



VHA INNOVATION
Ecosystem



VHA INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM (VHA IE)

Health Care Collaboration Playbook

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

CHANGING LIVES. SAVING LIVES.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2

Abbreviations..... 3

Introduction..... 4

Where Do I Begin? 5

Sample Statement of Work..... 7

What are the Types of Agreements? 9

Thank You..... 9

Conclusion 9

Questions?..... 9

Abbreviations

The following acronyms will assist in familiarizing yourself to the collaborative process:

Term	Acronym
Business Associate Agreement	BAA
Conflict of Interest	COI
Cooperative Research and Development Agreement	CRADA
Data Use Agreement	DUA
Institutional Review Board	IRB
Limited Data Set (see Data Use Agreements)	LDS
Memorandum of Agreement	MOA
Memorandum of Understanding	MOU
Office of the General Counsel	OGC
Statement of Work	SOW



Introduction

Collaboration is a critical component when building a culture of innovation. Strength is found by leaning into the expertise of external entities and, together, delivering mission-driven innovation to all Veterans. Collaborations can come in many forms, and this playbook will offer the insights and guidance you need to determine the best approach. Through collaboration, companies and organizations can further grow innovative business models for successful use in VA Medical Centers (VAMCs), and, with the help of VHA Innovation Ecosystem, VAMCs can continue providing poignant and nuanced care to better serve the Veteran community. In this playbook, you will find definitions of collaboration terminology, a helpful checklist, a sample Statement of Work (SOW), as well as document templates to assist you in developing meaningful collaborations.

No two collaborations are the exactly alike, but the guidance in this Playbook will help give you a launching point. Your individual collaboration will need to be tailored to the interests and needs of both you and your prospective collaborator.

The process of tailoring begins with the development of the Statement of Work (SOW; see Appendix for template). When creating this document, it is critical to include:

- Problem the collaboration looks to solve
- Roles and responsibilities of both the collaborator and VHA
- Solution to be tested
- Data being shared (if applicable)
- Alignment to VHA IE mission and goals
- Value proposition for the collaboration

The SOW should **tell the story** of your collaboration, while answering the who, what, where, and why of the collaboration.



Key Considerations for Building Collaborations

- ▶ **Does your potential collaboration contribute to building a culture of innovation and invite expertise from external entities?**
- ▶ **Is the opportunity focused on mission-driven innovation to help all Veterans?**



Where Do I Begin?

Statement of Work (SOW):

The Statement of Work serves as the *first* document to **tell the story** of the potential collaborations. VHA works with a collaborator(s) to develop the SOW, defining details such as the project title, background, scope, and goals. Project Managers and Signatories from both VHA and the collaborator(s) should be named in the SOW, and comprehensive contact information should be included. Not only will having contact information be helpful throughout the planning of the collaboration, but it will be critical in years to come, should either of the Project Managers relocate and information about the collaboration need to be found. A well-developed SOW should give the uninformed reader a good and clear understanding of the work being proposed.

Key Considerations:

A critical portion of the SOW is alignment to VHA's mission and priorities. This alignment can help **tell the story** of the collaboration and why it is important to the work VHA IE wants to accomplish. SOWs must be reviewed by the Office of General Counsel (OGC), who will then determine the type of legal agreement necessary for the potential collaboration (e.g. CRADA, MOA, MOU, DUA, or BAA).

CRITICAL ENTITIES TO HIGHLIGHT:

- ▶ The "story" of the collaboration
- ▶ Alignment to VHA's mission and/or priorities



VHA INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP CHECKLIST

1

YOU HAVE A PROBLEM + A POTENTIAL SOLUTION/ PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY.

Q: HAVE YOU SPOKEN WITH THE POTENTIAL PARTNER?



“NOT YET!”

Speak to the partner, in-person or virtually, to assess for mutual interest.

And then...



“ALL DONE!”

Reach out to VHA IE POCs (Suzanne Shirley or Anne Bailey) and obtain Statement of Work (SOW) Template.

2

TOGETHER WITH THE POTENTIAL PARTNER, CREATE A SOW.



Return the SOW to Anne Bailey, who will share with appropriate Office of General Counsel (OGC) team.



OGC will review and draft the appropriate legal agreement.



The legal agreement will then be shared with the potential partner for review.



Once all parties agree on the document in its entirety, the partner will sign.



Following the partner's signature, the VHA Project Manager should return the document to the pertinent VHA IE POC for VHA IE signature routing.

3

GO FORTH AND DO GREAT THINGS!





Sample Statement of Work

COLLABORATION ON PROTOTYPING AND PILOTING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS IN THE VETERAN POPULATION.

Background:

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration Innovation Ecosystem (VHA IE) and [Arbitrary Broad Collaborative eXamining Young Zebras \(ABCXYZ\)](#) have agreed to collaborate to rapidly deploy innovative practices and encourage healthcare innovation across VA. Working together will provide opportunities for VHA to pilot innovative healthcare solutions in clinical environments, providing Veterans opportunities to benefit from cutting-edge technology.

