RESEARCH BUSINESS OPERATIONS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook establishes standards and requirements for the proper and efficient operation of research offices with regard to formal communications, financial operations, and personnel.

2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES: This issuance constitutes a new guidance and procedural document pertaining to field-initiated communications with the Office of Research and Development (ORD), VHA Central Office.

3. RELATED DIRECTIVE: VHA Directive 1200.

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Office of Research and Development (12) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Handbook.

5. RESCISSION: None.

6. RECERTIFICATION: This document is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of May 2007.

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RESEARCH BUSINESS OPERATIONS

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook provides guidance for the successful operational management of research offices in field sites.

2. FORMAL COMMUNICATION

a. **Scope.** This paragraph provides guidance on field-initiated communications with the Office of Research and Development (ORD). Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office communication on administrative matters directed toward elements of the ORD must be routed through proper channels.

(1) Written requests must come from the medical center Director or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to the Director of the appropriate VHA Central Office Research and Development (R&D) Service, or to the Chief Research and Development Officer (CRADO).

(2) Contact between Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) investigators and elements of the ORD is appropriate only when concerned with professional or scientific issues and only after consultation with the Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) for Research and Development (R&D) or the Coordinator for Research and Development (C for R&D).

(3) Electronic mail may be considered formal communication; however, official approvals requiring a signature authority are valid only when submitted and/or received as signed correspondence.

b. **Required Formal Communication.** Requests for all types of R&D program or project support require concurrence by the ACOS for R&D and the signature of the medical center Director. Written communication includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(1) Requests for supplemental project funding.

(2) Requests for bridge or other supplemental funding.

(3) Requests to transfer funding from one site to another.

(4) Requests to transfer a project from one site to another.

(5) Requests for a change in Principal Investigator (PI).

(6) Requests for major changes in project objectives.

(7) Requests for no-cost extensions affecting award termination date.

(8) Appeals of decisions affecting resources.

(9) Notification of medical center staff participation in any major Congressional testimony, or other important project assignments, work group tasks, or other activities requested by VHA Central Office, the Network, etc.

c. **Exceptions.** Requests for resources that do not require approval by the medical center Director include:

(1) Requests for supplemental funds to cover actual travel costs related to VHA Central Office-directed travel; and

(2) Responses to oral inquiries initiated by ORD.

3. FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

This paragraph identifies the sources of VA research funding, the mechanisms for the appropriate administration of research funding, and certain vehicles for the expenditure of resources. Guidance for research employee travel and transfer also is provided.

a. **Funding Mechanisms.** VA R&D programs are funded in several ways.

(1) **Intramural Funds.** Congressionally appropriated VA R&D funds are allocated by VHA Central Office to support research programs and projects at the local facility. At the medical center level, the R&D Committee recommends to the Director, or CEO, the distribution and use of these funds. The four VHA Central Office R&D Services funding programs are:

(a) 821 Medical Research;

(b) 822 Rehabilitation Research and Development;

(c) 824 Health Services Research and Development; and

(d) 825 Cooperative Studies.

NOTE: *Funds allocated for use by an R&D Service are not to be transferred to another Service without specific VHA Central Office direction.*

(2) **Extramural Funds.** Extramural funds are funds other than those specifically appropriated for VA research by Congress that are made available at any time to support VA research. These funds may be provided by other Federal agencies, state or local government agencies, non-profit corporations or foundations, other charitable organizations, corporations, or an individual contributor. Such funds include:

(a) Gifts or donations received for research projects with the approval of the facility's R&D Committee and the Director, or CEO. These include donations of equipment or supplies, as well as funding by non-profit foundations, private donors, and corporations.

(b) Grants or contracts that have been approved by the R&D Committee and the medical center Director.

(c) **Reimbursables.** Reimbursables are extramural funds provided in support of an interagency agreement or a grant from a non-VA government organization. See VA Controller Policy, MP-4, Pt. 5, Chapter 2, D.02, Appropriation Reimbursements, or the superseding document.

(3) **Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADA)** ***NOTE:*** *See VHA Handbook 1200.18.*

b. **Distribution and Expenditure of Funds**

(1) **Funds Provided to the Medical Center.** Prior to the beginning of each fiscal year, ORD, VHA Central Office assigns an initial operating level of monetary allocations, Initial Target Allowance (ITA), for each facility's research programs. These allocations are subject to change pending Congressional action, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) action, administrative termination of a research program, or research merit review actions. The ORD provides additional funds to VA medical centers for additional research activities as approved throughout the fiscal year. The ORD also coordinates allocations of reimbursables among applicable VA medical centers. Other extramural funds may be received locally during a fiscal year.

(2) **Medical Center Responsibilities and Administrative Support.** The medical center Director is responsible for accomplishing the research mission at the facility and following all Federal and VA fiscal management policies and procedures. For each program, cost centers must be used to ensure that costs are charged to the correct program (see VA Handbook 4671.1 for a list of cost centers associated with each research service program). A common resource is a facility, function, or piece of equipment shared commonly by investigators at a VA medical center. Administrative common resources for all four R&D Services are allocated in Program 821; use cost center 101 Administration. A facility's Veterinary Medical Unit (VMU) is a common resource for all VA investigators, and funding is allocated through Program 821; use cost center 105. Funding from the ORD is allocated through Program 821; use cost center 102.

(a) Administration of Funds. The following entities may administer funds for VA-approved research, in accordance with applicable law and VA policy:

1. VA medical centers administer all intramural funds, all funds in the General Post Fund earmarked for research, and all funds received from another Federal agency under an interagency agreement (see VA Manual MP-4, Pt. V and VHA Directive 4721).

2. VA nonprofit research corporations (established under Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 7361-7368) administer all funds that the corporations receive. Medical centers may transfer any funds not appropriated to the Department to a VA nonprofit research corporation (see VHA Handbook 1200.17).

NOTE: *If approached by a potential donor or grantor interested in supporting VA research, a VA official may not direct the donor to deposit the funds with any entity other than VA or a VA nonprofit corporation.*

3. Affiliated schools and universities and nonprofit organizations (other than a VA nonprofit research corporation, discussed above) may administer funds for VA research if authorized by a VA medical center Director. A VA medical center Director may authorize these entities to administer funds for VA research only if administration is a condition of payment of the funds to VA.

(b) Administration of Contracts. Contracts may be awarded for R&D purposes. Some examples of activities to be achieved by contract include but are not limited to: the fabrication of prostheses; written consultative opinions, reviews, and critiques of R&D proposals or ongoing projects; statistical analyses and tabulations; and laboratory tests. Some limits on the authority for contracting are outlined in 38 U.S.C. 7303(c). VA facilities shall award contracts for research purposes only when the medical center cannot provide the service and in order to accomplish R&D specific goals and objectives. Such contracts must be approved by the R&D Committee.

1. Contracts must be in compliance with Federal and VA Acquisition Regulations.

2. All contract negotiations by a VA medical center are handled by the office responsible for acquisitions at the facility. Only a contracting officer is empowered by law to execute the contract. There must be technical or scientific assistance, however, from the principal investigator or from a contracting officer's technical representative designated by the relevant R&D service in the field or at VHA Central Office. No contract will be written for a period exceeding 1 year (although option years may be included), and each will specifically contain the information outlined in Appendix A.

a. Commercially available supplies, devices, and services can be obtained within the allowed dollar limits by local contract for use in an approved project.

b. In the case of consultant services, Letters of Agreement may be used subject to facility policies and controls as outlined in current VA regulations. Any questions about applicability should be directed to a duly appointed contracting officer in the office responsible for acquisitions at the facility.

(c) Administration of Interagency Agreements. VA may enter into interagency agreements with other Federal agencies under the provisions of 31 U.S.C. 1535, which was enacted as part of the Economy Act. Such agreements provide a means by which one agency with authority to provide a service or product contracts with another Federal agency or department, which has a need for the required services. Pursuant to this authority, VA may purchase R&D performed by other Federal agencies or perform research and development paid for by other agencies. The funding for an interagency agreement is provided through a reimbursable mechanism. Reimbursement to VA for the service provided is accomplished by VHA Central Office billing the other agency's appropriated fund and then issuing the funds to the field site. Reimbursable funds received by VA retain the period of availability of funds under the source appropriation. For example, 1-year appropriated funds will not convert to 2-year money when VA administers them. Funds must be obligated within the proper appropriation year as dictated by the Economy Act. Interagency agreements may not be used to extend the obligation life of an appropriation beyond the time provided by Congress to the source appropriation. In general, interagency agreements are negotiated by VHA Central Office and medical centers, and approved by VHA Central Office. Agreements with non-Federal organizations are processed through other contractual mechanisms.

(d) Managing the General Post Fund. General Post Funds will be managed according to current VA financial management policies and procedures and VHA policy (see VHA Dir. 4721), a summary of which follows. With the donor's consent, General Post Funds may be

transferred to a VA-affiliated nonprofit research corporation established under 38 U.S.C. 7361-7368.

1. All gifts or donations to VA for research to be conducted by a VA facility must be deposited in the General Post Fund. Acceptance of these donations requires prior approval of the facility's R&D Committee and the medical center Director. Donations to the General Post Fund for research at a VA facility are to be allocated by the medical center Director for research support within the facility, but may be designated for a specific investigator's work, according to donor instructions. The funding is administered by the VA medical center using the General Post Fund according to current VA financial management policies and procedures (MP-4, Pt. V, Ch. 2).

2. The R&D Committee and all appropriate subcommittees (Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), Subcommittee on Research Safety (SRS), etc.) must approve the research project to be supported by the General Post Fund.

3. Once the medical center Director has accepted the donation, gift, etc., the local research office will ensure that the following procedures are followed to authorize expenditures:

a. The facility's R&D Committee must review and approve all expenditures from the facility's General Post Fund. Disposition of each request will be recorded in the R&D Committee minutes.

b. General Post Fund transactions necessary to replenish salary accounts will be forwarded in writing to the ORD following local facility guidelines. A copy of the fiscal office transaction journalizing funds to the Treasury must accompany the written request.

(e) ACOS for R&D Responsibilities. The ACOS for R&D, or equivalent, may accept in-kind gifts to VA in support of VA-approved research, subject to the restrictions noted in preceding subparagraph 3b(2)(d). If the gifts are not accepted or are rejected, the ACOS for R&D or equivalent shall ensure that the medical center notifies the investigator that the project is terminated and he/she can no longer accept or expend resources related to the project.

(f) Employee Travel

1. Locally Directed Travel. Locally directed travel is paid from funds specifically allocated to the VA medical center for that purpose. The medical center Director may authorize employee travel expenditures from allocated funds in accordance with VA policies. Authorized travel from R&D funds is for the purpose(s) of:

a. Attendance at a professional meeting to present an R&D report or to participate in an organized discussion of medical, scientific, or technical subjects pertinent to the investigator's R&D work.

b. Informal exchange of medical, scientific or technical information, including receiving instruction in applicable topics.

c. Training in the use of specialized R&D equipment and techniques.

d. Participation in multi-facility research and development other than when the travel is centrally directed.

e. Travel essential for the conduct of a research project.

2. Centrally Directed Travel. When an authorized individual in VHA Central Office requests an employee to attend a meeting, training session, or similar activity related to research and development, such travel requires concurrence by the medical center Director and funds will be provided by VHA Central Office. Field facilities must provide VHA Central Office with an estimate of the travel costs. Final adjustment to travel estimates are due in VHA Central Office within 30 days of completion of travel.

3. Foreign Travel Requests. Requests for foreign travel funds and/or authorization must follow current VA local and national applicable policies, under the jurisdiction of the Chief Academic Affiliations Officer.

4. Other Travel Requests. Travel requested by an employee for any other purpose (not previously described) intrinsic to the R&D program requires prior approval by the Director of the pertinent R&D Service in VHA Central Office. This category includes travel for certain committee meetings and the permanent transfer of R&D employees. The request, approved by the medical center Director, will include the reason for, mode of and dates of travel, estimated per diem or expenses and transportation costs, and the amount of travel money required from VHA Central Office funds. Requests shall be directed to the Director of the appropriate R&D Service in VHA Central Office through established administrative channels at least 30 days prior to the travel date. Adjustment to funding is due in VHA Central Office within 30 days of completion of travel.

