

From: [Lee, Olga](#) on behalf of [Chandler, Larry](#)
To: [ARS-PA-3000-ALL-CD-LD-RL](#); [ARS-PA-3000-ALL-AO](#); [ARS-PA-3000-ALL-SECRETARIES](#)
Cc: [ARS-PA-3001-SMT](#); [Currie-Gross, Marcie](#); [Toth, Patti](#); [Treat, Ruth](#); [Heese, Reagan](#)
Subject: RE: Guidance to Area Directors and NPLs - Revised P&P 321.01 – "Requirements for Seeking and Accepting Incoming Research Agreements"
Date: Friday, November 21, 2014 12:33:00 PM
Attachments: [Plains Area Incoming Funds Record-Research \(IFR-425\) Template 10-1-201....pdf](#)

As you may have noticed, the revised P&P 321.01 requires that an incoming fund record (IFR) be submitted at least 30 days before the proposal is due. This 30-day timeframe seems challenging, but we have some suggestions to make the process more manageable.

First, the biggest change will be to submit IFR with preliminary information, rather than waiting for all the details to come together. Once a scientist becomes aware of an appropriate funding opportunity, s/he should immediately discuss it with the RL and CD. If the RL and CD agree, the scientist should work with the PSA to get the IFR entered into ARIS, even before all the specific details of the proposal have been worked out. After the IFR is approved, it can be revised when more information becomes available. A fillable IFR template is attached to make it as easy as possible for scientists to enter the IFR information.

Second, there will be times when it's simply not feasible to submit an IFR 30 days in advance. For instance, if you are invited to collaborate on a proposal with short notice. In these cases, the scientist should enter comments that explain why the IFR could not have been submitted earlier. However, even in these situations it would be helpful to submit the IFR at least 2 weeks prior to the proposal due date.

In addition, further reminders include:

- An IFR is required if ARS is the prime recipient, a sub recipient, or does not receive funds, but is a collaborator (no funds to ARS).
- Letters of collaboration to a co-PI or collaborator should be routed through the Area Office for Area Director approval. This also applies to sub-recipient commitment forms.
- Each ARS management unit participating in the research should enter its own IFR into ARIS.
- IFR comments should indicate who will be submitting the proposal (person and affiliation), total amount of proposal, and proposal due date. If the IFR is being submitted less than 30 days before the proposal due date, comments should also explain why the IFR could not have been submitted earlier.

We want to approve your IFRs quickly and efficiently. For that to happen, the IFRs should be timely; they should clearly describe the proposal team situation; and they should provide adequate information, knowing that the IFR can be updated later. Scientists may want to sign up for proposal alerts at the [Partnership and Grants SharePoint site](#). The site will then send automatic reminders when requests for proposals (RFP) are announced or revised. This may make it easier to stay abreast of appropriate opportunities.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. John McMurtry, Dr. Michael McGuire, Ms. Ruth Treat, or Ms. Reagan Heese for more information.

Enclosures

Expected Timelines for Routine Incoming Fund Records (IFR)

Action	Expected timeline	Responsible
IFR entered into ARIS and approved by RL	As soon as intent to apply for funds is known—no later than 30 days prior to proposal due date.	ARS Primary Investigator (PI) Program Support Assistant (PSA) Research Leader (RL)
IFR approved by CD	Up to 5 business days	Center Director (CD)
IFR approved by Area	Up to 5 business days	Area Director (AD)
IFR approved by ONP if IFR is \$50,000 or more, CRADA or MTRA	Up to 5 business days	National Program Leader (NPL)
Delete IFR if ARS does not approve it	Upon notification of disapproval	ARS PI, PSA, RL
Update IFR if funding is awarded	Upon notification by funding organization of their intention to fund	ARS PI, PSA, RL
Change status to Unfunded if funds are not awarded	Upon learning that the proposal will not be funded	ARS PI, PSA, RL
Letters of Authorization sent to Area for signature	After IFR is submitted	ARS PI Area Program Analyst (PA) AD
Signed Letters of Authorization returned to ARS PI	3 business days	PA ARS PI
AIMS documentation submitted in ARIS, along with 416/417 for research agreements over \$25,000	3 business days after notification by funding organization of their intention to fund	ARS PI, PSA, RL, CD
Update ARIS/AIMS for routine agreements	5 business days	Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO)
Send modifications to cooperator	5 business days	ADO
Funds available in the system for reimbursable agreements	5 business days after budget staff receives fully executed agreement and other documentation required for interagency agreements (FMMI PO#)	Budget Analyst (BA)
Funds available in the system for trust agreements	10 business days after receipt of check	BA

