Electronic Signature and Approval Process

Submitting a Proposal Package Electronically
| CONTENTS |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| DocuSign® Overview | 2 |
| **Account Setup** | 2 |
| **Getting Started** | 2 |
| The Proposal Routing Structure | 3 |
| Powerform Signer Information | 3 |
| Access Code Authentication | 4 |
| General Nondisclosure Agreement | 4 |
| **The Proposal Package Envelope** | 5 |
| Envelope Layout | 5 |
| More Options | 6 |
| **Signing Documents** | 6 |
| Adopting a Signature | 6 |
| Drawing A Signature | 7 |
| **Completing the Envelope** | 7 |
| Application to Seek Off-Campus Funds | 7 |
| Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form | 8 |
| F&A Waiver/Reduction Form | 8 |
| Authorization for Matching Funds/Cost Sharing | 9 |
| NIH PI Assurance Form | 9 |
| **Completing the Process** | 9 |
| **Frequently Asked Questions** | 10 |
| Support | 15 |
DOCUSIGN® OVERVIEW

This guide provides information on how to access, complete, sign, submit, and track a proposal package envelope using DocuSign®. Electronic signing provides a quick, easy, and secure method for signing and submitting internal research forms without the need to appear in person.

ACCOUNT SETUP

A DocuSign® account is not necessary for the submission or signature of a proposal package, but it is useful for tracking and managing submissions. Accounts can be created by the user or by the RAS upon request.

GETTING STARTED

Before beginning this process, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- **RAS will not review or submit incomplete proposal packages.** Be sure that submissions are in the FINAL form, as required by the sponsor. Once the submission has been sent to the next person for review, access to that envelope will not be available.
- **RAS reserves the right to withdraw for consideration, any submission that was received by RAS less than five (5) full business days prior to the submission deadline date.** When planning a submission, make sure to give each signer at least 48 hours to review and sign the submission. It is also important to make sure that there is ample time to resolve any issues that may be come up.
- **RAS reserves the right to withdraw for consideration, any proposal that lacks sponsor solicitation guidelines.** It is important that all sponsor guidelines are clearly followed as defined.
- **The PI may have someone else complete the proposal package for him or her.** Contact RAS if someone other than the PI is completing the proposal package.
- **There are limitations when using Grants.gov PDFs.** If the submission is a grants.gov submission, pay attention to the limitations and solutions explained on page 7.
- **Speak to a research administrator.** It is wise to consult with a research administrator before submission to avoid any errors in the submission.

To begin, go to the following page and click on the ‘Click here to submit a proposal to RAS’ link: [http://www.howard.edu/research/ras/esap.html](http://www.howard.edu/research/ras/esap.html)

Navigation to this link may also be possible by following the path below:

HU Website → Research & Innovation → Click on the red “Electronic Signature and Approval Process” link → Click on the “Click here to submit a proposal to RAS” link
THE PROPOSAL ROUTING STRUCTURE

Below is the current proposal routing structure for Academic Affairs and Health Sciences. This routing structure should be followed to properly route a proposal to RAS.

### ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>Andre Powell</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andre.powell@howard.edu">andre.powell@howard.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Jeanette Gibbs-Deshields</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jgibbs-deshields@howard.edu">jgibbs-deshields@howard.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/College Dean</td>
<td>Wayne Frederick</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wfrederick@howard.edu">wfrederick@howard.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Administrative Services</td>
<td>(<a href="mailto:ora@howard.edu">ora@howard.edu</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### HEALTH SCIENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>Jeanette Gibbs-Deshields</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jgibbs-deshields@howard.edu">jgibbs-deshields@howard.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Wayne Frederick</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wfrederick@howard.edu">wfrederick@howard.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/College Dean</td>
<td>Research Administrative Services</td>
<td>(<a href="mailto:ora@howard.edu">ora@howard.edu</a>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POWERFORM SIGNER INFORMATION

This is where you will define who will review and sign your envelope. Enter the name & Email address of the individuals who fit the listed roles. Keep the following in mind:

- If someone other than the actual PI is completing the proposal package, please contact RAS for advice on how to do this.
- Schools with no Chair can leave the space for the Chair blank.
- If a signer is going to be unavailable, the information of an alternate signer may be used. Contact the office of the signer for the information on who the alternate signer will be. This change may also be made later, while the document is en route.
- If the name or email address of a signer is unknown, please use the University website, Outlook, or other available resources to find it.

