
  ❖ Urgency
  ❖ Previous communications and relationship with PI
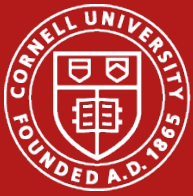 ❖ Does this need to be documented?

❖ **Timeliness**
  ❖ Each department has its own expectations on turnaround (e.g., 24 or 48-hours)
  ❖ "Soon" means different things to different people
  ❖ If you cannot answer questions immediately, still let the PI know you received their email

❖ **Clarity & Consistency**
  ❖ Professionalism, even with familiarity
  ❖ Consistent tone and message
  ❖ Be brief and provide only pertinent information
  ❖ Provide confident responses – use your resources!

Communication Skills (continued)

❖ **Provide Clear Expectations**
  - ❖ Timelines
  - ❖ Call to action when needed
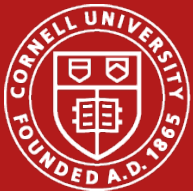 - ❖ Under promise and over deliver

❖ **Keep it Moving!**
  - ❖ Check in regularly
  - ❖ Switch up method of communication if not working
  - ❖ Let PI know you are there to help or answer questions if they are unsure
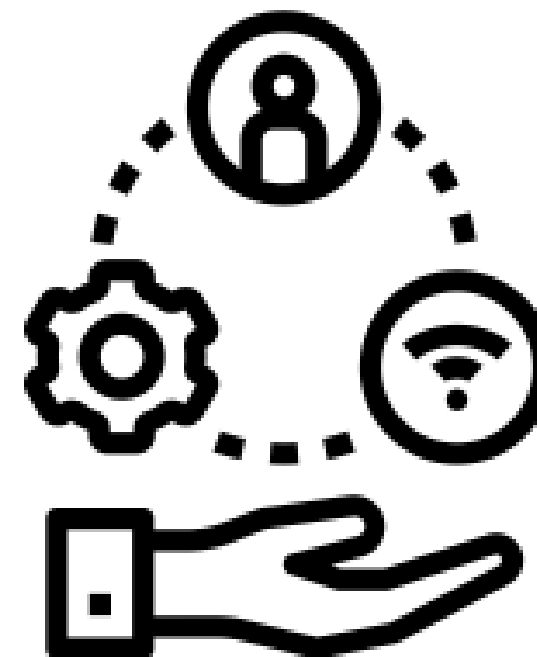
❖ **Know Your Resources**
  - ❖ If you cannot get a hold of PI, who might be able to?
  - ❖ If you are unsure or not the subject matter expert, who on campus is?
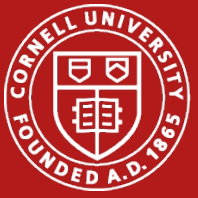 - ❖ What resources can we share with our PI's? (e.g., FAQs, sponsor guidance)
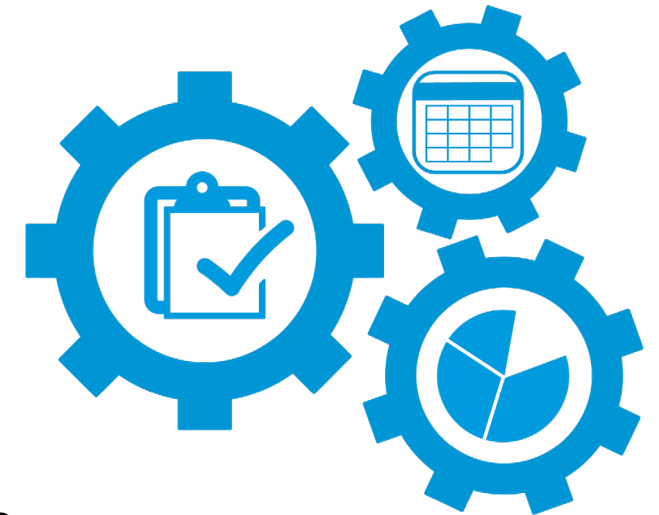
Common Resources

- ❖ [Who is My GCO](#)
- ❖ [Cornell Proposal Review Guidelines](#)
- ❖ **NIH Specific Resources**
  - • [Standard Due Dates & Start Dates](#)
  - • [Page Limits](#)
  - • [Guides](#)
- ❖ [NSF PAPPG 22-1](#)
- ❖ [PI Attestation Guide (RASS)](#)
- ❖ [FDP Clearing House](#)
- ❖ [ZIP Code +4 Look-Up](#)
- ❖ [Congressional District Look-Up](#)
- ❖ [Institutional Profile](#)
- ❖ [F&A Rate Matrix & Rate Agreement](#)
- ❖ [Costing Guide](#)