

Action Items for the Streamlining Working Group

- Create sub-groups and identify leads:
 - A. Portals and application/proposal systems including access, authority, and contact info.
 - B. Financial reporting, invoicing - templates, timing, etc.
 - C. Common policies, terms/conditions (i.e., data sharing, conflict of interest, and misconduct).
- Draft materials and/or recommendations
- Discuss outcomes and next steps from the May 16 session with reps from the ROC and IP groups to ensure alignment.

Sub-group A: Portals and application/proposal systems including access, authority, and contact info

- Proposal CENTRAL/grant system optimization:
 - How can the system be made easier? What should the work flow look like?
 - Allow more than one person to access the application/award in proposal CENTRAL (pC) and other grants management systems. Include an administrative module so that institutions can review and authorize awards.
 - Identify essential elements of the system and approach the company (Altum and others) with a united request.
 - Use these discussions to generate a best-practices document for other organizations that don't use pC.
- Application form/cover page: It could be helpful to have a standard form submitted with applications to identify key institutional contacts including, pre-award, post-award and communications.
 - In order to ensure that Sponsored Programs Offices are in the loop as soon as possible, the cover page should include a requirement for an authorized institutional signature, along with a clear note to investigators that they are not authorized to sign. Only pre-award would need to sign the application.
 - How might institutions better inform their investigators on the need to submit applications to sponsored projects before they are submitted to the foundation? Training? Boston University has a bulleted list with responsibilities and work flows. Foundations can also assist with FAQs and other resources (e.g., contact your sponsored programs office).

Sub-group B: Financial reporting, invoicing - templates, timing, etc.

- Timing of final financial reports: Agencies such as NIH and NSF are moving to a 120 day close out for financial reporting. PCORI representatives suggested that they might consider a 120 day closeout (would rather have a clean invoice at 120 days than a financial report at 90 days that is then revised at 120).
 - Reach out to PCORI to discuss the timing of financial close-out (final reporting), including a possible move to 120 days.
 - Discuss timing broadly with nonprofit funders.
- Adaptable templates for financial reporting

- Goal is to create a standard, but adaptable, financial reporting template for foundations to model based, in-part, on NIH and NSF terminology/requirements.
- Sub-group identifies the essential elements of financial reports to include, and how to include additional program-specific expenses as needed.
- Sub-group should consider interfacing with the Research Operating Costs group when designing a template.

Sub-group C: Common policies, terms/conditions (i.e., data sharing, conflict of interest, and misconduct)

- Non-financial compliance requirements: Identify opportunities for burden reduction and harmonization.
 - Conflict of interest, research misconduct, and research integrity.
- Non-financial compliance requirements: Data Sharing
 - Group should discuss NIH and foundation data-sharing policies to identify areas of alignment
 - Group should discuss infrastructure needs and administrative issues associated with data sharing to help craft guidelines.
 - Discuss data protection guidelines, including the EU General Data Protection Regulations
- Develop prototype contract or provision templates that foundations and institutions can agree on. Be clear that foundations would be able to change terms.
 - Model MTA forms – perhaps modeled on NIH’s model form.

Additional areas discussed:

- Institutions: use a central administrative office email address rather than personal addresses. Foundations: don’t require a personal email address for institutional administrative contacts.
- Both institutions and foundations should have policies and procedures on their websites that all parties can access.
 - Provide clear language regarding Research Operating Costs in policies and procedures – This will need to be a discussion with the ROC group to develop template language.
- Foundations and Institutions should be open to asking/taking questions about terms via phone or email, rather than simply red-lining contracts. Keep in mind that if an item is subject to negotiation, it will require engagement of legal staff, and may substantially delay grant contracting.
- Consideration of whether nonprofit funders could be included in/have access to the Federal Demonstration Partnership [Expanded Clearinghouse](#) (from the FDP website: “an [FDP Pilot Project](#) to test the efficacy and efficiency of using online organization Profiles in lieu of subrecipient commitment forms to obtain entity-based information needed by pass-through entities when they are issuing subawards or monitoring their subrecipient entities.”). Is this unlikely? Could the clearinghouse be easily replicated and housed elsewhere? Do institutions have the bandwidth to keep up two databases?
- Discuss change of institution processes for institutions and foundations, can this be made more efficient and timely?
- Lack of detail in award terms can create problems down the line. If you don’t want investigators to change expense reporting from prior years you have to indicate that up front.

- When you get to the application stage, the sponsored programs office needs to be engaged. If you have an application that has not been signed by an authorized individual (not the PI) you don't have an agreement.
 - If an individual/official authorized to sign for the institution has not signed, there is no agreement and the institution is not bound to the terms. Terms must then be negotiated before the award can be made.
 - Investigators can submit non-binding letters of intent without sponsored project's approval but foundations should understand that this is not an institutional approval, it is non-binding and at your own risk. Institutional resources may not be available, including for that investigator's effort.
 - Recommend requiring institutional sign-off for all applications (not necessarily pre-apps or Letters of Intent).
 - Foundations should copy someone in the grants management office early on if they need something from faculty.
- Foundations and institutions should provide each other feedback. Policies and practices are sometimes changed in response to feedback. What would you like to see? What is confusing? Inquiries, concerns and criticisms should be welcome. It would be good to have a systematic way of communicating with each other.
- Keeping a history of accepted terms is good practice and, to the extent possible, terms should be re-used without a lot of negotiation but there has to be acknowledgement that the degree of risk varies by study and terms that were previously acceptable for one study may not be appropriate for another (e.g., indemnity and liability). The more explanation that can be provided, the better.
 - It is almost always better to try to agree in concept first. Try not to start with an exchange of red-lined versions.