



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research & Development

Field Conference Call – Meeting Notes Monday, June 13, 2022 – 1:30 pm ET

Internal Teams Site: [Click Here](#)

1. Welcome

Rachel Ramoni, DMD, ScD

Dr. Ramoni welcomed attendees and highlighted the agenda. Items included ones related to the research enterprise transformation to be presented by leads of the respective initiatives.

2. ORD / Research Enterprise

Grant Huang, MPH, PhD

- Enterprise transformation initiative updates

Last month, ORD leadership met with the Field Research Advisory Committee to talk more about the realignment and obtain input and questions. We encourage people to talk with their FRAC representative about any questions or input. The next FRAC meeting will be on June 15.

A direct communication about the realignment will be sent to all VA investigators in the VAIRRS database to help ensure that information was getting to them. The content of the message was similar to ones all ACOS-Rs and AOs received back in April and included information that no immediate changes to funding of on-going projects nor merit review submissions will be occurring. ACOS-Rs should have received an advanced copy of the communication to know what is being said. Also, the Sharepoint site and email will provided for any questions or comments. Investigators do not need to go through ACOS-Rs for such contacts to ORD.

The field webinar on the realignment is still in discussion. We are balancing the desire to have substantive details based on FAQs/submitted questions beyond what has been made available with a timely effort to help ensure that the field can remain updated with plans and directions. We are currently considering a series of webinars likely to begin in the July timeframe.

At a recent Academy Health meeting, ORD leadership including Drs. Clancy, Ramoni, Tenhula and Atkins met HSRD center directors and other investigators on June 6. It was a good conversation that raised several questions about health services research and


needs and opportunities within this community. Please contact Jerry O'Keefe, Director, CIDER, if interested in more information.

Further questions, concerns, or feedback about the SharePoint, the Research Enterprise can be submitted through the feedback form and email address. Any feedback submitted through the feedback form will be anonymous while messages sent through the email will enable us to respond to your questions and concerns directly. The anonymous feedback form is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/ResearchEnterpriseFeedback>. The feedback email address is: VHAORDResearchEntFb@va.gov.

- **IT and Data Governance initiative**

Scott DuVall, PhD

The following message was previously sent via email and again reiterated to all the medical center ACOS-Rs and AOs,

Dr. DuVall has been asked to lead the  [IT and Data Governance initiative](#) under Dr. Ramoni's [VA Research Enterprise](#). I've been with the VA since 2008 and have been involved with the VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI) and several other efforts since then. I've seen what VA research can accomplish. And I've seen how frustrating it can be to do research when non-research things, like IT and data obstacles, get in the way. I've never been more optimistic about the future of VA research and am committed to finding strategic ways that the IT and data resources supporting research can be optimized.

Here are three things the field should know:

1. We are in a communication mode. We are setting up a channel for communication called System Owner Coordination (SOC). The SOC will also have a monthly recurring meeting ([first meeting June 29 at 2pm Eastern](#)) where we will update all interested parties and solicit ideas and feedback. We've set up a team using Microsoft Teams called [ORD IT and Data Governance System Owner Coordination](#) and anyone interested in learning and participating can join. This will be our most active channel of communication – so please let interested teams at your medical center know. We will also be sending out surveys, performing interviews and focus groups with research and research administration teams across VA, and presenting summaries in the ORD Monthly Field Calls. We also have set up an email to help us manage communication and receive feedback: ORDITandData@va.gov
2. We are in a capacity building mode. Several efforts are on the way. One of these includes building research capability in the VA Enterprise Cloud. Attached is a solicitation for research teams interested in piloting our initial cloud environment. Please pass this on to those who you think may have a project that could benefit. Proposals can be submitted here: <https://forms.office.com/q/wECND8AMTW>

3. We are in a process optimization mode. One of the big things we are tackling now is to create a pathway to reuse and share data collected and curated during research. We are creating an ORD-wide research data repository, called ORD STORE, that will come with governance and intake. The end result is that interested research project teams can follow simple steps during their IRB submission process including templated wording for their protocol and/or informed consent, that will allow cleaned cohort lists, defined and mapped variables, collected surveys, etc. to be reused in other research projects and shared with others that could benefit from building on their work.

