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Pre-Award Guidelines

Sponsored Research Office



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1. Record of Amendments

This is a record of approved changes made to these guidelines.

Rev.	Approval Date	Document Id Code	Type of Change
00	20/11/2020	N/A	Initial Release
01	02/02/2021	N/A	Updated Pre-Award Guidelines
02	07/11/2022	OVPR-SRO-PRE-GUD-001-02	Updated Pre-Award Guidelines

2. Abbreviation/Terms and Definitions

Abbreviation/Term	Definition
COI	Conflict of Interest
GS	Graduate Student
HBKU	Hamad Bin Khalifa University
HBKU Entities	Includes all Colleges and Research Institutes under HBKU
IACUC	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
IBC	Institutional Biosafety Committee
IDC	Indirect Costs
IDKT	Industry Development and Knowledge Transfer
IP	Intellectual Property
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LPI	Lead Principal Investigator
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
OVPR	The Office of Vice President for Research
PDF	Post-Doctoral Fellow
PIA	Proposal Internal Approval
QF	Qatar Foundation
QNRF	Qatar National Research Fund
RFA	Request for Applications
RFP	Request for Proposals
Sponsor	Relevant external entity that provides funds for the research
SRO	Sponsored Research Office – the entity under the HBKU OVPR which oversees administration and management of all externally funded research projects at HBKU, and supports grants funded by OVPR.
SRO E-Portal	A system designed for submitting proposal applications, managing projects and raising requests related to external research projects (Link)

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3. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the “Pre-Award Guidelines and Toolkit” is to provide instructions and tools to aid the proposal preparation process as detailed in the Pre-award Procedures available under “PreAward” tab [here](#). This is to standardize best practices during proposal preparation & submission to any external funding opportunity. This document will analyze all steps of proposal preparation and submission, from the identification of the funding opportunity to the submission to the Sponsor, and the award announcement.

These guidelines apply to all HBKU faculty, researchers, students and any other personnel seeking external funding for a research project. All interested parties referred to within this document shall be charged with notice of its contents.

4. Funding Opportunities Identification

The SRO shall share with HBKU faculty and researchers a list of available external funding opportunities on a monthly basis via e-mail or through their website under the tab “Funding Opportunities” [here](#). It is the LPI’s responsibility to ensure they are selecting the most appropriate scheme for their research, either from the above-mentioned list or from other external Sponsors.


Moreover, all LPIs are advised to utilize Pivot-RP as a funding opportunities database [here](#).

4.1 Research Themes and Sub-themes

During the submission of the application, the LPI must ensure that the proposal aligns with the thematic areas listed in the “Request for Applications (RFA)” or “Request for Proposals (RFP)” documents. Failure to meet this requirement can lead to disqualification.

The themes and subthemes in Figure 1 represent the key areas of research at HBKU. Applicants are invited to submit applications under one or more of these. Additionally, they may apply to grants even if their application fails to fall neatly in one of the listed categories, provided that the Dean/ED approves the application through the PIA form on the SRO E-Portal.

PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION	SUSTAINABILITY	ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	PRECISION HEALTH	SOCIAL PROGRESS
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Personalized Learning	Sustainable Energy	Education	Preventive Health	Arabic Language, Culture & Heritage
Social Emotional & Character Development	Resource Security & Management	Healthcare	Diagnosis & Treatment	Social Responsibility
Glocalized Curriculum	Environmental Protection & Restoration	Smart Cities	National Health Mapping Programs	Social Inclusion
Inclusion & Equity	Sustainable / Circular Economy	Smart Economy		Ethics & Policy
	Wellbeing	Smart Society		Family Cohesion
		Analytics & Decision Support		

Figure 1: Key research themes at HBKU.

4.2 Types of Proposals


The application process may involve one or more phases that require submission of proposal materials. Types of proposals include:

- **Letters Of Intent (LoI) / Pre-Proposals / Expressions of Interest:** the LPI is required to provide basic information, such as project summary, an approximate budget breakdown, and other documents as requested by the Sponsor (these may also include institutional approvals, and agreement to terms and conditions). The Sponsor, upon reviewing this basic information, may invite the LPI for full application.
- **Full Proposals:** Full proposals typically include full documents, like research plan, budget breakdown and other relevant documents, based on the Sponsor's guidelines. Full proposals are the last phase of the proposal submission process. In cases where Sponsors do not require a preliminary phase, full proposals are the only phase.

