



## FOOD & WATERBORNE DISEASES INTEGRATED RESEARCH NETWORK **ROLE OF PROJECT LEADERS UNDER THE FWDIRN CONTRACT**

The Food and Waterborne Integrated Research Network (FWDIRN) is a central activity within the Enteric and Hepatic Diseases Branch of the Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (DMID) of NIAID. The purpose of the FWD-IRN is to conduct research that is critical to the DMID mission.

The FWDIRN comprises a family of seven contracts with expertise in microbiology, immunology, zoonoses, biostatistics, and clinical research. Each contract is awarded to an institution; a Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for the research and staff performance in that Research Unit.

Each Research Unit may have multiple projects ongoing at any particular time. Each project has a designated Project Leader (PL). Although the roles and responsibilities of the Project Leaders can vary, the success of each Research Unit contract is dependent on the abilities of the Project Leader responsible for each project.

The Project Leader does not have an independent status, but is primarily responsible to the PI for accomplishment of the research objectives. The contribution of the Project Leader to the conception, organization, and accomplishment of the research plan can range from a high degree of independence to being a research manager. The Project Leader role often includes conceiving the entire project, defining the research plan, conducting the research, and reporting the results. The roles and responsibilities of the Project Leader are defined by the PI, and the PI ultimately retains responsibility of all work performed under the contract.

The POs have developed a list of high priority research areas for the Research Units. For more specific projects or areas of research, POs also issue a brief Statement of Objectives (SOO), which details the objective of the project, but does not direct how the project should be performed. In response to an SOO, the Project Leader is responsible for developing the full project and conducting the research.

Projects are initiated in the research units by either of two mechanisms.

- The PO may identify key research needs through a briefing document (SOO) to which the PIs respond with concepts drafted as above.
- The Principal Investigator may submit a research concept to the appropriate Project Officer (PO), who will review the proposal in committee with the other unit POs. The Concept may be written by the PI, or by a Project Leader, who may be a colleague, collaborator, or a potential subcontractor. The concept is submitted to the PO through the PI.

Concepts are reviewed by a committee comprising the FWDIRN Project Officers, and may be reviewed by other government employees, if appropriate. Concepts may be accepted, rejected, or returned for revision. Accepted concepts are followed up by a detailed, full proposal that is also reviewed by FWDIRN Project Officers.