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Grants Management Skills Keep Funded Projects on Target

Executive Summary

- ▶ The authors provide detailed information about the process of applying for a grant and the management of a grant once it is funded.
- ▶ The contracting process is described, with attention to the who, what, when, and how of such an endeavor, including financial and space needs for all personnel and funding for supplemental material and administrative support.
- ▶ They emphasize the need for the person writing a proposal, usually the primary investigator or PI, to have a full understanding of his/her organization's direction for the future to assure that the proposed grant project is consistent with the overall aims of the organization.
- ▶ This understanding is critical to "determine whether financial and administrative support will continue once funding is over – something increasingly required by funders."
- ▶ Knowing as much as possible about the funding organization, effective budget planning, and the development and use of the proposal as a preliminary work plan once the project is funded are also highly recommended.

THERE IS A SAYING among proposal writers that the only thing worse than *not* being funded, is *being* funded. The thrill of receiving a favorable review begins to fade once attention is turned towards managing the grant. To assure the project proceeds according to proposed time frame and plan, several steps should be taken during the proposal development phase and in the early post-funding period. These steps serve to identify the activities required to achieve project goals and to guarantee that sufficient funds are available to cover the time and resources needed.

In this article, information about the grants management aspects of program development are provided and suggestions are offered for how to prepare for and respond to the demands of monitoring and managing a funded project. The discussion is sufficiently global to allow for application to research, training, or new program development grants.

The Grants Management Process

The grants management process begins as soon as the first steps are taken toward developing a project proposal. In developing a proposal, the authors formulate a written con-

tract that describes what will be done and what resources will be needed to accomplish the work required. The proposal constitutes a bond of agreement between the proposal developers and the funding agency (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987) and serves as a blueprint for the project.

For purposes of discussion, we have separated grants management activities into those associated with pre-funding and post-funding periods. Within these periods, early-phase and late-phase activities are required. In addition, for projects conducted over prolonged

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periods of time, a middle stage devoted to project maintenance is included in the post-funding period.

Pre-funding Activities:

In the pre-funding phase, activities focus on securing approval to undertake the project, formulating a plan for completion of the project, identifying and negotiating the contributions of project team members, and determining how much money will be needed to accomplish the task. These activities set the stage for what follows once funding is received. Principal among these activities is assessment — assessment of the organization's mission and vision, its resources, its areas of expertise, and its deficiencies. Lauffer (1983) has referred to this phase as the "knowing your organization" stage. "Knowing your organization" assures that what is proposed is consistent with the organization's direction for the future. It also helps determine whether financial and administrative support will continue once funding is over — an essential component of program development work and one that is increasingly required by funders. This pre-proposal development phase also helps identify the mechanisms and processes needed to initiate the project and to respond once funding is received. It often uncovers hidden costs associated with new program development and initiating research projects. "Knowing the funding organization" also is important because agencies often fund specific types of projects or areas of research. They also may have specific policies pertaining to submitting applications and preparing budgets and reports. When these are followed, the potential for favorable outcome is increased.

Budget planning and development. One of the principal tasks of the pre-funding phase is developing a budget and identifying all project components that require time, space, and resources. The steps in

this planning process are inter-related and overlap. Consequently, a mechanism for working back and forth between identifying activities, developing a time line, and estimating a budget is needed. For each element of a study or project, the proposal developer should ask: How long will it take to accomplish this task? When in the chronologic order of the project or program planning process should it occur? Who will be directly or indirectly involved in the activity and how much time will be required for their involvement?

When preparing the budget, the developer should think of it as a tool for plotting out expenditures associated with the project. Regardless of the specifications of the agency, a comprehensive, detailed budget must be completed prior to submitting the proposal. Even in those cases in which an agency specifies in advance how much money will be granted or offers considerable latitude concerning expenditures within the total budgeted amount, a detailed analysis is needed. This analysis helps prevent the initiation of a program that simply can not be carried out within the constraints of the maximum amount of money allowed. It also clarifies for the proposal developer how the funds should be spent and reduces the potential for overexpenditures that could result in insufficient funds to carry the program to completion.

