VCU Sponsored Programs NIH Research Performance Progress Report "RPPR" Training Reference

Section 1:

RPPR (Research Performance Progress Report)

•   **A federal initiative that defines common reporting categories for interim performance reports from awardees**
•   **Implemented by all federal agencies in their own web systems 2012 and later**
•   **Standardized types of information requested across all federal agencies that administer research awards**
•   **Streamlines the ability to compare outputs and outcomes of research programs across the government**
•   **Reduces costs through use of uniform criteria**

Section 2:

Codified in 2 CFR 200, Uniform Guidance Performance Measurement and Reporting (12/26/2014)

Reference(s) in UG: 200.301, 200.328

Federal agencies and pass-through entities must "use OMB-approved governmentwide standard information collections when providing financial and performance information." Current approved performance progress reports such as the "Research Performance Progress Report" aka "RPPR" is an example of a standard information collection.

Section 3:

As a federal agency, NIH has adopted the RPPR. The categories in black are the required standard report elements adopted by NIH; the subsections in red are the primary focus of this training:

A.   **Cover Page (many fields are pre-populated from era Commons)**

B.   **Accomplishments*** (B.4)**

C.   **Products**

D.   **Participants*** (D.1)**

E.   **Impact**

F.   **Changes/Problems**

G.   **Special Reporting Requirements*** (G.10)**

H.   **Budget**

I.   **Outcomes**

Section 4:

For a complete guide to preparing the RPPR for NIH there is no substitute for the 134 page NIH instruction guide located here: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/rppr/rppr_instruction_guide.pdf.

This VCU training guidance describes additional VCU-specific tools and recommendations to help you accurately answer the questions in the highlighted sections which we find present the most common challenges to completing the RPPR accurately.

Section 5:

Excerpt from NIH instructions:

B.4 What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided? If the research is not intended to provide training and professional development opportunities or there is nothing significant to report during the reporting period, select Nothing to Report. Describe opportunities for training and professional development provided to anyone who worked on the project or anyone who was involved in the activities supported by the project. Training activities are those in which individuals with advanced professional skills and experience assist others in attaining greater proficiency. Training activities may include, for example, courses or one-on-one work with a mentor. Professional development activities result in increased knowledge or skill in one's area of expertise and may include workshops, conferences, seminars, study groups, and individual study. Include participation in conferences, workshops, and seminars not listed under major activities. For all projects reporting graduate students and/or postdoctoral participants in Section D., describe whether your institution has established Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for those participants. Do not include the actual IDP, instead include information to describe how IDPs are used, if they are used, to help manage the training for those individuals.

The NIH is currently trying to gauge which institutions have broad formal guidelines for Individual Development Plan (IDP) development so the question to answer here is whether *VCU* (not PIs or mentors) has established an IDP for each graduate student and postdoc identified in Section D, Participants, and have worked on the project for one calendar month or more.

- As of February 1, 2021, VCU requires the development and use of IDPs for graduate students and postdoctoral researchers per Compliance Notice 21.001.1. Therefore, we should be responding that VCU *has* implemented formal guidelines for IDPs;
- Given that an individual development plan has been developed by the PI or other mentor, it is appropriate to provide detail in this section about progress made in the last year in fulfillment of the goals in the IDP.

Section 6:

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Excerpt from NIH instructions:

Section D – Participants

The RPPR Section D. allows the agency to know who has worked on the project to gauge and report performance in promoting partnerships and collaborations. D.1 What individuals have worked on the project? Provide or update the information for: (1) program director(s)/principal investigator(s) (PDs/PIs); and (2) each person who has worked at least one person month per year on the project during the reporting period, regardless of the source of compensation (a person month equals approximately 160 hours or 8.3% of annualized effort)…. A Commons ID is required for all individuals with a postdoctoral, graduate or undergraduate role.

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What NIH is seeking:

- The instructions call for every individual who worked *at least one month* on the project *regardless of the source of compensation.* Your RPPR should include anyone who meets that criteria. This includes individuals at subrecipient sites as well.
- Years ago the personnel report in the RPPR captured the PI and all key personnel, but now this report is "workforce-driven". If a faculty member has committed less than one calendar month, they should not be included even if they are key personnel.
- Please be sure to include the commons ID of anyone with a postdoctoral, graduate or undergraduate role.
- Add language about committed for key in NOA and 25% reduction
- Remember that it reflects positively on the project if sufficient effort has been committed. NIH cares that we answer this accurately and completely.

