EXPANDING THE FRONTIERS OF SPACE ASTRONOMY

HST Grant Funding

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STUC – 19 Oct 2022
Summary

- In May, the STUC raised two concerns regarding HST grants
  - Allocation profile
  - Grant reporting

- The grant allocation profile was changed in 2017 to address ongoing growth in unspent but obligated funds
  - Appropriate to revisit the rationale, history, and outcome
  - Significant flexibility in system to address circumstances associated with particular projects or institutions

- Interim and final performance reports are at the minimum level to satisfy federal funding requirements and auditing
  - Happy to hear concerns or suggestions for improvement
  - We will be making examples available on grants website
Grant Allocation History and Rationale

• April 2017
  • Growing pool of unspent funds in HST grants (> $40M)
  • Driven by slower rate of expenditure than scheduled release of funds to grants
    • Note this is a matter of spending rate – it’s not a matter of funds never being spent
  • NASA faced $40M shortfall in HST budget for FY18 – FY20
    • See “HST Project Update” by Jennifer Wiseman and Pat Crouse, Nov 2017 STUC presentation
    • NASA asked STScI to investigate mitigation of shortfall by reducing “uncosted carryover”

• Summer 2017
  • STScI responded with project RUCUS (Reduce Uncosted Carryover Using Software)
    • Significant software development effort
    • Investigation and analysis of grant allocation and spending
    • Modeling of uncosted carryover under various possible new grant profiles
    • Communication with STUC members, grantees, and institutions to explore what would be acceptable
    • Paul Hertz (HQ) discussed the need to reduce uncosted carryover at AAS and APAC
Grant Allocation History and Rationale

- October 2017
  - Notification to community of new grant increment profile (email from Paula Sessa, GRA)
    - Funds released based upon invoicing instead of fixed schedule
    - When 90% of extant funding is invoiced and paid, next allotment automatically available
  - Upgrade to Space Telescope Grants Management System (STGMS) to release allocations automatically to avoid disruption in funded research at grantee institutions
  - Additional funding available upon request, generally within one business day
  - Increment profile:
    - **Approved Amount** | **Available at Award** | **Available when 90% expended**
    - Up to $30,000 | 100% |
    - Up to $50,000 | 50% | 50%
    - Greater than $50,000 | 20% | 20% in equal increments
  - Expenditures monitored automatically
    - $0 in first 9 months results in notification
    - $0 in first 12 months results in 50% reduction in funding available (no change in award)
Grant Allocation History and Rationale

- November 2017
  - New grant allocation profile discussed at STUC meeting
  - STUC formally endorsed solution to HST budget shortfall, but stressed need to maintain grants funding over the long term (see STUC report, Nov 2017)
- These allocations incorporated into subsequent revisions of General Grant Provisions document (no change from Paula Sessa email in Oct 2017)
- Grant pool has remained near $30M per cycle since Cycle 26 implementation
- Uncosted carryover currently half of what it was when the allocations were revised
Grant Reporting Burden

- Federal research dollars are subject to review and audit
- Requirements for Interim Performance Reports and Final Performance Report are outlined in General Grant Provisions documents
  - Interim: Due annually
  - Final: Due within 90 days of the grant end date
  - Each includes:
    - Brief comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals and objectives for the period, the findings of the investigator, or both.
    - Reason why established goals were not met, if appropriate.
  - Each report submitted by grant administrative PI using STGMS
- Other reports from authorizing or certifying official
  - Interim: financial (monthly), annual audit (expenditures > $750K)
  - Final: financial, equipment, new technology (all within 90 days of grant end)
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- The requirements for interim and final reports are unavoidable, but we can provide examples to the community to make it clear what is required
  - Examples will be posted to grants website

- *These really should be brief*
  - Both in content and in time to write (certainly less than an hour invested)