THE EFFECTIVE grants manager begins preparing the budget as soon as the idea for a proposal begins to take form. Each activity connected with developing a program or the study of some phenomenon is associated with a cost. For example, if a survey will be used to collect data from subjects, questions the program director/principal investigator (PD/PI) will need to consider are: How often will the survey be distributed and to how large a sample? Will the survey be handed out to subjects or will it be sent by

mail? Will the survey be returned by mail or will it be dropped off at a central location? Who will need to be involved in preparing the surveys, copying them, folding them, stapling them, placing them in envelopes, and mailing or distributing them? Will the surveys be professionally printed and how long will they be? Will the surveys be purchased or must they be developed by the investigator? Will repeat mailings be sent to nonrespondents? Or will all subjects get a followup letter or prompt after initial mailing? Will repeat mailings contain a second copy of the questionnaire in the event the first is lost? Will data from the surveys be scanned into a database or will they be hand entered? Who will complete the data entry and cleaning? How much will the survey weigh and how large will the mailed packet be? Will special envelopes be required for distribution and return of questionnaires? Each of these questions has a cost associated with it and each requires consideration when estimating the budget required to cover the project. If even a small detail is overlooked, the impact on the budget can be severe. It may mean the difference between completing the project as intended or eliminating activities (or personnel) to assure that costs remain within budgetary constraints.

Some agencies, most notably the federal government, provide detailed templates for how to prepare the budget. Others do not. In general, all budgets should include estimates for: (a) personnel, including consultations if needed; (b) the purchase or rental of equipment; (c) local and long-distance travel; (d) supplies; and (e) other miscellaneous expenditures. Occasionally, rental or renovation of space may be required. These latter expenses often are not covered by funding agencies, meaning that internal support for the coverage of these costs will be required.

The budget planning process involves estimating both direct and

indirect costs. Direct costs are those associated with accomplishing the work of the project; indirect costs also are real costs incurred on behalf of the project, but are designated as indirect because there is no mechanism for charging them directly to the grant. These costs routinely involve maintenance of the work environment and providing utilities necessary for accomplishing tasks. For instance, whenever researchers or program directors use their offices during the course of research or demonstration projects, costs incur. These may include rental fees, payment of utilities, equipment depreciation, providing security, and general maintenance of workspace. Because an estimate of the actual amount spent on the services cannot be computed for the specific area involved, costs are generally computed as a portion of an overall charge to an operating budget.

Indirect costs also may include administrative expenses associated with general grants management or research support. Oversight of funds may involve personnel from the grant recipient's department, the senior administrator's office, the financial management office, the payroll office, and the accounting office. Each of these areas provides services to the project, although no tangible dollar amount can be determined with any degree of accuracy.

Before calculating indirect costs, the proposal developer should review both the internal institution's and the external funding agency's policies concerning indirect cost recovery. The federal government, for example, has very specific criteria for what can and cannot be considered an indirect cost. In response to recent changes in these rules, many research active universities have developed written interpretations of how the rules apply to their institutions. Proposal developers should familiarize themselves with these rules and requirements before any work is done on the budget.

In most instances, organizations use a formula to determine a percent of the total budget that is estimated to cover costs of indirect services. This percentage can vary significantly by type of institution and in the case of the federal government is negotiated in advance. In some cases, foundations and other sponsors refuse to pay for any indirect cost recovery or they may severely restrict the amount allowed. In those instances, the proposal developer should secure administrative approval and assurance that indirect costs will be borne by the institution; this should be done before the proposal is submitted. When organizations waive their requirements for indirect cost recovery, or if they agree to cover the salary and benefits of some or all of the project's personnel, or if they provide equipment and resources to achieve the program goals, proposal developers should calculate the costs associated with each of these items and identify them as contributed or donated costs. Contributed costs can be significant depending on the institution's usual indirect cost recovery rate. Consequently, they should be highlighted in the budget estimation and justification sections to indicate the organization's commitment to the project and the investigator.

