



# From Idea to Impact: Developing the Research Science Liaison Position at Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center



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## Background

Strong industry partnerships are vital for the successful expansion of clinical trial programs. However, potential Principal Investigators (PIs) may not have the bandwidth to systematically identify trials that offer cutting-edge research ideas, investigate unmet needs, and have high accrual potential for their patient population. To address these challenges, the University of North Carolina's Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center (LCCC) developed an innovative Research Science Liaison (RSL) position in 2023 to improve communication and workflow with industry partners.

## Goals

The RSL position was designed for PhD-level professionals with the expertise to strategically navigate the clinical trial landscape.

Serving as a point of contact for industry partners, the RSL role aims to increase the number of industry-sponsored clinical trials at LCCC.

This position was envisioned as a bridge between LCCC and pharmaceutical and biotech companies, facilitating high-level scientific and medical exchanges in areas of clinical interest.

During their first year, RSLs had:

135 meetings with  
67 different companies

(Only 1 company declined to meet with them.)

Industry studies  
reviewed in 2 years: 437

2024



2022

In ISTs across  
the solid tumor  
portfolios

*"This was a perfect example of  
why we need someone in your  
position at every University."*  
- MSL

*"[You RSLs] are like hawks:  
you circle and then strike."*  
- Lineberger PI

Our current Industry  
Contact list has

200+

MSLs and other industry  
representatives

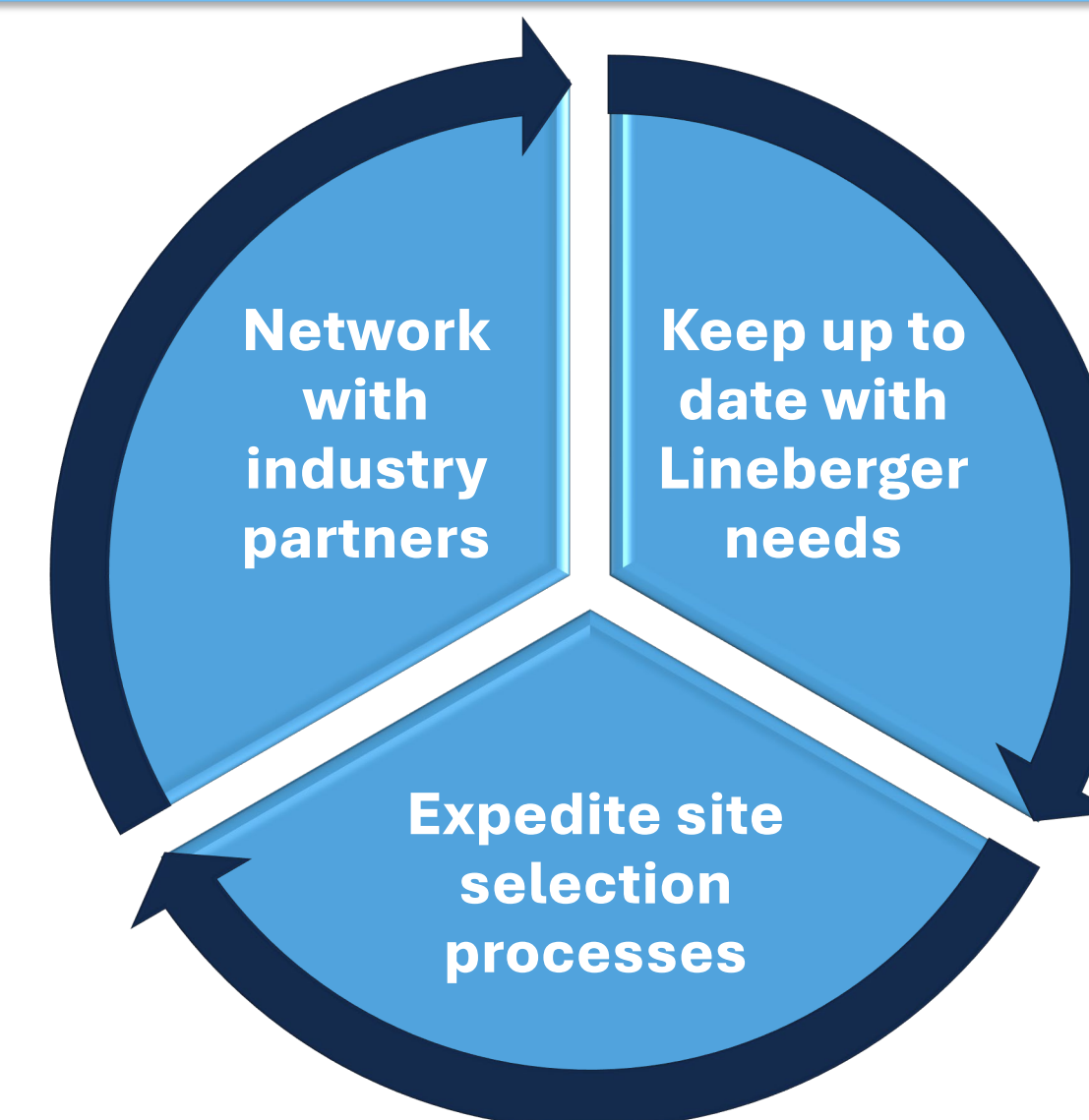
*"The RSLs provide a wonderful conduit between  
industry-sponsored trials and their numerous key  
researchers. They have been amazing partners that  
help bring innovative trials to reach patients faster  
by keeping MSLs abreast of trial gaps and  
connecting them to their institution's dynamic  
research interests."*  
-Field Medical Director

