

Weber State University (WSU)  
Frequently Asked Questions for OSP

**1. *How can I determine if my research idea is worth pursuing?***

The first step is to write a white paper. The outline for a white paper is on the OSP website. Talk with your colleagues at WSU and those at other schools to learn their thoughts and advice. Schedule a meeting with your Dean who will help evaluate.

A grant search can help you determine if there are potential funding sources for your project. In addition, some grant-awarding entities accept letters of inquiry about potential projects, or you may be able to contact a Program Officer directly to discuss your idea.

Don't hesitate to contact your Research Administrator in OSP for your college to help facilitate the process.

**2. *How do I find money for a project?***

WSU has access to a database supported by the Grants Resource Center, American Association of State Colleges and Universities. If you contact OSP we will provide the username and password, along with instructions to guide you through a search. If you prefer, we will search for you if you will provide key words or a one-page narrative.

Our website has links to both government-agency and private-organization funding sources.

**3. *How do I start writing a proposal?***

Some solicitations/agencies have specific formats/structure you must follow in your proposal; others do not specify any particular format or structure. One way to start is to download the whitepaper outline from our website. Not all of the items on the outline will apply to your particular project, but it will give you a place to begin.

OSP can help you develop an outline for your proposal, based on the specific requirements of each solicitation. We also can help you develop the Narrative section(s) of the proposal, as well as editing/proofreading the final proposal.

Each solicitation/agency is unique in their specific requirements. You should not hesitate to contact your Research Administrator in OSP, for your college, to help facilitate the process. Always keep your Research Administrator informed of any proposal BEFORE submitting.

**4. *Do I need to get any approvals before applying for a grant?***

Principal Investigators (PIs) cannot commit University resources to a research project. You should discuss your idea with your Chair and Dean at the very beginning of the proposal-development process; some proposals also require letters of support at the College level. In

addition, most proposals require proof of support (a letter and/or “signing” the actual proposal application) at the University Administration level (usually the Provost). OSP will obtain these higher-level approvals.

**5. *How do I get started on NSF Fastlane?***

OSP will list you as an authorized WSU user. Please call us. You can then open a file. We will provide technical assistance. Fastlane is very intuitive. Once registered and logged in, you need to open your specific application and give OSP access to read, edit and submit proposal.

Your Research Administrator in OSP would be happy to help you navigate through the processes.

**6. *I have lost my National Science Foundation FastLane password. What can I do to get another one?***

The NSF FastLane Log In site (<https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/researchadmin/researchAdminHome.do>) includes a Password Reset link, and a link to lookup your FastLane ID. If you have any questions or problems, contact your OSP Research Administrator.

**7. *How do I create a budget for my proposal?***

All you have to do is identify and estimate. We will do the calculations for you. For example, tell us if you are buying out time, paying supplemental pay, or other types of wages, and the amount of time. We will go to Banner and get the correct numbers for the wages and benefits. Let us know what kind of equipment you need and we can help get estimates. Decide what kind of travel you will require and we will calculate the costs. We have a worksheet that does all this. We can show you a sample worksheet.

The budget is a key component in your proposal and it’s very important to have all the information correct. It is also crucial to have the budget outlined to align with WSU’s banner system; if this is done ahead of time, it can save much time.

**8. *Can you get money for me to travel to a conference?***

We are often approached with this question. Typically, your travel to conferences must come from your department. Your Chair and your Dean can explain the practices that are customary and usual.

OSP can help you build in a travel budget for travel to a conference if it is directly connected to the project that would be funded. For example, if you are funded by National Science Foundation to conduct some research, and as part of the project you describe dissemination

to be accomplished by presenting a paper at a specific conference, that travel can be included in the proposal.

**9. *Why do I have to sign all these forms?***

Federal and state auditors require verification that OMB-A21 and university PPM are being met. At the present time, we are required to show original paper signatures. We only ask for those things that are absolutely required by auditors. Our objective is to protect the university against any adverse audit findings.

NOTE: Weber State University programmers are currently working on a digital signature system that will be acceptable to auditors, and we expect that this will be made available late in 2012. In the meantime, to make the process easier, we have started sending the forms by pdf and they can be signed, and sent back by way of pdf. This version is acceptable to auditors.

**10. *How do I get extra compensation?***

If extra-compensation is allowed by the funding agency, and written into the budget, it can be awarded in accordance with WSU policy and procedure. An extra-compensation form must be properly executed and in the file at OSP. A PAR must be done to effect the compensation.

