



VHA Diffusion of Excellence

VHA Diffusion of Excellence Program Playbook

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VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



VHA Innovation Ecosystem

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
WHAT IS THE DIFFUSION OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM?	4
THE SETTING	5
OUR PRINCIPLES	7
OUR PROCESSES	10
VHA SHARK TANK COMPETITION	11
FACILATED REPLICATION	14
DIFFUSION OF EXCELLENCE BASE CAMP	15
FACILITATED REPLICATION	16
NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	17
DIFFUSION OF EXCELLENCE SUMMIT	18
DIFFUSION PATHWAYS	19
VHA DIFFUSION ACADEMY	22
VHA DIFFUSION MARKETPLACE	24
CONCLUSION	25
APPENDIX A. SHARK TANK COMPETITION STAGES	26
APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER MATRICES	28

INTRODUCTION

Housed within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Innovation Ecosystem, the Diffusion of Excellence (DoE) focuses on scaling health care practices across the nation's largest integrated health care system. We connect over 300,000 VHA employees serving more than nine million Veterans at roughly 1,250 facilities. In 2016, VHA DoE began to develop frameworks that enable Promising Practices. Developed by frontline employees, these practices aim to obtain recognition and broader impact. We've discovered unique ways to empower our workforce and make their efforts more readily available and digestible to peers and leadership.

After six years, seven national competitions, 79 Promising Practice designations, 12 National Diffusion Practices, over 800 practice replications, and too many relationships formed to count, we want to share some of the knowledge we've accrued along the way. This Diffusion Playbook is intended as a practical overview and guide. It's a "bread-crum trail," rather than formal manual.

We hope you find this Playbook helpful in your pursuit of health care excellence. Please don't hesitate to reach out at Diffusion@va.gov with feedback or to start a conversation.

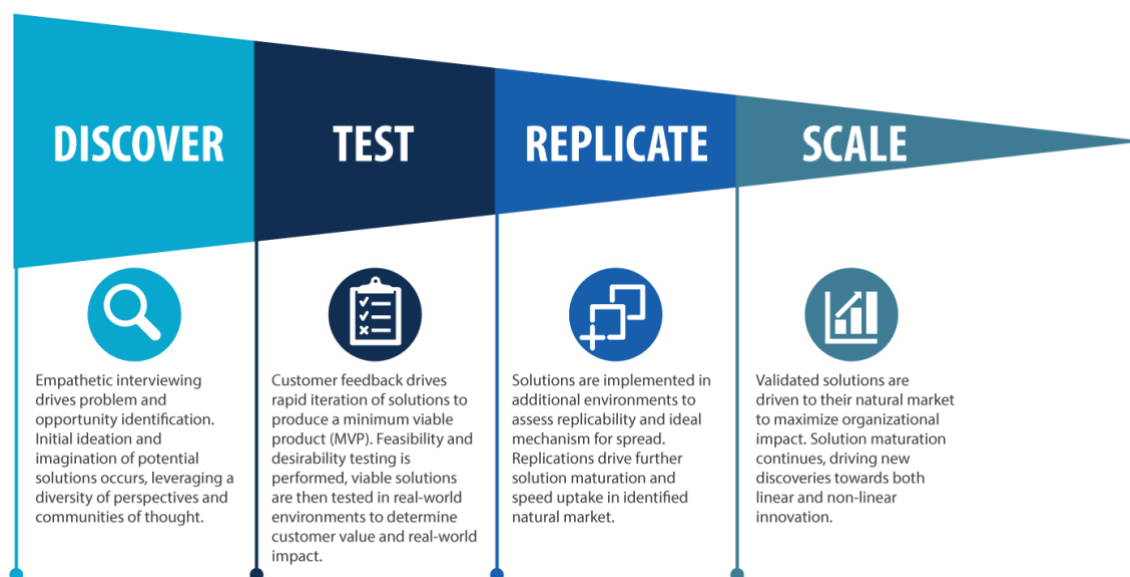
Diffusion of Excellence: Impact by the Numbers



WHAT IS THE DIFFUSION OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM?

The 2015 Veterans Choice Act studies revealed that VHA outperformed the private sector on many measures, but measures of Veteran outcomes varied between facilities. VHA Innovation Ecosystem (VHA IE) seeks to address these disparities through a structured approach to diffusing best practices across the enterprise.

VHA IE Innovation Operational Model



Ryan J. Vega, MD and Kenneth W. Kiser, MD MPH, VHA's Innovation Ecosystem: Operationalizing Innovation in Health Care, *NEJM Catalyst Innovations in Care Delivery* 2020; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1056/CAT.20.0263>

To address potential disparities in outcomes between facilities, VHA IE designed an Innovation Operational Model. The model provides a structured approach to identify problems, test solutions, and replicate and scale solutions across the enterprise. The Diffusion of Excellence program plays a critical role in the "Replicate" and "Scale" phases.

Diffusion of Excellence's goal is to identify and disseminate clinical and operational Promising Practices to standardize health care initiatives. Since 2016, Diffusion of Excellence has sponsored VHA Shark Tank Competition, which identifies employee-developed Promising Practices and matches them with interested VA facilities. This competition discovers Promising Practices, and facilitates their diffusion based on their potential to improve service delivery to Veterans. Promising Practices address access, care coordination, employee engagement, quality and safety, Veteran experience, and more. Diffusion of Excellence supports VHA as it strives to be a learning system that empowers its employees every day.



THE SETTING

DoE operates in an environment that we often take for granted. Separately, these elements may not appear all that impressive, but combined, they are important operating principals that make VHA fertile ground for the diffusion of Promising Practices. The following factors help us set the stage for success.

Mission-driven Workforce

Bringing a unique sense of purpose to work each day, VHA employees feel a deep connection and patriotic duty towards the mission of delivering quality health care to Veterans of our armed services. Roughly one-third of our workforce are Veterans themselves, and many have a family member receiving VHA care.

Top-down Leadership Support

Senior VHA leadership celebrates innovative clinical and operational practices that improve service delivery. Whereas many health care systems may not offer this latitude, we find our employees often enjoy support from their supervisors to engage in innovation and/or diffusion activities.

