

**Department of Surgery
Resident Research FAQs
Date: 8/2/2024**

Residents and Fellows,

If you plan on submitting a proposal for an extramural grant or research award, please read the following FAQs to ensure that your proposal gets the correct institutional approvals for an on-time submission.

Resident Research FAQs About Extramural Research Proposals

1. What does “extramural” mean?

This refers to grants or awards that are sponsored outside of Northwestern University. This includes the NIH, surgical societies, foundations, and other non-profit organizations.

2. What is the Northwestern University Sponsored Research (SR) Office?

Northwestern Sponsored Research is the university’s authorized organizational representative and is the university’s central pre-award and non-financial post-award research administration unit. Sponsored Research is accountable to the university and external sponsors for compliance, review, advisement, negotiation, approval, and authorization of all sponsored research activity. Go to their proposal [webpage](#) for more information.

3. If I am a trainee and I want to submit a proposal for an extramural grant or research award, does my proposal need to get approved by SR before I submit it to the sponsor?

YES!!

4. Who in Research Administration should I contact to ensure that my proposal is properly assembled, entered CERES and gets approval from SR?

Regardless of who your faculty mentor is, you need to contact:

Darlene Ratliff

Manager of Research Administration

Department of Surgery

5. Wait -- what is CERES?

CERES stands for Central Electronic Research System. It is a sponsored research administration management system that is used for proposal, grant and contract administration, award management, and agreements management.

6. What is the best way to reach Ms. Ratliff?

Email her at darlene.ratliff@northwestern.edu

7. How far in advance should I notify Ms. Ratliff that I am planning to submit an extramural proposal?

You need to notify Ms. Ratliff at least 6 weeks prior to the final deadline. *So plan ahead!*

8. What does Ms. Ratliff need to know about my proposal?

Start with the name of the sponsor and the award mechanism, the name of your mentor, and a link to the funding opportunity announcement and/or application instructions.

9. What will happen after I send this information to Ms. Ratliff?

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Ms. Ratliff will respond to you by email and set up a time to meet by phone or Zoom. *Do not ignore this!* It is very important, since she will personally help you through the proposal submission process. If you email her and you don't hear back – send her another email! After the initial meeting, she will also set up multiple subsequent meetings with you to ensure that everything is done on time. It is critically important to AVOID LAST MINUTE REQUESTS for help because this is stressful for everyone and puts your proposal at risk of not getting approved and submitted on time!

10. How far ahead of the final deadline does Ms. Ratliff need the FINAL VERSION of all documents for my proposal?

Ms. Ratliff needs these documents TEN (10) business days ahead of the final deadline, which will allow her to get everything reviewed and routed to SR before their deadline, which is 5 business days before the final deadline. So, you need to PLAN AHEAD. REPEAT – PLAN AHEAD.

11. Why can't I just submit everything the day of the final deadline?

It is customary that your proposal will need changes to get approval, so don't wait to the last minute! Pay attention to deadlines and PLAN AHEAD.

12. What if I have other questions or problems or want to give feedback? Who can I contact?

Contact Dr. Karen Ho, Director of Resident Research, at kho1@nm.org