NCURA Neighborhoods Online Chat
Training Grants
July 9, 2008

Featured Guests: **Vivian Holmes**, Director of Finance and Administration, Harvard Medical School; **Valerie Sherman**, Assistant Director of Finance, Division of Medical Sciences, Harvard Medical School; **Alex Shimada-Brand**, Training Grants Coordinator, Division of Medical Sciences, Harvard Medical School and **Will Carter**, Staff Assistant, Division of Medical Sciences, Harvard Medical School.

#1

Q: How long does it take to write a training grant? How early should I start?

A: It usually takes 2-3 months to gather hundreds of tables from dozens of professors, department administrators, and current and past pre- and post-docs.

#2

Q: Is it possible to do a training grant one section at a time?

A: Not really. There are so many parts of a training grant that, while you're waiting for replies for hundreds of tables from dozens of professors, you'll be collecting info on program seminars, student clubs, and syllabi, all the while hounding dozens of current and past trainees for their information. If you have a team preparing it, you could split tasks, but still, start early.

#3

Q: Many of our faculty members have asked for a training grant database -- something that might contain templates for all the lengthy tables, for example. Do you offer any centralized services like this specifically for training grants?

A: We've had many discussions about centralizing faculty info and concluded that it doesn't work for us. Faculty should really have that info in a folder on their computer. If they're on a second training grant, then they should simply re-send that folder. But often the second training grant is looking for different info, which is why I don't think that centralizing works.
See the templates for the 12 tables.

#4

Q: How many professors should I put on the grant?

A: The number of faculty you appoint should be broad enough to present a range of research possibilities for pre-docs, and to adequately address the proposed education and research training needs of the program. The NIH usually wants to fund existing programs, so all faculty working in a particular dept/program should be put on the grant. Remove faculty who have become inactive mentors, or whose field of research has diverged from the programs.

#5

Q: What kind of diversity reporting info should I provide?

A: Regarding diversity reporting: New applications must include a description of plans to enhance recruitment of a diverse trainee pool and may wish to include data in support of past accomplishments. Renewal applications must include a detailed account of experiences in recruiting individuals from underrepresented groups during the previous funding period. For Renewal applications, complete Table 10: "Admissions and Completion Records, and for annual progress reports, complete the "Trainee Diversity Report" table.

#6

Q: Are there materials that are requested after the application is submitted, but before the award?

A: Materials requested later: Just-in-time (JIT) info. If your grant submission received a score in the top 20% from the initial peer review, the NIH will request JIT info from you. For JIT info, you must provide updated human and animal protocol information, and "Other Support" information from each faculty member on the grant. **Note:** a JIT request is NOT an indicator that your grant will get funded.

#7

Q: How do you determine the PGY level for post-doc trainees? If the trainee took a year off before beginning his/her post-doc work, should it be counted?

A: It is based on the number of years experience beyond the degree date – identify and subtract years "taken off." An explanation could accompany the appointment form.

#8

Q: How is your institution and others handling the new NRSA policy (i.e., the treatment of the health benefits as it pertains to trainee costs and F&A)?

A: We recently (as of July 2007) revised our HMS stipend and tuition policy. This also addresses the separation of medical insurance costs from the tuition and fees. I will be happy to forward you our policy offline.

#9

Q: The NIH awards up to 60% of tuition, up to $16,000. In the grant application, do I ask for my school's full tuition amount, or just $16,000?

A: You should always include the actual and full cost of tuition in the proposal.

#10

Q: Can the department pay trainees to bring them up to their department pay rate level? (e.g., $22872 instead of $20772 per NIH)?

A: Departments can pay trainees to bring them up to the department's pay rate, but the money must come from a non-federal source.

#11

Q: What kinds of trainee expenditures are generally allowed on training grants?

A: Allowable trainee's expenses include trainee approved travel, lab supplies, books and medical insurance costs.

#12

Q: Can the institutional allowance be used to pay faculty for mentoring?

A: We have never paid faculty for mentoring on a training grant, that might be a good question for your grants management administrator.

#13

Q: We have an individual who runs our Fellowship program associated with a T32. Is there a 'reasonable' amount of dedicated effort that may be written into the budget?

A: A staff salary cannot be a direct line item on a T32 budget.

#14

Q: What about travel and supplies for the trainee that might be incurred after the budget period expires?

A: Travel and supply costs incurred after the appointment or budget period are not allowed.

#15

Q: If one trainee doesn't use his travel allowance can another trainee use it?

A: Yes, unused travel allowance funds can be made available to other trainees on the grant.

#16

Q: If travel is allocated to the trainee on the Statement of Appointment, should you amend the Statement to allow the travel allowance to transfer to another trainee?

A: The 2271 form asks for an estimate for travel, so if you enter a figure on the form, and the trainees uses a different amount you do not need to amend the form.

#17

Q: Can someone clarify allowable expense after the term date of the grant? If the trainee is appointed during the last month of the grant, what expenses can be paid after the budget end date? Such as trainee stipend, health insurance etc.

