



From Site Data to Site Advocacy

How the PPD™ Clinical Research Business Is Strengthening Relationships Through Transparency and Recognition

In clinical research, strong relationships between CROs and clinical sites are built on more than just well-designed protocols. They require mutual understanding, proactive communication, and systems that reinforce trust. That's where the PPD™ clinical research business of Thermo Fisher Scientific's Strategic Site Collaborations (SSC) team steps in.

As part of our **Collaborate Forward** series, we spoke with **Paula Underhill, Senior Director of Strategic Site Collaborations (SSC)**, who leads efforts across the PPD business's **SELECT global partnership program**, to understand how the organization is reframing site relationships. Her team's goal is clear: ensure the site voice is heard early, supported consistently, and recognized meaningfully.

The result is a framework that aligns data with empathy, and performance with partnership.

Project Culture: Partnership, Not Paperwork

The PPD team's SELECT program is built around two core site categories: global healthcare providers (hospitals, clinics, and specialty centers) and commercial site networks, collectively covering over 3,000 sites worldwide.

At the heart of the program is a mindset shift. The SSC team reframes site relationships by asking, "What value and support can we bring to the site?" rather than treating sites as transactional delivery points. Strong, long-term commitment requires a new paradigm for deeper consolidated relationships encompassing therapeutic insight, defined models through mutually agreed-upon metrics, communication and processes, as well as integrated technology solutions and support. Furthermore, an innovative tiering methodology strengthens and provides SELECT commercial site network partnerships clarity and defined expectations to progress through the tiers.

Each SELECT partnership site is connected with a dedicated relationship manager. These relationships are structured and intentional, not situational. And for newer or smaller sites, the SSC team creates clear pathways for early engagement and trust-building.

Process & Systems: Turning Scorecards into Strategy

The development of a strong, data-driven strategy is key to the success of the PPD business's SELECT program. The PPD business transforms raw site and study information into useful insights that improve outcomes for patients, sites, and sponsors. This continuous improvement cycle ensures data tools continue to meet business needs and bring value to the PPD business's SELECT partners and internal stakeholders.

The strategy focuses on five key areas:

- **Data infrastructure** - Building secure and efficient systems to collect, store, and access important site and study information.
- **Performance metrics** - Setting, tracking, and reporting key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure success and share progress with sites.
- **Analytics capabilities** - Creating tools and methods to turn raw data into meaningful insights.
- **Integration** - Linking SSC data with enterprise systems to create a full picture of site performance and study progress
- **Stakeholder insights** - Sharing focused, relevant information to help stakeholders make informed decisions and plan strategically.

To support this relationship-first model, demonstrate impact, enhance site communication and drive cost-saving efficiencies, the PPD business built the **Study Record Database**. This database is a centralized repository of all SSC study inputs, enabling comprehensive real-time tracking, analysis, and reporting across the clinical study lifecycle.

In addition, tailored "Site Score Cards" are developed to supplement activity, benchmarking and performance.

Each Score Card compares a site's performance across core metrics including:

- Study start-up timelines
- Enrollment and screening numbers
- Query resolution
- Data entry speed and quality

These insights are reviewed in regular check-ins with site relationship managers. Dashboards are delivered directly to the site partners, with clear, easy-to-navigate visual data. Crucially, the dashboards work both ways. They provide clarity for the site and invite questions.

This is especially important for sites enrolled in the PPD business's Frontier Program, which is focused on engaging new investigators. Through this program, the PPD team

The PPD team has built robust data sets enhancing their approach to transparent and holistic partnerships. One example is the sharing of consistent performance and monitoring data, for each partnership; enabling awareness of activity, volume and performance and tailored "Score Cards."

provides targeted support, practical guidance, and more frequent touchpoints to ensure they can contribute confidently and effectively.

People & Connection: Recognition, Coaching, and Closing Loops

One standout element of the SELECT program is its emphasis on recognition. Sites that meet key milestones or show strong performance don't just receive a thank-you email. They're formally acknowledged through the PPD business's **Recognition Program**.

These aren't just tokens of appreciation—they're visibility tools. The more badges a site receives, the more they stand out amongst their peers. It's a practical way of turning great performance into greater opportunity.

The team also tracks its own interactions with sites to improve continuity and service. They've created structured communication pathways so that questions don't disappear into a void. Whether it's through Score Card discussions, ongoing governance meetings, or end-of-study recognitions, the site voice is both heard and responded to.

This system also helps mitigate concerns, such as addressing challenges with a particular investigator without compromising an entire site's standing. Issues are surfaced, reviewed, and resolved thoughtfully, reinforcing a sense of trust and fairness.

Progress: Supporting Growth and Accelerating Start-Up

The results of the SELECT program are clear. Sponsors are increasingly receptive to the site recommendations provided by the PPD team. Rather than second-guessing feasibility reports, they're relying on performance data to make smarter,



faster decisions. This confidence leads to **shorter start-up timelines** and **fewer administrative hurdles**.

Sites—especially those newer to clinical research—benefit from having dedicated support to help them understand expectations, set up systems for success, and raise concerns early. With performance now benchmarked against both historic and peer data, every site has a clearer view of where they stand and what they can achieve next.

The **Frontier Program** also shows promise as a scalable framework to engage and elevate new voices in the research ecosystem.

By shifting how site success is defined and supported, the PPD team is creating a stronger network of research-ready sites around the globe.

Collaborate Forward Takeaways

The experience of the PPD team offers key lessons for building stronger, more responsive site relationships:

- **Lead with value.** Focus on what you can do for the site, not just what they can do for you.
- **Create clarity through data.** Provide sites with performance insights they can understand and act on.

- **Support new voices.** Give new and growing sites clear communication, coaching, and structure.
- **Recognize excellence.** Badges and certificates elevate strong sites and increase visibility to sponsors.
- **Make feedback actionable.** Create structured, regular pathways for engagement—and close the loop.

From dashboards to development, recognition to relationships—when you build systems around people, progress follows.

Because when sites are seen, supported, and celebrated, collaboration becomes more than a process. It becomes a partnership.

Let's keep moving forward. Together.

pppd

The Collaborate Forward Team

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Let's keep moving
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