*6/16/2017*

# How to Initiate a CESU Task Agreement in the NPS Intermountain Region

Colorado Plateau (CP), Desert Southwest (DS), and Rocky Mountains (RM) Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU)

1. Contact your CESU Research Coordinator (RC) by phone or email to discuss your project as early as possible. The CESU used is determined by the Unit to which the nonfederal Partner belongs. If a Partner belongs to more than one CESU, defer to the one that the NPS unit is geographically located within or is closest to.
   a. CPCESU Research Coordinator: Todd Chaudhry, 928.523.6638, todd_chaudhry@nps.gov
   b. DSCESU Research Coordinator: Sallie Hejl, 520.621.7998, sallie_hejl@nps.gov
      Cultural Resources Specialist: Pat O'Brien, 520.626.3966, pat_o'brien@nps.gov (Pat has the lead for all DSCESU cultural projects and may assist with CP/RMCESU ones as needed)
   c. RMCESU Research Coordinator: Brendan Moynahan, 406.243.4449, brendan_moynahan@nps.gov
2. Confirm ATR certification: NPS Master ATR Certification List.
3. Obtain the current required forms and guidance from the RC or the CPCESU, DSCESU, or RMCESU websites.
4. Prepare draft documents (incl. TA Template, Budget, and Justification).
5. Submit drafts to RC for review and approval.
6. Request SF-424 forms from Partner.
7. Submit FBMS Purchase Request and Attachments (incl. TA Template, Budget, Justification, and SF-424/424A/424B).
8. Financial Assistance processes the TA and emails all parties when executed.

Note: This guidance is focused on initiating CESU projects through the IMR Financial Assistance Office. Consult with your RC as to whether your project should be processed through IMR or another Financial Assistance Office as the process and forms may differ. For those projects processed through the WASO Financial Assistance Office additional information can be found at http://wcp.den.nps.gov/FA.htm or by emailing nps_waso_financial_assistance@nps.gov.

# Detailed Steps for How to Initiate IMR CESU Task Agreements

1. ***Contact CESU Research Coordinator (RC, see pg. 1)***. At the earliest possible date, the NPS Agreements Technical Representative (ATR, or alternate) notifies the RC of intent to develop a new Task Agreement (TA). The ATR discusses the project with the RC to make sure it is appropriate for the CESU agreement, including how NPS will be substantially involved and how it fulfills a public purpose. As needed, the RC can help to identify a suitable CESU Partner and Principal Investigator (PI) to best meet project objectives.

2. ***Confirm ATR Certification***. All projects require a certified ATR which can be confirmed by checking the NPS Master ATR Certification List maintained by WASO. ATRs must have completed the 24-hour initial ATR training or 8-hour re-certification training within the last 3 years AND be registered on the national list.

3. ***Obtain Forms***. The three IMR CESUs use the same forms (which are subject to frequent change); available from your RC or the IMR CESU websites (see pg. 1). A new TA requires the following: 1) CESU Task Agreement Template, 2) Budget (embedded in the TA or provided separately), 3) Justification for Use of Financial Assistance (e-signed), 4) Application for Federal Assistance forms SF-424, 424A, and 424B (e-signed), and 5) Purchase Request.

4. ***Prepare Draft Documents***.

   A. **Task Agreement Template**. The ATR uses the template to draft the TA in cooperation with the PI, particularly for the Statement of Work (SOW) and Budget. This includes ensuring that the PI has secured necessary internal review and approval prior to submitting the drafts for RC review. Note that text highlighted in yellow on the template needs to be completed or contains important parenthetical guidance which should be deleted in the final version. In drafting the TA: a) establish a realistic schedule for the project that avoids unnecessary modifications for date extensions later on, and b) include an itemized budget including the standard 17.5% CESU Indirect Cost Rate. The Budget form must be completed by the Partner and include sufficient details so that it is clear how the costs of each category were calculated (i.e. unit cost, number of units, and total; e.g. $0.50/mi. x 1000 mi. = $500); the required minimum wage is $10.10/hr. (with some exceptions). Cost share is not required but if included must likewise be itemized. A CESU Budget Excel template is available but not required. NPS expenses cannot be included. Total budget figures should be rounded to the nearest whole dollar. We strongly encourage discrete projects with a finite scope and timeline. Ask your RC if including 'continuation' language in the TA is appropriate for multi-phased projects which allows for money-added modifications in subsequent FYs. The start date can be no later than Sept. 30 of the current FY and the maximum life span of any TA is 5 years past the obligation date (with an end date of no later than June 1 of the final FY).

   B. **Justification for Use of Financial Assistance**. Please carefully read the instructions and complete the form. If downloaded from the CESU sites (see pg. 1), some fields have been pre-filled and parenthetical guidance is provided for others. If you have not already done so, at least 3 nonfederal partners from any of the 17 CESUs need to be considered and a rationale provided as to why the Recipient was selected. The ATR needs to provide their e-signature (e.g. /s/ John Doe) and date on page 3.

