# Partners Research Management Fiscal Year 2010 Annual Investigator Update

Throughout Fiscal Year 2010, Research Management identified and implemented a number of initiatives designed to enhance our business processes and leverage systems to ultimately decrease the administrative burden of research projects. These improvements were guided by and made possible through the effort and support of numerous Principal Investigators and Department Administrators. In particular, we'd like to highlight the following research groups and thank them for the advice they have offered, the time they have invested and the support they have shown to these initiatives:

- Executive Committee on Research (ECOR)
- BRI Research Oversight Committee (ROC)
- Research Administrators Discussion Group (RADG)
- Biomedical Research Institute Service and Communications (BRISC)
- Research Administration Advisory Committee (RAAC)
- Partners Research Issues forum

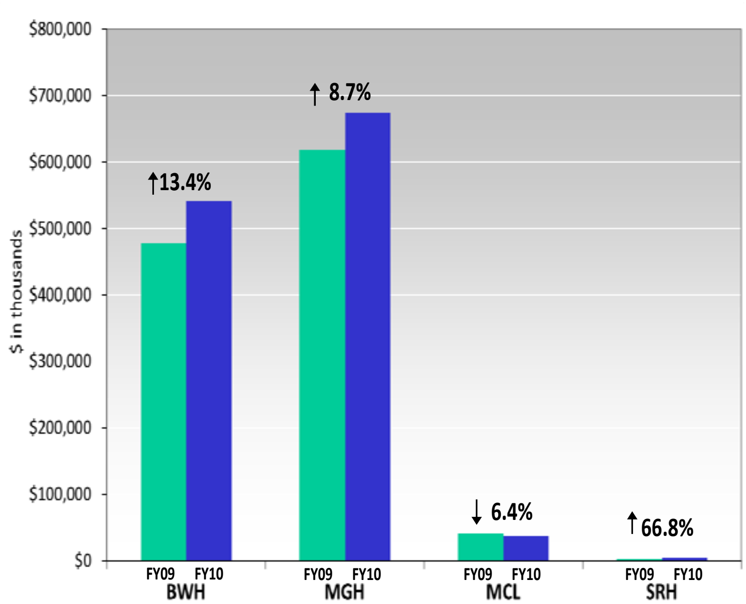
This Annual Investigator Update provides a summary of the progress we've made on just a few of our key initiatives and their intended impact on investigators' specific needs and concerns. This is in no way a comprehensive review of our accomplishments nor is it an indication that all of our challenges have been addressed. We will continue to work together as a team to focus on the areas of research administration that still need to be improved.

**Snapshot of Research over the past year at Partners**

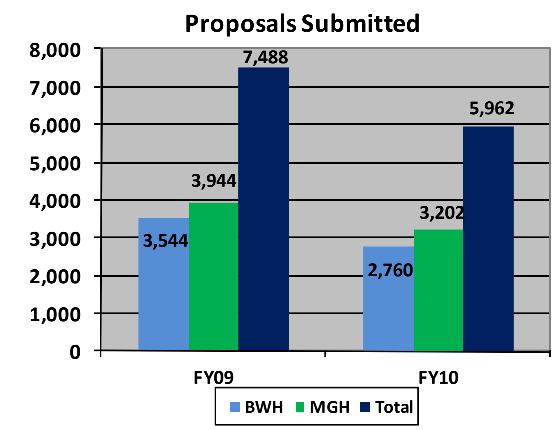
Research at Partners continues to thrive. As of September 2010, the Partners research community consisted of:

- 9,835 active project grants across four entities
- 2,470 Principal Investigators
- $1.3 billion annualized research revenue
- Partners had $98 million worth of ARRA research revenue in 2010

***FY09-FY10 Total Research Revenue by Entity***




*Note: Total Research Revenue (TC) = Direct Revenue (TDC) + Indirect Revenue (ICR) per P&L.*




*Note: Includes ARRA*

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# IMPROVING TURNAROUND TIMES

## New Award Setup

The timely creation of a fund is critically important to the successful management of a research project. Historically, the standard timeline to set up a fund was 30 days following the receipt of an award notice. Research Management has implemented a number of process improvements to reduce award setup turnaround times. As a result, the timeframe has been reduced and **88% of awards were set up in 15 days or less from the receipt of the award** between January 2010 and September 2010. The most common reasons for delay in award setup are missing or incomplete Conflict of Interest (COI) forms or the need to revise budgets due to funding reductions, especially on larger awards with numerous collaborators such as program projects.

