The VHA Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) in the Office of Research and Development (ORD) is requesting information from other Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) program or VISN offices that are interested in a new form of partnership with research. HSR&D is seeking to fund “researchers in residence” to spend time in clinical program and VISN offices to help with analysis and bring research knowledge to policy and program planning. Program or operations offices will benefit from advance analytic expertise and access to a network of research knowledge, as well as additional support towards VISN Leadership Plan goals regarding innovation and best practices spread. HSR&D researchers will benefit by increasing their understanding of important policy and operations questions and the operational data available to answer them.

Interested program office “hosts” should identify the policy or clinical issue for which they are seeking help – for example, analyzing impact of a policy change; developing evidence-based policy responses to an emerging clinical problem; exploring factors associated with variation in clinical performance, etc. The timing and details of the arrangement are negotiable but hosts should describe what arrangement would be optimal in terms of timing, duration, percentage effort, and need for the person to be on site vs. virtual. Funding for personnel salary, travel, and lodging during the program would come from the Office of Research and Development. Funding commitment could support 100% effort for 3 months or 25% effort over a year. HSR&D funding will be a maximum of $35,000 per residency. Duration and support will be based on the success of the relationship and continued need of the program office or VISN office.

Background: VA is undergoing substantial transformations in how it provides care, in response to recent legislation to expand options for Veterans to seek care outside VA, VA’s evolution towards a Community Health Care Network, and efforts to improve care timeliness and efficiency through modernization efforts. To achieve VA priority goals, processes should be informed by rigorous research and evaluation in best practices and policies related to greater choice for Veterans, improvements in timeliness, modernization, and efficiency of care, and suicide prevention. With these priorities, the rapid launching of new initiatives and the need to determine their effectiveness, impact, and ultimately sustainability, VA program offices or VISN offices may find themselves constrained in what they are able to achieve analytically given limited staffing. Therefore, HSR&D is offering VA program and VISN offices the option to leverage its researchers, who are already embedded in the VA system. With expertise in research methods and analyses, HSR&D investigators are primed to partner with program leaders to acquire additional knowledge of the system’s current challenges, with the goals of helping to better inform future VA programs and policies, and ultimately the care of Veterans.
Please submit your office’s proposal for an HSR&D researcher in residence posting via this web form link by no later than January 17th. In the form include a brief background of the expected program or policy to benefit from additional analytical support. The identified initiative should be linked to a VA national priority and if applicable, a VISN performance plan goal. Special consideration will be given to new VA priorities. Outline objectives to be achieved during the “researcher in residence” program that can be accomplished within one year. The host should also describe what qualifications, as well as arrangements would be optimal to achieve outlined objectives - to include personnel qualifications, duration of assignment, and the amount of in-person time in the office needed to establish relationships (e.g., 3 continuous months in DC, one year with up to one week per month in DC).

Residents may work virtually; however, hosting offices are expected to be able to provide a desk and computer when resident is working at the host office. The host must also provide data access for the researcher in residence.

To help us monitor the success of the program and identify ways to improve it, the hosting offices will be required to complete a brief mid-year assessment and a brief final report which should include any products arising from this program.

Priority will be given to host offices that do not already have a major linkage to VA HSR&D, Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) researchers or access to HSR&D Data Resource Centers.

Request for assistance summaries will be reviewed administratively based on the following criteria:

1. National VA leadership support of new initiative, policy, or clinical practice (or augmentation of an existing initiative) and alignment with VA national priority and if applicable, a VISN performance plan goal
2. Level of Program Office’s or VISN office’s existing partnerships with VA research (e.g., less priority for offices with existing HSR&D/QUERI evaluation centers and programs)
3. Degree to which proposed objective(s) is achievable given VA leadership timeline and need
4. Ability of host office to provide basic administrative support to researcher in residence (e.g., data access as well as desk, computer access when onsite)
5. Potential for residency to advance program of research (e.g., ability to work with new or existing data sets, participate in policy development, partner with operations analysts).
6. Potential impact on Veteran care, within and/or outside VA