

**Graduate Medical Education (GME) Enhancement  
under the Veterans Access, Choice,  
and Accountability Act (VACAA) of 2014 [PL 113-146]**

**Request for Proposal**

**1. PURPOSE**

The Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) announces a Request for Proposals for VACAA resident physician funding. This Request for Proposal (RFP) is intended to supplement base resident physician GME positions. This RFP provides information, policies, and application procedures for sites to submit proposals to request funding to increase resident physician positions.

**2. BACKGROUND**

The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 and its extension in 2016 authorized the Department of Veterans Affairs to expand GME with new and established medical residency program affiliates. This is to be accomplished by increasing the number of GME positions at VA medical facilities by 1,500 over a 10-year period (through 2024). The legislation targets needed specialties and/or geographic areas for the new medical resident positions. These are: mental health, primary care, (including geriatrics), new sites for GME, and those designated as critical need specialties located within health professional shortage areas (as defined by HRSA), having a shortage of physicians, rural locations, or in a program/area where there are significant delays in Veteran access to care.

**3. FOCUS AND SCOPE**

Eligible sites include all VA facilities that currently participate in Graduate Medical Education (GME) wishing to expand their current GME programs or affiliations and VA facilities that do not currently have a GME program but want to get started.

Facilities approved for positions shall have an active affiliation with an accredited sponsoring institution(s) and an appropriate educational infrastructure. The required educational infrastructure must include an accredited residency program and VA GME leaders, to include a Designated Education Officer (DEO) / Associate Chief of Staff for Education (ACOS/E), or equivalent.

Facilities may apply for positions to expand training opportunities in primary care (family medicine, internal medicine, geriatrics), and mental health (psychiatry including subspecialties, and addiction medicine). This proposal may also involve training in new sites of care like CBOCs or domicilliarities. Applications for other critically needed specialties will also be accepted. Data demonstrating the critical need is required for this category and will be compared to the needs of other facilities. There is also a priority for health professional shortage areas defined as rural locations with 50% or higher rurality as reported by the Office of Rural Health, areas having a documented shortage of physicians, or areas with high concentrations of Veterans. Other areas of interest include affiliations with Indian Health Service (IHS) and Tribal locations and partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). GME Enhancement positions should begin their training in AY 2021-2022

(July 2021). Facilities with current temporary positions that receive VACAA approval may begin in AY 2020-2021.

**This round is limited to 150 position awards. Priority will be given:**

- 1. To those facilities requesting primary care or mental health positions;**
- 2. Positions to finish VACAA expansion projects started in previous RFPs. For example, if 2 FTE are needed to finish the expansion of a specific residency program, they should both be requested in this RFP with explanation. OAA will work with facilities to assist with expansion completion;**
- 3. Those in rural locations; and**
- 4. Critical needs requests and will require access documentation to be competitive.**

#### **4. REVIEW PROCESS**

An OAA review team will assess the merits of each application. Reviewers will have expertise and leadership in GME as well as experience in GME oversight.

Applications will be evaluated per the selection criteria that follow.

Facility-specific staffing, access and timeliness of care data that applicants provide will be analyzed by OAA and used to support expansion of positions throughout the VA system in a manner that reflects the workload and resources available to support training activities.

The VA facility must be affiliated with, the sponsoring institution of the training program in the specialties requested in this proposal. If new affiliate relationships are established, a formal affiliation agreement must be executed before rotations begin. [Contact Office of Academic Affiliations (10X1) for assistance.] For both new and existing programs, there must be a Program Letter of Agreement (PLA) in place in addition to the affiliation agreement.

The facility must provide evidence of committed leadership, appropriate clinical and educational activities, and sufficient workload to support a culture of excellence in GME. The site must demonstrate the following, either in place, or with a plan for implementation:

- VISN, facility, and clinical leadership commitment to build and sustain an outstanding learning environment.
- Strong leadership by the VA facility's Designated Education Officer (DEO), ACOS/E or equivalent with appropriate qualifications and experience – or a commitment to recruit such an individual.
- Appropriate clinical activities, workload, and space to support new or expanded training programs.
- A strong partnership between the VA facility and its academic affiliate(s), with committed leadership by the academic program director.
- Administrative infrastructure to support an expanded GME program.
- Evidence of sound strategies for programmatic and learner evaluation as appropriate and required by accrediting body standards.
- Acknowledgement that the facility understands that positions awarded under VACAA must be filled as awarded (cannot be reassigned to other programs, either temporarily or permanently), and that tracking and reporting to OAA on utilization of VACAA positions will be required.
- Interprofessional educational activities (between nursing and physician trainees, for example) are encouraged, but not required.

