2020 Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Shark Tank Competition

Applicant Frequently Asked Questions

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# Veterans Health Administration Innovation Ecosystem (VHA IE), Diffusion of Excellence, and VHA Diffusion Marketplace Overview

## What is the VHA Innovation Ecosystem (VHA IE)?

VHA IE is the catalyst for enabling the discovery and spread of mission-driven health care innovation to advance care delivery and service that exceeds expectations, restores hope, and builds trust within the Veteran community. As part of the VHA Office of Discovery, Education and Affiliate Networks (DEAN), VHA IE leverages the collective power of innovation champions from across VHA to drive improvement and foster a culture of innovation and continuous learning.

VHA IE is fueled by four complementary portfolios: VHA Innovators Network (iNET), Diffusion of Excellence, VHA Innovation Community, and Care and Transformational Initiatives. These core programs operate at distinct stages of the innovation cycle, forming the connective tissue of an ecosystem, driving a culture of innovation and learning, and creating opportunities for VHA staff. These programs offer employees the opportunity to discover, test, replicate, and scale innovations financial support, frontline empowerment, training, and a collaborative network of peers.

For more information, please visit the [VHA IE](https://www.va.gov/INNOVATIONECOSYSTEM/home.html) website.

## What is the Diffusion of Excellence?

VHA Diffusion of Excellence specializes in scaling emergent, high-impact health care practices across the nation’s largest integrated health care system consisting of more than 300,000 employees serving over nine million Veterans at roughly 1,250 facilities. The 2015 Veterans Choice Act studies uncovered that on average VHA outperformed the private sector on many measures, but variation between facilities resulted in poor outcomes for some Veterans. VHA took a unique approach to solving this issue by designing and deploying a model to identify, test, and diffuse evidence-based practices across VHA, naming it Diffusion of Excellence.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence puts VA’s talented clinical and administrative workforce at the helm of enterprise-wide health care improvement initiatives. Since 2015, VHA has held five “shark tank” style competitions, each followed by the Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp. During Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp, the winners, known as Diffusion of Excellence Fellows, build implementation plans for practice replication. VHA consults the Diffusion of Excellence Fellows on adapting the practices to meet the unique needs of local Veteran populations and employees. Once the practices prove to be replicable and deliver consistent impact, Diffusion of Excellence works with national stakeholders to collaboratively develop strategies for national diffusion throughout the VHA health care system.

For more information on Diffusion of Excellence, please visit the [VHA IE](https://www.va.gov/INNOVATIONECOSYSTEM/home.html) website.

## Why should I join the Diffusion of Excellence team?

Diffusion of Excellence brings together a diverse national network of fellow innovators working to hone and standardize their promising practices. By participating in Diffusion of Excellence, you will

* Accelerate the scaling of your practice with the support of the Diffusion of Excellence community
* Improve and expand the impact of your practice on the Veteran community
* Receive recognition from national leadership for you, your team, and your facility
* Gain leadership support for further adoption of your practice

## What is the VHA Diffusion Marketplace?

The VHA Diffusion Marketplace (Marketplace) is a web-based platform that enables VHA employees to share, discover, and implement promising practices across the health care system. The Marketplace helps frontline VHA employees access and spread innovative health care ideas and solutions that positively impact Veterans lives. All practices on the Marketplace operate in at least two VHA sites, are endorsed by a senior VHA leader with relevant subject matter expertise and have an active team to support diffusion of practice knowledge. For all VHA employees, the Marketplace offers easy access to a range of innovations, along with tutorials, ratings, and contact information for the practice creators. Employees can collaborate with the practice creators and their local teams to identify and adapt new practices to fit their facility’s needs. The Marketplace strengthens VHA in becoming a learning health care system, fostering a culture of innovation that continually improves the care provided to Veterans.

