

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC

**VA NURSING ACADEMY:
ENHANCING ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM**

Starting in Academic Year 2009-2010

Request for Proposals

1. INTRODUCTION

- a. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Nursing Academy, established in 2007, is committed to nursing education and practice and will address nursing shortages in VA and the Nation by
 - (1) expanding teaching faculty in VA facilities and affiliated nursing schools.
 - (2) increasing VA recruitment and retention through enhanced clinical experiences for nursing students and expanded teaching opportunities for VA nurses.
 - (3) emphasizing the importance of a continuum of nursing education through expansion of the stipend program for graduate students and the Pre- and Post-doctoral Nurse Fellowship Programs¹.
- b. This Request for Proposals (RFP) provides information, policies, and application procedures for VA facilities and systems and for schools of nursing regarding the **VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program**. VA facilities and systems and their affiliated nursing school(s) that have commitments to enhancing their academic partnerships and the care of veterans are invited to submit a proposal to participate in the remaining three years of this five-year pilot program.
- c. Selection of a diverse group of VA - nursing school partnerships is desired, and VA facilities and schools of nursing, regardless of their size, complexity, and other characteristics, are encouraged to submit a proposal. **A goal of this RFP is that two partnerships will be selected in which the VA facility is a category 2 or 3 complexity level (not highly complex/tertiary care). The remaining partnerships that will be selected can be from any complexity levels. In all cases, the selected proposals must meet the quality standards expected for the VA Nursing Academy.**
- d. **Proposals must focus on baccalaureate nursing education** although some graduate education activities may be included. **The required increase in enrollment must be in the baccalaureate education program which may include generic/traditional pre-licensure track, accelerated pre-licensure track and RN-to-BSN track.**

¹ Department of Veterans Affairs, Associated Health Education, Nursing Pre-Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programs, http://www.va.gov/oa/residencies_fellowships.asp

2. BACKGROUND

It is estimated that U.S. hospitals currently need 118,000 Registered Nurses (RNs) to fill vacant positions¹. An additional 30,000 RNs will be needed by 2014 and by 2015 all 50 states will experience a shortage of nurses². Within VA, almost 22,000 RNs will be eligible for retirement by 2010³.

Almost three-fourths of the Nation's nursing schools report faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into entry-level baccalaureate programs.⁴ In 2006, U.S. nursing schools turned away 38,415 qualified applicants from entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints⁵.

Title 38 of the United States Code, section 7302 states in part:

"In order to carry out more effectively the primary function of the Veterans Health Administration and in order to assist in providing an adequate supply of health personnel to the Nation, the Secretary . . . to the extent feasible without interfering with the medical care and treatment of veterans, shall develop and carry out a program of education and training of health personnel."

Under this authorization, the Department of Veterans Affairs established the VA Nursing Academy that is committed to nursing education and practice and will address the nursing shortages in VA and the Nation. The Nursing Academy was developed collaboratively by the Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) and the Office of Nursing Services, with OAA taking the lead based on its experience with affiliations and funding educational programs.

3. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

- a. Goals: The VA Nursing Academy's **Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program** will enable stronger, mutually beneficial relationships between nursing schools and VA facilities by **(1)** expanding faculty and professional development, **(2)** increasing student enrollment, **(3)** providing opportunities for educational and practice innovations, and **(4)** increasing recruitment and retention of VA nurses as a result of enhanced roles in nursing education.

(1) Faculty expansion and professional development

- (a) Nursing schools will provide without compensation faculty appointments to qualified VA nurses. These VA-based faculty will participate in a variety of educational activities at the VA facility and the school of nursing. Such activities might include precepting/supervising students in clinical practice, administrative, and research experiences at the VA facilities, teaching classes at the VA and/or school, and serving on academic committees. VA nurses will continue to be paid by the VA facility and will be relieved of their usual duties while participating in activities related to the VA

¹ American Hospital Association, 2006, *The State of America's Hospitals: Taking the Pulse*.

² Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), September 2004, *What is Behind HRSA's Projected Supply, Demand and Shortage of Registered Nurses?*

³ Department of Veterans Affairs, 2007, VA PAID data, Regular & Early Retirement Projection w/ % Report, <http://vssc.med.va.gov>, extracted 03/06/07 *included Pay, FT/PT, Permanent/Temporary.

⁴ American Association of Colleges of Nursing, (2006). Fang, D., Wilsey-Wisniewski, S. & Bednash, G.D. (2006). 2006-2007 enrollment and graduations in baccalaureate and graduate programs in nursing. Washington, DC.

⁵ American Association of Colleges of Nursing, (2006). Fang, D., Wilsey-Wisniewski, S. & Bednash, G.D. (2006). 2006-2007 enrollment and graduations in baccalaureate and graduate programs in nursing. Washington, DC.

Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program. Please note that the Federal criminal code (in particular, section 209 of title 18, United States Code) generally prohibits Federal Government employees from receiving a "supplementation" of their Government salary. So, these faculty appointments must not provide any compensation or other employee benefits.

- (b) VA will provide salary support for nursing school-based faculty members while they are at VA facilities or providing services for VA. These services may be in the areas of education, clinical practice, administration, or research.
 - (c) VA-nursing school collaboration will expand opportunities for professional and scholarly development for school faculty and VA nurses. The VA nurses will be provided with opportunities, as appropriate, to enhance their knowledge of educational principles and their skills.
- (2) Increased nursing student enrollment in the baccalaureate degree program(s).
- (a) Salary support by VA for additional faculty will be linked to required increases in enrollment in baccalaureate nursing programs, the number of students participating in VA clinical education opportunities, and expansion of the types of educational activities offered at VA.
 - (b) Nursing schools are encouraged to incorporate "Troops to Nurses" opportunities to allow separating military service members to receive credit for clinical skills learned in military settings.
- (3) Innovations in nursing education and practice are strongly encouraged and will be implemented collaboratively by VA and school faculty at the VA facility and the school. Such innovations might include but are not limited to:
- (a) Graduated levels of responsibilities for the care of patients
 - (b) Continuity of care across various settings and use of additional settings for clinical experiences.
 - (c) Interprofessional learning.
 - (d) Scholarly projects related to the care of veterans.
 - (e) Implementation or expansion of evidenced-based practice.
- (4) It is expected that recruitment and retention of VA nurses will increase as a result of the program and that recruitment of former students will increase as a result of their participation in the program, their familiarity with VA, and their desire to care for veterans.

b. Selection and funding of VA-nursing school partnerships:

- (1) Up to four VA facility-nursing school partnerships will be competitively selected in response to this RFP. A goal of this RFP is that two partnerships will be selected in which the VA facility is a category 2 or 3 complexity level (not highly complex/tertiary care). The remaining partnerships that will be selected can be from any complexity level. In all cases, the selected proposals must meet the quality standards expected for the VA Nursing Academy.
- (2) VA - nursing school partnerships selected through this RFP will receive funding for 3 years starting with academic year 2009-2010 and ending after academic year 2011-2012. Continuation of funding in years 2 and 3 of the program will be based on satisfactory performance of the partnership toward meeting program goals as described in the original proposal, required annual reports and program evaluations.
- (3) Continued funding beyond the pilot program will depend on the pilot program outcomes.
- (4) **Proposals must focus on baccalaureate nursing education** although some graduate education activities may be included.
- (5) **The required increase in enrollment must be in the baccalaureate program(s).**

c. Funding Support by VA by Academic Year (AY):

- (1) Funding will be used to pay for the designated number and types of positions described below. **Funding for Program Directors will generally not be allowed except for the part of their time that they are functioning in a teaching faculty (not administrative/coordinating) role.**
- (a) Full-time equivalent (FTE) school-based faculty while they are at VA facilities or providing services for VA. These services may be in the areas of education, clinical practice, administration, or research. These FTE positions may be comprised of multiple part-time individuals. However, it is strongly recommended that each school-based faculty member who will be participating in the VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnership Program will be assigned at least quarter-time to the program. Many of the current program partnerships have the school-based faculty who are each assigned for more than 25% of their time.
- (b) FTE VA-based faculty who will supervise students and participate in a variety of educational activities at the VA facility and the school of nursing. Such activities might include precepting students at the VA facilities, teaching classes, serving on academic committees, or involving students in clinical, administrative, and research experiences. It is strongly recommended that each VA nurse who will be functioning in a faculty role in the VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnership Program will be assigned at least quarter-time to the program. Many of the current program partnerships have the VA-based faculty who are each assigned for more than 25% of their time. These nurses must be relieved of other responsibilities while participating in educational activities related to the partnership. The funding provided for the VA-based faculty will be available to back-fill their time.
- (2) FTE positions to be funded by VA for each VA-nursing school partnership are indicated in the chart below. These numbers are contingent on the school increasing its baccalaureate program enrollment by 20 positions over the 2007-2008 baseline numbers for each cohort of 5 faculty positions funded (2 school-based and 3 VA-based) per academic year. An increase of less than 20 will be funded fewer positions on a pro-rated basis. Increases of more than 20 will not result in additional positions.

Type of Faculty	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
• VA-based	3	6	3
• School-based	2	4	2
Enrollment increase over baseline of 2008-2009	20	40	20

Example if the baseline baccalaureate enrollment in 2008-2009 is 80.

- *For 2009-2010 the enrollment would increase to 100.*
- *For 2010-2011 the enrollment would be 120 which would include continuing students from the prior year if they were in the program longer than one year or new students in programs of less than two years.*
- *For 2011-2012 the enrollment would be 100.*

4. POLICIES

a. Governance:

- (1) The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Academic Affiliations, in collaboration with the VHA Office of Nursing Services, maintains overall responsibility for the administration of the VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program.
- (2) The Director of the VA Nursing Academy at the national level will be responsible for program implementation and oversight and will report to the Deputy Chief Academic Affiliations Officer.
- (3) In proposed partnerships involving more than one VA facility, one of the VA facilities will be designated as the lead facility.
- (4) **Each selected partnership will have two designated program directors: one for the VA facility and one for the school. The VA Nurse Executive and the School Dean or persons with equivalent titles will be significantly involved in program development and implementation. However, the VA Nurse Executive or the School Dean should not be designated as program directors. The program directors will report to the VA Nurse Executive and the School Dean respectively for program implementation. The two program directors for each partnership should be assigned to this program at least half-time each.**

b. School-based faculty will either (1) be appointed to VA and paid directly by VA or (2) remain on the school's payroll and the school will be reimbursed for the salary and benefits through an Intergovernmental Personnel Mobility Act (IPA) agreement (see Attachment A for information regarding IPAs).

- (1) School-based faculty appointed to VA.
 - (a) Will be appointed to part-time VA positions with salaries determined according to the VA Qualification Standards and the VA facility salary scale. These individuals must meet all requirements for appointment to VA including U.S. citizenship. The individuals will be paid for services provided while at VA facilities or providing services for VA. These services may be in the areas of education, clinical practice, administration or research.
 - (b) Will be paid directly by VA. Funds will not be paid to the school for this purpose.
 - (c) Will become part-time VA employees and part-time school employees. VA funding is not meant to supplement the full-time salary from the school or result in an increased income (other than that created by potential differences in the hourly rate for the VA time compared to the school time).
 - (d) Will be eligible for VA benefits such as annual and sick leave, and participation in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, Federal Employees Retirement System, and Thrift Savings Plan as determined by Federal regulations for part-time employees.
- (2) School-based faculty paid through an Intergovernmental Personnel Mobility Act (IPA) agreement between the VA facility and the school.
 - (a) The school will be reimbursed by VA for services provided by designated faculty while at VA facilities or providing services for VA. These services may be in the areas of education, clinical practice, administration or research. Reimbursement will be for the usual salary and fringe benefits.
 - (b) The individual faculty members.
 - (i) Will not receive additional salary based on their assignment to the VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnership Program.
 - (ii) Will receive the usual benefits according to the school policies.

- (iii) Are not entitled to VA employee benefits other than those provided to without compensation employees.
 - (iv) Will be processed at the VA facility according to the policies and procedures for without compensation employees.
 - (v) Are required to maintain appropriate registration, licensure, and certification and provide documentation thereof to the VA facility.
- c. Appointment of VA nurses as nursing school faculty will be in accordance with the usual practices of the school. It may be necessary for these individuals to obtain a license to practice in the state where the school is located. VA Facility Directors should grant authorized absences from the VA facility while the VA nurses are at the school for VA Nursing Academy related activities. Intergovernmental Personnel Mobility Act (IPA) agreements may be used in lieu of authorized absences for VA-based faculty.
- d. Liability Protection. When providing services in accordance with this program, school-based faculty and students will be protected from personal liability under the Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act, 28 U.S.C. 2679(b)-(d) while they are at a VA facility. VA-based faculty will similarly be protected while at the VA facility or the school.

5. ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

- a. The VA facility will:
 - (1) Demonstrate commitment by facility leadership and staff to support a culture of excellence in nursing education and clinical practice and to sustain an outstanding clinical and learning environment that will support this program.
 - (2) Enable VA nurses selected for participation to be released from their usual assignments while involved in the program activities. Nurses selected as VA-based faculty will be primarily involved with direct patient care, although others may also be selected.
 - (3) Develop functional statements, competencies, and performance standards that reflect the expanded roles of the nurses participating in the program.
 - (4) Appoint school-based faculty to paid or without compensation VA positions for the time they provide services at or for the VA facility. School-based faculty may be appointed without compensation through the use of IPA agreements. These activities may be related to clinical practice, education, administration, or research. Pay will be appropriate to the qualifications of the individual nurses and the local salary scale.
 - (5) Develop a robust recruitment program for nursing students involved in the VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program. Recruitment strategies should be developed in conjunction with the VA Healthcare Retention and Recruitment Office in New Orleans.
 - (6) Fund travel and registration for the VA program director and selected VA-based faculty to attend an initial planning meeting and follow-up implementation and evaluation meetings organized by the VA Nursing Academy throughout the pilot program. During the first year of program implementation the program directors were also invited to present at national nursing conferences.

