

UCAR Management Committee (UMC)  
Working Group #4 - Administrative Efficiency & Agility

**CONTRACTS**

Item #	Staff Raised Issues/Concerns <sup>1</sup>	Staff Identified Impact(s)	Staff Proposed Solution(s) <sup>2</sup>	WG#4 Recommendations, Comments, and/or Actions Based on SME Discussion	President's Council Response	Status
1	<p>Placement and status of subaward/consultant contracts.</p> <p>Comment added during the SME meeting: It was agreed that the overarching concern is a lack of "communication" – knowing the status of activities.</p>	<p>1) Delay in subawardee's ability to begin effort - until a signed contract was in place.</p> <p>2) No-cost extensions are not always an option due to overhead issues.</p> <p>3) Less time to complete their work.</p>	<p>1) Assign a Contract Administrator to keep the process moving along when the primary Administrator is unavailable, particularly during year-end or when they are out of the office for extended periods (e.g., PTO).</p> <p>2) Ensure the person handling the process is known to the PI.</p>	<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p><b>1a) Contracts should review how it communicates the status of open actions to lab/program administrators and improve its communication processes.</b></p> <p><b>1b) Contracts should review its process for managing open actions when staff members are on PTO to ensure continuity.</b></p> <p><b>1c) Contracts should identify opportunities to streamline subaward agreements to help expedite their acceptance by subawardees.</b></p> <p>Note: Based on the discussion at the SME meeting (held 4 December 2012), Contracts has already begun the process of addressing many of these issues as indicated below.</p> <p>Notes from the SME Meeting (held 4 December 2012):</p> <p>1) All procurements including subaward and consultant agreements are assigned to a specific Subcontract Administrator for placement and tracking purposes.</p> <p>Contracts is reviewing its communication methods and processes for managing open actions when staff are on PTO.</p> <p>Subcontract administrators will solicit the help of lab/program administrators/requisitioners if a subaward action is being delayed by the recipient organization. It was agreed that the administrators/requisitioners would engage the principal investigator or other program personnel as needed.</p>		

<sup>1</sup> This column list the issues and concerns raised by staff that was collected during the feedback solicitation process and clarified during the subject matter expert (SME) meeting(s).

<sup>2</sup> This column lists proposed solutions from the staff feedback process and, where applicable, refined during the SME meeting(s).

				<p>2) Contracts is updating its subaward template to help streamline the issuance, review, and acceptance of UCAR subawards by subrecipients.</p> <p>3) Under most federally issued grants and cooperative agreements, a 90-day preprend period is authorized. UCAR flows this provision down to subrecipients, unless otherwise restricted per the terms of the prime award. Upon request, the subcontract administrator will inform the administrator if a preprend provision is intended to be flowed to the Subrecipient. This information can be shared with their point of contact. Should the subrecipient make a decision to preprend on a pending subaward, it is at their own risk. Upon issuance of the subaward, the subrecipient will be reimbursed per the terms of the subaward.</p>		
2	<p><b>Purchase Requisition Tracking:</b></p> <p>Upon submission of a requisition, requisitioners are not able to track it through to completion;</p> <p>Strong desire for an electronic, online procurement system.</p> <p><b>Concern raised during SME discussion:</b> Administrators are concerned that they aren't able to track UPC purchases made by Contracts' staff.</p> <p>Requisitioner is notified of the item purchased but not the supplier.</p>	<p>Requisitions, administrators are spending a lot of time calling others to obtain status and find information.</p> <p>Do not know the vendor from whom purchases were made. Only see JP Morgan Chase in IFAS.</p>	<p>1) If a fully realized electronic procurement system (e.g., FinTools) is not forthcoming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform community</li> <li>• Establish focus groups - discuss how communication can be improved during the requisition process or how to develop a tracking system that meets their needs</li> <li>• Keep requisitioners informed as to status of orders.</li> </ul> <p>If administrators are keeping in touch with the subaward PI's they may be able to help speed up the process.</p> <p>2) Create query that can be run in labs/programs.</p>	<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p><b>2a) UCAR should develop or acquire an end-to-end purchasing system by which to track orders.</b></p> <p><b>2b) More broadly, an electronic purchasing system should be part of FinTools and the functional requirements for the system should be developed with input from a representative subset of end users.</b></p> <p>Notes from the SME Meeting: (held 4 December 2012):</p> <p>1) The respondent(s) is correct that UCAR does not have an end-to-end purchasing system by which to track orders. Currently a requisitioner can track their order in IFAS from the point of order through placement. Upon placement, the requisitioner is reliant on the Contracts' buyer or subcontract administrator to notify them via phone or email of order status.</p> <p>Note: The anticipated delivery date of an order is tracked and should be updated in the purchasing system when it is revised for any reason.</p> <p>All contract and subcontract administrators have been requested to keep requisitioners informed if there will be a delay in the order. The desired frequency of communications should be coordinated between the requisitioner and the buyer/subcontract administrator.</p>		

