

Minutes
Health Research Advisory Committee
February 28, 2013
Health and Welfare Building, Room 129
Commonwealth Avenue and Forster Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Committee Members Present:

In Attendance

Michael Wolf, Acting Secretary of Health and Chair of the Committee, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (in person)

Via Teleconference

Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation

Arthur Levine, MD, Senior Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences and Dean of the School of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh

Lewis Kuller, MD, DrPH, Professor of Epidemiology and University Professor of Public Health, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh

Michael Parmacek, MD, Herbert C. Rorer Professor of Medical Sciences and Director of the Penn Cardiovascular Institute, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine

Dwight Davis, MD, Professor, Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine and Director of Cardiac Rehabilitation, Hershey Medical Center

Lisa Staiano-Coico, PhD, President, The City College of New York

Kim Smith-Whitley, MD, Assistant Professor, Department of Hematology, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Department of Health (DOH) Staff:

Anne Baker, Deputy Secretary for Administration

Keith Fickel, Esq., Senior Counsel, Office of Legal Counsel

Sylvia Golas, DMD, MPH, Program Administrator, Bureau of Health Statistics and Research

Marina Matthew, RHIA, Director, Bureau of Health Statistics and Research

Allison Taylor, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel

Violet Witmer, Administrative Officer, Health Research Program, Bureau of Health Statistics and Research

Travis Zangrilli, MS, Program Manager, Health Research Program, Bureau of Health Statistics and Research

Others in Attendance

Via Teleconference

Janet Kile, Project Manager, Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Inc. (ORAU).

Linda Naney, Project Advisor, Group Manager, Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Inc. (ORAU).

Call to Order

Acting Secretary Michael Wolf called the meeting to order and initiated roll call at 10:12 a.m. on Thursday, February 28, 2013 in Room 129 of the Health and Welfare Building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Mr. Wolf welcomed Committee members and Department of Health staff who were attending in person and via teleconference to the meeting. He stated that the primary purpose of the meeting was to provide a review of the Health Research Program funding for 2011-12, 2012-13 and the proposed 2013-14 state fiscal year budgets. In addition, the Department would provide a review of the comprehensive program review being conducted by an outside vendor. Mr. Wolf also stated that although this was a public meeting, no members of the public were noted to be present.

Minutes of the November 9, 2011 Meeting

When a quorum of members was present via telephone, Mr. Wolf called for a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting held on November 9, 2011. A motion was made by Dr. Levine and seconded by Dr. Davis to accept the minutes of the meeting held on November 9, 2011. The minutes were approved by all Committee members.

Review and Overview of Health Research Program Funding

Mr. Wolf, Acting Secretary of Health, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, presented a review of the 2011-2012 Health Research Program Funding. In the fiscal year 2011-12, the CURE Program awarded a little over \$42 million to thirty formula grantees and just over \$15 million to twelve non-formula grantees. For the thirty formula grants awarded there were ninety-three projects which ranged from several hundred dollars to \$7.8 million.

The 2011-12 fiscal year also included non-formula funded grant awards. Two of these focused on collaborative research on translational genomics. The first was a project from the University of Pennsylvania that looked into the translation of genomics into improvements in cancer prevention and treatment. The second was presented to the Geisinger Weis Center for Research with a focus on examining the utility of genomic data and population screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm.

The remaining ten non-formula funds grant awards for 2011-12 focused their research on the area of cancer diagnostics or therapeutics with commercialization potential. The ten institutions were made up of three small businesses and seven research institutions. The ten grantees were: (1) Apogee Biotechnology which is located in Penn State Hershey School of Medicine; (2) Carnegie Mellon; (3) Geisinger Weis Center for Research; (4) the Institute for Hepatitis & Virus Research; (5) Oncoceutics located at Penn State Hershey School of Medicine; (6) Penn State University; (7) Thomas Jefferson University; (8) UE LifeSciences; (9) the University of Pennsylvania; and (10) Wistar.

In addition, for the fiscal year, 2011-12, the Department held public events to highlight the CURE Program and non-formula funds grant award research results. The Department is anticipating conducting these types of events for the formula grantees in the spring and summer of 2013.

Mr. Wolf then reviewed the 2012-2013 Health Research Program Funding, with the CURE Program awarding \$41.8 million in formula funding to 28 institutions, noting they are currently being reviewed by the Department. In addition Mr. Wolf stated that the formula grant funding would range from hundreds of dollars to \$7.7 million.

Mr. Wolf went on to summarize the proposed 2013-2014 Health Research Program Funding budget. He stated that the current proposal for CURE funding, to which he had testified earlier this week to the state legislature, was approximately \$42.2 million. Mr. Wolf further stated that at this point in time the budget proposal would include only formula funding.

Overview of the Health Research Program Review Being Conducted by Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Inc.

At this point, Mr. Wolf provided an overview of the Health Research Program review currently being performed by Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Inc. (ORAU). He stated that in the fall of 2012 the Department of Health (the Department) decided that the program was at a stage where undergoing comprehensive program review would be beneficial. He stated that the CURE Program has been running for approximately twelve years and during this time there had been no comprehensive review of the program to assess the benefits brought to the Commonwealth's health research community, or to examine areas where the Department could become more efficient.

