



American  
Heart  
Association.

# **Guide for Strategically Focused Research Network Oversight Advisory Committees**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

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

## PREFACE

The American Heart Association (AHA and/or Association) welcomes you to the Strategically Focused Research Network (SFRN) 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 the Centers comprising each Network. The AHA OAC are an integral part to the success of the SFRNs.

This guide governs the AHA SFRN Awards. Please refer to this guide to answer the most commonly asked questions about procedures and policies of this AHA Research Program. The research administration practices outlined in this manual cover only the AHA SFRNs. 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 SFRN Awards. In accepting this nomination, the OAC provides oversight and assures the Network achieves its identified specific aims and the desired goal of multi-disciplinary involvement; focusing on basic, clinical, population and translational research with a focus on one area strategic to the AHA's mission.

## I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Strategically Focused Research Network (SFRN) program is a mechanism that provides AHA an opportunity to address key strategic issues as determined by the AHA Board of Directors. This initiative is designed to produce a Network of interacting Centers, institutions and scientists for collaborative and multidisciplinary research. A major component of the Centers will be the interdisciplinary training of a new generation of scientists who, from their earliest experiences in research, will collaborate with other scientists through meetings with established investigators and semi-annual meetings with other Center investigators. One outcome of this program will be the creation of a report on the challenges and results of active collaboration. Your participation as an OAC member will help to facilitate these and other goals of the SFRN program.

The American Heart Association funded Centers that 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)
- Link research and training components through the program
- Prioritize multidisciplinary approaches with frequent collaborative interactions
- 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.

It is anticipated that the results of the funding and formation of the AHA Strategically Focused Research Center Networks and their linking in this structure will:

- Produce a cadre of new investigators who will energize the field and lead to an expansion of such investigators in later years
- Produce new research results based on the initial ideas of the Centers and on ideas generated by the interaction of the Centers and their investigators
- Provide insights into and report on the challenges and successful mechanisms for active collaboration
- 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 multidisciplinary approaches;
- Balanced membership of scientific expertise, geography, race, ethnicity, and sex.

The AHA SFRN OAC will provide external oversight for the Centers and serve in an advisory capacity to the Centers 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. Virtual meetings occur no less frequently than quarterly, and each OAC will have a minimum of one face-to-face meeting per year.

## A. OVERSIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Work with the Centers in the research Network to develop a framework for routine Network and AHA/ASA OAC meetings/teleconferences. Framework includes purpose of meetings, ongoing agenda development, logistics, recording of meetings and follow-up on action items generated from meetings, etc.
- Promote and facilitate collaboration among Centers that results in a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Track collaborative activities of Centers to ensure maximum inclusion of:
  - Basic Science
  - Clinical Science
  - Population Science
  - Translational Science
- Ensure focus is maintained on overall goal of the Network.
- Monitor, evaluate and report each Center's progress in the Network through the review of Scientific Progress Reports and any interim reporting requests. Evaluate each Center's synergy and how the Center is achieving and encouraging multidisciplinary involvement (basic, clinical, population and translational) with a focus on specific focus of the Network. Monitor and report on progress as it relates to specific study aims. Disseminate reports to Center Directors with recommendations targeted at achieving Network goals and study aims.
- Work with Centers 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 Fellows, including promotion/development of interdisciplinary experiences, grant writing skills, presentation skills, Networking, etc.
- OAC members will be 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. During the meeting, the OAC Members are tasked with facilitating discussion, collaboration and assisting fellows who may be honing skills or seeking career development advice. It will be expected for the Chair and Vice Chair or an alternative member up to 1-2 members to attend all semi-annual meetings.
- 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 semi-annually.
- Monitor and encourage interaction efforts within and among Centers. The Advisory Committee will encourage Centers to reward interaction and will request an annual report on the successes and challenges resulting from efforts to interact.

## B. COLLABORATION EXPECTATIONS:

One of the key objectives of this initiative is to encourage interaction among the SFRN Centers, both in training and research efforts. An important component of the initiative is a multi-disciplinary approach both within and among Centers that comprise the Network. The structure of the Network will include sufficient components to maximize the interaction and collaboration among the Centers. The entire Network is expected to operate as a team.

There is an expectation that all Centers within a 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 Centers should have been addressed in the Center's proposal and could include ways to encourage

interaction, augment or expand study findings, share training opportunities for fellows 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 Center 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, Annual Progress Reports describing each Center's efforts and financial commitments towards integration, as well as a report on successes/challenges of such efforts, will be required.

Centers selected for funding will be expected to interact and develop new hypotheses leading to collaborative projects. The collaborating Centers are expected to share everything from "samples" to "ideas". The Centers will be expected to work with the AHA OAC to define the strategies for leadership in training and interdisciplinary collaboration, as well as a clear commitment to collaboration with the other disciplines and other Centers within the Network. 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.

#### Collaboration Expectations:

- Centers will be expected to meet and collaborate with each other through interactions to accelerate information exchange and ideas. Specifically:
  - Center Directors will participate in bi-monthly teleconferences
  - Training Directors (and fellows) will participate in monthly teleconferences
  - All key Center personnel (Center Director, Training Director, Project PIs and fellows) will attend Annual Scientific Meetings
  - All key Center personnel will participate in a virtual meeting to provide progress updates to the Oversight Committee at 6-month intervals.
- Directors and investigators are expected to provide and share in Networking and cross-training opportunities for postdoctoral trainees in conjunction with AT LEAST one other Center in the Network.
- Each Center will be expected to collaborate with AT LEAST one other Center in the Network to develop a new hypothesis or build off of currently funded hypotheses. This interaction should lead to at least one (1) collaborative publication
- Each Center will collaborate and participate in producing an end-of-award report about the challenges, mechanisms and successes of the Centers' collaborations;

## 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. Teleconferences 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:

- Roll Call
- 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

Centers are required to submit a scientific report and attend a face-to-face meeting annually. Each OAC is expected to report on the progress of the Centers 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
- Initial Fellow onboarding
- Change in Fellow before the term of his/her fellowship commitment
- Change in Collaborating Investigator
- Change in Center's Grant Administrative Support
- Change in OAC Chair / Members

## E. ADMINISTRATION

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

- Change in Principal Investigator
- Change in location for Center Director, Training Director and Principal Investigator
- Change in leadership transition to Co-Center Director or Deputy Director
- Change in Center Director / Training Director
  - Further discussion with AHA Senior Management, OAC Chair and Members

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

- Lack of Center Progress
  - OAC Center Report with outlying concerns/comments will be distributed to the Center for response.
  - Insufficient response to concerns will be elevated to teleconference with Center and 2-3 designated OAC members including the OAC Chair and/or Vice Chair and Center to address concerns;

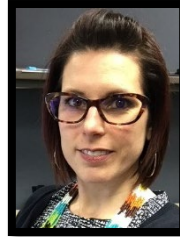
- Continued lack of progress will be elevated to AHA Senior Management for further discussion and recommendation to have monthly follow-up call to closely track progress may be requested.

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

#### AHA STAFF



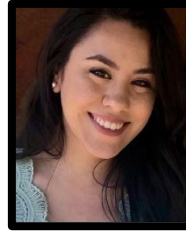
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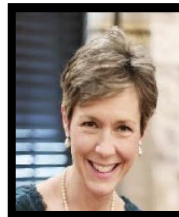
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