# INDEX OF FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## I have an idea for a research project. Would this be appropriate for the VHA-UHN Fellowship Program?

No. Unfortunately research projects are not eligible for the VHA-UHN Fellowship Program. This is due to the six month time frame of the program which is too short for completion of a research study. In addition, the Fellowship curriculum is focused on the principles of quality improvement and would not provide you with the information required to complete a research study. For more information on the difference between quality improvement and research, please see the VHA-UHN Fellowship Application Guide.

## What if I have a really good idea but I am not yet sure of all the details about how to implement it?

Ideas do not have to be fully developed to be submitted. You won’t necessarily know exactly how you will address this issue until your project starts and you complete a needs assessment. Often, your project activities would include a needs assessment including a root cause analysis and conversations with your colleagues and key stakeholders to determine the best approach.

Your proposal can include as much detail as you have, and you can include your thoughts on how you *might* address the issue. This could include broad change concepts such as improving workflow; changes to the work environment etc. (see [http://www.ihi.org/resources/pages/changes/usingchangeconceptsforimprovement.aspx](http://www.ihi.org/resources/pages/changes/usingchangeconceptsforimprovement.aspx%20)

for more information).

If you need help with this, try any or all of the following:

* + Talk with your colleagues about how you might further develop your plan; they may have some good ideas, and you may want to engage them once you do get your project off the ground – this would be a great way to start!
  + Consult the literature on your topic area – how have others successfully addressed this issue in the past?
  + Share your idea with your supervisor or manager and ask if s/he has any ideas about how you might develop your plan.
  + Seek assistance from a mentor.
  + Talk your idea over with other leaders (e.g. clinical lead) to see if they have any suggestions for you.

If you still need assistance with your proposal development, send an email to [smckay@vha.ca](mailto:smckay@vha.ca).

## I have several ideas for projects, but I’m not sure which one would be the best. What should I do?

First of all, it is wonderful that you have so many ideas! Narrowing them down can be a challenge. There are several possibilities: First, remember that if you are chosen for a Fellowship, you will have four days per week for approximately six months – so choose a project that you think you will be able to accomplish in that time. Second, think about your ideas and see whether any of them can be combined in some way; perhaps you can think of one project that will accomplish several of your goals. Third, talk your ideas over with your colleagues, your manager, your clinical lead, or other leaders to see which of your ideas inspires the most energy, which one you are most excited about, which is the most feasible, and where you might get the most help and support. Finally, if you are still unsure, contact Sandra McKay at [smckay@vha.ca](mailto:smckay@vha.ca). Sandra would be happy to talk through your ideas with you.

## Do Fellowship projects need to be service/team-specific, or do they need to be organization-wide?

Either. As long as your project is related to one of VHA’s strategic priority areas, it doesn’t matter whether it is specific to your team or whether it is service-wide or organization-wide. Just remember that you will have four days per week for approximately six months to complete your project – so make sure it isn’t something that is bigger than you are able to accomplish in the allotted time. We do not recommend projects that are unrelated to your specific clinical areas.

1. **I am an RPN and I have an idea for a project. Am I eligible to apply for a Fellowship?** Of courseRPN’s are eligible! As long as they are employed in a full-time or part-time position at their organization. A University degree is not a requirement – a willingness to learn and an excitement and passion about your project is a great start for all candidates.

## I am employed/contracted on a casual part-time basis; am I eligible to apply?

Casual staff and service providers are not eligible, but part-time staff and service providers (that is, individuals who have scheduled part-time hours) can apply providing they have a contract of at least 0.5FTE and have worked for VHA for a minimum of 6 months. If you are unclear of your status, please contact your manager.

## I am in an Advanced Practice role (e.g., Clinical Lead); am I eligible to apply?

Yes; the VHA-UHN Research Fellowship Program is available to all point-of-care providers who have the ability to flex their time to work on project activities. The VHA-UHN Research Fellowship Program provides individuals with that flexibility and protected time, by providing funds to cover their time. Individuals in a formal leadership role (e.g. Manager or Supervisor), however, are not eligible.

## I am currently working on my degree, and will be taking a course at the same time as the Fellowship. Can I use the Fellowship to work on a project or paper or placement for school?

The VHA-UHN Research Fellowship Program is about creating opportunities for point-of-care providers to contribute to strategic priority practice areas so Fellowship projects need to be focused on these. Therefore, the Fellowship time cannot be used for completing school courses, theses, or dissertations.

## Do I need to do a large-scale review of literature for my proposal?

A large-scale literature review is not necessary; however your proposal should include at least some background literature. A brief review of existing literature will be useful in helping you formulate your idea and your project, and providing some background for its importance. Remember – the proposal is only 4 pages long. Previous successful proposals have included a brief literature review, with a few references to peer-reviewed journals or texts, as well as relevant organizational documents.

## How do I incorporate literature into my proposal?

You can use articles related to your topic to support your ideas throughout the proposal. Examples of areas where you can use literature include the “introduction and significance” and “current knowledge available” sections but are not limited to these sections. Please include a full reference list at the end of your proposal.