Bottoms-up Opportunity

Every VHA team member can submit a practice to the VHA Shark Tank Competition. Employees at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers participating in the [VHA Innovators Network \(iNET\)](#) also have access to the [Spark-Seed-Spread Innovation Investment Program](#). Additionally, individual facilities, teams, and national communities of practices offer their own contests and forums to celebrate emerging innovations and practices.



Research Infrastructure

With over \$1 billion invested in research each year, VHA's Office of Research & Development (ORD) cultivates a robust research community. Every year, new evidence-based practices backed by formal research (e.g., randomized control trials) are validated and offer opportunities to make the pivot to operational implementation. ORD's Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) helps to translate these practices into routine Veteran care utilizing scientifically supported quality improvement (QI) methods. VHA's research infrastructure is truly a national asset.

Vertically Integrated Health Care System

VHA operates as a comprehensive health care provider for the Veterans it serves. For the business of diffusion, this means we can compare costs generated in one service line (e.g., time spent de-prescribing of potentially inappropriate medications by primary care clinicians) alongside gains in another (e.g., annualized reductions in our national pharmacy spend). This creates return-on-investment (ROI) incentives supporting a more comprehensive approach to Veteran care.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Our program's "secret sauce" is a blend of widely applied concepts from the start-up world, implementation science, and human psychology. We use our principles as a lens to constantly examine how to best support our collaborators. The following are key principles that inform all our diffusion efforts:

Diffusion of Excellence's Key Principles



Create a Bold Vision

Collaboratively create a practice vision compelling people to action. Being a champion for a Promising Practice in the nation's largest integrated health system is hard work. Our fellows and collaborators constantly confront organizational, interpersonal, procedural, and technical hurdles. Taken together, these challenges represent the biggest threat to success. Creating a compelling vision that is shared by peers and other stakeholders is fundamentally important to overcoming these barriers.

Define Practice Fidelity

Clearly define your practice's core and adaptable components. Establishing what constitutes your practice's fidelity is a fundamental implementation science concept. Just as a pharmaceutical medication consists of active and inactive ingredients, the core and adaptable components of a Promising Practice must be clearly defined. The core components provide new implementers with "guard rails" to help them achieve consistent clinical or operational outcomes, and the adaptable components grant them important latitude to tailor the implementation to their unique environment.

Build a Stakeholder Coalition

Cultivate a strong group of committed stakeholders. Health care delivery is a complex undertaking. Added to that is an inherent risk aversion when new practices and interventions have the potential to impact the lives of patients. Overcoming these natural challenges requires a team approach and deliberate coalition building. We teach our fellows and collaborators how to methodically educate, activate, and convert key stakeholders to enable long-term success and sustainment.

Select an Implementation Strategy

Think thoughtfully about how you want to grow. Often referred in the business world as a "go-to-market" strategy, thinking carefully about how you want to introduce and scale your practice or innovation across a nationwide health care system is critical to your success. The right strategy can create much-needed momentum, while the wrong strategy can stop you in your tracks. We teach our collaborators how to establish implementation strategies to deliver a strong "pull" of engagement from prospective early adopters and early majority implementers.

Measure Your Impact

Know your practice's key performance indicators (KPIs), track them closely, and consistently share them with stakeholders. The health care industry understandably places a heavy emphasis on evidence, and successful diffusion requires a data-driven approach. Promising Practices must clearly define the KPIs that will drive their success. They must clearly package that information and relay it to the proper stakeholders consistently over time. Of all our principles, measuring your impact serves as the linchpin to your ability to be successful in other areas (e.g., acquiring stakeholders, obtaining resources, celebrating achievements). Most importantly, the Veterans we serve deserve this laser focus on outcomes and results.



Cultivate Resources for Growth

Develop a strategy to sustainably support your practice's growth. Our health care system is fortunate to be comprised of creative team members that can often formulate and implement new practices at relatively low cost. That said, scaling a practice across our nationwide network requires a thoughtful resourcing strategy to avoid "burnout" and effectively achieve a practice's full potential. We teach our fellows how to pragmatically identify what they will need for this journey, and even help them acquire those resources.

Celebrate Along the Way

Acknowledge milestones and celebrate achievements regularly with your stakeholders and partners. Our health care system is fortunate to be comprised of creative team members that can often formulate and implement new practices at relatively low cost. That said, scaling a practice across our nationwide network requires a thoughtful resourcing strategy to avoid "burnout" and effectively achieve a practice's full potential. We teach our fellows how to pragmatically identify what they will need for this journey, and even help them acquire those resources.

Pave the Way for Sustainment

Develop and execute a comprehensive plan to sustain impact. Long-term practice sustainment requires a thoughtful approach to a health care system's policy, data, budgetary, and performance evaluation frameworks. We work closely with our fellows and organizational stakeholders to drive to embed a successful Promising Practice into the foundation of VHA.

OUR PROCESSES

Diffusion of Promising Practices is a contact sport. It takes a lot of effort to engage an entire health care workforce and empower them to be a part of a broader organizational transformation.

Diffusion of Excellence's Process



Our processes are thoughtfully crafted over the years with extensive input from key players at all levels. They are well defined enough to be repeatable, yet adaptable enough to serve a practice at any stage of the Innovation Operating Model. The three core processes we will examine in depth are:

- ▶ **VHA Shark Tank Competition:** Identifying Promising Practices and matching them with interested facilities. This competition allows us to identify emerging Promising Practices by positively incentivizing our employees through recognition of their work.
- ▶ **Facilitated Replication:** Enabling us to replicate Promising Practices to validate impact, inform the path forward, and develop knowledge-based materials to establish repeatable implementation processes for the practices. Implementing Teams are identified to develop an Implementation Plan that acts as a blueprint for each Promising Practice.
- ▶ **Diffusion Pathways:** Three defined pathways to promote practice sustainment and diffusion based on a practice's impact, replicability, and other factors.



