David: …science and technology policy fellow in his second year with HSR&D. He has really been a catalyst for this work on our work on what now is being called post-Covid conditions. He is going to spend about 15 minutes giving a quick summary of what is really a new collaborative funding opportunity branching across services. We are excited about this not only for what we can do in Covid, but as a potential model for cross-service collaboration in other high-priority topics. With that, I will let you take it away Machay [PH].

Machay [PH]: Thank you so much David. Can you hear me David, by the way? Just a quick check.

David: Yes, coming through well.

Machay [PH]: Okay perfect. Perfect. Hello everybody. Thank you so much for joining today. There we go. The purpose of today’s session is to give a brief overview of the collaborative narrative solicitation that we put out last month. Then the bulk of the hour will be open to a Q&A session with representatives from each of the services. As you may all know, patients who have been infected with the SARS CoV-2 virus experience lingering symptoms akin to a post-viral illness.

Little is understood about this phenomenon. Exactly how many people are affected with longer-term sequalae after acute infection with the virus remains unknown. However, published reports indicate that approximately 10% to 20% of Covid-19 patients experience lingering symptoms for weeks to months following acute illness. Due to a myriad of symptoms and varying timelines, it took some time for a number of agencies to settle upon a definition.

A few months ago, the World Health Organization has released a current living definition stating post-Covid-19 condition occurs in individuals with a history of probable or confirmed Sars CoV-2 infection usually three months from the onset of Covid-19 with symptoms that last for at least two months and cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis.

Over the pandemic, VA has facilitated research into this area. Listed here are just a few of the efforts looking at post-Covid conditions. We have further information as well as contact information listed in a recently released document of available Covid-19 research resources and infrastructure. I hope someone in the chat puts a link if possible, David, to that document.

There are a couple of things I wanted to mention. We are still taking in individual IIRs on the regular cycles about post-Covid-19 conditions. Also, although MVP, the Million Veterans’ Program is planning to put out surveys investigating post-Covid conditions, MVP data is available for investigating post-Covid conditions under dis-RFA and individual merits in the spring cycle for BORD or biomedical laboratories’ research and development.

Today we will be delving into our newest endeavor though – the ORD cross-service collaborative RFA. The goal of this RFA is to support pre-planned collaboration across multiple investigators to accelerate our understanding of the incidence, natural history, pathophysiology, therapies, and health system effects of post-Covid conditions. What we are envisioning is that this allows investigators with expertise to tackle different aspects of a single high priority problem. This is an ORD-wide cross-service RFA. This includes health services, clinical services, rehab, and biomedical laboratory research and development. We are excited about this co-announcement, and we hope it leads to collaborations among investigators across the translational pathway either all within a service or across services.

The award requires a composition of three IL1s. While applications proposing collaborations within one VA medical center will be accepted, it will need to demonstrate how the proposed program will facilitate new collaborations between groups that have to previously necessarily collaborated. Another component to promote effective collaboration across projects is a collaborative program may request support for up to three cores. The goal of these cores is to facilitate collaboration, communication, and learning across the individual studies. This is as well as facilitating support components of the individual research studies. This could include methodology or data cores. We are allowing investigators to be creative with their cores, except for one. One of the three cores has to be an administrative core, which will be responsible for communicating among the projects.

As a result of discussions with clinical partners and individual research services, ORD has identified a list of clinical areas of the highest interest. ORD will entertain applications outside of these priority areas of course, but these priority areas will be given preference.

The individual projects within a collaborative merits program can request funding for a maximum of four years, with the budget caps depending on the length of the project listed here. I just want to reiterate that the budget caps are for each individual project, and not for the program as a whole. As mentioned before, up to three cores may be proposed with one being a required administrative core. A yearly maximum per core is $50,000 a year allowed. This amount should not be included in the IO1 budget, and does not count towards the budget cap.

