

RM26 Program (tentative) - 06/15/2026

Session Type	Level	Working Title	Description	Lead Presenter
Compliance				
Concurrent Session	Intermediate	Subaward Jeopardy: The Mane Event	Do you think you know a lot about subawards (or do you want to learn more about subawards)? Have you ever wanted to be on a game show? This is the session for you! Come test your knowledge of the subawards with this fun, interactive game show! Categories include FDP, flow-down framework, IDC calculations and many more. Come for the knowledge, stay for the prizes!	Carrie Chesbro, Assistant Director for Subawards & Subrecipient Monitoring, Stanford University
Concurrent Session	Intermediate	Navigating the New Trails of Controlled Information	The federal government has redrawn—and continues to refine—the terrain of non-classified controlled information in the research environment. This session will help participants map the evolving landscape of Federal Contract Information (FCI), Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI), and Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) requirements. Attendees will learn how to read the legend, recognize risks, and stay on trail. Pack your GORP and water bottles - this is a serious hike!	Alexa Van Dalsem, Assistant Vice Chancellor of the Office of Contracts and Grants, University of Colorado Boulder
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Roping In Trustworthy Results from AI Tools	Tired of AI tools that buck you off halfway through the task? This interactive session is your chance to learn how to break in AI as a dependable trail companion in your daily research administration work. We'll cover the skills that separate the greenhorns from the seasoned hands: crafting clear prompts, designing workflows you can ride again and again, and corralling big, messy tasks into pieces an AI can actually handle with a goal of producing trustworthy results.	Julie Wenzel, Colorado State University
Concurrent Session	Intermediate	Wrangling Clinical Trial Billing Pitfalls	This session will explore common billing pitfalls and share practical strategies to improve collaboration, reduce risk, and strengthen billing compliance processes across research, finance, and compliance teams.	Jessica Kim, Associate Director for Clinical Trials & Industry Agreements, The Lundquist Institute
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	No longer the Wild West: Understanding Key Federal Compliance Requirements	This session will provide a basic understanding of federal requirements associated with Conflict of Interest (COI), Certificates of Confidentiality (CoC) and the Other Support document. We will review federal definitions and potential solutions for ensuring compliance.	Natalie Buys, Research & Finance Program Director, University of Colorado Anschutz
Contracting				
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Using SharePoint to Organize and Store Institutional Negotiation Positions	Ensuring consistent and up-to-date institutional negotiation responses to clauses in federal contracting requires negotiation positions to be stored in a way that is both accessible and flexible. Using a new tool CU Boulder has developed to house our positions on various clauses in the Federal Acquisition Regulation, this session will explore using SharePoint lists as a method of housing that data, beginning with an overview of the shift away from less functional software like Excel and continuing into how SharePoint enables management of new and changing data. Additionally, we will go over collaboration opportunities made available by housing those positions in a SharePoint site rather than a single file, including linkages between departments that give teams at different stages of award processing the ability to work off a common dataset and organize it according to their specific needs and focus areas.	Andie Smiley, Research Contracts Administrator, University of Colorado Boulder

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Session Type	Level	Working Title	Description	Lead Presenter
Concurrent Session	Intermediate	Know When to Hold 'Em, When to Fold 'Em: Strategic Contracting Negotiations Across the Sponsor Frontier	<p>In the diverse landscape of research administration, success requires the agility to pivot your negotiation strategy based on who is sitting across the table. Successful contract officers know when to hold 'em, when to negotiate 'em with flexible solutions, and when to fold 'em and manage the risk internally. This interactive session will equip attendees with practical negotiation strategies tailored to different sponsor and agreement types, from grant agreements with private foundations to contracts with federal agencies.</p> <p>Rather than playing every hand the same way, we'll examine key contracting terms through the lens of sponsor and agreement type. For each critical topic, such as intellectual property, indemnification, export controls, publication rights, and more, we'll explore what cards you're likely to be dealt when working with non-profits, traditional federal contracts, and emerging sponsor agreement types.</p> <p>Drawing from real-world experience negotiating agreements across the sponsor spectrum, we'll share:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Common positions and red flags by sponsor type -Balancing conflicting hands and aligning sponsor expectations with institutional reality -Practical tips for efficient negotiations that protect institutional and researcher interests -Understanding risk assessment frameworks to guide your decision-making and improve your odds <p>Attendees will leave with a winning hand: actionable tools, real life examples, and the confidence to tailor their negotiation approach based on who's at the table.</p> <p>Target Audience: Contract officers, grants administrators, and OSP</p>	Eszter Rudy, Contract and Grant Officer, Stanford University
Concurrent Session	Intermediate	Beyond the Signature: Award Negotiation's Hidden Checklist for Project Success	<p>Award negotiators spend significant time reviewing terms and conditions, but a successful award acceptance requires much more than legal and administrative review. This session explores the critical "beyond the terms" checklist that helps ensure awards are truly ready for execution and account setup. Topics will include compliance approvals and certifications, cost sharing, fabrication needs, subawards, export control considerations, account setup requirements, and other key institutional reviews that can impact project launch and long-term success. Attendees will leave with practical strategies and checklists to help identify potential issues before award acceptance and support a smoother transition from negotiation to award management.</p>	Rebecca Libera, Colorado State University

