

GUIDELINES TO DRAFTING A STATEMENT OF WORK

The Statement of Work (SOW) is attached to a Sponsored Research Agreement or a Subcontract/Sub-award Agreement and describes the work to be performed. The SOW should describe the tasks to be performed, the deliverables to be provided to the sponsor and the dates the deliveries are to be made. (Payments may also be associated with the deliverables, particularly if you are working on a fixed-price agreement.) The SOW should also contain a timeline for performance of the project.

SOWs that lack specificity in describing the tasks, the deliverables dates, and a measurable timeline for completing tasks and providing the deliverables can often lead to contract disputes because of ambiguities in the agreement and the expectations of the parties. To avoid such disputes, it is important for the parties to be specific in defining tasks, deliverables, timelines, and expectations. If the performance of the project is dependent on any action to be taken by the sponsor, those obligations of the sponsor should also be specifically defined.

The following outlines key elements of a well-defined SOW. Not all of the elements need be present to create a sufficient SOW, but they are recommended in order to reduce ambiguity.

GLOSSARY

Define any acronyms used in this SOW. Remember...the SOW may be reviewed by the sponsor's business and legal teams, so make sure any terms are clearly defined for non-technical reviewers.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Succinctly describe the problem that this research will address (1 or 2 paragraphs is fine). This may include a brief summary of the current scientific and technological state of the art or the developmental status of the field to be advanced.

PROJECT GOALS

At the beginning of this section, succinctly complete the following sentence:

The goal of this project is to....

(Complete the sentence with a brief description of the goal(s) and how the goal(s) will be met. Goals can be technical, economic or social. This too can be brief but try to make the goals as specific as possible.)

PROJECT TASKS

List the specific tasks to be performed for this project.

Poor example:

Task 1: Assess class needs for public health awareness.

Better example:

Task 1: Survey 4 classes of 20 students in asthma awareness. Each class will answer a 25 question survey that assesses their general knowledge of asthma issues as they relate to public health. One reviewer should take about 1 hour with each class to take the survey and another 2 hours per class to assess the data.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

List the anticipated deliverables. Under agreements for fundamental research the deliverables will probably be limited to interim and final reports.

Poor example:

“PI will be required to give weekly reports of progress during the soybean season with more frequent reports during the height of the season.”

The problem with the above example is that it does not specify what needs to be in the reports, what “more frequent” means, and when the “height of the season” is.

Better example:

“PI will be required to give weekly reports consisting of: wind pattern analysis, fungi spore distribution, and potential risk areas. During the height of the season, May 15-July 15, the PI may be required to give bi-weekly reports.”

PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

If there are meetings, conferences, or other administrative requirements of the project, they should be outlined in this section. Any requirement that is not an end product of a Project Task but is required by the performing party should be described here.

PROJECT TIMELINE

This section provides all dates for the project. It states dates for the tasks and deliverables. It also covers the dates for the administration portion of the statement of work. Under a fixed-price type agreement, the payments may be tied to the deliverables.

Example:

This project is expected to be completed 3 months from project start date.

	Tasks	Date	Payments
	Project Start	5/15/2013	\$10,000
T1	Milestone 1 – Task 1 completed and Interim report delivered.	6/28/2013	\$10,000
T2	Milestone 2 – Task 2 completed.	7/19/2013	\$10,000
	Project End. Final report delivered.	8/16/2013	\$10,000