Proposal for Business Process Improvement - Assignment of a Sponsor Code

I. Proposal

The objective is to streamline, simplify, redesign, and technologically upgrade the administrative process of assigning a new sponsor code, thereby improving operating effectiveness, decreasing organizational complexity and layering, improve productivity, and reduce lag-time in assignment of a new code.

II. Background

A. Identification of process customers: The requestor of a new Sponsor Code is a representative from a UC campus Office of Research Administration.

B. Determination of customer needs: The ability to obtain a new Sponsor Code at the initial stage of proposal development.

C. Existing process:

UC Campus research organizations currently have problems with sponsor code identifiers. The process in use by the UC campuses does not allow for campuses to track a sponsor with a single sponsor code throughout the life of a grant. The current process results in excess tracking, manual manipulation of codes, and loss of information that is key to campuses and labs.

Campuses need to track information about sponsors at the proposal stage of a grant. UCOP assigns a sponsor code for the grant only at the award stage and requires campuses to assign the sponsor code 9850-Miscellaneous if the sponsor code is not found in the existing sponsor table within UCOP’s CGX system. The 9850 sponsor code is not sufficient to track information about the sponsor at the campus level, so campuses are left to track these sponsor codes with their own unique identifiers. If the grant is awarded, the campus then makes a request to UCOP to establish a new sponsor code. UCOP will investigate the sponsor, and assign a new sponsor code. The campus then has to go back and substitute the miscellaneous and/or campus sponsor code with the new code provided by UCOP.

Campuses have implemented their own unique ways of handling campus sponsor code updates. Almost if not all, require manual processes of some sort, many of which involve back-end updates to tables in databases by programmers or other technical staff. These are not the kind of solutions we should be building at our universities to support our critical research activities in this day and age. Campuses have a variety of methods for synchronizing the 3 sponsor code identifiers (campus sponsor code, 9850-misc, and OP assigned sponsor code) that the current process generates.

Granted, most proposals have sponsors which can be found within the UCOP sponsor code table, but most campuses have a handful that must be tracked separately at the proposal stage each week. Larger campuses could have over 100 of these that they are tracking at any given time.

UC campuses would like to track a sponsor code using only one identifier, and would like UCOP’s help to come up with an improved solution.

III. Issues

1) The process described above has added layers of tracking at the campuses in order to accommodate the sponsor code. Campuses have separate unique solutions for accommodating sponsor code tracking -- some are very manual and some incorporate varying degrees of automation, but all provide challenges at the campus for keeping track of sponsor code identifiers.

2) Campuses may be investigating and replicating sponsor information for many of the same sponsors which could be reduced with a new solution.

3) Reconciliation of the UCOP sponsor code with our local sponsor code is still a manual process. Trying to submit proposal and award files to UCOP is an iterative and manual process due mainly to sponsor code errors.

4) A number of UC campuses are looking at bringing in new or updating existing research administration systems, such as the Kuali Coeus system which allows for only one sponsor code. As campuses work to bring in new systems, this provides an opportunity to improve or streamline ineffective processes.

5) For proposals without OP-assigned codes, the requirement to use '9850/misc' code means there is no information either contained in local systems or submitted to CGX about who the proposal was submitted to. Campuses and OP may want to have valid codes assigned for these proposals, even if they are not funded, for the purpose of knowing which sponsors and sponsor categories the campus has submitted proposals to. These proposals may remain in 'pending' status for some time and a simple designation of 'misc' as a sponsor during that time may be problematic.

IV. Options

The following are the options that the UC campuses seem to favor. Because of resource issues currently at UCOP we would like to come up with a solution that is a combination of Option 1 and 2, but wanted to also list each option separately for discussion purposes with UCOP. Other options are available, but they are less likely to serve all the campuses well.

Option 1 - UCOP to track sponsors at the proposal stage

UCOP could start tracking sponsors at the proposal stage. This would eliminate the reconciliation of multiple sponsor codes being used through the life of the grant. We understand that UCOP is not staffed to take on this additional workload, and this may be beyond the scope of the current UCOP system, but want to list this as one of the options.
• campuses can eliminate their local sponsor code tracking processes
• provides improved reporting on proposal sponsors for the campuses
• no changes to the CGX system are needed
• provides improved reporting on proposal sponsors for UCOP

Cons -
• UCOP is not currently staffed to take on the additional workload of assigning sponsor codes at the proposal stage

Notes -
• Are there limitations to the sponsor code field within the CGX system, that would prohibit this option?

Option 2 - Central UCOP system accessed by the campuses

Provide an interface to UCOP’s sponsor table which allows campuses to enter the information needed on new proposal sponsors that are not awarded. These would be given UCOP sponsor codes (i.e. sequential numbers) and flagged as ‘pre-award’ sponsors, requiring further review by UCOP when the award is made. This would allow sharing of proposal sponsors among the campuses. Campuses would commit to having knowledgeable staff perform this function, so this option would not require additional UCOP time or introduce data integrity problems. When the award has been granted, UCOP would already have the information needed to proceed with the review and establishment of the granted sponsor. The campus would not be left with reconciliation of the sponsor code.

Pros -
• workload issues are addressed at UCOP if campuses can do background work for new proposal sponsors
• pre-award sponsor information can be shared across the UC campuses

Cons -
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Notes -

Option 3 - Either UCOP or one campus runs a Kuali Coeus and Kuali Rice instance for UCOP. See KC: Sponsor Code Process diagrams. Kuali is built to track sponsor codes at both the proposal and award stage. Most of us who will run Kuali Coeus are already planning to develop an interface to UCOP to gather Sponsor data. By using Kuali Coeus as the source for Sponsor Codes, we can use the native administration and search processes to enter, resolve conflicts, and validate Sponsor Codes. All campuses can have access to create new sponsor codes with either UCOP giving distributed authority or having an approval mechanism. Then by using Rice we can add workflow to update campuses running KC directly and notify other campuses not running KC that new data is available. Finally, we build interfaces for non-KC campuses either using Web Services or text file downloads that will provide the latest sponsor codes for their systems.

Pros -
• sponsor code reconciliation can be eliminated at the campus
• workload issues are addressed at UCOP if campuses can do background work for new proposal sponsors
• pre-award sponsor information can be shared across the UC campuses
• campuses can eliminate their local sponsor code tracking processes
• provides improved reporting on proposal sponsors for the campuses
• no changes to the CGX system are needed
• can provide improved reporting on proposal sponsors for UCOP

Cons -
• There are only 36^4 sponsor codes available. Lucky for us that is 1.68 million sponsors. Hopefully this is large enough to keep all sponsors, until CGX and UCLA financials are retired and a system without this 4 character limit is developed.
• Building the interface between CGX and the current sponsor code management system will take work.
• The best approach requires UCOP to relinquish the approval process they currently have in place.
• Time to build interfaces between Kuali Rice instances

V. Recommendation