(g) Employee Transfer

1. Request for Research Funding Transfer. ORD funds are not transferred to a new facility without prior approval from the Director of the R&D Service involved. Official correspondence requesting approval for the transfer must be submitted to the Director of the R&D Service from the Director of the new facility. This correspondence must address the eligibility of the investigator at the new site by describing the role of the investigator at the new facility including employment status (e.g., full time, part time including hours per week) and specific location of the investigator's laboratory (refer to VHA Handbook 1200.15). In addition, the correspondence must provide the date of the R&D Committee approval for the project as well as any other committees (e.g., IRB, IACUC, SRS, etc.).

2. Materials Transfer. R&D supplies and materials (including equipment) may be transferred with an investigator to another VA site using local R&D funds following approval of each medical center Director and approval of the appropriate VHA Central Office Service Director, if the equipment was purchased by VHA Central Office-allocated resources.

3. Personal Transportation. R&D employees, their families, and household goods may be transported using R&D funds in accordance with existing VHA policy.

4. Other Requirements

a. **Change in Investigator R&D Status**. The original site must submit the form, Change in Investigator R&D Status (Research and Development Information System (RDIS) Page 19) signed by the medical center Director, to VHA Central Office indicating the funding available to be withdrawn. The Director of the R&D Service involved shall determine the amount of research funding to be provided to the new facility.

b. **Investigator Data Sheet**. Investigator data must be entered electronically (RDIS Page 18) on behalf of the investigator at the new facility prior to receipt of funding.

c. **Project Phase Out**. The Director of the R&D Service may approve funding for a "phase out" period after the investigator's departure from the original facility.

4. PERSONNEL IN R&D

This paragraph provides guidance on VA policy pertaining to personnel in R&D. Each VA field research office needs to be knowledgeable about existing Human Resources Management (HRM) policy to comply with sound HRM practices and principles.

a. **Scope.** A VA medical center with sufficient funding to support a Research Administrative Office employs an R&D staff funded through both Medical Care and R&D appropriations. The Director, or CEO of each health care facility is responsible for the R&D program of that institution, advised and assisted by an R&D Committee. Ordinarily, the Director delegates authority to administer the R&D program to an appropriately designated executive, the ACOS for R&D, the C for R&D, or equivalent, reporting to the Chief of Staff (COS). The ACOS for R&D or the C for R&D should be a physician; however, non-physicians may hold these positions with concurrence by the CRADO.

b. **VA Research And Development Staff**

(1) **ACOS for R&D.** The position of ACOS for R&D is established in the Office of the COS when authorized by the medical center Director and approved by the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director (Site Delegation authority). The ACOS for R&D needs to have research, patient care, and teaching responsibilities, but shall not have other major administrative responsibilities.

(a) The ACOS for R&D must be a physician unless the CRADO has granted an exception. The ACOS for R&D needs to have credible research and academic experience. ***NOTE****: A national search is recommended.*

(b) In considering the appointment of an ACOS for R&D, the R&D Committee and the Dean's Committee of the local medical school presents the nominee to the COS and medical center Director. The COS and medical center Director forward the nominee's credentials, a letter of recommendation, and the nominee's curriculum vitae with a request for concurrence to the CRADO. The concurrence process will include interviews with the CRADO and VHA Central Office staff. Following concurrence by the CRADO, the VISN Director approves the appointment. ***NOTE:*** *Disagreements between the CRADO and the appointing authority that cannot be resolved should consider input from the VISN Director and 10N, with final decision to be made by the Under Secretary for Health or designee.*

(c) The COS must request and consider input from the CRADO when preparing the ACOS for R&D's annual proficiency report (Title 38) or performance appraisal (Title 5).

(d) The ACOS for R&D, if new to such a position, is expected to participate in available training programs (e.g., VA National R&D Meeting, National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations (NAVREF), Society of Research Administrators (SRA), etc.) as soon as possible after assuming the position. In addition, the ACOS for R&D is encouraged to participate in day to week long visits to other VA medical centers with active research programs and to establish mentoring relationships with senior ACOS for R&D at other facilities.

(e) The ACOS for R&D is expected to participate in a personal active research program. The division of time must ensure that adequate attention is given to R&D administration.

