VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI)
Summer 2023 Request for Applications

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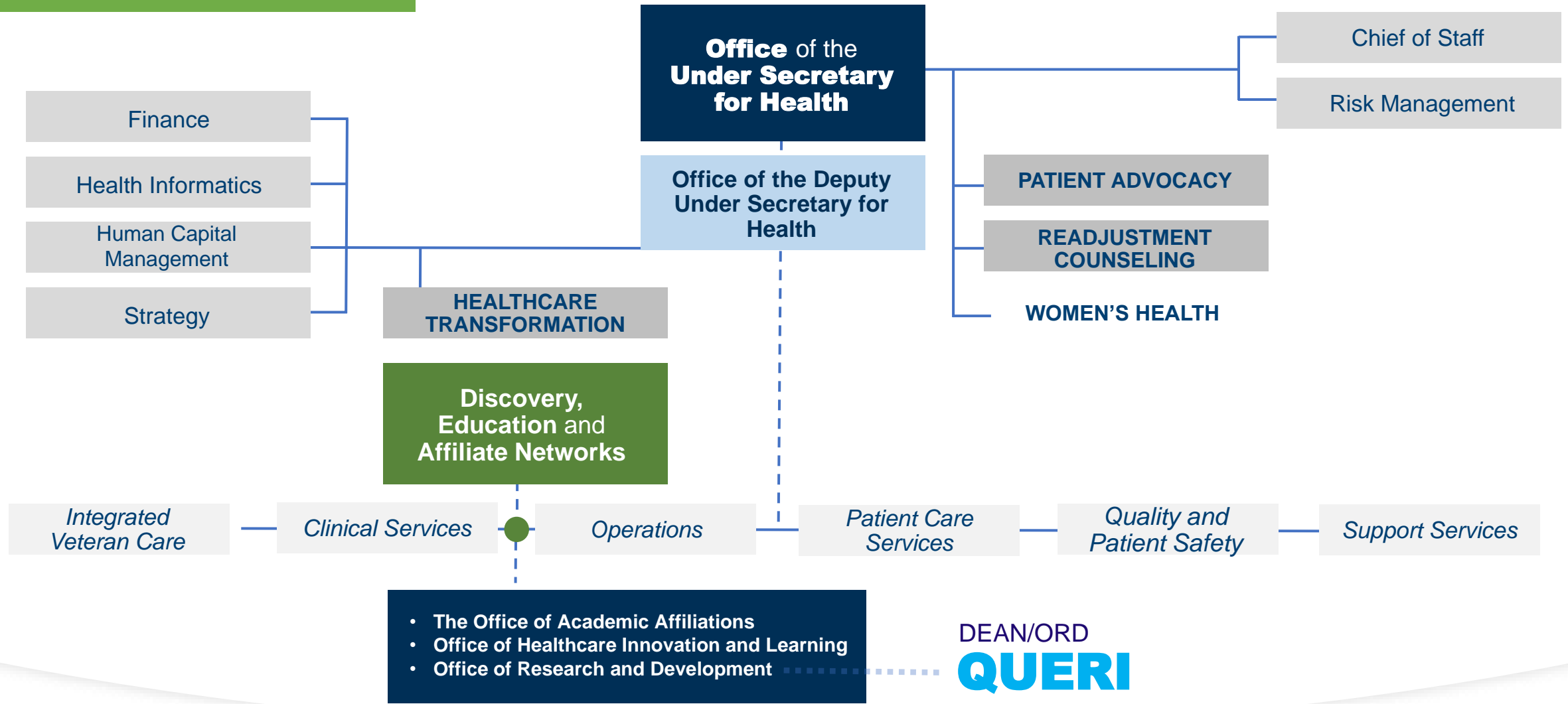**Stefanie Gidmark,** QUERI Program Specialist

