

Procedures for Withdrawing Proposals, Declining Contract or Grant Awards or Terminating Contracts or Grants

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Introduction

In the course of conducting extramurally-funded programs at Auburn University, there are rare occasions where it may be necessary to withdraw a proposal that has been submitted to a funding agency, to decline a new contract or grant award, or to terminate an existing contract or grant award. Declining an award or terminating a contract can have lasting impact on the reputation of the institution with a specific sponsor and jeopardize future funding to the institution and the investigators involved. Therefore, decisions to withdraw proposals, decline awards, or terminate contracts or grants should be initiated only after proper consideration and assessment of the risks involved by multiple individuals in the leadership hierarchy at Auburn University.

The following procedures are established for withdrawing proposals, declining new awards for contracts or grants, and terminating existing contracts or grants.

Proposal Withdrawals

It is possible that after a proposal is submitted to a funding agency, the investigator or investigative team may decide that the proposal should be withdrawn for reasons such as errors or omissions in the proposal package, or concern that the investigator or investigative team may not be able to conduct work as proposed. There are also occasions where the investigator(s) may encounter personal challenges, leave the university, or face other unusual circumstances that intervene which simply prevent the university from conducting the work as proposed.

Proposed procedure for withdrawal:

In the case of simple errors or omissions in the proposal package, the lead principal investigator, Contract Administrator or College Level Designees may initiate the withdrawal request. The affected Department Chair(s) and Associate Dean(s) for Research should be notified when this occurs, but they do not have to approve this type of withdrawal.

In the case where circumstances develop that would prevent Auburn from performing proposed work, the lead principal investigator or their Department Chair, in collaboration with the investigative team and their respective Department Chairs, will initiate a request for review and approval by the affected Associate Dean(s) for Research. Upon approval by the Associate Dean(s) for Research the request will be submitted to the sponsor by either the applicable Sponsored Programs Contracts Administrator or College Level Designee.

Declining Awards

When awards for contracts or grants are made to Auburn University there can be rare cases where conditions differ from those anticipated when the proposal was submitted. For example, the sponsor may impose restrictions on the work that are difficult or impossible for Auburn to meet (eg. CUI/EAR/ITAR restrictions) and which may not have been anticipated at the time the proposal was submitted. Also, the proposing investigator or investigative team may no longer be able to do the work due to reasons such as health related challenges, loss of critical research team expertise, or change in employment of the investigative team members. Therefore, there may be rare circumstances where an award (or specific tasks on larger master agreements or IDIQ contracts) may need to be rejected by Auburn University.

Proposed procedure for award (or task) rejection:

In cases where the investigator team is unable to complete the proposed work, they should communicate with their Department Chair(s) and Associate Dean(s) for Research to determine if there are other options for completing the work (eg. changing investigator team members, engaging other subcontractors, etc.).

If there are no other available options for completing the work, the lead principal investigator on the potential award/task may initiate a request for award/task rejection to their Department Chair in collaboration with the investigative team and their respective Department Chairs. This request must include clear and compelling justification for rejection of the award/task and a thorough discussion of the risks associated with accepting versus rejecting the award/task. This request must then be reviewed and approved by the affected Associate Dean(s) for Research and forwarded through the Director of OSP to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development (via the Office of Sponsored Programs) for final approval. In cases where the principal investigator is no longer employed at Auburn University or they are unable to make the request, their Department Chair may initiate the request. After final approval by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, OSP will be notified to take appropriate steps to reject the award/task.

Contract Termination

There are unusual circumstances where Auburn University may make the decision to terminate a contract or grant. As discussed previously, the proposing investigator or investigative team may no longer be able to perform the work due to reasons such as health related challenges, loss of critical research team expertise, or change in employment of investigative team members. Also, the sponsor may desire to impose new restrictions on the work to which Auburn University may not be able to comply. If the sponsor is no longer able to financially

support the work or otherwise chooses to terminate the contract, those instances will not need the approval steps outlined below.

Proposed procedure for contract or grant termination:

In cases where the investigator team is unable to complete the proposed work, they should communicate with their Department Chair(s) and Associate Dean(s) for Research to determine if there are other options for completing the work (eg. changing investigator team members, engaging other subcontractors, etc.).

If there are no other available options for completing the work, the lead principal investigator on the contract or grant may initiate a request for contract termination to their Department Chair in collaboration with the investigative team and their respective Department Chairs. This request must include clear and compelling justification for the termination and a thorough discussion of the risks associated with continuing versus terminating the contract or grant. This request must then be reviewed and approved by the affected Associate Dean(s) for Research and forwarded to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development (via the Office of Sponsored Programs) for their final approval. In cases where the principal investigator is no longer employed at Auburn University or is unable to make the request their Department Chair may initiate the request. After final approval by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, OSP will be notified to take appropriate steps to terminate the contract or grant. There may be cases where the need to terminate the contract is identified in one of the OVPRED units. In these instances, that office must communicate with the affected principal investigator or the investigative team, Department Chair(s), and Associate Dean(s) for Research (and their representative CLDs) and the Associate Dean(s) for Research will work with that OVPRED office to develop the formal termination request. This termination request will be routed through the principal investigator or investigative team, Department Chair(s) or unit leaders, and Associate Dean(s) for Research to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development for final approval. After final approval by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, OSP will be notified to take appropriate steps to terminate the contract.

Note, in all cases, that the terms and conditions specific to termination within a contract and grant (as applicable) should be reviewed prior to initiating said termination.