

Biomedical Laboratory Research & Development (BLR&D)

Guidance for Submission of a Letter of Intent for a BLR&D Distinguished Medical Research Scientist (DMRS) Award

I. Introduction

The application process for a BLR&D Distinguished Medical Research Scientist (DMRS) Award application begins with the preparation and submission of a Letter of Intent (LOI). **The primary purpose of the LOI is to provide BLR&D with the opportunity to determine if proposed applicant and studies meet the requirements of the funding opportunity announcement.**

In addition, submission of the LOI allows BLR&D the opportunity to access and provide feedback on the clinical and/or scientific focus and design of the collaborative merit reviews, the proposed innovations, and the overall impact on the veteran population.

II. Objectives for DMRS Award

BLR&D recognizes the important contributions of distinguished non-clinician scientists to the VA-ORD research program, through the Distinguished Medical Research Scientist (DMRS) Award. This Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) provides salary and research support to the non-clinical scientific recipient of the highest international recognition in the field of biomedical research. The DMRS should have a demonstrated record of commitment to VA research through seminal contributions to the biomedical fields and bringing prestige to research conducted at VAMC. The awardee is expected to continue to make high impact contributions to several medical and scientific disciplines to improve health care of Veterans. The award provides salary and research support for the term of the award and is renewable.

III. Eligible Individuals

Current, non-clinician VA investigators with the highest international recognition are eligible to apply. Scientists paid by the Medical Care appropriation are not eligible to apply for a DMRS award. It is expected that DMRS applicants have the qualifications for a GS-15 appointment within the Federal Government and the title of Professor at the university affiliate. Investigators responding to this RFA will have a majority of their Merit Award funding supported by BLR&D, shall maintain a VA employment of 5/8th or higher, and shall conduct all of VA-funded research in VA or VA-leased space. Note, space under a shared-use agreement (i.e. revocable license or license agreement with the affiliate) is not considered VA-leased space. Off-site waiver, partial or full, will not be available for the DMRS Award.

III. LOI Approval Considerations

The BLR&D DMRS Award LOI will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Professional Stature: The DMRS applicant's professional stature is evaluated based on their receiving one of the highest national and internal recognition in the biomedical field; membership on the national and international scientific academies; and recognition by national and international academies, societies, and universities.

Research Contributions: DMRS applicants' contributions to VA research is evaluated for its impact on Veterans health. Additional evaluation criteria include their research history of publishing peer-reviewed research papers in high impact journals, patents and licenses, scientific awards and recognitions. Research contribution is also evaluated for its impact on a broad range of health care conditions, establishing research collaborations, and mentoring and training scientific leaders. Please include examples of activities that had measurable impact on VA healthcare or advancing Veterans healthcare. **NOTE:** *Relevance of applicant's activities to improving the quality of care for Veterans is considered essential.*

Collaborations: DMRS applicants are evaluated for collaborations with VA and non-VA scientists and VA clinicians as evidenced by their joint peer-reviewed publications, developing novel therapeutic strategies to address Veterans health Care needs, sharing research techniques and/or special procedures, obtaining grants together, etc. **NOTE:** *Publications with VA clinician scientists are valued.*

Administrative Service: Both local and national VA and non-VA research administration is evaluated including serving as a research ambassador for the VA organization, local VA medical center committee service, and service at the affiliated university. **NOTE:** *Service to the local and national VA research program is considered essential.*

Research Project: DMRS applicants are evaluated for scientific and technical merit of the proposed research plan.

Note: Information used to evaluate the LOI submission will be gathered both from the CV and the 3-page letter of intent document. The 3-page letter of intent document may be used to briefly describe the specific aims of the research project, professional stature, and research contribution. Information describing collaborations and administrative service may be included in the CV.

IV. Components of the LOI Submission

LOIs must be submitted using the following template. Each LOI must contain the following three required components (A-C):

A. VHA Research & Development Letter of Intent Cover Page (VA Form 10-1313-13)

This form is available on the [forms page of the VA Research website](#).

B. Completed LOI Document

Please briefly address **all** of the requirements (Professional Stature, Research Contributions, Collaborations, Administrative Service, Research Project) in a 3-page pdf in conjunction with the Curriculum Vitae.

C. PI's Curriculum Vitae

Please include the applicant's Curriculum Vitae.

D. Letter of Nomination

A one-page letter of nomination from Medical Director of VAMC and ACOS(R) is required for this funding opportunity. The letter should state how nominee meets the requirements of the DMRS award, their highest scientific recognition, and VA service and contribution to Veterans Health. The letter should also include an explicit statement of where research will be conducted, whether it is in VA space or VA-leased space, and that the VA space described in the application and necessary support of the VA facility will be available. The letter should also declare the eligibility status and the current VA employment status of the PI, including 8ths.

V. Submission of the LOI

BLR&D will review and respond to submitted LOIs at any time; however, an LOI must be submitted no later than the date specified in the RFA. LOIs must be e-mailed to VHABLRD-CSR@va.gov by the local VA facility research office. Applicants may not upload LOIs directly to the mailbox. Questions relating to the LOI preparation and submission process may also be directed to VHABLRD-CSR@va.gov. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit LOIs as early as possible.**

LOIs with the following issues will be administratively withdrawn:

- Multiple submissions on behalf of the same PI;
- LOIs lacking the requisite information;
- LOIs submitted by investigators who do not meet the eligibility requirement.

LOIs meeting all of the administrative requirements are subject to disapproval if:

- Lacking in innovation/impact;
- Do not fall within the purview of BLR&D and/or research priority area;

VI. Approval

The LOI approval letter must be submitted with the full application package (in the Letters of Support attachment, o8b_VA_Letters of Support.pdf). **BLR&D may**

administratively withdraw from review any application that substantially deviates from what was described and approved at the LOI stage.

An approved DMRS development LOI is valid for a maximum of three (3) submissions of an application (initial submission and up to two resubmissions) during a period that encompasses four (4) **consecutive** review cycles following the initial approval of the LOI.

Effective: July 2019