Laurence D. Chandler, Area Director
USDA, ARS, PA
2150 Centre Avenue, Building D, Suite 300
Fort Collins, CO 80526-8119
970-492-7057
970-492-7065 (fax)
Larry.chandler@ars.usda.gov

From: MacDonald, Robert

Sent: Wednesday, October 01, 2014 1:22 PM

To: ARS-Area Directors-All; ARS-HQ-NPS-NPLS-All

Cc: Stetka, Jill; Shafer, Steven

Subject: Guidance to Area Directors and NPLs - Revised P&P 321.01 – “Requirements for Seeking and Accepting Incoming Research Agreements”

Importance: High

The revision of P&P 321.01, “Requirements for Seeking and Accepting Incoming Research Agreements”, has been posted to the [REE Administrative Issues](#) web page and is also attached for your reference, along with today’s Grantsmanship Times that briefly describes the revised P&P and how it was revised. It is important that you, as reviewers of ARIS Incoming Funds Records (IFRs, formerly the ARIS 425), read and understand this P&P as it outlines responsibilities and timelines for you and that impact you.

A key item of note and the only information I will repeat from either of the attached documents is the following:

The new P&P **requires an IFR to be submitted in ARIS no later than 30 days prior to the submission of a proposal (Section 5.A.2)**. Exceptions to this requirement should be made for last minute opportunities and for other circumstances where submitting an IFR 30 days prior to submission is not feasible; reasons for late submissions must be noted in the comments section of the IFR. *It is recommended that an IFR be submitted as soon as the intent to apply is known in order to allow adequate time to address any unforeseen issues.* Information contained in the IFR needs to be a reasonable estimate given available knowledge and should not be delayed until details are final. IFR information can and should be updated when greater detail is known or key information changes. IFRs must be approved prior to the submission of a formal proposal to an outside organization, even for those without funding.

This is a major change in thinking for many in ARS and means all parties involved in the review process must understand that the purpose of an IFR is seek approval to seek outside funding and not the venue for sorting out all the details. The intent is to allow sufficient time in an era of reduced staff to allow for review and discussion of whether the proposed research is appropriate. It is not a vehicle to determine whether all the proposal details are adequately sorted out. However, line and program management can raise concerns as part of their review of the IFR which should be addressed by the PI prior to submission.

The abuse of “urgent” IFRs has steadily grown over the past few years – that is, IFRs submitted at the last minute when the intent to submit was known well in advance. This places added workload on already stretched-thin reviewers and those processing the IFRs. However, it is recognized that genuine last-minute opportunities do arise and, as long as this is sufficiently documented in the comments field, they should be accepted. It is line management’s responsibility to assess with a last minute IFR is genuinely so.

Submitting of IFRs well in advance means that budgets and objectives are at an earlier stage of preparation. All reviewers are asked to recognize this fact and not demand exact budgets and be tolerant of changes in budgets and objectives – *at least in the IFR process.*

Please do read these documents as provide you important information.

Bob MacDonald

Coordinator, Partnerships and Grants
Office of National Programs
Agricultural Research Service
United States Department of Agriculture
5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Room 4-2142
Beltsville, MD 20705-5131

(301) 504-1184

robert.macdonald@ars.usda.gov

grantsmanship@ars.usda.gov

ARS Partnerships and Grants Intranet Site: <https://ars.arsnet.usda.gov/PG>

Bob's Blog: <https://ars.arsnet.usda.gov/PG/BobsBlog>

Get more information: www.ars.usda.gov



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