Office of Sponsored Programs

Grant Administration Panel Discussion

For Administrative Support Personnel

The Office of Sponsored Programs hosted panel discussion sessions for support personnel who assist with grant management. Panelists include staff experts from various administrative offices on campus. Below are questions and responses from the panel discussions.

HUMAN RESOURCES

What is the hiring process for full-time researchers/postdocs? Are there policies that we can reference for hiring full-time employees on grants?

Hiring for full-time researchers/postdocs follow the same guidelines as Hiring Staff, and begins with creating a Request to Fill - Staff in Interview Exchange, regardless of funding source. There is one policy that can be referenced when hiring Faculty and/or Staff, which can be found at https://www.wku.edu/financialaid/studentemployment/. Exceptions to the hiring process that exist for grant-funded positions are also located in this policy.

What is the student hiring process at WKU (back ground checks, FAFSA, etc.)? Who do I contact with questions? How many times during the academic year do we have to request for rehiring?

Cathy Cook in Student Financial Assistance handles student employment requests. They have made a recent change and are going through the Handshake platform now for job postings. The student does need a FAFSA on file to be eligible for employment. Jobs posted in Handshake must be posted for at least three days. The specifics of the hiring process is up to each department. When a student is chosen, the department makes a request to hire the student through TopNet. That request will initiate the electronic background check and I-9 process. Regardless of intention, every department must go through the 3-day job posting process in order to hire students. Students who have a FAFSA on file are good to work all academic year (Fall & Spring). Summer work is done separately from the academic year. For more information, please visit https://www.wku.edu/financialaid/studentemployment/.

SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

On the Inventory Web app, what should we enter for make and model?

The Make is the name of the asset. The Model is the type of the asset. For example, the make on most standard PC laptops at the university is Dell. The Model can be many different names, for example, Latitude 7490.

How do I initiate a transfer of an asset from my department to another department?

To initiate a transfer, please download and fill out the "Inventory Transfer Form" which can be found on Inventory Control's website, https://www.wku.edu/supplychainmanagement/inventory/. To complete the transfer, please email the completed document to inventorycontrol@wku.edu and CC the receiving party. This process will change as the Inventory Web App progresses; keep an eye on the Inventory Control website for more.

Are there any new developments coming in Inventory/Asset tracking?

Inventory Control has been working on a new Webapp with the IT Department. It should be ready for testing and use soon. When it is, we will notify the campus community.

If I have a new grant, how do I get the Index added to the drop down in PaymentNet?

Send an email to Pam or Teresa in the Procurement Card office requesting that it be added to JPMorgan Chase.

How long do I have to keep my p-card records related to grants?

All records should be kept for three years after the audit date. Check with GCA on the audit date. All records should be kept with record keeper.

Can a PI get help from Purchasing during the application process?

Purchasing can help any PI do research on the cost of goods and materials they would like to put into their proposal. If the grant application is requesting funds for equipment with a cost of $20,000 or more the PI should contact Purchasing to get assistance issuing a Request for Information (RFI). Involving the Purchasing Department during the application process could have a positive impact in getting your grant approved. If the grant is approved, this will definitely help make the ordering process go smoother.

What is the difference between quotes and bids/RFP?

Quotes are informal and can be done quickly by phone, email or using TopShop. The WKU Purchasing Department can give you the ability to request quotes through TopShop or we can get the quotes for you. Copies of the quotes or a summary should be attached or typed in the justification section of a requisition. Bids and/or RFPs (Request for Proposal) are more formal and must be issued by the WKU Purchasing Department. Bids include public advertising and specific terms and conditions that have been set up to protect the university and to ensure good business practices.

When are quotes or a competitive bid process required for purchases/services? What happens after a requisition is submitted and when are quotes or a competitive bid process required for purchases/services?

Procurement Cards can be used for supplies and materials up to $2,000. Anything over $2,000 should be requisitioned through TopShop. All requisitions go through a series of approvals/disapprovals before a Purchase Order is issued. It is possible the Purchasing Agent could be aware of a better value and recommend a change no matter what the dollar amount is. Grant purchases are subject to rules called Uniform Guidance. Those rules set up by the federal government require us to get quotes for anything costing $10,000 or more. Personal Services contracts that will have a cost of $10,000 or more require a competitive RFP process for award. For non-grant purchases we require quotes when the cost is $20,000 or more. Bids are required by the state and Uniform Guidance for anything with a cost equal to or greater than $40,000. In many cases, we have existing competitively bid and awarded contracts we can use in lieu of getting the quotes or bids ourselves. Please contact WKU Supply Chain Management for help finding existing contracts or for help getting quotes or bids.

What is the process for a blanket requisition?

Blanket orders are meant to be used when there are a lot of small purchases that need to be made with the same company throughout the fiscal year. Comfuel is a good example; the price of gas is constantly changing. So with a Blanket order, invoices can be charged to a certain amount that is encumbered in any given index under one Blanket requisition. Invoices are entered by Accounts Payable in Topshop which creates a release order. When the invoice comes through an email is generated so that the requester can approve it.

