



2025 Best Practices Submission

Presentation Title:

Empowering Compliance and Improvement: Subrecipient Monitoring Best Practices

Presenters:

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Presentation Description:

As the volume and complexity of research activity expands across higher education institutions, so does the level of sponsored funding and regulation. This session highlights one of those compliance requirements- subrecipient monitoring. Explore requirements and growth opportunities through a walkthrough of recent improvements implemented at the University of South Carolina, and learn about commonly encountered issues from an audit perspective.

Statement of the Problem:

All subaward invoices flow through the Controller's Office Compliance Team for review and processing. Our subaward invoicing processes were nearly entirely manual. We relied almost exclusively on email and manual spreadsheets to facilitate the invoice submission, approval, payment process, and monitoring, which created significant inefficiencies. The process was time-consuming and created an unnecessary burden for the Compliance Team and frustration for stakeholders.

Identify the Solution:

I participated in USC's Improvement Leaders Program, through the Office of Organizational Excellence. This program served as a springboard for me when identifying, developing, and implementing our subaward invoicing improvements. I developed a Project Charter to clearly define the project scope, identified a Project Sponsor for continual guidance/support throughout the project (the University Controller, Mandy Kibler), gathered metrics on the current process state, and held multiple discussions and discovery sessions with the project team (which included the Compliance Team, AP Team, and PeopleSoft Finance Support Team). The result of these efforts were three meaningful improvements to the subaward invoicing process: (1) a standard electronic invoice

submission form through Jotform; (2) a batch invoice processing method (AP Upload); and (3) electronic workflow approval through PeopleSoft Finance. Prior to implementing all improvements, we provided appropriate training to our end users (e.g., Business Managers, Principal Investigators, Subrecipients) through standard communications and webinars. The improvements resulted in streamlined and efficient invoicing processes and freed up our Compliance Team to spend time on more high-risk, non-administrative tasks. This improvement project also spurred meaningful cross-functional collaboration.

Implementation Timeline:

- 1) Map Current Process;
- 2) Explore Available Technology/Solutions (for streamlined invoice submission, payment processing, and invoice approval);
- 3) Hold Discovery Meetings with Internal Project Team (Compliance, AP, PeopleSoft Finance Support Team);
- 4) Map Future-State Process;
- 5) Complete System Testing for Electronic Workflow Solution (through PeopleSoft Finance) - October 2023;
- 6) Implement Electronic Invoice Submission Form (through Jotform) - November 2023;
- 7) Implement AP Upload Payment Process - December 2023;
- 8) Educate End Users on Change - March 2024;
- 9) Implement the Workflow Solution - April 2024;
- 10) Monitor the Results and Maintain SOPs - Ongoing

Benefits & Retrospect:

Multiple steps of the subaward invoicing process were streamlined, resulting in holistic improvement. The implemented improvements reduced manual work, improved the uniformity of invoice submissions, reduced the frequency of follow-ups and returned invoices, improved the tracking of outstanding and paid invoices, expedited invoice approval, improved customer relations, and improved processing time.