

# VA Research & Development

Health Services Research and Development  
(HSR&D)

**COIN Review Process**

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# Thank you!

- We greatly appreciate your involvement in the review of applications for the new HSR&D initiative—Centers of Innovation (COIN).
- Your time, energy, and insights are invaluable to us.
- The COIN mechanism is new and we will be asking you to think about research centers in new ways.

# Outline

- A. What is new about COIN?**
- B. Overview of VHA and VA Research**
- C. Why change a successful Center system?**
- D. Overview of new COIN & CREATE Initiatives**
- E. Reviewer Responsibilities**
- F. Critique Template Highlights**
- G. Key Review Criteria**
- H. Scoring Guide**

# What is new about COINs?

	Research Center	COIN
Researchers	Work alone or collaborate with other investigators within a center	Collaborate extensively with investigators at other research centers
Dissemination	Publications and conference presentations	Engaged operational and clinical leaders and managers who have a vested interest in the program
Organization	Thematically with groups of projects addressing questions related to the theme	Strategically around coordinated focused projects accelerating improvements in healthcare quality and outcomes
Success	Funding, projects, and publications	Impact of research on VHA practice, quality, and outcomes

# VA Healthcare System

- Largest integrated healthcare system, nationally
- **8.57M enrollees served by 817 clinics and 152 hospitals.**
  - [http://www.va.gov/landing2\\_about.htm](http://www.va.gov/landing2_about.htm)
- Organized nationally in 21 regional networks called Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs)

# VA's Research Program: Office of Research and Development

- VA's research program is intramural and all principal investigators have at least 5/8<sup>th</sup> VA appointment.
- VHA's Office of Research and Development has a budget of ~\$583M and funds four research services: Biomedical Laboratory, Clinical Sciences, Rehabilitation, & Health Services.
- Health Services Research and Development (HSRD): ~\$90M plus additional funds for QUERI.

# Department of Veterans Affairs

Veteran Affairs (VA)

Veterans Health Administration

Health Policy and Services

Office of Research and Development – Intramural Research,  
Joel Kupersmith, MD, Chief Research and Development Officer

**Health Services  
(HSR&D)**

- **Nine research portfolios**

Biomedical  
Laboratories

Clinical  
Science

Rehabilitation

# HSRD Capacity Building Program

- **Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP)**
  - 13 REAPs
  - Small in size; 3 to 5 independent investigators
  - Funded to build capacity in medical center where small groups of investigators were clustered
- **Center of Excellence (CoE)**
  - 14 CoEs
  - Large in size; 6 to 7 independent investigators or more
  - Funded to build and maintain HSR capacity in medical centers where many investigators were located

# New initiatives address gaps in translation

- Excellent health services research often not implemented by VHA
- Investigators' vision of issues and priorities important to the health care system may be narrow
- VHA leadership (field and CO) often not engaged in research outcomes
- Design of projects often does not foster implementation

# Centers of Innovation (COIN)

This initiative seeks to build on the past successes of HSR&D research centers while providing more effective mechanisms and incentives to reward research and partnerships to ensure that research has the greatest possible impact on VHA policies, health care practices, outcomes for Veterans, and the field of health services research.

