It is often required or advantageous to demonstrate institutional support in proposals. This provides evidence that UC San Diego is enthusiastically supportive of the proposed work, and that the PI/team has the necessary organizational resources to successfully conduct the project. Depending on sponsor and program, this can take a variety of forms, ranging from affirmation by campus leaders that the proposed work is well aligned with institutional priorities, to specific commitments of funds or other resources. This document provides guidance on effective practices; PIs are advised to work with their department and contracts and grants office to ensure compliance with sponsor and University policy.

**TYPES OF SUPPORT**

It can be useful for PIs to think in terms of assembling a robust institutional support package that includes multiple elements. Common types of support and specific examples include:

- **PIs’ own resources** – Appointments/affiliations, space, startup, or other discretionary funds
- **Personnel** – Committed administrative, technical and/or advisory project support
- **Trainee support** – Graduate student and postdoctoral fellowships
- **Instrumentation and facilities** – Core facilities, access to unique instruments, dedicated instrument time at National Labs, subsidized or reduced-rate facility charges
- **Services and subject matter expertise** – Outreach and educational programs; program evaluation; equity, diversity, and inclusion; IT and data storage/curation; ethics; innovation, commercialization, and entrepreneurial support
- **Internal funding opportunities** – Additional project support funding from internal UC San Diego programs (e.g., Galvanizing Engineering in Medicine Challenge, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Innovation Grants, Institute for Practical Ethics Fellowships)
- **Cost share/matching funds** – When required or expected. Learn more at Blink or HS SPPO.

**Creative partnerships**

Targeted collaborations can demonstrate in-kind institutional support. Consider leveraging resources through:

- Teaching + Learning Commons
- Center for Research on Educational Equity, Assessment & Teaching Excellence (CREATE)
- Office of Postdoctoral & Research Scholar Affairs
- Operational Strategic Initiatives
- Research IT Services
- Library Research Data Curation
- Research Ethics Program
- Institute for Practical Ethics
- Office for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, including Community Centers
- Institute for the Global Entrepreneur
- Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute (ACTRI)
- San Diego Supercomputer Center
- Halıcıoğlu Data Science Institute
- Qualcomm Institute (QI) and QI Innovation Space
- San Diego Nanotechnology Infrastructure
- Institute for Materials Discovery and Design
- Office of Innovation and Commercialization
- Visual Media Group
- Student Success Center

...and many more.
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Carefully review the prospective funder’s guidelines, e.g., request-for-proposal (RFP), for expectations around institutional support, including required documentation (e.g., NIH T32 applications require a standard institutional commitment letter).

• Try to view examples of previously funded proposals to get a sense of competitive commitments.

• Initiate discussions and negotiations as early as possible.

• In preparation for discussions, prepare a project synopsis, wish list, and commitment list (see below *).

• Start close to home. Before reaching out to central administration, approach your department head and/or dean for local resource commitments.

• Follow any formal protocol in place within your school/division for submitting support requests.

• To engage services and facilities, reach out to inquire about availability and project needs.

• Ensure commitments are firmly in place before requesting letters of support or collaboration.

• Provide well-developed draft text when approaching campus leadership for institutional letter.

• Request a consultation with Research Development and/or Foundation Relations to customize your strategy.

**Project synopsis.** Include as much of the following as possible:

- PI, co-PIs, and other key personnel, include departments and affiliations
- Proposal title
- Opportunity title, and URL
- For limited-submission opportunities, confirmation of Research Affairs’ approval to submit
- 2-3 sentence, high-level project description
- RFP language re: institutional commitment/support
- Key deadline(s)
- Submitting UC San Diego department
- Total $ request to sponsor, with breakdown of UCSD direct and IDC portions
- Period of performance
- Future renewal potential, if applicable

**Wish list and commitment list** for institutional leadership. Include:

- Desired forms and quantities of support (like a gift registry!)
- Commitments of support already secured

Things to Avoid

- **Citing generic institutional resources, or citing specialized ones only vaguely.** Laundry lists of institutional resources more often weaken than strengthen a proposal. Instead: Present a carefully curated selection of the most relevant resources. Be clear how you will partner with or make use of capabilities.