Please share these items with those you think will be interested in learning, contributing, or participating in any of these activities.

- **Research Week**

Ubon A. Mendie

ORD Communications is willing to provide communication training to all divisions.

This training will be made available to all staff regarding communications issues.

Everyone was reminded of the need to notify their Public Affairs Officers regarding publications that will have media interest.

3. **Research Protections & Policy**

- VAIRRS Module update

Angela Foster

A quick update on the VAIRRS program. The RCO module was successfully deployed in IRBNet on June 6th. All RCOs who responded to the RCO data call have been granted access to the new module. We are encouraging RCOs to start recording their audits in the new module as soon as possible. Doing so will allow the RCO to receive aggregated data of all audits performed in support of the yearly reporting requirement. Training sessions are currently underway and will be held weekly over the next two months. Any questions or issues can be addressed to the VAIRRS@va.gov inbox.

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

The following topics were discussed:

- Human Resources:
 - GS-14 Tech Transfer Specialists:
 - Dr. Hunter is now Regional TTS (Mid-West Region)
 - Dr. Wade will be a Regional TTS in a few weeks (Southeast Region)
 - Hiring Pipeline: GS-9 and MVP Field Tech Transfer Specialist

- Determination of Rights Process
- Audits
- Office Assessment
- Knowledge Management System: On-line Invention Disclosures and Certification
- Invention Disclosures: 400+
- Certification Forms – on-going efforts to obtain certification forms
 - Statistics shown below:

	Number of Inventions Disclosed to TTP	Number of Certs Missing or Incomplete 08 Nov 2021	Number of Certs Missing or Incomplete 15 Dec 2021	Number of Certs Missing or Incomplete 10 Jan 2022	Number of Certs Missing or Incomplete 14 Feb 2022	Number of Certs Missing or Incomplete 18 Apr 2022	Number of Certs Missing or Incomplete 01 Jun 2022
FY-2018	496	22	21	21	21	21	21
FY-2019	724	32	28	27	27	27	27
FY-2020	625	16	14	13	12	12	12
FY-2021	744	128	108	91	81	76	76
FY-2022	390	32 missing certs (64 FY-2022 IDs disclosed as of 08 Nov 2021)	51 missing certs (129 FY-2022 IDs disclosed as of 15 Dec 2021)	57 missing certs (154 FY-2022 IDs disclosed as of 10 Jan 2022)	63 missing certs (208 FY-2022 IDs disclosed as of 14 Feb 2022)	72 missing certs (327 FY-2022 IDs disclosed as of 18 Apr 2022)	110 missing certs (390 FY-2022 IDs disclosed as of 18 Apr 2022)
Total		230	222	209	204	208	246

5. Finance Updates

Matthew Verna

- Fund Execution, PMO's and Spend Plans, and Sweeps

- As of today, over 98% of our Current Year funding has been distributed out to the field. (855M of 882M)
- Approximately \$405M has been obligated this fiscal year to date, meaning over \$450M remains unobligated at this time.

- Please review your SOA's and funding requirements locally and continue to submit PMO requests to return excess funding timely.
- Beginning July 5th ORD Finance will be reaching out to the Field AO's and Budget Analysts to obtain spend plans. The ability of the station to obligate the funding will likely determine whether or not we engage in sweeping any funding back. Typically, this process is collaborative, and we have max participation, so sweeps are not generally needed. However, we will be kicking off the sweeps process on July 5th, so if you haven't already, please start reviewing your Research funding balances and start discussing your remaining research requirements in order to make this process seamless.
- With regards to our Prior Year funding, we still have about \$7M unobligated at this time. Last Thursday, Tony Laracuenta sent out an email with the Prior-Year funding balances by station requesting that each station provide feedback on the prior year balances. This activity will provide us with the amount of contracts that are pending obligation as well as identify contracts that will not obligate, requiring cost transfers locally. The suspense date for that activity is due to Maria Negrete by June 25th. If for some reason you have not seen this communication, please enter that in the chat box I will make sure you get a copy.

6. ORD Field Update

- IT Updates

Carl Grunfeld, MD, PhD

- VABOX.com

Many are starting to request use of VABOX.com to transfer materials and we are working on other means of transfer. We are working on a better approval process given the demand. I want to emphasize that you may need approval for use in transferring certain data. For example, if human studies, the IRB may need to be notified. If the ISSO approved transfer, then they need to be notified of the use of VABOX.com. You cannot use VABOX to bypass IT or other rules.

- Internet Explorer 11 vs. Microsoft Edge

Microsoft is no longer supporting Internet Explorer 11 (iE11). The VA has switched to Edge. There are some websites that still are only compatible with Internet Explorer 11. VA OIT has informed me that there is a way to have Edge work those sites.

7. Cross services updates and announcements Wendy Tenhula, PhD

- eRA Commons

VA-ORD has received notification from NIH that by the end of August 2022 application form versions containing the DUNS as an organizational identifier are being retired. The

result is that ASSIST will no longer be able to transfer information from an application prepared with a retired form set to an active RFA.

The new form version that includes the UEI as an organizational identifier (FORMS-G) was implemented in Spring 2022 for BLRD, CSRD and RRD, and in Summer 2022 for HSRD. If applicants expect to need to copy information from an application prepared prior to the transition to an active RFA, then they must complete the action by the end of August 2022.

- **ORD Research Supplements to promote Diversity and Collaborations** Carol Fowler, Ph.D.

ORD DEI Working group released two RFAs for ORD-wide Research Supplements on April 27, 2022:

- RD-22-029 - [Research Supplements to Promote Diversity \(I01, Type 3\)](#) – mentored research supplements for early career scientists from underrepresented populations.
- RD-22-030 - [Research Supplements to Promote Collaborations to Enhance Diversity in VA Research \(I01, Type 3\)](#) – intended to support collaborations between VA Investigators and investigators at non-VA institutions, including, but not limited to Minority Serving Institutions.

These will be offered as Type 3 supplements to active VA Merits funded by BLRD, CSRD, HSRD, and RRD. Due dates and budgets for both supplements:

- **Budget:** \$100,000/yr for up to 2 years
- **Due date for both opportunities: August 1, 2022.**
- **Earliest Start date: October 1, 2022**
- **Applications will only be accepted through grants.gov/NIH Assist and reviewed via eRA commons.**

An informational webinar and Q&A on this supplement opportunity was given on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. The webinar recording, webinar slides and a link to the RFA is posted at: <https://www.research.va.gov/funding/diversity.cfm>

For more information: Carol.Fowler@va.gov.

ORD DEI also has 2 additional short funding announcements:

- Support for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training for Veterans Affairs Field Research Employees. This opportunity is open to all VA employees who are currently affiliated with an ORD program/service including Research Services, Programs, Centers and VA investigators with current ORD-funded projects to request funds for education that will promote and support diversity, equity, and inclusion in their workforce.

- **Budget: \$ 5,500**
 - **Due: June 30, 2022**
 - **Applications must be submitted to the mailbox VHACOORDDEIWG@va.gov with the subject line “DEI Training” by June 30, 2022. Please include applicant and station name in the subject line.**
- Leadership Development for VA employees affiliated with an ORD Program/Service. ORD is seeking to promote professional development opportunities and grow future leaders that reflect the diversity of the Veterans VA serves.
 - **Budget: \$10,000**
 - **Due: June 30, 2022**
 - **Applications must be submitted to the mailbox VHACOORDDEIWG@va.gov with the subject line “Professional Development Training” by June 30, 2022. Please include applicant and station name in the subject line.**

8. Services updates and announcements

- **RR&D Updates**

Patricia A. Dorn, PhD
Karen Lohmann Siegel

- Paul B. Magnuson Award

The Paul B. Magnuson Award is presented annually to a VA RR&D investigator who exemplifies the entrepreneurship, humanitarianism, and dedication to veterans displayed by Dr. Magnuson during his career.

