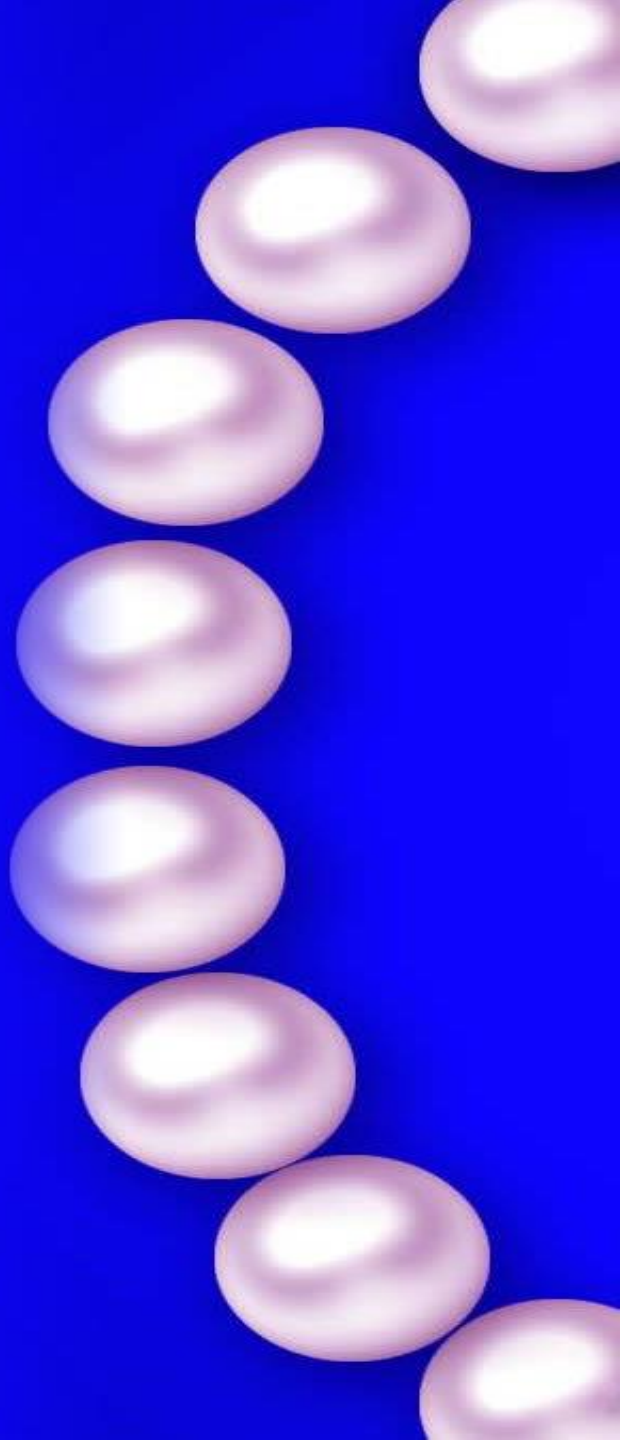
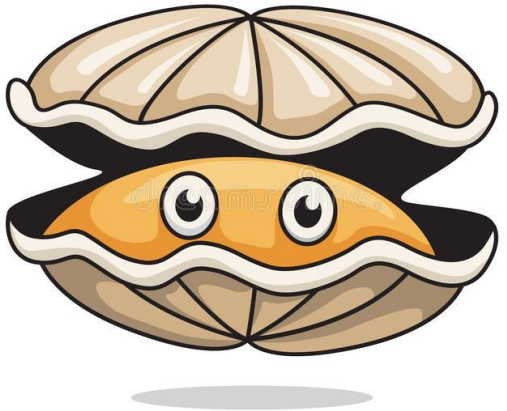
Using Checklists in Pre-Award Grants Management: Shaping Grains of Sand into Polished Pearls

by Maggie McCarthy & Rebecca E. Walker

NAVREF 2022
September 13, 2022
Part 1



Objectives



- Wisdom from Pearls
  - Mollusks make pearls to neutralize irritants
  - Lustrous final product created by irritations and iterations
  - It's a metaphor: how to make a checklist

- What should go on your application checklist?
  - Prime federal proposal examples
- What should go on your internal review checklist?
- Is there anything a checklist can't do? (Yes)

Required Registrations

SAM

SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

SAM.GOV

UEI

UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

GRANTS.GOV[SM]

FIND. APPLY. SUCCEED.[SM]

eRA

LOGIN.GOV

Other Pre-Award Considerations

- Time: Minimum 6 weeks to prepare - months before Notice of Award. Time to submit, oversee and manage?

