Sponsored Research Services (SRS)

• SRS Overview

• Pre-Award
  – Proposal Administration
  – Contract Negotiation

• Post-Award Administration
  – Project Management
  – Accounts Receivable

• Hot Topics/SRS Initiatives

• Audit at SRS – Evan Bryant
Texas A&M Sponsored Research Services (SRS) is a consortium of The Texas A&M University System members who bring together expertise in research administration to enhance the research mission.

Our Vision

• Exhibit leadership in research administration
  – Collaborate to develop consistent and efficient procedures
  – Engage in training and professional development
  – Maximize the benefits of technology

• Minimize the administrative burden of the research process
  – Deliver outstanding customer service to our members
  – Improve communication through the research community
  – Promote and maintain transparency to our members in order to foster excellent working relationships
Life Cycle of a Project
Pre-Award Proposal Administration
Pre-Award – Proposals

• Proposal Development
  – Work with faculty (or designee) on budget preparation
  – Complete all administrative information in application package
  – Upload administrative documents required by the sponsor
  – Review proposal for compliance with sponsor’s guidelines, RFP, or solicitation as well as AgriLife Policy, SAPs and System Policy

• Proposal Routing
  – SRS routes each proposal for external funding for approval by all investigators, department head or unit director, dean or appropriate vice president, and the AgriLife Administration

• Proposal Submission
  – After thorough quality review, SRS submits proposal per sponsor requirements, AgriLife Policy, SAPs and System Policy
How can we work together to submit a successful proposal?

- Communicate with the faculty benefits of submitting early (Proposal Submission Guidelines)
- Communicate with faculty the importance of complying with sponsor and agency requirements
- Be aware that during proposal development, SRS Proposal Administrators may contact you (DRA’s) for:
  - Cost sharing account numbers
  - Salary Verification
  - Other questions that may arise during the proposal preparation process
Pre-Award – Contract Negotiations
Pre-Award – Contract Negotiations

• The role of contract negotiators is to protect the interests of the Texas A&M System while considering the risk or impact of proposed agreement terms on the researcher, students, AgriLife, and sub-recipients. Contract negotiators:
  – Review and negotiate the terms and conditions of agreements to ensure compliance with applicable A&M System policies and applicable local, state and federal regulations
  – Review and address any exceptions included in the Request for Applications at the time of proposal preparation
  – When necessary, negotiators engage the Office of General Counsel, Texas A&M Technology Commercialization, Risk Management, and System member offices to seek approval on agreement terms
• If a sponsored research contract is received at the department it should be sent to SRS (awards@tamu.edu).
How can we partner together to complete negotiations in a timely fashion?

**Items required to complete negotiations:**

- **Proposal**: A Contract Negotiator (CN) will verify a proposal has been routed and has been approved. If one has not then it will be prepared and routed at negotiations.

- **Terms & Conditions (T&C)**: A CN will negotiate T&C if they do not adhere to System Policy. Non-standard T&C may require PI and AgriLife approval.

- **Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI)**: Verify FCOI has not changed since the proposal was submitted.

- **Security Compliance**: If specific security requirements are part of the agreement. CN will notify the designated security officer for that system.

- **Animal, Human and Biohazards Compliance**: If applicable an IACUC, IRB or IBC may be needed.
Post-Award Administration
Post-Award Management

• Account Establishment
• Determining Available Balances
• Making Changes to Budgets
• Requesting No-Cost Extensions
• Expenditure Compliance
• Cost Share Reporting
• Audit Coordination
• Payroll Compliance
• Subaward Initiation and Monitoring
• Sponsor Billing and Financial Reporting
• Project Closeout
How can we work together to manage a successful research project?

• Process timely payroll/non-payroll corrections on research accounts
  – This will help in accurate budgeting, billing, timely closeout and avoidance of potential audit findings

• Submission of technical deliverables
  – Assistance with the submission of technical reports to ensure receipt of funding
How can we work together to manage a successful research project?

- **Cost Sharing**
  - Assistance with account establishment
  - Timely application of charges as allowed by sponsor guidelines

- **Project Communication**
  - Communicate with Project Administrator on any sponsor, project progress or staffing changes

- **Creating Support Accounts on SRS Accounts**
  - Should only be created by SRS
Post-Award Accounts Receivable

• **Sponsor Billing**
  – Sponsored project invoicing for cost-reimbursement, fixed-price, and fixed rate research projects. The sponsor award document dictates the type and frequency of invoicing

• **Drawdown Accounts**
  – Under the terms of some awards, accounts receivable can draw down funds using the sponsor’s electronic payment system

• **Collections**
  – Outstanding invoices are monitored by accounts receivable and, when necessary, stakeholders are engaged regarding aged receivables

• **Financial Reports**
  – Preparation and submission of financial reports required by sponsors
How can we work together to ensure billing/reporting compliance on a project?

