INSTITUTE OF ARCTIC BIOLOGY

The NIH IDeA Administrative Support Office (IASO) – A shared services solution for NIH Institutional Development Award (IDeA) funded programs

BACKGROUND

UAF currently has three active programs funded by the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Institutional Development Award (IDeA) Program, all of which are administered by the Institute of Arctic Biology (IAB). These include the IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) award with Brian Barnes, IAB Director, as PI, and the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) Center for Transformative Research in Metabolism (TRiM), Kelly Drew PI. Additionally, PI Stacy Rasmus has partnered with the University of Montana for the American Indian/Alaska Native Clinical and Translational Research Program (AI/AN CTRP). IAB also was the home of Alaska's only other COBRE award that created and supported the development over 15 years of our Center of Alaska Native Health Research. Together these current IDeA programs represent the significant investment of at least $31.6M to UA over the next five years by NIH to support competitive basic, clinical, and translational biomedical research, faculty development, and infrastructure improvements at UA. This funding strengthens biomedical and health research in Alaska, enhances the competitiveness of our PIs in securing research funding, provides research opportunities for students, retains current faculty, and attracts new tenure-track and research faculty interested in seeking funding from the NIH.

IDeA funded programs are institutional, often state-wide awards that allow for the direct charging of administrative effort to restricted funds within each awarded grant. This effort can include program administrators, fiscal officers and technicians, administrative assistants, reporting specialists, and outreach coordinators. Indirect cost recovery from these programs help support executive administration, human resource, travel, procurement, and public relations. While a wide range of administrative support is allowable on the grant, it creates a duplication of effort in some areas and understaffed support in other areas when operated independent of one another. Additionally, within the last few years, NIH has encouraged the sharing of resources between IDeA programs (see IDeA PI Meeting Summary at https://tinyurl.com/s5duaow, pp 8-10). This encouragement was further reinforced by Alaska IDeA's Program Official, Sheila Caldwell, to PI Barnes to share administrative functions and costs whenever appropriate and where ever possible within the IDeA network.

With Alaska being one of 24 states eligible for IDeA funding, it is imperative that we fully support the administrative functions of these awards to grow administrative leaders to be experts in IDeA and NIH funded programs and share those resources across units within UA. This not only includes current IDeA awards already administered directly by IAB, but future awards that can benefit from a shared administrative support office. Outlined in this proposal is a model to equitably share administrative loads, provide consistent skilled support for pre and post-award management, cross-training and succession planning for staff, and meet the intent of NIH to sustain cross program coordination.

PROPOSAL

IAB is creating a co-located IDeA Administrative Support Office (IASO) to provide administrative support specific to NIH IDeA funded projects. We are collaborating to leverage pre- and post-award research administrative support that is currently direct charged to these programs, integrating functions with current IAB fund 1 supported administrators to provide team work and back up, and reorganizing indirect administrative support to better maintain the needs of these awards. We are moving forward with intent to meet the following short term goals:

- Goal #1 Provide efficient and cost effective administrative support to IDeA funded projects

- Goal #2 Leverage IDeA funding and state funding to maintain critical support for researchers
- Goal #3 Reduce redundancy and encourage best practices for IDeA programs
- Goal #4 Improve support and collaboration among current and future IDeA programs

As IASO ramps up and meets the short term goals, long term goals will focus on supporting UAFs strategic plan to achieve tier 1 research status. Utilizing IABs current resources and expertise, IASO will maintain the institutional knowledge of IDeA funded projects to assist PIs across UA to prepare proposals for IDeA funding opportunity announcements (FOA) and to publicly report the outcomes of their successful research. IASO's intended outcome is to continue to grow biomedical research in Alaska through the retention and recruitment of faculty and students in this field. IASO will concurrently work towards the following long term goals while implementing the previously listed short term goals:

