



VHA IE Fellowships

VHA Innovation Ecosystem FY2025 ENTREPRENEUR IN RESIDENCE AND SENIOR INNOVATION FELLOWSHIPS APPLICATION GUIDE

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning



VHA Innovation Ecosystem

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VHA Innovation Ecosystem Fellowships Application Timeline

APRIL 1

Sign up for VHA IE Fellowships Application Reminders here

April 23, 25, 30 + May 9

Meet the Fellows Information Session. Sign up here.

May 21 + June 6

IE Fellowships: How to Apply Information Sessions - Sign up here.

May 14

VHA IE Fellowships Application portal opens

June 14

VHA IE Fellowships Application portal closes

August 2024

Applicants notified of acceptance

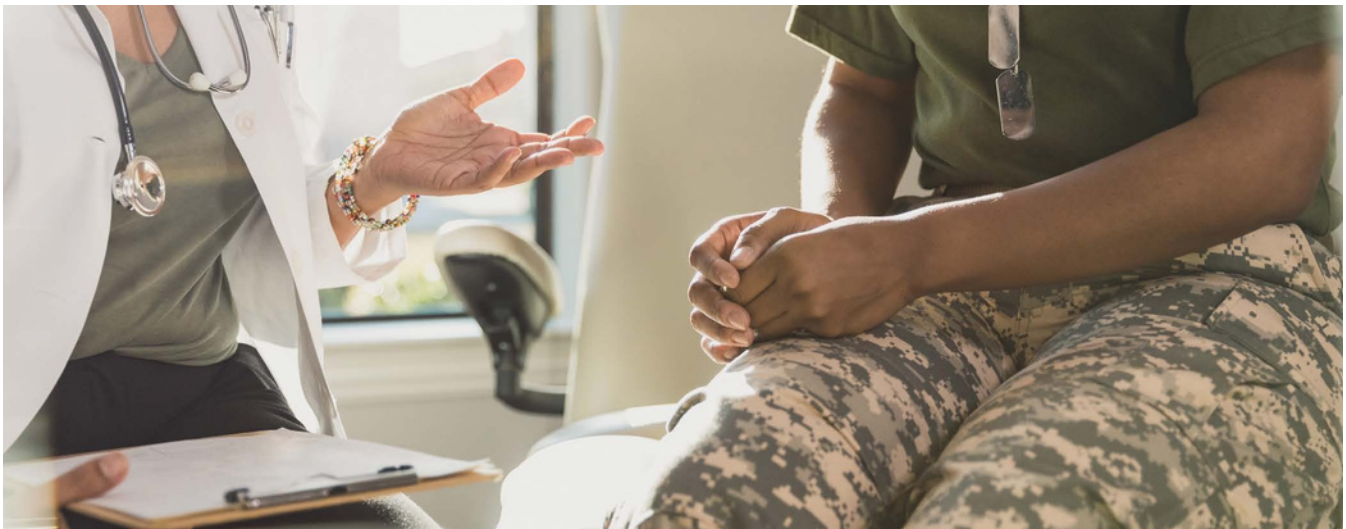
September 2024

VHA IE Announces the 2025 VHA Entrepreneur in Residence and Senior Innovation Fellowship Cohorts

Fall 2024 (Oct/Nov)

2025 VHA IE Fellowship year begins and Fellows attend VHA Innovation Experience (iEX)

Guiding Principles



When completing your application questions, it can be helpful to demonstrate how your project reflects the following values, strategies, and priorities.

VA Mission

“To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those who have served in our nation’s military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”

VHA Mission

Honor America’s Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

VHA Innovation Ecosystem (IE) Mission

VHA IE is the catalyst for enabling the discovery and spread of mission-driven health care innovation to advance care delivery and service that exceeds expectations, restores hope, and builds trust within the Veteran community. VHA IE leverages the collective power of innovation champions from across VA, academia, other government agencies, and industry to operationalize innovation and scale best practices. Through these collaborations, VHA IE is able to test, replicate, and scale innovations into practice to drive operational value for the enterprise.

VA CORE VALUES (I CARE)

- Integrity
- Commitment
- Advocacy
- Respect
- Excellence





VHA UNDER
SECRETARY FOR
HEALTH

CORE PRIORITIES

- Hire Faster and More Competitively
- Connect Veterans to the Soonest and Best Care
- Serve Veterans with Military Environmental Exposures
- Accelerate VA's Journey to a High Reliability Organization
- Support Veterans' Whole Health, their Caregivers, and Survivors
- Prevent Veteran Suicide

VHA IE Fellowships Overview

VHA Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning (VHA OHIL) Innovation Ecosystem Fellowships present an unparalleled opportunity for health care leaders who possess a dynamic presence, a passion for innovation, and a forward-thinking vision. VHA IE Fellows are provided the chance to gain valuable experience and hone the skills necessary to create positive contributions to VA Health Care Systems.

