

**REHABILITATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE
INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A LETTER OF INTENT FOR
MERIT REVIEW AND SMALL PROJECTS**

1. **PURPOSE:** This Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D) document contains required instructions for preparing and submitting a Letter Of Intent (LOI) to RR&D. More specifically, this document is to:
 - a. Confirm that each application forwarded to RR&D falls within the announced priority research areas or in those areas cited in subsequent special Request for Application (RFA) solicitations. *NOTE: The Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) for Research should carefully review the mission of each Service within the Office of Research and Development (ORD) to ensure that applications are sent to the most appropriate Service for review.*
 - b. Confirm that each application forwarded to RR&D has the potential to add to and improve the knowledge base in specific research areas.
 - c. Identify and resolve major problem areas such as Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) investigator eligibility and VA off-site research issues prior to the submission of a full application.
 - d. Provide RR&D an opportunity to plan for appropriate resources that allow for an efficient and effective review process.

2. **POLICY:** All applicants for research support through RR&D are required to submit a LOI each review cycle, including resubmissions and revisions. A description of the proposed project in terms of its objectives, rationale, methods, key personnel, resource requirements, expected outcomes, technology transfer implications and the impact on the healthcare delivery system for Veterans should be included. Each application submission must be preceded by an LOI. Applicants may submit more than one LOI per review cycle.
 - a. **Special Solicitations or Requests for Application (RFAs).** An RFA can be announced at any time and will contain special requirements and due dates. RFAs are posted on the ORD Intranet at <http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm>. *NOTE: Refer to specific solicitation number and instructions for submission information.*
 - b. **Due Date.** The LOI process was designed to provide a systematic and defined approach to enhance the development of successful applications for RR&D funding, to allow investigators as much time as possible to develop and fine tune applications and to permit adequate time for required reviews and approvals at the facility level. Please refer to the ORD Submission Calendar at <http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/process/submission-calendar.cfm> and the applicable RFA for submission deadlines.
 - c. **Review Process.** LOIs will be reviewed for scientific merit, relevance to Veterans' needs, RR&D Service priority areas, and whether the proposed research advances the knowledge base of rehabilitation research. Email notification of receipt will be issued

to the submitting VA facility within two weeks of the LOI submission deadline. If any issue(s) arise with the LOI, a Scientific Program Manager (SPM) will contact the station to attempt to resolve the issue(s). If the issue(s) cannot be resolved, then the LOI will be disapproved and an email to that effect will be sent. Contact to the station will be made at least two weeks prior to the application submission deadline. If the station is not contacted by a RR&D SPM, then the LOI has been accepted.

- d. **Off-Site Research.** VHA policy mandates that VA-funded research be performed within VA medical centers or in VA leased space, except when off-site facilities provide unique research opportunities (see VHA Handbook 1200.16). Full off-site waiver requests should be submitted to the RR&D Director (rrdreviews@va.gov) 60 days prior to the due date for receipt of applications to allow sufficient time for processing. Refer to Table 4 in the applicable RFA for deadlines. Applications for off-site research submitted without an approved off-site waiver will be returned without review. Partial off-site waivers will be addressed during JIT.
- e. **Eligibility.** All applicants (i.e., all persons assigned the PI role) for VA research funds must hold a minimum 5/8 VA salaried position before a research project can be funded (see VHA Handbook 1200.15). Eligibility waiver requests should be submitted to the RR&D Director (rrdreviews@va.gov) 60 days prior to the due date for receipt of applications to allow sufficient time for processing. Refer to Table 4 in the applicable RFA for deadlines. Applications for research submitted without an approved eligibility waiver will be returned without review.

3. FORMAT

- a. Type all pages single-spaced, with at least one-half inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right). Use an Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia typeface, a black font color, and a font size of 11 points or larger. Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch and 6 lines per inch.
- b. Number all pages consecutively, in the bottom right-hand margin, starting with the first page following the LOI Cover Page (VA Form 10-1313-13) and ending with the last page. Include the applicant's name and page number (e.g., Jones-1 to Jones-22).

