



Division of Advancement

Department of Government and Foundation Relations

Grants Orientation Handbook

2024

Mercyhurst University’s Department of Government and Foundation Relations is available to assist in identifying and successfully applying for grants to fund projects that increase our capacity to address our mission and achieve our goals. The Department strives to enhance relationships with a pool of foundations and government entities through cultivation and application submission.

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All grant projects exist to address a need* identified by the funder. A grant project is always a give-and-take scenario, wherein the funder wants to implement a project to meet its goals and objectives and the institution applying for the grant designs a project according to the funder's terms, because there are shared goals between the two or because the institution will also address its own goals and objectives in implementing the project. All grants entail activities that are tied to outcomes and performance measures and reporting.

*A "need" is a problem that is impacting success: e.g., students with low academic literacy have difficulty succeeding in college courses, which impacts college completion, especially among disadvantaged students; or, to survive and thrive during economic downturns, small businesses need to be flexible and identify alternative opportunities for revenue generation. The need is to improve students' learning or to improve businesses' adaptability. The method to address the need – what the project will do – is the strategy identified by the person designing the project to improve the area of need identified by the funder. Thus, a successful grant proposal would not identify the need as "we need a computer lab," but would identify a computer lab as a strategy to address a need to improve student learning. Identifying a strategy is the first step; the next step is to identify research, experience, and data which document that the identified strategy will achieve the results expected from the project.

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& R P S H WAE WE In ME implies, these grants are awarded through a competitive process, based on the highest-scored applications.

Entitlement: Entitlement grants are annual and continual funding allocations from the government.

Sub-agreements: When another institution has applied for and been awarded a grant and provides grant funds to Mercyhurst University to implement a part of the project, it is known as a sub-award. When Mercyhurst University applied for and was awarded a grant and provides grant funds to another institution to implement a part of the project, that institution is a sub-recipient. A sub-agreement is developed that outlines the terms of the project, participation, and reporting requirements. The sub-agreement process is more complex and requires additional time and effort for proposal and management afterward for all grant roles.

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) H G H A N D O Source of grant funding for Mercyhurst University is federal grants. Mercyhurst has previously received federal grants from the Department of State, National Science Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, Department of Justice, Environmental Protection Agency, and NASA.

Compliance Officer (GCO). Staff costs and fringes should be reviewed with the GCO for reasonableness and compliance to Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Labor laws, as well as Mercyhurst policies. The federally approved University indirect cost rate is 44.7% for on-campus activities and 25.4% for off-campus activities and must be included when allowable by the funding agency. Grants that do not allow for indirect costs to be budgeted or cap the indirect rate will be considered by GFR on an individual basis.

Timeline to develop a proposal

After a Request for Applications (RFA), Request for Proposals (RFP), or Solicitation is released, there are usually 30 to 45 days to complete and submit a grant application. The process to authorize the decision to pursue a grant can take a week and, given the time it can take to identify who will serl0 0 12 360.1hgn142 re W*60.1hgn142 r92 re W*(as -0.0072 Tc 12 0 0 12 490.2 564.17 Tm (to)Tj

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GOVERNMENT & FOUNDATION RELATIONS PROCEDURES

For grant projects to function efficiently and effectively, the University has established procedures that involve various departments to help the PD/PI. GFR, within the Advancement Office, provides pertinent information regarding grants and contracts to grant PD/PIs and identifies, summarizes, and disseminates information regarding grant opportunities to the appropriate administrators and other potential PD/PIs.

Mercyhurst encourages faculty to pursue externally funded research grants and contracts to contribute to their discipline and to further their own disciplinary knowledge. For more information, please contact Rich McCarty, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, at rmccarty@mercyhurst.edu.

Applying for a grant

The basic steps to applying for a grant are listed below to provide a general sense of the process. Be advised that the application process varies based on granting agency requirements.