**Percent of Awards set up in 15 Days or Less**

| Month | Total: 0-15 | Total: >15 | BWH: 0-15 | BWH: >15 | MGH: 0-15 | MGH: >15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Jan** | **97%** | 3% | 97% | 3% | 96% | 4% |
| **Feb** | **91%** | 9% | 94% | 6% | 88% | 12% |
| **Mar** | **91%** | 9% | 95% | 5% | 88% | 12% |
| **Apr** | **86%** | 14% | 85% | 15% | 87% | 13% |
| **May** | **84%** | 16% | 89% | 11% | 81% | 19% |
| **Jun** | **84%** | 16% | 85% | 15% | 83% | 17% |
| **Jul** | **81%** | 19% | 90% | 10% | 77% | 23% |
| **Aug** | **92%** | 8% | 90% | 10% | 93% | 7% |
| **Sep** | **93%** | 7% | 97% | 3% | 91% | 9% |
| **Total** | **88%** | 12% | 91% | 9% | 87% | 13% |

## Subcontracts

The Research Management (RM) Contracts team processed 4,018 agreements over the last fiscal year and averages approximately 175 incoming subcontracts and 161 outgoing subcontracts each month.

**Contracts (In Progress): as of September 30, 2010**

| | Pending Res. Mgt. | Pending Dept. | Pending Collaborator | Total Outstanding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BWH | 133 | 128 | 140 | 401 |
| MGH | 119 | 108 | 197 | 424 |
| ***Total*** | ***252*** | ***236*** | ***337*** | ***825*** |

The Contracts team is committed to reducing turnaround times in contract negotiations and to making the process more transparent to investigators. There are nine identified stages in this process that are currently being reviewed to identify improvements. A report has been developed to measure the time it takes to complete each step of the contract process, from the time of contract receipt or request to full execution of the agreement. The report is being tested and will be made available to the entire research community in 2011.

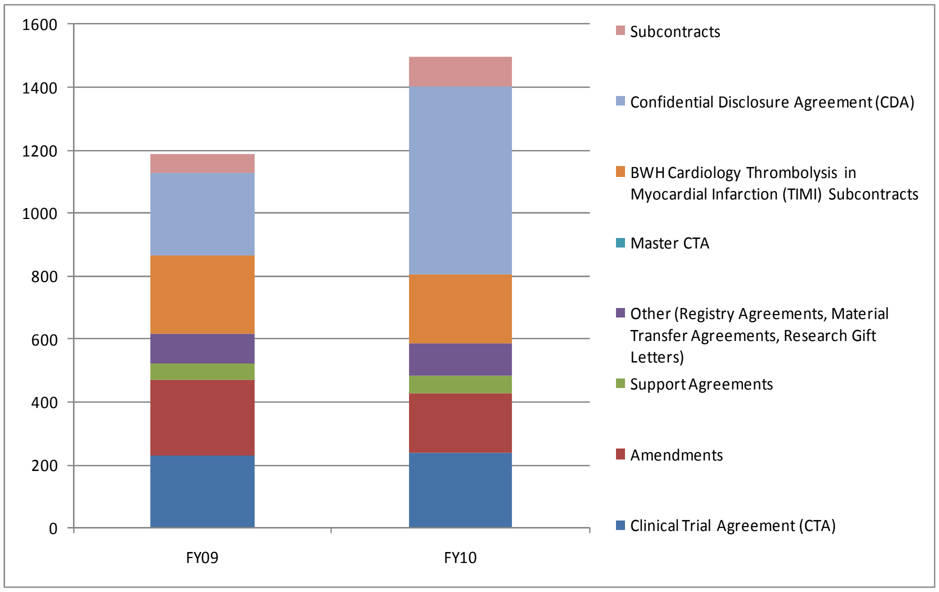
**Nine Stages of Incoming Contracts Process**

