

Subcontracts 101

Research collaborations between investigators at different institutions are commonplace today and are expected to become even more prominent in the future. This relatively new development is the result of the increasing sophistication of science and the sheer magnitude of complicated research projects. When WSU is designated a lead institution on a sponsored project for which there are outside collaborators, subawards, in the form of a subcontract, will be issued.

Subcontracts are made to outside entities (not individuals) that have a substantive, programmatic involvement in a specific portion of a sponsored project. When a new subcontract is required on a project, the Grant & Contract Officer (GCO) needs to fill out the Request For Subcontract (TO) sheet and verify the budget amount matches the subcontract category 721H11 in BANNER. A separate detailed budget, including cost-sharing, a specific Statement of Work, F & A rate sheet, and a Letter of Intent should be attached to the TO sheet. These items usually can be found in the proposal. Due to the time lag between index establishment and scanning, the optimal time to assemble the TO sheet package is when the GCO establishes the index/fund and inputs a budget amount in the 721H11 BANNER category.

Because the subcontracting process takes place in a time-sensitive environment, accurate information on the TO sheet is a critical element in expediting the process. Besides the aforementioned attachments to the TO sheet, the GCO should provide the complete name and address for the Subcontractor, the Administrative contact information, and the PI information to ensure the subcontract gets to the right place. Most subcontracts are transmitted electronically so inaccurate email addresses can potentially add months to the process.

Normally, the terms and conditions remain fixed for the duration of the project period. It may be necessary during the course of a subcontract to change one or several terms or conditions of the award. Any change to the subcontract such as continuation funding, no-cost extensions, or other administrative changes require a subcontract amendment. Programmatic changes, including Scope of Work and PI change, require prior approval from the Sponsor.

Amendments are initiated by the GCO and a TO sheet is necessary to begin the process. Once again, the contact person's email address should be accurate. The TO sheet only needs one of the following: Index/fund number, Purchase Order number, or the WSU contract number. If new money is involved, a continuation budget breakdown should be attached. Programmatic changes that required prior approval should also be attached.

All outgoing subcontracts/amendments have to be approved by Wayne State University's General Counsel before an authorized WSU signature can be obtained. This process has been streamlined by the utilization of templates that have been previously approved by General Counsel. These templates expedite negotiations between WSU and the subcontractors and are generally accepted by our collaborator institutions. However, if a subcontractor institution changes anything of note on a template, the subcontract must be re-approved by WSU's General Counsel.

Sometimes, even with the cleanest turn-over from the GCO and the speediest transmittal, the negotiation of a subcontract can take weeks and sometimes months to complete. These are the times when your patience is appreciated.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the subcontracting process, please contact Mike Maher ak1402@wayne.edu or send an email to spanewsletter@wayne.edu