

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR CONCEPT NOTE AND PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

VERSION 1.0

2025

TIDRC/UAC RESEARCH GRANTS MANAGEMENT OFFICE

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Introduction

As the competition for research funds intensifies, researchers in a research design process must endeavour to make their research proposals and concept notes persuasive. The research proposals or concept notes are meant to: a) identify and describe the work that requires research attention, b) explain why the work needs attention, and c) persuade the prospective funder(s) that the researchers are qualified and have adequate motivation for the work, and have a good management plan and technical approach. The clamour for problem-based research proposals in recent times implies that a number of researchers from different disciplines, must collaborate to develop a research proposal or concept note that meets the fore-stated objectives.

However, developing a multi-disciplinary research proposal or concept note can be time-consuming and frustrating if the Principal Investigators are not informed about their institutional procedures for developing a research proposal or concept note.

The purpose of these guidelines, therefore, is to inform relevant stakeholders about the steps and responsibilities of principal actors in research proposal or concept note development.

2.0 STEPS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

For large scale research proposals (for funding), a multidisciplinary proposal development team may be formed and a timeline for the preparation of the proposal set up, to meet the technical (including administrative) and financial requirements of the application.

In all cases, it is the responsibility of the lead person to inform the Research and Grant Management Office (RGMO) as soon as a decision is made to develop a proposal.

1. The RGMO identifies a request for proposal (RFP) or receives one from a staff member (including Heads of Research Units, and Directors) and distributes it widely to all research and administrative staff.
2. Director or Deputy-Director of TIDRC/UAC shall be included and copied all messages as appropriate.
3. Any researcher interested in the RFP should complete the Intent to Submit Form and forward it to RGMO

If only one proposal can be submitted from TIDRC/UAC in response to a particular RFP,

- a) proposals prepared by various teams will undergo an internal selection process where the Director or Deputy-Director, on the recommendation of the RGMO, selects TIDRC/UAC's proposal;
 - b) The Director or Deputy Director will put together one team to submit a proposal;
4. The staff/teams concerned develop the concept note or proposal with inputs from the relevant units' researchers;
 5. On or before the internal deadline, staff/proposal development teams submit to the RGMO a final version to be reviewed by a Head of the Research Unit, not less than 4 working days before the funder's deadline. Proposals or concept notes submitted after the internal deadline cannot be guaranteed successful review, approval and submission on time. Together with the final draft, responsible staff are required to also submit:
 - a. Guidelines/information related to call/proposal, if it is an invited proposal.
 - b. A budget narrative (if the proposal template does not include a budget narrative, one must be developed and submitted in consultation with the RGMO Head
 - c. Description and approval of co-funding sources, if this is a requirement.

- d. The RGMO reviews the format, content, budget, and other issues with budget review assistance from the Finance Office. Budgets will be rated as:
 - i. Satisfactory i.e. – no further review needed.
 - ii. Moderately satisfactory with minor revisions – no further review needed provided listed actions are taken.
 - iii. Not satisfactory implying that major revisions are needed, as per the instructions, and re-submission for review is needed.
6. The administrative procedures, including review and approval, take a minimum of 2 - 4 business days. Staff are therefore advised to take this into account when preparing proposals. In cases where PIs are travelling, they are advised to inform their other research team members of the on-going proposal development process and deadlines.
7. The RGMO will communicate the review to the staff within a maximum of four (4) business days, copies of which will be given to the Research Unit Head or Director or Deputy Director. The staff is then required to revise the proposal in line with the result of the review and send the final version to RGMO for submission on the behalf of the Director or Deputy Director.
8. In cases where a proposal has been approved, and the donor requires revisions to the proposal, Principal Investigators are to inform RGMO. Where there are major revisions including budget changes of over 10%, change in scope, and changes in staffing, the proposal will have to undergo review and be re-approved. Staff must note that guidelines for project development in relation to full cost recovery are still valid, but exceptions can be made if approved by Director or Deputy-Director. Likewise, the Staff Effort and Compensation rates remain valid, but exceptions to use lower or actual staff costs can be made if approved by the Director or Deputy-Director.
9. If a proposal is funded or not funded by a prospective donor/ funder, the PI is required to inform RGMO, so that the status of the proposal is amended from submitted to “funded” or “not funded”.

3.0 Bibliography

- Baker, M. J. (2000) 'Writing a Research Proposal', The Marketing Review, doi: 10.13g2/14g9347002523482.
- Molloy College (2014). Proposal Development handbook for project directors and principal investigators. Retrieved from [https://www.molloy.edu/documents/faculty%20research/proposal development handbook. pdf](https://www.molloy.edu/documents/faculty%20research/proposal%20development%20handbook.pdf) on 25-08-2018.
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- USAID/OFDA (2018). Proposal Guidelines. Retried from [https:// www.usaid.gov/ sites/default/ files/documents/18gg/ USAID- OFDA Proposal Guidelines February 2018 O.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/18gg/USAID-OFDA_Proposal_Guidelines_February_2018_O.pdf) on 30.08.2018.
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4.0 DEFINITIONS

- A research proposal is a document that proposes a research project. It describes the ideas for an investigation on a certain topic. It outlines the process from beginning to end and may be used to request financing for the project or certification for performing certain parts of the research.
- A problem-based research proposal is a proposal that is based on a well-articulated, research-worthy problem statement. A research problem attempts to justify the need for the research. Justifying the research question in the proposal does not only add meaning to the research but also serves as the first step in addressing the problem.