VHA SHARK TANK COMPETITION

How does VHA solve its toughest challenges? By asking the people that know best—its employees. Since its inception in 2015, Diffusion of Excellence has sponsored seven VHA Shark Tank Competitions, eliciting more than 3,200 employee-designated practices submissions—an average of more than 400 submissions per competition. The practices address key priorities such as access to care, quality and safety, workforce development, and Veteran experience. This all-employee competition not only identifies employee-developed Promising Practices, but also matches them with interested facilities.



DIFFUSION OF EXCELLENCE
VHA SHARK TANK
COMPETITION 2022

At the VHA Shark Tank Competition, 15 Finalists deliver a five-minute pitch to both a live and virtual audience. The pitch consists of a three-minute presentation followed by a two-minute question and answer session. Sharks place their bids outlining resources they will commit to the implementation at their health care facility. Winning bids are announced live during the event for 10 selected winners. In recent years, the competition has taken place as part of the VHA Innovation Experience. The event draws several thousand real-time viewers and celebrates the pioneering work of the best of our workforce.

Competition Eligibility

As previously mentioned, the VHA Shark Tank Competition is open to all VHA employees. For a practice to be eligible, it must meet all the following criteria:

1. **Successful Implementation:** The practice must be successfully implemented in at least one facility.
2. **Supported by Data:** There must be at least one month of real-world data collected to support practice viability and effectiveness.
3. **Linked to a Priority:** The practice must address one of the VHA Shark Tank Priorities.

Each year our team engages VHA leadership at national and local (e.g., VA Medical Centers) levels to identify organizational priorities. These priorities often change year to year. Refreshing them each cycle is a great way for our program to re-connect with stakeholders and is important to keeping the Diffusion of Excellence program vital and relevant.

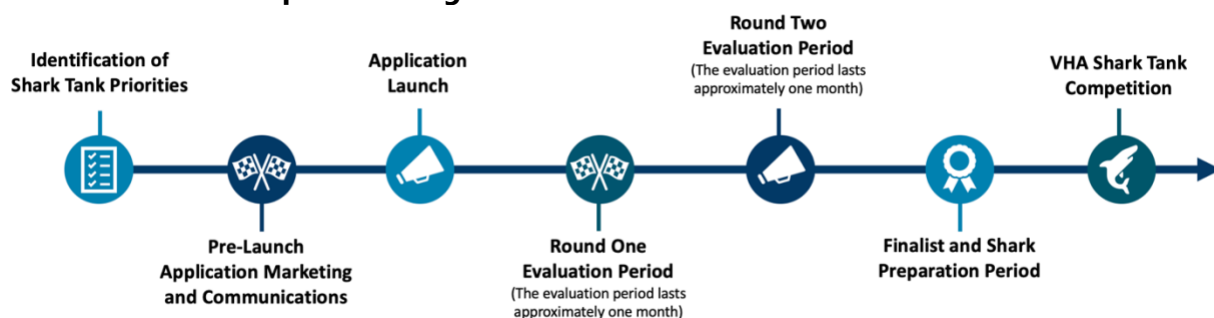
2022 VHA Shark Tank Priorities

- Age-Friendly Health Systems
- De-Implementation
- Employee Experience and Well-being
- Enabling Rural Veterans to Thrive
- Health Care After COVID-19
- Health Care Technologies and Tools
- Health Equity
- High Reliability Culture Change – Commit to Zero Harm
- I-DEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access)
- Immersive Technologies and Experiences
- Opioids and other Substance Use
- Post-Pandemic Care
- Suicide Prevention
- VA and Community Health Care Access
- Veteran Experience
- Whole Health
- Women's Health
- Other (Self-identified Priority Category)

Competition Stages

The VHA Shark Tank Competition has many stages that take place over several months from identifying priorities in the spring and leading up to the live event in the fall. The stages of a successful Shark Tank event are shown below with a more detailed description of each phase in Appendix A.

VHA Shark Tank Competition Stages





Competition Winners

Winning practices from the VHA Shark Tank Competition receive Promising Practice designation and proceed with six-to-nine months of facilitated replication with the winning Shark's facilities. Winners also gain access to project management, communication, and technical support from Diffusion of Excellence, which helps practice owners, called Diffusion of Excellence Fellows, with impact studies to determine scaling feasibility, support for conference and award submissions, and potentially national rollout. By the end of the Diffusion of Excellence program, Diffusion of Excellence Fellows and Implementing Facility Fellows can expect to accomplish packaged knowledge-based material, confirmation of desired clinical or operational impact in different settings, and engagement from national stakeholders for their input and support.



FACILATED REPLICATION

Once Promising Practices have been identified in the VHA Shark Tank Competition, they are launched into the facilitated replication phase. During this phase, the key players, **Diffusion of Excellence Fellows** (Diffusion Fellows), **Implementing Facility Fellows** (IFFs), and the **Implementation Leads** are charged with:

- ▶ Developing an implementation plan to replicate the Promising Practice.
- ▶ Replicating the practice.
- ▶ Creating knowledge-based materials.
- ▶ Tracking and reporting the impact of the practice to chart a path forward.

VHA Shark Tank Competition winners serve as Diffusion Fellows and mentor the facility during facilitated replication. IFFs are selected by the winning Shark to implement the practice at their facility. They are primarily responsible for practice implementation, and they often become key practice champions. Diffusion of Excellence project managers, or Implementation Leads, support replication and diffusion by facilitating weekly meetings, monitoring progress, and tracking risks and mitigation plans. They also develop implementation guides and informational materials to institute a repeatable implementation process for the practices.

