

## **VISN 5 MIRECC PILOT STUDY PROGRAM**

The MIRECC pilot research program invites study applications that support its mission of improving the care of Veterans with schizophrenia and other serious mental illnesses within the VISN, and ultimately, within the entire VA system and in the community at large. Projects dealing with other populations will occasionally be considered if the results promise to be applicable to our core mission. This program provides investigators with the opportunity to collect pilot data and test the feasibility of research ideas that can lead to larger externally funded NIH or VA grants. Proposals are subjected to peer review and must meet rigorous scientific standards. Additionally, proposals must satisfactorily meet standards of protecting human subjects. For example, one pilot study obtained preliminary data for the effectiveness of the Family Member Provider Outreach model which is now being tested in an HSR&D Merit review. Another pilot study obtained psychometric data on a new recovery scale. That pilot also lead to a Merit Review.

## **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND REVIEW PROCESS**

**Eligibility Criteria** – VISN 5 MIRECC Core and Affiliate Investigators are eligible to apply for pilot studies. Core investigators are researchers who receive salary support from the VISN 5 MIRECC. Affiliate investigators are researchers (M.D., Ph.D., etc.) who have a VA affiliation (permanent, temporary or Without Compensation appointment). Junior Investigators (medical students, interns, residents, and fellows) are eligible to submit applications for pilot studies.

**Award amount** – Maximum allowable annual reward is \$25,000 and if accepted the VISN 5 MIRECC will only commit to 1 year of funding. 2nd year of funding is contingent upon the submission of progress report and availability of funds.

**Budget and Timeline** – Pilot studies are expected to be approximately one year in duration, but may be up to two years in duration. For pilot studies projected to last for more than one year, the budget should be specified separately for each project year. The budget should provide projected costs associated with staffing, supplies, etc. Funds for investigator salary, travel, or IT equipment may not be included.

**Submission Process** – Annual deadline for pilot study applications is June 30. Interested applicants should contact Bernard Fischer, M.D., at [Bernard.Fischer@va.gov](mailto:Bernard.Fischer@va.gov) for more information on initiating the submission process. If you are concerned you will not be able to meet the annual deadline, contact Dr. Fischer to discuss.

**Application** – The pilot study application should include: (1) MIRECC Pilot Study Application face page, (2) the grant narrative, (3) citations, (4) a short abstract (60 words or less), and (5) an itemized budget with justification. The grant narrative should be no longer than 4 pages exclusive of references. The grant narrative should include the following sections:

1. Specific Aims (1/2 page) – State concisely and realistically what the research is intended to accomplish. Indicate how the research relates to the overall

mission of the VISN 5 MIRECC.

2. Background and Significance (1 page) – Briefly sketch the scientific literature pertinent to the proposed pilot study (and future grant application), critically evaluating existing knowledge and identifying the gaps that the pilot study are intended to fill.

3. Methods (2 pages) – Briefly describe the study design and the procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include the means by which the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

4. Research Team, Timeline, and Future Plans (1/2 page) – Briefly describe the qualifications and roles of the research team. Include a timeline for the work planned, including a projected completion date. Describe any new instruments, tools, or materials that will be generated. Describe plans for how the proposed pilot study will support a grant application to the VA, NIH, or other federal funding agency.

**Review Process and Criteria** - Pilot study applications will be reviewed by the VISN 5 MIRECC Pilot Study Review Committee for scientific merit as well as budgetary and human subjects conscientiousness. The VISN 5 MIRECC Pilot Study Review Committee may consult with content or methodological experts as needed. The review process will proceed as follows:

- 1) Submit completed application packages to Bernard Fischer
- 2) Budgetary Review performed by VISN 5 MIRECC Administrative Officer
- 3) Scientific Review performed by VISN 5 MIRECC Research Core Director and Peer Reviewer.
- 4) Human Subjects Review performed by VISN 5 MIRECC Director of Research Quality Management
- 5) Administrative Review and Final Sign-Off performed by VISN 5 MIRECC Director
- 6) Awarded applicants will be provided with:
  - i. Approval/Award Letter
  - ii. Copy of the VISN 5 MIRECC Affiliation Policy
  - iii. Any other pertinent information regarding funding, etc.

At any time during the review process, the VISN 5 MIRECC Pilot Study Review Committee may raise concerns, request clarifications and/or recommend changes to the pilot study application.

## **Year 2 Continuation Procedures**

The MIRECC Pilot Study program only commits to 1 year of funding, so at the end of year 1 all Investigators will need to complete a progress report and request second year money. Year 2 funding support is contingent upon review of the progress report as well as current fiscal year funding availability. Projects requiring a no-cost extension should also submit a progress report with justification.

Investigators who are interested in applying for year 2 funding should provide Bernard Fischer with a progress report approximately 90 days before the 1 year anniversary of the project's inception. Investigators may contact Bernard Fischer at anytime for the progress report form and any other information.

## **CONTACT**

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