



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research & Development

Field Conference Call – Meeting Notes Monday, January 10, 2022 – 1:30 pm ET

Internal Teams Site: [Click Here](#)

1. Welcome

Rachel Ramoni, DMD, ScD

Dr. Ramoni welcomed attendees and highlighted the agenda, including a recognition of the challenging times that all in VA and those in research in particular are facing with recent surges in COVID being seen across the nation.

2. ORD / Research Enterprise

Grant Huang, MPH, PhD

- ORD COVID Memo

ORD recently distributed a memo to ACOS-Rs and AOs in the field in response to recent info about challenges facing the field with surges in COVID-19 cases. The memo does not have any new requirements but reminds the field of resources and communication channels to ORD (using the ORDCOVID19@va.gov mailbox) to help with providing situational awareness or questions that can be readily routed to appropriate ORD personnel.

- Field Enterprise Research Service Support Contract

Previously, ORD had announced an initiative to establish a central contract to help investigators and R&D offices with temporary support when facing challenges that they cannot immediately address. Over the past few months, several volunteers in the field helped with developing tools and a workflow for more broadly enabling this contract to be used by the entire field. These volunteers were publicly acknowledged and include ACOS-Rs, AOs, budget analysts and ORD staff. The effort is now entering a new phase that involves testing some use cases for investigator and R&D office support. ORD plans to identify any process requirements from these cases and will also be completing a SharePoint-based request portal for submissions. ORD will be providing a webinar on the process when it is ready to roll out access. The completion timeline is expected within the upcoming months.

- CSP Network of Dedicated Enrollment Sites

As part of efforts to further build up the national clinical research enterprise, the Cooperative Studies Program is pleased to announce the selection of new facilities to join the Network of Dedicated Enrollment Sites (NODES). These VA facilities are: Ann Arbor,

MI; Atlanta, GA; Aurora/Denver, CO; the Bronx (NY) VAMC; Cleveland, OH; Greater Los Angeles, CA; Madison, WI; Miami, FL; Milwaukee, WI; Omaha, NE; Philadelphia, PA; Seattle, WA; West Haven, CT. CSP congratulates these sites on excellent applications and going through the intensive site visit process. NODES efforts will include developing all facilities interested in excelling in multi-site clinical research studies.

3. Technology Transfer Program (TTP) updates John Kaplan, PhD, JD, PE

The current status of incomplete Invention Disclosures due to missing Certification Forms including showing the number of missing Certification Forms per FY was discussed.

Mr. Kip Bodi will also be leaving the VA for a job in the private sector.

TTP also provided a heads-up about demonstration of the Commercial Cloud-based technology transfer knowledge system at the next ORD Field Call.

4. Research Protections & Policy Molly Klote, MD, PhD

As Dr. Klote was unable to join the call unexpectedly, the following notes are provided.

- **VAIRRS – coversheet completion - 52.5% complete (9568/18219)**
 - The field’s support is needed to encourage investigators and research staff to get project cover sheets completed in VAIRRS. Only projects that are active need coversheets. The information in the project coversheets drive our dashboards, so it is important that the information is complete and accurate. The VAIRRS team is creating a guide to completing the coversheets for those who are not finding the questions intuitive. The guide is scheduled to be released around Jan 19th. We will be asking for feedback on the guide with the ultimate goal of revising the questions in the coversheet wizard so that a guide is not necessary. Issues with VAIRRS – VAIRRS@va.gov
 - Conflict of interest function and RCO workspaces – Efforts are underway to finalize the contracting action and intended for the roll out of RCO workspaces and the COI functioning to occur by May 15. There will be training for each site for each function.
- **CTMS**
 - As an update on contracting activities, we should be received our Software as a Service letter this week and will then move forward with the acquisition.
- **VAEDA (VA Electronic Determination Aid) – current status**

- ORPPE is still looking for additional sites to volunteer for the soft launch. There are currently 11 and we are looking for another 5. Please email VAEDAsupport@va.gov if your facility is interested.

5. Finance Updates

Matthew Verna

- CR Update for the FY22 Budget

The current CR funding allowance restricted our appropriation to 141 days or \$307M. That CR allowance is scheduled to end on February 18th. We are told that the Appropriation committees are working to execute another CR that will take us through the end of March, a full year CR at the FY 21 enacted level (\$795 Million), or potentially an actual appropriation bill for an actual enactment for the remainder of the Fiscal Year. The department has engaged the Office of Finance for additional guidance concerning the impacts of a CR through March 30 to inform the Secretary.

- CC101 Update

Due to the existing CR limitation, ORD is unable to release the full CC101 distributions. However, in an effort to provide stations with some much-needed partial funding, we are in the process of distributing 50% of the Quarter 1 CC101 funds which is approx. \$7M. These funds should arrive on-site this week barring any rejects, so please work with your local Budget office to ensure successful distribution.