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Session Type	Level	Working Title	Description	Lead Presenter
Discussion Session	Intermediate	It Changed Again! Managing the Review of Evolving Federal Award Terms	Federal agencies continue to introduce new award terms, certifications, and compliance requirements, creating challenges for institutions tasked with reviewing and implementing them. This facilitated discussion group will provide an opportunity for participants to share how their institutions monitor, review, interpret, and communicate changing federal award requirements. Topics may include who is involved in the review process, how responsibilities are divided among sponsored programs, compliance, legal, and other offices, approaches to risk assessment and escalation, and strategies for communicating changes to investigators and campus stakeholders. Participants are encouraged to share successes, challenges, and practical solutions as we explore how institutions are adapting to an increasingly dynamic federal funding environment.	Rebecca Libera, Colorado State University
Concurrent Session	Basic	Single Audits and Subrecipient Monitoring	Most of us are aware of single audit requirements, both for our own institutions, and for our collaborators. But what does that exactly mean for our subrecipient collaborators? In this session, we will talk about the history and components of a single audit. Then, we will take a deep dive into how to use single audits in your subrecipient monitoring program, and meet the requirements in Uniform Guidance for approaching findings for your subrecipients.	Carrie Chesbro, Assistant Director for Subawards and Subrecipient Monitoring, Stanford University
Departmental and Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUI)				
Concurrent Session	Advanced	When Pressure Sparks Innovation: Transforming Grant Management Through Creative Support Models.	The future of research depends on the strength of the teams who power it—and when those teams are stretched thin, deadlines slip, burnout rises, and opportunities are lost. But what if a staffing crisis could become the catalyst for something smarter, stronger, and totally transformative? In this dynamic session, discover how Mass General Brigham turned a serious grant management challenge into a bold new model of support—one that boosts capacity, accelerates workflows, and lifts entire research communities. This isn't just a story about filling gaps; it's about reimagining what's possible when innovation meets necessity. Whether you're a seasoned research administrator or a leader looking to refine and modernize your operations, this session offers practical strategies, sophisticated case insights, and a forward-looking perspective on how institutions can maintain excellence—even under significant operational strain. This session will challenge the status quo—and inspire you to think bigger about the future of grant management.	David Waldron, Director Research Support Services & Pre Award, Mass General Brigham
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Saddle Up Smart: Clinical Research Fundamentals for Departmental Administrators	This session will provide an overview of clinical research for the DRA: the stages of research, the roles of parties involved and best practices for effectively working together. We will review budget factors, compliance issues, and contracting components and how the DRA/their work connects to each functional area. Key regulations that guide researchers/institutions will also be discussed.	Jennifer Cory, Director of Strategy and Operations, Stanford University