Figure 1 shows a sample of a working budget that includes the amount requested from the funding agency as well as contributed costs. During the budget development phase, the more detailed the information and the cost estimation, the better. This process helps assure the program director knows exactly how much money will be required to accomplish the goals of the project. Although most agencies request only the first column of information, the three column approach is useful as an internal tool for identifying true costs. This approach also helps identify who from within the institution (or elsewhere) should provide letters of support and commitment, espe-

cially if contributed funds are involved.

In conjunction with the budget's breakdown is the development of a budget justification statement for each of the items requested. The budget justification section is used to provide compelling evidence for why the cost requested is necessary. It also identifies the steps that have been taken to calculate the cost and to keep the cost within reasonable limits. In describing the individuals involved in the project or the items needed to accomplish it, notation should be made about any specific requirements or characteristics that would add to the cost estimate. For example, if a master's-prepared nurse rather than a baccalaureate or lesser-prepared nurse is needed to conduct comprehensive health assessments as part of data collection activities, this should be noted. In this case, the higher salary required to recruit an advanced practice nurse is justified because of the level of skill provided and the potential for accuracy in data collection.

BUDGET ESTIMATES must be calculated for the salaries and benefits of all personnel covered by the grant. In some institutions, part-time employees are hired on an hourly basis and when this occurs, total hours estimated are multiplied by hourly wage per person. Because salary and benefits estimates increase during multiple year projects and because some calculations for faculty with academic appointments include estimates for academic year (9 months) and summer (3 month) assignments, estimates should be determined for every year of the project and for every individual on the team.

The budget justification statement for a request of salary support and benefits for 20% effort by a PI or PD for all years of a project might look like the following:

Funds are requested to support 20% effort for Ms. Jones for all

Figure 1.

Vanderbilt University Medical Center
 Report of Transactions
 For the Month Ended 12/31/97
 Report Number : MD091

Date/Time 1/05/98 01:58

Budget No. 1-11-111-1111

Center Name
 Research Foundation
 Research FDN: Expanding Reseach Analysis

Account Number 10000

Expanded Trans Descr

10000 Xeroxing

Research Foundation, Grant Inv. 8999

20000 Speedy Delivery

99979 221111136 00022185

20000 Speedy Delivery

69971 221111026 00022185

60000 Company Supply Warehouse

99999 221111116 00022180

60000 Staples Supplies

98988 221111117 00022280

60000 Office Supply Store

98989 221599766 00022281

**Account 60000

** Budget No 1111111111

Account	J/E	Journal Source	Effective Date	Transaction Amount	D Begin/End C Current	Balance Period
10000	N1194	J. Doe	12/11/97	29.70	D	0.00
**Account 10000				29.70		29.70
20000	APA08	Accts Pay	12/15/97	25.00	D	100.00
20000	APA16	Accts Pay	12/15/97	72.45	D	100.00
**Account 20000				97.45		197.45
60000	APA09	Accts Pay	12/10/97	100.00	D	
60000	APA10	Accts Pay	12/15/97	50.00	D	
60000	APA11	Accts Pay	12/20/97	202.50	D	
**Account 60000				352.50		352.50

Vanderbilt University PURCHASE ORDER

No. 221-599766
 NOT VALID FOR AMOUNTS OVER \$500.00

COMPLETE ORDER NUMBER MUST APPEAR ON ALL PACKAGES AND INVOICES. VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY ACCOUNTS PAYABLE SECTION BOX 1810, STATION B NASHVILLE, TN 37235

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 60000
 CENTER: 1-11-111-1111

BUYER: J. Doe
 BUYER PHONE: 123
 BUYER FAX: 123
 BUYER ADDRESS: 123

DEPARTMENT: Area Grants Purchase Mgr.
 TELEPHONE: 222-1234

NAME: John Smith
 ADDRESS: 4504 Main St.
 CITY: Our Town
 STATE: USA
 ZIP: 99999-1234

DATE PREPARED: 12/05/97
 PREPARED BY: Jane Doe

DATE: 12/05/97
 DATE: 1111-0987

CITY: Your Town
 STATE: USA
 ZIP: 1111-0987

NAME: Office Supply Store
 ADDRESS: Town Shopping Mall
 CITY: 1234 Broad St.

