



# FY2026 Clinical Educator Grants Program Application Instructions

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## Section 1: Overview of the Clinical Educator Grants (CEG) Program

### What is the SC MIRECC?

The South Central Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (SC MIRECC) is one of 10 MIRECCs in VHA. MIRECCs aim to improve the provision of healthcare services to Veterans with mental health conditions through research, education, and the refinement of models and systems for delivering mental healthcare. The mission of SC MIRECC is to ***promote engagement, access, and quality of mental health care for Veterans facing barriers to care, especially rural and underserved Veterans.***

### What is the CEG Program?

The CEG program is an opportunity for clinicians and researchers at VISN 16 and 17 VA medical centers (VAMCs) and community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) to receive funding to develop educational products that address clinical gaps to improve mental health care for rural and underserved Veterans. All products are developed to be freely accessible in the public domain. Products must be designed to allow for wide dissemination and to be easily used by clinicians (VA and community health clinicians) or Veterans.

### Who Can Apply?

- Mental health clinicians, researchers, and educators in VISN 16 and VISN 17.
  - For those collaborating with staff outside of VISN 16 or VISN 17, the principal applicant must be a VISN 16 or VISN 17 staff member.
- Trainees may apply but must identify a permanent VA mental health professional as a Co-PI applicant. The permanent VISN 16 or VISN 17 VA mental health professional will be responsible for completing the product if it has not been completed before the end of the trainee's tenure at VA.
- Veteran or non-VA staff members can be co-applicants, but not principal applicants.
- Awardees will be designated as SC MIRECC Affiliate Investigators during their project.

### What is the Award Amount?

- Awards may be for up to \$5,000.

## Section 2: Getting Started

### Does Your Product Fill a Gap by Satisfying a Unique Need?

Check VA and community sources (websites, published materials, etc.) to ensure that a product similar to your proposal does not already exist. If there is a product similar to your proposed project, please be clear about how your product would fill an additional/different need.

### With Whom Can I Talk About My Application?

Talk to a CEG program director before preparing an application. Ask if your idea is innovative, unique, doable, and fundable. Their advice, as well as others who are knowledgeable about your content area, can help create a stronger application.

**Program Directors:** Dr. Ali Abbas Asghar-Ali ([Ali.Asghar-Ali@va.gov](mailto:Ali.Asghar-Ali@va.gov)) and Dr. Jennifer Bryan ([Jennifer.Bryan1@va.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Bryan1@va.gov)).

### How Do I Make My Project Relevant to the SC MIRECC?

Your project must support the SC MIRECC mission or commitment to DEI to improve mental health care for rural and other underserved Veterans. Projects tailored to rural populations should be applicable to CBOC or rural community settings.

### What Type of Project Can I Submit?

Clinical educator grants lead to development and piloting of new educational resources. To allow completion within the grant period, projects should be brief. Products that will be newly developed during the grant period, may not exceed 20 pages. Products that are currently in use in a clinical or research setting or have been previously drafted may exceed 20 pages, pending approval by the CEG program. Please submit products that are currently in use as part of the complete application. Talk with a CEG program director about your approach. Review our current products for examples at

[https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16/clinicalEducationProducts\\_topic.asp](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16/clinicalEducationProducts_topic.asp).

### When Does My Project Have to be Completed?

- Project funds **must** be spent before the end of the FY26.
- Awards will be announced in April 2025. **Spending deadlines are much earlier than the end of the fiscal year - expenditures may not be made after late August 2026.**
- If awarded, the SC MIRECC purchaser will provide instructions on how to spend the funds. Awardees will be required to meet with the SCMIRECC purchaser before October 15 2025 to discuss all purchasing plans.

## Section 3: Instructions for Preparing and Submitting an Application

### Where Is the Application Located?

- <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG-Application.docx>

### When is the Application Due?

FY2026 applications are **due by 4:30 PM (CT) on February 24, 2025.**









### How Do I Submit My Application?

- Email your application to [VISN16SCMIRECCEducation@va.gov](mailto:VISN16SCMIRECCEducation@va.gov)
- If applicable, attach figures, additional references, letters of support, and other supporting documents to your email.
- **In order to accept the application, your immediate supervisor and Mental Health or Service Line Chief must be copied on the submission email.**
- Contact [Jennifer.Bryan1@va.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Bryan1@va.gov) if you have questions.

### What are the Guidelines for My Budget?

See the table below for purchasing guidelines for CEG funds. Justify each proposed expense using the budget table in the application.

