

Hot Topics

OSR-Evanston Quarterly Network

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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?



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