Glossary of Common Terms

Terms marked with an asterisk (*) have been taken from the Foundation Center’s glossary (©1995-1999 The Foundation Center). The remaining terms are as defined by OSPRA.

Abstract: A short summary of a project or program including all pertinent aspects of the sponsored activity, including a summary of the objectives and expected results. The abstract is usually less than 350 words and limited to one double- spaced typed page.

Allocable Costs: Those allowable costs that actually benefit the grant or contract to which they are charged.

Allowable Costs: Those categories of costs that are allowable as a charge on a grant or contract as determined by the terms and conditions of the award and/or appropriate cost principles. Certain types of costs, such as the cost of alcoholic beverages are not allowable and may not be charged to a contract or grant.

Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR): The administrative official, who on behalf of the proposing organization, is empowered to make certifications and assurances and can commit the organization to the conduct of a project. The AOR for USI is the Executive Director of OSPRA.

Contract: A mechanism for procurement of a product or service with specific obligations for both sponsor and recipient. Typically, a research topic and the methods for conducting the research are specified in detail by the sponsor, although some sponsors award contracts in response to unsolicited proposals. An agreement; as used here, an agreement that a specific research activity will be performed at the request, and under the direction, of the agency providing the funds. Research performed under contract is more closely controlled by the agency than research performed under a grant. (Compare: Grant)

Co-Principal Investigator(s): shares authority with the principal investigator for leading and directing the project

Cost Sharing: Funds contributed to the project by the institution or a source other than the funding agency. Also referred to as Matching.

Direct Costs: Includes all items that can be categorically identified and charged to the specific project such as personnel, fringe benefits, consultants, subcontractors, travel, equipment, laboratory and scientific supplies, materials, and patent costs.

Donation: Transfer of equipment, money, goods, services, or property with or without specifications as to its use. Sometimes donation is used to designate contributions that are made with more specific intent than is usually the case with a gift, but the two terms are often used interchangeably. (Also see: Gift)

eGrants: The web-based system for submission and tracking grant applications used by the Corporation for National and Community Service and the U.S. Department of Education.
Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A): Costs that have been incurred for common or joint objectives of the university and the sponsored program, and which, therefore, cannot be identified specifically in reference to a particular project. Examples include building operations and maintenance, utilities, administrative services, laboratory space, and library service. Also referred to as Indirect Costs, Overhead.

Federal Funding: money provided by the U.S. Government

Federal Pass Through: Federal funding that is awarded as a sub-grant by a non-federal entity.

FOA: Funding Opportunity Announcement

Gift: Gifts and bequests are awards given with few or no conditions specified. Gifts may be provided to establish an endowment or to provide direct support for existing programs. Frequently, gifts are used to support developing programs for which other funding is not available. (Also see: Donation)

Grant: A type of financial assistance awarded to an organization for the conduct of research or other program as specified in an approved proposal. A grant, as opposed to a cooperative agreement, is used whenever the awarding office anticipates no substantial programmatic involvement with the recipient during the performance of the activities. Financial support provided for research study designed and proposed by the principal investigator(s). The granting agency exercises no direct control over the conduct of approved research supported by a grant. (Compare: Contract)

Grants.gov: The U.S. Government web-based source to find and apply for federal grants.

HRSA eHB: The Health Resources and Services Administration electronic handbook: a web-based system for submitting and tracking grant applications.

Indirect Costs: see F&A (Facilities and Administrative Costs)

NSF Fastlane: National Science Foundation’s web-based system for submitting and tracking grant applications.

Principal Investigator (PI): A principal investigator has absolute responsibility for the overall conduct of a sponsored project, including all technical, programmatic, financial, compliance and administrative aspects. The principal investigator is responsible for controlling the technical direction and academic quality of the project, and will ensure that a sponsored project is carried out in compliance with the terms, conditions and policies of the funder and the university. The term principal investigator (PI) is commonly used for research grants.

Private Funds: Funds available in the private sector without government involvement, support, or guarantee.

Project Director (PD): The term project director (PD) is commonly used for non-research projects and assumes the same responsibilities as a PI.
RFP: An acronym for Request for Proposal. When a funder issues a new contract or grant program, it sends out RFPs to agencies that might be qualified to participate. The RFP lists project specifications and application procedures. While a few foundations occasionally use RFPs in specific fields, most prefer to consider proposals that are initiated by applicants.

Seed money: A grant or contribution used to start a new project or organization.

State funds: money provided by the state

Tax-exempt: Refers to organizations that do not have to pay taxes such as federal or state corporate tax or state sales tax. Individuals who make donations to such organizations may be able to deduct these contributions from their income tax.