# VHA Shark Tank Competition Overview

## What is the VHA Shark Tank Competition?

Inspired by the reality television series, *Shark Tank*[[1]](#footnote-1), the VHA Shark Tank Competition offers a unique opportunity to recognize top performers solving some of the toughest clinical and operational challenges across VHA with the goal of changing and saving Veteran lives. The Competition invites all VHA employees to submit promising practices they have successfully implemented in at least one VHA facility. To be eligible, practices must address one of the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Priorities:

* **Access** – Improving the ease with which a Veteran can receive timely care including same day services, standardizing core processes and leveraging innovative practice solutions across specialties to optimize provider and care team productivity, integrating community care, and increasing access to quality care for our nation’s Veterans
* **Health Care After COVID-19** – Clinical and operational practices to promote Veteran, employee, and citizen health and safety to address the COVID-19 pandemic, and future emergency situations; this is inclusive of virtual care models to enable remote service delivery
* **High Reliability Culture Change: Commit to Zero Harm** – Develop standard work practices for leaders and staff and share best practices to support the enterprise effort to build a *Just Culture* of safety and drive to zero harm
* **Rural Women Veterans: A Diverse Community** – Develop and expand innovative practices to support rural women Veterans, with an emphasis on minority women living in rural areas
* **Veteran and Employee Experience** – Restoring pride, public trust, and confidence in VA by delivering patient experiences marked by effectiveness, ease, and engagement; delivering employee experiences and tools to promote engagement, trust, and retention of our most valuable resource
* **Whole Health** – An approach to health care that empowers and equips people to take charge of their health and well-being and live their life to the fullest
* **Upstream Suicide Prevention** – Improving the ability of Veterans, family members, and VA to meaningfully detect when a Veteran is at an increased risk for suicide and appropriately intervene to save lives and restore health

Additionally, the Competition seeks promising practices that improve outcomes for the following populations:

* All Veterans
* LGBTQ Veterans
* Older American Veterans
* Post-9/11 Veterans
* Pre-9/11 Veterans
* Rural Veterans
* Women Veterans
* VA Employees
* Veteran Caregivers

## Who can apply to the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition?

Any VHA employee who has **successfully implemented** a practice in at least one VHA facility can apply to the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition. An employee can submit an application as an individual contributor or on behalf of a team, service line, or medical center. If submitting a group effort, **one individual** must serve as the point of contact during the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition application process. If your practice receives Promising Practice designation, only one member of your team can serve as the primary Diffusion of Excellence Fellow and attend the Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp in February 2021. If additional team members would like to attend the Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp, their facility must provide travel funding to attend.

## What are important dates during the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition?

Figure 1 depicts the key milestones for the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition.

Figure 1. 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition Timeline



# 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition Application Process

## How can I apply to the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition?

To apply, complete the application[**form**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ST20application)onlineby 11:59 PM PT on **July 10, 2020**. Please see the [Appendix](#_Appendix) for a complete list of application questions. For more resources, please visit the [VHA Diffusion Marketplace](https://marketplace.VA.Gov).

## What if I miss the submission deadline?

If you miss the submission deadline, you can submit your promising practice in the next VHA Shark Tank Competition, tentatively scheduled for the Spring of 2021. Please monitor the VHA Shark Tank Competition page on the VHA Diffusion Marketplace for more information on the application process.

## What are some tips to consider when completing a VHA Shark Tank application?

When completing your application, please consider the following:

* Determine whether your practice can be replicated in another VHA facility in approximately 6-12 months
* Use measurable data in your application when describing your practice’s impact, user experience, and financial value
* Provide details on the user experience for your target population (e.g., Veterans, employees, caregivers)
* List all resource requirements (e.g., employees, equipment) necessary to implement your practice at a new facility
* Describe the specific steps to implement your practice, including timeframes
* Avoid acronyms and jargon, explain things like you would to a Veteran
* Do not submit sensitive or protected data in your application

Please see the [Appendix](#_Appendix) for a complete list of application questions.

## My practice crosses several of the key VHA Shark Tank Priorities. Which should I select as the practice’s primary Priority?

In general, select the VHA Shark Tank Priority that most closely aligns with your practice. Evaluators will review submissions based on the Priority, so select the one you think will have the most appropriate Evaluator for your submission. You can also include a statement in the “Additional Information” question that indicates your practice covers multiple Priorities.

