

KRA Design Critique

System: KRA Budget Screen Prototypes
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Overview

Kuali is a community source project to provide a suite of tools for financial systems at educational institutions. The research administration budget creation screens represent a complex portion of the system. The screens involved in the budget creation process are complex and contain a great deal of information that the user needs to see. The goal is to make the process as clear, efficient, and easy to use as possible.

In order to obtain feedback on the interface, a design critique was held on December 6, 2005, to present the screens to users. Staff members from each of the partnering institutions, identified as involved in the budget creation process at their institution, were invited to participate in the session. Due to scheduling conflicts, users at Arizona, Michigan, and Indiana were unable to attend. Staff members representing Hawaii, Cornell, and San Joaquin Delta participated in the critique. Overall, participants were pleased with the screens and the overall look, as well as the functionality the system will provide.

The results of the design critiques are presented on the following pages in table format. The table contains two columns including Observations/Comments, and Recommendations/Rationale as described below.

Observations/Comments – This column includes statements made by participants at the design critique as well as observations by the UXG team.

Recommendations/Rational or Questions – this column includes recommendations to consider as development continues and/or participants' rationale for the request or concern. In some cases, this column contains questions for the KRA team and the functional council to consider, as some issues are beyond the expertise of the UXG.

The table is divided into sections associated with the various screens and panels shown in the design critique. The sections include: Parameters, Overview, Personnel, Non-personnel, Cost Share, Modular Indirect Costs, Permissions, Output, Template, and Other. The 'Other' section contains comments and questions concerning the interaction between screens and/or the system as a whole, rather than a particular screen shown during the critique.

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Design Critique Results – KRA Budget Screens

Parameters	
Participants did not understand what the ‘use current rates’ button did in the ‘Fringe Benefit Rates’ section.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retain the proposed button but be sure help is available to explain system features. Due to differing terminology at the various institutions and a system with a new layout and new features, staff training will be required. 2. Committee Response – The button needs to be modified to state “use manual rates”, and the column needs to state “Manual Rates”. This also needs to be modified on the Grad Rates as well. Keeps it consistent with other parts of the system.
Overview	
No specific comments or concerns were made concerning this screen or its functionality.	
Personnel	
Participants stated that the fringe rates are frequently changed mid-term.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Would this need to be handled with different periods or could the rates for a particular period be changed part way through the time frame? 4. Committee Response – the system doesn’t allow this functionality. If you are using approved negotiated rates, they won’t change. But the system doesn’t allow fringe rates to change on a period-by-period basis.
One participant was concerned about how to handle a situation where a small grant account would be used to cover a salary or hourly wage until the funds were used up and then switch to other accounts to cover the salary.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Is this handled within the budget? 6. Committee Response – this is a post award issue, not a proposal / budget development issue.
Non-personnel	
The ‘Participant Expenses’ section would be helpful for Cornell users.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Retain this feature. 8. Committee Response – good, we’ll keep it.
Cornell users expressed the need for a justification section to enter reasoning for participant expenses.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. The ‘Category’ and ‘Description’ columns in the ‘Itemized Expenses’ section may already meet this need if the ‘Description’ text field is large enough to accommodate justification text. 10. Committee Response – ok, we’ll do this, but most justification should take place in the budget narrative.
Specific exclusions necessary for Cornell--this is where the Participant support costs needed to be treated as equipment with the ability to exclude as well. Proposals for new and competing renewal awards should use the latest set of rates in effect, while proposals for non-competing continuations should use the fixed rates that were in effect and frozen at the time of the initial award (per A-21 above).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Exclusions are a necessary part of the budget creation process at some institutions and the system should be designed in a flexible manner to accommodate such differences. Committee Response – versioning? We’re ok with the exclusions. With regard to other exclusions, the subcontracts section needs to allow for the first \$25,000, and the system

<p>For both Endowed and Contract Colleges, F&A costs are calculated on modified total direct costs (MTDC), which equals the total direct costs less the following exclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective July 1, 2003, the university's capitalization threshold will change to \$5000 for all equipment. This means that an item with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more and a useful life of two years or more will be considered capital equipment. • Cost in excess of \$25,000 on each subcontract (F&A costs are charged on the first \$25,000 of each subcontract), GRA exclusion (amount of GRA wage equivalent to tuition and fees), Graduate Health Insurance Leases and rental of real property. • Participant support costs for conferences and seminars. 	<p>already allows for exclusions on equipment. We need to discuss the issue of updates of Fringe Rates and IDC rates on older budgets.</p>
<p>Participants thought it would be helpful to have a 'Miscellaneous' category on the 'Non-personnel' screen.</p>	<p>12. More information is needed to determine if this is a necessary addition to the screens or if all expenses can be accounted for in the existing sections. This issue will be brought up in subsequent design critiques and should be considered by the KRA sub-committee to determine whether it is required addition to the screen.</p> <p>13. Committee Response – the “Other” category really serves this purpose. Please provide examples of how the “Other” category won't meet your needs.</p>
<p>Participants wanted to link accounts to the budget items in the 'Non-personnel' section.</p>	<p>14. Is this something that would be included in the budget screens or would this be handled elsewhere after the budget and funding is approved?</p> <p>15. Committee Response – can we get a clarification? Are they really talking about object codes, not accounts (in the FIS sense of the terms)?</p>
<p>If the user copies an expense to subsequent periods, would the budget automatically inflate the rates? If this feature were provided, would the user have the option to not inflate the rates for subsequent periods? Participants would like both options.</p>	<p>16. Whenever possible, provide automatic features that will reduce the workload for the user. When a line is copied, offer the user the option to inflate to the rate, or retain the current rate.</p> <p>17. Committee Response – the system does allow inflation rates for personnel, but it is either yes or no for all employees. The system allows users to inflate non-personnel items, and to decide which items are inflated and which ones are not. Any additional functionality would be an enhancement.</p>
Cost Share	
<p>No specific comments or concerns were made concerning this screen or its functionality.</p>	
Modular	
<p>When modular data is modified, how do changes reflect on</p>	<p>18. Provide training and help documentation so</p>