*"Your liaising between us and pharma has been truly  
invaluable in moving things forward. What was  
previously a haphazard, fairly inefficient process of PIs  
communicating with pharma about collaborations is  
now much more organized and effective under your  
leadership."*  
- Lineberger PI

*"I wish every University had an RSL!"*  
- MSL

*"Perfect and thank you  
thank you thank you,  
you are amazing!!!"*  
- MSL

## Solutions and Methods



The original six goals of the RSL position included:

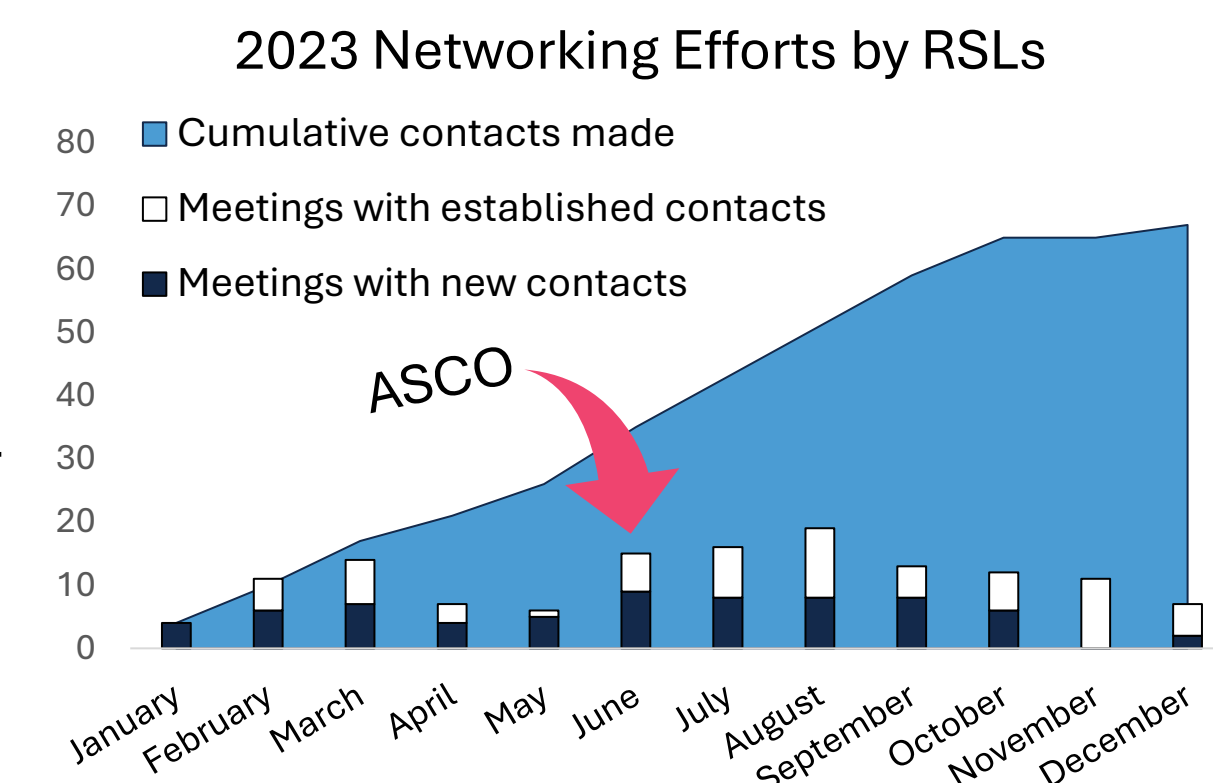
- Bring relevant insights from the field on research developments and treatment landscapes to evaluate external collaboration opportunities with industry.
- Collect key scientific and clinical information about products in the development pipelines of potential external industry partners based upon these insights.
- Serve as a conduit for communication between LCCC and external partners to facilitate future collaborations and advocating for LCCC involvement in exciting industry research opportunities and use of LCCC translational cores in strategic partnerships.
- Be involved in key strategic thinking and provide insight into the LCCC portfolio.
- Evaluate the LCCC clinical research portfolio in collaboration with clinical operations and investigators and work with investigators to identify opportunities to bring innovative clinical trials to LCCC patients to expand the portfolio or fill existing gaps within it.
- Develop strategies to develop and promote LCCC research trials encompassing basic, clinical, and translational research.

Since the role's inception, RSL tasks were expanded to manage confidential disclosure agreements (CDAs) and feasibility questionnaires, giving companies a single point of contact throughout the early steps of trial selection.

Two RSLs were hired and divided their efforts across solid tumors and hematological malignancies. During the first 1-2 months, RSLs prioritized establishing internal relationships by meeting with Lineberger providers.