4.3 Types of Research

The type of activity performed in the project determines the types of research, as per the list below:

- **Basic Research:** any experimental or theoretical work aimed at acquiring new knowledge of some observable facts or phenomena, with no specific application or use in view (without a clear or direct practical application).
- **Applied Research:** original investigation aimed at acquiring new knowledge, primarily directed towards a specific, practical aim or objective, like improvements in technology, materials, processes, methods, devices, and technologies. It typically attempts to

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determine and expand the potentialities of new scientific discoveries or advance the state of the art.

- **Experimental Development:** systematic work, producing additional knowledge on what was gained from research and practical experience. It is typically directed towards producing new products or processes or improving existing products or processes.
- **Translational Research:** research aimed at translating scientific discoveries - made as basic research - into results that directly benefit the health of the population (such as new treatments).


4.4 Types of Awards

Sponsors may use different funding mechanisms, also referred to as award types. The type of award is always specified in the guidelines. Most common award types include:

- **Grants:** A type of financial support awarded – typically after an open competition – in exchange for carrying out research (or other activities), as per the approved application.
- **Sub-Awards:** An award granted by the submitting entity to a sub-awardee for the subawardee to carry out part of an award received by the submitting entity. A sub-award may be provided through any form of legal agreement, including an agreement that the submitting entity considers a contract. All terms and conditions that are part of the primary award must be included in the sub-award document, which in turn must be duly signed by an authorized signatory of the receiving entity (or the sub-awardee).
- **Research Contracts:** Contracts covered outside of grants under which two or more parties agree to collaborate on a defined research project. The contract will typically contain a statement of work, period of performance, and IP ownership terms, and may provide for the commitment of effort, provision of resources, visiting researchers, or other exchange of value in support of the collaboration.
- **Gifts:** A type of financial support where the LPI usually has partial or total discretion in determining how the money can be spent. It may be for unrestricted or restricted use of the University, who commits to use the gift as specified by the donor.
- **Prizes:** Recognition based on competition or other criteria.

5. Proposal Development

As soon as the LPIs identify a funding opportunity, they may start developing a proposal. Sponsors typically provide all necessary information about the call for proposals in RFP documents. LPIs must always refer to the official guidelines provided by the Sponsor and regularly check Sponsor's website for any updates (for instance, some Sponsors change program guidelines and/or templates during the submission phase). Sponsors' guidelines include all necessary guidance on submission deadline, checklist, and eligibility, and proposal components. Failure to do so can result in the rejection of the proposal. Where LPIs face any doubts about,

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or require further clarifications on, the Sponsors' guidelines, they should directly contact the SRO which will be the focal point for all communication with the Sponsor.

The subsections below will guide you during the proposal preparation process.

5.1 Components of Standard Application

Below is an overview of the common proposal components (further details are discussed in the following sections):

- **Abstract / Project Summary:** A summary of the project that briefly describes the main objectives of research and any results obtained. It must be understandable to scientists and layperson.
- **Research plan / Project Narrative:** the purpose, relevance, and implementation of the project must be described in this section. The RFP specifies all that is required by the Sponsor.
- **Budget and Budget justification:** the financial proposal mirroring the project description.
- **Administrative compliance:** Any documents related the project must be attached with the proposal, as per the Sponsor's guidelines. The main documents can include:
 - a) Proof of eligibility documents, and/or registration of HBKU with the Sponsor
 - b) Letters/documents of support
 - c) Annexes: they can include CVs, bio-sketches, passports, or identity cards, etc.
 - d) Publications and patents
 - e) References
- **Compliance:** this includes ethical compliance, conflict of interest, data management and any other compliance requirements requested by the Sponsor.
- **Co-funding/ Cost-sharing:** this include co-funding and/or cost-sharing commitment, if specifically requested in the Sponsor's guidelines.

5.2 Checking Eligibility


Typically, the Sponsors have certain eligibility criteria with respect to the leading institutes submitting applications, the LPI and the team members, among others. Strict compliance with the set criteria is necessary to avoid rejection of application.

