College of the Environment COVID-19 Response Guidance:
Nonrefundable Travel Reimbursements (11 March UPDATE)

Issue Date: 11 March 2020
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Relevant UW Guidance:
- UW Post Award Fiscal Compliance memo on Travel Reimbursement: COVID-19 (9 March 2020)

In case you have not otherwise seen it, I want to alert you all to a clarification on reimbursements for nonrefundable travel expenses due to COVID-19 concerns. This clarification was issued by Post Award Fiscal Compliance on 9 March and essentially summarizes the situation as follows:

- **Federal awards**: If travel expenditures included the purchase of a nonrefundable ticket, the cost of that unused nonrefundable ticket is NOT an allowable expense on a Federal Award. The federal government has not issued an exception to this policy. Another budget will need to be used in these cases to ensure the travelers are reimbursed for expenses incurred unless formal exceptions are granted.

- **Other awards that call out non-refundable travel expenses for cancelled trips**: Award and Sponsor-specific requirements should be followed. (This is assumed to be uncommon, but the award documentation should be checked.)

- **Awards without relevant Award or Sponsor requirements**: UW Travel Policies state that if a refund cannot be obtained, the unrefundable amount can be charged to the Sponsored Award if there is a department determination that the health/safety of the travel is at risk and the travel should thus be cancelled. (Concerns about traveling due to the COVID-19 virus would fall under this category.)

Please note that it is expected that every effort should be made to obtain a full or partial refund from the vendor.

I would encourage you to read the clarification in full and pass on to individual PIs/travelers who are facing this situation. We also encourage PIs to talk directly with their Program Managers/Sponsors as some program managers/sponsors have indicated a willingness and ability to add additional funds to awards in cases where the cancelled travel expenses significantly impact the success of the grant/contract.