Using "Best Practice" Events to Synergize Center Grants: A Case Study

Kristin L. Dolan, PhD and Gretchen L. Kiser, PhD

Research Development Office, University of California San Francisco

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2016, the UCSF Research Development Office (RDO) was approached by two P30 directors looking to build connectivity with the other P30s at UCSF. Over the next 6 months, we worked with them to develop a half-day event that brought together directors and program managers from UCSF P30s. The purpose of this event, titled "UCSF P30s: Learning from Each Other" was to exchange best practices, identify areas of synergy, and build an ongoing UCSF P30 network. This poster summarizes our experience planning this particular event, the impact it had on UCSF P30s, and how this type of event could be easily adapted to a variety of groups and award mechanisms.
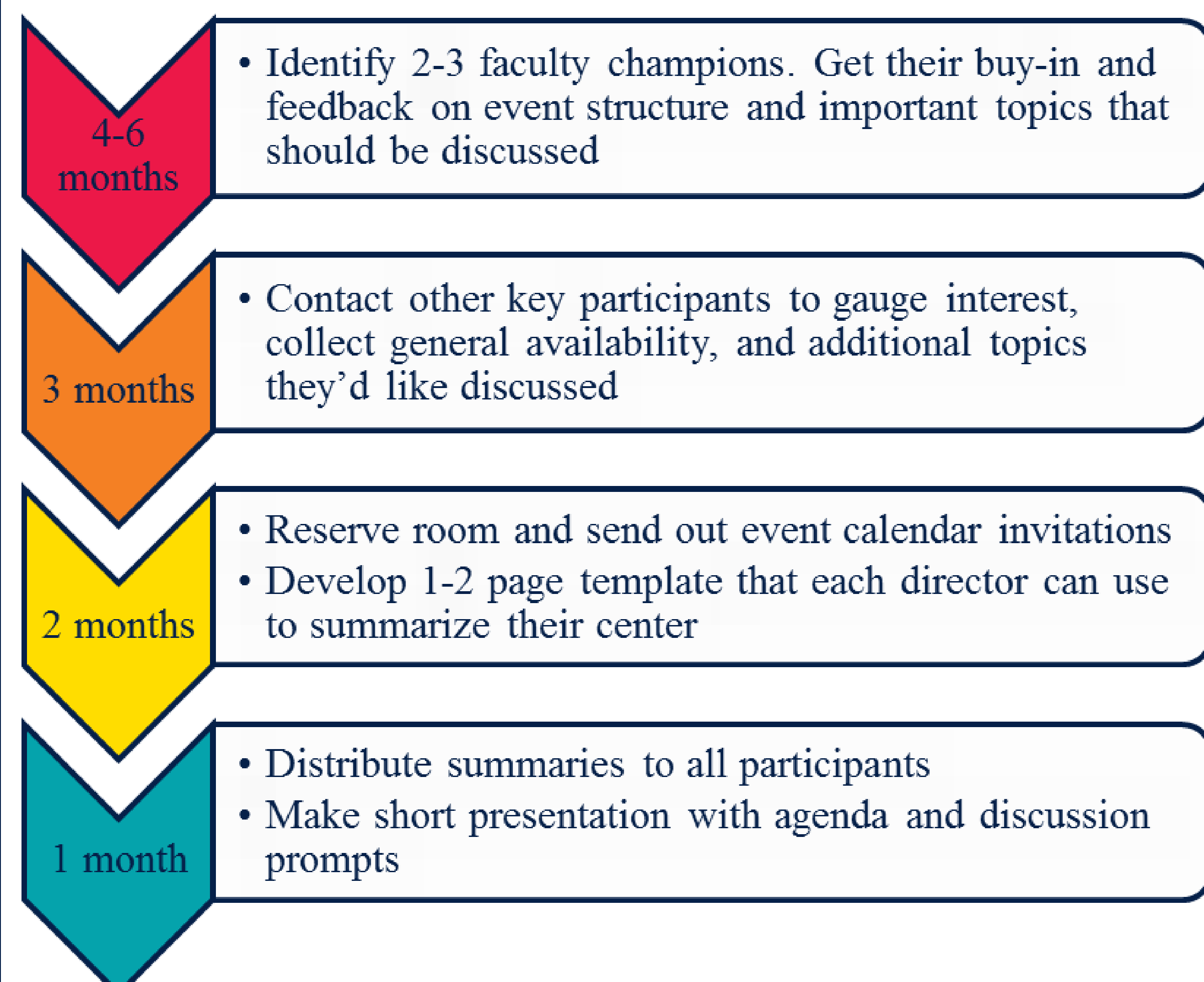
NIH's P30 Mechanism: NIH Center Core Grants (P30) are designed to support shared resources and facilities for research by a number of investigators from the same discipline who focus on a common research problem or from different disciplines who provide a multidisciplinary approach to a joint research effort. The P30 grant is integrated with the center's component projects or program projects, though funded independently from them. This support, by providing more accessible resources, is expected to assure a greater productivity than from the separate projects and program projects.

