**Guidance for Requesting Institutional Letters of Support from Central Mason Leadership**

**Applicable Letters of Support**

Central Mason leadership including:

* Provost
* Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact
* Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
* Associate Provost for Graduate Education
* Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education
* Associate Vice President Entrepreneurship and Innovation
* Executive Directors of Mason Research Institutes (IBI, IDIA, ISE)

*This guidance is for letters from Central Mason Offices. Please follow your academic unit’s standard practices for requesting letters of support from Department Chairs, Deans, academic unit diversity officers, etc. This guidance applies to both* ***new*** *grant applications and* ***resubmissions*** *for which* ***new letters*** *are being requested.*

**NOTE:**

For letters of support from the **Mason President,** please **contact Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP), immediately.** They can determine whether a designee is allowed and will follow up with the president’s office on the PI’s behalf.

For letters of support from **Congressional offices**, please contact the Director of Federal Government Relations (https://relations.gmu.edu/)

**Applicable Grants**

Proposals for which support letter from senior leadership are required or would significantly enhance the application. This typically applies to large-scale, multidisciplinary, or high-profile initiatives, such as:

* Awards for Research Training (e.g. NSF NRT, NSF IGE, NIH T32, T34)
* NIH center grants (e.g. P30, P50)
* Large NSF initiatives (e.g. NSF MRI, NSF ART, NSF Engines)
* Grants that require support from local economic development authorities (EDAs)

**Getting Started with an Institutional Letter of Support**

* Read the Proposal Solicitation ***carefully*** in ***consultation with Academic Unit Pre-award staff***
* Determine whether central institutional letters of support are required
  + If required follow guidance to request letter
  + If not required, consider whether letter of support from Mason leadership would substantially benefit proposal, then initiate request to appropriate point of contact
  + *Many proposals limit or do not allow letters of support, understand what is allowable*
  + *If letters are limited, consider having multiple individuals sign a single letter*
* Initiate support letter request as soon as plans for proposal are in process. Do not wait for last minute!!!

**Points of Contact for Support Letter Request**

* **Letters from Provost or Vice President, Research Innovation and Economic Impact (VPR)**
  + Investigators must contact academic unit dean’s office in advance through emailing Associate Dean of Research (ADR) and ADR admin. Information on letter of support should be attached to email.
  + Dean’s office may then email request to Provost or VPR with cc to exec assistant
    - Include instructions on where to return signed letter
  + If Dean’s Office instructs faculty to request letter directly, include administrative assistants for Provost or VPR in email: <https://provost.gmu.edu/about/leadership-team>
  + In general, Dean’s office should be alerted in advance to large efforts requiring central Mason support

**Requesting Financial Commitments from Provost Office**

Requesting new financial commitments (including new faculty hires, cost share, equipment, etc.) requires approvals in a process that takes ***much longe*r** than the typical 3 month timeframe between solicitation publication and submission deadline. You should plan well in advance of the solicitation if you are considering any proposals that would require such commitments. To initiate such a request:

Contact **Dean’s Office via ADR** as soon as financial commitment is needed

* + Consider future proposal submissions that might benefit from financial commitment, faculty hires and request dean’s office to facilitate discussion with Mason leadership well in advance of a proposal solicitation announcement

*The following letters may be requested directly from the appropriate central offices, but it may be helpful to give the ADR’s a head’s up in advance*

* **Letters reflecting George Mason Commitment to Diversity**
  + Provided by Vice President, DEI, Sharnnia Artis (Executive Asst.: Jeanmarie Lagos, jlagos@gmu.edu)
  + <https://diversity.gmu.edu/about/meet-our-staff>
* **Letters for Institutional Awards for Graduate Research Training** 
  + Provided by Laurence Bray (Admin: Yellia Seanor, yseanor@gmu.edu)
* **Letters for support for Undergraduate Research Support (OSCAR) or broader impacts on undergraduate education** 
  + Provided by Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (email [MasonUE@gmu.edu](mailto:MasonUE@gmu.edu)).
  + If anticipating requesting programmatic support (seminars, participation summer OSCAR activities, etc.) please reach out early to frame the proposal.
* **Requests for support letters from Economic Development Authority (EDA)**
  + Before reaching out to EDA, contact Paula Sorrell, Associate Vice President Entrepreneurship and Innovation (Admin: Emma Gaggioli, egaggiol@GMU.EDU) to expedite and coordinate process
* **Requests for support letters from Mason Research Institutes** 
  + Email executive director with request for support letter