Two main eligibility criteria are applicable to each grant application involving HBKU:

- **Eligibility based on HBKU policies & procedures:** before submitting any application, the LPI must be familiar and in compliance with HBKU policies and procedures.
- **Eligibility based on Sponsor:** the LPI must ensure that all eligibility criteria set by the Sponsor are met. Even the best proposal can be disqualified if it fails to pass the administrative screening.

Further details about the types of eligibility are as follows:

Type of Eligibility	Notes
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Institutional eligibility	<p>Sponsors might place restrictions on the types of institutions eligible to apply for funding, or on the number of proposals that can be submitted during the same cycle for the same call.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some international Sponsors might require equivalency to 501(c)(3) institutions. HBKU is eligible to apply for this type of funding (to provide evidence of the eligibility, the LPI/PI should contact the SRO). If the Sponsor sets specific restrictions for an institution (such as accreditation requirement), please contact the SRO. Some Sponsors evaluate the accreditation case by case. If the Sponsor limits the number of proposals/applications that an institution may submit, the LPI/PI must inform the SRO.
LPI/PI eligibility	<p>Eligibility conditions for LPis/PIs vary based on the Sponsor and the call. Some examples of such conditions are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For some calls, the investigator might only need a few years of experience after the PhD (Young Investigators), but others only allow Senior Investigators to apply. Sponsor guidelines, at times, may include H-index threshold for LPis and or PIs, or other parameters that restrict eligibility. Some calls might be open to LPis working at HBKU, although they do not have a permanent position yet. In this case, the LPI/PI should contact the SRO. If the call is open internationally - but there are specific geographic restrictions (i.e. the LPI must be based in the U.S., for instance) - HBKU may still participate as collaborator, provided that all other criteria are met.
Other Team members eligibility	<p>This eligibility criterion is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the Sponsor's requirements. Restrictions on collaborators or colleagues might impede the possibility to contract or sub-award.</p>
Other eligibility criteria	<p>Other restrictions to the eligibility might include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research effort % (inside or outside the country). Previous funding with the same Sponsor. Number of proposals/PI. Cost-sharing requirements.

Table 1: Main eligibility criteria when applying for external funding.

5.3 Proposal Preparation

The success of your application depends on several factors. The competitiveness of the projects, coupled with the expertise of the Key investigators, undoubtedly increase the chances of an award, provided that the application complies with all eligibility and administrative requirements.

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However, grant writing skills, and the ability to clearly and concisely present data are equally important.


While preparing the application, take note of the following key instructions:

5.3.1. Getting Started.

- Carefully read the RFP, annexes, and templates and become familiar with the language and terms of the call. Given the highly competitive environment, your proposal needs to satisfy the Sponsor's requests and requirements.
- Choose your Sponsor and scheme/call carefully: read though the guidelines and eligibility criteria, to avoid losing time over an inappropriate scheme application.
- If you are unsure whether your idea is in line with the Sponsor's requirements and mission, check previously submitted (and awarded!) grants to the same Sponsor.
- Use the latest templates (even if you have submitted a proposal to the specific program and/or sponsor before) and routinely check the guidelines (Sponsors frequently update their guidelines and templates).
- For projects involving collaborators, assign responsibilities within the group and follow-up on the tasks. Agree on tasks and budget allocation clearly, to avoid misunderstanding and delays. For any support concerning this matter, contact the SRO.
- The number of PIs participating in the project can be restricted by the Sponsor. If there are no restrictions, kindly ensure a reasonable number, to avoid redundancy and overlapping.
- Develop and firmly stick to a timeline.

5.3.2. Idea Articulation.

- It is important to have a well-founded and relevant research idea for which a sound proposal can be formulated.
- Introduce the subject of your research by providing a snapshot of the big picture to capture the reviewers' attention.
- Give a gap analysis and your intended solution for the existing issue.
- Address clearly, and concisely, your aims/research questions at the start, providing further detail in the subsequent sections.
- Clearly address the following four elements in your proposal:
 - a) Objective: what we you aiming to achieve
 - b) Output: what you expect to deliver
 - c) Outcome: what third/parties, locally or internationally, gain from the output
 - d) Impact: what a clear and realistic impact of the project might be.
- Stress upon your project's contribution to capacity building and your commitment to continue working beyond the award period. This is particularly important when applying to national sponsors who require your research to deliver a tangible benefit in the country and on local stakeholders.

