Description of Activity Types to Categorize Sponsored Project Activities

The Federal Government classifies sponsored projects in three broad categories (see Office of Management and Budget (OMB) [Uniform Guidance 2 CFR Part 200 - Appendix III to Part 200](#)):

1. Research and Development (R&D) – Basic, Applied and Development
2. Instruction
3. Other Sponsored Activities*

*Public Service falls under the umbrella of Other Sponsored Activities.

Below is a list of the categories that most universities use to classify sponsored project activities or functions.

1. Research and Development (R&D), or what is commonly referred to simply as "research" includes both research and development activities. **Research** is defined as a systematic study directed toward fuller scientific knowledge or understanding of the subject studied. **Development** is the systematic use of knowledge and understanding gained from research directed toward the production of useful materials, devices, systems, or methods, including design and development of prototypes and processes. R&D activities include the following subcategories:

A. **Basic Research** is undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge without particular application or use in mind.
B. **Applied Research** is conducted to gain the knowledge or understanding to meet a specific, recognized need.
C. **Development** (see definition above)

Additionally, the training of individuals in research techniques (e.g. externally-funded **research training** grants) that occur in the same facilities in which R&D is conducted is categorized as Research (rather than Instruction).

Characteristics of R&D include systematic investigation; contributions to generalized knowledge; supporting, refining or refuting other research studies; production of research outcomes; intent to publish or disseminate results, etc.
R&D varies greatly by field. The following are examples of sponsored research projects:
- Scientific laboratory or field research
- Searching for applications of new research findings or other knowledge
- Conceptual formulation and design of possible product or process alternatives
- Statistical studies
- Literary interpretations or criticisms
- Health-related studies
- Research on teaching effectiveness
- External funding to develop and maintain facilities or equipment and/or operation of a center or facility which will be used for research
- Creation of academic and professional publications
- Scholarship or writing of books, when the purpose of the writing is to publish research results
- Awards to departments, units or schools for the support of the training of research techniques of students or postdoctoral scholars, e.g., research training grants

2. Instruction means the teaching and training activities of an institution financed by federal, state and private agencies and organizations. Except for research training as described above, this term includes all teaching and training activities, whether they are offered for credits toward a degree or certificate or on a non-credit basis, and whether they are offered through regular academic departments or separate divisions, such as a summer school division or an extension division. It includes activities that are part of the University's instruction program to communicate educational content for-credit and not-for-credit courses. Examples include:

- Teaching
- Course and curriculum development
- Academic advising and development

3. Other Sponsored Activities (OSA) are programs and projects financed by federal, state and private agencies and organizations which involve the performance of work other than instruction and organized research.   These may include purchases for infrastructure that do not impact any research:
- Travel grants
- Support for University public events
- Support for teachers or students in elementary or high schools for outreach purposes
- Support for library collections or art museums, etc.
- Support for activities where there is no training of students, data collection or evaluation of any kind

  3a. Public Service is one of the more common activity types that generally falls under OSA. It is characterized as the delivery of professional (non-instructional) services to individuals and groups external to the University. Examples of public service include:
  - Health service projects
  - Community service projects
  - Public outreach activities
  - Community health clinics
  - Public broadcasting services
  - Museum and gallery exhibits
  - Conferences, seminars and workshops
  - Special events open to the public

When distinguishing between Public Service and Research and Development, consider if the Principal Investigator would conduct the project or work without an evaluation of outcomes or any academic recognition for the project such as publication of results and/or presentation of results at an academic meeting, then the project would be categorized as Public Service.

The Gray Area – Program Evaluation
Program Evaluation, or the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of programs to make judgements about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future program development, sometimes falls into a gray area of whether or not it's research. When distinguishing between R&D and OSA, you should consider if the project meets the definition of R&D, i.e. is it a systemic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge.

Some questions to consider when making this determination include:
- Is the goal of the program evaluation to test a hypothesis or answer a research question? If **no**, the activity is probably not research.
- Will the activity benefit people or entities other than those from whom the data are collected? If **no**, the activity is probably not research.
- Is the activity a routine operation in the setting? If **yes**, the activity is probably not research.
- Do the data gatherers have regular and routine contact with the data or the subjects? If **yes**, the activity is probably not research.
- Does the activity alter the timing or frequency of standard procedures? If **no**, the activity is probably not research.
- Is the activity part of a research project? If **yes**, the activity probably is research.