- PY Carryover project

Research Offices and Programs were advised to reduce Prior-Year FY21/22 balances in the 0161A1 appropriation down to 4% by the close of Fiscal Year 2021. Carryover of FY 21/22 funds in the 161A1 appropriation were directed to be obligated NLT January 10th, 2022. Funding sweeps are scheduled to begin next Tuesday on January 18th.

Therefore, in order to prevent rejects, it is advised that the field work with respective local fiscal offices to ensure that the unobligated Prior year 0161A1 research funds are placed into 'UNDISTRIBUTED' by Friday, January 14th to ensure that your station is in compliance. Please refer to the original "Funding Guidance to the Field" memo dated October 1, 2021 and direct any questions or concerns you have to the POC's listed within. Mr. Verna posted the funding memo into the chat box for convenience.

6. ORD Field Update

- IT Updates

Carl Grunfeld, MD, PhD

Efforts are underway to finalize the sites that want EDUROAM/Guest Wireless and SFFX folder control. Interested facilities should contact Dr. Grunfeld, if not already done.

7. Cross services updates and announcements

Wendy Tenhula, PhD

- **New Biographical Sketch**

There is an updated version of the Biographical Sketch (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024)) that will be **required for application submissions starting January 25, 2022**.

Investigators are encouraged to consider using the SciENcv application in My NCBI to develop and format your biosketch for NIH and VA application submissions. See [SciENcv - My NCBI Help - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#).

- **R&R Senior/Key Person Profile**

All Senior/Key Personnel listed on the R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) form on an application must enter a valid eRA Commons username (Commons ID) in the “Credential, e.g. agency login” field. **For application submission due dates on or after January 25, 2022, applicants will receive an error** that must be corrected in order to successfully submit the application. For details, see [NOT-OD-21-109](#).

- **eRA Commons JIT**

VA-ORD is moving to eRA Commons for Just in Time (JIT) effective January 1, 2022. Any application for which JIT has been initiated in the VA JIT Document Manager will complete JIT using that system. Awards that have compliance document requirements later in the project period (i.e., phased awards), will have terms and conditions, or milestones added to the eRA notice of award. Documentation for later phases can be uploaded through eRA Commons to the Grant Folder which also holds the documentation submitted through the JIT system.

Following an intent to award notification from eRA, VA-ORD will indicate the applicable JIT areas for the application in the eRA Commons JIT module. When JIT is released, a notification will then be sent to the applicant, who will be able to upload the necessary information in eRA Commons as a PDF, Word, Excel or one of several other allowable formats. Individuals with the Signing Official (SO) role can also upload documents and are the only individuals who can submit documents to VA-ORD on behalf of the research office and the applicant.

All JIT documents must be submitted within 180 days of the initial notification. The system will document all steps in the JIT review process and notify the applicant and SO by e-mail whenever there is a change in JIT area status or whenever the overall application status has changed. Reminder emails will be sent to the applicants at 90 days and 150 days after the initial notification.

We have arranged two (2) live training sessions with eRA for VA applicants and SOs. Please disseminate the below meeting information to your investigators and staff as appropriate. A recording from one of the sessions will also be made available. Please direct any questions to the [VHA CO RDO ERA Mailbox](#).

Training Sessions:

Wednesday, January 5, 2022 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM EST

Tuesday, January 11, 2022 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM EST

Ongoing Reminders Regarding eRA:

- All users will be required to switch by early 2022. For details, see [Two-Factor Authentication: Accessing eRA Modules via login.gov](#).
- Federal-wide Unique Entity Identifier Implementation Update [NOT-OD-21-170](#).
- **LOIs - Post COVID Conditions Collaborative Merit Updates** Maciej M. Gonek

15 Letters of Intent (LOIs) were received regarding the ORD-wide Post COVID Conditions Collaborative Merit.

Next steps include an internal review of LOIs before we recommend them to move forward with the full application. The field should be notified mid-February of approved LOIs **while full applications are due April 14th**.

- **CSR&D Updates** Terri Gleason, PhD
- The CSR&D Data Monitoring Committee

The CSR&D Data Monitoring Committee is moving from a schedule of bi-annual meetings to meetings on an annual basis as a standard practice for most studies. There may be individual cases, though, where the plan will be to review more frequently. Given this change in schedule, no Progress Reports will be due January 15 from PIs whose projects are assigned to the Psychiatric, Behavioral Health and Neurologic Disorders (PBN) panel. These Progress Reports will not be due until July 15. For the Medical/Surgical DMC panel, the next Progress Reports will not be due from PIs until October 15, 2022. Reminders will be sent closer to these dates. As always, thanks to the DMC members for their service and welcome any suggestions for DMC quality improvement.

