



Proposal Development

The objective of this learning guide is to ensure that all members of WRI Ross Center understand what the Proposal Development Process (PDP) is and how to follow it in any proposal they lead or in which they participate.

Specifically, this guide will help you:

- Understand why the PDP is necessary and can help you prepare more successful proposals.
- Understand your role and responsibilities in making this work.
- Demonstrate the many teams and resources available to help you navigate the proposal process, institutional requirements and better understand the requests and interests of your prospective funder.
- Avoid mistakes that can have negative impacts on project implementation and funding, and which can put donor relationships at risk.
- Learn about useful tools that can make proposal preparation more efficient.

Introduction

The objective of this learning guide is to ensure that all members of WRI Ross Center **understand what the Proposal Development Process (PDP) is and how to follow it in any proposal they lead** or in which they participate.

Goals!

This guide will help teams to:



Source: Guerrero, A. & Martínez, C., 2022.

What is the cities Proposal Development Process (PDP)?

What is the Proposal Development Process?

The **Proposal Development process (PDP)** is a series of steps and decisions that must be taken prior to the submission of a proposal by WRI Ross Center staff to ensure that proposals are strategic, of high quality, and financially sound.

Why is the Proposal Development Process important?

We have implemented this process to ensure that:

- Proposal teams have the support they need to prepare strong proposals that are strategically-aligned, of high quality and financially sound.
- The Cities Development team is aware of all funding activity so they can support proposal teams in navigating complex institutional and donor requirements and avoid costly mistakes.
- Decisions to submit proposals and Request for Proposal applications (RFPs) are deliberate and weight investment of staff time against potential resources.
- We are respectful, informed and well-coordinated in our approach to WRI Ross Center donors, many of whom also support other WRI programs and offices.
- Your fundraising efforts are recognized and counted as part of the program's funding pipeline.

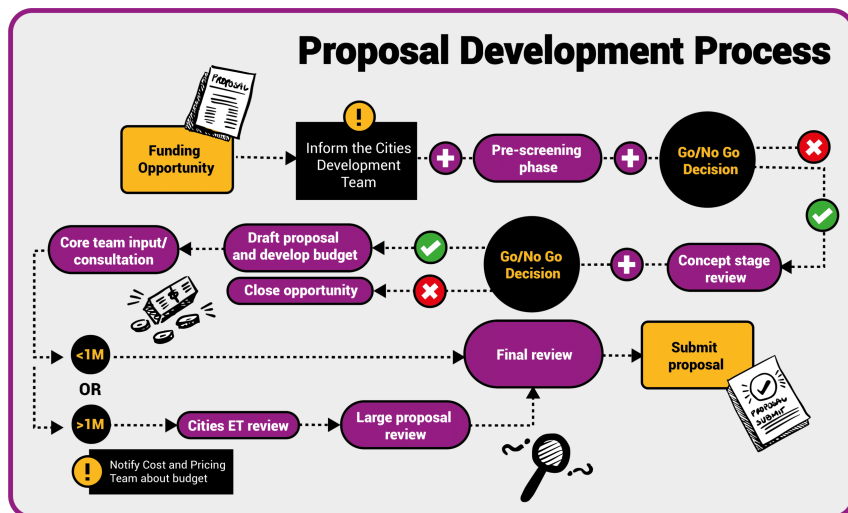
Who does the Proposal Development Process apply to?

1. The PDP applies to all proposals that will be submitted through WRI's Global office.
1. Proposals led by an independent WRI office (e.g., Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, and Turkey) AND where funding will be received directly by that office should follow the proposal process of the local office.

Who will help me guide me through the cities Proposal Development Process?

The Cities Development team is responsible for coordinating the Proposal Development Process. We will support you with proposal development and in engaging other Cities staff or institutional teams as needed or required.

Proposal Development Process (PDP)



Source: Guerrero, A. & Martínez, C., 2022.

Step 1: Inform the Cities Development Team

Your first point of contact will be someone from the **Cities Development team** in your local office.

ALL proposals for the WRI Ross Center are to be flagged to the Cities Development team in your office at the earliest possible stage. particularly for larger proposals which require more internal coordination

This pertains to ALL potential funding discussions and prospective proposals/RFP applications before they are developed, including renewals and sponsorships.