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Session Type	Level	Working Title	Description	Lead Presenter
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Granting the Future: Cultivating the Next Gen of Research Admins	<p>This session will focus on how to best incorporate (undergraduate and graduate) student workers into the Research Administration world. Generation Z is a "digital-native generation, born between 1997 and 2012, [and] is driving significant changes in management styles, work environments, and organizational values" (Forbes, 2025). While our current student workers may not all come from Generation Z, this conversation will also touch on how to work across generational differences.</p> <p>Presenters have either worked with students or started as students, and will present insights on what practices, strategies, and actual assignments. They will discuss best ways to engage with student workers so that the students themselves walk away with professional development experiences as well as a love for Research Administration.</p> <p>Learning Objectives: Audience members will walk away with 1 - A specific knowledge of how to incorporate students of different generations in the workplace 2 - Implementable strategies of how to manage student workers 3 - Examples of actual assignments that will foster excitement for Research Administration and professional development.</p>	Elliani Decker, Southern Utah University
Concurrent Session	Advanced	Reimagining the Grant Lifecycle: How AI Agents Are Shaping the Future of Research Administration at MGB	<p>This presentation invites you to imagine a smarter, more intuitive grant lifecycle—one where AI agents quietly handle the complexity behind the scenes so researchers and administrators can focus on discovery, not paperwork. At Mass General Brigham, we are moving beyond simple automation to thoughtfully weave AI into the fabric of research administration, from proposal development through closeout. Along the way, we'll explore how intelligent agents help anticipate needs, reduce friction, and bring clarity to an otherwise intricate process, all while preserving strong governance and trust. The result is a glimpse into an AI-enabled research ecosystem designed to work with people, not around them, and to make the grant journey feel just a little more human.</p>	David Waldron, Director Research Support Services & Pre Award, Mass General Brigham
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	PROSPER Beyond the 8 Second Ride in a Dept/PUI: Saddling Staff for Success	<p>The Dept/PUI ride is definitely exhilarating and comes with a lot of hopes and dreams of conquering the challenges before us. This session will challenge traditional staffing models where the 1-3/3-5 person office is traditionally the norm. Southern Utah University will present an update on new models developed through the NSF GRANTED program. We'll show how SUU has found replicable success in growing our PUI office to a well rounded 13 person team, while also addressing the challenges faced and plans for sustaining the programs beyond the 8 second ride.</p>	Sylvia Bradshaw, Executive Director, Sponsored Programs, Agreements, Research, and Contracts (SPARC), Southern Utah University

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Session Type	Level	Working Title	Description	Lead Presenter
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Creating Order from Complexity: Establishing Practical SOPs, Grant Workflows, and Compliance Systems in a Growing Institution Subtitle: Lessons Learned from Building Research Administration Infrastructure at a growing Institution	Picture yourself walking into a start-up institution and being asked to build the Research Administration function from the ground up. Whether you've got decades of experience, or you're stepping into your first role, the challenge can be as exciting as it is intimidating. You might be asking yourself, "How do I start?" In this session we will discuss how to prioritize SOPs, workflows and compliance systems, lessons learned in rapid process building and opportunities to add value beyond compliance. Participants will learn practical knowledge on how to create sustainable research administration infrastructure to support institutional growth and success.	Leighsa Washington, Executive Director of Sponsored Projects and Research Administration, California University of Science and Medicine
Discussion Session	Intermediate	Workday Adventures: Challenges, Learnings, Successes in implementing a new financial grant management tool	In this session, we will initiate discussion on how to, and how not to, implement a new financial grant management tool. Our specific scenario is the implementation of Workday Finance and Grand Module at a regional PUI. We will invite conversation about challenges and strategies of implementation, where we found assistance with little funding (including through grants!), and lessons learned. Specifics around the Workday platform may also be addressed.	Dr. Heidi Gehman, Director of Sponsored Programs, Southern Oregon University
Discussion Session	Basic/Overview	Subrecipient Monitoring Through the Life of the Award	We will discuss the challenges and opportunities of subaward monitoring and management throughout the life of the award. This session will provide a forum to share experiences with subawards and answer questions about subrecipient monitoring. Potential topics include roles and responsibilities in the subaward process, remedies for non-compliance, deobligations and supplements, and closesouts.	Natasha Fung, Senior Research Business Manager, City of Hope
Discussion Session	Basic/Overview	Passing the Baton From Pre to Post Award: The Full Cycle of Customer Service	How do central office institutions create an environment where excellent customer service can excel while aligning expectations and outcomes? What are best practices for building partnerships with PIs and departments from pre to post award? What are some tools to implement to ensure clear communication while working in a predominately PUI institution?	Yari Perez, Pre-Award Specialist and Samantha Hull, Post-Award Specialist, Santa Clara University