- Money: Cash flow considerations. Most grants are reimbursable. Can you “float” 30-90 days?

- People: Grants often involve hiring or paying people. Can your payroll and HR handle?

Sample NIH Submission Checklist (1 of 3)

- Copy key info from PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT and INSTRUCTIONS
- Note any crucial changes and announcement updates (tip: subscribe to notifications or use weekly NIH digest)
- Identify internal “library” of re-usable documents
- Save “how to” cheat sheets to recreate document
- Find good samples if none available
- Use good naming conventions for iterations/updates

Sample NIH Submission Checklist (2 of 3)

Important NIH Changes! Effect. Jan. 2023

- Must use UEI (not DUNS)
- New biosketch format
- New data sharing guidance
- R&R Senior/Key Person required to have an eRA Commons username

PRE-AWARD NIH GRANT REVIEW CHECKLIST

From NAVREF presentation 9-12-2022
by Maggie McCarthy & Rebecca Walker

General information:

☐ READ sponsor directions! Check for additional directions for:

☐ Application Form Pages
☐ Sponsor's required eligibility / Limited Submission
☐ 0.5" inch margins 11 points or larger
☐ Smaller text in figures/graphs/diagrams/charts allowed but must be legible
☐ Doc names 50 characters or less
☐ No Co-PI role used. (If Multiple PI, list as PI)
☐ No electronic signatures and Biosketch
☐ "Validate Application" button before submission to check for errors/warnings
☐ Updated announcements
☐ Additional info about priorities, etc.
☐ Font: Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, or Palatino Linotype
☐ All files in PDF
☐ No URLS except for citations in References Cited
☐ No headers or footers

****

Sample NIH Submission Checklist (3 of 3)

☐ SF424 (R&R): Changed/Corrected applications must be submitted before the application due date. If you check the "Changed/Corrected Application' box, then "Field 4.c Previous Grants.gov Tracking ID" is required.

☐ Project/Performance Site Location(s): Indicate the Primary Site where the work *will be performed* (usually the VA) and identify other locations will be performed part of the project

☐ Project Summary/Abstract: no longer than 30 lines of text.

☐ Narrative: no more than short 2-3 sentences.

☐ Bibliography & References Cited

☐ Facilities & Other Resources: Describe facilities and any useful information for space measurement and tools used for the project such as labs, animal, computer, office, clinical and other.

☐ Equipment: List major items of equipment (= >$5k) available for project and pertinent capabilities.

☐ Other Attachment: (if applicable) Foreign Justification (begin the section with a heading indicating "Foreign Justification" and name the file "Foreign Justification.")

☐ R&R Senior Key Persons: **Need eRA Common log in username for PD/PI** (The role of "Co-PD/PI" is not currently used by NIH and other PHS agencies.)

☐ Biographical Sketch(s): Limited to 5 pages. (Unless otherwise required in a specific FOA, do not include Current and Pending Support as this comes at the Just-In-Time (JIT) stage) https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm

Know Your Roles

- Review roles to prepare and submit grant
- Meet with PI DoD/NIH and getting ready
- Use FOA to create a checklist or update your template
- Common Structure – PIs assemble science, administrator assembles administrative content, reviews instructions, and assists with putting everything together into the application

Sample DoD Submission Checklist

PI/ Admin	**Attachment 2: Supporting Documentation** No page limit except as noted. Named "Support.pdf" (Admin. can combine all docs as instructed for submission.) No additional figures, tables, graphs, photographs, diagrams, chemical structures, or drawings. Upload as single PDF file. Start each document on a new page.
PI	References Cited – URLs may be included if available
PI	List of Abbreviations, Acronyms and Symbols
PI/ Admin	Facilities, Existing Equipment, and Other Resources – Describe the facilities and equipment available for performance of the proposed project and any additional facilities or equipment proposed for acquisition at no cost to the award.
PI	Publications and/or Patents – Include a list of relevant publication URLs and/or patent abstracts. If articles are not publicly available, then copies of up to five published manuscripts may be included in Attachment 2. Extra items will not be reviewed.
PI/ Admin	Letters of Organizational Support – Provide a letter (or letters, if applicable) signed by the Department Chair or appropriate organization official, confirming the laboratory space, equipment, and other resources available for the project.
PI/ Admin	Letters of Collaboration (if applicable) – Provide a signed letter from each collaborating individual or organization that will demonstrate that the PI has the support or resources necessary for the proposed work

Maggie's Pre-Award "Pearls"

- Build tools that work for you, your partners, and your PI(s)
  - Content, format, technology
- Dialogue builds relationships – checklists remind us to talk
- Everyone learned this sometime
- Formulaic – can use content for future grants
- Update your checklists!