| | |
|---|---|
| **1** | **Unexecuted Agreement Received:** from Prime Entity / Sponsor |
| **2** | **Pending Grant Administrator (GA)**: Pre-Award GA ensures proposal documents are complete and correct |
| **3** | **Pending Dept/PI Documentation**: RM requests documentation or further details |
| **4** | **Pending Dept/PI Approval**: All agreements must be approved by the department / PI |
| **5** | **Assigned:** to a Contracts Specialist for preliminary review |
| **6** | **In Negotiation**: Contracts Specialist works with the sponsor to reach satisfactory terms |
| **7** | **Partially Executed**: Signed by one party, pending signature by the other party |
| **8** | **Fully Executed**: Signed by both parties and ready to be billed or activated |
| **9** | **Other resolved**: Contract was terminated or not needed |

## Industry/Corporate-Sponsored Clinical Trials

The number of agreements executed by the Partners Clinical Research Office (PCRO) has increased, from 1,188 agreements in FY09 to 1,495 agreements in FY10. There has been increased pressure to handle the influx of agreements while working on ways to streamline the process. PCRO is working to identify where delays occur in the agreement/budget process and is committed to reducing the time it takes to execute these agreements.

PCRO is developing a report to measure the time it takes to complete a contract from the time of receipt to full execution. To increase transparency, the report will also measure each step of the process, including the PI questionnaire, contract, budget and Medicare Coverage Analysis (MCA). PCRO expects the turnaround report to be fully functional in early 2011.




*Types of PCRO Agreements Executed*

### Issues Causing Prolonged Negotiations

Clinical trial agreements must balance the differing interests of the institution and the company, yet further the common mission of engaging in research that advances medical care. The negotiations to reach agreement may be contentious and prolonged and are often the result of issues in these areas:

- Required documents and information to complete an MCA or budget are not available at the start of contract/budget negotiation
- Variable response time delays MCA or budget approval
- The sponsor uses a Clinical Research Organization (CRO) to negotiate the budget/contract
- Timeline for negotiations is not agreed upon
- The sponsor is not willing to adequately cover research related costs or payment terms are unfavorable and/or not in line with institutional policies
- Investigational device pricing is higher than FDA comparable pricing
- Department specific approval required for contract/budget negotiation
- Sponsor will not agree upon standard PHS contract terms or alternative provisions for Subject Injury, Insurance Limits, Publications, Payer of Last Resort for Investigational Device studies, Publication/Access to Data, etc.

## SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS

### InfoEd Proposal Development: Electronic Proposal Submission

InfoEd Proposal Development (PD) is an online portal for investigators to prepare, approve/route and track new grant applications. It provides an automated, centralized source of information for all new proposals throughout the development process.

**Benefits for PIs**

- Single-source hub for collaborative application preparation
- Streamlined budgeting functionality
- Improved data integrity
- Transparent proposal submission process
- Reduce non-value added work, such as replacing the time it takes to obtain a manual signature with an electronic signature

| Pilot Groups | | |
|---|---|---|
| Pilot Group 1 | BWH | Cardiology |
| | | Pathology |
| | | Sleep Medicine |
| | MGH | Anesthesia |
| Pilot Group 2 | BWH | Neurology |
| | | Pulmonary Medicine & Critical Care |
| | MGH | Center for Human Genetic Research |
| Pilot Group 3 | BWH | Channing Nurses Health Study |
| | | Preventive Medicine |
| | MGH | Cancer Center |
| | | CIMIT |
| | | Molecular Biology |
| | | Ragon Institute |