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Session Type	Level	Working Title	Description	Lead Presenter
Discussion Session	Intermediate	The Power of Data Driven Decision Making	<p>Institutional leaders frequently emphasize “data-driven decision making,” yet many Sponsored Programs Offices – particularly at Emerging Research (ERIs) and Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs) – struggle to access, interpret, and leverage the operational data that truly informs research growth, staffing needs, process improvements, and strategic investment. Traditional metrics such as proposals submitted, number of awards received, dollars expended are important, but they often fail to capture the operational realities, administrative barriers and capacity-building needs that shape research success at smaller institutions.</p> <p>As recipients of an NSF GRANTED award, the Tri-Alliance for Post Award Innovation has undertaken a comprehensive effort to collect and analyze data that more accurately reflects the lived experiences and operational challenges of research administration at ERIs. Through surveys, institutional assessments, and NCURA peer review recommendations, the Tri-Alliance has identified actionable insights that are driving development of new tools, collaborative resources, and targeted strategies to strengthen research infrastructure and support sustainable growth. In the session, presenters will discuss practical approaches to gathering and utilizing qualitative and quantitative data to improve processes, advocate for resources, identify institutional gaps, and better support research growth. Attendees will leave with practical strategies, adaptable assessment approaches, and new ideas for leveraging data as a catalyst for institutional change.</p>	Angie Rochat, Associate Vice Provost for Research, Loyola Marymount University
Agencies and Sponsors				
Discussion Session	Advanced	DOE Genesis 2026 Review and 2027 Preparation	This discussion group will review how different institutes managed the unprecedented DOE Genesis call for proposals and what was learned as we prepare for the 2027 call. Additionally, we will discuss resulting awards (OTAs) and how our institutes negotiated and worked with our partners. (Vince and I are open to adding others to this group or making this a panel discussion)	Matt Michener, Director, University of Tennessee Knoxville
Post Award				
Discussion Group	Intermediate	How to Present Data to PI	Post award focus on PI portfolio management, Award data and projection	Katie Wu, Senior RA, Stanford
Concurrent Session	Intermediate	Keeping on the Trail: Department of Justice Grant Management	Your institution was awarded a Department of Justice grant —now it is time to drive the herd home without losing your boots. This session serves as your essential trail guide through the rigorous landscape of DoJ post-award grant management. We will navigate the rugged terrain of terms and conditions, reporting, and the JustGrants system. Learn how to handle unexpected trail detours like budget modifications and scope changes so you can protect your grant on the trail from start to finish.	Genevieve Hurst, Senior Grant Officer, University of Colorado Boulder
Discussion Group	Basic	Don't Wait for Sundown: Year-Round Financial Management for Award Closeout Success	Award closeout is often treated as a final step at the end of a project, but successful closeout begins long before the award end date. This session explores how institutions can approach closeout as a year-round activity through proactive monitoring, strong communication, and coordinated processes between central offices and departments. The Grant Accountants at Denver Health will present real-world examples of strategies used to engage staff and develop standard processes to achieve successful closeouts. Attendees will learn practical approaches to reduce last-minute challenges, improve compliance, minimize financial risk, and create a smoother, more efficient closeout process for all stakeholders.	Karon Schleigh, Sr. Grant Accountant, Denver Health & Hospital Authority

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Concurrent Session	Basic	Demonstrating AI-Driven Award Data Extraction, Reconciliation, and Setup	<p>Award setup is still largely a manual, document-driven process, whether institutions are in the middle of a system conversion or just trying to keep up with daily intake. In this session, we will walk through an AI-enabled award extraction tool that the University of California Santa Barbara used during its Oracle implementation. This will include the process used and what can be done with current solutions to support successful conversions. We will also focus on how a new tool can be used day-to-day award setup.</p> <p>The session will focus on showing how the tool works in practice. We will demonstrate how research administrators use it to upload award documents, extract key award demographics and terms, and review the results directly alongside the source language. The goal is not to eliminate human review, but to reduce rekeying, speed up validation, and surface issues earlier in the award setup process.</p>	Chris Steele Education & Research Consulting Sr. Director Huron
Concurrent Session	Basic	Avoiding the Closeout Stampede: A Phased Framework for Sponsored Projects	<p>Closeout is where small oversights from earlier in the award lifecycle can become urgent, expensive problems—and where staff workload often spikes without warning. This session offers a structured, timeline-based approach to closeout that incorporates 2 CFR 200.344 and relevant 2024 Uniform Guidance revisions while focusing on practical implementation: spreading the work across the closeout timeline, clarifying responsibilities, and reducing last-minute pressure.</p> <p>We will walk through a phased framework covering the 90, 60, and 30 days before the project end date and the post-end-date window for resolving trailing transactions, completing financial reconciliation, and submitting final reports. The session will address common closeout stumbling blocks, including late cost transfers, effort certifications received after the books close, and other recurring issues attendees encounter.</p> <p>Attendees will leave with a closeout timeline template and checklist they can adapt to their own institutional context.</p>	Michelle Lorenz, University of Wyoming
Discussion Session	Basic	Don't Wait for Sundown: Year-Round Financial Management for Award Closeout Success	<p>Award closeout isn't just the last stop at the end of the trail—it's a financial management journey that requires year-round attention. Waiting until the award end date to address financial closeout activities can lead to compliance issues, unresolved balances, and unnecessary risk. This session explores how proactive financial management practices can help institutions stay ahead of closeout requirements year-round. The Grant Accountants at Denver Health will share practical strategies for monitoring financial activity, managing outstanding transactions, engaging departmental staff, and establishing standardized processes that support timely and successful award closeouts. Through real-world examples, attendees will learn how early financial oversight and strong collaboration between central offices and departments can reduce last-minute scrambles, improve compliance, minimize financial risk, and keep awards on track from kickoff to closeout.</p>	Karon Schleigh

