

# Guidelines for Collaborative Research

## Introduction

Collaboration between units is important for our research success now, and is expected to become an increasing trend for the future. Our deans and chancellors have endorsed collaboration, see documented titled "*Statement on Collaboration- Endorsed by Board of Deans and Chancellors, May 2014.*" As part of a strategy encouraging collaboration, it is important to share resources and credit with all investigators associated with your funding. Guidelines for how to use the existing policies most effectively will help units support collaborative research while maintaining a positive environment for all of their researchers.

## Sharing of RCR for Collaborative Research

Collaborative research often involves investigators from different units (departments, programs, schools, and colleges) as key personnel. The current practice is that 35% of the indirect costs recovery (ICR; also known as F&A) generated by grants supporting the research is returned by the Office of Planning and Budgeting to the unit that spent the money in budgets assigned to their organization code. To promote collaboration in research, the Office of Research expects deans, directors and chairs to negotiate the sharing of a portion of the returned ICR among key participating units. Sharing of returned ICR is part of the ABB principle of directing revenue to the unit that generates the activity, in this case, the unit carrying out the research effort. In the interests of flexibility and recognizing that different units may have different preferred approaches to accomplishing the goal of directing resources to where the activity occurs, the Office of Research will allow alternative approaches.

The most straightforward approach to resource sharing is to establish sub-budgets that are administratively managed by a participating unit, and for which an investigator in the participating unit is identified as the PI of the sub-budget. The Office of Research recommends this approach for two reasons: 1) F&A will automatically be returned to the college/school in which the budget resides and 2) expenditures on sub-budgets provide a more accurate picture of research activities carried out at the unit level when sub-budgets are used. Sub-budget redistribution of F&A from the parent unit to a secondary unit recognizes that: the secondary unit is providing space and access to laboratory equipment used in the research; graduate students and/or post-docs in the secondary unit are being supported by the grant; professional and/or classified staff in the secondary unit are contributing significant FTE to the grant; or unusual resources (e.g., specialized equipment of facilities) critical to the grant are based in a secondary unit, which provides maintenance and operations costs for the facility. Since sub-budgets create administrative burden, small funding amounts may not warrant a sub-budget. However, if the funding to another unit is at least \$25,000, sub-budgets should be established, and in many cases, even smaller amounts warrant setting up a sub-budget.

Alternatively, some units prefer to negotiate net ICR differentials each year at the dean's office level, and redistribute accordingly to departments or programs within the school or college. In this case, two units with frequent collaborative projects might decrease administrative burden by using this approach, but could use the subaccount approach for units with less frequent collaborations.

In yet another alternative, the primary unit may agree to transfer funds for a specific purpose, for instance to support a portion of the FTE of a staff member in the secondary unit, or to cover part of the costs of equipment maintenance agreements for equipment based in the secondary unit (but utilized by the other units associated with the grant).

Regardless of the chosen approach, the end result must be to support the goal that revenue is apportioned to the units that carry out the activity.