4. CONTENT

- a. An LOI Cover Sheet (VA Form 10-1313-13) is required for all submission types. Check applicable categories in each box and type in all requested information.
 - (1) In Box 2 mark: "new" if this is the first submission of the ensuing application; "resubmission" if the ensuing application is a resubmission of a previously reviewed application; "revision" if the LOI has been modified from the initial submission in the current cycle. Use the previous grant number in Box 2 for resubmissions.
 - (2) Check the appropriate program and level in Box 3. For Small Projects mark *Other* and type in "SPiRE". For Research Career Scientist mark *Other* and type in "RCS". Provide the RFA number under *Response to Specific Announcement*.

- b. An LOI is limited to three pages of text, one page of cited references, and one page describing the PI’s experience in the proposed research area. Note: This information (4.b.) is not required for RCS or resubmission applications; only the cover sheet (4.a.) is required.

(1) **Text Pages (not to exceed three pages).** In the following order, state:

- (a) For merit and small project applications, state preference for assignment to a specific scientific review group, and identify the SPM(s) with whom there have been discussions regarding this application. Resubmission applications are automatically assigned to the original review panel, unless specifically requested otherwise. RR&D will make the final determination for best placement. See [Purview of RR&D Scientific Review Groups](#).
- (b) **Purpose.** List the goals and specific objectives of the proposed research; clearly state the question to be addressed, hypothesis to be tested, methods, concepts, systems, or devices to be developed or evaluated.
- (c) **Background.** State the scientific rationale for the proposed research and its relationship to other major research findings. Explain how this research will advance knowledge in rehabilitation research. Describe the significance of the research and how it relates to RR&D priority areas. Indicate how this research directly benefits Veterans and how it contributes to the quality of services provided by VA.
- (d) **Methods and Research Plan.** Outline the proposed study design and methods. Identify (VA) subject population, sample size, and rationale for inclusion or exclusion of population served; (it is required that women and members of diverse ethnic and racial groups be recruited, unless contraindicated due to the study’s aims). Identify key issues that may have an impact on the success of the proposed project, such as: subject recruitment, participation of specialized personnel, orphan companies, space, and budget. Specify if the proposed research will involve animals and, if so, the time frame to clinical application. Indicate implications for technology transfer and potential for replication.
- (e) **Key Personnel.** Identify PI(s), co-investigators, collaborators, and consultants, and state their areas of expertise in a table format. Also include writers of support letters.

Name	Institution (if university, also include any VA affiliation (i.e., IPA, WOC))	Role and Percent Effort	Expertise

- (f) **Resources needed for the study with associated costs.** Refer to the applicable RFA for details about project duration and budget caps.
 - (g) **Project History.** Indicate whether this study is new, a continuation of an existing project (include years funded), or related to a previously unfunded project. Indicate the project number, title, and date of the previous related submission.
- (2) **Research Site.** State the name of the lead facility where the research (subject and laboratory work) will take place. If a portion of the project will be performed at any other site(s), identify the site location(s).
- (3) **Cited References (not to exceed one page).**
- (4) **PI's Experience (not to exceed one page).** Describe the PI's experience in the proposed research area.

5. SUBMITTING THE LOI

The LOI must be saved as a single PDF file. Name the file as follows: principal investigator's last name_station number_LOI (e.g., Jones_122_LOI). Submit the application electronically to rrdreviews@va.gov. Use the following text in the email "Subject:" line: [insert PI last name] LOI for [insert review cycle] Merit Review.

- a. **Signatures.** The LOI must be signed and dated by the ACOS or R&D Coordinator, or the appropriate designee. LOIs will not be accepted without being processed through the appropriate research office.
- b. **Deadlines.** The signed LOI must be received by 11:59 p.m. ET on the submission due date to receive consideration. Please refer to the ORD Submission Calendar at <http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/process/submission-calendar.cfm> and the applicable RFA for submission deadlines.

6. INQUIRIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Inquiries may be directed to RR&D, Program Analysis and Review Section (PARS) at rrdreviews@va.gov or (202) 443-5757. Please refer also to the RR&D website at <http://www.rehab.research.va.gov/>.