

Outline for VA/CDMRP Funding Talk

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1. What Do I Bring to The Discussion? Lengthy uniformed Army career doing health services research collaborating with many VA investigators over the years in a variety of contexts.
 - A. Psychiatrist-Health Services Researcher – DoD (Retired Army Colonel & 1991 Gulf War veteran, later Associate Chair for Research, Dept of Psychiatry, USU), Senior Physician Policy Researcher, RAND Corporation (2013-2021), Seattle VA/University of Washington (2021-Present).
 - B. Long history of VA/DoD Collaboration: VA Cooperative Studies Co-Chair on 3 Multicenter Trials (CSP470, 475, 494), co-I on VA funded studies, NIH Co-PI with VA researchers, 2 CDMRP grants with VA Co-Is.
2. Tips and Reflections: (disclaimer: I don't represent CDMRP and the program is of course evolving!)
 - A. Announcements can seem to reflect an odd potpourri of interests/priorities, and it can be hard to get feedback on your ideas prior to submission.
 - B. Keep in mind: you get one chance, so there is some risk involved. You can often re-tool a proposal if it isn't funded for a subsequent DoD or VA announcement but the reviewers/study section will be different.
 - C. Emphasize Military Significance of the research:
 - 1) Military priorities/perspectives count for a lot, but they aren't everything.
 - 2) Put yourself in the mind of "war fighter". For example, health care may be seen as competing with rather than enhancing readiness.
 - 3) Will the findings be 'actionable'? For example, testing implementation strategies. The expectation isn't necessarily immediate action, but your text should speak to the practical applications of the research in some context of relevance to the military.
 - 4) Can the findings increase readiness? For example, positive effects on injury, absenteeism, deployability, work function, organizational efficiency, working in teams/unit cohesion, reenlistment rates, resilience, fitness. For example, stigma reduction by itself may not be a winning idea, until language is added to suggest stigma reduction may improve teamwork, unit cohesion, and so on. If so, emphasize it in the text of the proposal.
 - 5) Consider problems in key military demographics (e.g., half are age 18-25). While women are only 15% of US military personnel, there is great emphasis on efforts to address women's unique needs. For example, If an announcement calls for dementia research, think hard about what would make your research relevant to the military and applicable to young people and their support systems/family.

- 6) Implementation Research: As stated above, health care programs sometimes evoke a mixed military reaction (e.g., more time in treatment can reduce time in the unit, deployability). Efforts to reduce health care use by making it more efficient/effective, addressing problems without visiting a facility, identifying problems before they become ‘a disciplinary problem’, mitigating the effects of an injury (e.g., traumatic amputation) that might allow continued military service.

D. Identifying DoD collaboration/collaborators:

- 1) Characteristics of a military collaborator may differ from the usual research collaborator profile, especially for those working in the medical facilities. Adjust your expectations accordingly.
 - a. If primarily clinical, the promise of ‘protected time’ for research is challenging, but, there are ways they can negotiate flexibility and get letters of support in various ways (good leaders want to support positive activities).
 - b. Youth and enthusiasm are easier to find than proven track records of research.
 - 2) Network with colleagues in your area of interest.
 - 3) Search USU website for faculty with related interests [www.usuhs.edu]. Uniformed Services University (USU) faculty are great if you can identify them. This the most conventional scholarly background for DoD investigators.
 - 4) Search literature databases to find those publishing in DoD. Almost all allow searching based on institutional affiliation.
 - 5) Review abstracts from national meetings including the Military Health System Research Symposium (For DoD funded investigators to present work)
 - 6) Google search for other military health research institutions—
 - a. Wikipedia:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_federal_research_and_development_agencies
 - b. Strategic List (links to all are available on the Wikipedia page above): Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), Army Medical Research and Development Command (USAMRDC), Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Office of Naval Research (ONR), Naval Medical Research Center (NMRC)
3. Feel free to reach to me if you are struggling to identify someone. I left the military in 2013 and things change quickly but I’m happy to consult around your efforts to connect to a collaborator.