

The Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC

Program Announcement
Office of Academic Affiliations
Office of Rural Health
March 14, 2019

Rural Faculty Development Initiative (RFDI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

1. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Rural Faculty Development Initiative (RFDI) Request for Proposals (RFP) represents a collaborative effort between the Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) and the Office of Rural Health (ORH) to establish a structured faculty development program for new and emerging VA health professions training activities at VA facilities serving rural Veterans. This announcement solicits applications with program activities beginning in the 1st Quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2020 to participate in a two-year faculty development program. This new initiative is intended to enhance professional development and provide teaching and training skills for educators of clinical professions in rural settings. The Veterans Access Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA) called for the addition of 1500 new Graduate Medical Education (GME) positions targeting primary care and mental health care. The 58 facilities with no or very low GME (fewer than 20 FTE annually) represent eligible facilities for the RFDI (see List on page 2). This RFP provides information and application procedures for proposal submission.

OAA leads VHA's statutory education mission to train clinicians for VA and the nation enabling high quality innovative learning environments, providing excellent care to Veterans, and developing, recruiting, and retaining well-trained professional staff. The 2017 *VHA Workforce Succession Strategic Plan* has identified the following professions as VHA's top five mission-critical priority professions for recruitment and retention: nurses, physicians, physician assistants, physical therapists and psychologists.

Because healthcare clinicians often practice in or near areas where they have trained, investment in these priority professions and in geographic areas of need is aligned both with rural training expansion and the Workforce Succession Strategic Plan.

This program seeks to achieve several organizational outcomes:

- Improved capacity for and quality of rural health professional education
- More effective clinical learning environments
- Enhanced staff and clinical educator engagement in health professions training
- Improved faculty and trainee recruitment and retention in rural practice

Benefits to participants include:

- Professional development including mentoring and support
- Development of new relationships with peers and educators
- Potential for continuing education units and professional recognition
- Cross-funded travel support for selected participants
- Support for training-site development and growth

2. TARGET (ELIGIBLE) SITES

Through the VACAA initiative in 2014, 58 VA sites (see list) were identified as having either no or very low (<20) GME FTE and therefore are considered target sites for expansion of health professions training and are now eligible to apply for the RFDI.

Alexandria, LA	Clarksburg, WV	Los Angeles ACC, CA	Roseburg, OR
Altoona, PA	Columbus, OH	Leavenworth, KS	Saginaw, MI
Anchorage, AK	Danville, IL	Manchester, NH	Sheridan, WY
Asheville, NC	Dublin, GA	Marion, IN	Sioux Falls, SD
Bath, NY	El Paso VA HCS	Marion, IL	Spokane, WA
Battle Creek, MI	Erie, PA	Martinsburg, WV	St. Cloud, MN
Beckley, WV	Fayetteville, AR	Miles City, MT	Togus, ME
Bedford, MA	Fayetteville, NC	Montgomery, AL	Tomah, WI
Big Spring, TX	Fort Harrison, MT	Montrose/ Castle Point, NY	Topeka, KS
Biloxi, MS	Ft. Meade (Black Hills), SD	Muskogee, OK	Tuscaloosa, AL
Butler, PA	Ft. Wayne, IN	Newington, CT	Walla Walla, WA
Canandaigua, NY	Grand Junction, CO	Northampton, MA	White City, OR
Cheyenne, WY	Harlingen, TX	Orlando, FL	Wilkes-Barre, PA
Chillicothe, OH	Iron Mountain, MI	Poplar Bluff, MO	
Coatesville, PA	Lyons, NJ	Prescott, N. Arizona	

3. **SELECTION CRITERIA**

- The facility Medical Center Director supports one or two clinical educators to participate in all aspects of the program. This includes:
 - Nomination of a “Lead Educator” * to be the primary point of contact for RFDI. This Lead Educator:
 - May be the facility DEO, DLO, or another qualified educator at the site.
 - May also participate as one of the two RFDI participants at the site.
 - Commitment to at least 10% release time free from other responsibilities for each participant during two years of the training program. This time is reserved for professional development activities and is to be identified as ‘education’ time in labor mapping.
 - Clinical educator(s) being nominated must be VA paid employees with a minimum of 0.5 FTE appointment.
- Facility supports Veteran-centered care models where trainees can learn roles and responsibilities of health care professionals in fields other than their own.
- Facility has the infrastructure to host health professions trainees. Infrastructure includes: space, equipment, staff and supervisors, along with a patient population appropriate for learning activities of trainees.
- Facility hosts current trainees or has a plan to host trainees by year two of the program (FY 2021). Trainees may be enrolled in physician, dental, nursing, and/or any associated health education program that has a current affiliation agreement with the facility.
 - OAA can assist sites in developing academic affiliations as needed.
- Nominated RFDI participants complete and sign the Participant Agreement.

