TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS

The SSRC holds short, weekly staff meetings on Mondays at 8:30 a.m. The first Monday of each month is for the full staff and subsequent Mondays are for scientists. Attendance at these meetings is important because of the information exchange and decision-making which occurs at that time. As a result, the Center makes little use of committees.

All SSRC employees must hold IRB and Information Security certifications.

The Center maintains a Virtual Office which contains useful information, forms and links. Go to **http://www.ssrc.msstate.edu/intranet/**

STANDARD SERVICES:

The SSRC maintains an administrative staff to assist you. If you do not know whom to contact, ask any administrative staff member and you will be directed to the appropriate personnel. If you have questions, please ask them. It's far easier to find out the "how to's" than to correct errors later. We are here to help you with the administrative/bureaucratic tasks so you can devote most of your time to the proposal writing and research processes. Often used services include the following:

Budget Preparation/Proposal Submission/Budget Modifications: Jennifer Flannagan

Budget Management/Account Reconciliation/Invoicing: Jennifer Flannagan, Linda Graves and Kathy Wooten.

Hiring and paying salaried personnel: Jennifer Flannagan. *Note that MSU has procedures for hiring employees. Such actions need to be approved by the Director of the SSRC and the appropriate Vice President.* All employee action forms need to be approved by the PI or project director before being submitted for official approval.

Hiring and paying hourly (wage) employees: Lori Stubbs submits hiring paperwork for hourly personnel, receives time sheets from them and inputs their time into the MSU system.

Inventory: The SSRC equipment inventory is managed by Lisa Moore. All equipment purchased through the SSRC is titled either to MSU or to an agency.

Keys: Office keys may be checked out from Carol White.

Leave: **Twelve-month employees** earn both personal and medical/sick leave. If their main appointment is with the SSRC, they need to submit personal leave requests to Jodie Shappley prior to their absence and medical/sick leave requests upon returning to work. Nine-month employees earn medical (sick) leave and follow the University's academic calendar for vacations. If their main appointment is with the SSRC, they must submit leave requests upon return to the office to Jodie Shappley. MSU leave policies can be found at http://www.msstate.edu/dept/audit/60201.html#PERSONAL .

Long distance calling: If your project has funds budgeted to cover long distance charges, see Lisa Moore to apply for a calling card number. MSU Telecommunications will assign a number(s) to the project, and the project will then be billed for calls made on that number.

Postage: We now use mail services.

Photocopying: Lori Stubbs will assign a photocopier number to your project(s) if copying is included in the budget; the projects are then billed monthly for the number of copies made.

Purchasing:
    Purchase orders: See Lisa Moore for assistance.
    Procurement cards: Project directors may apply for a procurement card. (See Kathy Wooten for information and assistance.) Procurement cards ease the purchasing procedures for many items. *Note: tax may not be charged on such purchases. Make sure that what you want to buy on the card is allowable before you make the purchase.*
    State Contract Items: Some items have a negotiated state contract price and must be purchased from that supplier unless you have identified another source at a much lower rate.

SSRC vehicles: SSRC vehicles may be checked out and used for official business. Project accounts will be charged for their use. See Lori Stubbs to reserve a vehicle.

Travel requests/reimbursements: See Carol White if you need assistance with the forms. Whenever you travel on official business, you should complete a travel request form, even if you are not requesting reimbursement. All travel questions are addressed in the State of Mississippi Travel Manual:
http://www.dfa.state.ms.us/Purchasing/Travel/TravelManual.pdf.

STEPS FOR PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION:

Read the RFP (request for proposals) or Program Announcement carefully to be sure that you understand it so you can comply with the agency's specific requirements, which may range from formatting instructions to restrictions on types of expenditures. Pay particular attention to the submission deadlines.

Upon deciding to submit a proposal, immediately notify Jennifer Flannagan. Give her a copy of the proposal guidelines or the URL so she can review them. She will forward that information to the Center's Sponsored Programs Administrator, Tina Cunningham.

As soon as you have a rough idea of what resources you will need to conduct the project, talk with Jennifer Flannagan and give her information so she can build you a draft budget. This is important to do early in the proposal preparation process so that your work plans do not exceed funding limits. As your plans are refined, the budget can be easily and quickly adjusted. The budget is a critical component of proposals and should not be left to the last minute.

As soon as the budget is solidified, Jennifer must submit a copy of it to the Sponsored Program Administrator for approval. This should be done at least five working days before proposal submission.

In the meantime, the individuals involved in the proposal need to complete the proposal in the appropriate format, following the agency guidelines.

Ideally, the submission of the proposal to Sponsored Programs Administration should occur 4-5 working days before it is due. If the proposal requires electronic submission, i.e., to NSF or NIH, one should allow even more time. When the text of the proposal is complete and the budget is approved by Sponsored Programs, then the PI prepares the Internal Approval Sheet (IAS)–see the SSRC Virtual Office under proposals. Advice on completing it can be obtained from Jennifer Flannagan.   Put the packet together with the IAS on top, and circulate the proposal for signatures.

Required signatures for proposals being submitted through the Office of Research:
>PI and Co-PIs
>*If the PI and/or Co-PIs are also faculty members in an academic department then the department head and dean of each must sign the IAS.*
>Director of the SSRC
>Director of Sponsored Programs Administration

Required signatures for proposals being submitted through Ag, Forestry & Vet Med:
>PI and Co-PIs
>*If the PI and/or Co-PIs are also faculty members in an academic department then the department head and dean of each must sign the IAS.*
>Director of the SSRC
>Associate Director, MAFES Research
>Director, Sponsored Programs Administration

Sponsored Programs Administration will submit the proposal. *Please note that agreements and contracts are between MSU and the agency, not between the SSRC and the agency, or between the PI and the agency. Any changes to the contracts must be approved by both MSU and the agency.*

BUDGET ITEMS to be considered for proposals include:

Personnel: Who will be working on the project? Are they MSU employees? What percent of their time will you need?

