COVID-19 Impact on Sponsored Project Implementation

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Please visit the University's COVID-19 Information webpage for updates, announcements, and information regarding the University's response to COVID-19.

**General Information**
This document is provided as additional guidance for navigating the implementation of a sponsored project at UNI during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a reminder, all sponsored projects are awarded to the University (as opposed to you as an individual) and as such all sponsored projects are subject to the University’s rules, policies and procedures. Additional rules and policies are frequently added layers of administration for most sponsored projects, and they apply in the following order:

![Diagram of rules and regulations order]

Importantly, a state/local, federal and/or sponsor specific rule or regulation cannot “override” UNI policy. For example, if UNI has a federal grant the mileage reimbursement rate offered to individuals working on the grant is the University rate and not automatically the federal reimbursement rate (unless, by University policy, the circumstances allow for the federal rate to be used).

While the University’s response to COVID-19 may be disruptive to your ability to implement your sponsored project, please remember that there are no “special rules” that allow you to implement your sponsored project outside of University policy. For example, the current travel restrictions apply to all sponsored projects without exception.

**Sponsored project salary and fringe expenses**
Please continue to charge salary and fringe benefits to your sponsored projects as appropriate even if some of your project activities have been changed or suspended as a result of the COVID-19 response. On March 9, 2020 the U.S. Office of Management and Budget issued a series of authorizations allowing federal agencies to expand their flexibility in the application of federal award administration rules. Of significance to UNI sponsored projects is a statement that allows for the continuation of charging salary...
and fringe benefits to sponsored projects under unexpected or extraordinary circumstances so long as the sponsored project recipient (UNI) is operating within its own policies. If, for example, you are charging salary and fringe to a grant and a part of your project activities involved travel to a meeting, you should continue to charge your salary and fringe expenses to the sponsored project and look for ways to continue to advance the project’s scope of work using alternative means to the planned travel.

**Expenses related to cancelled program activities**

At this time, there have been no changes to how UNI will handle expenses associated with sponsored projects that are related to cancellations. For example, if you were planning a trip to a cancelled conference and you have to cancel a hotel room and part or all of the reservation cost is non-refundable, the expense will still be allowed to post to the sponsored project account. Another example are costs incurred by an individual(s) for a cancelled event (a guest speaker, for example). If an expense has been incurred you may cover the expense (as appropriate) using the sponsored project account despite the fact that the event did not take place due to the COVID-19 response.

**Sponsored project timeline considerations**

The COVID-19 response may interfere with your project’s timeline. If you believe you will not be able to conduct a project activity within your current project timeline due to a COVID-19 response activity or restriction please contact RSP for guidance and assistance with requesting a no cost extension or to work with the project sponsor to modify your scope of work, etc.

**Sponsored project related travel**

As of March 13, 2020 all non-essential travel for university sponsored work is prohibited until further notice. If you incurred travel costs prior to the travel ban the costs will be allowed to post to the sponsored project account. Please keep in mind that travel to implement a sponsored project activity is not considered “essential”, even if the travel must happen in order to successfully implement the project. During the non-essential travel ban you should not make any travel plans that incur or obligate expenses and you should take steps immediately to cancel any existing travel plans at this time.

**Incurring non-essential expenses on sponsored projects**

Please take precautions when incurring expenses on sponsored projects that are experiencing significant programmatic disruptions due to the COVID-19 response. Expenses that are deemed “non-essential” or that support project elements that realistically may not be possible under the current circumstances could be disallowed by the sponsor. Review your project and the possible implications of working remotely, not being able to travel, restrictions on group gatherings, the suspension of community services, etc. so that you are only incurring expenses that can be justified under current and projected circumstances. For example, incurring expenses to plan a large workshop originally scheduled for this coming May should probably be avoided until further notice. If you are unsure, please contact RSP for guidance.

**Continued operations of the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs (RSP)**

At this time RSP is operating as usual. In the event the University asks staff to work remotely RSP will continue to operate. Certain services may be limited or modified, but we have a plan in place to ensure that all critical operations will continue via remote workstations. If remote operations are required the East Bartlett office space will be closed but you will be able to contact RSP staff via phone, email, and Zoom to continue applying for and administering external funding.