## What happens after I submit an application?

After the application period closes on July 10, 2020, Evaluators will review all submitted applications. All applicants will receive updates on the status of their applications via email. The first-round evaluation period last approximately two weeks.

## Who do I contact if I have additional questions?

For questions related to the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition, please email the [VA Innovation Support Team](mailto:VA%20Innovation%20Support%20Team) (vainnovation@atlasresearch.us).

# 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition Application Evaluation Process

## Who will evaluate the submitted practices?

Diffusion of Excellence Fellows, Medical Center and Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Directors, Innovation Specialists, Systems Redesign Coordinators, and other recommended Evaluators will review the applications and recommend Semifinalist practices. During the second round of evaluation, Program Office leaders and members of the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) team will evaluate Semifinalist practices and recommend Finalists to pitch their practices at the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition. Evaluators will have approximately two weeks to evaluate and recommend practices during each round of evaluation.

## What are the application evaluation criteria?

Table 1 details the evaluation criteria, their definitions, and associated examples of information an applicant may have included in their application. Note the examples do not represent an exhaustive list of the components for each criterion.

1. Evaluation Criteria

| Criteria | Evaluation Round | Definition | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **VHA Shark Tank Priority Impact** | Round 1 Evaluation  Round 2 Evaluation | Demonstrated impact in the aligned VHA Shark Tank Priority | **Access:** The practice reduced days to appointment or increased specialty care appointments within 30 days from preferred date |
| **Health After COVID-19: The practice increased access to personal protective equipment through the use of a 3D printing network** |
| **High Reliability Culture Change: Commit to Zero Harm:** The practice reduced hospital readmission or reduced infection rates |
| **Rural Women Veterans: A Diverse Community: The practice improved health care access for minority women Veterans living in a rural area** |
| **Veteran and Employee Experience:** The practice improved understanding of a Veteran’s diagnosis or treatment plan or increased feelings of trust or engagement in care; or the practice improved retention or increased job competency |
| **Whole Health: The practice provided Veterans with alternative options for care, focusing on developing a personalized health experience based on the Veteran’s values, needs, and goals** |
| **Upstream Suicide Prevention:** The practice improved advance detection of Veterans at risk for suicide and intervened to save their lives |
| **Data-Based Improvement** | Round 1 Evaluation  Round 2 Evaluation | Measured improvement in the practice’s primary success metric | The practice reduced Veteran’s wait time for limb prosthetics by 39 percent, from 33 days to 20 days |
| The practice resulted in a 54 percent total decrease in RN turnover from FY16 to FY17 |
| The practice detected more than 2 million anomalous records annually resulting in $6.4-9.0M additional revenue |
| After one year, the practice improved Veteran satisfaction by 14 percent per distributed survey |
| **Participant Satisfaction** | Round 1 Evaluation  Round 2 Evaluation | Improved satisfaction or experience for the practice user and/or target population | The practice improved patient satisfaction or experience metrics |
| The practice improved employee job satisfaction or experience metrics |
| The practice improved experience for the target population (e.g., rural Veterans, women Veterans) |
| **Image result for puzzle piece png**  **Implementation Feasibility** | Round 1 Evaluation  Round 2 Evaluation | Can be implemented in another facility through the Diffusion of Excellence model | The practice can be implemented in another VHA facility within six to 12 months |
| The practice is process-focused (e.g., has developed training manuals or timeline others can use to achieve similar results) |
| The practice has clearly specified resource requirements (e.g., infrastructure, technology, processes) |
| The practice integrates into existing VHA facility systems (e.g., infrastructure, technology, processes) |
| **Alignment to VHA Policies and Processes** | Round 2 Evaluation | Does not conflict with existing VHA processes or policies | The practice aligns with VHA policies (or) prescribed mandatory procedures and operational requirements (e.g., directives, handbooks, memorandums) |
| The practice aligns appropriately with system relationships (e.g., contracted partners, unions) |
| The practice aligns with strategic initiatives of VHA program offices (or) senior leadership |

## Are most of the selected practices low cost to implement?

The cost levels of the submitted practices vary. In previous VHA Shark Tank Competitions, selected practices had both low and high implementation costs. We recognize that low-cost practices may spread more easily to other facilities; however, low cost is not required for Promising Practice selection.