A: If the trainee is appointed during the last month of the grant, you can pay stipend, tuition and health fees after the budget end date provided the costs were obligated in the FSR.

#18

If, after appointing a trainee for the first time, the trainee decides not to stay in the program and leaves after 2-3 months can you use that slot for another trainee?

A: Since an appointment is required to last a minimum of 9 months, we remove them from the grant retroactively.

#19

Q: If a trainee leaves the institution before completing the termination form and attempts to contact him/her are unsuccessful what should you do?

A: You would have to complete the termination form in their absence and your Business Official can sign for the trainee.

#20

Q: If the Appointment ends May 31 and he/she graduates on May 15th, can he be paid for the entire month of May?

A: The graduation date (May 15) should be the appointments end date. The trainee should not be paid from the grant for the entire month.

#21

Q: What is the timeframe for post-doc payback requirements?

A: Post-docs must begin their payback requirements within two years of their termination.

#22

Q: Are payback forms needed for pre-doc trainees?

A: There are no payback requirements for pre-doc trainees.

#23

Q: If you find that a trainee had previous training grant experience after they have been on your grant for the maximum (5 yrs for pre-doc, 3 years for post docs) what do you do? Should you go back to trainee for repayment?

A: If it is determined that a trainee was ineligible to receive funding from the grant you should contact your Program Administrator at NIH to discuss how they would like to proceed.

#24

Q: Must the period of trainee appointment coincide with the budget period of the grant?

A: A trainee can be appointed at any time during the 12 months award period.

#25

Q: What is the maximum parental leave allowed without a leave of absence?

A: As of April 2008 fellows are allowed parental benefits (either parent) of eight work weeks - increased from 4 weeks - must be approved by the Program Director

#26

Q: How do you prorate trainee stipends when they terminate on a date that doesn't correlate to a payroll cycle?

A: The stipend payment should match the NIH stipend rates even if your payroll cycle does not match. NIH posts rates for the month, week and day.

#27

Q: If the NIH changes the stipend table during the middle of a grant year and all slots have not been filled should the new trainees be appointed at the new levels?

A: No, stipend amount is dictated at the time of the NGA, not the trainee appointment.

#28

Q: I have funds remaining in the stipend category. Can I rebudget those funds to cover tuition costs?

A: Yes, you can re-budget within the stipend and tuition/fees categories, and into stipend and tuition/fees. These are considered “trainee costs” and funds can only be re-budgeted WITHIN or INTO trainee costs.

#29

Q: Can appointed Trainees (Pre-docs? Post-Docs) receive additional stipends and/or compensation?” If so, what types of sources (NIH grants? Federal sources? Private sources?)

A: Any T32 stipend supplement must be from non-federal sources.

#30

Q: Can trainees receive compensation on NIH grants other than the training grant?

A: Trainees can work on NIH grants other than the training grant if the work is not related to the training project - has to separate.

#31

Q: If, for some reason, a trainee has to be terminated early, will the stipend need to be pro-rated?

A: If a trainee has terminated early the stipend will need to be pro-rated to the final day of the appointment.

#32

Q: What is your materiality limit when there's a discrepancy between the stipend amount on the termination notice/statement of appointment versus the central financial system?

A: There shouldn't be a discrepancy between the stipend amount on the termination notice and the appointment form. If the stipend amount on the termination notice does not match the amount on the original appointment form an amended appt form should be completed with the correct stipend amount.

#33

Q: Must you apply for a no-cost extension at the end of the project, if the trainee appointments extend beyond the project end date?

A: You must apply for a no cost extension at the end of the project if the trainee appointment goes beyond the project period AND a new project period is not starting immediately.

#34

Q: Must you apply for a no-cost extension at the end of the project, if the trainee appointments extend beyond the project end date?

A: Yes, you must apply for a no-cost extension at the end of the project when the trainee appt extends beyond the project end date.

#35

Q: In a no cost extension year can you appoint new trainees?

A: You can generally re-appoint current trainees but cannot appoint new trainees during the cost extension period. You would need to talk with your NIH grant management.

#36

Q: When is it appropriate to include a program manager as a direct line item on the budget? Is there a 'reasonable' %FTE for such a position?

A: The program manager is supported by the trainee related expense funds as much as the budget will allow.

#37

Q: How are obligated but not expensed costs handled on the FSR?

A: Only tuition stipend and health insurance costs can be obligated and they are reported as unliquidated obligations on the FSR.

#38

Q: How is carryover handled on the FSR?

A: If carryover is only allowed if you have expanded authority which is not usually awarded on a T32's. If it is, it should be mentioned specifically under “Remarks” in an FSR-only allowed with special permission.

#30

Q: When doing progress reports how do people report their upcoming expenses? Do they report what they think the program will cost them total for the year or do they set up the 2590 to the annual budgeted amount?

A: For 2590 (non-financial progress report), report estimated upcoming costs. For FSR's (financials), report unliquidated obligations.