Synergizing Core Services: While most cores at UCSF don't restrict which investigators can use them, they are quite siloed. The P30 structure (and similar mechanisms) has historically contributed to this siloed structure, in addition to geographic limitations (UCSF research is distributed across multiple sites). This siloed structure is inefficient and creates unnecessary redundancies and confusion amongst faculty and staff.

To address this, there is an ongoing effort at UCSF to consolidate and centralize key technology-based services that are disease agnostic. These consolidated cores are more efficient, of greater benefit to investigators, and is favored by NIH.[1]

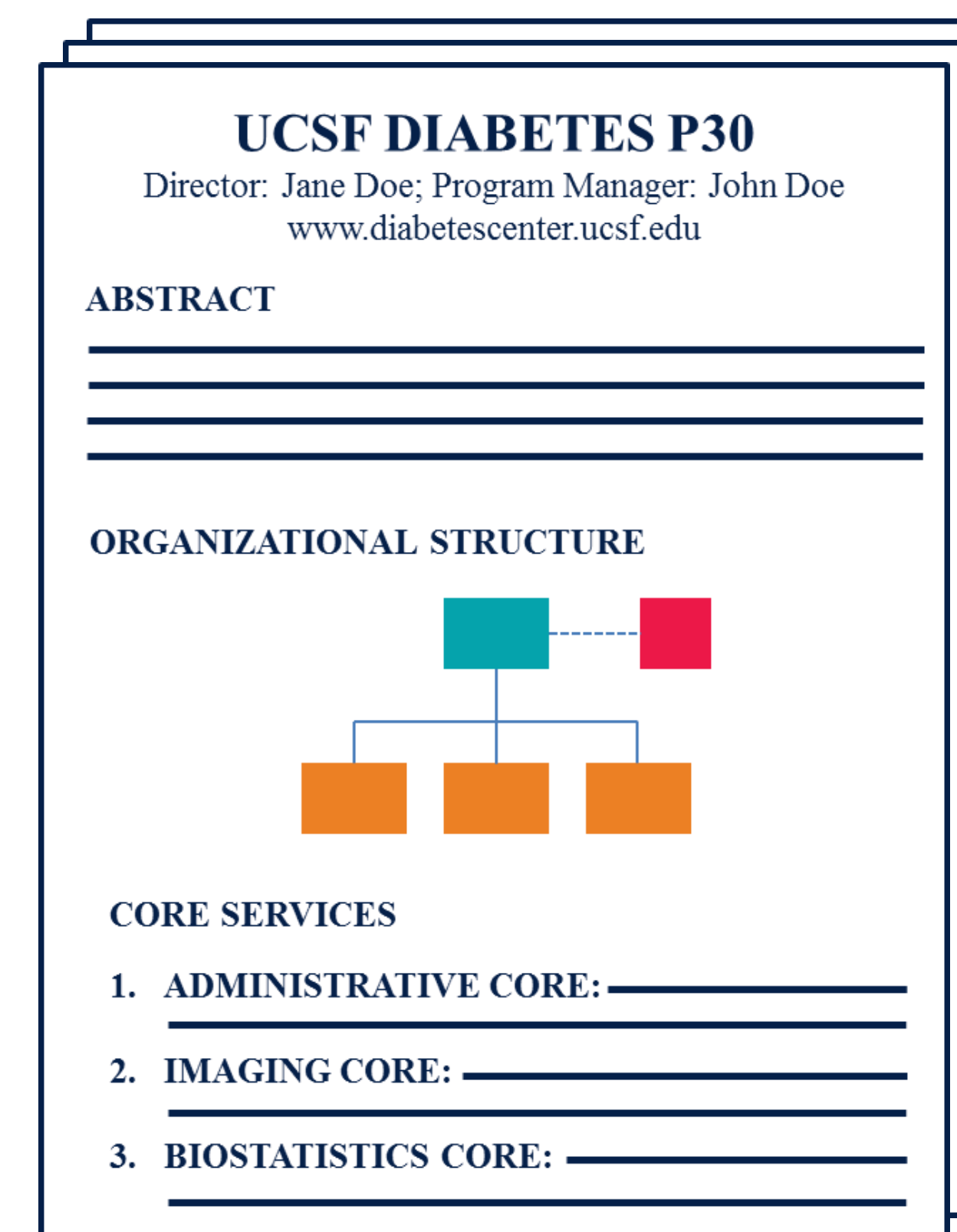## OPTIMAL PLANNING TIMELINE

While a similar event could be developed in less time, we found a planning period of roughly 6 months allowed us time to engage with the P30s on campus and get their buy-in. We believe this pre-event engagement greatly contributed to the high participation in this event (12 of the 14 active P30s at UCSF were represented).

4-6 months
- Identify 2-3 faculty champions. Get their buy-in and feedback on event structure and important topics that should be discussed

3 months
- Contact other key participants to gauge interest, collect general availability, and additional topics they'd like discussed

2 months
- Reserve room and send out event calendar invitations
- Develop 1-2 page template that each director can use to summarize their center

1 month