1. Identify an opportunity, understand the agency compliance requirements and related work responsibilities to meet the guidelines, and decide to take the lead as the grant PD/PI. Grant applications often require several weeks or months to compile, so any potential PD/PI interested in applying for a grant should start this process as soon as they become aware of the funding opportunity.
2. Meet with the Dean or Area VP to discuss and review the opportunity. If there is a decision to move forward, contact GFR to schedule a meeting.
3. At the meeting, GFR staff will review the terms of the grant opportunity with the PD/PI and other grant development team members and assist them with completing the ~~RF IRK~~ which is submitted by the RF IRK

5. Drafts of the proposed budget/match are created by the PD/PI with the assistance of GFR staff and then provided to the Finance staff for review/approval.
6. After a continual process of drafts, review, and editing, the final narrative and budget will be ready for submission. Additional elements often are required for an application—partner letters, assurance and certification forms, proof of eligibility forms, letters of support, budget summary forms, application face sheets, curriculum vitae, etc.—and the time it takes to compile these items needs to be taken into account. Grant development teams primarily work on the creation of key narrative sections and the budget for the proposal.
7. GFR staff prepares the final application and submits it to the funder. A complete copy will be sent to the PD/PI, key members of the project, and Finance staff.
8. Finally, we wait. It can take up to six months to receive a response from the funder on some applications, and some funders may request additional information from the PD/PI before making a final award decision.

After the award is made

1. If awarded,

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COMPLIANCE: Read the grant terms and regulation documents thoroughly: i.e., the RFA, RFP, or Solicitation, the grant contract documents, and any other information provided by the funding agency to become familiar with the terms for compliance, including required program and financial reporting. If there are concerns about the compliance requirements, GFR will determine if a discussion is needed with the funder before accepting the grant.

ACCEPTANCE: Each grant must be officially accepted by Mercyhurst. The PD/PI is NOT authorized to accept an award on behalf of the university. GFR will determine the authorized signatory for each grant and facilitate obtaining that signature.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION: Implement the proposed project by following the project work plan approved by the funder. Ensure that all activities are allowed under the grant terms and are directed toward achieving the project's objectives and goals. Contact the GCO with questions on what activities or expenditures are allowable under the grant.

DATA COLLECTION: Set up a data-tracking system at the beginning of the project to ensure that accurate and complete data needed to measure project objectives and performance measures are available to periodically evaluate project implementation (at least quarterly) and to complete periodic reports to the funding agency.

STAFFING: The PD/PI must work with the Payroll and Human Resource staff to hire and assign project staff and VP of Academic Affairs to adjust a faculty contract. A Personnel Action Form (PAF) is required for each person paid through grant funds. PAFs are found on the Human Resources HUB page, under the “SuBž gž [s

authorize. All payment requests and expense reports must be approved by the GCO before submission to Finance.

Purchasing Items and Services: Purchase orders and Vendor/Contract Service Payment forms are found on the Finance page on the HUB, under the “Accounts Payable & Employee Reimbursement” tab. All purchases exceeding \$25,000 must be reviewed by the General Counsel and Finance offices.

Hiring Staff: HR request form for temporary hourly positions. For faculty course load buy out (% of contract shifted to grant) or for additional work above and beyond contract, written approval from the Vice President of Academic Affairs is required. For exempt non-employees, the duties of the grant versus normal exempt duties will need to have written approval signed by the supervisor, HR, and Finance.

Payroll: A Personnel Action Form (PAF) is required for each person paid through grant funds. Stipends requests are made via the PAF and completed by the PD/PI, signed by the PD/PI for anyone employee except the PD/PI, and authorized by area VP. A PAF for the PD/PI must be signed by their supervisor. PAFs are found on the Human Resources HUB page, under the “Supervisor” tab. Time sheets for hourly employees must be submitted bi-weekly. Salaried employees must complete Time and Effort reporting at the end of each semester.

Grant Partners: Sub-agreements developed by GFR are reviewed by Finance and signed by all parties.

Student Aid: Scholarships to students must be provided to Student Financial Services for processing.