- Goal #5 Expand collaboration to support PIs across UA when responding to IDeA FOAs
- Goal #6 Encourage PIs to avoid over/under staffing administrative support in IDeA proposals
- Goal #7 Maintain UAs institutional knowledge of the IDeA program through cross-training and staff succession planning
- Goal #8 Increase collaboration between IDeA programs to include reporting and outreach activities
- Goal #9 Work with current IDeA PIs and Program Administrators to take advantage of supplemental funding opportunities

Through shared resources and cross-program collaboration, IASO eliminates redundancy among IDeA programs, fills gaps not planned for in the original proposal, and enables cost efficiencies and more conscientious stewardship of taxpayer resources. Supporting PIs with proposal development builds on past experiences of successfully funded proposals in addition to the operational knowledge of currently funded IDeA programs. Together, this informs the PIs of the current best practices so that the University can put forward our best candidate for single submission FOAs. Most importantly, an effective IASO is an indispensable part of IAB's goal of serving the state as a multidisciplinary, community-based health research institute by expanding UAF's ability to attract NIH funding.

Organizational Structure

Initially IASO will be comprised of three existing IAB staff members under the supervision of Matt Seymour (INBRE Fiscal Officer), see figure 1. Fiscal and administrative support will be provided by Brittany Whilhite (COBRE Grant/Admin Technician). Post-award grant management will be shared between Julie Closuit (IAB Grant Technician) and Valia Casey (IAB Grant Technician). IASO will report to IAB leadership and their staff will be co-located in Irving I to ensure IASO goals are met. The IASO Manager will report operationally to each IDeA Program Administrator as part of a collaborative agreement(s) between each IDeA Program.
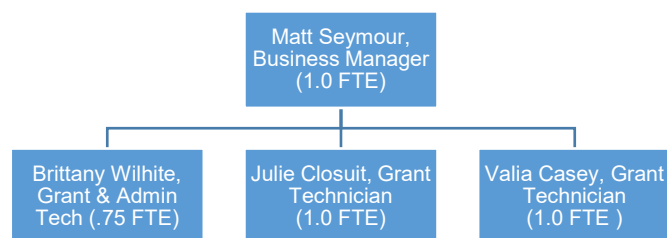

Figure 1 - Initial IASO Structure

Long term structure for IASO (figure 2) will be dependent on successfully funded future IDeA awards and collaborate agreements with each new IDeA program. PI support for proposal development will comprise of a team that includes the IASO Business Manager, an IDeA Program Administrator, PI's Proposal Coordinator, and dependent on funding, an external evaluator (i.e. - The Implementation Group (TIG) or the American Institute of Biological Sciences).
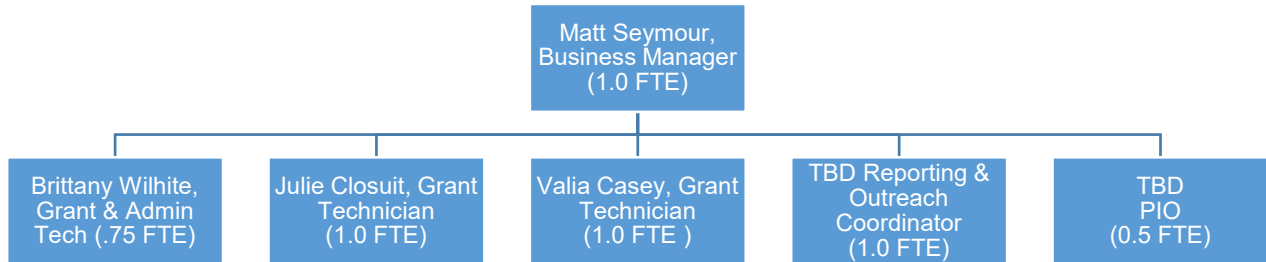
```
                          ┌─────────────────────────┐
                          │   Matt Seymour,         │
                          │   Business Manager      │
                          │   (1.0 FTE)             │
                          └─────────────────────────┘
   ┌───────────────┬───────────────┬───────────────┬───────────────┐
┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────┐
│Brittany  │ │Julie     │ │Valia     │ │TBD Reporting │ │TBD       │
│Wilhite,  │ │Closuit,  │ │Casey,    │ │& Outreach    │ │PIO       │
│Grant &   │ │Grant     │ │Grant     │ │Coordinator   │ │(0.5 FTE) │
│Admin Tech│ │Technician│ │Technician│ │(1.0 FTE)     │ │          │
│(.75 FTE) │ │(1.0 FTE) │ │(1.0 FTE )│ │              │ │          │
└──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────┘
```

