

Veteran Semi-structured Interview Questions
Veteran Engagement in VA Research

The Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) Center (CIVIC) at VA Portland Health Care System (VAPORHCS) has initiated a Veteran Engagement Group (VEG) improve the relevance of our research. We are conducting this study to understand more about the experience of Veteran members of this group, members of the seed committee that preceded this group, investigators who have consulted the VEG and other Veterans involved in VAPORHCS HSR&D Research. We will use the information you provide during today's interview to inform and aid VA research centers in their introduction and expansion of Veteran engagement efforts in research. We may also use this information to publish about our experience with Veteran research engagement. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded for accuracy. As explained during informed consent, all responses are confidential and you can pass on any question you prefer not to answer. Your name will not be linked to this interview; once I start recording I will only refer to you by a study ID number. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to end the interview at any time. Do you have any questions before we get started?

Thank you for your time.

[START AUDIO RECORDER]

This is _____[NAME OF INTERVIEWER]_____, Today's date is ___[DATE]____. I am with participant ___[STUDY ID#]_____.

Are you aware you are being audio-recorded?

(Following confirmation of verbal consent of awareness that interview is being recorded)

1). Experience

A. Before becoming a member of the CIVIC VEG, what kinds of participation did you have in VA research? How did you know about research or find out about past opportunities to participate in research?

Do you have any other experience(s) with research generally, not at the VA? Tell me about that.
Would you recommend the opportunity to participate in research to a friend or family member?
What would you say to someone to encourage their participation?

B. What were your questions, concerns or reservations when you were approached about participating in the VEG—either about your role or the VEG itself?

Are there other concerns that you might not have personally, but that you think could apply to other Veterans? Tell me about these.

** Why did you finally decide to participate as a VEG member?

**C. How do you see VA research as being connected to improved VA health care? You may or may not see this connection, but in either case, tell me your thoughts.

If you have experienced something in your VA health care that you attribute to research? Please describe.

**D. How has your participation in the CIVIC VEG impacted your connection to, or use of the VA? How do you think Veteran engagement, or patient engagement more generally, impacts health care?

2) Veteran perspectives on the details ('nuts & bolts') of VEG participation

There is a lot of decision-making that goes into developing a group like the CIVIC VEG and we are interested in your thoughts on some of the specific choices that have been made, and also on how these choices are decided. In putting together a toolkit, we want to provide as much information as possible that might be helpful to users.

- A. Tell us your thoughts about the best methods for recruiting members to a VEG. The least effective methods.
- B. What about how choices are best made regarding VEG membership? Diversity and inclusion of participants who are representative of all Veterans is something that researchers think about. Since we cannot include everyone, what are your thoughts about who should be included?
- C. **What groups do you see yourself representing through your participation in research?
- D. I'd like you to think about how choices are made regarding the rules of VEG participation?
 - a. Give me your thoughts on things like: bylaws, term limits, etc.
 - b. What types of trainings would be beneficial for VEG members?
 - c. How should we balance investigators thoughts about the rules of participation versus having VEG members make the rules?
 - d. What types of processes for becoming a VEG member seemed, in retrospect, unimportant?
 - e. What are your thoughts about payment for VEG members?
- E. **What is the most rewarding aspect of participating as a VEG member?
- F. **What is the most frustrating or more difficult aspect of the VEG process? As you experienced frustration, what was done to improve the process? How can we make the process easier or less frustrating in the future?
- G. Now let's talk about how to sustain VEG members.
 - a. Why have you continued your participation?
 - b. What will keep you going over the long term as a VEG member? What are the barriers to participating over the long term? How long is "long term" to you?
- H. **How do you think you had the greatest impact on the research studies presented?
- I. Tell us your thoughts about the overall time commitment involved in VEG participation.
- J. If a Veteran from another HSR&D Center was interested in participating in a VEG, what would you advise him/her to consider before making a commitment as a member?
How should the person prepare?
- K. Based on your experience with the VEG how would you describe your participation and experience of working with VA research to a friend or family member?
- L. Tell me about any other ideas you have for how Veterans could be included or engaged in VA research. (Alternately: What else could we be doing?)

3) Wrap up

Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you were hoping to discuss? Anything you haven't had a chance to say that is on your mind?

If there is nothing else, thank you again for your time and thoughtful ideas. [STOP RECORDER]