Before a full application is sent in, a letter of intent must be submitted by January 7, 2022. This letter of intent will be a maximum of eight pages long. This of course includes a cover page, a references page, and an additional page for any additional clinical trial information if applicable. The letters of intent will be reviewed administratively. If approved, a full application may be sent in April. For this letter of intent, please see the RFA for full information. This letter of intent should describe the estimated budgets for each project, a summary of the overall collaborative efforts, how individual projects will benefit from collaboration, and of course the objectives of each individual project and core.

Please note that at the letter of intent phase, it is the LOI’s of the entire program with the three project titles and descriptions together. At the full application stage, the projects will be coming in individually.

As for the full application, most of the aspects of this will look familiar since projects are meant to stand on their own in a sense. Each individual application will have a page limit for its research plan of 14 pages. This includes the regular background, preliminary studies, and design and method sections. Please note that the appendix will be identical for all individual projects in a program collaboration. These appendices include a list of all applications in the collaboration, approved letter of intent, research contacts and impact document, the project management plan and administrative core index, and an additional core rationale and function appendices. Once again, this appendix will be across all the same projects for the one collaboration program.

Project evaluation criteria is important to note. I will not take too much time going through each one, but this is what each project will be evaluated by. The two I want to talk about in a little bit more detail is the integration and project management plan. Those two will be more focusing and be scored on in terms of how these projects fit in together, what synergy is promoted by the project, how well each project is integrated, and the project management plan as well.

For each individual IO1 application, each proposed project will be reviewed and scored on its own. Projects within a given program will be reviewed together in sequence. Like I mentioned that synergy among the problems we factor into individual project scores. Funding recommendations will take into account individual project scores and potential value of the overall program. These are the three projects. High scoring projects may be funded individually if related projects are not necessarily fundable. What we are trying to encourage is we are trying to encourage collaboration, but we are also trying to make sure if it is a very strong project on its own that it will be indeed funded especially if it is a priority area.

Cores are slightly different in this sense. Cores will not be given a separate score. However, they will be either given a recommended or not recommended suggestion. Each core will be evaluated whether it will be deemed essential for the proposed research and has the capability and capacity to fulfill the proposed function. An administrative core is required for the overall program, but additional cores are subject to the assessment of the reviewers.

Here is the overall timeline. Basically, January 7th is when the letter of intent is due for the submission deadline. We will then have the letter of intent renewed administratively and contact the sites sometime within the middle of February. Then we will have the application open. Then we expect the applications to be due April 14th with a last submission deadline of April 18th. Scientific merit reviewed the panels. These would be peer-reviewed, and the panels will take place sometime within June 2022. We estimate that the earliest project start dates will be around August or early Fall, aka September 2022.

We are looking to fund up to four full programs, but we are also willing to fund some additional projects. As much as before the other projects in the associated program are not as strong. Overall, individually we are looking to fund about 15 projects at this collaborative merit in the sense of four full programs.

Resubmissions or appeals of programs are not allowed, and renewals are not allowed. Investigators may submit an LOI that includes projects that have already been submitted under the individual service. For example, I know that the RFA’s of HSR&D and RRD for December 2021 deadline are currently going on right now. If that individual project is deemed a little bit more appropriate in a collaborative merit program such as this, you are more than welcome to please submit that within the letter of intent. If the LOI is approved, the individual project applications will be removed from the service. Specific review can be transferred to review as part of this cross-service review.

One last thing I would like to mention is that although resubmissions or appeals of programs are not allowed, individual project resubmissions will be allowed in terms of the regular cycle. As mentioned before, applications will be reviewed in 2022. Funding decisions will be made independent of other scientific merit review board funding decisions. That is it for my presentation. We will open up for the question-and-answer section right now. Thank you very much.

David: Much thanks. You might put up the slide of the high-priority conditions again just because you moved through that pretty quickly. Then I wanted to just add one other detail. The letter of intent, there will be one letter of intent per proposed program. You will need to coordinate with your collaborators to write that together. At the individual project stage, you will be submitting those projects individually. The three PIs will be submitting those projects individually, but they will be connected through a common name, title for your proposal, and also by the fact that you will be using a common set of appendices across all three proposals. You will not have to submit the three as a group in one application. They will come in looking as individual projects coming into merit review to individual services.

