

Important Information Regarding HSR&D Merit Review Deadlines Cycle I (Winter) and Cycle III (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 15 (Cycle III-Summer) or December 15 (Cycle I-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](#). The website will be available starting April 1 or October 1 depending on the review cycle. Proposals which have not completed the ITS will not be reviewed.

Submission of Proposals for the June 15 (Summer) or December 15 (Winter) Merit Review Verification Deadline

HSR&D will post Request for Applications (RFAs) for the June 15/December 15 verification deadlines. The [RFAs](#) can be accessed at <http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm> after April 1 or October 1 depending on the review cycle.

Please note that the **Pilot Project Program has been suspended** until further notice. Due to pending changes in HSR&D programs and infrastructure support, a revised pilot program will be developed to complement these new initiatives.

It is extremely important that the current version of the forms and instructions be used to prepare Merit Review applications. Applications not submitted in accordance with HSR&D's RFAs will be administratively withdrawn and will not be reviewed. For resubmissions, please note that there may be changes/clarifications in the RFA and SF424 VA Application Guide instructions from the last merit review cycle. All text attachments must be submitted as Portable Document Format (PDF) files, with the required files names, and must conform to the formatting 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 after submission to Grants.gov to ensure that there are no transmission errors. PIs are responsible for printing out and reviewing the electronic image of the e-application during the two-day window in order to check the submission for format, transmission or content errors.

E-applications which do not meet formatting and content requirements or are incomplete will be administratively withdrawn and not reviewed. No exceptions will be made. It is the responsibility of the PI to check that each and every page is correct and that all elements of the proposal have been included. After an application has been submitted, PLEASE CHECK the e-application for problems with font type, font size, margins, characters per inch and lines per inch. We advise that PIs print out a page of the Research Plan AFTER it has been submitted during the two business day examination window and MANUALLY check for these types of errors as eRA does not generate an error message for them. However, such errors WILL cause the proposal to be withdrawn administratively.

Early Submission Strongly Advised

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

The verification deadline for applications submitted for Merit Review in the eRA system is June 15/December 15. 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. on June 8/December 8. A proposal that is submitted prior to June 8/December 8 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 prior to June 8/December 8 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. on June 10/December 10. **NOTE: Waiting to submit on June 10/December 10 is extremely risky because there will be no opportunity to correct transmission problems that are identified during the two business day examination period.**

HSR&D will begin its administrative review of applications that are accepted by eRA (with or without warnings) beginning June 10/December 10.

NOTE: Late applications will not be reviewed.

Tips to Ensure a Successful Submission

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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>.
- 3) Include only the attachments that are needed. VA-ORD requires all text attachments to the SF424 (R&R) application forms to be submitted as Portable Document Format (PDF) files. The inclusion of blank attachments will cause problems.
- 4) Budgets—the R&R Budget component includes three separate data entry screens: (1) Sections A and B; (2) Sections C through E; and (3) Sections F through K. All required fields (highlighted in yellow, outlined in red, and marked with an asterisk) must be completed before the “Next Period” button is activated. To navigate between the various screens, use the “Previous” and “Next” buttons at the top of the form. If you submit a proposal with completed budget pages for only one period (year 1), eRA Commons will not view it as an error.
- 5) Once an application is sent from Grants.gov to eRA, the three individuals listed on the cover page will receive an e-mail indicating whether the system detected:

- **Errors**—you must revise and resubmit your application to Grants.gov by June 10; or
- **Warnings or No Warnings**—you 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 June 10/December 10. If no action is taken within this allotted time, the application will pass into Receipt and Referral for CO review. Do not reject the amended/corrected version of the application after June 10/December 10 as your submission will be late. **Duplicate applications will be administratively withdrawn and will not be reviewed.**

6) **HSR&D will consider the errors listed below as fatal.** Applications that enter into Receipt and Referral after June 15/December 15 with these errors will be administratively withdrawn and will not be reviewed.

- Missing budget page(s) and Summary Budget Table. Applications must include a completed budget page for each year of study and a summary of the entire project’s expenditures using the summary budget table.
- Missing budget waiver, if project exceeds \$350,000 in any one year or the total project budget exceeds \$1,100,000.
- Missing documents required for submission. If this is a resubmission, the application must include the “Introduction to Application”.
- Missing or unsigned Director’s letter of support.
- Missing completed Electronic Submission Checklist.
- Exceeding specified page limits in the Research Plan or attachments.
- Failure to meet specified formatting requirements for Text (PDF) attachments in e-application. Research Plans should be carefully checked in the e-application for formatting or PDF conversion errors.
- Duplicate applications.

If you have any questions regarding the Merit Review process, please contact Kristy Benton-Grover, Program Manager, at 202/443-5728 or kristy.benton-grover@va.gov.

Table 4. Deadline, Review and Award Dates Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D)		
SUBMISSION CYCLES:	CYCLE I (WINTER)	CYCLE III (SUMMER)
Waiver for Offsite Research	October 15	April 15
Intent to Submit*	November 1 8:00 pm Eastern	May 1 8:00 pm Eastern
Waiver for Exceeding Budget Cap	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/revised applications must be submitted by December 10/June 10. NOTE: After this date the 2 business day correction window cannot be used.	December 8	June 8
Last Possible Submission Date to Grants.gov Assumes that no errors (Grants.gov or eRA) will be identified or need to be corrected. WARNING: If you submit an application on June 10/ December 10 to Grants.gov and there are errors identified by Grants.gov or eRA there will not be time to fix the errors, resubmit, and have the application received and verified by eRA. <u>You will miss the submission and verification deadlines.</u> If your proposal is accepted by eRA (with no errors), do not withdraw the application during the two business day examination window as <u>you will miss the verification deadline.</u>	December 10 6:00 pm Local Time	June 10 6:00 pm Local Time
Verification Deadline in eRA[^]	December 15	June 15
Review and Award Cycles:	CYCLE I (Winter)	CYCLE III (Summer)
Scientific Merit Review	March	August- September
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 date falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the deadline date is the next business day.

[^] Verification occurs two (2) business days after receipt of an application with no errors or only warnings.