## What is expected of an applicant whose practice is selected as a Semifinalist, Finalist, or Promising Practice?

If selected as a **Semifinalist**, your practice will continue to the second round of evaluation. The applicant does not need to take any additional action if selected as a Semifinalist.

If selected as a **Finalist**, you will:

* Attend three informational sessions in September and October 2020, designed to help you prepare for the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition
* Give a two-minute pitch presentation at the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition to Medical Center and VISN Director Sharks, who, if interested, will bid resources to replicate your promising practice in their facility or VISN

If you win the VHA Shark Tank Competition, you will:

* Participate in the Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp event in February 2021
* Work with the Implementing Facility and Diffusion of Excellence team for approximately six months to replicate your practice in the new facility or VISN
* Participate in weekly calls to guide and advise the implementation team
* Travel to the Implementing Facility, if required
* Support the potential national rollout and implementation of your Promising Practice

# 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition Event

## What happens on the day of the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition?

The Diffusion of Excellence leadership team will host the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition in October 2020 at the VHA Innovation Experience (iEx) in Washington, DC, and live stream the event to facilities across the country. Finalists will give a two-minute pitch presentation on their promising practice. Following the presentation, the VHA IE team will facilitate a question and answer (Q&A) session with the Finalists, asking them questions related to their practice. Medical Center and VISN Director Sharks will place bids on the Finalist practices via a SurveyMonkey tool. Sharks will have approximately 24 hours to submit their bids on the practices. There is no minimum or maximum number of practices that Sharks can bid on during the VHA Shark Tank Competition. Examples of resources that Sharks may bid include:

* One or more part-time or full-time equivalents (FTEs) to focus on implementation of the practice at their site
* Travel funds
* Time and/or other resources to help support implementation of the practice

Diffusion of Excellence leadership will announce the winning practices and Sharks at the awards ceremony on the last day of the VHA iEx event.

## Who are Sharks? Can I serve as a Shark?

Only Medical Center and VISN Directors will serve as Sharks and have the opportunity to bid resources to implement Finalist practice(s) pitched during the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition. If you are a Medical Center or VISN Director and are interested in serving as a Shark, please contact the [VA Innovation Support Team](mailto:VAInnovation@atlasresearch.us). The VA Innovation Support Team will provide a separate Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document for Sharks at a later date.

# Promising Practice Designation and Implementation

## What happens after the VHA Shark Tank Competition?

After the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition, the VA Innovation Support Team will compile Shark bids on the Finalist practices and evaluate them based on quantity, quality, and the facility or VISN’s need for the practice. The team will present the bids to VHA IE leaders for their recommendations on which practices should win and proceed with implementation. Additionally, Diffusion of Excellence leadership will select one winning practice based on popular vote from the audience. The team will capture popular vote via a mobile application during the live event.

VHA leaders will review the recommendations and select approximately 10 Finalists and 10 Sharks as winners of the Competition. Diffusion of Excellence leadership will announce the winners at the awards ceremony on the last day of the VHA iEx event. The winning practices will proceed with six months of facilitated replication in the winning Shark’s facility or VISN.

## What are the benefits of being selected as a winner of the VHA Shark Tank Competition?

If selected as a winner of the VHA Shark Tank Competition, the benefits include:

* Recognition from VA and VHA senior leaders
* Travel funding to attend the Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp
* Access to communication (e.g., graphics, toolkits) and technical (e.g., data analysis) support
* Support for conference submission development
* Invitation to develop a practice page on the VHA Diffusion Marketplace
* Access to training
* Possible national rollout of your practice
* Possible travel funding to attend the 2021 VHA iEx event

# Appendix

## 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition Application

### Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Competition. To compete, submit the application form below by **11:59 PM PT on July 10, 2020**.

