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VHA Diffusion of Excellence

DIFFUSION PLAYBOOK

VA

ie **VHA Innovation Ecosystem**

A Message from Blake Henderson,
Director of VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Dear Innovator,

Thank you for picking up the Veterans Health Administration Diffusion of Excellence Playbook. It is exciting to share the work we do in an easy-to-use workbook. The content reflects years of experiences supporting frontline innovation and the foundational elements we uncovered in the process.

The playbook is divided into two parts. Part One spotlights the Diffusion principles and provides space to assemble your innovation's business case. Part Two boasts the Diffusion programming we all know and love. Whether you are just beginning or further investing in your innovation journey, there is something for everyone.

While the playbook is not an accountability tool, anticipate working and reworking activities. Iterations are normal and expected throughout the process. I also encourage you to get and stay involved with the Diffusion of Excellence Community's Teams channel.

We are so honored to be along this journey with you. If you have questions or feedback about the playbook, please reach out to Diffusion@VA.gov.

Cheers,

Blake Henderson,
Director of VHA Diffusion of Excellence

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About the Diffusion of Excellence Playbook

The Diffusion of Excellence Playbook (Diffusion Playbook) is a practical and informational resource for building or growing an innovation. The playbook's underlying foundation is built on the Diffusion of Excellence (Diffusion) principles. These themes and corresponding activities are essential to the innovation's lifecycle and business case.

The playbook sets up a plan of action for moving forward through local and national paths. Local activities are meant for facility-level guidance and national activities are allocated for widespread programs. After exploring the Diffusion principles in Part One, Part Two outlines Diffusion's programming and engagement opportunities. To learn more about Diffusion lingo used throughout the playbook, see Appendix A.

The Diffusion Playbook is regularly reviewed and updated. Contact VADiffusionSupport@VA.gov at your convenience with questions, concerns, and feedback.

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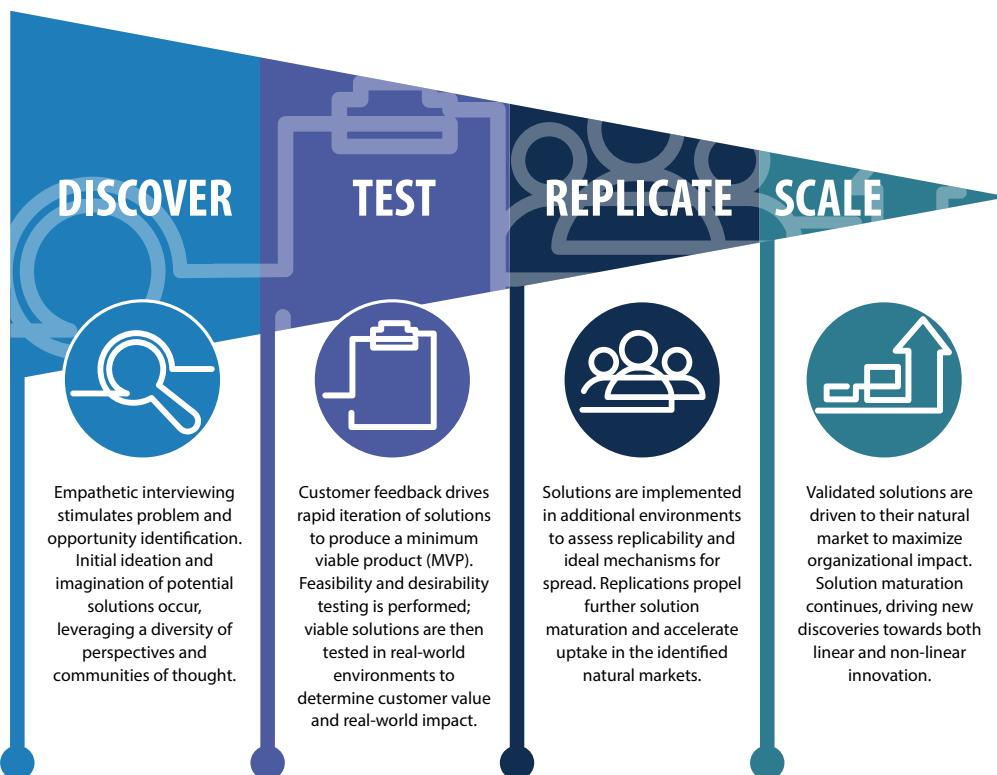
VHA Innovation Ecosystem

Diffusion of Excellence sits within Veterans Health Administration's Innovation Ecosystem (VHA IE). VHA IE is the catalyst for enabling the discovery and spread of mission-driven health care innovation that exceeds expectations, restores hope, and builds trust within the Veteran community. VHA IE leverages the collective power of innovation champions from across VA, academia, other government agencies, and industry to operationalize innovation and scale promising practices. Through these collaborations, VHA IE identifies, tests, replicates, and scales innovations to drive operational stability for the enterprise.

VHA IE Operational Model

VHA IE developed the innovation operational model to address potential disparities in outcomes among facilities. This structured approach allows VHA IE to pinpoint challenges and assess solutions then replicate and scale them.

DISCOVER

Empathetic interviewing stimulates problem and opportunity identification. Initial ideation and imagination of potential solutions occur, leveraging a diversity of perspectives and communities of thought.

TEST

Customer feedback drives rapid iteration of solutions to produce a minimum viable product (MVP). Feasibility and desirability testing is performed; viable solutions are then tested in real-world environments to determine customer value and real-world impact.

REPLICATE

Solutions are implemented in additional environments to assess replicability and ideal mechanisms for spread. Replications propel further solution maturation and accelerate uptake in the identified natural markets.

SCALE

Validated solutions are driven to their natural market to maximize organizational impact. Solution maturation continues, driving new discoveries towards both linear and non-linear innovation.

(Vega & Kizer, 2020)

Diffusion of Excellence functions in the replicate and scale stages of the VHA IE operational model and seeks to establish standardized health care initiatives. In the next section, its background and impact brings this to life.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Diffusion of Excellence identifies, replicates, and scales emerging employee-developed innovations across VHA. They sponsor the annual VHA Shark Tank Competition and build capacity for diffusion activities through training, education, and tooling delivered to the country's largest health care workforce.

Impact

Diffusion impacts over 300,000 VHA employees who serve more than nine million Veterans across approximately 1,250 facilities. Since 2016, VHA Shark Tank Competition received 3,635 submissions and identified 99 Promising Practices. The practices replicated over 1,000 times and have a 56% sustainment rate after working with Diffusion. These efforts foster countless relationships and knowledge sharing, summarized now in this playbook.

3,635
VHA Shark Tank Completed Submissions

56%
Sustainment Rate
(Based on 2022 QUERI SHARK Sustainment Survey of Cohorts 1-6, 2022)

13
National Diffusion Practices

89
Promising Practices

1,000+
Promising Practice Replications

(Veterans Health Administration, 2023)

Priority Alignment

Diffusion harmonizes itself with the VA health care priorities. These priorities are top-level strategic and operational advancements intended to be clear and actionable achievements deserving top performance, focused commitment, and the best use of available resources.

> Learn more about the Under Secretary for Health's priorities by visiting
> https://www.va.gov/health/priorities/index.asp

VA Health Care Priorities:

- Hire faster and more competitively
- Connect Veterans to the soonest and best care
- Serve Veterans with military environmental exposures
- Accelerate VA's journey to a High Reliability Organization
- Support Veterans' whole health, their caregivers, and survivors
- Prevent Veteran Suicide

By aligning with the Under Secretary for Health's (USH) priorities and promoting the standardization of health care processes, Diffusion is a change catalyst. Diffusion stimulates innovation, fosters problem-solving capabilities with employees and plays a pivotal role in delivering VHA's commitment to transforming Veterans' lives.

Setting the Stage

Diffusion operates a unique landscape that is vital to innovative work. The team holds strong relationships with VHA senior leadership and the robust research community that enthusiastically applauds innovations and provides bottom-up opportunities for all VHA employees to contribute through VHA Shark Tank Competition.

VHA is a vertically integrated health care system and operates as a comprehensive health care provider for Veterans. For Diffusion, this means costs generated can be compared in one service line (e.g., time spent de-prescribing potentially inappropriate medications by primary care clinicians) alongside gains in another (e.g., annualized reductions in national pharmacy spend). These return on investment (ROI) incentives support a more comprehensive Veteran-centric approach.

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Quality Management, Systems Redesign, and Innovation

VHA significantly invests in improvement methods such as Quality Management (QM), Systems Redesign (SR), and innovation to ensure the continuous improvement of Veteran care. These concepts, while interrelated, have distinct characteristics and methodologies.

Quality Management (QM) supports the ongoing assessment and improvement of health care outcomes and delivery processes. QM helps identify evidence-based practices, screens for deviations from standards of care, and keeps facilities in a continuous state of readiness and compliance with industry standards.

Systems Redesign and Improvement (SR) supports VHA's journey to become a high reliability organization by promoting a culture of continuous process improvement. SR provides the tools, principles, and education to improve health care delivery. This is achieved through national improvement initiatives and offerings (Veterans Health Administration, 2023).

Innovation often starts as a novel idea or practice that needs to be tested and piloted. The focus is on the feasibility of the innovation, using both quantitative and qualitative data. The intention is to find novel ways to improve service delivery, patient experience, and overall care outcomes.

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Innovation Business Case

In Part One, the Diffusion Playbook is built around creating an innovation business case, with local and national applicability. As the innovator, identify the best approach for the solution's present scope, anticipated results, and future goals. The local activities will be most useful to early-stage innovations but are worth revisiting for innovations actively replicating. The national activities are for more advanced innovations, especially those in enterprise-wide diffusion.

	Designates a Local Activity		**Designates a National Activity**

Building a Business Case

Building a strong business case is crucial for any innovative endeavor. A business case identifies essential components of the innovation, allows an evaluation of potential benefits and risks, bridges the transition from existing state to an envisioned future, and offers the needed validation to both scale and sustain.

> Drafting and redrafting business case components is okay and expected. It is all part of the innovation's journey.

A business case is an excellent communication tool that can be used internally and externally. Consider the following information and activities centered around the Diffusion principles and record your answers in the space provided. Several forms of a business case exist. Verbal agreements, written documents, and PowerPoints are all ways to present a business case. As an innovation matures, the business case evolves too. A business case should be tailored to fit a specific innovation and present the best information for that innovation. For customizable business case templates, Diffusion recommends using templates available on the web-based project management tool Mural, as VA has a universal license for this platform. Please visit the yourIT Service Portal to start a Mural account with a VA email address or see templates readily available in Appendix B.

To work through this workbook, provide the innovation's name you will be using for the following activities.

Select the innovation's applicable VA health care priorities.

Hire faster and more competitively

Connect Veterans to the soonest and best care

Serve Veterans with military environmental exposures

Accelerate VA's journey to a High Reliability Organization

Support Veterans' whole health, their caregivers, and survivors

Prevent Veteran suicide

What makes your innovation unique?

Why is this innovation needed now?

What's your why?

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PART ONE:
DIFFUSION PRINCIPLES

Diffusion of Excellence's secret sauce is a blend of widely applied concepts from the start-up world, implementation science, and human psychology. These principles are a lens to constantly examine how to best support innovators from the facility level to a broader national scale.

The Diffusion principles are key fundamentals that inform all diffusion efforts.

OUR PRINCIPLES

PAVE THE WAY FOR SUSTAINMENT

BUILD A BOLD VISION AND MISSION

SHAPE GOALS AND FRAME FIDELITY

RALLY THE STAKEHOLDERS

CULTIVATE GROWTH RESOURCES

MEASURE THE IMPACT

SELECT AN IMPLEMETATION STRATEGY

CELEBRATE NOW AND LATER

DIFFUSION PRINCIPLE #1:
Build a Bold Vision and Mission

Forming the strategic vision and mission is often overlooked or deprived of meaningful thought even though it is an important place to start a business case. The innovation's vision is bold and inspiring. The mission is actionable and tells stakeholders how the innovation intends to deliver on its promise. Invest time and thought into the development of the vision and mission. Refer to them often when speaking about the innovation.

Before explaining the necessary components of an innovation's vision and mission, there are other factors that first need to be aligned. These are the target audience and market dynamics, problem statement, value proposition, service description, and pain killers.

Target Audience and Market Dynamics

First, identify and understand the target audience. The target audience is also known as the customer segment or consumer of the practice or program. These people can be divided based on their demographics, care preferences, and location. The target audience will come up again in Diffusion Principle #3: Rally the Stakeholders.

Here's a guiding question to get started:

1. Who are you solving a problem for? Select the innovation's customer(s).

   All Veterans

   LGBTQ+ Veterans

   Veterans aged 65+

   Post-9/11 Veterans

   Pre-9/11 Veterans

   Rural Veterans

   Women Veterans

   Veterans struggling with mental health of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

   Veterans at risk of suicide

   Veterans with chronic or complex illnesses

   Minority Veterans
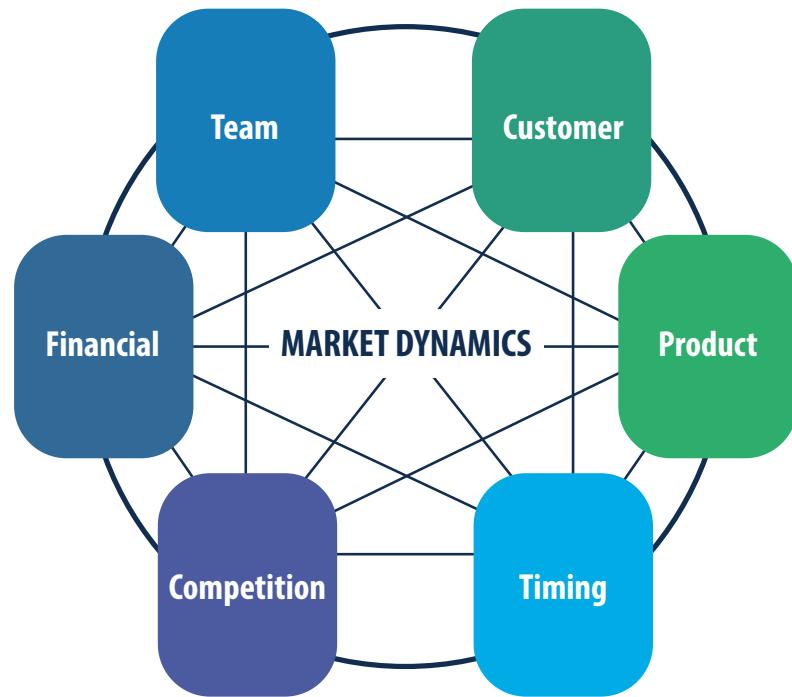
   VA Employees (please specify) _____

   Caregivers, families, and survivors

   Other _____

Market dynamics are considerations like customer trends, market size, current solution providers, technology, industry, and regulatory trends. These are factors that change the innovation's supply and demand curves for the target audience. They help determine if the innovation is going to succeed.

Six main market dynamics are:

Consider these market dynamics questions to understand the supply and demand of your innovation.

1. What considerations above apply to your innovation?

2. How do they impact your innovation?

Problem Statement

The problem statement defines the primary issue Veterans or other beneficiaries encounter related to the innovation. The problem statement does not include the value proposition, or solution.

Use the questions below to start the innovation's problem statement.

1. What's the problem?

2. Why is it a problem?

3. What led to the identification of the problem (i.e., research, patient feedback)?

4. Where is the problem occurring?

5. When is the problem occurring?

6. Who is experiencing the problem?

7. How is the problem observed?

Problem Statement Activity

Goal: To write your innovation's primary issue through a problem statement.

Instructions:

Review your previous responses to the target audience and problem statement guiding questions. Draft the innovation problem statement for your business case below.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Value Proposition

With the problem statement drafted, now comes the solution. The value proposition, or solution statement, outlines the innovation and its benefits. The questions below help define the value proposition statement. Answer the questions below to assist writing the value proposition.

1. How does the innovation solve the customer's problem identified in the problem statement?

2. What is the value the innovation delivers to the target audience?

3. What is the innovation's promise to the target audience?

4. Why should VHA devote resources now toward solving this problem across facilities? Give use cases.

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Value Proposition Activity

Goal: To draw up your innovation and its benefits with a value proposition statement.

Instructions: Use your value proposition responses above and circle back to your innovation's target audience and problem statement. Set your innovation's value proposition to add to your business case.

VALUE PROPOSITION STATEMENT

Products and Services

A clear description of the main product or service that an innovation offers is a contributing detail leading up to the development of the mission. Whether tangible or intangible, this description should ideally be a single sentence.

Consider the questions below and record the description in the activity.

1. Is your primary product or service tangible or intangible?

2. Is the product or service easy enough to explain to someone in one sentence?

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Products and Services Activity

Goal: To have a single-sentence description of the main product or service.

Instructions: Identify your innovation's tangible and intangible products or services and explain them in the space below. Remember, try to describe the products or services in one sentence.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Pain Killers

A pain killer helps alleviate the customers' issues. It highlights why the product or service is essential rather than just desirable.

Consider the following questions and enter your pain killer(s) in the activity below.

1. What exactly is the customer's pain point? What is causing it?

2. What is your solution to the customer's problem?

3. What makes your product or service a need-to-have versus nice-to-have at a facility?

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Pain Killers Activity

Goal: To highlight why this innovation is essential to alleviating customers' issues.