When all of the necessary information has been entered, click the Begin Signing button. An email will be immediately sent to the email address used for the PI, with an access code.
ACCESS CODE AUTHENTICATION

Access code authentication is a way to verify your identity to the system. The requested code is located in an email from DocuSign®. The subject line will begin with, “Email Validation.”

Copy the code from the email and paste it in the space provided on the screen displayed above. When you are done, click Validate. This code is unique to this proposal package envelope.

After the access code has been correctly entered, you will be taken to the General Nondisclosure Agreement.

GENERAL NONDISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

This page provides a short overview of the signing process and displays the consumer disclosure, which covers conducting business electronically with Howard University. You may review it at your leisure.

Everyone reviewing this envelope will have to perform the following task.

Select the checkbox to agree to conduct business electronically with Howard University and click the Review Document button to continue.

Important!
The Finish Later and Decline to Sign options will be discussed later and should be ignored at this point.
THE PROPOSAL PACKAGE ENVELOPE

This envelope includes documents such as a proposal checklist, the Application to Seek Off-Campus Funds, a Conflict of Interest Disclosure form, an F&A Waiver/Reduction form, a Matching/Cost Sharing Authorization form, and a NIH PI Assurance form (optional).

ENVELOPE LAYOUT

The right side of the page has icons that represent actual pages in the document. You can click on a page icon to jump to that page or use the scroll bar to navigate to a page.

- Grey pages contain read-only information.
- Green pages have fillable fields and options.
- Gold pages have objects that require an action or response.

The indicator icon on the left side is used to guide you through the process of completing and signing the envelope. The text shown in the indicator arrow displays the action you are expected to take. The text in the arrow changes as the indicator guides the signer through the envelope. The images below are examples of possible indicator arrows and with the expected actions:

- Select an item from a drop down list, a checkbox, or option button.
- Type information into the text box.
- Click the **Sign Here** or **Initial** tab to place a signature or initial in the document. You will be asked to adopt a signature.
- Once all of the required tasks are met, you can review the document and **Confirm Signing**.
- Provide some supporting documentation or attach your proposal.
- After adding information to a page, you can click **Next** to go to the next page.
Submitting a Proposal Package Electronically

**Important!**
All gold page icons must be green in order to send this to the next person in the routing structure. There are some pages that require you to choose an option from a dropdown box.

---

**MORE OPTIONS**

Located at the top-left of the screen is a button that says "More Options." Clicking this button reveals other features available to you while you are completing your envelope.

- **View History:** This option shows envelope data and history.
- **View Certificate:** This option opens a PDF version of the certificate of completion, which includes information about the envelope events.
- **View Consumer Disclosure:** This option shows the consumer disclosure for the envelope.
- **Change Signer:** Not applicable for now.
- **Decline to Sign:** Not applicable for now.
- **Markup:** Not applicable for now.
- **Finish Later:** This option lets you save what you have done. You may return to the document by using the Resume link in the Email Validation notification that included the access code.

---

**SIGNING DOCUMENTS**

This portion of the guide will show you how to sign or initial documents within the envelope. When you click on a **Sign Here** or **Initial** tab, you will be asked to adopt a signature and initials. Each signature has its own id code that links the signature to the email address of the signer. Since these are in-house documents and the identification code verifies the identity of the signers, RAS has agreed to accept any of these signatures.

---

**ADOPTING A SIGNATURE**

To adopt a signature:
- Verify that your name and initials are correct. Make any necessary changes.
- Select a style from the right to use for signatures and initials. This style is used for all signatures and initials in the document.
- Finally, click **Adopt your Signature** to save the information.
DRAWING A SIGNATURE

Depending on your browser, you may be able to draw your signature using various tools. After clicking **Draw** the signature styles are replaced with blocks for adding a signature and initials. This option is best with a touch pad or similar drawing device.

