ANNOUNCEMENT

Date: September 7, 2017

To: Provost, Deans, Department Chairs
From: Jay Walsh, Vice President for Research

Subj: Expansion of Voucher and Cost Sharing Programs for Core Facilities

Objectives of the Voucher Programs

1) For faculty, these programs
   a. provide a financial reward for writing a successful instrumentation grant and placing the instrument in a core facility
   b. provide a financial reward for donating an instrument to a core facility as part of recruitment or retention
   c. provide financial support for general use of core facilities as part of recruitment or retention

2) For directors of core facilities, these programs
   a. provide new resources and support for core facilities
   b. allow them to be active partners in supporting the research programs of faculty

3) For business administrators of core facilities, these programs
   a. support and strengthen the financial health of core facilities
   b. help cores attain financial sustainability

4) For central administrators, these programs
   a. maximize the University’s investment in core facilities
   b. encourage a healthy, collaborative environment among faculty, core directors and administrators in strengthening and maintaining Northwestern’s leadership in core facilities
   c. help the financial health of the cores allowing them to prosper

Background

The Office for Research (OR), through its Core Facilities Administration (CFA), supports approximately 50 university shared and core facilities on its Evanston and Chicago campuses as well in partnerships with Argonne National Laboratory and Northwestern Memorial Hospital Corporation. Core facilities are research laboratories created by faculty and supported by the University to meet the collective needs of its research community.

Core facilities are essential components of a modern research university providing state-of-the-art instrumentation and services under the supervision of experts on a fee-for-service basis. By sharing the cost, researchers have access to equipment, services, and expert technical support that would otherwise be too expensive to fund in their own labs.
Core facilities allow researchers within and outside of the University the opportunity to extend the breadth of their research programs and to integrate their programs across disciplines in novel ways. Core facilities facilitate collaborations and partnerships with the broader research community, and they are a creative, innovative response to the economic realities of scientific research in the 21st century.

Program Descriptions

I. Voucher Program: CFA provides financial incentives (vouchers) for faculty who help support core facilities. Support of a core facility can take the form of writing a successful external grant for instrumentation that is placed into a core facility, donating a new instrument to a core facility that is purchased with retention or start-up funds, or assigning a portion of retention or start-up funds for general use of core facilities. Vouchers take the form of credits to pay for use of instruments and services in core facilities.

A. Voucher for New Instruments to Core Facilities – this program rewards faculty who donate a new, cutting-edge instrument that can benefit multiple research groups. The voucher is for use of that instrument only, and it is funded by CFA. New instruments can be purchased using either internal (recruitment/retention) or external (grant) funds. Placing an instrument into a core facility allows faculty to share the operating costs and technical support with other investigators while maintaining privileged access to the instrument of up to two weeks in advance of other users.

B. Voucher for General Use of Core Facilities – this program allows faculty to use any instrument or service provided by a core facility. It is supported as part of recruitment and retention packages, and it is funded by the Provost, VPR and Schools using the standard cost sharing formula. By ear-marking funds for core facilities, the University encourages these faculty to take advantage of shared resources and services, expanding the user base and contributing to a steady income stream for that core facility.

II. Cost Sharing Program: OR’s Office for Sponsored Research (OSR) manages cost sharing requests related to grants (mandatory and voluntary - https://osr.northwestern.edu/proposals/costsharing). Cost Sharing represents the sponsored project or program costs (direct and indirect) that would normally be borne by a sponsor but instead are covered by the University or a third party, such as a subcontractor or an unfunded collaborator. “Cost matching” is often treated interchangeably with the term “cost sharing”; however, the term “cost matching” often refers to cost sharing agreements in which the amount of sponsor funding is based on an equal or proportionate commitment from the University.

OR is expanding the existing Cost Sharing Program to include instrumentation grants that, if funded, place the instrument into a core facility. This new initiative is outlined below, and provides benefits to all stakeholders as described in the Objectives.
C. **Cost Sharing of New Equipment for Core Facilities** – this program provides support for voluntary cost sharing for external instrumentation grants that covers costs that might not be allowable on the grant, e.g., service and maintenance contracts, additional staff or administrative personnel, upgrades to existing instruments that complement the new instrument, and support that enhances marketing activities (website development, brochures, workshops/training). This support enables these activities to occur without creating a financial burden that causes user fees to increase and enables replacement and/or upgrade of auxiliary items. Voluntary cost sharing is handled prior to proposal submission in conjunction with the Office for Sponsored Research according to its usual guidelines (see [https://osr.northwestern.edu/proposals/costsharing](https://osr.northwestern.edu/proposals/costsharing)) Funded by CFA and Schools and capped at $130K (see Table 1C, below).

Table 1. **Highlights of the expanded Voucher and Cost Sharing Programs**: These programs include one ongoing type of support (A) plus two new types of support (B and C). Types A and Type B occur at the recruitment and retention negotiation stage. Type C occurs before the submission of an equipment grant to an external agency. The account owner is responsible for ensuring that the funds are spent in core facilities.

(Abbreviations: PI - Principal Investigator; CF - Core Facility; CFA - Core Facilities Administration; Dept - Department)

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<th>Type</th>
<th>Program Highlights</th>
<th>Beneficiary</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Administration</th>
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</table>
| A    | Rewards PIs for placing new equipment in CFs (grant, recruitment/retention)  
- Equipment > $100K  
- Award = $10K max (prorated for equipment less than $600K) | PIs, CFs | • No maintenance cost to faculty  
• Professional staff to maintain eq.  
• Two-week advanced scheduling  
• Voucher used to offset user charges for the new instrument | Account owned and managed by CF |
| B    | Promotes usage of services in CFs (recruitment/retention)  
- Award >= $20K  
- No time limit | PIs, CFs | • Unrestricted use in CFs  
• Relieves funding pressure  
• Provides central support of CFs | Account owned and managed by Dept |
| C    | Supports costs related to new equipment in CFs funded by external sources  
- 25% of the first $200K  
- 10% of the next $800K  
- Award = $130K max. | CFs | • Covers costs related to new equipment (service contract, personnel, accessories, professional development, etc.)  
• Relieves burden of raising rates to cover these costs | Account owned and managed according to cost share agreement |

Should you have any questions, please contact the Director of Core Facilities Administration, Dr. Andy Ott, at a-ott@northwestern.edu. A website about this program and Q&As is being setup.