

Notification and Approval Requirements

Regarding Re-Budgets, No-Cost Extensions, and Graduation

Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) invests in students and early career professionals (e.g., graduate research fellows, interns, summer resilience interns, post-graduate fellows, etc.), and also provides considerable professional development training and support for its fellows. For example, VASG Graduate Research Fellowships require professional mentors to support students and limits eligible expenses to: student stipend; fringe benefits; tuition; enrollment, university and graduate program fees; health insurance; indirect costs; VASG event and conference fees, expenses and travel; and professional development training and travel. VASG fellowships and internships do not fund: 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.

VASG makes the financial investment to enhance fellows' competitiveness and success in their careers by managing the cohort of current fellows and alumni as a professional network, providing multiple training, networking, mentoring, and coaching opportunities.

VASG's intention is to ensure that fellows grow from managing their funds and projects and are able to direct costs as best meets their fellowship goals and objectives. Thus, the awardee is required to notify and obtain VASG's written approval for any change in the:

- Budget that amounts to more than ten (10) percent of the total budget;
- Award period (e.g., no cost extension): and/or
- Funding restrictions after graduation.

Notification should be in writing from the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) to the Virginia Sea Grant Director and Associate Director.

MOVING FUNDS BETWEEN LINE ITEMS

Any changes that amount to more than ten (10) percent of the total budget requires prior approval from VASG. If an awardee wishes to transfer funds from one budget line item to another (e.g., using tuition funds for travel), the fellow is required to work with their advisor(s) and AOR to submit the following documentation:

- A formal request (on letterhead) detailing the rationale for the budget revision, and
- A revised 90-4 budget (for each year and cumulative) and budget justification.

In Collaboration With



In general, budget changes will be approved only if:

- The funds will be used in direct support of the fellow's activities;
- The funds will be used for eligible expenses, as proposed in the fellow's proposal and as defined within the original RFP; and
- The funds will be used while the fellow is still a student and remains in good standing at his/her institution.

Additionally, budget revisions may result in changes to the indirect costs and have match ramifications.

CHANGES TO AWARD PERIOD OR TIMING OF SPENDING

Fellowship funds can be carried over from one year to the next without prior approval (e.g., if students have a two-year fellowship, they can reserve some of year one budgeted funds and spend them in year two, within the same line item). However, fellows cannot move funds forward (e.g., funds in the year two budget cannot be spent in year one).

Fellows can request a no-cost extension to use funds up to one year after the original end date of their award, with reasonable justification. Unexpended funds are not, by themselves, justification for an extension. No-cost extensions must be requested BEFORE the end of the award (at least two months in advance). Awardees are required to work with their AOR to submit the following documentation:

- A formal request (on letterhead) detailing the reason and rationale for the no-cost extension, confirmation of whether a budget modification is necessary, and the new proposed end date. The letter should include the VASG project # and title, original and new proposed end date, and any significant change(s) to the proposed fellowship timeline (e.g., relevant research activities, academic and outreach milestones, graduation date).
- If a change of more than ten (10) percent of the total budget is required the rationale for the budget revision, revised 90-4 budget(s) and budget justification must be included.

In general, VASG will only grant a single no-cost extension for up to one year in duration. There are some exceptions to this rule, particularly at the end of VASG's omnibus award from NOAA.

GRADUATION

Graduate Research Fellowship funds are intended to support the student's fellowship-related expenses while they are seeking a graduate degree at a Virginia institution working on their research objectives outlined in the application. VASG encourages all of our fellows to share important milestones, including defense and graduation dates, with VASG staff. At the conclusion of the fellow's graduate program they are required to notify VASG of their graduation date and submit a digital copy of their final project, thesis or dissertation to VASG.

Fellows who graduate before the end date of their fellowship award are not permitted to use the remaining funds to support post-graduation expenditures (e.g., stipend or salary; fringe benefits; health insurance; indirect costs; publication or printing costs; conference fees, expenses and travel; or tuition; enrollment, university and graduate program fees for a subsequent degree program). If the fellow graduates prior to VASG issuing year two funds, no additional funds will be allocated and VASG will work with the AOR to modify the subaward end date.



FEDERAL FUNDING AND AWARD NOTIFICATIONS

Funding for the Graduate Research Fellowship program is contingent on available federal funds from NOAA and the NSGCP. Throughout the award, VASG will work closely with the PI(s), fellow, and the institution's Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) to support the administration of the award. As VASG's host institution, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Office of Sponsored Programs will be the point-of-contact for questions regarding financial documentation and sub-award management.

To ensure compliance with federal funds from NOAA, awardees should review the Terms and Conditions thoroughly and be aware of and comply with the following conditions:

- When traveling the fellow is subject to the provisions of the Fly America Act and must comply with the Act when scheduling transportation for travel paid with VASG funds.
- Federal and match expenditure reports and/or invoices should be provided upon submission of every reimbursement request or quarterly (every three months; if no such requests have been submitted), at a minimum, and accurately reflect expenditures.

ENSURING THE GREATEST IMPACT FOR FELLOWS AND FELLOWSHIP FUNDS

VASG will entertain all allowable budget modifications, within the constraints of our NOAA award and NOAA/VASG policies, as long as they are consistent with the intent of the fellowship.

VASG monitors spend rates closely on all of its awards. If it appears that there are surplus funds in an award that will not be needed or spent by the fellow's end date, and if there is no clear spending plan for remaining funds at the end of the award, we may seek to return unneeded funds to VASG so that they may be reallocated to other needs, including other research and fellow activities.