

The Versatile Research Administrator—Bringing Strengths to the Research Administration Table

Bonita Agee Mahaffey • Lizethe Pendleton • Erna Serezlic • Anna French

Intermountain Office of Research Sponsored Projects

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

No conflicts of interest to disclose

Background

This presentation highlights diverse research backgrounds of a centralized office of newly minted research administration professionals serving the largest healthcare system in the USA Intermountain West region, and the strengths brought by each member that come from their unique backgrounds. The seven professionals in the Intermountain Office of Research Sponsored Projects (RSP) bring specific skills from their previous backgrounds to their current roles in Research Billing, Contracts, and Grants Management.

MAJOR FIELDS OF STUDY

Biology • Economics • Zoology Epidemiology • Applied Sciences Psychology • Pediatric Research Environmental Microbiology













Mission

The mission for the RSP office is to improve the quality of research support for the research community at Intermountain. This additional support takes shape in the form of guidance, ensuring safety and compliance, and answering questions to help streamline the process. Employee attrition and subsequent all-new hires over the past 18 months have led to prioritizing knowledge preservation, improving and adjusting current practices, and professional development opportunities. Utilizing the current skill sets of the team help promote consistent and efficient research activities.

RSP Staff & Previous Positions

Position/Role Previous Positions

Contracts Administrator

DNA Extraction Specialist Research Laboratory Technician Clinical Laboratory Assistant Laboratory Manager

Research Contracts & Billing Project Coordinator

Medical Records Manager Accounting Bookkeeper Contracts & Adjudication Medical Billing Manager

Research Operations Manager

Legal Assistant Physician Scribe Ocular Recovery Technician Behavioral Therapist Research Contracts Coordinator

Research Billing & Grants Officer, Sr.

Medical Assistant Clinical Laboratory Assistant Clinical Research Coordinator Cardiovascular Research Administrator

Research Billing **Compliance Project** Coordinator

Cosmetologist Medical Secretary Medical Billing Specialist

Research Contracts & Pre-Award Specialist

Licensed Medical Massage Therapist Physical Therapy Research Assistant Clinical Research Coordinator Research Project Coordinator

Grants Officer, Sr.

Data Analyst Biostatistics instructor Epidemiologist Research Project Manager PhD Researcher

Top Transferable Skills from Previous Positions

Contract Administrator

- Exact attention to detail
- Ability to adapt and learn
- Research background
- Multi-project tracking

Research Operations Manager Project Management

- Timeliness
- Customer service
- Collaboration (with physicians/attorneys)

Research Billing & Grants Officer, Sr.

- Exact attention to detail
- Ability to adapt and learn
- Research background
- Reading technical documents

RESEARCH

Research Contracts & Pre-Award Specialist

- Multi-project management
- Customer service
- Problem-solving
- Ability to adapt and learn

Research Billing Compliance Project Coordinator

- Exact attention to detail
- Multi-tasking
- Good communication skills
- Self-driven

Research Contracts & Billing Project Coordinator

- Ability to adapt and learn
- Exact attention to detail
- Multi-project tracking
- Computer literacy

Grants Officer, Senior

- Grant writing experience
- Multi-project management
- Succeed in deadline-driven environment

ADMINISTRATION

Exact attention to detail

Discussion

Our Office of Research Sponsored Projects has both strengths and limitations. Most of the team has research experience from direct involvement in research studies. These experiences from the other side of the research table enables RSP team members to approach their roles in the centralized office with empathy and understanding for the needs of researchers, while providing the necessary internal skills to help bring each project to fruition.

A top priority for our young team is to resolve the dual limitations of lack of institutional memory and deficiency of specialized experience in a research administration office. Networking with seasoned professionals allows our RSP team to benefit from others' years of expertise. Training from Research Administration courses offered by SRA International and other professional venues have proven to be excellent resources to help bridge the knowledge gap.



Conclusion

While recognizing the vital importance of specialized experience in professions such as Research Administration, the value of transferable skills from both related and unrelated occupations should not be undervalued. As a team, we pool our strengths and continually collaborate as issues arise. This "Work as One" approach, combined with networking and external trainings, bring significant contributions to the Research Administration table.

