McMaster University

Family Medicine

David Braley Primary Care Research Collaborative

@McMasterFamMed

Working with Health Research Services: Administrative Processes and General Overview of Services

Watch a recording of the session here

Julie Croskill

May 16th, 2023

Michael G. DeGroote SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Working with Health Research Services

May 16, 2023

Welcome and Agenda

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- Research Offices at McMaster
- Finding Grant Opportunities
- Preparing an Application for Review
- Requesting a Research Account
- Working with your Senior Research Accountant

Offices at McMaster

- **ROADS:** Handles all grants and grant agreements for non-FHS faculty, whether industry sponsored or sponsored by a funding agency
- **HRS:** Handles all grants and grant agreements for FHS faculty, whether industry sponsored or sponsored by a funding agency
- **MILO:** Handles all research contracts that are not tied to a grant: ex. research service contracts, research collaboration agreements, material/data transfer agreements, non-disclosure agreements, etc.
- **Office of Legal Services :** Responsible for reviewing any strictly service agreements: ex. agreements that do not involve research. Such agreements can't be administered through a research account so these need to be administered through a departmental operating account
  - Consulting agreements that pay out to the PI individually, are not within the scope of the university and need to be reviewed and negotiated by the researcher (and their lawyer) as a private individual. Where a PI has both a research agreement and a consulting agreement (paid to them personally) with the same company, this needs to be disclosed to MILO as a conflict of interest.

Department of Family Medicine – Department Contacts

- HRS Contacts
  - Caitlin Siu, Senior Grants Advisor
  - Rubi James, Agreements Officer
- MILO Contact
  - Ryan Vieira, Research Contracts Advisor
- Research Finance
  - Henry Li, Senior Research Accountant

Finding Grant Opportunities – First Steps

- Take stock of the funding you have, the funding you need and the funding you want
  - Note limitations on funding you already hold such as restrictions on what can be expensed, whether unused funds need to be returned, and if there are any restrictions on holding funds simultaneously
  - Consider your funding needs in terms of on-going operational expenses and project specific expenses
  - Craft a feasible “wish list”. How much could you reasonably and responsibly spend over a set period of time?
  - Consider whether you are apt to attract matched funding or partners (academic or industry) for a given project

These considerations are akin to setting the parameters of a literature review – there are too many funding opportunities to review if you don’t know what you’re looking for!

Finding Grant Opportunities

- HRS Weekly Bulletin
  - Contact hsresadm@mcmaster.ca to request subscription to faculty distribution list

- McMaster Funding Opportunities Database

Finding Grant Opportunities

- Consider common funding agencies and superstars for your line of work
  - E.g. PTSD studies likely to be funded by Dept. of National Defense
  - Track your heroes: Identify someone successful in your field. Find their CV and note who has funded their work, Google search announcements/news articles related to their name, note who they acknowledge in their publications
  - Sub-grants and collaborations! Connect with academic partners and let them know you are looking to build collaborative relationships.
- Contact Senior Grant Advisor
  - Connect with your SGA so that they know what opportunities you are interested in
- Let people come to you!
  - Update your web presence, e.g. McMaster Experts/Dept. Profile

Is This the Right Funding Opportunity for *Me*, and for My *Project*?

- Are you eligible?
  - Early career investigator, independent researcher, demographic identity, partners, limit on start-up funds
- Will you lead a *successful* project?
  - Is enough funding available to carry out your project?
  - Is the timing right? Award start/end date – will you be ready?
  - Do any of the conditions of the grant prohibit you from conducting the best possible research project?
- Does accepting the grant exclude you from other opportunities?
  - Are you permitted to apply to other opportunities for the same project?
    - Example: The tri-agencies generally prohibit applying to multiple competitions for the same project until a review decision has been made. Review decisions can take upwards of six months
  - Some competitions prohibit applicants from applying if they hold certain types of other funding.
    - Example: The Banting Research Foundation Discovery award prohibits PIs from applying if they have more than $50,000 in external operating funds.

