Purpose
The VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC was awarded in 2004 to serve as a translational medicine center that develops and disseminates scientifically rigorous assessments and novel, effective interventions for post-deployment mental illnesses and related challenges impacting Veteran functional outcomes and quality of life. The center has a special emphasis on Iraq/Afghanistan-era Veterans. Key areas of research focus include PTSD, TBI, substance use disorders, pain management, suicide prevention, and violence prevention. Special subpopulations of interest include women, families, and Gulf War Veterans. This program announcement provides information, application procedures, and guidelines for expansion of MIRECC Education Core efforts for improving post-deployment mental health of Veterans.

Priority areas for funding for this announcement include the following:
1. Community-focused projects.
2. Projects conducted with operational partners or stakeholders (can be local, though ideally would be VISN and national program office level) to ensure work is informed by and coordinated well with other complementary work.
3. Translation of mental health research on Iraq/Afghanistan-era Veterans, service members, or family needs into practice, training or education efforts.

Examples of possible projects include (but are certainly not limited to):
- development of new educational programs
- evaluation and/or modification of existing teaching or training programs
- development of enduring educational materials (printed, video, DVD, software)
- development of surveys and need assessments to identify and/or address knowledge gaps
- development of clinical databases (with proper ISO/PO approvals and security) for use in education-related activities such as identifying practice gaps or new areas that need to be addressed, developing teaching files, or performing practice evaluation/quality improvements.

Eligibility
A single individual is the “Principal Applicant,” although the project may be a group effort. Collaboration within and across VA sites within VISN 6 is encouraged. Awards are made to VA mental health or physical medicine/rehabilitation staff in VISN 6. Applicants can include trainees (e.g., interns, residents, postdoctoral fellows), however, a permanent VA staff member must be listed as a co-applicant and will maintain budgetary responsibility. Awarded applicants are “Affiliate MIRECC Educator(s)” during the course of their project.

The following WILL NOT be considered:
   a) Projects that already have funding to support similar efforts; and/or
   b) Incomplete submissions.

Funding
1. Funding priority will be given to projects that focus on MIRECC priority areas and emerging areas of interest, as described above.
2. Allowed budgets will be in the range of $5,000 to $10,000, dispersed one time in FY2020.
3. Approval of awards depends on availability of funds at the time of the decision. Projects must be completed within one year of funding. Allowable budget items include commercial materials to be used in the project, materials reproduction, and non-IT equipment. Temporary personnel can be hired part-time not to exceed the limits of the funding period. Normal VA human resources policies apply to all hires. The time of permanent VA employees (including
the Principal Applicant) can be “bought-out” on a temporary basis (with of course supervisor approvals). Budget items not allowed include food items, IT equipment, and any services that can normally be provided by your VAMC facility.

Outcomes

All projects must contain some element of enduring educational materials or programming (e.g. creation of webcasts, videos, hard copy materials) that can be used by more than one set of consumers/providers on an ongoing basis after the initial funding period has lapsed. All grants must contain a plan for measurement of success/failure of the project. Use of standardized methods and instruments is strongly encouraged. Measures must be objective and quantitative. Outcome measures sufficient to demonstrate the success or failure of the intervention/project must be specifically detailed in the proposal and completed by the end of the funding period.

Dissemination and Distribution

The grant applicant must share/disseminate the knowledge gained from the project. The potential for peer-reviewed publication will be viewed favorably during review but is not necessary. All products developed with this support must include proper credit to the VISN 6 MIRECC (e.g., logo, acknowledgements) and are the property of the VISN 6 MIRECC and VHA. As such, the products are not for profit and may be distributed to other VA facilities by the VISN 6 MIRECC, with proper author credit. Products may be posted on the MIRECC website and shared with other Networks and academic institutions.

Proposal Review and Approval

1. Standard VA grant review scoring criteria will be used to rate proposals on a scale from 1.0 (Excellent) to 5.0 (poor) based on significance, innovation, approach, feasibility, innovation, impact, financial soundness, sustainability, stability of leadership involved in project, as well as alignment with MIRECC mission and priority areas.
2. Proposals will undergo peer review. The MIRECC Director and Deputy Director may be consulted to assist in final funding decisions.
3. Final decisions rest with the MIRECC Director and Deputy Director based on reviewer recommendations, center priorities, and available resources.

Timetable and Application Form Instructions

Applications must be submitted by email to Leonard DeShield on or before close of business March 31 2020:
leonard.deshiel@va.gov

Applications must be combined into a single PDF document, in the order indicated below. The project proposal (narrative) should utilize 11-point Arial font, include 1-inch margins, and must be 5 pages or less. The outline for project formatting is: required signature sheet, narrative (introduction/justification, description of project, target audience timelines for completion, outcome measures, future plans), budget, and references. The 5-page limit does not include title, budget tables, references, and CV/resumes. Project narratives longer than 5 pages, incomplete, or submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed.