



Changes to the VA Intramural Awards Program

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Agenda

- Why are we making changes?
- What will replace the services?
- What are the changes to the application review process?
- What are the changes to the funding decision process?
- What is the new application review timeline?

What is the problem?



Overlapping service offerings and differing requirements lead to delays in review and rejected proposals, decreasing the ability to perform research.



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How do we solve the problem?



Implement new processes that enable investigators to more efficiently navigate the VA Research application process to rapidly launch research that improves the health and healthcare of Veterans.



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What will replace the services?



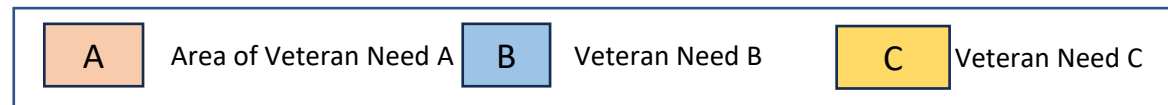
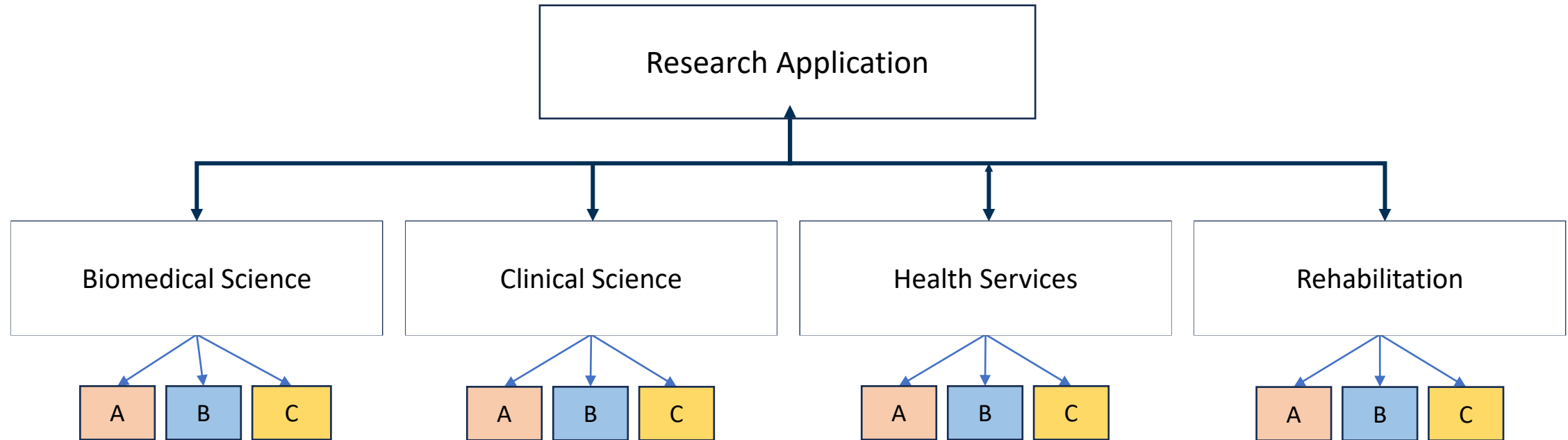
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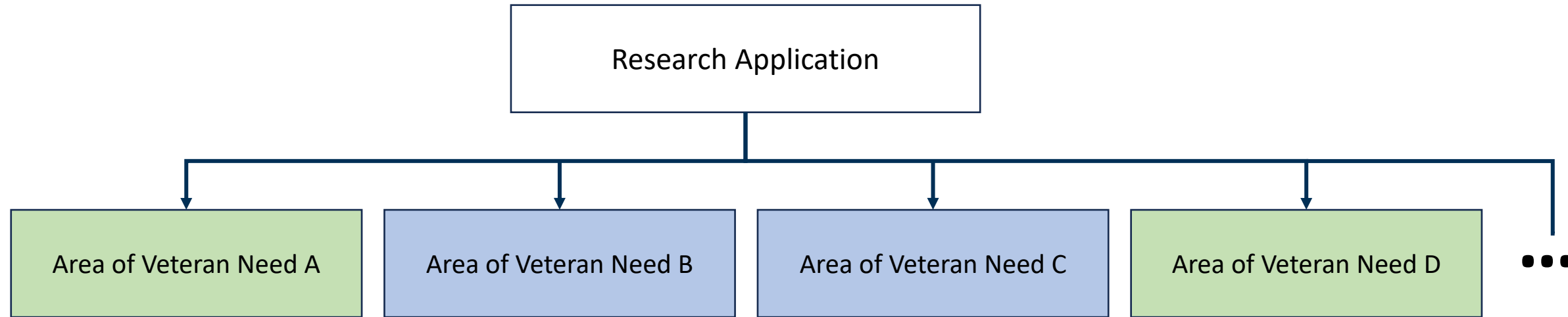
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How the service-based structure addresses Veteran needs