				<p>2) <b>Action:</b> Contracts will review reports available on UPC purchases and will determine what, if any, reports are available for download by UPC Authorized Officials.</p> <p>If reports are not available currently, Contracts will investigate reporting capabilities.</p> <p>Note: Contracts in conjunction with Treasury, Finance and IT have been working with bank representatives to determine resource requirements to upgrade from PaymentNet Legacy to PaymentNet IV. Additional reporting capabilities should be available with the upgrade.</p> <p>3) Notifications to Requisitioners – Contracts notifies all administrators/requisitioners when orders are placed on a UPC. The name of the supplier is on a copy of the purchase requisition that is sent to the administrator/requisitioner.</p> <p>4) An electronic purchasing system is part of the FinTools plan. The dimension of the system is still to be scoped.</p>		
3	<p>Administrator/Requisitioner Feedback: When there is dissatisfaction with vendors (software, publication, posters, etc), there is often no process by which administrators can provide feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Software is an area of particular concern: administrators report slow response times, late deliveries and unknowledgeable personnel.</li> </ul>	<p>Administrators become frustrated when they find efficiencies can be made, but they do not have a venue for feedback.</p> <p>Administrators feel their thoughts and concerns are not valued, while the burdens of the inefficient processes continue to remain part of their workloads.</p>	<p>- Work with vendors to develop a method by which vendors can obtain feedback from non-Contracts staff</p> <p>- A special meeting about software would be welcomed.</p>	<p><b>3) Recommendation: Contracts should identify a mechanism for requisitioners to provide feedback about vendor performance.</b></p> <p>Notes from the SME Meeting: (held 4 December 2012):</p> <p>1) Requisitioners can provide feedback about vendors to the Contracts Office using the Contracts alias at: Contracts@ucar.edu or by contacting any Contracts staff member.</p> <p>In addition, Contracts will add a “Feedback Link “ to its website to give requisitioners an additional on-line method for providing feedback.</p>		
4	<p>Obtaining lease agreements for EOL equipment during field experiments.</p> <p>Facts: - A typical field experiment for our facility requires deploying equipment at several locations. - Since EOL directly measures the</p>	<p>Lots of staff time.</p> <p>Extra site survey trips (with associated travel costs and staff time) when negotiations fail.</p> <p>Delay in start of the</p>	<p>We’re open to ideas. One obvious start would be to have a Contracts Administrator directly involved (perhaps including travel to the site) with site selection.</p>	<p><b>4) Recommendation: Contracts should identify options for streamlining the process of obtaining lease agreements to support field projects with a particular focus on addressing EOL’s needs in this area.</b></p> <p>Notes from the SME Meeting (held 4 December 2012):</p>		