- In the **Draw your signature** and **Draw your Initials** blocks draw your signature/initials using your finger or stylus (for a touch-screen) or mouse.
- If you make a mistake, click **Try Again** to reset the block.
- Click **Adopt my Signature** to save your name, initial, and signature style and return to the document.
- You can return to the pre-set signature styles by clicking **Select a Signature Style**.

COMPLETING THE ENVELOPE

This section of the guide will give an overview of the various forms found in this envelope. It will also provide information on completing these forms. If further information or assistance is required in regard to completing these forms, please contact RAS.

APPLICATION TO SEEK OFF-CAMPUS FUNDS

This form is used as an overview of the project. Information on this form should be found in the actual proposal and supporting documents. Complete the form in its entirety, to the best of your knowledge. Page 6 is gold, which means that there is an action that you are required to take.

Use the **Attach** tag on this page to upload your proposal and any supporting documents. You may attach one document or many. Once a document has been attached, you have the option of attaching another. To remove an attached document or an **Attach** tag, click on the tag and select **Delete Tag**.

There are no space or size limitations to the documents. You may attach images or documents created in Word, Excel, Adobe PDF, or similar applications.

**Important!**
Grants.gov PDF documents cannot be attached to the envelope. These documents should be emailed to the members of the routing structure separately. It will be best to do so after you have sent your DocuSign® submission.

When all necessary documents have been attached and the form is complete, sign the document using the **Sign Here** tab.
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE FORM

This form must be completed using information regarding the PI. The first page of this document is gold because of the dropdown box located at the top of the page. Based on which of the following options that you choose from the dropdown box, further action may be required of you. You MUST choose one of the following two options from the dropdown box:

- **Supplemental Explanation:** The PI has a conflict of interest with this project. The PI is required to supply an explanation of the conflict. Use the Attach tag to attach a document explaining the conflict.

- **Additional COI Forms:** Choose this option if there are other key personnel listed in this project. These key personnel will have to complete a COI form from the RAS website and email a signed copy of the form to you. You can then attach the signed forms to the envelope using the Attach tag.

- **No COI Attachment:** The PI is the only key personnel on the project and has no conflict.

Complete the form and sign page 10.

F&A WAIVER/REDUCTION FORM

This form is gold because of the dropdown box located to the top of page 11. Depending on the option you choose from the dropdown, this form may or may not be required. You MUST choose one of the following two options from the dropdown box:

- **No F&A Waiver/Reduction Necessary:** If you choose this option, do not complete or sign the form. You may move on to the next page.

- **F&A Waiver/Reduction Necessary:** If you choose this option, you will be required to complete the form and attach a justification for the rate you wish to use. A letter from the sponsor or a copy of the RFP stating the rate is sufficient. You will also have to sign the form.

You may contact RAS to verify the current University F&A rates.
AUTHORIZATION FOR MATCHING FUNDS/COST SHARING

This is another form that may be required to complete based on the option chosen in the dropdown. Again, you MUST choose one of the following options from the dropdown box:

- **No Cost Sharing Required:** If you choose this option, do not complete or sign the form. You may move on to the next page.

- **Cost Sharing Required:** If this option is chosen, you will be required to complete the form and attach an explanation for use of cost sharing. You will also have to sign the form.

NIH PI ASSURANCE FORM

This form is required for any projects seeking funding from the NIH. This form should actually be downloaded from the RAS website, signed by all required people, and attached on page 6 as a supporting document.

COMPLETING THE PROCESS

When you have completed adding information to all the required pages in the envelope, the indicator arrow will change into a box with a Confirm Signing button and a message.

Before pressing the button, review the envelope and make any changes to the information as necessary. After you are done reviewing the document and making necessary changes, click the **Confirm Signing** button.

When you press the button, your information will be saved and you will see a message window stating that you are complete. A notice of the completed envelope is immediately sent to the next person in the routing structure for review and approval.

You are given the option of downloading a PDF copy or printing a copy of the envelope.

You also have the option of creating a free DocuSign® account. This should be ignored. RAS will create an account for you.

Close the message window by clicking the **X** in the upper right corner.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the roles of the two new signatories?