**Deadline**

* Requests for Central Office letters of support should be emailed to the appropriate point of contact listed above, following consultation with local academic unit deans and pre-award staff, **not less than two (2) weeks** **before the proposal submission date.**
* **Allow 2 additional weeks** for letters that must be routed through dean’s office (Provost, VPR)

**What to Include in Support Letter Request**

* Name of the program to which you are applying
* Link to the solicitation (or attach a PDF of the solicitation to the request)
* Mason internal submission deadline of the program to which you are applying
* Proposed total budget
* Amount of cost share (if any) required by program
* Proposal Title
* Brief proposal abstract
* Description of the solicitation requirements for the letter, e.g. the solicitation specifically requires a letter from the Vice President for Research, discussion of central university resources, discussion of resources for graduate training, student population, related data
* Principal Investigator Biographical Sketch or link to current CV
* Any requested university commitment\*\*\*\* (please see **Requesting Financial Commitments from Provost Office**)
* Resources already committed to project by academic unit
* If applicable, information about resubmission.
* Draft Support Letter

**Guidelines for a Basic Letter of Support (or Collaboration) Document**

Adapted from**:** <https://research.arizona.edu/development/proposal-development/proposal-guidance/letters-of-support>

Requestees should draft a letter of support to be edited by the Provost Office as needed.

Ensure that you follow all guidance within the funding solicitation regarding context, formatting, and page length. Print the letter on institutional letterhead.

Addressee

Determine the appropriate addressee for the letter, typically the project’s principal investigator or the granting agency. There's not a hard and fast rule for all letters about who should be the addressee, as it depends upon the type of letter. If the letter details how the institution will provide support for the project, the addressee should be the granting agency. It may also be helpful to identify the funding solicitation and title using a “Re:” line.

First Paragraph

Define the letter writer's role and the entity represented (see the "Goals" text above).

Emphasize why the letter is being written, e.g., to support the proposal and research/academic goals or to commit resources or cost share/matching funds. State the details of the proposal being submitted and reference the funding solicitation including the principal investigator's name, title of the proposal, type of proposal (i.e., research, training, workshop), and where the letter is going (i.e., the funding agency or lead institution).

Body Paragraph(s)

Describe the strengths of the proposal, e.g., by explaining the science and/or education approach and its relevance or cutting edge approach, emphasize the team leadership strengths, promote a strong track record of mentorship, highlight the appropriate achievements of the team such as publications, or if part of a larger proposal, address how integral this component is to the overall project.

Link the strengths of the proposal to the organization or institution, e.g., alignment to with the university/college/department research or education goals, or the research expertise and resources at Mason to support this proposal.

Final Paragraph

Provide a summary that includes the commitment of resources (including quantifiable details, if applicable), how the work reflects the importance of the project to the institution and/or Mason, and reiteration of support of the proposal.

**Example first paragraph:**

In my role as the *Vice President of Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact (select role),* George Mason University (Mason), I am writing to express Mason’s enthusiastic support of *Proposal Title,* a submission for the *funding agency and program*. This effort is led by Principal Investigator name, degree, Faculty Position, Department of *X*.

**Example Closing**

In closing, Mason is highly supportive of this proposal for a *description of project.* The objectives outlined in the proposal are strongly aligned with Mason’s goal to *“conduct multidisciplinary, collaborative research in partnership with academic, industry and community stakeholders*.” I wish Dr. *faculty name* and the *proposal title* team the best of luck with their endeavors.