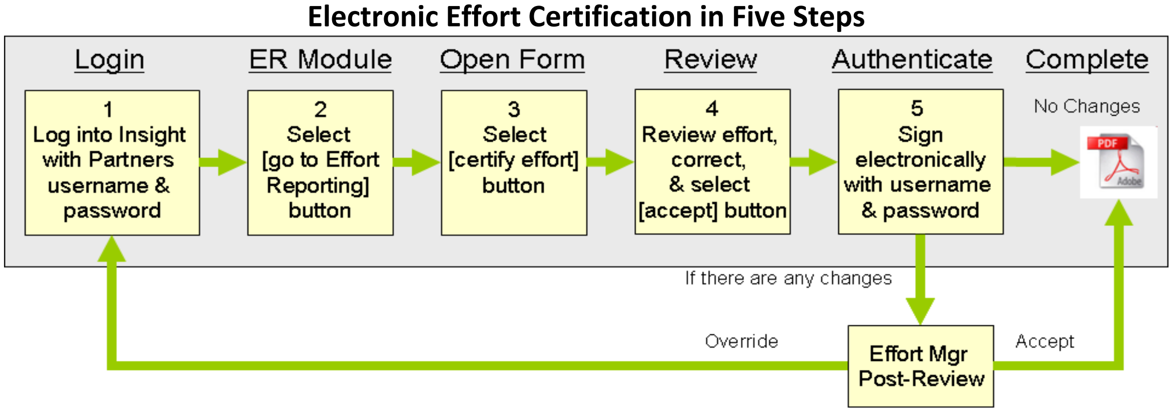
**Pilot Groups & Timeline**

Research Management rolled out InfoEd PD to 13 groups on a pilot basis. As of August 30, 2010, 336 proposals had been submitted through the system. InfoEd PD was rolled out to 12 additional groups in November 2010. After that, 12 new divisions/departments will go live each month until 100% of departments are live by the end of October 2011. Feedback from the pilot groups has been positive and has been incorporated to enhance the system. Thank you pilot groups!

## Insight Effort Reporting: Fulfilling Effort Certification Obligations Electronically

Effort Reporting is a federal requirement; failure to certify effort on a sponsored project could result in financial penalties, expenditure disallowances, project closure and/or ineligibility for future funding. As a collaborative effort between Research Management and entity leaders, we have implemented the Insight Effort Reporting Module as an online tool for investigators to electronically review, sign and track their effort certifications. This replaces manual, paper-based processes.

**Electronic Effort Certification in Five Steps**




**Benefits for PIs**

- Ability to certify effort electronically with forms accessible inside and outside of the Partners firewall
- Ability to track status of Effort Certification Forms in the approval workflow
- Centralized payroll distribution and sponsor commitment records to aid in estimating effort and identifying disproportions in payroll and commitment
- Directory of points of contact at Partners and all hospital entities

# PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

## Foundation Awards

Foundations are increasingly adding problematic restrictions to their awards. These restrictions require additional time to review and negotiate. In conjunction with other Partners departments, Research Management conducted a review of the foundation award process and made recommendations to improve risk management and structure negotiations while reducing the average turnaround times for award processing. The department implemented the following improvements in the fall of 2010:

- ***"Exception letters" replaced by PI notification emails* —** Sponsors will no longer receive a letter from Partners reserving the institution's right to negotiate any problematic terms and conditions. The Pre-Award team will notify PIs by email when they see problematic terms that need to be discussed before the award is made.
- ***Modified/expedited review of terms and conditions* —** To reduce the number of awards that need to be negotiated, Research Management will assess terms and conditions with the associated risk of the Sponsor, Agreement Type, Nature of Research Work and Funding Amount.
- ***Contract terms and conditions guidance* —** A guidance document that outlines Partners' stance toward many problematic terms and conditions is now available on the Partners Research Management Intranet. This document serves as a reference for Investigators and Administrators to help decide whether to apply for an award and it standardizes the review and negotiation process.