Institutional Checklist Purposes

- Remind preparers of steps/documents that are internal requirements
- Document the completion of internal requirements and approval to submit
- Communicate to future audience(s)

Institutional Checklist Example

- Remind preparers of steps/documents that are internal requirements: Proposal Personnel

Proposal Personnel

Senior/Key Personnel	Salary Source	Required Internal Documents					
		VALetter Contributed	VALetter Paid *	Univ Salary**	VA Paid SF50	NIH Only SFI	TRN
	[Blank]						

  - Document the completion of internal requirements and approval to submit

- Communicate to the future

Notes:

Quick List for SO Rev.:

- ☐ Grant Review Form
- ☐ Abstract/SOW
- ☐ Budget
- ☐ Budget Justification
- ☐ Fac/Resources
- ☐ PI Biosketch
- ☐ VA Letters
- ☐ SF50s
- ☐ Outg: SCF, DB+just, SOW
- ☐ Other: _____

SO Initials _____

Institutional Checklist Misc.

- Local VA requirements:
  - Impact Statement?
  - Approval for additional space/engineering changes?
- Funding opportunity #
- PI Assurance (NIH or per internal policy)
- Single IRB n/a, in use, or exception planned
- Single purchases over micro-purchase threshold
- Outgoing agreement documentation

Institutional Checklist
Outgoing Agreement Documentation

- Internal requirements are broader than application instructions
  - LOI/Subrecipient Commitment Form - SIGNED
  - Sam.gov exclusion search results
  - Subrecipient vs. Contractor determination
  - Scope of Work
  - Budget/budget justification or quote for a vendor agreement

Rebecca's Pre-Award "Pearls"

- See Maggie's Pearls: Build tools that will work for you.

This is a document request for the proposed subaward from SIBCR to your institution for the following project:

Here is the subaward document checklist:
- PHS 398 Face Page or Letter of Intent, signed by subrecipient's Authorized Official
- Subrecipient Commitment Form (blank version attached), signed by subrecipient's Authorized Official
- Statement of Work describing subrecipient's role in the project
- Biosketches for all Senior/Key Personnel with eRA Commons IDs (required for NIH proposals)
- Contact information for Senior/Key Personnel sufficient to complete SF424 contact page-Detailed Subaward Budget(s) on SF424 form - can send spreadsheets for initial draft(s)
- Narrative Budget Justification (can attach to budget as a PDF, but please also include Word document)
- Facilities and Resources with information specific to this grant proposal and SOW, including Scientific Environment statement
- Equipment list, if applicable
- Institutional Negotiated F&A Rate Agreement, if applicable
- Letter of Support, signed by subrecipient PI (if requested by SIBCR PI)

Rebecca's Pre-Award "Pearls"

- What a checklist should not be:
  - Not a replacement for training or SOPs/manuals
    - Summarize instructions if necessary
    - Leverage links to instructions or longer documents
  - Consider alternatives for How-To instructions
    - Flow charts
    - SOPs
    - Instructions on internal forms
    - Grants Management System
  - Not a replacement for conversations

Your Pearls

- Tips to share?
- Thoughts?
- Questions?

Thank you!

- Electronic handouts on NAVREF website
- Contact Information
  - Maggie McCarthy: maggie2help@gmail.com
  - Rebecca Walker: rebecca.walker@sibcr.org

Using Checklists in Post-Award Grants Management: Shaping Grains of Sand into Polished Pearls

