**CRAFTING A LETTER OF INTEREST (LOI)**

If you have questions about or suggested improvements to this document, please contact Matthew Winn at mwinn@txstate.edu.

**What is a LOI?**

The term “LOI” can stand for many things: Letter of Interest, Letter of Intent, or Letter of Introduction. Above all, the ***purpose*** of a LOI is to introduce your research or creative project to someone in a concise format that is easy for anyone (even lay people) to understand. LOI’s should be tailored to the person or organization you are sending it to (always know your audience). Some funders require LOIs to be in a specific format, so check their website. The majority of LOI’s are most effective when they are kept to one-page, or two pages if they include pictures or visuals (even better!). However, LOI’s for research projects to government agencies (like National Institutes of Health or National Science Foundation) should also include a list and description of your research questions and references.

From the funder’s point of view, a LOI helps them determine if the proposed project aligns with their mission and strategic goals, is competitive for funding, and is likely to make an impact.

From your point of view as a faculty member, developing a LOI can save you hours of valuable time and help you connect with potential funders or collaborators. By sending a LOI to a potential funder you will make personal contact with them and discover whether they are interested in your project before you go through the effort of writing a full funding proposal. When you send a LOI to a potential funder, you can find out valuable information such as whether or not a funder is interested in your project. Plus, funding priorities often change each year and are not always published. Sending a funder a LOI before applying for funding gives you the inside scoop on whether your project is a good fit for their current priorities. Another great use for a LOI is to send it to potential people or organizations to enlist their collaboration. Either way, this short document will introduce others to your project, while the email or letter you send with this document will introduce them to you.

**Instructions:**

Delete this first page to use the rest of the document as a template. Replace each paragraph with your own. Change the footer to include your contact information. If you are sending this to a foundation, work with the C3 Research Center to get clearance from University Advancement first.

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**<insert title of research or creative project>**

**Introduction**: *This “mini abstract” is the most important section of your LOI* because it is the first thing the targeted funder will read. Be sure opening sentences are compelling and enthusiastic about your project’s significance and impact. You want to “grab” your audience so they truly want to continue reading! Briefly summarize (1) the significant problem or need you will address and why it is important; (2) your research question(s) or creative inspiration, goal(s), and/or objectives; and (3) the significance and broad (grandiose) impact of your anticipated findings. Include language to demonstrate you understand the strategic priorities of the targeted funding agency as well as the types of projects they fund. Make a *clear and strong link between their priorities and your good idea*. Remember, you want them to “buy” your project, so sell it by explaining how your research or scholarly creative activity advances their cause. Extract a relevant quote from the funder’s strategic plan, and use words and phrases from other documents so the program officer literally sees their organization reflected in the description of your project. **It’s best to either keep the length of a LOI to one page, or add pictures, graphics, or diagrams to make it two pages.**

**The Team:** Provide a brief description of the team and their expertise in one to two sentences. The contacts at the bottom of the page should include the appropriate leader of your organization most aware of your project (i.e. Dean, Director, Chair, etc.) and the principal investigator (PI)/project director (PD).

**The Need**: The goal of this section is to answer four questions: 1) What is the problem your project will address? 2) Who is affected by the problem? 3) Is the issue compelling? 4) Will your project make an impact?A significant story or statistic will make this section memorable. Statistics gain the reader’s interest, but stories often gain support. A popular saying is “statistics raise eyebrows-stories raise money.”Finally, describe *why your project matters; what is the “so what?”* As you craft this description, keep in mind that most program officers or other staff at the agency are not as immersed as you are in the topic. Therefore, you must persuade them that they really should care about your project by linking the problem to their organization’s funding priorities and describing the potential short- and long-term impact of your project.

**Initial Data Collected:** Only include this section if you have preliminary or pilot data.

**Project Description (or “Plans for Continued Research”):** Use the latter title if you have initial data collected. Concisely describe your project, including *what you plan to do* and how you plan to do it); *who is involved* in the research; and *who will benefit*, directly and indirectly. If it is a pilot project to collect preliminary data and/or refine research methodologies, be direct in saying so. Describe the *innovative aspects of your research approach* to set your project apart from other projects the reviewer has seen. *Connect the description to The Need* presented in the previous section by indicating the extent to which your project fills in an existing gap or expands upon the literature and addresses a critical problem or need. Using information in your *Project Work Plan*, include a few major *milestones and a concise, general timeline* of what you will accomplish. As always, avoid the temptation to include the nitty-gritty details.

**Future Goals:** Describe future goals to expand the project after this initial phase is complete.

**Conclusion:** Restate why the project is important and how it is innovative; its goal(s), objectives, and expected outcomes; and how it adds new knowledge to your field. Then think in broad, grandiose terms and identify who benefits from the research project, considering its impact upon your participants as well as the college and university, San Marcos, Central Texas, the US, the world.

End this section with a strong statement of how the project *aligns with the funder’s strategic priorities* and the potential broader impacts of your findings.

**References:** (only include this if appropriate/necessary)