

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Research and Development**

Health Services Research and Development Service

Instructions for Submitting a Career Development Letter of Intent

*For the Career Development policy Handbook, refer to the Resources section of the following web page: <http://www.research.va.gov/funding/CDP.cfm>. For access to the electronic versions of VA Forms required for this LOI, please refer to: <http://www.research.va.gov/funding/process/forms.cfm> **NOTE: HSR&D is only accepting nominations for CDA-2 and CDEAs, with no plans for issuing RFAs for CDA-1 or CDTA proposals in the foreseeable future.***

- 1. A Letter of Intent (LOI) is required prior to submitting an application to the VA Career Development Award (CDA) program.** The purpose of the LOI is to determine whether a nominee meets eligibility criteria and to plan for the expertise needed to review the application. The LOI should provide a summary of how a nominee's background and interests will be integrated into a VA research career.

- 2. Minimum Eligibility Criteria for CDA-2 Awards.** CDA-2 awards have become increasingly competitive, and candidates may only submit two proposal revisions. LOI Disapprovals typically mean a nomination is premature and that additional evidence of prior training in basic HSR&D methods and approaches and/or scholarly productivity in terms of published manuscripts is needed to make the nominee's first CDA proposal submission as competitive as possible. A nominee should be able to demonstrate the following minimum criteria:
 - a) Clinician within five years of last clinical training or two years of a research fellowship; non-clinician within five years of doctoral degree or justification presented with the LOI for a waiver of this requirement.
 - b) Three publications in scientific journals demonstrating HSR&D potential in the topic area, including two as first-author.
 - c) Evidence of prior training that has provided the nominee with a sufficient foundation of knowledge and skills to meet objectives proposed and give reviewers an indication of whether the training plan will lead to achievable research and career goals including the ability to submit an HSR&D merit review project as principal investigator in the third year of the proposed CDA timeline.
 - d) Evidence of early integration into the VA research environment through work with VA investigators, understanding VA research in area of interest, and importance/relevance of aims to Veterans.

- 3. Preparation.** A CDA LOI consists of the VHA Research & Development Letter Of Intent Cover Page (VA Form 10-1313-13) plus information described below. Please use single-spaced text, Arial 11-point font, and 1-inch margins at each edge of the page.

VA Form 10-1313-13 should be completed as follows:

- a) Box 1.** Select the box for the HSR&D research service.
- b) Box 2.** Select "New," if the LOI is being submitted for the first time; "Revised," if the LOI was disapproved in a previous round and changes have been made; or "Resubmission," if the previous LOI approval has expired.

- c) **Box 3.** Check the box for “CDA Level” and specify CDA-2 or CDEA. (Refer to the Handbook for description of levels.) **NOTE: HSR&D is only accepting nominations for CDA-2 and CDEA (established independent investigators only), with no plans for issuing RFAs for CDA-1 or CDTA proposals in the foreseeable future.**
 - d) **Box 4.** Enter the project title (limit to a total of 81 characters, including spaces).
 - e) **Box 5.** Enter the nominee’s VA contact information in the fields presented. For nominees who are not current VA employees, enter the contact information for the local VA research office. Be sure to indicate whether the nominee is a clinician or non-clinician and whether they are a U.S. citizen in the appropriate check box. **NOTE: HSR&D can only support the CDA salaries of U.S. Citizens.**
 - f) **Box 6.** Complete all of the fields for the Associate Chief of Staff or Coordinator for R&D.
4. **Following Form 10-1313-13, attach the items described below.** (Limit one page)
- a) **Budget and Study Duration.** In a statement, answer the following questions pertaining to requested funds and duration.
 - (1) Will salary support be requested?
 - (2) Is research support requested? If yes, include an estimate of the number of years and amount per year.
 - (3) Indicate the percent effort planned on this award.
 - b) **In a statement, include the following information pertaining to the nominee’s training and research experience:**
 - (1) Number of years since completion of clinical training.
 - (2) Number of years of research training, including; include HSR&D relevant formal and informal training.
 - (3) Number of years of research experience, including specific responsibilities and mentor-guided training.
 - (4) Description of fellowship experiences should include scholarly productivity and both formal and informal structured training.
 - c) **Description of the nominee’s and mentor(s)’ qualifications.** Include the name of a primary mentor and up to three additional formal mentors and a description of each mentor’s prior/current working relationship with the nominee and qualifications relevant to the proposed work. *Note: CDEA nominees should briefly describe the facilities and resources to be provided.*
5. **Brief description of the proposed study or research plan that succinctly addresses each of the following.** (Limit to two pages.)
- a) **Scientific basis (rationale)** for the proposed research and its relationship to other major research findings.
 - b) **Significance of the research,** emphasizing its particular importance to Veterans or how it represents a unique opportunity within the VA health care system.