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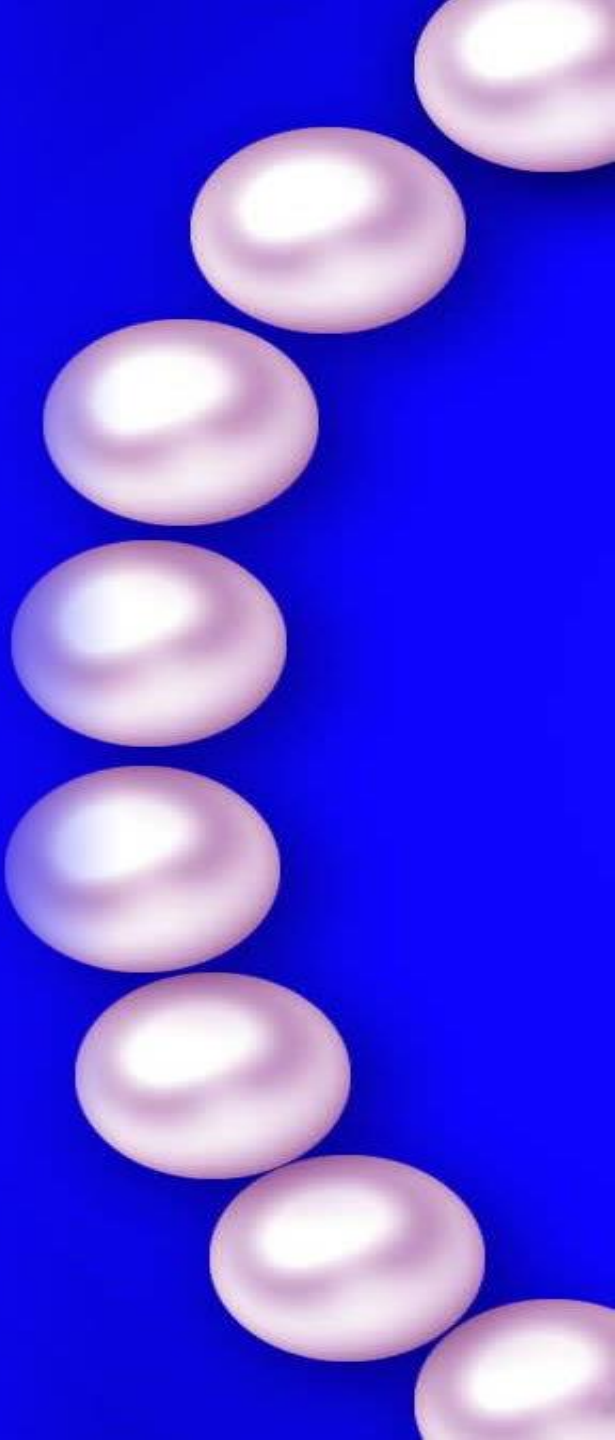

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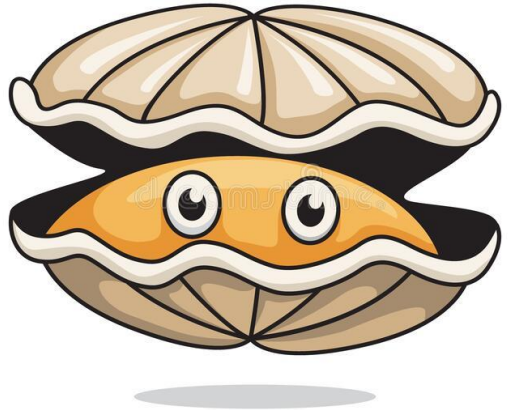


- Wisdom from Pearls
  - Mollusks make pearls to neutralize irritants
  - Lustrous final product created by irritations and iterations
  - It's a metaphor: how to make a checklist

- What goes on your new award set-up checklist?
- What goes on your monitoring checklist?
- Is there anything a checklist can't do? (Yes)

Congratulations! Setting the team work table

- Celebrate!
- Return to your pre-award thoughts –
  - Cash flow plans
  - Restart extra space/resources discussions with facility
- Share a copy of the award
- Internal: Checklist might suffice
- External: Checklist sets the scene for a conversation
  - Checklist a good take away handout but not a replacement for that talk

Kickoff Meeting to Review Grant Details

- Key Deliverables
  - Financial
  - Technical
- Budget Issues/Plans
  - Allowable dollar modifications
  - No-cost extensions
- Carry-forward
  - Authorized
  - Negotiable
- Purchasing: Notable categories of concern
- What comes up when we talk?

Subawards

- FDP Subaward form templates - fixed and cost reimbursement

FEDERAL DEMONSTRATION PARTNERSHIP
Redefining the Government & University Research Partnership

What is an Letter of Intent (LOI)/Intent to Sub?
It assures the Pass Through Entity (PTE) that the appropriate programmatic and administ rative personnel are informed of the potential subagreement, and provides an institutional signature. It also provides basic information such as contact info. An LOI is not a legal binding document.

What information is in an LOI?
An LOI usually contains the administrative contact information, both the PTE and Subrecipient Principal Investigator's (PI's) and Co-PI's names, a proposed title, name of the Prime Sponsor, period of performance and requested amount. An LOI will include a statement that the Office of Sponsored Programs has the authority to administer grants and contracts awarded to faculty and staff of the Subrecipient.

