Miami Dade College
Resource Development

Frequently Asked Questions

ADMINISTRATION	***What is the MDC internal process for grant seeking?*** Once you have decided on a grant that you want to write, the Miami Dade College (MDC) process begins with pre-approval using the grant start-up form from the campus president or department head. The president or department head must approve the form and send it via email to the Director of Resource Development to approve work on the grant proposal. This is the point at which the Director will assign a grant writer to assist. Once the final draft is completed, the Director of Resource Development will send the proposal and attachments back to the approving administrator for final approval. The documents will also be submitted to the MDC Authorized Organization Representative (see below: *Who can sign grant documents?*) for approval and a Board Item will be created for approval by the Board of Trustees. ***Who can submit grants?*** The department of Resource Development is the only unit of MDC authorized to submit grant proposals. ***Who can sign grant documents?*** The College President and the Executive Vice President/Provost are the only employees of the College that are authorized to sign grant-related documents. The College President has authorized the College Provost to sign such documents. There is only one Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) in the organization. No one else can sign grant documents. *When would we need to get the AOR's signature to submit an application on a timely basis?* The request for approvals must be submitted at least four days in advance of the submission target date. *The agency sent me a document for signature. Can I sign it and send it back to them?* No. The Executive Vice President/Provost is the sole individual authorized to sign grant documents. No other College employee is authorized to sign or submit grant documents on behalf of the College. *The agency does not require an AOR signature. May my campus president or department head sign the grant document?* No. The Executive Vice President/Provost is the sole individual authorized to sign grant documents. No other College employee is authorized to sign grant-related documents on behalf of the College. *If I get a grant agreement or contract, can I send it to Resource Development to get it signed?* You should send the document to the AOR directly. Once the document is signed, send Resource Development a copy so that the official files will be complete. Resource Development cannot review the contract or agreement for legal implications.

	What is a Proposal ID? A Proposal ID is a unique identifier for your grant proposal. This numerical identifier is used to create unique Board Items for approval by the Board of Trustees. Once a proposal is approved by the Board and awarded by the funding agency, the Proposal ID is used to set up the grant account in Business Affairs. Without this number, the funds received cannot be accessed. An account cannot be set up until the Board Item has been presented to, and approved by, the Board of Trustees. *How do I get a Proposal ID?* As soon as Resource Development is informed of your interest in pursuing a grant opportunity, the Director of Resource Development will assign a Proposal ID. The project will be approved at the Board of Trustees meeting following the submission of the grant. *How long does it take between requesting a Proposal ID and getting the Board of Trustees approval to activate a grant account in Business Affairs?* It depends on the Board meeting schedule. Sometimes it can take as little as a week, but two months is the average length of time needed. In rare cases, it can take as long as three months. ***How many years should I keep the grant files after a grant is submitted?*** Resource Development keeps grant files on record for a total of ten years (the first five years in office, the next five years in archives). All files are also kept electronically. Different agencies require different amounts of time. At the Grant Kick-Off meeting, the Grant Compliance Officer can help you find the specific amount of time required for your grant.
PRE-WRITING	***How can I find out if there are any grant opportunities that fit my idea?*** There are multiple ways to find grant opportunities: • The department of Resource Development may announce the grant opportunity. Resource Development researches and disseminates information about federal, state, local, and foundation grant-funding opportunities. • You may submit a grant search request to the Director of Resource Development. The department's grants associate will then conduct a grant search based on criteria you have identified in your request (e.g., target population served, proposed activities, budget). • You may locate a grant opportunity on your own. There are several websites you can use to conduct grant searches, including Grants.gov and foundationcenter.org. • An agency may learn about your idea and invite you to submit a grant application. *Can I contact a grant writer to request a grant search for a proposed project?* All requests for grant funding searches should be emailed to the Director of Resource Development. ***How can I be sure my project idea fits with the funder's purpose?*** Funders provide details on the purposes of their grant programs primarily through (1) general information on their websites;

(2) guidance documents for specific funding opportunities, frequently referred to as requests for proposals (RFPs); and (3) sample awarded proposals posted on their websites. Some funders encourage the submission of brief letters of inquiry or concept papers before applicants develop full proposals so that the funder may provide feedback on the fit of a specific project with its funding interests; letters of inquiry and concept papers are developed through and submitted by Resource Development. Some funders encourage phone calls to discuss the appropriateness of a project concept; such calls are made with the assistance of Resource Development. For nonprofits that do not provide information on their websites, applicants may examine the agency's funding history by examining its IRS 990 forms, available online, to determine whether the project concept is a good fit. Resource Development provides grant announcements and grant briefs that outline the funder's purpose. When in doubt, please contact Resource Development.

