

Strategies to Retain, Recognize, and Reward Clinical Trials Office Team Members

M. Mavredes, J. Luecht, K. Briggs Bouker

Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center

1. Background

During 2019-2022, the Clinical Trials Office (CTO) of Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at Georgetown University experienced a 61 percent average staff turnover, seeing 100 percent turnover in some functional areas. The Lombardi CTO sought to formalize onboarding, training/education, and professional advancement of CTO staff to recognize and reward staff members, while progressing to higher levels of job responsibility, increase job satisfaction, and retain skilled CTO staff members.

2. Goals

- Recognize and reward CTO staff who demonstrate the required elements of the Career Advancement Plan (CAP)
- Provide staff with clear career trajectory
- Increase job satisfaction for CTO team members
- Improve onboarding, training, and education for CTO team members
- Retain skilled CTO team members

3. Solutions and Methods

The Lombardi CTO leadership deployed a two-pronged approach starting in 2022: revamped onboarding, training, and continuing education program led by a Training and Education Manager, in conjunction with the CAP.

Onboarding, Training, Education: A multidisciplinary curriculum was developed for onboarding new staff including foundational oncology, clinical research regulations, treatment modalities, biostatistics, and ancillary disciplines. The continuing education program involves ongoing lectures from Lombardi and outside experts, and affords team members access to funds to support training and education initiatives for career growth.

CAP: The Lombardi CTO CAP encompasses four levels of achievement, characterized by depth and breadth of professional behaviors, reflecting job performance, expertise, maturity, dedication, leadership, educational pursuit, and responsibility. To provide equal opportunity for Lombardi CTO staff, the CAP takes place through two vertical career ladders: pre-defined and individualized or across functional areas. Interested CTO staff collaborate with their direct supervisor and Lombardi CTO Training and Education Manager for submission to the CAP Committee.

4. Outcomes

There were immediate and anticipated long-term outcomes (future directions). Immediate outcomes included: (1) CTO and Human Resources leadership reviewed, and adjusted as necessary, all position descriptions to ensure standardization and accuracy of job profiles, grading, and compensation; (2) successful deployment of the Lombardi CTO CAP; (3) increased levels of promotion of Lombardi CTO team members who initiated CAP, across all levels; and (4) increased staff retention with a 20 percent average staff turnover in 2022/2023, reduced to <5 percent in 2024 (<10 percent vacancy).

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Prior to implementation of this plan, there was a lack of key requirements for job satisfaction and staff retention within the Lombardi CTO. The Lombardi CTO CAP helped to mitigate high levels of staff turnover (≥ 20 percent), in conjunction with a formalized Lombardi CTO training and education program. Future directions include (1) refinement of professional behaviors and activities for well-rounded CAP applicants (*e.g.*, volunteerism), (2) plans for additional levels of achievement with increased staff retention, (3) continued efforts to synergize onboarding, training, continuing education, and CAP activities, and (4) formalized staff satisfaction surveys.