Maggie's Post-Award "Pearls"

- Use post-award lessons to ensure clean audits, position for future funding
- Investigators build experience at grant writing, trust in NPC, increase peer referrals to NPC
- Keep up with collaborators – diversify across teams both at VA and other university and other medical centers, maintain good relations with subs for potential new partnerships
- Track progress of grant for positive PR and publicity

Project Monitoring Set-Up

- Set yourself up for success
  - Be thorough
  - Be clear
- Set up monitoring during award set-up
- Ongoing monitoring has two purposes:

Funder/Award Requirements

- Senior/Key Personnel effort
- Report/deliverable deadlines
- Prior approval requirements
- Others as needed

Internal/Project Management

- Budget vs. expenses
  - Total burn rate
  - Categorical spending
- Regular invoicing at expected levels
- Remaining time
- Draw-down schedule

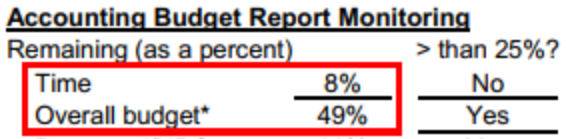
Project Monitoring Hints

- Define a regular monitoring period
  - 30-60 days allows for timely identification of misallocated costs
- Monitor vs. funder-approved budget
- Look for surprises

Outgoing Agreement Monitoring		Remaining	Remaining	
Agreement Name	Type of Agreement	% Funds	% Time	Receiving Invoices?
Post-Award Researcher	JPA	13%	8%	Yes
Staff Member 3	MOU	8%	8%	Yes
Small Outgoinng Sub	Sub	64%	8%	No
Large Vendor Agreement	Vendor	52%	8%	Not recently

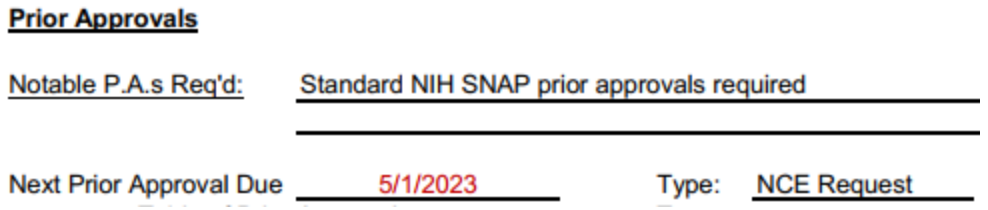
Project Monitoring Example

- Example and blank worksheet structure:
  - Budget vs. Expenses
  - Obligations/Invoicing and Encumbrances
  - Review checklist
    - Useful items -
      - Time vs. budget remaining
      - Receiving invoices
      - Senior/Key Personnel effort
      - Reporting
      - Prior Approvals
      - Other/Notes



Accounting Budget Report Monitoring

Remaining (as a percent)		> than 25%?
Time	8%	No
Overall budget*	49%	Yes



Prior Approvals

Notable P.A.s Req'd: Standard NIH SNAP prior approvals required

Next Prior Approval Due 5/1/2023 Type: NCE Request

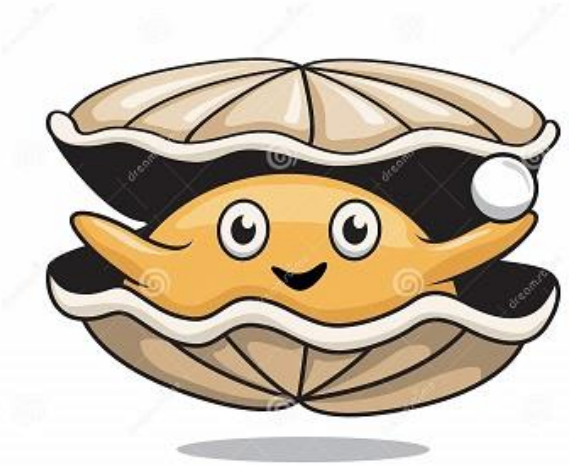
Close Out

- The end is nigh! Maybe
  - Review extension policies at the beginning of the final year - plan for extension vs. completion
  - Large expenditures in final month(s) are an audit red flag
- Final technical reporting
- Final financial reporting
- Financial close-out (return or keep remaining funds)
- Property report (if applicable - rare)
- Equipment disposition
- Invention reporting
- Ongoing obligations -
  - VA R&D approval close out or continue to renew
  - Publication acknowledgment
  - Clinicaltrials.gov

Rebecca's Post-Award "Pearls"

- Set yourself up for success with a thorough set-up process
- Spending a little time with your project monitoring checklist each month can save you a lot of time
- Checklists can be:
  - A take-away from a wider conversation [Handout 5]
  - An internal quality control tool [Handout 6]
  - An evolving status monitoring tool [Handout 7]
- Checklists should not be (repeat from Part 1):
  - A replacement for training or SOPs/manuals for admin staff
  - Full how-to instructions
  - A replacement for conversations

Your Pearls



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