 Heidi, remind us the chat is now open for people to ask questions. Is that the recommended way for people to post their questions to us?

Maria: At the moment, Heidi. This is Maria Anne Esterial [PH]. I am another cyber-seminar coordinator. Heidi is having some technical difficulties. The Q&A is currently open for anybody who is able and would like to ask a question. One of the questions did come in. That asked, could you discuss the type of preliminary data needed? Is the prelim data expected to be of similar quality amount for traditional merit applications?

David: I will take that. I have my other panelists who are free to jump in. This is Covid. I think we all recognize that we are dealing in new territory where the existing data is going to be changing on a daily basis. We may get proposals wanting to look at Omicron, and that data is sort of doubling every day. I think the reviewers will be taking that into account.

I think the one thing that will be important is if you are proposing using VA specific data, you show that that data is actually going to be up to the task in terms of having the information that you need. For example, if you are proposing to do a study that relies on sequencing of viral specimens, then you should be looking at the information we have on VA resources about sequence specimens. This is so that you are realistic about the number of specimens in the VA that will be sequenced through what is now called VA Seq Force [PH]. I will stop there and just see if any of my other collaborators want to join and answer that question. Holly, is there anything you want to add to that question? I do not see Trish on or anybody else.

Holly: David, I would just echo what you said. I mean, I think having the best preliminary data that you can have, realizing that this is an ever-changing environment. It is making sure that you have enough to make the case, and that you are able to do the study that you are proposing is going to be really important. It is if you needed to use resources having the letters of support that you would need in a regular type of merit award application.

Maria: Okay. Are you guys ready for the next question?

David: Yes Maria, this is a quick technical issue. I am not seeing the messages in the chat. I do not know if that is how I am set up.

Maria: You should be able to see. If you go to the bottom righthand corner of your screen, there is an ellipsis of Q&A. You want to open the question-and-answer panel. Just turn that carat downwards.

David: I see. I was in chat instead of Q&A.

Machay [PH]: Maria, can I ask you really quick? Miriam Smith and Patricia Dorn are both supposed to be on the panel. I am not sure why they have joined as attendees. Can you give them ability to speak?

Maria: Yes I can.

Rob: Hi, this is Rob Offreheim [PH], one of Maria’s colleagues. I am working with Patricia and Miriam right now to get them access. It may require promotion.

David: Yeah. I think the problem is they probably used a link from registering as an audience instead of panelist. Thanks Rob. While we are waiting for them to get on, should I just take the next question that I see?

Maria: Yes. We have, to what extent are mutually dependent aims appropriate discourage? For example, if one of the motivations to complete the projects together is to complete at least a few analysts that draw from data collected by different component merits, is that allowed or risk things?

David: Yeah, that is a really good question. I am not sure I can give a simple answer to that because we have had similar experience in HSR&D where we did a mechanism called Create that also did. I think obviously having proposals that are dependent is a good way to show integration. Reviewers will be looking at that. They may have questions about how much of a risk that imposes.

 If the relationship is that one study is completely dependent on another study and the results of that are uncertain or the ability of them to produce those results are uncertain, then I think that that is a potential risk that reviewers would be concerned about. On the other hand, if a second study is going to use the results of the first study and you can show that that first study will produce results, it will not really matter which way those results go for the second study to be able to use them. Then I think that is a safer way to go.

 Interdependency is fine, but you have to draw a line about is there a risk that based on things you cannot predict, one study may not be viable at all. I would recommend avoiding that. Is there anyone else? Holly or Miriam? I see Miriam now as a panelist, yeah.

