Solicitation for Letters of Intent (LOI) for Telehealth/Virtual Health Consortiums of Research (CORE)

Purpose: HSRD is soliciting Letters of Intent (LOIs) from HSRD Centers of Innovations (COINs) and non-COIN affiliated investigators to fund multi-year **COnsortium of REsearch (COREs)** in Telehealth/Virtual Health.

The goal of the Telehealth/Virtual Health CORE is to accelerate research that will enhance the **accessibility**, **capacity**, and **quality** of VA health care for Veterans, their families, and their caregivers anywhere in the country by taking advantage of emergent telehealth and virtual health technologies deployed by VHA program offices. The CORE will support this goal by:

1) developing a prioritized set of research goals informed by the Secretary of VA's priorities, requirements of the Mission Act, strategic visions of the Office of Connected Care and other VHA program offices, and gaps identified by existing research and;
2) developing a collaborative network of researchers in collaboration with program offices, Veterans, and other stake-holders to develop and conduct research to achieve these goals (see below for additional details on expectations of COREs).

Letter of Intent required for CORE application: HSR&D requests 3-page Letters of Intent (LOI) from COINs and non-COIN affiliated investigators that have expressed an interest in leading a research consortium addressing key issues on Telehealth/Virtual Health including, but not limited to:

1. Build evidence on which emergent virtual care modalities (including mobile apps, VA Video Connect, VA Health Chat, and text messaging) would work well for specific use cases and which subgroups; build evidence on how different modalities influence patients' and caregivers' experiences with VHA care
2. Develop a set of standardized outcomes to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Virtual Care model in pilot sites and nationwide, with a focus on virtual care into the home and non-VA sites of care (e.g. Advancing Telehealth through Local Access Stations, or ATLAS)
3. Determine how to effectively implement and integrate virtual care technologies (including VA loaned tablets, mobile apps and/or patient generated data, VA Video Connect, VA Health Chat, and text messaging) into routine clinical operations across all service lines, guided by patient/provider experience and clinical outcomes, including harms of telehealth
4. Examine how virtual modalities can augment clinical care supported in the Clinical Contact Center space, including development of an algorithm to optimize workflow, clinical applications, and patient experience
5. Develop the evidence for the use of virtual modalities in the setting of a disaster or emergency
6. Test different implementation strategies to increase the uptake of virtual care by providers and patients

7. Determine how to effectively train healthcare providers and clinical teams and Veterans on the use and integration of virtual care technologies in patient care
8. Build knowledge about costs and value of integrating/incorporating virtual care technologies in patients care

LOIs will be reviewed administratively by HSR&D. Competitive applicants, based on expertise and experience with the relevant partners, will be required to submit **a 10-page application** outlining the strategic plan and timeline, including the area of focus, sub-themes, key research questions, and annual and quarterly benchmarks that would drive their proposed work, partnerships/organizational structure, and at least **ONE impact goal** at the end of the 5-year funding period.

Who Can Apply: Any HSR&D investigators who are eligible to submit research applications can apply. The eligibility of this solicitation is not limited to COIN-based HSRD investigators. HSRD expects current teams that have been leading and working in the above areas to continue to work together and expand their research goals to be comprehensive in the particular area of research, policy and program. HSR&D requires applicants for this solicitation to reach out to other investigators working in Telehealth/Virtual Health area, whether at a COIN or not and to include them in the CORE application as they are willing to collaborate.

Letter of Intent Due Date: All letters of intent from interested teams must be received by the deadline of October 10, 2019. Collaborating PIs should submit only one LOI.

Elements of Letter of Intent: The 3-page LOI should outline the following elements:
- **Leadership plan** (one page approximately): including a paragraph on the qualifications of each PI and history of past collaborations and experience leading prior collaborative efforts. This should indicate a single corresponding PI and no more than 2 additional PIs.
- **Major Themes and broad research questions (**one page): organization and brief description of up to 3 theme areas, including the PI leads as well as illustrative research questions that will be addressed by each thematic group of investigators. A description of additional potential collaborators including relevant QUERI programs, and VHA program offices including past record of working with these partners and areas of alignment with program offices and initiatives.
- **Organizational Structure** (one page, approximately): organization and tentative staffing (up to one page)– including proposed staffing, and their responsibilities, activities, grade, level of effort, and location.
- **No letters of support are to be included in the LOI stage.**

Letters of Intent will be reviewed administratively. Competitive LOIs will be invited to submit a full 10-page application that describes a more detailed <u>multi-year plan</u> to accomplish the goals of the CORE and achieve at a minimum one 5-year impact goal.