- c) **Program Objectives.** Describe the nominee's research and training goals, and how this experience will lead to an independent research career by the end of the award. CDEA (sabbatical) proposals by established HSR&D investigators should describe the specific skills to be acquired or research activities to be pursued, and how they will enhance the nominee's career and contribute to local VA research.
 - d) **Project Design and Methods.** Briefly define and describe the research question/s, rationale and approach appropriate to the requested level, including the subject population to be used in the proposed research and estimated sample size, the model(s) of choice for the study (i.e., human, animal, cell culture, etc.) or conceptual framework, and the study design and methods. CDEA nominees should describe the nature of the work to be performed during the sabbatical, and the facilities and resources to be used.
 - e) **Description of Intervention(s)/Treatment(s).**
 - f) **Statement of Disclosure.** A 1-2 sentence statement from the nominee indicating that no financial or contractual relationship exists between any individual and/or organization involved in the proposed award that could constitute a real or apparent conflict of interest (including the nominee, all mentors, investigators, and collaborators who plan to devote 5 percent or more effort to the nominee's research and mentoring). If such a relationship or contract does exist, full disclosure must be provided.
 - g) **Acknowledgment of the VA policy to include women and minorities in research** (if applicable).
 - h) **References.** Up to five reference citations relevant to the proposed study may be attached on a separate page.
6. **Appointment Eligibility Documentation.** A separate letter from the local VA Human Resource Management (HRM) office indicating that the nominee is eligible for the respective appointment and can be hired by the VA medical center. Indicate if the nominee is currently employed by the VAMC. *Note: CDEA nominees must include documentation of specific educational leave, up to one year, to be provided by the medical center. The CDEA provides half of total salary and benefits during this period.*
7. **Biographical Sketch format for nominee and each mentor.** Nominee and mentor(s) should highlight only their most recent publications, presentations, and activities relevant to the proposal. The bio-sketch template can be downloaded from the VA Intranet at <http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/electronic-submission.cfm>. **Nominees are strongly advised not to include in their publication section proceedings, abstracts, posters, or manuscripts that are under review or do not have a documented publication date.**
8. **Waiver Request.** Should a facility see justification for nominating any candidate who does not meet one or more of the criteria for an award or whose proposed research may require an exception to the conditions stipulated in the Career Development Handbook, a separate letter from the ACOS/R&D requesting exception to a specific handbook stipulation(s) must be included. Exceptions must be well justified and approved at the LOI stage.

The deadline for LOI submission to Health Services R&D is April 15 and October 15.

Note: If the 15th falls on a weekend or holiday, submission is due the next business day. Early submission of LOIs is encouraged. (Deadline dates and contacts are summarized in the chart below.)

SERVICE	LOI SUBMISSION DEADLINES	LOI SUBMISSION ADDRESS	CONTACT
Health Services R&D	April 15 October 15	robert.small@va.gov	Robert Small (124D) robert.small@va.gov (202) 461-1515

Only electronic submissions will be accepted--no paper copies. Electronic submissions must be e-mailed to the appropriate service as a PDF file. The file should be named using the following format: Principal Investigator's Last Name_First Initial_Station Number_First Key Word in Title.