VCU Tools to help you:

- Use the Research Dashboard "Individuals Working on Project SAS Report" for a summary of all individuals on the project who have worked on the project in the past year. A sample is appended to this guide as "Appendix A." This report can aide conversations between the PI, fiscal administrator and Sponsored Programs about the Participants section;
- Remember, the report will only report individuals who were paid from the Banner 5-ledger index associated with this project so please add anyone paid from other sources including but not limited to: subrecipients, start-up funds, career awards, etc.
- The report will also sometimes show an individual's full contracted effort, instead of the actual time spent on the project thus far.

VCU People who can help:

- Engage the input of the fiscal administrator;
- Ask your Sponsored Programs reviewer any questions you might have about what is required.

Examples:

- PIs will sometimes leave people out of this section based on the relative importance of a role ("should we add Technicians?") or the source of compensation ("that person worked on the project, but was paid from start-up funds").
- PI's will sometimes leave off those with a postdoctoral, graduate or undergraduate role because they don't have a Commons ID. Remember that obtaining a Commons ID only takes a couple of minutes. Simply complete the "NIH Commons Account Form" located on the FORMS page.

Excerpt from NIH instructions:

G.10 Estimated unobligated balance. G.10.a Is it anticipated that an estimated unobligated balance (including prior year carryover) will be greater than 25% of the current year's total approved budget? If yes, provide the estimated unobligated balance. The total approved budget equals the current fiscal year award authorization plus any approved carryover of funds from a prior year(s). The numerator equals the total amount available for carryover and the denominator equals the current year's total approved budget.

G.10.b Provide an explanation for unobligated balance.

G.10.c If authorized to carryover the balance, provide a general description of how it is anticipated that the funds will be spent. To determine carryover authorization, see the Notice of Award.

What NIH is seeking:
- Many sponsors including NIH deduce that if funds are being expended, the work of the project is being done. The "yes or no" answer to this simple question about the spending or "burn" rate for the project can serve as an indicator of productivity. Of course there can be good reasons not to expend funds in a given year, i.e. to reserve resources over the life of the project. The follow up questions allow us as a grantee to provide additional rationale if we expect to carry forward at >25% balance.
- The G10 question is framed as an equation, i.e. determine your numerator and denominator to get your percentage.

Is the Estimated unobligated balance (including prior year carryover) > 25%?	Equation	Comprised of:
	Numerator (Estimated unobligated balance)	+ Total Costs SNAP Prior year carryover + Total Costs Non-SNAP Unobligated Balance + Total costs not spent from Total Costs Approved Budget (i.e. total costs approved budget less personnel, non-personnel, external subaward* and F&A commitments)**
	Denominator (Total Costs Approved Budget)	+ TC from NOA + any Non-SNAP carryforward approved in NOA

Assumptions:
*External subaward commitments: Calculation assumes that the entirety of subaward encumbrances will be liquidated by end of performance year so if that is inaccurate, please export to excel and manually adjust.
**F&A commitments: If your encumbrances include costs excluded from the F&A base, you'll need to adjust the amount of F&A accordingly. This portlet assumes all direct costs (with the exception of subawards) will incur full F&A costs.

VCU Tools to help you:
- The VCU Research Dashboard "SAS Balance Report" helps to quickly answer this question, as it shows the estimated unobligated balance for the project and calculates the percentage of the current year's approved budget that is projected to be left over. Samples appended to this guide as "Appendix B."
- When answering this question in the RPPR, this percentage should be your starting point but not necessarily your ending point. The Research Dashboard makes certain assumptions about prior year carryover, the rate of spending by authorized subrecipients, etc. It is necessary to identify if there are extenuating factors that may lead to a different answer than the one calculated by the report.

VCU people who can help:
- Engage the input of the fiscal administrator. While the Research Dashboard tool frames the conversation, there is no substitute for the input of the person(s) helping you manage your fiscal accounts.
- Consult with your Sponsored Programs reviewer about any outstanding questions.

Appendix A

- Example of "Individuals Working on Project SAS Report";

- Generate from PI Dashboard in the Reporting Center;

- Reported actual effort for "key in NOA" should not be > 25% reduction from committed effort in RAMS-SPOT unless we received prior approval from NIH. A 24% or less reduction is acceptable without prior approval. Actual effort that exceeds committed effort is acceptable (if can be tolerated by budget.)