(f) The medical center Director needs to appoint an Acting ACOS for R&D to serve while a new ACOS for R&D is sought for a vacant but authorized position, within 1 month of the position being vacant. Use of the "acting" designation for longer than 6 months must be authorized by the CRADO.

(2) **Coordinator for Research and Development (C for R&D).** The position of C for R&D, in lieu of that of ACOS for R&D, is usually established in the Office of the COS or equivalent when the R&D program lacks sufficient intramural funding to justify the ACOS for R&D position. The C for R&D needs to be a professional member of the medical center or clinical staff who has had research experience.

(a) The medical center Director appoints the C for R&D and notifies the CRADO of the appointment. Supporting documents, including the curriculum vitae of the appointee, will accompany the notification.

(b) The Office of the COS provides the clerical and administrative assistance needed by the C for R&D, or the VISN Director will assign a larger R&D office at another facility within the VISN to assume administrative responsibilities for the smaller facility.

(3) **Administrative Officer for Research and Development (AO for R&D).** The position of AO for R&D may be established if the position is approved by the medical center Director.

(a) The ACOS for R&D appoints the AO for R&D and notifies the Director of Operations, ORD, VHA Central Office of the appointment.

(b) Training and experience in health care administration and/or laboratory and/or health science are desirable. Prior familiarity with VA fiscal, supply, and personnel procedures and regulations is helpful.

(c) The AO for R&D, if new to such a position, is expected to participate in available training programs (e.g., VA National R&D Meeting, NAVREF, SRA, etc.) as soon as possible after assuming the position. In addition, the AO for R&D is encouraged to establish mentoring relationships with senior AO for R&D at other facilities.

(4) **Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO).** VA medical centers with animal facilities must have a veterinarian's services in order to meet requirements for proper animal care and welfare and to ensure a

satisfactory research environment. ***NOTE:*** *See VHA Handbook 1200.7 for detailed information regarding the qualifications and responsibilities of the VMO, or equivalent.*

(5) **Medical Center Research Personnel**

(a) The clinical and administrative staffs of VA facilities are encouraged to conduct R&D activities and are expected to provide most of the principal investigators. Investigators must be able to devote sufficient time to complete their R&D programs satisfactorily. The proportion of any clinician's time spent on R&D activities, including the R&D Committee, its subcommittees, and the IRB and/or IACUC must be accounted for clearly in the accounting system designed to track these expenditures, which are attributable to the Research Support portion of the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) transferred to the medical center.

(b) Appointees in the Career Development Program are expected to devote a majority of their time to R&D but also to participate in patient care. In accordance with policies of the Career Development Program, no more than 25 percent of the awardee's time may be spent in patient care activities (see VHA Research Handbooks related to the Career Development Program.)

(c) Non-clinician scientists paid from R&D funds are expected to devote most of their time to research and development. Their efforts, however, are to benefit patient care by any of several means, such as improving biomedical knowledge, assisting other professional or administrative personnel in their research programs, and by direct participation in health care activities, including committee membership.

(d) Consultants, attending physicians and other professionals holding appointments to the VA facility's staff, or assigned through an Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA), are encouraged to participate in R&D projects as collaborating investigators with VA personnel. This research participation requires a valid without compensation (WOC) appointment processed by the local HRM Office, even though the same person may receive compensation at other times as a clinical consultant or attending physician. Exceptions may be approved with the understanding that the facility Director is the approving authority and that concurrence of the appropriate R&D Director is required. If the exception is approved, the individual needs to be given another appointment (see VHA Handbook 1200.15).

(e) Non-VA physicians and other professional personnel may be used as technical advisors and paid from R&D funds only when they are retained to participate in an advisory or technical fashion and not as investigators.

(6) **Other Personnel.** These include positions such as technical, wage rate, clerical, and administrative staff required for the R&D programs. They may be paid from R&D funds. Such personnel may be assigned to work in the R&D programs at the VA facility while employed by an affiliated school or university, or affiliated non-profit research corporation or foundation. VA must give such personnel WOC appointments during the time they work at the VA facility. Conversely, VA non-professional personnel may be assigned to work outside the VA facility on a joint VA-university R&D project when that project has been approved by the local R&D Committee and the medical center Director, the VA personnel will be supervised by VA employees, and the work site has been approved by the CRADO (see VHA Handbook 1200.16).