## Timeline

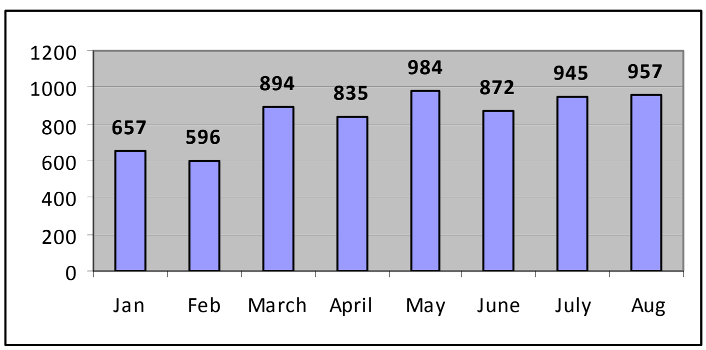
On September 15, 2010, Partners Research Management implemented the modified foundation processes and tools. In spring 2011, Research Management will assess the impact of these changes.

## Billing

Research Management continues to improve the timely billing of research expenses through automated billing. Automated billing, launched in January 2010, has increased the number of invoices sent each month by automatically billing any expenses posted to a research project. This results in PIs receiving more timely reimbursement of project expenses from their sponsors.

Average monthly billing activity:

- MGH – $8 million
- BWH – $7.7 million




*Invoices Created, January-August 2010*

## Lockbox update

Another feature of the billing system is that checks are posted automatically by PeopleSoft, reducing the number of unapplied checks. As of September 2010, BWH had 31 unapplied research payments and MGH had 20 in their respective lockboxes. Seven months earlier, in February 2010, BWH had 186 unapplied research payments and MGH had 245.

There is additional work to do with the billing and payment processes for industry clinical trials, other industry awards and foundation awards. These processes are currently being reviewed.

## Fund Management

The proper financial management of an award is essential to avoiding delays in financial reporting and preventing the accumulation of deficits, both of which could prohibit the timely closeout of the fund. Fund management also decreases the risk of incurring penalties or other sponsor actions. RM has prioritized the closeout of funds and strives to close these funds soon after a project period has ended.

- ***Fund management*** is a monthly review of sponsored funds that allows PIs to proactively identify and resolve financial issues prior to project end dates. Potential issues include deficit or credit balances, accelerated spending, required cost transfers, missing revenue or missing expenses.
- ***Closeout*** is the completion of administrative and financial deliverables to the sponsor at project end date and the inactivation of the fund in our grant systems. A fund must be in good financial standing in order to be inactivated in the system, which means:
  - All revenue must have been received
  - Revenue must equal expense
  - Expense must equal the amount reported to the sponsor

## Fund Statement: A New Tool to Manage Research Projects

Scheduled to rollout on January 15, 2011, Insight's new fund statement will make it easier for researchers to monitor financial activity on their accounts. The system will use a red, yellow and green alert system to flag high, medium and low risk spending behaviors. Although training is not required, it is encouraged. A webinar, now available on the Partners Research Management Intranet, offers a self-paced overview of this new Insight functionality. Research Management will also meet with departments at each entity, beginning in January, to introduce the new tool and help departments understand how they can use it to better manage their funds.

With approximately 10,000 active projects Partners-wide, the fund statement initiative will standardize the financial management of research funds. This system is intended to be a useful tool to improve transparency around fund management and to help facilitate conversations around deficit resolution and billing issues between Research Management and departments.

The fund statement should serve as a guide for these discussions and is not the final verdict on how a deficit should be resolved. Research Management expects to hear feedback from users after it is launched and will use that feedback to improve and refine the functionality. This is intended to be only a starting point to improve billing, deficit management and reporting transparency. Data issues, such as incorrect project end dates and budget amounts, impact the accuracy of the fund statement reports, so please contact your Post Award Grant Administrator to fix any discrepancies that you find.