Reviewing Grant Guidelines

- Maximum/minimum funding requests
- Pay attention to the applicable time periods
  - It is very common that the total amount of a multi-year grant will be paid out in equal installments. E.g. $100,000 per year for three years.
  - Take note of when the award will start
    - Will you have ethics approvals in place, staff hired, lab open, equipment purchased?
- Eligible Expenses
  - Common eligible expenses: project materials (e.g. reagents), staff salaries, computers, participant honorariums, service contracts (e.g. video production/website development), publication expenses.
  - Common ineligible expenses: equipment over $10,000, overhead, PI salary, office furniture, office rental, conference travel or KT in excess of $2000, tuition or book expenses for trainees, alcohol for group meetings.
- Match requirement?

Evaluating Grant Opportunities – Is this the *Right Grant* for Me?

- General Application Instructions
  - Page restrictions, list of materials (e.g. proposal, references, budget, etc.)
  - Note the submission platform (e.g. email, Researchnet, Proposal Central)
  - Due Date
    - Watch out for sneaky registration, LOI/NOI and application dates!
  - Specific instructions about templates, details of what to include
    - Example – statement that you have or will do X

Tracking Guideline Details

- If they recommend headings – plug them into your proposal before you write
  - Do the same for evaluation criteria.
    - E.g. If they are evaluating whether the project can be completed during the award term, include a timeline
- Prepare your budget justification with annotations – copy the applicable rules into each heading to remind yourself what is and is not permitted.
  - Delete annotations before submission!
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification – reach out to your research office for support, or contact the sponsor directly.
  - Keep all emails!
- If an ineligible expense is important to your research project, and you have it covered from another source, indicate so in your budget justification.

Budget Considerations and Tips

- Draft your budget in chronological order to ensure you haven't missed any key expenses
- Have your preliminary budget reviewed by a trusted colleague and ask both what you might be missing, and if they agree with your estimates
- Identify any funding gaps (e.g. ineligible expenses, or expenses in excess of the grant value)
  - Use your budget documents to speak to the gaps. Especially if the expense is critical to project success, how will the expense be covered? Note in-kind contributions, or other funding sources, and include information as to whether the funding is secured.
- Pay attention to the guidelines. Sometimes, quotes may be requested for certain items, or items of a certain value.
  - Example – recently a copy of McMaster's collective bargaining agreement was requested for a Wellcome Trust grant.
- Use your budget justification document to lay out your expenses. The more information you can provide, such as quotes, or references to set fees, the more organized your application will appear, and the more likely it is that reviewers will fund the full amount requested.
- A well-organized, thoughtful budget implies that your project plan is also well-organized and thoughtful!

Working With HRS – Application Review

- Once you've elected to apply to a grant opportunity, connect with your senior grant advisor asap
  - HRS has a two week application review policy
  - HRS will protect the confidentiality of your application
- Your senior grant advisor will review the application guidelines, and request a list of application materials
  - HRS Application Checklist
  - Research Proposal | Budget/Budget Justification | Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan | Data Management Plan | Mentorship Plan |Letter(s) of support | Institutional Indemnity Forms
  - HRS will facilitate application submission if necessary

Working With HRS – Application Review

- What to expect from HRS:
  - Educated, non-expert review
  - Does your application read well? Does it make sense to a non-expert? Are you highlighting your strengths and speaking to the evaluation criteria?
- Budget Check
  - Are expenses permissible?
  - Math Check!
  - General assessment of feasibility
- Administrative review of application materials
- Institutional signatures

Be Mindful of the Policies for the “Institution Paid”

- Most of the time, grants are not awarded to you, the PI, but rather the institution
- As such, there are certain rules or policies that you may have to follow:
  - E.g. working with a research office to set up a research account
    - Research accounts are for research!
  - Following deadlines for submitting information for reporting
  - Securing ethics approval prior to accessing funds
  - Following rules about procurement
  - Providing proof of insurance
  - Opening a research account prior to hiring new staff
  - Applying for indirect costs
    - “Passing through” indirect costs to sub-grantees

