

Preliminary Proposals and Letters of Intent

A Preliminary Proposal (sometimes called a Letter of Intent, Pre-Proposal, White Paper, Pre-Application or Concept Paper) is a preliminary submission to a sponsor in advance of a full proposal submission. The purpose of a Preliminary Proposal is to provide information about the project so the sponsor can decide whether to extend an invitation to submit a full proposal. Preliminary Proposals are not expected to result directly in an award.

The sponsor sets the requirements for a Preliminary Proposal. Generally speaking, Preliminary Proposals include a short description of a project, and may include a total cost estimate, but do not typically include a line-item budget. Many sponsors also limit the number of Preliminary Proposals they will agree to receive from an individual institution.

Although Preliminary Proposals should not contain a binding commitment of University resources, they often include an outline of institutional commitments that, if funded, would bind the University to perform a scope of work and potentially incur expenses for materials and supplies, equipment, personnel, and the need for additional space accommodations.

Because preliminary proposals are submitted on behalf of USD and may require coordination if multiple faculty members desire to submit Preliminary Proposals to the same sponsor, any preliminary proposal that contains a budget or a commitment by USD needs leadership approval and should be routed through the USD Cayuse approval system so an institutional record of the submission is established. Preliminary Proposals that are simply inquiries and do not contain any commitment of USD resources do not need to be routed through Cayuse.

By submitting and routing a Preliminary Proposal in Cayuse, it is understood that the University is not entering into a committed agreement until a full proposal is submitted. If the faculty submitting a Preliminary Proposal is invited to submit a full proposal, OSP will link the Preliminary Proposal record with the full proposal record in Cayuse.