## 5. SCHEDULE

- **February 4, 2020**
  - OAA sends request for applications to eligible VA facilities and appropriate Central Office officials.
- **February 11, 2020**
  - VACAA Position RFP Informational Teleconference
- **February 18, 2020**
  - VACAA Position RFP Informational Teleconference
- **February 25, 2020**
  - VACAA Position RFP Informational Teleconference
- **March 3, 2020**
  - VACAA Position RFP Informational Teleconference
- **May 8, 2020**
  - **Applications are due in OAA (see instructions below)**
- **May 8 - 29, 2020**
  - OAA reviews applications and makes recommendations for approval of allocations to the Chief Academic Affiliations Officer
- **June 16, 2020**
  - OAA notification to facilities regarding approval or disapproval

### **Post award follow-up and tracking.**

Positions allocated under this RFP will be monitored and local assessments of impact reported. Information about program implementation, recruitment of residents, and impact on VA patient care will be reported per the instructions that will be issued by OAA. These reports will be considered in evaluation of participating sites at the time of future allocation cycle decisions.

NOTE: All VACAA authorized positions (whether occupied or unoccupied) will be reported on the annual Congressionally Mandated Report on VACAA GME, along with facility and affiliate/program name.

## 6. OAA CONTACT PERSONS

### **VACAA:**

Larissa Emory, Management and Program Analyst, at [Larissa.Emory@va.gov](mailto:Larissa.Emory@va.gov), Dr. Anthony Albanese, OAA Director, at [Anthony.Albanese@va.gov](mailto:Anthony.Albanese@va.gov), and Dr. Edward Bope, OAA Associate Director, at [Edward.Bope@va.gov](mailto:Edward.Bope@va.gov).

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

### A. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Font and margin sizes:**

Font size must be 11-point or larger, with 12-point preferred for narrative portions. Margins must be at least one inch all around (excluding headers and footers).

**2. Online submission:**

Submit **each required element** of the application **in an electronic version** by clicking on <http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/> and going to the “AY 2021-2022 VACAA RFP” data entry section. The “AY 2021-2022 VACAA RFP” database will be open for applications beginning **February 4, 2020**. Applications may be changed or modified up to the closing date for applications. Only authorized individuals from the DEO’s office may upload files into the application database. Deadline for submission is **May 8, 2020**. Incomplete applications (i.e., those lacking in one or more elements) will not be considered by the review panel.

**3. General:**

Please see Application Submission Checklist found on page 8 of this RFP for submission items. Word or pdf file formats may be used. Letters must include a signature (i.e., they must be a scanned copy of an originally signed document).

### B. FACILITY APPLICATION PACKAGE INSTRUCTIONS

Each facility may apply for positions under any of the VACAA initiatives (Primary Care, Mental Health and Critical Access Needs). **Regardless of the number of initiatives under which a facility is applying, only one set of institution-level support letters needs to be submitted.** The following information must be submitted in the appropriate location within the GME Enhancement Application database online submission site:

#### ADD A REQUEST SECTION: Part 1:

For each specialty program in which positions are requested, complete a Specialty Program Request per the following outline.

**NOTE:** each item must be entered separately into the online request. Entries designated with “[list]” indicate that there will be a pull-down list or menu of options from which to choose. You should have the requested information available at the time each specialty request is entered. However, if you are missing some information, the system will save your answers and you can edit or enter additional information up to the closing date for the application.

- Rank: Rank position in order of greatest need.
- Position: Select initiative under which the position is requested. [dropdown list]
- Subspecialty requested [list]. *Note: VACAA requests cannot be used for Chief Resident in Quality and Patient Safety positions.*
- Is Program Accredited.
- Accrediting body [ACGME or AOA]. *Note: only ACGME or AOA-accredited programs may apply for physician resident positions under this RFP.* [dropdown list]

- Number of Positions Requested [Spin Up/Spin Down]
- Is This a New Affiliate?
- Name of Affiliate [list]
- Affiliate Agreement [dropdown list]
- Disbursement Agreement [dropdown list]
- Program Letter of Agreement (PLA).
- Is this Affiliate a Teaching Health Center or AHEC? [Select Below]
- Historically Black College/University (HBCU) [check]
- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) [check]
- Osteopathic Teaching Institution [check]
- Position(s) location: [Select a Location Below]
- Position(s) Location Address(es): [text]
- Location(s) Name(s) and Address(es): [text]
- Is the clinical site in a Health Profession Shortage Area? [Check]
- Impact on existing physician or other healthcare trainees [Check]
- Request Justification, if position other than primary care, mental health, or geriatrics. Include data on Veteran access to care [text] (6,000 characters max) -- *use the following outline:*
  - a. Your rationale for requesting positions in this specialty
  - b. The AY requested positions will begin (AY 2021 or 2022)
  - c. For critical needs position requests provide specific data on access issues in the specialty in which you are requesting positions – e.g., waiting times for appointments or procedures, use of contracted or locum tenens staff, use of fee basis or Choice card options to meet access goals. Be as specific as possible (e.g., statements such as “long waiting times” or “high use of fee basis” will be insufficient to justify your claims)
  - d. Describe how the positions will improve access of Veterans to healthcare services
  - e. Explain any “no” answers to the questions above and how you will address those challenges (e.g., if you have insufficient space or onsite supervision)
  - f. Describe the potential educational benefits to the residents of the clinical experience provided