This partial drawing of ORD's structure is for illustration purposes only

Where we are going



Broad Portfolios

- Include studies across the research spectrum
- Take research from concept to implementation

Actively Managed Portfolios

- Address urgent needs and critical problems
- Translate research to clinical and policy application

Transitioning from Services to Portfolios provides several key benefits



Tailored support for Veteran needs: ISRM will transition to a Portfolio-based structure, aligning research funding with specific Veteran health priorities



Accelerated research impact: Actively Managed Portfolios will focus resources on critical areas, driving faster advancements in Veteran care



Continued breadth of support: Broad Portfolios will maintain funding for a diverse range of research, including early-stage discovery, translational studies, and investigator development



Enhanced investigator experience: The new structure will provide streamlined support and resources to facilitate research and innovation



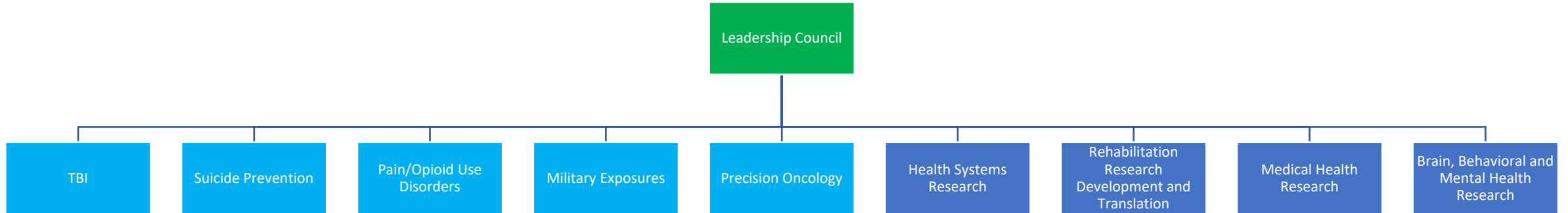
Scientific Review Groups have been assigned to the Broad Portfolios