Mileage: Mileage for use of a personal vehicle is reimbursed at the current federal rate as established yearly by the IRS. The Mileage Log form is found on the Finance page on the HUB, under the “Accounts Payable & Employee Reimbursement” tab.

SUB-RECIPIENT EXPENSES: If the proposal includes a sub-recipient, the PD/PI will coordinate the collection of sub-recipient invoices, review whether costs are allowable, and ensure costs are in approved budget categories, with the assistance of the GCO if needed. If the costs exceed the allowed budget or do not follow the guidelines list in the sub-agreement, the PD/PI will contact the sub-recipient to notify them of disallowance of payment, including corrections needed if applicable. If the PD/PI review of the sub-recipient's invoice occurs with no concerns, they will approve the payment and create a check request under Mercyhurst University's normal expense procedures.

BUDGETS: The PD/PI must spend within the approved budget categories and cannot overspend in any category. If there is an overage, it will be charged to the PD/PI's department. If the PD/PI

AUDIT RECORDS: Maintain copies of all expenditures-related paperwork (hiring, purchase requisitions, check request forms, University vehicle charges, credit card statements, mileage reimbursement, timesheets, time-and-effort reports, written quotes/RFP, etc.) to determine accuracy and completeness. The PD/PI should contact the GCO immediately when there are discrepancies between their own records and those in Self-Service. All records must be kept for a minimum of six years after the grant ends to meet audit guidelines.

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FUNDING AGENCIES REQUESTS AND INQUIRIES: Copies of inquiries/requests and

FINANCIAL REPORTS: The GCO reviews the financial portion of reports required for each grant according to the schedule determined by the funding agency. Depending on funding agency requirements, the GCO may be required to submit the financial portions of reports to the funding agency directly on the funding agency's electronic system. If the

DOCUMENTATION: GFR maintains grant project files with the following documents to meet audit standards: grant proposal, RFA/RFP/Solicitation, grant award notice, programmatic and financial reports, and significant communications from the funding agency.

RESPONSE TO AUDITOR INQUIRES: GFR staff will assist Finance staff and PD/PI with responses to auditor inquiries.

PREPARATION FOR SITE VISTIS: GFR staff will assist with compiling information for site visits, as needed. Most often the information requested relates to expenditures or program activities, and PD/PI, GCO, and Finance are the main sources of that information.

REPRESENTATION AT SITE VISITS AND AUDIT MEETINGS: GFR staff will be available to attend site visit and audit meetings, at the request of the PD/PI or Finance staff, to assist with representing the project and answering questions related to compliance.

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TIME AND EFFORT REPORTING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Mercyhurst University is required to document effort spent on externally sponsored activity per the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-21, Section J.10.a. This time and effort reporting policy is intended to meet this requirement. The system is an “After-the-Fact Activity” system under which the distribution of salaries and wages by Mercyhurst University will be supported by activity reports as described below:

- A. The Time and Effort Reporting Form will reasonably reflect the percentage of time spent on a state- or federal-funded grant by Mercyhurst University employees.

- B.

- D. Time and Effort Reporting Forms must be approved by a supervisor who has firsthand knowledge of the employee's activities.
1. If a form documents the PD/PI's time and effort, the form will be approved by the immediate supervisor (Department Chair for faculty).
 2. If a form documents an employee's effort and they are **not** the PD/PI, the form will be approved by the PD/PI.
 3. An employee may **not** approve their own Time and Effort Report.
- E. Time and Effort Reporting Forms will be completed at the end of each academic semester and summer reporting periods and will document the percentage distribution of effort expended during the semester or summer.
- F. The PD/PI is responsible for ensuring that the Time and Effort Reporting Forms are return90052005 Rering t

APPENDIX B

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Time and Effort Reporting Form

In order to comply with federal guidelines, this form must be completed and returned to the Faculty Research and Grants Compliance Officer at the end of each semester and summer by exempt employees (salaried) working on a federal or state funded project. Non-exempt (hourly) employees do not need to complete this form as they acknowledge effort through bi-weekly timesheets.

Name: _____ Department: _____

Report Period: