

# ORSO Guideline 33

## Research Credit Sharing, Tracking, and Reporting Based on Project Contribution

### WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

The Office of Research  
Office of Research Support and Operations

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#### Summary and Purpose

Collaborative synergy is increasingly necessary to fully realize the promise of modern research. To encourage collaborative inter- and multi-disciplinary projects, it is essential to recognize the contributions made by multiple Investigators on extramurally-funded projects. Credit allocation is important for faculty advancement and unit productivity reporting by individual Investigators, units, colleges, campuses, and the university as a whole.

The university currently tracks expenditures for reporting to NSF HERD. Research expenditures can be tracked at campus, area, and unit levels through our central accounting system Workday. However, research expenditures do not adequately reflect intellectual contribution because the cost of research varies by the area of science and the resources necessary to do the work. Furthermore, research expenditures cannot be allocated accurately to multiple individuals simultaneously. The nature of collaborative research is such that intellectual contributions are often made by teams and by multiple individuals, who may simultaneously belong to multiple units. Thus, the reality of modern research collaboration necessitates a different approach to tracking and reporting research credit. Recognizing that expenditures alone do not appropriately reflect credit to many individuals, colleges, campuses, Centers/Institutes, etc. all at the same time, this document serves to make an explicit distinction between expenditures vs. credit, and outlines a new approach to sharing, tracking, and reporting credit.

In summary, WSU wants to ensure that proper credit is provided to the appropriate Investigator(s) and unit(s) for each individual's Project Contribution (PC). Importantly, we recognize explicitly that PC's to a funded project are **not** necessarily correlated with the expenditures associated with a particular Investigator or reported effort.

#### Definitions

The *Investigators* (Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator, Senior Key Personnel) are defined as the individual(s) judged by the application organization to have the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct the project or program supported by the grant. WSU recognizes these contributions via the credit process in the electronic Request for Extramural Support Form (eREX Form). Note that on multi-investigator projects, WSU requires a PI to be designated the Contact/Lead PI, but this distinction is not necessarily associated with differential credit.

*Other Personnel* are individuals (faculty, post-docs, research assistants, etc.) with exceptional qualifications that merit consideration in the evaluation of a proposal and who provide important contributions to a project, but are not responsible for directing the project or program. Whereas these individuals do not typically have research expenditures allocated to them specifically, WSU does explicitly recognize their contributions via the credit process in the eREX Form.

*Credit* is recognition, including via institutional reporting, to those who play a substantial role in the

development and execution of a project.

*Project Contribution* is the contribution of an Investigator or Other Personnel toward the development and execution of a project.

### **Applicability**

Initial allocations of credit are indicated, as a percentage, on the Office of Research Support and Operations eREX Form. The total credit for all Investigators may not exceed 100%. However, each Investigator's credit may be associated with multiple units, and the distribution of credit across units may differ based on unit classification (departments, Centers, etc.). Thus, credit for a single project may be divided among, for example, five Investigators for 20% each and totaling 100% credit. Investigators must report their appointed campus and area/college. They may also indicate the academic unit(s) and/or other unit(s) for which this project applies and based on Investigators' appointments and PC. Percent credit is not divided for these affiliations, but shared (see below example).

Credit for each Investigator should be apportioned based upon the PC of that Investigator. Each individual in a project with multiple collaborators should be apportioned credit consistent with their level of intellectual and logistical responsibility for conceiving, leading, or directing the project. Accordingly, credit does **not** necessarily parallel the proportion of expenditures associated with an individual Investigator. Moreover, Other Personnel need not be listed as an Investigator on the official proposal to receive credit.

eREX Form approvals signify agreement to the assigned credit. Contact/Lead PI's are encouraged to discuss the proposed credit distribution with their fellow Investigators and with their department Chairs, school Directors, or Center/Institute Directors with sufficient lead time to allow discussion or clarification prior to proposal submission. Similarly, the Chair/Director/Dean/Chancellor signatures signify agreement to the assigned distribution of credit.

If the proposal is funded, an Investigator's PC may change the credit allocation between proposal and award or during the course of the project's execution. Thus, the apportionment of credit may be updated at the time the award is made or after the fact to reflect such changes, using a revised eREX Form submitted through the Office of Research Support and Operations.

Like the approval of the initial eREX Form, updates to credit distribution will require approvals by the Contact/Lead PI, Chair/Director(s), Center/Institute Director(s), and Dean(s)/Chancellor(s).

### **Reporting**

As mentioned previously, this document distinguishes between expenditures and credit. Expenditures are tracked in the University accounting system (Workday) while credit is tracked in the Office of Research via the MyResearch portal.

Across academia, it is common practice for faculty to report credit for projects to which they make a substantive contribution, and to report said credit in terms of total amount of funding brought to the university (direct and/or total dollars) – regardless of research expenditure. Likewise, it is common practice for units to report credit in terms of total amount of funding brought to the university by faculty associated with the unit. The same is true for Centers/Institutes and Campuses. Only at the overall university level, therefore, may it be expected that total research expenditures and total credit are directly related. We recognize that expenditure reporting and credit reporting are thus distinct systems for tracking research output, and that these two systems are complementary and serve different purposes.

Careful consideration is needed to develop context-specific reports at different levels of aggregation – unit, college/area, Center/Institute, campus, and university. The credit reporting system in MyResearch, in coordination with Institutional Research, will allow decision makers at various levels (upper WSU administration, Deans, Chairs, research administrators, etc.) appropriate access to reporting over ALL different types of WSU units. The Vice President for Research, Provost, and other WSU leadership review credit reporting on a regular basis to evaluate WSU's sponsored project portfolio of federal and non-federal awards.

**Example of PC allocation:**

| Name               | Credit % |
|--------------------|----------|
| Mike Wolcott       | 25       |
| Mike Wolcott       | 15       |
| Todd Butler        | 15       |
| Christopher Meiers | 15       |
| Danna Moore        | 10       |
| Gary Grove         | 10       |
| Allison Coffin     | 10       |

has to equal 100%--^

| WSU Campus |
|------------|
| Pullman    |
| Pullman    |
| Pullman    |
| Tri-Cities |
| Pullman    |
| Pullman    |
| Vancouver  |

| Area/College       |
|--------------------|
| VCEA               |
| VCEA               |
| CAS                |
| WSU-Tri-Cities     |
| Office of Research |
| CAHNRS             |
| CVM                |

^-----has to be complete-----^

| Academic Unit (required if one exists) |
|--|
| Civil & Environmental Engineering      |
| Civil & Environmental Engineering      |
| English                                |
|  |
|  |
| Plant Pathology                        |
| Integrative Physiology/Neurosci.       |

^-----does not have to be complete or equal 100%-----^

| Center/Institute/Other Non-Academic Unit |
|--|
| CMEC                                     |
| CEREO                                    |
| Center for Arts/Humanities               |
|  |
| SESRC                                    |
| WSU Prosser IAREC                        |
|  |