5. ***Submit Drafts to RC for Review and Approval***. The RC reviews the draft documents and may make edits or suggest changes to ensure they are complete and help make improvements where needed. Once the revisions are approved, the RC will send the ATR an Approval Email along with the approved versions of the TA/Budget/Justification with the RC 'LastnameApproved' appended to the file name. Note the RC approval email does NOT constitute execution of the TA or approval to start the project (see Step 8).

6. ***Request SF-424s from Partner***. Once the RC approval email is received, the ATR requests the Partner to complete the SF-424, SF-424A, and SF-424B. The request must include the RC-approved TA template and Budget for reference and should be sent to the PI and/or the Administrative Contact listed in the TA (typically in the Partner's Sponsored Projects Office or equivalent), noting that the process varies by Partner and typically takes 1-2 weeks but may take longer in some cases. The ATR should confirm all budget categories and total figures match exactly and both SF-424 and 424B are signed by the Partner prior to uploading with the PR (see below). This is solely the responsibility of the ATR as the RC is no longer involved in obtaining and reviewing 424s.

7. ***Submit FBMS PR Request with TA Documents***. Once the TA/Budget/Justification are approved by the RC, the ATR or alternate completes and submits the PR form (1/2015 version) for the exact amount (to the dollar/cent) in the TA/Budget/SF-424s via the IMR Sharepoint site: http://share.inside.nps.gov/sites/IMR/Requisitions/SitePages/Home.aspx. For TAs being processed through WASO the requisitioner must submit the PR via PRISM. The following fields on the PR should be completed as described to ensure proper processing: *Issuing Office* is 'PIM- IMR' or 'PWA- WASO', as appropriate; *Header Text* starts with the appropriate CESU (i.e., RMCESU, DSCESU, or CPCESU) and includes the RC's name/email; *Item Category* is 'By Dollars'; and *UPC* is '411C0000'. The following attachments are now required to be uploaded with the PR: TA Template (RC-approved version), Budget (RC-approved version), Justification (RC-approved version), and SF-424/424A/424B. Once the PR/attachments are loaded into FBMS by one of the requisitioners, all approvals are accomplished in the system by those with FBMS roles of *Supervisory Approver* and *Certifying Funds Approver*. Call/email Kelly Adams at IMR Financial Assistance (FA) if you have questions on this (303.969.2303, kelly_adams@nps.gov).

8. ***Financial Assistance Processes the TA documents***. FA staff will review the documents and email the ATR to read and e-sign the ATR Designation Letter before processing the TA. The signature page of the TA and FBMS award documents are first signed by NPS. The Agreements Officer obligates the funding in FBMS and FA staff email PDFs of the executed TA to the ATR, Partner (for counter signature), and RC. Once this email has been received the project can commence on the documented *Period of Performance* start date.

**Helpful hints:**

a) Be aware of your project deadlines and end date. Many projects end up requiring an extension; we prefer that you add at least a 6-month buffer to your expected project end date. **The Financial Assistance Officer cannot sign modifications to extend the performance period once the end date of the project is past.**

b) ATRs should monitor the status of fund drawdowns by reviewing the annual SF-425 Federal Financial Reports or getting the FA FBMS Draw Down Activity Report on the intranet site: http://wcp.den.nps.gov/Policy-Program/FedFinAssist/atrc.htm. Alternatively, you can contact Kelly Adams for information on how much of the funds have been drawn down. ATRs no longer have "approval" authority for Partner expenditures.

c) Request modifications for changes to existing TAs. For simple modifications (e.g. change in ATR/PI, No Cost Extension, etc.) the ATR should directly email FA (fa-imr@nps.gov or nps_waso_financial_assistance@nps.gov) with a cc to the RC and provide the project number, the needed change and brief rationale, and for No Cost Extensions what work the Partner will accomplish during the extension. For money-added modifications, the ATR needs to download and complete the Modification Template from the CESU website (see pg. 1) and provide a new Budget, both of which should be sent to the RC for review and approval. The ATR then requests the SF-424A from the Partner. As for new TAs, the RC-approved Template/Budget and SF-424A should be uploaded with the PR form for processing and execution.

d) Closeout is done by IMR Financial Assistance and ATRs at the end of a project. The Partner has 90 days past the end date of the project to draw down the remainder of the funds, and send a Final SF-425 form to fa-imr@nps.gov or nps_waso_financial_assistance@nps.gov. Note that for 5-year projects there is no additional 90-day period beyond the project end date and funds should ideally be drawn down by mid-August. Financial Assistance will send a notice of the closeout to the ATR, and request the status of the final products. **At conclusion of a project, the ATR must send an electronic final report to the RC, and both an electronic and hardcopy to the NPS Technical Information Center. Mail the hard copy to: NPS Technical Information Center (TIC) 12795 West Alameda Parkway, Lakewood, Colorado 80228, Attn: Catherine Kisluk; email the digital version to catherine_kisluk@nps.gov and cc the RC.**

e) For questions at IMR Financial Assistance please call/email Kelly Adams, Grants Management Specialist, at 303.969.2303 or kelly_adams@nps.gov.