Other than computers, what types of items might need an inventory control tag for grants?

Any asset that has an original price of $2,000 or more and all computers need to be tagged by inventory control, regardless of acquisition method. Grant funded assets are assigned specialized tags that read “Property of WKU Federal Grant”.

Are equipment purchases on grant cost share indexes (beginning with a 6) inventoried similar to other non-grant equipment?

Yes, the funding source does not play into what gets inventoried or not, we base our tagging decisions on the original purchase price. As long as the asset belongs to WKU, and it is either over $2,000 or a computer, we are obligated to tag it.

How do I surplus a piece of equipment purchased with federal grant funds? Is this similar to other surplus requests?

Before surplussing a grant purchased asset, it is important to check with Grants and Contracts Accounting (GCA) to make sure that the asset is allowed to be surplussed. As long as GCA gives the 'OK' to dispose of an asset, the surplus procedures would be the same as for any other asset.

TRAVEL

What is the approval and payment process for Group Travel Vouchers – does it go to Travel or Purchasing, or both?

The first step is completing an Estimated Group Travel form. That form will go to Accounts Payable as the estimated amount the travel will cost. Once the travel is complete, the Group

Travel Voucher is completed and turned in to Accounts Payable to balance the total. Accounts Payable will send the voucher to Travel for final approval; then it will go back to Accounts Payable for final payment.

What is an appropriate per diem reimbursement for a trip that involves conference travel and a few additional days of personal travel afterward? (for example) Is it appropriate to request any meals during the last day of return travel (following the personal travel days)?

The Travel office recommends that all days traveled are listed, even if it includes personal travel days. The only days where meals would be listed are the days travel occurred on behalf of WKU. Meals cannot be covered during those personal days. During travel on behalf of WKU, if a person is taking a few extra days after their conference for personal travel, the Travel Office will still cover the cost of the return home. The travel back would have happened regardless of the personal time.

When in transit, do we claim the meal per diem for the destination or where the traveler is when the meal is taken?

The per diem for meals is applicable to where the meal was purchased, which can be different than the destination.

Can flight protection/travel insurance be paid for by the university for travel?

State funds will not allow reimbursement for any travel protection or cancellation protection. Because travel protection is considered personal insurance for that person, state funds won't allow this cost. Study abroad medical insurance is required for all students traveling on a WKU study abroad trip.

Can I be reimbursed for international phone charges?

If the access is necessary for business purposes - email or staying in contact with students while travelling - it can be covered with receipts.

How do I get a travel voucher signed if the individual is not physically on campus?

A Permission to Sign Form is online and can be filled out at https://www.wku.edu/strategyopfin/forms/documents/permission_to_sign.docx. The person travelling can fill it out while they're on campus or if they can email and give permission to sign. That email would need to be attached to the voucher. Also, the approver signature for the index being charged must be an original signature. Travel is starting to request that approvers sign in blue ink as well.

Why can't I claim mileage from my home to the destination?

The Travel Policy says that the University will pay the lesser amount for travel to the destination address. Any travel to the campus from your home is considered commuter mileage. For example, if you are traveling to Nashville and you live in Brownsville, you will only be able to claim the mileage from the campus to Nashville. The travel from Brownsville to campus would be commuter mileage.

Can I request per diem/subsistence at a lower/different rate than the GSA or foreign rate if there are not enough funds to cover the full allowable per diem?

Yes. A person can always reimburse a lower amount, Travel just can't reimburse above the specified rate.

Can you have more than one proxy on travel vouchers?

Yes, it is possible to have more than one proxy for Travel Vouchers.

Am I covered through my personal car insurance when I travel and rent a car?

WKU has a contract with Enterprise & National which provides full insurance coverage when traveling on WKU official business. This contract can also be used for personal travel but would not include insurance. If employees choose not to utilize this rental car contract and pay a higher rate elsewhere, the rental car expense will be reduced to our contracted rate. This only applies to a standard car rental. The contract can be found at https://legacy.enterprise.com/car_rental/deeplinkmap.do?bid=028&refId=WESKENUN.

INTERNAL GRANTS

We have a couple of RCAP awards in our department, but I can never remember the right index. How do I find out which index to use?

RCAP indexes are assigned by award year. All awards in a fiscal year will utilize the same index. Awards in FY19 (i.e. 19-80XX) will have and index ending in "19", and so on. Spending guidelines, which include the full index number, can be found at https://www.wku.edu/sponsoredprograms/rcap_award-management.php.

I keep a record of all of the charges connected to each RCAP award, but how do I know the salary and fringe benefits costs for the student worker being paid with RCAP funds?

For RCAP students paid via Student Financial Assistance, typically the office associate or the faculty supervisor will have access to the hours worked in a reporting period, and based on the rate of pay, they can typically estimate the cost of that work. RCAP only sees the hours once they are paid out and hit Banner, and it includes both salary and fringe benefits. You can contact RCAP at internal.grants@wku.edu to request a balance sheet with the latest payroll information. Spending guidelines, which include details on hiring students, can be found at https://www.wku.edu/sponsoredprograms/rcap_award-management.php.

Are there restrictions on what is allowed for FUSE and RCAP travel?

RCAP supports travel that is essential to conducting the research and project objectives, but does not fund travel to conferences or to disseminate project results. All travel should follow university travel policies, be consistent with the approved project budget, occur within the project period, and should be for the least expensive method of travel. Spending guidelines, which include details on travel reimbursement, can be found at https://www.wku.edu/sponsoredprograms/rcap_award-management.php.

FUSE supports travel for the student to conduct research for the awarded project. FUSE will also support faculty and student travel to conferences for student presentation. Due to the nature of the FUSE awards, all university travel guidelines and policies must be followed. A Spending Guide can be found within the FUSE award document or at https://www.wku.edu/research/fuse_awardee_info.php.

Who is expected to submit internal grant proposals – the faculty member, department office, dean's office, etc.?

Final RCAP applications with Department Head and Dean (or designee) approvals may be submitted by the PI or the Dean's office (as determined by the Dean's office). However, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure all approvals are obtained and the final application is received prior to the deadline.

Final copies of the FUSE application are expected to be submitted by the faculty mentor. The mentor is also expected to copy their Department Head on the email submission to FUSE. Students are expected to email their draft application to their faculty one week before the final submissions are due. This gives the mentor time to review the application before submitting to FUSE.

What level of detail is preferred for hard code requests on FUSE and RCAP awards?

RCAP requests the same transaction details that are needed from PCard. PCard requests that the subject line of the hard code include "HARDCODE". They also request to only receive one email that has been fully approved. Please send the hard code request to internal.grants@wku.edu and when we approve we will copy you when we send it to PCard, so they only receive one email. Other than that, RCAP just requests that the RCAP award number (i.e. 20-80XX) is listed in the request. Spending guidelines, which include details on hard codes, can be found at https://www.wku.edu/sponsoredprograms/rcap_award-management.php.

FUSE also requests the same level of detail that is need for Pcard. Please send the hard code request to fuse@wku.edu and when we approve we will copy you and send to PCard, so they only receive one email. We do ask that a snip of the transaction in JPMC is sent within the email when possible.

SPONSORED PROGRAMS – PRE-AWARD

Am I supposed to be doing something to help faculty in my department with proposal development?

At the PD stage, our office leans on your knowledge at the department/college level to help faculty with accurate budgeting. Communicating with your faculty the resources available to them at this stage is helpful. We also rely on you to assist with accurate student rates as the $/hr or average GA assistantship stipend per semester varies across campus.

Do other universities issue sub-contracts to researchers here at WKU?

Yes, WKU has issued and received subawards for projects with researchers at other universities in Kentucky and across the U.S.

SPONSORED PROGRAMS – POST-AWARD

What happens after one of our faculty members gets a grant (proposal is awarded)?

The award document is carefully reviewed to ensure that the terms and conditions are acceptable. If the award amount is the same as proposed and no budget revisions are needed, OSP sets up the chart of accounts and requests the index number. If the award is less than (or more than) proposed, OSP will work with the PI to revise the budget and negotiate the revision with the sponsor. The chart of accounts is prepared by OSP, then sent to GCA for setup and alignment of index number. The PI is advised of index number and is e-mailed a copy of the chart of accounts, budget, award document and sign-off sheet by GCA.

What is the relationship/role of OSP Post-Award and GCA?

OSP handles all aspects of the post award process including award negotiation, budget revisions, reallocations and no-cost extension requests. GCA adjusts Banner budget based on information sent to them by OSP and also handles all financial reporting for the project, effort certifications and posting of p-card feeds.

When WKU issues a sub-contract to another agency or university, does WKU become a co-sponsor of that grant (does WKU act as a sponsor for the subawardee)? What does that process look like?

In essence, yes. All post-award requests such as budget revisions, reallocations, no-cost extension requests and change in scope must be submitted directly to OSP, rather than to the prime sponsor.

GRANTS AND CONTRACTS ACCOUNTING

I'm planning to surplus a piece of equipment purchased with federal grant funds. Are there any restrictions or regulations I should be aware of regarding surplus of federally funded equipment?

There can be different rules for each sponsor. Grants and Contracts Accounting (GCA) must be notified before any action is taken so that we may check the award document for direction on the disposal of equipment. Inventory Control (Rodney Hounshell) is working on a routing system that would alert GCA when a grant-funded asset has come to them for surplus, but it is not yet in place. GCA does not dispose of any grant files that still have active equipment. Being notified of asset disposal is the only way we know to dispose of old files.