Brain, Behavioral & Mental Health	Health Systems Research	Medical Health	Rehabilitation
<p>HSR4: Mental and Behavioral Health</p> <p>MHBA: Preclinical Mental Health</p> <p>MHBC: Clinical Mental Health</p> <p>MHBP: PTSD</p> <p>NURA: Substance Abuse</p> <p>NURB: Peripheral Neuropathy & Epilepsy</p> <p>NURC: SCI & TBI</p> <p>NURD: Alzheimer’s Disease, Dementia, Aging Brain, Neurodegeneration and Cognitive Dysfunction</p> <p>NURE: Movement Disorders, Parkinson’s, Huntington’s, ALS, Dystonia, Neurodegeneration</p> <p>NURF: Sensory Dysfunction</p> <p>NURR: Sleep</p> <p>NURP: Pain</p> <p>RRD1/B: Brain Health</p> <p>RRD4: Behavioral Health & Social Reintegration</p>	<p>HSR1: Health Care & Clinical Management</p> <p>HSR2: Behavioral, Social & Cultural Determinants of Health</p> <p>HSR3: Health Care Informatics</p> <p>HSR5: Health Care System Organization & Delivery and Women’s Health</p> <p>HSR6: Long Term Care & Aging & Support Services</p> <p>HSR7: Special Emphasis Topics</p> <p>HSR8: QUERI</p> <p>MRA0: Career Development</p> <p>HQ5, HQ8: QUERI</p>	<p>CARA/B: Cardiology</p> <p>CAMM: Cellular & Molecular Medicine, Geroscience</p> <p>ENDA: Endocrinology,</p> <p>ENDB: Frailty, musculoskeletal health</p> <p>GAST: Gastroenterology</p> <p>HEMA: Hematology</p> <p>IMMA: Immunology</p> <p>INFA/B: Infectious Diseases</p> <p>NEPH: Nephrology</p> <p>ONCA/B/C/D/E: Oncology</p> <p>PULM: Pulmonology</p> <p>SPLD: GW</p> <p>SURG: Surgery</p>	<p>RRDA: Spinal Cord Injuries/Disorders & Neuropathic Pain</p> <p>RRD0: Regenerative Rehabilitation Medicine</p> <p>RRD2: Musculoskeletal Health & Injury</p> <p>RRD3: Sensory Systems & Communications Disorders</p> <p>RRD5: Rehabilitation Engineering & Prosthetics/Orthotics</p> <p>RRD6: Chronic Medical Conditions & Aging</p> <p>RRD7: Research Career Scientist</p> <p>RRD8: Career Development Program- Panel 1</p> <p>RRD9: Career Development Program – Panel 2</p> <p>RRDC: Centers/REAPs</p> <p>MRA1: Mentored Physician and Clinical Psychologist Scientist Award in Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias (MPCPS-ADRD)</p>

Shared Governance Structure

Leadership Council

Shared Governance



Actively Managed Portfolios

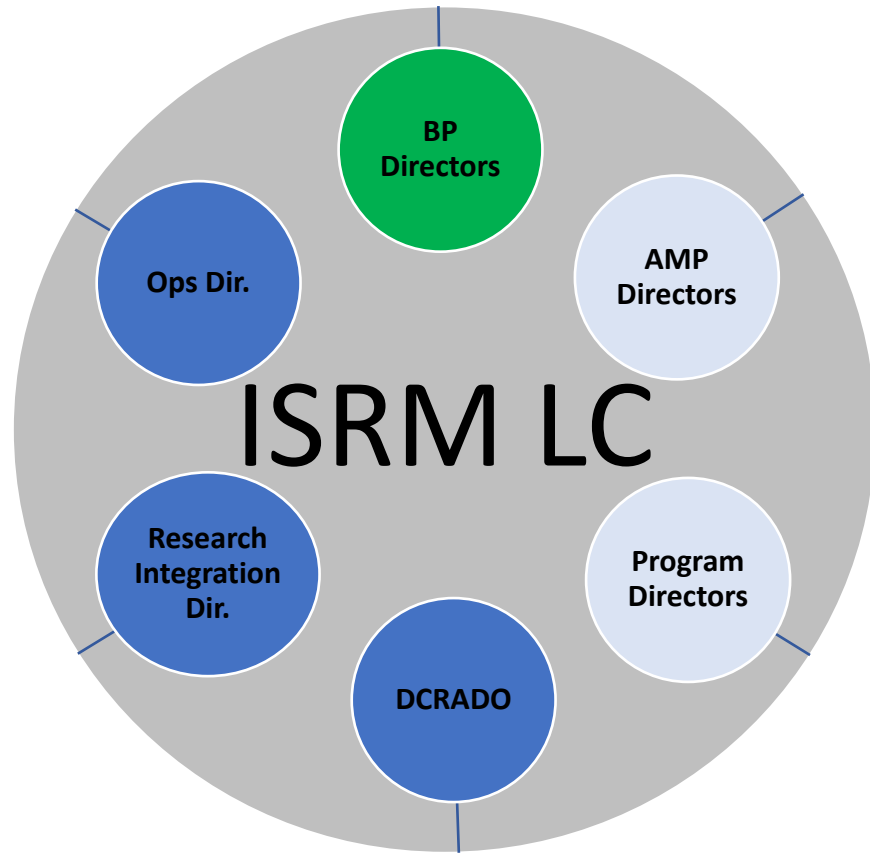
Focused purviews

Broad Portfolios

Broad purviews



ISRM Leadership Council



- **Structure:**

- DCRADO, Director of Research Integration, Director of Operations Portfolio Directors, Program Directors are voting members
- Deputy Directors for BPs are non-voting members

- **Functions:**

- Oversight of portfolio activities
- Promoting cross-portfolio communications
- Communication with ORD leadership

Key Points



The current services will be replaced by portfolios of Veteran need.



Actively managed portfolios will provide funding to address specific areas of Veteran need.



Broad portfolios will continue to provide funding for a wide range of investigator-initiated research from discovery to translation and also support the Career Development, Research Career Scientist, Centers, and Service Award programs.

What are the changes to the application review process?



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Issues with the Current Application process

#	Current Issue	Anticipated Challenges in Portfolio Model
1	Large Number of RFAs	Additional Portfolios with their own RFAs could increase the number further.
2	Wide variation in application offerings and requirements	Operations team reviewers that have sat within a unique Service now work across Portfolios. They will have difficulty in navigating each Portfolio's different processes.
3	Duplicative offerings	If multiple Portfolios can fund similar projects, it will further silo efforts and reduce the ability to learn from findings.

Components to the Revised Application Review Process

In order to address the issues we have seen in the current process and the challenges they cause for ORD, ISRM is proposing a revision to the application review process that has 5 components.

- 1 Cross-Portfolio RFAs
- 2 Notices of Special Interest
- 3 RFA Standardization
- 4 Pre-Applications

New Cross-Portfolio RFAs

RFAs

Career Development Award 1 (IK1)

Career Development Award 2 (IK2)

Research Career Scientist (IK6)

Pilot Research (I21)

Research not including a clinical trial (I01)

Research including a clinical trial site (single or multisite (I01)

Pre-Application – Merit Clinical Trial (I01)

Pre-Application – Merit Non-Clinical Trials (I01)

Pre-Application – Pilot (I21)

Pre-Application – Career Development Award (IK1/IK2)

Pre-Application – Research Career Scientist (IK6)



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Portfolio Notices of Special Interest

Based upon Portfolio purviews

Brain, Behavior, and Mental Health Broad Portfolio

Health Systems Broad Portfolio

Medical Health Broad Portfolio

Rehabilitation Broad Portfolio

Military Exposure Actively Managed Portfolio

Pain / Opioid Use Actively Managed Portfolio

Precision Oncology Actively Managed Portfolio

Suicide Prevention Actively Managed Portfolio

Traumatic Brain Injury Actively Managed Portfolio

Critical Research Areas/Cross Portfolio

Women's Health

Durability of Rehabilitation Interventions for Veterans

Chronic Effects of Neurotrauma

Studies on Lethal Means Safety Approaches to Suicide Prevention

RFA Standardization

- Uniform eligibility requirements:
 - 5/8 VA at time of funding
 - Work conducted fully in VA or VA-leased space
 - Waivers granted by the ISRM Leadership Council
- Uniform budget caps:
 - Non-clinician PI salary: 3/8 support above the cap for 1 PI
 - Any additional salary support required by the non-clinician PI would be included in the budget, including multi-PI salary.
 - Standard research budget caps based on research type