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Pre-Award				
Discussion Session	Intermediate	Managing the Proposal Surge: Practical Strategies and tools for High-Volume Submissions	This session focuses on practical strategies and tools for managing high-volume proposal submissions in fast-paced research environments. Participants will learn how to streamline proposal workflows, improve coordination across teams, collaborators, and other institutions, and maintain quality and compliance while handling multiple concurrent deadlines. The session will cover approaches for workload prioritization, internal tracking systems, document management, and effective communication between principal investigators, research administrators, support staff, and potential use of the AI in improving efficiency. Emphasis will be placed on scalable practices that reduce bottlenecks, enhance efficiency, and support timely submission without compromising proposal quality. The session is designed for research administrators, proposal managers and coordinators, and research development professionals responsible for coordinating or supporting multiple funding submissions simultaneously.	Mariam Ubilava, Proposal Manager, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Concurrent Session	Advanced	Saddle Up for Interdisciplinary Grants: How Engineering-Social Science Collaboration Shapes Research	Pre-award administrators are increasingly asked to support interdisciplinary grant proposals — but are Research Administrators equipped with the evidence and strategies to champion them effectively? This session offers a data-driven look at what cross-disciplinary collaboration between engineering and social science researchers actually produces, and what that means for how we develop, position, and advocate for interdisciplinary proposals. Drawing on bibliometric data from seven major U.S. research universities, this study examined whether engineering faculty who collaborate with social scientists produce measurably stronger research outcomes. The findings are compelling: collaborating engineers consistently outperform non-collaborating peers across grants, publications, citations, and honorific awards — generating between 42 and 69 percent of institutional research output while representing a smaller share of the faculty population. This pattern is consistent across institution types, from land-grant universities to elite private institutes. For pre-award professionals, the implications are practical and immediate. When RAs understand what makes interdisciplinary teams productive, we can better advise faculty during proposal development, make a stronger internal case for resource investment, and align our outreach strategies with the collaboration patterns that sponsors increasingly prioritize through convergence research initiatives. This session will translate the research findings into actionable strategies for pre-award practice — from how we structure early faculty conversations to how we frame broader impact narratives for interdisciplinary teams. Participants will leave with concrete, evidence-based tools and frameworks ready for immediate application and are encouraged to come prepared to share insights from their own institutional contexts.	Camille Coley, Associate Vice Provost, University of San Francisco
Concurrent Session	Intermediate	Saddle Up and Steward: Financial Fundamentals of Clinical Research	This session will cover budgeting best practices for clinical research, including sponsored research budgets and financial aspects of non-sponsored research. We will discuss the perspectives of an academic medical center and hospital working together to identify cost gaps, compliance issues, and complexities associated with both sponsored and non-sponsored research.	Jennifer Cory, Director of Strategy & Operations, Stanford