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- Highlight your past success. Demonstrate to the Sponsor that you have qualified staff to assist you in achieving what you have proposed.
- Justify the methods used, relating them to aims and deliverables, and address all potential questions that reviewers might raise.
- Include detailed work-packages, with assigned roles and efforts for each research team members. Add a Gantt diagram to report your milestones per each work-package (for the full project duration).
- Highlight the innovative aspect of your project, if any.
- Mitigate potential risks with a contingency plan, showing you can deliver your proposed research.

5.3.3. For Resubmissions.

- Note that resubmissions are only possible when specifically allowed by the Sponsor and must be properly disclosed as such as per the Sponsor's requirements. Any resubmission that is not flagged or submitted as new, or one that fails to follow the Sponsor's instructions, might result in a disqualification.
- In case of a resubmission, make sure you address all questions and concerns raised by the reviewers in the research plan (instructions about how to highlight changes in the research plan are typically mentioned in the RFP).


5.3.4. Formatting.

- Formatting must be in strict compliance with the Sponsor's templates, including respecting the page limits, max no. of characters and formats. More details are specified in each call.
- The use of headings, tables, clear and succinct diagrams/images/graphics, and numeric citations will make your application easier to follow for the reviewers.
- Always revise and edit!

5.4 Budget Preparation

Before planning the budget, please consider the following:

- Carefully prepare your budget to minimize delays and any budget changes once the project is awarded.
- Sponsors usually set a minimum and maximum of allowable budget, to be claimed for costs incurred during the period of performance of the project (project duration). Kindly, take note of allowable and unallowable costs as per the Sponsor's guidelines.
- All budget line items must be duly detailed to justify requested funds and must align with the submitted research proposal.
- Avoid use of lump sums and provide unit costs.
- Costs must be reasonable (not inflated), allocable, and necessary for the supported activity. All budget line items must be duly detailed to justify requested funds. The budget must reflect and support the project narrative!


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- If collaborators are included in a project, the budget should be distributed fairly – based on the assigned tasks – with HBKU’s interest as a priority.
- Costs are direct and indirect:
 - a) Direct costs are those specifically and easily identified with a particular project or activity and are allowable (i.e. salaries, student fees and tuition, consultant costs, equipment, supplies, travel, sub-agreements, other costs).
 - b) Indirect costs are those incurred for common or joint objectives and cannot be easily and specifically identified with a particular sponsored project. Indirect costs can be referred to as “overhead” or “Facilities and Administrative costs”.
- Follow the Sponsor’s budget component instructions to accurately build and present your budget.
- **Cost vs. Budget:** Kindly take note of the distinction between cost and budget. Budget refers to direct cash allocated to a project whereas cost is the total cost to carry out the project which may include cash and non-cash assets/contributions. A project may be zero-budget, but it might not necessarily be zero-cost as we now need to consider the value of this noncash contribution. Please see Section 5.5 for further details.


The main categories of direct costs within a proposal are itemized as follows:

Direct Costs
Personnel
<p>It includes all research team members who will be hired and/or paid on the grant. Number of days (effort days) per year and/or percentage of effort must be listed. For all HBKU staff participating at zero cost, this will be considered as cost-sharing (see Section 5.5).</p> <p>The main personnel cost categories are as follows:</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PDs, LPIs, PIs ○ Freelancers ○ Graduate Students ○ Consultants ○ Contributors <p>For details about hiring, kindly refer to HR policy & procedures (here), SRO Hiring Procedures on External Research Grants (here) and to the Home Entity HR focal point.</p>		
PDs, LPIs, Is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kindly refer to the “Pre-Award Procedures” for the fees to be applied. ○ Participation of HBKU LPIs and PIs at zero cost is not encouraged unless the Sponsor specifically requires/considers in-kind contribution as cost-sharing (see Section 5.5) as part of the evaluation. 	