Step 2: Pre screening phase (Is this opportunity viable?)

- The purpose of this early stage is to answer key strategic, technical, operational, financial and institutional development questions in order to determine whether an opportunity is viable and to identify potential risks.
- Before launching into proposal development or agreeing to join a consortium, first, you should review some important questions to consider the cost benefit of pursuing the opportunity, potential risks to WRI, staff capacity to develop the proposal, alignment with our global outcomes and long-term strategy and budget restrictions.
- Be sure to engage the Cities Development team so they can help teams walk through pre-screening questions and alert the core Development team if the opportunity involves a donor that is centrally managed or a company that must be vetted.
- A go/no go decision is made in this stage.
- Enter opportunity in Salesforce under Qualify stage.

Do we have the capacity to put together this proposal?

What is the cost-benefit to develop this proposal? Is it worth it?

Is the opportunity aligned with our global outcomes and does it advance our five-year strategy/objectives?
Does the opportunity provide a significant role to advance our work in our priority countries/cities led by WRI's IOs? Does it leverage our strengths?
Are there any trade offs or conflicts of interest that result from accepting the funding? (E.g., ability to access current or future funding from donor or participate in future calls?)
What are the potential repercussions of not moving ahead? (E.g., risk to donor relationship, ability to create impact/scale, raise profile, impact key event etc.)
Does the project impose any unusual conditions that may create risks for WRI? (e.g., lobbying, advocacy, endorsement, electoral politics, foreign government influencing, funding for a government position, etc.)
Does the opportunity have potential to add value by generating new evidence or examples for a problem we work on where there is a significant knowledge gap?

Salesforce is WRI's institutional database for tracking relationships with key constituents including donors. We use Salesforce to track all aspects of WRI's relationships with our donors and prospective donors.
WRI uses Salesforce to track funding histories, existing grants and new funding opportunities with donors including pending proposals. Most of WRI's largest donors fund several programs and offices. Salesforce helps track these connections across the WRI network. The Development teams across the Institute are charged with ensuring that WRI is internally coordinated in its outreach to donors and that donor engagement is transparent and well-managed.
Reports on fundraising progress or "pipeline" are regularly generated from Salesforce and shared with the Cities Executive Team and WRI leadership, including the board and president.
It is critical that every funding opportunity pursued by WRI's offices is captured in Salesforce. If your proposal is not listed in Salesforce, it doesn't exist. Development and your team's program coordinator can help!

Step 3: Concept stage review

- This stage will be facilitated by the Development team in consultation with relevant Directors and proposal leads.
- The Development team will walk the proposal team through the requirements of the donor/request for proposal (RFP), highlighting important requirements and providing strategic guidance regarding the donor's objectives, flagging potential areas of concern and noting where other teams may need to be consulted.
- Depending on the size and complexity of the funding opportunity, proposal teams should include representatives from relevant WRI offices, other programs/centers, core teams and the program coordinator who will prepare the budget.
- The proposal team should consider some important operational considerations as they review the details and requirements of the funding opportunity including:
 - Strategic alignment (between the donor's objectives and WRI's)
 - Technical capacity (WRI's capacity to deliver the project/other partners that may be needed)
 - Financial constraints (such as donor limits on overhead)
 - Legal and other (such as consortium participation or government buy-in).

What is the budget limit for the opportunity? (Will it cover our costs? How much stays with WRI? How much to Global vs Local?)
Are there any budgetary restrictions imposed by the donor that create a financial risk to WRI? (e.g., overhead caps) Ask the WRI Finance team about the donor.
Do we have the staff capacity to deliver on this grant? If not, is the funding/timing enough to allow for new hires?
Will the project require any specialized training for WRI teams to successfully deliver on the grant (e.g., MEL, equity) Could the opportunity potentially overtax our existing systems/teams (e.g., Grants & Contracts, MEL, Communications) due to significant outflow of subgrants or other requirements?
Will the opportunity involve data collection or research that will help inform or be informed by project activities on the ground? Will this research be published (by WRI or the funder) or shared externally to help scale our work?

