“MEIF@USM” Award Policies

Effective September 16, 2016 for current and new projects, unless otherwise indicated

1. **Eligibility**

   The following are eligible to serve as Principal Investigators (PIs) on MEIF projects:
   - Regular tenured faculty
   - Tenure-track faculty
   - Non-tenure-track faculty (including emeritus and research faculty)
   - Regular professional staff members

   The following are eligible to serve as Co-Principal Investigators on MEIF projects:
   - Students
   - Postdoctoral appointee faculty
   - Adjunct or visiting faculty who are not University employees
   - Temporary employees

   In such cases an eligible PI must be assigned to supervise the co-PI’s role within the project.

2. **Eligible Uses of MEIF Funds**

   **Direct Costs:** MEIF funds support all direct cost items. Indirect cost recovery is not allowed in MEIF awards. All expenses must adhere to the University of Maine System’s Human Resources and Procurement policies.

   **Strategic New Hires of Research Faculty and Professional Staff:** MEIF support for strategic hires of research faculty and professional staff is limited to three years, after which financial support must come from other sources, including but not limited to, E&G, grants and contracts, and fee for services.
   - When E&G funds will support the strategic hires after three years of MEIF support, the MEIF applications must include letters from the Provost and the appropriate Dean(s) indicating their support for the positions and for fund the positions with E&G after three years. In addition, since no E&G staffing commitment is allowable without approval from the University's Position Review Committee, Human Resources must be consulted to properly classify, assign salary, and bring to Position Review for approval.
   - Teaching is permissible for 100% MEIF-funded positions but the percentage effort is limited to 25% (equivalent to a 1/1 teaching load).
   - The PI must discuss hiring requests with Human Resources prior to submitting the application
     - HR will work with the PI to determine appropriate titles, job descriptions, compensation, and search and hiring processes.
     - All applications that involve hiring will require the signature of an appropriate authorized individual at Human Resources on the application cover page before submission to the MEIF program. Applications that do not include this signature will not be accepted for consideration for funding.

   **Summer Salary:** Summer salary for individual faculty members on a 9-month appointment is permissible; however, the salary cannot exceed two-ninths of the academic year. This is known as the “two-ninths rule” and translates to a maximum of two months of summer salary support per budget year.
**COURSE RELEASE – REPLACEMENT COST:** Support for replacement cost to hire an adjunct (salary and the appropriate benefit rate for temporary employees) to teach the course. Such requests must have approval of the appropriate department chair and Dean. Replacement costs vary by department.

**GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS:** MEIF funds may be used to support stipends and tuition waivers for graduate research assistants as long as they meet the following eligibility requirement of the Office of Graduate Studies:

- Fully matriculated in a degree program at the graduate level.
- Registered for at least six credits of coursework in the semester(s) in which they will be working (master’s and CAS students), or registered for GRS 602 (masters) or GRS 701 (doctoral) and be making satisfactory progress in their program.

Stipend amounts are as follows:

- Full-time (20 hours per week): $11,250 per academic year ($1,250 per month).
- 1/2 time (10 hours per week): $5,625 per academic year ($625 per month).
- 1/4 time (5 hours per week): $2,812.5 per academic year ($312.5 per month).

**Tuition Waivers:**

- MEIF-funded graduate research assistants working 10 or more hours/week will receive tuition waivers, up to a maximum of 18 credits during any academic year, in addition to their stipends at the following rates:
  - Full time (20 hrs.) – 18 credit tuition waiver per academic year.
  - 1/2 time (10 hrs.) – nine credit tuition waiver per academic year.
- MEIF will only pay in-state tuition rate for out-of-state students.
- If a student decides not to take courses throughout the summer, they may be hired as a temporary employee.

**UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:** Undergraduate students pay varies from $10-$15 per hour, depending on work complexity and student experience. Undergraduate students may work no more than 20 hours per week during the academic year and 39 hours per week during the summer semester.

**INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL:** Use of MEIF funds for international travel is permissible.

- The PI must notify the Office of International Program of proposed international travel plans for any program (credit or non-credit) which has institutional support and/or involves students traveling under the management of the University.
- Besides overseeing student exchange, the purposes of travel may include, for example, partnership exploration and promotion of USM to potential degree students.
- The Director of the Office of International Program must sign off on all MEIF applications that include international travel plans as described above by signing the application cover page before submitting to the MEIF program. Applications that do not include this sign off will not be accepted for consideration for funding.

**EQUIPMENT:** Use of MEIF funds for equipment purchases is permissible as long as the equipment is required for the project and will be usable beyond the award period.

3. **INELIGIBLE USES OF MEIF FUNDS**

**TENURE-TRACK POSITIONS:** Hiring new tenure-track faculty positions with MEIF funds is not permissible *(This policy is effective for new awards.)*
ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION (ADD-COMP): MEIF funds cannot support additional compensation during the academic year for faculty on nine-month appointments and for research faculty and staff on 12-month appointments. (Add-comps in current multi-year awards will no longer be permissible in budgets approved after July 1, 2017.)

