

Guidance on “Institutional Commitment/Support” in Grant Proposals

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Introduction

Sometimes it is necessary to provide institutional commitment/support language in sponsored project proposals, either within the narrative of the application or as a letter attached to the proposal application. This guidance is provided to faculty and staff as they develop such proposals, in the hope that this will speed and simplify proposal development. This guidance also provides introductory thoughts, sample language, and a sample letter as examples for future use.

The first and most important item to note is that institutional commitment/support is not cost sharing or matching. Cost sharing and matching are specific terms of art that are primarily differentiated by the use of specific dollar amounts in the grant application (such as, “UTSA will commit \$50,000 in cash towards the delivery of the project.”). Language reflecting institutional commitment and support does not provide specific dollars amounts; it provides general statements of university support towards the project.

The differentiation between institutional commitment/support, on the one hand, and cost sharing, on the other, has important implications for our indirect cost (F&A) structure. Increased cost sharing has the effect of reducing our F&A rate that is subsequently negotiated with the U.S. Government. Down the road, this could reduce F&A distributions. It is in our interest, then, to keep our F&A rate as high as possible, and one way to accomplish that is by minimizing the usage of cost sharing except where it is mandatory or justified in compelling circumstances.

Examples of Institutional Commitment/Support Language

Examples of institutional commitment/support language include:

- “The University will provide offices, labs, and administrative space as necessary for the accomplishment of project deliverables.”
- “UTSA has several labs that will be utilized for the proposed research.”
- “Administrative staff within the _____ Department will be available to provide support to the researchers conducting research in this project.”
- “Several graduate students within the department will be providing basic research support to the researchers during the life of the project.”

The main point here is to outline department/college/university support that will be available to the project, without providing specific dollar amounts that could be construed as auditable cost sharing by the sponsor.

As further guidance to faculty and staff, the following sample letter of institutional commitment/support is provided. This letter is provided by Dr. Gracy though this can occur at the departmental and college levels too:

Sample Letter of Institutional Commitment/Support

[Faculty/Sponsor Contact Information]

Re: Letter of Support

Dear Dr. _____,

I wish to express my enthusiastic support for your _____ grant proposal, entitled “_____,” designed to facilitate _____ here at UTSA. We are uniquely positioned among universities in south Texas to perform this project, and I foresee that the growth resulting from this grant will propel the research of the investigators to new levels of productivity and discovery. Your team of investigators, one of the most successful groups of researchers here at UTSA and _____, includes numerous Principal Investigators from the Departments of _____ that will build important collaborations to tackle pressing _____ issues as outlined in your proposal.

As Vice President for Research, I can assure you that the University will provide the infrastructure to facilitate _____ research at UTSA. Specifically, the University has designated that existing resources such as _____ [as examples: space that is already in use but will now also support this research program, personnel who currently have research built into their workload will now devote some of this time for this research project, equipment that is currently in a facility may now be used to support this research] in order to accomplish the objectives of this grant. I am highly supportive of your efforts as outlined in this proposal, and if there is anything more I can do to assist this effort, please let me know.

Best regards,

Robert W. Gracy
Vice President for Research