NAME: Office Supply Store
 ADDRESS: Town Shopping Mall
 CITY: 1234 Broad St.

NAME: Office Supply Store
 ADDRESS: Town Shopping Mall
 CITY: 1234 Broad St.

APPROVED BY: [Signature]
 AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE REQUIRED
 ACCOUNTING CLEARANCE/NOTATIONS

ITEM NO.	QUANTITY	UNIT	MODIFIED NO	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	DISC.	AMOUNT
1	2	ea	456	staplers	6.00		12.00
2	1	ea	1234	Xerox paper	36.50		36.50
3	1	ea	AL98	2 drawer file cabinet	154.00		154.00
Total							202.50

This order is subject to and governed by the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action policies contained in Title 41, Chapter 204-4, Order 41-40, 41-40-200-4 and 40-211.1. Violation of these policies may result in a contract being terminated, suspension of further orders, military service or handover, and the implementing rule and regulation.

years of the project. Ms. Jones will serve as the program director of the project and as such will be responsible for overseeing all activities associated with it. She will assure project objectives are carried through as planned and will prepare interim and final reports. In addition, she will monitor the budget, orient project team members to data collection procedures, conduct weekly project team meetings and oversee data analysis procedures. Ms. Jones' considerable experience with managed care organizations and her previous oversight of a number of large and small programs such as this assures that the project will be completed successfully and according to budget. Estimates for benefits are calculated at 24% of base and salary estimates for years 2 and 3 of the project contain 4% annual cost of living increases.

In the event the funding agency does not support the effort of the PD, as is often the case with small grants programs, the costs (salary and benefits) associated with the director's time should be calculated and identified as a contributed cost. A statement in the budget justification also should be included. An example might be: *Because of the recognized importance of this project, the Department of Nursing will cover salary and benefit expenses equivalent to the amount of time required by Ms. Jones to oversee project related activities (20% effort = \$14,880).*

Equipment purchases are requested when they are deemed essential to the conduct of the project. In estimating the costs of equipment, attention should be paid to the specific attributes required of the equipment (for example, sufficient memory to handle data analysis software for computer requests) and whether a particular brand of equipment is needed. This requirement most often occurs with requests for products that measure physiologic parameters and for which established reliability and validity estimates are

essential. In such cases, the proposal developer should mention what aspects of the product are important and why the expense is justified in light of what the product will achieve. This is especially true if the brand requested is more expensive than other products available.

When determining estimates for equipment, the proposal developer should keep in mind the costs associated with maintaining and using the equipment. For example, most new equipment comes with a time limited warranty; in planning for using the equipment over the duration of the project, the proposal developer should obtain an estimate of the costs associated with purchasing service agreements to cover the period involved. Proposal developers also should consider whether supplies will be needed for the equipment (for example, paper and cartridges for printouts of physiologic measures); these should be estimated for each year of the program. In some instances, expenses will be more evident during certain years. For example, if mailed questionnaires are sent out during the 1st and 3rd years of the project, the proposal developer should note why printing, paper, and postage estimates for these 2 years exceed estimates for others.

PROJECT-RELATED travel is another budget item that requires specific information about how cost estimates are determined. In calculating the total figure for travel expenses, the proposal developer should consider the mode of travel, whether travel will be local or long distance or a combination of both, and what means of transportation will be used (airplane or automobile). Incorporated into the travel estimate is lodging, food, and any miscellaneous expenses associated with the trip. In preparing the justification section for these expenses, information should be included about the number of people travel-

ing and how often the travel will occur. Because some foundations place restrictions on travel and per diem expenses, the proposal developer should review the foundation's budget guidelines before the proposal is submitted.

Subcontractual arrangements are a special consideration in budget development and a full discussion of this process is beyond the scope of this article. General considerations include attention to administrative approval at all sites, estimating individual budgets for each of the subcontract sites (which are then incorporated into the full budget), and determining the subcontract site's formula for recovery of indirect costs. This discussion should occur prior to submitting the proposal during initial negotiations concerning resource availability and need. If indirect cost recovery is requested by a subcontract site after the original budget is approved, the internal shifting of money to cover these costs may result in the need to eliminate some aspect of the project or the ultimate removal of the subcontract site. This can have disastrous consequences for the overall project and the future good will of the institution.