Miriam: The one thing I would add is I would think about this in the same way that I would think about mutually dependent aims in an application. If you need and you have to have one aim to be successful, you will have issues with completing the third aim if that were the case. I would think of it the same way as that. There would be an issue if within an application you had aims that were dependent upon each other. If they cross applications, they were using the same data and collaborating is fine. If you are making sure that something works in one application and using that data, then you obviously have another application or award that would be at risk.

Machay [PH]: I will move onto the next question. Are cores expected to be currently existing such as a data core? Or can there be plans to develop a new core?

David: There are. Either is appropriate. Recognize that the funding for the cores is relatively modest. It is $50,000 per year. You will just want to show that. I would say that it may be difficult to completely develop something from scratch with that amount of funding, but we expect that people will use that money to build on data resources they may already have or methodology work that is already underway in their research. Use that money to bring together people across the studies interested in that. Coordinate and build on it. The simple answer is either is appropriate. If you are really building something from scratch, you are going to have to show that you can do it on what are relatively modest resources. Trish or Miriam, would you like to comment or weigh in anything that you previously did not have a chance to?

Rob: We are still trying to get their audio set up, David. I am sorry.

David: Oh, I got you. Sorry.

Trish: You cannot? You cannot hear me now?

David: I can hear you Trish now.

Trish: Okay great. Hi. Sorry everybody. I am in accord with what has been commented regarding the preliminary data that would be needed to bring in for a merit size study. I am in accord with what has been said. We are really looking forward to people coming forward and bringing in these collaborative projects.

Miriam: This is Miriam from CSR&D. Also, I agree with everything that was said previously. We certainly understand that we are in an environment where things are moving rapidly. There has not been a lot of time to generate preliminary data. We are just very glad to see you all on. I will kick it back to David or \_\_\_\_\_ [00:24:23].

Machay [PH]: Thank you Miriam. Next question. When the three IO1s get submitted, do they all get funded or failed collectively?

David: They will not get funded or fail collectively. There will be. They will be scored individually, although a component of that score will reflect the degree to which they work together. At the second stage, we will look at individual scores of all the projects and look grouped by program with recognizing that we have an aim to fund up to five programs. At that stage being part of a program we will be looking at the overall scores of the program. Whether the program gets funded intact will depend on the collective scores of the three projects.

Then once the program funding has been decided, we will look at the top scoring proposals that did not get included as part of a program. That is where an individual project that is both felt to be scientifically strong and also relevant to our priorities may get funded. The aim of this mechanism was not to create a disincentive for people to collaborate because they felt like they were reducing your chance of getting funded because you have to get all three across the line. If your project is strong and important, even if your collaborator’s projects are not funded, you will still have a chance at getting funded. To the extent that we are trying to get programs that include three strong projects, we will be looking for the best of those programs collectively. Does anyone else want to weigh in on whether I made that more confusing or less confusing in my answer?

Machay [PH]: If not, we will move forward. Can data that is being used for other research projects already be used?

David: Does anyone want to take that? I mean, we envision. I will start and people can weigh in. We envision people are going to be reusing data. One of the purposes of our efforts in Covid is to build centralized data resources. The Covid share data resource is one example of that. We know people are generating. The Covid Outcomes Research Collaboratory is generating cohorts of patients with Covid and control patients. We envision those kinds of data used for multiple studies.

 We encourage people to use data that has been developed in other research or is being used in other research projects, but we do not want them. We want them to be asking new questions. Your proposal like any proposal would show how you are building on work you have already done and taking advantage of available data to do that. We will at the stage of funding be making sure that we are not funding duplicate studies of things that may already be underway.

Trish: Patricia Dorn. Thank you David that you hit upon it exactly with the different questions and not duplicating effort activities.

Machay [PH]: Okay. Thank you very much to the panel. Let me see. Are the three projects expected to include two different VAs? This was indicated in an earlier announcement.