The signature of the Associate Vice President for Academic Finance (Andre Powell) or Executive Director of Health Sciences (Jeanette Gibbs Deshields) affirms that:
- an analysis has been performed on the total and effective Facilities and Administrative rate; and
- committed efforts of faculty and staff are in accordance with IBS or other equivalent source documents.

The signature of the Provost and Chief Academic Officer (Wayne Frederick) affirms that:
- the PI does not commit the University to anything that has not been approved by the proper authorities;
- appropriate letters of commitment from concerned subcontractors and faculty are included in the package;
- the budget and budget justifications are rational and intelligible; and
- the proposal, as drafted, represents the University well.

Where are the proposal packages stored?

DocuSign® is operated by a third party outside of the University. All documents are saved to DocuSign® servers and are accessible, even if the HU network is down.

Are electronic signatures legal?

In 2000, the U.S. Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce (ESIGN) Act established electronic records and signatures as legally binding, having the same legal effects as traditional paper documents and handwritten signatures. But not all eSignature solutions are created equal. Only DocuSign® warrants federal ESIGN Act compliance. Per European Directive 1999/93/EC, DocuSign®’s advanced signature is legally admissible and enforceable in the European Union. In fact, almost every civilized country in the world has adopted an electronic signature law, and the vast majority recognized DocuSign®’s form of electronic signature as meeting the definition of a valid electronic signature.

Since the documents included in the proposal package are primarily in-house documents, Research Administrative Services has agreed to accept documents signed electronically through DocuSign®.

How do I get a DocuSign® account?

The RAS staff will create and distribute accounts for PIs and other signers. Once complete, an introductory email will be sent to you with login credential information, reference material, and a link to the proposal package.
How I find out who are Alternate Signatories?

Reviewers, especially Department Chairs and Deans, should always inform their staff of when they will be unable to sign documents and who will be their designated signatory. It is up to the PI to contact signees to find out the status of signatory responsibilities.

Can the routing process be more parallel instead of hierarchal?

No. The routing process is a hierarchal in nature and DocuSign® follows the rules of that process.

Does the person I’ve asked to sign a document need an account?

No! Your signers don’t need an account, and they don’t need to buy anything.

Can some members of the routing process be edited or omitted?

It is recommended that all members of the routing process review and sign the proposal as necessary. If there is no other choice, the signature of the budget officer and AVP are the only signatures that are absolutely required in order for RAS to process a proposal.

The PI may edit signers or the order of signing by logging into their DocuSign® account.

Can I edit signers once the proposal has already begun the routing process?

Yes. As the PI, you have full control of the routing of the document.

What is an envelope?

An envelope is a collection of documents that are sent to recipients for review and signature.

Do I have to sign all of the documents? If not, which ones require signature, etc.?

No. There are some documents that are required and some that are mandatory based on your research. The Application to Seek off-Campus Funds and Conflict of Interest Disclosure forms are always required. Forms such as the F&A Waiver/Reduction Request, Cost Sharing Authorization are only required if the items are included in the proposal.

What fields in the document are required?

Each required form must be thoroughly completed before it is submitted. Before you confirm signing a document, make sure that it has been completely filled out and all additional attachments are included.
Can any of the information on the forms be pre-populated?

There are limits to what information can be pre-populated due to the fact that all PIs are using the same template and pre-populated data may not be applicable to some PIs. For example, PIs have different Chairs and Deans depending on the school or college under which they are employed.

How do I go about making a change after I have submitted the proposal to be routed?

Once you have submitted a proposal through the routing process, no changes can be made unless the proposal is marked up by a reviewer within the routing process.

Can I print or save the document at any stage?

Yes. The PI or anyone who has signed a document may save or print the document at any time. To save the document, use the Finish Later feature under More Options. To get back into the document, click on the Resume link in the email containing the access code.

How can I "mark-up"/edit a document within DocuSign®?

A signer may wish to suggest a change to a document by using the mark-up feature. The document will be sent back to the PI with the suggested edits. The PI will have to make the changes and sign off on those changes.

How do I track a proposal?

The PI may edit signers or the order of signing by logging into their DocuSign® account. Signers may view the date and time previous signatures were made.