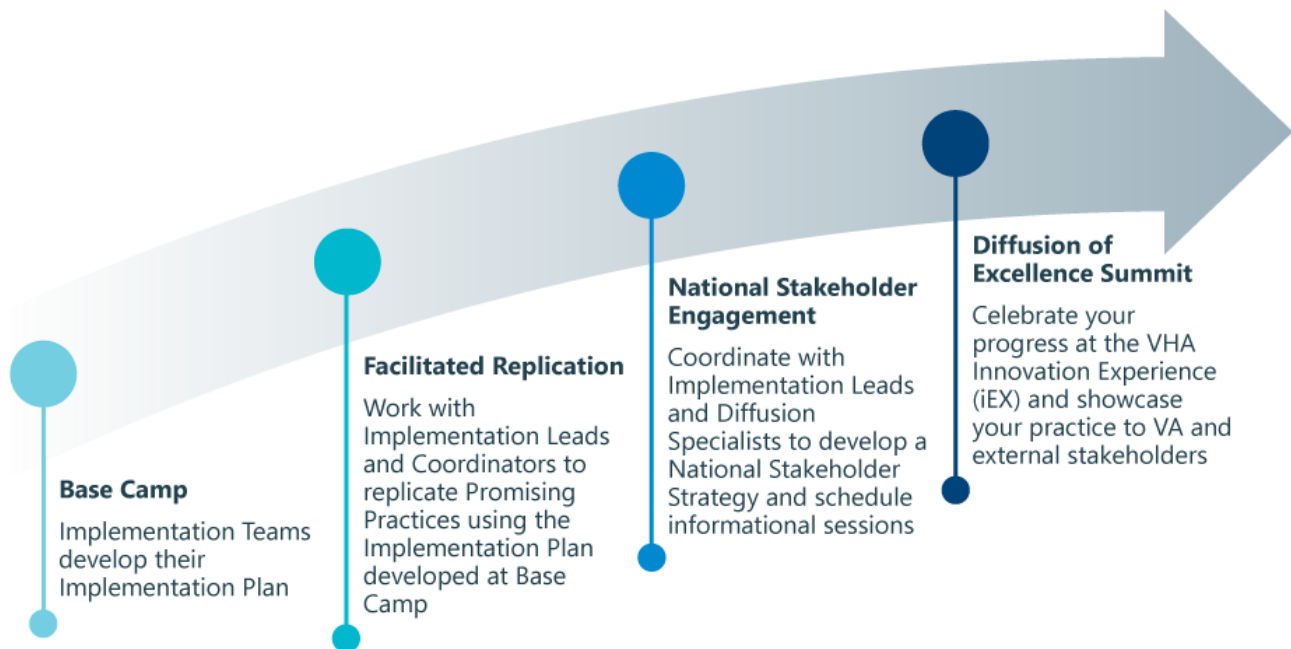
Facilitated replication consists of two Key Events in the Diffusion of Excellence Program:



Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp (Base Camp) and **Diffusion of Excellence Summit** (Diffusion Summit) events allow Diffusion Fellows and IFFs to establish important relationships, develop actionable materials, and share experiences that are integral to their journey through replication.

Throughout facilitated replication, Diffusion Fellows and IFF's are supported by DoE to replicate their Promising Practice at the implementing VA facility. At the end of facilitated replication, DoE leadership analyzes each practice and determines the appropriate path forward.

Diffusion Timeline and Events



Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp

After winning VHA Shark Tank Competition and being designated a Promising Practice, facilitated replication begins with Base Camp. Base Camp is a three-day training bringing together the Diffusion Fellow, IFF, and Base Camp Support Team. The Support Team consists of an iNET Innovation Specialist or a Diffusion Specialist as group facilitator.

Base Camp offers a unique experience for attendees—

- ▶ Presentations from subject matter experts
- ▶ Implementation project planning led by facilitators
- ▶ Opportunities to network with colleagues and leaders across VHA

Most importantly, the Diffusion Fellow and IFF will work together and design an implementation plan to be used over the course of the facilitated replication process in the coming months.

Once Base Camp concludes, the implementation teams utilize the implementation plans created at Base Camp to replicate the Promising Practice at the implementing facility.

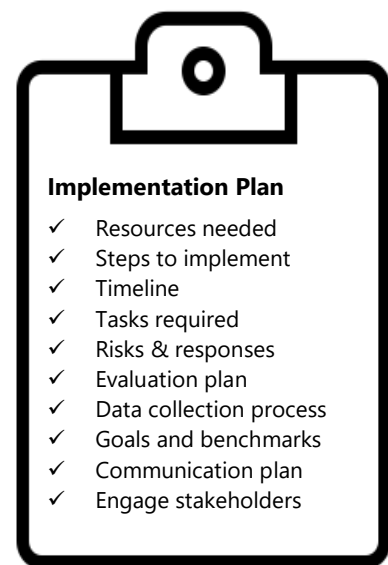
Facilitated Replication

As part of facilitated replication, Diffusion of Excellence provides project management and communications support to Diffusion Fellows and IFFs during the replication of their practice at the implementing site. Facilitated implementation is important because this period effectively serves as a “replication study” to help mature the practice and deepen our understanding of its impacts.

The three primary goals during the facilitated replication period are:

1. **Package the Knowledge Base:** Our project managers, known as Implementation Leads, assist the Diffusion Fellows with developing a comprehensive Implementation Guide and supporting materials (e.g., one-pagers, leadership presentations, training materials).
2. **Confirm Impact:** We work with the IFFs to design a metrics and measurement plan to confirm the practice is achieving the desired outcomes.
3. **Cultivate National Stakeholder Support:** We facilitate informational briefings with potential national stakeholders, help them design the briefing materials, and collect data after stakeholder meetings to ascertain their level of support.

Secondary goals of facilitated replication vary widely. We try to stay flexible to each practice’s needs, such as providing technical support for data analysis or site visit coordination.