the whole of the document?	users know what to expect from the system. 19. Committee Response – committee agrees.
Indirect Costs	
Participants stated that the rates are frequently changed mid-term.	20. Would this need to be handled with different periods or could the rates for a particular period be changed part way through the time frame? 21. Committee Response – the user could use “manual rates” to accommodate a changing rate from one period to the next.
Permissions	
No specific comments or concerns were made concerning this screen or its functionality.	
Output	
Is it possible to generate an Excel document that conforms to agency standards?	22. Provide features for the users that allow output to conform to agency standards. The user could then upload the file to the agency rather than re-entering all of the budget data. If development time do not allow for this in version 1, consider this feature for a future upgrade of the system. 23. Committee Response – we don’t allow exports to excel because we want to ensure data integrity in the system.
Template	
If a template is created, can it automatically inflate to the new rates?	24. Whenever possible, provide automatic features that will reduce the workload for the user. When a template is create, offer the user the option to inflate to the new rates, or retain the rates in the original budget. 25. Committee Response – yes, we should double check with the developers. And we need clarification from the users – are they talking about inflation rates that are changed, or fringe or IDC rates that have changed from the old budget.
Other	
Cornell has a set rate for fee remission – rather than by credit hour. In addition, the fee amount must be excluded from indirect costs.	26. In the proposed design, where would this tuition amount be entered into the budget and how could the user indicate the amount is excluded from the indirect costs? 27. Committee Response – exclusions are determined in a maintenance table. The tuition field is user-entered, so we don’t need to worry about the issue.
How is data saved? If a user navigates to another page within the budget, will the previously entered data be saved or does the user have to click the save button and then move to another page?	28. Save data as the user navigates from screen to screen within the budget module. Provide training and help documentation so users know what to expect from the system.

	29. Committee Response – we agree with the recommendation above.
After a budget is approved and funded, can users link the associated accounts with the budget?	30. Is this handled within the budget screens, or elsewhere? 31. Committee Response – we need clarification on whether the “accounts” are actually object codes. The linking will take place between KRA and FIS components and will be on the FIS side.

Additional Questions and Comments submitted after the critique session was completed.

This module seems to be geared toward the Principal Investigator (PI). The PI would input the budget and forward to the Fiscal Officer (FO) for review. Is this correct?

Committee Response - Yes, for review and approval by the department, which at some institutions may be the FO.

From this process, would we be able to see if the proposal was funded? or at what stage the proposal is at (submitted to sponsor, negotiating with sponsor for award)?

Committee Response – This is the realm of a middle-ware component that we have not developed yet. FIS will show awarded proposals.

When the proposal is funded, does this module roll into the account creation and grant management of the award? Would we be able to see actual expenditures, encumbrances, balance of budget? Balance of cost share?

Committee Response – the financial component would show the actual expenditures, encumbrances, balance of budget, etc. The goal is for this system to roll into the financial system.

Is it possible to see each period of the proposal, side by side?

Committee Response – we don’t have that functionality currently, but it is a good idea. We could add it to the enhancement list for Phase 3.

In the personnel screen, the "Salary FY 06 base", is this figure downloaded from a personnel database? Is this figure used to calculate the period salary? How does salary changes in the middle of a budget period reflected?

Committee Response – yes, yes, inflation rates on the parameters page drive the salary for the period, based on the date that the university typically provides salaries.

I am assuming that for personnel, each PI will not be able to see the entire University employees. If they will be able to, will security be created where they can't? If you will be using an employee that is not in your department, will you be able to add their name and information?

Committee Response – the system currently allows the user to see all employees. Certain universities will need to build extra security to disable this feature.

Indirect overhead - can the check button (one discussed at the demo) be added for all categories.

Committee Response – we need more information on the check button they are referring to.

Drop down - Is this changeable? Can more or less categories be added? If a category is added and is not part of indirect overhead charged, can this be integrated in the system where it is automatically taken out of the indirect calculation?

Committee Response – Each category has a list of subcategories which are managed on a maintenance table. “Add”, “delete”, and “exclude from IDC” are all possible from this maintenance table.