	POLICY **Elements of a Proposal**
BTI Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research	

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Purpose: To describe the appropriate content for the basic elements that should be included for every proposal submission in instances when the proposal format instructions are not provided by a funding agency.

Policy: 1. It is the policy of the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research (BTI) that funding agencies' specific guidelines or application forms are the preferred format for proposal preparation and should be followed whenever possible.   If proposal format instructions or forms are not provided by a funding agency, BTI proposals should include the following basic elements:

- Title or cover page.
- Abstract or summary.
- Technical narrative.
- Budget and budget justification.
- Indirect cost rate, as required.
- Current and pending support.
- Project personnel.
- Facilities description.
- Appendices
  - Letters of support.
  - Other.

2. Most federal agencies and some private sources have posted their application guidelines and forms on the web which should be downloaded and completed by the principal investigator when available.

3. When proposal formats or forms are not provided by the agency the following elements should be included in the proposal:
- Cover Page – Format and Required Elements:
  - The cover page should include the following information to assist agency staff and proposal reviewers in identifying the application:
  - Sponsor name and address to whom application will be submitted.
  - Title of project.
  - Dollar amount requested.
  - Principal investigator's name, address and signature.
  - New, renewal, revised, continuation or supplemental application. Indicate the current agency's award number if application is
  - Sponsor name and address to whom application will be submitted.
  - BTI's full name and address.
  - Project start and end dates proposed.

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- o Other required BTI signatories such as the Vice President for Finance or his/her designee.
- Abstract: Format and Required Elements
  - o The abstract should be a clear, concise statement of the major objectives and scope of the research, usually in 200 words or less.
  - o Descriptions of the problem to be studied, methodologies to be employed, anticipated results, and their significance should be included.
  - o The abstract should be able to stand alone.

- Technical Narrative: The main body of the proposal is the technical narrative which is a detailed statement of the work to be undertaken and should include the following:
  - o Specific aims of the study and long-term objectives.
  - o Background and significance of the research and its relation to existing knowledge.
  - o Findings of any preliminary studies.
  - o Experimental design and methods.
  - o Past and proposed collaborations related to the work.
  - o Tentative sequence or timetable for completing the proposed work
  - o Involvement of human subjects, vertebrate animals, hazardous materials, genetically-engineered organisms, or other special conditions.
  - o Plans for evaluation and dissemination.
  - o Other considerations required by the sponsor or the research.
  - o The technical narrative is followed by a relevant and current listing of complete literature citations (authors, title, book or journal, volume and page numbers, and year of publication).

- Budget and Budget Justification:
  - o The budget should be designed on the basis of the technical narrative and should reflect, in fiscal terms, the proposed work and resources required to complete the work.
  - o The proposal budget is the best estimate of project costs at the time of proposal submission.
  - o Current rates for salaries, services and supplies, equipment and maintenance, travel, and tuition should be used as a basis for developing the budget.
  - o Given that project periods normally begin 6 to 9 months after proposal submission, it is important to prepare a budget that will cover projected expenses, such as salary increases by using current rates plus reasonable percentage increases.

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- o Fringe benefits and indirect (F&A) rates are fixed for a given period. If the start date of the award is anticipated to be in the next fiscal year the approved rate for the year the award will start should be used.
  - o Budget figures should be rounded to whole dollars.
  - o The budget justification accompanying the budget should explain, by budget category, the calculations used in determining the total cost for each category, as well as any special or unusual circumstances
  - o To adjust for inflation over the life of a multi-year project, it is recommended that a 3% increase for all direct cost budget categories be included in each successive budget period except for items requiring more or less than this rate.
- Current and Pending Support: Information should include:
  - o Each individual's percentage of effort or person-months devoted to each project.
  - o Title and brief description of the projects.
  - o Award amounts.
  - o Project periods.
  - o Overlap of research activities.
  - o Program income expected, if any.

4. Proposals that include cost sharing commitments must have a separate schedule included with the proposal that specifically details out the resources used to meet the cost sharing claimed and the approval signatures necessary to authorize fiscal commitment (see Cost Sharing Methods and Uses Policy).

- Project Personnel:

- Biographical information on all key personnel should be included in the proposal. Generally, within the allowable space, the following should be included for each profile:
  - o Post-secondary education.
  - o Research training and professional experience.
  - o Employment history.
  - o Honors.
  - o Professional memberships.
  - o Major (relevant) publications (often limited by number or to a specified time period).
- Facilities Description:
  - o The facilities description may start with a broad overview of BTI including its staff and programs, number of members, and other pertinent information.

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- o The principal investigator, lab, or department should be described, in terms of personnel, laboratories, equipment, technical support and shared resources relevant to the proposed project.

5. In proposals requesting equipment, sufficient detail should be included in explaining the need for the equipment that may duplicate or replace existing equipment.

6. Facilities and field sites should be described for projects conducted wholly or partly off-site.

- Appendices:
    - o It is advisable to include all information essential to the review of the proposal within the narrative portion of the proposal, as appendices are not always sent to individual reviewers.
    - o Items that may be allowable or required as appendices are vitae, reprints, supporting letters, and other supplementary materials pertinent to the proposed project