Frequently Asked Questions

Strategically Focused Research Network (SFRN) Structure

Q: What is a SFRN?
A: A SFRN is comprised of three to five centers, working on three projects each that are focused on one strategic area. To view further information, refer to the SFRN General Information Page or a previous RFA, under the left side of the page under "Supporting Documents".

Q: What does a SFRN look like?
A: A SFRN includes three to five centers each working on three separate projects. For more information about the look and feel of a SFRN, view this illustration.
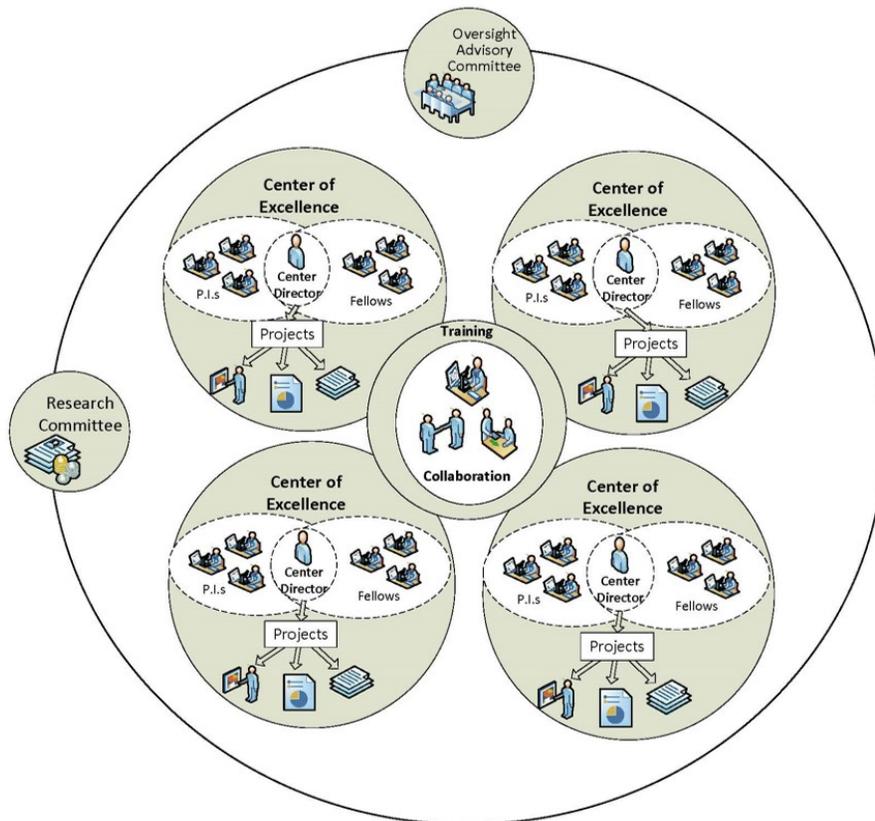
Q: How often will an SFRN be available for funding?
A: Starting in 2015, the AHA will begin funding two of these Networks each year. Topics are announced in early spring and RFAs containing application deadlines are released approximately late spring and early fall. Check back for updated information, or sign up for our Research Insider email for announcements.

Q: How much funding will be available with each Network?
A: Each Network will receive $12-20M in funding.

SFRN Application - General

Q: How is a Project application created?
A: Once your Center creates their application and adds your project to the application, an email will automatically generate and will include a link that should be used to join the application.

Q: Are Research Assurances Required for the Center Application?
A: No

Q: Can a Letter of Support from a company or institution be submitted in the application?
A: Yes. You will need to add the company to the Third Party Personnel section as an 'Other Professional' role. This will require a biosketch and a Letter of Support. If this is a letter from a company, you may submit a 'dummy' biosketch in that required field.

Q: Should Institutional Personnel for a Project application be selected from the Project's institution or the Center's institution?
A: Enter the Institutional Personnel from your own institution.

Q: We have deleted a Project Card from the application. Are we able to reorder projects so that project numbers align?
A: AHA does not recommend using the titles "Project 1" "Project 2" "Project 3" in any of your application documentation. Please refer to projects by "PI Last Name Project" so that reviewers are clear on which project is which.

Q: How do you make updates to the PI's information in the Third-Party Personnel section?
A: To update the PI's information, you will need to completely delete the project in that section and re-add them with the updated information. The Project PI will then receive another invitation email to join the application.

Q: If a Center Director is also the Training Director or Project PI, will they need to commit the minimum required effort for each individual role?
A: Yes. A Center Director is required to demonstrate a 20% minimum effort; Training Director 5% minimum effort; Project PIs 10% minimum effort. Responsibility are mutually exclusive. Director and Project PI salary requested must be proportional to the percent effort devoted to the Center. The AHA does not impose a salary cap other than the caps noted within the Budget as indicated with the SFRN General Information Page.

Q. If institutions are funded through an AHA Network already, can they apply for additional network funding?
A. Yes, there is not a current restriction but AHA will review for overlaps.

Q. Will our application be down-graded or received unfavorably if we don't have one of each type of project (basic/clinical/population)?
A. Science classifications must follow the mandate set forth in the RFA.

Q. How many applications do you think you will receive for this network?
A. This information is not disclosed but we can share that we have received 18-31 application from previous networks.

SFRN Application – Collaboration

Q: Can collaborative funds come from the Center and Project budgets?
A: Yes. The recommended collaborative funds amount can be dispersed in both the Center and Project budgets.

Q. Is it possible to involve international collaborators?
A. Yes, but the principal PI will need to be housed at either the Center's institution or an institution within the US.

Q. What are some collaborative efforts examples?
A. Hosting a kick-off meeting, travel expenses related to funds to visit other centers (e.g.., sending fellows or PIs to another center to learn new techniques or skills or teach onsite), joint publication costs, allocating money to fund future collaborative projects, hosting fellows for relevant symposium, semi-annual meetings or lab visits.

SFRN Application – Subcontracts

Q. Is it better to have an entire team from one institution? Or multiple places?
A. Ideally, Center Directors should establish the best team for the job, regardless of location. Refer to the SFRN General Information Page.

Q. Are there any requirements regarding subcontracting with another institution?
A. No. All funding is paid directly from AHA to the Center Institution. We do not regulate subcontracts, AHA's only requirement is that the 10% indirect for the project either goes to the center institution, or the subcontracted institution (i.e., if the subcontracting entity takes 10% Indirect Costs as a portion of the subcontract, the Center institution cannot take an additional 10% on top of these indirect costs.). Once all parties have agreed to the subcontract, a signed copy should be forwarded to the AHA for reference.

SFRN Peer Review

Q. What is the peer review process for the SFRNs?
A. Review of the applications will be conducted by the AHA and will occur in two phases. For Phase I, a peer review committee of volunteer scientists will be assembled to review all the submitted applications and will be narrowed down based on scores and brought back for Phase II. For Phase II, the highest ranks center application will be invited back and include "a reverse site visit" presentation to the AHA review group.

Q. What are the details of the "reverse site visit"?
A. The second phase of peer review (Phase II) will be conducted with only the highest-ranked candidates. The Center Director and key personnel will have approximately 3-4 weeks to prepare for the reverse site visit; presentation should focus on the Center review criteria only. Note: Each invited Center Director and key personnel will be expected to travel to attend the reverse site visit at their own expense.