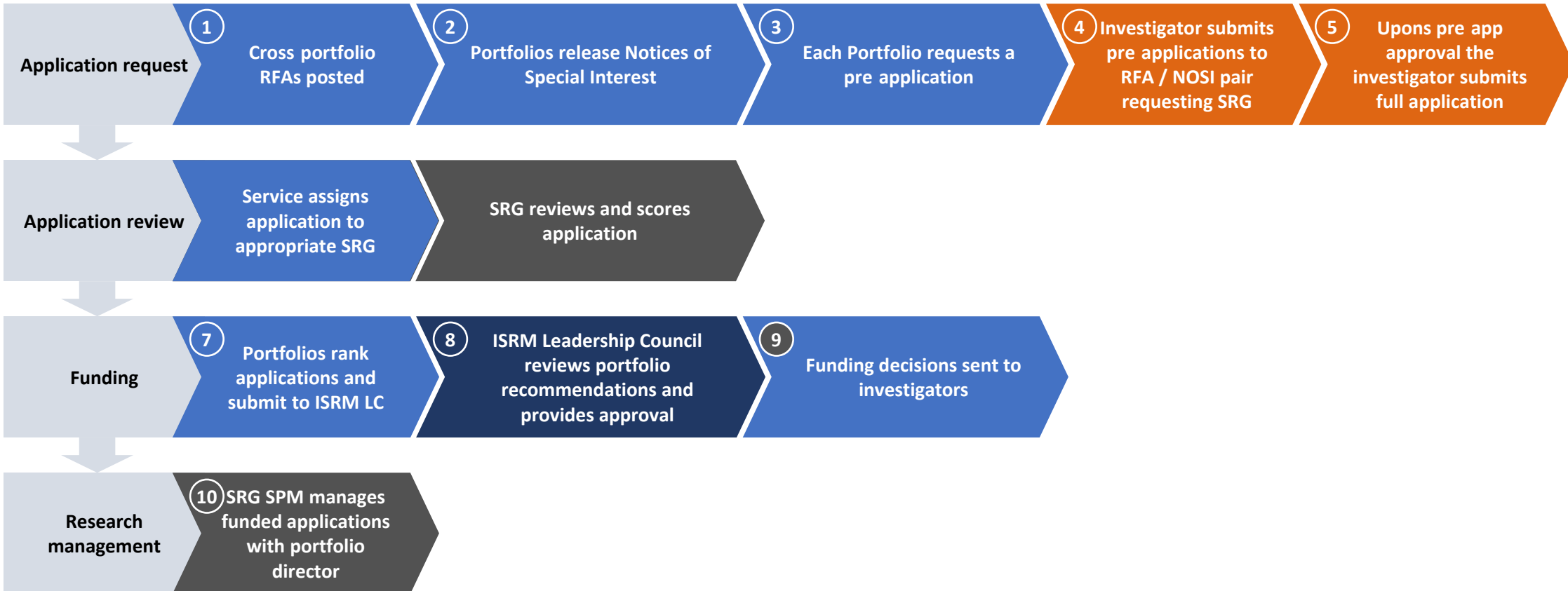
Pre-application RFAs

- Clinical Trials, Career Development and Technology Development Awards
 - Pre-apps due 12 weeks before full application due date
 - Administrative + Scientific review with feedback
 - Stations notified of concerns/disapprovals
- Other Research
 - Pre-Apps due six weeks before full application due date
 - Administrative review with optional scientific review and feedback
 - Stations notified of concerns/disapprovals

The revised research application process

Key

- Portfolio actions
- Investigator actions
- Scientific Review Group (SRG) actions
- ISRM Leadership Council actions



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Investigator View



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Summary of New Process for Investigators

1 Align on Portfolio & SRG Scope

The investigator picks the Portfolio NOSI, RFA and SRG with the appropriate purviews for their proposed study.



2 Pre-Application Submission

Complete the standardized pre-application providing basic project information and the requested portfolio NOSI and SRG and submit.



