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UFIRST

University of Florida Integrated Research Support Tool
Detailed Meeting Notes – Week 1: July 15-18, 2013

Objectives for July 15-18, 2013

The Office of Research is undertaking a review of the way we perform the business of research at UF. The ultimate goal is to outline processes that most efficiently and compliantly route proposals and related documents, collect information, present information to stakeholders who must provide approval, and allow for tracking and reporting. With these improvements, we hope to provide space for our faculty to devote more time to their research and other sponsored activity and less time to chasing forms and paperwork. During the first week of the core team meetings, the objectives were to:

- Introduce the project, methodology and team
- Discuss the peer institution demonstrations from previous weeks
- Outline business goals for limited opportunity solicitations and internal UF competitions
- Identify proposal development needs
- Review the current process for routing proposals with an eye to the value at each step

General Discussion

- PI's can be more productive in the lab if their administrative duties were lessened. The processes should not be made more complicated.
- There is a need for a centralized content management system on which the entire process is integrated. It should include items such as the final submission along with other proposal artifacts and the NOA.
- Many of the ideas throughout the week rely on an investment in the quality of our research administrators. Without quality people, no system will be effective.
- The training situation should be addressed. It is difficult to know what requirements must be completed. In addition, the orientation process is less than effective as new PIs don't understand all the why's to the things that we do. In addition, the group felt training requirements should meet audit requirements, not University requirements.
- There is email communication overload. A PI doesn't know what needs to get looked at and what doesn't.
- The award cycle time for an NOA from the time an award is granted to when the money is released needs to be addressed. However, it was noted that the perception of award set up time may be larger than the actual problem. Many start counting award processing time when the sponsor lets them know of the impending award opposed to when the award actually gets to UF.
- Accurate data available in central systems is an important outcome of our process.
- The business process for making award changes (prior approvals such as re-budgeting), needs to be addressed.
- Subcontracts require a lot of coordination by faculty and staff. Several pieces of information need to be collected and orchestrated with the Faculty and the subcontractor.
- The FCOI may be moved to the time of the award as opposed to proposal time
- PI mentoring in proposal development is critical and not occurring effectively in the routing process.

- Certain issues can be resolved by the PI notifying their department admins instead of the office finding out after something has been awarded.
- The question of how to route proposals that UFF submits was raised.

Internal Competitions

An overview of the business process from limited ops or internal competition was provided. Internal competitions include programs such as the Office of Research Opportunity Fund, CTSI pilot programs, MBI funding, USDA Formula Funds, and Cancer Center and Aging competitions.

- The group running an internal program or competition should decide what data is required and how it is routed.
- Most internal applications:
    - Require a small abstract or scope of work and a budget
    - Require signature of the PI and Chair but the rest of the process varies by college and by program.
- The chair signature is required because often it is an unfunded effort.
- Some Deans have additional internal selection processes to provide limited applicant pools to the Office of Research. The Research committee makes a recommendation to the Dean of Research who works with the Dean of the college to move a candidate forward
- In general, Internal and Limited Opportunity proposals should be routed the same as external funding, but flagged as internal or limited. The current uncertainty in proposals (and in awards) about what was competed for externally, competed for internally or simply split for managerial accounting purposes is confusing. Extramural funding is sometimes given to the University and then the University funds the internal projects (e.g. USDA Formula Funds; CTSI's pilot funds sourced from their NIH). There is importance in knowing whether the grant is peer reviewed.
- There is importance in collecting all of the internal awards instead of selecting certain ones.
- When awarded:
    - Some people want projects, not just a flex code, to better track these funds
    - It was thought that General Accounting does not want people using the Project ChartField for non-2xx fund activity
    - Construction Accounting has the same need and it is met with projects.
- Custom reminders that the group running the competition could manage would be useful
- Knowing how many times a PI has applied and has been awarded or rejected is valuable to know when selecting candidates to move forward in limited opportunity solicitations.

External Limited Opportunities

Limited opportunities include such programs as the Space Research Institute, many large instrumentation programs, and the Florida High Tech Corridor program (FHTCC). These are similar to internal competitions except that the outcome is a proposal to the external sponsor rather than allocation of funding already here.