5.0 A concept note refers to a brief summary of a proposal containing a brief description of the idea of the project and the objectives to be pursued. In many instances, funding agencies require a concept note before the submission of a full proposal, in order to decide whether the proposed project is in line with their priorities and to eliminate proposals that are not likely to be funded. Concept notes may also be submitted to funders who prefer to understand a project through a brief summary rather than a fully-fledged proposal document.

5.1 APPENDICES

A. Intent to Submit Form

Principal Investigator/Project Director: _____

Proposal includes UOA TIDRC/UAC Co-Investigator(s)? if yes, co-investigators must also sign/certify on the signature page. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Period of performance (xx/xx/xxxx): ____ (start date) to: (end date): _____

Sponsor deadline: (m/d/yr): _____

If UOATIDRC/UAC is the lead institution (list all external collaborating institutions below):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Lead applicant institution, if not UOATIDRC/UAC, list the lead applicant institution first, followed by all other collaborating institutions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Budget Summary (include all years)

Total direct cost ____ Total indirect cost: ____ Total budget: ____ Indirect cost rate:

Does the sponsor limit, or exclude indirect costs? ☐ Yes ☐ No If so, please enter the sponsor: _____

Mandatory rate (%) where limitation is the case: _____

Does the budget include academic year course and /or release time for one or more project personnel? ☐ Yes ☐ No

C. Center and Third–Party Cost Sharing/Matching

The authorized Research Unit head must approve cost sharing/matching funds and provide RGMO with a third-party source of funding prior to submission.

Is cost – sharing/matching required by sponsor? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, specify sponsor match (% or ratio):

Is third party (external to TIDRC/UAC) cost-sharing/matching included in this proposal? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, enter total amount below:

D. Proposal Compliance Review

This proposal involves (check all that applies):

Use of human subjects IRB protocol: _____ Review pending: _____ Approved: _____

Use of animal subjects protocol: _____ Review pending: _____ Approved: _____

Use of chemicals/ hazardous materials: _____ Specify: _____

Export controls (check all that apply)

Is there collaboration with a researcher or institution outside Benin? Specify location of collaborator (s): _____

Travel outside Benin? Specify location(s) of travel: _____

Proposal involves transmission of technical information, and/or shipment from a foreign country? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes is checked, specify location of transmission/shipment _____

Intellectual property and proprietary/confidential information (check all that apply)

Proposal involves UOA TIDRC/UAC or third-party Intellectual Property (IP)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is this clearly stated in the proposal? ☐ Yes ☐ No

E. Other Special Considerations

Proposal involves, requires or includes (check all that applies):

Use of Laboratory ☐ Yes ☐ No

Additional Office space ☐ Yes ☐ No

Equipment Rental/Use ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, Director, RGMO and Research Unit Head's approval (if applicable) are required prior to submission.

Multi-disciplinary research (across Departments/Faculties) ☐ Yes ☐ No

Targeted community/region impact: specify localities that will directly benefit from the project activities: _____
Yes ☐ No

F. Additional Notes

You may use this space to provide any additional notes, explanation or other information you feel may be useful for your internal approvals (Director, or Deputy-Director RGMO)

G. Investigators Certification

My signature below certifies that:

- The information submitted within the application is true, complete, and accurate to the best of my knowledge;
- I will accept (or share, with my co-investigators) responsibility for the financial and scientific conduct of the project and will provide the required financial and technical/progress reports if a grant is awarded;
- I am fully aware of the Institute's financial conflict of interest policy and if a significant financial interest exists now, or in the future in relation to this proposal, I will inform the RGMO.

H. Signatures of Research Team Members

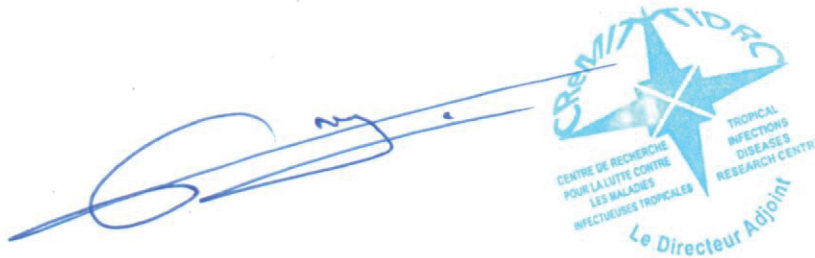
FULL NAME	RESEARCH UNIT	ROLE ON THE PROJECT	SIGNATURE

I. Department/Unit/College/RGMO Endorsement

OFFICIAL	FULL NAME	SIGNATURE
RESEARCH UNIT HEAD		
TIDRC/UAC DIRECTOR OR DEPUTY-DIRECTOR		
RGMO OFFICER		

Approval & adoption

This Guidelines and Procedures for Concept Note and Proposal Development version 1.0 is hereby formally approved and adopted as the official policy of the Tropical Infectious Diseases Research Center/University of Abomey-Calavi, effective August 28, 2025.



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