

4.2.2.2 Management Fee

Management fee is an amount of money paid to a recipient in excess of a cooperative agreement's or cooperative support agreement's allowable costs. Generally, NSF does not permit the payment of fee (profit) to organizations under financial assistance. However, a management fee may be authorized for awards in the limited circumstances of construction or operations of a large facility as the responsible organization is likely to incur certain legitimate business expenses that may not be reimbursable under the governing cost principles. NSF provides for a management fee in these limited circumstances, as appropriate, recognizing that the awardee would only incur such expenses as a result of its support of the NSF-funded activity.

The following categories will be used in the negotiation and award of a management fee:

- **Working capital necessary to fund operations under an award** - An amount for working capital may be necessary to ensure a level of retained earnings available to the organization in order to secure credit and borrowing to assure the financial health of the organization.
- **Facilities capital necessary to acquire assets for performance** - An amount for facilities capital may be necessary to allow the organization to acquire major assets and to address expenses that require immediate substantive financial outlays but that are only reimbursed through depreciation or amortization over a period of years.
- **Other expenses that are ordinary and necessary for business operations but that are not otherwise reimbursable under the governing cost principles** – An amount for other expenses that are ordinary and necessary but not otherwise reimbursable may be necessary to provide a reasonable allowance for management initiative and investments that will directly or indirectly benefit the NSF-funded activity. Inclusion of amounts under this category warrants careful consideration of the benefits that may be obtained when providing management fee. Examples of potential appropriate needs include contract terminations and losses, certain appropriate educational and public outreach activities, and providing financial incentives to obtain and retain high caliber staff. Although not an exhaustive list, the following are examples of expenses that are not appropriate uses of a management fee:
 - Alcoholic beverages
 - Tickets to concerts, sporting and other events
 - Vacation or other travel for non-business purposes
 - Social or sporting club memberships
 - Meals or social activities for non-business purposes
 - Meals or social activities for business purposes that are so extravagant as to constitute entertainment

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- Luxury or personal items
- Lobbying as set forth at 2 CFR § 200.450 and FAR 31.205-22, as appropriate to the recipient type

Costs incurred under the award that are otherwise allowable under the governing cost principles must be classified as direct or indirect charges to the award and shall not be included as proposed fee elements.

A management fee proposal must be submitted to NSF that provides sufficient visibility into each category to identify its intended purpose. Agreement on management fee amounts shall be completed and an amount established prior to the initiation of work under an award, or any subsequent period not authorized as part of the initial award. Any amount negotiated shall be expressly set forth in the terms and conditions of the award. Awardees may draw down the management fee in proportion to the amount incurred during the performance period. Fee established for a period longer than one year shall be subject to adjustment in the event of a significant change to the budget or work scope.

Even though the management fee represents an amount in excess of cost and is therefore not subject to the governing cost principles, NSF, as a matter of policy, has determined that review of appropriate use of such funds is necessary. Information available on actual uses of management fee previously awarded by NSF in the preceding five-year period under any award shall be included in the proposing organization's fee proposal. As a term and condition of the award, the awardee will be required to provide information (typically annually) on the actual use(s) of the management fee. NSF will conduct reviews of this information regarding the extent to which the awardee fee proposals have proven reliable when compared with actual uses of management fee (both as to the fee amount as well as the planned uses of the fee). Unexplained failure to reasonably adhere to planned uses of fee will result in reduction of future management fee amounts under the award.