



Wrap-Up with NPCs: Key-  
takeaways and lessons learned

# VA's Response to GAO: Recommendations to Enhance Research Relationships

## Successful Practices:

**Ensuring Understanding of the Overall Partnership:** Sites with successful partnerships typically share a common understanding of the full Academic Affiliate/VA relationship (i.e., including shared faculty, educational programs, clinical programs, research in context of the overall shared missions).

**Communication Mechanisms:** Strong communication practices among VA, NPCs, and VA Academic Affiliates are critical to foster effective partnerships.

**Written Agreements:** Establish clear, well defined, transparent, formalized agreements among the local partners regarding extramural awards administration, shared resources (e.g., cores), and other partnership agreements as appropriate.

# Growing Your Program: Practical Lessons from Successful Sites

- Looked at RDIS/ VERA Tables from the past decade to identify sites with sustained growth
- Selected for Presentation Sites That Were:
  - Geographically Distributed Throughout the VA Research Enterprise
  - Programs of different size/scope
  - Had unique stories to tell in terms of program growth, challenges overcome
  - Could address unique contributions of VA research partners such as NPC and affiliate

# CHANGE MANAGEMENT

How to Predict (and Plan for) the Future Voyage!

- Plan ahead
- Breathe...don't panic
- Model parental calm
- Work the problem
- Stick to the facts
- Prioritize resources by importance of outcomes

# Partnering with a PEO

**HOW DO I FIND AND SELECT A PEO?**

[NAPEO.org/WhatisaPEO](https://www.napeo.org/WhatisaPEO)

# PACT ACT & MILITARY EXPOSURES RESEARCH PROGRAM

- Military exposures research is a high visibility area for ORD and VA
- Research leaders (i.e., ACOS-Rs) should have working knowledge of key details and POCs
- ORD is working with other agencies to identify gaps and needs for future work
- Research funding and opportunities are available for work across a spectrum of disciplines
- Relevant to recruitment, partnerships, new research

# The New Electronic Health Record and What the Transition Means to the Research Office and the Non Profit Corporation

[ORDResearchApplicationAnalyst@va.gov](mailto:ORDResearchApplicationAnalyst@va.gov)

- For questions, concerns, and assistance with transition activity
- Include this distribution group on any correspondence, implementation managers, or Oracle/Cerner regarding research transition activities

[R&D and NPC Manual for the EHR Transition \(CSI Team\)](#)

- Provides operations guidance for R&D and NPC Leadership to assist transition efforts
- Questions about the Manual can be directed to [ORDResearchApplicationAnalyst@va.gov](mailto:ORDResearchApplicationAnalyst@va.gov)
- [R&D Manual for the EHR Transition - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

[Researcher Resource Guide](#)

- For all researchers to keep up to date on important information about transition
- <https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VHAPugResearch/RRG/SitePages/EHRM-and-research.aspx>

# ACOS/VA Brown Bag Lunch

## VA Research Enterprise Hot Topics Discussion Part 1

- Need to understand the magnitude of the change, the limitations and to focus on the long term goal. Trying to Run through September to catch up and then walk into next Fiscal Year.
- Patience: This hybrid approach is new to VA. Understand that we will have bumps in the road and that the team will work to address as they come up. The process will smooth out over time.
- Learn: The new processes, the required documents, the authorities.
- Communication: Continue communicating with me regarding your struggles. We can only get better if we understand the issues.



# Research Enterprise Dashboard prototype

- Multiple user groups with different needs
  - Clinicians
  - ORD
  - Clinical researchers
  - Partnered Research Program Office
- Ability to track and differentiate clinical trials from different funding sources (VA, other Federal agencies, industry) is key
- Combining [clinicaltrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) data with VAIRRS data
  - VAIRRS data includes non-interventional research and trials
  - [Clinicaltrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) may be more up-to-date regarding recruitment status
- Documenting VA publications for VA trials via GenHub

# NAVIGATING DoD CDMRP EXTRAMURAL GRANTS

- Extramural funding enables an Investigator to pursue their research focus among different avenues.
- These funds allow a researcher to hire staff directly through the foundation.
- There is a VERA dollar for dollar match for DoD federal awards.
- There is often more flexibility using extramural funds for equipment / supplies purchasing, contracts for services, large meetings, etc., than VA grant funding.
- VA research staff salaries can be reimbursed through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NPC and the VA facility.

