

Meeting Summary for DGA Meeting (09/12/2024)

Quick recap

Michele announced the resignation of Andrea Thomas and welcomed Catie Maas to the cost accounting unit. Blair shared that there are new TDX tickets coming soon. Eric discussed the NIFA indirect cost limitation policy and presented a flow chart and budget templates to manage a complex process involving federally negotiated rates and subawards. The team also discussed various case studies.

Next steps

- Eric to update and upload the new NIFA budget template to the OSP website.
- Michele to send out the NIFA flowchart and budget templates to the DGA listserv.
- OSP team to continue iterating on the NIFA budget calculator to address all scenarios.
- Eric and Michele to work on incorporating the NIFA calculations into the detailed budget template.
- OSP team to provide case-by-case assistance on NIFA proposals until the process is finalized.

OSP Updates

Michele announced the resignation of Andrea Thomas in Post Award and welcomed Catie Maas to the Cost Accounting Unit. Blair provided updates on new TDX tickets. Blair also mentioned a new flag added to TDX by OIT, which may affect visibility of certain personnel in the TDX system. She discussed ongoing issues with the ticket assignment process and encouraged team members to reach out to osp-web@uidaho.edu for assistance. Mindy raised a concern about accessing tickets she was added to, and Blair explained that this could be due to incorrect linking. Blair assured the team that they are working on these issues and asked for patience.

USDA NIFA TFFA Indirect Costs

Eric discussed the NIFA indirect cost policy affecting USDA NIFA applications. Key points:

1. Policy change: Subawards excluded from NIFA TFFA rate calculation.
2. Rate determination: Lower of negotiated rate or TFFA rate is used.
3. Adjustment: If subawards use lower rate than TFFA, UI's indirect cost rate will increase to maximum allowable.
4. Tools in development:
 - Calculator (being refined)
 - Integration into budget justification/template
 - Flow chart for process management
5. Process complexity:
 - Varies based on presence of subawards
 - Case-by-case approach until method is finalized
6. Support offered:

- Templates to aid calculations
- Encouragement to ask questions and report issues

Additional updates:

7. New template:

- Discussed potential upload to OSP website
- Eric to collaborate with Blair

Eric continues to refine the process and tools, while the team explores practical applications through case studies.

Project Submission and Eligibility Discussion

Chelsea from Pre Award presented the first case study, which involved a proposal solicitation from NSF. Meladi discussed the submission window for a project, which was open from September 1st to September 18th. She clarified that the submission time was based on Moscow time, not Idaho Falls time. Chelsea and Eric confirmed that the project could be submitted via both research.gov and grants.gov, with research.gov being preferred by OSP. They also discussed the eligibility of Dr. Fu as the lead PI, with no restrictions mentioned in the solicitation. Eric added that there were internal restrictions at the University of Idaho (see APM 45.22). Rodrigo provided the budget parameters for the project, which were \$600,000 for a 3-year award duration for track one and \$1.2 million for a 3-4 year duration for track two, with no cost share required.

Techcorp Research Project Costs

Tami discussed a case study involving Dr. Lee and Techcorp, a technology company, collaborating on a research project to develop new battery technologies. The project's total direct costs were \$750,000, with 75% of the work on campus and 25% off campus. They determined the correct F&A rate by considering the sponsor and the location of the work. They concluded that the on-campus industry rate should be used, which is 57.1 3% modified total direct costs. They then calculated the indirect costs for the project, which amounted to \$285,650. Finally, they determined the total direct and indirect costs for the project, which were \$1,035,650. Tami stressed the importance of using the university's federally negotiated rate for sponsored projects, unless specific conditions apply.

Collaboration Classification

Cindy led a discussion on how to classify collaborations in research proposals, with Brittany suggesting that programmatic work should be classified as a subaward, while maintenance services should be classified as a service contract. Mindy raised a point about collaborative proposals where funding is separate, which could affect the classification. Cindy emphasized the need to understand the programmatic work and reach out for help when dealing with complex situations. Cindy shared to submit a TDX ticket for subaward versus service contracts determination and to direct PIs to relevant resources.

Allowable and Unallowable Costs

Heather led a discussion on the topic of 'allowable versus unallowable costs' in grant funding. The team discussed various scenarios, including a grant for a conference in Hawaii, a week-long stay at a luxury resort, and a rental car for the duration. They identified which costs appeared to be allowable and reasonable, and which were unallowable. The team also discussed potential alternatives for unallowable costs, such as using personal funds or non-grant funds. Heather facilitated the discussion, and the team shared their insights and experiences.

PI's Consultant Request and Guidelines

The team discussed a case where a Principal Investigator (PI) wanted to budget a colleague as a consultant on an NSF proposal, with a consulting fee of \$10,500 per day. The team raised concerns about the short notice given by the PI, the classification of the university as a consultant or sub-recipient, and the justification for the high daily rate. They also discussed the potential misuse of funds and the need for a revised scope of work. The team agreed to refer to the OSP's 4-day business rule, sponsor limitations, and professional services costs guidelines to guide the PI. They also considered the need for a qualified bid for services.

NSF Cost Sharing and Budget Constraints

Eric discussed the National Science Foundation (NSF) program's budget constraints and the implications of voluntary cost sharing. He highlighted that NSF generally disapproves of cost sharing and that it is not allowable under most NSF RFPs. Eric also mentioned that research.gov won't let you submit a proposal if there's someone in the budget without any costs associated with them. The team agreed that the budget justification should only include items in the budget, and any mention of voluntary cost sharing should be removed or refined. They also discussed the process of obtaining a waiver for voluntary cost share and the importance of ensuring the budget matches the scope of work. The team ended the conversation with a discussion on how to approach the Principal Investigator (PI) about these issues.