

Determining Necessity and Reasonableness of Expenses

Federal grant funds may only be spent on costs which are necessary and reasonable for the performance of the federal award. District staff must consider these elements when determining the reasonableness of a cost. A cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision to incur the cost was made. For example, reasonable means that sound business practices were followed, and purchases were comparable to market prices. When determining reasonableness of a cost, consideration must be given to:

1. Whether the cost is a type generally recognized as ordinary and necessary for the operation of the District or the proper and efficient performance of the federal award;
2. The restraints or requirements imposed by factors, such as: sound business practices; arm's-length bargaining; federal, state, and other laws and regulations; and terms and conditions of the federal award;
3. Market prices for comparable goods or services for the geographic area;
4. Whether the individuals concerned acted with prudence in the circumstances considering their responsibilities to the District, its employees, its students, the public at large, and the federal government;
5. Whether the District significantly deviates from its established practices and policies regarding the incurrence of costs, which may unjustifiably increase the federal award's cost.

While the relevant federal administrative rule does not provide specific descriptions of what satisfies the "necessary" element beyond its inclusion in the reasonableness analysis above, "necessary" is determined based on the needs of the program. Specifically, the expenditure must be necessary to achieve an important program objective. A key aspect in determining whether a cost is necessary is whether the District can demonstrate that the cost addresses an existing need, and can prove it. For example, the District may deem a language skills software program necessary for a limited English proficiency program.

When determining whether a cost is necessary, consideration may be given to:

1. Whether the cost is needed for the proper and efficient performance of the grant program;
2. Whether the cost is identified in the approved budget or application;
3. Whether there is an educational benefit associated with the cost;

4. Whether the cost aligns with identified needs based on results and findings from a needs assessment; and
5. Whether the cost addresses program goals and objectives and is based on program data;

Procedure History:

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