Organizing the work to be done. One of the most useful techniques for organizing the work of a project is creating a planning document that specifies the activities to be done and identifies who is responsible for overseeing them. Included in the document are estimates of the time required for completing tasks and whether an activity will need to be accomplished more than once. A column also may be added to denote the status of activities, which then allows the form to serve as both a planning and a process monitoring document. To assure all project team members are working from the same planning document, each revision should be dated or numbered.

Program planning software are available to manage projects, but

simple spreadsheet formats or word processing programs also can suffice. For example, Table 1 contains a portion of a grants management plan that was prepared in WordPerfect 6.0 software using the table format. The focus of the plan is on the administrative tasks that must be accomplished prior to submitting a proposal to the funding agency. None of the activities other than the budget statement pertain to the actual writing of the proposal, yet all must be accomplished before the proposal is sent.

Administrative review. Requirements associated with internal administrative review vary across institutions. In some cases, a well-prescribed process is defined and clearly stated in internal application procedure materials. In others the process is less formal, although a representative of the organization will need to sign off as the contact person for receipt of funds. Most agencies award contracts or grants to the organization rather than the individual; thus, the need for identifying an administrative contact who can serve as the primary person for interacting with funding agencies.

Administrative review may be required for access to subjects, use of resources, availability of space, or donation of equipment. Administrative approval also is required when an employee is requesting a percent of work time to devote to project-related activities. Even when funds are requested to support the time spent by the employee, someone must be available to cover the usual job-related activities that will be handled during the course of the project. A discussion should be held prior to the proposal's submission concerning what will be done if the proposal is funded.

To facilitate administrative review, the proposal developer should have as a minimum an executive summary of the proposal and a copy of the budget and budget justification for all years of the project. In the brief proposal

should be a list of agencies involved in the project and letters of support or agreement to participate. Documentation of human subjects review board approval (IRB) or approval for use of vertebrate animals also should be included for research projects. In addition, some indication of review by participating agencies should be noted.

If a formal institutional review and approval process is not in place at the organizations involved in the project, a cover letter should be provided highlighting what is needed from the administrator before the proposal is submitted for funding consideration. This letter should contain the title of the project, where the proposal is being submitted, what will be required of the institution and its employees, the total number of years covered by the project and an estimate of direct and indirect costs. The proposal developer may need to meet with the administrator, especially if a standard review and administrative sign off process are not in place. Sufficient time should be allowed to revise the proposal and to provide additional information based on the outcome of the meeting.

Once the proposal is submitted, copies of the document should be sent to administrators and others who helped facilitate the submission or the completion of the application. Alert them to the anticipated date for decision about funding and keep them apprised of any changes that occur in the schedule. Also, be sure to notify them of the subsequent outcome of the proposal review, even if rejected (Selby-Harrington, Donat, & Hibbard, 1993).

Post-Funding Activities

Post-funding activities begin once a favorable response is received from the funding agency. In this period, the quality of the PD/PI's management skills make the difference between a successful, smooth running project and

one that is hampered by multiple problems. These early skills also enhance project team productivity during the first year of funding, where efficient use of time is essential (Bergstrom & Baun, 1994). Because all projects require some problem resolution activities and the need to make adjustments along the way, the effective grants manager works to assure the project is overseen carefully and steps are taken to assure that the goals, time frame, and activities needed to accomplish the work are clear to project team members and participating institutions.

In the immediate post-funding phase, attention shifts to setting up the mechanisms for oversight of the project, confirming continued commitment from project team members and administrators, hiring and orienting new members of the project team, finalizing time frames for project completion, communicating information about start-up activities at project sites, and establishing mechanisms for monitoring the project and its expenditures. As the project draws to an end, activities are directed toward completing reports, initiating mechanisms for sustaining the work of the project, reconciling budget accounts, and bringing closure to project-related activities.

