

DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS AFFAIRS

# Memorandum

Date: **OCT 16 2020**

From: Executive Director, VHA National Center for Patient Safety (17PS)

Subj: Request for Application for Designation as Patient Safety Center of Inquiry

To: Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) Director (10N1-23)  
Associate Chief of Staff for Research (14RD)

1. The Request for Application for the Fiscal Year 2022-2024 Patient Safety Center of Inquiry (PSCI) is attached. Additional details regarding the PSCIs and submission instructions can be found in the solicitation document.

2. Questions may be addressed to the VHA National Center for Patient Safety by email, [NCPS@va.gov](mailto:NCPS@va.gov) or phone 734-930-5980.



William Gunnar

Attachment

October 16, 2020

**VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR PATIENT SAFETY**

**FY 22-24 PATIENT SAFETY CENTERS OF INQUIRY PROJECT PROPOSAL  
REQUEST FOR APPLICATION**

- 1) **PURPOSE:** To solicit Requests for Application (RFA) for selection as a Patient Safety Center of Inquiry (PSCI) for the three-year period Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 through 2024. Two PSCIs will be selected by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) National Center for Patient Safety (NCPS) and each funded at an annual cost of up to \$500,000. PSCI funding is contingent on continued availability of specific purpose Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) funding and annual satisfactory completion of goals and milestones as outlined in the project proposal and approved by the Executive Director, NCPS.
  
- 2) **BACKGROUND:** In 1999, the PSCIs were established by then Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) Togo D. West Jr. Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, VA Under Secretary for Health at the time, stated the purpose for the PSCIs as follows, “Our approach with these Patient Safety Centers of Inquiry is based on principles of continuous learning and quality improvement that has proven highly effective in other industries. We view these centers as learning laboratories that will facilitate cross-industry knowledge and technology transfer.” Over the past 20 years, the PSCIs have collaborated with NCPS to significantly contributed to patient safety science. Notably, the PSCIs have advanced VHA safe patient care and treatment through teamwork and simulation training, usability testing and human factors design, Breakthrough Series Collaboratives to reduce patient falls and adverse drug events, improving electronic communication and alerts, improving patient safety during moderate sedation, improving home safety for high-risk patients as well as using human factors principles to reduce hospital acquired infections and improve the sterilization of reusable medical equipment, environmental factors supportive services to prevent suicide, patient safety measurement, diagnosis and treatment of delirium, and interventions to reduce catheter associated urinary tract infections. In the past 5 years, PSCIs have published over 250 peer reviewed publications.
  
- 3) **PROPOSAL EXPECTATIONS:**
  - a) **Goals and Objectives:** Proposals for PSCIs should aim to evaluate and translate patient safety research findings into standard practices that are implemented and disseminated to improve patient safety across the entire VHA system. Funded PSCIs will be able to work with NCPS staff to develop promising pilot tests and other projects to determine how to best translate facility-level corrective actions into practices that could be applied successfully elsewhere in the VHA to improve patient safety.

- b) **Each PSCI is expected to:**
  - i) Develop, implement, and demonstrate interventions in multiple VHA facilities to promote practices that improve patient safety by reducing adverse events or that replace or improve practices known to be associated with patient safety problems.
  - ii) Document that changed practices and/or systems reduce the likelihood of adverse events in multiple VHA facilities.
  - iii) Document the methods employed to foster changing practices and systems so that other VHA facilities can implement similar or identical changes to improve patient safety.
  - iv) Develop, test, refine, and facilitate active distribution of tools and products specifically designed to promote patient safety, such as clinical tools; cognitive aids; educational materials; measures of patient safety, policy reports; VHA information letters, handbooks, and/or directives; and others. Tools and other output should be evaluated for effectiveness and impact.
  
- c) **Areas for Focus:** The PSCI RFA should address a high priority area of focus with a high likelihood of addressing patient safety concerns. The following areas of focus have been identified based on VHA priorities and NCPS evaluation of adverse event data:
  - i) Handoffs in Care with Community Care (MISSION Act)
  - ii) Delays in Care, both internal to VHA and in association with Community Care (MISSION Act)
  - iii) Patient Safety and the Electronic Health Record
  - iv) Suicide Prevention
  - v) Patient Safety Culture and the VHA High Reliability Organization Journey to Zero Harm
  - vi) Inpatient Medication Errors

#### 4) **REQUIREMENTS:**

- a) **General Requirements:** Leadership and responsibilities for operational success should be clearly located at one site; however, PSCIs should plan to spread innovations to other facilities within VHA. Proposals may originate from any VHA facility but must be coordinated and approved by appropriate facility and network leadership.
  
