

Health Services Scientific Merit Winter 2021 Request for Applications

Naomi Tomoyasu, PhD, HSR&D Deputy Director

Cathie Plouzek, PhD, HSR&D Scientific Program Manager

Alexandra Neuhaus-Follini, PhD and Stephanie Guerra, PhD,
AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellows

October 5, 2020

11:00 am-12:00 pm ET





Poll Question

Have you ever applied or contributed to an application for HSR&D funding?

- a) Yes**
- b) No**



Poll Question

What is your role in VA?

- a) Investigator**
- b) Coordinator, Project Manager, Analyst**
- c) ACOS, AO, or other research leadership**
- d) Operations leadership/staff**
- e) Other**



HSR&D Research Priorities

HSR&D Research Priorities at a Glance

*ORD Clinical Priorities

Suicide Prevention*	Substance Use Disorders Including opioid misuse and stimulant use disorders, and pain management
Access to Care	Long-term Care and Aging
Mental Health including PTSD*	Health Care Informatics and EHR Modernization (Cerner Migration) including measurement/information science
Women's Health	Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health
Health Care Value	Quality and Safety of Health Care
Primary Care Practice and Complex Chronic Disease Management	Population Health and Whole Health
Disabilities including spinal cord injury (SCI) and traumatic brain Injury (TBI) focused on health systems issues	Virtual Care/Telehealth

Cross-cutting HSR Methods

Implementation Science

- Complexity Science/Health Systems Engineering
- Data/Measurement Science

Legislative Priorities

- MISSION Act
- Comprehensive Addiction & Recovery Act
- CARES Act (Long term COVID-19 impact; deferred care)
- Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act

ORD-wide Research Priorities

Expand Veterans' access to high quality clinical trials

Increase substantial real-world impact of VA research

Putting VA data to work for Veterans

Actively promote equity & inclusion within our sphere of influence

Optimize VA research enterprise



What is New?

New RFAs:

- 1. Opioids Safety and Opioid Use Disorder**
- 2. Social Determinants of Health (Expanded)**
- 3. Innovation Initiative Program-Phase II RFA**

Updated Priorities



Update on Cerner

Due to unforeseen impacts caused by the coronavirus pandemic, on **Aug. 6, 2020**, VA revised the deployment schedule for implementation of its new electronic health record (EHR) system. The **revised timeline** preserves the department's 10-year plan to roll out the EHR nationwide by 2028. <https://vaww.ehrm.va.gov/resources/deployment-schedule/>

The new VA-wide EHR system and associated Cerner systems will **GO Live** in the **Pacific Northwest (VISN 20) late 2020 and in 2021**, however, the rollout schedule is being adjusted to allow smaller, lower complexity sites to go live with the initial capability set. **In designing your studies, please beware that the transition has potential implications for data availability.**



Update on Cerner

If you have questions about potential impact of the Cerner implementation on your research plans, please email the **ORD EHRM workgroup** ResearchEHRM@va.gov.

Resource links, current updates, and FAQs can be found on the EHRM and Research page of the Research Resource Guide (RRG). Regarding **EHRM-related research methods**, please contact **VA Coordinating Hub to Promote Research Optimizing Veteran-Centric EHR Networks (PROVEN)** at PROVENHub@va.gov.

For administrative purposes, your proposal should discuss possible ways you could mitigate the effects of any data disruption. Note: this section will not be factored into scoring during scientific review.



HSR&D Request for Applications

1. **HSR&D Merit Review Award (Parent)**
 - Budget cap \$1.2M and duration of 4 years
2. **HSR&D Merit Review Award Pilot Project**
 - Budget cap \$200,000 and duration 18 months
3. **HSR&D Targeted Suicide Prevention**
 - Budget cap \$1.2M and duration of 4 years
4. **HSR&D Social Determinants of Health-UPDATED**
 - Merit and Pilot options
5. **Opioids Safety and Opioid Use Disorder-NEW**
 - Merit and Pilot options
6. **Innovation Initiative Program-Phase II RFA-NEW**
 - Available only for Phase I awards
7. **HSR&D Career Development Award**
 - Research Plan has 14-page limit
8. **HSR&D HBCU Research Scientist Training Program Award (IK2)**
 - Follows CDA-2 application format

Not Offered this Cycle

Implementation RFA
COVID-19 Rapid Response
Randomized Program Evaluation RFA
Innovation Phase I RFA



Eligibility

- **MD, PhD, or equivalent doctoral degree in a medical, biological, or behavioral science field**
- **VA paid appointment of at least 25 hours per week (5/8ths)**
- **All VA medical centers with an active research program are eligible.**
- **Each VA medical center must be registered as an applicant organization in Grants.gov and eRA Commons before any proposals can be submitted.**

Waivers

Eligibility Waiver see: Program Guide 1200.15

Off Site Waiver see: Program Guide 1200.16

**Waiver for Offsite Research, Waiver for Exceeding Duration or Budget Cap, and IPA Waiver
Deadline November 15, 2020**

Copy of the waiver approval letter from HSR&D must be included in the “Letters of Support” section of application. Missing letters are considered fatal.



