

ORDE "KNOW YOUR AGENCY" SERIES: OFFICE OF NAVAL RESEARCH (ONR)

ONR Site: <http://www.onr.navy.mil/>

OVERVIEW

Founded in August, 1946, the Office of Naval Research (ONR) was originally created to maintain the partnership arrangements among government, academia and industry that had developed during World War II and produced major technological advancements. ONR is located in Arlington, VA and functions as the research arm of the US Navy and Marine Corps.

Specific Interests

ONR funds basic research, applied research, and advanced technology development. ONR interests include mathematics, computer science, electronics, machine learning/intelligence, sensors, communications, ocean engineering and acoustics, materials research (including biomaterials), non-destructive evaluation, cognition, biometrics, computational neuroscience, decision-making, gut microbiology, microbial fuel cells, force health protection, stress physiology, aviation technology, unmanned air systems, turbine engine technology, and many more. Interest topics are driven by the Naval Research and Development Framework, available at <https://www.onr.navy.mil/our-research/naval-research-framework>.

Approach

While ONR funds basic research, relevancy to ONR objectives must be very clear – from initial conversations with program officers to full proposals. ONR program officers are involved from the beginning to the end of projects, even initiating projects with specific investigators they have worked with in the past. High value is placed on partnerships between academic researchers and industry as a means to ensure new science and technology findings are incorporated into systems and make their way to the field quickly.

AGENCY ORGANIZATION

ONR is managed by the Chief of Naval Research (Flag Navy officer) and the R&D Portfolio Director (civilian position). A 15-member Naval Research Advisory

Committee is a civilian scientific advisory group charged with providing objective analyses concerning science, research and development. This Committee originally served as advisors to the Chief of Naval Research for its first 10 years and played a large role in how ONR was developed and organized. It now provides formal briefings to ONR leadership, reporting on trends in science and technology pertinent to the US Navy. Committee members are selected from industry, academia and research institutes and are appointed for two-year terms. (Source: NRAC Website – <https://www.nrac.navy.mil/>).

The Office of Research Directorate manages ONR's Discovery and Invention Portfolio through six Science and Technology (S&T) Departments:

Code 30 – Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare and Combatting Terrorism

Code 31 – Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR)

Code 32 – Ocean Battlespace Sensing

Code 33 – Sea Warfare and Weapons

Code 34 – Warfighter Performance

Code 35 – Naval Air Warfare and Weapons

Each S&T Department has corresponding divisions, organized by programs addressing specific ONR interests. There are Division Directors and Program Officers.

GRANTS PROCESS

Like all Department of Defense research agencies, grant proposals are submitted in response to specific Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs) issued by ONR. While some BAAs are very topic-specific, the Long Range BAA for Navy and Marine Corps Science & Technology provides details about agency interests as a whole and is updated yearly in terms of current interests, personnel, and process. In addition to BAAs, ONR also issues Requests for Proposals (RFPs) that outline government requirements to potential contractors. RFPs are used to fund very specific tasks in contrast to BAAs that outline agency needs and leave project design to the proposer.

ONR uses a two-step proposal submission process:

White paper submission: After a discussion with the appropriate program officer, a researcher is invited to submit a 4-5 page white paper detailing the proposed project. The program officer reviews the white paper and provides informal feedback, either encouraging or discouraging full proposal submission.

Full proposal submission: A full proposal is developed and submitted via Grants.gov in response to a specific BAA. Full proposals consist of two volumes – a technical proposal and a detailed cost proposal.

Additional Funding Mechanisms

Other DOD-wide funding opportunities in which ONR participates are the Defense University Research Instrumentation Program (DURIP) and the DOD Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI). ONR also offers a yearly Young Investigator Program.

Contact with Agency Program Staff:

Researchers are highly encouraged to consult with ONR program officers at every stage – to discern agency interest in the proposed project, to gain insights on the submission process, to report on project progress, and to work toward the next project. A list of research topics with links to program officers is available at <http://www.onr.navy.mil/Science-Technology/Contacts.aspx>.

