# Effort Verification

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Overview
The quarterly effort verification process is an important internal control to ensure payroll charges are accurate, allowable and properly allocated on sponsored agreements. Quarterly verification is an on-going internal control process driven by federal regulations (Uniform Guidance 200.430) and comply with the UVM Effort Management and Reporting on Sponsored Agreements policy. The effort verification objectives are as follows:

- Perform an after-the-fact review of actual payroll charges on sponsored agreement
- Assess/update effort plans for PIs, CO-PI and other key personnel
- Identify applicable action items (prior approvals, salary distribution changes, APF payments)
- Document the effort verification results

The process overview below summarizes the key steps during the effort verification process:

User Guide Purpose - This user guide provides instructions to prepare, conduct and document effort verifications using the PI Portal in PeopleSoft Financials.
Navigating to the PI Portal

In PeopleSoft Financials UVM Employee Homepage click on the UVM PI Portal tile.

Commitments by Person Tool

Select the **Sponsored Effort Commitments** menu option on the left of the screen. Use the search options to bring up the commitment details for a specific individual or search by department to obtain a list of all faculty and key personnel who require quarterly effort verifications.
Once you click on the hyperlink for the commitment report for an individual you will see two tabs. The first is the **Commitments by Person** tab and the second is the **Distributions by Person** tab to allow you to compare their current distribution to their commitments within the PI Portal. Both tabs default to the current fiscal year, but you have the option to show commitments for all years or to see distribution breakdowns for a select range of fiscal years.

**Commitments by Person:**

The report will list award and project specific details pertaining to the commitment such as the project description, awarded department and PI, project description and award title. The report also indicates if the individual is considered Key Personnel based on the role type set up by SPA after review of the award documents. Commitments are listed as a percentage.

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Commitment by Person Report Details: The report will list award and project specific details pertaining to the commitment such as the project description, awarded department and PI, project description and award title. The report also indicates if the individual is considered Key Personnel based on the role type set up by SPA after review of the award documents. Commitments are listed as a percentage.
Commitments are set up under the calendar columns for 12-month employees. Commitments are set up under the academic and summer columns for non-12-month employees, typically 9-month faculty. The start and end date listed pertains to the effort commitment. For more information on the project simply click on the following button:

**Go To Project**

### Distributions by Person

Distribution by person data DOES NOT include additional payment information. Please see the FAQ for guidance on navigating to eAPFs that have been submitted for an individual. This tab will also indicate if there is an outstanding distribution change request in process for the individual you are reviewing.

If an individual has multiple employee records for the fiscal year(s) being reviewed the distribution breakdown for each record will be included. The full chartstring can be seen by clicking on either the "chartfield" tab or the 'expand' icon next to "chartfield" tab. By default, the data will sort by the starting effective date.
Personnel Commitments by Project

Select the **PI Portal: Search for Projects** menu option on the left of the screen. Enter the applicable search criteria necessary to bring up the project you wish to review and click on the “Retrieve Data (as of last night)” button. Click on the **Project ID** hyperlink to access the project details.

Select the **Personnel Commitments** tab.

Personnel Commitment Details: This tab will display all faculty and key personnel commitments on the project along with their role on the project. This tab also indicates if the individual is considered Key Personnel based on the role type set up by SPA after review of the award documents.

Commitments are set up under the calendar columns for 12-month employees. Commitments are set up under the academic and summer columns for non-12-month employees, typically 9-month faculty.
Preparing for an Effort Verification Meeting

**Scheduling** - Designated effort unit administrators play an important role in facilitating the effort verification process for PI, CO-PI and other key personnel. **Schedule a meeting well in advance** with the PI, CO-PI or faculty member. **Important considerations are:**

- The effort verifications can be staggered to accommodate volume. For example, one faculty member could have their verification reviews in August, November, and March. A second faculty member verification review schedule could occur in September, December, and April.
- Conduct an effort verification review of the current fiscal year during the faculty member certification review of the previous fiscal year.