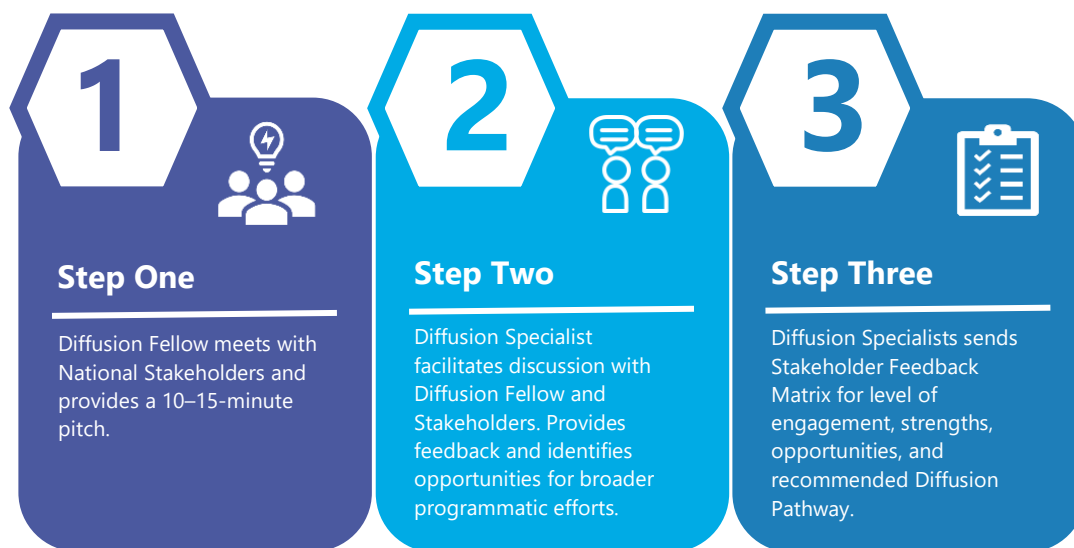
National Stakeholder Engagement

We find it is critical to engage and educate national stakeholders during facilitated replication. We tap into our Diffusion Specialists in the final three months of facilitated replication to facilitate *low-risk* interactions with at least three national stakeholders for each practice. The term “low-risk” is emphasized here because it is important that Diffusion Fellows and national stakeholders feel comfortable having a candid conversation. From a practical standpoint, this means we never make concrete requests for funding or support.

The Diffusion Fellow begins these stakeholder meetings by providing a brief practice overview, including clearly describing the practice’s impacts based on available qualitative and quantitative data. Then we pause to collect feedback and answer questions. Once we’ve answered all questions from the national stakeholder, we use the opportunity to ask any questions we might have about their existing priorities, and how this practice might (or might not) align with them.

Finally, to close the meeting, we let the national stakeholder know we will be sending them a brief survey, and that their feedback will be critical to helping Diffusion of Excellence assess the best Diffusion Pathway for the Promising Practice.

National Stakeholder Engagement Steps



The Stakeholder Feedback Matrix is designed to help us understand a stakeholder’s desired level of engagement and recommended diffusion pathway. This enables us to take the answers from the three stakeholders and arrange them in a matrix. This provides a strong “at-a-glance” depiction of stakeholder support. Refer to Appendix B for examples of stakeholder matrices.

Diffusion of Excellence Summit

Facilitated replication culminates with a graduation presentation at Diffusion of Excellence Summit (Diffusion Summit). This event provides each Promising Practice's Diffusion Fellow(s) and IFF(s) the opportunity to report out on what their year has been like since the previous VHA Shark Tank Competition. The forum is designed for the audience, including program office leaders, facility leaders, and fellow colleagues, to hear about the Promising Practice's replication, including initial outcomes, lessons learned, successes, and next steps.





DIFFUSION PATHWAYS

Once a cohort of Promising Practices completes their facilitated replication with Diffusion of Excellence, there are three Diffusion Pathways recommended to move forward: **Organic Diffusion**, **Initial Diffusion**, and **National Diffusion**.

Organic Diffusion Practices demonstrate moderate impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. These Promising Practices remain a part of the VHA Innovation Ecosystem community, are made available on VHA Diffusion Marketplace for organic dissemination, are eligible for ad hoc support, and receive access to resourcing opportunities offered within VHA Innovation Ecosystem.

Examples of Organic Diffusion:

Projects likely to successfully diffuse organically demonstrate moderate impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. Examples of current projects in organic diffusion include:

- ▶ **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.

Initial Diffusion Practices demonstrate strong impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. Like Organic Diffusion Practices, Initial Diffusion Practices are highlighted on VHA Diffusion Marketplace and receive insight to resourcing opportunities offered within VHA Innovation Ecosystem. In addition, they are invited to attend VHA Diffusion Academy, a learning opportunity offered annually. At VHA Diffusion Academy, Practice Teams are invited to network and learn alongside other Project Teams from across VHA Innovation Ecosystem, as well as work as a Practice Team to develop a 1–2-year Diffusion Business Plan. More information about VHA Diffusion Academy can be found [here](#).

Examples of Initial Diffusion:

Projects aligned with Initial Diffusion demonstrate strong impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. Examples of current projects in initial diffusion include:

- ▶ [MoRe Concept](#): Mobile Recruitment (MoRe) is a clinical research participant recruitment strategy that integrates the use of mobile technology in atypical research recruitment locations and improves Veteran access to research study opportunities.
- ▶ [Telelactation 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 & wellness for older Veterans by tailoring strength, aerobic, balance, and flexibility exercises to individual needs in person and virtually.

National Diffusion Practices demonstrate very high impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. They also receive the same foundational benefits as Organic and Initial Diffusion Practices. Promising Practices nominated for National Diffusion are assigned a Diffusion Specialist from Diffusion of Excellence for approximately 3 years of the implementation effort. Other support can include developing a strategic plan for National Diffusion and building a national stakeholder coalition.

EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL DIFFUSION:

Projects are ready for National Diffusion if they demonstrate very high impact, replicability, stakeholder support, and cost effectiveness. Examples of current projects in National Diffusion include:

- ▶ [PRIDE in All Who Served](#): The PRIDE in All Who Served program provides a resource for reducing healthcare disparities for the LGBTQ+ community with sessions focusing on overall wellness, increasing social connectedness, and empowering Veterans to engage in services related to their personal healthcare needs.
- ▶ [PT in PACT](#): 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.
- ▶ [Remote Temperature Monitoring](#): Remote Temperature Monitoring involves the use of Podometrics SmartMat, a device that uses thermal imaging to measure the daily foot temperature to at-risk, diabetic Veterans.
- ▶ [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.

The key players in this phase are the **Diffusion of Excellence Fellows** (Diffusion Fellows), who mentor the implementing facility, and the **Diffusion Specialists**.

