Field Enterprise Research Support Services Introduction and Rollout

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Objectives

1. Provide introduction to the Field Enterprise Research Support Services (FERSS) Initiative

2. Outline general policies and procedures for using the FERSS contract

3. Overview of request submission, evaluation, and resource deployment processes

4. Overview and demonstration of the SharePoint site and form that must be completed to request support services

Introduction and Background

- ORD enterprise transformation activities include developing solutions for more efficient and effective ability to conduct VA research and produce results.

- A key barrier is the ability to get support/personnel and expertise to complete critical steps in the research process given reliance on other groups in VA for administrative or other functions.

- FERSS initiative seeks to provide time-limited field Principal Investigator and R&D Office access to contractual staffing resources to support ORD funded studies in areas of recruitment, enrollment, and other key procedures.
  - ✓May 2021 – Contracting process began
  - ✓July 2021 – ORD workgroups organized to address policy/procedures
  - ✓Sept 2021 – Contract awarded
  - ✓Jan 2022 – Use cases piloted at 3 sites: Cleveland, Madison, and Portland
  - ✓March 2022 – FERSS request SharePoint site launched

- Initiative will serve as a model for future ORD enterprise-level support for other Field needs.

Active Use Cases in Place

Site	Type of Support	Time
Cleveland	IRB Support	20 hrs / week for 6 months
Madison	SharePoint support for study management	16 hours / week
Portland	Statistical Analysis support for ORD-funded SCR&D study	40 hours / week

Organization

- Key FERSS Initiative leads include:
  - Tony Laracuente, Initiative Lead
  - Grant Huang, Executive Sponsor
  - Shawn Berrien, FERSS COR

- Workgroups included ACOS-Rs, AOs, budget analysts, ORD staff, and Project Management from Titan Alpha.

- Oversight for this initiative is provided by the ORD Enterprise Transformation Executive Committee and the Field Operations and Performance Subcommittee.

- R&D Offices will serve in a critical "gatekeeper" role for FERSS requests.

Workgroup Members

Alicia Brown – Las Vegas
Amber Goetschius – Asheville *
Amy Morris – Salisbury
Ashley Scales – Atlanta *
Bill Lance – West Haven *
Carol Fowler – ORD
Carrie May – Durham
Coralyn Ana – San Diego
David Kincaid – Augusta
David Thompson – Phoenix
Elizabeth Koester – Ann Arbor
Erica Aulik – ORD
Gail Latlief – Tampa
Gregory Goodale – Albany
Heather Basehore – Coatesville

Holly Henry – Cleveland *
Josh Nixon – Minneapolis *
Kallie Chauncey – Birmingham
Karen Lohmann Siegel – ORD
Karen M Johnson – Shreveport
Kathleen Chard – Cincinnati *
Kevin Beck – E Orange
Latanya Higginbottom – Birmingham
Margaret Covar – Tampa
Masood Khan – ORD
Naomi Tomoyasu – ORD
Richard Dennis – Little Rock *
Shawn Berrien – ORD
Stanley Jones – Phoenix

Sue Theus – Memphis *
Suzanne Milbourne – Wilmington
Thelma Salazar – Albuquerque
Timothy Foley – Baltimore
Victoria Davey – ORD

* Chair or Coordinator

FERSS OVERVIEW

FERSS Contract Highlights

The purpose of this contract is to enable VA Research staff across the US and its territories to request and receive support for professional and administrative services.

- Awarded to Aptive HTG on 9/27/2021.

- 1 year Base-Period: 9/29/2021 - 9/28/2022; 6-month Option Period 1: 9/29/2022 - 3/28/2022

- Scope and breadth of requests may involve single-site, multi-site, or remote (off-site) research studies / clinical trials

- Research Administrative Support:
  - Including all aspects of project management, data analysis, reporting, communications, proposal development, cooperative agreements and all related administrative support in support of VAMC Field Research Programs and the Office of Research and Development (ORD)

- Medical Research Support:
  - Includes, but is not limited to collection of blood/bio specimens, clinical trial and/or research study assessments, administering questionnaires, supporting facility and remote clinical trials, supporting recruitment efforts, obtaining informed consent, writing articles and reports for publication, grant application support, and education / training support.

