



Grant Recipient Award Action Request Guidance

Program: Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP) and Connecting Minority Communities (CMC) Pilot Program

Grants Office: National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)



U.S. Department of Commerce

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
<i>Disclaimer.....</i>	2
<i>How to Use This Guide</i>	2
<i>Resources and Requirements</i>	2
<i>What is an Award Action Request?</i>	3
<i>Award Action Request Roles</i>	3
<i>Award Action Request Process.....</i>	4
<i>Best Practices Checklist</i>	4
<i>Award Action Request Submission.....</i>	5
Budget Revision	6
<i>Determining If a Budget Revision is Required.....</i>	6
<i>Budget Revision Documentation</i>	7
<i>Example: 10% Rule Calculation Within SF-424A.....</i>	7
\$0.00 (f. Contractual). If they had previously allocated funds to the Contractual cost category, a budget modification would not be required.	8
<i>Example: 10% Rule Calculation Within SF-424C</i>	9
<i>Additional Budget Revision Trigger Examples</i>	10
Change in Key Personnel	12
<i>Examples of a Change in Key Personnel.....</i>	12
<i>Change in Key Personnel Documentation</i>	12
Change in Scope	14
<i>Examples of a Change in Scope.....</i>	14
<i>Change in Scope Documentation</i>	14
No-Cost Extension	15
<i>Examples of a No-Cost Extension</i>	15
<i>No-Cost Extension Roles</i>	16
<i>No-Cost Extension Documentation</i>	16
Subaward, Transfer, Contract Out Work.....	18
<i>Examples of a Subaward, Transfer or Contract Out Work.....</i>	18
<i>Subaward, Transfer, or Contract Out Work Documentation</i>	18

Introduction

This guide is designed to help Department of Commerce (DOC) NTIA Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth (OICG) grant recipients understand the process for requesting certain Award Action Requests (AARs). The following guidance is specifically for grant recipients under the Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP) or the Connecting Minority Communities (CMC) Pilot Program with National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) as their Grants Office.

This guide only includes the most common types of AARs. If you need assistance with any AARs not included in this guide, please contact your Federal Program Officer (FPO) and NIST Grants Specialist (GS).

Disclaimer

This resource is not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, the specific requirements set forth in program Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), existing [DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions](#) requirements, or other Departmental Administrative Orders (DAOs) and Federal Circulars.

Similarly, this guidance document does not supersede or supplement NIST Financial Assistance Agreements Management Office (FAAMO) policy and procedures related to their work on financial assistance awards. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in this guidance.

How to Use This Guide

When submitting an AAR:

1. First, review [Section 1](#) of this guide to ensure you are familiar with the overarching AAR requirements, roles, timeline, and submission process.
2. Refer to the relevant AAR section for specific requirements and mandatory documentation.
 - a. [Section 2: Budget Revision](#)
 - b. [Section 3: Change in Key Personnel](#)
 - c. [Section 4: Change in Scope](#)
 - d. [Section 5: No-Cost Extension](#)
 - e. [Section 6: Subaward, Transfer, or Contract Out Work](#)
3. Review all drafted documentation against the Best Practices Checklist in [Section 1.7](#).
4. Submit the AAR to the Unfunded Grants Action Mailbox (UGAM) using the instructions in [Section 1.8](#).

Resources and Requirements

Grant recipients should ensure all changes to the award comply with:

- Current Standard and Specific Award Conditions (SACs) of the applicable program
- Current NOFO of the applicable program
- Regulations outlined in 2 CFR § 200.308
- [DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions](#) (DOC Standard Terms and Conditions)

Please contact your assigned FPO if you have any additional questions on AARs.

What is an Award Action Request?

