

Cost-Sharing (Matching) on External Grant Proposals and Requests for Special Funding

A sometimes troublesome and time-consuming process for investigators is obtaining approval for cost-sharing (matching) in proposal budgets. The difficulty is due, at least in part, to the non-routine nature of the process.

There are three common types of cost-sharing:

- **Actual money** requested for specific items such as purchase of equipment or payment for people such as a graduate assistants.
- **Monetary value of faculty or staff time** paid by the institution but spent on the project. Most faculty are expected to do research or scholarly activities as reflected in their assigned workload. The monetary value of the time devoted to the grant project but paid by the University (i.e., not charged to the funding agency) is considered cost-sharing.
- **In-kind contribution** such as free use of a piece of equipment that normally requires a fee.

Cost-sharing of the monetary value of time spent on the project is often misunderstood by PIs and not accounted for in the project budget. However, it is fairly routine and is the easiest type of cost-sharing to accomplish. Investigators need to be cautious that they are not over committing their time. To help in monitoring this more easily, the assigned grant officer can generate a report of current and pending awards for each PI, co-PI and senior investigator. This includes time committed to existing grants and time promised in all outstanding proposals.

Cost-sharing of actual money is not normally included in proposals. Even when it is included, the amount of cost sharing and the source of funds may vary widely from proposal to proposal. This makes nearly every request for cost-sharing unique.

Important points for investigators to keep in mind when considering asking for actual money cost-sharing:

- **Cost-sharing of actual money is not normally included in proposals** when it is not required by the agency issuing the RFP, and therefore approval should not be assumed.
- **Cost-sharing of actual money may be possible if it is required by the funding agency or if there are exceptional circumstances.** If in doubt, discuss your planned request informally with your Associate Dean for Research or an Associate Vice President for Research before starting the approval process.
- **Cost-sharing commitments for actual money are a partnership among multiple entities,** typically the investigator(s), the department(s), the college(s), and the OVPRED.
- **The process will take time, so start early.** Cost-sharing of actual money requires financial commitments from multiple units on campus and requires discussions among multiple unit heads. Because the cost-sharing amounts can be large, unit heads, rather than their designees, normally are the ones to grant approval. To allow sufficient time, it is very important to start the approval process early. Deans and the Vice President for Research and Economic Development retain the right to refuse consideration of any cost-sharing request if not received by the deadline indicated below. Even that amount of time may be insufficient to put together a complex cost-sharing package.

As UNT expands its role as a research university, the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development (OVPRED) seeks ways to help researchers improve the quality of proposals. At the same time, the OVPRED strives to streamline the proposal submission process so as to make it less burdensome on investigators. With these goals in mind, the OVPRED and the Deans have jointly developed a procedure to assist investigators in gaining approval for cost-sharing. The procedure incorporates the OVPRED's requirement for cooperation between the Colleges and the OVPRED, while at the same time eases the burden on the individual investigator by having more of the process carried out by administrators.

Procedure for Approval of Cost-Sharing:

1. The investigator should submit the following materials to the department chair. Once the materials are submitted to the chair, it is the chair's responsibility to see that the paperwork moves through the various administrative offices in a timely fashion and to keep the investigator informed of its progress. Note: Some colleges (see below) require that the materials be submitted by the investigator directly to the Associate Dean for Research. In that case the Associate Dean will be the one to monitor the progress of the paperwork and to keep the investigator informed. In either case, the intent is to transfer responsibility for the approval process to administrators and their staffs so as to free the investigator to work on the substantive portions of the proposal.
 - a. **Proposed budget using Budget Builder**, <http://research.unt.edu/ored/forms> (This should be generated by working with your assigned grant officer in the Office of the Vice President for Research. Errors in the budget due to lack of consultation with the pre-awards staff, especially incorrect indirect cost calculations, will slow the process and may result in denial of the cost-sharing request.)
 - b. **UNT Pre-Award Cost Sharing Form**, <http://research.unt.edu/ored/forms> (This is typically filled out in cooperation with the grant officer based on your proposed budget.)
 - c. **VPR&ED Request For Cost Sharing Form**, <http://research.unt.edu/ored/forms>
 - d. **URL to the relevant program webpage** or other information describing the grant program to which you are applying
 - e. **Draft of the proposal** (An outline or overview of the proposal may be acceptable in some cases, but the information must be sufficiently complete so as to explain the nature of the proposal, any co-PIs, and the need for the match.)
2. No less than **two weeks** before the agency deadline, although earlier is much preferred and actually required in some colleges (see note below), the chair submits the materials to the Associate Dean for Research, or the equivalent, with a recommendation for accepting or rejecting the cost-sharing request.
3. The Dean (or designee) will either accept, deny, or suggest modifications to the cost-sharing request.
4. The Associate Dean for Research will inform the PI of the Dean's decision and, if relevant, confer with the PI to negotiate suggested modifications.

5. For requests that are accepted/supported by the Dean, the Associate Dean for Research will initiate discussions with the relevant Associate Vice President for Research concerning the cost-sharing request.
6. For requests that are denied by the Dean, the PI may, in extraordinary circumstances, appeal directly to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development by contacting the relevant Associate Vice President for Research and explaining the extenuating circumstances. If it is agreed that extenuating circumstances merit additional consideration, then the Vice President for Research (or designee) will initiate communications with the Dean(s) to consider the request further. (NOTE: An appeal to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development should **NEVER** be made before the Dean has considered and denied the request.)
7. Once a final decision has been reached among the Dean(s) and the Vice President for Research, the Associate Dean for Research will inform the PI.

Procedure for Approval of Special Requests for Funding:

Investigators occasionally need to make requests for research-related funding that are not associated with a grant proposal and do not fall within one of the normal funding mechanisms of the OVPRED. Requests for such special funding should follow the same procedure as listed above, except the documentation is different. In the case of a special request for funding, the investigator should provide the chair (or associate dean, depending upon the college) with written justification for the request and a detailed breakdown of the cost. For equipment purchases, the documentation would normally include a quote from the manufacturer or other supplier. For equipment repair, details of the repair cost should be included.

College Specific Directions:

- In the **College of Arts and Sciences**, materials must be received by the Associate Dean of Research from the chair **three** weeks prior to the agency deadline.
- In the **College of Education**, submit materials directly to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research. An additional College form is also required listing commitments of department and College.
- In the **College of Engineering**, submit materials directly to the Associate Dean for Research **three** weeks prior to the agency deadline.
- In the **College of Information**, submit materials directly to the Associate Dean for Research **20-30 days** prior to agency deadline.
- In the **College of Public Affairs and Community Service**, submit materials directly to the Associate Dean for Research **three** weeks prior to the agency deadline.