David: We strongly encourage collaboration across VA medical centers. One aim of this project is to build a more collaborative cross-VA approach to questions in Covid rather than people working in their same silos. We do recognize that it is possible that there are strong teams within one larger VA research program that can put together three projects that meet the other criteria of this solicitation. If they can convince us that these projects fit together well but are developing novel collaborations that would not have otherwise happened, then we will consider it. If it is three studies from the same lab, we would not look favorably on that. That is not something that needs this mechanism to do it. We are looking for collaborations that seem to take advantage of this mechanism to build new relationships, ask new questions in different ways, and ideally build collaborations across medical centers.

Would anyone else like to weigh in on that? This may be most likely to come from something like biomed. I have commented sort of from the perspective of health services. If it is all a team of health services researchers just asking three different health services questions using the same data that they have all been using, that would not be viewed very favorably by us from one center. Holly, do you want to comment from a BL perspective?

Holly: No David. I would just agree with what you had said. Ideally if you are coming in from the same VA medical center, we would really want this to make sure that this is a collaboration that is new, that is more robust, and different than perhaps putting in an individual IO1 application with multiple PIs. There would be a mechanism to do that. If there was a collaboration that answers bigger questions and definitely demonstrates synergy, we would consider that. Like David said, ideally we would like to see this be part of a research enterprise approach to Covid and the health and well-being of the veterans. Seeing this across VAs would be ideal. We are realizing there are some questions that may be answered better by a team within one VA medical center.

Miriam: This is Miriam. I would totally agree and echo what Holly said. For CSR&D we certainly realize that during the pandemic there have been, for instance, individuals who have different chemical expertise who have started to work with each other within a given medical center during the pandemic. They may not have had any prior collaborations, so we would certainly view that as a positive. This is while still encouraging folks to of course consider working more broadly across the enterprise.

David: Yeah, just to wrap up that discussion, I think collaborations across services within a medical center would be viewed more favorably than collaborations within one service within one medical center. We recognize none of our funding mechanisms really promote cross-service collaboration even at the same medical center. That would be different. Machay [PH], I think you skipped over a question from Dr. Kahn.

Machay [PH]: What would happen in the scenario if one of the three proposals do not get good scores?

David: At the funding stage we will be looking first at sort of overall program scores. If we do not have a sufficient number of programs where all three projects score very well, we may consider funding a collaboration of just two projects rather than three. If we have a sufficient number of programs where all three projects do well, then obviously they would get preference. This is understanding that we are also going to be looking at a balance across different services, and a balance across different clinical questions in the same way that we do in any kind of funding decisions looking for a balance.

 The two projects might have a chance of getting funded as a mini-program. Conceivably it is with some cores. Additionally, as individual projects they will always have a chance of getting funded on their own once the decisions about funding of programs are made. We have to admit. This is kind of new territory for us. Holly can speak from a little more experience from their collaborative merit program in biomed BL and CS where we adopted this mechanism from. We are. We are striving not to disadvantage good ideas who may worry gee, I am going to be at the risk of the least successful of the three projects. All the scores will be individual, and good ideas we will be finding ways to get funded even if not as part of a program.

 We really have no idea how many people are going to come in under this. We have no idea what the score distribution is going to look like at the end of this. Our intent is to, as we have said, get at least three to four programs funded. We envision. We obviously cannot say anything. We envision your chances of getting funded under this mechanism will be at least as high or better than coming in as a single project under the standing merit programs. Does anyone else want to weigh in? Maybe I am not sure if I went out too far on a limb on that about chances. Holly, do you want to say anything from the collaborative merit experience in BL and CS?

Holly: No, I think you have summarized it well. We will look at the three projects together. Ideally it would be fantastic if all three were to receive a very high score, then that decision is made for us, and we can move forward with that. For those applications that come in independently with very good scores, we definitely would like to consider them individually to move forward.

David: Yeah. I think what is different from the previous collaborative merit is it was. There was no. Holly, correct me if I am wrong. There was not sort of pre-existing attempt to get a certain number of collaborations across the finish line. Is that fair? If they did all get good scores, they got a little extra funding for collaboration. Is that right?