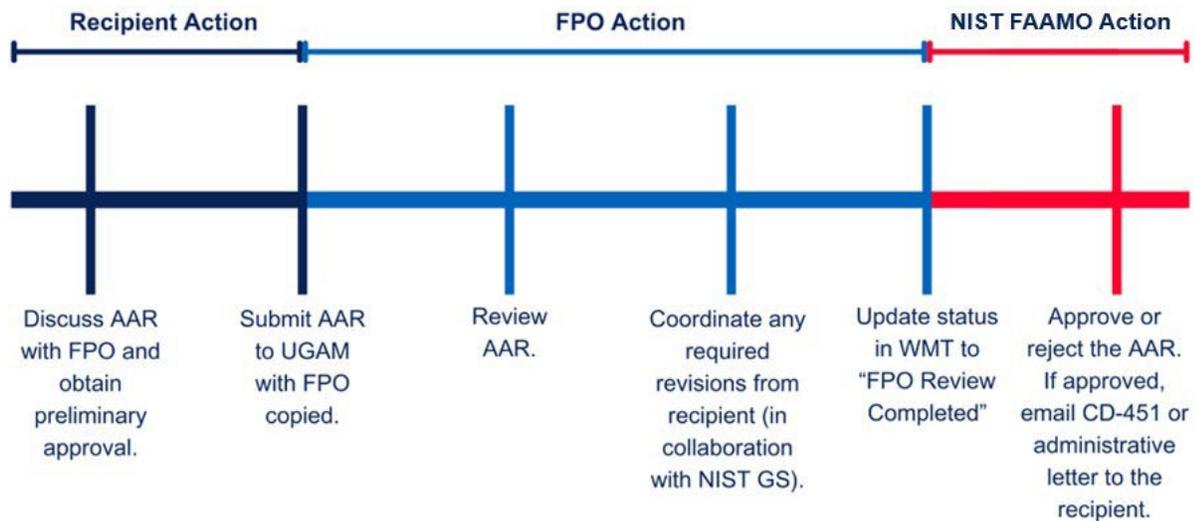
An AAR is the mechanism grant recipients use to propose changes to their award in response to an event(s) that may occur within the grant lifecycle as grant recipients execute contracts, receive bids, and make amendments to projects. AARs allow grant recipients to amend an aspect (budget, scope, key personnel, etc.) of their approved project but AARs may not change the original award amount.

Award Action Request Roles

Grant recipients should establish who within their internal structure will be responsible for gathering and compiling information for the amendment to be requested. Ideally, this individual should be familiar with the project, understand the reasoning behind the change request, and be able to quickly update and amend documents required for the request. Regardless of who assembles the AAR materials, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) is responsible for formally submitting the AAR, with the assigned FPO copied.

		
<p>AUTHORIZED ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE (AOR)</p> <p>Submits the Award Action Request (AAR) to the Unfunded Grants Action Mailbox (UGAM), with FPO copied.</p>	<p>FEDERAL PROGRAM OFFICER (FPO)</p> <p>Conducts initial review and coordinates any necessary revisions before making recommendation for approval to Grants Office.</p>	<p>FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS MANAGEMENT OFFICE (FAAMO)</p> <p>Provides guidance on submission in coordination with FPO and approves or rejects the AAR submitted by the grantee to UGAM.</p>

Award Action Request Process



If the Grants Office formalizes the AAR approval through an amendment via a Notice of Award (NoA), the grant recipient must sign and return the NoA to the NIST GS within 30 business days of receipt.

Best Practices Checklist

✓	Best Practices
<input type="checkbox"/>	Notify your FPO in advance of upcoming AARs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit AARs as soon as possible so there is sufficient time to process them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review all submissions for typos and errors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copy the FPO on all formal AAR submissions to UGAM.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check that the financial numbers and project information match across all documentation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain working documents in their original format (e.g., .doc) and use a separate 'Archive' folder to capture older versions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Store any AAR items (approval emails and submitted documents) in the grant file.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Before submitting the AAR, ensure all necessary documents have been attached.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that budget information matches what was approved in the SF-424A or SF-424C.

Award Action Request Submission

Grant recipients submit AARs as Unfunded Grant Actions (UGAs), via UGAM (UGAM@nist.gov). Prior to formally submitting the AAR, the FPO conducts an initial review of the request and, if necessary, works with the grant recipient to revise the submission. Once the FPO provides preliminary approval, the AOR formally submits the AAR to UGAM@nist.gov with their FPO copied. The email should contain the following information in the subject line:

- Grant recipient name
- NIST award number
- AOR or Principal Investigator (PI)/Project Director
- Action being requested (e.g., change in key personnel, change in scope, etc.)

AARs are not approved until the NIST Grants Officer (GO) issues approval in the form of an award amendment (NoA) or Administrative Change Letter. The time frame for NIST to approve an AAR will vary depending on the completeness of the initial request. Once an AAR package is complete, it takes approximately 17 business days for official approval in the form of an award amendment (NoA) and approximately 12 business days for official approval in the form of an Administrative Change Letter. The process may take longer if more information and/or clarifications are needed from the grant recipient. Upon receiving the NIST GO's approval, the grant recipient must sign and return the form to complete the amendment (if a NoA was issued).

Budget Revision

A change to the grant recipient's previously approved budget to accommodate substantive revisions to planned funding expenditures in line with changed budgetary costs.