- b) **Proposal Requirements:**
  - i) **Administrative Content.** Proposals must contain the following information in numbered order and are to be no more than 20 pages in length, excluding a two-page executive summary, transmittal letter, and appendices. Applications should be typed on standard-sized (8 1/2 by 11 inch) white paper, single-spaced, with a font size no smaller than twelve characters per inch. Applications should include:
    - (1) Executive Summary of overall proposal and implementation plans (maximum two pages).

- (2) Patient safety topic(s) to be emphasized and rationale for their selection.
- (3) Specific PSCI goals and objectives.
- (4) Plans and schedules for attaining, evaluating, and documenting the achievement of the PSCI's goals and objectives.
- (5) Proposed administrative infrastructure, including key leadership and core staff roles and pertinent qualifications. The PSCI is expected to have a Director who will allocate at least 40% effort to running the center.
- (6) Description of any proposed collaborative relationship, e.g., with academic affiliate or other organization that has a demonstrated record of successful activity in technical or programmatic areas fundamental to patient safety, or key offices in VACO that can help to track and disseminate your findings and products.
- (7) Any proposed advisory mechanisms, their composition, functions, and operational activities.
- (8) Discussion of applicants' (site and key personnel) experience and evidence of success in applying patient safety innovations or other achievements in improving the quality or safety of patient care. It is especially important to list experience developing and implementing patient safety programs.
- (9) Summary of specific milestones for organizational progress and accomplishments, beginning with the selection of the PSCI (anticipated no later than April 30, 2021) and ending with the close of the proposed funding period. (Include Gantt chart for clarity of anticipated accomplishments).
- (10) Personnel and budget. PSCIs will be funded under the 0152 Medical Support and Compliance (MS&C) appropriation, the 0160 Medical Services appropriation, or a combination of the two. Requested funding must be broken down by appropriation, purpose, and FY quarterly apportionment for each year as follows:

APPROPRIATION	PURPOSE	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
0152 MS&C	Salaries					
0152 MS&C	Contracts					
0152 NS&C	All Other					
0160 Med Services	Salaries					
0162 Med Services	Contracts					
0160 Med Services	All Other					
TOTAL						

c) **Restrictions:**

- i) PSCI funds cannot be used for travel. No travel obligations may be made at the local level from any PSCI funds that originate from NCPS. Travel will need to be funded by the host medical center from medical center funds.
- ii) PSCI funds cannot be used for IT equipment, software, or IT services.

NOTE: It is strongly recommended that the servicing fiscal office be consulted to ensure correct appropriation allocation. Once initial funding commitments are made, it is unlikely that a change in the appropriation can be made.

d) **Appendices should include only:**

- i) Biographical sketches of key personnel. The Principle Investigator must have at least 5/8 appointment in VA.
- ii) Letters of support (e.g., from important participants and/or consultants if applicable). Letters of support from elected officials should not be solicited or submitted.
- iii) Related publications by key personnel proposed.

5) **SIGNATURES.** Each proposal should include cover transmittal letter approved and signed by the appropriate facility Director. The transmittal letter must certify that the Principle Investigator is at least 5/8 VA employee. Evidence of coordination among involved parties is also required.

6) **DUE DATE.** Proposals must be received no later than January 31, 2021.

- a) Proposal Submission. An electronic copy of each application is to be submitted to [ncps@va.gov](mailto:ncps@va.gov) by January 31, 2021, with the subject line "Patient Safety Centers of Inquiry RFA".

7) **PRIOR TO PROPOSAL SUBMISSION.** Not later than December 1, 2020, applicants should submit a one-page letter of intent summarizing the basic technical emphasis of their application, principle investigators and collaborators, and VHA and university affiliations (see Email address noted below). This letter will be used only to organize the proposal review process and need not be signed by a facility Director. Submitting this letter does not commit a prospective applicant to submit a proposal.

8) **PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS:** NCPS will review all proposals. After the review period, a statement summarizing the review of each proposal will be provided to all applicants. Review criteria will emphasize the following; the percentage of weight for each is provided in parentheses:

- a) Technical merit of the goals, objectives, plan, and relevance to NCPS priorities for PSCIs, as described above in Paragraph 4 of this

solicitation. Authors should be sure to demonstrate current knowledge of the state of scientific and technical knowledge in their selected topic through citation of relevant research findings. (40%)

- b) Feasibility of implementation of the proposed work of the PSCI throughout VHA facilities. This factor may include an assessment of the prior work, productivity, and qualifications of the proposed key personnel. (30%)
- c) Administrative management plan. This will consider the appropriateness of proposed administrative infrastructure; organizational and advisory support; and the plans and schedule for attaining, evaluating, and documenting the achievement of the PSCI's goals and objectives. (10%)
- d) Value to the VHA as part of a PSCI portfolio, as defined by (a), (b), and (c) above and the proposed annual and/or total cost of the proposed PSCI. (20%)

Please send questions to [ncps@va.gov](mailto:ncps@va.gov).