- **Waiting until the last minute to develop substantive collaborations or request letters.** Doing so conveys to prospective partners insincerity about authentic collaboration and disrespect for their valuable time. Instead: Reach out early. Keep in mind: Obtaining letters from administrative offices, e.g., Vice Chancellors’, may take up to 2 weeks for review and signatures.

- **Requesting letters before appropriate discussion has occurred, or before commitments have been secured.** This is like putting the cart before the horse. Keep in mind: Letters citing commitment of funds or other specific resources typically require back-up documentation.

- **Disregarding sponsor requirements for letter format and content.** Time will be wasted drafting letters that cannot be submitted, or the proposal could even be returned without review. Keep in mind: Some sponsors or programs limit letters to a very brief formulaic format (e.g., NSF, for most programs).

(List continues next page)
Things to Avoid (Continued)

- **Ignoring RFP restrictions on allowable support.** Instead: Check with your business office or contracts and grants office in advance to ensure allowability of sources you’re considering, and avoid coming up short.

- **Going overboard.** Make the proposed effort appear so well-resourced that it raises questions about the need for sponsor funding. Instead: Discuss in-hand resources as valuable and empowering, and note how they may differentiate your proposal from the competition. Be clear how the requested support is vital to the success of the proposed work.

- **Assuming that what works for one sponsor will work for others.** In particular, note that private sponsors’ requirements can differ markedly from those of public funding agencies. For assistance preparing proposals to private sponsors, contact Foundation Relations.

### HOW AND WHERE TO HIGHLIGHT SUPPORT

Whether and where support is called out in a proposal, as well as call-out wording and/or graphics, can depend on many factors, such as: sponsor policy, specific RFP instructions, type(s) of support, and win strategy. Common places to refer to institutional support include:

- **Narrative** – Some proposals include specific sections addressing institutional resources and/or commitment. Specific commitments (e.g., personnel or instrument time) can be highlighted in the sections where the assets most effectively demonstrate feasibility, such as in the methodology section or management plan. Student support can be flagged in a section on education or workforce development. Support for broader-impact, evaluation, and diversity activities can be noted where these activities are described.

- **Graphics** – Strategic graphics (e.g., pie charts, tables, org charts, photos) with reinforcing captions can be used to highlight institutional support. A figure breaking down overall costs into sponsor, institutional, and other (if applicable) contributions can highlight the relative magnitude of support. Be careful to follow sponsor and RFP rules on providing specific dollar values and calculations (e.g., NSF typically prohibits voluntary committed cost share, while DOE often requires it).

- **Supplementary Documentation** – Some proposal packages require and/or include additional materials, in which specific commitments can and should be highlighted (e.g., highlighting commitments of resources supporting postdoctoral scholars or data storage in postdoctoral mentoring plans or data management plans, respectively).

- **Letters** – If allowable to include specific resource commitments in letters of collaboration, by all means, do so.

- **Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources** – More detailed descriptions (than page-limited narratives are able to accommodate) of specific, in-kind resource commitments can sometimes be included here. To avoid these being overlooked, be sure to mention them within the narrative, and point readers to this section.

- **Budget Justification** – Sometimes, it is possible and advantageous to also highlight institutional support here, e.g., to demonstrate how the sponsor’s funds will be leveraged with institutional support.

### Additional Resources

For more on identifying resources and developing strong letters of support, including sample letters, please see:

- **Resources for UC San Diego PIs** (internal SharePoint library, SSO login)
- **Hit the Sweet Spot for Letters of Support** (NIH)
- **Reference Letters vs Letters of Support. What’s the Difference?** (NIH)
- **Goals and Guidelines for Letters of Support** (University of Arizona)
- **How to Write an Effective Letter of Support** (Tufts University; aimed at collaborators, but relevant tips for drafting letters for institutional signatories)

### Questions?

Please contact us to see if we can help with your current or anticipated proposal efforts:

researchdevelopment@ucsd.edu  
http://researchdevelopment.ucsd.edu