

# Approval Process for Grant Proposals and Agreements

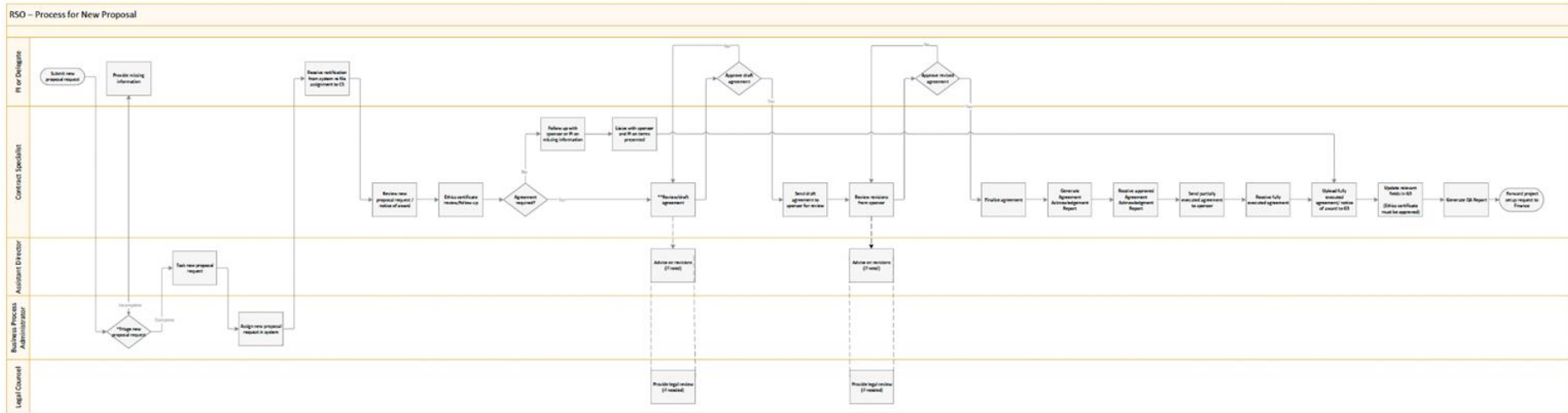
Office of the Vice-President  
(Research and Innovation)

April 15, 2025



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*Process map circa 2021 (project set up). To illustrate multistep set up processes only (map and personnel titles are outdated).*

# Factors that Contribute to Lengthy Approval Times

- Multiple approval steps
- Research ethics applications submitted late in the process
- Multiple sponsors
- Foreign jurisdictions
- Conflicting publication or intellectual property requirements
- New sponsors
- Unresponsive sponsors
- Missing information and documentation with requests for new projects

# Contract Issues That Cause Delays

- Mismatch of expectations between sponsor and researcher regarding potential outcomes of the research
- Identifying matching sources of funding
- Any “guarantee” of research results
- “Secret” research
- Restrictions on student thesis rights
- Expectations about ownership and licensing of intellectual property, including publication
- Research Security issues