Who should I contact if I identify a possible grant opportunity or receive a grant announcement that I'm interested in pursuing?

When identifying a potential grant opportunity—regardless of whether your campus will be the lead or if it will be subcontracting or collaborating with another entity—Resource Development must be involved as soon as possible and always before the proposal is submitted. Contact the Director of Resource Development before beginning work on any grant proposal.

Why must I notify Resource Development when I am considering writing a grant?

Notifying Resource Development of your intentions to apply will avoid conflicts with submissions being made by other divisions of the College or agency limitations. In addition, early notification allows Resource Development to provide you with the technical support needed to make your proposal as competitive as possible.

When should I notify Resource Development that I am interested in pursuing a grant?

Notify Resource Development as soon as you decide to pursue a grant opportunity.

If I find a grant opportunity that I'm interested in, can I forward it to my campus assigned grant writer and begin working on it?

All grants must go through Resource Development's approval process. Forward information regarding the grant opportunity through your reporting line to your division head, usually a campus president. The unit head will send an email to the Director of Resource Development requesting that the project move forward. At that time, the director will assign a grant writer to work with you.

Why do I need pre-approval?

Campus pre-approval is required to ensure campus buy-in, that there are no conflicts of interests, and to ensure your project is aligned with the campus strategic plan.

	When do I need MDC Foundation pre-approval? MDC Foundation pre-approval is required to make sure that the Foundation is not already working on a project with the selected agency. Anytime you are considering applying to an agency that requires IRS designated charitable organization status [sometimes identified as 501 (c) 3] for funding, check, with Resource Development to find out if the Foundation must approve. Do this before you begin working on the grant. *To whom do I send my request for pre-approval?* Requests for pre-approval should be sent to your immediate supervisor using the grant start-up form and then up your reporting line to either the campus president or district unit supervisor. Resource Development will get approval from the Miami Dade College Foundation if the proposal is required to be submitted by a 501 (c) 3 organization. *When should I request pre-approval from my campus president or district unit supervisor?* You should request campus pre-approval as soon as you are sure you want to write the proposal. *What does the pre-approval request have to say?* The grant start-up form includes a brief description of your proposed project, the approximate amount of your grant request, and information regarding any potential impact on MDC resources. Individual campuses may require additional information. Your supervisor can help you format the pre-approval request to meet the criteria at your work location. ***My grant writer has scheduled a start-up meeting for a grant that I'm interested in pursuing. How can I prepare?*** First, thoroughly review any materials your grant writer sends you beforehand. This may include the grant guidelines, grant brief, and proposal development timeline. Also, you should bring a brief (one page or less) description of your project. You may wish to discuss the idea with your supervisor before the start-up meeting and you should identify writing team members. Invite your supervisor, the writing team, and any external partners to the meeting. ***Is there any grant training available?*** Resource Development offers several training options. Presentations are offered at all campuses and online and cover a range of topic areas relevant to understanding MDC's grant development process and enhancing competencies in proposal development. Some of these presentations are very short – an hour or so; some are all day trainings. For a more intensive experience, you may want to participate in Resource Development's Internship Program. Through this two-phase program, participants are assigned to an MDC grant writer who works closely with the participant to strengthen grant writing skills. The Internship concludes with the participant selecting, developing, and applying for a funding opportunity to benefit his or her work location. Participants must be recommended by the campus president or the business unit head. To find out more about training being currently offered, see contact Resource Development. *I'm new to grants and I'm interested in participating with a grant group to get familiar with grants before I start applying for*

