South Central Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (SC MIRECC)

Clinical Educator Grants Program

Application Instructions

FY2018
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Section 1: Overview of the SC MIRECC Clinical Educator Grants Program

South Central MIRECC Overview
Funded in October 1998, the South Central Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (SC MIRECC) is one of ten MIRECCs in the Veterans Health Administration. Congress mandated the establishment of MIRECCs 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. A disproportionate share of Veterans live in rural America, making health care access difficult. The SC MIRECC is interested in improving and responding to the mental health needs of these underserved Veterans.

Purpose of the Clinical Educator Grants Program
This program funds the development of innovative clinical education products that benefit the mental health care of rural and other underserved Veterans. Clinicians and research investigators at VA medical centers (VAMCs) and community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) develop these products. The program also amplifies research and clinical demonstration projects through the development of clinical tools, intervention materials, training programs, and evidence-based treatment manuals. Products developed through this program are available to the public at no cost. Visit https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/clinicalEducationProducts.asp for more details.

Eligibility
VISN 16 and VISN 17 clinicians, researchers, evaluators, and educators who are or are collaborating with VA mental health staff are eligible to apply. 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.”

Trainees may also apply, although a permanent VA staff member must be a co-applicant. Veteran consumers or non-VA community members can be co-applicants but they cannot be the principal applicant. Awarded funds will be transferred to a mental health service fund control point at the awardee’s VAMC. Awardees will be identified as SC MIRECC Affiliate Investigators during the course of their project.

Award Amount
The award amount ranges between $500 and $7,000. Up to $10,000 may be awarded for projects involving multiple VA facilities.
Section 2: Getting Started

Brainstorm Your Idea With a Member of the SC MIRECC Education Core
Talk to a member of the SC MIRECC Education Core before preparing an application (see box at right). Ask if your idea is innovative, unique, doable, and fundable. Getting advice from the Education Core, as well as others who are knowledgeable about your content area, significantly improves your chances of being funded. Good advice will save you time and effort and result in a stronger application.

Tailor Projects to the SC MIRECC Mission
Projects funded by this program must benefit the mental health care of rural and other underserved Veterans. Projects tailored to rural populations should be tested in CBOC or rural community settings.

Types of Projects
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 your local site contact about the approach you want to take.

- **Create new applications for existing educational resources.** For example, you could create a video or manual for delivering evidence-based therapy.
  a. Provider Communication: Education and Practice in a Veterans Healthcare System (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKMc6xHo)
- **Develop and pilot new educational interventions.** You could create and assess a new patient education intervention. You could also deliver an intervention to enhance treatment adherence.
a. A Veteran’s Guide to Talking with Kids about PTSD
   (https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/Talking_with_Kids_about_PTSD.pdf)

b. Self-Help STOP Worry: A Tool for Older Veterans
   (https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/STOP_Worry_Clinican_Workbook.pdf;
   https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/STOP_Worry_Self-
   Help_Workbook.pdf)

   (https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/Living_With_Purpose.pdf)

Project Time Frame
Project funds must be spent or obligated for spending before the end of the fiscal year
(September 30), or risk being swept by the facility and returned to VA Central Office. Swept
funds cannot be returned. Work with your local fiscal contact to make sure you meet your
spending or obligation goals. Awards are usually announced in October. Funds are
transferred to your VAMC mental health fund control point once funding has been approved.
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 your proposal is too big to be completed in one fiscal year (October 1 – September 30),
consider dividing it into two separate applications, which will allow you to complete the
project over two fiscal years. 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.

Use and Distribution of SC MIRECC Clinical Educator Grant Products
All products developed through the Clinical Educator Grant program are SC MIRECC and VHA
products. All products 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 may be posted on SC MIRECC and other VA websites.

Section 3: Instructions for Preparing and Submitting an
Application
Download the application at https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_Application.pdf.
Your application should include your contact information, a description of the project,
program objectives, the clinical issue the proposed product addresses, how the product improves the clinical issue, how the product improves mental health care for rural and other underserved Veterans, product evaluation, proposed budget, and any references. If applicable, attach figures, additional references, letters of support, and other supporting documents to your email submission.

