

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: October 23, 2019

From: Principal Executive Director, Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (003)

Subj: Request Approval for the December 2019 Acquisition Workforce Innovation Symposium (VIEWS# 226004)

To: Secretary (00)

1. In accordance with existing Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) conference policies and guidelines and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC) requests approval to host VA's second Acquisition Workforce Innovation Symposium (AWIS) in December 2019. VA hosted the well-received, initial 2019 AWIS training event in June, attended by nearly 1,400 acquisition professionals (see VIEWS # 145652). OALC now seeks your approval to host the second AWIS in December 2019 at the same location. This will allow VA to exercise an option to the existing contract, conserve funds through duplication, and reach the remaining 1,500 acquisition professionals.

2. Goals and Objectives: AWIS is part of the Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO) and the Senior Procurement Executive's (SPE) continuing efforts to create learning opportunities through face-to-face connection and collaboration. AWIS is a critical pillar in achieving OALC's strategic goals in Accountability, Customer Service, and Transformation, which will improve the customer and employee experience and advance our craft, so that our acquisition workforce can champion better business outcomes that delivers improved services to Veterans nationwide. Further, the educational sessions are designed to target and close technical proficiencies and business acumen competency gaps.

3. Justification: VA proposes this AWIS training event to support implementation of the Office of Management and Budget's Policy Letter 05-01, which outlines agency responsibilities for the professional development and career management of its acquisition workforce to support the accomplishment of our mission. AWIS forums bring together approximately 3,000 acquisition professionals (1,500 in June 2019 and 1,500 in December 2019) to learn, share, and provide the comprehensive training required to improve the acquisition process and the Veterans experience (June AWIS training recipients are ineligible to attend the December forum). The AWIS training forum, which includes contracting officer representatives and project and program managers, co-locates acquisition senior leaders, supervisors, and specialists, into a single, dynamic learning environment to leverage the variety of backgrounds, skill sets, needs, and interests with the common purpose of delivering capabilities to better serve our Veterans and customers.

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The CAO and SPE utilize the AWIS platform to address specific learning needs to avoid future internal and external deficiencies. The agenda topics covered can be found in Attachment 1. Government Accounting Office (GAO) recommendations for VA's acquisition management have identified inadequate acquisition training as one of the major reasons for putting VA on its 2019 High Risk List and stated VA's training "at times," has not been comprehensive nor provided to staff that could benefit from it. This training symposium provides an excellent venue to deliver consistent messaging to the largest number of VA's acquisition professionals at a single event. In addition to minimizing misinterpretation, this AWIS affords the participants crosstalk, forums, and discussions surrounding relevant changes in Federal and VA-specific procurement policy affecting our workforce.

AWIS also allows the introduction of VA's new SPE initiative, the Acquisition Lifecycle Framework (ALF). ALF builds upon previous efforts to improve the front-end process by expanding it to a focus on the end-to-end processes necessary for effective procurements. This training identifies clear roles and responsibilities from requirement development through contract close out. Training on the ALF also addresses the issue of comprehensive training identified by GAO.

4. Business Case Analysis: The estimated cost for the December 2019 AWIS is \$2.3 million, an increase of \$100,000. The increase reflects estimates that correspond with the General Services Administration's Fiscal Year 2020 Per Diem Rates for attendee TDY, venue, and logistical support, as well as contracted operational and processes services with the Financial Services Center to process travel vouchers for the attendees. The site recommendation allows for efficient travel, facilities use, and an economy to the Department, given the scope of the proposed attendees. The Conference Request Form 10008 (Attachment 2) provides costing data to support the December 2019 AWIS. The Responsible Conference Executive for this event is Ms. Terri McCrea. Should you wish to discuss the proposed conference, you may reach Ms. McCrea at (202) 632-9606 or Ms. Judith Dawson, VA's Acquisition Career Manager, at (202) 461-1533.

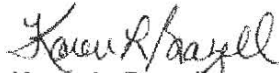
5. Contracted Services: OALC will need to solicit the anticipated contractual services by October 1, 2019, for logistical support and execution of the December 2019 AWIS. In addition to these services, the contractor shall provide all on-site and closeout support services.

6. Proposed Location and Dates: The December 2019 AWIS will be held on December 17-18, 2019 (with travel dates of December 16 and 19) which will be held at the Gaylord Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas.

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7. OALC seeks your approval to host the VA December 2019 AWIS, that directly supports VA's Fourth Strategic Goal "...to provide world class customer service [and solutions] to Veterans and VA employees" by enhancing the professional readiness of VA's acquisition workforce. For questions, please contact Iris Hall, OALC's Acting Executive Officer / Chief of Staff who can be reached at (202) 461-6906 or Iris.Hall2@va.gov.


