UA Research Administration Forum – January 9, 2019

Effort reporting for departments

Departmental Effort Report Monitoring

Facilitators: Sponsored Projects & Contracting Services; Tara Gonzalez and Tabatha Holan
Discussion Panel:

Tomas Alvarez, Hydrology & Atmospheric Sciences;
Jason Challenger, Medicine;
Chris Duggan, Aerospace & Mechanical Engineering

Effort reporting – what Post-award reviews them for

Collaborative Q&A

Federal shutdown,

Training and outreach updates

Future forum topics

How often do you meet with PIs?

Meet with PI's monthly, quarterly or as needed.

Tomas: Open door policies, ongoing meetings

Chris: Open door, many meetings soon after monthly reports are sent.

Jason: Monthly for active

By working with the PI's regularly, we minimize errors and the effort is more accurately accounted.

How often do you update Payroll Distributions (PD)?

Tomas: constant meetings as faculty desire.

Chris: Reports show start/end and planning discussions happen for the current semester. Don't put in Position Distributions too far in the future.

Jason: meets with PIs when a grant is new or one ends soon to discuss PDs. Don't do it too far in the future (more than a couple months).

Payroll distribution is updated as needed,

When there is a new award

An award is ending

There is a change in effort.

Update it as soon as possible, but typically not more than a month in advance.

While having the conversation/meeting with the PI

How do you Prepare for Effort Reporting?

What do you do to get more in the front of effort reports?

Preparing for Effort reports – Thomas Alverez

Run a report of the funding of the Graduate Research Assistants/Associates and compare it to the PI's directives. If there is a discrepancy, I have the PI meet with the business office and resolve the discrepancy. This is done usually the first week.

Starting to run reports for the next certification already.

Review the payroll expenses for the Effort Period

Agents sent to PI's on their accounts with PEL's information on a monthly basis for their review

Preparing for Effort reports – Jason Challenger

Almost all of the work involved with the effort certification process is complete before the effort certification reports are created.

First, we meet regularly with our PI's and/or send them financial reports on a regular basis. We discuss current and future effort for themselves and the people they fund during these meetings. Current, new and ending projects are discussed.

We maintain detailed excel spreadsheets, what we call "funding plans", with all of their accounts and the corresponding effort and funding with the starting and ending dates. We can quickly and easily identify the effort and funding for any account for any time frame which includes each effort certification time period. Jason brings the funding plan Funding plans are ready before the effort certs are issued.

Q from Rachele Peterson: What if someone from another department needs to add someone from UAHS who has clinical effort? Need as much advance notice as possible

If investigator is over the salary cap, who covers that cost share? Ultimately a UAHS. Cost sharing discussions should happen at the proposal stage to identify who will cover this.

Preparing for Effort reports – Chris Duggan

Check continuation account

Look at cost share, sometimes on effort report

Run PELs, remember to use A2 so it moves the payroll

Also helpful to FY end Payroll split. Good for RA/GRA/TA

It aligns better with the effort report

Analytics > Financials > General – Financial Management >Cost Share

Tara commented

How do you track effort reports?

Thomas Alvarez's Method

Week the reports are generated, after all effort reports created, filter the action list inbox to only see effort reports,

> Action list > filter
>
> Again, GRAs are the ones to watch closely. If a PI wants to change a grad student from one account to another, Tomas asks the reason for sake of compliance. Is one project out of funds?

1. Copy all the effort reports and paste in an excel file. To clear the filter, simple click the "clear filter" button in UAF. In the excel worksheet, create a separate tab for each PI and move related effort reports over to the PI's tab.
2. Review and reconcile each tab with backup documentation and make any notes for the PI to review
3. After each PI's accounts have been reconciled and approved at the department level, emails are sent to the PI and follow up with the PI on approval as needed.

Jason Challenger's Method

1. Compare the funding plan spreadsheet with the effort certifications.

In most cases they match and effort reports are approved.

In the event they do not match, investigate and adjust where it is necessary. I will typically wait a week or two before contacting other units to approve. This allows them time to review and approve the report for their accounts. Then, I will contact other business managers if they have not approved the report timely. Finally, I'll begin contacting the PI's for their approval.

Q: How much time is spent creating these spreadsheets? How many accounts do you have? Jason: If funding is simple, don't do the spreadsheet and just use a database. Several PIs had many accounts. In the long run, maintenance of the spreadsheets is simple. Some PIs have 20-40 accounts so set up can be significant. In the long run, the spreadsheets save a significant amount of time.

Tomas points out the difference that Jason spends more time up front and Tomas spends more time on the back end.

2. The approach taken to obtain the PI's approval depends on the individual and this is learned through experience.

Tactics include: discussing and approving during financial meeting, emailing with instructions and document numbers, emailing with a screenshot of the report, contacting the Admin for assistance, and even text messaging.

Jason: Not every PI is the same so you have to figure out what works for each person. Some have to sit down and approve while in the meeting with Jason.