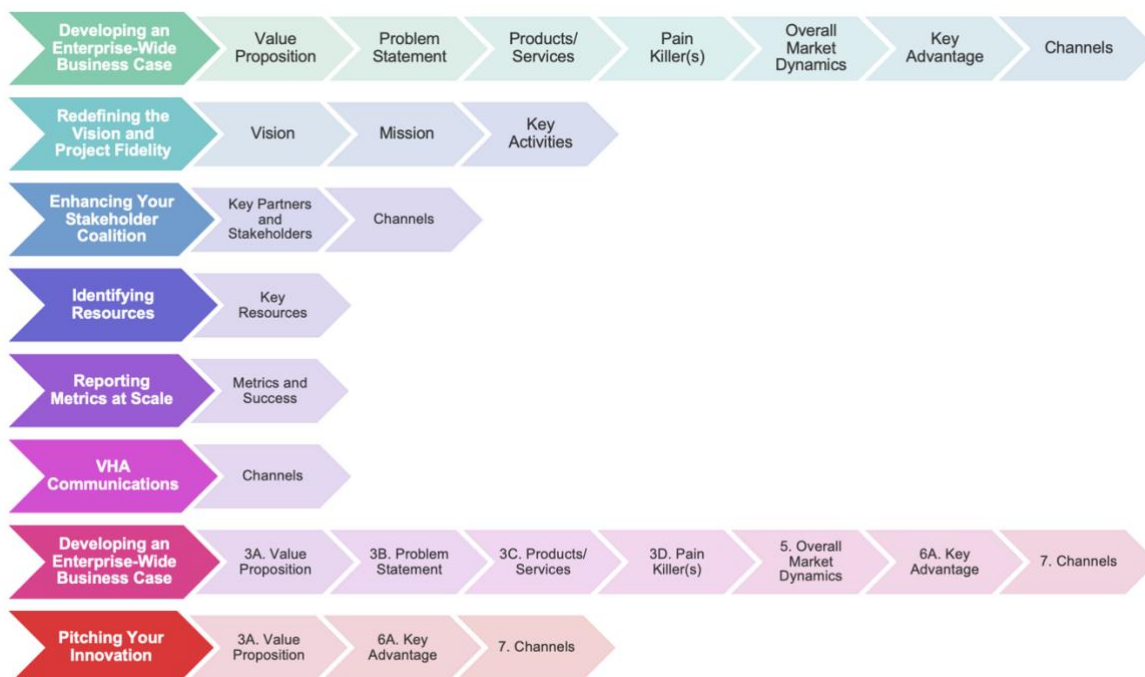
VHA Diffusion Academy

VHA Diffusion Academy (Diffusion Academy) brings together Practice Teams across VHA Innovation Ecosystem and our partners eager to take their Promising Practices to the next level of scaling and sustainability. The first event of its kind, Diffusion Academy, is an energizing and inspiring event that connects like-minded innovators and offers a platform to brainstorm and collaborate. The curriculum offers flexibility to assess each practice's specific needs while promoting team cohesion, replication pathways, strategic communication, and resourcing opportunities.

VHA leaders, subject matter experts, and attendees all help facilitate conversation with a great depth of diverse perspective. Diffusion Academy helps Practice Teams build a network of supportive colleague innovators to build a legacy to scale excellence and deliver exemplary service to our Veterans.

VHA Diffusion Academy Curriculum

Diffusion Academy is designed with continued active engagement through virtual workshops and community mentorship. The curriculum, outlined below, addresses knowledge and project management gaps for practices continuing to diffuse, mature, and/or progress naturally.



Diffusion Academy Pre-Work

Prior to attending Diffusion Academy, teams attend webinars facilitated by seasoned Diffusion Specialists. These webinars outline prework for each team to complete prior to attending Diffusion Academy. The webinars address three foundational topics: **Developing an Enterprise-Wide Business Case Part I, Redefining the Vision and Practice Fidelity**, and **Enhancing Your Stakeholder Coalition**.

Diffusion Academy Core Elements

Teams attend a three-day event to work through the Diffusion Academy Core Elements. The topics include **Identifying Resources, Reporting Metrics at Scale, VHA Communications, and Developing an Enterprise-Wide Business Case Part II**.

In addition to facilitation of the sessions by the Diffusion Specialists, teams work through the content with a designated facilitator in small group sessions.

Post-Diffusion Academy Work

After completing Diffusion Academy, teams attend two final sessions including **Pitching your Innovation** and **Awards, Recognition Systems, and Diffusion Academy Graduation**.

VHA DIFFUSION MARKETPLACE

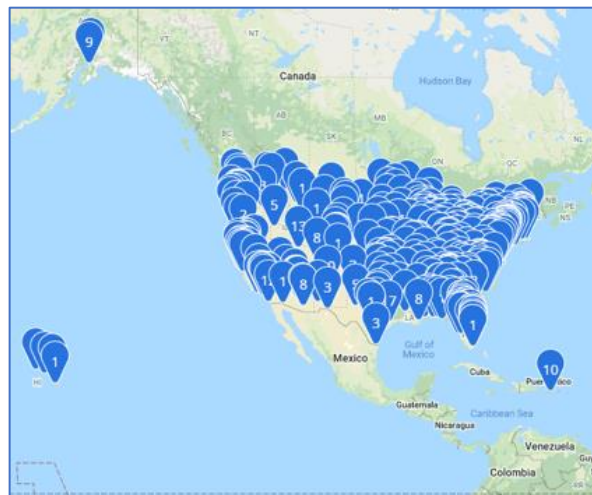
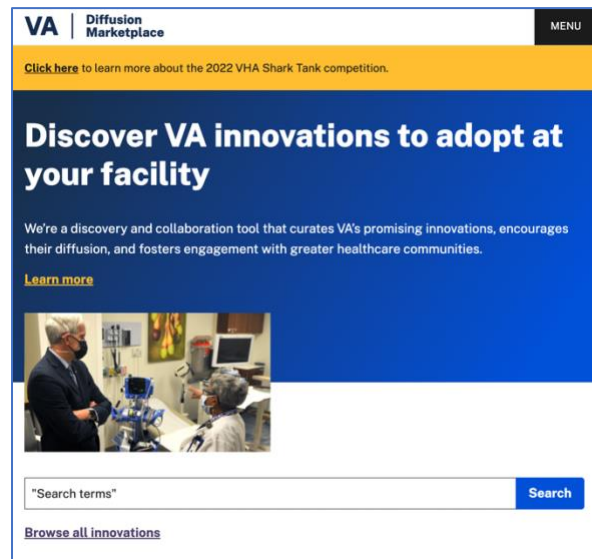
What if everyone could search across all the Promising Practices currently being diffused in VHA health care system to find the one that is right for their facility and the problems they need to solve? VHA Diffusion Marketplace (Marketplace) is a digital platform designed to do just that. The Marketplace is a living, searchable repository of over 100 Promising Practices developed and implemented by frontline employees to improve clinical care and operations.

