

Turning Site Feedback Into Action

How AbbVie is Building Stronger Feedback Loops Across Clinical Trial Execution

For AbbVie, site engagement is not a supporting activity within clinical research—it is central to how they build strong partnerships, strengthen study execution, and help bring new treatment options to patients. Sites are closest to the daily realities of trial delivery, and their expertise and experience provide critical insight into what works, what creates burden, and where sponsors can make collaboration easier and more effective.

That is why AbbVie is focused on turning site feedback into action. By listening to sites, understanding their day-to-day realities, and acting on what they learn, AbbVie works to simplify the clinical trial experience, reduce unnecessary barriers, close the feedback loop, and create the conditions that help sites deliver high-quality studies for the patients who are waiting for new treatment options.

“Sites have choices about the studies they take on,” said Alun Pinnegar, Senior Director, Clinical Field Excellence and Site Centricity at AbbVie. “Our responsibility is to understand their needs and experience, create an environment where they can work effectively with us, and build the kind of partnership that ultimately supports patient participation in clinical research.”

The **Collaborate Forward Playbook** identified four pillars that help turn collaboration from an aspiration into an operational practice: Executive Leadership Support, Operational Impact, Information Governance, and Feedback Loops. AbbVie’s approach shows what that can look like in practice: listening beyond individual studies, structuring qualitative input, sharing insights across functions, and acting during active studies when possible. Where our previous InterVIEW with AbbVie explored how those principles can shape trials before they reach the field, this story looks at what happens once those relationships and feedback mechanisms are put into practice.

Understanding the Site Beyond the Study

AbbVie's engagement extends beyond the lifecycle of an individual clinical trial.

Depending on the relationship and needs of the site, teams may connect quarterly, semiannually, or annually to better understand how the site operates and share insights into prospective trial opportunities. These conversations can explore processes and timelines around areas such as study startup, budgeting, and contracting, seeking opportunities to optimize collaboration.

That knowledge can have a direct operational impact for both sites and AbbVie, especially when it helps teams anticipate friction before it slows study activation or distracts site staff from patient-focused work.

Understanding how long a particular step in a site's startup process typically takes can help AbbVie teams establish more realistic expectations, anticipate potential bottlenecks, and reduce unnecessary follow-up communication.

Reducing Friction Before It Becomes a Barrier

One place those insights can make a difference is study startup.

Budgeting and contracting have been areas of focus as AbbVie works to reduce unnecessary barriers. The organization has evolved its approach to areas including negotiation, fair market value parameters and analysis, and study visit-level budgeting.

Teams can also proactively incorporate site-specific costs previously agreed upon through rate cards or past studies into initial budget drafts. AbbVie benchmarks study costs at the country level to help create greater consistency in the process.

The goal is to make the process as lean, predictable, and site-friendly as possible, avoiding budget and contracting delays that can slow study startup and create unnecessary burden for site teams.

It also illustrates an important principle of collaboration: listening has greater value when what is learned can influence how work gets done.

Connecting the People Closest to Sites

AbbVie has a significant network of Clinical Research Associates (CRAs) who operate globally and interact directly with sites.

Through its **One R&D Ways of Working** approach, AbbVie's in-house Clinical Development Operations and Global Medical Affairs staff work side by side to provide sites with information that is relevant to them.

Teams across AbbVie capture questions, comments, and experiences from sites and bring those insights back into AbbVie. The organization has also placed additional emphasis on building the competencies of field-facing operations colleagues so they can drive meaningful and impactful interactions with sites. Those conversations create valuable knowledge about the site experience. The next challenge is making sure that knowledge does not remain only with the person who heard it.

Turning Conversations Into Organizational Intelligence

Information governance is what allows individual conversations to become organizational intelligence.

AbbVie adopted a clinical customer relationship management (CRM) approach to bring greater structure to site engagement. CRM helps field teams connect with appropriate sites at relevant times and with information tailored to those relationships.

AbbVie has also created an internal database to formalize qualitative information that was previously collected entirely informally.

Information is standardized so cross-functional colleagues can more easily understand and use what has been learned, regardless of whether the organization is a large site network or an independent site. Structured information can also be incorporated into dashboards, shared across functions to support decision-making, and further tailor onward communications with sites to best meet their needs.

“Site feedback is most valuable when it can travel beyond the original conversation,” said Alex Lebrun, Associate Director, Global Site Contracting: Solutions, Engagement, and Partnerships at AbbVie. “Creating structure around what we learn helps us bring those perspectives into decisions across the organization.”

In this model, listening to sites is not solely about strengthening individual relationships. It creates a source of organizational knowledge that can be shared, applied, and used to help AbbVie act with greater consistency, responsiveness, and reliability as a sponsor partner.

Closing the Feedback Loop

Capturing site intelligence has limited value if it does not lead to action.

When a potential signal or challenge emerges, AbbVie can leverage local representation to explore the issue further. Targeted questions and talking points can be shared with field teams for discussion with sites over a defined period.

Insights can then be aggregated, patterns identified, and the information used to support decisions. This approach has helped inform improvements in areas including clinical technologies utilized by sites.

The process creates a feedback loop: identify an issue, gather site perspectives, identify patterns, make improvements, and bring those improvements back into the field. Because this cycle can happen during an active study, sites may experience the impact of their feedback in near real time.



That distinction matters. For sites managing the demands of one clinical trial after another, the promise of improvement in a future study does little to address the challenges they are experiencing today. Closing the loop within the current trial demonstrates that feedback was not simply collected, but heard, considered, and used to make a difference.

Effective collaboration is not simply providing sites with an opportunity to give feedback. It is creating a path for that feedback to improve the experience of the people who provided it.

Operationalizing Collaboration

For AbbVie, these pillars are not theoretical. They show up in how teams listen, share what they learn, and act on site input.

- **Executive Leadership Support** establishes site centrality as an organizational priority.
- **Operational Impact** ensures that insights can influence the processes that affect sites.
- **Information Governance** allows knowledge to travel beyond individual conversations.
- **Feedback Loops** create opportunities to turn what is heard into action.

The result is more than a process for collecting site feedback. It is a way to embed site perspectives into how decisions are made and how clinical trial delivery is improved.



Collaborate Forward Takeaways

- **Build relationships beyond individual studies.** Ongoing engagement can help sponsors understand how sites operate, anticipate challenges, and identify lessons with broader value.
- **Create a path for insights to travel.** CRM, standardized site intelligence, and shared dashboards can help prevent valuable knowledge from remaining within individual relationships or functions.
- **Equip field teams to listen, not just communicate.** The people closest to sites can be an important source of organizational intelligence when they have the skills, structure, and opportunities to capture what they hear.
- **Connect feedback to operational change.** Site engagement becomes more meaningful when insights influence processes, technologies, and decisions that sites experience.
- **Close the loop while it still matters.** When possible, acting on feedback during an active study allows sites to experience the impact of collaboration firsthand rather than waiting for improvements to appear in a future trial.

By turning site feedback into action, AbbVie is strengthening collaboration where it matters most—at the point of study execution—and helping create a clinical trial experience that better supports sites, advances high-quality research, and brings new treatment options closer to the patients who need them.

This approach builds on the collaborative culture explored in our previous [AbbVie Collaborate Forward InterVIEW](#), where we looked at how site and stakeholder perspectives are incorporated earlier in protocol design, feasibility, and the patient experience. Together, the two examples show how collaboration can extend across the clinical trial lifecycle—from designing studies with sites in mind to listening, learning, and acting throughout study execution.

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