Overview of QUERI

QUERI
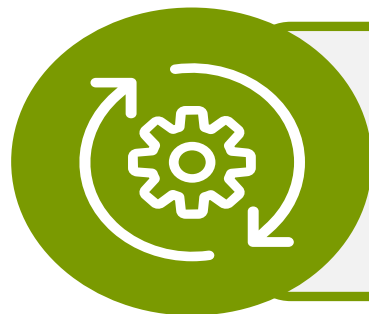VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative
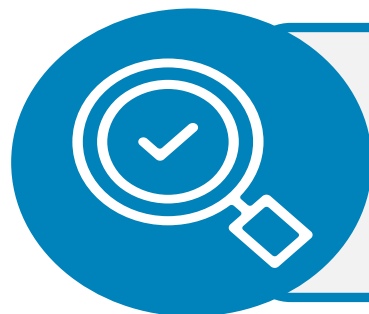EVIDENCE INTO PRACTICE

VHA **Organizational Chart**

QUERI Strategic Methodology

Implement
Plan, deploy and sustain effective practices across diverse settings

Enhance Veteran access to cutting edge, personalized treatments

Evaluate
Conduct rigorous evaluations to optimize programs and policies affecting Veterans

Develop mutually beneficial partnerships

Inform rollout of high priority initiatives
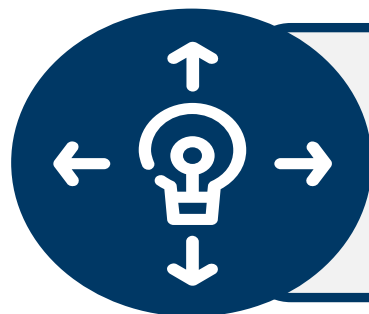
Disseminate & Sustain
Promote the application of implementation and quality improvement sciences across the translation spectrum

Drive a culture of learning and knowledge translation across VA

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QUERI Funds 40+ Centers Across the VA

Seattle, WA
- Virtual Care
- Caring Letters for Suicide Prevention
- Virtual Pain Care Teams

Salt Lake City, UT
- Antimicrobial Stewardship
- ▼ Multifaceted Provider Support for OUD Treatment
- ❑ StrAtegic PoLicy Evidence-based EvaluatioN CenTer (SALIENT)

San Francisco, CA
- Measurement Science
- ★ Adaptation

Palo Alto, CA
- Access with Video Telehealth Tablet
- Multidisciplinary Pain and Addiction Treatment
- ★ Leadership and Organizational Change for Implementation
- ❑ Center for Policy Evaluation

Los Angeles, CA
- Women's Health
- Primary Care for High-risk Veterans
- Complementary & Integrative Health
- Health Equity
- ▼ EBQI for Medication-Assisted Treatment
- ▼ Care Coordination for Homeless Veterans
- ★ Evidence-based Quality Improvement
- ★ Rapid Qualitative Methods
- ❑ Leading Evaluations to Advance VA's Response to National Priorities (LEARN)

Iowa City, IA
- Rural Health Programs
- ▼ Hospital Prevention of Opioid Adverse Events

Minneapolis, MN
- ▼ Tobacco Dependence Treatment

Madison, WI
- Healthcare Associated Infection Prevention
- Pharmacogenetic Testing

Hines, IL
- ❑ Evidence-to-Policy Evaluation Center for Veterans (EPEC-Vet)

Ann Arbor, MI
- Medication Safety
- ★ Learn. Engage. Act. Process. (LEAP)
- ★ Center for Evaluation & Implementation Resources

Indianapolis, IN
- Telehealth

Syracuse, NY
- ★ Implementation Facilitation

Denver, CO
- Quadruple Aim
- Long-Term Care
- Suicide Risk Identification
- ★ Designing for Dissemination & Implementation

San Antonio, TX
- Point-of-Care Ultrasound Training

Houston, TX
- ★ Leading Healthcare Improvement
- ❑ Houston Evidence-based Rapid Measurement Evaluations (HERMES) Center

Little Rock, AR
- Behavioral Health
- Advanced Care Planning
- ▼ Caring Contacts for Suicide Prevention

Charleston, SC
- ❑ Charleston, Providence, Iowa City (CPIC) Evidence-based Policy Evaluation Center

Tampa, FL
- Traumatic Brain Injury

Bronx, NY
- Transitioning Service Members

Pittsburgh, PA
- Cirrhosis Care
- Dual Use of Medications

Durham, NC
- Function & Independence
- Dynamic Diffusion Network
- Caregiver Support
- Diffusion of Excellence