	my project. What can I do? We recommend informing your supervisor or campus administration of your desire to become more familiar with grants. This may facilitate your participation on a grant writing team for a selected project. We also recommend participating in the various training opportunities that are offered by Resource Development.
WRITING	***What are the respective roles of the grant writer and faculty or staff in proposal writing?*** The roles of the grant writer and faculty or staff in proposal writing vary depending on the type of proposal being developed and the grant writing expertise of the project team members. Faculty and staff are subject matter experts. The grant writer has expertise in funding agency requirements and application-specific requirements. Faculty or staff work closely with the grant writer to align their knowledge and experience of a subject area with the criteria needed to develop a competitive proposal. The grant writer translates what you know into what the funding agency needs to see. *Why don't the grant writers write the proposals?* Grant writers are charged with ensuring alignment of the concept with the criteria established by the funding agency. Grant writers are experts on the mechanisms used by funders to select and award funds; however, grant writers depend on faculty and staff to be the experts in their particular subject areas or departments. A successful proposal capitalizes on a synergistic relationship between the grant writer and the faculty or staff member. ***Can a campus or district unit team develop a proposal on their own?*** Yes. Should a site-based team decide to write a proposal themselves, Resource Development can answer questions regarding the requirements of the grant; serve as a liaison to the funder; secure campus, district, and Board approvals; and submit the proposal on behalf of the site-based team.
SUBMISSION	***How many days in advance of an agency deadline does Resource Development typically submit a grant application?*** Resource Development submits a grant application from one to four days in advance of an agency deadline. *Why does Resource Development submit grant application in advance of the agency deadline?* Resource Development submits a grant application well in advance of an agency deadline to ensure that we can ameliorate any submission difficulties. For example, a federal grant submitted through Grants.gov is vetted by the application site and the funding agency before being accepted for review. This process takes about four days. For this reason, all federal grants need to be submitted at least four days before the actual due date to ensure that there are no technological glitches. (In fact, some federal agencies recommend submitted as much as ten days before the due date!). ***Do all grants need to be submitted through Resource Development?*** All grant applications, without exception, go through the Resource Development – if the College is the fiscal agent, if another school or organization is the fiscal agent, or if staff from Resource Development has or has not helped to write the proposal. No grant proposal may be submitted by any group or person other than Resource Development. *If I am a partner on a grant that another organization is writing, does Resource Development have to submit the proposal?*

	In the case of a proposal that has a fiscal agent other than MDC, Resource Development will release our proposal components to that agency for submission. Individuals or teams must not provide external agencies with MDC component pieces that have not been through the internal approval process described elsewhere in this document. Resource Development will shepherd these projects through the system. You must get a copy of the final submission for the MDC files. *Do letters of intent or pre-proposals need to be submitted through Resource Development?* All grant applications, without exception, even letters of intent and pre-proposals, go through Resource Development – if the College is the fiscal agent, if another school or organization is the fiscal agent, or if staff from Resource Development has or has not helped to write the proposal. *Do grants submitted through the MDC Foundation need to be submitted through Resource Development?* All grant-related projects must be submitted through the department of Resource Development. This is true for grants submitted by MDC or by the MDC Foundation.
IMPLEMENTATION	***What is a grant Kick-Off meeting?*** A grant kick-off meeting is a meeting between the project director and the Grants Compliance Officer intended to provide the project director with the basic information needed to successfully implement the grant. At the meeting, the following activities will take place: analyze the grant documents in detail; communicate shared understanding of project objectives, deliverables, budget, and timeline; review MDC grant implementation procedures and applicable regulations located in the MDC Grants Handbook; and address all concerns or questions the project director may have. ***I've been named as project director for a new grant, now what?*** Once an award notice from a funder is received by the College, a grant Kick-Off meeting will be scheduled by the Grant Compliance Officer for the project staff. During this meeting the highlights of the grant, including the objectives, reporting and budget requirements, activity implementation, and College grant management protocol, will be reviewed. The goal of this first meeting is to clearly define the responsibilities and expectations of both the funder and the College. Resource Development is committed to support each project director in their efforts to achieve the goals and objectives of their grant. If at any time you have a question or problem implementing your project you should call the Grant Compliance Officer for assistance. *What is the single most important thing I should do as a new project director?* Be familiar with your approved grant award documents (RFP, grant proposal, award letter, and contract). Your grant award documents are your blueprint of what you should do, when it needs to be done, who is responsible for it, and what you should accomplish. (At the Kick-Off, meeting you will develop a deliverables table that includes what you are expected to do and when it has to be done.) Then make sure you have all the resources you need to complete each task. ***How should I respond to a funder asking for information about my grant?*** Before you respond to any inquiry, you should contact Resource Development or the Restricted Accounts Management department. We can help "decode" what the funder wants and help to draft a response. The same information can be presented in many ways. Some ways may have a negative impact on your project or the College.