**Assessing effort and personnel charged on active awards** – Prior to the meeting, assess the current effort distribution of the person and personnel charged to the person’s sponsored agreements in the current fiscal year. Identify potential discussion points.

- Assess whether effort commitments are complete in the **Commitment by Person** report.
- Does the actual payroll charged by person seem reasonable in the **Get Payroll Distributions** (percentages) and/or **Get Payroll Transaction Details** (by Name/Date) (dollars) for the dates pertaining to your review?
- Review departmental payroll suspense to assess if projects have been set up and effort can be allocated to a project or follow up with the sponsor and/or SPA on the award or advanced account set up if necessary.
- Review last quarterly verification action items and resulting effects.

If the faculty member is verifying for others as PI or CO-PI, obtain a list of personnel charged to their active sponsored agreements by reviewing the **Payroll Expenses to Date** and **Get Payroll Distributions** data sections of the **Payroll Information** tab in the PI Portal and cross referenced with the commitments of faculty and key personnel in the **Personnel Commitments** tab.
Note: Student wages, temporary wages, additional pay, including summer salary for 9-month and 10-month appointments, are not encumbered. These costs will be posted as a payroll expenditure. The Transaction Detail tab can be referenced to see the individual payroll transactions by name/date for the entire project or a specific date range pertaining to the quarterly review.

Transaction Detail

Note: Stipend payments are not subject to effort reporting requirements. Please reference the sponsors terms and conditions for minimal time commitments and review those charges in the verification process of the respective PI/CO-PI.

Review Action item(s) from previous verification session – Prior to a verification meeting, assess whether the previous actions items have been completed. Facilitate the closure of any remaining action items prior to the upcoming meeting.

Identify key award documents to facilitate verification discussion – Prior to a verification meeting, identify key award documents (UVMClick, PeopleSoft, eAPFs) that will likely aid the discussion points. Key documents will clarify any confusion on commitments and payroll distribution results.

Effort Verification by Individual

Principal Investigators, Co-PIs, Co-Investigators and faculty working on sponsored agreements should have a Commitment by Person report in the PI Portal, which should be verified on a quarterly basis. Non-key personnel or students do not have commitment reports. Upon completion of the verification review document the scope of the review, the verification review results and any action items.
Review Active Commitments – Review the current fiscal year effort commitments (PeopleSoft default), as well as additional fiscal years that fall within the scope of the quarterly review for reasonableness. Review salary distributions and eAPFs if necessary to determine if actual effort was allocated accurately and if there are any future effort adjustments that need to be processed. The following discussion points should occur to complete a comprehensive review of the individual’s effort:

- Are commitments in the active sponsored agreements correct and complete?
  - If a commitment was set up incorrectly email SPA@uvm.edu.
  - Document any planned effort changes for future reference. If effort changes require prior sponsor approval email SPA@uvm.edu to start the prior approval process. Upon sponsor notification, SPA will make the appropriate change(s).
- Are salary distribution and eAPF percentages accurate, reasonable and properly allocated based on actual effort since the last quarterly review?
- Are salary distribution and eAPF percentages accurate, reasonable and properly allocated based on planned future effort for the remainder of the fiscal year and upcoming quarter under review?
- If there is effort in department suspense, assess if projects have been set up and effort can be allocated to the appropriate sponsored project or follow up with the sponsor and/or SPA on the award or advanced account set up if necessary.
- Assess what level of effort needs to be applied on each sponsored agreement during the remaining time of the budget period to meet effort commitment?
- Do I need to communicate to a PI or obtain a prior approval from a sponsor on a planned effort commitment reduction or disengagement greater than 3 month? Departments/PIs are responsible for communicating directly with SPA on prior approval requests.
- What will be my effort commitment for any upcoming no-cost extension period requests?

Review Pending Proposals section of the effort plan – UVMClick has a custom reports for proposals. To navigate to the reports in UVMClick select Grants > Reports > Custom Reports and then in the filter box enter: Investigators on Proposals. The following four reports are suggested by SPA.