If an item or service is available through your local Care/Service Lines, then justify the purchase of a similar item or service with project funds. Only include items in your budget that you have described in your application.

You CAN purchase these items	You CANNOT purchase these items
 Incentives for Veterans for participation. (e.g., Canteen coupons)	 Food (including participant snacks) and lodging.
 Professional services (e.g., voice recording; computer programming; web page design; graphic design) that cannot be provided by your VA facility. <b>Please check with your facility to ensure that a service is not available.**</b>	 Equipment or IT (computers, projectors, CD players, and some software)
 Material reproduction that cannot be provided by your VA facility. <b>Please check with your facility to ensure that this service is not available.</b>	 Photocopying or binding that can be provided by your VA facility
 Additional materials and/or supplies that are not available at your facility and are needed for the	 Reproduction of electronic data that can be provided by your VA facility

You CAN purchase these items	You CANNOT purchase these items
<u>development</u> (not sustainment) of your project, such as textbooks, guides, etc.	

**Graphic Design & Related Services.** Your product will require a graphic designer and you must use the Baylor College of Medicine Graphics department unless you receive approval otherwise from the CEG program team. A medical editor will review all products before they are submitted to the designer.” The CEG program team will assist you with setting up design services for your product. All products that are featured on the SC MIRECC website, must be 508 compliant for users with audio/visual needs. This includes tasks such as adding alternate text for images in PDFs and captions on videos. Once your completed product is approved by the CEG program directors, it will be forwarded to Ashley McDaniel ([Ashley.McDaniel@va.gov](mailto:Ashley.McDaniel@va.gov)) to be posted on the Center’s website. If you plan to propose a video, please talk to the CEG program team before submission to ensure that a video product could be considered. If your video is approved, you will be asked to transfer the completed video to us by uploading it on our [SC MIR Video Transfers](#) YouTube account. Ms. McDaniel will guide you through the process and answer your questions.

**VA Contracting.** Any expenditure over \$3500 for goods or services for a single transaction with one vendor has to go through VA Contracting. **Speak with the CEG purchaser and program directors before entering into any agreement with a vendor.** If you talk to vendors to get cost estimates while preparing your application, let them know that VA will put the work out for bid, and they will have the opportunity to bid for the job. Please note that it may take several months to complete the VA contracting process.

**Content Experts.** We cannot pay VA employees for work as consultants on this grant. However, a VA employee may receive an educational item, e.g., a book of reasonable value, in recognition of their contribution. The item can be included in the budget. If you are planning to consult with, and financially compensate, content experts, you must state that the content experts are not VA employees in the application. The total payment to each expert should be no greater than \$2500. **Speak with the CEG purchaser and program directors before entering into any agreement with an expert.** Experts must register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://sam.gov/SAM/> to receive payments. If the total payment will be above \$2500, you must go through VA Contracting.

**Miscellaneous Items.** Miscellaneous items can be purchased if the items are needed to support the development of the product. However, such items may not be purchased for the dissemination of the product.

## Do I Need a Reference List or Letters of Support?

Yes, you need a reference list. Provide a list of any references cited in your application. Limit references to relevant products, programs and literature. No, you do not need letters of support. However, for those who may choose to include letters of support, please submit all appropriate letters of support as an attachment in the same email as your application. Also, please include letters necessary to demonstrate the support of content experts and programs or departments providing support to, or collaborating on, the project (e.g., VA Employee Education System, your local Medical Media, etc.).

## Section 4: Review Process

### Who Will Review My Application?

All applications are reviewed by at least three members of the SC MIRECC Education Core or outside experts. They are rated in terms of consistency with the SC MIRECC mission, appropriate goals, target population, attention to population needs, feasibility of plans, appropriate evaluation, potential outcomes, and justified budget. Applicants will receive written feedback about their proposal. The review committee often asks applicants to make specific changes in their project or provide additional information in a revised application. Revised applications are reviewed for adherence to the review committee's recommendations.

### When Will I Find Out if My Application Has Been Funded or Denied?

Funding decisions are expected to be made in April 2025. The CEG program directors will email applicants a decision letter.