Boston & Bedford, MA
- Bridging the Care Continuum
- Access to Legal Services for Veterans
- Community Care
- eHealth
- Patient Centered Care
- Cerner (EHR National Rollout)
- Health Professions Trainees
- ★ Evidence, Policy, and Implementation Center (EPIC)
- ❑ Partnered Evidence-based Policy Resource Center

West Haven, CT
- ▼ Stepped Care for Opioid Use Disorder
- ▼ Telemedicine for Medication-Assisted Treatment

Philadelphia, PA
- Age Friendly Health System

Key
- National Program Center
- Partnered Evaluation Initiative
- ❑ Evidence-based Policy Evaluation Center
- ▼ VISN Partnered Implementation Initiative
- ★ Implementation Training & Resources

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QUERI Projects are Non-Research

- QUERI projects are non-research projects because of the **funding source** (special purpose, medical administration funds) and their focus on **improvement** within VA.

- Protocols involving data collection are non-research if the **data are fed back to providers or operations leaders** to directly improve care and/or other VA processes. The activity does not meet the definition of research.

- In situations when a QUERI project wants to collect additional data above and beyond what is needed for informing improvement within VA, a determination should be sought as to whether the project's activities constitute research.

CyberSeminar: Everything You Need to Know About VHA Non-research Protocols

[Link to Recording](#)

CyberSeminar: Everything You Need to Know About QUERI Non-research Protocols

[Link to Recording](#)

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Key Characteristics of Non-Research Activities

- **Primary purpose of quality assessment and quality improvement for internal VA purposes.**
  - The activity is designed and implemented for internal VA operational purposes (i.e., its findings are intended to be used by VA or by entities responsible for overseeing VA).
- Non-research protocols may involve **randomization (e.g., cluster-randomization)**; randomization by itself does not define research
- **Not designed for generalizability beyond VA**.
  - The activity is <u>not</u> designed to produce information that expands the knowledge base of a scientific discipline (or other scholarly field).
  - However, this does not mean that a research activity done solely within VA is not research if it is only conducted within VA.

ORD Program Guide 1200.21

QUERI Funds Rigorous Designs

Clinical Effectiveness - - - → **Implementation**

Study-supported practitioners deliver intervention

Transition to Existing Practitioners: Develop "First Follower"

Existing practitioners deliver intervention

Hybrid Type 1 test clinical intervention, observe implementation

Hybrid Type 2 test clinical intervention & implementation strategy

Hybrid Type 3 test implementation strategies, observe clinical outcomes

Curran, et. al. Med Care 2012

QUERI Implementation Roadmap

CyberSeminar: The QUERI Implementation Roadmap: A Framework to Guide Partnered Implementation and Quality Improvement Efforts in a Learning Health System

Link for recording
Link for slide deck

Link for QUERI Implementation Roadmap Guide

QUERI Impact Measures

ACTION Impact Framework, Braganza, et al, JGIM, 2020

Domain	Measures
Alignment	Priorities, metrics, partners
Commitment	Shared operational resources and financial support, evidence-based strategies and products
Tailoring to local context	Implementation sites, providers using effective practice, Veterans/family members/caregivers served
Informing the field	Briefings with key decision-makers, publications, scale-up and spread
Observing healthcare change and generating **N**ew projects	Sustainability, quality of care and health outcomes, policy, culture, employee engagement and new projects requests

QUERI Addresses Multi-Level Priorities

National Priorities block:
- National Priorities: VHA Leadership, SecVA Goals
- VA National Program Offices
- Veterans Integrated Service Networks
- VA Medical Centers
- Service Lines

QUERI Strategic Methodology
1. Implement
2. Evaluate
3. Disseminate and Sustain

Research Priorities block:
- VA Office of Research and Development
- QUERI Strategic Plan priorities:
1. Reduce unwanted clinical and service variation across VA;
2. Build capacity to respond quickly to national and regional developments;
3. Deepen and expand partnerships across programs, geographic regions, and service lines;
4. Drive a culture of rapid learning in support of VA's transformation to a High-Reliability Organization and Learning Health System; and
5. Empower employees to move the needle on quality of care.

