

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Office of Grants & Contracts

Time and Effort Certification Glossary

The following terms are commonly used when referring to the work that a university employee undertakes on a sponsored project:

1. **Award** – Depending on its context, either: (a) the terms and conditions associated with a sponsor’s decision to select a UTRGV sponsored project proposal or application for funding, or (b) the Notice of Award or other documentation reflecting such a decision by the sponsor.
2. **Committed Effort or Effort Commitment** – The amount of effort identified in a sponsored project agreement or sponsored project proposal that is submitted and accepted by the sponsor regardless of whether salary support is requested in support of that effort.
3. **Cost Shared Effort or Contributed Effort** – The percent of committed effort that is contributed by an individual to a sponsored project and is to be paid and cost shared by UTRGV or a third party. It represents effort committed to the sponsored project that will be paid by UTRGV or third party resources. (For a more detailed definition of cost shared effort and more information relating generally to cost sharing, see UTRGV policy [ADM 07-302](#), Cost Sharing on Sponsored Projects).
4. **Cost Sharing** – The mandatory or voluntary commitment of UTRGV’s resources contained in the proposal or award agreement. The concept of matching is synonymous with cost sharing.

These are different types of cost sharing:

- a. Mandatory Committed Cost Sharing is required by the sponsor as a condition of obtaining an award; it is tracked and reported to the sponsor.
 - b. Voluntary Committed Cost Sharing is not required by the sponsor but is voluntarily offered by the institution, documented and quantified in the proposal and accepted by the sponsor. This includes minimum effort not directly charged to a sponsored project, but tracked and reported to the sponsor. Voluntary Committed Cost Sharing is generally discouraged and, if proposed, must be recommended for approval by the appropriate Dean or Vice President. Final approval rests with the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation or designee.
5. **Department Effort Coordinator** – The departmental individual responsible for coordination between awards and accounts and faculty and research staff in their department, to facilitate administration of the effort commitment, charging, and certification process.
 6. **Effort** – The amount of time spent on any activity for which an individual is compensated by UTRGV. Effort is expressed as a percentage of the individual’s Total Institutional Activities, and does not assume a 40-hour workweek or any other standard workweek. Activities typically include Research (sponsored projects), Instruction (teaching/instructing students), Clinical Practice, Administrative Duties (chair, dean, proposal

preparation, etc.), and other Institutional Activities (as assigned). An individual's total effort must equal 100%. For example, if an individual averages 60 hours per week during the reporting period and spends an average of 15 hours on a sponsored research/project, that represents 25% effort and the other 45 hours, allocated to other institutional activities, represents 75% effort. For a graduate student who is employed for only 10 hours, the 10 hours represent 100% effort.

Completed effort certification should reflect all activities conducted under the terms of employment, which typically does not include activities compensated by stipend payments or outside employment.

7. **Individual** – Any UTRGV employee who has committed effort (whether paid by the sponsor or cost shared) on a sponsored project. Where appropriate in this policy, the following subcategories will be utilized:
 - a. A Primary Individual has responsibility for the overall conduct and management of the research or activity as described in the proposal/application or as identified in the Notice of Award of a sponsored project. A primary individual is typically identified in the sponsored project award as principal investigator, project director, co-investigator, co-project director, or a person with comparable responsibilities on a sponsored project proposal. A primary individual typically, but not always, carries an academic (i.e., faculty) appointment.
 - b. A Supporting Individual is an employee other than the Primary Individual whose salary is supported in part or completely by sponsored research/project under the direction of the Primary Individual.
8. **Institutional Base Salary (IBS)** – The base annual compensation set by UTRGV, typically on a 9 or 12 month basis, for an individual's appointment, whether that individual's professional activities are spent on instruction, research, public service, administration, or on other areas of focus, and whether that employee is appointed full-time or part-time. IBS is the required basis for determining salary in proposal budgets. Excluded from IBS are fringe benefit payments, reimbursed expenses, temporary or supplemental compensation for incidental work such as very small one-off assignment on payments received for weekend workshops, and any income that an individual may be permitted to earn outside of duties to UTRGV.
9. **Maximum Level of Effort Commitment** – The upper limit of (or "cap" on) that primary individuals can devote to all activities associated with a sponsored project. Most primary individuals who are faculty at UTRGV working on sponsored projects generally have other responsibilities as part of their total workload that would preclude them from devoting 100% of their time and effort to a sponsored project. In most situations, faculty may not have more than 80% effort committed on a sponsored project during the academic year. However, faculty with a nine-month appointment for the academic fiscal year who have committed effort on a sponsored project may be allowed a 100% appointment during one or more summer months but cannot perform other activities during that period (e.g. serving on institutional committees, writing proposals, etc.) as these activities would reduce the effort expended on the project below the 100% commitment. Primary Individuals who do not hold faculty positions and supporting individuals may be allowed a 100% appointment on a sponsored project with a similar level of effort, provided that the individual does not perform other UTRGV related duties and does not work on research activities that are not related to the sponsored project to which he or she has committed all of his or her effort.
10. **Minimum Level of Effort Commitment** – The minimum level of effort every Primary Individual is required to expend on each of the individual's sponsored projects. If there was no level of effort described in the sponsored project proposal, there is a minimum of 1% commitment on the part of the Primary Individual and other key

personnel during the period of the project. This minimum requirement does not apply to equipment grants, dissertation support, other awards intended as “student augmentation,” limited-purpose grants such as travel grants or conference support, education grants, and scholarship grants.

11. ***Sponsored Projects*** – Activities conducted in research, instruction, training, or public service as a result of a formal written agreement (such as a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement), which agreement is typically obtained as a result of a formal application and approval process. Government, industry, or private sponsors can externally fund these activities. Sponsored projects are separately budgeted and accounted for, meaning there is a defined scope of work, a budget that identifies the costs to be incurred in the performance of the work, and the accumulation of costs actually incurred in support of the project. Sponsored projects usually involve a specific commitment of time for each individual involved in achieving the aims of the project. Sponsored projects may be thought of as transactions in which there are specified statements of work with a related, reciprocal transfer of funding.
12. ***Time and Effort Certification or Effort Reporting*** – formal verification through UTRGV’s effort certification system that committed effort (whether paid from the sponsored project account or cost shared) has been performed. The certification process is a key part of UTRGV’s system of internal controls that provides reasonable assurance that the charges are accurate, allowable, and properly allocated.
13. ***Total Institutional Activities*** – All activities for which an individual is paid by UTRGV as a result of their employment. Activities typically include Research (sponsored projects), Instruction (teaching/instructing students), Clinical Practice, continuous Administrative Duties (chair, dean, proposal preparation, etc.), and other activities (as assigned). Only activities for which the employee is paid by UTRGV to perform (as part of IBS) are considered “Total Institutional Activities.”

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(effortcert@utrgv.edu)