- These normally go through PI, Chair and Dean approval before Office of Research selection of the applicant.
- (CURRENT PROCESS FIX POSSIBILITY): Can Cayuse be updated for Federal Limited applications?

- (CURRENT PROCESS FIX POSSIBILITY): Can the FYI come in email content rather than just a link to the funding page?
- Research Program Development does not get many requests for targeted help identifying funding opportunities at this time

Proposal Development

To initiate to track proposals within a unit, various tools exist:

- Quarterly emails are sent out by some to probe for potential submissions. They take responses and create a log of upcoming submissions awareness.
- Whiteboards
- Some have proposal initiation forms that requests information such as:
  - RFA# (RFP, Call, Solicitation) – identified as very helpful to review solicitation requirements. Recommended to be available in tracking tools
  - Sponsor
  - Title
  - Start Date
  - Deadline Date
  - Faculty Effort %
  - Subcontracts included?
  - Animal Use
  - Human Use
  - Companion budget form
- Cayuse is well received for proposal development but use is limited outside direct federal grants
- Abstracts, Lay Summaries or Project Summaries were identified as a key component that if captured could be highly valuable to the institution.
  - To support understanding of potential compliance and missing budget requirements during the routing process
  - Typically required for limited and internal applications
  - Some places - given to the development officer, who can turn that into fundraising opportunities for the college
  - Disseminated to the PR person to work with the PI to create PR for the college.
  - Facilitate identification of reviewers for limited and internal competitions
  - Facilitate identification of experts to invite for targeted institutional strategic programs

Common proposal elements and who primarily works on or completes them:

- Budget, Cost Share – Staff with input from Faculty
- Justification - Staff, Faculty
- Scope of Work or Abstract, narrative (Appendices) - Faculty
- Resources - Staff, Faculty
- Research Plan - Faculty

- Biosketch - Faculty
- IACUC/IRB and other certifications (Multiple sections) - Faculty
- Face Page - Staff
- Subcontract Coordination and Info Collection - Faculty, Staff
- FCOI - Faculty (Internal - Does not get submitted to Sponsor)
- Letters of Support - Faculty, Staff
- Multi-PI Plan - Faculty
- Data Sharing/Data Management - Faculty
- Post Doc Management - Faculty
- Cover letter – Faculty
- Training Grant Tables – Staff
  - Requires significant data collection to create tables of information regarding mentors, predoctoral students, and postdocs. Many of the needed elements are currently missing in institutional data sources:
    - Definition of a postdoc
    - Gender
    - Ethnicity
    - More..
  - According to one of the team members, despite the volumes of data, reviewers are generally only looking for
    - Are mentors well-funded
    - Are the people they have mentored have been successful
    - A Well Qualified applicant Pool
- Clinical Trials have different internal requirements – Faculty

Budget and Justification

- Different budget forms are required by different sponsors
- Each unit has their own budget building excel as PS is considered onerous
- Cross-college or even cross-department proposals
  - Cost share is difficult to manage because promised cost share wasn't always provided.
  - Budget development is hard as each person uses their own form and the variations in
  - Is a challenge as local business rules require that typically every department administrator of a faculty involved should be consulted.
- The following elements were identified to aid in budget development
  - Fringe rates
  - Tuition rates
  - IDC/F&A rates
  - Lab Services rates

  - Threshold information for items such as Equipment and Salary Cap
  - System to System capability
  - Clinical Trial functionality
  - Proper calculations for salaries and F&A with flexibility to override data. Such overrides must be flagged for review
  - Support to properly identify and budget for 9 month vs. 12 month faculty
  - Export Capability
  - Import Capability
- Because the proposal and award budgets often differ and there is no current process to re-route the budget if it does differ at time of award, many times the college is unaware of changes
- Having a development tool that someone could calculate travel costs by trip or total animal costs based on days would be helpful
- Clinical trials have very different types of budgets, so do we have different type of budgets in a system for clinical trials
- Some areas get the justification from faculty while others create a shell and allow the PI to update/modify that shell of a justification