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Freelancers	Research Associates; Research Assistants; Post-Doctoral Fellows (PDFs), Engineers, Lab Technicians. All hiring below is referred to freelancer positions, either full-time or part-time (not permanent positions). New hiring requests in the last 6 months of the project are not encouraged and are under the discretion of the SRO.
	Full-time hiring
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindly refer to the “Pre-Award Procedures” for the fees to be applied. Hiring packages vary depending on HR policy & procedures. To check renewability of contracts, kindly refer to Home Entity HR focal point.
	Part-time hiring
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The monthly salary will be compensated as a lump sum, subject to budget availability and HR policy (refer to the HR focal point as it must be determined case by case). To check renewability of contracts, kindly refer to Home Entity HR focal point.
Graduate Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindly refer to the Graduate Student Employment Under Sponsored Research Grants Guidelines here, and to the focal point for GS at the HBKU Colleges.
Consultants	Few Sponsors allow consultants. For consultant cost details, kindly refer to the Sponsor’s guidelines and Individual Contributors Hiring Procedure available here .
Contributors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract time: max 30 calendar days Total cost: 50K QAR max/agreement. For further information, kindly refer to the Individual Contributors Hiring Procedure here.
Other types of contracts	Please refer to the Home Entity HR focal point.
Equipment	
Three main categories of equipment include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital Equipment Consumables and Materials Services 	
As procurement process takes time, purchase of any equipment in the last 3 months of the project is not allowed. For more details about resources, refer to QF procurement policy & procedures here . Please also refer to your Home Entity, as well as the Sponsor’s guidelines.	
Travel	
LPIs are encouraged to make use of the telecommunication technologies wherever possible. In case, use of such technologies is not feasible, LPIs are required to indicate the purpose and destination (if known) and name(s) of traveler(s).	

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Transportation/Ticket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mode and cost of transportation (airfare, train, etc.) as per the Sponsor's travel policy.
Per diem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of days, with per diem rate. For the per-diem rates to be applied for travel, the Sponsor usually provides a document of reference. If there are no restrictions set by the Sponsor, please refer to the QF travel policy under Section 7.3 here.
Other costs (Depending on the Sponsor's guidelines and allowable costs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VISA fees Other travel costs might be claimed, based on the Sponsor's travel policy.
Miscellaneous	
<p>It may include the below costs, and other costs depending on the Sponsor's rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation Publication costs Conference fees/ registration fees Local transportation for research purposes related to the awarded grant. 	
Indirect Costs (IDC)	
<p>Costs supporting operation and maintenance of facilities, utilities, spaces, and other services, incurred for common or joint projects/objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDC for HBKU should be set as 20% of total direct costs (unless the Sponsor sets a different cap in the guidelines less than 20%). For projects lasting more than one year, % of IDC need to be the same every year. 	

Table 2: Budget components described, based on direct and indirect costs.


In order to prepare a budget breakdown, the LPI must use the Sponsor's templates, when available, and/or the template for HBKU's budget provided by the SRO (see Section 10).

Collaborators' Budget. While preparing the budget, consider the following:

- Ensure that all external partners agree on the correspondent budget allocation before the submission, to avoid any issues or delays in the event the project is awarded.
- Before submitting the application to the Sponsor, request the collaborators to share their budget with you (signed or authorized through email) as a confirmation.
- Given the lengthy negotiations with the Collaborators for IP and legal terms, if a Collaborator already has an existing signed agreement with HBKU, LPIs may draft a research plan with that Collaborator's involvement from the first year of the project (preferably starting from the second semester). If there is no existing signed agreement, it is advisable to add the Collaborator in the second year to avoid any change of scope in the research plan and delays in the negotiation process.

5.5 Co-funding and Cost-sharing

Some Sponsors include co-funding and cost-sharing as part of the evaluation of the proposal. Therefore, it is important to secure some cash or in-kind resources/contribution.

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- **Co-funding:** Co-funding can be included in the application as a cash or in-kind contribution from a third-party (an institution that is not a partner in the project). Typically, depending on the Sponsor's policies, co-funding from academic institutions is not allowed.
- **Cost-sharing:** Cost-sharing may only be provided by the partners of the project (as submitting or collaborative institutes), as cash or in-kind contribution. HBKU allows costsharing from HBKU, as described in further detail in the HBKU-SRO Pre-Award procedures document.

