

HSRD Town Hall

April 13, 2022



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

PANEL INTRODUCTIONS

HSR&D Leadership

- David Atkins, MD, MPH, Director, HSRD
- Naomi Tomoyasu, PhD, Deputy Director, HSRD
- Amy Kilbourne, PhD, MPH, Director, QUERI

Guest Panelists

- Antonio Laracuente, MBA, Director of Field Operations, ORD
- Christine Kowalski, MPH, Qualitative Methods Learning Collaborative Advisory Group (QMLC)

TOWN HALL OVERVIEW

HSR&D Staff

ORD Research Enterprise Initiatives

HSR&D Strategic Planning Updates

Q&A

HSRD SCIENTIFIC PORTFOLIO MANAGERS (SPM)

SPM	Portfolio(s)
Amanda Borsky, DrPH, MPP	Women's Health, Health Systems
Kevin Chaney, MGS	Informatics, Connected Care
Crystal Henderson, EdD	Health Equity, Rural Health, Social Determinants of Health
Eric Enone	Acting COIN Program Management (assisted by Lina Kubli, PhD, Detail from RRD)
Robert O'Brien, PhD	Mental and Behavioral Health
Lynne Padgett, PhD	Aging, Long-Term Services and Supports, Mobility
Cathie Plouzek, PhD	Health Care and Clinical Management, Opioids, Innovation
Robert Small	Career Development, Centralized Research Positions

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Fellow	Portfolio(s)
Maciej Gonek, PhD	Post COVID Conditions, Pain and Opioids, Veteran Engagement
Karen McNamara, PhD	COVID-Disrupted and Delayed Care, Provider Burnout, Veteran Engagement
Laura Zimmerman, PhD	Rural Health, Vaccine Hesitancy, Patient-Centered Education

HSRD SCIENTIFIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Staff	Roles(s)
Kara Beck, PhD	QUERI Program Support
Melissa Braganza, MPH	QUERI Program Manager
Liza Catucci, MPH (detailed to ORD)	Administrative Officer
Eric Enone, MPH	Acting Administrative Officer, Administration, Handbooks, Eligibility, HR
Veronica Gittens	Administrative Support
Judy McMaster	Administrative Support
Christine Nguyen, MHA	Strategic Planning, Advancing Impact, OMB Reviews, Data Safety Monitoring Board
Tiffin Ross-Shepard, BS	Scientific Merit Review Manager, JIT, Clinical Trials
Mary Walsh, RN	Budget, Liaison to Finance, Resource Centers and Independent VA Investigators



ORD is embarking upon a journey to enable VA Research to operate more efficiently as a Research Enterprise

What is the VA Research Enterprise?
VA Research Enterprise is the entire set of people, tools, and processes committed to a whole-of-VA approach for improving Veteran health and well-being through scientific endeavors.

Clinical/operations and the research enterprise must actively work together to efficiently improve the health and well-being of Veterans.



As a health system, VA is uniquely capable of this integration at scale.

For this to succeed, we have to build an enterprise with 5 key characteristics:



Unique Value Proposition: addresses VA's research needs by leveraging its unique capabilities and resources



Real-World Outcomes: improves Veterans' health and well-being to solve the problems they face



Engaged People: involves a diverse research community that aims to improve Veterans' well-being



Integration: cultivates relationships and partnerships to achieve VA's mission



Organizational Excellence: operates with streamlined processes, effective collaboration, high-quality customer service, and appropriate resources

ORD developed a set of 9 foundational research enterprise initiatives to tackle by December 31, 2022

Initiative	Objective
IT and Data Governance	Provide ORD staff and VA researchers with access to the tools, data, processes, and capabilities required to efficiently conduct and support research
Actively Managed Portfolios	Provide research leaders with autonomy, flexibility, information, resources, and tools to make decisions needed to rapidly respond to research priorities focused on the health challenges faced by Veterans
Central Research HR Function	Enable researchers to quickly hire qualified staff for VA Research projects limiting research start-up and execution delays
Centralized Field Support Contract	Provide VA researchers with expedited access to a wide range of support resources (e.g., biostatisticians, study coordinators, home visit nurses)
Alignment of ORD's Organization	Ensure alignment of organizational structure and roles with the desired enterprise functions to build capacity and better support researchers, Veterans, and the broader VA Enterprise
Staff Development and Mentoring Program	Implement effective leadership practices across ORD and help with career development for all staff
Finance Process	Ensure optimal and timely allocation of research funds and limit carryover by proactively reallocating unobligated funds to other research priorities throughout the fiscal year
Partnered Research Program	Implement tools, processes, and resources to improve the VA Research's ability to effectively cooperate with industry and enhance Veteran's access to high-quality clinical trials
ORD Governance & Success Measures	Ensure effective coordination, prioritization, and implementation of strategic Research Enterprise efforts

HSRD STRATEGIC PLANNING GOALS

1

Increase Research Impact

As part of the VA research enterprise, HSRD generates high-quality and relevant evidence that has measurable impacts on VA policy and practice.