* Facility Lead Educator: For the purposes of the RFDI, a lead educator will be nominated by the Medical Center Director and will be the primary point of contact. This person may be the current facility DEO, DLO, or other individual, as needed. This individual may also be nominated as a program participant in RFDI.

4. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- OAA
 - Program implementation, coordination and support
 - Provision of faculty development curriculum resources and training opportunities
 - Cross-funded travel support for one or two clinical educators per site
 - Technical and logistical expertise and support
 - Program evaluation and feedback
 - Help connect site with training programs

- FACILITY
 - Protected time for two years for one or two clinical educators
 - Release time for travel to attend OAA-sponsored faculty development activities

- PARTICIPANT
 - Participate in all program requirements including assessment and evaluation activities
 - Commitment to engage in future training of health professions trainees at their site.

5. **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Clinician participants from selected eligible health professions training sites will enroll in a two-year faculty development program. The blended learning model includes face-to-face activities, local projects, and distance learning strategies including experiential learning with group projects, online curriculum, and self-study. Participants will have a unique opportunity to learn to become skilled clinical educators alongside peer professionals based in rural areas across the country.

The curriculum will be designed to provide instruction and opportunities for practice and application of new skills especially clinical precepting for trainees providing care to rural Veterans. The first year will focus on skills development, while the second year will provide more opportunities for experiential development and practice. The program will emphasize unique aspects of training and providing care at VA.

Participants will complete the program with new clinical educator skills, confidence and resources including a peer network. Potential outcomes include implementation and enhancement of a culture of learning at rural sites, increased trainee satisfaction, and increased trainee recruitment and faculty retention.

Examples of content that may be offered to enhance clinical educators' skills:

Core Content:

- Trainee Assessment, Feedback and Evaluation
- Transitioning from clinician to clinician educator
- Teaching with the patient present ("bedside" teaching)
- Working with struggling learners
- Telehealth as a tool for education and rural healthcare delivery

- Trainee and provider wellness
- Additional topics to be determined

VA-Related Topics:

- Rural Veteran/Family/Caregiver-Centered Care
- Military cultural competence
- VA-specific policies and procedures including new program affiliations and trainee relationships
- Tips and guidance for successful trainee recruitment into the VA workforce

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

- All application materials are to be uploaded to the OAA portal;
<http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/rfp/default.aspx?PID=66>
- A non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI) is due to OAA no later than 11:59 pm Eastern Time (ET) March 29, 2019.
- Full application is due to OAA no later than 11:59 pm Eastern Time May 17, 2019.

1. LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) INSTRUCTIONS. Maximum one page due on March 29, 2019.

A Letter of Intent (LOI) to apply for RFDI will be used by OAA to assess field interest and for planning purposes. The LOI form is provided in Appendix B. LOIs are non-binding. Submitting an LOI does not obligate the facility to submit a complete proposal.

LOIs should be from the Medical Center Director with support from VISN leadership, Chief of Staff and Lead Educator/Designated Education Officer.

- The facility will submit their LOI through the application portal.
- User(s) must register upon the first use of the portal.
- Because the full proposal will be submitted through the same portal, the title of the document should include facility name and “LOI” to distinguish between the LOI and application.
- Complete the <Award Notify List> in the portal for your LOI submission to be finalized in the system.
- After the LOI is uploaded and <Notify us you are complete> is selected, an automatically-generated confirmation e-mail will be forwarded to both the submitter and OAA staff.

Faxed, mailed, or e-mailed LOIs will NOT be accepted.

OAA recognizes that some of the information in the LOI may evolve or change with the development of a full application.

2. AWARD NOTIFICATION LIST SETUP

- If not already done, complete the <Award Notify List> tab on the left side of the portal menu. This allows the submitter to enter the email addresses of individuals who should be notified of the proposal review result. You may add non-VA e-mail addresses directly at the bottom of the page. Only one address must be included per line. **Only those e-mail addresses listed in the portal will be notified.**
- **You must include the following individuals in your e-mail notification list:**
 - VISN director
 - Medical Center Director
 - Chief of Staff
 - Lead Educator/Designated Education Officer (or designee)

- Nominated clinical educator(s)
- Chief of Service for each nominated clinical educator

3. APPLICATION STEPS

- Applications must be submitted by the facility-designated individual. This may be **Chief of Staff, the Lead Educator (i.e. DEO, DLO, Associate Chief of Staff-Education) or another designated individual.** The Lead Educator may be included as one of the two nominated participants.
- Two separate documents are required in 12-point Arial or Calibri font:
 1. Document 1 - Core Narrative
 2. Document 2 - Letters of Support (all letters combined into a single document)
- Each facility is limited to one application
- After the Core Narrative and Letters of Support are uploaded and <Notify us you are complete> is selected, an automatically-generated confirmation e-mail will be forwarded to both the submitter and OAA staff.

