PI Responsibilities

- Read & Comply with Contractual Requirements
- Conduct Project in Compliance with Agreement (Program Management)
- Ethical Conduct of Research
- Notify OSP of any Changes in Scope of the Project
- Monthly Financial Report Review & Initiate Required Corrections (monthly expenditures)
- Cost Sharing Commitments/Documentation
- Time & Effort Reporting
- Property – Care & Maintenance
- Request Time Extensions from Sponsor – documentation required
- Submit Final Technical Report(s) to Sponsor
- Retain Final Technical Report(s) & Electronic Research Data
- Inventions & Copyrights – Contact Technology Transfer Office (TTO)
- Distance Learning Materials – Contact TTO
- Conflict of Interest/Financial Disclosure Statement Requirements
- Deficits – Must be handled by PI, Department and College (Dean)

Tips & Tricks

**Fiscal Management** – Communicate with your Fiscal Manager and Department Accountant about what you are thinking and check your financial reports monthly.

- Read your award letter so that you understand the guidelines of your grant.
- Read and think about your monthly inception-to-date report and/or CatBooks report and estimate 6 months in advance where you will be on your budget. Remember to update your FM/Dept Accountant if funding sources change.
  - Need an introduction to the Inception-to-date report? [watch this video.](#)
  - Are all the people in your lab on your reports on the correct grants?
- Understand the Facilities & Administration (Indirect Cost) rate and how it impacts your budget. See the OSP website [PI guide](#) or contact OSP for a tutorial.
- Develop a relationship with your Department and OSP financial partners and communicate with them.
- Try to anticipate problems or changes and discuss them with your Department contact or Fiscal Manager in a timely manner. They are managing MANY different grants so they need some time to be able to help you with yours.
- Make it clear with MSU collaborators and External Collaborators/Subawardees how they are expected to manage their part of the grant funds, possibly at a kick-off meeting at the start of the project.
- For multi-PI grants with MSU collaborators, you may want to manage the funds under one index number (or account) to increase flexibility or separate index numbers to increase individual accountability.
- You want to manage your budget somewhere between a hoarder, doing everything at the bare minimum of cost, and a spendthrift, triple doing everything to be sure you have the right answer. You want the right science, at the right price, at the right time.
- As with grant funds, start-up funds have different guidelines on how you can spend them so understand those guidelines and deadlines (some expire according to grant dates and some expire based on the fiscal year or calendar year).
- Cost Share/Matching Funds – identify the sources of these funds at the beginning and make sure that you are following the requirements from the award letter. See the [MSU policy](#).

**Reporting Management** – Do your reports on time with the needed information.

- Understand what the reporting timing is. NSF and NIH often request once per year but there can be special requirements that might be outlined in your award letter. [NSF demo site](#), [NIH Information](#), [USDA NIFA report info](#).
- Talk to your sponsor’s Program Official about what is required or what normally goes into a report long before the report is due.
- Send your report in one week before it is due so that you can get feedback on whether you have included what is required.
- Reports are important. Not because the Program Official will read every line but because they have to report to their boss about what you accomplished. If you are late with a report, they are late with their report or don’t include your information and they might be less likely to see your next proposal favorably.
- Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Or good enough.
- Think about what you have accomplished towards the original goals of the grant. If you are contemplating a significant change to those goals or plans, reach out to your Program Official and OSP FM before submitting your report reflecting those plans.
- Incorporate your graduate students and postdocs in the report writing process.
- Make it clear with MSU collaborators and External Collaborators/Subawardees what part of the report they will be responsible for and the timelines, either in the grant proposal itself or at a kick-off meeting at the start of the project.
- Create a word document (or other word processing program) template for reports so that you aren’t restricted to working on them online. The Research.gov system requires: Accomplishments, Products, Participants, Impact, Changes/Problems, and Special Requirements. Add to them as you work through the project so that it is easier to polish up the report by the deadline.
- You are responsible for knowing when a report is due and getting it in on time.
- Many grants have yearly meeting where PIs report on their findings in posters or presentations. These are important because they give a chance to network with other researchers as well as the program officials.
- Time & Effort must reflect time spent on the grant activities (salary certification). This is managed by Departments through the Time & Effort reporting tool that is maintained by OSP.

**Student Mentoring and Managing a Research Group** – Manage expectations throughout the process: recruiting, hiring, supervising/mentoring, annual reviews/committee meetings, etc.
- To run a successful group, you will need to be able to mentor different types of people –listening, mentoring, coaching and creating a supportive environment.
  - Consider attending a workshop on mentoring through your department or the [Center for Faculty Excellence](https://www.centerforfacultyexcellence.org).  
  - Do a workshop with your group around “Real Colors” to improve group dynamics and communications. Contact Betsy Webb in HR or Tara Mastel in MSU Extension.
- When hiring graduate students, undergraduate students, postdocs, research technicians – ask questions to understand their capabilities, knowledge, motivation and future plans. You can do this by practicing “behavioral interviewing.” This is where you ask questions such as “What makes you feel content at the end of a typical day? Tell me about a time when you were in your comfort zone and then got rudely shocked out of it by circumstances or by people on the job. How did you handle this?” Learn more in the [Science article (1999)](https://www.sciencemag.org/content/285/5428/108).
- Graduate students must be enrolled by the 10th day of classes (see the [Graduate School](https://www.graduateschool.msu.edu/) for more information).
- Make sure that you plan for summer support above all else. Other times of the year there are teaching assistantships and internships that can support graduate students but in the summer it is the PI that must provide the support.
- Salaries can go up over time, with raises or as your people take on new positions and develop, so you will need to take that into account in your projections.
- Understand and communicate about how long a project will take, and the commitment that you make to the new hire.
- If timing changes, talk to your Department accountant AS SOON AS POSSIBLE about how you can manage your funds. It might require a re-budgeting discussion with your Fiscal Manager in OSP.
- Make sure that the people on your grant are trained according to the requirements of the grant – [Conflict of Interest](https://www.osp.msu.edu/research-ethics/code-of-conduct/conflict-of-interest), [Responsible Conduct of Research](https://www.osp.msu.edu/research-ethics/responsible-conduct-research), lab safety, IRB Human Subjects, IACUC Animal Subjects, etc. See [Research Compliance](https://www.osp.msu.edu/research-ethics).
- Understand how different appointments have different guidelines – teaching assistant versus a research assistant (see the [Graduate School](https://www.graduateschool.msu.edu/) for more information).
- Time management – Do you need a course buy-out? Keep track of your time commitments on grants – both current and pending proposals these are reported through the Time & Effort reporting system.
- Your success depends on people working with you to do the research that you propose. Hire the best that you can and mentor them to be a productive team member.
- Ask your colleagues and collaborators at MSU and other universities to recommend undergraduate students who are looking for graduate student opportunities.