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Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Hold Your Horses: Considering Cost Principles When Beginning the Budget Journey	This session will focus on the cost principles and how to effectively think about allowability, allocability, reasonableness, and consistency when considering pre-award budget costs. You will be guided through the cost principles, appropriate best practices, how to avoid common pitfalls, and will be provided detailed information on specific budget cost categories, how the cost principles should be applied to each category, and budget items in need of additional justification. You will leave the session able to understand how to apply the cost principles and able to ask appropriate questions when developing a thorough and well-justified budget with your researchers.	Melissa Dunivant, Principal Proposal Analyst, University of Colorado Boulder
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Building stronger PI relationships in Pre-Award	Pre-award administrators often serve as the first and most consistent point of contact for Principal Investigators throughout the proposal development process. While technical expertise and regulatory knowledge are essential, the ability to build strong working relationships with PIs can have an equally significant impact on proposal success. This session will focus on the people side of research administration and the role relationship-building plays in creating a positive and productive pre-award experience. Participants will explore practical approaches for establishing trust, improving communication, managing expectations, and navigating difficult conversations. The session will also examine how pre-award administrators can become trusted advisors who help investigators successfully develop and submit proposals. Attendees will leave with strategies they can implement immediately to strengthen PI engagement, improve collaboration, and foster more effective working relationships across their institutions.	Zaw Maung, Senior Contracts & Grants Officer, Lundquist Institute for Biomedical Innovation at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Charting the Trail Ahead: Building a proposal budget that's useful down the road	Proposal budgets aren't just a collection of numbers on a page. They are actually the financial roadmaps of sponsored projects, and when strategically built they become an indispensable tool for effective post-award management. However, if you build a roadmap without an understanding of the trail or your destination, it can result in a lot of frustration and potentially even financial shortfalls. This session will explore leveraging post-award expertise at the time of proposal with the goal of enabling you to foresee and hopefully mitigate bumps, potholes, and other obstacles along the trail.	Krista Roznovsky, Director, Engineering Research Administration, Stanford
Discussion Session	Basic/Overview	Who Has Time for a Pit Stop?! Barriers to Evolving Workflow While Maintaining Momentum	This discussion group explores the "modernization paradox" facing university pre-award offices, including PUIs and other institutions that must adapt and evolve while navigating the persistent resource barriers inherent to their specific environments. The session focuses on the constant struggle of trying to keep up with a never-ending stack of daily to-dos while simultaneously trying to launch new systems to help the office grow. We will discuss the friction of "changing the tires while the car is moving," focusing on how teams can realistically navigate growth and modernize workflows when their primary resource, time, is already fully committed to survival. By addressing common hurdles from limited IT support and staffing shortages to a culture resistant to change, the group will share adaptable strategies for fostering stronger teamwork and seamless workload transfers without reaching a breaking point.	Judith Gagnebin, Grants and Research Administrator, California State University, Fresno

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Concurrent Session	Intermediate	From Opportunity to Submission: A Framework for Collaborative and Strategic Proposal Management	As funding opportunities become increasingly large and complex, research development teams need practical systems to coordinate proposal strategy, compliance, narrative development, and stakeholder engagement. This session presents a flexible proposal management framework developed through years of leading strategic, multi-partner proposal efforts across higher education and industry. Using a scalable Excel-based structure, the framework translates funding opportunity requirements into actionable workflows that support strategic messaging, facilitate collaborative proposal writing, improve coordination, reduce administrative burden, and strengthen proposal development as a strategic institutional function. Attendees will explore practical examples, lessons learned, and approaches adaptable to a wide range of institutional contexts.	Mike Mitchell, Senior Director, Research Development, University of Colorado Boulder
Workforce Wellness and Resilience				
Discussion Session	Intermediate	Hitch up yer wagon, it's time to hit the trail	In this session we'll discuss the challenges and common pitfalls of transitioning to a new university or institute and the variety of approaches that can lead to success when taking on a new position.	Matt Michener, Director Pre-award Operations, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Steady Under Pressure: Sustaining Resilience for Research Administrators	Research administration is a high-stakes, deadline-driven environment—juggling proposals, award set-up, compliance checks, audits, and closeout while systems change and policies evolve. This session reframes “resilience” from simply “pushing through” to building sustainable practices at the personal, team, and organizational levels. We'll blend practical triage methods, boundary-setting scripts for tough conversations with PIs and leadership, and light-lift process tools (checklists, templates, cross-training, and automation) that reduce rework and burnout. Participants will leave with actionable tactics and a 30/60/90-day plan to stabilize workload, protect quality, and improve well-being—without sacrificing compliance.	Brigette Pfister, Post-Award Manager, Colorado State University
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	What does EQ have to with it?	It is Emotional Intelligence, or EQ, that is the #1 predictor of professional success and personal excellence. Many times we enter the workplace knowing how to read, write, and report on bodies of knowledge, but often the skills to manage our emotions in the heat of a challenging problem we face is lacking. We're born with an Intelligence Quotient (IQ), but the good news is, you can increase your EQ! We will dive into the four emotional intelligence skills: self-awareness, self- management, social awareness and relationship management. By assessing where you are, and where you'd like to be, you can approach your professional and personal lives with greater insight.	Barbara Inderwiesche, Director of Electronic Research Administration, University of California, Irvine

