



American  
Heart  
Association.

# **Guide for Health Equity Research Networks Oversight Advisory Committees**

## **AHA MISSION STATEMENT**

**To be a relentless force  
for a world of longer,  
healthier lives.**

## **AHA 2024 Impact Goal**

**to advance cardiovascular health for all, including  
identifying and removing barriers  
to health care access and quality by 2024.**

## PREFACE

The American Heart Association (AHA and/or Association) welcomes you to a Health Equity Research Network (HERN) Oversight Advisory Committee (OAC). It is a great source of pride to the AHA that you have been selected to provide external oversight and serve in an advisory capacity for this HERN. The AHA OAC is an integral part to the success of the Health Equity Research Networks.

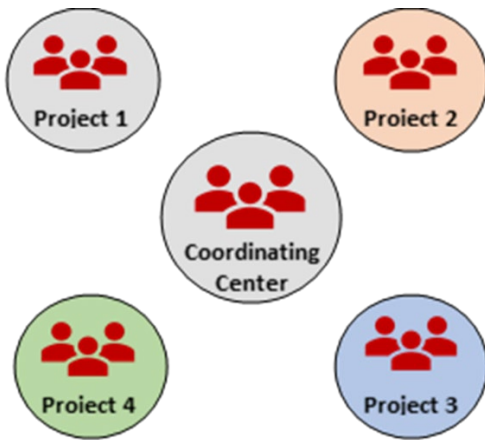
This guide governs the AHA HERN OAC. Please refer to this guide to answer the most asked questions about procedures and policies of this AHA Research Program. The research administration practices outlined in this manual cover only the AHA HERNs. Acceptance of the AHA's policies and OAC charge are a requirement of accepting the OAC nomination.

This guide has been prepared to assist the OAC and AHA staff with the specific terms and conditions applicable to managing the AHA HERN Awards. In accepting this nomination, the OAC provides oversight and assures the Network achieves its identified specific aims and the desired goals stated in the RFA.

## I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Health Equity Research Network (HERN) programs are mechanisms that provide AHA an opportunity to address key strategic issues as determined by the AHA Board of Directors. The HERN program was designed to advance the science of cardiovascular health and healthcare topics within a health equity lens. This initiative is designed to produce a single Network that will include a Coordinating Center and multiple Projects. A Network may propose to address multiple approaches that are closely aligned thematically (Figure 1). Your participation as an OAC member will help to facilitate these and other goals of the Network programs.

Figure 1. Illustration of Network Structure



The American Heart Association funded Networks will attempt to accomplish the following goals:

- Accelerate generation of important, novel ideas
- Answer significant questions addressing gaps in knowledge
- Create important gains (developing new investigators is one such gain) per the RFA
- Demonstrate efficacy through data collection and evaluation
- Demonstrate the effectiveness or the applicability of the findings in clinical, public health or community-based settings such as workplaces, schools, churches or other “real-life” settings.
- Increase inclusion of individuals and communities that have been historically underrepresented in science and medicine
- Prioritize the use of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

It is anticipated that the results of the funding and formation of the AHA HERN and their linking in this structure will:

- Produce new research results based on the initial ideas of the Networks and on ideas generated by the interaction of the projects and their investigators
- Provide insights into and report on the challenges and successful mechanisms for synergy and collaboration
- Identify programs and policies that address racial health disparities and movement towards health equity.

- Identify programs and policies that result in individual lifestyle modifications that reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

## II. SELECTION FOR OVERSIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Chair and Members of the OAC have been nominated and approved by Office of Science Operations (OSO) Senior Management. Each Advisory Committee includes:

- Leading established investigators in the area of the awarded research Network, but who are not funded by the program;
- Investigators experienced in clinical, epidemiological, population, and community-based participatory research approaches;
- Balanced membership of scientific expertise, geography, race, ethnicity, and sex.

The AHA HERN OAC will provide external oversight for the Network and serve in an advisory capacity to the Coordinating Center, Projects, and AHA leadership.

## III. OVERSIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHARGE

The OAC chair and members will be expected to complete a 2-year term, with the possibility to renew for a second 2-year term and any no-cost extension period. Video-/teleconference meetings occur no less frequently than quarterly, and each OAC will be expected to attend one in-person annual meeting per year and at least two OAC members attend the semi-annual meeting per year.

### A. OVERSIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Work with the key personnel in the research Network to develop a framework for routine Network and AHA/ASA OAC meetings/teleconferences. Framework includes purpose of meetings, on-going agenda development, logistics, recording of meetings and follow-up on action items generated from meetings, etc.
- Promote and facilitate collaboration among the Coordinating Center PI and Project PIs.
- Monitor collaborative activities of the Network.
- Ensure focus is maintained on overall goal of the Network as stated in the RFA.
- Monitor, evaluate and report the Coordinating Center and the Projects' progress through the review of Scientific Progress Reports and any interim reporting requests. Evaluate the Network's synergy and how the Coordinating Center is achieving and encouraging collaboration among the projects.
- Monitor and report on progress as it relates to specific study aims. Provide feedback to Coordinating Center PI and Project PIs with recommendations targeted at achieving Network goals and study aims.
- Work with Coordinating Center to identify and implement best science and/or administrative practices that will aid the Network in achieving its goals.
- Monitor development and training of Network Trainees, including promotion/development of experiences, grant writing skills, presentation skills, networking, etc.
- OAC members are expected to attend the annual meeting of the Network they oversee. There will be four face-to-face annual meetings for each Network over the duration of the award with a possible fifth face-to-face annual meeting during any no cost extension. During the meetings, the OAC Members are tasked with facilitating discussion, collaboration and advising trainees who may be honing skills or seeking career development advice.
- Oversee and annually evaluate the program, including an evaluation of the progress of the trainees. Progress of the Networks will be shared with the AHA Research Committee.