DOCUMENT 1: CORE NARRATIVE (Appendix C)

Please follow the template and page number limits explicitly.

DOCUMENT 2: LETTERS OF SUPPORT must provide assurance of local facility support for participating in the program. Medical Center leadership must commit to protected release time for participants. Letters must reflect that VISN leadership has been notified and is supportive of the application and participation. There must be a completed and signed Participant Agreement from nominated individuals.

Applications missing any letter of support will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed.

- Facility Director and Chief of Staff (can be a joint letter). The Director and Chief of Staff's joint letter must address the facility's commitment to the educational process, including sufficient release time for each proposed clinical educator to be fully engaged in RFDI. Note: **Facility Director/Chief of Staff must identify the percentage of release time authorized for each proposed clinical educator. If release time is not indicated or is specified below 10%, the proposal will not be considered.** (Release time will be labor mapped as "education" time)
- Each clinical educator nominated to participate in RFDI must complete the Participant Agreement (Appendix D).

4. REVIEW PROCESS

An ad hoc, interprofessional peer review committee designated by the Chief Academic Affiliations Officer (CAAO) will assess the merits of applications. Reviewers will have demonstrated expertise and leadership in clinical health professions education and patient care. The committee will evaluate specific items in the application that reflect the following criteria:

Review Criteria and Application Checklist	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commitment to 10% protected time by Medical Center Director.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Facility has current trainees or plans to host health professions clinical trainees by the second program year (FY2021). Trainees may represent medical, dental, nursing or associated health professions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Facility supports Veteran-centered care models where trainees can learn roles and responsibilities of health care professionals in fields other than their own.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site has the infrastructure to host health professions trainees. Infrastructure includes space, equipment, supervising practitioners and relevant patient population for trainee education.
<input type="checkbox"/>	All nominated participants complete Participant Agreement

5. POINT OF CONTACT

For information concerning this program announcement, contact Dr. Amber K. Fisher
208 422-1488 amber.fisher3@va.gov

6. **SCHEDULE**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>
March 15, 2019	Request for Proposal announcement released
March 25, 2019	Informational Call Hosted by OAA re RFP
March 29, 2019	Letter of Intent (LOI) due to OAA by 11:59 PM ET. Submission must be uploaded to http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/rfp/default.aspx?PID=66
April 11, 22, and May 6, 2019	Informational Calls Hosted by OAA re RFP
May 17, 2019	Full application due to OAA by 11:59 ET. Submission must be uploaded to http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/rfp/default.aspx?PID=66 in two separate documents: Core Narrative and Letters of Support.
June 14, 2019	Notification of selected facilities/clinical educators from OAA
Aug/Sept 2019	Support calls/consultation for new sites prior to beginning program
October 2019	Rural Faculty Development Program Begins

APPENDIX A - CHECKLIST FOR FINAL PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

This is a checklist to assist you in submitting a complete proposal. You need not submit this checklist with the proposal, it is for your use only.

Notification of Decisions:

Ensure that the <Award Notify List> is complete with the email addresses of individuals who should be notified of the proposal review result. Only those e-mail addresses listed in the portal will be notified when award results are released. You must include the following individuals in your list:

- VISN Director
- Medical Center Director
- Chief of Staff
- Lead Educator or Designated Education or Learning Officer
- Nominated clinical educator(s)
- Chief of Service for each nominated clinical educator

Proposals are due **no later than 11:59 pm ET on Friday May 17, 2019**, and must be uploaded through the OAA Portal at

<http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/rfp/default.aspx?PID=66> in separate documents:

- **Document 1 - Core Narrative**
- **Document 2 - Letters of Support (all letters combined into one file)**

Core Narrative: See Appendix C. Not to exceed 4 pages.

Proposals must include these elements:

- Introductory/Background Information
- Description of the facility's learning environment
- Clinical Educator List
- Recruitment and Retention

Letters of Support: Not to exceed 3 pages. Letters of Support must provide assurance of facility support. Medical Center leadership must show a commitment to health professions education and Veteran-centered practice models. There must be a letter of support from each of the individuals listed below:

Facility Director and Chief of Staff (joint letter). The Director and Chief of Staff's joint letter must specify at least 10% release time for each proposed clinical educator to be fully engaged in RFDI. Letters must reflect that VISN leadership has been notified and is supportive of the application and participation. **Note: If release time is not indicated or is specified below 10%, the proposal will not be considered.**

Each clinical educator (not to exceed two) nominated to participate in RFDI must complete and sign the Participant Agreement (Appendix D).