Instructions: For facility-level implementation, spell out your innovation pain killers for your business case and record them below.

LOCAL PAIN KILLERS

Pain killers also exist at the national level. Use these questions to help you enter your pain killer(s) in the activity below.

1. What is causing your customer's pre-existing pain point at the health system level?

2. How is your solution to the customer's problem perceived by VISN and VA medical center directors?

3. What makes your product or service a need-to-have versus a nice-to-have for VHA?

NATIONAL PAIN KILLERS

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Crafting the Vision and Mission Statements

Being the champion for an innovation in the nation's largest integrated health system is hard work. Innovators and collaborators constantly confront organizational, interpersonal, procedural, and technical hurdles. A vision and mission shared by peers and other stakeholders are fundamentally important to overcome these barriers and compel people to action.

Vision and mission statements are one aspect of broader strategic thinking for innovative practices, and therefore, support the creation of a business case. Strategic visions and missions help innovators think about the future of the innovation and how to get there. They also enhance local and national stakeholder commitment and aid in decision making. Without them, innovations risk implementing differently in new locations and derailing efforts to standardize processes.

Vision

A vision statement ensures the innovation inspires action and showcases the end goal to existing and potential stakeholders. It reflects the aspirations and long-term direction of an innovation. The guidelines below will guide you in creating the vision statement for both local and national implementation.

WHAT	WHY
Describes what the team wants to accomplish	Motivates the team towards a desirable outcome
Dreams big about what the practice can become	Clarifies the project's direction and goals

When crafting a vision statement, make sure it is:

- Clear and concise
- Brief (aim for one sentence)
- Challenging, engaging, and inspiring for the team
- Future-oriented, desirable, and aspirational

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Read the VA vision and take a moment to reflect on how innovative work can fulfill this vision.
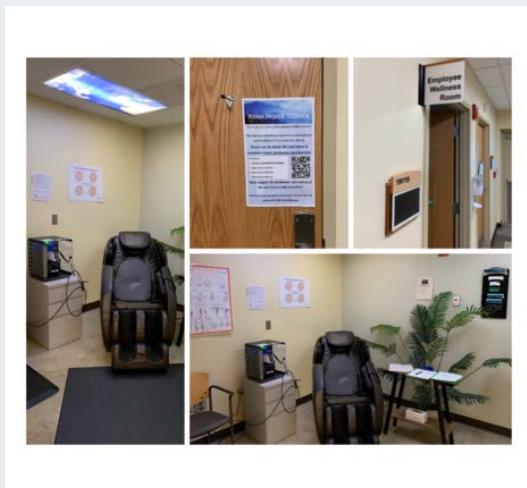
The Veterans Affairs Vision

"To provide Veterans the world-class benefits and services they have earned –and to do so by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship."

The below visions are highlights from other innovators that are challenging, engaging, and inspiring other employees and the status quo.

Innovation Visions
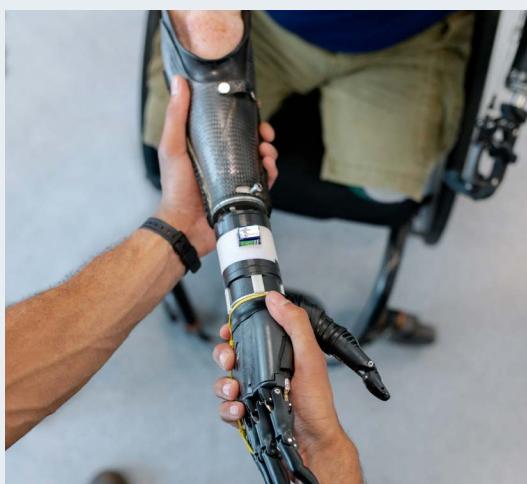
"To provide world-class healthcare by creating opportunities to support the well-being of employees"

– Employee Well-Being Center and Carts

"To improve access to patient centered contraceptive service for pregnancy capable Veterans"

– Contraception on Demand
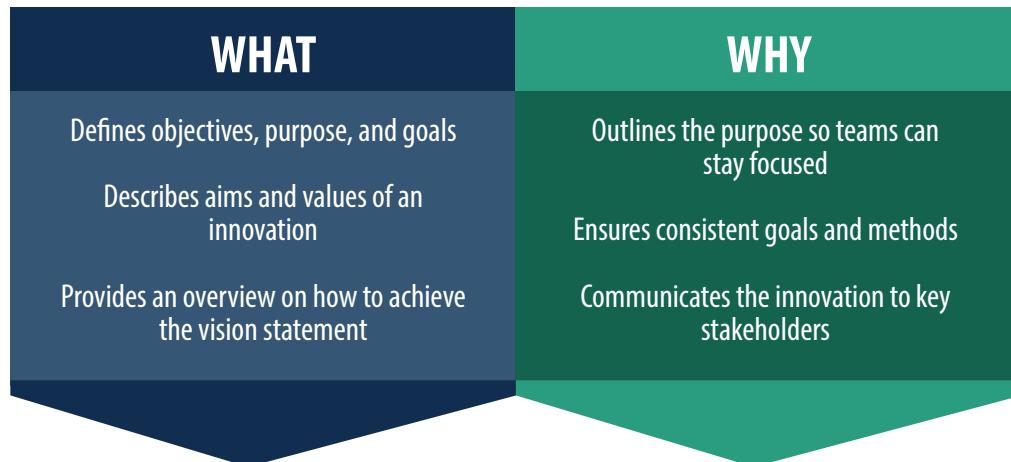
"FLOW3 will transform the timely delivery of prosthetic limb care for Veterans with amputations"

– Enterprise Prosthetic Limb Workflow Management System

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Mission

Mission statements define the action that will achieve the vision. Where the vision is future, the mission is present. This is why the mission statement may change as the product or service adapts to changing environments and technologies to meet the vision. While equally important, mission statements are the road map to a vision's end goal. Keep in mind the guidelines below when creating your innovation's mission statement.

WHAT	WHY
Defines objectives, purpose, and goals	Outlines the purpose so teams can stay focused
Describes aims and values of an innovation	Ensures consistent goals and methods
Provides an overview on how to achieve the vision statement	Communicates the innovation to key stakeholders

> "A well-crafted mission statement can provide the focus and motivation one needs to take one's business to the next level"
>
> *–James Ike Schaap, PhD and Joshua Lawrence Schaap*

When crafting a mission statement:

- Use present tense
- Make it inspiring, motivating, and compelling to the target audience
- Keep it brief and no more than a few sentences
- Don't be overly specific with values, percentages, numbers, goals, or strategies

Read the VA mission statement and the mission statements of featured Promising Practices.

The Veterans Affairs Mission

"To fulfill President Lincoln's promise 'To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan' by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans. VA's five core values underscore the obligations inherent in VA's mission: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence."

Innovation Missions

"To optimize turn-around time by manufacturing prescription glasses in-house in order to improve the lives of Veterans with visual impairments"

– Blind Rehab In-house Eyeglass Fabrication

"Utilize early identification, appropriate testing, and patient-centered treatment plans to reduce the harmful effects of C.diff infections"

– 2 Step Solution to Fixing the C.diff Problem

Vision and Mission Activity

Goals: To inspire action to showcase the innovation's end goal through the vision statement. To craft the innovation's road map to the vision's end goal through the mission statement.

Instructions: In this activity, you will define your innovation's vision and mission statements. Begin by using the vision guiding questions below to brainstorm different elements of the statement. Use your thoughts from the questions to craft your vision statement in the space underneath. Once you complete your vision statement, use the mission guiding questions to brainstorm and craft your mission statement.

Vision Guiding Questions

1. What is your core focus? What makes this innovation special?

2. What need is being satisfied?

3. Who is being satisfied?

4. Does your vision support VA's vision statement and health care priorities?

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VISION STATEMENT

Mission Guiding Questions

1. Why do you care about this innovation?

2. What does your innovation do? How does it satisfy customers' needs?

3. Does your mission align with VA's mission statement and health care priorities?

MISSION STATEMENT

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Your innovation's vision and mission will be and should be redrafted and reconsidered as it matures and spreads. Use the activity below to craft your national vision and mission.

Goals: To redraft your evolved vision statement now that your innovation matured. To consider your evolved mission statement since your innovation matured.

Instructions: First, write your current vision and mission guiding the innovation. Consider how your innovation will grow from local implementation to national implementation and refresh the vision and mission as needed.

CURRENT VISION

NEW VISION

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CURRENT MISSION

NEW MISSION

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DIFFUSION PRINCIPLE #2:
Shape Goals and Frame Fidelity
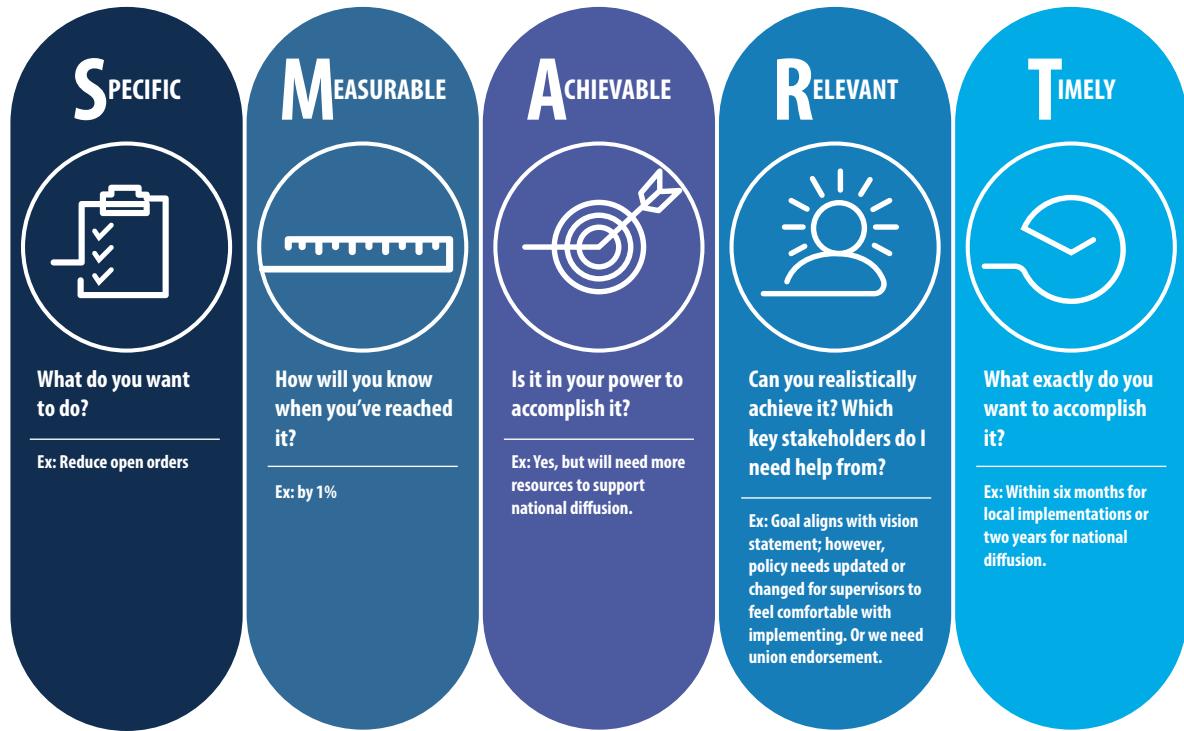
In Diffusion Principle #1: Build a Bold Vision and Mission, the innovation's vision and mission groundwork was laid with help from the target audience, problem statement, and value proposition activities to tee up the next principle, Diffusion Principle #2: Shape Goals and Frame Fidelity.

Setting SMART goals and defining or refining an innovation's fidelity involves also identifying the innovation's key advantages and activities to spread it. SMART goals help evaluate the innovation's local and national success while the core and adaptable components help an innovation be delivered as intended and achieve the expected results. Key activities preserve fidelity and an innovation's key advantages use fidelity to highlight the unique attributes that set it apart.

SMART Goals

The purpose of making SMART goals is to set measurable goals for implementing your innovation locally and nationally. Goals should be clearly defined so a facility can evaluate success.

SPECIFIC	**M**EASURABLE	**A**CHIEVABLE	**R**ELEVANT	**T**IMELY
What do you want to do?	How will you know when you've reached it?	Is it in your power to accomplish it?	Can you realistically achieve it? Which key stakeholders do I need help from?	What exactly do you want to accomplish it?
Ex: Reduce open orders	Ex: by 1%	Ex: Yes, but will need more resources to support national diffusion.	Ex: Goal aligns with vision statement; however, policy needs updated or changed for supervisors to feel comfortable with implementing. Or we need union endorsement.	Ex: Within six months for local implementations or two years for national diffusion.

LOCAL

SMART Goal Activity

Goal: To create SMART goals for your innovation that align with your vision statement.

Instructions: In this activity, list goals for your innovation. Next, convert them into specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (SMART) goals.

GOALS	CONVERT GOAL INTO A SMART GOAL
Ex: Implement The Surgical Pause at all VAMCs	Ex: By the end of FY23, at least 55 VHA surgical sites of care will measure Veteran frailty for elective surgeries by utilizing the National RAI Frailty Tool.

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Core and Adaptable Components

Core and adaptable components, jointly known as an innovation's fidelity, are fundamental implementation science concepts. These factors examine if an innovation was delivered as intended and achieved the expected results. Whether building a business case or process map, setting this framework early with associated metrics for an implementation team to follow helps advance the innovation seamlessly.

> Business case and process maps are living documents and change regularly. Follow this playbook to ensure consistency and sustainability.

Core components are essential to an innovation's effectiveness and remain consistent across all adoptions. They provide guard rails to new implementers to achieve consistent clinical or operational outcomes. On the other hand, adaptable components change based on the needs and circumstances of individual sites. These components grant innovators important latitude to tailor the implementation to their unique environment.

Core and adaptable components help shape support materials such as:

- A list of pre-implementation requirements at a new facility.
- Toolkits guiding core and adaptable implementation steps.
- A suggested timeline of implementation milestones for putting core components in place and making adaptations.

> Fidelity starts with vision and mission statements. If you have not already defined your vision and mission statements, please refer to Diffusion Principle #1: Build a Bold Vision and Mission.

Defining Core and Adaptable Components Activity

LOCAL   **NATIONAL**

Goals: To describe the core components across all your innovation's adoptions. To detail the adaptable components that can change during the innovation's implementation.

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Instructions: Use the core and adaptable components questions below to define the core and adaptable components for your innovation. List the components in the space below each of the two categories.

Core Components

1. What is essential to your innovation to achieve the desired outcome?

2. How do these components align with the innovation's bold vision and mission?

Adaptable Components

3. What can be different from one implementation to another site adoption?

4. What makes these components nonessential to achieving your innovation's desired outcome?

As an innovation matures for a national audience, core and adaptable components ensure the necessary elements are upheld and executed at new locations and fungible elements are adapted to the new location's specific needs. Core and adaptable components inform facilities what they must have in place for successful implementation, and what they should have in place, but can adjust to suit their specific needs. Explaining the people, processes, and tools necessary for components can be helpful for implementation growth and sustainability.

Goals: To identify the core people, process, and tools to scale your innovation. To classify the adaptable people, process, and tools to scale your innovation.

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Instructions:

Fill out the tables below to determine the people, processes, and tools that make up your innovation's core and adaptable components. Be sure to reference your vision and mission statements from the previous section so they align with the components you define.

CORE COMPONENTS	
People	Determine what people are necessary.
Process	Explain the required process.
Tools	Decide the tools that are critical.

ADAPTABLE COMPONENTS	
People	List what personnel needs are acceptable.
Process	Describe processes that are flexible.
Tools	See what tools can change.

Key Activities

Key activities are most important for innovations to mature and sustain while preserving fidelity. They support communication campaigns, gain visibility, track impact, and help educate new people on the innovation.

Review the example activities below. Use a check mark to select the key activities already being used and use an exclamation point for key activities to start using to support the innovation.

Staff Education and Training	Staff Responsibilities to Implement Innovation	Stakeholder Committee Quarterly Meetings	Communication and Marketing Campaigns
Collecting, Analyzing, and Reporting Metrics	Networking and Community Engagement Calls	Product/Program Piloting and Testing	Other

Identifying Your Key Activities Activity

LOCAL   NATIONAL

Consider the questions below and record the key activities below.

1. What actions are imperative for your innovation to be a success?

2. What does it take for a facility to put this innovation into place? How will they do it?

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Goal: To identify key activities that are imperative for your innovation's success and sustainment.

Instructions: Using the selections made above, list your innovation's key activities below. Consider how these activities help your innovation grow and sustain.

Key Activity	How does the activity grow and/or sustain your innovation?

What is the risk if these key activities not being implemented or utilized?

Key Advantages

Key advantages are the unique attributes that set an innovation apart from competitors or the status quo. This may include factors like patients, relationships, expertise, and experience.

Use the following questions to highlight the innovation's key advantages for a facility in the activity below.

1. What does the innovation offer that others do not in a facility?

2. Why would the target audience use this service over other services?

3. What does the innovation offer at its core that is difficult to imitate?

4. Do people trust the innovation more than others? Why?

5. Do the key activities selected above meet the innovation's key advantages?

Goal: To recognize the unique attributes of your innovation.

Instructions: Explain your innovation's key advantages for facility-level replication using the responses from the questions above.

LOCAL KEY ADVANTAGES

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There are also key advantages at the national level. These questions help you respond in the activity below.