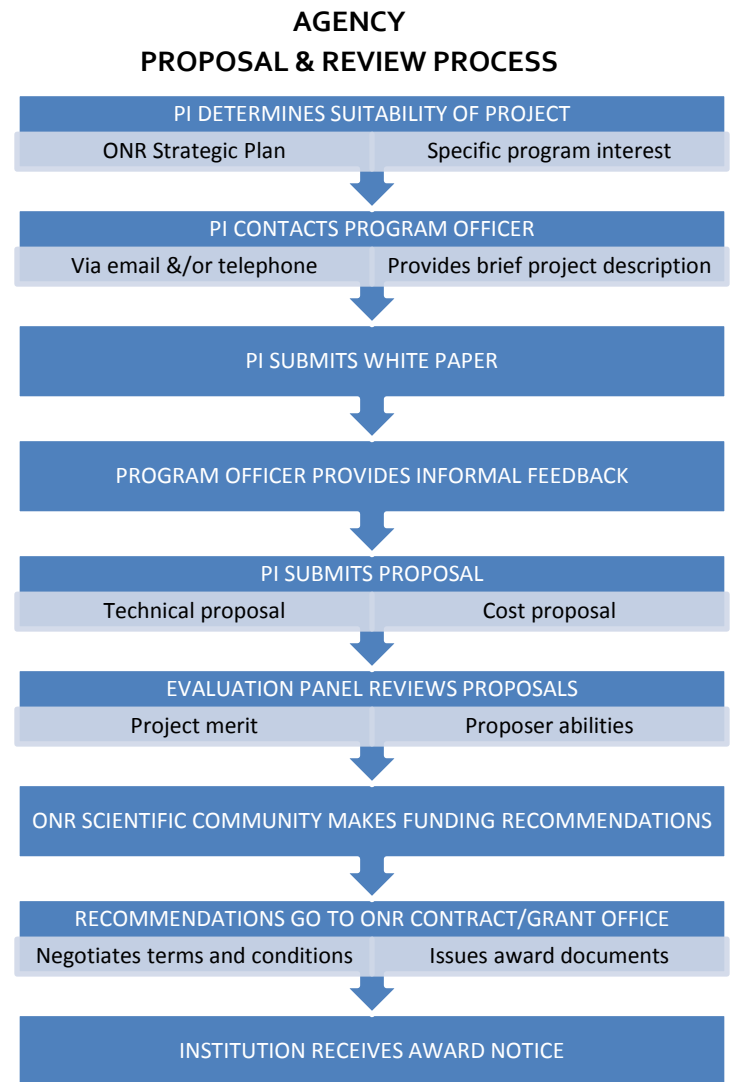
Typical Agency Proposal Process:

- 1) PI determines suitability of proposed project to ONR mission, programs, and specific topic areas
- 2) PI contacts program officer for assistance and questions about applying for funding
- 3) Program officer requests white paper
- 4) PI receives informal feedback from program officer, encouraging or discouraging full proposal
- 5) PI submits proposal
- 6) ONR Evaluation Panel reviews proposal
- 7) ONR scientific community makes final funding recommendations
- 8) Recommendations are forwarded to ONR Contracts/Grants Office for negotiation/award
- 9) PI's institution receives award notice

Proposal Review Process:

Proposal evaluation criteria include overall scientific and technical merit, sponsor relevance, proposer capabilities

and experience, and proposal costs. Evaluation panels consist of the program officer and other government scientific experts. Industry representatives may also be brought in as subject matter experts. Recommendations are made by ONR's scientific/technical community. Recommended proposals are then forwarded to ONR's Contracts and Grant Awards Management Office, responsible for cost analysis and negotiations.



What Happens Next?

Basic research awards are generally provided as grants to universities; ONR also uses contracts, cooperative agreements, and other award mechanisms. A negotiation process between the receiving institution and ONR precedes award. Those who are turned down are encouraged to consult with the program officer to determine next steps including resubmission.