Veterans Health Foundation

Improving Veteran Lives Through Research and Education

2026 Medical Education and Patient Safety Award

Request for Applications

Purpose

Veterans Health Foundation (VHF) invites VA staff and postgraduate trainees to propose practical projects that strengthen medical education, improve patient safety, and advance the quality of care for Veterans. The Medical Education and Patient Safety (MEPS) program supports people who see an opportunity to improve everyday practice and have a workable plan to test and evaluate a solution.

This opportunity is designed for nontraditional researchers, especially clinician educators and staff or trainees whose primary work is patient care, teaching, or quality improvement. Applicants do not need an established research career or prior grant funding. Proposals should explain the problem, the proposed change, and how the team will determine whether it made a meaningful difference.

Award at a glance

- Funding: Up to $10,000 per award, administered by VHF.
- Project period: One year, with an additional one-year no-cost extension available by request. Funds may be used for no more than two years.
- Eligible VA sites: VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS), Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center (WBVAMC), Wilmington VA Medical Center (WVAMC) and VA Butler Healthcare System.
- Applications: One application per individual.

2026 application cycle

Release date: **October 23,2026**
Application deadline: **December 9, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. EST**
Target award notification: **January 22,2027**
Submit one complete PDF to: grants@veteranshealthfoundation.org

Who may apply

- VA employees must hold a VA appointment of at least 5/8ths at the project start date at an eligible site.
- Postgraduate trainees must base their project activities at an eligible VA site
- Priority will be given to individuals not currently receiving funding from other sources. Disclose current and prior grant and fellowship support in the application.

Prior recipients whose MEPS funds were not used for reasons within their control may not reapply until two years have elapsed between the end of the prior award and the new application date. For this eligibility rule, the prior award ends two years after local site approval to initiate the project.

Projects involving another VA medical center require that medical center director's endorsement and clarification of any financial support arrangements.

Projects encouraged

Projects may address medical education, patient safety, or quality improvement tied to these areas. Examples include:

- Testing an educational approach, curriculum, simulation, or feedback process and measuring its effect on learning or clinical practice.
- Improving a handoff, medication safety process, follow-up system, or other care process that creates a risk for patients.
- Testing a practical workflow change and tracking whether it improves the reliability, safety, or quality of Veteran care.

A strong proposal identifies a specific local need, sets a realistic improvement goal, and uses measures appropriate to the project. Innovation may be a thoughtful adaptation of an existing approach to a new local need. The plan should be understandable to reviewers from clinical, education, research, and Veteran backgrounds.

How funds may be used

Allowable requests include project personnel support, equipment, and travel or conference registration to present findings. Include a complete one-year budget and a justification for personnel and equipment. Use current cost estimates for any statistical or other support services.

- Travel requests may not exceed $2,500.
- Funds may not support physical plant infrastructure or salary for the project lead or mentor.
- The service line of other full-time VA employees may be reimbursed for time those employees work on the project.

What to submit

Combine the following into one PDF. The five-page limit applies to the project plan, including its tables and figures; the cover page, budget, biographical sketches, and references are separate.

- Completed MEPS fillable electronic cover page.
- Complete one-year budget using the MEPS budget template, with budget justification.
- NIH biographical sketch for the project lead and other key personnel, including past grant and fellowship support. Applicants without prior funding should state that; relevant clinical, teaching, and improvement experience should be described.
- Project plan of no more than five single-spaced pages, with one-inch margins and font size of at least 11 points. References may occupy up to two additional pages.

How to write the project plan

Use the three sections below. Write in plain language, define unfamiliar terms, and provide enough information for reviewers to evaluate the project without consulting other documents.

1 Project goals and intended improvement

What problem or educational need will you address? Who is affected? Describe the change you propose and what you intend to accomplish during the award period. For patient safety or quality improvement projects, identify the care process or safety issue and set a measurable goal. For education projects, identify the learning need and intended educational outcome.

2 Background and importance

Why does this matter for Veterans, learners, or VA care teams? Summarize the local need and relevant existing work. Explain what is missing from current practice and why your proposed approach is a reasonable next step. Include available baseline information or explain how you will obtain it.

3 Project approach and evaluation

Describe the activities, team responsibilities, setting, and one-year timeline. Explain how you will test or implement the change and assess results. Address:

- Measures and data: What will you measure, where will data come from, and when will you collect it? Describe how you will compare results with baseline or another appropriate reference.
- Analysis and learning: How will you summarize and interpret findings? Use an approach suited to the project's size and purpose; explain how results will guide improvement.
- Feasibility and risks: Identify resources, anticipated barriers, alternative approaches, and any hazards to personnel and planned precautions.
- Next steps: Explain how useful changes could be sustained and how findings will be shared with relevant VA teams or learners.

Review and selection

Awards are competitive. Review will emphasize the quality and relevance of the proposed project, including educational merit and innovation, applicability to patient safety, and alignment with the VA mission. Applicants should demonstrate:

- A clear, meaningful educational need or patient safety problem.
- A practical approach that fits the setting and available resources.
- Measurable goals and a credible plan to assess outcomes or improvement.
- A feasible timeline, justified budget, and relevant team experience.

The program's focus is the nontraditional researcher and clinician educator. Applications should be evaluated in that context, recognizing relevant clinical, teaching, and quality improvement experience rather than expecting an established record of research funding.

Applications are reviewed by an individual committee comprised of medical educators, researchers, clinical staff, and Veterans. Reviewers without a connection to the applicant will use a standardized scoring assessment. The review committee establishes the funding cutoff and makes final award decisions. Written critiques are available to applicants upon written request.

Award responsibilities

Recipients must submit a progress report at six months and a final report at project completion. Reports should describe activities, results to date, barriers, and use of funds. VHF Administration will audit expenditures for consistency with the approved application and VHF policies. Any requested extension must remain within the maximum two-year award period.

Submission and questions

Submit a complete, legible PDF electronically by the confirmed deadline. Incomplete applications or applications that do not follow the instructions will not be considered. Project plans exceeding five pages or failing to meet the font-size requirements will be returned without review.

Applications must be submitted to grants@veteranshealthfoundation.org

Appeals

Applicants may appeal in writing to the Chief Executive Officer within 30 days of the decision. Appeals are limited to conflicts of interest or procedural issues and may not challenge the review committee's assessment of scientific merit or significance. The committee chair may reject an appeal without merit or refer it to the full committee for review and, if granted, reconsideration of the application.