1. What does the innovation offer that others do not in VHA?

2. Why would the target audience use this service over other services across VHA?

3. What does the innovation offer at the health system level that is difficult to imitate?

4. Do people trust the innovation more than others in VHA?

Key Advantages Activity

Using the questions above, draft your innovation's key advantages at the national level.

NATIONAL KEY ADVANTAGES

DIFFUSION PRINCIPLE #3:
Rally the Stakeholders

In this section, identifying important stakeholders starts with building the implementation team and compiling a stakeholder coalition. Stakeholders differ between innovation needs and vary in type, dedicated time, and responsibility.

Building and Engaging the Team

The implementation team contains people who are experienced in the solution's space with the leadership, energy, knowledge, and commitment to lead to success. A prosperous implementation team has various skillsets, experiences, and responsibilities. Communicating roles, expectations, and time commitments is imperative to a team's dynamic. Regularly-cadenced meetings, task follow-ups, and the overall meeting environment keep the team engaged.

Effective Meetings:

Are well organized with a meeting leader, agenda, and shared goal.

Promote psychological safety and active listening.

Run efficiently and collaboratively.

Use the activity below to create a written record of team roles, responsibilities, and dynamics. Like other aspects of this playbook, it is recommended to revisit team roles and responsibilities ideally quarterly, and at least annually.

Building Your Team Activity

Goal: To record your innovation team's roles, responsibilities, skills, and training opportunities.

Instructions: Complete the table to the right and identify your team members, responsibilities, training needs, and meeting type/frequency for your innovation.

LOCAL

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Team Member & Position	Responsibilities (Subject to Change)	Full Time or Part Time on Team	Training/Education Needed	Meeting Type and Frequency
Ex: Clinical Applications Coordinator; Greg Wallen	Ex: Upload practice templates into CPRS for clinician documentation; pull data	Ex: Part time; initial comments and needs to address' monthly monitoring of adherence to templates	Ex: Training of team members to implement the note template; education on data pulls	Ex: Initial weekly meetings for template input and correct procedures for template use; monthly for data pulls

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Team Member & Position	Responsibilities (Subject to Change)	Full Time or Part Time on Team	Training/Education Needed	Meeting Type and Frequency

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Engaging Your Team Activity

Goal: To draft communications plan for your innovation to determine how your team will engage with each other.

Instructions: Spend time considering team contributions. Team members are assigned tasks and should be prepared to give updates in the regular-cadence meeting or through email communication. Work through the activity below and record how your team will engage together to get work done. Identify the purpose and methods of communication, the lead person responsible, and frequency of the communication or meeting for different audiences.

Audience	Purpose of Communication	Method of Communication	Person Responsible	Frequency
Ex: Project Team	Ex: Status Updates	Ex: Email	Ex: Project Lead	Ex: Weekly

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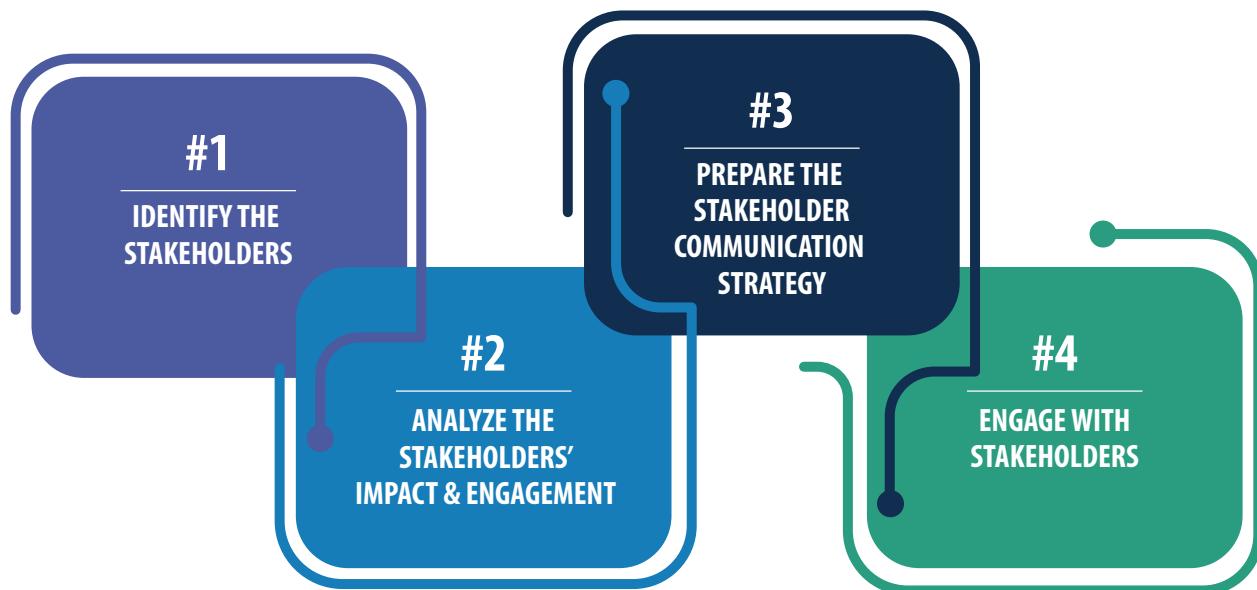
Building a Stakeholder Coalition

In addition to a core team, overcoming health care delivery challenges requires deliberate coalition building. Stakeholders are any individual or group who can affect or are affected by the innovation. Having key stakeholders at the decision-making table enables long-term success and sustainment.

Securing stakeholder relationships and buy-in are crucial to an innovation's success. Both local and national stakeholders can be categorized and prioritized differently based on their influence and level of engagement. Invested stakeholders help acquire more resources, obtain required approvals, and spread the word about the innovation.
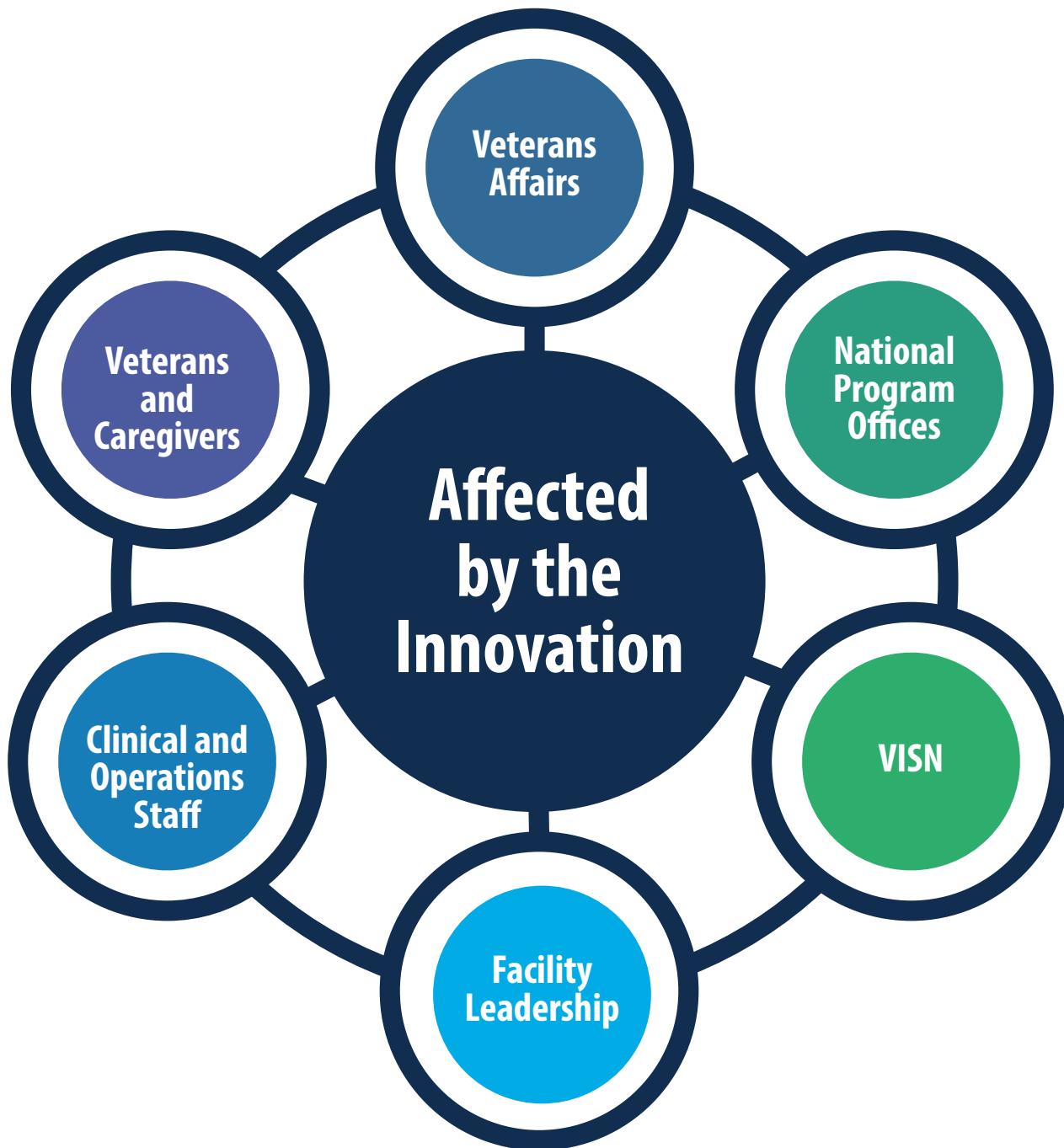
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
Stakeholder engagement is broken down into four stages, depicted below
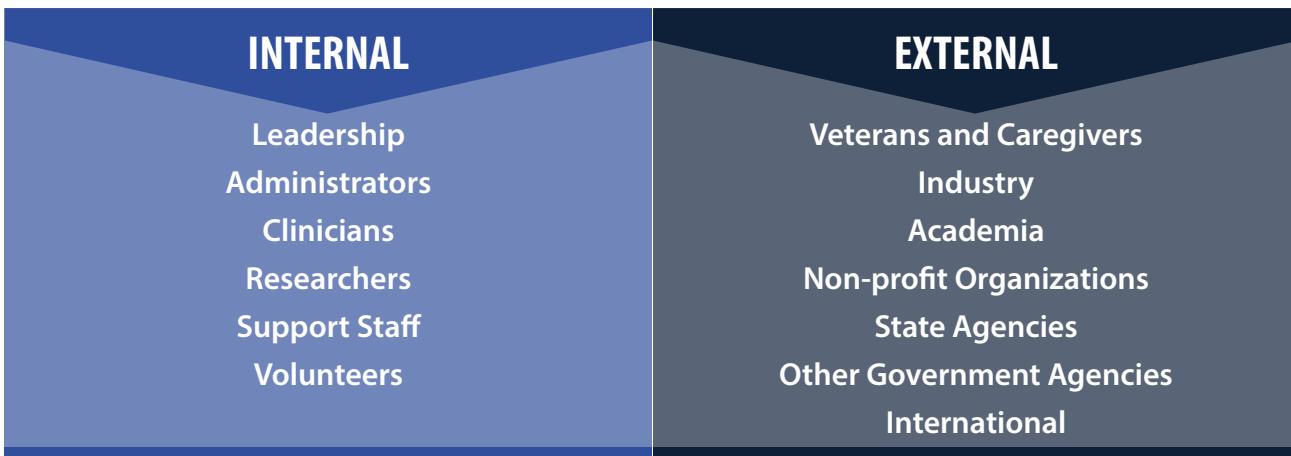
#1
IDENTIFY THE STAKEHOLDERS

#2
ANALYZE THE STAKEHOLDERS' IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

#3
PREPARE THE STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

#4
ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders are people affected by an innovation, both locally and nationally. These can include:

Affected by the Innovation

- Veterans Affairs
- National Program Offices
- VISN
- Facility Leadership
- Clinical and Operations Staff
- Veterans and Caregivers

Another way of thinking about an innovation's customers is to consider internal versus external stakeholders.

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
Leadership	Veterans and Caregivers
Administrators	Industry
Clinicians	Academia
Researchers	Non-profit Organizations
Support Staff	State Agencies
Volunteers	Other Government Agencies
	International

An established network of change agents can use their influence to advocate, connect, and recruit more following for an innovation. After thinking about what people or groups are affected by or can affect the innovation, categorize the effects of those stakeholders. The four categories are:

SPONSORSHIP STAKEHOLDERS	ECONOMIC STAKEHOLDERS	END USER STAKEHOLDERS	INFLUENCER STAKEHOLDERS
The stakeholders set program office policies and priorities and co-own the innovation.	The stakeholders provide funding for the innovation.	Stakeholders are the intended recipients of the innovation and include Veterans, families, caregivers, and fellow employees.	The stakeholders spread news about your innovation, network on the innovation's behalf, and influence the opionons of other leaders.

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Identify Key Stakeholders for Widespread Diffusion Activity

NATIONAL

Goals: To expand your perspective on stakeholders outside of local implementation. To dissect national and external stakeholders into sponsorship, economic, end user, and influence stakeholders.

Instructions: Consider the different categories and list key stakeholders who are instrumental in scaling your innovation beyond local implementation.

SPONSORSHIP STAKEHOLDERS	ECONOMIC STAKEHOLDERS	END USER STAKEHOLDERS	INFLUENCER STAKEHOLDERS
Ex: Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and other groups can help sponsor your efforts through proposal submission	Ex: HSR&D and other groups to help with funding. HSR&D supports research that encompasses all aspects of Veteran health care and focuses on patient care, cost, and quality. They can provide resources in the form of grants for evaluations of innovations.	Ex: Veterans and VA staff who will use your practice.	Ex: Local leadership or others who are familiar with your practice and can advocate for you at a higher level. Public Affairs Officer-market locally and throughout the VISN to garner support.

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STEP 2

ANALYZE THE STAKEHOLDERS' IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

After the stakeholders are identified and categorized, the next step is to understand whether they are primary or secondary stakeholders. This distinction helps prioritize conversations and resources.

Primary stakeholders engage directly with the innovation, either through providing resources or receiving benefits.

Primary stakeholders include:

Implementation team

Veterans receiving the care

Facility leadership providing resources

Service line leadership benefiting from the innovation

VHA setting agency priorities

Secondary stakeholders may have influence but are not directly involved or affected by the innovation.

Secondary stakeholders include:

Advocacy groups providing lobby support or spreading awareness

Suppliers providing required goods for innovation

Medical center staff not directly involved

Media groups spreading awareness and affecting public opinion

Taxpayers affecting which policymakers are in office

Policymakers making and enacting laws affecting funding and priorities

LOCAL   **NATIONAL**

Identifying and Engaging Stakeholder Groups Activity

Goals: To take the previously identified stakeholders and analyze them. To choose stakeholder engagement methods.

Instructions: In the first part of the activity, list your innovation's key partners and stakeholders. Consider your sponsorship stakeholders, economic stakeholders, end user stakeholders, and influencer stakeholders and reflect on engaging existing, new, and past stakeholders.

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WHO ARE YOUR CURRENT KEY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Consider primary and secondary stakeholders such as Veterans, facility leadership, service line-level leadership, VHA employees, suppliers, advocacy groups, taxpayers policymakers, media groups, etc.

EXISTING STAKEHOLDERS

What strategies worked in the past?	What strategies didn't work?

NEW STAKEHOLDERS

What stakeholders do you need to engage as you scale?	How can you build from past strategies to engage new stakeholders?

PAST STAKEHOLDERS

Who are your disengaged stakeholders?	What can you do to reengage?

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In the sections above, the focus is identifying stakeholders and determining how to engage with them on a local level. As the innovation grows on to national diffusion, the stakeholder perspective will expand to stakeholders relevant to widespread diffusion.

> **❯** Remember that you do not have to work with every person or group who knocks on your door. Be strategic about the stakeholders you choose to work with and make sure they will help you on your national diffusion journey.

If there is already a strong stakeholder group at the facility level, what stakeholders will you need to engage as you scale? How can you build from past strategies to engage new stakeholders?

Once the innovation's stakeholders are identified, categorized, and distinguished as primary or secondary, next analyze their influence to help determine the relationship approach.

The graph below reflects four different customer relationship approaches based on the level of influence and interest in the innovation.

HIGH INFLUENCE, LOW INTEREST

Maintain stakeholder satisfaction since they strongly impact the innovation.

Meet these stakeholders' requirements. They have many varied, simultaneous priorities and responsibilities.

Example: VA medical center director

HIGH INFLUENCE, HIGH INTEREST

Manage the stakeholder relationship closely as they have the largest effect on the innovation.

Fully engage these stakeholders and make the strongest efforts to meet their requirements.

Example: Direct supervisor

LOW INFLUENCE, LOW INTEREST

Monitor the stakeholder relationship to ensure there is no change in status.

Keep this stakeholder group on your radar for potential change in influence or interest.

Example: Colleagues from different departments

LOW INFLUENCE, HIGH INTEREST

Keep these stakeholders informed since they may not strongly affect the work but can be affected by the innovation.

Adequately work with the stakeholders to ensure no major issues arise.

Example: Veterans

Adapted from Mendelow, A.L. (1981). 'Environmental Scanning - The Impact of the Stakeholder Concept,' ICIS 1981 Proceedings, 20. [online].

STEP 3

PREPARE THE STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Finally, it is time to engage the stakeholders to cultivate meaningful and beneficial relationships to bring the greatest benefits to those affected by the innovation.