Biosketch

Elements that would aid in biosketch development

- Academic analytics is a tool that may be utilized to pull a list of publications for a PI
- We need a database to show the Award PI's total award amounts
- Training, dates, where they were trained
- Faculty history, Degree history

Resources

- Centers such as CTSI or ICBR could write quality statements that could be re-used to pull into resource statement
- HiPerGator is an example of a service that could have a centralized quality statement that people could be used across proposals
- A database of resources, centrally stored, could also open eyes to researchers over items that could be available
- A college statement that is centralized and categorized could help to produce a quality statement of resources
- These resource statements could be available in a shopping cart model that is centrally located and accessible during proposal development

Other common documents in proposal development that need to be made easily available:

- University Annual Financial Statements
- Board of Trustees information
- Annual Sponsored Research Data

- F&A Rate Agreements
- Audit Reports
- A133
- Fringe Benefit Rate Schedule
- Service Centers/Providers
- General Grant Writing Information

Exceptions

Many other proposal by proposal requirements exist that the system is unlikely to account for but notes sections and documents attached must be flexible to accommodate. We will continue to grow this list but for now, items identified are:

- Visa Requirements
- HR Salary Information

System to System Requirement

- We want to route in the system we have developed in not have to duplicate information in the proposal development and again in a routing "system"
- Non-federal applications, awards and other agreements would still be created and routed in this integrated tool but exporting the budget detail and uploading and storing documents will be critical.

Outliers

- IFAS has two areas where there are different forms, different budgets, and different routing requirements such as SPA and IFAS Service Programs
- Fixed Price Contracts
- Clinical Trials

Alerts

Possible alerts to facilitate more timely flow through the process:

- A notification of a PI's intent to file
- Opportunity Announcement in your area of interest
- Request to PI to enter some high level information (web version of initiation form)
- Milestones
- Reports due
- Deliverables due
- During the routing process:
    - Change in faculty involved
    - Change in budget after approval

  - When others approve
- Alerts should be customizable by proposal or project
- Users should be able to turn on or off alerts as needed
- Various formats should be available, such as text or email

Reports

Outcomes/Benefits of centralized data and reports:

- Promotion and Tenure package completion
- Annual Evaluations
- Year in Review

The disconnect between NERDC and PeopleSoft data makes it difficult to know the primary PI in terms of saying which PI should get credit for extramurally funded opportunities. This plays into why people keep their own shadow systems, because DSR and/or enterprise data can't be trusted. Internal and limited competitions exacerbate the problem.

- We don't have access to meaningful data about proposed versus awarded work. We cannot currently separate competitive versus non-competitive applications.
- Some desired reports:
  - Proposal Disposition: (Not Funded, Resubmitted, Withdrawn, Awarded)
  - Proposals submitted
    - Internal funding
    - External funding
  - Co-Investigator information
  - Effort commitments by proposal
  - Proposal Success ratios

Security

- The ability to see internal or limited opportunities should not be visible to other faculty.
- Listing the Proposal title during proposal development and prior to award can sometimes be sensitive. Many faculty will likely not want that searchable or available to other faculty. There was also mention that this information is already available via the DSR mail log.
- Security is an issue using Shared Folders.

Current State Proposal Routing

Although discussing alternate proposal routing methods was not in the original intent of the first week, the group as we discussed current state was able to identify some opportunities based on the realities of the current situation. One suggestion was an eligibility model. As PI and department you have maintained a particular level of success in application quality, the PI has all trainings in place, the PI hasn't pushed proposals through at deadline, has maintained effort certifications, award management, and protocol management, etc then their proposals can be considered for expediting. The concept of expediting continued in the discussion where if the PI is "eligible" and:

- The proposal was built in the University's budgeting tool
- The proposal includes no cost sharing
- Proposed effort is within institutionally defined tolerances

then the proposal can be expedited and not go through the current model of four layers of review prior to submission. There are risks associated with such a model and the future state days will included dedicated time to resolve what the triggers are for expediting through the process, clear definition what each signature is approving, and the risks associated with any changes to the process.