<p>interaction between the Earth's surface and the atmosphere, selection of the site is primarily based on the scientific needs of the research. This can result in our need to use land that is public (federal, state, community, etc.) or private (corporate or personal).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many issues may need to be addressed with each site, including: placement of equipment, access mode (road, walking, helicopter, etc.) and frequency, connection to electrical power and/or communication, damage to crops, ability/need to get building permits, archeological surveys, etc.</li> </ul> <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EOL field staff accompanies the project PI to select the most appropriate location and often are the first people to contact landowners.</li> <li>- It is not uncommon for these staff to start a first round of negotiations of the above issues in the process of evaluating the feasibility of the site. In the case that these negotiations fail, the process must be repeated at another candidate location.</li> <li>- At present, staff return to EOL, present the result of these negotiations to EOL staff and administrators, who then send a request to Contracts.</li> <li>- A Contracts Administrator (who only has a written description of these negotiations) contacts the landowner directly and asks them for their Social Security Number in addition to their signature on a multi-page legal document. Some landowners are understandably suspicious of this process and delay (sometimes by months) completing</li> </ul>	<p>project.</p> <p>Uncertainty in project planning.</p> <p>Added effort (cost and staff time) to develop alternate strategies.</p> <p>Ill will towards NCAR/UCAR.</p>	<p>At a minimum, Contracts (and EOL administrators) should meet face-to-face with EOL field staff early in this process.</p> <p>In the past, EOL staff have asked to have a copy of a lease agreement in hand when first approaching a landowner, but have been told that this is not proper legal procedure.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Contracts will review its lease agreement to ensure it meets the needs of labs/programs, while managing UCAR's risks.</li> <li>2) SME's agreed to consider having a contracts representative at meetings with land owners, if they intend to discuss leasing property. It would be a best practice if labs/programs engaged Contracts prior to any field experiment site visit.</li> <li>3) EOL will provide as much notice as possible to Contracts when they have an upcoming field program or when they anticipate needing a contracts representative at an on-site meeting.</li> <li>4) Contracts will provide EOL with a copy of UCAR's standard lease agreement. If the landowner requests any changes to the lease agreement, Contracts will be contacted and enter into discussions with the land owner.</li> </ol>		
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	<p>an agreement.</p> <p>EOL is presently developing a new facility that could be deployed at as many as 100 unique sites per project. The present system that often takes months for an individual site is not workable.</p>					
5	<p>The current process for establishing funding channels between NOAA and UCAR/UCP is inefficient and sometimes inaccessible.</p>	<p>Loss of funding opportunities (sometimes significant) with NOAA simply because we've had no way to receive the funds.</p>	<p>1) All UCP programs should have access to a readily available funding mechanism for receipt of NOAA funding</p> <p>There should be a clear channel to establish funds quickly and efficiently from NOAA.</p> <p>Ideally, each UCP program should be able to establish its own agreement with NOAA as needed, or at the very least, have a general UCP cooperative agreement that's readily accessible to all programs.</p>	<p><b>5) Recommendation: UCAR should continue to work closely with NOAA to identify funding mechanisms to streamline the process of moving funds from NOAA to UCAR.</b></p> <p>Notes from the SME Meeting (held 4 December 2012):</p> <p>Comment: With the renewal of the NOAA/JOSS Cooperative Agreement (CA), a decision was made to restrict funding for non-JOSS related activities from being awarded on the JOSS agreement.</p> <p>To address concerns raised by labs/programs both in NCAR and UCP, UCAR tried to establish itself as a NOAA Cooperative Institute (CI). Due to concerns raised by the university community, NOAA chose not to establish UCAR as a CI.</p> <p>NOAA ultimately agreed to establish a new CA for VSP (includes funding for VSP, SPARK, and SIP), and to retain the CAs for COMET and DTC. GLOBE had already been issued a new one-year CA. For all other programs, NOAA agreed to look into the establishment of an Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity Contract (IDIQ).</p> <p>1) <u>Action</u>: UCAR has been in contact with NOAA and will continue to provide updates to impacted NCAR and UCP labs and programs.</p> <p>A meeting with all UCAR impacted labs/programs has been scheduled for 23 January 2013.</p>		
6	<p>Non-Encumbered Blanket Order (NBPO) Process.</p> <p>Whenever we receive services from a vendor with a blanket agreement, we never receive a receipt.</p>	<p>All of the payments are processed through Contracts and everything seems to go into "space". We only see the final charge when we review</p>	<p>1) Send the receipts to the administrators, or individuals asking for the work.</p> <p>2) Pre-populate the</p>	<p><b>6) Recommendation: Contracts should review the NPBO process and will work with stakeholders to get feedback on any proposed process changes prior to implementation.</b></p> <p>Notes from the SME Meeting (held 4 December 2012):</p>		

