VA Innovators Network: A Safe Space for Testing New Ideas and Joining Forces with Stakeholders Across the Community

Julie Whitney
January 2018
The Motivation: Why Innovate?

- Engaging employees with innovation allows them to see and solve problems at the source to better serve patients. By connecting them to the mission, gives a purpose which reduces burnout.

- Better take advantage of our existing capacity and brainpower.

- Employee retention: employees are leaving the VA and we need to find new ways to keep them engaged, learn new skills, and grow in their careers.
"This really is an innovative approach, but I'm afraid we can't consider it. It's never been done before."
Culture must support innovation

Culture determined by what the leaders reward, celebrate and punish!

Give them the why.

Know your organization and adjust.

Passive Resistance will kill projects!
Innovation Foundations

Must Deliver Value

- **Clinical Value**: Expressed as an improvement in health outcomes (e.g., overall management of chronic disease within a panel, such as A1c <8%)
- **Operational Value**: Expressed as a measure of increased efficiency or productivity (e.g., time to appointment, number of patients seen)
- **Financial Value**: Expressed as a cost savings or return on investment
- **Customer Value**: Expressed as an improvement in satisfaction or experience for the target population (e.g., Veteran’s access or receipt of timely visit, self-reported quality of life)
- **Societal Value**: Expressed as a collective benefit to the community (e.g., Does this help inform broader healthcare challenges for Veterans and non-Veterans?)
Must have: Fitness for the World

V/C > 3xPt

Patrick Littlefield
Innovation Formula: Bolus of Change

\[ i \times s > 3xPt \]

Patrick Littlefield
Innovators & Early Adopters: Make them a Team!

- Can help overcome the passive resistance
- Support each other through the process
- Learn from one another
- Build coalitions between diverse services: physicians, housekeepers, safety, engineering, finance, IT, biomed, administration
- Have fun with it!
Get an early win and share it widely!

Locally funded innovations with a local support team to facilitate purchase and deployment:
- Exercise on psychiatric ward
- Specialty beds
- CPR Anywhere
- Waiting room pagers
Innovator Champion

✓ Lead and support the program
✓ Have visible executive and leadership support
✓ Team builder
✓ Development of innovation ecosystem
Provide Funding to Support Innovation Efforts

SPARK grants ($5-10K) – Proof of Concept Projects: This level of funding helps you develop initial proof of concept “prototypes” where there is a strong problem statement and potentially some preliminary evidence or strong theory of action.

SEED grants (~$50K) – Pilot projects: This level of funding helps further develop your proof of concept and test it out in the form of a pilot. For these projects, there is a moderate evidence base and funding is provided for replication grants designed to pilot, test, and validate effectiveness of your proof of concept innovation.

SPREAD grants ($100-$500K) – Implementation and scaling projects: This level of funding helps you spread, diffuse, or scale your innovation projects to other clinics or sites at the VA. The evidence base for these projects is mature and they are deemed suitable for scaling because they have been vetted by the appropriate stakeholders and have been proven effective through pilot or replication studies.

Also have local and network funds with an application & selection process!
The Approach
Based on Human Centered Design
Empathy

Brene Brown
Empathy
Training + Support

Provide training and other enabling support to help employees grow in their careers

Human Centered Design Workshops

Innovation Accelerator + boot camp programs

Pitch workshops with Veterans and employees

Entrepreneurship + making training
Celebrate Failure!

- Heroic Failure
- Giraffe Award
- Dare to Try
- Utter Failure

Process will be uncomfortable with lots of failure
“I haven’t failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that didn’t work.”

- Thomas Edison
Create “Pitch” Workshops to Give Employees an Opportunity to Raise and Solve Problems
The Plan for This Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>“I’ve never heard of HCD”</th>
<th>“I’m learning about it”</th>
<th>“I’ve participated in a few HCD projects”</th>
<th>“I’ve lead many HCD projects”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING GOALS</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Expertity</td>
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- Introduction November and December
- HCD Training (January)
- Pitching (January)
- Design/Implement (March-August)
Create a Network

Develop internal and external partnerships to ensure projects can be spread and sustained
The VA Innovation Engine

Empowering and enabling those who know VA best to make it better

Innovators Network

THE PEOPLE. Through teaching and training, VA is encouraged to innovate and apply those innovations on the front lines to improve the Veteran experience.

VA Center for Innovation

THE FUEL. The VA Center for Innovation powers two influential field-based innovation initiatives.

The VHA Innovation Program

THE MUSCLE. Employee ideas are transformed into reality through the Employee Innovation Competition and project implementation.

Diffusion of Excellence

Diffusing Best Practices Across VHA

THE PROCESS. Ideas are vetted, resourced, and replicated so sparks of innovation catch fire.
VA INNOVATION DEMO DAY

WASHINGTON, DC

Monday, August 15, 2016 | 1:30pm EDT
Recognize + Celebrate

Celebrate and recognize employees in a public way
Measure Impact

Measure what is meaningful and share

Examples:

- Veterans experience (Net Promoter Score)
- Clinical outcomes
- Financial (cost avoidance)
- Employee experience (hiring + retention)
- Societal value

Stay tuned for more details on measuring value + outcomes for Patrick’s presentation this afternoon
Food for Thought from the ‘The Smartest Places on Earth’

Brainbelts:

- Take on complex, multidisciplinary, and expensive challenges
- Are drive by a connector
- Operate in a collaborative ecosystem of contributors
- Focus on one, or just a few, disciplines or activities
- Are open to sharing knowledge and expertise
- Contain physical centers, such as incubators or start-up spaces
- Foster an environment that acts as a magnet for talent
- Have capital available
- Have an understanding of threat