How do you know who signed?

As the individual requesting that a document be DocuSign®ed, you control who signs by providing the signer’s email address and other contact information in the beginning of the process. The document is routed to the signer’s email with a request to sign. DocuSign® records the signer’s IP address and a timestamp of the signing activity.

DocuSign® gives you complete visibility and control. You can log into your account and see who’s viewed your proposal, who’s signed it, and who’s on deck to sign next.

What document types are supported in DocuSign®?

You can use DocuSign® to sign any kind of document: .doc, .docx, .pdf, .xls, .xlsx, .txt… anything. Grants.gov PDF documents cannot be attached to DocuSign®. These documents should be emailed to the members of the routing structure separately. It will be best to do so after you have completed your DocuSign® submission.
Is a DocuSign® Signature a “Digital Signature”?

No. DocuSign® lets you create an electronic signature, which is not the same as a digital signature.

An electronic signature, as defined by the Federal E-SIGN Act, is an “electronic sound, symbol or process, attached to or logically associated with a contract or other record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the record” (ESIGN). All 50 states have laws that define electronic signatures in substantially the same way.

Whereas, a digital signature or digital signature scheme is a mathematical scheme for determining the source of a digital message or document. A digital signature by definition is a technology, a method of authenticating. It does not by itself meet the standards of what constitutes a valid electronic signature, nor does it mean that the signer’s identity has been verified. Digital signatures are most often used to apply a digital “seal” to an electronic document in order to make it tamper-evident. In fact, DocuSign® uses digital signatures in this way; DocuSign® customers and signers have the option to apply a digital signature to a DocuSign®ed document when the transaction is complete.

So when you need to get a legally-binding signature, make sure you’re using a complete electronic signature solution.

How does my signature get in there?

The first time you sign a document, you’ll be asked to adopt a signature. You can type in your name and select a signature style, create one with your mouse, or use a stylus on a tablet PC. This signature will be associated with a unique identifier so that every document you sign will be recorded as signed by you and you alone. The process of uploading a scanned image of your pen-and-paper signature is currently being researched.

Can I be notified each time a document is signed?

Yes, but we have elected not to activate this feature. Instead, you will receive and email notification when the document has completed the process.

What do I do if the process is held up by RAS?

RAS staff has been trained to respond to DocuSign® submissions in a timely manner. If there has been no movement within RAS, it is suggested that you contact RAS.

What do I do if the process is held up by another reviewer?

We ask that all signees respond to DocuSign submissions within 2 business days. We ask that PIs contact signees who take longer to respond.
Can notification emails be edited by the PI?

Yes. The PI may change the rate at which email reminders are sent to recipients. The default rate is currently set to 1 day, which is the shortest interval currently available.

Can reminders be sent to reviewers?

The PI may set email reminders to documents at an interval of their choosing. Email reminders are managed in the PI’s DocuSign® account.

What internet browsers support DocuSign®?

DocuSign® has been tested on and works fine with Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Apple Safari. It is also compatible with most mobile-based browsers.

Does DocuSign® support SMS messaging?

DocuSign® does not support SMS messaging, but you can get email reminders on a mobile device if you sync your HU email to your mobile device.

What if I am a PI and the Chair or Dean?

Enter your name and email address in each applicable area of the routing process. You will be required to sign as the PI and as the Chair or Dean.

Does this process affect the deadline to submit a proposal to RAS?

No. When submitting a proposal for routing, PIs should keep in mind that proposals should be received by RAS at least 5 business days prior to the proposal deadline date given by the sponsor. We ask all reviewers to sign DocuSign submissions within 2 business days.

Can the routing process be auto-populated?

Yes. Unfortunately, all PIs are using the same template. The idea of creating a different template for every PI is not efficient.
SUPPORT

RAS is available to receive any questions or comments regarding DocuSign®. Please feel free to contact any of us at any time. You may call us at (202) 806-4759 or email us using the information below:

**LeeRoy Smith**  
*Technical Support Specialist*  
leesmith@howard.edu

**Scott Hodgkins**  
*Director, Financial Systems*  
shodgkins@howard.edu