	I have a question on a grant that I was recently awarded, should I call the grant writer? No. The grant writer has pre-award responsibilities only. Once the grant has been submitted and confirmations received, their role ends. You should contact the Grant Compliance Officer with questions related to post-award activities and responsibilities. **How do I know what is allowable under a grant?** Look at your approved grant award documents. If your award documents do not clearly state that you can do or purchase something, check with the Grant Compliance Officer or Restricted Accounts Management (RAM) department. Remember just because it's a grant, it doesn't mean that it is exempt from the College policies and procedures. **Is a grant budget different from a College budget?** Most grant budgets come with very specific regulations that may restrict the transfers between budget categories, prohibit the purchase of certain goods or services, and limit the specific timeframe that the funds are available. In many cases, modifications to the approved budget require prior approval from the funder. This approval process (coordinated by the department of Restricted Accounts Management) can be very detailed and can require as much as two months to complete. Always consult with Restricted Accounts Management when you require prior approval.
REPORTING	***Why must I file grant reports with the agency?*** Project reports are one of the conditions for funding on all government grants and almost all private grants. All grant projects require reports describing how faithfully the proposal is being implemented (performance reports) and how the funds are being expended (financial reports). Reporting allows funders to determine if a project has been successful and often determines if future funding will be awarded to the College. *What are my responsibilities for grant reporting?* Performance reports are the responsibility of the project director and should reflect the progress made in accomplishing the project objectives. Project directors should address the connection between grant expenditures and specific objectives and outcomes. The report should identify the project's strengths in addition to strategies which will correct any weaknesses in the program. If there were changes, exceptions to the plan must be clearly explained. Financial reports are completed by the Restricted Accounts Management department with the assistance of the project director. While the formal reporting is not completed by the project director, he or she must still maintain complete records of project expenditures and documentation of any cost share for the project. Project directors must be aware of the format,content requirements, and due dates for thereports as soon as the project begins so that information needed for the reports may be collected throughout the duration of the project. The grant documents include a schedule for required reports. All reports must be processed through the appropriate campus approval channels and submitted by the project director. A copy of the final report must be provided to the Grant Compliance Officer. ***What are the reporting requirements related to my grant?***

	The grant proposal, grant guidelines, or contract will specify the requirements for each grant. The funding agency may have specific questions to be answered in the report. At the Kick-Off meeting held with the Grant Compliance Officer, you will create a deliverables chart that will include reporting dates and address the goals, objectives, and activities written into the proposal. ***How can I get help with writing my report?*** The Grant Compliance Officer is available to interpret funding agency requirements and to review draft performance reports. Project directors may submit a draft report to the Grant Compliance Officer two weeks prior to the due date for review. ***What should I do if one of my reports is going to be late?*** Project directors should immediately notify their direct supervisor and the Grant Compliance Officer as soon as they know a report may be late. The Grant Compliance Officer can help contact the funder to ask for an extension. However, late reporting will jeopardize funding for the grant in question and can also negatively impact future funding from the agency under all of its grant programs. ***What is a Time and Effort Certification Form and who needs to fill one out?*** Time and Effort reporting is a federally mandated process used to confirm that the salaries and benefits charged to a grant project, or pledged as cost share, are reasonable and reflect the actual work performed. Completed forms must be delivered to the project director of each grant by the fifth day of each month and must detail effort for the previous month. The project director then sends the completed forms to Restricted Accounts Management at RAMTTimeEffort@mdc.edu for reconciliation with payroll records. Time and Effort Certification Forms can be requested from the Grant Compliance Officer. ***How many grants can one project director devote time to? How much total time does each employee have?*** Effort is measured as a percent of the employee's total employment obligation. Everything an employee does – grant-funded or not – is expressed as a percent. Total activity equals 100% effort and may not exceed 100%. It is the percentage of time specified, not the number of grants, which determines the answer.