



## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE MEDICAL EDUCATION AND PATIENT SAFETY GRANTS

### ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS), Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center (WBVAMC), and Wilmington VA Medical Center (WVAMC) employees (with at least 5/8ths employment) and health professions trainees are invited to submit applications for medical education and patient safety grants from the Veterans Health Foundation (VHF).

### AWARD CEILING:

These funds are limited to not more than \$10,000 per award. The project award is for a term of one year with a no cost extension for an additional year available by request.

### REVIEW CRITERIA:

Awards will be based on educational merit and innovation, applicability to patient safety, and relevance to the VA mission. Grant reviewers will be selected by the VAPHS ACOS for Education, ACOS for Research and Development and the VHF Chief Executive Officer. Reviewers will be comprised of medical educators, researchers, clinical staff, and Veterans. Reviewers without connection to the applicant will score applications utilizing a standardized scoring assessment. The grant review committee will determine the cut-off score for awards and make the final funding decision.

### SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL DATES:

All applications must be submitted electronically to: [Shannon.Hula@va.gov](mailto:Shannon.Hula@va.gov). The deadline for the submission of applications will be Wednesday, May 1, 2024. The target date for the notification of approval/disapproval is June 7, 2024.

Funds will be administered by the Veterans Health Foundation.

### Attachments:

- a. Letter to Applicants
- b. Instructions for Grant Application
- c. Appendix 1: Research vs. Quality Improvement Chart
- d. Appendix 2: Fillable Electronic Cover Page
- e. Appendix 3: Budget Template



## MEDICAL EDUCATION AND PATIENT SAFETY GRANT APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Dear Applicant:

The Veterans Health Foundation (VHF) invites you to submit an application for the VHF funded Medical Education and Patient Safety (MEPS) grants. The MEPS grants were established in 2014 to provide support for VAPHS staff and trainees conducting new and worthy projects in medical education and/or patient safety. In 2023, the program was expanded to include WBVAMC and WVAMC. The goal of these grants is to support the scholarly work of VA staff and trainees in medical education and patient safety and to encourage staff and trainees to pursue further innovative ideas based on their projects.

Eligibility criteria:

- VA staff applicants must have a 5/8ths or greater appointment at the VA at the project start date.
- Postgraduate trainees are eligible for grant awards but must base their activities at VAPHS, WBVAMC, or WVAMC.
- Investigators previously awarded MEPS grants that were not used for reasons within the investigators' control are ineligible to apply for another such award until 2 years have elapsed between the end of the previous MEPS award and the date of proposed application for another such award. When this interval of 2 years has elapsed, prior recipients are eligible to apply for another MEPS award. The end of the award is two years following the local site approval to initiate the approved MEPS project.

Any project involving the cooperation of another VA Medical Center will need endorsement and clarification of any issues of financial support from that Medical Center's Director. MEPS funds **are not available** for physical plant infrastructure, or **for salary support for the investigator nor their mentor. The service line of other VA employees may be reimbursed for the time the employee works on the grant.** Funding for personnel support is a legitimate request. **Budget requests for travel must not exceed \$2,500.00. Only one application per individual will be accepted.**

All proposals will be rated on a competitive basis. **Individuals not currently receiving funds from other sources will receive higher priority. This grant is intended to support the non-traditional investigator with a focus on the clinician educator.**

Grants are awarded on a competitive basis. **The amount of the award is a maximum of \$10,000; funds must be utilized over no more than two years.** Grant application reviews will be compiled and written critiques from the review process will be provided to each applicant upon written request. 6-month progress reports will be required as well as a final report when the project is complete. Fund utilization will be audited by VHF Administration to ensure that funds are spent in a manner consistent with the grant submission and according to VHF policies.

If you are interested in applying for these funds, please follow the attached instructions for preparing the grant application and contact the VHF Grants and Contracts Manager with any questions. **Incomplete applications or applications not prepared in accordance with instructions will not be considered.**

We look forward to your participation in this program.

Sincerely,

Alanna Caffas  
CEO  
Veterans Health Foundation



## INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING MEPS GRANT APPLICATION

Applications for the MEPS program are limited to 5 single-spaced pages, excluding references. The application package should include:

- The Medical Education and Patient Safety Grants Application Fillable Electronic Cover Page
- A complete one-year budget using the included template. Include a budget justification for personnel and all equipment items. Examples of budget line items: Biostatistician or research assistant support (\$80/hour through the VAPHS Research STAT core), equipment purchase, travel and/or registration to conference to present findings.
- The NIH biographical sketch for the Principal Investigator and any other key personnel, include all past research grant(s) and fellowship support.
- Project Plan  
The plan should include sufficient information needed for reviewers to evaluate the project, independent of any other document. Be specific and informative and avoid redundancies. Organize items a-c (below), to answer these questions:

(1) What do you intend to do? (2) Why is the work important? (3) What has already been done? (4) How are you going to do the work?

