

Staff Effort Estimate Calculator: A Successful Multisite Program Budget and Staffing Tool

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1. Background

A successful multisite program requires an accurate estimate of staff effort in order to sufficiently support funding proposals. The program must define how its operations integrate and differentiate from existing clinical trial office operations. We developed a budget estimate tool to provide funding proposal justification and assist in projecting multisite program staffing needs. Here, we detail how our multisite operational plan and staff effort estimate calculator have become invaluable tools for the MCW Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office Multisite Program.

2. Goals

- Completed multisite program operations plan and staff effort estimate calculator
- Received funder feedback about multisite budget
- Obtained approved multisite budget proposal(s)
- Gained approval for staff hiring requests from human resources

3. Solutions and Methods

- Define multisite program structure and staff roles in an operational plan
- Develop Excel-based multisite budget estimator
- Utilize estimator for multisite funding proposals and staff hiring decisions

4. Outcomes

The MCW Multisite Program operations plan and staff effort estimate calculator (Excel-based) were created in 2017. After implementation, all eight multisite funding proposals with an approved letter of intent and completed funder fair market value analysis obtained multisite budget approval, totaling over \$9.7 million (\$1.4 million dedicated to multisite), although a few are still pending review. Funder feedback required only minor clarifications. These were addressed by sharing details from the estimator. The MCW Department of Human Resources approved two program staff positions using data generated from the estimate calculator. In addition, the tool served as an important source in the administrative decision to pause acceptance of new multisite studies during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Lessons Learned

The staff effort estimate calculator was successfully utilized to obtain funding for multisite program studies and to justify the need for new staff positions. The calculator allows for constant refinement based on team feedback (e.g., perceived effort), the impact of process changes, and experience (e.g., external site declining participation or slower than anticipated accrual rates). It is crucial that study-related data input into the estimator (e.g., accrual goals from statisticians, estimated time to enrollment completion, duration of patient treatment and follow-up) is accurate. These elements have greater