To best plan the communications and engagement strategy, take time to reflect on the questions below:

1. Who influences the stakeholders' opinions or actions?

2. Who else do the stakeholders influence?

3. What motivates the stakeholders most of all?

4. What VA health care priority are my stakeholders most interested in or aligned with?

5. What is the best way to communicate with these stakeholders?

6. How do the customers feel about this innovation?

7. What is my key message?

8. What is my ask?

9. How will I manage opposition from stakeholders who do not support the innovation?

10. Do I have any disengaged customers? If so, what can I do to reengage them?

With these answers, craft specific messaging, decide on communication methods, and select communication frequency to make necessary contact with stakeholders in the next section.

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STEP 4

ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Building a strategy to best engage with each customer promotes transparent conversations and trustworthy partnerships. Consider the following strategies for the communication plan.

- Communicate with stakeholders regularly to keep them updated and informed.
- Keep stakeholders involved and create a system for incorporating feedback. Report back with updates.
- Ensure empathetic listening so stakeholders feel heard, understood, and valued.
- Give stakeholders public credit. Showcase and celebrate the team's achievements.

Whether replicating or scaling an innovation, there are engagement methods to consider. These approaches bring the communication strategy to life.

COLLABORATION	Shared accountability and responsibility
PARTICIPATION	Part of the team and engages in tasks and responsibilities for a particular area/activity
CONSULTATION	Involved but not responsible – the team broadcasts information to all or target stakeholders choose whether to engage with it
PUSH COMMUNICATIONS	One-way engagement where the team broadcasts information to all or target stakeholders via various platforms
PULL COMMUNICATIONS	One-way engagement where information is made available, and stakeholders choose whether to engage with it

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After the engagement strategy and approach for each stakeholder is decided, ascertain the best communication method with each stakeholder. Working through the Diffusion Playbook will help curate information about an innovation, distill it into a business case to share with stakeholders and increase understanding of the innovation's process, goals, and achievements. However, it is important to consider what channels to use.

Communication channels used to deliver the value proposition to customers is vital. These can include word of mouth, blogs, publications, interviews, and media. It is important to plan how customers will learn about the innovation, how it will be explained and advertised, and how to maintain customer relationships after delivery.

SURVEYS

Gain feedback and insight from stakeholders into what matters most to them, their preferred methods of contact, and other information they can provide.

ONE PAGERS

Informative documents that give brief but important information and background. They are good for busy stakeholders who do not have a lot of time for in-depth reading.

EMAILS

Information-only or for back-and-forth communication. Allows for the recipients to read and respond at their convenience.

Be careful! Inbox overload can cause some emails to be lost or ignored. Best not to overuse or rely on for urgent communications.

BRIEF INTERVIEWS

A good way to talk to stakeholders one-on-one and to get better back-and-forth dialogue than from email.

Try to keep meetings between 15 to 30 minutes, especially for busier stakeholders.

FLYERS

More visual than one pagers.

Meant to raise quick awareness for your practice or for related events and resources.

GROUP MEETINGS

A forum for multiple stakeholders to come together and provide diverse feedback.

Collaboration among the team and stakeholders through events like Community of Practices or Advisory Panels.

DIFFUSION MARKETPLACE

A marketing tool for a program, process, or tool designed and implemented within VA that brings a unique value toward addressing a clinical operational, or strategic problem.

OTHER

Stakeholder Coalition Channels Activity

Goal: Identify and define channels for national stakeholder engagement.

Instructions: Use the following guiding questions to help determine how to achieve awareness of your innovation, how to deliver your innovation, and how you will continue to support and collaborate with stakeholders after your initial connection.

Stakeholder Coalition Guiding Questions:

Awareness:
1. How will the customers become aware of the innovative solution in a medical center or across VA?

2. How will the solution be explained and advertised locally versus nationally?

3. Will the solution change how the end user performs their current job? If so, explain how.

Delivery:
1. How will the solution be delivered day-to-day?

Support:
1. What will the relationship with the customer look like after the value proposition is delivered?

DIFFUSION PRINCIPLE #4:
Cultivate Growth Resources

VHA is fortunate to be comprised of creative team members that can formulate and implement new innovations at relatively low cost. Still, scaling an innovation across a nationwide network requires a thoughtful resourcing strategy to avoid burnout and achieve full potential.

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Has your innovation received funding?

• Name of funding source

• Total funding amount

• Duration of funding

Resource plans identify, organize, and list the resources required to complete an implementation or other project. Use a resource plan to see how and when resources will be used.

> To Build a Resource Plan:
>
>   1. Identify required, support, and optional resources.
>   2. Prioritize the resource list.
>   3. Determine how to acquire these resources.
>   4. Determine a timeline to acquire the resources.
>   5. Identify and address barriers to acquiring resources.

Resources are needed to implement an innovation both locally and nationally. The table below shares some examples of resources.

RESOURCE TYPE	EXAMPLES
Services	Outsourcing
Labor	Staff
Equipment	Hardware, medical supplies
Technology	Software, dashboards
Materials	Manufacturing supplies
Money	Investment, business capital
Space	More space may be needed if adding new staff
Time	Timescales affected by other resources

Next, think about who and what resources are needed and why. An estimation is needed for each resource. Use these estimation techniques for guidance.

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ESTIMATION TECHNIQUE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
Analogous estimating	Estimate based off similar project	In a previous project, a laboratory ordered five centrifuges. It is estimated that in a new project with a similar budget, the analogous estimate would be to order five centrifuges.
Parametric estimating	Estimate based off historical data or experience	A year-long project requires 4,000 hours of staffing. If it took one person roughly two years to complete, then two people are needed to complete it in one year.
Three-point estimating	Choosing a most likely value once you have defined an upper (optimistic) and lower (pessimistic) value	Estimate the time it takes to complete an activity. The optimistic estimate may be 8 days to create a one-pager; the pessimistic estimate may be 30 days; and a duration of 12 days may be deemed most likely.

LOCAL   **NATIONAL**

Resource Planning Activity

Resourcing comes from a variety of places. While it can start locally or regionally, there are opportunities for diffusing nationally. Connecting to applicable program offices or research groups may not always result in immediate investments but can lead to resources in the future.

For each resource, use selection criteria to determine the need and its priority. To identify which items to prioritize first, consider:

Goal: To plan for the necessary resources for successful implementation.

Instructions: For each resource, use selection criteria to determine the need and its priority. To identify which items to prioritize first, use the guiding questions below. Then, continue on to list the optimal personnel and material resources to replicate the innovation.

- What resources are needed to begin certain activities?

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- When would the resource be available? Where is the resource located?

- What resources will take the most time to secure?

- What are the costs associated with the resources?

- Do you need certain resources to move beyond a step in your process? If you lack the resource, will certain activities grind to a halt? Which resources are "must haves" and "nice to haves" for the innovation?

List the optimal personnel resources needed to replicate your innovation and the amount of time required by each of them.

–Example: Registered Nurse - 15 hours/week for 6 months, Business Analyst 40 hours/week; Biomedical Engineer- 5 hours/week during contracting; 10 hours per week during installation

OPTIMAL PERSONNEL RESOURCES

List the optimal material resources needed to replicate your innovation.

–Example: Equipment, information technology (IT) support, storage space

OPTIMAL MATERIAL RESOURCES

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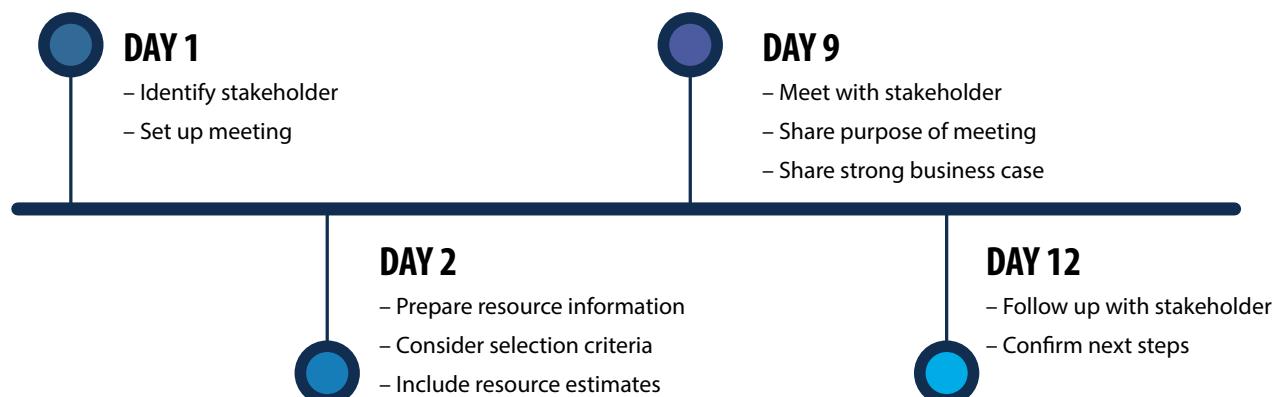
Acquiring resources is the process of securing team members, equipment, materials, and other resources to deliver the innovation at the implementation site. Keep the priorities in mind when acquiring resources in the event not all resources can be acquired at once.

Work with the local implementation team to establish:

- Which resources are already procured or currently available at the implementing facility?

- Which resources need to be sourced?

- Who is potentially supplying the remaining resources?

- Will your innovation need any external licensing or contracting work to successfully implement in a new facility?
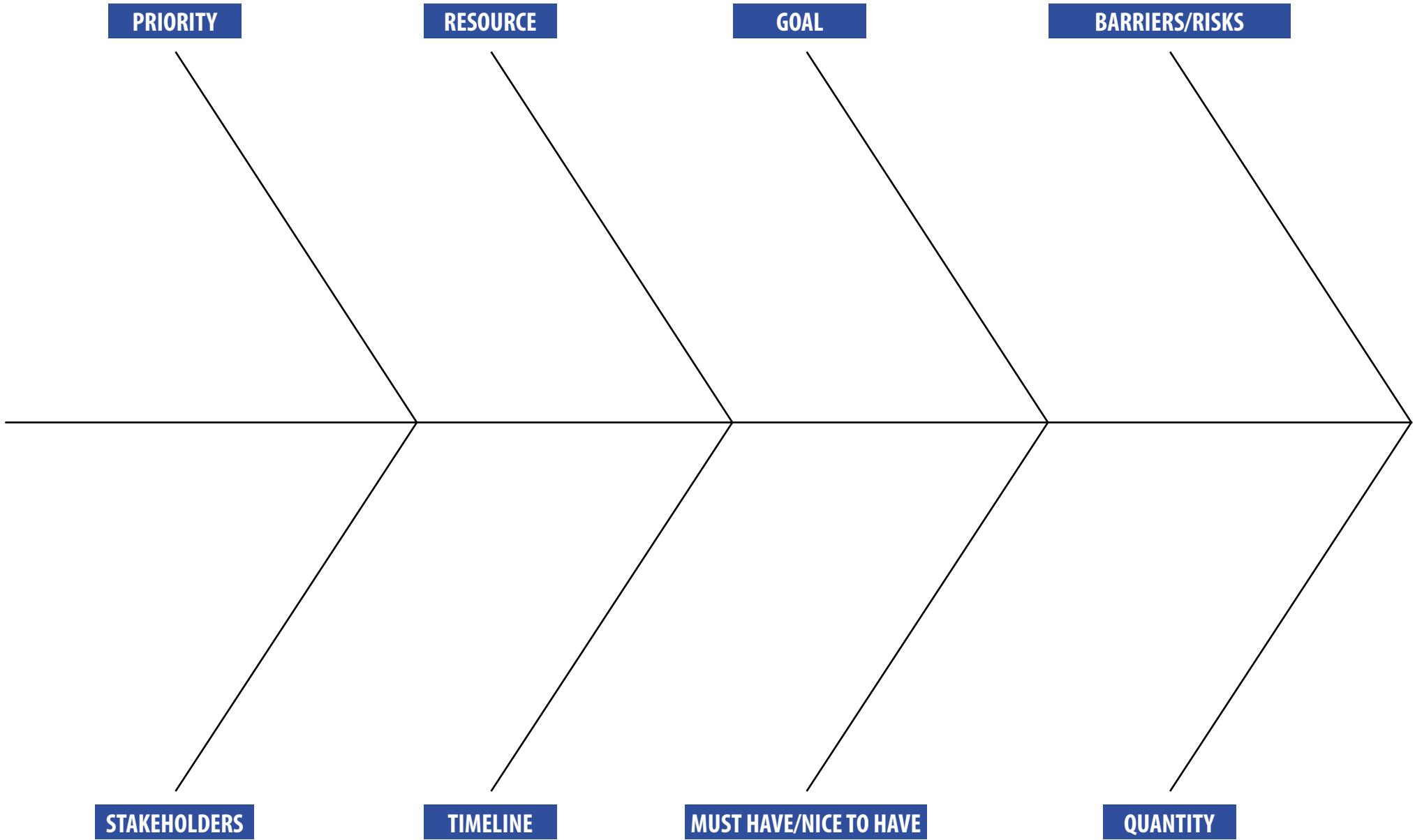
It is key to prepare a timeline before seeking resources from stakeholders. Prior to meeting with identified stakeholders, prepare them with the purpose of the meeting and the information for the needed resources.

Below is a sample timeline for seeking resources from stakeholders.

DAY 1
– Identify stakeholder
– Set up meeting

DAY 2
– Prepare resource information
– Consider selection criteria
– Include resource estimates

DAY 9
– Meet with stakeholder
– Share purpose of meeting
– Share strong business case

DAY 12
– Follow up with stakeholder
– Confirm next steps

> **Things to Consider When Creating a Resource Timeline**
>
> - When do you need each resource? When can those resources be relieved?
> - Is this resource a short-term or long-term investment?
> - What resource limitations would slow progression or cause delays?
> - How long does it take to acquire each resource?

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PRIORITY

RESOURCE

GOAL

BARRIERS/RISKS

STAKEHOLDERS

TIMELINE

MUST HAVE/NICE TO HAVE

QUANTITY

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Identifying and Securing Resources Activity

Goal: To catalog national resources and how to acquire them for widespread diffusion.

Instructions: First, respond to the securing national resources guiding questions. Then, complete the chart with the resources needed to implement the innovation across a VISN or enterprise wide.

Once the innovation is ready for more widespread diffusion, expand the scope of resources to a national level. Use the guiding questions below to brainstorm what new resources may be needed for an innovation's national diffusion.

Securing National Resources Guiding Questions:

• What are the next steps for you to seek out more resource opportunities?

• What resource barriers do you anticipate facing?

• How can you further leverage your local, VISN, and national network to address these implementation challenges?

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Identifying and Securing Resources Activity

Goal: To catalog national resources and how to acquire them for widespread diffusion.

Instructions: Complete the chart with the resources needed to implement the innovation across a VISN or enterprise wide.

RESOURCE	HOW TO ACQUIRE

NATIONAL

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Risk Management

There may be barriers to securing resources that are out of the implementation team's control or need a different approach than planned. Barriers to resources are considered risks and solutions are mitigation strategies.

> Helpful Tips:
>
> - Start elsewhere and complete other activities while waiting for resources.
> - Check-in. Routinely check resource status and process.
> - Be patient. Understand that getting resources may be slower than expected.
> - Be understanding. Have empathy for stakeholders and competing priorities.

Risk management is an ongoing process that involves assessing and monitoring threats that may delay or halt an innovation. Many internal or external factors could negatively impact an innovation. The most common risks are related to schedule, cost, quality, technology, and resources.

Schedule Risk	Implementation will not complete on time.
Cost Risk	Total implementation cost will exceed the budget.
Quality Risk	Implementation will not meet the defined standards.
Technology Risk	Technology might not perform as required.
Resource Risk	Not enough time or team members have the proper skills to complete the project.

To understand overall risk level, the three factors to consider when evaluating risks are probability, impact, and vulnerability.

Risk Probability	Likelihood of a risk event occurring
Risk Impact	Consequences of a risk event occurring
Risk Vulnerability	Extent to which a risk event can be controlled

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All innovations face some sort of risk. Please select all types of risk that apply to your innovation.

Time   Funding/Resources

Technology   Process

Other _____

Next step is to develop a response plan and decide what to do about those risks. Based on the implementation team's risk tolerance, the potential risks can be transferred, reduced, avoided, or accepted. By selecting risk reduction, mitigation strategies need to be developed and put into action.

RISK ACCEPTANCE

When you accept the identified risk and do not take any other action to reduce it because you can accept its impact and possible consequences

RISK REDUCTION

When you take actions to reduce risk to an acceptable level

RISK TRANSFER

When you hand over the risk to another person or department

RISK AVOIDANCE

When you decide to change the plan so the risk disappears

EXAMPLE RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

FACTOR	RISK(S)	MITIGATION STRATEGY
Human Resources	• Staff recruitment • Ability to hire staff • Short staffing	• Cross–train staff until replacement is available • Develop job share plan to better utilize existing staff • Allow video conferencing into meetings for those unable to attend in-person
Infrastructure Capability	• Purchasing and contracting • Challenge of obtaining supplies	• Borrow supplies/equipment from different departments until acquiring needed supplies. • Determine best purchasing method (i.e., obtain a credit card) for ordering supplies. • Develop policy change to be more inclusive of who can purchase supplies.
Technology	• Ideal software solution is not approved within the Technical Reference Model (TRM)	• Request Enterprise Architecture Assessment for official approval to be added to TRM. • Source use case applications for local OI&T to utilize for potential local implementation.