Through this collaboration, VHA IE will advance its mission to imbed innovation as a core fabric of VHA, build a collaborative innovation community, and deliver a repeatable process for scaling innovation. VHA IE will identify appropriate pilot sites for [ABCXYZ](#) to test innovative clinical solutions, including VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) for deploying identified projects. [ABCXYZ](#) serves the nation by collaborating with industry to make innovative technology. This collaboration will allow [ABCXYZ](#) to host innovation challenges and then share solutions with VHA for piloting in a clinical environment. These solutions will then be assessed for applicability and usability in a Veteran population. VHA and [ABCXYZ](#) will work together through sharing feedback to iterate and improve each determined solution.

Scope:

Through their healthcare challenge events, [ABCXYZ](#) will identify promising technologies ready for pre-clinical or clinical piloting that align with VHA's mission and strategic goals. The identified technologies will be provided to the VHA IE for the dissemination to VAMC for piloting and determining efficacy and value. VHA IE will work with [ABCXYZ](#) to provide clinical and User/Human Centered Design feedback. If pilots are successful, VHA IE can identify potential transition paths within the VA and offer opportunities for implementation.

Initial projects will focus on the federal COVID-19 response including collaborations with select [ABCXYZ](#) industry collaborators offering solutions to screen Veterans, support healthcare providers, and fortify outbreak tracking mechanisms. Both organizations will regularly offer updates on current and future projects and Care & Transformation Initiatives (CTI) will serve as the liaison between [ABCXYZ](#) and VHA to coordinate the overall collaboration.

Goals:

The overall collaboration will focus on priority areas of CTI within VHA IE with a specific emphasis on Veteran Facing Solutions and Artificial Intelligence. Additionally, CTI will leverage its network of capability-focused Innovation Centers to drive this collaboration at VAMCs across the nation. Joining together VHA IE and [ABCXYZ](#) enables clinical assessment of healthcare innovation.

This collaboration offers valuable outcomes for both VHA and [ABCXYZ](#) including: evaluating innovative tools with the potential to improve Veteran care; fostering a culture of innovation and continuous learning; capturing and sharing lessons learned; and creating a single point of contact for all



VHA INNOVATION Ecosystem

collaboration efforts conducted between [ABCXYZ](#) and VHA.

Potential Opportunities for Strategic Alignment:

VHA IE and [ABCXYZ](#) share the goal of making the most innovative and effective medical technologies readily available. By more formally aligning the strengths and goals of the two organizations, VHA IE hopes to rapidly generate evidence through Veteran pilot studies. Close collaboration with [ABCXYZ](#) illuminates promising solutions designed to address the continuum of care within the VA Health System which can improve patient outcomes and reduce healthcare costs. VHA envisions a synergistic relationship where [ABCXYZ](#) can facilitate the demonstration and clinical validation of emerging technologies into VAMCs to improve clinical outcomes, while VA research capabilities can identify appropriate populations and clinical sites for implementation and clinical utility within [ABCXYZ](#) contexts.

What are the Types of Agreements?

VHA IE leverages several pathways to establish collaborative relationships. This portion is included truly as an FYI. Under the current workflow, OGC will review each SOW and determine the most appropriate type of agreement for each particular collaboration. A template for each of these types of agreements is included in the appendices. Types of agreements include:

- Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA)
- Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)
- Memorandum of Agreement (MOA): Donations
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Data Use Agreement (DUA)
- Business Associate Agreement (BAA)

Thank You

On behalf of the VHA Innovation Community we would like to say, “Thank you!” to the many individuals and companies that played important roles in the development and success of each collaboration that informed the creation of this playbook. We are truly appreciative of the solutions our collaborators bring, and we look forward to expanding our reach as we continue tackling some of Veterans’ toughest challenges. Through collaborating, solutions addressing opioid misuse, diabetic foot ulcers, and countless others have been piloted and deployed enterprise-wide. We look forward to growing our collaborations and continuing to make an invaluable difference in the lives of those we serve.

COLLABORATING ENABLES VHA TO:

- ▶ Continue tackling some of Veterans’ biggest challenges
- ▶ Make an impactful difference to the Veterans served

Conclusion

Congratulations!! You made it through the Collaboration Playbook! You are well on your way to further improving the lives of our nation’s Veterans.

Just like a good collaboration, this playbook is always growing and changing. We will continue to provide updates as we learn from the experiences of collaborators and innovators. We encourage you to contribute to the growth and value of this playbook by reaching out to us, as below, with comments or questions.

Questions?

For questions pertaining to collaborations, please reach to [Anne Bailey](#), PharmD, BCPS, Liaison for Collaborative Agreements, Emerging Tech Clinical Specialist, and Pharmacist Provider or [Suzanne Shirley](#), Director of Fellowships and Community Engagement.