

GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

Budget Guidance & Budget Justification Examples

REQUIREMENTS

All Virginia university students applying for the Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) Graduate Research Fellowship are responsible for routing the application through their institution's research administration or sponsored programs office, and obtaining all required institutional approvals and endorsements before submitting to VASG. This includes all budget documents. Each institution's procedure may vary. Although, all will have an internal deadline for submitting applications to their sponsored programs/research office for their review and approval prior to VASG's deadline.

For full details on the application guidelines, required elements, and review and selection process, please download the 2022 Graduate Research Fellowship announcement. The information included below should not be considered a comprehensive guide. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review VASG's additional guidance documents and related templates available at: <https://vaseagrant.org/>

CREATING A FELLOWSHIP BUDGET

Budgets must be developed in the **Sea Grant 90-4 budget worksheet** (available on the VASG website). The budget justification must include a detailed description of each line item cost in the 90-4 budget. The guidance and examples below are provided to support applicants in developing their individual budgets. However, universities and departments often have specific budget justification text, definitions for cost and expense categories, and facilities and administrative (F&A; or Indirect Cost) rates that may be different from the included examples. VASG strongly encourages students to begin working early on with their faculty advisor(s), business manager or fiscal officer (as appropriate), and institution's sponsored programs/research office to develop their fellowship budgets.

Eligible Fellowship Expenses

The Graduate Research Fellowship covers student expenses but not research costs (see eligible and ineligible cost items below). Up to \$40,000 per year for up to two years for full-time graduate, professional degree, or Ph.D. program students at a Virginia academic institution can be requested for fellowship-related costs.

Eligible Costs include: student stipend; fringe benefits; tuition; enrollment, university and graduate program fees; health insurance; indirect costs; VASG events and conference fees, expenses and travel; and professional development training and travel.

Ineligible Costs include: research and lab supplies; research and field work travel; sample processing; research-related service fees; laboratory and field equipment (expendable supplies and permanent equipment); and other expenses needed to conduct research activities. Students who graduate before the end date of their fellowship award will not be permitted to use the remaining funds to support post-graduate expenditures.

The budget should include travel support for the fellow to attend one to two VASG meetings per year (e.g., fellowship orientation meeting, presenting at a VASG event, and VASG-sponsored professional development workshops). If universities limit travel and in-person meetings during the fellowship award, then travel funds can be re-budgeted into eligible cost categories only, with VASG approval.

IN COLLABORATION WITH



GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

To support applicants, VASG has compiled a series of example budget justifications below for the most common eligible line item cost categories. Example text for ineligible costs are not included.

Salary and Student Stipend (Section A)

The student ("Research Asst. Grad. Students") and faculty advisor ("Senior Personnel"), as well as any other related personnel must be assigned to the categories according to the explanation provided in the budget justification and in accordance with NOAA usage (i.e., these definitions may not necessarily conform to usage within your institution).

Identify project personnel by their full name and title in the budget justification. Use accurate, current salaries as the basis for calculating salaries and wages for each individual. Enter months of effort as full-time equivalents, regardless of how many calendar months the individual will work on the project (both Sea Grant and matching funds). Entries must be done in separate columns (e.g., Sea Grant funds vs. matching funds) as indicated on the 90-4 budget.

The budget justification should address the following questions:

- Is each individual identified by name and position?
- Are months of effort clearly stated for each position?
- Are the total costs (Sea Grant and match funds) for each person listed along with an explanation of how the costs were calculated?
- Do the combined charges for all activities of any individual exceed 100% of time?
- Do the time commitments and charges appear reasonable?
- Are all individuals currently employees of the applicant organization? If not, an explanation must be included (e.g., a graduate student enrolling in fall semester).
- Is a cost of living increase built into the budget and are the salary increases justified for the grant period?

Example 1.

Research Assistant Graduate Student (Sea Grant \$##,###; Match \$##,###) - The Ph.D. student wage is based on a ## month performance period per year. The fellow, [First Last], will devote up to ###% academic year effort and ###% summer effort to the project each year. Specific wage rates are determined by the academic department. Graduate student stipend payments are based on the level of the student and on the number of years of experience the individual has had on research and sponsored projects. The wage rate for the student in year two is \$##,###, which includes a #% increase from year one.

Example 2.

Total Salaries and Wages. (Sea Grant \$##,###; Match \$##,###)

Senior Personnel. Dr. [First Last], advisor (Sea Grant \$0; Match \$#,###)

Dr. [Last Name] will serve as the academic advisor and will contribute ## months of effort as match.

Research Assistant Graduate Student. [First Last], fellow (Sea Grant \$##,###; Match \$##,###)

A total of ## months (\$#,### per month; Ph.D. student) are required to complete the proposed fellowship project in year 1.

Example 3.

[First Last], Faculty Advisor. Months of Effort: 0 Sea Grant; ## Match. Monthly salary: \$#,###

Salary costs are requested to support the graduate student and proposed fellowship activities. Dr. [Last] is an associate professor at the university in the [department title]. \$#,### of the PI's paid salary will be used as match (## months). The faculty advisor will be responsible for assisting with overall project management.