RSLs stay abreast of disease group needs at weekly meetings where all trials/patients are discussed. Some disease groups established monthly "portfolio meetings" with RSLs to review potential studies and discuss trials in the portfolio.

RSLs developed a network within the industry community via outreach to medical science liaisons (MSLs). RSLs maintain quarterly check-ins with our most established industry partners, and try to connect in-person at national conferences.



Each RSL set up custom RSS feeds to send relevant clinicaltrial.gov study records to their email within 24 hours of posting. If a study that may be of interest is posted, an email is sent to the sponsor contact listed.

### Sample RSL outreach email

Good morning,  
I am the Research Science Liaison at the University of North Carolina Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center for the solid tumor disease groups. My role is to serve as the primary point of contact with pharmaceutical companies to facilitate information exchange about trial opportunities that might be a good fit for the Lineberger patient population.  
Our Phase 1 team has been looking for an industry study that can enroll multiple tumor types with fairly broad eligibility criteria. I was excited to see the <study name> study posted to ct.gov, because this is the kind of study that our team enrolls well to.  
I would love to hear if you are still looking for sites to participate in this trial, or any additional information that I can share with the Phase 1 team. I'm also happy to help set up a CDA, schedule a call with one of our Phase 1 providers, or answer any questions you may have about Lineberger's site capabilities.  
Thank you, and we look forward to hearing from you.

The company's CMO responded positively just 19 minutes after this was sent!

## Lessons Learned & Future Directions

The RSL position serves as a springboard for further engagement and collaboration with academia and industry for clinical trials. RSLs streamlined and increased industry-sponsored clinical trial participation at LCCC. See our accompanying poster for additional metrics.

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