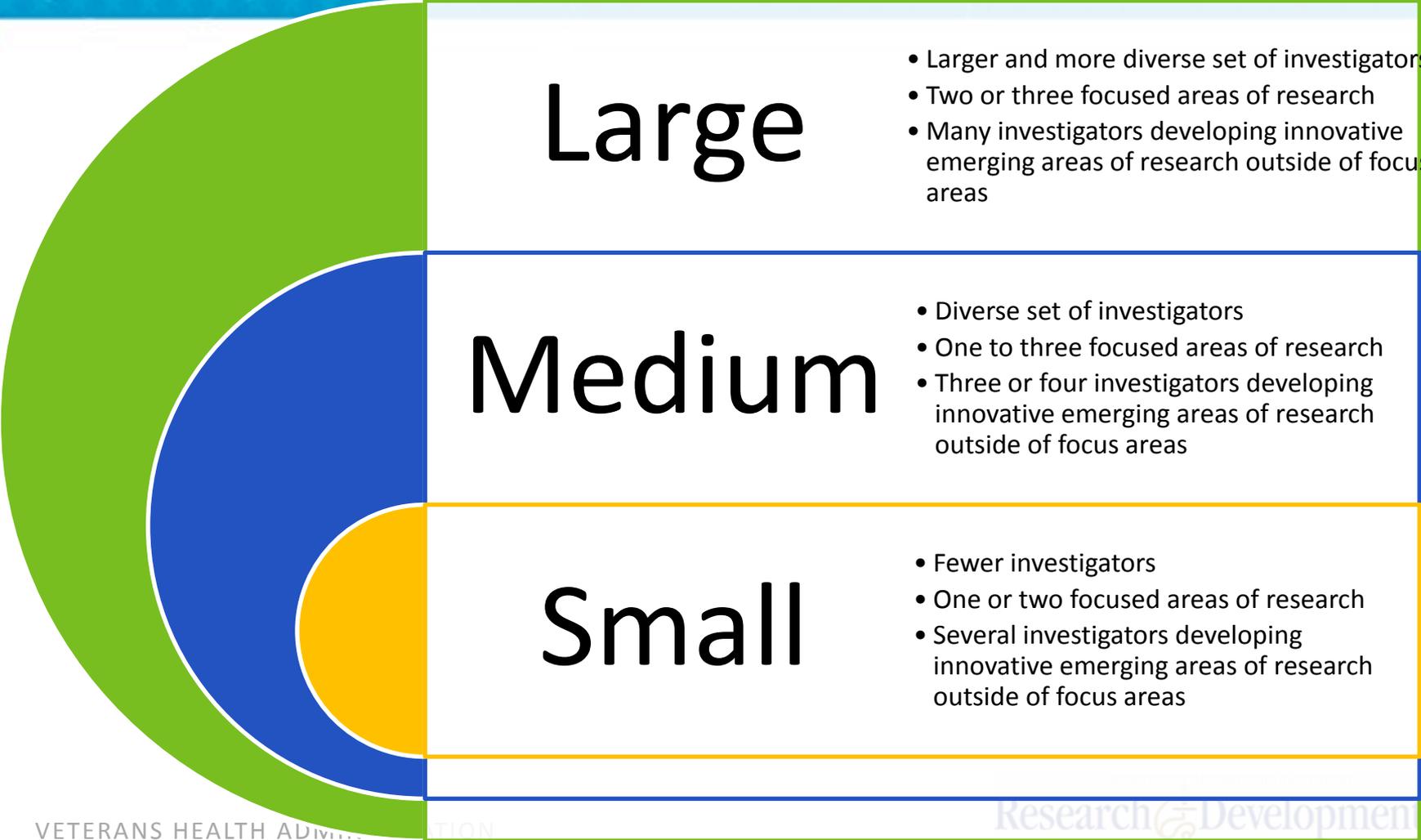
# COIN Overview

- Eligibility:
  - VA medical centers
  - 5 HSR&D or QUERI funded principal investigators
- Review Process – 2 stages:
  - Peer review – to assess potential for significant contributions to VHA healthcare system, Veterans' health, health services research and the nation
  - Reverse site visit if needed to address questions raised in peer review
- Budget:
  - COIN budgets variable (based on size and complexity)
  - Fund minimum of 15 COINs

# No one size fits all COINs

- Expectations that small and large COINs will be valuable
- Reviewers should adjust for
  - the size of the COIN's investigator team,
  - the complexity and scope of the proposed strategic plan, and
  - the commitment of partners and the hosting medical center to provide resources
- Relative importance of work outside focus areas will vary with size and complexity of COIN
- Expect to see several Multi-Institutional COINs

# Expect Centers of Various Sizes and Levels of Complexity



## Large

- Larger and more diverse set of investigators
- Two or three focused areas of research
- Many investigators developing innovative emerging areas of research outside of focus areas