Risk Management Plan Activity

Goal: To recognize implementation plan risks (i.e., time, technology, funding and resources, and processes) and establish mitigation strategies and responsibilities.

Instructions: Fill in the chart below with your implementation risks, the respective mitigation strategies, and who is responsible for each.

IDENTIFIED RISK	MITIGATION STRATEGY	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE
Local Ex: If upgrades to drug files are dependent on a pharmacist informaticist then they need the experience and time to complete these duties.	Coordinate a standard operating procedure that reduces mistakes and is timebound; engage VISN Pharmacy Executive (VPE) or local pharmacy leadership.	Pharmacy Representative on project team
If leadership does not keep tabs on all the innovative quality improvement initiatives taking place then the proper recognition is not given and momentum can decrease.	Levels of implementation have been developed to track each sites progress. As sites meet milestones, the national diffusion team will alert facility leadership to inform them of the progress, outcomes, and notable recognition of the team members.	Project manager and practice owner.

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DIFFUSION PRINCIPLE #5:
Measure the Impact

Key performance indicators (KPIs) should be developed, tracked closely, and regularly shared with stakeholders. The health care industry understandably places a heavy emphasis on evidence-based innovations and successful diffusion requires a data-driven approach. Innovations must clearly define KPIs that drive their success. KPIs should assess the innovation's fidelity. More about fidelity can be found in Diffusion Principle #2: Shape Goals and Frame Fidelity. Of all Diffusion's principles, measuring impact serves as the linchpin to the ability to succeed in acquiring stakeholders, obtaining resources, and celebrating achievements. Most importantly, Veterans deserve this laser focus on outcomes and results.

Before diving into KPI specifics, it is important to start by learning about metrics and data systems. A metric is a quantitative or qualitative measure used to track and assess an innovation's status. Establishing and measuring metrics is key for an innovation's success. Metrics are an excellent source of feedback, which can help improve the innovation. They can tell the story of how well the innovation meets the need of stakeholders and determines which services the innovation impacts the most.

Metrics align with the VA health care priorities

- Hire faster and more competitively
- Connect Veterans to the soonest and best care
- Serve Veterans with military environmental exposures
- Accelerate VA's journey to a High Reliability Organization
- Support Veterans' whole health, their caregivers, and survivors
- Prevent Veteran suicide

Metrics address key stake holders

- Veterans
- Caregivers
- VHA employees
- Community members

The two types of metrics are process and outcome metrics. Process metrics indicate what is being done to maintain or improve the current state. They measure the specific steps in a process that lead to a particular outcome. Outcome metrics reflect the impact of the innovation. They are the Veteran, clinical, operational, and financial outcomes that an innovation addresses.

Sample Process Metrics

Efficiency (ratio of output to input)
Productivity
Turnaround time
Error rate

Sample Outcome Metrics

Mortality rate
Readmission rate
Veteran experience
Safety of care
Length of stay
Cost effectiveness

What critical metrics does your innovation use to measure its impact statement (e.g., reduced infection rates, improved patient/employee satisfaction, demonstrated cost savings or avoidance)?

Quantitative and qualitative data are the two main types of data to collect and work with.

Quantitative Data

Deals with quantities, values, or numbers

Perceived as more reliable and objective

Example: Height, weight, age

Qualitative Data

Observational and descriptive rather than numerical in nature

Usually not measurable

Perceived as more subjective

Example: The room is dark, damp, and has maroon wallpaper

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Before data collection starts, identify the proper metrics for the innovation using the guiding questions below.

The innovation meets the needs of:

Veteran patients   VHA employees

Veterans not directly served by VHA   Community members

Caregivers   Other _____

As a reminder, what VA health care priority does this innovation pertain to?

With the appropriate metrics selected, now it is time to collect the data and analyze it. Take time to reflect and respond below to help navigate the data collection process.

- What measures are required?

- What is the data type?

- How will data be collected?

- Who will collect or compile the data?

- What data will they be collecting?

- What is the reference period?

- How often should the data be collected?

- How often do these reports get published?

- Can you rely on the data accuracy and timeliness that forms this report?

- Can you reasonably expect that your innovation will impact the measure?

- At what level of the organization will you possibly see a change (e.g., facility, individual, clinic)?

> When collecting data, consider what data is already routinely tracked and reported at a facility. Data already being collected saves considerable time and effort.

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EXAMPLES OF ROUTINELY REPORTED DATA

- Reports available in sources such as VHA Support Service Center (VSSC)
- Reports available through the External Peer Review Program (EPRP)
- All Employees Survey Data for specific organizational units
- Survey of Health Experiences of Patients (SHEP) data
- Readmission Measures
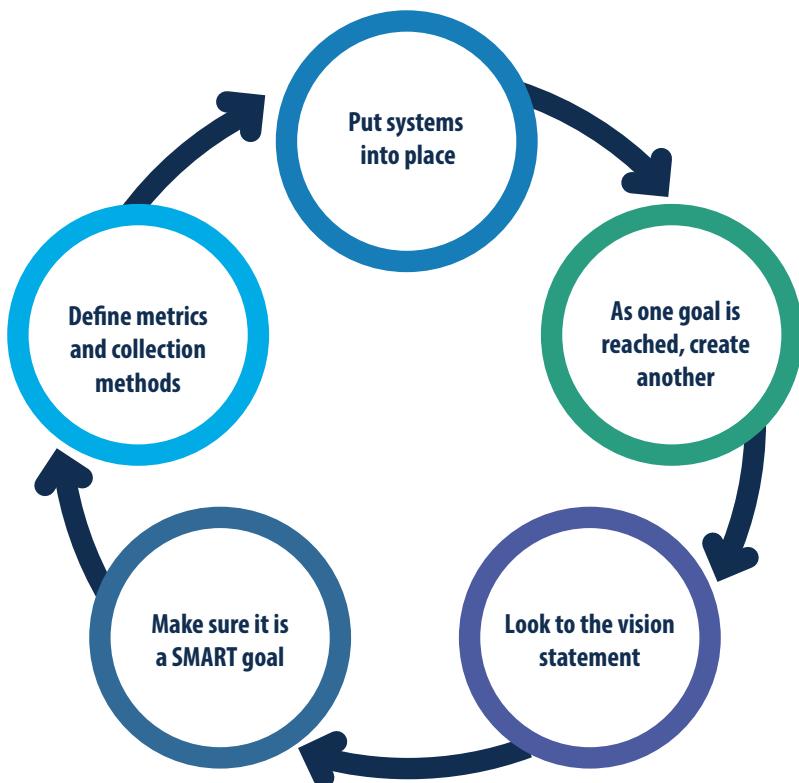
To effectively execute the data collection and analysis, create a functional data system that works for the implementation team. The questions below offer considerations to keep in mind while building out these systems.

WHAT ITEMS CAN BE ASSIGNED TO TEAM MEMBERS?

IS THIS REALISTIC WITH CURRENT WORK/LIFE SCENARIO?

HOW CAN YOU MAKE THIS A HABIT?

Goal creation and data collection are all part of an iterative process. There is no end to the workflow as the cycle adapts to the needs and changes of an innovation.

- Put systems into place
- As one goal is reached, create another
- Look to the vision statement
- Make sure it is a SMART goal
- Define metrics and collection methods

Now that the metrics and measurement basics are complete, look at additional resources to use.

INTERNAL TO VA

- Dashboards that already exist: VHA RAMP Search
- Data already collected and available for analysis: VHA Data Portal

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE DATA

- Access and Quality in VA Health Care / Veteran Affairs
- VA API Platform
- Shining Light on VA Hospitals - Maps of 40 Hospitals
- National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (va.gov)

DATA YOU GATHER

- Surveys (Vsignals, eScreening, Qualtrics)
- Observation, time mapping, etc.

LOCAL

Data Sourcing and Accessing Activity

Goals: To brainstorm data sources and access methods for new implementations. To tailor data for different audiences across a facility.

Instructions: Conceptualize how your innovation uses data. Answer the questions below to help think through data, its sources, and ethical uses.

What data sources would be useful for the implementation?

How might you obtain these data sources?

What steps would you take to ensure an ethical use of data?

Which stakeholders can help you access data and metrics?

How will you tailor your metrics and data reporting for different stakeholders?

Goals and Systems Creation Activity

Goal: To arrange your SMART goals from Diffusion Principle #2 with the data sources to locate the information.

LOCAL

Instructions: Copy your SMART goals list from Diffusion Principle #2 in the following table. Work with your team to locate data sources for implementation success.

SMART Goals	Data Source/Measure of Success
Ex: Implement the RAI Frailty Tool in 55 VHA Surgical Sites of care by the end of FY23	Ex: National Surgery Office Surgical Pause Dashboard map view to see the number of implementing facilities and level of implementation.

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Data Storytelling

Storytelling with data tells the innovation's story and impact. It is an integral part of local or national diffusion strategies and makes a business case more legitimate and compelling.

When storytelling with data, think from the customer's perspective. Visualizing data in an easy-to-digest fashion helps share the true value of an innovation.

> - Instead of, "our innovation increased cost savings for our facility."
> - Try, "our innovation increased cost savings by 25% over the 2023 fiscal year."

Reflect and describe how your innovation tracks and collects metric data. Summarize the innovation's impact on your target audience. Your customer details can be found in Diffusion Principle #1.

Data Storytelling Activity

NATIONAL

Goals: To coordinate data to tell a compelling story for specific audiences. To explain why certain data is compelling to tell your innovation's story.

Instructions: Tell us a story about a time your solution worked (e.g., a time when your solution changed a Veteran's life, a time when it improved how VA employees do their work and deliver care). Please provide a quote from this experience if possible.

Identify the data to tell your innovation story and record your ideas below. Also, consider the audiences to tell your story to. Finally, explain why this data makes a compelling story. Please provide a quote from this experience if possible.

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STORYTELLING DATA	AUDIENCE	WHY IS THIS DATA COMPELLING?

STORYTELLING DATA	AUDIENCE	WHY IS THIS DATA COMPELLING?

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DIFFUSION PRINCIPLE #6:
Select an Implementation Strategy

An implementation plan is a project management tool that facilitates the execution of a strategic plan for a project. The plan breaks down the implementation process into smaller steps. It hosts the resources, team information, risks, timeline, and metrics for success.

The implementation plan helps define actions and constraints to success and analyzes the current state. The future state illustrates the improved outcome and aligns with the innovation's vision and mission.

The difference between the current and future states is the gap. It is what is needed to attain and move into the desired state. When determining how to bridge the gap, think about why the gap exists and address underlying causes.

TODAY
Current State

THE GAP

TOMORROW
Future State

Leading Change

Change management is the process of helping individuals understand and accept change. One notable change management model is the ADKAR™ model (Hiatt, 2006). This outcome-oriented method aims to limit resistance to organizational change and hypothesizes that change success depends on a human-centered approach in the design of the new process.

A D K A R

AWARENESS   DESIRE   KNOWLEDGE   ABILITY   REINFORCEMENT

The ADKAR states of change are the building blocks to help conceptualize the model. At first, there is awareness and desire to move out of the current state. This state exists in the enablement zone. Then, the transition state focuses on knowledge and ability which tilts into the engagement zone. Finally, the future concentrates on reinforcement.

current

AWARENESS — Create awareness of the need for change

DESIRE — Foster desire to make the change

transition

KNOWLEDGE — Provide knowledge on how to change

ABILITY — Ensure that employees can make the change

future

REINFORCEMENT — Reinforce the change

Step 1: Awareness

Awareness' goal is to draw attention to the need for the innovative change.

- Use this checklist to provide clear explanations about why the innovative change is needed.
- Announce the innovative change to employees well ahead of time. The announcement should be clearly communicated, and employees should have access to the information after the announcement.
- Explain the reason, pain points, and return on investment of the new solution.
- Give employees opportunities to ask questions and make suggestions in a public or private forum.

Step 2: Desire

Next, the goal is to foster the desire to make the innovative change.

- The list below are actions to help gauge employee's reactions to change.
- Identify and engage a diverse coalition of change leaders impacted by the change.
- How do you make the need for change relevant and important to your key stakeholder? What are the benefits of change to them?
- Involve employees in solution development. Understanding their core reasons for resistance helps proactively overcome them.

Step 3: Knowledge

The knowledge goal demonstrates how to change.

- The knowledge checklist addresses training and coaching needs.
- Identify specific education gaps for each role involved in the innovation. Formal training materials, job aides, and individual and group coaching will help the employees feel supported.
- Offer resources like process flowcharts that employees can reference later.

Step 4: Ability

The goal here is to ensure employees can make the innovative change.

- The ability list enters the engagement zone to monitor performance of the change.
- Allow hands-on training and testing to build employee confidence and ability.
- Monitor progress immediately following implementation launch. Utilize change leaders for coaching and feedback collection.
- Identify reasonable metrics at the beginning and adjust processes as necessary.

Step 5: Reinforcement

The final goal is to reinforce the change.

- The reinforcement checklist recognizes that sustaining a change can be more difficult than making the initial change.
- Monitor the change over time to confirm it fulfills the desired outcome.
- Continue collecting feedback to make improvements and provide support.
- Encourage and celebrate success with positive feedback, rewards, and leadership recognition to foster continued employee participation.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

It is critical to understand an innovation's process from inception through maintenance.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN CONSIDERATIONS	
What	• What are we implementing? • What is the change? • What are the steps to get there? • What resources and tools may an end user need? • What VA health care priorities are impacted by this innovation?
When	• When are these changes being implemented? • Will these changes be completed in phases? • How long do you anticipate it will take to replicate your innovation in another VHA facility?
Where	• Where will this implementation occurs
Who	• Who is involved? • Who will be impacted by this change?
How	• How is this change going to impact users and/or participants? • Is there a role change? • Is there new technology to use? • How will you provide staff with the guidance, training, coaching, and on-the-job support they will need?
Why	• Why is this project significant and what is the purpose of this implementation?
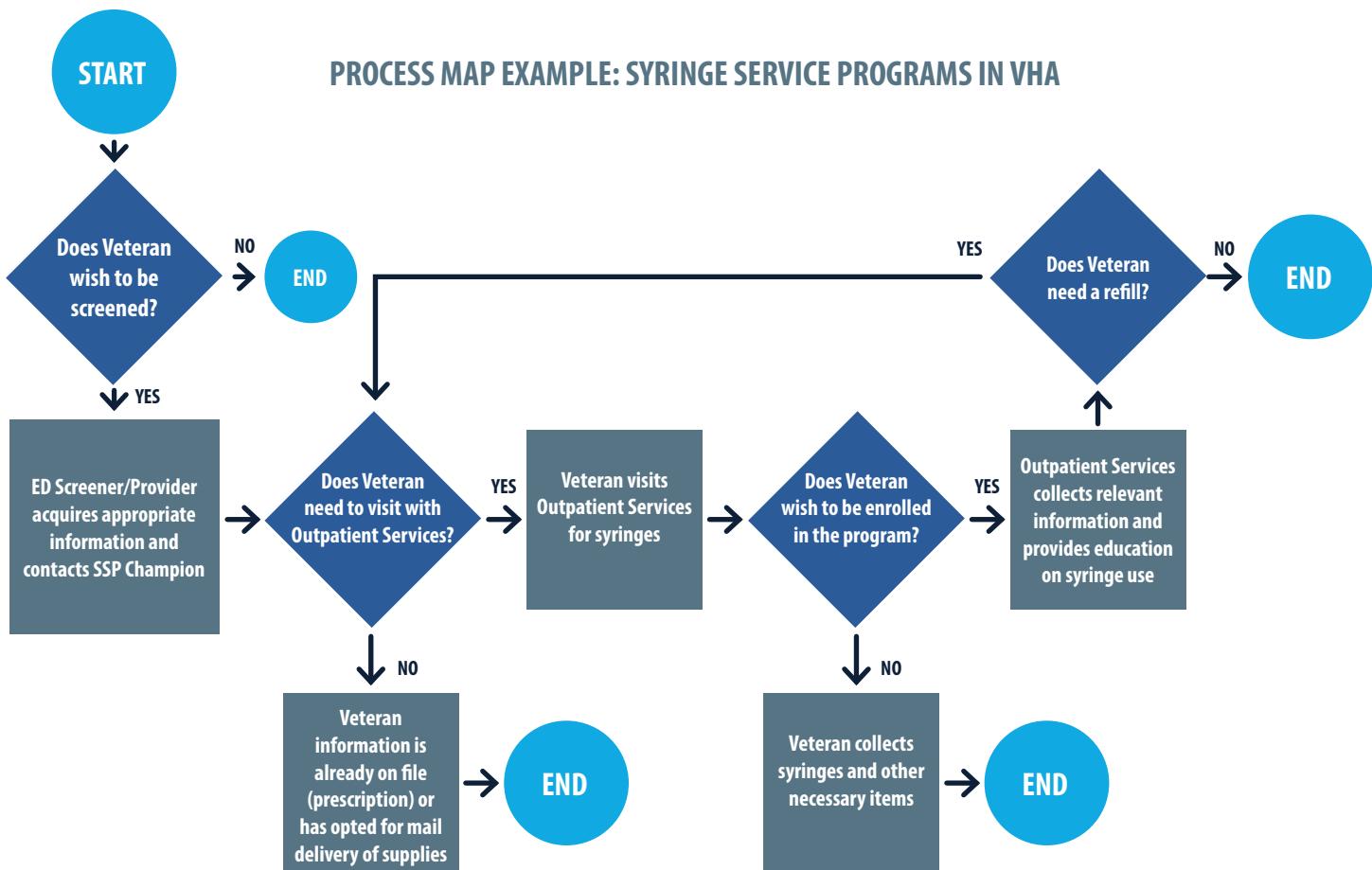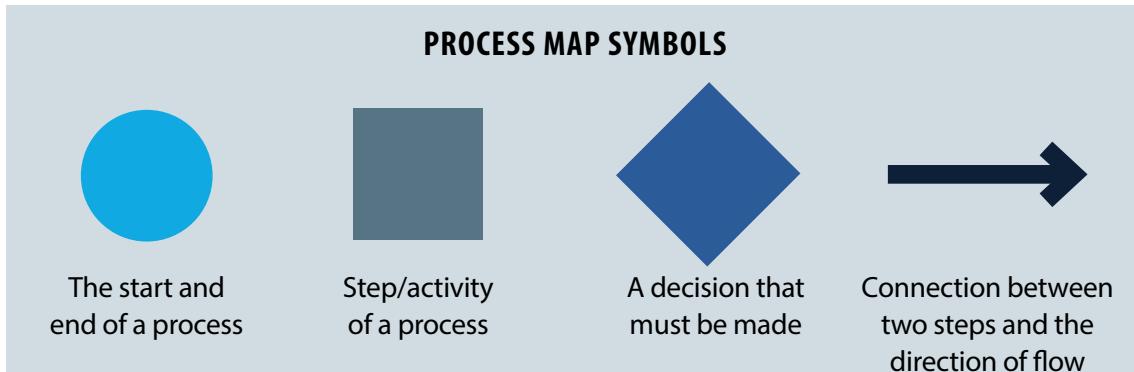
Describe, in narrative form, the optimal process for implementing and maintaining the innovation, in 3-5 sentences.