Concept stage review questions (for large opportunities)

What types partners do we need to build a strong consortium? Does the opportunity require or strongly suggest partnering with specific types of organizations or firms? (e.g., local groups, academic, government, private sector?)
Do we need to prepare a partnership agreement or does the bid require some other agreement for consortium members?
What is the cash flow scenario? Will we receive cash in advance or be reimbursed? (The former is preferable, particularly if the for grants >\$1M)
Will there be Subgrantees? (If other than our International Offices)
Do we have discretion on who we can subgrant to? (Fiduciary responsibility)
What is the grant range for subgrants? (Many small grants create a transaction cost/strain on our Operations team)
Are the potential subgrantees able to meet WRI's due diligence process? WRI carries the fiduciary responsibility for our subgrantees. We need to select partners/subgrantees that apply sufficient financial controls (e.g, double entry bookkeeping). Alternatively, we need to include funding in the grant to build grantee capacity building in this regard.
What kind of specialized operations personnel might we need? Does this capacity exist or do we need to hire? Can we use this funding to enhance our skill set/sophistication in technical or operational areas? (Note: WRI will only approve hiring full-time staff for minimum of 1 year.)

Donor requirements

- A final Go/No Go decision should be made once the donor's proposal requirements are reviewed.
- If a go, the proposal team should outline clear roles and responsibilities to determine who "holds the pen", who must provide input, and who needs to agree and sign off on the proposal. We recommend using the [RAPID framework](#): (Recommend, Agree, Perform, Input, Decide) to clarify roles.
- In the WRI Ross Center, the Global Office Workstream Director and/or the Cities lead in the relevant International Office(s) are responsible for making the decision to commit WRI to a proposal. For proposals >\$1M+, the WRI Ross Center Global Director must agree.
- Enter/update opportunity into Salesforce under the Concept Note stage.

Step 4: Proposal development (Engaging Core Teams)

The WRI Ross Center has a remarkable core team of experts with specialized skills to support technical teams in the development and execution of robust projects. These are areas that donors emphasize and scrutinize. Proposal teams are strongly encouraged to engage core teams and other experts early in the proposal development phase and budget time needed from these teams to adequately implement the project.

These experts include:

1. **Communications:** outreach and influence strategies, blogs and editorial/web development.
2. **Finance/Operations:** budget guidance/approval, donor-required budget formats.
3. **Gender and Social Equity:** Integration of gender/equity into project design.
4. **Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PMEL):** Theory of Change, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning plan, indicator development.
5. **Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE):** research design, primary data collection and analysis, publication planning and design.
6. **Data & Tools:** data into action, data governance, database management, geospatial analysis, equity/distributional data, tool development.

Step 5: Budget Development

The following are the minimum required costs to include in proposal budgets submitted through the Global Office to ensure an adequate level of quality control, engagement and financial oversight available to deliver results on our projects. These include core costs (e.g., WRI Ross Center Global Director) and Program Coordinator/Grant and Finance Specialist(PC/GFS) time.

- **Proposal budgets of \$200K-\$500K** – labor line must include at least 1.5 hours per month/18 hours per year of the WRI Ross Center Global Director through lifetime of grant AND at least 10% of Program Coordinator time per month through lifetime of grant.
- **Proposal budgets of \$500K-\$1M** – labor line must include 4.5 hours per month/54 hours per year of the WRI Ross Center Global Director through lifetime of grant AND at least 20% of a Program Coordinator time per month through lifetime of grant.
- **Proposal budgets over \$1M** – labor line must include 7.5 hours per month/90 hours per year of the WRI Ross Center Global Director through lifetime of grant AND at least 30% of a Program Coordinator time per month through lifetime of grant.

Requirements and Best Practices:

Include Core and Program Coordinator costs

Guerrero, A. & Martínez, C., 2022.

Requirements and best practices

- **Think beyond technical teams.** budget time for other in-house expertise needed to deliver the project (e.g., Communications and outreach, donor engagement, project evaluation, publication design and review, etc)
- **Engage the Finance team early.** Donors have their own unique budget requirements and templates. In some cases, WRI has negotiated an agreed-upon budget structure that we must follow with certain donors to avoid overhead limits. Engage the Finance team as you consider an opportunity so they can share donor intelligence and flag potential risks.
- **It's Complicated.** Start working on the budget right away. Don't wait until a few days before the due date. Large budgets and those that include multiple offices may take time to build and coordinate across offices and the Finance team.
- **Leave time for review.** The Finance team must review and approve all budgets of \$1M or more. In addition, they must approve all budgets for government and other key donors.

