

Consolidated Certification Process for Research Centers Guide for Developing Consolidated Business Plans

This guide is intended to facilitate the development of a single business plan that meets all university requirements enumerated in the *Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Research Institutes and Centers*. The business plan and the profile are key components of the consolidated certification process (*Concert*), which conveys recognition as a University Research Center and entitlement to the perquisites associated with that designation. The business plan provides a blueprint for continued and new investment in time, money, and other resources from multiple parties to ensure the mission is successfully carried out.

Developing the business plan is an opportunity for reflection, discussion, and formulation of realistic plans for development and growth. The plan should narrate and place into context, rather than repeat verbatim, the information provided on the University Research Institute or Center Profile. The plan and the approval process are intended to ensure that members of the center are thoughtfully pursuing a course of action that has a reasonable chance for success, that success is defined in clear terms, and that key stakeholders understand how to contribute to the success of the institute or center.

The guide is intended to accommodate business plan development for a wide range of center missions, structures, developmental levels, and circumstances. Accordingly, the submitted plan should reflect the character of the institute or center—for example, a plan for a large scale, mature engineering center may look very different than a small start-up in health sciences or public administration. The business plan and the profile are reviewed using common criteria for certification, recertification, and center establishment proposals.

The review criteria encompass four domains: Purpose, Aims, Status, and Strategy. *PURPOSE* establishes the mission and character of the institute or center. *AIMS* identifies strategic goals and key performance indicators. *STATUS* describes, analyzes, and synthesizes the current status, history, operating context, competitive environment, and other information relevant to the established strategy described in the plan. *STRATEGY* presents how constituents will pursue center aims for the forthcoming five year period.

Center business plans may be developed using these domains as section headings. However, no specific business plan format or nomenclature is required, to allow for the variation in form commensurate with the diversity of disciplines represented in research centers. Directors of existing centers may update and submit extant plans using their customary format and process, making any revisions needed to address the required elements and to be responsive to the review criteria.

The required elements include a mission statement and measurable key performance indicators. All centers employ a small number of common research activity indicators. Additional research activity and other mission related goals and indicators are custom to each center. In addition to the required reporting and analysis of sponsored research activity indicators, the guide includes a non-exhaustive list of suggested items to consider for inclusion in business plans.

PURPOSE

Mission statement. The mission statement is a required component of the business plan. It communicates what the center does, how it does it, for whom, and why. It reflects the core values and competencies of the constituent members. Ideally, it is easily remembered and can serve as an operating doctrine, guiding the choices and behaviors of constituent members as they engage in center related activities in or outside the scope of an operational plan.

Vision and values statements also may be included, but are not required.

AIMS

Key performance indicators. Key performance indicators represent abiding outcomes that the center pursues across business plan cycles. Key performance indicator data are used to describe center status in the business plan and to inform the center evaluation process. KPIs may be quantitative or qualitative. For example, achieving or maintaining a laboratory accreditation or other organizational recognition would be a qualitative indicator. The center director is responsible for ensuring that KPIs are measured and reported at regular intervals as required by the supervisor (typically annually).

All research institutes and centers are required to report annually on four common KPIs:

1. Total direct costs
2. Reimbursed indirect costs
3. Total dollar value of proposals submitted
4. Total number of proposals submitted

Center business plans may use additional sponsored research activity metrics as KPIs or to otherwise describe center activity. Possibilities include

- Synergistic research expenditures allocated to other units on projects where a constituent of the center is principal investigator
- Collaborative research expenditures as a subdivision of allocated direct and indirect costs (i.e. center constituents as co-investigators on projects led by a principal investigator in another unit, counting only the portion allocated to center constituents)
- Ancillary research expenditures allocated to other units, where center resources were used or center constituents provided key support, such as associated collaborative research expenditures credited to non-constituent faculty, center revenues from constituents serving as faculty participants, etc.

Most centers will adopt additional mission-related KPIs related to scholarship, academics, and service. More detailed information regarding KPIs and research activity metrics is provided in the section entitled *Key Performance Indicators for University Research Institutes and Centers*.

STATUS

The status of the institute or center should be explained in a manner that situates and informs strategy by describing and analyzing the center and its operating environment. This section should be a succinct and compelling narrative meant to convince the reader that there is an opportunity to advance the center mission if the proposed strategies are enacted. Italicized items marked with an asterisk are required. Other items are suggested.

Provide more detailed information about the center regarding the major research questions it embraces, the problems it solves, the services it provides, and the clients it serves. Include any major highlights that exemplify achievement of the mission.

Describe how the center is distinctive, unique, or makes a special contribution to the fulfillment of the university mission.

**Report at least three prior year's performance on the five sponsored research activity indicators defined above, as well as those associated with other goals and objectives.*

- For initial certification, existing centers may include definitions of the other KPIs that will be monitored in the forthcoming 5-year planning cycle if prior data are not available.

**Interpret previous levels or trends on KPIs.*

Explain center leadership management, highlighting the expertise of the director and key constituent members.

Describe guidance and decision-making structures and processes; for example, advisory boards and committees.

Describe the center organization, including positions by type and source of financing (for example, base funded, "soft money" funded, joint appointments, elective allocation of faculty department research).

Include a current organizational chart and a projected organizational chart if pertinent.

Include a financial overview and any relevant budget information.

Describe the space, facilities, and major equipment the RIC controls or to which it has special access.

Describe how constituents and stakeholders were engaged in the development of the plan.

STRATEGY

Provide a competitive analysis or market analysis as appropriate. Where is the field headed? What are the priorities or directions of likely funding agencies?

Provide an assessment of the overall strategic position of the center. A widely used process to accomplish such an assessment is a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

For business plans submitted for recertification, provide an assessment of strategy implementation from the prior plan, including any substantial changes in strategy, successes, or challenges encountered.

Describe the major strategies and associated actions the center will take in the next 5 years to advance the mission. These should be responsive to the assessment of the "market" and the center's prior performance, status, and strategic position.

The strategy component may take the form of a small set of broad goals with associated concrete actions that have resource implications. The business plan should provide a brief synopsis of well-reasoned, compelling, actionable strategies that, if enacted, will enhance KPI performance. The plan should make clear which strategies can be implemented with existing resources and structures, and which strategies are conditional on reorganizing, restructuring, or acquiring resources.

The strategy section should provide a clear resource plan that both describes current support, and anticipates and justifies future resource requests. Department and college support for ongoing operation and implementation of business plan strategies should be presented explicitly.