## Medium

- Diverse set of investigators
- One to three focused areas of research
- Three or four investigators developing innovative emerging areas of research outside of focus areas

## Small

- Fewer investigators
- One or two focused areas of research
- Several investigators developing innovative emerging areas of research outside of focus areas

# Multi-Institutional COIN

- Both Medical Centers submitting a Multi-Institutional COIN application met eligibility requirements
- Multi-Institutional COIN applications were pre-approved prior to submission
- Affiliation between Medical Centers in a Multi-Institutional COIN may be a result of long-term collaborations and mentoring across the two medical centers, common interests and co-location of focused areas of research, and geographic proximity
- The organizational plan for a Multi-Institutional COIN will identify one Director/Principal Investigator overall and a Co-Director/Co-Principal Investigator for the other site
- Expectations are that the Multi-Institutional COIN may have a complex organizational structure, but that the two groups of investigators working together will yield important collaborations, innovations, and impact for Veterans Health

# COIN Elements: Strategic Plan

- Forward-looking strategic plan
- One to three focused areas of research
  - One focused area is related to operational or clinical partner and produces relatively short-term (18 – 24 months) and long-term impact
- Emerging areas of research
- Mentoring and career development
- Engaged partners (e.g., VHA operational and clinical leaders, academic affiliates)
- Strong organization and management plan

# COIN: Focused Areas of Research

- Each COIN is required to have one to three focused areas of research – wide latitude in picking focus areas (e.g. clinical areas, health outcomes, health system, research methods, etc.)
- A focused area of research may consist of three to five or more projects that are linked strategically to address priorities
- At least one of these focused areas of research should address questions of significant to one or more VHA/VA clinical or operational partner(s)
  - CREATE or coordinated projects similar to a CREATE
  - Short-term (< 24months) and long-term impacts expected
  - Close working relationship with the partner is critical