The nature of patient safety quality improvement projects will necessitate some differences in the study plan, compared to a traditional research plan. Appendix 1 has a chart to assist the investigator in designing these types of studies.

**Do not exceed 5 pages for items a-c, with margins set at 1 inch and the font at 11 points or larger.** All tables, graphs, figures, diagrams and charts must be included within the 5-page limit. **References should not exceed two pages and do not count against the 5-page limit.**

- Specific Aims.** List the project objectives and what the specific activity or intervention proposed in this application is intended to accomplish. State the medical education question to be tested or the specific need to be filled. For patient safety projects, identify the patient care issue or healthcare process that you plan to improve.
- Background and Significance.** Briefly sketch the background leading to the present application, critically evaluate existing knowledge, and specifically identify the gaps that the project is intended to fill. State concisely the importance and relevance of the medical education or patient safety project described in this application by relating the specific aims to the broad, long-term objectives.
- Design and Methods.** Describe the medical education or patient safety project design and the procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. For patient safety projects, please answer the questions, "*How will you analyze the patient safety issue?*" and "*How will you demonstrate an improvement that positively impacts patient safety?*" Describe any new methodology and its advantage over existing methodologies. Discuss the potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieving the aims. As part of this section, provide a planned timeline for project completion. Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and the precautions to be exercised.



## INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING MEPS GRANT APPLICATION

**The 5-page limit will be strictly enforced. Applications that exceed this limit or do not conform to the type size limitations will be returned without review. The full application must be combined into one PDF document.**

**Applications must be submitted electronically to [Shannon.Hula@va.gov](mailto:Shannon.Hula@va.gov)**

**Applicants for MEPS awards may appeal decisions of the MEPS Review Committee by notifying the ACOS/E in writing within 30 days of the decision.** Appeals may not be based on the Review Committee's assessment of scientific merit or significance of the application, only on the grounds of conflict of interest or procedural issues. The Review Committee Chair has the discretion to reject the appeal if the appeal is without merit or refer the appeal to the full MEPS Review Committee for review of the appeal and reconsideration of the application if the appeal is granted.

Any questions relating to application submission should be directed to the VHF Grants and Contracts Manager.

### Contact Information:

Shannon Hula, PhD  
Grants and Contracts Manager  
Veterans Health Foundation  
University Drive C, Building 30  
Pittsburgh, PA 15240  
[Shannon.Hula@va.gov](mailto:Shannon.Hula@va.gov)

# Research project vs Quality Improvement project

	Research project	Quality improvement project
Purpose	Generate generalizable knowledge	Improve a patient care or healthcare process
Starting point	Gap in knowledge	Patient care problem
End point	Answer a research question	Improvement of a program, process, or system
Testing strategy	Single test	Sequential testing (PDSA cycles)
Design	Predetermined protocol, rigorous design	Adaptive, iterative design
Data analysis	Statistically prove/disprove hypothesis	Identify outcome data to compare new program, process, or system to prior
Publication/presentation	Expectation that investigator share results broadly	Project designers expected to share insights locally; encouraged to share them broadly



University Drive C, Building 30, Ground Floor
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15240
Telephone: 412.360.2403 Fax: 412.360.2393

MEDICAL EDUCATION AND PATIENT SAFETY (MEPS)
GRANT APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Principal Investigator (PI) \_\_\_\_\_
(last name, first name, middle initial)

Are you a post graduate trainee? Yes [ ] No [ ] (If no, skip this section)

Training Program \_\_\_\_\_

Program Director's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Post Graduate Year of Training \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Department/Service Line \_\_\_\_\_

Date Entered VA Duty \_\_\_\_\_

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Year Awarded \_\_\_\_\_

VA Employment in Eighths \_\_\_\_\_

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Year Awarded \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Department/Division \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number \_\_\_\_\_

Project Category: Education [ ] Patient Safety [ ]

Title of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Location/Facility for Completion of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Requested \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NO MORE THAN \$10,000 MAY BE REQUESTED

Start Date of Project \_\_\_\_\_

End Date of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: Those applications approved for funding will require all appropriate subcommittee approvals and ACOS/R&D or ACOS/E notification in order to request the release of funds. If deemed exempt, confirmation of determination is required. If an award is made, the awardee will abide by all guidelines established by their local VA Research and Development or Education Office as well as VHF.

Signature of PI \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of PI's Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_