Additional Important Information

- Full proposals are submitted by facility Lead Educator/DEO/DLO, ACOS-Education, or designee using the OAA portal at <http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/rfp/default.aspx?PID=66>
- Letters of support must include a signature (electronic signatures are acceptable).
- Two documents, **Core Narrative and Letters of Support (all letters combined into one document)**, are uploaded. These must be uploaded as two separate files following the requirements outlined for each document above.
- Acceptable formats for submitted proposals are Word or PDF formats. Font size must be 12-point Arial or Calibri. Margins must be at least one inch all around (excluding headers and footers).

APPENDIX B – LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) TEMPLATE

Please use the following template for your Letter of Intent. Not to exceed one page. Due March 29, 2019. If you have questions, please contact amber.fisher3@va.gov.

DATE :

FROM : [NAME, CREDENTIALS, TITLE]
[FACILITY NAME]
[ADDRESS]

To Dr. Marjorie Bowman :

Our site would like to nominate 1-2 clinical educators from (list professions if known) to participate in the OAA/ORH 2-year Rural Faculty Development Initiative (RFDI) with at least 10% of each of their time protected for participation.

Our VISN leadership, Chief of Staff and Lead Educator/Designated Education Officer have lent their support for these nominations and we look forward to fully supporting their participation in this program.

Our nominee(s) will be teaching at our [name site(s) including main VA facility, CLC, CBOC, ACC, Mobile Unit, or unsure].

Facility goals by participation in the program include [open narrative – limit 100 words].

We recognize this Letter of Intent is non-binding and information we submit may change prior to our full application. If we proceed to a full application, we will submit our application by the deadline of May 17, 2019.

Signed,

[Medical Center Director to sign here]

Name of Medical Center Director

APPENDIX C - CORE NARRATIVE TEMPLATE

Please use the following template to complete your core narrative. Follow all page number limits. Due May 17, 2019. If you have questions, please contact Dr. Amber Fisher at: amber.fisher3@va.gov.

Introductory Information

VISN Number:

Facility Name:

Facility City, State:

Facility Number:

Primary Points of Contact (two contacts are required)

Position Title	Name	E-Mail Address	Phone number
Lead Educator/ DEO/DLO or ACOS- Education			
Point of Contact other than Lead Educator/DEO or ACOS-Education			

Description of the Facility Learning Environment (Maximum of 2 pages)

1. Describe your facility's current status and plans for hosting health professions trainees and how this program may fit into that plan.
 - a. Goals for starting or expanding clinical education at your site(s).
 - b. Desired outcomes for your participation in the RFDI.
 - c. Description how you include or plan to include staff and trainees in Veteran-centered learning experiences. Examples may include PACT, integrated mental health care, inpatient care teams, etc.
2. Describe existing or desired academic collaborators/affiliates and nature of the partnerships.
 - a. May include: grand rounds, clinical rotations offered, affiliate faculty appointments, team care examples, huddles, and other clinical and staff activities that may enhance learning.
3. List all existing clinical training professions at your facility. Include professions that do not currently have trainees but have the potential for hosting trainees in the future. Please use the following table:

Existing Health Professions Training Programs at my site	Health Professions Training Programs that desire future trainees at my site

4. Describe your clinical infrastructure – aspects to address *may include*:
- a. Space: exam room, office, classrooms, call rooms, personal belongings storage space
 - b. Equipment:
 - i. Clinical: exam table, patient evaluation tools, computer/laptop
 - ii. Administrative: computer, telephone, dictation, desk
 - iii. Simulation: lab, mannequins, videos
 - c. Supervising practitioners and staffing available to support trainee learning
 - d. Patient population and patient volume appropriate for trainee learning experiences
5. OPTIONAL: Describe any recent educational success or educational innovations you have implemented.

Clinical Educator Nominations

Name and Credentials	Position/Title	Profession	E-Mail Address	Phone number
Nominated Clinical Educator #1				
Nominated Clinical Educator #2				

Recruitment and Retention (1 page)

Describe opportunities and challenges you may have in *recruiting and retaining* trainees (as well as clinicians and clinical educators) and steps that will be taken to develop the opportunities and overcome the challenges.

APPENDIX D – PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

Please use the following template for each nominated clinical educator. Not to exceed one page each.

DATE :

FROM : [NAME, CREDENTIALS, TITLE]
[FACILITY NAME]

To Dr. Marjorie Bowman :

I am pleased to be nominated to participate in the OAA/ORH 2-year Rural Faculty Development Initiative (RFDI) with at least 10% of my time dedicated for participation.

My Medical Center Director, Chief of Staff and my supervisor have lent their support for my nomination. If selected as a final participant, I will plan to assist in training of future health professions learners and/or my fellow clinical educators at my site. [Optional: include your goals for participation in RFDI – limit 100 words].

Barring any unforeseen problems, I plan to participate in the full two-year program to the best of my ability.

Signed,

[Nominee to sign here]

Name of Clinical Educator Nominee