

White Paper Basics:

White papers are short, often unsolicited, and describe a project enabling a prospective sponsor to decide whether to learn more about the project or to make a commitment in advance to support it. White papers are also useful in attracting collaborators (other faculty, other universities, advisory board members, etc.) to join in the work of the project. Companies and Federal defense agencies often request white papers as a way of gaining information on research projects that may be of interest to them; such sponsors may then request more detailed proposals.

White papers describe a problem and a proposed approach, give a ballpark budget figure, and tell what the perceived benefits will be. Thus, a white paper is both a description of a problem and a proposed solution. It is also a marketing tool that is designed to generate interest in the proposed undertaking.

A white paper should be 1-2 pages in length or longer if you are so instructed. White papers are brief yet readable documents. **Write for your audience. Write to persuade your reader to join with you on the project.**

- Be clear and to the point
- Format your paper with sections clearly identified and easily skimmed
- Make sure the proposed sponsor understands:
 - the problem
 - your proposed solution
 - expected costs
 - anticipated benefits of the project
 - what it can gain by supporting the effort

What follows are descriptions of sections that should be included in a white paper. You can add sections to this list, restructure, or simplify it to suit the needs of your proposal and the sponsor or person you are trying to entice.

1. Identifying Information

1. Project title
2. Principal Investigator
3. Institution (TU and other confirmed collaborators)
4. Industry collaborator(s), proposed partner(s) or Sponsor
5. PI contact information
6. Deadline (preferred or actual) for response from recipient of white paper

2. Executive Summary

Summarize the need for this service/product/research, your approach, anticipated outcomes - including benefits

- and underscore the qualifications of the PI and TU ("why we are the best ones to do this work and to do it here"). The summary presents the key ideas and gives the reader cues on material that will follow in the white paper. Include project vision and goal in this section. Objectives are also sometimes itemized, as well as some sense of timing (i.e., "This is envisioned as a eighteen-month project.")

3. Description of problem

Describe the present state of affairs and what is problematic – this leads to the issues you intend to address. By showing you know what has been accomplished to-date in the field, you strengthen your position as an expert.

4. Partners

Reference the current relationship with the sponsor or partner you are trying to entice for this project and talk about how this project will enhance that relationship.

5. Proposed Project

This is the heart of the white paper. The nature of the white paper and any instructions you are following for it will determine the depth of your explanation in these areas. Describe:

- Overall solution
- Details of the product design
 - diagrams where appropriate
- What the product/research will do and how it will work
- Novel aspects of the product/research or the approach
- Activities and/or tasks that are involved
- Evaluation methods you will employ to determine the project's effectiveness

6. Expected Results

What do you hope to accomplish? How will this improve TU's program(s)? What will be the impact on students (undergrad and grad)? What will be the broader impact of the project? What will the partner/sponsor gain?

7. Engagement between Partners

How will the partners in this enterprise interact? How frequently? What will be the partners' broad areas of responsibility?

8. Personnel

Who will work on the project and what are their general qualifications, roles and responsibilities? Will students be involved and how?

9. Funding

Give a ballpark figure for the project (your Senior Research Administrator can help on this). Will TU or other sources provide cost share for the project? (Check with your SRA first if you require cost sharing.)

10. References

List references cited, including references on previous key works in the field and on pedagogy as appropriate.

(Rochester Institute of Technology, One Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623-5603
© Rochester Institute of Technology. All Rights Reserved | [Disclaimer](#) | [Copyright Infringement](#)
Questions or concerns? Send us [feedback](#). Telephone: 585-475-2411)