### Benefits for PIs

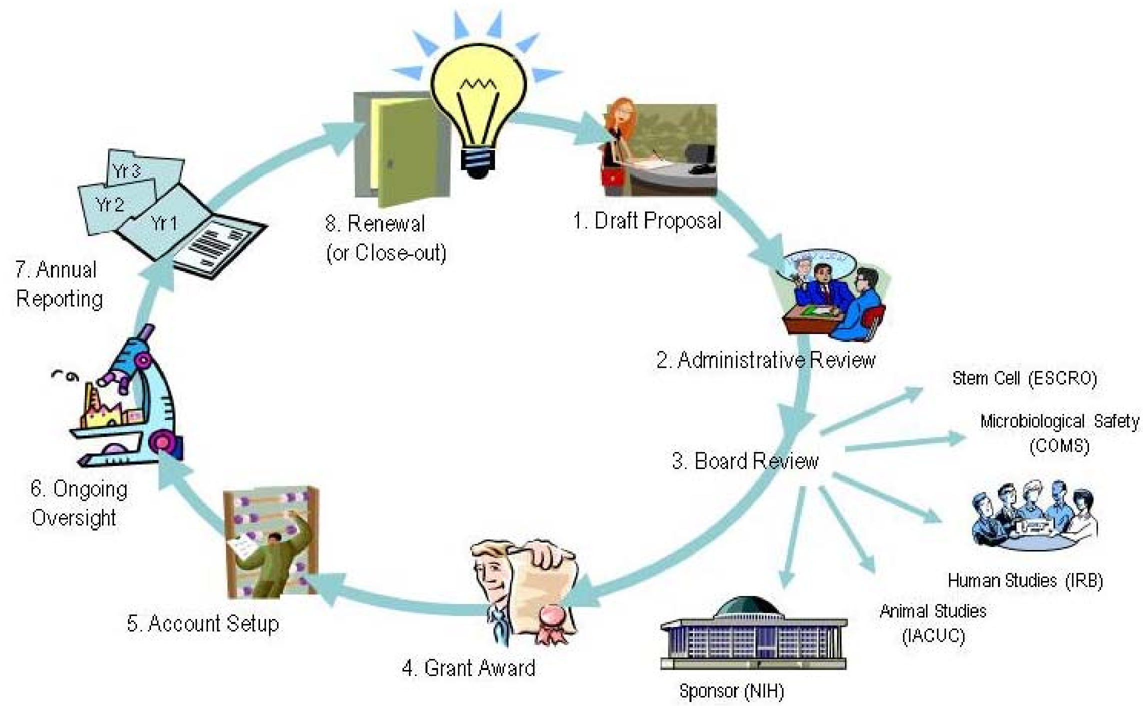
- Provides, at a quick glance, an update of all accounts and their status
- Makes it possible to easily zero in on which accounts need immediate attention
- Helps identify who is responsible for resolving the issue and who to contact in Research Management for assistance

# FUTURE INITIATIVES

## Improved Business Processes Throughout the Grant Lifecycle

Current Research Management initiatives have a common goal to automate processes to reduce administrative work and improve efficiencies. Our goal is to work together with you, the investigators and research administrators, to allow for the advancement of outstanding research. Future initiatives will build on the momentum of the initiatives described in this update to further streamline our business processes. You can expect improved access to resources that will enable you to navigate the lifecycle of an award and reduce the turnaround times of its various stages, as well as enhanced and tailored communications about the topics that are important to you.

**Partners Research Management Grant Lifecycle**




We appreciate the help you've provided thus far, but as you know, work remains to be done. In the coming year, we will focus on the rollout of electronic InfoEd Proposal Development and the new Fund Statement tool in Insight. Both of these initiatives will transform research administration within Partners. We cannot lose sight of areas that continue to present challenges and require attention, such as improving the timeliness of cost transfers and retaining high quality administrators to support investigators. We'll continue to need your support and feedback as we strive to make further improvements in FY11 and beyond.

## Feedback Encouraged

Does this update meet your needs? Do you have additional questions or suggestions for future communications? Send your comments, questions and suggestions to the Partners Research Management email box, researchfeedback@partners.org, and keep the communication flowing.