

PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS

Preliminary proposals, sometimes referred to as “white papers” or “pre-proposals,” are concise, preliminary descriptions of projects that are submitted to funding agencies. Funding agencies use preliminary proposals (1) to determine whether potential projects address their funding priorities, and/or (2) to gather information on specific topics.

Funding agency guidelines regarding Preliminary Proposals vary. Other information may be requested, in addition to project descriptions, such as strategies, partnerships and cost estimates. Some agencies require Preliminary Proposals to be submitted by the University’s Office of Sponsored Programs and others require them to be submitted by the Principal Investigator (PI). The question occasionally arises as to whether or not a “preliminary proposal” requires authorizing approval of the institution prior to submission.

If the submission meets any of the following criteria it is not a preliminary proposal, and should be routed:

- the submission has a specific budget that would serve as the basis for an award;
- the submission is going to industry;
- the submission requires institutional approval of a reduced or waived F&A rate; or
- If there are any restrictions on IP ownership or publication rights

If none of the above criteria are met, then a preliminary proposal is appropriate with an information copy forwarded to the Office of Sponsored Programs.

Should a proposal be submitted to a sponsor without UMBC institutional approval, the proposal may be rescinded and/or award declined.

Preliminary proposals submittals should also include the following statement:

"Preliminary Proposal: Pending Institutional Approvals. This does not represent a firm quote and does not commit University personnel, facilities or funds."