

COVID-19

Research Administration Grants and Contracts - FAQ's

Offices of: Sponsored Programs (OSP), Research Business Management (RBM),
Post-Award Financial Management (PAFM)

Updated: March 26, 2020

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Funding agency responses to COVID-19

Q: How are funding agencies responding to this crisis?

A: Both federal and private sponsors have been emphasizing flexibility and the need for institutions to prioritize personnel safety and safety of research subjects. The NIH has issued detailed guidance https://grants.nih.gov/grants/natural_disasters/corona-virus.htm. We encourage researchers to stay apprised to sponsor announcements. The Offices of Sponsored Programs (OSP), Research Business Management (RBM) and Post-Award Financial Management (PAFM) are regularly reviewing agency updates and will advise researchers accordingly.

Availability of Research Administration Offices

Q: What services will be available during this period?

A: Operations in all Research Administration team offices are normal until further notice. Continue to contact your assigned OSP or RBM point of contact for most matters. (contact information can be found at <https://www.luriechildrens.org/en/research/toolkit/support-staff-directory/>). Feel free to reach out to the respective offices with any questions or concerns.

COVID-19 Funding Opportunities

Q: Is there a comprehensive listing of COVID-19 related funding opportunities?

A: Yes. OSP encourages investigators to review and consider COVID-19 related opportunities posted through NUCATS (<https://www.nucats.northwestern.edu/funding/covid19.html>).

Proposal Deadlines

Q: Do COVID-19 restrictions limit my ability to submit an application for a new grant opportunity or participate in an application as a subawardee at this time?

A: For direct grant applications, the Office of Sponsored Programs and the Research Administration team offices remain open and OSP is tracking all PI proposal deadlines for timely submission. For direct grant applications, please contact OSP staff who will confirm in writing any change in posted sponsor deadlines. For consortia applications, OSP will confirm application expectations with the administrative contact at partner institutions. PIs supported by Research Administrative Coordinators or Research Grant Specialists should confirm proposal plans with their RAC/RGS, who will then coordinate with OSP.

Q: May I request an extension to a grant submission deadline? Updated 3/26/20

A: NIH has issued COVID-19 guidance (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/natural_disasters/coronavirus.htm) which includes allowance for late proposal submissions. These communications must be based on the institution's ability to submit the proposal. As Lurie Children's and Manne Research Institute remain open, it is important to coordinate with OSP any request for a late submission.

NIH's notice of March 26, 2020 (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-091.html>) allows for late proposal submission, through May 1, for applications due between March 9 and May 1, 2020. **OSP advises** that investigators carefully consider the review implications in this notice. When submitting a late application, NIH cannot guarantee a timely review. A late review will result in a late project start. Investigators are strongly encouraged to consider this risk when considering a late submission.

Many other sponsors are extending application deadlines currently. Please work with your OSP point of contact to clarify sponsor deadline expectations in writing (contact information can be found at <https://www.luriechildrens.org/en/research/toolkit/support-staff-directory/>)

Allowable Costs/Charges/Effort on Sponsored Projects

Q: Can a recipient continue to pay personnel costs under awards in the event of an emergency?

A: Since our students and staff will continue to perform research both off and on campus, PIs should continue charging salaries to grants as normal. More information about costs charged to sponsored projects will be distributed in follow up communications. Our research administration offices are prepared to offer their full support remotely to help you navigate these challenges.

Q. What if I have already been approved for remote work?

A. If you have been approved for remote work, you can and should continue to work remotely. All remote work approvals are now approved up to April 10th. As we have stated in the past, remote work is at the discretion of your manager. If you are needed to return to work sooner or if your job duties can no longer be performed remotely, your direct manager will inform you of such.

Q: I'm a PI working remotely from home, under self-quarantine. Can my effort still be charged to the grant?

A: In general, yes, provided you remain engaged in your project. Current NIH prior approval requirements regarding disengagement and effort reductions remain in effect.

Q: My study may be impacted by the pause, which could lead to delays in completing my study and spending the funds by the end of the project period. What should I do?

A: Most federal sponsors, including NIH, allow for a one-time no cost extension for 12 months at the end of the project. Please discuss your specific project with your OSP point of contact who will provide guidance on the options available to you.

Research Related Travel

Q: I was planning to travel to a conference for my research work supported by a grant, but the conference was cancelled due to precautions regarding COVID-19. May I still charge the travel-related costs to the grant?

A: To date, there is no federal guidance relating to charges to awards for non-refundable travel, conferences, and related expenses due to the coronavirus. Please continue to follow the Medical Center Travel Expense Policy. Specific guidance is listed below.

Effective March 11, Lurie implemented a temporary foreign and domestic business-related travel ban for all faculty and staff, and suspension of external events or conferences in all Lurie Children's facilities through April 15th or sooner, if conditions warrant.

Please contact the Accounts Payable Department regarding changes to your business travel plans. We are aware that many organizations have cancelled or are contemplating cancelling upcoming meetings and conferences due to the ongoing travel concerns. The Medical Center has elected to reimburse fees incurred due to these unforeseen business travel changes and/or cancellations.

For business travel arrangements made through our travel partner, Uniglobe Travel Designers, please contact them directly to process any changes and/or cancellations needed. Uniglobe works with the major airlines including United, Delta, and American Airlines to waive change

fees on our behalf. They will also work with the hotels to have fees waived when possible. They can be reached Monday thru Friday from 9:30am – 4:00pm at luriechildrens@uniglobetd.com or 614 -237- 4488 and after hours at afterhours@uniglobetd.com or 800-966-6512.

For business travel arrangements made directly and paid by an employee or faculty, first work with the airline, hotel, and conference to process any changes and/or cancellations. If any fees are incurred, the Medical Center will reimburse you. Please obtain proof of cancellation and fees and submit an expense report for reimbursement.

If you have any questions, please contact the Accounts Payable Department at ap@luriechildrens.org or 312.227.7160.

Post Award Management Agency Deadlines

Q: I am working on a progress report with a deadline. Is this deadline impacted at this time?

A: NIH has issued COVID-19 guidance (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/natural_disasters/coronavirus.htm) which includes allowance for late report submissions. These communications must be based on the institution's ability to submit the report. As Lurie Children's and Manne Research Institute remain open, it is important to coordinate with OSP, which may include contacting the program official to clarify any need for submitting a late report. Late submissions require written sponsor acknowledgment prior to proceeding.

New and continuing Industry trials

Q: May I facilitate a new industry sponsored study at this time?

A: Yes. Please contact the OSP industry contracts team. (contact information can be found at <https://www.luriechildrens.org/en/research/toolkit/support-staff-directory/>). OSP continues to review and execute confidentiality agreements and negotiate industry-sponsored studies and other contracts. Please follow Manne Research Institute guidance on initiating new trials at this time, once contracts are executed: <http://portal2/sites/incident-cmd/covid19/SitePages/Research.aspx>.

Q: May I order gift cards for study participants at this time?

A: With the request to ramp down research, we are reviewing each request individually. Check with your PI prior to submitting an order to ensure enrollment has not been put on hold. E-gift card options are under review at this time. We will update you when that option becomes available.

Updating Sponsors

Q: Should NIH or other sponsors (government, industry, or non-profit) be notified that select protocol activities or in-person visits of a funded research study will be paused?

A: OSP encourages researchers to contact their program officials or industry scientific contacts to convey any unexpected delays in conducting sponsored projects or industry trials. Additional updates may be appropriate during the next scheduled progress report or monitoring visit.