- Investigator on Proposals – All States
- Investigator on Proposals – In Development
- Investigator on Proposals (Other than PI) – by Investigator
- Investigator on Proposals (PI only) – by Investigator

Recommended discussion points related to pending proposals are:

- Will my pending proposals affect my ability to meet my commitments on my current active sponsored agreements?
- Should I communicate effort commitment changes to the sponsor(s) to proactively address reductions of effort and/or disengagement longer than 3 months?
- Should I request an advance account be established to account for a likely award?
• Have the sponsors communicated that your pending proposals will not be funded?
Communication on pending proposal changes should be with your assigned Research Administrator in the University’s Sponsored Project Administration (SPA) office.

Upon completion of the quarterly verification review document the scope of the review, the verification review results and any action items.

Effort Verification by Project (Including Non-Key Personnel Effort)

Personnel who have payroll charged directly or as cost share on sponsored agreements are required to have their effort reviewed on a quarterly basis. The PI or CO-PI, who have first-hand knowledge of the effort by personnel charged to their respective sponsored agreements, may perform the project level effort verification review in collaboration with support from the designated unit effort administrator.

Review Key Personnel and Faculty Effort – The PI or CO-PI should review the committed effort of faculty (non-key personnel) and key personnel on their projects and confirm their actual effort on the project. Refer to the effort reduction section for additional considerations if planned effort changes are anticipated from the original committed effort proposed to the sponsor.

Review Other Non-Key personnel – The PI or CO-PI should review their other non-key personnel effort charged as direct or as cost share on their projects. These other non-key personnel, such as students, outreach professional and lab techs, will not have a Commitment by Person report. However, the Payroll Information tab and the Transaction Detail tab are convenient tools within the PI Portal to review actual and planned payroll charges. Effort verification considerations:

• Review the individuals’ fiscal year effort on the active sponsored agreements for accuracy, reasonableness and proper allocation.
• Determine whether changes should occur on existing employees charged to the sponsored agreement or if someone has not charged but should be.
• Reminder: Student wages, temporary wages, additional pay, including summer salary for 9-month and 10-month appointments, are not encumbered. These costs will be posted as a payroll expenditure.

Upon completion of the quarterly verification review document the scope of the review, the verification review results and any action items.
Effort Reductions

**PI assessment of effort reduction request** – The PI plays an important role in assessing the impact of the effort reduction request and determining whether the sponsor needs to approve it. The following questions are common examples of what a PI weighs when considering an effort reduction request:

- Will the ability to achieve the scope of work be impacted?
- What will be the impact of my reduced effort as PI?
- Which faculty member will replace me as PI?
- What will be the effect of the reduction of effort by other key personnel (CPI, OKP)?
- Should non-key faculty commitments be replaced with other faculty?
- What commitments should continue during a no-cost extension period?
- Does the sponsor require a prior approval of this effort reduction?

The department administrator and/or SPA should support/facilitate this assessment process.

**PI assessment only** – If the PI assessment doesn’t require sponsor prior approval of the effort reduction request, the PI assessment results should be documented for future reference.

**Sponsor approval required** – The PI should contact SPA to submit a formal request to the sponsor. Upon sponsor notification, SPA will make the appropriate change(s) to the commitment data.

Pending Proposals

UVMClick has custom reports to view funding proposals. The following four reports are suggested by SPA:

- Investigator on Proposals – All States
- Investigator on Proposals – In Development
- **Investigator on Proposals (Other than PI) – by Investigator**
- Investigator on Proposals (PI only) – by Investigator

**Navigating to the reports:** Grants > Reports > Custom Reports and then in the filter box enter: Investigators on Proposals.
Select the report you wish to review. Using the various filter features search for the PI or Investigator you wish to search for by last name. Review each funding proposal that is currently listed as Pending Sponsor Review by clicking on the funding proposal number hyperlink. Then click on the sponsor name below the proposal workflow diagram:
Click on the “View Budget” option from the menu on the left of the screen and the select the “Personnel Costs” options from the “Jump To” drop down menu located at the top of the screen.