c. **Research Center Director Appointments**

(1) It is VHA policy that concurrence is required by the CRADO, or designee, in appointments for the position of Director for any Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) Center of Excellence, Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D) Center, Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) Center or Epidemiology Research and Information (ERI) Center that receives, or expects to receive, R&D core support funds. These Center Directors can be appointed using Title 38 or Title 5 appointing authorities as applicable. ***NOTE:*** *See Appendix B for a description of the concurrence process.*

(2) The ORD requires that specified Centers (HSR&D Centers of Excellence, RR&D, CSP, and ERI Centers) appoint physician leadership (Director, Deputy and/or Associate Director). Each facility is to conduct a national search for a proposed replacement Center Director. Concurrence by the appropriate VHA Central Office R&D Service Director is required before the medical center Director appoints the Center Director.

(3) Funding is provided as a program project award to the Center Director (as Principal Investigator) for a specific period of time. Consistent with current policy, if a Principal Investigator (Center Director) leaves, the ORD would prematurely terminate the award unless provisions are made for an appropriate replacement (based upon joint review of the facility and the appropriate R&D Service Director). Since these Center awards are provided to the R&D Center Director (Principal Investigator), ensuring appropriate recruitment and concurrence will avoid premature termination of such awards upon a Center Director's departure.

CONTRACT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Contracts awarded within Research and Development (R&D) must contain the following information:

1. A statement of the specific objectives with as much technical detail of the objectives as possible.

2. A series of achievement dates or milestones of accomplishments for the contract period, which will allow coordination of accomplishments or progress to payment of vouchers.

3. Specific instructions on voucher submissions for services performed; i.e., vouchers must contain work hours, work weeks, or work months for personal services expended on the contract, other labor charges, overhead, materials, travel, and miscellaneous items in sufficient detail to verify services rendered and permit cost accounting.

4. A timetable for delivery of the final products, and, in case of devices, a method of testing acceptability prior to final voucher payment.

5. A reporting schedule that includes brief quarterly reports that highlight significant achievements or problems and a final report that includes engineering drawings, schematics, and sufficient detail to allow production of prototypes where desired, as well as any other products stipulated in the contract.

6. Requirement of a termination report when a contract that has not been completed is discontinued, including a summary of results obtained and the reasons for termination.

7. Designation of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee as the contracting officer's technical representative. The contract coordinator is responsible for:

a. Day-to-day liaison with the contractor on scientific or technical coordination or instructions, and

b. Verification of services rendered by the contractor.

8. Requirement that VA support be recognized in publications (see Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook 1200.19).

PROCESSING NOMINATIONS FOR KEY CENTER DIRECTORS

1. Local Facility. The local facility must:

a. Nationally advertise, screen, interview, and identify a primary Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) Center of Excellence, Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D), Cooperative Studies Program (CSP), or Epidemiology Research and Information (ERI) Center Director candidate. When completing these steps, the applicable Title 5 or Title 38 requirements must be met.

b. Articulate tentative commitment concerning salary, percent effort requirements, and tentative academic affiliate appointment.

c. Obtain the applicant's tentative acceptance of terms and conditions and desire to continue with the recruitment process.

d. Submit a letter from the medical center Director or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) through the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director to the appropriate Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Central Office Research and Development (R&D) Service Director, with copy of applicant's curriculum vitae and request for concurrence in the selection. If the Service Director concurs tentatively with the selection, the local facility will:

e. Schedule an interview in VHA Central Office with the appropriate Service Director.

f. Make travel arrangements for the candidate to travel to VHA Central Office for the interview.

2. VHA Central Office, Office of R&D

a. The Chief Research and Development Officer (CRADO) designates concurrence to the:

(1) Director, HSR&D, for HSR&D Center of Excellence Director appointments;

(2) Director, RR&D, for RR&D Center Director appointments;

(3) Director, CSP, for CSP and ERI Center appointments.

b. The VHA Central Office Service (HSR&D, RR&D, or CSP, as appropriate) must:

(1) Provide funds for the candidate's travel to VHA Central Office for the interview.

(2) Review the candidate's qualifications and abilities to provide Center leadership.

(3) Interview the applicant.

(4) Respond with concurrence or concerns within 2 weeks following the interview.