- Distribute summaries to all participants
- Make short presentation with agenda and discussion prompts

PRE-EVENT MATERIALS

P30 directors used a template to prepare a short **1-2 page summary** of their center. Summaries were combined into a single packet and sent to participants before the event.

Since any participants were not familiar with all the P30s on campus, this packet provided useful background material. It also enabled the RDO to prepare specific questions to help guide the discussion.

UCSF DIABETES P30
Director: Jane Doe; Program Manager: John Doe
www.diabetescenter.ucsf.edu

ABSTRACT

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

CORE SERVICES
1. ADMINISTRATIVE CORE:
2. IMAGING CORE:
3. BIOSTATISTICS CORE:

EVENT DAY

Room Set-Up: We used a **roundtable set-up** for our casual large-group discussion. Participants (25 in total) sat at long tables and faced towards the middle of the room. We used a projector to display discussion prompts and a presentation by our UCSF Research Resource Program.

Agenda: Below is the agenda we used for the "UCSF P30s: Learning from Each Other" event. Our coffee break and reception allowed for networking and one on one discussion.

Time	Topic
1:05-1:30pm	Introductions
1:30-1:50pm	Administrative Core
1:50-2:30pm	Pilot/Feasibility and Enrichment Programs
2:30-2:50pm	Coffee Break
2:50-3:05pm	UCSF Research Resource Program
3:05-3:45pm	Resource Cores
3:45-4:05pm	Institutional Value of P30s
4:05-4:20pm	Wrap Up
4:20-5:00pm	Reception