b. The nursing school will:

- (1) Have a baccalaureate degree program that is accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Schools that do not offer baccalaureate degrees in nursing are not eligible to participate in the Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program even if the students are eligible to become licensed before completing a master's or higher degree program.
- (2) Increase enrollment in the baccalaureate degree program(s) based on the increased faculty and the shifting of faculty roles and responsibilities to VA-based faculty. The required increases are described in section 3c(2) of this RFP.
- (3) Be able and willing to give faculty appointments to VA nurses who participate in nursing education activities at the VA facility and the school.
- (4) Provide release time for faculty to participate in partnership activities.
- (5) Commit to develop, implement, and evaluate innovative approaches to education and nursing practice.
- (6) Provide a course and other educational opportunities, as appropriate, for VA nurses who receive faculty appointments to enable them to assume faculty roles and responsibilities successfully, keeping in mind that some VA-based faculty may have prior knowledge and skills in this area. The content will include: principles of adult education; roles, methods, and competencies of teaching, coaching, and evaluating adult learners; roles and competencies of patient and student advocacy; transitions from basic to advanced learning; and transitions from novice to expert practitioner. Sufficient content should be presented early enough in the Nursing Academy implementation to enable the faculty to assume their responsibilities successfully.
- (7) Incorporate advanced standing opportunities for applicants with associate degrees in nursing or baccalaureate and higher degrees in other fields.
- (8) Incorporate "Troops to Nurses" concepts so that separating and prior military service members can receive credit for clinical skills learned in military settings.
- (9) Fund travel and registration for the school-based program director and selected participating faculty to attend an initial planning meeting and follow-up implementation and evaluation meetings organized by the VA Nursing Academy throughout the 5-year pilot program.

c. Jointly the VA facility and the school of nursing will:

- (1) Have a properly executed affiliation agreement.
- (2) Develop a partnership of the nature required to participate in the VA Nursing Academy's Enhanced Academic Partnerships Program.
- (3) Collaboratively select qualified, interested VA nurses to participate in this program and assist them in assuming faculty roles and responsibilities including release time from usual assignments for the time involved in educational activities. These VA nurses will primarily be from roles involved in daily direct patient care, although others may also be selected.
- (4) Collaboratively select nursing school faculty who will participate in the Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program and will either be paid directly by VA or paid by the school with reimbursement by VA for services provided while at or for VA. These services may be related to clinical practice, education, administration, or research.
- (5) Develop and implement enhanced learning opportunities at the VA facility.
- (6) Develop and implement a formative and summative program evaluation plan at the local level that will include educational program opportunities; faculty, student, and patient care outcomes.

- (7) Participate fully in national program evaluation activities implemented by the VA Nursing Academy.

6. PROGRAM EVALUATION

Evaluation of the Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program will be implemented at the local partnership level and at the national level. Evaluations will include structure, process, and outcome assessments of clinical practice, education, and program activities.

- a. Structure: How the program was designed and organized
- b. Process: How the program was implemented
- c. Outcomes: For example:
 - (1) Clinical practice
 - (a) Patient satisfaction, safety, education, and readmissions.
 - (b) Nursing-sensitive measures such as medication errors, pain management, falls, and infections.
 - (2) Education
 - (a) Enhanced clinical skills including communications with patients and staff, patient advocacy, team-based care, patient management, patient education, continuity of care across a variety of settings, critical thinking, and quality improvement and system redesign activities.
 - (b) Improved performance on standardized tests.
 - (c) Curriculum Innovations: How they were identified and developed, impact on the education process and outcomes, likelihood to be kept in the curriculum.
 - (3) Program
 - (a) Student satisfaction with faculty, curriculum, and learning environment; participation in and satisfaction with educational opportunities at the VA facility; and recruitment by VA following graduation.
 - (b) Faculty satisfaction with roles and responsibilities in the program, preparation for these roles and responsibilities, changes in the clinical and educational environment and program, career opportunities based on participation in the program, recognition for participation in the program.
 - (c) Student and faculty career plans including number recruited to VA employment and analysis of retention of those recruited.