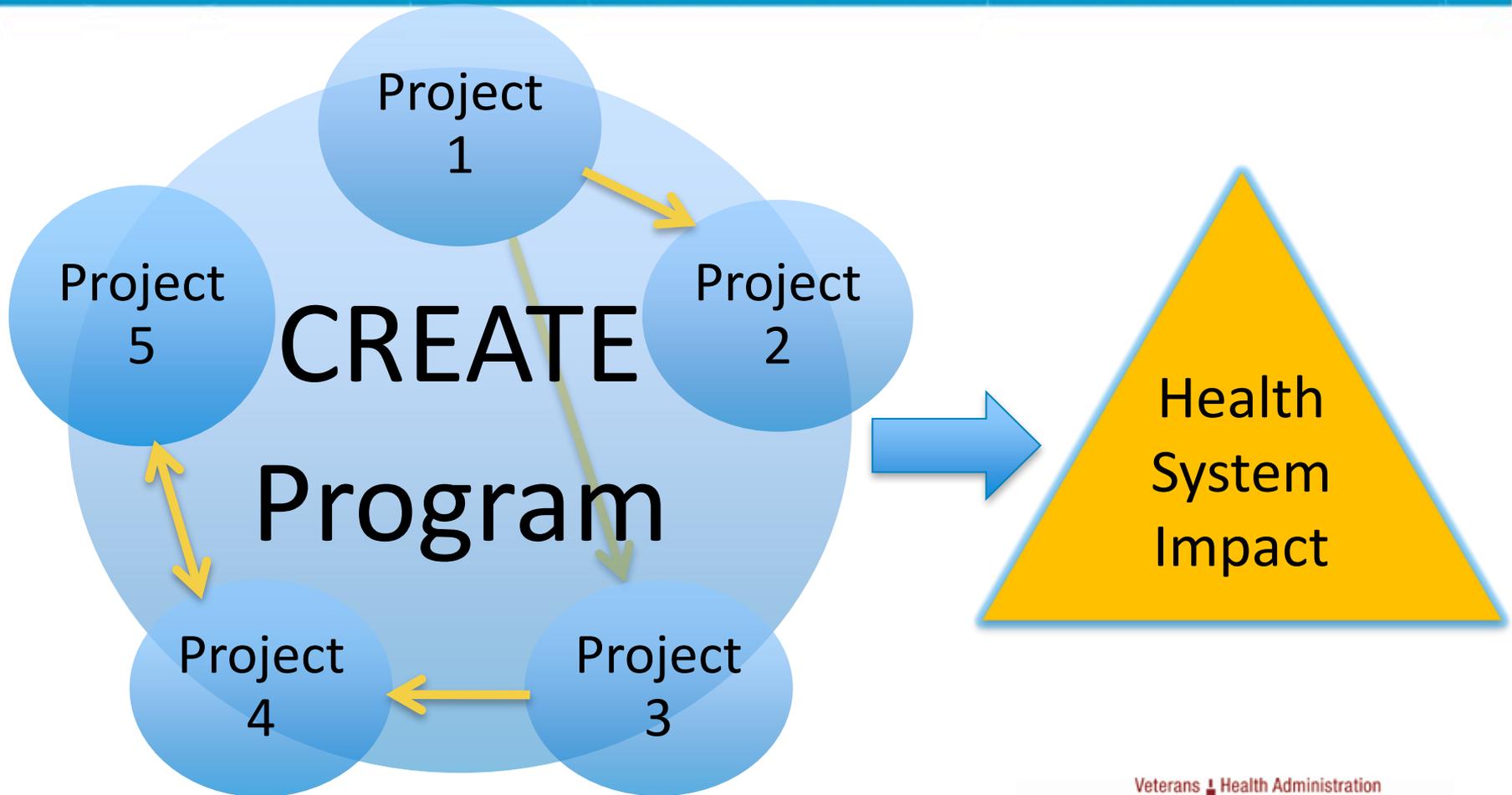
# Goals of CREATE Initiative

- Accelerate scientific advances through portfolio of related projects: *whole greater than sum of parts*
- Engage relevant VHA partners to align projects with major priorities of health system
- Promote collaboration among best researchers to advance important science
- Measurable impact on Veteran healthcare or health
  - Address important needs of partners
- Attention to implementation of results

# CREATE Elements

- Agreement among investigators, partner(s), and HSR&D to support a group of research projects that significantly enhance important knowledge and impact Veteran health
- Health-system partner(s) engaged at outset
- A “ground level” approach to determining VHA priorities
- 3 to 5 coordinated, focused, multi-site research projects
- Veteran impact integrated into objectives
- Duration: CREATE maximum = 5 years
- Individual project maximum = 4 years
- Budget (maximum): \$1.1m annually, \$4.5m total

# CREATE Program



# Emerging Areas of Research

- Investigators and projects conducting highly innovative research, not grouped in a focused area
- Too few investigators to form a focused area of research
  - May collaborate with focus area at another COIN
- Findings may be too novel and early to be implemented or have other short-term impact
- Expect COINs to nurture these researchers working outside the focused areas of research
  - May be more important part of impact of larger COINs

# Other Elements of the COIN

- Engaged partners
- Mentoring and Career Development
- Cross-Medical-Center Investigator Collaboration
- Service to Partners
- Implementation Capacity

Goal: Increase impact of HSRD research on VHA while preserving the strengths of current HSRD researchers:

- innovative, investigator initiated research
- advancing fundamental research concepts/methods
- growing next generation of researchers

# Reviewer Responsibilities

- Read *Reviewer Guidance for COIN Applications* and the *Guidelines for Scoring of HSR&D COIN Proposals*
- Examine the critique template to be used for documenting your evaluation.
- Read your assigned COIN applications (up to 3). It is suggested that you begin with the Executive Summary found in appendix 1 of the proposal
- Complete a template for each of your assigned reviews and submit it and your preliminary score to the eRA Commons Internet Assisted Review (IAR) website for the meeting.
- Read the Executive Summary (and more, as time allows) for each of the other proposals.