<p>NBPO Renewals – The other problem is when it comes time to renew the blanket agreement through Contracts, we are given a blank form with instructions from a Contracts representative. This is a somewhat cumbersome process and could be made simpler.</p>	<p>accounts in iFAS during the month.</p> <p>Sometimes, we get credits for paying our bills early and these credits show up out of nowhere onto our accounts.</p> <p>Renewal process - there is a lot of confusion about exactly what forms need to be turned in and how much information should be on the forms.</p>	<p>requested forms with the needed information to help with any confusion and increase the level of customer service.</p> <p>3) The on-line NBPO lists needs to be kept up-to-date.</p>	<p>1) The Contracts Office does not receive receipts from any orders placed using a Non-Encumbered Blanket Order (NBPO). The requisitioner places an order and the receipt is either directed to the requisitioner or sent to UCAR's Finance Office for payment.</p> <p>2) Finance's NBPO Payment Process follows:</p> <p>Background: NBPO are put in place with frequently used vendors. No encumbrance is entered into IFAS. The first two digits on the PO represent the year the PO was put into place. Items for NBPO's are not received into the UCAR receiving system. In addition, due to the average dollar amount of a NBPO transaction receiving verification from the end user is not required on a per invoice level. It is however the responsibility of the lab/division to monitor expenditures incurred by their program that were against NBPO's to ensure validity of charges. Any discrepancies related to charges should be brought to the attention of the Accounts Payable Office.</p> <p>Invoice Process: Invoices newly received through the USPS or through the <a href="mailto:invoices@ucar.edu">invoices@ucar.edu</a> mail box are reviewed by the Accounting Support person assigned to NBPO's to determine if it requires approval. If an invoice is received without a PO# and an NBPO exists for that vendor, an assumption is made that the invoice should be processed against the NBPO. Any invoices for NBPO's that do not reference an account key are sent to the person who placed the order for clarification on which account key to use.</p> <p>Although it's not required by policy for an invoice against an NBPO to be approved at a per invoice level, a division or lab can make the request to review invoices prior to payment giving them the opportunity to make changes to the account key before the payment is made. The invoices can be sent to one (1) central point of contact within a lab/division.</p> <p>Determining which invoices should be routed for approval, the NBPO number is cross checked against a list of NBPO's that have been notated as needing approval. Invoices requiring approval are sent via interoffice mail to the lab/division's designated approver. Invoices that do not require divisional approval move on to the payment process.</p>		
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7	<p>Generating a number for the PR is a "silly process" that requires someone to take a PR form and record the number off of it. If you want to enter the information in the Excel form, you may, but you must use the paper form's number and then recycle the form. Also, the Excel form is not made well enough to calculate totals and to top it all off, the cells are "protected" so you can't put a formula in to calculate the totals for you.</p>	<p>A lot of extra manual work to turn in a PR.</p>	<p>1) We are aware that this process is being worked on in FinTools and will, most likely, be electronic. Can't wait!!</p> <p>2) Can Contracts PR form be unprotected to allow users to extend fields for data entry purposes?</p>	<p><b>7) Recommendation: UCAR needs an electronic purchase requisition systems and should move quickly to implement a solution that is acceptable to all end users.</b></p> <p>Notes from the SME Meeting (held 4 December 2012):</p> <p>1) The reason requisitioners must continue to use a preprinted purchase requisition (PR) form when submitting PRs on-line to the Contracts Office is to 1) obtain a PR number and 2) to avoid using the same PR number for multiple orders.</p> <p>When UCAR implements a fully-functional on-line order system, the concern noted will be fully addressed.</p> <p>2) The PR form on Contracts website will be replaced by a PR form that allows for expansion of fields for data entry purposes.</p>		
8	<p>Frequency of submission of conflict of interest disclosures:</p> <p>Seems fairly frequent (every grant proposal anyway), when I would think it would be enough to submit one per year, or just one if/when</p>	<p>Productivity</p>	<p>Reduce requirement for multiple instances of form</p>	<p>Notes from the SME Meeting: (held 4 December 2012):</p> <p>Conflict of Interest (COI) disclosures are required to be submitted by both NSF and NIH with all proposal submissions. In addition, federal regulations require that principal investigators (PI) and CO-PIs named on an award</p>		

	anything on them changes. I suppose this may be an NSF [and NIH] requirement so there is nothing to do about it, and it doesn't take that much time to do, so it isn't a high priority to remove it. It is just one more trip to the printer, and walk down the hall, but added up over the number of people who have to each do it 2-10+(?) times/year and it could sum to a fair amount of human resources creating and processing these. ~100 human-hrs/year across a Lab?			submit annual COI certifications.  The NCAR and UCP budget offices, with the roll-out of the new Panda system, will only require COIs from named PIs and CoPIs at point of proposal on NSF and NIH proposals. For all other submissions, unless funded, a COI will not be required.  To meet federal regulations UCAR must continue to receive annual renewals of COIs for all awards that are active in a given year.		
9	NCAR B&P and Contracts need to look to minimize all tasks that aren't absolutely required by some known regulations (vs. possible threat of audit or a question from the PACUR).	Assuring UCAR is covered at a ridiculous/maximum level makes a lot of unnecessary paperwork, creates confusion, and sometimes angers our collaborators.	Contracts should try not to implement new requirements until they are completely understood and discussed with stakeholders.	<b>9) Recommendation: Contracts should not implement new requirements until they are reviewed and discussed with stakeholders prior to implementation.</b>  Notes from the SME Meeting: (held 4 December 2012):  Contracts will review its process for the roll-out of new regulations.		
10	Pass-down of responsibility that is not appropriately supported by UCAR.  Example: Export Control and ITAR Roles. Labs/Programs are expected to comply at the highest degree, but UCAR doesn't afford Laboratory staff the same training support that they provide to UCAR staff.  Another example: Property Administration	Frustration and an un level playing field. Workload problems.		<b>10) Recommendation: To the greatest extent possible, UCAR F&amp;A should not off-load finance and administration duties, traditionally done by F&amp;A, to UCP and NCAR entities without a full discussion of rationale and impacts. If it's determined that some duties should move out of F&amp;A, adequate training must be conducted.</b>  Notes from the SME Meeting: (held 4 December 2012):  1) Adequate training must be provided or available when processes are moved to labs/programs from F&A. Also, need to ensure we have staff assigned that have the right knowledge.  2) Other examples of processes moved from F&A to labs/programs include: Property, Invoicing, Salary Adjustment Processes (added extra step by having to complete salary increases on line).  3) It was requested that a heads-up or other form of notification be sent out as to why processes are moving into labs/programs.		



				<p><u>Action:</u> The UMC will be reviewing the responsibility for export oversight/monitoring to ensure it is at the right level at the January 28th UMC meeting.</p>		
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