**11. *What are indirect costs?***

Indirect costs, sometimes referred to as Facilities and Administrative (F&A) or Overhead costs are costs incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project or institutional activity. For example, F&A costs may include, but are not limited to: building and equipment use, operations, maintenance and utilities, general departmental and sponsored projects administration, library, and capital improvements.

The federal government tells us what rate to use for indirect costs. This rate changes from time to time, so you should contact OSP. WSU's federal F&A cost rate for sponsored projects is established in accordance with the federal government's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-21, Cost Principles for Higher Education.

**12. *The agency that I am applying to only allows 10% in indirect costs. How can I get this approved?***

The policy at Weber State University is that we recover all possible indirect costs (F&A). We use the federally negotiated rate on every proposal. However, when an agency

publishes a rate that is different, and applies that rate to all applications, the published rate can be used. Any other deviation from the WSU's federally negotiated indirect cost rate must be approved by the Provost.

**13. *What is cost sharing or matching funds?***

Institutional commitment, including cash and third party in-kind contributions may meet the definition of cost-share. Funding agencies have restrictions on what is cost-share allowable so it is important to pay close attention to agency-specific requirements. Generally speaking, cost-share is any item devoted to the project such as personnel services; supplies; equipment; tuition, and in some cases, unrecovered indirect costs. In-kind contributions are those committed to the project by a third party entity. These may be in the form of real property; equipment; supplies; and the value of goods and services specifically identifiable to the grant project

**14. *Can I charge some of my secretary's time to the grant?***

The secretary's time is considered by the federal government to be an indirect cost and therefore cannot be applied to a grant. However, in the case of a program where the federal legislation creating the program articulates the need for a secretary, that can be included. For example, Student Support Services funded by the US Department of Education allows for a secretary wholly and completely dedicated to the project.

**15. *My project involves interviewing people for a study. I have heard about Institutional Review Board (IRB), but this is just unidentified people in my study. Do I need IRB? What is IRB anyway?***

The IRB is charged with assuring all Weber State University research projects adhere to Federal, State, and University guidelines. The board's Human Subjects in Research Committee is responsible for ensuring the University complies with established policies for the protection of human subjects used in clinical research and other scientific investigations. The WSU administration requires that all research involving the use of human subjects must be submitted to the committee for review.

For more information, the OSP website includes an IRB link, or visit <http://www.weber.edu/IRB/default.html>

**16. *Do we have Institutional Animal Care and Use (IACUC) at Weber State University?***

Yes. The IACUC is responsible for ensuring the humane treatment of animals used in research and scholarly activities at WSU by faculty, students, staff, and other members of

the campus community. For more information, the OSP website includes a link to the IACUC website, or go to <http://www.weber.edu/ACUC/default.html>

***17. What happens to equipment purchased with a grant or a contract?***

Title to equipment purchased from sponsored funds is dependent upon the sponsor. Weber State University retains the title to most federally sponsored research equipment and we always try to negotiate title for all other sponsored equipment.

***18. What is an allowable cost?***

As it relates to sponsored projects and programs, the simple definition of an allowable cost can be determined by applying a three-pronged test. An allowable cost for a specific grant is one that is acceptable if (1) it is incurred solely to advance the work under the sponsored agreement; (2) it benefits both the sponsored agreement and other work of the institution, in proportions that can be approximated through use of reasonable methods, or (3) it is necessary to the overall operation of the institution and is deemed to be assignable in part to sponsored projects.

In addition, there are some special or unique terms or conditions related to allowable costs and sponsored programs. The follow two scenarios are the most common to sponsored programs:

1. Where the purchase of equipment or other capital items is specifically authorized under a sponsored agreement, the amounts thus authorized for such purchases are assignable to the sponsored agreement regardless of the use that may subsequently be made of the equipment or other capital items involved.
2. An allowable cost for a sponsored project cannot be shifted to other sponsored agreements in order to meet deficiencies caused by overruns or other fund considerations, to avoid restrictions imposed by law or by terms of the sponsored agreement, or for other reasons of convenience. In addition, any costs allocable to activities sponsored by industry, foreign governments or other sponsors may not be shifted to federally sponsored agreements.

If you should have additional questions about allowable costs on a sponsored project or agreement, please contact the Office of Sponsored Projects at x7537.

***19. Who signs proposals? Who signs grants and contracts?***

The PI is not authorized to sign any document to legally obligate the university. OSP will facilitate the correct signatures for the correct levels of funding.

***20. What happens if I spend more than my budget?***

If expenditures exceed the awarded budget, accounting will freeze the account. The Principal Investigator will be liable for pursuing a funding supplement to cover the costs and ensuring that the account is reconciled. Ultimately, the Dean of the College will have to cover over-expenditures.