WRI requires all proposals of \$1M+ to undergo a Large Proposal Review. This is an institutional requirement to ensure that proposals are 1) strategically aligned; 2) technically and financially sound; 3) leverage the strengths of WRI's matrix; and 4) are staffed and budgeted appropriately for the deliverables.

The Cities Executive Team (ET) and Core team leads will be informed of and given an opportunity to review advanced drafts of proposals of \$1M+ prior to or in parallel with WRI's institutional LPR process.

The Cities Development team will coordinate this review process in partnership with the Core Development team and the Finance Department's Cost and Pricing team.

Note: Renewals and proposals that require rapid turnaround by donors may be expedited but this step cannot be skipped.

Cities Development Team will coordinate the work with other teams to organize the respective reviews and ensure the participation of all relevant teams.

Step 6: Final review and proposal submission

For Proposals <\$1M:

- Final review and approval of the proposal should include: Development, Global Workstream Lead, IO Lead (if applicable).
- Final review of the budget: Operations or Finance Team (depending on donor).

For all Proposals:

- Once the relevant approvals are in place, the proposal can be submitted by Development or project team.
- Don't forget to update Salesforce to "Proposal submitted".

Summary

- The Proposal Development Process (PDP) is a series of steps and decisions in the way we develop proposals in the WRI Ross Center.
- Every proposal submitted through the Global Office is required to follow this process (unless your local office has its own specific proposal requirements).
- The process also aligns with WRI's institutional requirements for proposal development. ALL WRI proposals .
- The processes at WRI are complex, the Cities Development team is here to help you navigate them.

Quiz: Who should you first alert about a potential proposal or significant funding opportunity?

- ☐ 1) finance team
- ☐ 2) development team
- ☐ 3) operations team
- ☐ 4) human resources

Quiz: Why does WRI require some proposals go through a Large Proposal Review?

- ☐ 1) because the amount is more than \$1M USD
- ☐ 2) to ensure proposals are strategic, well-costed proposal and of high quality

- ☐ 3) to ensure program leadership are aware of and approve the proposal
- ☐ 4) all of the above

Quiz: What are two key requirements for proposal budgets prepared by the Cities team and which are submitted through the Global office?

- ☐ 1) The budget should include travel and conference costs.
- ☐ 3) The budget should always include subgrant costs.
- ☐ 4) The budget must include costs for Development and IT.

Quiz: What is the database that WRI uses to track fundraising activities and capture donor contacts and information across the network?

- ☐ 1) TM1
- ☐ 2) Salesforce
- ☐ 3) Costpoint
- ☐ 4) Cognos

Additional Resources

- [Cities Proposal Development Process and Budget Requirements](#): This memo contains the details of the WRI Ross Center proposal development process.
- [Cities Global Office- Proposal Flow](#): Graphic presentation of the process to be followed for the presentation of a project proposal to a funder, including the different technical and operational areas involved.
- [WRI Proposal Development Roadmap](#): A guide that outlines the stages of the proposal development process, describes who is responsible at each point and links to useful resources.
- [FAQ by donors in proposals](#): A guide to answer the most common questions that are required in donor applications, tenders and proposals. Links to complementary documents and resources are included.
- [Financial Proposal Guidance](#): Best practices for proposal development, with a focus on proposal budgeting developed by WRI's Global Finance team.
- [Salesforce for Development](#): Presentation with relevant information about the Salesforce platform and the importance of its use for the clarity of the relationship with the donor.

- [Banyan](#): Platform that allows easy access and searching to the organization's systems/tools through a single digital portal.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

WRI has an array of resources to help you with your proposal.

The Cities Development team is here to help so please don't hesitate to ask for guidance.

Visit other websites in our broader digital ecosystem:



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<https://thecityfixlearn.org/courses/proposal-development>