**PHS 398 Research Plan, part of SF 424 (R&R) Application for Federal Assistance**

## 2.5 Components of an Application to NIH or Other PHS Agencies

The SF424 (R&R) form set is comprised of a number of components, each listed in the table below as a separate “document.” In addition to these components, NIH and other PHS agencies applicants will also complete supplemental components listed as “PHS398” components in the table below.

Table 2.5-1. Components of an NIH or Other PHS Agencies Application

| document | required | optional | instructions |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SF424 (R&R) Cover | x |  | [Section 4.2](#_4.2_Cover_Component) |
| SF424 (R&R) Project/Performance Site Locations | x |  | [Section 4.3](#_4.3_Project/Performance_Site_Locati) |
| SF424 (R&R) Other Project Information | x |  | [Section 4.4](#_4.4_Other_Project_Information Compo) |
| SF424 (R&R) Senior / Key Person Profile(s) | x |  | [Section 4.5](#Section_4_5) |
| SF424 (R&R) Budget  *(If NOT using PHS398 Modular Budget.)* | **\*** |  | [Section 4.7](#RR_Budget) |
| SF424 (R&R) Subaward Budget Attachment Form |  | x | [Section 4.8](#Consortium) |
| PHS398 Cover Letter |  | x | [Section 5.2](#_5.2_Cover_Letter_Component) |
| PHS398 Cover Page Supplement | x |  | [Section 5.3](#_5.3_Cover_Page_Supplement Component) |
| PHS398 Modular Budget  *(If NOT using SF424 (R&R) Budget)* | **\*** |  | [Section 5.4](#Modular_Budget_Component) |
| PHS398 Research Plan  *(Not required for Career Development Award (K)   applications)* | x |  | [Section 5.5](#Research_Plan_Component) |
| PHS398 Career Development Award Supplemental Form  *(Required only for Career Development Award (K)   applications)* | x |  | [Section 7.5](#CDA_supplemental_form) |
| PHS398 Checklist | x |  | [Section 5.6](#Section_5_6) |

**\*** The application forms package associated with most NIH funding opportunities includes two optional budget components: (1) SF424 (R&R) Budget and (2) PHS398 Modular Budget. NIH application submissions must include either the SF424 (R&R) Budget Component or the PHS398 Modular Budget Component, but never both. (Note AHRQ does not accept modular budgets.) Unless other stated in a funding announcement, an application must always be submitted with a budget component. For those programs where either form is a possibility, the budget forms will be considered “optional” by the Grants.gov package. Nonetheless, it is still required that you select and submit one of these budget forms for an application to be accepted by the NIH.

To determine which budget component to use for NIH applications, consult the modular budget guidelines found in [Section 5.4](#Modular_Budget_Component). Additional guidance may also be provided in the specific funding opportunity announcement.

Some funding opportunities will explicitly state the use of only one of the budget components. In this case, the application package will only include the accepted budget form which will appear in the list of “mandatory” forms (not in the optional list).

All required and optional forms for electronic submission listed above are available through Grants.gov and should be downloaded from the FOA being applied to. Do not use any forms or format pages from other sources; these may include extraneous headers/footers or other information that could interfere with the electronic application process.

## 2.6 Format Specifications for Text (PDF) Attachments

Designed to maximize system-conducted validations, multiple separate attachments are required for a complete application. When the application is received by the agency, all submitted forms and all separate attachments are concatenated into a single document that is used by peer reviewers and agency staff.

NIH and other PHS agencies require all text attachments to the Adobe application forms to be submitted as PDFs and that all text attachments conform to the agency-specific formatting requirements noted below. Failure to follow these requirements may lead to rejection of the application during agency validation or delay in the review process. (See [Section 2.3.2](#_2.3.2_Creating_PDFs_for Text Attach) for more information on creating PDFs.)

Text attachments should be generated using word processing software and then converted to PDF using PDF generating software. Avoid scanning text attachments to convert to PDF since that causes problems for the agency handling the application. Additional tips for creating PDF files can be found at <http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/pdf_guidelines.htm>.

When attaching a PDF document to the actual forms, please note you are attaching an actual document, not just pointing to the location of an externally stored document. Therefore, if you revise the document after it has been attached, you **must** delete the previous attachment and then reattach the revised document to the application form. Use the “**View Attachment**” button to determine if the correct version has been attached.