[First Last], Graduate Student. Months of Effort: ## Sea Grant, ## Match, Ph.D. student monthly stipend: \$#,###

[Ms./Mr. Last] is a Ph.D. student and applicant for the fellowship. Stipend costs are requested to support the proposed activities.

As the fellow for this proposal, [First] is requesting ## months of salary and will have primary responsibility for project management and execution.

Faculty salary and graduate assistantship are calculated based on university rates. All salaries include a ##% annual increases.

IN COLLABORATION WITH



Fringe Benefits (Section B)

Fringe benefits are those customarily paid by the grantee institution, following its usual practices in the payment of such benefits.

The budget justification should address the following questions:

- Are fringe benefits identified as a separate item?
- Are the elements that comprise fringe benefits indicated?
- Do the fringe benefits and charges appear reasonable?
- Are the total charges for each person included (separately) along with an explanation of how the charges were calculated?
- Are fringe benefits charged to federal and matching categories in the same proportion as salaries?

Example 1.

Fringe benefits were calculated at ##.##% (the current university rate) of the faculty advisory's (PI) committed salary for this project. Fringe benefits of \$#,### will be provided as match on the award.

Example 2.

The fringe benefit rate applicable to university faculty salaries is ##.##%, which will be attributable to this project. This rate includes the university's contribution to the Virginia Supplemental Retirement System, FICA, health, life and disability insurance premiums, worker's compensation, unemployment insurance premiums, annual leave, and sick leave.

Example 3.

Fringe benefits are calculated at a rate of ##.##% for faculty personnel, [First Last], and come to a total of \$#,###, which will be used as match. Actual fringe costs may vary for individual employees based on salary level, length of service, and type of coverage. The amounts posted to each grant account represent the proportionate fringe burden associated with salary costs allocated to that award.

Travel (Section E)

A detailed budget narrative is required for all fellowship-related travel. Eligible travel expenses include VASG events and conference fees, associated expenses and travel costs, and professional development training and travel. The description must provide a detailed breakdown of travel costs totaling more than \$5,000 or 5% of the total project cost, whichever is greater (refer to Example 3).

The budget justification should address the following questions:

- For foreign and domestic travel, is each trip listed along with the destination, method of travel, estimated mileage, cost per mile, duration of travel, number of travelers, and per diem rate for meals and lodging?
- If the actual trip details are unknown, what is the basis for the proposed travel charges?
- Are the requested travel costs eligible and directly relevant to the successful completion of the project and goals of the fellowship program?
- Are the travel charges reasonable and realistic?

Example 1.

Domestic - US (inc. Puerto Rico): \$#,### Total - Sea Grant \$##,###; Match \$#,###

A total of \$#,### is requested for travel to meetings and conferences to present results, including VASG meetings which are anticipated to be held at locations in Hampton Roads or Richmond (3 per year at \$### per trip; rental car, fuel, tolls, and parking fees) and one national conference (one per year at \$#,###). In addition, \$### is requested for # trips to meet with the professional mentor at local sites in the tidewater region per year, at an average of \$## per trip, as detailed below.

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Example 2.

Domestic Travel. Sea Grant \$###,###; Match \$#,###

All travel will be conducted in accordance with university's travel regulations. Mileage will be charged at the current federal and state approved rate on the date(s) of travel. Travel estimates are based on costs that were incurred on previous projects of a similar nature for federal and state agencies. Funds are requested for two Sea Grant project meetings within 50 miles of the university (rental car, fuel, tolls, and parking fees; totaling \$###) in Richmond and Hampton Roads.

Example 3.

Domestic travel in the amount of \$### in year one is requested to attend one national conference (detailed below), a VASG's event in Richmond, as well as the fellowship orientation meeting, and two VASG professional development workshops.

Coastal Conference in San Diego, California - Month ##-##, 202# (# days; 2 travel days)

Registration: \$###

Primary Method of Transportation: Flight \$###

Ground and Local Transportation: \$###

Per diem: Lodging: \$###; Meals: \$ ## (\$## travel day)

Total: \$#,###

Publications (Section F)

Applicants are eligible to request reasonable publication costs to communicate the results of their fellowship activities and related graduate research. Per the Department of Commerce's Standard Terms and Conditions, NOAA and VASG require funding recipients to credit financial assistance where appropriate. Awardees should refer to the VASG's website for information on attributions for publications, reports, videos, etc., and requirements for reproducing VASG's logo.

Other Costs (Section G)

A detailed budget narrative is required for other cost categories. How sponsored programs/research offices categorize these costs may vary. However, common eligible costs include tuition; enrollment, university, and graduate program fees; and student health insurance.

The budget justification should address the following questions:

- Are items listed by nature of expense?
- Are the costs necessary for the successful completion of the project and in compliance with the goals of the fellowship program?
- Are ineligible or disallowed costs excluded?
- Are the charges reasonable?
- Are charges which duplicate indirect cost items excluded?