Multi-Level VA Priorities

Research Priorities

Legislative, Executive, and Veteran Priorities

Legislative, Executive, and Veteran Priorities block:
- Veterans' and their caregivers' needs
- Veterans Service Organizations
- Congressional Priorities
  - Megabus/NDAA
  - Hannon Act
  - VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (MISSION Act)
  - Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act of 2018
  - Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA)
  - 21st Century Cures Act
  - Hannon Act
  - STRONG Veterans Act
  - PACT Act, etc.
- Presidential Executive Orders and memoranda

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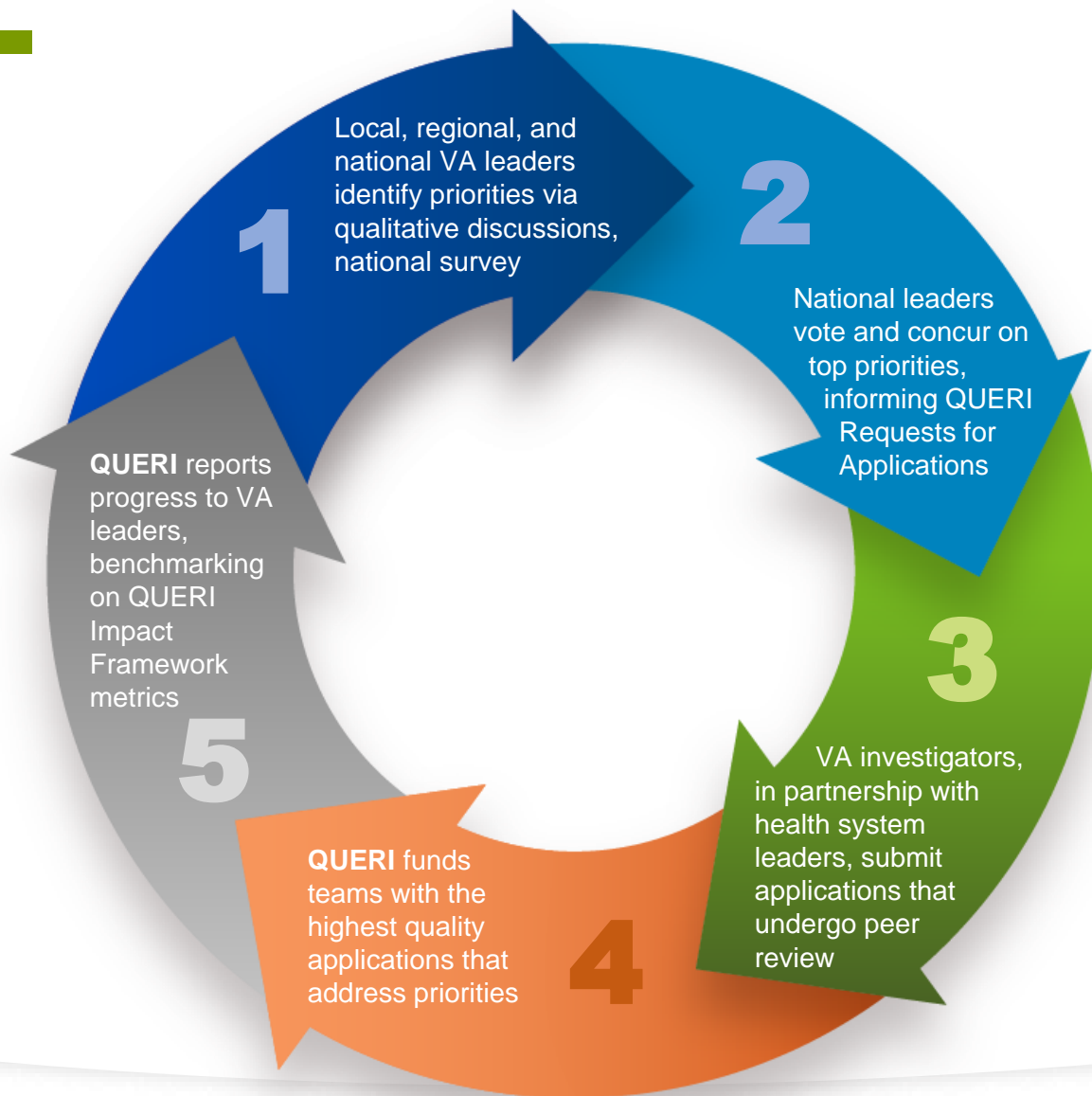EVIDENCE INTO PRACTICE