POST-EVENT ACTIVITIES

Action Items:
1. The RDO produced an **event synopsis** that was distributed to all participants
2. All P30s sent RDO a **list of their members** so that overlaps and potential synergies could be identified.
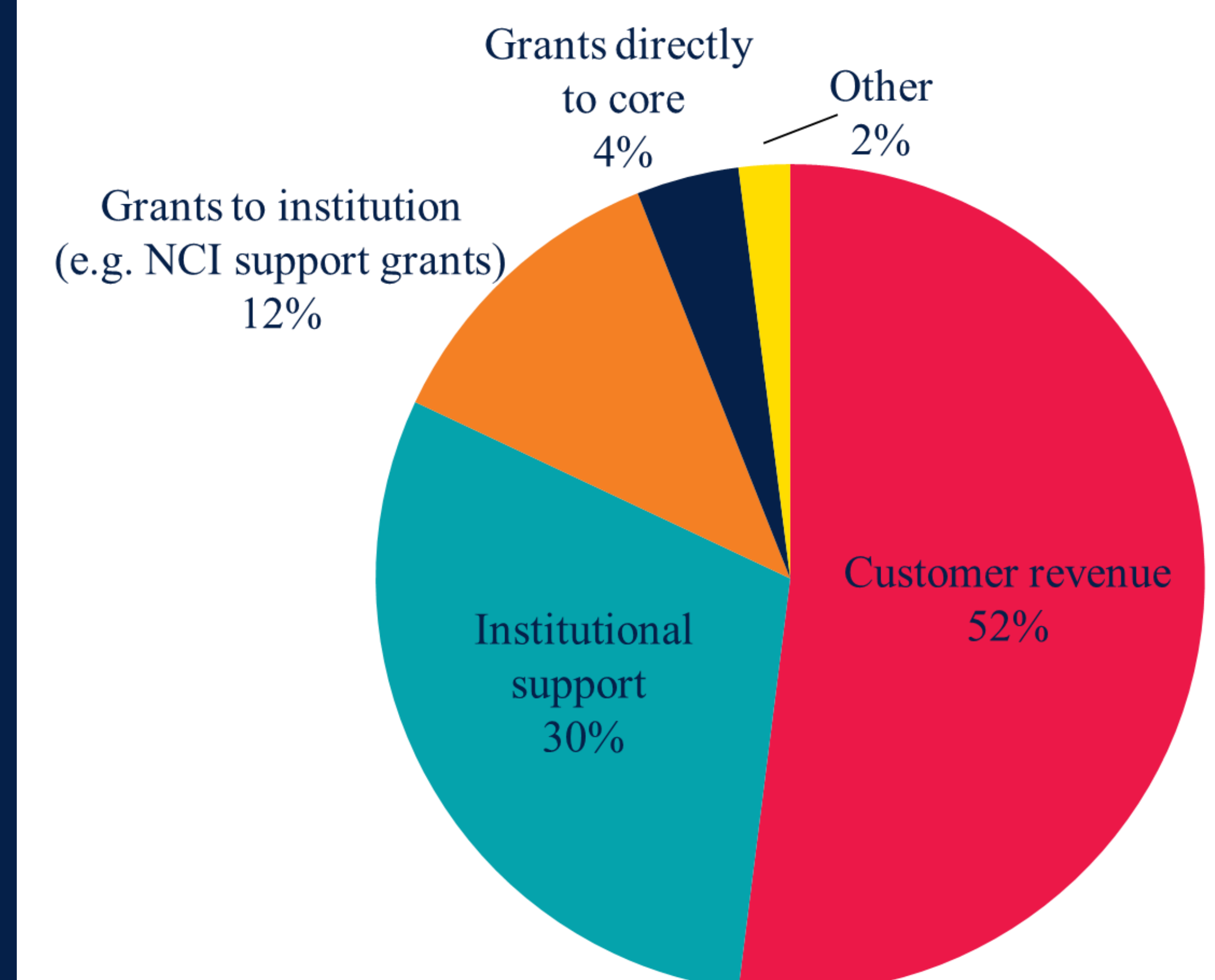
Lessons Learned:
1. We tried to **record audio from the event** so we could ensure the synopsis captured the main discussion points; however, the quality of the recording was very poor and we had to rely on memory and our notes. It would have been helpful to have someone on the RDO serve as a **scribe** for the event.
2. When reviewing the summaries, we noticed that one P30 was very different from the others and many of the event topics were not as relevant. A **pragmatic review of eligible centers** to make sure all participants shared common interests would have been useful.

OUTCOMES FOR UCSF P30s

During the "Wrap Up" portion of the discussion, a number of participants expressed interest in meeting again. The group decided that P30 program managers would meet once every two months to discuss operational challenges and best practices. In addition, the entire group (P30 directors and program managers) would meet once a quarter and discuss a specific topic in more detail. For example, the first follow-on event focused on a "Return on Investment" report that can be used to advocate for institutional support.

Advocating for Institutional Support: Unlike other Research Program Projects and Centers, Center Core Grants do not conduct research. Therefore, an argument can be made that a portion (or all) of the indirect costs could be returned to the center as a form of institutional support. According to a study of 282 cores from 156 institutions, institutions support ~30% of total core costs.[2]

Pie chart:
- Customer revenue 52%
- Institutional support 30%
- Grants to institution (e.g. NCI support grants) 12%
- Grants directly to core 4%
- Other 2%

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, we found this event was a very successful way to stimulate discussions and synergistic activities amongst a group of faculty and staff with shared interests. Participants were very engaged during the event and expressed great appreciation to the RDO for planning and moderating the discussion. In addition, the event stimulated some interesting outcomes for UCSF P30s, which we consider indicators of the event's success. We believe this event can be replicated or adapted for other groups (campuses and award mechanisms) looking to synergize their efforts.

REFERENCES

[1] Chang MC, Birken S, Grieder F, and Anderson A. *U.S. National Institutes of Health Core Consolidation–Investing in Greater Efficiency.* J Biomol Tech. 2015 Apr; 26(1): 1–3. DOI: 10.7171/jbt.15-2601-003
[2] *The 2016 Core Facility Benchmarking Study.* Santa Clara: Agilent Technologies, Inc. 2016. http://www.agilent.com/cs/library/ whitepaper/public/2016_Benchmarking_Study.pdf

CONTACT

For more information, contact Kristin Dolan
(kristin.dolan@ucsf.edu)