Figure 2 - IASO Long Term Structure

Funding

- A collaborative funding model will show staff salaries being charged equally among the IDeA programs restricted funds as well as IAB Fund 1 as appropriate.
- Funding levels, services provided, and quality assurances will be detailed in a Cooperative Agreement between each IDeA Program Principal Investigator and will be revised on an as needed basis.

Current & Future Collaborations

The current cooperative agreement between IAB's IDeA programs (INBRE and TRiM) is the foundation for the creation of the IASO (see the attached CA). Future collaborations with proposed IDeA funding opportunity announcements will be initiated with potential PIs during the internal UAF call for submission and services of the IASO will be available as a resource for proposal development, budget review, and collaborative opportunities. Cooperative agreements with future COBRE and CTRP funded projects will dictate the need for support services and shared core resources to include a reporting specialist, outreach coordinator, public information officer, and administrative support.

SWOT Analysis

Strength:

- Complies with NIH's desire for collaboration and cost efficiencies among IDeA funded programs
- Supports UAF strategic goal to become a tier 1 research institute
- Scalable – IASO can be sized to service any number of IDeA (or other NIH) funded programs, state-wide
- Accountability to collaborating programs through approved Cooperative Agreement(s)

- Leverages restricted funding and IAB Fund 1 to maintain a critical mass and back up capability of administrative support personnel
- Maintain institutional knowledge to support best practices for future IDeA proposal submissions
- Eliminates redundancies in administration among IDeA funded programs
- Creates a career ladder for fiscal and grant technicians

Weakness:

- Loss of direct supervisory control may be undesirable for some IDeA program PI's

Opportunities:

- IASO will be able to provide additional administrative support services such as public relations, outreach, and NIH reporting expertise
- Cost savings from combined, team-oriented staff support direct charging IDeA funding can be used to invest in other core program needs such as graduate and undergraduate student support, lab equipment, and faculty development
- Improve coordination of IDeA single submission calls (i.e. - COBRE FOAs) with the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research to create a timely and seamless white paper review process in order to maximize UAF's opportunity for funding
- Greater awareness and coordination of supplemental funding opportunities for current IDeA Programs to submit collaborative proposals with one another for joint funding
- Improve collaboration with other NIH funding opportunities, such as the NIH Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) that encourages outreach collaboration and leveraging with IDeA Programs in its FOA

Threats:

- Lack of leadership support to strongly encourage program collaboration and participation
- Future renewals of IDeA programs may be less competitive if NIH's desire for collaboration and cost efficiencies among programs is not pursued
- Reduction in IDeA funded awards. However, this shared services model is scalable and can be focused on pursuing future IDeA awards by supporting proposal development and by servicing other NIH awards

SUMMARY

The IASO shared services model promotes collaboration, eliminates redundancy among IDeA programs, creates back up of critical functions, and provides cost savings that can be invested to support other programmatic needs. IASO will allow IDeA programs to share best practices, maintain subject matter expertise, and most importantly help each program to meet its goals and objectives.

Restructuring IAB's administrative and grant support for NIH/IDeA center awards into a collaborative collective allows leveraging of staff and resources. It encourages team building, reduction of expenses, avoiding duplication and weakness from single points of failure, and will enable and support the success of all IAB faculty in competing for new grants and awards.