NOMINATING A TOPIC FOR THE VA EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS PROGRAM

Would an independent and rigorous review of the scientific literature help your office plan or implement a program, develop a guideline or directive, make a health policy decision, or inform future research needs? The Evidence Synthesis Program (ESP) is soliciting nominations from VHA leadership for review topics for FY 2027. The ESP offers a range of evidence synthesis products to meet the needs of decision-makers. Because of high demand and limited resources, review topics are prioritized based on the following criteria:

- Topic nominated by system-level leadership: the proposed evidence review will be incorporated into health system decision-making and is likely to make a significant impact (eg, clinical guidelines, VHA Directive, formulary guidance, resource allocation, or research agenda development).
- Significant issue for VHA: Nomination addresses a high-priority national goal with a clear plan for a rapid uptake of the evidence synthesis findings (into the development of clinical guidelines, VHA Directives, performance measures, educational programs, coverage policies, or other strategies for improving the quality of health care services).
- Not duplicative: The topic is not already covered by a recent or soon-to-be-available high-quality systematic review.
- Feasible: Published literature (*eg*, RCTs, observational studies, systematic reviews) is available to address proposed research questions(s).
- Engaged Operational Partner: Nominator of the proposed review has been responsive and engaged during the topic development phase and has provided timely input regarding the proposed scope and is willing to assess the impact of the proposed ESP review.

Completed nomination forms should be submitted by email to ESP.CoordinatingCenter@va.gov.

Once received, the ESP Coordinating Center (ESP CC) will contact you to schedule a meeting to learn more about your request. We will then work with you to determine the feasibility of a review on your proposed topic, refine the scope of the proposed review, craft a set of preliminary key questions, and develop a briefing document. If approved, your nomination will be assigned to one of our ESP Centers.

Nomination Deadline	Notification of Selection	Project Start Date
FY 2027		
February 1, 2027	May 17, 2027	June 1, 2027
FY 2028		
June 1, 2027	October 15, 2027	November 1, 2027
October 1, 2027	February 16, 2028	March 1, 2028

As an operational partner (OP) of an assigned review, you will be involved in the ESP review process in the following way:

1. Recommend Technical Expert Panel (TEP) participants, who will:

- Provide content expertise to the review team through a couple of hour-long conference calls.
- Give input on key questions and eligibility criteria, advising on substantive issues or possibly overlooked areas of research; assure VA relevance; provide feedback on work in progress; and may be invited to review the draft report.

2. Approve final project scope and timeframe for completion

- OPs will be consulted as appropriate throughout review process to insure the report produced is relevant and actionable by VHA.

3. Provide feedback on draft report

- To maintain independence of the review team, OPs do not participate in writing or editing the ESP report, and as such, are not included as authors. However, OPs will be given the opportunity to review the draft report and provide feedback. OPs will be acknowledged in the report by name as the requestor; similarly, TEP members will be acknowledged for their role as a consultant.
- ESP's editorial review process is designed to ensure the accuracy, quality, consistency, and credibility of evidence reports produced for the VHA. In addition to the OP review, the draft report is reviewed by at least 3 external peer reviewers comprised of topic and methodology experts, as well as selected TEP members. The ESP CC manages this peer review process independently from the ESP Center producing the report and works with them to balance, manage, or mitigate any potential nonfinancial conflicts of interest identified.
- All comments received on the draft report are considered by the ESP Center in preparation of the final report. De-identified reviewer comments and their disposition will be included as an appendix in the report. The synthesis of the scientific literature presented in the final document may not necessarily represent the views of OPs and peer reviewers.

4. Assist with disseminating report findings to the field and relevant groups

- Final reports are posted on the ESP website and indexed in PubMed after an embargo period to allow for journal submission by the review team. The report will be available to VHA affiliates via the intranet during the embargo to support decision-making. OPs are not typically involved in manuscript development, but may be invited to participate if their contribution (*eg*, programmatic data) warrants it.
- The ESP Center will be available to present the findings at a venue appropriate to the topic and decision-making needs (*eg*, national webinar/cyberseminars, leadership briefings, program/ committee meetings, or conferences). OPs will be invited to participate in webinars/cyberseminars as discussants, addressing such issues as implementation and policy implications.
- A Management eBrief will be developed to provide VHA management with a concise summary of findings to inform decision-making. OPs will be invited to review the draft and may provide messaging to be included as to the implications the report may have for VHA policy or practice, and identify appropriate dissemination targets.

5. Complete program follow-up questionnaire

- Upon completion of the report, OPs are surveyed on initial decision-making needs, resulting actions of the report's findings, implementation timeframe, and overall perception of report content to support continuous quality improvement and evaluate the impact of our evidence synthesis reports.

Thank you for participating in the program!

TOPIC NOMINATION FORM

Nomination Summary

1. What is the clinical/policy/implementation challenge you are trying to address? (*If applicable, please include any known data on the prevalence of the problem among Veterans*)

2. Select the option that best fits the intended usage of the evidence synthesis. Check all that apply.

- ☐ Performance Measure
- ☐ VHA Guideline or Directive
- ☐ Clinical guidance
- ☐ Identify future research needs
  - ☐ Report will be used to inform a RFA
  - ☐ Report will be used to inform a State of the Art Conference (SOTA): Date of SOTA.
- ☐ Update existing review
- ☐ Evaluate new technology
- ☐ Formulary guidance
- ☐ Training and curriculum development
- ☐ Determine implementation strategy best suited for the VHA
- ☐ Support program development and evaluation activities
- ☐ Support resource allocation decisions
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Please describe any other need for your evidence synthesis.

3. Please describe the specific population(s) of interest.

4. Please identify the intervention(s) of interest.

5. Please identify the comparison condition(s) of interest.

6. Please identify the outcome(s) of interest.

7. Please list any key studies you'd like to make us aware of.

Requestor Information

1. Please indicate the VHA Office, Program, and/or Committee requesting this evidence synthesis, and provide a primary point(s) of contact who will serve as the “operational partner (OP)” for an assigned review. (The role of the OP is described above.)

2. Our reports take from 9 to12 months to complete and are assigned to one of our research centers 3 times per year. Given this, what time frame for report completion best suits your decision-making needs?

- ○ March 2028
- ○ August 2028
- ○ More urgent - earlier than March 2028. (Please provide a justification in the text box below for this urgency. We may be able to provide assistance with an abbreviated product in lieu of a more comprehensive systematic review.)

3. Please provide your name and contact information. If you are making a nomination behalf of an Office or Committee, how do you anticipate being involved going forward?

4. Which of the following roles best describes your position at the VA?

- ○ Academic Researcher charged with leading system-wide health/quality improvement efforts (no VA operations decision-making authority)
- ○ Non-academic Subject Matter Expert (SME) with VA operations decision-making authority, including National Program Offices, Central Office, and Chief Consultants
- ○ Non-academic Health System Manager with VA operations decision-making authority, such as VISN Director or Chief Medical Officer

5. Are you a practicing VA clinician?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

6. How did you hear about the ESP?

If you have any questions about the ESP or need assistance in nominating your topic, please contact:

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