



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**OFFICE OF RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT**  
**UNDER SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR**  
**OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN HEALTH SYSTEMS RESEARCH**  
**PROGRAM GUIDE, 1204.04**

As of February 12, 2025, the Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research (VHA Handbook 1204.04) has been replaced with this HSR Program Guide.

**ISSUANCE DATE: February 12, 2025**

**EXPIRATION DATE: February 11, 2030**

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## **1. PURPOSE**

This Program Guide describes procedures related to nomination and selection for the Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Systems Research.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Systems Research was established in 1998 as Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research, in recognition of the importance of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Services Research Program and its vital link to the health care of Veterans and the public. VHA annually invites nominations for this award in recognition of the highest level of achievement in Health Systems Research. A committee convened by VA Health Systems Research (HSR) reviews all nominations and recommends one VA investigator as the awardee to the Under Secretary for Health for approval.

## **3. HSR AWARD REVIEW COMMITTEE**

The HSR Award Review Committee is appointed by the Director, HSR and comprised of experienced health services researchers with and without a VA affiliation. The committee includes the Chair of HSR's Scientific Merit Review Board, a former USH Awardee, and others familiar with health services research, VA priorities, and HSR's goals.

## **4. AWARD CRITERIA**

The HSR Award Review Committee reviews and evaluates the nominations, based on the following criteria:

- a. The candidate's research has led to a major improvement in the quality of Veterans' health care or has added significantly to the understanding of factors that affect the health of America's Veterans;
- b. The candidate has made a substantive contribution to the future of VA Health Systems Research by inspiring a new generation of investigators and has demonstrated excellence in training and mentorship of new investigators; and
- c. The candidate has enhanced the visibility and reputation of VA research through national leadership in the research community.
- d. If no candidate meets the established criteria, no nomination will be forwarded by the Committee.

## **5. ELIGIBILITY**

Each facility may nominate one candidate, who must be employed by VA with at least a 5/8 full-time equivalency appointment. The research contribution leading to the nomination must have been carried out in VA, and it must relate clearly to VA's research

mission. For additional information refer to:  
[http://www.HSR&D.research.va.gov/for\\_researchers/awards/under\\_secretary/](http://www.HSR&D.research.va.gov/for_researchers/awards/under_secretary/).

## **6. DESCRIPTION OF AWARD**

Awardees receive a \$5,000 cash award and an inscribed plaque commemorating the awardee's achievement. In addition, the awardee's facility receives \$50,000 per year for up to 3 years to support the awardee's research, provided that the awardee is the recipient of a currently-funded, nationally peer-reviewed research project (VA Merit Review, or non-VA research support). The award is presented at a national meeting.

## **7. RESPONSIBILITIES**

a. Under Secretary for Health approves the nomination. At the national ceremony, the Under Secretary for Health or designee presents the award to the honored researcher and to the Director of the sponsoring VA facility.

b. The Chief Research and Development Officer (CRADO) approves the selection of the nominee and submits VA Form 4659, Incentive Award Recommendation and Approval, to the VHA Awards team.

c. The Director, HSR, appoints the Award Review Committee, reviews the nomination package for the selected candidate and submits to the CRADO for approval, and ensures presentation of the award at an appropriate venue.

d. The HSR Program Coordinator announces the opportunity for nominations to the field, specifying the due date for complete nomination packages; provides guidance on preparing the nomination packages; convenes the Award Review Committee; ensures all nominations receive administrative and scientific review; obtains appropriate concurrences and approvals for the nominee; and arranges the presentation of the award.

e. The VA facility Research & Development Committee evaluates the merits of all candidates proposed by that facility and recommends one candidate to the VA facility Director for submission.

f. The Associate Chief of Staff for Research (ACOS/R) ensures that a complete nomination package is submitted to HSR by the due date specified in the announcement for nominations.

g. The Administrative officer (AO) at the facility of the honoree facilitates the payment of the one-time cash award to the honoree and manages the \$50,000 per year for up to 3 years to support the honoree's research provided the honoree is the recipient of a currently-funded, nationally peer-reviewed research project (VA Merit Review, or non-VA research support).

**February 12, 2025**

**UNDER SECRETARY'S AWARD**

APPROVED:

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