

HCSRN Project Policy Best Practices: Publications & Authorship

Approved by: HCSRN Asset Stewardship
Committee

Last Revision: 11-15-2011

- [Scope and Purpose](#)
- [Potential Policy Content Areas](#)
- [Identified Best Practices – General](#)
- [Identified Best Practices – Lead Authors](#)
- [Other HCSRN Publication & Authorship Policy Resources](#)
- [Other HCSRN Project Policy Topics](#)
- [Submitting Updates and Feedback](#)
- [Links to External Resources](#)

Scope and Purpose

Large and complex multicenter HCSRN projects (e.g., coordinating centers, consortia with multiple ancillary or sub-studies) often develop project specific publication and authorship policies as part of their infrastructure and governance. Such guidance documents provide structure, clarification of responsibilities, and pre-defined practices for these projects.

This document is meant to provide general guidance for such projects by offering experience-based best practices from existing projects with publication and authorship policies already in place. This document and its companion resources are intended to increase efficiency, avoid duplication of effort, encourage consistency and facilitate transparency while ensuring that HCSRN projects maintain control over their own policies.

See also: [Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals](#)

Potential Policy Content Areas

Most existing publication and authorship policy and guidance documents for HCSRN studies contain the elements below, though the degree of policy detail varies based on the nature, complexity and needs of the project.

| Element | Considerations & Contextual Details |
|--|--|
| Publication proposal idea submission, review and decision-making processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May encompass both the main outcome paper (primary publication), as well as any ancillary publications (methods papers, secondary analyses, etc.). ▪ Depending on the nature and needs of the project, publications oversight and tracking responsibilities may be assigned to an existing committee (e.g., steering committee), a stand-alone committee (e.g., publications committee), or it may be an expectation that the lead author inform the overall Principal Investigator. ▪ The Principal Investigator of the project may be designated special responsibilities, such as selection of first authors or identification of mentors for junior authors. |
| Pre-submission publication review | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The funder and/or publication committee may require manuscripts to be put forward for review prior to submission for publication (some funding agencies |

| Element | Considerations & Contextual Details |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| requirements | <p>may also require pre-review of presentations).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The timeline is often 14 to 30 days in advance of submission. ▪ The pre-review may be to ensure proper acknowledgments are made; to catalog submissions for metrics reporting; as a check to ensure confidential or proprietary information is not disclosed; to ensure participating institutions, research centers and grant numbers are properly identified; or for scientific review or other reasons. ▪ Rather than at pre-submission review, some funders may require a copy of papers after publication. |
| Authorship determination guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All persons designated should qualify for authorship and have participated sufficiently in the writing of the manuscript. ▪ Authorship may be described by the journal or other standard authorship guidelines. ▪ Order of authorship, though ultimately the decision of the senior author, if generally a joint decision of the co-authors. The order should reflect the relative contribution of each to the development of the manuscript. |
| Acknowledgments guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Study funder(s) should be acknowledged in all manuscripts. This typically includes the agency, grant/contract number and title of the project. ▪ The project may also proffer descriptive text for clearly and adequately acknowledging the project, proper identification of the institutions involved, and so on. ▪ Each journal has its own requirements regarding acknowledgment of individuals who contributed to the study, but are not listed as a co-author. |
| Affiliations guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project specific policies may encourage or require authors to name the project as an affiliation within the acknowledgments. |
| Dispute resolution processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disputes may arise over authorship and so on. A pre-defined pathway for settling disputes is useful, in case agreement cannot be reached independently. ▪ The resolution panel should excuse any members with potential conflicts (e.g., from the same site as a disputant, co-author on the disputed paper, etc.) ▪ Some projects create infrastructure to provide an appeals mechanism to a second body if the initial resolution of the dispute does not satisfy the parties. |

Identified Best Practices – General Oversight & Management

1. Begin discussing authorship very early in the collaborative process. Even the study design phase is not too early.
2. Determine who is responsible for oversight of publication and authorship issues such as outlined in this document (e.g., publications committee, steering committee, principal investigator, etc). Provide a clear point of contact.
3. Facilitate and encourage participation in writing the publication by all sites contributing data or input.