To be eligible, your practice must address one of the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Priorities:

* Access
* Health Care After COVID-19
* High Reliability Culture Change: Commit to Zero Harm
* Rural Women Veterans: A Diverse Community
* Veteran and Employee Experience
* Whole Health
* Upstream Suicide Prevention

Additionally, you must have successfully implemented your practice in at least one facility. Successful implementation requires launching your practice and having data-based results collected for a minimum of one month.

**The application tool does not auto save. We recommend saving your answers in this word document as you progress through the application.** If you cannot complete your application at one time, do not close your web browser or you will lose your responses**. Additionally, we do not accept attachments.** Please include all relevant information related to your practice in the application.

**Please do not include any Protected Health Information (PHI) or Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in your application.**

If you have any questions, please email the [VA Innovation Support Team](mailto:VAInnovation@atlasresearch.us).

### Applicant Contact Information and Practice Eligibility

1. Applicant First Name (required)
2. Applicant Last Name (required)
3. Applicant Email Address (required)
4. Applicant Phone Number (required)
5. VISN and Facility Name (required)
6. What is your position title? (required)
   * Chaplain
   * Health Systems Specialist/Non-Clinician Administrator
   * Medical Support Assistant
   * Nurse
   * Nurse Practitioner or Advanced Practice Nurse
   * Nursing Assistant
   * Other (please specify)
   * Pharmacist
   * Physician
   * Physician Assistant
   * Police Officer
   * Program Manager/Analyst
   * Psychologist
   * Social Worker
   * Support Services (e.g., Environmental Services, Transport)

To be eligible, you must have successfully implemented your practice in at least one facility. Successful implementation requires launching your practice and having data-based results collected for a minimum of one month.

1. Based on the definition above, has your practice been successfully implemented in at least one facility? (required)
   * Yes
   * No
2. Based on the definition above, how many facilities have successfully implemented your practice? (required)
   * 0
   * 1
   * 2
   * 3
   * 4
   * 5
   * 6
   * 7
   * 8
   * 9
   * 10+

### Team Member Information

1. Is your supervisor aware of your application submission? (required)
   * Yes
   * No
2. Supervisor First Name (required)
3. Supervisor Last Name (required)
4. Supervisor Title (required)
5. Supervisor Email (required)
6. Please provide names, positions, and VA email addresses of any key members involved in this effort. (optional)

### Practice Priority Area

The 2020 VHA Shark Tank Priorities are:

* **Access** – Improving the ease with which a Veteran can receive timely care including same day services, standardizing core processes and leveraging innovative practice solutions across specialties to optimize provider and care team productivity, integrating community care, and increasing access to quality care for our nation’s Veterans
* **Health Care After COVID-19** – Clinical and operational practices to promote Veteran, employee, and citizen health and safety to address the COVID-19 pandemic, and future emergency situations; this is inclusive of virtual care models to enable remote service delivery
* **High Reliability Culture Change: Commit to Zero Harm** – Develop standard work practices for leaders and staff and share best practices to support the enterprise effort to build a *Just Culture* of safety and drive to zero harm
* **Rural Women Veterans: A Diverse Community** – Develop and expand innovative practices to support rural women veterans, with an emphasis on minority women living in rural areas
* **Veteran and Employee Experience** – Restoring pride, public trust, and confidence in VA by delivering patient experiences marked by effectiveness, ease, and engagement; delivering employee experiences and tools to promote engagement, trust, and retention of our most valuable resource
* **Whole Health** – An approach to health care that empowers and equips people to take charge of their health and well-being and live their life to the fullest
* **Upstream Suicide Prevention** – Improving the ability of Veterans, family members, and VA to meaningfully detect when a Veteran is at an increased risk for suicide and appropriately intervene to save lives and restore health

1. Select the 2020 VHA Shark Tank Priority most relevant to your practice. (required)
   * Access
   * Health Care After COVID-19
   * High Reliability Culture Change: Commit to Zero Harm
   * Rural Women Veterans: A Diverse Community
   * Veteran and Employee Experience
   * Whole Health
   * Upstream Suicide Prevention

