

Summary of Steps for Initiating Task Agreements Through the NPS Intermountain Region CESUs

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

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 non-federal 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. CP-CESU Research Coordinator: Todd Chaudhry, 928.523.6638, todd_chaudhry@nps.gov
 - b. DS-CESU 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 DS-CESU cultural projects and may assist with CP- and RM-CESU ones as needed)
 - c. RM-CESU 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 [CP-CESU](#), [DS-CESU](#), or [RM-CESU](#) websites.
4. Prepare draft documents (incl. TA Template with SOW/budget and Justification).
5. Submit drafts to RC for review and approval.
6. Request SF-424 forms from Partner.
7. Submit FBMS Purchase Request.
8. RC submits final documents to IMR Financial Assistance.
9. IMR Financial Assistance processes the TA and notifies all parties when the TA is executed.

Detailed Steps for Initiating IMR CESU Task Agreements

1. **Contact CESU Research Coordinator (RC, see above).** At the earliest possible date, the NPS Agreement 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. If not already identified, the RC can also help to identify a suitable CESU Partner and Principal Investigator (PI) to best meet projects needs.
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 change), available from your RC or the IMR CESU websites (see above). A new TA requires the following forms: 1) CESU Task Agreement Template, 2) Budget – may be embedded in the TA narrative or provided as a separate sheet, 3) Justification for Use of Financial Assistance, 4) Purchase Request, and 5) Application for Federal Assistance forms SF-424, 424A, and 424B.
4. **Prepare Draft Documents.**
 - A. **Task Agreement Template.** The ATR uses the template to draft the TA with help from the cooperating PI, particularly for the Statement of Work (SOW) and budget. 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 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). 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. 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 entire form, including the Sole Source Award Justification (pgs. 4-5). Some fields are pre-filled and parenthetical guidance is provided for others. The ATR needs to provide their e-signature (e.g. /s/ John Doe) and date on pages 3 and 5.
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. The RC and ATR communicate back and forth until both parties approve the documents.
6. **Request SF-424s from Partner.** Once the ATR, RC, and PI have finalized the above documents, the ATR requests the Partner to complete the SF-424, SF-424A, and SF-424B. The request must include the final TA form and budget for reference and should be sent to the PI and/or the Administrative Contact listed on 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 figures match (to the dollar/cent) and both SF-424 and 424B are signed prior to forwarding to the RC.
7. **Submit FBMS PR Request.** Once the budget and SOW are approved by the RC, the ATR gets their park or office 'requestor' to complete and submit the PR form (10/2014 version) for the exact amount (to the

dollar/cent, in agreement with the TA budget) via the IMR Sharepoint site. Make sure that the PR request form includes the name of the IMR Agreements office – code is **PIM**. There are certain “standard entries” for CESU tasks: *The UPC for Cooperative Agreements (no property involved) is 411C0000*. Under the “description” of the service, the *Item Category* should always be “AU”. Under the section on “Line Item data” – enter **PIM** under the column “Purchasing Group”. Ask your requestors to insert your CESU (i.e., RM-CESU, DS-CESU, or CP-CESU) in the beginning of the *PR Header information block*. Once the **PR** is loaded into FBMS by one of the IMR requisitioners, all approvals are accomplished in the system by those with FBMS roles of *Supervisory Approver* and *Certifying Funds Approver*. Call Kelly Adams at IMR Financial Assistance if you have questions on this (303.969.2303).

8. **RC submits final documents to IMR Financial Assistance.** The RC conducts a final review of the documents and then submits them to IMR Financial Assistance and cc’s the ATR and Partner representatives. Note that this email is the official submittal to IMR Financial Assistance; it is *not* notice of approval or execution of the Task Agreement (see Step 9).
9. **IMR Financial Assistance Processes the TA documents.** The signature page of the TA and FBMS award documents are first signed by NPS and then the Partner. The Agreements Officer at IMR obligates the funding in FBMS and emails a PDF of the fully executed TA to the ATR (along with an ATR letter that requires signature), the Partner and the RC.

Other “helpful hints” for IMR CESU task agreements:

- 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 IMR Financial Assistance Officer cannot sign modifications to extend the performance period once the end date of the project is past.**
- b) ATRs can monitor the status of the funds drawdown by getting the FA FBMS Draw Down Activity Report on the intranet site: <http://wcp.den.nps.gov/Policy-Program/FedFinAssist/activityreports.htm>. Alternatively, you can contact Kelly Adams (see below) 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 IMR Financial Assistance (fa-imr@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 above) and provide a new budget, PR form, and SF-424A which should be requested from the Partner. The ATR sends these to the RC who will then route them to IMR Financial Assistance.
- 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. 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. IMR 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 Kelly Adams, IMR Grants Management Specialist, at 303.969.2303.