

Centralized Knowledge Hub: Streamlining Access to Clinical Research Resources on SharePoint

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1. Background

For years, the Wilmot Cancer Institute Clinical Trials Office (CTO) used a Shared Drive to store work instructions, document templates, and educational resources. As staffing levels increased, multiple contributors managed this repository, leading to inconsistent organization, version control issues, and accidental deletion or relocation of files. Multiple versions of the same document were saved in different locations, causing confusion. Staff reported difficulty locating essential resources, highlighting inefficiencies in the system. Tools developed by previous CTO leaders were scattered across the Shared Drive, making it difficult to consolidate institutional knowledge. These challenges underscored the need for a centralized, structured, and user-friendly knowledge hub to support clinical research staff.

2. Goals

The primary goal was to create a centralized knowledge hub, replacing the disorganized Shared Drive with a structured, intuitive resource. This included the creation of a comprehensive Employee Handbook to improve accessibility to policies, workflows, and reference materials. Additionally, maintaining document control was essential, ensuring appropriate view-only or download access depending on document type. The system needed to be user-friendly, allowing staff to locate and utilize resources without confusion.

3. Solutions and Methods

The CTO Knowledge Hub, built in SharePoint, was designed with four primary sections:

1. A welcoming Home Page featuring frequently used internal and external links, a group photo, and easy navigation.
2. A Getting Started page offering essential onboarding information, replacing PDF materials previously distributed by email.
3. The CTO Employee Handbook, structured with a drop-down index linking to each topic such as Audits, IND Preparation, and Subject Shadow Charts.
4. A feedback form and group email address to facilitate ongoing improvements.

To establish consistent structure and professional appearance, a general site plan and page template incorporating University branding were developed. Two volunteers from the CTO Staff Council participated in User Acceptance Testing, identifying areas for improvement prior to launch.

To facilitate prompt response to questions, a group email address was included in the page template. A feedback form using SharePoint's Lists feature was implemented, allowing for the documentation and tracking of issues over time.

4. Outcomes

The CTO Knowledge Hub was introduced to CTO staff on February 24, 2025. That day, there were 30 unique visitors to the Home Page, with an average session duration of 4 minutes 56 seconds, indicating strong initial engagement. Early anecdotal feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with one individual commenting the platform was designed in an intuitive, user-friendly way. Ongoing evaluation and staff input will guide future enhancements to ensure continued usability and relevance.

5. Learned and Future Directions

Beyond the initial site plan, establishing a clear document library structure early in the process was essential, as it impacts long-term maintenance and updates. Regular team check-ins ensured alignment, collaboration, and the exchange of new ideas, allowing for continuous refinement of the platform throughout development.

Moving forward, additional topics will be added to the Employee Handbook, further expanding its utility. Future plans include using SharePoint to share news, CTO event information, and ongoing communication with staff. Usage data and feedback will be collected over the coming year to gauge effectiveness and identify opportunities for future enhancements.