

The Center for Research & Innovation (CRI) and the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) have developed measures to minimize potential disruptions to research activities caused by COVID-19.

The FAQs below contain information as it relates to the conduct of research, research operations and sponsored programs.

Operations

- What services will be available from the research office during this period?**

Operations in all offices will be operating remotely. The research office will handle new proposal submissions and other sponsored program activities. Continue to contact CRI or OSP for any questions you might have. New and updated communications will be sent via email and posted on the [COVID-19 Research Guidance](#) website.

Proposal Deadlines

- Who will be supporting proposal submissions?**

Please be assured that OSP is able to access all PSU and sponsor systems while working remotely. Proposals will continue to be submitted by OSP.

Our experience is that federal agencies are flexible about deadlines under difficult circumstances beyond our control. However, if agencies are officially closed, proposals will most likely remain in a queue, pending resumption of agency operations – as has been the case during federal budget-related shutdowns.

[OSP](#) may be reached via email or phone. OSP will return your call or email as soon as possible.

Awards will be set up, modifications processed and subawards will be issued.

- I am quarantined, self-isolated, or caring for a sick family member and unable to submit my proposal by the stated deadline. May I request an extension?**

Most federal agencies, including NIH and NSF, do not grant prior approval for late submissions; however, there are existing policies that address extenuating circumstances. See current [NIH](#) and [NSF](#) guidance. We strongly encourage you to discuss your specific situation with both your agency Program Official and OSP.

- What if I have to stay home for an undetermined amount of time, and there is a proposal deadline during this period? Will anyone in OSP or CRI be available to assist me with my submission?**

Principal investigators will be able to submit proposals with the assistance of Sponsored Programs. Please don't hesitate to contact Heather Arnold at haarnold@plymouth.edu.

If you require assistance from The Center for Research & Innovation, please contact Joe Boyer at jnboyer@plymouth.edu.

- I am considering submitting a conference or travel proposal to NSF for a future meeting. The site of the meeting has not yet been selected; should I take into account COVID-19 in conference planning and site selection?**

Travel logistics, accessibility, and health and safety considerations of the participants should always be a foremost consideration in any conference proposal. Since the COVID-19 threat is still evolving, it is important to consider flexibility and alternative plans in a proposal to support travel or a conference. For foreign travel, you should consult the [State Department Travel Advisories website](#).

Allowable Costs/Charges/Effort on Sponsored Programs

- A conference has been cancelled, but I have nonrefundable travel and hotel costs. Can these be charged to my grant?**

The cancellation fees on grant-related activities can be charged to sponsored funds if the travel was cancelled as a result of COVID-19. Otherwise, expenses should be charged to non-sponsored funds. Authorized approvers must ensure any change or cancellation fees charged to sponsored funds are reasonable and allowable. Travelers should retain documentation of their cancellation request with the vendors. If a traveler has booked travel to a non-restricted country but the traveler elects to cancel their trip due to individual safety concerns, these charges cannot be charged to sponsored funds.

- Can I charge trip cancellation insurance to my grant?**

Trip cancellation insurance is typically unallowable on grants. However, we are monitoring any additional guidance the federal government may issue related to travel. If you need to travel in the coming months to conduct business for a sponsored project, and you want to purchase trip cancellation insurance, you may reach out to Heather Arnold at haarnold@plymouth.edu to request prior approval from the sponsor to charge this cost to the grant.

- I am working remotely from home in self-isolation. Can my effort still be charge to the grant?**

In general, yes, provided you remain engaged in your project. If you are a PI, please note that current NIH and NSF prior approval requirements regarding disengagement and effort reductions remain in effect.

Please refer to the [USNH policy](#) that governs flexible working arrangements. Due to COVID-19 concerns, we have made it an easier process to request a flexible work arrangement.

- **I am a PI, or co-PI, or full-time research staff, and home sick and can't work on my project. Can my salary still be charged to a grant?**

Yes. According to the university's indirect cost rate agreement with the federal government, sick leave and other paid absences, may be charged to the grant.

- **If my hourly student cannot return to campus and can work remotely, can they be paid with grant funds?**

In general yes, provided the work they are doing is related and attributable to the grant being charged.

- **I am a graduate student. What about research assistant responsibilities? Will I continue to be paid?**

Research Assistants will continue to be paid. We anticipate laboratory-based research to continue, although in a modified way, i.e., remotely.

- **If the sponsor agency program officer, grants management or contracting officer is unavailable, or if the agency is closed, due to COVID-19, can project personnel continue to work and charge salary to the project?**

At this time, we expect that project personnel would be able to continue work until their period of performance and funding is exhausted. However, monitor [COVID-19 Research Guidance](#) for agency updates. If prior approvals are required, confer with Heather Arnold regarding submission of approvals. The answer, and the level of risk regarding allowability of costs and project changes may vary depending on the type of request, whether the sponsor has an electronic system, etc.

- **I am a PI/researcher and I am required to work from home because of the coronavirus. Would I be able to charge supplies relating to telework (e.g., laptop, printer, office supplies, etc.) to my grant?**

These types of expenses are considered administrative costs (indirect costs), and generally are not appropriate as a direct cost unless specifically approved by the sponsor. You may wish to talk with your supervisor about your needs to work from home.