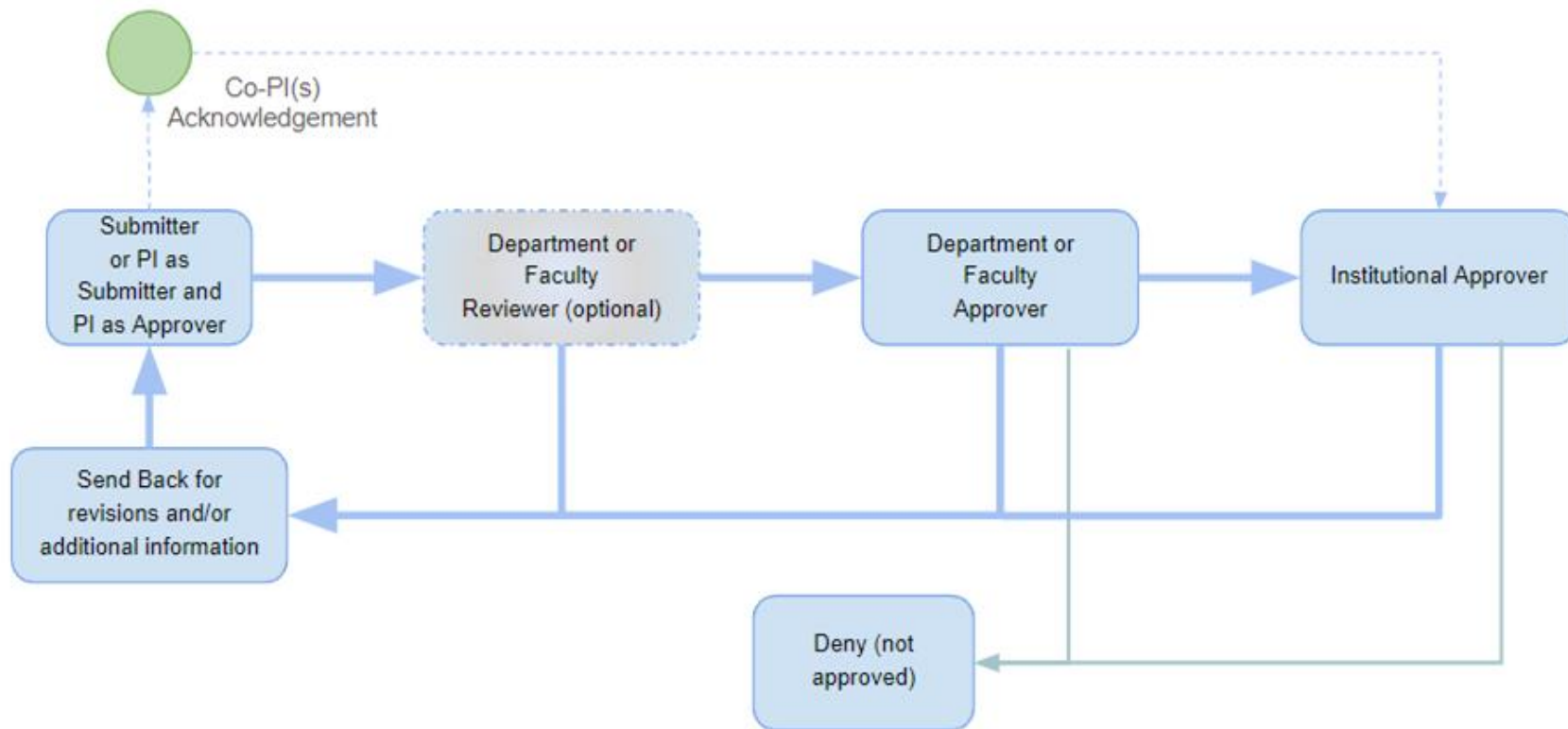
# Strategies that Reduce Turnaround Times

- Review “[Speeding Up Contract Negotiations](#)” presentation
- Using template agreements
- Early submission of ethics applications
- Consider requesting a Pre-Budget Spending Project
- System Improvement [e.g. Reduce the number of approval steps where possible (RAS and CASIP)]

# Pre-Budget Spending Projects

- Launched in 2023, the Pre-Budget Spending Project procedure reduces wait times in spending grant funds and improves efficiency by allowing a researcher to approve expenditures before receiving the Notice of Award or signed contract from the sponsor.
- This process may be used in certain cases where the Principal Investigator, Chair and Dean are comfortable allowing limited spending prior to the project being finalized by authorizing an over expenditure.
- A Pre-Budget Spending Project can be considered when it is likely that the project will not be activated for a significant period of time (i.e. greater than 6 weeks).
- More information on this process can be found in [this Google Doc](#).

# Research Approval Workflow (Applications)



# Application Issues that Cause Delays

- Principal Applicants (PI) late start on application
- Incomplete applications, missing application requirements, Co-PIs not completing their agreement to participate in the project in PeopleSoft
- Certifications missing (FCOI compliance, Risk Assessment Form, STRAC, etc.)
- When still required by sponsors, Dept/Faculty as well as co-applicants wet signatures are missing
- When required, Indirect Costs of Research not included in the budget
- Submissions in the sponsor portal without institutional review/approval



# Complete Documentation Package

- Ensure submission of request completing necessary fields for request via the Researcher Home Page. This ensures online workflow approvals PI, Chair, Dean, etc.
- Includes a budget and scope of work, certifications information, as well as sponsor contact information
- Includes Indirect Costs of Research (if required)
- Letters of commitment by Department, Faculty, VPRI, etc. if required



## Need for SPEED

- how to ensure your sponsored research agreements will get signed *faster*

# Get Ready!

## Prepare yourself:

- **Learn** about key university [concepts](#) and [policies](#) related to research – there are a few things to avoid.
- **Know** the difference between a [technical service project](#) and a [research project](#)
- **Answer** about all of the following:
  - Who will be on the research team? (students – need to be protected)
  - Will you need to share your confidential/proprietary/background IP with the sponsor to do the work?
  - Do you expect in-kind support or technical/scientific advice from the sponsor? Will you be needing their confidential information/background IP to do the work?
  - Will you need to subcontract some of the work to another institution?
  - Do you plan to submit for matching government funding?
  - What are the outcomes from the project that you are willing to provide to sponsor?
- **Talk to your sponsor** – come to an understanding (via email) about how you will report results, what rights the sponsor will have. Make sure sponsor understands that *results are not guaranteed, university won't be responsible for sponsor's results, student rights and publication rights are fundamental and will be protected.*