Each innovation has its own webpage with key information including the problem faced, innovative solution, and notable results. In addition, an implementation timeline, required resources, and team contact information are provided to further aid the user. These tailored pages include an interactive map of the facilities where the innovation has been adopted.

These life-saving Promising Practices range in origination, complexity, accomplishments, and resources. Practice creators manage their own practice pages and provide updates as their practices evolve. Visitors to the Marketplace can search, follow, comment, and even commit to adopting a practice. They can navigate an interactive map of over 1,000 practice adoptions to see what other facilities have implemented or are in the process of adopting.

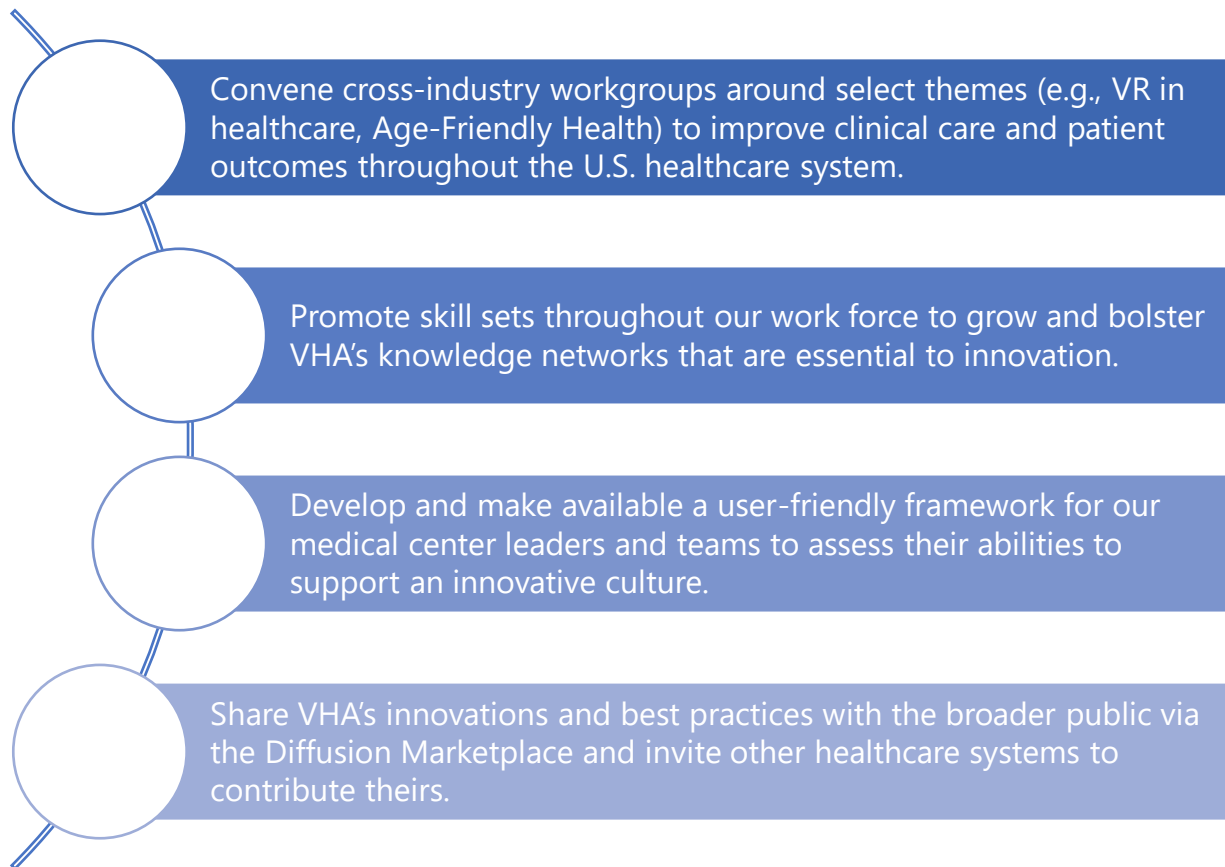
From its initial launch in February 2020, it was only available to VA employees, however, as of October 2021, the Marketplace is publicly accessible. Now Veterans, their caregivers, external health care innovators, and the general public will have instant access to innovations already spreading across VA.

Visit Diffusion Marketplace today to find the next impactful or life-saving practice to adopt at your VA facility <https://marketplace.va.gov/>. If you have an innovation to nominate for the VHA Diffusion Marketplace, please [complete this form](#) from the Marketplace site.



