Hot Topics

OSR-Evanston Quarterly Network
Monday, April 13\textsuperscript{th}
Kelly Morrison, Associate Director
Uniform Guidance Check-In

• The OMB “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards” was released on December 26, 2013
• The “Uniform Guidance” consolidates the eight federal circulars that govern financial assistance (grants), including A-21, A-110 and A-133, also effectively consolidating grantee communities
• Meant to ease administrative burden and strengthen oversight over Federal funds to reduce risks of waste, fraud and abuse
  • Effective December 26, 2014
What’s happening?

• Review of policies and procedures is continuing
• In certain areas, moving forward – in others, waiting still on final guidance
• Federal Demonstration Partnership/Research Terms and Conditions
• Piloting changes in certain areas
  – Subcontracting
  – Procurement
• Keep in mind that certain areas are business as usual for Northwestern for the time being
  – Effort reporting
Compensation – Fringe Benefits

• Costs for unused (terminal) leave cannot be direct charged to an award

• Cost of leave should be recognized in the period that the leave is taken and paid for

• Northwestern is incorporating terminal leave benefit into fringe benefits rate, as opposed to direct charging sponsored project at time of employee separation

• Not anticipated that this change in methodology will significantly affect fringe benefits rates
  • Fully operational by FY2016
Subrecipient Monitoring

- Increased scrutiny for monitoring subrecipients
  - Risk assessments
  - Technical and financial reporting
  - Use of fixed price
  - De minimus F&A rate of 10% MTDC for subs w/o federally-negotiated rate
- Northwestern working to implement changes to both risk assessment and ongoing monitoring
- Emphasis on distinguishing between subrecipient categorization/selection and vendor categorization/selection
- System tracking associated with cost reimbursable and fixed price
- Emphasis that changes related to review of technical and financial reports may require increased engagement at PI/department levels
What’s happening?

• Upcoming Sessions
  – Subcontracting under the UG – May 2015
  – Dedicated FDP/RTC session

• Continued engagement of deans’ offices and broader research community regarding changes (process, policy)

• Please send any questions or feedback to Uniform-Guidance@northwestern.edu

• UG page on ASRSP website: http://www.northwestern.edu/asrsp/federal-initiatives/uniform-guidance.html
NSF Proposal Reviews

• In recent years, NSF has become more and more stringent with administrative requirements
• Recently, we have seen more and more proposal file updates – and proposal rejections
• Keep in mind that
  – Proposal file updates are often at the discretion of the Program Officer
  – We typically see proposal file updates allowed after the implementation of a new GPG – in a few months, these same issues could turn to administrative rejections
Returning Proposals w/o Review

- GPG update indicates that a proposal will not be accepted or will be returned without review for specific reasons outlined.

- Rejections in recent months
  - **Font & Spacing**
    - Allowable fonts
    - No more than 6 lines of text within a vertical space of 1 inch
    - 1” margins, all directions
  - **NSF Results from NSF Prior Support**
    - Missing certain required information (e.g., total award amount)
    - Missing for one involved PI or Co-PI
    - Missing two separate sections discussing intellectual merit and broader impacts
Results from Prior NSF Support

• Note that Results from Prior NSF Support includes current NSF funding (PI and Co-Is)
• Maximum of 5 pages (within 15-page Project Description)
• The following information must be included –
  • Award Number, Amount, and Period
  • Title of Project
  • Summary of the Results (separate sections on Broader Impacts & Intellectual Merit)
  • Publications
  • Evidence of Research Products
  • If proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work
Recent Proposal File Updates

• Project Description – “Broader Impacts of the Proposed Work”
• Letters of support vs. letters of collaboration
• Biographical Sketches
  – Location
  – Synergistic activities
  – Numbers of total collaborators & co-editors, sponsors
Business Functions of OSR

• Proposal review and submission is the predominant business function of OSR
• Others include
  – Agreement negotiation, award establishment, subcontract issuance, non-financial post-award, some financial post-award!, training/outreach, ERA/information
• With regard to proposal processing, OSR-Evanston is most interested in the development and submission of the administrative shell

OSR is currently engaging in two projects, one focused on proposal workflow and one on award workflow – both focused on systematic solutions to tracking these activities
Overview of Proposal Workflow Goals

• Improve the *quality* of proposal development and submission
  – More compliant proposals
  – More competitive proposals
• Improve the *efficiency* of proposal development and submission
  – Clearer roles and expectations reduce “guesswork” and “re-work”
  – Assignment of resources to risks
• Improve the *transparency* of proposal development and submission
  – Less reliant on anecdotes
  – Promotes accountability at all levels
• Improve overall organizational health and decisionmaking
  – Promotes internal consistency at all levels
  – Human resources go further
  – Establish operations/training feedback loop; help set training priorities
Award Workflow

• While proposals represent the predominant function of OSR-Evanston, awards are another significant piece
• Award set-up process
• Focus on transparency and accountability – same themes from proposal workflow
• Developing process in InfoEd that will track on where an award is in workflow
• Keep in mind this process will focus on tracking award set-up once an award is in place
  – Unilateral award arrives
  – Bi-lateral or multi-lateral award is fully executed
Questions?