A budget revision does not change the original award amount.

Simplified Acquisition Threshold: In accordance with 2 CFR § 200.308(f), transfers of funds by the grant recipient among direct cost categories are permitted without a budget revision for awards in which the federal share of the project is equal to or less than the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT), set at \$250,000 as of June 20, 2018 pursuant to [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) memo 18-18](#).

For awards in which the federal share of the project exceeds the SAT, budget revisions must be approved by the Grants Officer under the following conditions:

10% Rule: The grant recipient transfers funds between existing direct cost categories, and the cumulative amount of the direct cost transfers exceeds 10% of the most recently approved total project budget.

New Cost Categories: The grant recipient transfers funds into a cost category that was unfunded in the most recently approved project budget (e.g., shifting funds from a contract that did not use all of their funds, to a new cost category item to pay for travel costs that were not in the most recently approved budget).

Determining If a Budget Revision is Required

To calculate the 10% threshold, utilize the total budget recorded on the last approved SF-424A or SF-424C.¹

Approved Total Budget x .10 = 10% Rule Threshold

If you are uncertain if a budget revision is required, contact your FPO!

SF-424A: Line k. TOTALS, Column 5

SF-424C: Line 16. Total Project Costs, Column c. Total Allowable Costs

For dual type projects, sum the SF-424A and SF-424C values indicated above to determine the total budget, then calculate the 10% threshold.

¹ Note that the regulatory language at 2 CFR § 200.308(f) only applies to transfers of direct costs categories; however, the total budget (including both direct and indirect costs) should be used to determine whether a transfer exceeds 10% of the total budget, per the [DOC Standard Terms and Conditions](#).

Budget Revision Documentation

Official documentation is required if a grant recipient wishes to make significant budget modifications.

Requests to change and/or add program objectives or tasks that do not involve a transfer of funds between direct cost categories **do not constitute** a budget revision and should instead be submitted as a Change in Scope AAR.

If a Budget Revision AAR includes a request for a No-Cost Extension, the grant recipient must also submit a No-Cost Extension AAR.

Required Documents	Description
Justification	Written justification for the change (in the body of the email or as an email attachment).
Updated SF-424A or SF- 424C	Updated budget form, specific to the grant requesting revisions (e.g., SF-424A for non-construction projects or SF-424C for construction projects).
Updated Budget Narrative	The budget narrative should explain the proposed funds transferred, support and justify the change in budget, and should specifically highlight the changed amount from the original to revised.
Updated Detailed Budget Justification (spreadsheet)	The updated detailed budget spreadsheet should include revised budget figures supporting the requested change and all line-item costs broken out by cost category. For each line item, provide the previously approved total cost and the revised total cost.

Example: 10% Rule Calculation Within SF-424A

This example is of a non-construction project, which uses the SF-424A budget form:

- **Total Budget** (Direct + Indirect Costs) = \$331,500
- 10% threshold = \$33,150
 - $\$331,500 \times .10 = \$33,150$

This means the grant recipient can transfer funds between any previously funded cost categories in aggregate up to \$33,150 without needing a budget modification.

In the below example, the grant recipient transferred a total of \$3,000 into three cost categories (c. Travel, e. Supplies, and f. Contractual). While they have only transferred \$3,000 between budget categories, which is well below the 10% threshold of \$33,150, **a budget modification is required** because they transferred funds to a cost category that was previously budgeted at

\$0.00 (f. Contractual). If they had previously allocated funds to the Contractual cost category, a budget modification would not be required.

6. Object Class Categories	Total Cost (5) [federal + Non-federal] [Reported in SF-424A]	Total Expenditures [Reported in Performance (Technical) Report]	Amount Transferred Between Cost Categories [Total Expenditures - Total Cost]
a. Personnel	\$25,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$0.00
b. Fringe Benefits	\$7,000.00	\$6,500.00	\$0.00
c. Travel	\$8,000.00	\$9,000.00	\$1,000.00
d. Equipment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
e. Supplies	\$7,500.00	\$8,000.00	\$500.00
f. Contractual	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
g. Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
h. Other	\$275,000.00	\$200,000.00	\$0.00
i. Total Direct Charges (sum of 6a-6h)	\$322,500.00	\$245,000.00	-
j. Indirect Charges	\$9,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00
k. TOTALS (sum of 6i and 6j)	\$331,500.00	\$251,000.00	-

Example: 10% Rule Calculation Within SF-424C

This example is of a construction project, which uses the SF-424C budget form:

- **Total Budget** (Direct + Indirect Costs) = \$8,600,000
- 10% threshold = \$860,000
 - \$8,600,000 x .10 = \$860,000

This means the grant recipient can transfer funds between funded cost categories in aggregate up to \$860,000 without needing a budget modification.