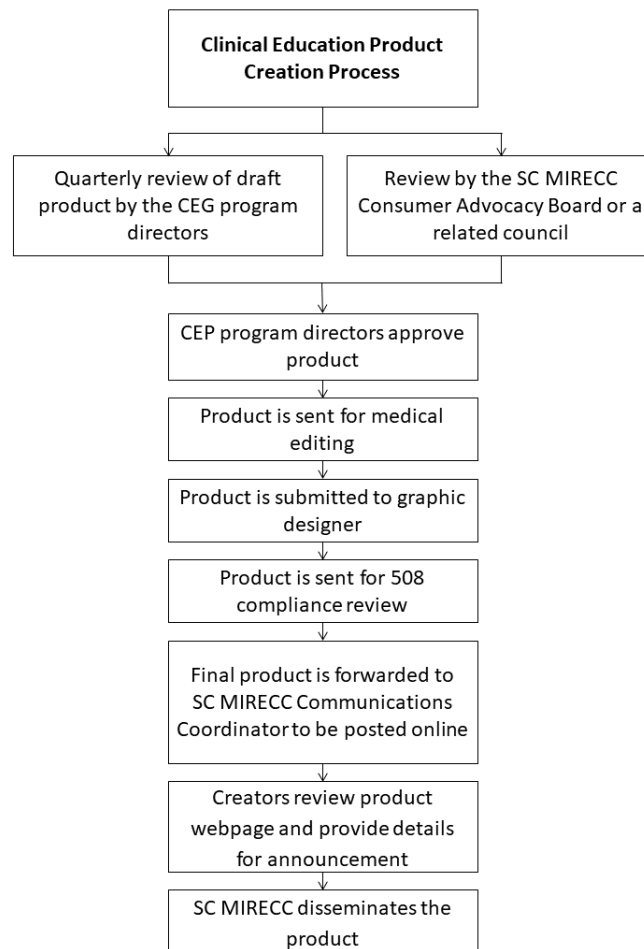
### What Steps are Involved in the Creation of my Product?

As you're creating your product, it should be reviewed by members of the intended audience, e.g., Veterans, if intended for Veterans. If you do not have access to a local Veteran consumer council, we can facilitate review by the SC MIRECC Consumer Advocacy Board or a related council. Once completed, your product will be reviewed by the CEG program directors. On a quarterly basis, the CEG program will also ask for you to submit a working copy of your product – this helps provide ongoing review and feedback. After your product is approved by the program directors, it will be sent for medical editing. You will be able to accept/reject suggested edits. Your product will be submitted to a graphic designer after editing is complete. After you approve the graphic design it will be reviewed for 508 compliance. Finally, it will be forwarded to the SC MIRECC Communications Coordinator to be posted online. You will have the opportunity to review the webpage and provide details for the announcement before it is disseminated by the SC MIRECC.

It is critical that you consider a strategy for dissemination of your product. Keep the following questions in mind:

- How do you intend for the target audience to learn about your product?
- What are relevant distributions lists and professional organizations to which announcements about your product should be shared?
- How can we reach both VA and non-VA audience members?
- What newsletters, bulletins, etc. are appropriate for announcements about your product?

Figure 1. Diagram of the Clinical Education Product creation process



### How Should I Acknowledge SC MIRECC in My Product?

Products created through this program are SC MIRECC and VHA products. They must acknowledge funding from the SC MIRECC with the statement “this [work] was supported by

the VA South Central Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC).” We will also provide the SC MIRECC symbol for placement on the final product. These products are not for profit and will be distributed to the public at no cost. Products will be posted on the SC MIRECC website.

## **Section 5: Tips for Submitting a Successful Application**

- ✓ **Your application should be complete but brief.** Be clear about your project plan. Applications that are vague, general, or duplicate existing products will receive low scores.
- ✓ **Showcase the uniqueness of your product.** Search online for products similar to what you propose and state how your product differs from, or enhances, these existing resources.
- ✓ **Make sure you can complete your project in the timeframe you propose.**
- ✓ **Make your product widely applicable.** Your product should be easily accessible online and apply to a national audience of clinicians or Veterans.
- ✓ **Get feedback on your application from colleagues.**

## **Section 6: Sample Applications**

1. Sample 1: [https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG\\_sample\\_application\\_1.pdf](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_sample_application_1.pdf)
2. Sample 2: [https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG\\_sample\\_application\\_2.pdf](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_sample_application_2.pdf)

## **Section 7: Contacts**

### **Program Directors:**

Dr. Ali Abbas Asghar-Ali ([Ali.Asghar-Ali@va.gov](mailto:Ali.Asghar-Ali@va.gov))

Dr. Jennifer Bryan ([Jennifer.Bryan1@va.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Bryan1@va.gov))

### **Communications Coordinator**

Ashley McDaniel ([Ashley.McDaniel@va.gov](mailto:Ashley.McDaniel@va.gov))