>**Principal Investigator** (PI) or **Project Director**: For purposes of grant management, there can be only one PI. Multiple Co-PIs are often included in budgets.

>**"Collaborators"** is a generic term for all individuals working on the project, including personnel working via subcontracts and consulting agreements. This is a descriptive, inclusive term, not one used as a budget category.

>**FTE** (full-time equivalent) refers to the percent of effort devoted to a particular funding source during a particular pay period. Often, academic departments refer to one course as

12.5% effort, but in doing so they are averaging effort out over the 9 month academic year. For grants and contracts purposes, one course translates to 25% FTE. At no time may the FTE exceed 100%.

Summer Pay: Nine-month faculty can earn up to 33% of their annual 9-month rate in the summer. This amount includes both income from summer school teaching and participation in grants and contracts.

Fringe Benefits: The fringe rate is calculated based on salary rate and type of employment. Tuition for graduate research assistants on assistantship is included as a fringe benefit.

Travel: What travel will be involved? Be aware of agency requirements, some require detailed cost estimates for meals, lodging, airfare, mileage, registration, etc., while others require travel costs to be broken down by in-state, out-of-state and international.

Equipment: Will you need to purchase equipment? (Be careful, some agencies do not allow equipment purchases and remember that the equipment must be needed for the project and will have to be justified.)

Contractual Items:

Subcontracts are agreements with other institutions/agencies to provide certain services for the project. Subcontracts require that the institution/agency prepare a budget detailing its expenses and submit it, with the appropriate forms and institutional approval, so the SSRC can submit it as part of its proposal.

Consultants are individuals who *ARE NOT MSU employees*. Usually a letter from the consultant indicating his/her agreement to work on the project is included with the SSRC proposal. Consultants are paid an hourly (or per day) fee and consultant expenses such as travel expenses, if any, must be included in the budget. MSU requires that we explain why we are not using MSU employees to provide the service; make sure that you provide a brief, but sound explanation when you help complete the required paperwork needed to pay them.

Software and data costing more than $5,000.

Long distance calls and **postage** expenses also fall under this category. *Note: The state bars all state agencies from buying cell phones.*

An SSRC **lease/utility/maintenance fee** is budgeted for all proposals. The percentage used is based on the previous year's expenses and income.

Commodities:
Materials to be used exclusively for the project.
Photocopying/printing project needs.
Software and data costing less than $5,000.

Direct Costs is the sum of personnel, travel, contractuals and commodities and equipment.

F&A or **Indirect Cost** or **Overhead** is calculated according to MSU's negotiated rates. On most grants and contracts the SSRC charges 26% modified total direct cost. This is done because we are an off-campus unit that pays its own lease and utilities.

Note: Permission to charge a lower F&A rate must be granted by the appropriate Vice President (either Research and Economic Development or Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine) depending on the route through which the proposal is being submitted. If the agency will only pay a reduced rate, or no rate at all, a copy of the RFP indicating the limitation should be attached to the IAS. An official letter from the agency will serve the same purpose.

WHEN AN AWARD IS RECEIVED:

When the agency decides to fund the proposal, it should send the award directly to Sponsored Programs Administration. *Note that if you receive a notice of award, make sure it is not the original by checking with Jennifer Flannagan. (If you are holding the award, MSU doesn't know that it's been awarded and the project cannot start.)*

If human subjects are involved in your project, the project director/PI must submit a request for approval from MSU's Internal Review Board (IRB). In the case when project personnel are going to prepare surveys, etc., during the project, the project can receive a provisional approval to allow time for development of the necessary project materials. IRB approval must be received before MSU can accept an award. We will not receive an account number or be allowed to work on the project without IRB approval.

After Sponsored Programs Administration accepts the award, it will send that information to Sponsored Programs Accounting. That office will issue an account number for the project. All project expenditures should be charged to that account.

The SSRC will set up a project budget on the SSRC intranet and all charges to that project will be posted there. Project directors can look at the expenditures for their projects.

WHEN YOU RECEIVE NOTICE OF THE AWARD:

Contact Jennifer Flannagan so that she can prepare to submit payroll information and/or assist with hiring new staff.

Contact Lori Stubbs if you have budgeted for hourly personnel so their payroll information may be submitted.

If you have subcontracts involved in your project, as soon as possible complete the subcontractor form and submit it to the Sponsored Programs Administrator so that office can prepare a contract.

If you have consultants involved in your project, work with Lori Stubbs to see that the appropriate paperwork is completed. There are several stages involved in this activity, so whenever you can, start the process early.

If there is an allocation for long distance calls in the budget, see Lisa Moore to request a calling number.

If there is an allocation for photocopying in the budget, see Lori Stubbs to get cost center account numbers.

MANAGING THE PROJECT:

No expenditure may be charged to a particular project without the request and approval of the project director.

Project directors have access to their project budgets on the SSRC intranet. This permits directors to easily manage the financial aspects of their projects. The project director is responsible for reviewing the account and notifying Jennifer Flannagan, Linda Graves or Kathy Wooten of any discrepancies or questions directors may have. They reconcile these records with the MSU Banner accounting system. When projects come to an end, they also assist accounting as MSU closes out the project.

If it becomes obvious that funds need to be reallocated in the budget, see Jennifer Flannagan for assistance in developing a budget modification. Remember that the contract is between MSU and the agency, so any change in the budget or scope of work must be agreed upon by MSU and the agency. Informal agreements between the PI and the PI's agency contact must be confirmed officially.

Remember, if you have any questions, the administrative staff stands ready to assist you.