

DESCRIPTION/SPECIFICATIONS/PERFORMANCE WORK STATEMENT

- 1. BACKGROUND:** The mission of Veterans Emergency Management Evaluation Center (VEMEC) is to promote the health and social welfare of America's Veterans and the Nation by initiating and coordinating projects aimed at developing evidence-based practices for use in mitigating against, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from national emergencies and natural disasters (Public Law (P.L.) 113-5, 109-417, 107-287). Funding for VEMEC comes from the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-5; a follow up bill to the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act of 2006, P. L. 109-417). VEMEC was also established in accord with the requirements of P.L. 107-287 that mandated the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish medical emergency preparedness research and education centers at VA Medical Centers (VAMC); VEMEC is the only such center within VA.

Given its nationwide scope, VA must respond to the full range of emergencies and disasters that may occur in the United States. VA has distinct assets relevant to preparedness, including the widespread use of uniform electronic medical record software and an existing surge capacity. This broad ability to draw on multiple resources, coupled with a strong commitment to planning, provides resources and a level of surge capacity that few private sector facilities can replicate. As such, existing program evaluation work outside of VA does not adequately address VHA's needs, nor does it fully address health concerns particularly to Veterans during emergencies, crises, and other disasters.

U.S. Military Veterans, currently more than 22 million individuals, are an important population in disaster research as they have shared skills and experiences that may differentiate their disaster-related experiences from those in the civilian population. However, even though Veterans have been mentioned in some of the earliest writings on resilience, researchers have primarily focused on combat-related stressors. Few have investigated how Veterans are impacted by non-combat related disasters.

"Disaster resilience" is a relatively recent concept used to describe the capacity of individuals and communities to withstand and recover from disasters. Experts tend to agree that natural disasters are on the rise and the danger of man-made disasters (either through accident or terrorist intent) is increasing as well. Research is needed to identify potential levers that could enhance resilience of our Nation's Veteran population during non-combat related disasters and similar crises.

The results of the survey will contribute a foundational assessment of disaster resilience and preparedness among Veterans, provide vital data to understand what factors impact their disaster resilience, and assess the degree to which Veterans are equipped and willing to participate in community disaster preparedness.

- 2. SCOPE OF WORK:** The Contractor shall furnish all qualified personnel, labor, facilities, supplies, equipment, transportation, supervision and other non-personal services necessary to facilitate a data collection survey for VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. The goal of this survey is to obtain a total of 3,750 respondents out of 10,000 contacted to a 15 to 20-minute web, mail or telephone survey (which will include an introductory/ consent cover letter) with Veteran VA-users nationwide. The target population will be Veterans who used VA healthcare within two years prior to the start-date of the fielding of the survey at any VA medical facility in the United States. The study will oversample Veteran VA-users by age categories and gender.

The aim of this national survey of Veteran VA-users is to:

- Identify what individual (e.g. health status, gender, age) and community (e.g., rurality) characteristics are associated with disaster resilience among Veterans?
- Identify what individual (e.g. health status, gender, age) and community (e.g., rurality) characteristics are associated with household preparedness among Veterans?
- Understand the relationship between household preparedness and disaster resilience among Veterans.
- Understand to what extent Veterans are willing and able to promote increased disaster resilience among individuals in their own communities? This would include an assessment of their current involvement in promoting resilience in their communities.

3. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: September 1, 2017 thru August 31, 2018.

4. PLACE OF PERFORMANCE: All work to be performed shall be accomplished at the contractor's facility.

5. TASKS:

6.1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

6.1.1 Contractor must meet VA-specified computer data security requirements for hardware, software, and CATI station infrastructure including all required trainings for contractor personnel.

6.1.2 Contractor must have a system in place to securely transfer data files between contractor and VA (i.e. secure-FTP or other alternative approach subject to approval by VA. All information that has sensitive personal information such as name, address, phone numbers, birthdate, etc. shall be transmitted utilizing a VA-approved process.

6.1.3 Contractor must assist the VA with dissemination of results including media outreach and support of peer-reviewed scientific publications.

6.1.4 Refusal conversion attempts shall be made by experienced interviewers for soft refusals only. Soft refusal is defined as refusal where respondents provide reasons for not participating (e.g. not having time or being too busy at that moment, or a refusal made by an individual other than the selected respondent) that may change.

6.1.5 The Contractor shall designate a supervisor specifically for this requirement and conduct interviewer trainings in close collaboration with the COR.

6.1.6 The Contractor shall monitor all employees including subcontractor employees, if any, to ensure compliance with the contract specific requirements.

6.1.7 Contractor shall set up and conduct regular meetings on biweekly or monthly basis with the COR and VEMEC members to ensure contract terms and conditions are met.

6.1.8 The contractor shall provide the COR an option to monitor interviews.

6.2 GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.2.1** The COR will provide the necessary data, study questionnaire, and supporting documentation so the Contractor can successfully produce the sample design, oversee field work, sample weighting and dataset specifications.
- 6.2.2** The COR will provide study-specific objectives to assist the Contractor on all phases of the survey including sample design development, overseeing field work, data collection, sample weighting, dataset construction, data analysis and report-writing.
- 6.2.3** The COR will furnish an electronic file of Veteran contact information to the Contractor. This file will include last known, telephone number, mailing address and date of birth. The latter two are critical information for location efforts.
- 6.2.4** The COR will provide supply package contents which include a cover letter, and information sheet about the study; informing sampled Veterans that they will be called by the Contractor unless they opt out by calling the toll-free number.

6.3 CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.3.1** In collaboration with the COR, the Contractor shall produce the sample design, pre-field research, limited literature review, questionnaire design, oversee field work, sample weighting, dataset specifications, data analysis and report-writing.
- 6.3.2** The Contractor shall provide the tested version of the programmed questionnaire (for mail, web, and telephone) including all corrections or revisions required by the COR for review and final approval.
- 6.3.3** The Contractor shall review all survey questions to ensure that all appropriate procedures are being followed.
- 6.3.4** The Contractor shall send a pre-notification letter via mail to all respondents. In the letter, the Contractor shall also include the following:
 - 6.3.4.1** a \$2.00 pre-incentive paid by the Contractor on behalf of the VA; and
 - 6.3.4.2** a toll-free number for the Veteran to opt out if they wish not to participate in the survey or schedule a preferred date and time for the interview
- 6.3.5** After sending the pre-notification letter, the Contractor must follow-up by sending a full packet by mail to approximately 10,000 Veterans which includes a cover letter, printed questionnaire, web link and toll-free number.
- 6.3.6** Contractor shall begin calls to remind the Veterans of the survey or conduct interviews as necessary within 10-14 days after the pre-notification letter is sent by mail. In accordance with the time zone where the Veteran is located, call attempts shall be made during week nights between 4:00 PM and 9:00 PM and between 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM on weekends.

- 6.3.7** The Contractor shall conduct up to eight (8) call attempts to reach respondents over each survey period at various time of the day.
- 6.3.8** The Contractor shall conduct additional attempts to contact non-responders as needed through secondary addresses and phone numbers.
- 6.3.9** Contractor shall track opt-out requests and remove them from the telephone sample and attempt to schedule calls at preferred times and dates as needed.
- 6.3.10** The Contractor shall provide an initial STATA or SAS data file within four (4) months after contract award and the final Stata or SAS data file at the conclusion of the contract.
- 6.3.11** Within 60 days of the initial mailing of the packets, the contractor shall provide the COR with a list of returned/un-opened mailing packets from wrong addresses (or returned for any other reason) keeping an accounting for all non-received/returned \$2 cash.