VHA IE Fellows remain at their assigned duty stations, working on existing transformational projects in all stages of implementation throughout VA. Participants acquire essential innovation competencies, develop their leadership skills, and promote innovative visions across VHA.

VHA IE Fellowships prepare emerging health care leaders for potential leadership positions within local VA Medical Centers (VAMC), VISN regions, and/or VHA Program Offices.

VHA IE Fellowships Mission

VHA Innovation Ecosystem Fellowships empower VA employees through strategic guidance and relationship development to become change agents and catalytic leaders capable of championing solutions that will improve health care for Veterans.



Education and
Empowerment
Exercises

Project
Promotion and
Expansion

Improved
Innovation
Competencies

Nationally
Recognized
Mentors and
Subject Matter
Experts

Community
of Innovation
Peers

Project
Resources
and Funding

Program Structure and Curriculum

1. VHA IE Fellows attend virtual or in-person sessions in Washington, D.C. and other locations. Sessions feature professional enrichment content highlighting innovation core competencies.

2. VHA IE Fellows implement an enterprise-wide innovation project or a project of relative significance. Eligible applicants must have projects that are relevant to VHA mission, strategic priorities, and/or operations.

3. VHA IE Fellows are expected to make substantive progress on their projects and identifiable contributions to VHA.

4. VHA IE Fellows have access to nationally recognized mentors and experts based on their area of interest. Mentors will assist Fellows with career development and project focus and implementation.

5. VHA IE Fellows expand their community of peers, advancing their knowledge, networks, and abilities to bolster VHA innovation and educate external innovators on key VHA challenges and solutions.

6. VHA IE Fellows are **required to attend VHA Innovation Experience (iEX), typically held in October.**

7. VHA IE Fellows will attend an orientation as the program begins and attend subsequent monthly meetings to discuss project progress, challenges, and solutions with their peers. Fellows are also encouraged to attend leadership summits throughout the program.

8. To support business case development, VHA IE Fellows attend a 3-day VHA Diffusion of Excellence Diffusion Academy event to learn how to build an effective business case.

9. The program does not schedule sessions on weekends or over federal holidays. VHA IE Fellows are

otherwise at their assigned duty station with the expectation that up to 20% of their time will be focused on their VHA IE Fellowships project.

10. This program is a knowledge enrichment and leadership development opportunity and includes resourcing and funding as agreed upon after candidate selection. This may include salary reimbursement and/or project resource support and will be negotiated between each VHA IE Fellow, their leadership, and VHA Innovation Ecosystem. Additionally, travel expenses and administrative support related to work performed as a VHA IE Fellow may be covered by VHA Innovation Ecosystem upon approval.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- **Fellows remain at their duty station**
- **Up to 20% protected time for Fellowship Project**
- **2024 VHA Innovation Experience Conference (iEX)**
(October)
- **VHA IE Fellowships kickoff orientation**
- **Monthly Fellowships trainings**
- **Monthly Office Hours with VHA IE Director of Fellowships**
- **Fellowships peer collaboration opportunities**
- **Participation in 2025 Diffusion of Excellence Diffusion Academy**
(January)
- **Regularly occurring project management support meetings**



Overview of Eligibility

VHA IE Fellows will be selected by VHA OHIL through a national applicant pool based on the applicant's commitment to innovation, leadership potential, and ability to implement a transformational project that will modernize VA Health Care Systems and enhance the customer experience for Veterans, their families, and caregivers. Fellows must be supported by their direct leadership.

The program has a broad interdisciplinary focus. VHA IE Fellows include physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, health care administrators, lawyers, engineers, and industry leaders. Participants are accomplished leaders currently leading an innovative project(s). Applicants must be a U.S. citizen or possess a current visa suitable for participation in this paid educational activity. U.S. citizens shall be given priority in selection.

Fellowship Project

Disclaimers

[Click here to review information about Project Disclaimers](#)

A paid VA appointment is required prior to starting the program but is not required at the time of the application. Part-time appointments are acceptable to meet eligibility criteria. Participants currently enrolled in VA training programs or internships may apply but must have an official VA staff appointment for the duration of the Fellowship.

