Purpose of the Space Survey

The primary purpose of the Space Survey is to verify room areas, room function and type to provide an accurate basis for the Facilities and Administrative (F&A) proposal as required by the Federal Government for the recovery of Facilities and Administrative costs.

Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Costs

Facilities and administrative (F&A) costs are those incurred for common or joint objectives and cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project. F&A costs are also referred to as indirect costs.

For example, an investigator's use of electrical power, water and other utilities, or the services of the purchasing and accounting offices or the library are not normally charged directly because it is not practical to account for them separately.

Western Michigan University has standard F&A cost rates for on- and off-campus (there are a few exceptions). The standard rates are negotiated and approved by Department of Health and Human Services.

F&A costs benefit the research but are initially paid for by the University. The F&A cost rate (expressed as a percentage) is charged to direct costs on each research project to reimburse the University. Almost all award documents detail the authorized F&A cost rate and the awarded F&A cost amount.

Time Period Covered

The functional classification of a room is based on the activities conducted in that room over all of Fiscal Year 2021. This survey must reflect the average functional use throughout the fiscal year. When completing the survey, consideration should be given to the anticipated activity for the remainder of Fiscal year 2021.

Deadlines

The F&A proposal is due to the federal government December 2021. The survey information needs to be collected by May 2021.
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Space Classification

There are two primary classification groups used to categorize or classify space at the room level functional use and room types.

- **Functional Use**
  
  Represents a function or activity that occurs in a room. The most important part of the survey is to accurately reflect the functional use of space based on the activity performed in the room during the fiscal year, not just at the time of the survey. Correctly estimating the percentage of total time for the year (not a percentage of an 8 hour day) spent on the functional activities is critical. The percentage should be entered according to the most reasonable whole number. The percentages assigned for all functions performed in the room, must total 100%. Functional use is vital in determining indirect cost recovery of Facilities and Administrative (F&A) cost associated with sponsored agreements.

  - **Room Specific** — functional coding of space must be done on a room-by-room basis. The coding must take into account the specific activities performed in each room. Arbitrary percentages are not acceptable and will be challenged by federal negotiators. The person completing the survey for a specific room may need to “walk the space” and must have first-hand knowledge about: who occupies the room, how the room is used, the funding sources of the occupants, and the specific activities conducted in the room.

  - **Consistency between Functional Coding of Room and Dollars Spent** — federal guidelines require that the coding of space must be consistent with the coding of the expenses that support the activities in that space. If an activity is funded with an organized research account, the space used should be classified as organized research. Conversely, if an activity is funded with an instruction account, the space used should be coded as instruction.

  - **Consider the following when assigning functional use percentages to rooms**
    
    - **Determine occupants**— identify all individuals who use the space. Anyone that uses the space on a regular basis should be identified.
Individuals who use the space on a non-recurring basis for a material amount of time should also be identified.

- **Determine funding sources** – classification of space must be consistent with the coding of the expenses that support the activities in that space so it is necessary to determine the funding sources of the occupants of a room.

- **Determine how the occupants use the room** – what a person does in a particular room determines how that room should be coded. A person can work in multiple rooms and do different activities in each room. For example, a faculty member may use a research lab for organized research and an office for instruction.

- **Consider the extent of use by each occupant** – a person works in a lab 15 hours a week for four months should be counted much less than someone who works in the lab 40 hours a week for the entire year.

**Room Types** – identifies how the room is used and may reflect the physical characteristics of that space. For example, a room can be an office or laboratory but not both.