Once the components of the innovation are ready, next is the process map. Process maps are visual representations of the actions, steps, and tasks to achieve a certain goal. Process maps draw a picture of the facility's existing process, identify ideas to improve it, and outline how things will happen in the future. Process maps help ensure the innovation's fidelity by providing a clear and consistent road map for anyone implementing.

Mapping Your Process Activity

Goal: To create a visual representation of the actions, steps, and tasks for the implementation process.

Instructions: Using the process map symbols below, create a process map for your innovation. Think through each step and the resulting process. Consider where deviations or roadblocks may occur throughout the process. Use the example process map below as a guide as you build out your own process map.

PROCESS MAP SYMBOLS

The start and end of a process	Step/activity of a process	A decision that must be made	Connection between two steps and the direction of flow

PROCESS MAP EXAMPLE: SYRINGE SERVICE PROGRAMS IN VHA

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

START

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

START

Highlight any bright spots or challenges you discovered when you implemented your innovation. If you would change your implementation process going forward, please explain why.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

As you continue to grow your innovation, you can reflect on your process map and note rooms for improvement.

Goal: To deep dive into your current process map to find pain points and room for improvement for greater implementation spread.

Instructions: Review your current process map prior to this activity or return to the local mapping your process activity above to complete a process map.

QUESTION	ANSWER
Are there any complaints about this process from implementing teams? Are there possible resolutions to address these complaints?	
Are there any unnecessary redundancies in the process? Is there any risk if those redundancies are removed?	
Are there any bottlenecks in the process? If so, how can they be relieved?	
Are there any steps missing from this process map that need to be added in?	
Are there any other areas for improvement in this process?	

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Implementation Tools and Templates

There is a variety of project implementation tools that can be used throughout the planning, execution, monitoring and controlling of an innovation. Tools that exist at your fingertips include Mural, Excel, and PowerPoint. Refer to Appendix B to view different tools and templates for an innovation's implementation.

Implementation Plan Activity

Goal: To list all necessary steps involved in implementing your innovation and sequence the implementation steps into chronological order.

LOCAL

Instructions: Fill out the chart below with actions for implementation. List owners, timeline, and communication and training needed for each action.

WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	WHO (STAKEHOLDER)	COMMUNICATION	TRAINING/ COACHING
Ex: Determine process flow/ managing Veteran Referrals	Ex: 3-4 weeks	Ex: Local facility	Ex: Local CCC lead	Ex: Update team as needed	Ex: TBD

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

National diffusion requires strategy beyond the initial implementation plan. The four common diffusion strategies are basic, cohort, big bang, and hybrid implementation.

Basic implementation is completed through organic adoption and growth. There is no leadership mandate and is 100% opt-in.

BASIC IMPLEMENTATION MAKES SENSE WHEN:

- The project is in high demand,

- There is little-to-no funding, and

- The knowledge base is already well-packaged.

Next, cohort implementation spreads through cohorts of new adopters. There is strong leadership support, but it is not the highest priority.

COHORT IMPLEMENTATION MAKES SENSE WHEN:

- Fewer resources are readily available,

- The knowledge base is still being refined,

- The product is not finalized (e.g., software, progressive clinical protocol), and

- Awareness and demand are still maturing.

The big bang implementation strategy implements all at once on a national scale and is the most uncommon strategy. It is generally required or expected to be adopted by senior leadership.

BIG BANG IMPLEMENTATION MAKES SENSE WHEN:

- There is strong senior-level VA support, and the project is a leadership imperative,

- The solution is lightweight to implement,

- Resourcing is plentiful (funding or FTE), and

- There is a sense of urgency.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Finally, hybrid implementation combines multiple implementation approaches. The combination of methods makes the most sense for sustaining impact.

> ## HYBRID IMPLEMENTATION MAKES SENSE WHEN:
>
> - The innovation knowledge base is well-packaged,
>
> - The solution is lightweight to implement, and
>
> - Awareness and demand are varied throughout the enterprise.

National Implementation Strategy Guiding Questions

1. Which strategy might be right for your innovation?

2. Why do you think the strategy is right for your innovation?

DIFFUSION PRINCIPLE #7:
Celebrate Now and Later

"Strive for progress not perfection"
–Unknown

Take pride in the steps made to further develop an innovation's impact. Taking the time to acknowledge these achievements allows the source of success to replicate in the future. Celebrations can come in different forms like certificates, a showcase of innovations, seeking out exposure opportunities like getting published in a local or national newsletter, VA communication, and so on. Track the progress of the innovation's goals and celebrate milestones regularly with stakeholders and the implementation team.

Celebrate Now and Later Activity

Goal: To name ways to celebrate team achievements and implementation milestones.

Instructions: Craft your celebrations for your innovation's achievements. Get creative with your ideas!

> Celebrate innovatively!
> Think outside the box and consider ways to celebrate that are specific to the innovation.

TYPE OF CELEBRATION	STEPS TO CREATE CELEBRATION

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

DIFFUSION PRINCIPLE #8:
Pave the Way for Sustainment

An innovation's sustainment requires a thoughtful approach to a health care system's policy, data, budgetary, and performance evaluation frameworks. It requires determining long-term feasibility and upholding appropriate resource allocation. Stakeholder involvement is crucial in the planning and sustainment for implementation and scalability.

As part of sustainable development, innovations must define metrics and anticipate outcomes all while refining and adapting their organizational management. Effective application of sustainability includes continuous measurement of impact and improvement through evaluation and accountability. Integrating sustainability requires being compliant, engaging, innovative, and transformative. Diffusion of Excellence works closely with their fellows and organizational stakeholders to drive a successful and sustainable community into the VHA foundation.

Use the guiding questions below to pave the way for your innovation's sustainment.

1. In a perfect world, what would your innovation look like in two years from now? Five years? Ten years?

2. Does a program office oversee the innovation? Is it embedded in the work we do every day?

3. Do you envision your innovation being applicable and scalable outside VHA?

4. Do you foresee the innovation being totally different than how it began or saw it going?

5. Is your innovation something Veterans and caregivers ask for? Is it a household name?

Congratulations, you have successfully completed Part One of the Diffusion Playbook. Thank you for investing your time, thought, and effort into your innovation's business case. This document and its corresponding activities are living entities and not only can, but should, be regularly revisited and updated. If you have any questions, please contact VADiffusionSupport@va.gov.

Part Two:
Diffusion of Excellence Programs

Part Two of the Diffusion of Excellence Playbook showcases the various programs Diffusion offers. The annual cycle helps Diffusion identify, replicate, and scale innovations.
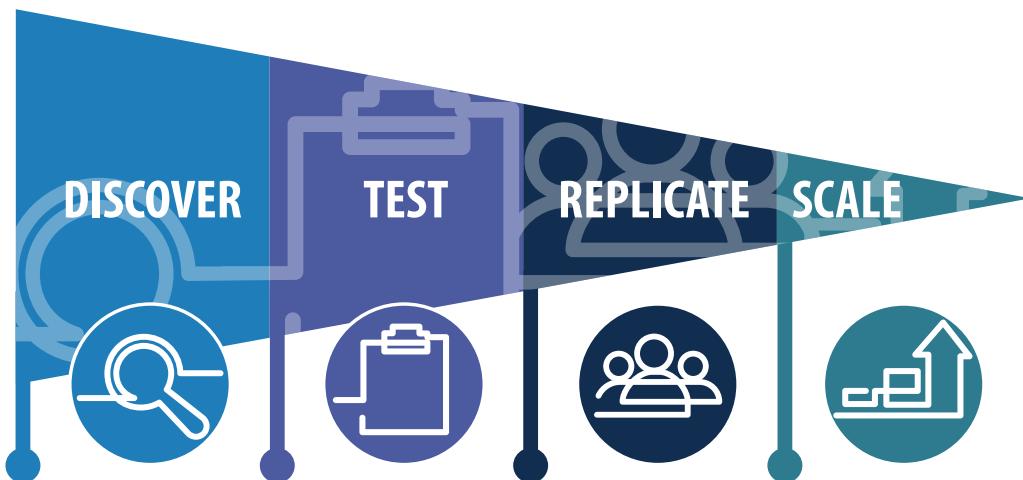
Diffusion of Excellence Overview

Diffusion of Excellence provides a robust platform to spread and integrate Promising Practices across VHA. The dynamic process requires inspiring an entire health care workforce to set-up a larger, transformative organizational change. Over time, the methods have been meticulously refined with valuable input from stakeholders across all organizational levels.

At the 10,000-foot view, Diffusion of Excellence:

Reinforces VA Health Care Priorities	Empowers Employees	Acts as a Change Catalyst for Coalition Building	Standardizes Process and Outcome Improvements
Health care priorities focus the organization's commitment. Diffusion programming aligns with the USH's priorities.	Employee-driven problem solving is necessary for success. Diffusion invests in workforce training and development.	Local and national stakeholders seek out innovative ideas. Diffusion provides a safe space for these conversations.	Standardized health care raises the Veteran and employee experience. Diffusion develops innovations' knowledge base materials.

As a reminder, Diffusion primarily operates in the replicate and scale stages of the VHA IE operational model. However, Diffusion programming is flexible to accommodate practices at any stage of the model.

DISCOVER   TEST   REPLICATE   SCALE

(Vega & Kizer, 2020)

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Diffusion of Excellence Offerings

Collectively, these events, milestones, and tools proclaim Diffusion's holistic approach to promoting a culture of innovation in health care delivery. In the coming sections, the playbook defines these items in greater detail.

VHA Shark Tank Competition

Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp

Facilitated Replication

National Stakeholder Engagement

Diffusion Pathways

Diffusion Summit

VHA Diffusion Academy

Diffusion Talent Accelerator

Diffusion Marketplace

VHA Shark Tank Competition (VHA Shark Tank)

Employees are the invaluable resource at the heart of VHA's learning health care system. Since 2015, Diffusion of Excellence has held nine VHA Shark Tank Competitions open to all VHA employees. In total, the competition has received over 3,200 employee-submitted applications across all VISNs. These submissions address all VA health care priorities and go through rounds of review by subject matter experts across the enterprise.

Each year, the competition boasts 15 finalists. Before the marquee event at VHA Innovation Experience (iEX), VISN and medical center directors, known as Sharks, submit bids committing resources to implement a finalist practice in their facility or region. During the VHA Shark Tank main act, finalists pitch their innovation to a nationwide audience and answer questions from an expert panel about their innovation's impact and future goals. Ten winning bids are announced live at iEX. The competition attracts thousands of viewers celebrating the innovative contributions of VHA.

Application eligibility for the annual competition includes:

1 **Successfully Implemented**
The practice is successfully implemented in at least one facility. The employee's home facility fulfills this criterion.

2 **Data Supported**
The submission has at least three months of implementation data to support the practice's viability and effectiveness.

3 **Priority Aligned**
The practice aligns to one or more VA health care priorities.

The six VA health care priorities are the most important strategic and operational advancements that must be achieved by VA. They deserve top performance, focused commitment, and the best use of available resources.

VA Health Care Priorities:

- Hire faster and more competitively
- Connect Veterans to the soonest and best care
- Serve Veterans with military environmental exposures
- Accelerate VA's journey to a High Reliability Organization
- Support Veterans' whole health, their caregivers, and survivors
- Prevent Veteran Suicide
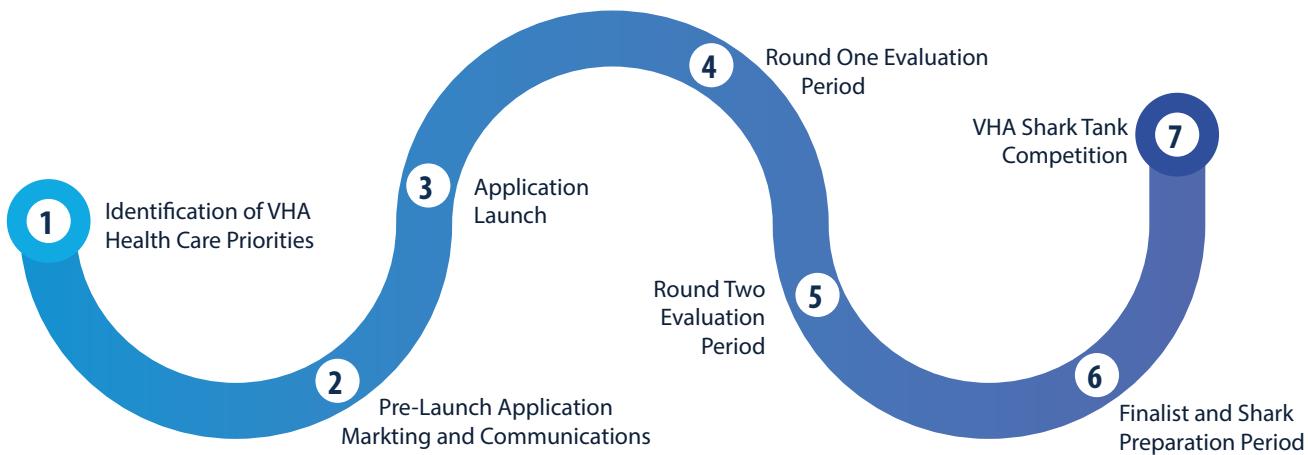
After applicants self-select their submission's applicable priority, they also choose the Veteran community segment it improves outcomes for. Options include, but are not limited to:

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

Each group possesses unique needs and challenges that require tailored solutions. The competition aims to foster and highlight those solutions.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Competition Stages

VHA Shark Tank Competition unfolds over several months. The competition season commences with the application launch in spring and culminates with the live event every fall.

1. Identification of VHA Health Care Priorities
2. Pre-Launch Application Markting and Communications
3. Application Launch
4. Round One Evaluation Period
5. Round Two Evaluation Period
6. Finalist and Shark Preparation Period
7. VHA Shark Tank Competition

Competition Winners

A Promising Practice, as defined by Diffusion, is a distinction granted to VHA Shark Tank winners. These selections are based on a practice's potential viability and replicability, number of bids received, and application evaluation data. Promising Practices work with Diffusion through Facilitated Replication in winning Shark's facilities or regions. For finalist practices that do not gain Promising Practice designation, participation in VHA Shark Tank Competition provides exposure to a broad VHA audience of various organizational levels and invaluable networking opportunities.

Being named a Promising Practice, and the respective team members becoming Diffusion of Excellence Fellows, comes with significant benefits. These include conversations with VA and VHA senior leaders, development of implementation toolkits and marketing materials, and validating impact. Winners also have a continued presence on VHA Diffusion Marketplace and access to future community opportunities.

After VHA Shark Tank, the next opportunity is for Diffusion of Excellence Fellows and Implementing Facility Fellows to attend Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp. They come together in-person to build an implementation plan. It is leveraged during Facilitated Replication, presented to national stakeholders, and reflected on at Diffusion of Excellence Summit.

Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp
Implementation Teams develop their Implementation Plan

Facilitated Replication
Work with Implementation Leads and Coordinators to replicate Promising Practices using the implementation plan developed at Base Camp

National Stakeholder Engagement
Coordinate with Implementation Leads and Diffusion Specialists to develop a National Stakeholder Strategy and schedule informational sessions

Diffusion of Excellence Summit
Celebrate your progress at the VHA Innovation Experience (iEX) and showcase your practice to VA and external stakeholders

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

VHA DIFFUSION OF EXCELLENCE
Base Camp

VHA Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp (Base Camp)

Securing a win at VHA Shark Tank Competition and earning Promising Practice designation is the start of an exciting journey. Winners are invited to Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp (Base Camp). The three-day training event unites the Diffusion of Excellence Fellow (Diffusion Fellow), Implementing Facility Fellow (IFF), and Diffusion Support Team. It creates an environment for exchanging ideas and developing an effective implementation plan.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Implementation teams at Base Camp are dynamic. Learn more about each Base Camp role below.

