

Award Types

In its most broad definition, an award constitutes financial support for a specific research project, training program, equipment purchase or other research-related activity. The federal government uses three primary types of awards: Assistance Awards (including grants and cooperative agreements), Contracts and Other Transaction Agreements. Each is defined below:

Contract: Legally binding document signed by authorized officials from both parties providing support for a specific set of tasks for the direct benefit of the sponsor. A contract contains a narrowly focused statement of work and detailed terms and conditions.

Grant: Financial assistance for a specific purpose or specific project without expectation of any tangible deliverables other than a final report. The sponsor does not play an active role in the research project and there are only few general terms and conditions.

Cooperative Agreement: A contract whereby the sponsor is substantially involved in the project and the outcome of the research results. The sponsor and university work collaboratively and the reporting requirements are usually more strict.

Other Transaction Awards: These are funding instruments which do not incorporate the standard terms and conditions of the OMB Circulars but rather, all terms and conditions are negotiated between the federal sponsor (currently only the Department of Defense and NIH are authorized to award OTAs) on a case-by-case basis.

The Contracts Team in OSP uses other tools to facilitate research on behalf of researchers at Mason. These agreements serve very specific purposes and depending upon the need, can be tailored to suit each circumstance. Some examples include:

Memorandum of Understanding: An MOU is commonly used as a confirmation of agreed upon terms when an oral agreement is reduced to writing. It sets forth the basic principles and guidelines under which the parties will work together to accomplish their goals. It is uniquely tailored to each individual circumstance and may be funded or unfunded. It is also known as a Memorandum of Agreement.

Non-Disclosure Agreement: A legally binding contract agreeing to treat specific shared information as confidential, proprietary or trade secret and to not disclose it to others without proper authorization. At Mason, Principal Investigators are required to sign these agreements acknowledging their responsibilities to safeguard the confidential information of an outside party during the course of the discussions and any resulting research projects.

Teaming Agreement: An agreement involving two parties who wish to combine resources to submit a proposal for a government contract. The agreement will specify which party will serve as the prime award recipient and which will serve as the subaward recipient should the proposal be selected for funding. The prime award recipient is then legally obligated to issue a subaward to the subrecipient within a reasonable amount of time after receipt of award.

Material Transfer Agreement: These are used to document and govern the transfer of biological or other scientific materials from one party to another for research purposes. They typically address conditions of use and royalties or intellectual property rights that may result from such use.

IDIQ/Master Agreement: An indefinite delivery indefinite quantity contract is issued when a sponsor has identified a need for services, but does not know precisely how or when these services will be required. The terms and conditions of this master agreement are negotiated and accepted by both parties but it does not contain a statement of work or any funding. As the sponsor identifies a need, it will issue a task order awarding the funds for the particular task and specifying the exact work to be done in a statement of work.

Subaward: Issued under a prime award (grant, contract or cooperative agreement) where a portion of the scope of work is delegated by the prime award recipient to a subrecipient. Depending upon the circumstances, Mason can either be on the issuing or receiving end of a subaward.

IPA: A contract under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act whereby a federal agency purchases the services of a faculty member.

Consultant Agreement: An agreement for the purpose of acquiring the professional services of an individual with knowledge and expertise in a specified field. Consultants are considered independent contractors rather than subcontractors or employees. Consultant agreements are not handled in OSP but are treated as purchased services and coordinated through the Office of Purchasing.