CONCLUSION

Going forward Diffusion of Excellence will contribute to establishing Innovation as VA's 5th mission. In addition to sustaining current services like the VHA Shark Tank Competition and national diffusion efforts, we are committing our program to the following priorities:



APPENDIX A. SHARK TANK COMPETITION STAGES

Stage	Description
Identification of Shark Tank Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identify VHA Shark Tank Priorities by engaging Medical Center and Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) Directors ▶ Confirm priority recommendations with VHA leadership
Pre-Launch Application Marketing and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Meet with VHA Communications to review the marketing and communications plan for the upcoming competition ▶ Coordinate delivery of all employee emails announcing the launch of the application and marketing toolkits for facilities ▶ Promote the application submission period on social media and other communication channels internal to VA ▶ Review application feedback from the prior competitions and meet with subject matter experts in research and evaluation to improve the application questions ▶ Develop the application and conduct internal usability testing to ensure its functionality ▶ Develop VHA Shark Tank Competition landing page on VHA Diffusion Marketplace including the link to the application and resource materials
Application Launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Submit successfully implemented practices aligning with VHA leadership priorities (all VHA employees) ▶ Continue to coordinate the delivery of all employee emails announcing the launch of the application and marketing toolkits for facilities ▶ Continue to promote the application submission period on the VHA Diffusion Marketplace, social media, and other internal VA communication channels ▶ Provide support to applicants through the development of FAQ documents, the Diffusion of Excellence inbox, and informational sessions ▶ Provide technical support to any applicants that experience issues on the application platform
Round One Evaluation Period <i>(The evaluation period lasts approximately one month)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recruit Diffusion Specialists, Innovation Specialists, Systems Redesign Coordinators, Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), Quality Management Offices (QMOs), Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D), and Medical Center and VISN Directors to participate as Round 1 Evaluators ▶ Develop an evaluation tool based on VHA Shark Tank Competition evaluation criteria ▶ Host Informational Session to provide guidance on the evaluation process and review the evaluation criteria ▶ Assign applications to Evaluators based on their identified areas of expertise and capacity ▶ Analyze qualitative and quantitative evaluation data using a weighted selection process

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop 100 Semifinalist practice recommendations to proceed in the competition
Round Two Evaluation Period <i>(The evaluation period lasts approximately one month)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recruit Program Office leaders, Evidence Synthesis Program (ESP), Partnered Evidence-based Policy Resource Center (PEPReC), and Center for Evaluation and Implementation Resources (CEIR) to participate as Round 2 Evaluators ▶ QUERI reviews and evaluates 100 Semifinalist practices ▶ Use evaluation tool to evaluate based on clinical soundness, high impact on Veteran outcomes, and spread potential ▶ Host an Informational Session to provide guidance on the evaluation process and review the evaluation criteria ▶ Coordinate an independent evaluation of the Semifinalist applications by the Ethics team ▶ Assign applications to Evaluators based on their identified areas of expertise and capacity ▶ Analyze qualitative and quantitative evaluation data using a weighted selection process ▶ Recommend 15 Finalist practices to be vetted and confirmed by the Governance Board ▶ Provide Program Office Evaluator feedback to 85 denied Semifinalists
Finalist and Shark Preparation Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide 15 Finalists with guidance on pitching their practices at the competition ▶ Host dress rehearsal with 15 Finalists at the National Press Club prior to the event ▶ Add Finalist applications to the VHA Diffusion Marketplace ▶ Develop the Readiness to Implement Assessment to assist Sharks with bid development ▶ QUERI develops the Finalist Quickview and Wish List to assist Sharks with developing their bids ▶ Provide Sharks with guidance on developing and submitting their bids prior to the competition
VHA Shark Tank Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Host the competition at VHA Innovation Experience and live stream to all VA Medical Centers ▶ Winners are announced live at VHA Innovation Experience

APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER MATRICES

The Stakeholder Feedback Matrix is designed to help us understand a stakeholder's: 1) Desired Level of Engagement, and 2) Recommended Diffusion Pathway. This enables us to take the answers from the three stakeholders and arrange them in a matrix. This provides a strong "at-a-glance" depiction of stakeholder support. Diffusion Pathways are discussed further in the Diffusion Pathways section of this document.

Stakeholder Feedback Matrix				
Desired Engagement	Strong – We would like regular updates and to play an active role in diffusing this practice			
	Moderate – Please update us at regular intervals (e.g., quarterly) on the status of this practice			
	Light – Only make us aware of significant updates or milestones achieved			
		Organic Diffusion – We support the continued "organic" diffusion of this practice as facilities see fit to adopt it	Initial Diffusion – We support the continued systematic diffusion of this practice to help mature it and prepare it for national diffusion	National Diffusion – We believe VHA should implement this practice as a national standard
Recommended Diffusion Pathway				

The Stakeholder Feedback Matrix below is for a practice that was ultimately selected for National Diffusion. We were able to identify several national stakeholders that felt the practice exhibited very high impact and aligned to their organizational priorities.

Stakeholder Feedback Matrix				
Desired Engagement	Strong – We would like regular updates and to play an active role in diffusing this practice			Stakeholder #2
	Moderate – Please update us at regular intervals (e.g., quarterly) on the status of this practice		Stakeholder #1	Stakeholder #3
	Light – Only make us aware of significant updates or milestones achieved			
		Organic Diffusion – We support the continued "organic" diffusion of this practice as facilities see fit to adopt it	Initial Diffusion – We support the continued systematic diffusion of this practice to help mature it and prepare it for national diffusion	National Diffusion – We believe VHA should implement this practice as a national standard
Recommended Diffusion Pathway				

On the other hand, the Stakeholder Feedback Matrix below is for a practice that was slated for Organic Diffusion. The stakeholders felt the practice needed stronger supporting data if it was to gain their support.

Stakeholder Feedback Matrix				
Desired Engagement	Strong – We would like regular updates and to play an active role in diffusing this practice			
	Moderate – Please update us at regular intervals (e.g., quarterly) on the status of this practice	Stakeholder #2		
	Light – Only make us aware of significant updates or milestones achieved	Stakeholder #1		
		Organic Diffusion – We support the continued “organic” diffusion of this practice as facilities see fit to adopt it	Initial Diffusion – We support the continued systematic diffusion of this practice to help mature it and prepare it for national diffusion	National Diffusion – We believe VHA should implement this practice as a national standard
Recommended Diffusion Pathway				

Taken together, this collection of data points from national stakeholders helps inform the path forward for each practice. It also helps us establish open and honest working relationships between Diffusion Fellows and national stakeholders. Many of these relationships live on and do not require our team’s continuous involvement.