Diffusion Fellow	Implementing Facility Fellow (IFF)	Base Camp Facilitator	Base Camp Documenter	Implementation Lead
VHA Shark Tank Winner	VHA Shark Tank Winning Facility Representative	VHA Innovators Network Innovation Specialist	Support Team/Tracks Base Camp Activities	Support Team/Project Manager

The Diffusion Support Team is an essential component of Base Camp to ensure participants derive maximum value. Their support continues throughout Facilitated Replication.

Expert Presentations

Subject matter experts enrich the learning landscape. Deep insights and practical tips help shape the implementation strategies

Facilitator-Led Project Planning

Experienced facilitators guide implementation project planning. Visualizations and plans lead to impactful Promising Practices

Networking Opportunities

Attendees foster relationships with colleagues and leaders across VHA. Connections and collaborations start here

Base Camp revolves around the Diffusion Fellow and IFF designing an implementation plan. The plan serves as a road map for Facilitated Replication in the following months. It aligns teams towards a common goal and processes to replicate the Promising Practice at the new facility successfully.

Concluding Base Camp, the plan's real-world execution begins. Implementation teams utilize the strategies and guidelines detailed in the implementation plans to replicate the Promising Practice. This process showcases the power of collaborative innovation and its potential for improving health care practices.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Facilitated Replication

Once Promising Practices complete Base Camp, the next phase launches. Facilitated Replication is when Diffusion of Excellence provides project management support to the Diffusion Fellow and IFF. The subsequent months use techniques and knowledge acquired at Base Camp to replicate the practice in a new facility or VISN.

During this phase, Diffusion Fellows, IFFs, and Implementation Leads are charged with:

- Using the implementation plan to replicate the Promising Practice.

- Creating knowledge-based materials.

- Tracking and reporting the practice impact to chart a path forward.

VHA Shark Tank Competition winners, now known as Diffusion Fellows, mentor the new facility during Facilitated Replication. IFFs are selected by the winning Shark to implement the practice at their facility. IFFs are responsible for local implementation and often become key practice champions. Implementation Leads from the Diffusion of Excellence Support Team host weekly meetings, monitor progress, and track risks and mitigations. They also build implementation guides and informational materials to institute a repeatable process for practices.

Three primary goals of Facilitated Replication are to:
- Package the Knowledge Base: Implementation Leads assist the Diffusion Fellows in developing a comprehensive implementation guide and other support materials (i.e., one-pagers, leadership presentations, and training materials).
- Confirm Impact: Implementation Leads work with the IFFs to design a metrics and measurement plan to verify the practice's desired outcomes.

- Cultivate National Stakeholder Support: Diffusion of Excellence facilitates informational briefings with national stakeholders to supply them practice overviews.

Diffusion Fellows and IFFs receive comprehensive project management and communications support. This prepares them to tackle the next milestone, which is engaging national stakeholders.

National Stakeholder Engagement

In essence, Facilitated Replication is a replication study to refine the practice and deepen understanding of its impact. It is critical to engage and educate national stakeholders during Facilitated Replication. Diffusion Specialists from Diffusion of Excellence facilitate low-risk interactions with at least three national stakeholders for each practice.
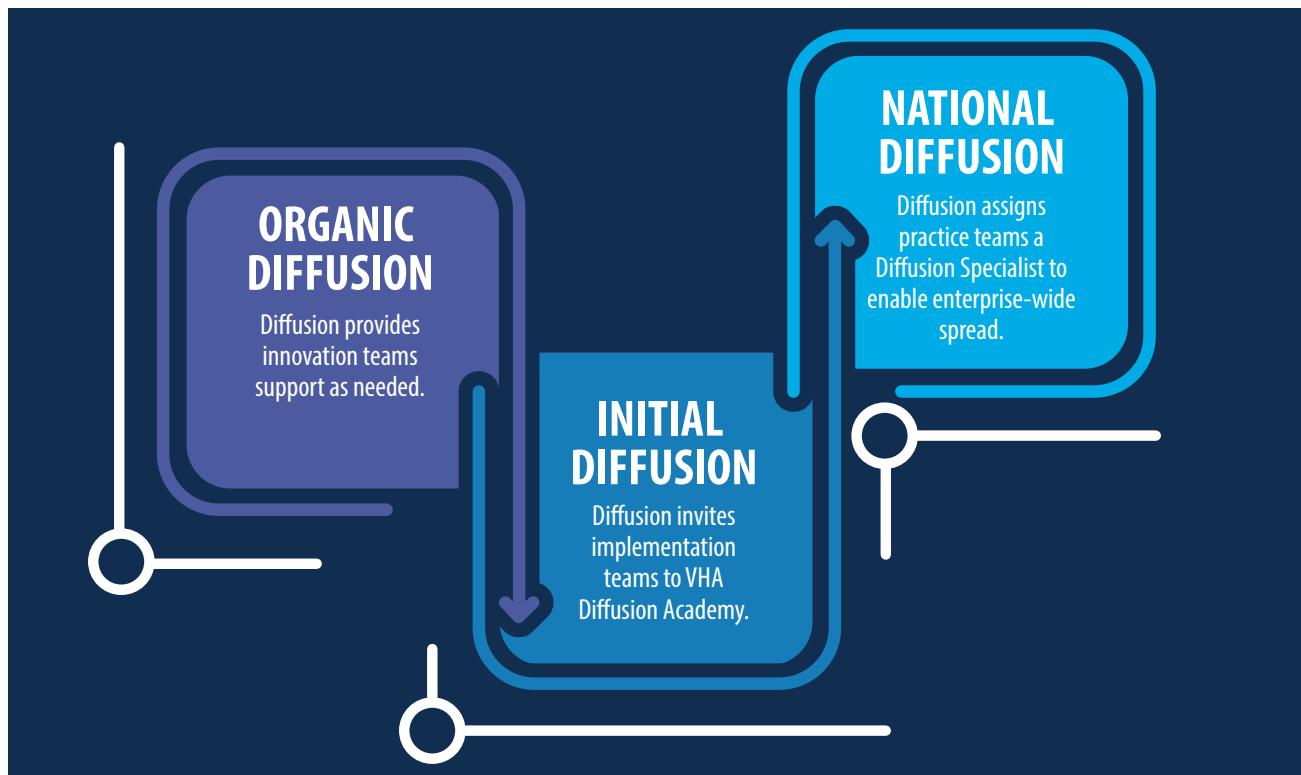
Diffusion Fellows provide a brief practice overview, including the practice's impact based on available data. During the discussion, national stakeholders provide a program office priority overview and work with the Diffusion Fellows to message and advocate for the Promising Practice with applicable audiences. The feedback received is critical to assess the best diffusion pathway for the Promising Practice.

Diffusion Pathways

Upon completing Facilitated Replication and national stakeholder engagement, Diffusion announces each practice's optimal path forward at Diffusion of Excellence Summit. These are known as Diffusion pathways.

There are three Diffusion pathways: Organic Diffusion, Initial Diffusion, and National Diffusion. Each pathway is designed to reflect the practice's impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost-effectiveness. Diffusion of Excellence provides varying levels of support for each Diffusion pathway.

Diffusion Pathways

NATIONAL DIFFUSION
Diffusion assigns practice teams a Diffusion Specialist to enable enterprise-wide spread.

ORGANIC DIFFUSION
Diffusion provides innovation teams support as needed.

INITIAL DIFFUSION
Diffusion invites implementation teams to VHA Diffusion Academy.

Organic Diffusion Practices

Organic Diffusion Practices demonstrate moderate impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. These Promising Practices help grow the greater Diffusion of Excellence community and remain available on Diffusion Marketplace for organic dissemination. They are eligible for Diffusion of Excellence ad hoc support and receive enterprise-wide resourcing opportunity updates through the Diffusion of Excellence mail serve.

Example of Organic Diffusion
Expanding Harm Reduction Services and Implementation of Syringe Services Programs: Syringe services programs are community-based prevention programs which provide evidence-based, life-saving services for people who use illicit drugs, including access to syringes, naloxone, fentanyl test strips, infection screening and linkage to treatment.

EMS Clean Covers
The EMS Clean Plastic Covers will indicate to patients and staff that a piece of medical equipment is clean and ready for use.

COACH
COACH was designed to improve the quality of life for both patients with dementia and their caregivers, help Veterans to remain living at home for as long as possible, and alleviate caregiver burden.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Initial Diffusion Practices

Initial Diffusion Practices demonstrate strong impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. Like Organic Diffusion Practices, they are highlighted on Diffusion Marketplace and are made aware of open VA resource opportunities. In addition, they are invited to the annual VHA Diffusion Academy. At VHA Diffusion Academy, innovation teams cultivate their business case for further growth and sustainment.

Examples of Initial Diffusion

VA Operating Room Preparation Standardization
Standardizing operating room setups dramatically decreases unnecessary waste and patient safety events and increases efficiency by creating the same setup no matter which staff rotates through or sets up the case.

VA Lactation Program
Standardized lactation support and services offered through VA enhances timely service, provides a greater choice for Veterans, and increases their access to care.

Gerofit
Gerofit is an exercise program that promotes health and wellness for older Veterans by tailoring strength, aerobic, balance, and flexibility exercises to individual needs in person and virtually.

National Diffusion Practices

VHA DIFFUSION OF EXCELLENCE
National Diffusion

National Diffusion Practices demonstrate exceptional impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. They receive the same foundational benefits as Organic and Initial Diffusion Practices. Furthermore, National Diffusion Practices are assigned a Diffusion Specialist from Diffusion of Excellence. This support comes in the form of facilitating strategic planning, building a national stakeholder coalition, and conducting nationwide trainings.

Examples of National Diffusion

PRIDE in All Who Served
The PRIDE in All Who Served program provides a resource for reducing health care disparities and increasing patient health literacy for the LGBTQ+ community with sessions focusing on overall wellness, increasing social connectedness, and empowering Veterans to engage in services related to their personal health care needs.

Primary Care Physical Therapy
Embedding Physical Therapists in Primary Care facilitates same day examination and treatment for musculoskeletal conditions allowing earlier intervention and frequently avoiding unnecessary medications, imaging, and specialty referrals while keeping Primary Care appointment times available for Veterans requiring medical care.

Surgical Pause
Surgical Pause utilizes the simple yet sophisticated Risk Analysis Index to screen Veterans for frailty in 30 seconds, effectively flagging high risk Veterans so that the surgical team can ensure that the proposed treatment plans both mitigate known risks and align with the Veteran's overarching life goals.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Diffusion of Excellence Summit

Facilitated Replication reaches celebration at Diffusion of Excellence Summit (Diffusion Summit). The event is a graduation ceremony that marks the culmination of hard work, innovation, and commitment of the Promising Practices' Diffusion Fellows and Implementing Facility Fellows. Diffusion Summit allows the Diffusion Fellows and IFFs to recount their experiences and progress over the last year. The implementation teams share their efforts, challenges, and victories.

Program office leaders, facility leaders, and colleagues attend Diffusion Summit. Each Promising Practice's presentation provides a comprehensive account of the replication efforts and outcomes from Facilitated Replication. Diffusion Summit not only showcases the achievements of the Diffusion Fellows and IFFs, but also illuminates the path forward. It sets the stage for continued innovation and advancement in health care delivery.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence
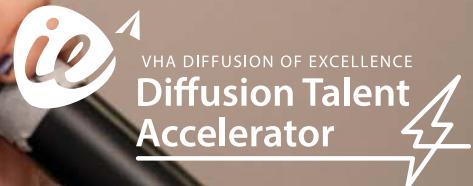
VHA Diffusion Academy (Diffusion Academy)

VHA Diffusion Academy (Diffusion Academy) is an annual trailblazing event aimed at enhancing the scalability and sustainability of innovations through business case building. It unites like-minded innovators and frames VHA as a learning health care system.

Individualized Curriculum

The curriculum flexes to meet the specific needs of each innovation. The components encourage team cohesion, highlight replication strategies, improve communication planning, and identify resource opportunities. Diffusion Academy's goal is to equip innovators with the tools, resources, and community needed to maintain and expand their innovations over two to three years.

By creating a strong business case founded on Diffusion principles, gaps are bridged in resourcing, stakeholder buy-in, and communication strategies for innovations. Diffusion Academy's marquee event centers around a three-day workshop, where innovators build an enterprise-wide business case.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Diffusion Talent Accelerator (DTA)

Diffusion Talent Accelerator (DTA) embeds a diffusion culture by expanding the human talent pool capable of replicating and scaling innovations as an integral part of VHA's learning health care system. The program trains DTA Specialists in VISN or national program offices to see a project through the replicate and scale innovation stages. In the first year, these Specialists gain the skills to deploy their own diffusion program and identify, implement, and scale practices within their VISN or program office.

Specialists Support Opportunities

DTA Specialists join a multitude of events focused on replicating and scaling innovations. After a personalized orientation, DTA Specialists attend Diffusion Academy, participate in monthly training sessions, and receive a national Diffusion Specialist mentor.

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Discover VA innovations to adopt at your facility

We're a discovery and collaboration tool that curates VA's promising innovations, encourages their diffusion, and fosters engagement with greater healthcare communities.

Learn more
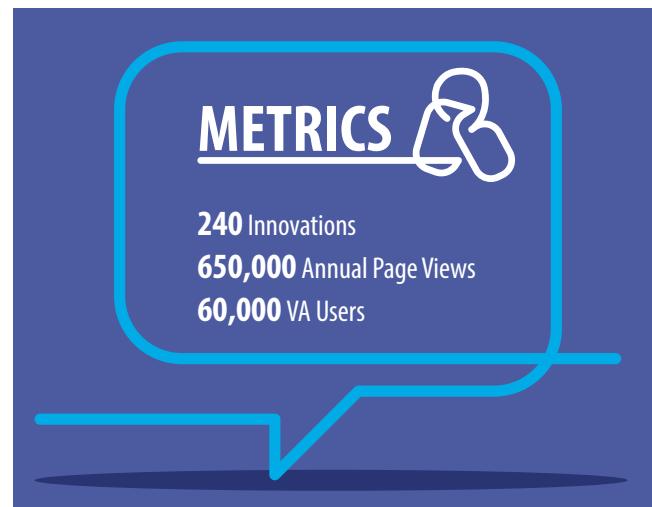
"Search terms"   **Search**

Diffusion Marketplace (Marketplace)

Diffusion Marketplace (Marketplace) is a publicly available platform designed to facilitate the discovery and collaboration of VA innovations. As a dynamic, digital repository, the Marketplace features over 100 innovations. These innovations vary in origin, complexity, achievements, and resource needs.
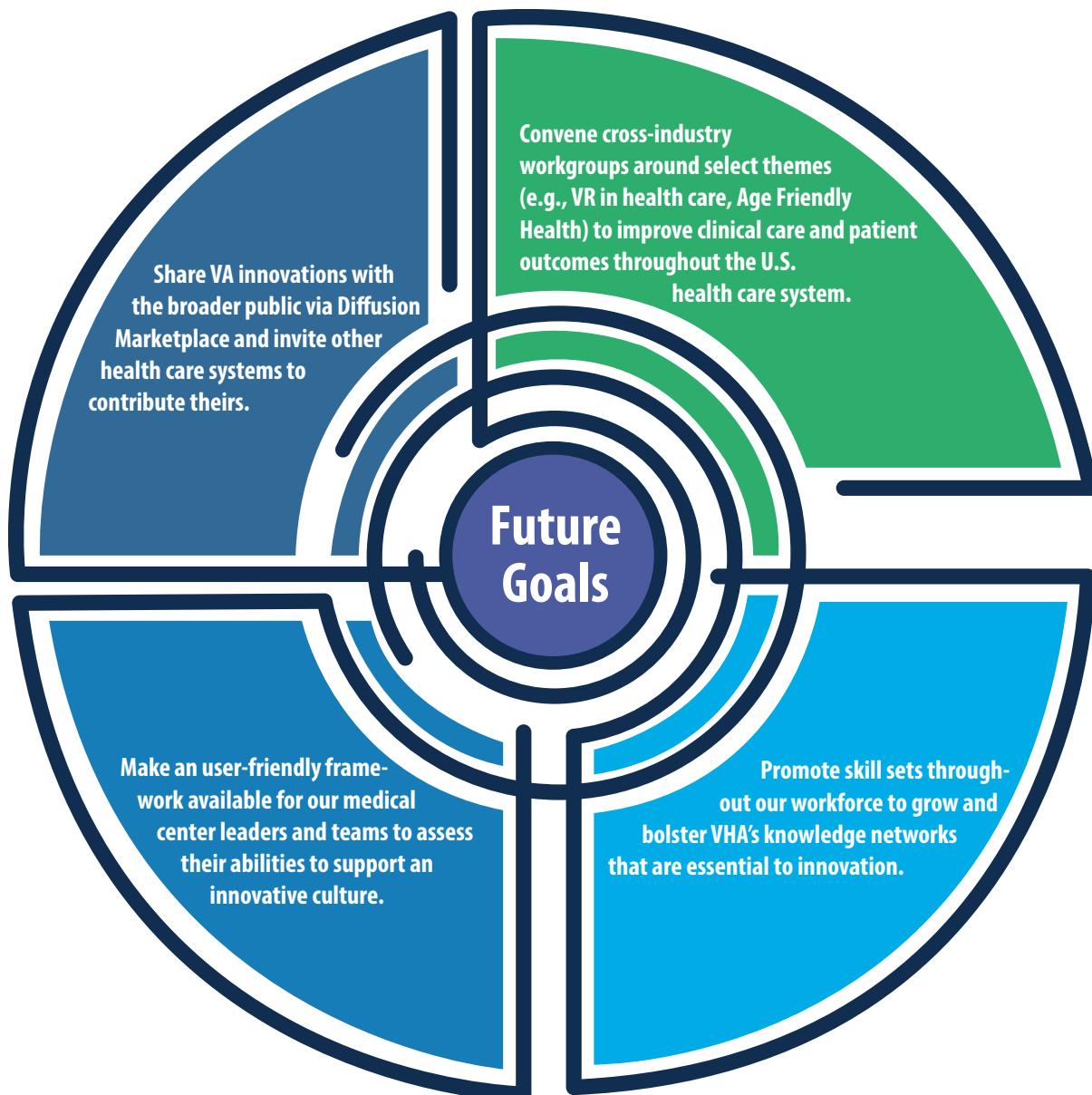
Innovations have a dedicated web page providing key insights into the challenges addressed, solutions implemented, and results achieved. Using human-centered design, innovation pages provide details about the implementation timeline, necessary resources, and team contact information and are entirely managed by the innovation's team. An interactive map displays facility adoptions to lend a geographic perspective to an user's exploration.