7. REVIEW PROCESS

- a. An ad hoc review committee designated by the Chief Academic Affiliations Officer, in collaboration with the Chief Nursing Officer, will assess the merits of the proposals. Reviewers will have demonstrated expertise and leadership in the education of nurses and other health professionals and in the care of patients.
- b. Incomplete proposals (i.e. those missing or with incomplete elements) will not be considered by the review panel.
- c. **Proposals will be grouped according to the complexity level of the lead VA facility so that comparable facilities and partnerships will compete against one another for approval. Proposals submitted by VA complexity levels 2 and 3 facilities will be reviewed separately from those submitted by complexity level 1 facilities. However, in all cases, the determining selection factor will be the overall quality of the proposal.**

d. Proposals will be scored according to the following criteria:

- (1) Commitment of VA and nursing school leadership to support the affiliation relationship and implementation of the Enhanced Academic Partnerships Program.
- (2) Commitment by the VA facility leadership and staff to support a culture of excellence in nursing education and practice and to sustain an outstanding clinical and learning environment that will support this program.
- (3) Commitment of the nursing school to increase enrollment by the required number of students in the baccalaureate degree program(s).
- (4) Current and past relationships and activities between the VA facility and the school of nursing.
- (5) Experience of designated program directors at the VA facility and the nursing school in implementing educational programs and innovations.
- (6) Ability to implement the partnership model into their current organizational structures, including faculty and VA appointments and release time to participate in the program.
- (7) Activities and learning opportunities to be included in the program. These may include clinical, administrative, research, and education activities.
- (8) Availability, interest, and experience of VA nurses and school faculty to participate in the program.
- (9) Proposed development plan for VA-based faculty (See section 5.b.(6)).
- (10) Proposed local evaluation plan and agreement to participate in national evaluation activities implemented by the VA Nursing Academy.
- (11) Agreements to fund travel and registration for VA and school program directors and selected VA and school-based faculty to attend an initial planning meeting and follow-up implementation and evaluation meetings organized by the VA Nursing Academy throughout the pilot program.

8. SCHEDULE

November 25, 2008	Request for Proposals distributed to Veterans Integrated Service Networks, Offices in Central Office, VA facilities, schools of nursing, and professional and other organizations. Press Release issued as soon as possible thereafter.
February 11, 2009	Proposals are due to the Office of Academic Affiliations (See instructions in Attachment B).
March 27, 2009	Applying partnerships will be notified of selection/non-selection.
July – September 2009	Program implementation and funding begins. <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Nursing school-based faculty are appointed to paid VA positions or assigned to VA under an IPA agreement to provide services at or for VA facilities.b. VA nurses who will participate in the program are appointed as VA-based faculty of the nursing school, are oriented to their roles, and participate in faculty development activities.c. Arrangements are made for an increased number of nursing students to receive enhanced clinical experiences at VA facilities.d. Schools increase enrollment as required in RFP.e. Evaluation is planned and implemented locally and nationally.

September 2009 – May 2010 Program implementation continued. Plans are made for second year of the program.

October/November 2010 First Annual Report due to the Office of Academic Affiliations.

9. INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSAL

- a. The proposal will be submitted electronically using a VA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) Support Center password protected web portal. **Faxed, mailed, and e-mailed documents will not be accepted.**
- b. To gain access to the “VANA RFP” portal to submit the proposal, a designated person at the VA facility (or lead VA facility if more than one VA facility are included in the proposal), should:
 - (1) Go to <http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/VanaRFP/Register.aspx> .
 - (2) Fill out the Form to register for access. After clicking “Register” You’ll be redirected to a Login Screen where you will enter your password you just specified in the registration form. You will then have access to the sections requiring data entry and file uploads.
 - (3) Technical questions or problems should be referred to the OAA Support Center at 314-894-5760, extension 5 or by e-mail to David.Bernett@va.gov . Questions involving the RFP itself should be directed to Dr. Linda Johnson at 202-461-9498 or Linda.Johnson@va.gov [Linda D Johnson (VHACO) in Outlook.]
- c. Submission of Proposals.
 - (1) Go to <http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/VanaRFP/>. You can always return to the “VANA RFP” portal at this URL. Please bookmark this address for future use. Use your email and password to login. **Questions or problems** should be referred to the OAA Support Center at 314-894-5760 extension 5 or by e-mail to David.Bernett@va.gov.
 - (2) See Attachment B of this RFP for the information on the format and sections of the proposal.
 - (3) The identifying information about the VA facility(ies) and the nursing school(s) and the funding information will be entered directly into the database
 - (4) Other sections of the proposal will be uploaded as files. Uploading is similar to attaching documents to an e-mail message. Two types of documents (.doc, .pdf) can be uploaded. The transmittal letter, table of contents, abstract, core narrative, and appendices will be uploaded separately. **Documents MUST be less than 4mb each.**
 - (5) Sections of the proposal may be changed or modified up to the closing date for proposals.
 - (6) Incomplete proposals (i.e. those missing or with incomplete elements) will not be considered by the review panel.
 - (7) **Please click on the “Submit Complete” button when finished.** This notifies us that you are finished entering your data and file uploads. You CAN however, still make changes up until the final date for submissions.