Individuals On My Project
Principal Investigator: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Name	Grant ID	Title	Sponsor	Proposal Number	Budget Period	Job Title	Commitment on Record	% Effort for Current Budget Period	Calendar Months for Current Budget Period
MY DEPARTMENT									
Anatomy									
▮▮▮			National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke/NIH/DHHS	▮▮	12/01/2019-11/30/2020	Lab Technician	0.00	97.78	11.73
			National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke/NIH/DHHS		12/01/2019-11/30/2020	Graduate Assistant	0.00	91.78	11.01
			National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke/NIH/DHHS		12/01/2019-11/30/2020	Laboratory Technician	0.00	100.00	12.00
						Laboratory Technician	0.00	90.92	10.91
			National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke/NIH/DHHS		12/01/2019-11/30/2020	Assistant Professor	37.50	0.00	0.00
						Assistant Professor	37.50	37.09	4.45
OUTSIDE MY DEPARTMENT									
Pharmaceutics									
			National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke/NIH/DHHS	▮	12/01/2019-11/30/2020	Professor	5.00	4.86	0.58

Appendix B

- Example #1 of SAS Unobligated Balance Report (<25% balance);

- Generate from PI Dashboard in the VCU Reporting Center; Reconcile carefully against departmental records.

- If response for G.10.a is "no", there is no branching to G.10.b or G.10.c questions

PI Name	▓▓▓▓
Sponsor	National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research/NIH/DHHS
Proposal Number	
Award Number	▓▓▓▓
Individuals on this Project	Individuals on this Project
Title	▓▓▓▓
Budget Period	08/21/2019 – 06/30/2020
Carryforward Total	$0.00
Award Total	$482,644.50
Total Approved Budget	$482,644.50
Total Spent from Budget Period Start Date	$209,931.06
Personnel Commitments	$142,526.16
Non Personnel Encumbrances	$482.21
External Sub Award Encumbrances	$0.00
F&A Commitments	$79,012.12
Estimated Unobligated Balance	$50,692.94
Estimated Unobligated Balance as % of Total Approved Budget	11%
Percent of Total Approved Budget is 25% or Less	🟢

Appendix B

- Example #2 of SAS Unobligated Balance Report (~25% balance);

- Generate from PI Dashboard in the Reporting Center; Reconcile carefully against departmental records.

- PI should work closely with fiscal administrator to project expenses through current budget year so that we answer the question accurately.
- If response for G.10.a is "no", there is no branching to G.10.b or G.10.c questions
- If response for G.10.a is "yes", there will be branching to G.10.b and G.10.c questions
  - ➢ G.10.b…Briefly describe factors that led to the >25% balance
  - ➢ G.10.c…Briefly describe how carryforward funds will be used in future to support the approved specific aims of the project.

5/11/2021   SAS Output

PI Name		
Sponsor		National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism/NIH/DHHS
Proposal Number		
Award Number		
Individuals on this Project		Individuals on this Project
Title		
Budget Period		08/05/2020 - 06/30/2021
Total Costs Non-SNAP Unobligated Balance		.
Total Costs Non-SNAP Carryforward Approved in NOA		.
Total Costs SNAP Prior Year Carryforward		.
Award Total Costs		$348,946.00
Total Costs Approved Budget		$348,946.00
Total Costs Spent from Budget Period Start Date		$211,967.22
Personnel Commitments		$27,310.06
Non Personnel Encumbrances		$3,623.00
External Sub Award Encumbrances		$9,582.00
F&A Commitments		$17,090.51
Percent of Total Approved Budget is 25% or Less		🟢
Total Costs Estimated Unobligated Balance		$79,373.20
Estimated Unobligated Balance as % of Total Approved Budget		23%

Appendix B
- Example #3 of SAS Unobligated Balance Report (>25% balance);

- Generate from PI Dashboard in the Reporting Center; Reconcile carefully against departmental records.

- PI should work closely with fiscal administrator to project expenses through current budget year so that we answer the question accurately.
- Response for G.10.a is "yes", and there will be branching to G.10.b and G.10.c questions
  - ➢ G.10.b…Briefly describe factors that led to the >25% balance
  - ➢ G.10.c…Briefly describe how carryforward funds will be used in future to support the approved specific aims of the project.

PI Name	████
Sponsor	National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke/NIH/DHHS
Proposal Number	████
Award Number	████
Individuals on this Project	Individuals on this Project
Title	████
Budget Period	12/01/2019 - 11/30/2020
Total Costs Non-SNAP Unobligated Balance	
Total Costs Non-SNAP Carryforward Approved in NOA	
Total Costs SNAP Prior Year Carryforward	$202,197.15
Award Total Costs	$333,594.00
Total Costs Approved Budget	$535,791.15
Total Costs Spent from Budget Period Start Date	$276,246.24
Personnel Commitments	$24,667.64
Non Personnel Encumbrances	$7,643.38
External Sub Award Encumbrances	
F&A Commitments	$16,963.28
Percent of Total Approved Budget is 25% or Less	🔴
Total Costs Estimated Unobligated Balance	$210,270.60
Estimated Unobligated Balance as % of Total Approved Budget	39%