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Discussion Session	Basic/Overview	Idea to Impact: Building a Cohort-Based Research Administration Training Program	<p>Research administration is becoming increasingly complex, yet many institutions continue to rely heavily on decentralized or fully virtual on-boarding and professional development approaches. In response, the UC Davis School of Medicine Office of Research, Research Administration Unit developed an in-person cohort-based Research Administration Training Certificate Program designed to provide structured, interactive, and hands-on training for both new and experienced research administrators.</p> <p>This discussion session will explore the rationale, development process, and implementation of the program, including the decision to prioritize in-person cohort learning, collaborative discussion, case-based activities, and relationship-building across departments. Discussion leaders will detail the 2.5-year development process, curriculum design considerations, delivery methods, lessons learned, and early outcomes from the inaugural cohort.</p> <p>Participants will be encouraged to share their own institutional challenges and experiences related to on-boarding, staff development, retention, knowledge transfer, and building research administration communities. The session is intended to be highly interactive and will provide attendees with practical ideas and strategies for developing or enhancing training programs within their own institutions.</p>	Christopher Wang, UC Davis Health
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Taking the Reins: Driving Change Through Personal Agency	<p>The wild west landscape of research moves fast, but the administrators who move it are often waiting for permission to lead. Regardless of our roles, each person possesses a unique set of skills and talents that often go untapped because they aren't listed in their job description. In this interactive session, we will focus on developing individual agency, moving beyond standard operating procedures to explore how your specific background and passions can be the catalyst for institutional change. This is a dedicated space to brainstorm how to saddle up using the tools you already have to fix the problems you see every day. Additionally, this session aims to increase retention and reduce burnout by helping staff find meaning and ownership in their daily work by leveraging their hidden strengths in practical ways.</p>	Emma Pritchett, Research Administrator, Colorado State University
Concurrent Session	Intermediate	Saddle up for clarity – how to simplify communication, and why it's challenging and essential	<p>In this highly engaging workshop, learn immediately actionable tools and build confidence to communicate clearly and concisely. Simplifying can improve written and spoken communication with any audience, anywhere. See why this movement is gaining momentum and build the skills now.</p>	Lee Shainis, Simplify Language
Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Straight Shootin': Simplify Language in Action	<p>In the complex frontier of research administration, dense jargon and "academic-speak" often lead to wires getting crossed. At CU Boulder, we're working to cut through the noise with a "straight shootin'" approach. By using techniques from Lee Shainis' "Simplify Language" method, we're streamlining how research administrators communicate with each other, sponsors, and PIs. In this session, we'll dive into how to use clear, simple communication to give better direction and lighten the administrative load. We'll also talk about how ditching the complexity makes our work more inclusive for everyone, especially for our non-native English speakers. Attendees will walk away with practical strategies built for the research world that help you strip away the fluff and ensure communication hits the mark every time.</p> <p>This workshop is a practical follow-up to Lee Shainis' Simplify Language session.</p>	Allison Fischer Allison Fischer, Manager - Proposal Development, University of Colorado Boulder