Chris Duggan's Method

1. Run analytics report "Outstanding Effort Certifications Details" and export to excel

   Financials>General – Sponsored Projects>Outstanding Effort Certifications.

   Click hyperlink: Outstanding Effort Certifications Details

2. Add PI name, Sponsor name and account name and sort by PI (manual cut and paste sort)

   Tara/Tabatha will edit the report to add these

3. Review with payroll representative
4. Approve as Fiscal Officer, prioritize approval where other departments are involved
5. Check UAFinancials Outstanding Certifications by Chart/Org/Report, sorted by outstanding approvers for real time status of reports
   Chris prioritizes effort reports that involve other departments to make sure everyone has time to approve by the deadline.
6. Email individualized list with instruction to PI's along with updated monthly reports
7. Where effort may be in question, ad hoc route back to self to allow for second review by FO

What challenges have you encountered?

PI has left the University

- Though the PI has left, it is still their responsibility to approve their effort report(s)
- Email screenshot of the effort report(s) and ask for them to review and approve. Then SPCS Compliance (Tara or Tabatha) will super-user approve for them and then ad hoc route to a new PI if applicable.
- After approval is obtained forward their reply email to SPCS Financial Compliance Services, along with the screenshot(s) sent and ask them to approve on the PI's behalf.
- If PI is nonresponsive, seek a key personnel/Co-PI who have knowledge of whom is working on the project(s).
- Forward email/inform SPCS Compliance Service and they can routing for you.

Sometimes PIs leave and come back as DCCs. Provisioning instructions are on the Research Gateway Website (RGW) at ???.

PI is on travel and can't VPN in to UAF/time zone issue:

- Email a screenshot of the effort report(s) and ask for them to review and reply that they approve
- After approval is obtained forward their reply email to SPCS Compliance group, along with the screenshot(s) sent and ask them to approve on the PI's behalf.

Getting PI's to approve when in the field for long period of time

Sometimes the screenshot method is effective.

You can put a note in the effort report about extenuating circumstances or otherwise communicate with SPCS and document the situation for future audit.

Getting PI's to approve when the Effort Report is not generated in the home department.

- To avoid this error, when adding an account line do not enter the effort percentage or the salary amount. Add line first, then update the fields.

This is a known bug and instructions are forthcoming.

If the report is someone in your department but the PI is in another department, work with the lead unit to coordinate.

Tabatha added a tip about doc search for an employee.

Tara: Some employees are frustrated by being contacted many times by many people in the case of working with multiple departments

SPCS Postaward: What we look for when reviewing effort reports

- All accounts are reviewed according to cost principles
    - Reasonable, allowable, allocable, consistently treated
- Review the balance of the account with increased effort
    - Is there enough budget to cover the salary as well as the associated ERE and F&A?
- Account end date
    - Is it within the project's period of performance?
    - If account is expired, review the closeout timeline and whether or not SPCS will be able to invoice or draw-down funds
    - Has a final Financial Report been submitted to the sponsor?
- If the account is an E-Verify account, ensure the employee is E-Verified.
- If expenses are moved to a Federal/sub-federal account will be looking for error certification or a note that answers the following questions:
    - Describe in detail the expenditure(s) that are being transferred
    - How did this expenditure benefit the project?
    - How the error occurred?
    - Why is the error correction late?
- Reasonable justification for a significant changes in effort
- Review the balance of the account with increased effort
    - Is there enough budget to cover the associated ERE and F&A?
- Account end date

    - Is it within the period of performance?
    - Has a final Financial Report been submitted to the sponsor?
- Does the Cost Share source and name on the cost share account name match the employee and the source being moved to?
- If it is determined that any changes are needed, the effort report will be ad hoc routed to the Fiscal Officer for changes. Post award will hold off on approving until after the department has made adjustments and all approvals from FO and PIs are obtained.

Resources

UA Financials

- Outstanding Certifications by Chart/Org/Report
- Doc search: Document type "ECD" filter by org code, fiscal year, and/or employee ID
- Effort Detail tab on effort reports

Analytics

- Financials>General – Sponsored Projects>Outstanding Effort Certification
- Financials>General – Sponsored Projects>Ad Hoc Effort Certification

Research Gateway

- http://rgw.arizona.edu/administration/managing-projects/effort-reporting
- http://rgw.arizona.edu/administration/managing-projects/effort-reporting/effort-reporting-policy
- http://rgw.arizona.edu/administration/managing-projects/effort-reporting/effort-reporting-procedure
- Micro learning videos *coming soon*

SPCS Financial Compliance Services

- Tara Gonzales tgonzale@email.arizona.edu 626-6660
- Tabatha Holan tholan@email.arizona.edu 626-6442

NCURA FRA/PRA conference coming in March in Las Vegas.

Federal Shutdown – advice is

If project can be conducted without daily federal oversight, you can likely proceed.

Contact SPCS if you

February Topic is Subawarding