With regards to current state, the conversation included current required approvals and what items were reviewed by each approver.
In general:

- Space available needs to be reviewed. An example was given of a new greenhouse that was included in a proposal and the approvers were unaware it was included. This was caught, questioned, and ultimately removed.
- Some reviews are effective and some sign without review
- Some PI's review their proposal, but others have admins that they rely completely on. They sign but have never really looked at the proposal.
- The demand of the approvals becomes such a burden that it is often separated from the application itself. If so, what is the effectiveness?
- The PI has been trained to sign and now they simply do so without being clear what the signature means.
- It was suggested that it may be that the deadline is driving signatures without review
- For those who route using myUFL, many do not start entry until a budget is finalized. Many communicated their responsibility is the actual application, not what is in PeopleSoft.
- There is concern with the risk of having reviews and approvals skipped and not being prepared when we get an award or having the reputation of the University soiled by bad proposals.
- We are still thinking in terms of linear workflow, but do we really need routing? The current routing process was really about data collection.
- Should we just put some minimal information in front of a PI and have them sign? Just inform a chair, with no signature required

Co-Investigator Approvals

- Currently Co-PIs are signing so that they get the IDC associated with the project
- This is believed to have come about because many years ago, people were becoming earmarked for work they were unaware of
- We could ask for an acknowledgement by Co-I's that does not hold up the approval routing
- However, some felt an affirmative response should be required by a Co-I
- The College of Medicine went to the MOU system to accommodate someone that had proposed effort that was cut from the award
- The Co-I, Co-PI, and M-PI (Mutli-PI) language needs to be cleared up at the University

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Chair Approvals

- Many administrators indicated that they have local business rules that the administrator knows what is within their bounds to sign and they adhere to them. If something needs chair review, it is up to the administrator to bring this to the Chair's attention for approval. If not brought to their attention, most believe the chair simply signs without substantive review.
- Those that indicated that chairs are reviewing indicated concern for effort (ie minimum percentage requirements to be listed as an Investigator); cost share commitments; and F&A rates
- When a department is not primary:
  - There is a concern that a notification to a department with a Co-I may not be enough. An approval stating they agree with the proposal would be better. Local business rules and errors in 9 vs 12 month entry were 2 identified examples
  - But, what is the risk if the Co-Investigator's department doesn't approve it?
  - Can a 2 day window of notice triggered to the Co-I department if the proposal requires limited other review?
- Some feel that the Dean level review is useful but the Chair level review is unnecessary. Some feel Chair is necessary but not dean. Is it college specific?
- Some feel that expedited is good, but for a large or complicated proposals, extra eyes on it is a good thing
- Chairs and Deans are often aware of political impacts to certain proposals and how they would be received by the State Government or a key sponsor
- If a quality tool is in place that catches errors and omissions then the actual approval can fly and needs to be less extensive for review

Dean Approvals

- Deans are generally reviewing the same things that the Chair is reviewing. Cost Share, F&A, and Effort. Are both reviews necessary?
- PHHP is looking for budget, Budget Justification, abstract
- IFAS dean is concerned with cost share and F&A. Because they are not using the system, they can acquire the Dean approval before it's ready to go to DSR.
- OUTLIER: IFAS has three Deans that may need to sign one proposal so the typical pooled signature group doesn't work for them

DSR Level Review

- DSR is mainly looking for aberrations and unusual budget items
- Cayuse has helped to reduce the review process

Compliance Reviews

- Most compliance reviews take place at the time of award. The Yes/No response to critical compliance questions is all that is required at proposal routing
- College of Med requires Clinical Services review
- IFAS has a Germplasm that requires additional review
- FCOI forms seem less than effective and can benefit from a full process review. The group was informed of a parallel team to evaluate the FCOI process and that the issue could be further discussed during future state.

What happens between Proposal Submission and Award?

In preparation for future discussions, a brief tie into the award process was made. Some ideas to keep in mind when those conversations occur (scheduled for August 1).

- Pathology starts IRB activities in that window
- Some hiring activities can begin such as postings and interviews
- The risk of temps and the temp approval process needs to be addressed/discussed
- Quotes and subcontracts are items that could get moving faster during that window
- Items like training, certification, and getting the lab ready are all items that could be expedited in the pre-awarded window
- Should awards be asking for a revised budget from the Department when the Sponsor grants an award for less than the proposed amount?