Launched in February 2020, the Marketplace was exclusive to VA employees. However, in October 2021, the website was made publicly accessible. Veterans, their caregivers, external health care innovators, and the public can now easily access innovations transforming VA. They can explore innovations, follow updates, and even pledge to adopt a particular innovation. Visit Diffusion Marketplace to discover the next influential or lifesaving innovation.

METRICS

240 Innovations
650,000 Annual Page Views
60,000 VA Users

VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Conclusion

For the foreseeable future, Diffusion of Excellence continues to see innovation as key to VA's mission. Diffusion is committed to maintaining current services like VHA Shark Tank Competition, National Diffusion, and Diffusion Talent Accelerator efforts while creating new initiatives and setting transformative goals, as seen below.

Future Goals

- Convene cross-industry workgroups around select themes (e.g., VR in health care, Age Friendly Health) to improve clinical care and patient outcomes throughout the U.S. health care system.
- Share VA innovations with the broader public via Diffusion Marketplace and invite other health care systems to contribute theirs.
- Make an user-friendly framework available for our medical center leaders and teams to assess their abilities to support an innovative culture.
- Promote skill sets throughout our workforce to grow and bolster VHA's knowledge networks that are essential to innovation.

Thank you for the unwavering support and commitment to VA's mission. Thank you also for being a part of this journey and contributing to the legacy of excellence at Veterans Affairs. Diffusion of Excellence looks to continue serving Veterans and advance the innovation boundaries in health care.

References and Appendices

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VHA Diffusion of Excellence

Appendix A:
Diffusion Dictionary

TERM	DEFINITION
Diffusion of Excellence (Diffusion)	Diffusion of Excellence identifies, replicates, and scales emerging Promising Practices across VHA.
Diffusion of Excellence Fellow (Diffusion Fellow, DF)	VHA Shark Tank winner who serves as a mentor to the new implementing facility during Facilitated Replication.
Diffusion Marketplace (Marketplace)	A discovery and collaboration digital platform that hosts over 240 innovations. Using human-centered design principles, the Marketplace curates VA's promising innovations, encourages their diffusion, and fosters engagement with greater health care communities.
Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp (Base Camp)	The three-day in-person training for implementation teams to meet and develop their implementation plans for Facilitated Replication. The focus is on diffusing practices at a local level.
Diffusion of Excellence Summit (Diffusion Summit)	The graduation event for Promising Practices to report the successes and lessons learned during their Facilitated Replication. Diffusion Summit is at VHA Innovation Experience.
Diffusion Pathways	Three pathways (i.e., organic, initial, and national) based on Promising Practice impact, replicability, and more. Promising Practices receive their diffusion pathway at the end of Facilitated Replication, and pathways are announced to a larger audience at Diffusion Summit.
Diffusion Specialist	Diffusion of Excellence team members who support Promising Practices during Facilitated Replication with national stakeholder conversations, initial diffusion Promising Practices during Diffusion Academy, and national diffusion Promising Practices for enterprise-wide spread.
Diffusion Talent Accelerator (DTA)	The training and mentorship program for VISN and Program Office Diffusion Specialists on how to guide projects through the innovation lifecycle.
Facilitated Replication	The six-to-nine-month period where implementation teams receive project management support from Diffusion to replicate at the implementing facility, develop an implementation guide, and confirm practice impact.

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TERM	DEFINITION
Implementation Lead	Contract project managers from Diffusion who host weekly meetings to monitor Facilitated Replication progress, track risks and mitigations, and assist in developing implementation guides.
Implementing Facility Fellow (IFF)	The champion from the facility primarily responsible for local implementation that is matched with a VHA Shark Tank winner.
Initial Diffusion	Practices that demonstrate strong impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. They are invited to Diffusion Academy to develop a business case for further growth and sustainment.
Innovation	An innovation is a program, process, or tool designed and implemented within VA that brings a unique value toward addressing a clinical, operational, or strategic problem.
National Diffusion	Practices that demonstrate exceptional impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. They are assigned a Diffusion Specialist for one to three years of national implementation effort.
Organic Diffusion	Practices that demonstrate moderate impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. They receive ad hoc support from Diffusion Specialists as they organically replicate to other facilities.
Promising Practice	Employee-developed practice that receives at least one Shark bid and wins VHA Shark Tank Competition. The practice team works with Diffusion to implement their innovation at the new facility during Facilitated Replication.
Shark	VISN and medical center directors who bid on practices at VHA Shark Tank Competition to implement one or more of these innovations at their facility.
VHA Diffusion Academy (Diffusion Academy)	The three-day in-person training that brings together seasoned innovation teams from across VHA to build a community and develop a business case for further growth and sustainment.
VHA Shark Tank Competition (VHA Shark Tank)	The competition identifies frontline employee innovations that promote positive outcomes and improved experiences for Veterans, employees, caregivers, and VHA community. The competition spotlights passionate employees who are addressing the toughest challenges across VHA while providing a platform for exposure to all levels of leadership.

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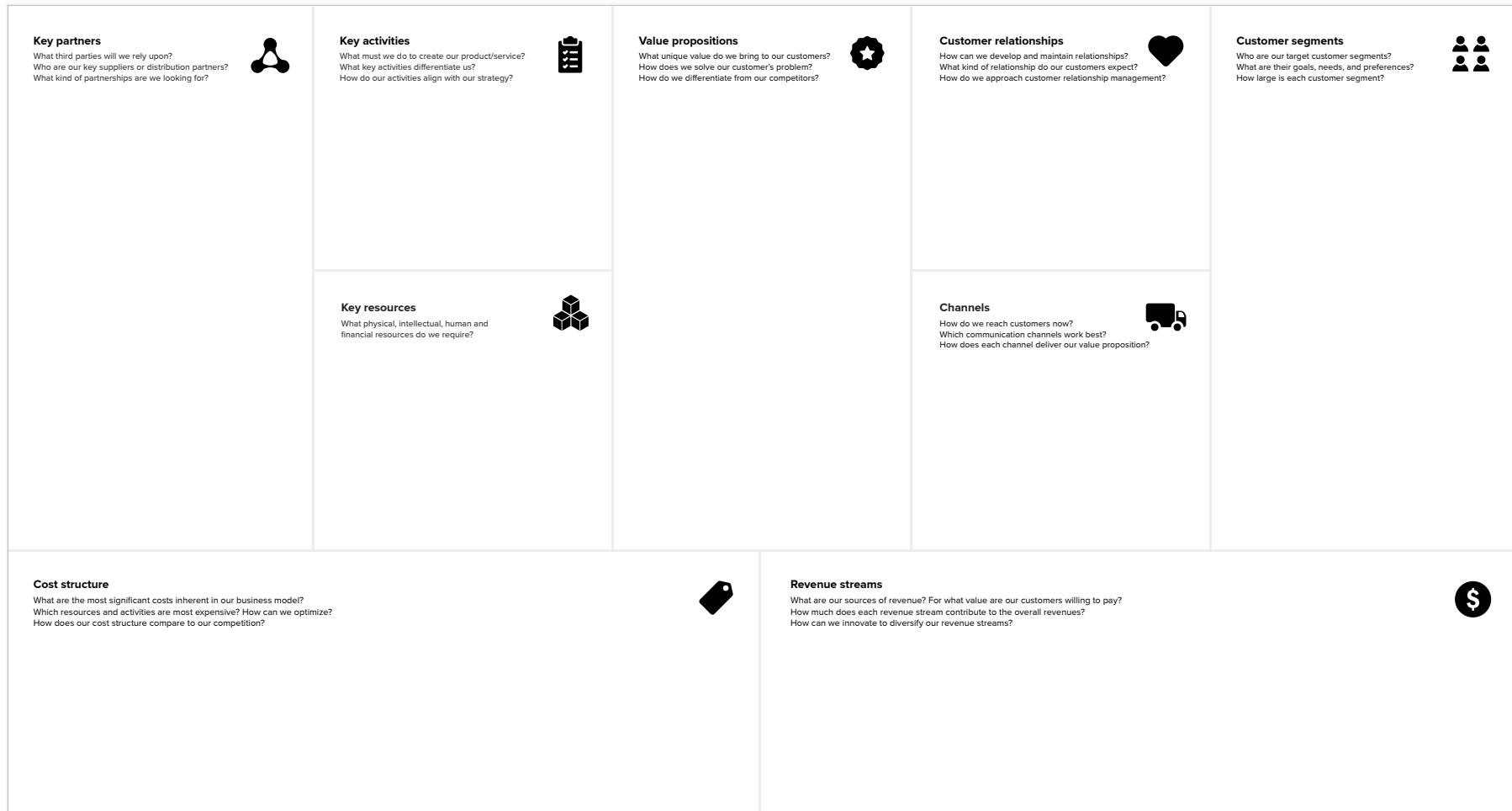
Appendix B:
Templates and Tools

For templates, Diffusion recommends using templates available on the web-based project management tool Mural, as VA has a universal license for this platform. Please visit the yourIT Service Portal to start a Mural account with a VA email address or see templates readily available in Microsoft Office and below.

Business Case

A business case is an excellent communication tool. While there are several forms of a business case, below is business case template to get started. More templates can be found on Mural and in Microsoft Office.

Key partners
What third parties will we rely upon?
Who are our key suppliers or distribution partners?
What kind of partnerships are we looking for?

Key activities
What must we do to create our product/service?
What key activities differentiate us?
How do our activities align with our strategy?

Key resources
What physical, intellectual, human and financial resources do we require?

Value propositions
What unique value do we bring to our customers?
How does we solve our customer's problem?
How do we differentiate from our competitors?

Customer relationships
How can we develop and maintain relationships?
What kind of relationship do our customers expect?
How do we approach customer relationship management?

Channels
How do we reach customers now?
Which communication channels work best?
How does each channel deliver our value proposition?

Customer segments
Who are our target customer segments?
What are their goals, needs, and preferences?
How large is each customer segment?

Cost structure
What are the most significant costs inherent in our business model?
Which resources and activities are most expensive? How can we optimize?
How does our cost structure compare to our competition?

Revenue streams
What are our sources of revenue? For what value are our customers willing to pay?
How much does each revenue stream contribute to the overall revenues?
How can we innovate to diversify our revenue streams?

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Implementation Plan

This template is a great resource to define your project and set project boundaries or scope. You can also use it to identify project deliverables and assign different sections to your team members. For each step of your practice, define the different elements and break them down into activities.

Problem Statement	**Stated Reason for Action:**		
Solution	**Short Description of Selected Solution:** **Baseline** **Target**		

Outcome Metrics

ie⁴

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Implementation Plan

#	Step	Person Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Current State & Next Steps
1	Identify resources needed for implementation				
(a)	Identify resource category (HR, facilities, IT, equipment, etc.)				
(b)	Identify resources needed				
2	Identify the incremental and sequential steps needed to implement the practice				
(a)	Define a timeline for each step				
(b)	Insert detailed tasks required to address implementation plan				
3	Identify potential project risks and brainstorm prevention/mitigation plans for the risks				

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Implementation Plan

#	Step	Person Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Current State & Next Steps
4	Create implementation evaluation plan				
(a)	Identify process to regularly collect process metric data				
(b)	Identify interim goals and benchmarks				
(c)	Identify metrics and processes to monitor impacts on system				
(d)	Develop reporting format and timeline				
5	Refer to, and update, project timeline frequently				
(a)	Use project timeline to stay on track and update progress				
6	Refer to project communication plan frequently				
(a)	Use communication plan to keep stakeholders informed and educated				

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Gantt Chart

A Gantt chart is a great way to map out different implementation tasks as it provides a visual representation of your project plan over time. Developing and planning a timeline prior to beginning implementation is a great reference to ensure the implementing team stays on track.

At a glance, a Gantt chart includes:

- Tasks list – this is all the project activities to be completed
- Timeline – this displays when each task will start and end
- Progress – this may be indicated by percentage complete or bar shading
- Milestones – this could be major events, dates, or decisions
- Resource assigned – this designates the person responsible for each task

Additional elements may include a dateline, which is a vertical line that highlights the current date, and dependencies, which are lines to connect tasks that may need to be completed in chronological order. The Gantt chart can be created in Microsoft Office using Project, Excel, or Word. Other online tools or software that can be used to build out the Gantt chart are Mural, Asana, and Monday.com.
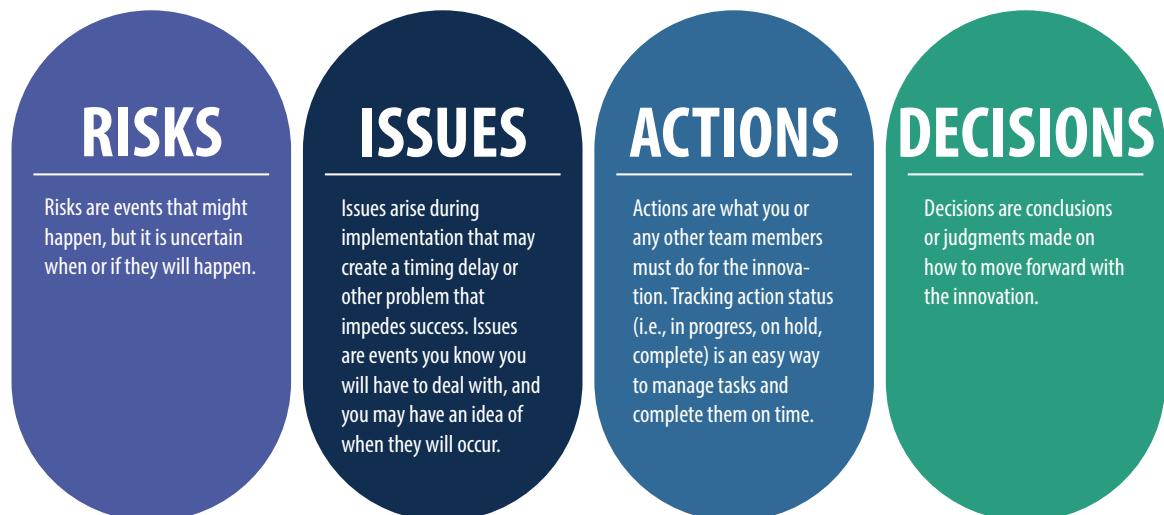
EXAMPLE:

One Year Roadmap	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Project/Goal/Team		Task/Initiative										
Project/Goal/Team			Task/Initiative									
Project/Goal/Team					Task/Initiative							
Project/Goal/Team					Task/Initiative							
Project/Goal/Team							Task/Initiative					
Project/Goal/Team				Task/Initiative								
Project/Goal/Team						Task/Initiative						

One Year Roadmap	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec

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RAID Log

A RAID log is a tool used to identify and track key risks, actions, issues, and decisions for an innovation. It is created during the planning phase and updated throughout the implementation lifecycle. This tool helps with organizing information and monitoring changes affected by potential risks, actions taken, known issues, and pivotal decisions.

RISKS
Risks are events that might happen, but it is uncertain when or if they will happen.

ISSUES
Issues arise during implementation that may create a timing delay or other problem that impedes success. Issues are events you know you will have to deal with, and you may have an idea of when they will occur.

ACTIONS
Actions are what you or any other team members must do for the innovation. Tracking action status (i.e., in progress, on hold, complete) is an easy way to manage tasks and complete them on time.

DECISIONS
Decisions are conclusions or judgments made on how to move forward with the innovation.

RAID Category	Description	Owner	Priority Level	Comments

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Appendix C:
Professional Development Opportunities

Congratulations! You are one of VHA's change leaders interested in or already engaged in VHA's goal to bring effective, efficient, and patient-centered care to our nation's Veterans. You may be asking yourself, "Where do I go from here?" Diffusion of Excellence encourages you to check out the VHA Innovation Ecosystem Catalog to guide you in the right direction on your innovation journey.

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