The award was established in 1998 in recognition of the importance of rehabilitation research within the VA Health Care System.

The award consists of a one-time \$5,000 cash award to an individual, \$50,000 per year for three (3) years supplemental funding for their ongoing peer-reviewed research, and a celebratory plaque.

Nominations for the 2023 [Paul B. Magnuson Award](#) are being accepted through **September 1, 2022**. Please refer to [Program Guide 1203.06](#) and the [Instructions for Preparing and Submitting a Nomination Packet](#).

- Review Updates

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

Spring 2023 - Center and Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP):

- NEW RFAs published – March 3, 2022
- Webinar – April 20, 2022, 12 noon: This webinar included an overview of the funding mechanism, what RR&D is looking for and a Q&A session. Contact Dr. Shirley Groer (Shirley.Groer@va.gov) for a link to the recording.
- Pre-application and List of Key Personnel submission deadline – September 1, 2022
- Full award e-application submission deadline (**no changed/corrected applications after this date**) – January 11, 2023
- Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (**Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024**)) **is required for all application submissions**
- Scientific Review – April 2023
- Scores and Summary Statements released – April/May 2023
- Administrative Review/Site Visits – May/June 2023
- Intent-to-Award notifications – Subsequent to site visit

Summer 2022 – Merit, Career Development and Research Career Scientist:

- **NEW** Summer 2022 RFAs have been published for ALL award opportunities
- *Developing and Validating Alternatives to the Use of Canines, Felines and Non-Human Primates in VA Research (I01): RFA RX-22-032* – published February 10, 2022
 - The goal of this two-phased RFA is to develop and validate alternative methods to the use of sensitive species (e.g., non-human primates (NHP), canines and/or felines) in research. VA RR&D investigators currently funded to conduct sensitive species research are eligible to apply.
 - VA-ORD acknowledges the need for basic and translational research relevant to Veterans' conditions in appropriate models and the parallel need to reduce or eliminate the use of sensitive species.
 - The alternative methods (i.e., animal models not involving sensitive species, microphysiological systems, in vitro systems, in silico models and research involving human subjects) model should be outcome-driven, to determine successful establishment to the comparator model.
 - This RFA will support initial model development (phase one) and if successful, followed by a second phase of model validation.
 - To ensure their proposed area of research meets the intent of this FOA/RFA, investigators are strongly encouraged to consult RR&D program purview and portfolio descriptions on the RR&D website and contact the listed Scientific Program Manager (SPM) relevant to their area of study.
- *Durability of Rehabilitation Interventions for VETerans (DRIVE) Award (I01): RFA RX-22-012* – published March 30, 2022
- *RR&D Translational Rehabilitation Research Award: Stage 1 (TRRA-1) (IU1)* – published April 14, 2022
 - Funding mechanism to facilitate the translation of **promising** VA research discoveries in the realm of neurological, musculoskeletal and sensory systems into new treatments for **Veterans to obtain functional gains**.
 - TRRA-1 award provides administrative support for:

- Preparatory planning for preliminary FDA interactions and early peer-review of the technical merit and feasibility of the approach.
 - An FDA regulatory consultant.
 - A Project Officer/Administrator (preparation and maintenance of a Masterfile, manages regulatory tasks, etc.)
 - Travel (if needed) for team members to meet.
- Goal is to provide VA PD/PI with funding for services NOT provided through a standard Merit Award and to prepare PD/PI for TRRA-2 – Pre-clinical Good Laboratory Practice testing of the product for FDA IND/IDE submission.
- Pre-application (LOI and waiver request) submission deadline – May 2, 2022 (as May 1 falls on a Sunday)
- Full award e-application submission deadline (no changed/corrected applications after this date) – June 10, 2022
- Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024)) is required for all application submissions
- Scientific Review – August 8-16, 2022
- Scores released – August 18, 2022
- Summary Statements released – September 9, 2022
- Intent-to-Award notifications – late September 2022