In this example, the grant recipient has transferred \$1,020,000 between three budgeted cost categories. Because they have surpassed the 10% threshold amount of \$860,000, **a budget modification is required** to increase the cost categories where funds are needed.

Cost Classification	c. Total Allowable Costs [Reported in SF-424C]	Total Expenditures [Reported in Performance (Technical) Report]	Amount Transferred Between Cost Categories [Total Expenditures – Total Allowable Costs]
1. Administrative and legal expenses	\$100,000.00	\$120,000.00	\$20,000.00
2. Land, structures, rights-of-way, appraisals, etc.	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
3. Relocation expenses and payments	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
4. Architectural and engineering fees	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
5. Other architectural and engineering fees	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
6. Project inspection fees	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
7. Site work	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
8. Demolition and removal	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
9. Construction	\$2,000,000.00	\$2,600,000.00	\$600,000.00
10. Equipment	\$3,000,000.00	\$3,400,000.00	\$400,000.00
11. Miscellaneous	\$3,000,000.00	\$400,000.00	\$0.00
12. SUBTOTAL (sum of lines 1-11)	\$8,100,000.00	\$6,520,000.00	-
13. Contingencies	\$500,000.00	\$250,000.00	\$0.00
14. SUBTOTAL	\$8,600,000.00	\$6,770,000.00	-

15. Project (program) income	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
16. TOTAL PROJECT COSTS (subtract #15 from #14)	\$8,600,000.00	\$6,770,000.00	-

Additional Budget Revision Trigger Examples

See the table below for examples demonstrating when a Budget Revision AAR may be required, as well as scenarios when an AAR is generally not required.

Note that even if an AAR is not required, all funds must still be used for an authorized purpose under the award.

Example	Example Reason for Change	Action	Explanation
Travel Costs	Travel costs were included in the original budget, but increased after award receipt.	Calculate 10%. If under the threshold, approval may not be necessary.	If the total increase is less than or equal to 10% of the total award and funds can be transferred from another direct cost category to cover these costs, a Budget Revision AAR may not be necessary.
Facilities and Administration	Facility to be used to store	Calculate 10%. If under the threshold,	Transfers of funds between direct and indirect cost categories does not require
(F&A) Costs (indirect costs)	equipment purchased with grant funds.	approval may not be necessary.	prior approval as long as the total budget remains the same and the new use of funds is authorized under the award. Note that when transferring funds to the indirect cost category, grant recipients should be cognizant of their program's maximum indirect cost rate and ensure that they do not exceed this amount.
Contract Amendment	Existing contract is modified to include mapping costs.	Calculate 10%. If under the threshold, approval may not be necessary.	If the total increase is less than or equal to 10% of the total award and funds can be transferred from another direct cost category to cover these costs, a Budget Revision AAR may not be necessary. However, contracting for activities that are central to the purpose of the award will require submission of a Subaward, Transfer, or Contract Out Work AAR.

<p>Moving funds from an approved cost category to an unapproved cost category</p>	<p>Amount that was budgeted for travel and legal costs is not needed; Grant recipient did not previously budget for any contractors but would like to hire one.</p>	<p>Request prior approval if moving funds to a cost category previously budgeted as \$0, regardless of the 10% threshold.</p>	<p>If funds are transferred into a new cost category, a Budget Revision AAR is required, regardless of the amount.</p>
<p>Moving funds from an approved cost category to create a new position, hire new contractors, or make a subaward</p>	<p>Grant recipient does not have the expertise to complete part of the project and must therefore hire an expert in that area of the project.</p>	<p>Request prior approval if moving funds to a new cost category. Calculate 10% if transferring funds to an existing cost category. If under the threshold, approval may not be necessary.</p>	<p>If funds are moved from one cost category to another category that was previously approved and funded under the award and the total amount transferred is at or under 10% of the total award, a Budget Revision AAR may not be necessary. However, the grant recipient must submit a Subaward, Transfer, or Contract Out Work AAR.</p>

Change in Key Personnel

Non-construction Projects: Per 2 CFR § 200.308(c)(2), grant recipients with non-construction projects must request prior approval before undergoing a change in a key person specified in the application or federal award.

