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SHARED EQUIPMENT EVALUATION PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook establishes policies and procedures related to the Shared Equipment Evaluation Program (ShEEP) for the Medical Research Service (MRS). The purpose of ShEEP is to review proposals and make recommendations for funding of common resource or shared equipment to be used in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers to support biomedical research.

2. SCOPE

a. The ShEEP will review requests for new or replacement research and animal facility equipment annually. Upgrades that will expand the features or capabilities of existing equipment will also be considered if they are cost-effective and provide the same utility as the purchase of new equipment. In-kind partnering and/or direct contribution from other sources is required for each item of equipment requested.

(1) In-kind partnering includes, but is not limited to, the cost of minor renovations to allow installation of the equipment and/or provision of dedicated technician(s) to operate the requested equipment.

(2) Direct contributions include monetary contributions from all sources other than VA Central Office. Direct contributions from investigators who will share the requested equipment needs to be clearly identified. If ownership of the requested equipment will be shared (i.e., shared between the VA medical center and its academic affiliate), a sharing agreement or memorandum of understanding, signed by all

parties, must be approved by MRS before any funds will be released from VA Central Office.

b. A maximum of five items of equipment may be requested from a single facility, per annual request. The amount requested for the MRS share of research and animal facility equipment may not exceed a combined total of \$250,000. The cost of service contracts will not be considered in evaluating the required contribution from other sources.

(1) Requests for purchase or upgrade of common resource, shared, or animal facility equipment which costs at least \$20,000 per item (including the MRS portion and other sources of funding) must have in-kind partnering and/or direct contribution from other sources equaling **a minimum of 25 percent for each item**.

(2) The value of in-kind partnering is to be included in the total cost of an item of equipment when calculating the percent contribution from other sources. For example, a piece of equipment with a cost of \$60,000, for which a full-time technician would be supplied at a cost of \$20,000, would have a total cost of \$80,000. The in-kind partnering in this example would represent 25 percent of the total cost of the item.

c. The program will not review requests for:

(1) Items of common resource, shared, or animal facility equipment costing less than \$20,000.

(2) Administrative support equipment, office equipment, computers, or computer accessories. Computer components integral to the functioning of an equipment item may, however, be included in requests for shared-use equipment.

(3) Support for construction of new facilities or renovation of existing facilities.

(4) Repair or renovation to restore existing equipment to its previous level of utility.

(5) Equipment maintenance contracts.

3. MAJOR FACTORS CONSIDERED FOR SHARED EQUIPMENT REQUESTS

a. Consideration will be given to the following factors in evaluating requests for research and animal facility equipment:

(1) Does the request fall within the scope of the ShEEP as described in paragraph 2?

(2) Are the plans for sharing the cost of purchasing each item of equipment sufficient? Each item of equipment will be evaluated independently and must have its own cost sharing arrangement. Higher priority may be given to equipment requests that have more than the minimum 25 percent cost sharing.

(3) Is the proposed purchase or upgrade of the equipment items well justified? How important are the requested equipment items to research at the facility and to the VA-funded investigators who will use the equipment? Is the equipment requested the most appropriate for their needs?

(4) Are the investigators who will share the equipment productive members of the research service?

(5) What is the status of research at the facility? Is the facility maintaining its level of VA funded research? Is the level of VA funding increasing or decreasing?

(6) Does the facility have the means to house and maintain the equipment items? Does the equipment have special installation or maintenance requirements? Have these requirements been addressed in the proposal?

b. Additional consideration will be given to the following factors in evaluating requests for animal facility equipment:

(1) What is the importance of the item to maintaining compliance with applicable Federal regulations and/or maintaining Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, International (AAALAC) accreditation?

(2) How will acquisition of the item improve the quality or efficiency of animal care? This component of the justification is a critical factor and must be fully addressed.

(3) Does the size of the animal research program (i.e., daily inventory and/or total annual use of animals by species) support the need for the requested equipment?

c. **Infrastructure Surveys.** MRS will forward requests for shared or common-use equipment to the Research Evaluation Project (REP) for further review. The REP may determine that an Infrastructure Survey of the medical center is required or may refer to previous surveys before making a recommendation based upon the existing research infrastructure.

d. Requests for research equipment must be submitted in accordance with the instructions contained in Appendix A. Requests for animal facility equipment must be submitted in accordance with the instructions contained in Appendix B. Applications that are not submitted in accordance with the specified guidelines will not be reviewed.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF REQUESTS FOR SHARED OR COMMON RESOURCE RESEARCH EQUIPMENT

1. One proposal will be accepted from each Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility that received funding from Biomedical Laboratory or Clinical Science Research and Development Services (BLRD/CSRD) in the current fiscal year. Proposals for equipment that exceed the specified limit of \$500,000 for requested funding will not be reviewed.

2. FORMAT: Proposals must be unbound and consist of single-spaced typed pages. Proposals that exceed specified page limitations will not be reviewed.

a. Use only letter-quality print. All text must be prepared with at least 11-point font, with no more than fifteen characters per inch and no more than 6 lines per inch.

b. All tables must be prepared with at least 9-point font.

