



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL AND LIFE SCIENCES

RESEARCH DIVISION

Guidelines for Graduate Students Seeking Extramural Support and Writing Proposals

NOTE: All hyperlinks in this document are active and will either

- **navigate to headings** within this document
 - OR
 - **open web pages** in a browser
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The mission of CALS Research Division is to facilitate research in CALS and help investigators meet compliance regulations, use funds ethically, and meet sponsor expectations.

The CALS Research Division is here to assist with the campus routing and approval process for CALS graduate students planning to submit a proposal for extramural funding. **Contact Becky Bound**, at (608) 265-8443 or rbound@cals.wisc.edu, **as soon as you know you're considering applying for funding and writing a proposal.**

This document was put together by the Research Division solely for the purpose to serve as a resource for graduate students in CALS. This document provides:

- [Key Points](#) for graduate students seeking funding,
- [Proposal Writing DOs and DON'Ts](#),
- [Research Division Web Resources](#) for graduate students seeking funding, and
- [Supplementary Resources](#) that will help graduate students navigate through the extramural funding process.

If you have suggestions for further resources that the Research Division should make available to graduate students and include in this document, please contact Lilia Uili, at (608) 262-1365 or luli@cals.wisc.edu, or Becky Bound, at (608) 265-8443 or rbound@cals.wisc.edu.

Key Points for Graduate Students seeking funding

1. Begin working on your proposal 4-6 months prior to the proposal deadline
 2. Contact Becky Bound at (608) 265-8443 or rbound@cals.wisc.edu
 3. Proposals always route through your Department, CALS, and the University
 4. Your proposal must be routed through [WISPER](#) (Wisconsin Proposal Electronic Routing system)
 5. Your advisor will be the PI (Principal Investigator) on the record routed through WISPER
 6. Get the PI signature on the record early
 7. Complete a protocol with [the appropriate IRB](#)
 8. Complete the required [Human](#) or [Animal](#) subjects training and certification
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Proposal Writing DOs and DON'Ts

DO

- Use reasonable fonts and margin
- Provide helpful pictures but not dense data
- Single, simple theme that tells a consistent story throughout the proposal
- Be exciting and enthusiastic
- Convince the reviewers that this proposal is exciting
- Tailor proposal to funding agency
- Be organized: use section headings, sub-section headings, etc.
- Biological importance and expected results **must** be clearly laid out
- Keep preliminary data results simple
- Make the critical point and no more
- Create a “hypothesis-driven” proposal
 - State hypothesis(es) explicitly and remind reader of hypothesis(es) throughout proposal
- Get an expert in your field to proofread the proposal for scientific precision
- Get someone smart and critical but unfamiliar with your field to proofread your proposal
 - There will be some reviewers that are entirely unfamiliar with your methods, your discipline, and/or the importance of what you study. The comprehension of your reader is your responsibility as a writer!

DON'T

- Don't irritate the reviewer. All of these are irritating to reviewers: small font, dense data, no transitions, poor organization, no singular theme, etc.
- Don't assume the proposal is read in one fell swoop; use transitions and remind the reader of what they are reading, summaries of what they just read, and rationales of what they're about to read
- Avoid excessive abbreviations and complicated data
- Don't pack in as much information as possible

Research Division Web Resources for Extramural Funding

[Research Division Contacts for each CALS department](#)

NOTE: Regardless of who is listed as the primary contact for your department, Becky Bound will be your primary contact for fellowship submissions.

Find Funding

Non-Federal Funding:

Any agency not supported by the federal government. For example, the American Association of Cancer Research, National Fish and Wildlife Association, Fulbright Scholar Program, etc.

[Upcoming non-federal funding opportunities](#)

[Non-federal agencies requesting proposals for funding](#)

Federal Funding:

Any agency supported by the Federal government. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Department of Education (DoE), National Science Foundation (NSF), etc.

[Federal funding Current News, Updates, and Tips](#)

[Grants.gov Overview and Federal Agency Submission Guidelines](#)

[Grants.gov](#)

[Grants.gov at UW-Madison](#) (through RSP)

[Grants.gov Submission Tips](#) (through RSP)

Internal Funding:

Funding opportunities through UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

[Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship](#)

Developing Your Proposal

[Proposal Development Forms and Documents](#)

[Proposal Budget Spreadsheets and Budget Narratives](#)

[Proposal Effort Commitments](#)

[CALS Departmental Effort Coordinators](#)

Routing Your Proposal

[WISPER Key Definitions and Helpful Hints](#)

NOTE: Although graduate students are not the PI of a record, it may be helpful to review the Research Division [WISPER for PIs](#) webpage.

[WISPER Help – webcasts and instructions](#)

Submitting Your Proposal

[Step-by-Step submission process](#)

Supplementary Resources

- List of [commonly used acronyms](#)
- [Definitions](#) of typical extramural funding terms
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [All Research Division Forms and Documents](#)
- Research Division [staff](#)
- Policies (related to extramural funding)
 - [UW-Madison](#)
 - [Graduate School](#)
 - [CALs](#)
- Other considerations for proposals and agreements
 - [PI status](#)
 - [Advance Account Numbers](#)
 - [Cost Share](#)