Example 1.

Graduate Student Fees and Health Insurance. Sea Grant \$###,###; Match \$#,###

A total of \$###,### is requested to support the fellow's comprehensive student fees and required health insurance.

Example 2.

Academic tuition for Ph.D. students in the [department title] at the university is inclusive of all required student fees as all sponsored program proposals that include graduate student stipends in the budget must also include tuition, technology, and library fees for the same period that the student will be on graduate research associate stipend. The amount includes a #% escalation factor incurring August ## of each year.

IN COLLABORATION WITH

**Example 3.**

Tuition (not subject to indirect cost): Sea Grant \$###,###; Match \$###,###

\$#,### is requested to cover part of the fellow's tuition for spring and summer semesters of 202# based on current university rates. The remaining tuition for the academic year 202#-202# will be covered by university funds and contributed as match.

Example 4.

Graduate Student Tuition: Sea Grant \$###,###; Match \$#,###

Funds are requested to cover the costs of tuition for the applicant. The tuition rates are based on projected in-state tuition for the 202#-202# academic year for the student in the [department title] at the university.

Match Requirement

VASG-funded projects require a fifty percent (50%) funding match (i.e., budgets must show \$1 of match for every \$2 of Sea Grant funding requested). Only non-Federal funds may be committed as matching contribution. In-kind contributions, unrecovered F&A and tuition, non-federal research expense, start-up funds, faculty salaries, travel support (research, conference, professional development, etc.), partial stipend and tuition are all examples of match.

Common methods used to meet the match and full support requirements have included: 1) providing partial support for the stipend and/or tuition as part of the required match (although that partial support cannot come with other responsibilities, e.g., teaching assistantships, in order to receive the full professional development benefits of the fellowship), or 2) the academic institutions volunteering to waive overhead on the federal dollars. To date, VASG partner institutions have chosen the latter option and have used the foregone overhead to make up most or all of their match requirement.

The budget justification should address the following questions:

- Does the fellowship budget meet the 50% match requirement?
- Does the budget exclude federal funds being used as match and are the contributions in compliance with federal cost principles?
- Are the sources of match (i.e. cash or in-kind) clearly identified and do they exclude contributions used for other programs or existing awards?
- Does the budget justification provide adequate documentation to support in-kind contributions?
- Are matching contributions necessary for accomplishing the fellowship project?

Example 1.

Dr. [Last Name] will cost-share #.#% effort at \$#,### along with a corresponding fringe of \$#,### (#.#%) as part of the matching funds for the fellowship in year two of the project.

Example 2.

Total Matching Funds: Sea Grant \$0 ; Match \$###,###

Faculty Mentor: Dr. [Last Name] will provide mentorship effort and serve as the faculty advisor for the graduate student at #.# person-months per year, totaling \$#,###.

Indirect Costs: Unrecovered indirect costs totaling \$###,### are being contributed as match on this fellowship proposal. The matching funds are calculated on the faculty mentor efforts, graduate student salary, student health insurance, and travel costs. Only student tuition is excluded per the university's F&A agreement.

IN COLLABORATION WITH





Indirect Costs

Indirect cost is the institution's negotiated F&A rate and its relation to those elements of the proposed grant budget to which that rate is to be applied. The institution's sponsored programs/research office will identify the direct costs to which indirect costs can be applied. An explanation of all indirect costs must be included in the budget justification.

Unrecovered indirect cost may be included as part of cost sharing and match.

The budget justification should address the following questions:

- Are indirect costs requested?
- Is the correct rate being used? If a lower rate than is authorized in the indirect cost rate agreement is being proposed, you must explain why your organization is deviating from the approved rate.
- Is the rate applied to the correct base total (i.e., modified total direct costs)?
- Are charges which duplicate direct costs excluded? If not, the budget justification must explain why.

Example 1.

A total of \$##,### unrecovered facilities and administrative funds (calculated at the rate of ##%) will be provided as part of the required match from sponsor and will be an in-kind contribution for year two of the project

Example 2.

Indirect costs in the amount of \$##,### for facilities and administrations for [university name] is ##.##%. A reduced rate of 0% is accepted in support of this fellowship project. A portion of the waived indirect costs (totaling \$##,###) will be contributed as a portion of the required match.

Example 3.

The university's ONR negotiated rate dated [Month #, 20##] authorizes an on-campus indirect cost rate of ##% of modified total direct costs (MTDC; totaling \$#,###) effective [Month #, 20##] through [Month #, 20##].

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This guidance document, VASG's fellowship announcement, eSeaGrant instructions, application templates, and additional resources can be found at: <https://vaseagrant.org/graduate-research-fellowships/>

For questions or inquiries, please contact VASG at vasg@vaseagrant.org. Please reference "Graduate Research Fellowship" in your email subject line.

IN COLLABORATION WITH