All applicants must demonstrate that their VA position will allow them to use up to 20% of their time to participate in this program.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

[Click here to review the MOU document.](#) The MOU does not need to be submitted with your application. However, we request that you socialize the document with your direct leadership before submitting your application to confirm their support.

If you are selected as a finalist, your direct leadership must sign the MOU. We will require written acknowledgement from your Director Level Leadership within two weeks of admission into the program.

Project

- Must be an existing innovation project or project of relative significance.
- Directly relevant to VHA Mission or Operations.
- Relates to National, VISN, or Local strategic priorities and needs.
- VHA IE Fellowships do not support clinical trials or other IRB Research projects.

Fellow

- VA Employee
- U.S. Citizen or possess a current Visa allowing paid educational activity.
- U.S. Citizens shall be given priority in selection.
- Participation supported by direct leadership.

ELIGIBILITY

Application Package

To prepare your VHA IE Fellowships application, use the information provided below. The application portal will open on May 14, 2024 for submission. The information provided below is to assist Fellowship applicants in preparing applications before the submission portal opens.

For more information about previous fellows and to access the official application portal, please visit [VHA IE Fellowships](#). The deadline for submission is June 14, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. PT.

Application Questions

The application questions are divided into four sections, 'Applicant Information', 'Applicant Profile', 'Project Information', and 'Technical Information'. Use the questions below to prepare your application for submission.

Applicant Information

- 1) Applicant Name
- 2) Applicant VA.gov Email Address
- 3) Official Job Title
- 4) Duty Station
- 5) Direct Supervisor Name
- 6) Direct Supervisor Title
- 7) Direct Supervisor VA.gov Email Address
- 8) VA Facility or Office Director Name
- 9) VA Facility or Office Director Title
- 10) VA Facility or Office Director VA.gov Email Address
- 11) Are you affiliated with an Innovation Ecosystem Program?

The following programs are considered under the umbrella of VHA Innovation Ecosystem:

- Diffusion of Excellence/Diffusion Talent Accelerator (DTA)
- IE Fellowships (EIR/SIF/MIT Catalyst)
- Innovators Network (iNET)
- National Centers for Innovation to Impact

Applicant Profile

Answers should focus on the applicant as an individual. You will have the opportunity to define your Fellowships project in the next portion of the application.

- 1) What has your experience been working in an innovation space and why are you drawn to innovation?
- 2) Provide a brief introduction of yourself, focusing on your professional and personal strengths, especially as they relate to your contributions to health care innovation.
- 3) List 3 professional development goals (ex. public speaking, leadership, relationship building, etc.) that you have for next year. How will participating in VHA IE Fellowships support your goal?
- 4) Please detail any relevant experience that speaks to your capacity as a leader.
- 5) Describe a time when you were responsible for helping a group of people understand why a specific change (in process, policy or procedure) was necessary. What was the change? What did you do?

Application Package Checklist

- Completed Application Questions
 - Applicant Information
 - Applicant Profile
 - Project Information
 - Technical Information
- Confirmation of Fiscal Appropriation Codes
- Current Resume or CV
- MOU Socialized Among Leadership
- Signed [Conflict of Interest \(COI\)](#) (if appropriate)
- Notify Fellowships of any Disclosures

Application Package

Project Description

This is your opportunity to lay out your vision for your VHA IE Fellowships Project. Your project should focus on implementing an innovative solution within VHA. Innovation projects seek to create, design, and test impactful products, processes, etc. that directly improve outcomes, experiences, etc. The end goal isn't a body of information; thus, it is NOT research.

VHA IE Fellowships do not support clinical trials, or research projects that require Institutional Review Board Support

Per 45 CFR 46.102(d) and the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), the deciding question between Research (in need of IRB action) and quality improvement covered under HIPAA's "health care operations" provisions) is the following: Is the activity a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge? If the response is yes, it's research. If not, it's quality improvement.

Find out more about how VA defines Research.

[Is It Research](#)

[Human Subject Regulations Decision Charts | HHS.gov](#)
[Office of Research & Development \(va.gov\)](#)

1) **What is the full name of your project?**

2) **Core Priorities:** Select the primary VHA Under Secretary for Health Care Priority that your project addresses.

- Connect Veterans to the Soonest and Best Care
- Serve Veterans with Military Environmental Exposures
- Accelerate VA's Journey to a High Reliability Organization
- Support Veteran's Whole Health, their Caregivers and Survivors
- Prevent Veteran Suicide
- Higher Faster and More Competatively
- [To learn more about the Under Secretary for Health Care's Priorities, click here.](#)

3) **Project Summary:** Please provide a brief introduction to your project. Include information about the problem that your project is addressing.