STIPENDS: Use of MEIF funds to provide stipends to faculty and staff to undertake projects that are not part of their ongoing appointments is not permissible. (Stipends in current multi-year awards will no longer be permissible in budgets approved after July 1, 2018.)

4. OTHER AWARD POLICIES

PROPOSALS TO EXTERNAL SOURCES: As a condition of a MEIF award, the PI is expected to prepare and submit proposals for extramural funding from federal, foundations, or other sponsors during the award period. The USM Research Office will assist the PI in identifying potential funding sources. The MEIF Program Office will work with the PI to determine the number of proposals to be submitted. The final number will be part of the award’s evaluation metrics.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT: PIs must demonstrate an effort to leverage $5 from external sources for every $1 invested by MEIF before the end of the award period. Depending on the project, achieving the 1:5 ratio could be accomplished annually or by the end of the award period through grants, contracts, fees-for-services, and other sources of revenues. Additionally, grants and contracts that are awarded to partners and collaborators can be counted toward the 1:5 ratio only if the involvement of the MEIF project was critical to the award.

REPORTS: PIs are required to submit semi-annual progress, annual, and final reports. In the semi-annual report PIs have the opportunity to propose changes in their budgets to address unforeseen circumstances that, if not addressed, could result in large unobligated balances by the end of the budget year. From time to time it may be necessary for the PI to meet with MEIF program staff to review progress and financials.

ANNUAL RENEWALS OF MULTI-YEAR AWARDS: The USM Research Office is committed to providing appropriate assistance in helping the PIs and their teams succeed with their projects. Annual renewal is contingent on progress in achieving the project’s outcomes, meeting award requirements and deliverables, and availability of MEIF funds. The Research Office will conduct six-month and annual financial and programmatic progress reviews of all investments; provide feedback for encouragement, as well as corrective actions for improvement; offer appropriate assistance, as needed; and determine the appropriate level of renewal support needed for multi-year investments. The MEIF Program Office may terminate funding for a project that consistently does not perform well, i.e. is not achieving its outcomes after implementing corrective actions.

BUDGET REALLOCATION:
A PI may reallocate funds within the following categories:
- Other Direct Costs
- Personnel categories including student support

A PI may reallocate funds from-to the following categories with the prior approval of both the MEIF Program Liaison and the MEIF Financial Manager:
- Other Direct Costs to Personnel, including student support

Reallocation of personnel funds, including student support, to Other Direct Costs categories is not permissible.
**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT:** The PI is responsible for the financial management of the grant. This includes managing payroll, human resources and purchasing. The PI is strongly encouraged to seek out financial management and administrative support from his/her department, college, or another college. The USM Research Office will not provide such support.

**Overspending Award Amount:** The PI and his/her department is responsible for any expenses that exceed the award amount.

**No-Cost Extensions:** A single no-cost extension may be allowed on a case by case basis at the end of the award period; this extension may not exceed three months. The PI must submit a justification for a no-cost extension to the MEIF Program Office 60 days prior to the end of a project’s award period. Requests for no-cost extensions must meet the following three conditions: the end of the project period is approaching; there is a programmatic need to continue the research; and there are sufficient funds remaining to cover the extended effort.

**Unspent Balances at the End of a Budget Period:** Unspent balances at the end of a budget period will not be carried over to the next budget period unless there is strong justification for the use of all or part of the unspent balances in the subsequent budget period. The PI must submit such a request to the MEIF Program Office as part of the required annual report. The request must include a justification of why the funds were not used as planned (lack of time due to a busy teaching schedule is not an appropriate justification) and how the funds will be used in the subsequent budget period in a manner that will achieve the project’s outcomes. The request will undergo internal review to determine appropriateness of the request and alignment with the project’s outcomes. In the absence of such a request from the PI, unspent balances will not be carried over and will not be available to the project.

Use of unspent balances to support a new project is not permissible.

**Co-Mingling of Funds:** Program income cannot be co-mingled with MEIF funds, and, therefore, must be placed in non-MEIF, nonsweeping accounts.

5. **Policies Under Development**

**Program Income:** All project strategies and activities supported through MEIF should include an expectation that MEIF funding will be phased out. It is important the PIs focus on sustaining their project work beyond MEIF support through a variety of methods, including grants, contracts, or program income.

- Program Income refers to revenues directly generated by activities carried out with MEIF funds. Examples include revenue generated from conference fees; fees-for-services; the sale of conference and research materials; royalties from patents and copyrights; and sales of products with an accompanying material transfer agreement.
  - In FY17 the USM Research Office will work with USM Finance and Administration to identify an appropriate unified vehicle for capturing program incomes without sweeping them at the end of the fiscal year. Once this is accomplished the USM Research Office, Finance and Administration, and the PIs will negotiate an appropriate distribution policy that directs portions of the revenues back to the PIs to reinvest in their initiatives, to the University, and to the MEIF program in order to recover some of its investment.