UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Effort Reporting – Recommended Best Practices

Extramural Funds Accounting Contacts

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Recommended Best Practices

A. Establish and maintain good communication and clear roles.

1. Good communication is essential between Effort Reporting Coordinator and Reviewers:

   Mark calendar with ERS deadlines to reserve appropriate time to review and assist departmental personnel. Understand departmental deadlines that may affect timeliness of Department staff's review and certification process.

   Document department's business practice for certification, maintain on file, and have available to auditors upon request.

   Maintain list of Co-PIs that have independent financial responsibility and certification authority for staff paid from a federally funded grant.

   Develop email list serve to send notifications to Certifiers

   Develop checklist of items for review on Effort Reports prior to distributing notices to Certifiers. Checklist may include:

   - Does the number of reports generated agree with expected number for the current period?
   - Sample reports to verify that all expected payroll periods and cycle end dates are reflected.
   - Spot check payroll titles to verify that Academic and/or Non-Academic appear as expected.
   - Notify Certifiers when effort reports are available and when they are due.
   - Follow up with Certifiers on open reports to make sure they are certified within 60 days of report issue date.
   - Ensure that employees leaving the department have their effort properly recorded, if applicable.

2. Department Coordinators and department Payroll personnel should communicate regularly and correct out-of-balance situations between payroll records and certified effort ASAP.

3. Good communication between departments can ensure that effort reporting is complete and accurate.

   Department responsible for an award should notify the other departments if the award involves effort for their PIs.

   Department responsible for an award should activate multiple certification as needed.

B. Coordinator Responsibilities

The Coordinator reviews and modifies Effort Reports to enable the PI to more easily certify Effort for his/her employees utilizing the following steps:

Review the Payroll distribution to ensure that it matches the expected amount, given the information provided by the PI during the Effort Reporting period

Review the information available to you such as Other Support, proposal budgets and justifications, awards, letters to the sponsor about effort, pending payroll transfers, etc.

Update the Adjusted Effort % and Cost Sharing Columns if needed.

If changes were made to the report, enter an auditable comment explaining the change, then save the report.

Determine if multiple certifications are needed. If required, enable multiple certifications and save.

Meet with the PI, Self-Certifier(s), and/or Other Designated Certifier(s) to explain any changes that have been made to the Effort Reports to enable the certification process to begin.

Ensure certification of the report within 30 days of report issue date (must be done by someone with direct, first-hand knowledge of the research work performed).

The Certifier holds ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of the report.

C. Multiple Certifications

When an Effort Report contains multiple projects where each is owned by a different PI, that report also appears on other PIs' My Projects lists. Effort Reports like this may require certifications by multiple PIs if no single PI has first hand knowledge of ALL the work performed by the individual. The multiple certifications toggle can be found on the certification screen.

ERS has a Multiple Certification feature that allows each sponsored project line of an Effort Report to be certified individually. Either the Coordinator or the PI can activate this feature

If an Effort Report has the Multiple Certification feature activated AND at least one of the lines is already certified by another PI, do not deactivate Multiple Certifications as this will eliminate the certifications already captured for that Effort Report.

D. Certification

Principal Investigators are required to certify their own Effort Reports.

Effort Reports for non-faculty staff must be certified by a person who has first hand knowledge of the work performed on the benefiting federally sponsored project(s).

Certification of Effort Reports must adhere to a preciseness tolerance of +/- 5 percentage points per activity.

The actual Effort should be reflected in the Adjusted Effort % column, although it is initially pre-populated with the same numbers as the Effort % column.

E. Recertification of an Effort Report

Recertification of previously certified reports is NOT recommended as a common practice.

Recertification is necessary in the following two situations:

1. The certifier who previously certified the Effort Report re-opens it

2. ERS re-opens it based on new payroll information (payroll expense transfer, late pay, etc.)

The process of recertification is the same as that of certification: review, modify, certify.

A comment with an appropriate level of detail is required upon re-opening an Effort Report for recertification.

F. Avoid payroll transfers by indicating correct percentages the first time.

Certify the report "as is" if the effort shown is within +/- 5% of the actual effort expended.

G. Certify Report after making payroll expense transfers.

Prepare the payroll expense transfer prior to certification for ERS to incorporate the changes automatically and reissue the report.

If you certify and identify that there was a necessary payroll adjustment thereafter, , be sure to submit the necessary changes via UPAY as soon as possible after certifying the effort report. ERS will verify that the payroll and effort are in sync after the adjustments.

I. Creating Searches in ERS

1. Use custom saved searches to reduce workload:

   Subscribe to all of your PI's lists of Effort Reports ("My Projects") from the Manage Saved Searches page in order to see the same list of Effort Reports that the PI sees.

2. Communicate electronically with other individuals who need ERS information:

   Use the built-in e-mail functionality to e-mail effort reports to other staff.

   Share a saved search with another ERS user who may benefit.

3. If you wish to sort or otherwise reorganize the data available on an effort report, you can transfer the data to a spreadsheet.

4. Become familiar with the various ERS report status codes in order to ensure that the appropriate action is taken.

J. Comments in ERS

ERS requires an explanation in the Comment field when any modifications are made to the Effort Report.

Comments are permanent, auditable records, so it is important that comments clearly explain WHAT you changed and WHY you changed it. Do not use the comments section as a communication tool.