# FY2020 Clinical Educator Grants Program Application Instructions

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

What is 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 living with mental illness through research, education, and the development of improved models and systems for delivering mental healthcare. The mission of SC MIRECC is to promote equity in engagement, access, and quality of mental health care for Veterans facing barriers to care, especially rural Veterans.

What is the CEG Program?
Clinicians and researchers at VA medical centers (VAMCs) and community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) develop products through this program to improve mental health care for rural and other underserved Veterans. It amplifies research and clinical demonstration projects through the development of clinical tools, intervention materials, training programs, and evidence-based treatment manuals. Products are given to the public for free.

Who Can Apply?
- Mental health clinicians, researchers, evaluators, and educators in VISN 16 and VISN 17 or those collaborating with VISN 16 or VISN 17 mental health staff members.
  - A single applicant must be designated the “principal applicant” even if the project has multiple collaborators.
  - For multi-site collaborations where each site has its own leader, those individuals will be designated “co-principal applicants.”
  - 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 staff member as a co-applicant.
- Veteran consumers or non-VA community members can be co-applicants but not principal applicants.
- Awardees will be designated SC MIRECC Affiliate Investigators during their project.

What is the Award Amount?
- Awards range from $500-$7,000.
- Multi-site collaborative projects at facilities in VISNs 16 and/or 17 may be eligible for a grant up to $10,000.
Section 2: Getting Started

Who Can I Talk to 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 result in a stronger application.

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

How Do I Make My Project Relevant to SC MIRECC?
Your project must support the SC MIRECC mission to improve mental health care for rural and other underserved Veterans. Projects tailored to rural populations should be tested in CBOC or rural community settings.

What Type of Project Can I Submit?
Typically, clinical educator projects create new applications for existing educational resources or develop and pilot new educational interventions. However, you are not limited to these two approaches. Talk with a Program Director about the approach you want to take. Review our current inventory of products for examples at https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16/clinicalEducationProducts_topic.asp.

When Does My Project Have to be Completed?
- Project funds **must** be spent or obligated for spending before the end of the fiscal year (September 30).
- Awards are usually announced in October. Plan to spend your funds by late August.
  - While you are not required to complete your project by late August, we expect the project to be completed in 12-18 months.
  - If you can’t complete your project in one fiscal year (October 1 – September 30), consider dividing it into separate applications for two fiscal years.
    - For example, you could propose to develop program materials in the first year and apply and evaluate the materials in the second.
    - If you choose this approach, state that this project is “part one” in your application and briefly describe in your proposal the future phase(s) of the project and that you intend to apply for further funding. We cannot fund future phases in advance, but it will help your current application if reviewers know your next steps.
- If awarded, an SC MIRECC employee will instruct you on how to spend your funds.
Section 3: Instructions for Preparing and Submitting an Application

Where Can I Download the Application?
- [https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_Application.pdf](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_Application.pdf).

When is the Application Due?
FY2020 applications are **due by 4:00 PM (CT) on August 2, 2019.**

Where Do I Submit My Application?
- Email your application to **VISN16SCMIRECCEducation@va.gov.**
- If applicable, attach figures, additional references, letters of support, and other supporting documents to your email.
- **Your Mental Health or Service Line Chief must be copied on the email or we cannot accept your application.** If you work at a CBOC, you will need to copy your clinic Director.
- Contact **Jennifer.Bryan1@va.gov** if you have questions.

What are the Guidelines for My Budget?
See the table below for guidance on what can and cannot be purchased with CEG grant 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.

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<th>You CAN purchase these items</th>
<th>You CANNOT purchase these items</th>
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<td>![checkmark] VA hiring of a new and temporary employee (approval from your HR department is required; this can be a cumbersome and slow process and success varies by site).</td>
<td>![exclamation-mark] Salary or honorariums to VA employees (even for work on personal time).</td>
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<td>![checkmark] Incentives for participation (e.g., Canteen coupons, door prizes, etc.)</td>
<td>![exclamation-mark] Food (including participant snacks).</td>
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<td>![checkmark] Commercial materials to be used in the development of your project</td>
<td>![exclamation-mark] Lodging.</td>
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<tr>
<td>![checkmark] Professional services (e.g., voice recording; computer programming; web page design; graphic design) that cannot be provided by your VA facility. Please check with your facility to ensure that a service is not available.**</td>
<td>![exclamation-mark] Photocopying or binding that can be provided by your VA facility.</td>
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- ** means please check with your facility to ensure that a service is not available.
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<tr>
<td>🔄 Material reproduction that cannot be provided by your VA facility. Please check with your facility to ensure that this service is not available.</td>
<td>🔄 Equipment or IT (computers, projectors, CD players, and some software)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🔄 Additional materials and/or supplies that are not available at your facility and are needed for the development (not sustainment) of your project, such as textbooks, guides, etc.</td>
<td>🔄 Reproduction of electronic data (e.g., audiotapes, videotapes, CDs) that can be provided by your VA facility</td>
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**Please note that the SC MIRECC can make the services of a medical editor available to you at no cost. He or she can copy edit any educational product developed from this grant.**

**Graphic Design & Related Services.** If your product requires graphic design, video, or other related services it must be made 508 compliant for users with audio/visual needs. This may include alternate text for images in PDFs and captions for videos. The SC MIRECC webmaster (Ashley.McDaniel@va.gov) can provide guidance and answer questions about what would be needed to make the product 508 compliant for our website.

**VA Contracting.** Anything over $3000 for goods and $2500 for services to one vendor has to go through VA Contracting. Occasionally, a department credit card can be used to pay invoices to one vendor if the services are different and are billed on separate dates. However, the charges on the invoice cannot be recurrent. **Speak with the CEG Directors before entering into any agreement with a vendor before submitting an application.** They will ask a SC MIRECC budget specialist if your purchase is possible. If you talk to vendors to get cost estimates while preparing your application, let them know that the VA will put the work out for bid and they will have the opportunity to bid for the job.

**Content Experts.** We cannot pay VA employees for work that is done on VA time. If you are planning to consult with and 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 below $2500. Experts must register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at [https://sam.gov/SAM/](https://sam.gov/SAM/) to receive payments. If the total payment will be above $2500, you must go through VA Contracting.

**Miscellaneous Items.** Exercise bands, art materials, bottled water, or even a tablet or laptop (not connected to the VA system) can be purchased if the items are needed to support the development of the product. However, if buying such items is necessary for the dissemination of the product, then the application will likely not be funded. Purchases that impact the dissemination of education products make them less exportable to our facilities and consumers.
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. If there is not enough room in the application to list all your references, they can be attached to your submission in a separate file.

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. Please also 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 usually made in late September. The CEG Program Director will email applicants a decision letter.

What Happens With My Product After it is Created?
As you’re making your product, you should have it reviewed by Veterans (if intended for Veterans) or mental health providers (if intended for providers). If you do not have access to a local Veteran consumer council, we will have it reviewed by the SC MIRECC Consumer Advisory Board or related council. Once completed, your product will be reviewed by the CEG Program Directors. The SC MIRECC webmaster will conduct a 508-compliance review to verify that your product can be posted online and notify you of any changes needed. Once approved by all necessary parties, it will be posted online.

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 logo 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 time frame you propose.**

✓ **Make your product easily exportable.** Easily exportable products can be posted online. Examples of non-exportable products include purchasing commercial videos for multiple sites or products made specifically for one facility.

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

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