Committed cost for the project – whether in-cash or in-kind – must be secured once the project is active. If the co-funder/cost-sharer is unable to fulfil its obligation, then the Sponsor and SRO have the right to suspend or terminate the project. The co-funding/cost-sharing contribution is part of the evaluation and, therefore, cannot be easily removed or modified without solid justification. Commitments must be secured with HBKU prior to submitting a proposal to avoid post-award retraction. Co-funding/cost-sharing may only commence once the agreement is signed. If there are no existing signed agreements with the co-funder/cost-sharer, it is recommended to add the cofunder/cost-sharer in the second year of the project.

6. Ethical and Other Compliance

6.1 Ethical Compliance

Depending on the type of project and the Sponsors' rules, the LPI may be required to provide documents of compliance. Please note that all necessary information related to any potential ethical and/or other compliance must be indicated in the PIA form during proposal submission.

Required ethical approvals may include approval or certification with respect to:

- Human subjects
- Animals
- Hazardous materials


6.1.1. Approval of Research Involving Human Subjects

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is responsible for the protection of rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research. Sponsored research projects involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by IRB to ensure that all research activities are ethically and methodologically sound, and in accordance with the regulations and guidelines of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in Qatar.

Typically, the LPI is not required to upload any IRB approval at the proposal preparation stage. However, as soon as the project is awarded, the LPI must promptly apply for IRB [here](#).

6.1.2. Approval of Research Involving Animals

The IACUC is responsible for ensuring that research involving the use of animals adheres to all applicable regulations and is compliant with MoPH guidelines. Any sponsored research involving

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animals must be reviewed and approved by the EVMC (Equine Veterinary Medical Center) IACUC. For further details, please follow the link: <https://www.evmc.qa/iacuc/>.

6.1.3. Approval of Research Involving Hazardous Materials

The Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) oversees all biomedical research activities at HBKU, involving infectious agents, animal use, recombinant DNA, and genetically modified material by ensuring that all research involving hazardous materials and the facilities used to conduct research are in compliance with existing governmental regulations, guidelines and institutional policies.

Typically, the LPI is not required to upload any IBC approval at the proposal preparation stage. However, as soon as the project is awarded, the LPI must promptly apply for IBC approval [here](#).

It is the LPIs' responsibility to ensure accurate IRB, IACUC and IBC approvals are obtained and renewed on timely basis before conducting research. These approvals must be provided to the Sponsor to ensure compliance.

6.2 Data Management Plan (DMP)

Depending on the Sponsor, the LPI may be required to submit a Data Management Plan at the prefunding stage or during the post-award. When required by the Sponsor, the LPI must clarify in this document the reasons for selecting specific methodologies, approaches, formats, standards, of the project. A data management plan must describe the type of data produced, how these data are managed, and how they will be accessible and available to other researchers.

6.3 Conflict of Interest (CoI)


LPIs submitting grants must disclose on the PIA whether a CoI exists. If there is a potential conflict, the LPI must contact the SRO as soon as possible, fill in the CoI template (see Section 10) and attach it with the application, to avoid proposal disqualification.

6.4 Additional Administrative Compliance

When applying to external funds, some Sponsors – especially international ones – might raise additional compliance requests. These requests include but are not limited to:

- Registration of HBKU at the Sponsor's portal/database.
- Activation of a specific account (or identification number like DUNS number), through the SRO or directly from the LPI.
- Identification of a finance and/or grants coordinator at HBKU.
- Approval of the Sponsor's Terms & Conditions.
- Tax questionnaires and/or tax identification number.
- Other specific supplementary documents.
- Templates or other documents required by the Submitting Institute if HBKU is a subawardee.

LPIs must reach out to the SRO as soon as possible, to allow timely processing of such requests.

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7. Intellectual Property and Commercialization

The HBKU IDKT Office deals with the identification, protection, management and ownership of IP at HBKU. LPIs are strongly advised to contact the HBKU IDKT office prior to submitting any proposal if the application contains proprietary information. If so, it must be declared on the PIA form.

For further guidance on IP related matters (including queries regarding commercialization of research outcomes), all LPIs must contact the HBKU IDKT office and refer to the QF IP Policy [here](#).

8. Submitting Application

As HBKU's authorized institutional official, the SRO reviews and approves/endorsees all sponsored research proposals on behalf of HBKU, either for submissions through submission systems, or for other non-system submissions. The submissions can go through the SRO, or directly from the LPI to the Sponsor, as indicated in the Sponsor's guidelines and described below.