# Critique Template Highlights

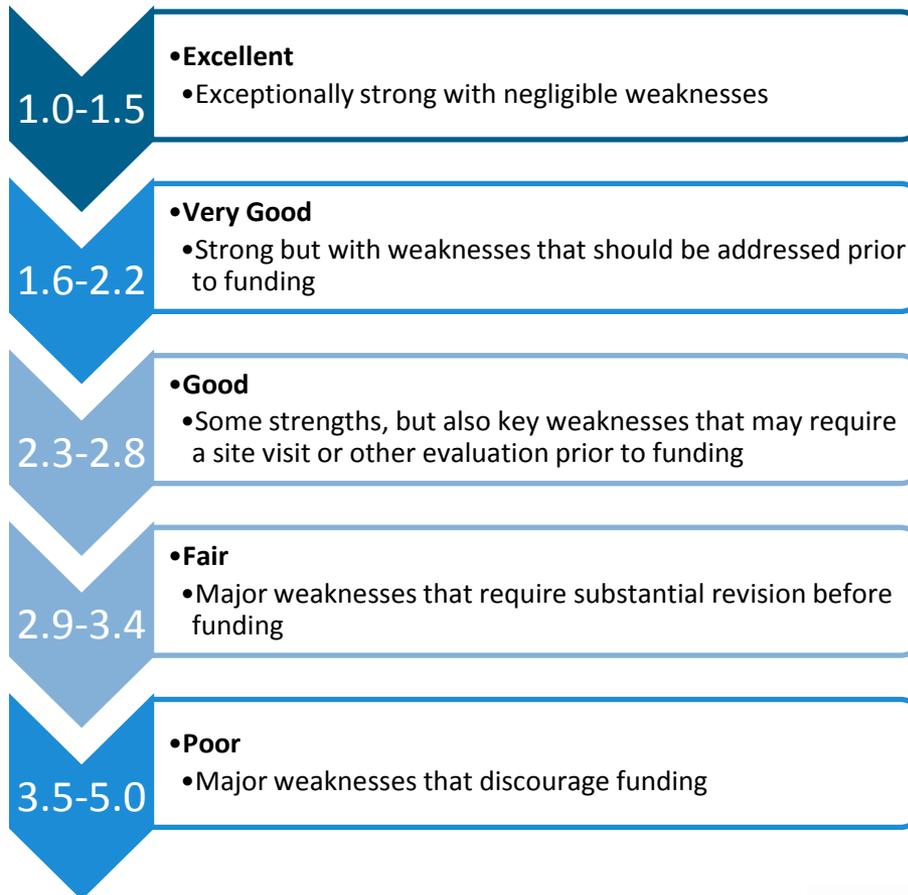
- Summary Page
- Reviewer Critique and Criterion Scores
- Overall Impression
- Key Strengths and Weaknesses

# Key Review Criteria

- Strategic Plan for Focused Area(s) for Research
- Contributions in Research Areas Outside of Focus Areas
- Mentoring and Career Development
- Collaboration and Service
- Research Capacity, Infrastructure and Leadership

# Scoring Guide

Do comments support the score?



# What reviewers may want to consider in their summaries?

- Does strategic plan give coherent picture of value to HSRD, VHA, Veterans and health services research?
- Does this COIN have the capacity to advance a research area and/or accelerate improvements in the quality of VHA care?
  - Critical mass of talent? Track record of successful funding and high impact research? Necessary partnerships?
- Is a strong plan proposed for the organization of the COIN, including the leadership and management structure?
  - Proven leadership; adequate institutional support from facility or Network; affiliate relationships?
- What would HSRD and VA lose if this COIN is not funded?

# Clarity in Presentation of Critiques

- Try to clarify whether criticisms reflect concern with:
  - the value of the proposed research program
  - their ability to execute their research plan
  - operations/management /leadership
- Be as explicit as possible about the strengths and limitations

# Questions?

Thank you, again!!