Holly: That is correct. What is, I will say, a little bit different from the BL and CS RFA is that the BL and CS RFA is an ongoing project. In the past we have let an application that perhaps did not score well come back in for resubmission, and then catch up with their compadres in that first submission. Then give them. Allow them to have the administrative core as well.

David: Right. As we said, we are not intending to do that although it will again depend a little bit on how well we do with the first round of this.

Machay [PH]: All right. Thank you very much. For this next question I would like to combine two of them due to the earlier technical snafu. What is the definition of a core? Would it be universities with the VA? Is funding for non-VA cores allowed?

David: Like any project, you can have collaborators of non-VA investigators through contracts or through IPAs. If your university collaborator has a unique resource perhaps funded by some of the NIH money in this space that you think would be useful or can be leveraged to support this work, the funding could go to that. It is under the same constraints that all of our funding is about the mechanisms for supporting people who are not VA and do not have VA appointments.

 If you can make a compelling case, for example if someone had been funded by NIH to develop a unique data source that is relevant. Obviously if we are talking about clinical data it would need to have veteran-specific data. I could envision where there might be something developed outside the VA, and you want to get access to that data resource and use it for a core activity that supports all three projects. Then that could be done. We are also looking to develop resources that are more generally available. It would not be excluded. You would have to make a good case and show that you could fund it within our existing funding constraints. Ideally, show that it has a path towards becoming more broadly available to VA researchers.

Machay [PH]: Thank you David. Does anyone else have anything to say to that last question? Okay. We have already touched upon this, but I just want to reiterate for this common question. If collaborations occur within a local institution among groups that have not previously worked together, would that collaborative effort be as favorably considered as those across VA facilities?

David: Yeah, I think we have sort of answered that previously. I think collaborations within a local institution generally are not as favorable as across institutions. If it is a collaboration within a local institution, collaborations across services would be looked at more favorably than collaborations within a service. Then if you are really proposing a program of collaborators who all are within the same research service at the same VA medical center, you would really have to show that you are doing something unique that would not happen on its own. You know? That is not impossible, but it would be harder.

 I think we are recognizing the amount of core funding we are providing is modest. It basically just promotes some sort of communication. The question would be, if you are all at the same place and you are all working in Covid, the only thing different is we are giving you an extra $50,000 a year. Do you really need that to start working together? Again, if you make a compelling case that this is really innovative ways of bringing people together who are really taking different approaches to a common problem. If that is the collaboration that seems to make sense to you, you can try to make that case and we will consider it.

Machay [PH]: Thank you David.

Miriam: This is Miriam. I guess I would just want to remind people that there is going to be a huge focus on the quality of the actual research proposed independent of whether people are at the same site or different sites and so on. It is a hard question to answer until we see the actual research that is being proposed.

David: That is a very good point. We do not want you to go grab somebody off the street at another place just to be a collaborator because you think having someone from a different site will make it stronger. If you have good science and a case to show why this will do something new to unlock these questions, that is better than just. That is what we want to see. It is the science. In the end, obviously because these proposals are going to come in and be scored individually, it will be the science that is the dominant factor in terms of what gets across the finish line.

Miriam: Yes. Thanks David.

Machay [PH]: Thank you. This next question is more for BL R&D, but anyone could pipe in. Will the VA support a project that used blood/data from non-human primates that were collected by an affiliated academic institution?

Holly: This is Holly. I would say that that is a really good question considering the difficulty we have with using non-human primates. I would say I would ask that you contact me directly. I would say that we would consider that, but just know that there would be difficulties in going forward with that.

Machay [PH]: Thank you Holly. This next question is more of a clarification question. The question is, can you clarify again? It is up to three IO1s and three cores plus an administrative core. Or is the administrative core part of the three cores with the same $50k budget? Just to be clear, I pulled up the slide. Up to three cores may be proposed, and one of them will be the administrative core. It is including the administrative core. Each one gets a yearly maximum of $50,000 per core. The second part of the question is, can the IO1s each be targeting a different agency? An example is HSR&D and/or CSR&D. Or should all of them be directed to the same institute? During the LOI phase, you will be listing each project separately on the cover page. Each one would be available to go to whichever institution. All three then could be within an agency, or they could be selected for different agencies.