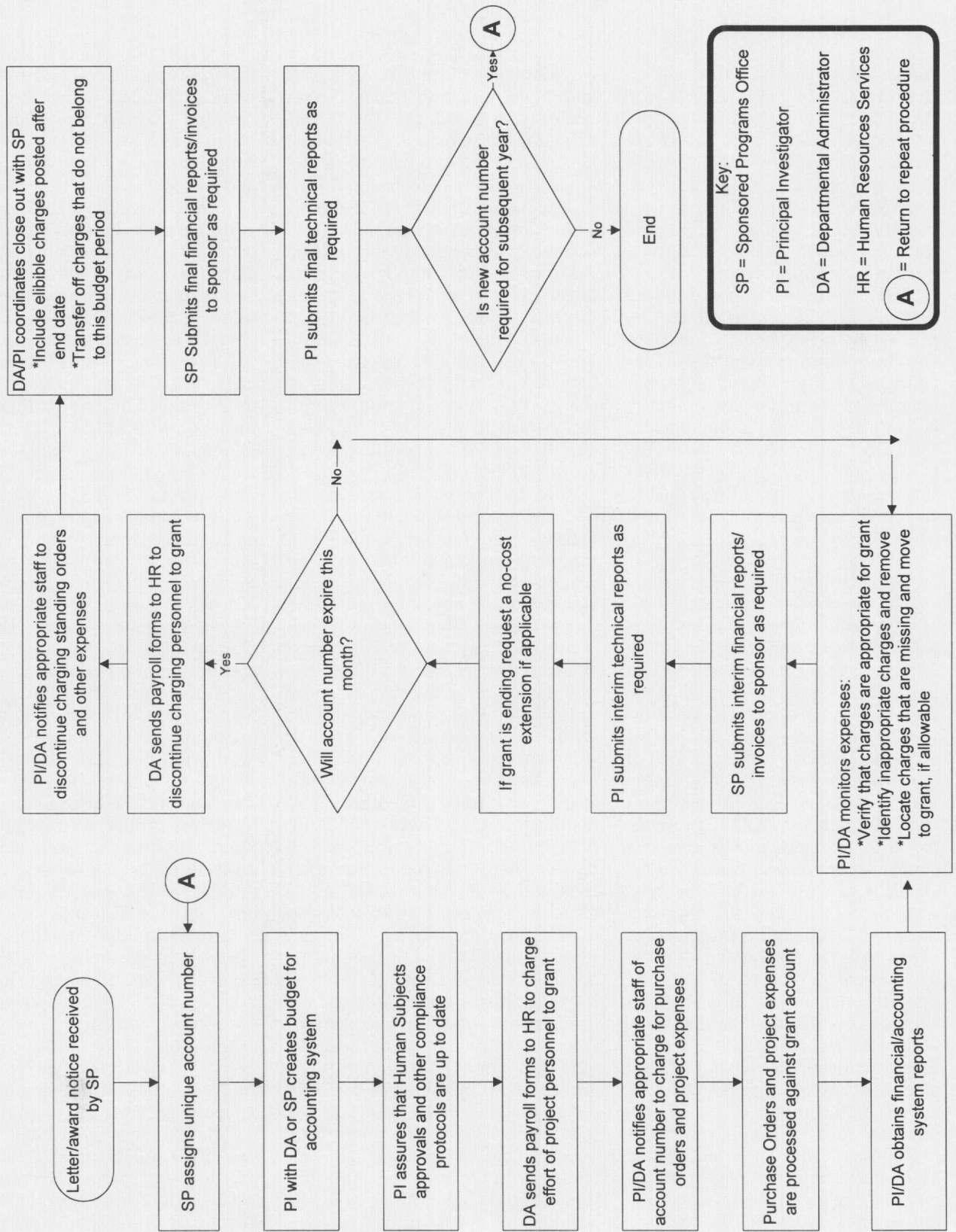
Figure 2 contains a grants management diagram that charts the important steps in the life of a grant — from time of funding until termination of grant. As the lead person for the project, the PI or PD has overall responsibility for every aspect of the program. The PI/PD is assisted by a number of individuals, however, who work to assure that all regulations of the organization, the funding agency, and state and federal governments are addressed. A departmental administrator may be responsible for managing the financial aspects of the grant in conjunction with the PD/PI and often oversees the submission of paperwork and required internal and external documents.

