



Research Operations Innovation Program

Clinical Trials Operations

By: Ryan Chiechi, MBA, MHA · Mathew Bush · Amanda Hammond, JD · Meghan Brenan Licata, PhD, RN, ONP
Jason Light, MPH, MS · Michael Kenney · Brenda Williams, BSN, RN · Adrine Chung · Ashley Baker Lee, MBA

BACKGROUND

City of Hope (COH) Research Operations (RO) team is committed to providing COH basic, translational, and clinical research programs excellent operational and regulatory support. The RO staff assist investigators, remove administrative barriers and help rapidly and safely move science forward. There are five teams that comprise RO: Research Applications and Data Management, Clinical Research Services, Research Administration, Research Protections, and Clinical Research Operations. All five teams, under a single leader, work together to further COH scientific discovery through provision of top-caliber operational support to research portfolios and programs. There remain opportunities for more collaborative, efficient, standardized processes, and potential for staff development and engagement.

METHODS

In 2019, COH RO launched a competitive, project-based Research Innovations Program amongst the five RO teams aimed to boost collaboration and generate innovative operational improvement ideas in alignment with enterprise strategic priority. *De novo* project concepts were required to be conceived of and led by ground-level RO staff with a short completion timeline. Each project required a project leader to guide and direct project completion, however senior leaders within RO could not serve in this role in order to facilitate bottom-up ideas and broader team participation. A formal request for project proposals was issued and twelve proposals were received, addressing a variety of topics including improved support for basic science, improvements to clinical trial processes and enhanced employee professional development opportunities. Five projects were planned to be selected for execution.



OUTCOMES

The committee, comprised of executive and scientific leaders, selected six well-conceived and developed projects, one more than anticipated. All the selected projects offered to close an identified gap and foster a highly engaged work environment, they included:

- Research Operations Collaborator Content Management System for Subsites & Sponsors;
- Research Operations Orientation Program;
- Research Operations Campus Recruiting Project;
- Developing a Research Operations Conference Travel Policy;
- Use of Mobile Performance Board Template to Identify Challenges & Drive Change;
- Expanded Lunch & Learn Program.

Subsequent to selection, the six project leads developed a detailed project charter and implementation plan, addressing review questions. In FY20, during execution, project leads will provide the RO team project updates and progress with plans for sustainability beyond FY20.

METRICS AND GOALS

The selected proposals supported the following enterprise-wide strategic initiatives:

- Enhance community research;
- Enterprise-wide implementation of Precision Medicine;
- Promote efficient use of resources and financial accountability;
- Continue to advance CAR T and/or IEC programs;
- Increase employee engagement scores;

FUTURE PLANS

Although the projects only recently launched, there is a clear display of connectedness and the planned outcomes well-received by RO staff. Beyond the collaborative nature, the RO Innovation Program provided leadership a window to better understand staff challenges and priorities on a ground level. The RO Leadership team received valuable feedback regarding issues surrounding employee engagement, barriers and administrative burden specific to the RO team. This allows not only these projects to move forward but for leadership and teams to consider the challenges of the employees when considering solutions and new initiatives.