David: This is obviously someone who is spending too much time writing NIH applications. Yes, they could be across research services or within a research service. Again, we are looking for the collaborations that make sense to you from a scientific standpoint. We are hoping that some of those collaborations will span research services. There will be novel ways to look at a problem if one can bring what signals you are seeing in clinical big data from health services research and test those signals in a clinical study. Look for biological signals that might track the data of what you are seeing in clinical data. We think there is a case to be made that we hope people will take on cross-service collaboration. If you think the collaboration that makes sense is within a service, we will want to see that you are tackling different questions in ways that build on each other.

 I think because we did get a question sort of offline about this, one way I thought of it is we do not want somebody to take what could be a single study, and then just divide it up into three studies. Then say we are going to collaborate. We are all going to use the same data, and we are going to look at one outcome in this data and another outcome in that data. You are basically just dividing up what really could be one study. We are looking for collaborations that are a little more innovative than that. We are also going to be asking the question. If these projects could all live on their own and do not benefit from the other projects at all, then there is no particular value or necessity to fund them together or have them. You want to make the case of how they each benefit each other, and how the extra funding for the cores will help advance the science as well. Do others want to dive in on their take? I see we have a bunch of other questions that we probably want to get to.

Trish: It is Trisha Dorn. That was a very good and clear response, David. Just as a reminder for people to read the RFA, you will see what will be responsive and meet the intent of the different research services when you are talking about having a collaboration across the different services. That would be a good guide. Then please contact the appropriate scientific program managers that have some deeper discussions.

David: Great.

Miriam: It is Miriam. I would echo Trisha’s comment. You know? For all the services, we would really be happy to talk with you early in this process – meaning soon. In reality, there is not a lot of time left before the LOIs have to come in. Please do reach out. It really is to your advantage to reach out and talk to the scientific portfolio managers or other staff as early as possible. That really applies of course to our other submissions also.

David: Machay [PH] has put up the, please use the central mailbox. That will be directed to the appropriate person. Some services have a single point person. Other services, the right person to talk to is going to depend on your area of interest. Just send it to that ordcovid19@va.gov mailbox. We will get it to the right person. We only have eight minutes left, so let us try to walk a little more quickly.

Can pilot data come from a non-VA project? Yes. It is just like in any research. If that is relevant data, the source of it does not matter.

Will the development of a new innovation and app be an appropriate project? Again, to the extent that it would be appropriate in any kind of research project, this is as opposed to is it a question that is actually a research question versus something that is product development? Presumably if you are developing something, we would want to see the scientific question being asked. Does it actually allow you to answer scientific questions? Does it improve outcomes? This is as opposed. It could be a component, but obviously we will be interested in how it will allow you to answer scientific questions about better treatments or new discoveries.

Can you email a copy of today’s presentation? Maria or Heidi, the example of where or how will they get today’s presentation? I think it will be on the cyber seminar website.

Heidi: Yes. It will be on the cyber seminar website. Also, we will be sending it out via email to everyone who registered.

David: Great, thank you. Do the different projects need to intertwine? Apologies if this was already answered. Yes. I mean, we are looking for collaborations that make sense. It is up to your creativity to show how different projects benefit from each other. We are not looking for three things that are completely independent and just share the fact that they are about Covid. This is either sharing common data, common methodology, or technology. We are asking about a common question. I am just trying to read. It says, for instance if one site is looking at different variants on the incidence of post-Covid conditions, would another site need to look at the effect of different variants on sleep disturbances? They do not necessarily need to. I think if there is a project, you want to show how the projects all relate to each other. You do not want one that is sort of hanging out on its own and not really related to each other, if that is sort of what the question is getting at.