# NAVIGATING EXTRAMURAL GRANTS

- Target your applications to relevant NIH ICs and funding opportunities
- Read and follow application instructions
- Use Assist to create and copy application templates.
- Complete and submit online grant applications before the funding agency deadline.

# Veteran Research Engagement Groups: Unlocking the full potential of Veteran voices

- DO: Seek out and nurture connections across VA system, outside VA, and within your facility
  - research, clinical, & administration stakeholders at your site
  - Community-based engagement experts
- DO: Include Veteran input in launch
  - Recruitment, selection, metrics
- DO: Adapt and evolve
  - Adapt, implement, and adjust model over time
- DO: Attend to relationships and group dynamics
  - Challenges can include virtual format, differences among members
  - Investigators too!
- DO: Build a team-based model
  - Share tasks, obtain diverse input
  - Multiple moving parts, tweaking along the way

# Public Relations: Controlling the Narrative and Publicizing your Program

## TIPS: AT THE “MACRO” LEVEL

- Work to build a relationship with your local public affairs team.
  - Consider the many channels they may be able to use:
    - Print and broadcast
    - Social media
    - Internal and external newsletters, especially their local Veteran community
- Use illustrations/anecdotes to “humanize”
- Remember that they can help make sure the staff of the hospital knows about research and further extend the reach to Veterans using your VAMC.

## TIPS: AT THE “MICRO” LEVEL

- Finding the right language:
  - Associated Press style vs. language for a scientific journal
  - Avoid jargon or technical language as much as possible.
  - Being concise and avoiding too much detail is key to public affairs products
- Understand media timelines (3 or 4 days may be too late)
- Invite your public affairs officer (PAO) to a meet with your staff and researchers to let them tell you how they work best.
- If your researchers get approached by the media, the procedure is to get the PAO involved BEFORE engaging.

# Conveying Value & Relationship Building with Executive Leadership, Clinical Services, & Support Services

*Demonstrate the Value of Research to Administration/Leadership in other Services*

- Study Summaries (funded, pending, submitted/not funded)
- Dissemination
- Service to VA
- Service to Field
- Mentorship
- Clinician Knowledge Translation
- Policy Products
- Patient Knowledge Translation
- QI/PI Products
- Risks Mitigation Activities
- Partnerships
- Challenges

# Clinical Trial Center: Tools and Guides

## HELPFUL NEGOTIATION TOOLS

Sponsor Questionnaire

Holdback Memo

COLA and Clinical Trial Budget

Study Start Up Agreement

Coverage Analysis

Budget Analysis **Clinical Trial Center: Tools  
and Guides**

# Public Relations: Controlling the Narrative and Publicizing your Program

## Best Practice wish list:

- Parity across programs – all Research programs have a web presence
- Consistent web address for research programs  
(e.g. [www.research.va.gov/facility\\_name](http://www.research.va.gov/facility_name), placing under ORD)
- Newer, more flexible CMS accessible for both technical and novice managers (*CMS systems in use now each present difficulties in terms of usability, often artificially limiting advanced users while simultaneously being too complex for novices!*)
- Centralized resources for training and staff development: Multiple avenues for self-directed learning exist, both within government and from free or paid online sources. *ORD should suggest training rather than develop internal training.* Facility or ORD WebOps buy-in for direct edit capability will likely depend on their confidence in the skillset of our assigned staff.



# Debunking Website Development Mysticism

- Choosing a platform comes down to evaluating your website wants/needs and the purpose it will perform. Really ask yourself what do you want your website to do.
- At a minimum, your website should answer the 5 W's. Who your website is for. What your organization is about. Where is your org (contact info). When should clients use your services and why should they?
- Using examples of the most successful websites, we can infer some of the better and more innovating tactics to create a better web experience for visitors.
- Simplicity, high-resolution images, and clear messaging are keys for a simple effective site. If you think it's too complicated, let a 5th grader navigate the site to decide.