Lucindia Shouse will serve as the CSR&D DMC Team Lead working with DMC panel managers – Tamara Paine for the PBN DMC and Danny Myers for the Med/Surg DMC.

- Intent to Fund Notifications from Fall 2021 CSR&D Round of Review

The CSR&D margin meeting will be held this Thursday, Jan 13. Funding decisions will be made dependent on availability of funds and will send Intent to Fund notifications by approximated Jan 21, 2022. The plan also includes a ranked order of waitlist studies that may have the potential to move forward, just depending upon availability of funds. CSR&D will try to clear any/all waitlist decisions to approve studies before the submission date of applications for Spring, that being March 15.

- Efforts on Suicide Prevention

Joe Constans has been introduced to the national enterprise as our Senior Program Manager for Suicide Prevention. Since onboarding and coming up to speed, he has been working to organize some specific efforts in supporting this high priority topic. The webpage and general information has been updated: [Suicide Prevention Research \(va.gov\)](#). The generation of a new opportunity to apply for a Suicide Clinical Resource Center will be announced shortly. A webinar announcement describing methodology related to a new clinical trials database is being provided: [SPTD: Suicide Prevention Trials Database \(va.gov\)](#)

- RR&D Updates

Patricia A. Dorn, PhD

- Review Updates

SCIENTIFIC REVIEW TIMELINES (refer to applicable [FOA/RFA](#) for details):
Please continue to contact [RR&D](#) for guidance and to ask questions.

Winter 2022 - Merit, Career Development and Research Career Scientist:

- NEW RFAs published – October 1, 2021
 - NOTE: An updated VA Application Guide SF 424 (R&R) was published October 1
- LOI and Waiver Request deadline – November 1, 2021
- Last possible application submission deadline (no changed/corrected applications after this date) – December 10, 2021
 - NOTE: Biographical Sketch Format (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 12/2020 Approved Through 02/28/2023) must be used)
- Scientific Review – February 22 thru March 2, 2022
- Scores released – March 4, 2022
- Summary Statements released – March 25, 2022
- Intent-to-Fund notifications – by early April 2022

Spring 2022 – SPiRE:

- NEW RFA published – December 17, 2021
- Pre-application (LOI and waiver request) deadline – February 1, 2022
- Last possible award application submission deadline (**no changed/corrected applications after this date**) – March 10, 2022
- An updated version of the Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (**Rev. 10/2021** Approved Through 09/30/2024)) will be **required for application submissions starting January 25, 2022**
- Scientific Review – April 20, 2022
- Scores and Summary Statements released – May 12, 2022
- Intent-to-Fund notifications – Late May 2022

- HSR&D Updates

David Atkins, MD

- HSR&D are reviewing nominations for 3 HSRD field awards – best mentor, best paper and research impact. Thank you for the support for these nominations.
- HSR&D will be releasing call for nominations for USH award shortly. Please consider nominating your top HSRD researcher.
- SMRB will be held March 1-4. HSR&D received 28 CDAs, 16 Pilots, and 97 IIRs, 2 Innovation, and 10 QUERI
- Funding decisions will be released in early April. HSR&D have made decision that Summer SMRB will also be virtual.
- HSR&D continues to support efforts in post COVID conditions and in disrupted care during pandemic.
- HSR&D are working with Office of Rural Health on a field based meeting for the spring to update our research agenda on rural health. Meeting will be invitational. If you have researchers interested in attending contact Laura Zimmerman at laura.zimmerman1@va.gov.
- Emergency Medicine Virtual State of the Art Conference kicks off tomorrow with plenary sessions. Workgroups will work over next month and meet early February with their recommendations. SOTA is invitational but sessions will be recorded and available after the session.

- **BLR&D Updates**

Christopher T. Bever, Jr., MD

- **2022 Middleton Award Nominations**

2022 Middleton Award Nominations deadline is February 1, 2022. The Middleton Award is BLR&D's highest honor for outstanding scientific achievement. We are looking for VA scientists whose research program has had a substantial real-world impact on the healthcare of Veterans. The nominee should stand head and shoulders above his/her peers in terms their impact on a research field of prime important to VA's mission. All nomination packages must be submitted to the VHABLRD-CSR@va.gov mailbox by the research office before **February 1, 2022**. The nomination instructions can be found on the Middleton website. A link will be included in the field conference notes.

Middleton Website: [William S. Middleton Award \(va.gov\)](http://www.middletonaward.va.gov)

Questions about the Middleton Award contact: Kimberlee.potter@va.gov