Intent to Submit (ITS)

HSR&D requires Intent to Submit (ITS) notification through HSR&D's ART website.

<http://art.puget-sound.med.va.gov/IntentSubmitIntro.cfm>

The ITS window:

October 21, 2020 to November 4, 2020

Applications submitted to Grants.gov without a completed ITS will not be accepted or reviewed.

Mentored awards (CDA & HBCU) must have an approved Letter of Intent (LOI) or an LOI that is under review to submit an ITS. LOIs are emailed to robert.small@va.gov.

ITS are used to determine panels, so an abstract that describes the project will assist in the assignment. Please include all the sites and personnel in the ITS.

Please note: QUERI application ITS window is **October 1st to November 16th**



Abstract Format

Project Summary/Abstract is **REQUIRED** following format listed in the RFA.

Background:

Significance/Impact:

Innovation:

Specific Aims:

Methodology:

Implementation/Next Steps:



Notable Sections in RFA

Patient Experience and Veteran Engagement

HSRD position:

- Most of our research would benefit from ensuring we had considered the patients perspective – on clinical care, health outcomes, implementation, and research.
- Encourage efforts to obtain Veteran input into health outcomes, interventions, study recruitment, and design. Options for obtaining input include prior research, focus groups, Veteran engagement panels.

Clinical Trial Recruitment

- A large proportion of HSRD trials fail to meet recruitment goals.
- Trials will need to more explicitly justify data used to estimate recruitment -- e.g., pilot data, prior studies, etc. -- and comment on mitigation strategies in recruitment lags.
- We want to see the PLAN B for recruiting.



Notable Sections in RFA

Implementation and Dissemination Plan

- Context: “The tree falling in the woods phenomenon” -- If an HSRD-derived intervention doesn’t get implemented, does it make any noise?
- Dissemination in manuscripts and to partners is insufficient.
- **Proposals will need to explicitly discuss what the next steps are after project is completed. What is the path to making a difference in VA care?**
- **Need to consider who “owns” the problem the study is attempting to solve; what are the potential barriers to implementation, and how to overcome them. Who will be the partner to implement the project?**
- **Studies of interventions should consider how they can collect information relevant to implementation during the efficacy/effectiveness study (e.g., use of hybrid designs).**
- **Need to compress cycle of understanding problem, testing interventions, scaling solutions.**



Parent Merit Review Award

Parent: \$1,200,000 (max) for 4 years

- **HSR&D has identified priority areas that should be considered in developing research proposals. For details on updated HSR&D research priorities, please visit**

<https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/funding/PriorityDomains2019.pdf>



Pilot Project Award

PILOT: \$200,000 (max) and up to 18 months

Pilot Goals and Next Steps should be very clear.

- Strengthen the evidence for larger studies.
- Preliminary data for full-scale proposals,
- Establish feasibility of objectives/methods (e.g., recruitment; implementation feasible within existing infrastructure).
- Explore novel approaches through a small-scale study.
- Pilots *can* be used for an innovative study not designed to lead to IIR.

Methods should align with goals, be appropriate for pilot work

Only one resubmission allowed.



Targeted Suicide Prevention

RFA: \$1,200,000 (max) for 4 years

Focus on observational studies, effectiveness studies, implementation studies (including hybrid studies), or population-based and community-level studies that address the prevention of suicide or treatment of suicidality among Veterans.

Emphasis on Veteran groups that are at high risk for suicidality and other risky behaviors.

- Veterans in **transition** from military to Veteran status,
- Veterans who have **already** made a **suicide attempt**,
- Veterans experiencing **financial difficulties**,
- Veterans who are struggling with **chronic pain**,
- **Women Veterans, Older Veterans, Homeless Veterans, OEF/OIF/OND Veterans**
- Veterans with **access to lethal means** (e.g. firearms, illicit drugs, engagement in related risky behaviors such as driving under the influence, alcohol or opioid abuse, etc.),
- Veterans at **risk** who are not receiving VHA care, and
- Veterans with a less than **dishonorable discharge**.