### Practice Information and Metrics

1. Practice Title (required)
2. Provide a problem statement for your practice. Please elaborate on what data demonstrated a need for your practice and provide its source. (required | **200 words**)
3. Provide a 2-3 sentence summary of your practice including its impact on the target population. (required | **100 words**)
4. Please select the target population your practice benefits. (required)
   * All Veterans
   * LGBTQ Veterans
   * Older American Veterans
   * Post-9/11 Veterans
   * Pre-9/11 Veterans
   * Rural Veterans
   * Women Veterans
   * VA Employees
   * Veteran Caregivers
   * Other (please specify)
5. Describe how your practice delivers direct or indirect benefit to Veterans and/or VA employees (e.g., changing Veteran lives, saving Veteran lives, building trust, restoring hope, change/improve how employees do their work and deliver care). (required | **150 words**)
6. What is the **primary** metric used to measure your practice’s success in resolving your problem statement (e.g., reduced infection rates, improved patient/employee satisfaction, demonstrated cost savings or avoidance)? (required | **25 words**)
7. Describe how primary metric data is tracked and collected to determine your practice’s success. (required | **100 words**)
8. Provide a sample ofprimary metric data collected to date and explain how it demonstrates your practice’s impact. (required | **100 words**)
9. Describe any other metrics you use to evaluate the effectiveness of your practice and include data for each. (required | **100 words**)

### Practice Implementation and Replication

1. Please describe the specific steps you took to implement your practice and the timeline/timeframe for each. (required | **250 words**)
2. How long do you anticipate it will take to replicate your practice in another VHA facility? (required)
   * 1-3 months
   * 4-6 months
   * 7-9 months
   * 10-12 months
   * 12+ months
3. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being **very easy** to replicate and 5 being very difficult to replicate, please indicate the ease of replicability of your practice in a new facility. (required)
   * 1
   * 2
   * 3
   * 4
   * 5
4. Describe any potential risks or barriers to implementing your practice. (required | **100 words**)
5. List the names of individuals from your facility, VISN, or central office management that were critical to your practice’s implementation. (required | **100 words**)
6. List the personnel resources (e.g., number of full-time equivalents (FTEs), number of part-time employees, specific certification holders) needed to replicate your practice. (required | **100 words**)
7. Estimate the total personnel resource cost required for your practice. (required | **numerical value only**)
8. List the material resources (e.g., equipment, information technology (IT) support, space) needed to replicate your practice. (required | **100 words**)
9. Estimate the total material resource cost required for your practice. (required | **numerical value only**)
10. Are there any proprietary components for your practice?
    * Yes
      1. If yes, please elaborate.
    * No
11. Does your practice require external contracting support to implement?
    * Yes
      1. If yes, please elaborate.
    * No
12. Have you produced any peer reviewed studies related to your practice?
    * Yes
      1. If yes, please elaborate and provide the link(s) to the abstract.
    * No
13. Did your practice receive Spark, Seed, and/or Spread funding from the VHA Innovators Network? (required)
    * Yes
    * No
14. Did your practice receive funding from a source other than the VHA Innovators Network? (required)

* Yes
* No

1. If you responded yes to the question above, please provide: (optional)
   * Name of Funding Source
   * Total Funding Amount
   * Duration of Funding
2. Does your practice have any support other than funding from a National Program Office (e.g., Office of Rural Health, Office of Connected Care, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention)? (required)
   * Yes
     1. If yes, please elaborate.
   * No
3. Provide any additional informatio on your practice below. (optional)

1. [Shark Tank](http://abc.go.com/shows/shark-tank/about-the-show) is a reality television series aired on ABC where entrepreneurs make ten-minute business presentations or “pitches” to a panel of potential investors called “Sharks” – self-made multi-millionaire and billionaire executives. In their pitch, entrepreneurs attempt to convince the “Sharks” to invest in their business or product. If “Sharks” believe the idea is viable and will provide a significant return on investment, they will bid their funding and support. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)