What is Ecrt?

Ecrt is a web-based application employed by the University of Akron (UA) to comply with federal & university effort reporting requirements on sponsored projects. The ecrt system collects & summarizes the base salary + base salary adjustments + mandatory cost share effort %s **by account** (speedtype) for each employee (Statement Owner) during a semester (Period of Performance). Base salary excludes bonuses, stipends, hourly pay, retro pay, and pay without leave. At the end of a semester, ecrt creates the effort cards (statements) to be certified.

Who must Certify?

- The Principal Investigator (PI) must certify effort on his/her sponsored projects in ecrt if:
    - Any portion of the PI's own salary was charged to the project.
    - The PI committed effort to a mandatory cost share on the project.
    - Any portion of PI's support staffs' salaries were charged to the PI's project.
    - The PI committed support staff effort to a mandatory cost share on the project.

- All non-PI, full-time faculty must certify in ecrt for themselves if any portion of their own salary was charged to a sponsored project. And/or the employee committed effort to a mandatory cost share on the project.

PIs and full-time faculty employees (referred to as Certifiers in this guide) certify only their sponsored speedtypes on cards as well as any non-sponsored speedtype. Part-time faculty, graduate students, postdoctoral trainees, lecturers, and contract professionals are considered support staff and normally do not certify cards unless they are a PI or Project Lead for a sponsored project.

What is Effort Certification?

Effort Certification is UA's means of providing assurance to sponsors that:

- The salaries charged to their sponsored projects are reasonable in relation to work performed.
- Faculty and support staff have met their contractual time commitments.

To provide this assurance, ecrt creates employee effort cards. Each effort card displays a payroll % by speedtype in relation to the employee's total base salary. In a separate column, any cost share % is also displayed for its speedtype. A computed effort column sums the payroll %s and the cost share %s by speedtype. The computed effort %s for each speedtype displayed on the card must be certified by its PI or faculty certifier as correct. If not correct, a cost transfer (PAF) must be initiated to move the salaries.

If multiple speedtypes with different Certifiers exist on a card, each Certifier completes his/her own Attestation Statement. The last Certifier must also certify the card's non-sponsored row, if it exists.

When is Effort Certification performed?

A few months after the end of each semester, the effort cards are created and the certification period opens. The cards for employees without sponsored projects or mandatory cost share automatically close without certification. Otherwise, cards with sponsored projects and cost share stay open.

Ecrt sends emails to all Certifiers listing their cards for the newly opened semester. Certifiers have 30 days (the due date on the card) to certify the Not Certified cards displaying in their ecrt Work List.

Why Certify?

Effort certification is mandated by federal agencies and by University policy for all sponsored projects. Failure to properly certify in a timely manner could:

- o Jeopardize current funding for the improperly certified project
- o Jeopardize future federal research funding for the entire university
- o Result in large fines levied against UA. Multi-million dollar fines have been levied against several universities including John Hopkins, Northwestern, & Harvard
- o Cause UA and the PI to be susceptible to False Claims Act allegations
- o Create adverse publicity for the University
- o Result in criminal action against the PI

What are the Effort Coordinator's Responsibilities?

A primary Effort Coordinator (EC) must be assigned to each university department in ecrt. The EC's responsibilities include:

- Review the summary email at the opening of each certification period to understand who must certify for the semester (period of performance) & to offer assistance.
- Process any cards that contain large (over 5%) variances between the ecrt computed %s and the certified %s. These cards appear in the Effort Tasks work list in ecrt. A Daily Task email alerts the EC to newly created effort tasks.
- Review the Associated Certifiers tab in ecrt to follow up on overdue, uncertified cards.

The Central Administrator (CA) for ecrt at UA is one Office of Research Administration employee for the entire university. The CA can be contacted by ECs for assistance at ecrt@uakron.edu.

What are red flags?

Effort reporting, in a nutshell, is the reasonable, certified approximation of actual activity on sponsored projects based on an employee's own average work week. Red flags are noticeable audit issues with effort cards including:

- Late certification
- Re-certification due to payroll adjustments
- Certification by someone without knowledge of the effort expended on a project
- Effort distribution that leaves too little time to credibly cover teaching, administrative, and other non-sponsored duties.
- Inconsistences between the certified effort statement and other documentation such as outside activity forms, leave reports, progress reports, emails, and other documentation.
- Effort reporting that simply mimics budgeted amounts without regard to actual effort.