



Guidelines for Writing a Scope of Work

The Scope of Work (SOW) is the portion of sponsored research agreement where the work to be performed is described. The SOW should contain any milestones, reports, deliverables, and end products that are expected to be provided by the performing party. The SOW should also contain a timeline for all deliverables.

In crafting the SOW, it is best to be as clear and specific as possible. Incorporating the 6 fundamental components outlined below can help avoid ambiguity and set the foundation for a strong research relationship.

A Scope of Work should include the following components:

1. Glossary
2. Problem Statement
3. Goals of the Agreement
4. Objectives of the Agreement/Deliverables
5. Administration
6. Timeline.

1. Glossary

In the Glossary, spell out each acronym used in the SOW. Also include definitions of odd or unusual terms. Think about the document from the perspective of someone who does not work in the particular industry or discipline.

2. Problem Statement

Succinctly describe the problem that this research will address (1 or 2 paragraphs is fine). Describe the scientific and technological baseline, that is, the current state-of-the-art or developmental status of the field to be advanced.

3. Goals of the Agreement

At the beginning of this section, complete the following sentence (please be succinct):

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. Please be brief, two to three sentences maximum.

4. Objective of the Agreement/Deliverable

Complete this section with the objectives of the project, which are things that will be measurable or knowable at the end of this agreement—this is where the deliverables should be listed. Deliverables are comprised of a task and an end product.

The Glossary, Problem Statement, Goals of the Agreement, Objectives /Deliverables, and Administration components of the SOW should remove ambiguity as to what is expected of the performing party. Together, these elements should paint a thorough picture of what is expected, when, and in what form, while noting any special requirements. (New York University, 2020)



MIT and MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory scope of work guidelines include:

1

What problem(s) are you interested in solving that CSAIL might be able to assist with?
Background of the project – who initiated the project and who are the stakeholders?

2

To the extent it's not obvious in the above, why is this difficult, i.e., what are the key challenges in the work?

3

Describe the project listing both the business objective AND the research objective as related to the business objective.

4

Is there work being done on the problem (inside your organization or by others) that you know of, and if so, how does it fall short of solving the problem?

5

What do you imagine the length of the project to be, i.e., is this more likely to be 1, 3, 5, ... person-years of work? What would the significant milestones be? At what intervals in the project's duration?

6

What would you like to see as the outcome of this work (a technique, an implemented algorithm, ...)? The deliverables should be clearly stated.

7

What will be the communication plan? Who will point communication from your company? How will you communicate on project progress? (NOTE: research takes time and weekly status calls are not recommended)

8

What is the budget for this project?

9

What is the approval process? Establish process for review of deliverables and approvals.

For questions and additional information, please contact the
MIT CSAIL Alliances Client Relations team at: alliances@csail.mit.edu

cap.csail.mit.edu/about-us/meet-our-team