3. REQUIREMENTS: Each facility's proposal must contain the following materials:

a. A cover sheet (one page only) listing the following six items in the order specified:

(1) Shared Equipment Evaluation Program Request – Research Equipment.

(2) VA medical center name and address.

- (3) Administrative contact name, telephone number, and fax number.
- (4) Name, title, and signature of the Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development.
- (5) Name, title, and signature of the Research and Development (R&D) Committee Chair.
- (6) An itemized list of all research equipment requested.

b. Written confirmation that the requested funds can be expended in fiscal year 2006.

c. A brief narrative, providing the history of research at the facility. Also provide a table listing the facility's 5-year total R&D funding history, with VA and non-VA funding totaled separately. The combined narrative and table must not exceed one page.

d. On a separate page for each equipment item requested, provide the following information in the order specified (limit one page per item of equipment):

- (1) **Item of Equipment.** Name and brief description of the specific item of equipment.
- (2) **Type of Request.** Is this a request to purchase new equipment, purchase replacement equipment, or upgrade existing equipment?
- (3) **Cost of Equipment (minimum of \$50,000 per item).** Cost of the item broken down by total cost, amount requested from BLRD/CSRD, and the amount to be funded by other source(s). **Dollar-for-dollar matching is required for all items.** If multiple other sources are involved, list each separately. Direct contributions from investigators who will share the requested equipment should be clearly identified. **Letters of commitment will be required for all partners.**
- (4) **Location of the Equipment.** Clearly indicate where (building and room number) the equipment will be located. A VA-controlled location is required. If ownership of the requested equipment will be shared (i.e., between the VA medical center and its academic affiliate), a sharing agreement or memorandum of understanding, signed by all parties, must be approved by MRS before any funds will be released from VA Central Office.
- (5) **Installation.** Describe any special installation requirements and how they will be met. Briefly describe plans for covering the cost of installation and/or necessary renovations.
- (6) **Maintenance.** Describe any required service contacts, technicians, etc., and how the cost of these items will be covered. Although the cost of service contracts may be provided by other sources, these costs will not be considered in evaluating the required contribution from other sources.
- (7) **Overlap.** Describe whether or not funding for the equipment has been requested from another source and, if so, list the agency and status of other requests for this equipment. Indicate how any overlap in funding will be addressed.
- (8) **Justification.** Describe the need for this piece of equipment and how it will enhance the capabilities of the overall on-site VA research program. If the requested item is to be used in conjunction with other available instruments or parts of instruments, provide a description of those instruments including their function and how the requested item interfaces with them. If an upgrade for existing equipment is requested, clearly describe how the upgrade will provide the same level of utility as purchase of new equipment, the cost savings involved, and the expected lifetime of the upgraded equipment. If an upgrade is approved and funded, no request for replacement of the upgraded

equipment will be accepted for review for a minimum of 4 years.

e. **User information.** For each equipment item requested, provide a separate table (limit two pages) of all funded projects for investigators who will use the equipment. A separate line should be used for each funded project. All information for each investigator must be kept together in the table and sorted by investigator's last name in descending order of proposed usage. The table must include the following information:

(1) Name, degree(s) and appointment for each investigator. VA appointments are to be expressed in 8ths (e.g., 5/8ths). For non-VA investigators, indicate the academic institution and rank.

(2) The proposed usage (hours per week and hours per year) for each investigator.

(3) Description of each currently funded project to include the funding agency, start and end dates, current year funding, and total funding for the award period. The column containing current year funding should be totaled to indicate total current year funding.

(1) VA and non-VA funded projects must be listed in separate columns.

(2) For VA-funded projects, indicate type of award and funding source (e.g., Merit Review, MRS).

(3) For non-VA funded projects, indicate the granting agency and grant number.

f. **Justification for each Investigator.** For each equipment item, justify the use of this equipment by each identified user (limit ½ page per investigator).

g. **Attachments.** Attachments should include the following items:

(1) A letter of transmittal from the medical center Director; **a letter of approval from the R&D committee is not required in the proposal.**

(2) A signed letter of commitment from each source of direct contribution clearly identifying the amount of support that will be provided for each item of equipment. **The total of all contributions must equal or exceed the level of a dollar-for dollar match with funds requested from BLRD/CSRD.**

(3) For replacement equipment, a copy of the relevant Consolidated Memorandum Receipt (CMR) describing the equipment to be replaced and a copy of the completed VA Form 2237, "Request, Turn In, and Receipt for Property or Services", which will be submitted to excess the outdated equipment.

h. **Appendix (original plus 2 copies).** The following items for each investigator who will use any of the requested equipment must be kept together and placed in the appendix in alphabetical order by investigator's last name:

(1) **Biographic sketch.** (VA form 10-1313-5/6, Combined Biographical Form, or NIH equivalent). Do not attach curricula vitae.

(2) Title and current abstract of all funded research projects. **NOTE:** *Publications and abstracts may be combined on a single page for each investigator.*

(3) Copy of VA forms 10-1313A, Merit Review Board Summary Statement, and 10-1313-3, Current Funds and First Year Request for Program, for each ongoing VA-funded program.