The study presently being conducted by Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Inc., is looking at several key areas: (1) the impact the CURE Program has had on improving health in the Commonwealth through return on investment cost/benefit analysis; (2) the accomplishments and progress made through grant awards; (3) the feasibility of developing priorities for all grants; (4) how to utilize the Advisory Committee and its additional expertise to advise the Department; and finally (5) the grant management process and best practices.

Presentation by Representatives from Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Inc. Regarding the Program Review

Mr. Wolf then invited representatives from Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Inc., the vendor conducting the program review, to present and to discuss their approach to the tasks they'd been asked to complete. Mr. Wolf introduced Ms. Janet Kile, the program review project manager. Ms. Kile in turn introduced Ms. Linda Naney, the advisor and group manager for the program review, who then made the presentation.

Ms. Naney provided an overview of Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Inc. (ORAU), and stated that the Department had tasked ORAU with conducting a program review of the CURE Program including three tasks: (1) to prepare a report on the impact of the CURE program on improving the health of Pennsylvanians; (2) to review the current process for issuing grants and to make recommendations for improvements; (3) to review the current reporting requirements, to make recommendations that balance the need for information to ensure that grant monies are spent appropriately, that metrics for impact and success are tracked and that the amount of data

and paper currently being received by the program is appropriate. At the conclusion of the presentation, Ms. Naney stated that ORAU anticipates submitting a draft report (to the Department) that summarizes results of the overall program review effort and recommendations for improvement at the end of March.

Questions and Answers Regarding the Program Review

At the completion of the presentation Mr. Wolf asked if there were any questions for Ms. Kile or Ms. Naney regarding the program review process.

Dr. Levine observed that with the end of funding in the non-formula stream, the whole complexion of the program had changed because the formula funds are basically given out by formula to institutions in Pennsylvania that choose the research themes and projects with which they wish to engage. He further stated that this is very different than the non-formula grants where competitive peer review determines which institutions receive the grants. In addition Dr. Levine questioned whether given this change in complexion which one might assume will be permanent, does that not change the engagement of the department with Oak Ridge Associated Universities?

Ms. Matthew responded that the engagement with ORAU would change for the peer review, but that the Department was still required by law to conduct performance reviews, and that a contractor would still be needed to assist the Department with the performance reviews.

Mr. Wolf noted that in numerous conversations with grantees over the last couple of fiscal years it has been pointed out that there are redundancies in the grant management process. He stated that the Department recognizes this, and is very interested in working to streamline the process.

Plans for next 2013 Meeting

Mr. Wolf then stated that the next Health Research Advisory Committee meeting would be held prior to June 30th of 2013. At that meeting ORAU would present their findings with regard to the program performance review final report. He further stated that other topics would be determined based upon ORAU's findings. In addition, the final determination of the 2013-14 budget would be discussed.

Other business for the Committee

Mr. Wolf then asked if there was any other business for the committee.

Dr. Levine stated that he had some additional questions. He asked, "Assuming that the end of the non-formula funds would be durable, is there any possibility that the Commonwealth will ever return to non-formula funded grants?" In addition, he asked to be given a sense of the political dynamics related to this issue.

Mr. Wolf responded that he thought that there was always an interest in additional funds being put back into the program. In addition, he stated that one of the issues that had been recognized

surrounding CURE was that there had been a lot of very good work done over the years with CURE funding, but, unfortunately, that there had probably not been enough publicity regarding this fact. Mr. Wolf further stated that he thought that this was an issue; and that the Department was looking forward to ORAU's final report, and learning how the Department can do a better job of talking about what the CURE funds have done. He further indicated that he thought that the Department needed to address these kinds of issues, and then, look forward to additional funds being put back into the budgets. Mr. Wolf also suggested that the university community might also wish to consider and to address the results of the program review. Finally, he stated that if there is a larger discussion surrounding what has been proposed in this year's budget certainly the Department and others would be more than willing to entertain this and he was certain that there would then also be a legislative push to try to put those funds back in the budget.

Dr. Levine then stated that he would offer his strong and possibly even charismatic support of CURE funding. He also stated that should there ever be a time that he or his colleagues could be of help to the Acting Secretary in this regard that he and his colleagues in other institutions in Pennsylvania would be happy to assist.

Dr. Parmeczek stated that to broaden upon Dr. Levine's point he thought that underlying some of the questions was the remarkably challenging situation that all were facing with regard to NIH funding right now. Rather than being due to the sequestration, it was due to a drop in real dollars to funding the NIH.

Dr. Levine stated that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania invests less money in the research dimensions in higher education than all but two other states in the United States and that these CURE funds have been absolutely critical to obtaining viability in and of itself and viability that can be leveraged with federal and other funds.

Mr. Wolf stated that he believed that the committee members' respective chancellors and presidents were presently testifying in front of the senate appropriations hearing; the same body that the Acting Secretary had testified before a couple of days ago. Mr. Wolf stated that there is always a story involved in what happens to the CURE monies; and this is an important component that has always been lacking for CURE funding. One of the things the Department is looking to do is to speak more about what CURE has done. The Department would like to create a series of events surrounding the check presentation, and talk at great length about the work that CURE does at various institutes and institutions for the 2012-2013 formula funded awards.

Adjournment

Mr. Wolf then asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Davis motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Levine. The Acting Secretary then thanked everyone for their time and participation in the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m.