4. Early in the project period, deliberate openly about papers likely to result and select papers and lead/first authors.
5. Require prior-approval by any publication committee or project Principal Investigator for ideas/manuscripts.
6. Provide a publication proposal form or template. Consider including a field for possible target journals.
7. Define roles and responsibilities of publication committee members, overall PI, and authors.
8. Confirm appropriateness of topic and ensure there are no conflicts of interest within the group.
9. Set expectations for length of time from submission-to-review of new publication proposals.
10. Review publication proposals using pre-defined, documented processes.
11. Ensure the publication committee's decision-making process is transparent so potential authors understand how and when decisions are made, who makes them, and what considerations may affect decision outcomes.
12. Before disputes arise, agree upon and document a process for adjudicating disagreements, if needed.
13. Ensure those tasked with resolving a given dispute have no conflicts of interest pertaining to the paper or disputants involved.
14. Track progress of papers and presentations and hold authors accountable.
15. Provide lead authors with a timely reminder of any pre-submission review/approval requirements for manuscripts or presentations.
16. Encourage junior level investigators to participate in writing groups or provide mentors for them to lead writing groups.
17. Agree and document from the outset if the process applies to analyses conducted at only a single site of a multicenter project.

Identified Best Practices – Lead Authors

1. Openly discuss co-authorship and order of authorship early in the process, recognizing that final order may change over the course of writing and editing the paper. Ultimately, base order of authorship on the actual relative contribution of each co-author.
2. Ensure all senior authors and co-authors know they are named contributors and meet the Uniform Requirements criteria to be listed as authors.
3. Centrally coordinate the writing of the manuscript.
4. Create and actively manage your writing group, including communications and regular meetings, etc. between authors.
5. Communicate progress to publications committee on an agreed upon / regular basis.

6. Update the publications committee if changes/revisions to the manuscript are made.
7. Update the publications committee and co-authors on the progress and outcome of submission.
8. If the lead author will not be the corresponding author, identify someone else and ensure they are willing to take on this designation.
9. Consider how negative or null results can still be constructed as compelling content for journals.
10. If help is needed to identify target journals for submission or resubmission, consult the publications committee and/or co-authors for fresh ideas.
11. When pre-approval reviews are needed, ensure this is built into the writing and submission timeline.
12. Adhere to the manuscript development timeline. Avoid competitors publishing first on the same topic, or the PI assigning a new lead author.
13. If the main outcome paper is not written and submitted in a timely fashion, other writing groups will be forced to delay submitting the secondary publication.

Other HCSRN Publication and Authorship Policy Resources

Check the HCSRN Tools & Materials | Managing & Closing Out Project page of www.hcsrn.org for other resources to help project teams develop publication and authorship policies.

- [HCSRN Project Policy Template](#)
- [Existing Project Policies & Content Comparison Table](#)
- [Sample Manuscript Tracking Sheet](#)
- [Sample Publication Proposal Form](#)

Other HCSRN Project Policy Topics

Check the HCSRN Member Resources pages for similar resources for New Project Proposals.

Best practices guidance, existing policies and comparisons of similarities/differences between existing policies are continuing to be developed for additional topics, including data sharing and for-profit collaborations.

Submitting Updates & Feedback

This is a dynamic, living document. Additional best practices and resources can be added over time.

To provide an updated project policy, submit a new policy for the repository, share a best practice, ask questions or provide feedback, contact:



Ella Thompson, HCSRN Manager
email: thompson.e@ghc.org
phone: 206.442.5211

Links to External Resources

- Per federal law, all published articles from NIH-funded research must be submitted to [PubMed Central](#) for public access.
- Provide a link to the [Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals](#) in your policy.