- **Rooms may have more than one functional usage such as:**
  - Faculty Offices (310)
  - Administrative Offices (310)
  - Office Support (315)
  - Conference Rooms (350)
  - Conference Room Support (355)
  - Research Labs (250)
  - Research Lab Support (255)
  - Instruction Labs (210)
  - Instructional Lab Support (215)

- **Most common functional usage in these rooms are:**
  - Instructional/Departmental Research
  - Organized Research
  - Departmental Administration

- **Support Rooms** – functional coding should generally be done based on the average functional use of the rooms supported.
  - Conference room support
  - Office room support
  - Research Lab support
  - Instruction Lab support

**Examples of Space Classifications**

- **Classifying Research Space - RESEARCH** is divided into two categories:
  - Organized Research (including activity supported by cost sharing on organized research)
Departmental Research

The room type normally associated with RESEARCH activity is RESEARCH LABORATORIES. However, research activity may exist (in varying degrees) in several other room types such as TEACHING LABORATORIES and OFFICES. Conversely, activity other than research may be taking place in a room classified as a RESEARCH LABORATORY.

It is important to note the following when assigning room functions:

It is the USE OF SPACE, not the room type that determines the functional assignment given for a particular room.

The assignment of space to the various research functions, instruction, and other sponsored activities should be based on interviews with the person(s) that use the space.

Example 1: Distinguishing Between Organized Research and Department Research

STEP 1: Identify activity taking place in the room

Professor Smith occupies a research lab. The primary research activity taking place in the lab is supported by a grant from NSF (externally funded research). Professor Smith is also performing experimental studies not funded by a particular sponsor, but supported by departmental or other funds.

STEP 2: Determine the proportionate use of activity within the room

Through consultation with Professor Smith determine a reasonable estimate of the activity between ORGANIZED RESEARCH and DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH.

Professor Smith indicates that the room is used approximately 80% for the NSF supported research and 20% for research supported by other funds. The space inventory for this room is completed as follows:

80% Organized Research
20% Instruction/Department Research

STEP 3: Verify the reasonableness of the proportionate use

The proportionate use function of all space utilized by Professor Smith should reflect the proportionate functions of the account(s) used by Professor Smith. Significant differences should be investigated and documented. For example, a project has little or no expenses for the fiscal year which the space data is being collected.
Example 2: Treatment of Cost Sharing

If Professor Smith’s NSF grant was cut and the department provided cost share dollars to supplement the NSF research, then the space used for that activity would be coded in the same manner as the NSF research grant supported activities, or ORGANIZED RESEARCH.

- Classifying Instructional Space

The room types generally associated with INSTRUCTION are CLASSROOMS and TEACHING LABORATORIES. However, INSTRUCTION activity can also take place in room types such as RESEARCH LABORATORIES, CONFERENCE ROOMS, and OFFICES. It is the use of space, i.e. the activity taking place in the room and not the room types that determines the appropriate functional assignment for a particular room.

Instructional activities are those related to instructing students such as:

- Course preparation
- Counseling and advising/assisting students registered in classes
- Grading
- Syllabus production
- Textbook orders
- Exam preparation
- Formal classroom teaching and laboratories

- Classifying Other Sponsored Activities Space

Other Sponsored Activities are SPONSORED BY THIRD PARTIES (either Federal or non-Federal). This category includes contract-for-service activities, community service programs, seminars, symposiums, and conferences, etc. funded by third parties.

It will likely be necessary to interview the employee responsible for each sponsored project to determine where these activities were conducted or planned.

- Classifying Departmental Administration Space

Space associated with Departmental Administration is generally located in academic administration offices of the Chair/Head and Dean. Within these areas, room types generally classified as Departmental Administration are OFFICES and CONFERENCE ROOMS.

Departmental Administration activities are those such as:

- General academic departmental office functions including that of Chairs and departmental staff
- Administrative functions in academic Dean’s offices
- General academic departmental services such as mail distribution and telephone service
- Development of proposals for new research activities
- Academic department conference rooms

When assigning the functional classification for FACULTY OFFICES, the range of activities associated with the faculty member should be considered. A faculty member involved in research, teaching, administrative duties, proposal development, and other sponsored programs would have multiple functional classifications for his/her office. Possibilities may include functions such as Organized Research, Departmental Research, Instruction, Other Sponsored Activities, and Departmental Administration. Interviewing the faculty member is necessary to determine the appropriate percentages to assign to each function.