**Font**

Use an Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia typeface, a black font color, and a font size of 11 points or larger. (A Symbol font may be used to insert Greek letters or special characters; the font size requirement still applies.)

Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch.

Type may be no more than six lines per inch.

**Page Margins**

Use standard paper size (8 ½" x 11).

Use at least one-half inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages. No information should appear in the margins, including the PI’s name and page numbers.

**Page Formatting**

Since a number of reviewers will be reviewing applications as an electronic document and not a paper version, applicants are strongly encouraged to use only a standard, single-column format for the text. Avoid using a two-column format since it can cause difficulties when reviewing the document electronically.

Do not include any information in a header or footer of the attachments. A header will be system-generated that references the name of the PD/PI. Page numbers for the footer will be system-generated in the complete application, with all pages sequentially numbered.

**Figures, Graphs, Diagrams, Charts, Tables, Figure Legends, and Footnotes**

You may use a smaller type size but it must be in a black font color, readily legible, and follow the font typeface requirement. Color can be used in figures; however, all text must be in a black font color, clear and legible.

**Grantsmanship**

Use English and avoid jargon.

If terms are not universally known, spell out the term the first time it is used and note the appropriate abbreviation in parentheses. The abbreviation may be used thereafter.

**Separate Attachments**

Separate attachments have been designed for the Research Plan sections to maximize automatic validations conducted by the eRA system. When the application is received by the agency, all of the Research Plan sections will be concatenated in the appropriate order so that reviewers and agency staff will see a single cohesive Research Plan.

While each section of the Research Plan needs to eventually be uploaded separately, applicants are encouraged to construct the Research Plan as a single document, separating sections into distinct PDF attachments just before uploading the files. In this way the applicant can better monitor formatting requirements such as page limits. When validating for page limits, the eRA Commons will not count the white space created by breaking the text into separate files for uploading.

**Page Limits**

Although many of the sections of this application are separate text (PDF) attachments, page limitations referenced in these instructions and/or funding opportunity announcement must still be followed. Agency validations will include checks for page limits. Some accommodation will be made for sections that when combined must fit within a specified limitation. Note that while these computer validations will help minimize incomplete and/or non-compliant applications, they do not replace the validations conducted by NIH staff. Applications found not to comply with the requirements may lead to rejection of the application during agency validation or delay in the review process.

All applications and proposals for NIH and other PHS agency funding must be self-contained within specified page limitations. Unless otherwise specified in an NIH solicitation, Internet website addresses (URLs) may not be used to provide information necessary to the review because reviewers are under no obligation to view the Internet sites. Moreover, reviewers are cautioned that they should not directly access an Internet site as it could compromise their anonymity.

Observe the page number limitations given in Table 2.6-1. Only in cases involving interdependent multiple subprojects (e.g., Program Projects and Multi-Center Clinical Trials) will the PHS accept applications that exceed the page number limitations. However, specific page number limits may apply to each subproject. For information pertaining to page number limits for such projects, contact the awarding component to which the application may be assigned. (See [Table 1.4-1. Agency Contact Table](#Table_AwardingComponents).) **The page number limitations may also be different for other specialized grant applications (e.g., R03 and R21 applications). Consult and follow the additional instructions for those applications.**

Table 2.6-1. Page Limitations and Content Requirements

| section | page limit | content |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [Introduction](#Introduction)  - New applications  - Resubmission applications  - Revision applications | Not required/Not to be submitted  1-3 (check announcement for specific guidance)  1 | See Instructions |
| [Research Plan](#Research_Plan_Component)  Sections 2-5  Sections 6 - 17 | 25\*  \* Some exclusions for renewal applications  none | Text including all figures, charts, tables, and diagrams. |
| [Biographical Sketches](#Additional_Bio_Instruct) | 4 | No more than four pages for each person listed as Senior/Key Persons. |
| [Appendix](#Appendix) | none | **New requirements effective 1/3/2007**. See Instructions for specifics.  Generally limited publications are allowed now only in certain situations. Only questionnaires and other materials are allowed. |
| [PAs and RFAs](#_Grant_Solicitations) | Page limitations specified in the PA and RFA announcement in the *NIH Guide* take precedence. | See specific instructions in PAs and RFAs published in the *NIH Guide*. |