Send Letter of Intent to the mailbox: vhacoordcoin@va.gov (cc: **miho.tanaka@va.gov**)

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Additional Information for full CORE proposals

Activities of the CORE: Funded by HSR&D, the aims of the CORE and plan will be developed by the applicants, but the following activities are expected to be part of the overall process.

A. **Conduct review of current/recent HSRD portfolio:**
- Work with contractor to direct review of past/current HSR&D research portfolio in Telehealth/Virtual Health and refine gaps in existing research for HSRD to focus on priority research areas and avoid overlap among funded research studies;
- Review recent ESP products relevant to Telehealth/Virtual Health; with HSR&D, identify possible topics for new ESP reviews;
- Review current and potential new data systems and sources for research, including operational and research-collected data;
- With QUERI, identify practices being implemented in Telehealth/Virtual Health.

B. **Coordinate with VHA Partners to Identify Data Resources, Data Needs, and Potential Research Priorities**
- Coordinate and facilitate communication and collaborations with the Office of Connected Care, Office of Rural Health, VA Innovation Center, and other key VHA program offices for HSR&D to enhance real-world impact of funded research studies in VHA operations.
- Coordinate and facilitate communication across the investigators and operations partners to identify resources and data systems to support research in Telehealth/Virtual Health.
- With partners, review current state of practice and policy to identify priority questions that can be addressed by research and Identify funding mechanisms for addressing them. Additional funding for expert meetings will be available from HSRD.
- Consider and promulgate recommendations for common data elements and outcomes measures in Telehealth/Virtual Health.
- Provide feedback on existing research roadmaps created by HSR&D and other ORD services.
- Identify at least one meaningful and impactful clinical or policy goal in the priority area and/or sub-areas and develop a plan for achieving that goal within the 5-year CORE funding period.

C. **Facilitate development and execution of research to address priority goals**
- Develop network of interested researchers and other stakeholders to facilitate collaborative projects across COINS and with researchers not affiliated with COINs on Telehealth/Virtual Health.
- Identify important new areas of research and cross-cutting issues related to Telehealth/Virtual Health.
- Work with partners to secure funding for rapid pilots and evaluate those pilots in Telehealth/Virtual Health.
- Identify opportunities for randomized program evaluations of new initiatives in Telehealth/Virtual Health.
- Identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration with outside partners if necessary.
- Identify research-developed evidence ready for implementation by QUERI.

D. **Develop annual report of new developments, progress, and research impacts in priority area**
- Work with SPMs to maintain and ongoing inventory of funded research in the priority area, findings, and publications in Telehealth/Virtual Health.
- Report progress regularly to HSR&D and work with CIDER on dissemination of key messages.
- Facilitate publication and dissemination of consortia products.
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CORE Structure: COREs are meant to support inclusive, cross-sites collaborative research activities that also engage researchers who are not at current COINs. A CORE will have a single, corresponding PI but may be organized around up to three independent theme areas, each with their own PI (one of whom should be the corresponding PI). Funding and in-kind resources will support cross-site coordination, portfolio reviews, planning and communication, agenda setting meetings,, and data analysis.

CORE Funding: Once an LOI has been approved each CORE team will receive research funds of up to $500,000 per year for 2 years; an internal review at the end of year 2 will be conducted to determine continuation of funding for years 3 to 5 will be available. The annual funding in that period will depend on the proposed research budget and planned activities, but will not be less than $250,000 per year.

Additional Resources for the COREs: HSR&D has contracted with Prometheus Federal Services LLC (subcontract with Atlas Research) to conduct an initial portfolio review of our funded projects in Telehealth/Virtual Health, which will contribute to the analyses that COREs will be required to do in examining the current state of research in Telehealth/Virtual Health. In addition, HSR&D SPMs will also be available to facilitate information-sharing with other federal partners and VHA

stakeholders and provide feedback on ORD research roadmap or other long-term plans if appropriate.

Tentative Timelines for subsequent activities (to be revised as needed):

- HSRD Review CORE LOIs (by HSRD):   Mid- October 2019
- HSRD comments on LOI released (tentative):   Late October 2019
- HSRD Release RFA for CORE Proposal (tentative):   Late October 2019
- CORE full proposals due from teams (tentative):   Late November 2019
- Review and funding decisions (tentative):   Early December 2019