

## 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 2020.** The ESP offers a range of products from rapid review evidence briefs to full systematic reviews, tailored to the needs of decision-makers. Because of high demand, 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:* the topic represents important uncertainty for decision makers (eg, benefits/harms, variation in care, new emerging technology, or controversy) and will help resolve health care dilemmas.
- *Not duplicative:* the topic is not already covered by an available or soon-to-be available high-quality systematic review by AHRQ or others.
- *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.

Nominations addressing high-priority national goals are given preference and will be evaluated on the operational partners' 1) plans for a rapid uptake of the evidence synthesis (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), 2) approach for dissemination of findings, and 3) willingness to assess the impact of the proposed ESP review.

**Nominations are accepted by completing this form. Once completed, please email the form to [esp.cc@va.gov](mailto:esp.cc@va.gov).**

Once received, the ESP Coordinating Center (ESP CC) will contact you to inform you of the status of your request. If your nomination is prioritized for development, we will 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 for review by HSR&D leadership. If approved, your nomination may be assigned to one of our ESP Centers for the next assignment cycle.

| Nomination Deadline | Notification of Selection | Project Start Date |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>FY 2020</b>      |                           |                    |
| May 1, 2019         | October 15, 2019          | November 1, 2019   |
| October 1, 2019     | February 15, 2020         | March 1, 2020      |
| February 1, 2020    | May 15, 2020              | June 1, 2020       |

Reports generally take nine months to complete. If your need is more urgent, please state that in the nomination form. We have limited capacity for rapid review evidence briefs and may accommodate this once we learn more about your needs.

As an operational partner 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, and selected TEP members. The ESP Coordinating Center (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!*

*Text boxes will expand to accommodate your answers.*

**1. Nomination summary: Briefly describe your research needs and include specific questions you would like a review of the published literature to address. Feel free to include relevant background information that you feel would help ESP staff better understand the context of your request.**

**PLEASE SPELL OUT ALL ACRONYMS.**

**2. Please indicate the VHA Office and/or Committee requesting this evidence synthesis. Briefly describe the charge of the Office or Committee.**

**3. How would you anticipate this review informing clinical practice and/or policy decision-making at the health system level?**

*Specifically address the following:*

- *What is the significance of your research question(s) to the VHA? (eg, emerging issue in which the VA has little guidance, large number of Veterans affected, etc)*
- *What are the specific uncertainties that a proposed review will address for the VHA?*
- *Please describe any relevant background information on your topic that may help us better understand the context of your research needs.*

**4. How will the proposed evidence review be incorporated into health system decision-making? What specific decision-making groups will utilize the report? Please elaborate on your plans for implementation of findings.**

**5. Does your research question include a specific population of interest?**

Yes

No

*If yes, describe the population(s) of interest.*

**6. Does your research question include a treatment or intervention?**

Yes

No

*If yes, describe all of the treatment(s) or intervention(s) of interest.*

**7. Does your question include a comparison of different healthcare approaches?**

Yes

No

*If yes, explain the specific technologies, devices, drugs, or interventions you would like to see compared.*

**8. Describe all outcome(s) of interest for your research question.** This will help us identify available published literature likely to address your research questions.

**9. Are you aware of any existing literature that addresses your research question(s)?**

No, I am not aware of any literature that examines my research question(s).

- Yes:
- Systematic reviews
  - Primary research studies
  - Professional guidelines
  - Other (please specify):

In order to develop an initial search strategy, it would be most helpful if you could supply us with key references that address your topic of interest.

**10. What is the timeframe in which the draft report would need to be completed?**

Please include any dates of significance, such as upcoming meetings in which the review findings would be shared. *For requests for rapid timeframes (shorter than 9 months), please provide justification for the urgency (eg, significance of the problem, potential consequences of a delay).*

**Note: most reviews average a 9-month timeframe.**

**11. If you are making a nomination on behalf of an Office or Committee, who should be the primary point(s) of contact going forward?**

**12. Please provide your name and contact information:**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>First name:</b>    |  |
| <b>Last name:</b>     |  |
| <b>Title:</b>         |  |
| <b>VHA Office:</b>    |  |
| <b>Email address:</b> |  |
| <b>Phone number:</b>  |  |

**13. How did you hear about the Evidence-based Synthesis Program (ESP)?**

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

Nicole L. Floyd, MPH, Deputy Director  
Evidence Synthesis Program Coordinating Center  
VA Portland Health Care System  
[nicole.floyd@va.gov](mailto:nicole.floyd@va.gov)  
503-220-8262 x51836

**Click here to submit  
this nomination to  
[esp.cc@va.gov](mailto:esp.cc@va.gov)**