3 Application Submission

Upon approval, submit a full application through the ORD-Wide RFA including the approval letter which indicates the NOSI being responded to and the assigned SRG.

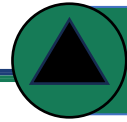


4 Receive Funding Decision

The investigator receives scores and summary statement and an intent-to fund (if applicable).



Takeaways on Application Review Process Revisions for Investigators



What has changed

- Funding opportunities are organized by the type of research proposed.
- Accepted Pre-Applications are required prior to any full application submission for most applications.
- Pre-applications are submitted to the cross-portfolio pre-application RFAs (I02).
- The scientific review groups review for all Portfolios (not just a single Service).
- Scored proposals will be ranked in the Portfolio funding meeting.
- The ranked applications will go to the ISRM Leadership Council which will set the pay line for the round.
- Funded projects will be managed by the SPM who managed the review working with the director of the Portfolio to which it was submitted.

Takeaways on Application Review Process Revisions for Investigators

What has NOT changed

- RFAs are posted and applications are submitted through Grants.gov and eRA Commons.
- ORD-wide RFAs will still support the full range of research activities and disciplines.
- The purview of scientific review groups (SRGs) and timing of SRG meetings (every 6 months).
- The Scientific Portfolio Managers who manage the SRGs have not changed.
- Review by a specific scientific review group can be requested.
- Applications not funded may be resubmitted no more than 2 times (-A1 and -A2).
- Once a decision has been made about an application, a notice of intent to fund or not to fund will be sent.
- PIs with approved applications will be required to complete just-in-time requirements.
- If funded, the SPM who managed the review of the application will manage your project.

What are the Changes to the Funding Decision Process?



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Portfolio Funding Process

- The budget for each portfolio is determined by the ISRM Leadership Council at the beginning of each fiscal year.
 - Value of projects from end of the prior fiscal year
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 - Additional specific funding provided in ORD budget
- The ISRM LC has the authority to transfer funds between portfolios during the fiscal year if required.

Project Funding Process

- Applications for funding will be reviewed in either the standing scientific review groups or the special review groups.
- Portfolios will hold funding ranking meetings for each review cycle.
- Ranked lists will be submitted for approval to the Leadership Council.
- Deviations from the established “pay line” will require approval.

What is the New Application Review Timeline?



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Key Components to the Revised Application Review Transition Timeline

Staying the same:

Due dates for **pre-applications, full applications, reviews, and margin meetings** will remain on the **same cycle** as we transition from Services to Portfolios

- SRGs that were originally in **HSRD** (*to become HSR Broad Portfolio*) and **RRD** (*to become RRD Broad Portfolio*) will remain Summer/Winter
- SRGs that were originally in **BLRD** (*to become MHA Broad Portfolio*) and **CSRD** (*to become BBMH Broad Portfolio*) will remain Spring/Fall
 - January '25 – Final “Service” Margin meetings for BL and CS to conclude application cycle

Changing:

August '24 will be the **launch date for new ORD-Wide RFAs, Portfolio Pre-Applications , and Notices of Special Interest**

- HSRD and RRD RFAs will be taken down in August '24
- BLRD and CSRD RFAs will be taken down in September '24

Conclusion

- On October 1, 2024, ISRM will transition from four Services to nine Portfolios.
- Service RFAs will be replaced by cross-portfolio RFAs and portfolio Notices of Special Interest
- Peer-review panels (SRGs and SMRBs) will remain the same.
- Portfolio funding recommendations will be reviewed by the ISRM Leadership Council which will have representation from all portfolios.



