

## Common Budget Mistakes

### Lessons Learned from a Recent Grant Writing Workshop

**No PI effort listed** – The most important element in a proposal is the ideas of the PI. Therefore, PI effort should be included (as a % not hours).

**Facilities and Administrative Cost** - All proposals must contain F&A costs (see the Grants and Contracts web for current rates), **or** a copy of agency policy which restricts F&A costs for all grantees, **or** an F&A cost waiver.

**Make sure the budget adds correctly!** – Also check for rounding errors.

**Use the correct fringe rates for faculty and grads** – This information is available from the Grants and Contracts web site.

**Don't show pennies!** - The inclusion of pennies implies a degree of precision that doesn't exist when doing research. Budgets are best guesses of project cost if everything goes according to the original plan.

**Put commas in numbers** - Numbers with commas are much easier to read. Your proposal should please the reviewer not irritate them.

**Use the columnar format for budgets** - Numbers should align on the right. They should be easy to follow.

**Don't include budget categories without numbers.** – If you aren't requesting equipment funds, don't show equipment line items.

**Equipment items must cost at least \$5,000** – Don't list items in the equipment category unless they meet the definition.

**Start your budget with the most important item** – Begin with salaries.

**Don't over commit PI time to the project** - Be realistic about the time you can devote to the project. What would happen if you submitted 3 proposals each showing 50% effort and they all got funded?

**Don't measure PI time with hours** – There is no such thing as a standard 40-hour work week for faculty. It's important to use % of effort.

**Use agency electronic forms** – when available

**Visit the following web sites for more information on sponsored project budgeting:**

[Office of the VP for Research](#)

[Grants and Contracts Office](#)

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Grants and Contracts Office