- **BLR&D Updates**

Holly Krull, PhD

- Clinician Scientist Investigator (CSI) Award

Nomination packages are due Wednesday June 29th. The Clinician Scientist Investigator (CSI) program recognize and retain outstanding clinician scientists engaged in VA research while they continue to provide high quality and timely clinical care to Veterans. Information about the program may be found: [Biomedical Laboratory R&D Clinician Scientist Investigator \(CSI\) Award \(va.gov\)](#)

CSI Award levels: The Clinician Scientist Investigator (CSI) Award will allow for a Merit award extension of up to 2 additional years (for a total of 6 years) and up to 4 additional years (for a total of 8 years) for a Senior Clinician Scientist Investigator (SCSI) Award.

CSI Eligibility:

- A minimum 5/8th VA paid clinical appointment with a current BLRD Merit award at the time of submission of a competitive BLRD Merit renewal application.
- A competitive BLRD Merit renewal application which has received an excellent to very good score (< 20th percentile).
- An outstanding record of scholarly productivity including national peer-reviewed research funding as Principal Investigator (co-investigator is not sufficient) for at least 8 years while serving as a VA clinician.

- A strong record of contribution to local and national VA research and/or clinical programs.
- In good standing with their Service Chief and/or Chief of Staff.

- **BLRD and CSRD Updates**

Both BLRD and CSRD Services have completed scientific review team meetings. Our scientific program managers are preparing summary statements for release and are preparing for Margin Meetings/funding decision meetings on July 13 and 14. We request that investigators not contact their portfolio managers about applications that are currently under review until after the margin meetings occur.

- **CSR&D Updates**

Miriam Smyth, PhD

- Career Development (CADE) Symposium:

BLR&D and CSR&D will be hosting our annual Career Development Symposium on July 19th and 20th. Investigators with BL or CS Career Development awards with start dates in **Calendar Year 2019** or **Calendar Year 2021** have been invited to participate.

We are looking forward to this opportunity to hear from our early-career investigators, answer their questions, introduce them to various ORD stakeholders, and build the community of CADEs.

We still have not heard back from everyone, so if your office supports any of these investigators, please encourage them to check their VA email for their invitation (from VHA CADE review) and reply if they haven't done so already.

Staff Departure: Jana Drgonova, PhD. – July 1

Portfolios: Preclinical mental health, pain, substance abuse/addiction.

Coverage: multiple staff will cover – specifics will be announced before July 1 on the contacts section of the website.

Jana has been a tremendous member of the ORD team and we will miss her. Our great loss is NIDA's gain.

Shared mailbox: please recall that the shared mailbox should be used for general questions that will be triaged by staff to appropriate staff member – VHA BLRD-CSR&D@va.gov

- **HSRD Updates**

David Atkins, MD, MPH

SMRB Update: June 10 was the deadline for SMRB applications for the summer cycle. Review is scheduled last day of August.

Review of cross-service Long COVID research programs will be held in two weeks, June 27-28.

June 15 is the deadline for project mods for HSRD projects wishing to reallocate any 2022 funds.

We are planning on releasing a solicitation for concept papers for a Practice Based Research Network for long COVID. Solicitation is open to facilities with a research program and a long COVID clinic.

HSRD/QUERI: Planning is underway for a national HSRD/QUERI meeting for late October. Hope to have exact time and location in a few weeks.

Naomi Tomoyasu Deputy Director has left for SAMHSA. We will be announcing plans as they develop for coverage of her duties but in meantime you may reach out to me and to Mary Walsh.