4) **Project Goals:** What are your overall goals for your project?

5) **Metrics:** List (at least) 3 data points that you will report on throughout your Fellowship year.

6) **Timeline:** The Fellowships experience occurs from October 1st though September 30th. Please share (at least) 5 bullet points outlining primary milestones you plan to meet during the 2025 Fellowship cohort year.

7) **Barriers:** What are the obstacles currently preventing you from achieving your project objectives and what is your plan for remediation?

8) **Stakeholders:** In list form, please tell us about collaborators and their current or potential role or relationship to your project.

Stakeholders can be departments, offices, service lines, or individual subject matter experts. Include any key stakeholders you would want to work with during your Fellowship year or who could be allies when faced with identified roadblocks.

Technical Information

1) As part of your Fellowship year, up to 20% of your salary is supported by VHA Innovation Ecosystem. Your duty station must be able to receive salary funding using fiscal codes **0160A1** (Medical Services) or **0152A1** (Medical Support & Compliance).

On this section of the application, we ask that you confirm with your direct supervisor and facility fiscal office that salary support can be received using the appropriate fiscal codes. If you do NOT know who your fiscal point-of-contact is, we suggest reaching out to your direct supervisor to find out who they are; this information will be necessary if your application is selected.

2) **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Intent** - A MOU is a written agreement between VHA IE Fellowships and your facility. A copy of the MOU is available in the VHA IE Fellowships Application Guide. The MOU does not need to be submitted with your application.

We request that you share the document with your direct leadership before submitting your application to confirm their support.

If you are selected as a Fellow, your facility's leadership must sign the MOU. We will require written acknowledgement from your facility or program office leadership within two weeks of admission into the program.

3) **Fellowships Eligibility:** Fellowships eligibility requirements are available in the Application Guide [here](#). We will ask you to confirm you have reviewed and understand the outlined Fellowships eligibility requirements.

4) **Signed Conflict of Interest (COI)**– If you have a partnership with an external entity that is a part of, impacted by, or a potential collaborator during your Fellowships Year, we will ask that you sign and attach an [Alt 450 COI form](#) to your application.

[Click here to download the Alt 450 COI form.](#)

Please note, if selected as a finalist, any disclosures on the Alt 450 COI form will be reviewed by Office of General Council. On the application we will ask that you upload this form directly.

5) **Disclosures:** Does your project involve an invention disclosure, certification, or licensure? If it does, you must reach out to us at VHAInnovationFellows@VA.gov prior to submission of your application.

If you have any inquiries or concerns regarding VHA IE Fellowships, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at VHAInnovationFellows@va.gov. We would be more than happy to assist you.

Evaluation Rubric

The Evaluation Rubric is provided for your reference. Submissions will be assessed based on their feasibility, problem identification, project impact, organization, leadership potential, and strategic value to VHA.

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Feasibility	Not enough information is provided in the application to judiciously score this category.	The subject and scope of the project goals and timeline are not realistic.	The subject and scope of the project goals and timeline are realistic but may not be fit for Fellowships.	The subject and scope of the project goals and timeline are realistic.	The subject and scope of the project goals and timeline are realistic and achievable.
Problem Identification	Not enough information is provided in the application to judiciously score this category.	Project does not clearly outline a targeted problem, the impact on VHA, or how the project solves this problem.	Project outlines a targeted problem and the impact on VHA but is not clear on how the project solves this problem.	Project outlines a targeted problem, the impact on VHA, and how the project solves this problem but struggles with clarity.	Project clearly outlines targeted problem, why it is a problem for VHA, and how the project solves this problem.
Project Impact	Not enough information is provided in the application to judiciously score this category.	Project fails to demonstrate impact, either current or potential, on identified problem.	Project demonstrates minimal current or potential impact on identified problem.	Project demonstrates a moderate current or potential impact on identified problem.	Project demonstrates significant current or potential impact on identified problem.
Organization	The application answers lack clear organization and coherence.	There is an attempt at organization, but the application answers are difficult to follow.	The application answers are moderately organized with a structure and basic coherence.	The organization of the application answers provide clear and substantive support of the applicant's project.	The organization of the application answers provide exceptional clarity and full support of the applicant's project.
Leadership	Applicant demonstrates no leadership qualities, lacks direction, and communication skills.	Applicant demonstrates limited leadership qualities, basic communication, and some direction.	Applicant demonstrates solid leadership qualities with clear direction, motivation, and adequate communication.	Applicant demonstrates consistent leadership qualities, provides clear direction, motivation, and effective communication.	Applicant demonstrates exceptional leadership qualities and shows visionary direction and motivation.
VHA Strategic Priorities	Application does not align to any VHA Strategic Priority.	Application weakly aligns with VHA Strategic Priorities.	Application moderately aligns with VHA Strategic Priorities.	Application clearly aligns with VHA Strategic Priorities but struggles to demonstrate a clear pathway to impact.	Application strongly aligns with and demonstrates clear pathway to impact in Strategic Priority areas.