Application Deadline and Submission Guidelines
Applications for the fiscal year 2018 funding cycle must be emailed to VISN16SCMIRECCEducation@va.gov by 4:00 PM (CT) on August 4, 2017. You must copy your Mental Health or Service Line Chief for concurrence on the email. If you work at a CBOC, you may also need concurrence from your clinic Director. If your Service Chief or Director are not included on the email, we cannot accept your application.

Most applicants will be asked to provide more information about their project or revise and resubmit their application. If you have questions about the application or the appropriateness of your project, please contact Dr. Adler at Geri.Adler@va.gov or (713) 440-4480 (after July 20, 2017, email VISN16SCMIRECCEducation@va.gov for assistance).

Proposed Budget: Guidelines and Form
Congress and VHA have strict regulations on what can and cannot be purchased with these funds (see table below). Submit an itemized budget in section 15 of the application (attach additional sheets if needed). Include a descriptive justification for each expense. If an item or service is readily available through 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 should work with your local fiscal department to verify they can accept and distribute award funds to your project before submitting your application. This will ensure timely transmission of funds if awarded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You CAN purchase these items</th>
<th>You CANNOT purchase these items</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✨ Travel of a non-VA employee to a VA site (e.g., a guest speaker)</td>
<td>✧ Travel by VA employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✨ VA hiring of a new and temporary employee (approval from your HR department is required; this can be a cumbersome and slow process and)</td>
<td>✧ Salary or honorariums to VA employees (even for work on personal time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>You CAN purchase these items</td>
<td>You CANNOT purchase these items</td>
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<td>success varies by site).</td>
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<tr>
<td>🔄 Incentives for participation (e.g., Canteen coupons, door prizes, etc.)</td>
<td>🔄 Food (including participant snacks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🔄 Commercial materials to be used in the development of your project</td>
<td>🔄 Lodging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🔄 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>🔄 Photocopying or binding that can be provided by your VA facility</td>
</tr>
<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.**

**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. You should speak with your local fiscal contact to verify that this option is possible at your facility before entering into any agreement with a vendor. If you know your project will spend more than $2500 for a service from one vendor, you need to go through VA Contracting. If you talk to vendors to get cost estimates while preparing your proposal, 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 Central Contractor Registration to receive payments
(https://www.bpn.gov/ccr/). 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.

**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 of your references, they can be attached to your submission in a separate file.

**Letters of Support**
Submit all appropriate letters of support, including any letters necessary to demonstrate the support of content experts and programs or departments providing support to or collaborating on the project.

**Section 4: Review Process**

**Reviews**
All applications are reviewed by at least three members of the SC MIRECC Education Core or outside experts. Applications 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.

**Notice of Award/Decline**
Funding decisions are usually made by late September. Awardees will receive an award letter by email from the Clinical Educator Grant Program Director.

**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 the National MIRECC Website ([https://www.mirecc.va.gov/index.asp](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/index.asp)), Internet, library, and educational catalogs for products similar to what you propose. State how your product differs from or enhances these existing resources.

✓ **Make sure you can complete your project in the time frame you propose.** You must be able to complete or nearly complete your project between January and mid-September. If your project will take more time, you may need to divide your grant into smaller pieces and submit separate grants over a few fiscal years.

✓ **Make your product easily exportable** (e.g., materials that can be put in electronic form or posted on a website or DVDs). Examples of non-exportable products include purchasing commercial videos for multiple sites and products made specifically for one facility.

✓ **Work with colleagues on the project.** This can be more satisfying than working alone and make it easier to meet deadlines.

✓ **Get feedback on your application.** Ask colleagues who are not involved in the project to read your application. If they don’t understand what you want to do, neither will the reviewers. Sometimes people fail to ask for feedback because they are anxious about their writing. However, not getting feedback on your application is a fatal flaw. Most applicants will be asked to provide more information about their project or revise and resubmit their application.

**Section 6: Sample Applications**

Download sample Application 1 at [https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_sample_application_1.pdf](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_sample_application_1.pdf)

Download sample Application 2 at [https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_sample_application_2.pdf](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_sample_application_2.pdf)