

## NSF Budget Tips

- ❑ Read the specific **Program Solicitation** (also known as RFP, RFQ, etc.) budget information section thoroughly. Work with your OSP Fiscal Manager early and often in the budget process.
- ❑ Use the **OSP Information Sheet** for appropriate indirect cost rate (IDC) also known as facilities and administrative or F&A for some federal sponsors. The information sheet also has current travel allowances, estimate of benefits, DUN's and TIN numbers.
- ❑ An **accurate and reasonable budget** is important for a proposal to be competitive. Federal sponsors sometimes limit the amount of transfers between categories and moving between budget categories can affect your indirect costs calculation.
- ❑ **Salaries and wages**: Include all MSU personnel paid on the project such as faculty, senior personnel, post doc's, grad students and under grad's.
- ❑ Fringe Benefits: **Estimates vs. Actual**. Estimates are average benefits of all campus employees found on the OSP Information Sheet; actual benefits of a current individual employee are on the SAIS Report "Payroll and Benefits by Index/Org".
- ❑ Equipment: **Any items over \$5,000** - indirect costs are not calculated on equipment.
- ❑ Travel:
  - Use reasonable amounts for airfare, hotel and conference registration.
  - State of Montana travel rules govern MSU employees and students
  - Use the current lodging and meal per diem rates for in-state and out-of-state.
  - Fly America Act.
  - Some federal awards/programs don't allow foreign travel.
  - **If foreign travel is allowed (includes Canada and Mexico), it should be stated in the budget at proposal time or approved by the sponsor prior to travel.**
- ❑ **Participant Support**: Not a common budget expense on NSF proposals. NSF defines participants as non MSU employees or students.
- ❑ **Other Direct Costs**: Materials & Supplies, Publication Costs, Computer Services; allowed if directly allocable to the project.
- ❑ **Consultant Services vs. Subaward**: Consult with your OSP Fiscal Manager. Must be determined at proposal stage.
- ❑ Awards: **Student tuition and fees** (includes health benefits). For the most up to date estimates go here: <http://catalog.montana.edu/expenses/>
- ❑ Indirect costs: **Typically federal research rate of 44%**, based on Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). Total direct costs less equipment, participant support, subaward expenditures over \$25K and awards (student tuitions & fees).
- ❑ The **budget justification** explains the different costs in the budget. It's usually a page or two.
- ❑ OK to include a reasonable **annual inflation increase** (3-5% is typical). Note the percentage you use in the budget justification.