Important Information Regarding HSR&D Merit Review Deadlines – Winter and Summer

Intent to Submit Deadline
HSR&D requires that Intent to Submit (ITS) information be provided for any application that is going to be submitted for the June (Summer) or December (Winter) Merit Review verification deadlines. Intent to Submit (ITS) information, including the proposal abstract, must be submitted electronically by close of business (8:00 pm Eastern Time) **on May 1 (for Summer) and November 1 (for Winter)** using the form at HSR&D's ART Website (http://art.puget-sound.med.va.gov/). [*NOTE: the ART Website is a VA Intranet Website and is only accessible via the VA network.*] Proposals which have not completed the ITS will not be reviewed.

Submission of Applications
Applications not submitted in accordance with HSR&D's RFAs will be administratively withdrawn and will not be reviewed. All text attachments must be submitted as Portable Document Format (PDF) files, with the required files names, and must conform to the format requirements outlined in the SF424 (Section 2.6).

All proposals should be proofread carefully prior to submission. In addition, the electronic image of submitted proposals (eApplication in eRA Commons) must be reviewed during the two business day examination period to ensure that there are no transmission or format errors.

E-applications which do not meet format and content requirements will be administratively withdrawn and not reviewed. It is the PI's responsibility to check that each page is correct and that all elements of the proposal have been correctly included. After an application has been submitted, PLEASE CHECK the e-application for problems with font size, margins, characters per inch and lines per inch. An extremely large left and/or bottom margin may be a signal that there is a problem. When in doubt, print out a page of the Research Plan and MANUALLY check by measuring the line spacing (max of 6 lines/vertical inch) and font point size (max of 15 characters/horizontal inch). eRA does not generate an error message for this format problem. However, such errors WILL cause the proposal to be administratively withdrawn.

Early Submission Strongly Advised
The first day to submit a Merit Review application to Grants.gov is **May 15 (Summer) or November 15 (Winter)**.

The verification deadline for applications submitted in the eRA system is June 15/December 15 (unless this date falls on a weekend or Federal holiday and then it would be the next business day). In order to meet the verification deadline and have time to correct any problems, applications should be submitted and accepted in Grants.gov on or before 6:00 p.m. five (5) business days prior to the verification deadline. A proposal that is submitted prior to this date will go through the verification process, and if any errors or warnings are identified, there will be time for the PD/PI and AOR/SO to revise and resubmit the proposal. In addition, submitting early will allow time, during the two business day examination period, for the PD/PI and AOR/SO to carefully review the electronic image of the proposal (eApplication in eRA Commons) and correct any format, content or transmission errors. If you are absolutely sure that a proposal will not have errors or warnings, the last possible date for submission in Grants.gov is on or before 6:00 p.m. three (3) business days prior to the verification deadline.

NOTE: Waiting to submit on the Last Possible Submission deadline is extremely risky because you CAN NOT use the two business day examination period and resubmit a changed/corrected application. New or changed/corrected applications submitted after the Down to the Wire Submission deadline will NOT meet the eRA verification deadline.

NOTE: Late applications will not be reviewed.

Tips to Ensure a Successful Submission
1) Applicants and applicant organizations should confirm that all of the required registrations with the various federal organizations (NIH's eRA Commons, Grants.gov, DUNS, etc) are complete, active and that the applicant's eRA Commons profile is up to date. For more information about registrations, visit the [Get Registered](#) page.

2) Guidance documents for electronic submission are posted on the ORD Intranet at http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/electronic-submission.cfm. Instructions in both the specific RFA and the SF424 VA Application Guide must be carefully read and followed. Specific instructions contained in the RFA supersede any general instructions contained in the SF424 VA Application Guide. If there is a discrepancy between instructions in the VA SF424 and a RFA, the RFA always takes precedence.

3) In order to access, work on, complete and submit the SF424 (R&R) applications, Adobe Reader (version 8.1.1 or later) is required; version 9.1 or higher is strongly recommended. The use of earlier versions of Adobe Reader may permanently corrupt the application file. If this occurs, you will need to download a new application package and start over. Please be sure that you can open and read the application package in Adobe Reader before you try to submit to Grants.gov. Information on using Adobe Acrobat (Standard or Professional) with applications submitted to Grants.gov is available at: http://www.grants.gov/assets/UsingAcrobatPro.pdf.

4) Project titles in eRA must match the title as submitted for the ITS. A project title is limited to 200 characters, including spaces and punctuation. If a title change is needed between the ITS submission and final application submission in eRA, you must contact HSR&D (vhacoscirev@va.gov) to request a title change.

