

Guidelines for Charging Facilities & Administrative Costs

This document provides guidance for charging Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs on sponsored project budgets per [University Policy 601.16 Facilities and Administrative Costs](#).

Facilities and Administrative (F&A, also commonly known as overhead or indirect costs) are the general support expenses relating to research and sponsored programs that are incurred for common objectives of the University and therefore cannot be readily identified with a particular sponsored award. Our F&A rates are set by the federal government through a negotiation process based upon a formal F&A cost proposal.

Full F&A rates reflect our federally negotiated costs of delivering services for which the University expects to be fully reimbursed (Table 1). Waiving or reducing the F&A rate constitutes cost-sharing. Agreements to share the cost of projects may be in the University’s interests in some cases, but the decision to cost-share on a proposal is an institutional decision and not the decision of an individual faculty member (see [University Policy 602.6 Cost Sharing in Sponsored Programs](#)). The Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development must approve any departure from full F&A cost recovery regardless of funding source.

Applicable Rates:

The rate agreement sets forth different rates for Organized Research (OR), Instruction, and Other Sponsored Activities (OSA), with on-campus and off-campus rates for each category. See Table 1 for applicable rates.

Table 1. Full F&A Rates

Type of Project	FY 23 Rate	FY 24 Rate
OR - On	54%	54%
OR - Off	26%	26%
Instruction - On	52%	52%
Instruction - Off	26%	26%
OSA - On	37%	37%
OSA - Off	26%	26%

These rates are effective through June 30th of each fiscal year.

The appropriate F&A rate should be applied to a project’s Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) base. MTDC is usually calculated by subtracting from the total direct costs (1) any equipment item costing more than \$5,000, (2) the amount of any subcontract above \$25,000, and (3) tuition costs. Occasionally, there are other deductions from the total direct costs.

To use the off-campus rate, rent must be paid to a landlord with rental costs included in the budget and at

least 54% of the project must take place in an off-campus facility. The Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development will also approve the off-campus rate for faculty members who are in-residence at a federal or corporate laboratory outside the Charlotte region for the entire project (e.g., summer guest investigator program). The final determination to use either the on- or off-campus rate will be made by the Office of Research Services. The University applies its federal F&A rate to all federally funded projects, whether we are the prime recipient or a sub-recipient of those funds, unless the amount of F&A recovery has been restricted by the sponsor. The University also applies its federal F&A rate to projects funded by non-federal sponsors, including foundations, businesses, and corporations.

UNC Charlotte has a public service mission to serve the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Thus, for projects funded by local government and local not-for-profit agencies within the immediate Charlotte region, the University will charge an F&A rate of 26% of MTDC. This 26% rate will not apply to federal pass-through funds. In the case of federal pass-through funds, the University expects recovery of F&A at the full rate. Projects that fund only graduate student support (salary, fringe benefits, tuition) may charge an F&A rate of 26% of modified total direct costs.

Recovery of Limited/Reduced F&A:

Many private, non-profit foundations have an established, written policy of not paying indirect costs on awards or contracts. Other sponsors limit F&A recovery through guidelines or formal policy or allow direct charges for research administration costs instead of paying indirect costs. Adjustments to the University's applicable full F&A rates may be granted if the sponsor's policy indicates that the limitations on F&A apply equally to all recipients. In such cases, a waiver must be submitted for review and approval by the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development at least 10 days before the submission deadline. The request, including a detailed rationale and documentation of the sponsor's standard policy or guidelines limiting F&A recovery, must be submitted and routed for approval through the University's electronic research administration (eRA) system. Approval of the waiver will be recorded in the eRA system and is required for submission of the proposal or contract to the sponsor.

Return of F&A Funds to Investigators, Colleges, Departments, and Centers:

The University returns a proportion of the recovered F&A receipts from sponsored awards to investigators and their affiliated academic colleges, departments, units, and centers/institutes. For awards involving multiple investigators (PIs and co-PIs), the portion of the F&A returned to each unit will follow the agreed-upon allocation of credit recorded and approved in the University's eRA system. Any post-submission or post-award changes in the allocation of credit must be approved in advance by all PIs and participating units (departments, colleges, and centers) and will be applied to receipts generated on expenditures after the approval date. The Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, in consultation with the Provost, is responsible for determining if a unit, including centers and institutes, is eligible to receive F&A funds.

Return of F&A to Colleges, Departments, Centers, and Institutes: The University will return **10%** of recovered F&A receipts to the academic department or administrative unit of the investigators participating in the project and listed as PI or co-PI on the award. Official University centers and institutes are not eligible to receive the F&A allocated to departments or administrative units unless the participating investigator has no academic departmental affiliation (see Table 2 for a summary).

An additional **6%** of the F&A receipts will be returned to the investigator’s college. If the project is also affiliated with an official University center or institute, these funds are split evenly (50/50) between the college(s) and the center(s)/institute(s) (Table 2). F&A receipts generated on projects with a reduced F&A rate that requires a waiver of the University’s full rate are not eligible to be returned to the participating college, center, or institute. This same rule does not apply to participating departments. Funds distributed to colleges, centers and institutes must be used to support research-related activities and initiatives and expenditures must follow all University spending guidelines.

Return of F&A to Investigators: Individual faculty members will receive up to **10%** of the F&A receipts associated with sponsored research grants and contracts that carry one of the University’s full rates (Table 1). For multiple investigator awards, the distribution of F&A will follow the agreed-upon allocation of credit. There are no limits on the amount that can be carried over from fiscal year to fiscal year. However, the University will periodically monitor the balance in investigators’ accounts to ensure funds are being spent in a timely manner. Expenditures of these funds must follow all University spending guidelines. Finally, if an investigator leaves or separates from the University at any time, the remaining balance in their F&A account and any future distributions will be returned to the central F&A fund.

Table 2: Return of F&A funds to academic and research units and qualified projects.

	Percentage Returned	Full F&A/ No Waiver
College	6% or 3% if split equally with Center(s)	Required
Centers and Institutes	6% or 3% if split equally with College(s)	Required
Department and Administrative Units	10%	Not Required
Investigator (PI/co-PI)	10%	Required