10. **CONTACTS** for further information or questions

- Linda D. Johnson, PhD, RN, Director, VA Nursing Academy, at 202-461-9498 or **Linda.Johnson@va.gov** [Linda D. Johnson (VHACO) in Outlook].
- Anna C. Alt-White, RN, PhD, ONS Director, Research and Academics, at 202-461-6963 or Anna.Alt-White@va.gov
- David Bernett at the OAA Support Center for technical questions or problems. Call 314-894-5760, extension 5 or send an e-mail message to **David.Bernett@va.gov**.

Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Mobility Program

1. Introduction:

The Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Mobility Program may be an effective process to use for the assignment of and payment for nursing school faculty to VA facilities and/or assignment of VA employees to nursing school faculty positions without loss of pay, rights, benefits and obligations associated with their original appointment (employer). The legal authority for assignments under the IPA is 5 U.S. Code sections 3371 through 3375. The regulations can be found in Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), part 5, chapter 334. Also see VA Handbook 5005, Part I, Chapter 3, Section C, dated April 15, 2002.

2. Purpose of IPA assignments:

Assignments to or from state and local governments, institutions of higher education, Indian tribal governments and other eligible organizations are intended to facilitate cooperation between the Federal Government and the non-Federal entity through the temporary assignment of skilled personnel. Each assignment should be made for purposes which the Federal agency determines are of mutual concern and benefit to the Federal agency and to the non-Federal organization. Each proposed assignment should be carefully examined to ensure that it is for sound public purposes and furthers the goals and objectives of the participating organizations.

3. Policies:

- a. Non-VA employees must be employed in a permanent position by their organization for at least 90 days to be eligible for an IPA assignment.
- b. The employees participating in IPA assignments must be U.S. citizens or citizens with alien registration.
- c. The IPA assignment is voluntary and must be agreed to by the employee.
- d. An IPA agreement should state that the employee will return to the position occupied before the IPA assignment to one of comparable pay, duties and seniority and that the employee's rights and benefits will be fully protected. Agreements for Federal employees should clearly state their obligation to return to Federal service for a time equal to the length of the IPA mobility assignment or be responsible to refund all expenses, exclusive of salary and benefits, associated with the assignment.
- e. Regulations require that an assignment be implemented and documented in writing. Optional Form 69, Assignment Agreement, available from the Office of Personnel Management, must be completed.
- f. Assignments may be made for up to 2 years and may be full-time, part-time or intermittent. An assignment may be extended for an additional 2 years by the agency head or designee, when determined to be a benefit to both organizations. An employee that has been on an IPA mobility assignment for 4 continuous years may not be sent on another IPA assignment without returning to duty with the original employer for at least 12 months. Successive assignments without at least a break of 60 days are considered continuous under the IPA mobility authority. A Federal employee may not serve on IPA mobility assignments for more than a total of 6 years in their career.

- g. At the completion of the assignment, the participating employee will be returned to the position he or she occupied at the time the agreement was entered into or a position of like seniority, status and pay.
- h. An assignment may be terminated at any time at the option of the Federal or non-Federal organization. Where possible, the party terminating the agreement before the original completion date should give a 30-day notice to all parties involved. The notification should be in writing and should include the reasons for the termination. An IPA assignment must be terminated immediately whenever the assignee is no longer employed by his or her original employer.
- i. A non-Federal employee on assignment to a Federal agency is subject to a number of provisions of law governing the ethical and other conduct of Federal employees.
- j. Cost-sharing arrangement for mobility assignments are negotiated between the participating organizations. Cost-sharing arrangements should be based on the extent to which the participating organizations benefit from the assignment. The larger share of the costs should be absorbed by the organization which benefits most from the assignment. The Federal agency may agree to pay all, some, or none of the costs associated with an assignment. Agencies should not authorize reimbursement for indirect or administrative costs associated with the assignment. This includes charges for preparing and maintaining payroll records, developing report on the assignment, and negotiating the agreement. Other prohibited costs include tuition credits, office space, furnishings, supplies, staff support, and computer.
- k. Individuals on IPA assignments are covered under the permanent employer's leave system. The assignment agreement should specify which organization will be responsible for approving and reporting leave. The agreement should also spell out what holidays will be observed by the individuals.

4. Responsibilities:

- a. Human Resources Management Officers at the VA facilities are the IPA coordinators and are responsible for oversight of the IPA assignment.
- b. The Nurse Executive and the Dean (or equivalent) of the nursing school or their designees are responsible for initiation of the IPA process and completion of the OF 69.
- c. The VA Nursing Academy Program Directors at the VA and the nursing school are responsible for implementing and monitoring approved IPA assignments, including necessary reports and documents.