Social Determinants of Health

Major Changes:

- **Expanded Focus Includes Racial/Ethnic Equity**
 - o Areas of emphasis include interventions to reduce disparities and under-studied populations of racial/ethnic minority Veterans
- **Equity Evaluation Plan**
 - o Required for all proposals planning to test interventions or evaluate existing programs
 - o Goal is to guard against unintended consequences (introduction of new or exacerbation of existing disparities)
- **Guidance Regarding Community-Based Participatory Research**
 - o Studies may propose local strategies to address unmet social needs
 - o Implementation/Dissemination Plans must discuss generalizability



Social Determinants of Health

Two Funding Mechanisms:

- **Merit Review Awards**

- o Up to 4 years
- o Budget may not exceed \$1.2 million

- **Pilot Projects**

- o Up to 18 months
- o Budget may not exceed \$200,000
- o Generate data to establish feasibility of an IIR
- o Establish a new partnership with an outside organization
- o Answer a question of high value to a clinical or operations partner



Opioid Safety and Opioid Use Disorder

Produce evidence that will prove useful to development and evaluation of new and existing evidence-based practices for various Veteran populations

Overarching Themes:

- Study of opioids safety and Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) management for **older Veterans**
- Development and deployment of more effective strategies for **reducing racial and ethnic disparities** in the treatment and management of pain and OUD
- Examination and development of interventions and models of care that can be **scaled within the VA**
- Effects of the **COVID-19 pandemic** on pain and OUD care



Opioid Safety and Opioid Use Disorder

Priorities:

- Improve **implementation of evidence-based medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD)** by examining barriers and facilitators of MOUD in the VA setting
- Identification and development of appropriate and successful strategies for **opioid tapering**
- Examination of the **potential role of buprenorphine/naloxone** in managing pain in patients with a history of OUD
- Studies of **behavioral health and exercise/movement** interventions for chronic pain, and for patients with OUD
- Development of more effective approaches to **monitor patient outcomes** for guiding treatment



Opioid Safety and Opioid Use Disorder

Opioids Merit Applications

- Up to 4 years
- Budget may not exceed \$1.2 million

Opioids Pilot Applications

- Up to 18 months
- Budget may not exceed \$200,000

Goal:

1. Generate data to establish feasibility of an IIR
2. Establish a new partnership with an outside organization
3. Answer a question of high value to a clinical or operations partner

Link to CyberSeminar:

https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/archives/video_archive.cfm?SessionID=3860&Seriesid=60



Career Development Award Mentored Research

The narrative page limit is 14 pages.

Letter of Intent – Deadline October 15, 2020: reviewed for acceptance

ITS required (ART) Window: October 21 to November 4, 2020

<https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/cdp/default.cfm>

- **5 years of Salary Support**
- **Supplement support funds \$40,000/year for Years 1-3 at COINs and \$50,000/year at facilities not affiliated with COINs**
- **Candidate's training, experience and research accomplishments**
- **Career Plan**
- **Mentoring Plan**



HBCU Research Scientist Training Program Award Mentored Research

Letter of Intent – Deadline October 15, 2020: reviewed for acceptance

ITS required (ART) Window: October 21 to November 4, 2020

<https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/cdp/default.cfm>

- **VA primary mentor and HBCU co-mentor required**
- **Nominee must have attended an HBCU or have a faculty appointment at an HBCU**
- **5 years of Salary Support**
- **Supplement support funds \$65,000/year Years 1-3**
- **Follows CDA-2 application format**
- **Candidate's training, experience and research accomplishments**
- **Career Plan**
- **Mentoring Plan**



Calendar

Date

October 15, 2020

October 21, 2020

November 4, 2020

November 15, 2020

November 15, 2020

December 8, 2020

December 10, 2020

December 15, 2020

March 2021

Event

CDA Letter of Intent due

ITS Opens and CDA ITS deadline

ITS Closes

Waiver deadline

Grants.gov opens

Down to the Wire Submission

Last Submission Date Grants.gov

Verification Deadline

Scientific Merit Review



COVID-19

ORD COVID-19 SharePoint site:

<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vacovhacom/admin/projects/covid19>

Please direct questions:

ORDCOVI19@va.gov



QUERI RFAs

QUERI RFA CyberSeminar October 8, 2020

11:00 am ET

Registration link:

<https://veteransaffairsevents.webex.com/veteransaffairsevents/onstage/g.php?MTID=e66ccfd9a8836bbf5b2d91fe4f69b2304>



Questions



vhacoscirev@va.gov

Social Determinants of Health RFA:

Alexandra.Neuhaus-Follini@va.gov

Opioids Safety and Opioid Use Disorder RFA:

VAHSRDOpioidsRFA@va.gov

HSR&D RFAs:

<http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm>

**Thank you for your attendance.
Please stay safe.
We hope to review your
application soon!**