2

Improve Research Efficiency

HSRD has a robust infrastructure that capitalizes on VA's unique strengths and continually improves the efficiency and long-term productivity of research.

3

Strengthen Research Workforce

HSRD supports a robust, diverse scientific community that is equipped to meet emerging health services questions.

INCREASING RESEARCH IMPACT OBJECTIVES

- Set priorities with input of stakeholders
- Leverage unique VA capabilities within a large, diverse, national healthcare system
- Ensure that funding mechanisms are aligned to support both organizational priorities and innovation
- Improve communication to increase impact and support for research
- Ensure quality, transparency, and reproducibility of VA research

IMPROVING RESEARCH EFFICIENCY OBJECTIVES

- Address HR/IT/contracting obstacles
- Address challenges to paying research participants
- Improve data and computing resources
- Facilitate data re-use
- Improve the development of and support for research teams

STRENGTHENING WORKFORCE OBJECTIVES

- Increase diversity of investigators and research staff, including race/ethnicity, Veteran status, disabilities
- Enhance support for investigators and research staff to facilitate successful trajectories in VA research
- Establish a process by which emerging priority areas, methodologic skills, and disciplines relevant to health services are identified, updated, and incorporated into recruitment and training of the VA research workforce

QUESTIONS

Please enter questions into chat

Q&A – MODELS OF WORK AND WORKPLACE

- How might we leverage the telework capabilities we have established to support places and people that often struggle with recruiting staff, investigators, and leaders?
- What formats/strategies can provide flexibility while also fostering collaboration?
- How to navigate VISN- and/or site-specific issues with varying degrees of flexibility in post-pandemic models of work?
- How will HSRD support VA research centers in improving their workplaces to be more inclusive and retain talented staff?

Q&A – TRAINING NEEDS

- Provide opportunities to gain proficiency in the application of programming and coding, such as R, SQL and Python.
- What opportunities exist for training in managing people, budgets, and grant writing?
- How can I ensure that I receive essential job training as part of my work?

Q&A – BARRIERS TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Centralized Transcription Service Program
- Qualitative Methods Learning Collaborative (QMLC) Advisory Group
- Use of VA research dollars to purchase scientific software (e.g., Atlas, NVivo) and/or software as a service
- Regional Procurement Office East provides direct support for research contracting to ORD and field sites [[Home - R&D Contracting Division - Customer Center \(sharepoint.com\)](#)]
- New ORD Field Enterprise Research Support Services (FERSS) Contract [[Field Enterprise Research Support Services \(FERSS\) - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)]

Q&A – CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

- CDA applicants require nearly mid-career credentials to be competitive. This also causes equity issues for women and underrepresented minorities. Have you considered reducing barriers to the CDA (e.g., support promising investigators to use the CDA to develop their career and get pubs)?
- Can HSRD develop a centralized program to support aspiring novice researchers who cannot secure local and/or VISN support? Any advice for an aspiring researcher in dissertation in doctorate degree program that has no local support? Any groups to join for networking, or mentorship, or help in any way?
- Can HSRD create a path/program for established mid-career persons to transition to research without loss of established income?
- What is the career ladder for research assistants and project managers not interested in becoming an investigator or pursuing a PhD?

Q&A – HSRD/QUERI RFAS AND FUNDING STREAMS

- Is it possible to make HSRD funding apps more similar to operations RFAs, which tend to be more feasible and more accessible for early career researchers?
- I've been a fan of the periodic different funding streams (e.g., Innovation awards, Research to Impact for Veterans [RVR]; could there be other funding streams beyond the HSRD/QUERI dichotomy?

Q&A – ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

- Regulatory processes (e.g., IRB) are excessively long and duplicate information across forms.
- Participant payment process is often very slow.
- Could an option like Survey Monkey be used for surveys of Veterans?
- Can VA Redcap be approved for storage of PII or PHI?
- Many VA investigators and staff are hired on Term appointments, severely limiting their mobility within the federal government. Can ORD create a system for being able to apply to move into a career appointment when certain requirements are met or by creating a special type of career appointment category just for researchers?
- There is not one central repository for all things VA\VHA research.

Q&A

- Bringing an active research team to sites that do not have active research or the research is geared to a fellowship program? How do we make that happen