Key grant administration changes that constitute a Change in Key Personnel AAR include members of

A change to the grant recipient's key grant administration personnel specified in the application or award agreement (CD-450).

the grant recipient organization that, if removed, would cause a significant impact to the project. For example, any change in the AOR, PI, chief financial officer, or technical personnel listed on the CD-450 or application material would require a Change in Key Personnel AAR.

Per 2 CFR § 200.308(c)(3), prior approval is required if an AOR disengages from a non-construction project for more than three months, or there is a 25% or more reduction in their time devoted to the project. In this situation, grant recipients must submit a **Change in Key Personnel AAR**.

Construction Projects: The NIST Grants Office recommends grant recipients with construction projects to notify their FPO and the Grants Office of changes in key personnel via the AAR submission process.

In all cases, if an individual is removed from a project, the grant recipient should ensure that the individual no longer has access to project-related materials. Please review your organization's policies for removing the employee's access to the grant's administrative, financial, and all other data. Similarly, please ensure that the separated employee no longer has access to the project's equipment and other material assets. Please recover all grant-related equipment from the separated employee. Finally, follow your organization's policies about communicating the separation to your project team, collaborators, and vendors/contractors.

Examples of a Change in Key Personnel

Examples of when a Change in Key Personnel AAR may be required are as follows:

- The grant recipient's financial administrator who handles all payments and financial transactions leaves the organization.
- Due to a recent resignation, the AOR or PI needs to be replaced.
- The grant recipient's AOR plans to disengage from a non-construction project for more than three months due to sabbatical leave, so the grant recipient has hired a temporary replacement.

Change in Key Personnel Documentation

Official documentation is required if a grant recipient wishes to make a change in key personnel.

Required Documents	Description
Justification	Written justification for the change (in the body of the email or as an attachment)
Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)	Resume or CV of the new key personnel
Contact Information	Contact Information (name, title, phone, and email) of the new personnel

Change in Scope

A change in the specific direction, goals, objectives, purposes, or project areas of the approved project.

Non-construction Projects: Per 2 CFR § 200.308(c)(1), non-construction projects need prior approval for any changes in scope, even if there is no associated budget revision.

Construction Projects: Per 2 CFR § 200.308(h)(1), construction projects must request prior approval for a change in scope that also results in a budget revision.

If a Change in Scope request includes a request for a No-Cost Extension, the grant recipient must consult with their FPO on coordinating the submission of a No-Cost Extension AAR in addition to, or in combination with, the Change in Scope AAR.

Examples of a Change in Scope

Examples of when a Change in Scope AAR may be required are as follows:

- The grant recipient decides to change their method of device distribution from loaning to donating laptops to students.
- The grant recipient alters the method of internet delivery (e.g., fiber to fixed wireless).
- The grant recipient needs to reduce the scope of their project (e.g., building four wireless towers instead of six) due to price increases.

Change in Scope Documentation

Official documentation is required if a grant recipient wishes to make a change in scope.

Any change in scope that results in a decrease or change in federal funding must be accompanied by an SF-424A or SF-424C and a budget narrative describing the planned expenditure of the remaining funds. Change in Scope AARs may decrease the original award amount but may not raise it.

Required Documents	Description
Justification	Written justification for the change (in the body of the email or as an attachment)
Updated Project Narrative	Revised project narrative specifically highlighting the change proposed to the project
Budget Narrative	If a budget change is required:
Updated SF-424A or SF- 424C	Revised budget narrative that exemplifies the change to be made to the budget as a result of the change in scope.
Justification	If a budget change is required:

No-Cost Extension

An amendment that extends a project's period of performance without granting additional funds.

According to the BIP and CMC NOFOs, the Assistant Secretary may extend the initial award period for an eligible grant recipient (or covered partnership) if the grant recipient certifies that:

1. They have a plan for use of the grant funds;
2. The execution or implementation of the project is underway; and/or
3. Extenuating circumstances require an extension of time to allow the project to be completed.

The grant recipient may submit a request to extend the period of performance not later than **90 days** prior to the end of the period of performance. However, it is recommended that grant recipients wait to submit a No-Cost Extension AAR until six months before the end of the grant recipient's period of performance.

