

## **Tips and Suggestions for Writing Grant Budgets**

General A budget is often the most scrutinized component of a grant proposal and can certainly make or break a project. Budgets are typically reviewed by the program officer once the project itself has been peer evaluated. The budget should be carefully researched with a detailed narrative explanation; page limitations often do not apply to the budget narrative. Follow the agency template or guidelines as closely as possible. Pay close attention to the budget categories and be sure you understand whether dollars can be moved from one category to another after an award is made. Be frugal and realistic in your requests and avoid using estimates in your budget—they suggest that you did not do your homework in preparing the proposal.

When an award is made it must go to a UWSP account; it cannot be received into a personal account. Our general ledger staff will maintain the account on your behalf. Budget reports will be sent from that office as well but you are responsible for preparing and submitting progress or status reports to the granting agency. You are also responsible for seeing that the award is used in conformity to the agency's guidelines and spent by the end of the award period. Usually, money left over at the end of the award will be returned to the agency (or simply not encumbered) unless an extension is granted by the agency. Arranging any extensions and providing proper notification to UWSP is your responsibility.

Salaries The university follows state and system guidelines as well as those of the granting agency in all disbursements from a grant account. Employees of the university may not, in general, receive more than 100% of their salary for work done on campus during a contract period. State and UW-System policies allow for overload payments only under certain circumstances. Overload salaries are limited to \$12,000 and you should check with the provost's office to determine whether overload is a possibility. If you have a 9-month contract, you may earn two ninths of your 9-month salary from university accounts during the summer months. If you have a 12-month contract, you may not, in general, earn additional salary from a university account during the summer. Any variations in this require approval from your line officer.

Wages should be in line with campus rates. Please contact the payroll office for the proper range. Salaries for academic staff members on grants must conform to the system ranges for the appointment. The current ranges can be found on the system web pages, the personnel office, or from the provost's office. New non-teaching academic staff positions must be properly titled by the Hayes-Hill Titling Advisory Committee; this committee will also assign the proper salary range. While this can be done after the grant award, it is a good practice to have the position titled before a proposal is submitted so the budget can accurately reflect the proper salary range.

Grant accounts will be charged for fringe benefits on all salaries and wages. This includes awards from other UW-System agencies. If fringe costs are not included in the budget when they should be, the project account or university unit must make up the difference from other categories and this can amount to a significant charge. The

current fringe rates for all categories of employees are available on the Grant Support web page.

**Raises** Your budget should include reasonable forecasts for increases in salaries; the budget office can help you make these projections. Academic staff members are often on promotion schedules and should not be denied promotion increases because grant budgets have not been structured to pay for the increases. It is thus very important to consider when promotions are due and to include the increases in the budget. Grant agencies sometimes question these increases so a line in the narrative to the effect that “UW-System personnel policies provide for promotions of x% during year y,” may be necessary. Questions can be directed to the budget or personnel offices.

**Matching Funds** Many granting agencies require the university to match, at varying percentages, the award that the agency may make. It is your responsibility to arrange for these matching dollars before the proposal is submitted. Being as specific as possible about how the matching funds are arranged will strengthen the proposal. Agencies are quite aware of “in-kind matches”—those that often do not involve any real dollars contributed to the project—and may not consider this as actual campus support for the project. Even when matching dollars are not required, arranging for some real monetary support from the campus will make the proposal more attractive. Consider, for instance, a proposal to UPDC to provide matching funds.

**Indirect Costs** “Indirect costs” refers to the costs of doing the business of the project that are not attached directly to a deliverable item. Sometimes referred to as overhead costs, the indirect costs go to the university and cannot be dispersed by the project director. Indirect costs are usually calculated as a percentage of salary and fringe benefit costs; the percentage is determined or approved by the grants support office following state, federal and agency guidelines. The current rates are shown on the grants support web page. If the appropriate agency is not listed, please contact the grants support office while you are drafting your budget.

**Miscellaneous** There are a host of issues to work through in crafting a proposal budget. Collaborations, capital costs, split appointments, multiyear projects, and so on can add significant wrinkles to the process of devising a fundable project. Please confer with your colleagues and the grants office as needed to work through these types of issues. As always, the agency program officer is perhaps your best ally in writing your proposal and budget.