



**Health Services Research and Development
Management Consultation Program Announcement**

ORD's Impacts on Physician Recruitment and Retention

1) Overview

VA's intramural research program is designed to play a key role in recruiting and retaining highly skilled physicians. The Office of Research and Development (ORD) seeks a better understanding of how and to what extent the VA research program affects recruitment and retention, and how ORD may enhance its role in these areas. The Management Consultation Program is initiating two studies on this topic. The first will develop a model designed to explain ORD's role in physician recruitment and retention. The second will collect data to validate that model. **This solicitation concerns the first study only.**

Specifically, this study shall have the following aims:

1. Determine the theoretical relationships of VA research on recruitment and retention of physicians.
2. Develop and pilot methods to assess these relationships which will be used in the second study described above.
3. Ensure some or all of the data collection strategy can be periodically repeated to monitor trends and assess impacts of any ORD actions on physician recruitment and retention.

The Management Consultation Program requests applications by June 1, 2004. One investigative team will be awarded up to \$80,000 total, in FY04 and FY05 funds, for the period of July 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004. Interested parties are advised to discuss their ideas with the Management Consultation Program prior to submitting an application.

2) Background

The impact of the VA research program on recruitment and retention has historically been used as a justification for an intramural research program, yet this impact has never been formally documented. The Management Consultation program seeks one investigative team to thoroughly enumerate the potential impacts of VA Research's role in recruitment and retention, and design a methodology to document them. Based on the findings of this study, a subsequent solicitation will be issued to document these influences and provide insight into any actions ORD may undertake to influence recruitment and retention.

The Management Consultation program expects that influences on recruitment and retention will be subtle and complex. They may also vary by physician specialty.

Possible direct effects may include:

- ❑ recruiting physicians by offering research time;
- ❑ using special incentives or opportunities to recruit ‘star’ researchers or physicians;
- ❑ fostering relationships with affiliates;
- ❑ impacting the tenure of physicians within VA by the length or competitiveness of research awards and the career development program;
- ❑ creating demands for research that must be balanced with clinical demands for physicians, facilities, and VISNs;
- ❑ drawing physician-researchers away from their patient care responsibilities to attend to research.

Possible indirect effects may include:

- ❑ recruiting junior physicians (researchers or non-researchers) to come to a medical center specifically to work or train with a senior researcher;
- ❑ offering a special clinical service or very high quality in a service that is only possible due to the researcher-physicians at a Medical Center;
- ❑ impacting the quality of professional life on non-research physicians, in either positive or negative ways (e.g. in a more innovative or stimulating environment; some physicians may shoulder additional responsibilities to allow other physicians to engage in research);
- ❑ facilitating recruiting of physicians and researchers at affiliated institutions with the help of VA appointments.

This study will only consider physicians and their specialties, not other provider types. The primary focus should be on ORD and ORD policies- other agents in the recruitment and retention process (e.g. medical centers and the leadership, networks, affiliated medical schools) should be viewed as customers of ORD, even if they play a more proximal role in physician employment.

3) Review Criteria

ORD seeks an understanding of the role of VA research on recruitment at retention, and a valid data collection methodology that can help inform ORD policy and be repeated over time to monitor trends or impacts of any interventions. The investigative team will have to select and justify one or more data collection methods (e.g. focus groups, administrative record review, site visits, surveys) based on their theoretical discussion and literature review.

Applications will be reviewed based on the quality and applicability of their theoretical discussion, rigor and validity of proposed methods, potential beneficial impact on ORD policy, budgetary efficiency, and experience of the investigator teams. Applicants are encouraged to collaborate across facilities as needed, and to contact the Management Consultation program office prior to application.

4) Eligibility

The Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator (if any) must hold a paid VA appointment of at least 5/8 time.

5) Submission Instructions

- a) Applicants should submit **a literature review and research plan no longer than 7 pages** addressing the study aims listed in section 1.
- b) All submitted materials not on forms must have margins of at least 1 inch on all sides, be single spaced, and use a font at least 15 characters per inch.
- c) Each submission must include a face page and abstract page on forms 1313-1 and 1313-2.
- d) Each submission may include up to two pages of literature citations.
- e) Each submission may include one biographical sketch for each key personnel. Each biographical sketch is limited to 2 pages per person using 1313-5 and 1313-6.
- f) Each submission must include a budget for the design phase of the study, and a separate budget for a human subjects portion of the study (if any). Separate budgets will allow some portion of work to begin immediately while aspects involving human subjects are reviewed by an IRB. **Total funding cannot exceed \$80,000 in FY04 and FY05 funds.** Please submit budgets on VA forms 1313-3 and 1313. Note that this project crosses fiscal years, and each fiscal year should have its own budget pages
- g) No additional attachments will be accepted.
- h) All applications must be received by June 1, 2004.**
- i) Mail the original application, signed by the investigator, and six copies to:
Management Consultation Program
HSR&D/124C
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue
Washington DC 20420
- j) ORD research forms can be downloaded at <http://www1.va.gov/resdev/fr/forms.cfm>

6) Results

HSR&D's Management Consultation Program will convene an ad hoc panel of VA and external consultants. **The application review will be completed and announced by June 15, 2004.**

7) Contact Information

Questions concerning this solicitation may be directed to:

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