No-Cost Extensions do not permit grant recipients to perform activities that are not described in the last approved project narrative and may not be exercised merely to utilize unliquidated balances. Prior to submitting a request, grant recipients should coordinate with their FPO and Grants Specialist to determine if a Change in Project Scope AAR is required, and if the Change in Project Scope and No-Cost Extension AARs should be submitted together or separately. In some cases, it may be recommended that grant recipients submit a Change in Project Scope AAR and a No-Cost Extension AAR together to allow NIST FAAMO the opportunity to review the timeline of tasks associated with the Change in Project Scope against the requested period of performance end date submitted in the No-Cost Extension. Non-Federal entities are not authorized to extend an award that contains a zero balance.

Please reference the program-specific NOFO for additional information on No-Cost Extensions.

Examples of a No-Cost Extension

Examples of when a No-Cost Extension AAR may be required are as follows:

- Due to supply chain issues, the shipment of the devices (or equipment) purchased by the grant recipient has been delayed for 9 months, postponing the implementation of the project.
- Due to an unexpected hiring freeze that lasted 6 months, the grant recipient has not been able to hire sufficient project staff to support the project, therefore delaying implementation.

No-Cost Extension Roles

After the grant recipient submits their AAR to UGAM, the Program Office, NTIA Assistant Secretary (or an individual with delegated authority), and NIST Grants Office each conduct a review.

			
<p align="center">RECIPIENT</p> <p>Submits the AAR to UGAM with the FPO copied.</p>	<p align="center">FPO</p> <p>Conducts initial review, develops decision memo, and coordinates any necessary revisions before making recommendation to Grants Office.</p>	<p align="center">NTIA ASSISTANT SECRETARY</p> <p>Conducts secondary review, reviews decision memo, and suggests any necessary revisions before making recommendation to leadership.</p>	<p align="center">NIST FAAMO</p> <p>Provides guidance on submission in coordination with FPO and approves or rejects the AAR submitted by the grantee to UGAM.</p>

No-Cost Extension Documentation

Official documentation is required if a grant recipient wishes to submit a No-Cost Extension AAR.

Required Documents	Description
Justification	A detailed explanation of why the project could not be completed by the approved end date (or justification).
Certification for Extension	Certification of No-Cost Extension guidelines: They have a plan for use of the grant funds; The execution or implementation of the project is underway; and/or Extenuating circumstances require an extension of time to allow the project to be completed. To certify the above requirements, the grant recipient should include the responses to the requirements in the justification of why the project could not be completed by the approved end date.
Description of project activities	Description of the project activities that require support during the extension.
Revised period of performance	Revised period of performance that reflects the No-Cost Extension request.
OMB-Approved Budget Form (SF-424A or SF-424C)	An OMB-approved budget form: SF-424C for construction programs; SF-424A for non-construction programs. Grant recipients use this form for the balance of the funds to be carried over into the extended project period.

Updated Budget Narrative (spreadsheet)	A detailed budget narrative (spreadsheet) broken out by cost category for the balance of funds to be carried over into the extended project period.
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Subaward, Transfer, Contract Out Work

The subawarding, transferring, or contracting out of any work under a federal award, if not approved in the award application.

This guidance **does not** include the requirements to transfer an award to a different organization. Please contact your assigned FPO and the Grants Office if you need to transfer your award.

Non-construction Projects: Per 2 CFR § 200.308(c)(6), non-construction projects must request prior approval before they subaward, transfer, or contract out work if not described in the approved application. If the services or work that is proposed for subaward, transfer, or contract

was identified in the initial grant application and funded in the approved federal award, then an AAR is not required.

Construction Projects: The NIST Grants Office also requests construction projects to notify them of subawards, transfers, or contracts, per the [DOC Standard Terms and Conditions](#) (.04 Prohibition against Assignment by a Non-Federal Entity).

A grant recipient may acquire supplies, material, equipment, or general support services through a subaward, transfer, or contract without a Subaward, Transfer, or Contract Out Work AAR.

Examples of a Subaward, Transfer or Contract Out Work

Actions likely to require a Subaward, Transfer, or Contract Out Work AAR include but are not limited to:

- Designating a subrecipient or contractor that was listed as “TBD” in the approved application;
- Working with a subrecipient or contractor that was not identified in the approved application; or
- Replacing an organization identified in the approved application with a different subrecipient or contractor.

Subaward, Transfer, or Contract Out Work Documentation

Required Documents	Description
Justification	A detailed explanation of why the work is being subawarded or contracted out. Effective date for the subaward or contract out work.
Description of the Work	Description of the work for each subaward How the subaward or contractor was chosen (competitive or non- competitive)

	<p>If the subaward or contract was chosen <u>non-competitively</u>, you must also include justification for that decision.</p>
<p>Budget Document</p>	<p>Budget for each subaward or contractor.</p>