(4) Copy of the award notice and budget page for each ongoing non-VA-funded grant.

4. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

a. Submit the original and 15 copies (only 2 copies of the appendix are needed) to:

Director, Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development Service (121F)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

Proposals must be received by January 31, 2006.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF REQUESTS FOR ANIMAL FACILITY EQUIPMENT

1. One proposal will be accepted from each Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility that received funding from Biomedical Laboratory or Clinical Science Research and Development Services (BLRD/CSRD) in the current fiscal year. Proposals for equipment that exceed the specified limit of \$500,000 for requested funding will not be reviewed.

2. FORMAT: Proposals must be unbound and consist of single-spaced typed pages. Proposals that exceed specified page limitations will not be reviewed.

a. Use only letter-quality print. All text must be prepared with at least 11-point font, with no more than 15 characters per inch and no more than 6 lines per inch.

b. All tables must be prepared with at least 9-point font.

3. REQUIREMENTS: Each facility's proposal must contain the following materials:

a. A cover sheet (one page only) listing the following six items in the order specified:

(1) Shared Equipment Evaluation Program Request – Animal Facility Equipment.

(2) VA medical center name and address.

(3) Administrative contact name, telephone number, and fax number.

(4) Name, title, and signature of the Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development.

(5) Name, title, and signature of the Research and Development (R&D) Committee Chair.

(6) An itemized list of all animal facility equipment requested.

b. Written confirmation that the requested funds can be expended in fiscal year 2006.

c. A brief narrative (limit one page), providing the following information:

- (1) Present Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, International (AAALAC) status and date of last site visit. Indicate if the medical center is in a status other than full accreditation.
- (2) Net square footage of animal facility space (the figure on the AAALAC annual report can be used here).
- (3) Current VA Central Office cost center 105 allocation.
- (4) If available, cost for medical center support of the Veterinary Medical Unit (VMU). This should be limited to such items as equipment, renovations, security, etc., during the past 5 years.

d. **Animal Use Data.** Provide a table (limit one page) listing the following information:

- (1) Total annual use of animals by species (this information can be copied from the last United States (U.S.) Department of Agriculture (USDA) Annual Report form submitted as part of Research and Development Information System (RDIS) part II).
- (2) Total average daily inventory of animals by species (this information can be copied from the last VMU Annual Report or from the AAALAC Program Description, if updated within the past year).
 - a. Provide a legible floor plan or sketch of the animal facility on 8½ x 11-inch paper, with the rooms labeled according to use. Clearly indicate where the requested equipment will be located.
 - b. On a separate page for each equipment item requested, provide the following information in the order specified (limit one page per item of equipment):
 - (1) **Item of Equipment.** Name and brief description of the specific item of equipment.
 - (2) **Type of Request.** Is this a request to purchase new equipment, purchase replacement equipment, or upgrade existing equipment?
 - (3) **Cost of Equipment (minimum of \$50,000 per item).** Cost of the item broken down by total cost, amount requested from BLRD/CSRD, and the amount to be funded by other source(s). **Dollar-for-dollar matching is required for all items.** If multiple other sources are involved, list each separately. Direct contributions from investigators who will share the requested equipment should be clearly identified. **Letters of commitment will be required for all partners.**
 - (4) **Location of the Equipment.** Clearly indicate the location of the equipment within the animal facility.
 - (5) **Installation.** Describe any special installation requirements and how they will be met. Briefly describe plans for covering the cost of installation and/or necessary renovations.
 - (6) **Maintenance.** Describe any required service contacts, technicians, etc., and how these costs will be covered. Although the cost of service contracts may be provided by other sources, these costs will not be considered in evaluating the required contribution from other sources.
 - (7) **Overlap.** Describe whether or not funding for the equipment has been requested from another source and, if so, list the agency and status of other requests for this equipment. Indicate how any

overlap in funding will be addressed.

(8) **Justification.** Describe the overall justification or need for this piece of equipment. State whether or not the item is required to meet Federal regulations (e.g., the Animal Welfare Act) or to maintain AAALAC accreditation. If an upgrade to existing equipment is requested, clearly describe how the upgrade will provide the same level of utility as purchase of new equipment, the cost savings involved, and the expected lifetime of the upgraded equipment. If an upgrade is approved and funded, no request for replacement of that equipment will be accepted for review for a minimum of 4 years.

e. **Attachments.** Attachments should include the following items:

(1) A letter of transmittal from the medical center Director; **a letter of approval from the R&D committee is not required in the proposal.**

(2) A signed letter of commitment from each source of direct contribution clearly identifying the amount of support that will be provided for each item of equipment. **The total of all contributions must equal or exceed the level of a dollar-for dollar match with funds requested from BLRD/CSRD.**

(3) For replacement equipment, a copy of the relevant Consolidated Memorandum Receipt (CMR) describing the equipment to be replaced and a copy of the completed VA Form 2237, Request, Turn In, and Receipt for Property or Services, which must be submitted to excess the outdated equipment.

4. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

a. Submit the original and 15 copies (only 2 copies of the appendix are needed) to:

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