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- a. Font size and Margins. Font size must be 10-point or larger and margins must be one inch on all sides, excluding headers and footers.
- b. Page limits.
 - (1) The transmittal letter, abstract, table of contents, identifying information about the VA facility(ies) and schools of nursing are not included in the page limits.
 - (2) The core narrative must not exceed 20 pages.
 - (3) The appendices, which include the letters and supplemental materials, must not exceed 10 pages.
- c. Submit the documents at <http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/VanaRFP/>.
 - (1) The “**Identifying Information**” tab will be used to enter information about the VA facility(ies) and schools of nursing.
 - (2) The “**Core Uploads**” tab will be used to upload the transmittal letter, the table of contents, the abstract, and the core narrative, including the visual timeline.
 - (3) The “**Appendices**” tab will be used to upload the letters of support and supplemental materials.
 - (4) The “**Funding**” tab will be used to enter the funding data.

2. PROPOSAL SECTIONS

- a. The identifying information will be entered directly into the database.
 - (1) VA Facility(ies). Enter information for all facilities involved and identify the “lead” facility if there is more than one in the proposal.
 - (a) Name of facility.
 - (b) City and State.
 - (c) Facility Director’s name and e-mail address.
 - (d) Nurse Executive’s name, title, e-mail address, and phone number.
 - (e) Proposed Program Director’s name, current position, telephone number; fax number, e-mail address, and percent of time assigned to this role (should be at least half-time).
 - (2) School(s) of Nursing
 - (a) Name of university or college.
 - (b) City and State.
 - (c) Name of school of nursing including “school or college of nursing”.
 - (d) Dean’s (or equivalent person’s) name, title, e-mail address and phone number.
 - (e) Proposed Program Director’s name, current position, telephone number; fax number, e-mail address, and percent of time assigned to this role (should be at least half-time).
- b. The transmittal letter from the VA facility Director must document support for the program by
 - (1) A statement of commitment for the program.
 - (2) Describing contributions the proposed partnership can make to the care of veterans and nursing education.
 - (3) Authorizing release time for the program director and VA-based faculty participating in the program.
 - (4) Agreeing to pay for the time school-based faculty are at the VA supervising students or providing services at or for VA. Payment may be directly to the faculty members or as

reimbursement to the school that continues to pay the faculty who are participating in the program through an IPA.

- (5) Agreeing to fund travel and registration for the VA program director and selected VA-based faculty to attend an initial planning meeting and follow-up implementation and evaluation meetings organized by the VA Nursing Academy throughout the pilot program. Agreeing, within budgetary limitations, to pay for travel and registration for conferences at which the local VA Program Director or VA-based faculty have been selected to give an oral or poster presentation on the VA Nursing Academy.
 - (6) Agreeing to develop a robust recruitment program for nursing students involved in the VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program.
 - (7) Encouraging support of IT needs of the program.
 - (8) Identifying names, titles, telephone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses of the program directors and other contacts at the VA facility and the school of nursing. The VA program director will be the primary contact with the Office of Academic Affiliations.
- c. The **Table of Contents for the Core Narrative and Appendices** should list the page numbers of the main sections [(1) and (2)] and the subsections [at least (a), (b), etc.] identified in sections 2e and f below. The Table of Contents does not count in the page limitations.
- d. The **Abstract** of the proposal describes the proposed partnership and components of the proposed program. The abstract must not be more than two pages and does not count in the page limitations. Include at least:
- (1) A brief history of relationship between VA facility and school of nursing.
 - (2) Description of the proposed program to be implemented.
 - (3) Description of new, enhanced, and innovative educational and practice opportunities for students at the VA and schools.
 - (4) Roles and responsibilities of VA-based and school-based faculty.
 - (5) Faculty development program for the VA-based faculty.
 - (6) Other information as desired.
- e. The **Core Narrative** of the proposal **must not exceed 20 single-spaced pages and should start as page 1.** **Proposals exceeding the page limitations will not be reviewed.** The Core Narrative should include:
- (1) **Background Information:**
 - (a) VA facility
 - i. Clinical and education activities.
 - ii. Nature of the relationships with the nursing school that is the partner in this application and other schools of nursing.
 - iii. Vacancy and turnover rates and ability to backfill positions if current nurses are reassigned to the VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program.
 - (b) School(s) of nursing that will be participating in Enhanced Academic Partnership Program
 - i. Education programs, faculty, student enrollment, graduations.
 - ii. Accreditation status.
 - iii. Current learning opportunities at VA facility.
 - iv. Current inclusion of VA staff in school activities such as precepting, teaching, and serving on academic committees.
 - v. Inclusion of the concepts of the "Troops to Nursing" and advanced standing programs for graduates of associate degree nursing programs and graduates of degree programs in other fields.