**SEE NEXT SLIDE BEFORE YOU FINALIZE YOUR SCOPE AND BUDGET.**

# Greenlighting

## Prepare your sponsor:

Consider/discuss these items with your sponsor:

- Sponsor agrees to use **university's template**, which automatically guarantees compliance with university policies and means that no exceptions/permissions need to be sought.
- Sponsor **does not need to own or negotiate a license to IP up front** – it is much more efficient to agree to negotiate those terms if/when something commercializable is produced.
- **All work done at university by university personnel.** If work *must* be done on Sponsor's site, get them to provide you with their site access requirements (if any) ASAP.
- **Payment** terms are up-front, yearly (not in arrears or tied to milestones). Payment at the end of a contract or based on milestones requires extra work and exceptions.

**SEE ALSO SLIDES 3 and 4.**

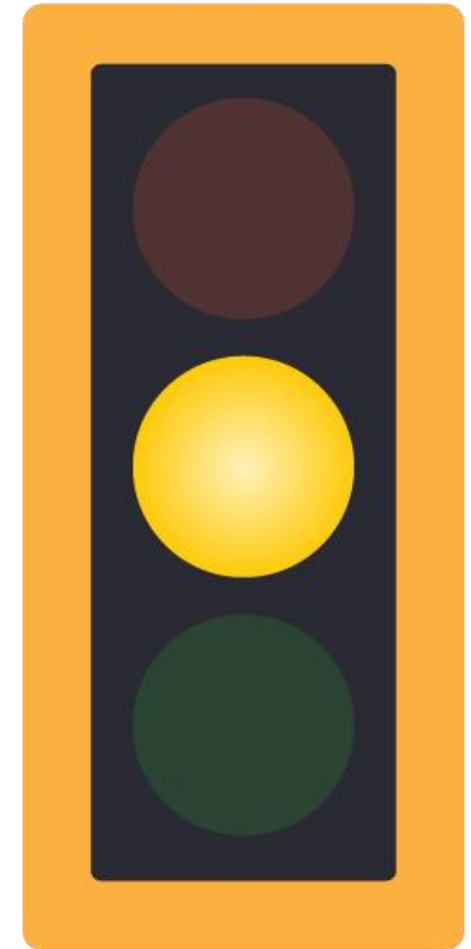
**Finalize and submit your scope of work and budget (including ICR) after you've considered all of these items.**



# Hazards ahead

## Scenarios that slow negotiations:

- Your scope of work does not describe **clear deliverables/reports**. Look at slide 1 – what will you provide to the Sponsor to show progress? **Reports ✓ Patents ✗**
- Your Sponsor contact didn't get **business approval** for this project, or has not yet informed anyone in their contracts department. Ask your scientific contact – what else needs to be done for this to be approved? Understand what other steps are needed. **Make sure that everyone is on the same page – no surprises.**
- Your Sponsor doesn't realize that you plan to **apply for matching** government funding for the project. RAS staff should not be the *first* ones telling the Sponsor that you intend to submit to NSERC.
- The Sponsor is a **brand new company, and/or new to university research**. If the Sponsor is not familiar with research contracts, has an uncertain cash flow, and/or does not carry standard levels of insurance, they may be nervous. **Starting small (smaller scope, shorter timeline) often helps build confidence and trust.**
- Your project involves **multiple** Sponsors and/or multiple collaborators and/or one or more subcontracts. The more parties involved, the greater the likelihood of stalls. **If parties can agree to use university templates, understand that results must be published, commercialization options are better than up-front assignments or licenses, and sponsors should restrict themselves from sharing confidential information (background IP) if possible.**





# Roadblocks ahead

## Scenarios that stall negotiations:

- Sponsor wants clauses that **violate** laws or policy. *See slide 1 – know what we can't do.*
- Sponsor **doesn't respond** in a timely manner. *You will be asked to get your scientific contact to prompt their business folks.*
- Sponsor asks for changes to the **scope or budget**. *This requires your approval.*
- Sponsor does not agree with **requirements** for – insurance, limitation of liability, your instructions about intellectual property. *Requires other review & approvals within the university (maybe including Risk Management, Legal, yours, your Chair's if students are involved). Avoid this by having the tough conversations at the beginning - see slide 2*
- Sponsors **don't agree with each other**. What works for one Sponsor won't work for others. *See slide 2 – set common expectations up front. Do not let sponsors 'negotiate on the fly' – help them all understand that there must be one set of rules for all.*
- You negotiated or signed an agreement **without RAS involvement**. *Researchers do not have authority or expertise to do this.*
- You **are not responsive** to RAS's requests for information or confirmation.

**RAS can be very flexible but there are things we can't control.**



# Options Navigation Network Spring 2025 Update



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