Recommended discussion points related to pending proposals are:

- Will my pending proposals affect my ability to meet my commitments on my current active sponsored agreements?
- Should I communicate effort commitment changes to the sponsor(s) to proactively address reductions of effort and/or disengagement longer than 3 months?
- Should I request an advance account be established to account for a likely award?
- Have the sponsors communicated that your pending proposals will not be funded?

Communication on pending proposal changes should be with your assigned Research Administrator in the University’s Sponsored Project Administration (SPA) office.
Documenting Results and Completing Action Items

The documented completion of the verification review scope, the verification results and applicable action items from the quarterly verification is important for future verification reviews and establishing an audit trail of this payroll allocation internal control.

**Documenting the quarterly review results and action items** – The designated unit effort administrator should maintain a record of when the quarterly reviews were conducted and document results and any applicable action items using the “Add/View/Edit Comments” button in the individual’s Sponsored Effort Commitments report.

* You may need to disable pop up blocker for your browser if you don’t get a new tab for comments.

**Steps to add/edit/save a comment:**
1. Click on the + sign to add a new comment.
2. The text box opens small, but you can expand it by dragging the bottom right corner.
3. Be sure to click on the save button. That will provide the user ID and last updated date/time stamp.
4. If you need to make changes to your comment you can click the “Edit Comment” button or the – button and just start over. BE SURE TO SAVE.

**Completing the action items** – The resulting action items such as submitting prior approval of effort reduction, payroll distribution changes or processing of additional payments require timely action. The designated unit effort administrator should expedite actions that will retroactively charge or allocate costs on sponsored agreements.
Example:

FAQs

What is committed effort?
Committed effort is that proportion of an individual’s institutional effort that will be devoted to a sponsored activity. Effort proposed for a PI or other key personnel in a grant application, typically in the budget and/or budget narrative, becomes a commitment (or obligation) the university must fulfill unless explicitly modified during award negotiations with the sponsor. The cost associated with committed effort may be borne by the sponsor (charged to the grant or contract) or by the institution (cost-sharing).

Who is responsible for reviewing the faculty effort commitments?
The faculty member is responsible for their effort management. However, the unit effort administrator should schedule quarterly meetings with each faculty member and facilitate a review of their Commitment by Person report. The following business practices are recommended during quarterly verifications:

- Effort administrators should review the current effort commitments and identify potential issues or questions in preparation for the meeting with the faculty member.
- Email a list of the potential issues/questions to the faculty member prior to the meeting to allow the faculty member preparatory time
- Review the current effort commitment information together
• Decide on a course of action to resolve open issues, e.g., submit salary distribution changes, process an eAPF for summer effort, request sponsor prior approval for reductions greater than 25%, etc.…

• Record action items such as prior approval requests and payroll distribution changes for future reference. A follow-up email to the faculty after the meeting to capture the results of the quarterly meeting is recommended.

What is the source of the commitment information in the PI Portal?
Effort commitments are derived based on the proposed budget and budget narrative of the award documentation. Commitments are only entered for key personnel and faculty on sponsored projects.

How do I update commitments?

• If an effort commitment was set up incorrectly, please email SPA@uvm.edu to request a correction.

• When an effort commitment is correct in the system, but the planned effort is changing:
  • If a person’s planned effort has changed and is within the 25% reduction threshold and less than a 3 months disengagement for the budget period then no prior approval is required. In this case, make a note of your review and the planned effort and submit all necessary payroll changes to have the correct effort allocated to the project. No further action is needed.

  o If the person is key personnel and the planned effort change exceeds the 25% reduction threshold and/or is more than a 3 month disengagement and prior sponsor approval is required then email SPA@uvm.edu. Upon sponsor notification, SPA will make the appropriate change(s).

Additional Resources/Help

Resources

• SPA’s PI Portal Job Aid
• Effort Management & Reporting Website
• Effort Management & Reporting Policy

Training

• Professional Development & Training Classes

Relevant UVM Departments

• Sponsored Project Administration (SPA)
• Financial & Cost Accounting Services