• Process timely payroll/non-payroll corrections on research accounts
• Timely application of cost sharing charges
• Partner with your project administrator to ensure any budget category restrictions are adhered to
• Shortly after the project end date, confirm that all project expenses have posted and clear all encumbrances
• Keep pro-card receipts readily available in order to meet invoice deadlines on projects that require receipts to be included with invoices.
• Review travel receipts after uploading to ensure readability. This will prevent sponsors such as TPW from rejecting expenses due to their inability to read the documentation
Hot Topics/SRS Initiatives

- ezFedGrants - USDA
- Website Redesign
- Post Award Reorganization
- Set up Team
USDA ezFedGrants

• The USDA solution that will let you apply for and manage USDA grants and agreements online.
  – Standardized across USDA
  – Single source of input
  – Expedited claim approval
  – Automated work flow process and electronic signatures

• Requires Level 2 authorization access
  – Allows the user to do business with USDA
  – Register for Level 2 access online, receive confirmation email, visit USDA Service Center in person for identity proofing and then GAO will grant permission/access on behalf of Member to ezFed Grants.
USDA ezFedGrants System

• **Grant Processor (Principal Investigators, Negotiators and Project Administrators)**
  – Search and view funding opportunities
  – Create, edit, and submit applications;
  – Create, edit, and submit performance reports; and
  – Create, edit, and submit financial reports.

• **Signatory Official (Directors and Proposal Administrators)**
  – Search, view, edit and sign applications, agreements, and amendments; and
  – Sign claims and financial and performance reports, if applicable.

• **Grant Administrative Officer (limit 2 per System Member)**
  – Grant Processor functions; and
  – Manage ezFedGrants permissions/access
## Pre-Award – Proposals

**Contact Information for AgriLife Proposal Administrators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>862-1462</td>
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<td>Anna Jahn</td>
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<td>Stephanie Towns</td>
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</tbody>
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Pre-Award – Contract Negotiations

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Associate Executive Director:
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Post Award Reorganization

• Recommendation through the CROI and TSOC was to ensure one point of contact for PI’s (to be the Project Administrator)

• Initiative was started in September 2015.

• Nearing completion with several business practices being changed and implementation of the “set up team.”
ASET Team

- Priority to establish projects account timely
- Reduce cost transfers and payroll corrections
- Ensure data integrity of award data
- Solution: dedicated team, highly trained to establish projects within 5 days of receipt of award
Audits at SRS
Volume of Audit Activity at SRS

Audits by Sponsor

July 2014 through December 2016

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<th>Sponsor</th>
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Volume of Audit Activity at SRS

Audits by Member

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<td>Grand Total</td>
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Common Areas of Focus

- Costs incurred within the Project Period
- Allowability of Costs
- Participant Eligibility
- Cost Sharing / Matching
Common Areas of Focus

• Costs incurred within the Project Period
  – Ensure that expenses charged to the sponsored project were incurred prior to the project end date.
  – Stop recurring payments so that they do not post to the account after the project end date (e.g. Telecommunications expense).
  – Process EPAs timely to prevent payroll charges on the account after the end date.
  – Process corrections timely so that project accounts can be closed.
  – Promote awareness of upcoming project end dates among those who use internal service centers (e.g. lab services, lab supplies, print/copy services).
Common Areas of Focus

• Allowability of Costs
  – Ensure proper approvals are captured during the purchasing and accounts payable process.
  – Retain supporting documentation for procurement card purchases.
Common Areas of Focus

• Participant Eligibility
  – If you assist in screening potential project participants, ensure the eligibility requirements are clear and are being met. Confirm eligibility requirements with the sponsor if necessary.
Common Areas of Focus

• Cost Sharing / Matching
  – We must ensure cost sharing commitments are being met. Payroll costs are a common element of cost sharing so management of payroll allocation is often key.
Potential Impact to AgriLife

• Loss of funding
• Fines and Penalties
• Damage to the University’s Reputation
• Susceptibility to False Claims Allegations
Questions??