In some institutions, a spon-

Table 1.
Pre-Funding Grants Management Planning Activities

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Discuss plans for proposal development with administrative group and secure approval for submission to funding agency. Responsible Person:												
Contact potential sites to determine level of interest in participating in interagency grant proposal. Responsible Person:												
Confirm commitment with agencies and provide statement of understanding concerning participant requirements. Identify lead (contact) person at each site. Responsible Person:												
Convene first planning team meeting and distribute minutes to all members (present and absent). Responsible Person:												
Identify resources available for achieving goals of project and document additional resources needed. Responsible Person:												
Meet with grants manager to discuss program budget and identify time frame for internal review and sign-off. Responsible Person:												
Prepare initial draft of budget for review and discussion at second team meeting. Responsible Person:												
Convene second meeting of planning team. Distribute materials to members one week in advance. Responsible Person:												
Revise budget based on recommendations of planning team and resubmit for review and consideration. Responsible Person:												
Prepare contractual arrangement statements for participating sites. Submit to contracts office for review and approval. Responsible Person:												

Figure 1. Grants Management Flow Chart



tions and reconfirm who will be the primary contact person at project sites. For subcontractual arrangements in which funds are transferred to other sites, the discussion should include the process for how the money will be transferred and how often the transfers will occur (for example, quarterly or annually).

During the early post-funding period, the PD/PI finalizes the processes to be used to purchase equipment and to request bids for contractors. If purchases and other charges for supplies are generally accomplished through one person, the PD/PI will need to assure that this person is well informed about the project and that all charges to the project account are identified as such.

ANOTHER of the first steps associated with early project oversight involves identifying when and how often project team meetings will be held. In the start-up period these meetings may need to be held weekly to assure that all project team members are fully informed of the project's goals, the time frame for completion, and the expectations of members. Although member responsibilities may evolve and change over time, an initial understanding of who will do what and who is accountable to whom is essential. If someone other than the PD/PI will be responsible for the day-to-day oversight of project-related activities, discussions should occur about when the PD/PI will be involved in problem resolution and decision making. These meetings can serve as an effective means for keeping team members informed and for facilitating group problem-solving activities. Members should have an opportunity to bring forward issues pertaining to their work on the project. Agendas are useful and in all cases meeting minutes should be kept, with identification of decision points and persons responsible for carrying out activities.

Managing the budget. Managing and monitoring the budget serves not only to assure that the project expenditures remain within budgeted amounts, but also guarantees that a paper trail is available should the project be audited at a later date. These documents should be housed separately from other project-related documents and should be clearly labeled according to type of expenditure and date of transaction.

Because every organization has its own financial reporting system, it will be the responsibility of the PD/PI to become familiar with the system in place at the project site. Reports of expenditures often are generated monthly and these should be compared carefully to documents and accounts kept by project team members. Financial reporting documents can be confusing; consequently, new investigators should check to see if the organization offers training sessions for interpreting reports. When these are not available, the PD/PI should review the first set of documents with someone familiar with the reporting process. In some institutions, a central office oversees the monitoring of all grants accounts; in others the responsibility rests with the PD/PI. PDs/PIs should determine at the outset whether anyone other than they will be responsible for monitoring budget expenditures.

When reviewing budget reports, the PD/PI should look for under as well as overexpenditures. If expenditures were intended for the period under review, careful consideration should be paid to why they are not appearing in the report. If delays in start-up time have pushed the purchase of equipment or other supplies behind, that is an accepted discrepancy; if an expense is missing that should have been charged against the account, that is not. When discrepancies are identified, an immediate investigation of what happened is required.

A review of budget reports also should include confirmation that

the approved percent of effort for work associated with the grant is charged to the grant account. Usually, this process is initiated by completing some type of change in account status form that is signed by the responsible PI/PD or grant administrator. This process should occur as soon as possible after the grant account is established to assure that the correct portion of salary and benefits expenditures is charged against the grant account.