- *Questions? Email Christopher.Bever@va.gov*



Appendix: Detailed Transition Timeline



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ISRM Application Review Transition Timeline FY24

Key	Black Text = Current Services Based Review Red Text = New Portfolio Based Review
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	Jan '24	Feb '24	Mar '24	Apr'24	May'24	Jun '24	Jul '24	Aug'24	Sep'24	Oct '24	Nov '24	Dec '24
BLRD to MHA	✓ Margin mtng (BL)		Full app submission ddln (BL)		SRGs meet; LOIs, Waivers submission ddln (BL)	SRGs meet (BL)	Margin mtng (BL) Post ISRM RFAs; Post portfolio pre-app RFAs NOSIs		Full apps submission ddln (BL) Take down BL RFAs		SRGs meet (BL) Pre-apps, Waivers due (MHA)	SRGs meet (BL)
CSR to BBMH	✓ Margin mtng (CS)		Full app submission ddln (CS)		SRGs meet; LOIs, Waivers submission ddln (CS)	SRGs meet (CS)	Margin mtng (CS) Post ISRM RFAs; Post portfolio pre-app RFAs NOSIs		Full apps submission ddln (CS) Take down BL RFAs		SRGs meet (CS) Pre-apps, Waivers due (BBMH)	SRGs meet (CS)
HSRD to HSR			SRGs meet (HS); Post HS RFAs	Margin mtng (HS)	LOIs, ITs, Waivers submission ddln (HS)	Full app Submission ddln (HS) Take down HS RFAs	Post ISRM RFAs; Post portfolio pre-app RFAs NOSIs	SRGs meet (HS)		Margin mtng (HS)	Pre-apps, Waivers due (HSR)	Full App submission ddln (HSR)
RRD to RS		✓ SPiRE pre-app ddln; waiver ddln; ✓ SRGs meet (RD)	SPiRE full app ddln; Margin mtng (RD)	SPiRE review (RD)	Pre-Apps, Waivers submission ddln (RD)	Full app submission ddln (RD); Take down RD RFAs	Post ISRM RFAs; Post portfolio pre-app RFAs NOSIs	SPiRE pre-apps, waivers ddln; SRGs meet (RD)	SPiRE full app submission ddln; Take down SPiRE RFA	Margin mtng; Review SPiRES (RD)	Pre-apps, Waivers due (RS)	Full App submission ddln (RS)

ISRM Application Review Transition Timeline FY25

Key	Black Text = Current Services Based Review Red Text = New Portfolio Based Review
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	Jan '25	Feb '25	Mar '25	Apr'25	May'25	Jun '25	Jul '25	Aug'25	Sep'25	Oct '25	Nov '25	Dec '25
BLRD to MHA	A1/A2 Pre-Apps Deadline Margin mtng (BL)		Full App submission ddln (MHA)		Review (MHA); LOIs, Wavers ddln (MHA)	SRGs meet (MHA) Post/Update NOSIs	Funding ranking mtng (MHA)		Full App Submission ddln (MHA)		Review (MHA); LOIs, Wavers ddln (MHA)	Review (MHA)
CSR to BBMH	A1/A2 Pre-Apps Deadline Margin mtng (CS)		Full App submission ddln (BBMH)		Review (BBMH); LOIs, Wavers ddln (BBMH)	SRGs meet (BBMH) Post/Update NOSIs	Funding ranking mtng (BBMH)		Full App Submission ddln (BBMH)		Review (BBMH); LOIs, Wavers ddln (BBMH)	Review (BBMH)
HSR to HSR			SRGs meet (HSR), Post/Update NOSIs	Funding ranking mtng (HSR)	Pre-apps, Waivers submission ddln (HSR)	Full App Submission ddln (HSR)		Review mtngs (HSR)		Funding ranking mtng (HSR)	Pre-apps, ITs, Waivers ddln (HSR)	Full App submission ddln (HSR)
RRD to RS		SRGs meet (RS)	Post/Update NOSIs Funding Ranking Meeting (RS)		Margin (RS); Pre-Apps, waivers submission ddln;	Full App submission ddln (RS)		Review mtngs (RS)		Funding ranking mtng (RS)	Pre-apps, ITs, Waivers ddln (RS)	Full App submission ddln (RS)