- Monitor and encourage synergy among Coordinating Center and Projects.

## B. COLLABORATION EXPECTATIONS:

This initiative is designed to produce a single Network that will include a Coordinating Center and multiple Projects. The entire Network is expected to operate as a team.

There is an expectation that the Network will interact with each other to provide networking opportunities for trainees, to encourage sharing of commonly-useful knowledge and methods, to educate each other on unique knowledge and methods and to provide a stimulating atmosphere for research collaborations. Strategies for communication and interaction among the Network should have been addressed in the Coordinating Center's proposal and could include ways to encourage interaction, augment or expand study findings, share training opportunities for trainees and junior investigators, etc. The OAC will monitor progress in this regard and is encouraged to ensure these strategies are utilized and to offer suggestions when deficiencies exist.

All key Network personnel will be expected to participate in annual meetings and other activities such as routine tele/videoconferences to facilitate interaction and collaboration. Quarterly Patient Recruitment & Retention Reports to track enrollment progress of recruiting human subjects, Annual Progress Reports describing each Projects efforts and financial commitments towards integration, as well as a report on successes/challenges of such efforts, will be required.

Collaborations within the Network need not be limited to single projects but could be transformative for the overall work of the Network if approved by the OAC. Collaborations between HERNs is highly encouraged.

### Collaboration Expectations:

- The Network will be expected to meet semi-annually
  - All key Network personnel (Coordinating Center PI, Project PIs and trainees) will attend the HERN Annual Meeting hosted by the AHA
  - Semi-Annual Meetings will be hosted by the Coordinating Center institution or be held on a rotating basis by the Project institutions.
- Each Network will be expected to develop a new hypothesis or build off of currently funded hypotheses.
- The Network will produce an end-of-award report about the challenges, mechanisms and successes of the collaborations and research findings.

## IV. OPERATIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The OAC will be expected to follow AHA's Conflict of Interest Policy and AHA Operational Policies regarding the Ethics Policy, Inclusiveness Policy and AHA's Mission and Strategic Driving Force, Guiding Values and Essential Elements for AHA Research Enterprise.

### A. MEETINGS

Leadership will be provided by the Chair of the committee for the Network. The primary function of the Chair is to provide leadership at all meetings and encourage all members to participate in the decision-making process for the OAC. Virtual meetings will be scheduled by the assigned AHA Network manager on a bi-monthly, quarterly, or more frequent basis, at the discretion of the committee. Each meeting should focus on specific content or issues.

## B. AGENDA

The agenda should be prepared & reviewed by the AHA manager, Chair and Vice Chair for each scheduled meeting and distributed to the members with the meeting notice. The agenda should include:

- Welcome and Introductions, Call to Order
- Review of AHA Conflict of Interest Policy & Operational Policies
- Approval of previous Meeting Minutes
- Discussion Agenda
- Information Agenda
- Review of Action Items
- New Business
- Adjournment

## C. MINUTES

The minutes will be kept by the AHA Network manager and distributed to the members prior to the meeting to allow for review. Minutes and other OAC records shall be filed with AHA. Meeting minutes should include discussion, decisions, recommendations, and action items made by the OAC.

## D. REPORTING

Networks are required to submit an annual scientific report and attend a face-to-face meeting semi-annually. Each OAC is expected to report on the progress of the Networks and if there are concerns that should be addressed.

The following administrative matters will be handled by the AHA Network Manager:

- Budget/Re-budgeting project funds
- Any trainee mandate, if stated in the RFA
- Change in Collaborating Investigator
- Change in Coordinating Center and Project's Grant Administrative Support
- Change in OAC Chair / Members

## E. ADMINISTRATION

The following administrative issues will be directed to the OAC chair(s) for review and approval:

- Change in Principal Investigator to any project
- Change in location for Principal Investigator

The following will be directed for further action and might require additional meetings:

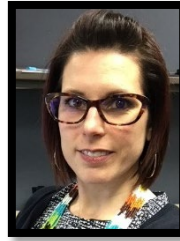
- Lack of Network Progress
  - OAC Network Report with concerns/comments will be distributed to the Coordinating Center and/or Project PI(s) for response.
  - Insufficient response to concerns will be elevated to virtual meeting with Coordinating Center and/or Project PI(s) 2-3 designated OAC members including the OAC Chair and/or Vice Chair and Center to address concerns
  - Continued lack of progress will be elevated to AHA Senior Management for further discussion and decision.

We appreciate the leadership and support of the Oversight Advisory Committees.

AHA STAFF



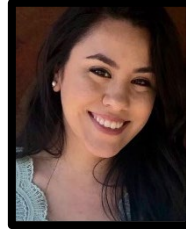
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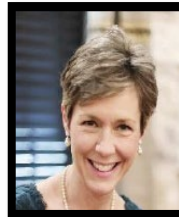
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