KEY WORKGROUP DECISIONS

- **Tools**
  - Build a basic SharePoint Request collection portal and process.
  - Add enhancements such as workflows in the SharePoint portal, and update processes based on any feedback received and assessments of implementation activities.

- **Request Review**
  - R & D Office serves as a "gatekeeper" reviewing requests prior to entry in SharePoint.

- **How much support can be requested**
  - Established guidance that no single station shall receive in excess of 1.0 FTE (1920 contract work hours) of aggregate support during the contract period.

- **Contract Funding**
  - Contract will be centrally-funded through the base year and first 6-month option period; subsequent funding and sustainment is still to be determined.

What can and cannot be requested

Yes	No
• Program /Administrative Support and Research Study Support. Additional details and examples are found directly on the [FERSS SharePoint site]().	• Long-term support (longer than 12 months)
• Support that is not inherently governmental	• Personnel engaged in research projects or study teams
• Can be performed virtually	• IT hardware or software
• Can be performed onsite as needed	

Choose VA

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

POLICY and PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS

- Anyone with a VA email address and internal VA SharePoint access should be able to access the site and submit a request.

- You must use your VA email address for all communications regarding your requests.

- Local R & D Offices should serve as initial "gatekeepers" before a request is entered into the FERSS SharePoint site.

- Detailed process flows and evaluation criteria are available in the [FERSS Toolkit library](#).

Request Submission Process

Who: Any VA research Field staff w/ VA email address and SharePoint access

How:
1. Identify a need your station has for support
2. Access the site
3. Use the FERSS Toolkit library for help, and
4. Submit a completed Request form
   Note: You cannot start filling out a request and save it for later. It must be completed all at once.

Outputs:
1. Request Item tracked in SharePoint Portal
2. You will automatically receive a confirmation email after the request is submitted

Request Evaluation Process

Who: FERSS contract COR, Shawn Berrien

Inputs:
1. Completed Request Form
2. Centralized Contract Rubric – Developed by FERSS workgroups; approved by FERSS leadership. Available in FERSS Toolkit.
   - Criteria include: Justification, Relationship to Organizational Strategic Vision, Feasibility, Efficiency of Tactic/ Approach, and Sustainability
   - Criteria are measured on a 4 - point scale: (4) Exemplary, (3) Adequate, (2) Needs Improvement, (1) Insufficient Evidence of Need
   - Detailed descriptions are outlined in the document, available in the **FERSS Toolkit**

Outputs: Email or phone communications from Shawn Berrien for
1. Clarification as needed
2. Notification of result

Timeline: Response to be received one week after request submission

Resource Approval / Assignment Process

Who: FERSS COR works with contractor (Aptive HTG) to assign and onboard each Resource

Input: Completed Request Form

Outputs: Contractor pricing, onboarding and badging documents, Background investigation, Sponsorship, Government Furnished Equipment (GFE), etc.

Timeline: Aptive HTG provides info to COR about resources within 5 days after receiving info from COR

Next Steps: Decide if intake of Resource at local facility is needed; Begin Local Intake and credentialing and privileging process as needed.

Accessing the FERSS SharePoint Site

- Accessible to anyone with a VA email address and internal VA SharePoint access

- Link to site: https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VHAORPPE/CentralizedResearchContractRequest

Provided by Erica Aulik, ORD

FERSS Reference Toolkit Overview

- The [FERSS Toolkit Library](#) may be accessed via links near the bottom of the FERSS site.

- We recommend opening this in a separate tab or window (Right click on the link and select "Open in New Tab" or "Open in New Window" and referring to documents as you complete your request.

- The sample Requests will help you see the level of detail needed in the text boxes.

FERSS Toolkit Library Link
The Following Documents are included:
- Sample PI Request
- Sample Research Office Request
- Slides from Webinar
- Examples of FTE calculations
- ORD Centralized Contract Scoring Rubric

After reading the information in the Toolkit Library, Submit your request at this link.

Choose VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Summary

The FERSS initiative seeks to provide time-limited field Principal Investigator and R&D Office access to contractual staffing resources to support ORD funded studies in areas of recruitment, enrollment, and other key procedures.

- Link to Field Enterprise Research Support Services Site: https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VHAORPPE/CentralizedResearchContractRequest

- Open for requests on **March 21, 2022**

- Accessible to anyone with a VA email address and VA SharePoint access

- Refer to the FERSS Toolkit Library as you complete your request form

QUESTIONS?????