Problem: Budget constraints resulted in a decrease in IRB staffing, as we were unable to replace a regulatory analyst position. At the same time, the volume of submissions increased due to a faculty hiring initiative.

Program: While the common cry is to do more with less, the reality is that constraints offer the opportunity to assess the scope of activities performed by the IRB, and to determine which activities can be modified or eliminated in order to provide timely review of submissions while still maintaining a system of review that ensures conformance with federal regulation and institutional policies. The HRPP leadership initiated a process to evaluate the current activities and responsibilities of each departmental component. Leadership was charged with identifying and prioritizing activities that could be eliminated or modified in order to reduce workload without compromising the mission of the HRPP or the integrity of protocol reviews. We reviewed the following areas: operations, staffing models, education, and compliance. The HRPP Director and Managers examined the full process of IRB protocol review, assessing each of the steps from submission through approval. At each step, we questioned who performed the step and whether the step was necessary, performed as an IRB function or as a courtesy to another department, and able to be completed more efficiently; reviewed the existing staffing model considering the following: which staff were assigned to attend full committee meetings, the current system for managing expedited review, and the current system for managing minor amendments (personnel changes, advertisement modifications); reviewed the travel budget for staff conference attendance; reviewed the current process for new member orientation; reviewed the current schedule of educational offerings, assessing attendance at sessions to identify those sessions that could be eliminated or replaced by online offerings; and reviewed the compliance unit activities, assessing the number of not-for-cause audits, study start up consultations. Following identification of a large number of possible changes, leadership prioritized the changes by potential effect and ease of implementation. The advantage of a prioritized list is that it provides a coherent structure for change, allowing for a stepped approach to implementation. Although this process was initiated in response to fiscal constraint, we found it to be a valuable assessment of HRPP function, easily translatable to other institutions, and of potential value to IRBs, no matter their size.