

Memorandum

SEP 3 2004

Date:

To: HSR&D and QuERI Centers

From: Stephan D. Fihn, MD, MPH Acting Chief of Research and Development Officer

CC: Shirley Meehan, MBA, PhD, Acting Director of HSR&D

Subject: Change in solicitation schedule "Academic Experts"

Effective after the August 1, 2004 deadline, the application deadlines and award schedule for the solicitation "**Supplements to Support Collaboration between VA and Academic Experts in Implementation Research**" are changed as indicated below.

Please replace paragraph 10 with the following:

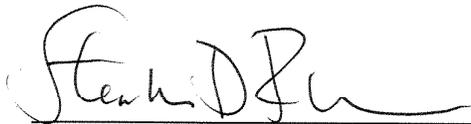
10) **Application Deadlines.** The due dates for applications follow the standard HSR&D IIR proposal review schedule. Current HSR&D proposal due dates are June 15th (reviewed in September) and December 15th (reviewed in March).

Please replace paragraph 11 with the following:

11) **Schedule.** The following award schedule will be followed:

- Applications due June 15th and December 15th.
- Applications will be reviewed and notification will be transmitted according to HSR&D IIR review policy (see VHA Handbook 1204-1 "Post-Review Notification of Review Results").

Approved:



Stephan D. Fihn, MD, MPH
Acting Chief Research and Development Officer

**OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE (HSR&D)**

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT:

Supplements to Support Collaboration between VA and Academic Experts in Implementation Research

- 1) **Purpose.** The Office of Research and Development (ORD) and its Health Services Research & Development Service (HSR&D) are dedicated to evidence- and research-based improvement in the quality, efficiency and outcomes of healthcare service delivery within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). This solicitation invites applications from existing centrally-funded HSR&D Centers for supplemental funding to develop and enhance relationships with non-VA researchers who have expertise in the implementation of evidence-based clinical practice and the study of implementation processes.

The supplements are designed to enhance collaboration of scientific leaders in implementation research and the broad array of related disciplines with VA researchers. Planned activities should strengthen capacity to study and improve implementation methods and processes through such activities as consulting to develop and/or conduct VA research or implementation projects, mentoring/educating, participating in scientific review activities and/or suggesting important new research emphases.

- 2) **Background.** VHA is devoting significant effort and resources to improve health care service quality and outcomes. In support of this effort, ORD has launched a series of initiatives to apply research evidence to VHA healthcare delivery. This solicitation is designed to enhance ORD's capacity to (a) conduct, evaluate and refine quality and outcome improvement efforts through the application of established implementation strategies and (b) to conduct research on implementation. The solicitation will achieve these goals by encouraging collaborations between the VA research community and implementation research experts at local universities and other research organizations.
- 3) **Objectives.** This funding mechanism offers established HSR&D Centers funding for recruitment and support of academic experts to serve as collaborators and mentors for VA investigators (including trainees, junior and senior investigators). Collaborators will provide formal and informal training in implementation methods. Training activities may be local or national (e.g., web courses, workshops, textbooks) in scope.

Funding may be used to support collaborations through mechanisms such as Interagency Personnel Agreements (IPAs) and service contracts.

- 4) **Eligibility.** Applications will only be accepted from currently funded HSR&D Centers ("Centers"), including Centers of Excellence, Resource Centers, QUERI Coordinating Centers, REAPs and TREPs. Participation in this program must not conflict with existing Center responsibilities. Funding from this special program announcement cannot be used to meet the research project requirements to qualify for or maintain REAP or TREP core funding.

The principal investigator (PI) must be a Center Director or Associate Director; or a senior investigator at an existing HSR&D Center and must conform to current eligibility requirements (see VHA Handbook 1200.15 "Eligibility for VA Research Support"). If the applicant is not the Director or Associate Director of the applicant Center, a two-page letter of support from the HSR&D Center Director explaining how the PI will accomplish the administrative challenges of this award, must be included with the application.

- 5) **Budget.** Supplements of up to \$100,000 per established HSR&D Center per year, for up to two years are available under the auspices of this award.

- 6) **Annual Reporting Requirements.** A progress report must be included in the annual Center report and will be reviewed administratively by HSR&D to ensure that performance meets expectations (see section 3 “Objectives”). The progress report must document the salary support, training activities, research undertaken, and value added to the Center’s activities.
- 7) **Renewal of Awards.** Renewal for an additional similar funding period will be contingent upon competitive review and availability of funds. Applications for renewal of supplemental funding will follow the same format and review process as new applications but must include two additional pages devoted to accomplishments. Applications for renewal should be timed to ensure continuity of funding (see section 11 “Schedule”).
- 8) **Evaluation Criteria.** Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria.

a. **Administrative Review Criteria.** Applications are expected to meet the following minimum administrative review criteria to be considered for scientific merit review:

- i. PI is eligible for VA research funding (section 4 above);
- ii. PI is an HSR&D Center Director or Associate Director; or PI is a senior investigator and has submitted a two-page letter of support from his or her Center Director;
- iii. PI oversight is contributed;
- iv. Application is endorsed by ACOS and medical center director.

b. **Scientific Review Criteria.** Scientific merit reviewers will be asked to evaluate applications in terms of the following criteria:

- i. Expertise of proposed collaborator(s): The general health services expertise and specific implementation expertise of the proposed collaborators must be clearly documented. Evidence should be presented demonstrating the collaborator(s)’ potential for building and/or strengthening academic or other interagency partnerships and their ability to build capacity in the area of implementation.
- ii. Plan for using proposed collaborator(s): A clearly specified plan showing how the collaborator(s) will work with Center investigators and other staff should be presented. At a minimum the proposal should identify the VA personnel with whom the collaborator(s) will work, the projects with which they will be involved, the training they will provide and the long-term and short-term goals for the proposed collaboration. Clearly indicate the value added to the existing Center.
- iii. Evaluation Plan: Measurable indicators of success/failure, lessons learned, plans for future improvements related to collaboration in general and specifically as related to implementation. The evaluation plan should be clear and concise and should demonstrate the value added to the Center.
- iv. Funding mechanism: An appropriate mechanism for funding the proposed collaborator(s) (e.g., IPA or service agreement) should be described.

- 9) **Application Instructions.** Applications should include the following (see Appendix A for details on format):

Cover Letter: A one-page letter from the HSR&D Center Director requesting supplemental funding in response to this solicitation.

Forms: Completed and signed forms 10-1313-1 and 10-1313-2

Narrative: The narrative is limited to five pages and should follow the format provided in Appendix A of this document.

Letters of Agreement: Include a detailed letter of agreement of no more than three pages from each academic expert/collaborator. The letter should display a clear understanding of the goals

and mission of ORD's implementation initiative and clearly demonstrate commitment to VHA and to the collaboration endeavor.

10) **Application Deadlines.** Applications will be reviewed quarterly. Due dates are: February 1, May 1, August 1 and November 1, beginning February 1, 2004.

11) **Schedule.** The following award schedule is projected:

- Initial Program Announcement issued November, 2003.
- Applications due August 1, November 1, February 1 and May 1 (beginning February 1, 2004).
- Applications will be reviewed and notification will be transmitted within one month of receipt of application (in March, June, September and November).
- Funding will begin either October 1, January 1, April 1 or July 1.

12) **Mailing Address.** Proposals should be sent by regular mail or overnight courier, via the ACOS for R&D, to:

Caryn Cohen, MS
Health Services Research and Development Service (124-I)
Office of Research and Development Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

13) **Inquiries.** Specific guidance regarding proposal development may be obtained from Caryn Cohen, MS (202-254-0218) or caryn.cohen@hq.med.va.gov.

Nelda P. Wray, MD, MPH
Chief Research and Development Officer

Attachment

Appendix A
INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

1. Format.

- a. **Forms Required.** Use VA Forms 10-1313-1 and 10-1313-2. These forms are available through each VA medical facility's Office of Research and Development (or equivalent).
- b. **Printing, Reproduction, and Assembly.** Use standard 8-1/2" by 11" white paper for pages other than forms. Type material single-spaced. Type must be easy to read (and photocopy). The minimum size for computer-generated print is 11 point (approximately 1/8 inch in height for capital letters). There may be no more than six lines of text per vertical inch and page margins must be a minimum of 1 inch at each edge. The original will serve as the master file copy; it should be single sided and contain original signatures. Copies should be double-sided. Use a blank sheet of paper as a continuation sheet for VA forms if necessary.
- c. **Pagination.** Type the last name of the proposed PI in the lower right portion of each page, followed by the sequential page number.

2. Ordering and Content of Materials.

- a. **Cover letter** from HSR&D Center Director.
- b. **VA Form 10-1313-1** Identify review group as "Implementation Collaboration Supplemental Funding"
- c. **VA Form 10-1313-2**
- d. **Narrative** (5 page limit): Use the following format:
 - i. Expertise of proposed collaborator(s): The general health services expertise and specific implementation expertise of the proposed collaborators must be clearly documented. Evidence should be presented demonstrating the collaborator(s)' potential for building and/or strengthening academic or other interagency partnerships and their ability to build capacity in the area of implementation.
 - ii. Plan for using proposed collaborator(s): A clearly specified plan showing how the collaborator(s) will work with Center investigators and other staff should be presented. At a minimum the proposal should identify the VA personnel with whom the collaborator(s) will work, the projects with which they will be involved, the training they will provide and the long-term and short-term goals for the proposed collaboration. Clearly indicate the value added to the existing Center.
 - iii. Evaluation Plan: Measurable indicators of success/failure, lessons learned, plans for future improvements related to collaboration in general and specifically as related to implementation. The evaluation plan should be clear and concise and should demonstrate the value added to the Center.
 - iv. Funding mechanism: An appropriate mechanism for funding the proposed collaborator(s) (e.g., IPA or service agreement) should be described.
- e. **Letters of Agreement**: Include a detailed letter of agreement of no more than 3 pages from each academic expert/collaborator. The letter should display a clear understanding of the goals and mission of ORD's implementation initiative and clearly demonstrate commitment to VHA and to the collaboration endeavor.
- f. **Supplemental Documents**:
 - i. Collaborator CV(s)
 - ii. If the PI is not an HSR&D Center Director or Associate Director, include the following:
 - Two-page letter of support from the director for the PI.
 - PI's CV

3. Copies. Include the original application (single sided) and 10 copies (double-sided).