(2) Proposed Partnership.

- (a) Reasons for applying for this Enhanced Academic Partnership Program including expected outcomes.
- (b) VA and school program directors.
 - i. Names, positions, educational preparation (degree, university, date, specialty), description of experience that justifies being program director.
 - ii. Percent of FTE that each will devote to this program (should be at least half time).
- (c) New, enhanced, and innovative educational opportunities for students at the VA facility.
 - i. Description of opportunities and why they were selected.
 - ii. Anticipated interest by students.
 - iii. Level and number of students to be involved.
 - iv. Anticipated schedule of implementation.
 - v. Methods to recruit students to these opportunities.
 - vi. Involvement of school-based and VA-based faculty.
 - vii. Evaluation.
- (d) New, enhanced and innovative curriculum components other than those described in the section above.
 - i. Description of components and why they were selected.
 - ii. Anticipated interest by students, if appropriate.
 - iii. Level and number of students to be involved, if appropriate.
 - iv. Anticipated schedule of implementation.
 - v. Methods to recruit students to these opportunities, if appropriate.
 - vi. Involvement of school-based and VA-based faculty.
 - vii. Evaluation.
- (e) A visual timeline such as a Gantt Chart identifying:
 - i. Implementation of the new, enhanced, and innovative educational opportunities at the VA facility and the school that are described in sections (c) and (d) above.
 - ii. Faculty development program(s) for VA-based faculty that will be provided throughout the program, especially when new faculty are identified.
 - iii. Admission of cohorts of students in the baccalaureate degree program that are increased in size as a result of the VA Nursing Academy. The reviewers should be able to identify the increased numbers that justify the faculty funding as stated in section 3c(2) on page 4 of this RFP.
- (f) Nurses who will serve as VA-based faculty.
 - i. Selection method including required qualifications.
 - ii. Roles and responsibilities in the program and anticipated percent of time each will devote to this program.
 - iii. If known, names, positions, educational preparation (degree, university, date, specialty), experience in content area.
- (g) School-based faculty.
 - i. Selection method including required qualifications.
 - ii. Roles and responsibilities in the program including services that will be provided to VA other than direct involvement with students and anticipated percent of time each will devote to this program.
 - iii. If known, names, positions, educational preparation (degree, university, date, specialty), experience in content area.
- (h) Proposed faculty development program provided by school of nursing for the VA-based faculty to develop education knowledge, roles, and competencies.
- (i) Formative and summative evaluation of the educational opportunities and the overall program at the local level including areas described in section 6 of this RFP.

- f. **Appendices, which must not exceed 10 pages. Continue the page numbers from the Core Narrative.**
- (1) Letters of support from the following:
- (a) VISN Director. Include a description of the unique contributions the proposed partnership can make to the care of veterans and nursing education, a commitment to the program and a commitment to assist, if needed, in the funding of travel and registration for the VA program director and selected VA-based faculty to attend an initial planning meeting and follow-up implementation and evaluation meetings organized by the VA Nursing Academy throughout the pilot program.
 - (b) VA Nurse Executive(s). Include a description of anticipated impact of the partnership on the nursing staff in general and on the specific units to be involved in the partnership, the anticipated benefits of the partnership to the care of veterans, a commitment to release the VA program director and participating nurses from their usual duties while they are participating in the program, statement regarding anticipated ability to backfill the positions of the participating nurses and to provide additional support to the program director.
 - (c) Dean(s) or equivalent person(s) of the School(s) of Nursing. Include a statement of commitment for the partnership, a description of contributions the proposed partnership can make to nursing education, a commitment to release participating faculty members from their usual duties while they are participating in the program, a statement regarding anticipated ability to backfill the positions of the participating nurses and to provide additional support to the program director, a commitment to fund travel and registration for the VA program director and selected VA-based faculty to attend an initial planning meeting and follow-up implementation and evaluation meetings organized by the VA Nursing Academy throughout the pilot program.
 - (d) Program Directors at VA facility(ies) and school(s) of nursing.
 - (e) Designated Education Officer (DEO) at VA facility(ies).
 - (f) Others as desired.
- (2) Supplemental materials as desired and within page limit.
- g. **Funding Estimates** will be entered online to indicate anticipated funding needed to support faculty positions in academic year 2009-2010. Funding for Program Directors will not be paid except for the part of their time that they are functioning in a teaching faculty (not administrative/coordinating) role.
- (1) VA nurses (3 FTEE) who will become faculty: Average annual salary and benefits per FTEE.
 - (2) School faculty (2 FTEE) who will be assigned to this program: Average annual salary and benefits per FTEE.