## How do I submit my application?

Please submit all sections of your application **by email to** [**smkay@vha.ca**](mailto:smkay@vha.ca) **by** **Friday June 22nd, 2018 by 4:00 pm**. Applications should include:

1. Completed Fellowship Application Form
2. Completed Manager Approval Form – please scan and email a signed copy
3. Project Proposal (remember, the proposal **must be blinded** – do not include your name or any other identifying information about yourself, with the exception of your professional designation – e.g., RN, PT, etc.); also do not include the name of your manager in the proposal).

Unfortunately, applications that are late or incomplete will not be considered. See *Criteria and Requirements* for further detail on what to include and how to submit your application.

## What is a ‘blinded proposal’ and why is it required?

A blinded proposal is one that does not include your name or any other information that would allow a proposal reviewer to identify you. This is important so that we can ensure all proposals are reviewed fairly without bias. Please do not include the name of your manager in your proposal either.

Your application form and manager approval/reference forms can all include your name – but should not be included within your proposal document.

When you save your proposal document, please name it using your project title – do not include your name.

Don’t worry - we have a process for tracking your proposal once it is submitted – so we can match your blinded proposal to your name once we complete the scoring process.

1. **What if people apply for the same topic from different clinical areas/teams? Will you only choose one?**

No. Applications will be selected based on the strength and quality of the proposal. However, if you are working on your proposal with someone else who is applying, make sure your applications are not identical.

## Can one person submit more than one proposal?

Yes, however it is not recommended. Candidates will not be favoured by the number of proposals they submit, but by the strength of their applications. Each successful applicant will only be awarded one Fellowship. The application process is time consuming and requires a lot of effort, so make sure you do not sacrifice quality for quantity; we recommend going deep with one topic rather than scratching the surface of several topics. If you are chosen for a Fellowship you will be spending a significant amount of time working on and thinking about your project, so try choosing the topic that excites you the most. What are you passionate about? Talk to your manager about your ideas and see if one idea is more feasible than another.

## If I am accepted into the Fellowship, are the weekly seminars mandatory?

Yes. If you are accepted into the VHA-UHN Research Fellowship Program, you must attend 80% of all the seminars. You will be assigned to a weekly seminar group; each seminar takes place from 9am- 12pm on your assigned seminar day. Participants will be given four paid 7 hr. days a week for their projects. One of these days must be your assigned seminar day so you are able to attend. Participation in the seminars is one of the key success factors for Fellowship completion; you will learn valuable information, receive support and mentorship, and build an extended network through these seminars.

## Can I apply if I’ve already made plans for vacation during the six months of the VHA-UHN Fellowship Program?

Yes. As long as you will be able to attend 80% of the seminar classes and complete your project, you may take vacation during the Fellowship. There will be a two week break during December.

## There is an eight -page limit. Does that include references?

The bibliography or reference list at the end of the proposal will not be included in the eight- page limit.

## Do appendices count in my four-page limit?

No. However, do **not** place any of the pre-specified heading sections within your appendices (e.g., a common mistake involves inserting the project timeline as an appendix; the project timeline should be included in the proposal itself, within the four-page limit). The appendices can be used for supporting documentation (e.g., a sample of a tool you plan to use), as long as it is described within your proposal. If you use appendices, make sure you discuss/describe them within the eight-page proposal. Do not write “see Appendix A” without a description. Remember – your eight-page proposal should be able to stand on its own and be generally understood without relying on appendices.

## In my application, should some of the pre-specified heading sections be longer than others?

It depends on your topic. Your proposal is evaluated based on overall strength, clarity, and alignment with a strategic priority area and the content of each of the pre-specified headings contribute to that. Reviewers will be scoring each section, so make sure you have addressed all sections as indicated by the pre-specified headings.

## How much detail should be included in the timeline?

We recognize that a detailed week-to-week or day-to-day timeline may not be clear until the project is underway. For the proposal, think of what you want to accomplish in the six months and how you will achieve it. Imagine your project is complete; what are the major steps you would have had to accomplish to get to that point? What are the key milestones that need to be achieved? It may be helpful to think of it in a month-to-month context – what are the key activities that need to happen in each of the six months?

## If applications are being judged mostly on the strength of the proposal, why do I need a reference and approval from my manager?

Although project proposals will be the main consideration in the approval process, the selection committee will need to ensure that the applicants are able to complete the work. We also need to ensure that your manager is informed of your activities so s/he is able to provide you with the support you need.

## Why do Fellowship participants need to meet regularly with their managers?

Regular meetings with your VHA mentor will help keep them informed about your activities, help them to better understand how to support you, and help promote your accountability to your Fellowship activities. One of the goals of the VHA-UHN Fellowship Program is to help develop point- of-care providers as leaders, and part of being a leader in a point-of-care role involves communicating and collaborating with other leaders, colleagues, and stakeholders with whom you work.

## I am a manager with several staff/service providers who have great project ideas, and I want to support all of them. Is it possible for multiple staff/service providers from the same team or clinical area to receive Fellowships?

Yes. Fellowship proposals will be chosen based on their strength.

## What if I have more questions that aren’t covered here?

If you have more questions, please contact Sandra McKay at [smckay@vha.ca](mailto:smckay@vha.ca), Sonia Nizzer at [snizzer@vha.ca](mailto:snizzer@vha.ca) or Arlinda Ruco [aruco@vha.ca](mailto:aruco@vha.ca)