Maximizing Research Administration: **Navigating the Path to Project Success**

Sachit Verma, MD, MBA, FACHE, FAPCR
Assistant Director, Research Operations
Stravitz-Sanyal Institute for Liver Disease & Metabolic Health
VCU School of Medicine – Virginia Commonwealth University

Introduction

Research administration encompasses the management and support services that facilitate the execution of research projects. Pre-and post-award activities involved include proposal development, grant & award management, budgeting, regulatory compliance, effort monitoring, contract negotiations, expense reporting and financial management. The success of research projects can only be achieved by research administrators who play a vital role in ensuring smooth and efficient operations.

Strategic Approach

To improve research administration practices and drive success in research projects, it is crucial to adopt these key strategies.

1. **Implement a Centralized Project Management System**: Establish a system that is centrally managed for monitoring and overseeing all research initiatives, including project timelines, financial allocations, and status updates, to increase operational efficiency. Develop a comprehensive set of protocols and guidelines for research administration to guarantee consistency and compliance in all research projects.

2. **Empower Your Team: Cultivating Growth Through Ongoing Training and Development**: Provide training sessions and workshops that focus on research administration and operations to enhance the skills and knowledge of research staff and administrators.

3. **Utilize Technology for Data Management and Reporting**: Enhance the effectiveness and precision of research activities by using software and tools to manage, store, analyze and report data. Leveraging technology solutions like research administration software can lead to streamlined administrative processes, improved efficiency, and enhanced collaboration among research team members.

4. **Establish Comprehensible Communication Channels**: It is important to establish robust communication protocols and channels both within research teams and across departments to facilitate collaboration and information sharing. By working closely with researchers, Principal Investigators (PIs) and providing support throughout the grant proposal

development process, research administrators can increase the likelihood of securing funding for important research projects. They should establish sound budgeting processes, create detailed financial reports, and communicate regularly with stakeholders.

5. **Stay Informed and Adaptable**: Research administration is a dynamic field that is constantly evolving. Staying informed about emerging trends, best practices, and regulatory changes is essential for maintaining relevance and improving the efficacy of research administration. Being able to understand funding agencies' requirements thoroughly and conveying the significance and impact of the proposed research effectively.

6. **Compliance Control**: Research projects frequently must adhere to multiple rules, such as those related to human subject research, animal welfare, and intellectual property.

Conclusion

Research administrators have the responsibility of staying up to date on these regulations and ensuring that projects are conducted ethically and in accordance with all applicable laws and mitigate any potential compliance risks. To ensure research integrity, it is crucial to have strong research administration practices given the increasing emphasis on transparency and accountability in research. Managing research administration effectively is necessary to ensure the success and sustainability of research in today's competitive academic landscape.

It is important for research administrators to create detailed project plans, establish explicit and realistic milestones and deliverables, and maintain open communication with project team members. By being organized and proactive, research administrators can make sure that the projects are completed successfully on time and on budget. Embracing these strategies can help research administrators manage the complexity of research administration and support the growth and sustainability of research endeavors.

Reference

Kerridge, Simon, Scott, Stephanie F. (2018) Research Administration around the World.
Research Management Review, 23 (1). pp. 1-34

****