# Indirect Rates – Why They are Important and How They Can Benefit your NPC

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate allows for recovery of overhead costs



Ensure proper accounting during the year to identify unallowable costs that need to be removed from calculation



Analyze cost allocation methodologies for appropriateness



# Dept. of Health & Human Services - Program Support Center, Cost Allocation Services (CAS)

- Follow the checklist
- Patience
- Be on the lookout for additional updates – customer portal, policy changes, etc.

# QuickBooks Setup: Building a Boat that Floats

Identify your key players and know what details are important to them.

Use a process that is not cumbersome

Utilize the tools that are available

Set goals and timelines that are attainable, that will keep you on track to report regularly

# Indirect Rates – Why They are Important

- Always ask for and take full IDC
- Check your IDC actuals monthly or at least quarterly.
- Budget your administrative expenses to your anticipated modified total direct costs.

# OPTIMIZING VA RESEARCH, PARTNERSHIPS AND IMPACT

1. Hire and train for ACOS-R essential **attributes & skills**
2. Improve the **onboarding** experience
3. Increase **networking** opportunities
4. Resource (through information & training) for **negotiation**
5. Increase **knowledge** related to administrative oversight
6. Decrease **administrative complexity**
7. Consider the unique challenges of **small sites**

# Rowing Together: Fostering Effective Physician and Administrative Partnerships for Research

- Leadership partnerships
- Provide context
- Benefit to patients
- Improvement in practice
- Co-design and iterate
- Complementary skills
- Different perspectives
- All models flawed, use what you can

# Leveraging CDAs for the Next Generation

## The Applicant:

- Strategies for Selecting/Supporting Applicants Committed to VA Mission/Career
- Leveraging Clinical Fellowship Programs to Drive CDA Pipeline
- Staging/Timing of the LOI and Application to Maximize Chances of Success
- Characteristics of a Successful LOI and Application

## The Mentor:

- Supporting Mentors with Protected Time for Mentorship
- The ACOS as a “4th Mentor”: Support Pre-LOI/Application, Post-Award

## Supplemental Resources:

- VISN-Sponsored or Facility-Sponsored CDA-1 Programs as a Bridge to ORD CDA-2
- DEI Supplements to Merits as a Bridget to CDA-2
- Integrating Resources of the Affiliate Effectively (while maintaining VA-centricity)



# Small Sites: Think Big, Start Small

- Engage your organization in an Institutional Research Culture
- Raising awareness
- Identifying and engaging clinician researchers

# Auditing: What You Should Know, Where to Look and What to Ask

What are your organization's regulatory audit requirements?

What are each party's responsibilities?

What does an audit involve?

Are you ready for the audit?

# A Tale of Three Lands: A Panel and You on Growth – Not Just Size

Become the translator between VA and your affiliate and view the NPC as inextricably linked with each giant.

It could hurt to try but do it anyway.

# NPPO UPDATES

- Our Veterans are our first consideration, our PI's our second.
- PI's are bringing in funds to conduct research.
- It is the responsibility of the NPC to provide accurate monthly/quarterly statements.
- Our PI's deserve stellar service and support.
- PI's should not have to fully depend on their Research Coordinators to fulfill these administrative duties.

# NPPO SITE VISITS

- Responses to the Operations Oversight Questionnaire, Internal Controls Questionnaire
- Most recent audited or unaudited financial statements
- Records of mandatory trainings for key employees and directors
- Project accounts and administrative account(s) listings and statements prepared for principal investigators
- Minutes of all board meetings since the previous NPPO review
- Operating policies and procedures
- Cash disbursements and Credit card purchases
- Payroll and personnel files
- IPA assignment agreements

# External Audits

- An independent auditor's report for the NPC's last completed fiscal year.
- Each NPC with revenues in excess of \$500,000 for any year must obtain an independent audit of the financial statements of the NPC for that year.
- A NPC with annual revenues between \$100,000 and \$500,000 must obtain an audit of the NPC at least every 3 years.

# Pre and Post Award Grant Management:

## What Does Success Look Like?

Ensure that someone has the responsibility to read through the grant agreements or identifying compliance requirements



Collaboration between all individuals in grants management



Keep good documentation!



# PRE-AWARD GRANT MANAGEMENT

Key Take-Away from this Session:

Communication! Communication! Communication!