Two time periods are particularly critical for budget report monitoring. The first is during the initial months of the project, when expenses may be inadvertently charged against another account. The second is at the end of the grant, when all expenditures must be identified and charged against the account prior to its closure. Because of the time required to process budget expenditures, careful planning is needed to assure all charges are debited against the account before it is closed.

During the funding period, regular review of expenditures and unspent funds should occur at least monthly. Careful attention should be paid to ledgers where information is provided about funds available and expended. Some institutions also include projections for anticipated expenditures for the year. When this is not done, the PI or PD should calculate estimates him/herself to assure that expenditures do not exceed those allowable for the year.

Report writing and communicating with the funding agency. Report writing is an integral component of the grants management process. As a minimum, reports are required at the completion of a funded project; they also may be requested at intervals, particularly for multi-year grants. In many cases, subsequent year funding is dependent upon evidence of accomplishment of individual year objectives. Consequently, the ways in which information is provided in interim reports can influence the

continuance or discontinuance of funding.

One of the most effective ways to facilitate report writing is to keep accurate meeting minutes and to maintain a decision log of project-related activities. These documents can be used to describe the processes used to achieve the project's goals and to identify instances when changes in planning had to occur.

Minimum requirements for interim and final report include a summary description of the project, its major findings, and plans for disseminating results. Any under or overexpenditures in the budget should be addressed in the narrative summary. For interim reports, specific objectives for the next funding period should be included. These may be short-term objectives for achieving overall project goals and will usually cover plans for activities associated with both the process component and the outcome component of the project. The final report should include a discussion of how the project will be carried forward once funding has ended.

Project-related communications also may involve verbal and written requests to re-budget items, to ask for additional (or supplementary) funds, to carry forward unspent money from one funding period to the next, and to extend the time frame for completing project requirements. This last request is referred to as a request for "no cost extension," which means that no additional funds are requested, but additional time is needed to bring the project to successful closure. An extension may be requested because a project got underway later than anticipated, because data collection activities were added beyond those originally identified, or because the completion of activities took more time than was envisioned. When requesting extensions or changes in budgeted items, include carefully stated rationales for each. Within the rationale should appear a brief description of

the original plans and why a change is needed. Include a time frame or budget spending plan to clarify how the changes will be carried out.

Summary

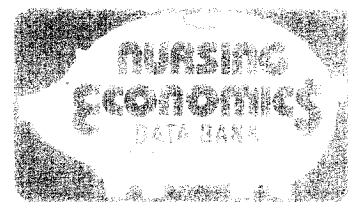
An often neglected but equally relevant aspect of program development and nursing research is the management of funded projects from the time an idea is generated to the final submission of project report. When effective grants management skills are used to oversee the development of a program proposal and the oversight of the funded project, the likelihood of successful outcome is increased. In this article several steps have been described in the grants management process that can be used to assure that projects are developed and proceed according to plan. \$

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Epilepsy Costs

A new report from the Epilepsy Foundation places the preliminary annual national cost of epilepsy at approximately \$12.5 billion, the first time in more than 20 years the cost of epilepsy has been calculated. The report also noted that the young bear an inordinate burden; some 300,000 children aged 14 and under have epilepsy.

Schizophrenia Costs

- The financial impact of schizophrenia in the U.S. is believed to exceed that of all cancers combined, with direct and indirect costs associated with the disorder estimated to be more than \$50 billion.
- Schizophrenia is the most resource-intensive mental illness, accounting for one-third of all mental illness costs.
- People with schizophrenia occupy 25% of all hospital beds and account for 40% of all long-term care days.

Empowered Patients Are More Satisfied with Their Care

A study by Press, Ganey Associates, Inc. confirms the emerging and strengthening trend in health care, that today's patients want to know their rights and what to expect. The study supports the strong relationship between empowering patients and their satisfaction with care delivery. The mean satisfaction score for overall satisfaction with the health care facility was 84.9 in those patients who had received information regarding their rights. For patients who had not received this information, the overall satisfaction mean was 81.2, a statistically significant difference between the two respondents. For more information on the study, contact (800) 232-8032; www.pressganey.com