Memorandum

Date: Insert Date

From: Executive Director, VHA Innovation Ecosystem (14HIL1)

Subject: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) VHA Innovation Ecosystem Fellowships

To: Insert Direct Leadership Name(s) and Title(s)

1. **Purpose:** This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) specifies the conditions for mutual agreement between VHA Innovation Ecosystem (VHA IE) and Insert Fellow Duty Station regarding the requirements and funding for the VHA IE Fellowships. This MOU will be agreed upon by VHA Innovation Ecosystem leadership and respective VA leader(s).
2. **Background:** VHA Innovation Ecosystem, a program office under VHA Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning (VHA OHIL) offers field-based employees the opportunity for career growth and development through Innovation Ecosystem Fellowships. The program lasts one calendar year (October Insert Year–September Insert Year), allowing for continuity across fiscal years. Selected VHA IE Fellows will oversee a national, regional, or local level project that helps shape the vision and strategic direction for the larger innovation ecosystem and delivers enterprise-wide value.
3. **Scope:** Time commitment for VHA IE Fellows shall not exceed 20% of their current dedications. This program is a knowledge enrichment and leadership development opportunity and includes resourcing and funding, as agreed upon after candidate selection. This may include salary reimbursement and/or project resource support and will be negotiated between each Fellow, their leadership, and VHA IE. All travel expenses and administrative support related to work performed as a VHA IE Fellow will be covered by VHA IE.
4. **Administration:** The following outlines our mutual understanding and commitment regarding this agreement:
 - a. **Administrative:** Insert Fellow will spend no more than 20% of time with VHA Innovation Ecosystem. Salary, benefits, and timecard will be administered by Insert Fellow Duty Station. VHA Innovation Ecosystem will reimburse salary (not to include benefits) for time spent supporting VHA Innovation Ecosystem.
 - b. **Leave:** Insert Fellow will notify their VHA IE and respective VA facility leadership of any leave or travel related to Fellowships to ensure appropriate timecard certification.
 - c. **Travel:** Official travel associated with Fellowships will be arranged by Insert Fellow Duty Station and will follow all Federal Travel Regulations and local policy. Reimbursement procedures are as follows:
 - i. Travel related to VA IE Fellowships should be approved by VHA IE Fellowships Director at least four weeks in advance of planned travel.
 - ii. Traveler will submit the PAID voucher to *VHA IE Fiscal Agent* at sampleemail@va.gov, within **30 calendar days** of the last day of each travel event.
 - iii. Upon receipt and acceptance of the PAID voucher, VHA IE will complete an expense transfer for the total cost of the PAID voucher. **If the voucher is not received within 30 days, the voucher will not be reimbursed.**
 - d. **Duty Location:** Employee will work remotely or at their permanent duty station to fulfill fellowship duties.
 - e. This agreement may be terminated or extended based on operational requirements. Notice of termination by any party should be communicated 14 days in advance.

Memorandum

1. **Period of Performance:** This MOU covers Insert Start Date to Insert End Date.

2. **Fiscal Requirements:**

a. **Total Salary Reimbursement Covered by MOU:** Insert Amount

b. **Salary appropriation:** 0152A1 or 0160A1

c. Travel should be coordinated and approved at the originating/partner site. Reimbursement will be completed through an expense transfer as detailed above.

3. **Points of Contact:**

Area	Name	E-mail Address	Organization
Fiscal	Inset Rep	Rep Email	14HIL1
Administrative	Amber Goetschius	Amber.Goetschius@va.gov	14HIL1
Fiscal	Insert Rep	Rep Email	Insert Org Code
Administrative	Insert Rep	Rep Email	Insert Org Code

8. Please contact Amber Goetschius (Amber.Goetschius@va.gov) or VHA (VHAInnovationFellows@va.gov) if you have any questions.

Amber Goetschius
Acting Director of Fellowships, VHA Innovation Ecosystem

Kristopher "Kit" Teague
Executive Director, VHA Innovation Ecosystem

VISN/VACO/Facility Director Name
VISN/VACO/Facility Director Title