5) Letters of Support - All memoranda/letters should be scanned and submitted as a single document. Please forward any letters of support directly to the PI or appropriate field staff working on the application in advance of the application submission so that the letter(s) may be included in the Letters of Support attachment as a part of the electronic application. Do not send an original hard copy or email PDF of the letter directly to the Director of HSR&D. If the application is a resubmission, Letters of Support from the original application may be used again if the letters are dated a year or less from the time of the first submission to the resubmission. Letters of Support are saved under the filename: 08b_VA_Letters.pdf.

6) Applications are transferred from Grants.gov to the eRA system. Once an application is sent from Grants.gov to eRA, the three individuals listed on the cover page (box 5, 14 and 19) will receive an e-mail indicating whether the system detected any errors or warnings:
   - **Errors**—you must revise and resubmit your application to Grants.gov by the Last Possible Submission Deadline (3 business days prior to verification deadline); or
   - **Warnings or No Warnings**—if an application is submitted on or before the Down to the Wire Submission Deadline, you will have 2 business days to examine the e-application to ensure it is complete and accurate. If you notice any errors, particularly those listed below, you should "reject" the application and revise and resubmit by the Last Possible Submission Deadline. If no action is taken within this allotted time, the application will pass into Receipt and Referral for CO review. **Do not reject an application on or after the Down to the Wire Submission deadline as a changed/corrected submission submitted after this date will not meet the eRA verification deadline (June 15/December 15). <mark>You must withdraw the previous version before submitting the corrected one.</mark> If duplicate applications are received in eRA by CO, the application submitted FIRST will be accepted and the second application will be administratively withdrawn and not reviewed.**

7) **HSR&D will consider the errors listed below as fatal.** Applications submitted to Grants.gov/eRA with these errors will be administratively withdrawn and will not be reviewed.

- **Missing budget page(s)**. Applications must include a completed budget page for each year of study.
- **Missing budget waiver approval letter**, if the total project budget (for all years) exceeds $1,100,000. Resubmissions should include the letter (or notice) from a prior submission of the same proposal in which a budget waiver was granted.
- **Missing off-site waiver approval letter,** if off-site research is proposed.
- **Missing documents** required for submission. If this is a resubmission, the application must include the "Introduction to Revised Application". If this is a Pilot Project, the application must include either an IRB waiver letter from the HSR&D Director, or ensure that the Director's Letter contains a statement that a protocol or exemption request has been submitted to the IRB.
- **Missing or unsigned Director's letter** of support.
- **Exceeding specified page limits** in the Research Plan or as noted in attachments.
- **Failure to meet specified content or formatting requirements** for Text (PDF) attachments in e-application. Research plans should be carefully checked for formatting and PDF conversion errors.

If you have any questions regarding the HSR&D Merit Review process, please do not hesitate to contact Scientific Merit Review Program staff at vhacoscirev@va.gov.

All questions concerning electronic submission (Grants.gov/eRA) should be directed to the eRA mailbox in Outlook at rd-era@va.gov.

Table 3. Deadline, Review and Award Dates Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D)		
SUBMISSION CYCLES:	**WINTER 2017** (2017/05 Council)	**SUMMER 2016** (2016/10 Council)
Intent to Submit Window*	**October 15 to November 1** **8:00 pm Eastern time**	**April 15 to May 1** **8:00 pm Eastern time**
Waiver for Offsite Research, Waiver for Exceeding Budget Cap, IPA Waiver, and IRB Refusal of Prior Review Letter*	**November 15**	**May 15**
First day to submit Merit Review Award applications to Grants.gov*	**November 15**	**May 15**
Down to the Wire Submission Deadline to Grants.gov* This deadline allows errors identified by Grants.gov, eRA, or the PI/SO during the two business day examination period to be corrected. All changed/corrected applications must be submitted by this date. **NOTE:** After this date the 2 business day correction window cannot be used to identify errors and resubmit a corrected/changed application as this application would miss the eRA verification deadline.	**December 8**	**June 8**
Last Possible Submission Date to Grants.gov* Errors identified CANNOT be corrected at this time. WARNING: If you submit an application on this date to Grants.gov and there are errors identified by Grants.gov or eRA, you CANNOT fix the errors, resubmit, and have the application meet the eRA submission and verification deadlines. If your proposal is accepted by eRA (with no errors) on this date, do not withdraw the application during the two business day examination window as you will not be able to resubmit and meet the verification deadline.	**December 10**	**June 10**
Verification Deadline in eRA ‡ * Once verified, an application is considered final and no other version will be accepted for review.	**December 15**	**June 15**
Review and Award Cycles:		
Scientific Merit Review	March	August
Administrative Review	April-May	October-November
Earliest Project Start Date Note: VA-ORD R&D Services may not always be able to honor the requested start date of an application; therefore, applicants should make no commitments or obligations until confirmation of the start date by the awarding service.	July	January

*If the deadline falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the due date is the next business day.
‡ Verification occurs two (2) business days after receipt of an application with no errors or only warnings.