



# **TRAINING SCIENTISTS TO MAKE THE RIGHT MOVES**

**A Practical Guide to Developing Programs  
in Scientific Management**

**Burroughs Wellcome Fund  
Howard Hughes Medical Institute**

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## Chapter 4

# DEVELOPING A BUDGET AND GETTING THE FUNDS TOGETHER

### In This Chapter

Thinking Through Some Budget Details

Securing Additional Funds

Tips for Cutting Costs

One of the most difficult challenges faced by training event organizers is figuring out how to pay for everything. This chapter offers guidance on developing a realistic budget, discusses strategies for obtaining additional funds, and provides tips for cutting costs.

## THINKING THROUGH SOME BUDGET DETAILS

First you will have to figure out how much money you will need, from the minimum to the optimum amount. To do this, create a list of items and their estimated costs. Include everything you can think of. In addition to costs for meeting space and refreshments, other expenses may come into play. For example

- ❖ Will speakers receive honoraria? Will you need funds to cover speaker travel and accommodations?
- ❖ How much will you need to conduct a pretraining needs assessment and posttraining evaluation?
- ❖ Will expensive assessment instruments be used in the training (e.g., Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Skillscope 360-degree assessment)?

Your list of budget items should be a planning tool that you adjust as you gather more information about attendance, speaker fees, and so on. (A checklist of budget items for a large-scale event, which you can use as a starting point, can be found in appendix 1.) The more detailed information you collect in advance, the less chance of unpleasant budgetary surprises later.



Try to obtain a copy of the budget for a recent, similar event. As always, don't hesitate to ask for help—your organization should have several sources of budget expertise.

Once you have a list of budget items, ask yourself the following questions:

- ❖ How much money do I have to work with? Do I have the minimum funds necessary to hold the training? Are there budget items that I can do without?
- ❖ Is the event expected to incur a profit?
- ❖ Do I need or want to charge registration fees to training participants?

- ❖ What kind of in-kind support is available to help offset costs?
- ❖ Do I need to seek supplemental funding or find an organization to cosponsor the training?
- ❖ If I have collaborating partners, what will they contribute in funds and in-kind support? Do they have internal budgeting conventions (e.g., definition of the fiscal year) that I need to be aware of?
- ❖ Can the budget accommodate unexpected costs or fewer than anticipated participants?
- ❖ What happens if the grant funding or in-kind support I am counting on does not materialize? For example, will I delay or cancel the training?

You should also determine who will approve the budget, who will authorize payments, and how payments will be made.

### Training Event Costs

#### Speakers and Food for Lunchtime Seminars

Below are some examples of costs for various training events (keep in mind, however, that they are based on 2005 figures).

*“Our current biweekly series is held at noon for an hour, and we provide lunch. Half the budget is for honoraria and travel for outside speakers; the other half is for pizza and sodas. Food runs \$300 to \$400 per session, which is pretty inexpensive for an attendance of 80 to 100. For speakers in the Milwaukee area but at another institution or for a professional mediator, we pay honoraria of about \$300. For outsiders, when a trip is involved, the honorarium is usually \$500. Some speakers set their own fee scale.”*

—Philip Clifford, Medical College of Wisconsin

#### Funds from Participants

*“We provided breakfast and lunch both days, and hors d’oeuvres and drinks on the first night. Our principal speaker costs were the cost of a professional leadership training team and the costs associated with two leadership skills assessment instruments. The attendance cost was about \$260 per person. We covered approximately half the cost of the course through grants from a local foundation and other private funds and we charged about \$95 per postdoc participant, \$175 per faculty participant, and \$225 per non-UCSF participant to cover the remaining costs. Our postdoctoral association was able to provide partial scholarships to all postdocs who expressed a need. Most postdocs and PIs used research grant money to pay for the course.”*

—Samara Reck-Peterson, University of California—San Francisco

#### Grants and Registration Fees for a Summer Session

*“The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) tries to minimize expenses, for example, by holding events on a university campus in the summer. For our five-day institute, we had an NIH R13 grant, which helped lower registration fees. Participants pay for housing and travel. I set up a contract to guarantee a rate at a conference center on campus; participants then make their own registration arrangements. Participants’ fees have been \$100 to \$150. This year they’re going up to \$200. The fee covers food and some handouts. The host institution absorbs other costs and may pay for audiovisual and PC support people. Overhead costs run about*

*\$35,000, and the host university will cover part of those as well. ASM provides \$10,000 to \$15,000 in unrestricted funds, plus staff time. That covers speakers, handouts, and audiovisual-related items but not meeting rooms.”*

