V. Cautionary Guidance

Cost sharing is normally stated in the budget. However, cost sharing commitments can be stated in the budget justification or in the proposal narrative. No matter where cost sharing commitments are found within the proposal, they can be legally binding on the institution if the proposal is funded. Sometimes, a PI unintentionally commits to cost share by using certain words in their proposal narrative or budget justification. Even if the commitment was truly an accident, the cost share is still legally binding upon award. Here are some tips to keep that from happening.

**Terms to Avoid When Cost Sharing Not Required by Sponsor or You Don’t Intend to Include it**

Cost sharing, sharing, matching, in-kind, donate, commit (either % or $), allocate (either % or $), exclusive use, volunteer, support at no cost, contribute

**Alternate ways of expressing yourself so you don’t accidentally commit to cost share**

Substitutions italicized:

- Professor X will be *providing* expert advice and consultation to the project, as needed.
- The University *demonstrates* support to the project through the availability and expertise of the PI/PD.
- Professor X is PI and *requests* 25% salary support for this project. She will *provide* additional support, as needed.
- Dr. Z's laboratory is 1200 square feet. He also has access to the departmental transmogrifier that is beneficial to the research. (*Note how neither the lab nor the equipment are “contributed” or “exclusive use.”*)
- No salary support is requested for Dr. Q; however she will *provide* intellectual direction for the project. (*Note how the word “volunteer” was replaced with “provide” to describe unpaid time on a project.*)

**More Cautionary Guidance**

- Do not over-commit PI or co-PI time beyond 100% effort. If a research team member is committed 100% on another project, do not include them in yours.
- Cost share the minimum amount required.
- Federal dollars cannot be used as cost sharing or matching toward another federally sponsored project unless there is written authorization from both federal agencies.