8.1 [Submission through SRO](#)

Some proposals are institutionally endorsed by the SRO and submitted by the SRO to the Sponsor electronically (though Qgrants – for QNRF grants – or other similar interactive real-time online systems, depending on the Sponsor). When the proposal is complete, the SRO provides institutional endorsement of the proposal and submits.


8.2 [LPI's Direct Submission to Sponsor](#)

Some Sponsors allow smooth processes for grant submission directly from the LPI, who can submit through email, or via personal accounts on the Sponsor's webpage. However, even in such cases, some Sponsors might require identifying a grant manager or financial focal point. Therefore, to facilitate the LPI-direct-submission process, it is important to keep the SRO informed even when the SRO is not required to submit the proposal. Registration of HBKU with the Sponsor might be mandatory, and sometimes the Sponsor may request additional support documents and signatures.

The same rules apply when HBKU is the sub-awardee.

9. Closing Remarks

This section shares closing remarks on how to master the application process.

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9.1. START EARLY!

- Sponsors' deadlines are non-negotiable! Make sure to start the process ahead of time. This will allow you to:
 - Have sufficient time to get feedback and assistance.
 - Minimize the chances of proposal disqualification due to administrative noncompliance.
 - Conduct a careful check of the budget breakdown and eligibility of the expenses.
 - Make all necessary amendments that might strengthen the application and increase chances of a proposal award.
 - Leave sufficient time for the SRO and the Sponsor to resolve any potential technical issue and submit a high-quality proposal.
- Inform the SRO promptly of any update! Particularly so if:
 - The application requires registration of HBKU/SRO in the Sponsor's system.
 - Specific legal terms and conditions are requested by the Sponsor.


Raising such requests and obtaining all necessary approvals as early as possible is highly encouraged as some requests require involvement of certain departments or institutional officials which could take time.
- Share with the SRO all the necessary and complete documents in a timely manner, for the SRO to review and vet your application.

9.2. COMPLY WITH SPONSOR'S GUIDELINES AND INTERNAL PROCEDURES!

- Even the best grant application can fail the first administrative screening with the Sponsor if there is no compliance with the guidelines.
- Ultimately, it is the LPI who is responsible for the accuracy and quality of the content of the proposal.
- You must adhere to high standards of quality and compliance, in accordance with applicable policies and guidelines set by HBKU and its Sponsors and partners.

9.3. BE ORIGINAL!

- Make sure your proposal is original! Check for plagiarism of your proposal using the available detection tools and resources (such as iThenticate) before submitting to the Sponsor. Keep in mind that copying your own work is also a form of plagiarism. Duplication of a proposal with other proposal(s) funded or pending funding, and whether internal or external to HBKU, might result in disqualification of your application.
- Importance of Novelty/Patentability: researchers are encouraged to pursue novel, relevant and impactful project ideas. Funding agencies and Sponsors typically measure/evaluate projects based on their level of novelty, potential outcome, and impact. Projects with disruptive ideas potentially leading to high impact (e.g., patents, startups) usually stand a high chance of funding. For any questions about project novelty and impact, contact the SRO on the SRO E-Portal.

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9.4. TIPS & TRICKS!

- Always refer to the Sponsor's website for official deadlines. Furthermore, check the links in the guidelines, as well as the FAQs, when available. One of main reasons grants are not funded is the failure to follow Sponsor's instructions.
- The application will be reviewed by external reviewers/experts in the field, who are busy! Make sure to provide a clear rationale, addressing all key parts of the applications in concise way, to make their task easier. Avoid ambiguity and be clear and specific about what you are referring to.
- Review, proofread and spell check the application to ensure it is accurate and reads well.
- For any matters concerning technical aspects of the call, and/or glitches and issues with the system or platform for the submission, promptly submit the requests directly to the Sponsor.

10. Templates and Other Resources

Templates

- Conflict of Interest template (request from SRO via SRO E-Portal)
- Budget template, to be used for HBKU budget ([here](#))
- Effort letter (mentioning the n. of days dedicated to research, to be approved by the Executive Director/Dean – mostly for QNRF grants) – (request from SRO via SRO EPortal)
- Cost-sharing template (request from SRO via SRO E-Portal as the template changes depending on the call)

Other Resources

- Past SRO Pre-award and Post-Award Workshops ([here](#))