Indirect Costs (aka – overhead, facilities and administration, F&A)

- Most grants state a policy on whether they will cover indirect costs
  - Direct Costs: the costs that are directly connected with a specific research project, including salaries, wages and benefits of research personnel, materials and supplies, equipment, user fees, and travel expenses.
  - Indirect costs: the costs that are not directly connected with a specific project but with the research enterprise as a whole, including facilities and equipment use and maintenance; utilities; insurance; administration costs such as legal, procurement, payroll, ethics and research administration; libraries, computing facilities and support; central animal facilities; biohazard handling; and other professional services provided by the University.
- Most granting agencies specify a policy in relation to indirect costs. They might:
  - Allow indirect costs at a certain rate (e.g. 25%)
  - Allow indirect costs that can be justified as a line item
  - Disallow indirect costs
- Similarly, most institutions also have an indirect costs policy
  - Details the rate applied to certain types of sponsors
  - McMaster's indirect cost policy
- While it is tempting to exclude indirect costs, because you might think it makes your grant more competitive, be aware that some institutions might "charge" you the permitted rate, and it will come out of your budget.

Congratulations! Setting up a Research Account

- Typical documentation required to set up a research account (external sponsor)
  - Account request form
  - Funding letter (aka notification of award NOA, authorization for funding AFF)
    - Funding letters include: term of the award, amount of the award, instructions re. leftover funds
    - Award acceptance forms
    - Electronic transfer documents
  - Copy of final application and budget
  - Assurance certificates (HiREB, Biohazards, Animal Research Ethics Board)

Not sure what you need? Check out our General Instructions

Research Accounts with Agreements

Agreement Officers handle:

- Outgoing funding (subgrants and service agreements, including clinical trial site agreements)
- Material/data transfers and Memorandums of Understanding
- Subgrants coming in from other institutions

Sometimes “funding letters” and “agreements” look similar. An Agreement Officer will review a document that contains:

- Indemnification clause
- Governing law clause in which the terms specify a jurisdiction outside of Canada
- Publication rights where the terms contain restrictions or review requirements
- Licensing or ownership of intellectual property where the terms stipulate anything other than sole ownership by McMaster
- Requirements for collaborators outside of McMaster
- Insurance requirements
- Transfer of data or materials
- Clinical trials
- Funding obtained from Industry

If you aren’t sure whether you have an agreement or grant, contact your SGA!

Congratulations! Setting up a Research Account

Documentation for internal sponsors

- Internally Sponsored Research Form is used for transfers between a department and PI
  - Account request form
  - Application/scope of work
  - Budget
  - Ethics certificates
- Internal Transfer Form is used for transfers from one PI to another PI
  - Account request form
  - Application/scope of work
  - Budget
  - Ethics certificates
  - Senior grant advisor will obtain permission to move the funds from the senior research accountant
- Research Residual Accounts
  - Research residual account form
  - Research project statement
- Hospital Recovery Accounts
  - Hospital Research Recovery Account Request Form

Working with Research Finance

- Once HRS has processed you application, they will submit your research account to research finance
- Research finance:
  - Reviews allowable expenditures
  - Allocates overhead
  - Notes delegates/grants access to delegates
  - Processes invoices
  - Processes installment payments
  - Assists with financial reporting
  - Closes projects
    - Your SRA will either send unused funds back to the sponsor or move funds to a residual account

Amendments

- Grant details can change. Contact your Senior Grant Advisor if you:
  - End the award early
  - Move grant to another institution
  - Change the research team (PI, Co-PIs)
    - Take a leave of absence (e.g. paternity leave)
  - Add/subtract funds
  - Receive notice of a reprofiling exercises
    - Sometimes sponsors will have extra funds in a given year and will pay awards early
  - Extend end date
  - Request budget line re-allocation or carry-forward