**UPLOAD SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS SECTION: Part 2– upload the following documents :**

Support letters in the following categories may be entered (**uploaded**) as **pdf, image files (gif or jpeg), or Word files**. At a minimum, the support letters should contain the specific information outlined below for each support letter. Please limit each letter to two pages. The letter should be addressed to “Marjorie Bowman, M.D., Chief Academic Affiliations Officer (10X).” (Please title your files for reviewer clarity. Your files will be automatically prefixed with your facility name)

1. **Affiliate Program Director’s Letter of Support** file upload – 1 for each program in which positions are requested.
  - State your current ACGME (or AOA) accreditation status, citations, and their resolution
  - Attest to your current accreditation cycle length
  - Provide evidence of Departmental support for the additional VA positions
  - Comment on the quality and availability of VA-based faculty to supervise additional residents at the VA

2. **VA Site Director's Letter of Support** file upload – 1 for each program in which positions are requested
  - Describe the Service or Section support available for the requested positions
  - Describe the clinical experience, including any unique aspects of your program (e.g., inter-disciplinary or inter-professional venues) incorporated into your VA-based training for the specialty requested

**UPLOAD SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS SECTION: Part 2: Additional Support letters** – *only one letter in each category is required regardless of the number of programs or the number of RFP applications.*

1. **Medical Center Director's Letter (through the Chief of Staff)**
  - Indicate support for requested additional positions
  - Describe any resource support that would be provided to enhance the educational infrastructure in general (e.g., use of VERA educational funds)
  - Provide an assessment of the relationship with affiliate(s)
  - Comment on the clinical & educational environment
  - Comment on the relationship with the affiliate(s)
  - Assess the 'value' of additional residents to the facility
2. **Designated Education Officer (DEO) Letter**
  - Provide a personal statement of commitment to the proposal and to graduate medical education programs in general
  - Detail your vision for educational enhancement at the VA
  - Briefly describe your individual achievements and initiatives at the facility and/or VISN levels in the field of education
  - Provide your contact information: title, business address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address
  - Acknowledge that VACAA positions must be filled as awarded and cannot be redistributed to other programs
  - Acknowledge that at least annual reporting to OAA on fill rates and any reasons not filled for VACAA positions will be required
3. **Network Support Letter** (from the Network Director, through the VISN Chief Medical Officer and the Network Academic Affiliations Officer – only 1 letter from the VISN for each applicant facility is required)
  - Describe the relevance of the facility proposal to the VISN's educational and clinical missions.
  - Specify your rationale for wanting additional positions (VISN perspective)
  - Assess the specific facility's ability to train additional residents
  - Indicate the VISN-level resource support for additional positions
  - Describe the unique contributions the facility and VISN can make to the GME Enhancement Program
  - Elucidate the perceived merits of the facility proposal from the VISN and national perspective, if applicable
  - Identify the Network POC, the Network Academic Affiliations Officer

**4. Designated Institutional Official (DIO), Letter: sponsoring affiliated institution**

- Indicate your institutional affiliation support for the VA application
- Discuss any accreditation issues involving the institution or the programs in which positions are requested
- Provide assurance of institutional approval of requested additional positions, including GME Committee approval if applicable
- Describe any matching of institutional support (e.g., additional positions in the same specialty program to ensure appropriately balanced training opportunities)

### **APPLICATION SUBMISSION CHECK LIST**

**INSTRUCTIONS: Incomplete applications will not be considered by the review committee. The following list is to assist your planning and represents the required sections for this application.**

- ADD A REQUEST SECTION: Part 1:**
  - Facility priority
  - Program application type (Primary Care/Mental Health/Critical Access Needs)
  - Other basic program information including program accreditation status
  - Request Justification, including Data on veteran access to care
  
- UPLOAD SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS SECTION: Part 2 upload the following documents: 1 Program Director and 1 VA Site Director Letter of Support for each specialty program request.**
  - Program Director's letter (one for each specialty program requested; limit 2 pages)
  - VA Site Program Director letter (one for each specialty program requested; limit 2 pages)
  
- UPLOAD SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS SECTION: Part 2 only one letter in each category is required regardless of the number of programs or the number of RFP applications.**
  - Medical Center Director through the Chief of Staff
  - Designated Education Officer (DEO)
  - Network Director (through VISN Chief Medical Officer and Network Academic Affiliations Officer)
  - Designated Institutional Official (DIO) sponsoring affiliated institution