

Cost Sharing Guidance

Responsibility

Responsible McCormick Official: Justin Notestein, Associate Dean

Responsible Office: McCormick Office of Research Administration

Last Updated: August 15, 2026

Overview

This guidance applies to cost share requests for proposals involving McCormick investigators. It serves as a supplement to the [guidelines from the Office for Research](#). Both sets of guidelines should be considered when making a cost-share request at either the school or the institutional level.

Approval for Cost-Sharing

All requests for cost-share are at the discretion of the McCormick Associate Dean for Research; approval is not guaranteed.

Voluntary Cost Share

- McCormick does not engage in voluntary cost share except in exceptional circumstances.
- Voluntary cost-share requests for cash support for equipment-only grants will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- If a PI wants to include voluntary cost share in a proposal, they should work with their research administrator to capture in-kind faculty effort or unrecovered F&A or use discretionary funds.

Mandatory Cost Share

- Mandated cost sharing must be clearly specified in the sponsor's solicitation.
- When mandatory cost share is required by a sponsor without a specific cost-share level, the cost-share request to McCormick should not exceed 10% of the portion of the sponsor budget that will remain in McCormick.
- Contributions to cost share are apportioned to schools within Northwestern according to the appointments of the investigators from each school accounting for fractional faculty appointments between schools.
- If cost sharing is requested from McCormick, it is expected that partner universities, research labs, and subcontractors will provide cost share at the same percentage level, unless otherwise specified in the solicitation.
- University Fellowships may be available for mandatory cost sharing at the level of one 12-month University Fellowship per \$2M in sponsor funding carrying full F&A that comes to and remains in McCormick when the total funds coming to McCormick exceed \$5M. Graduate student support (with costs based on the standard student costs that would be included in the sponsor budget) is included as part of the 10% maximum cost share level.

- All cost share for cash and for graduate student quarters beyond that mentioned in the previous point must be fully recovered through academic year salary commitments on the grant, except for cash support of equipment-only grants.

Process

Please refer to the [Sponsored Research cost sharing page](#) for information regarding the Process of Obtaining Institutional Cost Share Support as well as the Cost Share Decision Tree. The website also includes standard templates for the cost-share budget and cost-share workbook.

Consistent with Office for Research guidelines, the PI should make the initial request for cost-sharing support **at least four weeks** (preferably 6–8 weeks) before the proposal deadline.

It is highly encouraged that research administrators schedule a cost-share meeting with their manager or the Senior Director prior to submission of a cost-share request. All cash and graduate student quarter requests must receive sign off in DocuSign from the Senior Director of Research Administration prior to any review and approval at the departmental and school level. Contact Brittany Patrick, Senior Director of Research Administration, for questions or concerns:

Brittany.Patrick@northwestern.edu

Covering Cost-Share from Academic Year Salary Recovery

- Only the amount of academic year salary recovery beyond that used for summer salary, discretionary funds, and course buyout is available for cash and graduate student cost sharing requests. The funds available for cost sharing can be maximized by avoiding any summer salary charged to the grant, not using academic year salary to cover 0.5 months of summer salary, using all recovered salary for cost-sharing rather than using any portion for faculty discretionary funds, and not using recovered salary for course buyout.
- Faculty direct charging (academic salary + fringe) needs to be equal to 1.538 times the cash request or the graduate student quarter cash equivalent, since McCormick's portion of direct charging (65%) is used to cover the request ($1 / 0.65 = 1.538$), assuming no academic year salary recovery is used for summer salary or course buyout. [If an investigator has level of academic year salary recovery so that 50% of the recovered salary is returned to the investigator's discretionary account, the multiplier is based on McCormick's reduced portion of direct charging (50%).] Investigators can choose to forego the fraction of academic year salary recovery that normally flows to the investigator's discretionary account (see McCormick's academic year salary recovery policy). In this case, 100% of direct charging can be used toward the cash request or the graduate student quarter cash equivalent.

Example of cash ask and required AY salary recovery (with 35% discretionary)

Cash ask for \$10,000

\$5,000 Dean's office; \$5,000 OR

$\$5,000 \times 1.538 = \$7,690$

Thus, academic year salary + fringe recovery on the sponsor budget must equal \$7,690

Example of graduate student quarters ask (FY26 rate) and required AY salary recovery

One (1) graduate student quarter ask has a cash equivalent of \$14,394

$\$14,394 \times 1.538 = \$22,138$

Thus, academic year salary + fringe recovery on the sponsor budget must equal \$22,138

Additional Notes

- Graduate student support: All graduate student support, whether from one 12-month University Fellowship per \$2M in sponsor funding or from funds generated from McCormick investigators' academic year salary recovery, may only be used to support McCormick doctoral students.
- Limited submissions requiring cost share: In the case of a limited submission proposal that requires a cost-share commitment, the PI should contact the McCormick Associate Dean for Research in advance of submitting a limited submission to the Office for Research Development to obtain preliminary approval. Working with the responsible research administrator, the PI should prepare a list of all tenure or tenure-track key personnel and their written confirmation of participation using DocuSign to obtain this confirmation of participation.
- Equipment-only proposals: Equipment-only proposals must identify major, and in some cases minor, users that will be included in the calculation for the cost-share distribution. A rationale for the user group selected must also be provided.
- Pre-proposals: Cost-sharing commitments are not made at the pre-proposal stage.
- Space: McCormick does not provide space as part of cost sharing. Requests regarding incremental or renovated space must be discussed with the relevant department chairs early in the proposal preparation process.
- Award modification: If an award amount changes, the cost share must be adjusted and reapproved by all parties whose commitment is revised (department chairs, deans, and/or the Office for Research). The responsible research administrator should facilitate this approval on behalf of the PI.
- Spending modification: If expenditures on an award change such that the direct charging changes (for instance, summer salary is taken instead of academic year salary, academic year salary is used for 0.5 months of summer salary, or the amount of discretionary funds flowing to a faculty member's discretionary account changes), cost sharing is adjusted accordingly.