—Amy Chang, American Society for Microbiology

### Big-Ticket Item: Refreshments

*“One ‘down side’ to appending an event to a society conference is that food and beverage charges at conference facilities (whether hotels or convention centers) tend to be astronomical—meals and drinks represent high-return items for the properties. So, while you might save money by availing yourself of ‘free’ space, you may lose at least a portion of the advantage in additional costs for meals. Case in point—we’re budgeting over \$30,000 for food and drinks for 120 people for a two-day (Thursday afternoon through Saturday morning) course in Chicago. Admittedly, the Windy City is more expensive than many, but food and beverage is the largest single cost center for the course.”*

—Crispin Taylor, American Society of Plant Biologists

### Cosponsors for a High-Overhead Event

*“When we hosted a large-scale campus event and were faced with major overhead costs to use the campus conference center, I enlisted many departments as cosponsors. This approach generated a great response. The cost to cosponsors was only \$500 to \$1,000 per department, and chairs typically have this kind of discretionary funding in their budgets. The sponsoring departments were listed in the event program and in all publicity materials, and were mentioned during the event. Here at UNC, there are 14 schools and colleges I can approach, in addition to local colleges and universities, that can serve as cosponsors to help defray the costs of a seminar or series that has broad appeal. This approach has been quite successful. Additionally, the North Carolina Biotechnology Center here in the Research Triangle area has small grants that UNC has received for professional development events on biotech and biomedical research topics.”*

—Melanie Sinche, University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill

## Tip

If your target trainees include postdocs, consider factoring a limited number of fellowships into your budget planning so that postdocs who couldn’t otherwise attend are able to.

## SECURING ADDITIONAL FUNDS

### Potential Funding Sources

After determining the amount of funding you will receive from your organization and adding up the costs of your budget items, you may find that you will need to obtain additional support. One option is to partner with another organization that can help shoulder the funding load (see page 17, “Collaborating with Another Organization”). Another possibility is to seek grant support from federal or private-sector funders.

Opportunities to apply for federal funding directly are limited, especially if you are just starting out and planning a small-scale event. For example, most support for this type of activity from National Institutes of Health (NIH) agencies, such as the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, is subsumed within larger, multicomponent research training and career

development grant initiatives. NIH does, however, support investigator-initiated grants (e.g., R13 grants) for large scientific conferences, but awards are contingent on the priorities of the institutes and centers within NIH.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is a possibility. It funds large-scale professional development initiatives for scientists, such as its ADVANCE initiative for women in science and engineering careers, but the agency may also consider funding small workshops. In addition, NSF might consider a request for funds to evaluate a program or activity, especially if there is a plan for how to use the results.

### It's Best to Double-Check

*“When you apply for grant support, remember to carefully read all of the instructions—even if you have applied to the same agency many times before. Requirements can change, and proposals will not be reviewed if they don't conform to the new requirements.”*

—Ida Chow, Society for Developmental Biology

Instead of applying directly for federal funding, you may want to contact the people at your university or society who administer its federal training and other large-scale professional development grants to see if they can write your training activity into the next application for their grants. Alternatively, an administrator who is flexible and interested in the type of training you envision might be able to release some funds to you through an existing grant.

### Tip

**It may be easier to obtain small contributions from several interested sources than to convince any one of them alone to be a substantial funder.**

It is also worth considering private-sector funders. Foundations, associations, scientific institutes, and companies that share your organization's mission are promising places to contact for funding. Regional and local private-sector organizations are more likely than national ones to support local training events. Local chapters of national organizations, such as associations for university faculty might be worth contacting. In addition, a professional society that has members (but not necessarily a headquarters or other office) in your area might sign on as a sponsor and help advertise the activity to its members.

Local scientific institutes and biotechnology and pharmaceutical firms are also worth a try. They have a vested interest in supporting the professional development of beginning scientists and broadening their access to potential employees. Those in your area might be interested in cosponsoring your training event—especially if you invite one of their staff to give a talk. Another likely partner is a smaller organization that can't shoulder such a program alone but might be delighted to cosponsor your event if its people can attend. Check with fundraising staff at your organization to find out about potential local funding sources and cosponsors for your event.

**Note:** HHMI and BWF support scientific management training at the national level through the publication of this volume. HHMI is *not* a potential source of funding for regional and local scientific management

training activities. BWF occasionally supports regional scientific management training events jointly organized by multiple institutions for their graduate student and postdoc constituencies.

### Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

If you approach a company for funding or any form of sponsorship for a training activity, be on high alert for even the appearance of conflict of interest. Institutional guidelines for conflicts of interest differ, but in the context of lab management training events, conflicts of interest are most likely to arise if you solicit or accept money or gifts from present or potential vendors (because this may call into question the motivation for your purchasing decisions). To be safe, it is a good idea to check with the appropriate authorities at your organization before you accept support.

#### Conflict of Interest

*“Members of our postdoc association solicited lab vendors to help cover the costs of a postdoc event without the dean’s knowledge. When he found out, he thought this was a conflict of interest since the postdocs buy products from these vendors. Instead, he decided that I could solicit vendors without a conflict of interest, since I don’t have a lab.”*

—Lisa Kozlowski, Thomas Jefferson University

### Asking Participants to Pay: Pros and Cons

Still another potential source of funds is the training participants themselves. There are benefits and drawbacks to registration fees that cover part or all of a participant’s expenses. Benefits include an increased likelihood that registrants will value the activity and attend the entire event. Registration fees will also give you more money to provide for things that will enhance the training. Furthermore, you will get a much more accurate count of participants, which will help your planning of room size, refreshments, and other logistical matters. Drawbacks include the possibility that some participants, such as postdocs, will not be able to attend because they cannot afford to do so. Understanding both sides of this equation should help you make decisions about who pays for what. Even if participants don’t pay a registration fee, having them pay for travel and lodging (if you have an off-site event) will help you keep costs down.

The following are some examples of registration fees charged for lab management training activities:

- ❖ \$25 for an on-site general grant-writing session (not enough to cover all costs but enough to encourage attendance)
- ❖ \$95 for postdocs (\$175 for faculty) to attend a two-day, on-campus leadership and laboratory management course (fee includes course materials and meals); a limited number of scholarships available for postdocs who have no other means to pay for the course; and a \$225 fee for registrants not affiliated with the university hosting the event
- ❖ \$200 to attend a five-day career development course, held at the conference center of a local research institute (fee covers meals and some course materials; participants pay for their housing and travel)

### Tip

Consult the catalog of continuing education programs offered by universities on topics such as personal finance to get an idea of the “going rate” for a similar-length session on scientific management issues.

## TIPS FOR CUTTING COSTS

If supplemental funding or partnering with another organization is not an option, you will have to find another way to make your training program fit your budget. Experienced planners point out that the amount of funds does not play as large a role as one might think in the quality of a training program. In budgets for training activities, big-ticket items fall into three categories: facilities, speakers, and food. Costs for all three, as well as for training materials, can be minimized without curtailing content. Here are some tips from experienced planners that can help you stretch the funds you have.

### Doing a Lot with a Little

*“People who don’t plan training programs regularly may not realize how inexpensively they can be done. You can get such positive results and have a large number of people attend your programs without spending much money at all—in some cases, just the cost of nametags.”*

—Melanie Sinche, University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

### Take Advantage of Nearby Resources

You could

- ❖ Use campus facilities that don’t have a rental charge (e.g., a large lecture hall or auditorium).
- ❖ Choose speakers who live nearby or will be visiting the area for a meeting or lecture.
- ❖ Ask a local business school, your human resources department, or your university’s career center to conduct a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and other assessments for a leadership training session. (Keep in mind that there is still a fee for each person who completes the assessment.)
- ❖ Solicit materials, such as boxes of pens and paper, from vendors; vendors are often happy to provide supplies because it is good advertising for them. (Check first with your organization to make sure there is not a conflict of interest.)
- ❖ Ask people you have a working relationship with (colleagues or society members) to be speakers without an honorarium. Depending on their career level, they may be more interested in adding the event to their CV or having a chance to espouse their views than in banking a small check. In such instances, don’t forget to send a formal invitation and a follow-up thank you that the speakers can keep in their files and show to department chairs.

For more ideas on resources that are close to home, see page 16, “People Who Can Help,” and page 47, “Places to Look for Speakers.”

### **Be Imaginative When Planning Meal Functions**

Consider the following:

- ❖ Schedule the session so that you can serve coffee and cookies or a continental breakfast rather than lunch or dinner. If you serve lunch, boxed lunches may be less expensive than a full hot lunch spread. Or, try using a local deli or even a pizza parlor to provide the food.
- ❖ If you rent meeting space for an overnight event, look for a facility that includes breakfast in the room charges.

For more suggestions on managing catering and other logistics-related costs, see chapter 8, “Making It Happen.”

