

Modified May 12, 2008

SUBJECT: MWA POLICY ON LETTERS OF INTENT

Policy Effective October 1, 2005, MWA requires that a Letter of Intent (LOI) be submitted to the Area Office and approved ****before**** any type of document that would bring outside funds into ARS or transfer ARS funds to another organization. Pre-approval via the LOI must be obtained before significant effort is expended to prepare any grant proposal (including ARS-funded grant programs), or cooperative agreement (new or adding funds). Since the LOI must be submitted before any such documents are prepared, it follows that the LOI must be submitted and approved before the submission of extramural actions or submission of the incoming and outgoing agreements. You may complete the rest of the document once the Area has approved it.

Area approval of the LOI is mandatory for all grant programs and extramural actions. **The LOI does not replace or eliminate any existing Agency process for the approval of extramural agreements.**

Supporting Authority P&P 321.1, Acceptance of Non-Appropriated Funds to Conduct Research or Perform Services
P&P 280.0, Extramural Agreements Manual

Applicable Extramural This policy refers to the following extramural actions:

- Specific Cooperative Agreement
- BARD Research Grant Agreement
- Reimbursable Cooperative Agreement
- Trust Fund Cooperative Agreement
- Memorandum of Understanding
- Non-funded Cooperative Agreement
- Interagency Reimbursable Agreement
- Grant proposal (NOTE: Even if the proposal is “No Funds to ARS” the LOI must be submitted to the MWA Office **before proposal drafting begins.**)

Exceptions LOIs are not required for:

- Applications for the ARS Headquarters Postdoc Program
- No-funds extension of an existing cooperative agreement

Justification The policy protects the interests of the scientist by ensuring that a final proposal or funding agreement, often the result of extensive time and effort from several people, can be approved quickly by the Area Office in time to meet relevant deadlines. The LOI process provides for an adequate and timely evaluation of proposed grant-funded research, as well as projects conducted by others with ARS funds. This evaluation by the MWA Office considers relevance of the outside funds or cooperative agreement to ARS base-funded research commitments. The

Incoming Agreement and Outgoing Agreement do not provide information that is complete or early enough for the MWA Office to approve the effort that will go into preparation of a full proposal or agreement. Because the LOI must be submitted at this early stage of document drafting, it does not replace the later submission of the Incoming Agreement (Pre-Award), or in some cases only the Outgoing Agreement.

LOI Procedure

Procedures for the LOI are defined below.

1. A LOI must be submitted to the Area Office for approval ***before drafting*** any proposal, cooperative agreement (e.g., SCA), or Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement. It does not replace the later submission of Incoming Agreement (Pre-Award) and Outgoing Agreement into ARIS.
2. Use the approved electronic LOI format in ARIS, save to a .pdf and email this file to the Area Office. **Do not send a hard copy.**
3. The description of the project should be succinct but contain enough information to describe what each participant will contribute, why their contribution is important to the success of the project, and how this project enhances the number, quality, or impact of milestones and deliverables approved by peer review (OSQR) for the ongoing CRIS project plan.
4. Funding information or lack thereof will be used to determine the type of formal agreement.
5. Notification of Area Director approval/disapproval will be sent via e-mail from the Area Office to the requestor with appropriate copies to the LAO and MU. The approved LOI will be kept on file in the MWA Program Analyst's office.
6. After the LOI has been approved, all other existing policies and procedures should be followed for preparation, approval, and submission of grant proposals and agreements, including timely submission of Incoming Agreement (Pre-Award) and Outgoing Agreement.

**Failure
To Comply**

Failure to comply could result in disapproval by the Area Director of your proposed project or grant proposal.