Let me just move on. When will this funding mechanism be available? That is the timeline. If by available, you are meaning when will funding be available for projects, we are looking at summer of 2022. That is when we think the approval. We hope to approve projects at the very beginning of the summer, and then hope projects can get started as soon as they can clear their just in time requirements.

Any recommendations for ways to reach out to researchers at other VAs who might be willing to collaborate? I think the best way – others can weigh in – is to send your interest to us. The scientific program managers and the Covid group in the ORD are probably the best people to know who is working in a space. If you are looking for other people who are interested in this common question or working with a particular type of data, we can do that. You can also go to our Covid resources on our website, which often has information. Look also at the link that is in the chat that links to the Covid resources. Those are all linked to actual individuals who are working in this space. The slides will be presented.

Are co-PIs allowed on this mechanism? Yes, in the way that they are allowed in any other individual project. This is meaning there has to be a multiple PI plan to justify why there should be more than one PI on the project, but the same rules apply.

Is it possible to request an extension for submitting the LOI? No, I do not think so.

What is our deadline? January 7. Again, yeah I just think we are under a tight timeline just because of this two-stage mechanism whereby we are looking for collaboration. We are looking to have an LOI process, and then we need to give people time to submit their proposals.

Will the email also have names of people on this meeting so we can contact them for possible collaboration? Heidi, is that possible?

Heidi: I am sorry. David, I missed that. What was the question?

David: Someone was asking if they could get the names of people who had signed up to join this just to see.

Heidi: No. That is not something that we are doing right now.

David: Right okay. I would propose that these are a variety of questions that sort of get at the challenges of collaborators. I would say the place to start would be send your area of interest and information to our email address. We will connect you to a scientific program manager who can talk to you about your area of interest and who else might be in that. We have. Look at the shared data resources which talk about CSP2028, cork, and other things. There are people associated with each of those efforts who are individuals that you may want to reach out to. Look at our Covid information on the ORD website and the HSR&D website. You will see publications and other research news about a number of people working on different aspects of this. You are raising a question which we will take back. Is it possible for us to create a Listserv or something where people could get on a bulletin board equivalent? This is where people can get on board and say I have this. I am interested in this idea. Are there others who might be collaborators? I am going to take that off.

Trish: David?

David: Trish?

Trish: This is just as a thought for people just to go off on their own and do. Go into Reporter. You can do a search of course by area. As well, you can do it just for VA. Also, if you go for example on the Clin Trials site, again you can search by agency and by area of interest or domain. It is a way that you on your own at the moment can see who is out there in the VA doing work that is in your area of interest.

David: Trish, what is the lag time in Reporter for getting VA-funded work into Reporter?

Trish: I mean, once it has the money – I am sorry David. I do not know. I know we try and get that over there as quickly as possible. For clinical trials, they are going to have to be in there before they recruit the first subjects, so that has to be done. That is part of Jet.

David: Right. HSR&D also has a searchable site for ongoing studies. You can search by terms like Covid to find out who is funded in this space.

Machay [PH]: Okay, we are at time. Thank you so much to our panelists for answering all of the questions that we came to today. Thank you so much for everyone to join. Like we have said, any questions at all please contact central email posted right here on the slides. We will reply to you as soon as possible.

David: Heidi, when will these slides be sent out to people who registered?

Heidi: The slides were sent out this morning in the reminder email. The recording usually takes us a day or two to get that posted.

David: Great. Will there be? The best way to get answers to these questions will be at the recording. There will not be any written transcript of the questions and answers. Is that correct?

Heidi: There will be a written transcript, but that usually takes us a few days to get posted.

David: Okay great. I want to thank Heidi and the CIDER team for putting this on. Thank everybody for joining us. We are hoping we will get your good ideas coming in. We are happy to answer questions to help you decide how to put together a good proposal. Thanks everybody.

Heidi: Thanks everyone for joining us.