Business Office

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is Chrome River?**

Chrome River is the Travel Expense Management system. This system processes travel reimbursement requests for employees and miscellaneous reimbursements.

1. **Do I need access to Chrome River and who provides it?**

Any employee who has expenses to be reimbursed needs access to Chrome River. You need to contact your Unit Security Contact (USC) if access has not already been set up.

1. **How do I know if I already have access to Chrome River?**

Go to <https://www.busfin.uillinois.edu/applications/chrome_river> and click on the Log in box. Enter your University netID and password on the window that pops open. If you entered your netID and password correctly access fails, then you will need to request access.

1. **Why can I not access Chrome River remotely?**

You need to have VPN running to access Chrome River remotely.

1. **What is My UI Financials?**

My UI Financials provides the financial data by CFOP for CFOP’s that individual employees have been granted access to. Access should be granted for all CFOP’s that an employee is responsible for.

1. **What is a CFOP?**

CFOP stands for **C**hart, **F**und, **O**rg Program **C**ode. This is the method designed for the Banner system to identify funding and expenses by the campus (chart), the type of funding used (fund), the department using that funding source (org) and the type of funding/expense used/incurred (program code). Each part of the CFOP makes it specific to employees given access to the CFOP for use.

1. **How do I receive access to My UI Financials?**

Access is given by the Business Office. You can call or send an email requesting access. The business office will need to know which CFOP you need access to.

1. **On the financial report sent by the business office, what do the numbers in parentheses mean?**

These are amounts representing subtractions. If they appear above the line “Total Transfers/Commitments” they are funds committed to other units or the department. If the negative number is on the “Expense Balance from My UI Financials” line this represents the total expenses charged to the CFOP since the start of the fiscal year which is July 1. If the negative number appears on the “Encumbrance Balance from My UI Financials” line, this represents commitments in the form of salary appointments or purchase orders processed.

1. **How do I know what the balance is of my faculty accounts based on the information provided by the business office?**

The available balance for each account is the line highlighted in yellow on the report and is labeled as “Anticipated Balance”. This balance includes commitments that have been transferred or need to be transferred. If the amount of this line is in parentheses, then the CFOP is in deficit.

1. **What is an encumbrance?**

This is a commitment of funds from a given CFOP. The most frequent types of the encumbrances are for salary, benefits, and requisitions/purchase orders. Encumbrances are used to understand future expected expenses tied to a specific CFOP. These are amounts that are subtracted from the total amount available for use.

1. **What is a labor distribution/redistribution?**

A labor distribution refers to posting of salary for a given pay period by employee. A redistribution is a change in posting from the original posting. Transfers of this nature are affected by the HR office or by the business office in concert with the HR office.

1. **Can I make a transfer from my gift to my research fund or vice versa?**

No. Gifts funds originate from the U of I foundation. Donors give funds to the foundation with the intent they are to be used on behalf of the University as directed by the donors. Gift funds belong to the foundation, not the University. Due to this distinction, there are limitations as to any “transfers” of gift funds to research funds, etc. Budget transfers cannot be made between gift funds and university funds. To use the gift funds, expenses must be charged against the gift fund. Transfer of expenses from a university account to the gift fund are permissible as are transfers of expenses directly to the gift fund to a university account. Transfers between gift funds can be made without the incurrence of actual expenses.

1. **Can my grant funds be deposited to my gift account or faculty account?**

No. Gifts must flow through the U of I foundation where a gift fund for the specific donation is established or funds are deposited to a general use gift fund on behalf of the department. Grants from external parties usually require an application for review by the sponsor where the project is defined and a budget is provided. Grants come with expectations for how the funds are to be used, reporting associated with the outcomes of the project and may require a breakdown of how the funds were actually spent. Grant applications are to flow through the sponsored programs office who is the official representative of the University to bind the University to the terms of the grant. Grant funds are set up in a separate grant CFOP and charges are applied to those funds. The sponsored programs office is responsible for all financial reporting related to grants and is responsible for invoicing for the expenses associated with each grant.

1. **The grant sponsor is willing to send the funds to my personal checking account, is this okay?**

No. While completing the application you have likely indicated that you are employed by the University of Illinois and that you have university resources available for your use in conjunction with the grant. Due to this implied availability, the sponsor infers it can hold the University liable for using its funds as directed. As a result, only the sponsored programs office can bind the University to the terms of the grant agreement and funds must be sent to the University, not the individual employee.

