



2014 VA Industry Innovation Competition  
for Mental Health

# Industry Day Webinar

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## Webinar: Questions & Answers

### TOPIC 1: Upstream Suicide Prevention

**Q: How far upstream should the approach be?**

A: As far upstream as the innovation leads you.

**Q: Will there be suicide data available?**

A: Yes, we'll provide suicide data reports from 2012; we'll post these reports to the VACI webpage under Industry Competition. Additionally, VA has recently publicized a number of open data sets that may contain helpful information on services, facilities, populations, etc.

**Q: Do you consider resilience an upstream technique?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Are you looking for us to reach out to Veterans outside the VA system, in addition to those within?**

A: We are definitely looking to reach Veterans outside the VA system. That said, we've also observed many risks among Veterans already within the system.

**Q: Is traumatic brain injury (TBI) a good topic to address?**

A: We're finding that TBI is a risk factor for suicide, so it's an important area to address.

**Q: How would you encourage us to think about this in a generational approach?**

A: We do not recommend focusing on a particular cohort, because different cohorts have different needs.

**Q: Is VA open to concepts covering the entire life span from active duty through post-duty, or just the latter?**

A: We are interested in proposals that address the whole lifetime of the Veteran.

## **TOPIC 2: Improving Veterans Receptivity to Mental Health Care to Promote Treatment Engagement and Participation**

**Q: Do you want solutions implemented by the private sector or by VA itself?**

A: We're heavily invested in doing a lot of work ourselves, but we're also highly open to working with communities and the private sector.

VACI is in general very interested in [public-private partnerships](#). We are making awards in this competition via the Broad Agency Announcement (BAA), which is a different vehicle from public-private partnerships. Nevertheless, we are interested in ideas for partnerships.

**Q: Are you interested in performing services differently, or in new evidence based treatment methods?**

A: Generally we feel positively about the evidence-based care available. What we're looking for with this topic is ways to increase awareness and better engage Veterans. We're less interested in changing the actual clinical content of the interaction, which is in the domain of evidence-based medicine.

**Q: Do you favor proposals to conduct a pilot or field test in a VA facility, as opposed to a non-VA facility?**

A: No. Across all three topics areas, we're interested in data and outcomes. A proposal to demonstrate effectiveness in a non-VA location is not at a disadvantage.

**Q: If we have an engagement proposal that hasn't been finalized, is it worth submitting?**

A: We encourage you to submit, as the downside of submitting at the concept paper stage is low.

**Q: Why are all of these topics focused on human centered design?**

A: We want a deep understanding of the users we are developing these programs for, so that the solutions fit with the way people are trying to access services. User-centered design ensures that we're responsive to the ways communities are living and working now.

**Q: What sort of best practices in human centered design are you looking for?**

A: We encourage you to research best practices online and partner with organizations that specialize in human centered design.

### **TOPIC 3: Innovative Methods of Incentivizing Behavior to Improve Mental Wellness**

**Q: Are you interested in capabilities that take into account physiological aspects?**

A: If you have evidence that physiological monitoring can be effective in improving mental health outcomes, then yes, we're interested.

**Q: Are new tool approaches acceptable?**

A: Yes. The tool must use evidence-based practices, but it doesn't necessarily have to use VA's resources, such as the PTSD Coach app (although it's fine if it does).

The Obama Administration is prioritizing evidence-based practice. It's a recurring theme you'll hear during the BAA process. Part of VACI's mission is to bring these sorts of ideas into VA.

**Q: This topic is focused on behavioral modification. Are there best practices for behavioral change strategies that you'd like us to use?**

A: There are a number of different approaches related to this field of study. We encourage you to engage experts in academia and the private sector.