Karen L. Brazell

Attachments (2):

1. December 2019 AWIS Draft Agenda
2. VA Form 10008 Conference Request

APPROVED / DISAPPROVED



Robert L. Wilkie

NOV 08 2019

Date

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: **JUN 26 2019**

From: Executive in Charge, Office of the Under Secretary of Health (10)

Subj: Request Approval to Implement Innovation to Impact: Research to Advance VA's Learning Healthcare Community (Baltimore, MD) (98586/BIS7854)

To: Secretary of Veterans Affairs (00)

1. In accordance with existing Department of Veterans Affairs conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Office of Health Services Research and Development Service requests your approval to implement Innovation to Impact: Research to Advance VA's Learning Healthcare Community (Baltimore, MD) (98586/BIS7854) in fiscal year 2019.
2. Purpose: The primary purpose of the conference is to develop and sustain knowledge in studying services pertaining to clients' complex medical needs. The secondary purpose of the conference is to gain understanding in evaluating methods and opportunities to change operational practices through improvements in knowledge application. The third purpose of this conference is for the Health Services Research and Development Service to promote research skills among employees in the Department, especially VHA.
3. Goals and Objectives: The conference will improve the VHA service capability by enhancing proficiency among staff and reinforcing the value of fitted information through in-person cooperation among colleagues. The conference will also enhance the quality of services to Veterans by preparing and encouraging staff to apply their improved knowledge to best practices and other conditions affecting intricate operations in VHA. This face-to-face conference will help staff clarify and coordinate future requirements that Health Services Research and Development Service is promoting in employees with the goal of improving service quality across major work functions.
4. Justification: The conference requires extended, uninterrupted episodes of face-to-face engagement to sustain attention on complex research factors and conditions affecting customers. The content of the conference is consistent with goals of VA and VHA, as it will include an extensive set of peer-to-peer presentations that concentrate on necessary designs, methods and professional requirements for improving knowledge application and overall service quality. The conference is required for attendees to fully achieve their professional qualification to meet Department standards for full participation in the mission of the VA and its growth of performance capability. Lodging taxes are included in estimated costs even if the Federal Government is tax-exempt in selected locations because all travelers attending the conference may not hold a government issued travel card. All travelers will have completed mandatory travel card and ethics training as required by VHA.

Request Approval to Implement Innovation to Impact: Research to Advance VA's Learning Healthcare Community (Baltimore, MD) (98586/BIS7854)

5. Business Case Analysis: The proposed training, Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Innovation to Impact: Research to Advance VA's Learning Healthcare Community (Baltimore, MD) (98586/BIS7854), beginning on 09/09/2019 and ending on 09/11/2019 will be held in Baltimore, MD and include 335 VA personnel of which 310 will be travelers (310 air travelers), at a total estimated cost of \$737,524.20. The estimated cost per attendee is \$2,201.56. The travel dates are 09/08/2019 returning 09/12/2019. The value of the event to the VA mission is that it will reinforce vital Veteran services; as well as reinforce proficiency in planning contextual analyses of the operational conditions affecting such services. Detailed market cost research was conducted on three potential locations. The location selected was determined to offer the VA the best value, especially regarding its travel costs and location services.

The \$143,000 in non-travel cost is \$50,000 for meeting room cost and \$93,000 for audiovisual cost.

6. The proposed dates and location are:

Dates	Potential Location
09/09/2019 - 09/11/2019	Baltimore, MD

7. The overall proposed per event cost estimate is provided below:

	Number of employees	Support Staff/VA Faculty	Non-Travel Cost	Travel Cost	Contractor Support	Total Cost	Cost per Participant
Innovation to Impact: Research to Advance VA's Learning Healthcare Community (Baltimore, MD) (98586/BIS7854)	335	5 Support / 160 faculty out of 335 Employees	\$143,000.00	\$594,524.20	\$0.00	\$737,524.20	\$2,201.56

Request Approval to Implement Innovation to Impact: Research to Advance VA's Learning Healthcare Community (Baltimore, MD) (98586/BIS7854)

8. The Responsible Conference Executive (RCE) for this event is David Atkins, MD, MPH, Director, Health Services Research and Development Service, and is available at 202-443-5726 should you wish to further discuss the proposed Innovation to Impact: Research to Advance VA's Learning Healthcare Community (Baltimore, MD) (98586/BIS7854).



Richard A. Stone, MD
Executive in Charge

4/10/19
Date

APPROVE / DISAPPROVE



Robert L. Wilkie
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

JUN 26 2019
Date