- **Am I allowed to pay staff who are quarantined from sponsored programs funds?**

Federal agencies are working internally on a number of proposal and award-related issues pertaining to COVID-19. We are waiting on further communication from our partners about these issues and will provide guidance as information becomes available. In the meantime, please continue to follow all relevant policies and procedures and apply those practices consistently. If an employee's salary is charged to a sponsored program, then their time spent in quarantine can also be charged to the sponsored program.

Project Changes, Delays and Sponsor Notifications

- **My research will be impacted due to COVID-19. What should I do?**

***Federal Sponsors (including federal flow-down):** Communicate delays in writing to your sponsor in accordance with 2 CFR 200.328(d)(1), and any agency or award-specific terms and conditions.*

Work with Heather Arnold to request prior approval if you anticipate a change in budget or program plans (e.g., need for additional funds, disengagement of key personnel for more than 3 months or 25% or more reduction in effort, change in scope, etc.) in accordance with 2 CFR 200.308(c). Note that some sponsors may have more stringent prior approval requirements.

As a prime sponsor, we may need to modify subaward agreements. Work with Heather Arnold to prepare subaward modifications for Federal contracts and/or other sponsored programs with strict deliverable due dates and schedules that may be impacted by closures, availability of personnel, materials or equipment, etc.

Keep track of charges impacted by COVID-19, such as cancelled travel and conference registration fees, salary costs for quarantined staff, etc. in the event sponsors provide future guidance that necessitates a change in funding source.

***Non-Federal Sponsors:** Please review the terms and conditions of the agreement and contact Heather Arnold regarding notification process and content.*

Research-Related

- **I am a PI on a NSF-funded Conference or Travel award, but the meeting has been canceled. Who do I contact regarding the impact to the NSF award?**

You should contact the cognizant NSF program officer about this situation. In light of the public health threat, you may wish to consider alternate plans, such as providing or using options for virtual participation. In addition, NSF program officers will be open to rescheduling the conference or using the funds for a future meeting that is consistent with the original scope and objectives of the award.

- **I am involved with a Conference or Travel award for a meeting that is taking place in the coming weeks. Should I continue with plans for the meeting?**

Reach out to the conference organizer or host as they are best equipped to understand the guidance at the location of the event. They may recommend having contingency plans if the event is ultimately cancelled or re-located, or might be planning to provide options for virtual participation. We also suggest checking the [State Department Travel Advisories website](#) if the conference involves foreign travel.

- What special planning might I be doing if my research involves human subject participation?**

Please visit the [COVID-19 Research Guidance](#) website for guidance.

- Will my sponsor provide for an extension to my award if the planned activities are disrupted by the COVID-19 public health threat?**

Most federal awards are eligible for one-year grantee-approved no-cost extension and then further extensions as approved by the agency. If you foresee a need for an agency- approved extension, you should include that information in your annual report and discuss the need ahead of time with the cognizant agency program officer for your award.

If the sponsor is not a federal agency or federal agency flow-down, please consult the terms and conditions of the award. If you have any questions, please contact your Grant and Contract Administrator for assistance.

- I am experiencing delayed subject recruitment and/or cancellations of scheduled follow-up visits with my study participants and it is negatively affecting the programs of my grant. What should I do?**

For programmatic issues affecting your study, we strongly recommend you speak with your agency Program Officer or other sponsor contact. If any issues should persist, they may need to be reported in future progress reports, or you may need a No Cost Extension to complete your study. Please coordinate any such actions with Heather Arnold

- I use vertebrate animals as part of my research. Will they be taken care of if I am quarantined or the campus has curtailed operations?**

Yes, contact the facility managers where your animals are housed for specific details. Plans are in place that will allow caretakers onto campus specifically for general husbandry and care. Please contact Paul Fedorchak at pfedorch@plymouth.edu with questions.

- I have a biohazardous waste box in use in my laboratory. What do I do?**

Seal the biowaste bags and the box as you would for shipment. Contact OEHS at 2-4041 to request pick-up of the bioboxes.

- Will EHS continue to make chemical deliveries?**

Yes, but they will be handled on a case-by-case basis depending on staff availability. Chemical deliveries will not occur in the event UNH curtails operations. Contact Andy Glode with questions, 862-5038.

- How do I request hazardous waste disposal from EHS?**

All waste requests continue through UNHCEMS® via the Hazardous Waste Removal Request form, <https://cems.unh.edu/unh/CEMS/RequestRemoval>

Compliance

- **I have a progress report due and my study is impacted by a COVID-19 related delay. Should I report this in my progress report?**

Yes. If your study is impacted, refer to the sponsor's requirements regarding where and how this should be included in your progress report. You may also confer with Heather Arnold for additional guidance.

- **I have IRB/IACUC protocol submissions pending. Will they be reviewed?**

PSU IRB and IACUC committee meetings will be conducted via Zoom.

- **I have more questions related to my research. Whom do I contact?**

*Please contact Heather Arnold at haarnold@plymouth.edu
Or Joe Boyer at jnboyer@plymouth.edu for any further questions you may have.*