1. **What is the process for me to apply for a grant?**

The application for applying for funding varies by the entity (sponsor) providing the funding. If you are applying to a federal agency, they may have a portal you will be required to use. Most of these portals have approval processes in place where the sponsored programs office must either approve the application or do the final submission. Non-federal sponsors may require you to complete an online application and then they send you a notification of the award. At this point, they may request the University contact information. Whether you submit a request to a federal agency or a non-federal sponsor, the sponsored programs office must be involved. Sponsored programs has a grant proposal tracking system that enables units to upload a copy of the statement or work/abstract, the budget and the budget justification. These documents originate with the applicant/Principal Investigator (PI). The statement of work should at a minimum include 4 or 5 sentences explaining the nature of the research and expected outcomes. This may also include background of the PI and others working on the research. The budget should include any applicable salaries, fringe benefits, expected travel, needed services and materials and supplies. University policy requires that indirect cost recovery be included in all proposals unless the sponsor specifically states and indirect cost recovery will not be allowed. The business office can assist you with the current fringe benefit rate to use and the applicable indirect cost recovery rate. The budget justification should explain the salaries being charged, the benefit rate used, and a brief explanation for the need of any other budgeted expenses. The business office can review and assist with the budget, but only the PI has the knowledge as to what expenses can be expected to be incurred and what the research is for and the expected outcomes. The business office will work with sponsored programs to insure the statement of work, budget and budget justification are submitted. Sponsored programs will also need the link to the request for proposal/application which the PI will need to supply. Further questions may require the PI’s response as the business office has limited knowledge related to the proposal. Timely reply will assist in moving the proposal through the sponsored programs office for final approval of the award document with the sponsor.

1. **My grant is ending soon but I haven’t been able to complete my research. Can I have more time and how do I request more time?**

The business office can work with you and the sponsored programs office to request more time. This request should be made as soon as you know you will need more time. Some sponsors, especially federal sponsors, require that we make this type of request a certain number of days prior to the end date of the grant. Please check with the business office if you do not know how far in advance you need to make the request. You will need to prepare a letter addressed to your sponsor contact and explain why you need more time and how much time you think you will need. This should be forwarded to the business office who will forward it to the sponsored programs post award contact. The post award office will submit the request to the sponsor.

1. **When do I need purchase order?**

Purchase orders are required when utilizing services of non-university providers or when goods are purchased that cannot be paid via a P-card or through iBuy. If an actual “good” is not procured then a services is provided and a purchase order must be requested via the requisition process. Please see the Business Office webpage for more information at: <https://slcl.illinois.edu/business-office-and-business-forms-information>.

1. **What do I need to do to obtain a P-card or T-card?**

P-cards and T-cards are only issued to certain staff with SLCL. Office Managers for the various departments and the second floor receptionist are authorized card holders. To request either card, please check with your supervisor to insure you should be a cardholder. Once that is verified, the online training must be completed. Online training sites can be found via <https://answers.uillinois.edu/training/120630> and <https://answers.uillinois.edu/training/120648>. After successfully completing the training, there is an application and authorization form for each card that must be completed and routed to the business office for processing.

1. **What are the restricted and prohibited transactions for p-cards and t-cards?**

For p-cards, please see: <https://www.busfin.uillinois.edu/bfpp/section-7-purchasing/7_6_the_university_purchasing_card__pcard_#prohibited-purchases>. For t-cards pleasesee:<https://www.busfin.uillinois.edu/cms/one.aspx?portalId=1993898&pageId=2143171> and <https://www.busfin.uillinois.edu/cms/one.aspx?portalId=1993898&pageId=2143170>.

1. **How do I find a vendor’s ID?**

Banner screen FTMVEND can be used to search for a vendor by name or the ID if you have it. This screen indicates the status is terminated and also allows the viewer to verify the address on the quote or invoice is listed in the system. If not, an update will be needed.

1. **How do I request a vendor ID be established or update an existing ID?**

<https://www.busfin.uillinois.edu/forms/buying_contracts/vendor_payment> is the webpage for vendor setup and update. This page contains the link to vendor information form which should be used whenever requesting set up or update. This form changes periodically so using the link ensures the current form will be used. This webpage also provides the needed guidance on when a new form must be completed for an existing vendor or when the required documentation can be submitted to vendor maintenance for updating. This webpage also provides instructions for completing the vendor information form. Office Managers are responsible for sending the vendor information form to new or existing vendors needing an update and providing the vendor ID to the Business Office on the respective form requesting payment/reimbursement**.**

1. **Can I use departmental funds or gift funds for cards/flowers for bereavement?**

OBFS policy section 8-Payments and Reimbursements requires expenses to be a legitimate business expense that answers the question: Why was the expenses incurred and how did that benefit the University? While expenses of this nature reflect our care/concern for one another during time of loss, or hardship they do not meet the requirement of a legitimate business expense. Voluntary contributions can be used to pay for expenses of this nature.

1. **I want to take my staff to lunch, can I be reimbursed for the cost?**

For meals to be reimbursable, they must have a business purpose, have an itemized receipt, the number of attendees, the affiliation of the attendees (employee/non-employee) and whether alcohol was served. The maximum allowable cost for the meal $75 per person per meal. The business purpose should indicate the items discussed and that the meal was not purely a social time. As per question #22 above, there must be a direct benefit to the University for the meal to be allowable.