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Concurrent Session	Basic/Overview	Your Risk-Averse Mindset Needed: Responsibly Navigating the AI Adoption Rodeo	In a field governed by principles of responsibility and compliance, many research administrators remain uncertain about how secure artificial intelligence (AI) systems actually are - and whether using them puts their institution's data at risk. This session provides clarity and simplicity about the way that data moves through AI systems, and what institutions can do to use AI responsibly AND protect institutional data simultaneously. By breaking down each step of the process in straightforward, practical terms, each participant will be prepared to make decisions from an informed standpoint regarding when and how AI can be used safely in their own specific institutional contexts.	Nathan Wiggins, Data Scientist, Southern Utah University
Discussion Session	Intermediate	Don't bring a knife to a gunfight: Corraling Communication with your stakeholders.	Effective communication is essential to success in research administration. From investigators and sponsors to institutional leaders and colleagues, research administrators must tailor their communication approaches to diverse stakeholders while navigating competing priorities, complex information, and challenging conversations. This interactive discussion session will explore practical strategies for understanding your audience, communicating with purpose, and using negotiation and active listening techniques to achieve productive outcomes across the research enterprise.	Sarah Browngoetz, Senior Research and Sponsored Programs Officer, Lundquist Institute for Biomedical Innovation at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center
Discussion Session	Basic/Overview	Begin with the end in mind, it's not manipulation. It's guidance, direction, and structure.	Begin with the end in mind. It's not manipulation- it's guidance, direction and structure. Communication strategies useful across the RA landscape. Understanding how to reach your goal using specific communication tools. We will reveal our most effective tools to get what you need in a conversation. The discussion group will choose their adventure from a list of relevant themes/topics. The group will drive the discussion.	Sarah Browngoetz, Senior Research and Sponsored Programs Officer, Lundquist Institute for Biomedical Innovation at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center
Discussion Session	Basic/Overview	Supporting the Career Pivot: What We've Learned on the Job In Year One	As a new RA in a smaller R2/PUI institution, we've learned on the job, while utilizing our experiences from previous careers to support our department. In this discussion session, we will talk about the challenges we've faced learning on the job without the resources available at a large institution. We will also discuss how we envision creating systems to support new research administrators sharing skills gained from our work with the Tri-Alliance cohort. We'll invite discussion from participants to share what infrastructure they have at their institution and to share their experience as new research administrators.	Elizabeth Donaldson, Non-Financial Analyst, University of San Francisco Samantha Hull, Post-Award Specialist, Santa Clara University
Discussion Session	Overview	Around the Campfire: Conversations on Change, Resilience, and Success in Research Administration	Pull up a seat around the campfire and join fellow research administrators for an open and candid conversation about navigating a rapidly evolving profession. From shifting sponsor requirements and increasing workloads to staffing challenges, new technologies, and changing institutional priorities, today's research administrators are continually adapting to new realities. Through facilitated discussion, participants will share experiences, lessons learned, and practical strategies for building resilience, supporting colleagues, and finding sustainable paths to success.	Wendy Turner, Assistant Director of Preaward Services, University of Arizona

LeadMe Final Presentations

These sessions represent the final Personal Best Leadership Projects presented by this year's LeadMe program participants and serve as the culminating activity of the program.

Concurrent Session	Overview	From Quarterly Catch-up to Monthly Confidence: Redesigning PI Reporting for Compliance, Clarity, and Impact	Join us for an inspiring look at leadership in action! We'll kick things off with a brief introduction to the NCURA Region VI/VII LEAD Me Program, then hear from the 2026 mentees as they showcase their Personal Best Leadership Projects. These unique projects were developed independently by each mentee and demonstrate how they've put The Leadership Challenge's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership into practice in meaningful and impactful ways.	Tarita Varner, Mentee
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RM26 Program (tentative) - 06/15/2026

Session Type	Level	Working Title	Description	Lead Presenter
Concurrent Session	Overview	Saddled Up for the Future: Using AI to Support Continuous Development in Research Administration - Amethyst Ware, Mentee; The Challenge of Leading through Change: Combining the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership with Change Management	Join us for an inspiring look at leadership in action! We'll kick things off with a brief introduction to the NCURA Region VI/VII LEAD Me Program, then hear from the 2026 mentees as they showcase their Personal Best Leadership Projects. These unique projects were developed independently by each mentee and demonstrate how they've put The Leadership Challenge's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership into practice in meaningful and impactful ways.	Catherine Douras, Mentee
Concurrent Session	Overview	Exploring Responsible AI Adoption in Research Administration: Initial Framework and Repository	Join us for an inspiring look at leadership in action! We'll kick things off with a brief introduction to the NCURA Region VI/VII LEAD Me Program, then hear from the 2026 mentees as they showcase their Personal Best Leadership Projects. These unique projects were developed independently by each mentee and demonstrate how they've put The Leadership Challenge's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership into practice in meaningful and impactful ways.	Abby Talkington, Mentee