QUERI Lifecycle: Systematic Process to Implement VHA priorities at the Frontline Level: Identifying Priorities, Funding Initiatives to Address Priorities, Communicating Results and Impacts

Evidence Act is Law (US PL 115-435)

- ✓ Influences agency budgets

- ✓ Requires annual evaluation plans on top priorities that inform policies and resource allocations

- ✓ Evaluation plans made public

- ✓ Leverage other legislative mandates

Braganza, Kilbourne et al., HSR 2022

1 Local, regional, and national VA leaders identify priorities via qualitative discussions, national survey

2 National leaders vote and concur on top priorities, informing QUERI Requests for Applications

3 VA investigators, in partnership with health system leaders, submit applications that undergo peer review

4 QUERI funds teams with the highest quality applications that address priorities

5 QUERI reports progress to VA leaders, benchmarking on QUERI Impact Framework metrics

Priorities will inform QUERI support for:

- ✓ VA Strategic Plan for FY2022-2028 highlights the need for VA to deliver timely, accessible, high-quality care and services to meet the unique needs of Veterans

- ✓ FY22 Annual Evaluation Plan, FY23 Annual Evaluation Plan

- ✓ FY23 QUERI Priorities (based on input from leaders across VA)

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Under Secretary for Health Goals

USH Priorities:

1. Hire faster and more competitively
2. Connect Veterans to the soonest and best care
3. Serve Veterans with toxic exposures
4. Accelerate our journey to high reliability
5. Support Veterans whole health, their caregivers and survivors
6. Prevent Veteran suicide

Strategic Enablers:

1. Retain, invest in and support our people
2. Scale best practices and driving innovation
3. Improve our technology systems and workflows
4. Drive equity for women, minority and LGBTQ+ veterans
5. Partner with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), states, advocates and interagency partners

QUERI Priorities

VHA Priority	QUERI FY23 Survey Results
Hire faster and more competitively	1. **Workforce recruitment, onboarding, and retention*** 3. Employee and trainee experience and burnout 8. Virtual work
Connect Veterans to the soonest and best care	2. **Clinical care and organizational efficiency*** 4. In-person, virtual, and community care services 6. Health disparities
Serve Veterans with toxic exposures	7. Toxic exposure/PACT Act
Accelerate our journey to high reliability	5. Culture of safety, learning, and knowledge translation 9. EHR implementation
Support Veterans whole health, their caregivers, and survivors	Ongoing QUERI activities
Prevent Veteran suicide	Ongoing QUERI activities

* indicates Network Director Top Priority

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QUERI Advancing Diversity in Implementation Leadership (ADIL)

- **Objective:** grow a pipeline of implementation, quality improvement (QI), and evaluation expertise from populations that reflect the diversity of the Veterans VA serves

- **Anticipated Impacts:** promote VA as a national leader in applying high-reliability, learning organization and evidence-based policy methods to improve health care, especially for underserved populations

MISSION

Improve Veteran health by accelerating evidence into health care practice and policy

VISION

Become a trusted purveyor of evidence, implementation, and quality improvement (QI) methods across VA, supporting frontline providers in deploying effective practices that transform Veteran care

VALUES

Excellence, Commitment, Partnerships, Rigor, Resilience, Flexibility

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Overview of ADIL

- **Hands-on Learning.** Support a hands-on implementation, QI, or evaluation partnered initiative and mentored experience.
- **Impact Focus.** Non-research project aligned with a current priority listed in the ADIL RFA.
- **Preparation for Implementation Leadership Opportunities.** Next step is to apply for independent project funding, an employment opportunity or promotion, or leadership training opportunity that is related to implementation or quality improvement science.
- **Funds Available.** QUERI 870 funding will be a maximum of $100K/year for up to 2 years.

ADIL Eligibility

- Open to candidates who are investigators, staff, or students **affiliated with a QUERI center** (with at least one year left in the funding period) and are from populations that reflect the diversity of the Veterans VA serves.
  - Includes: individuals from racial and ethnic groups that have been shown to be underrepresented in the health-related sciences, Veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds

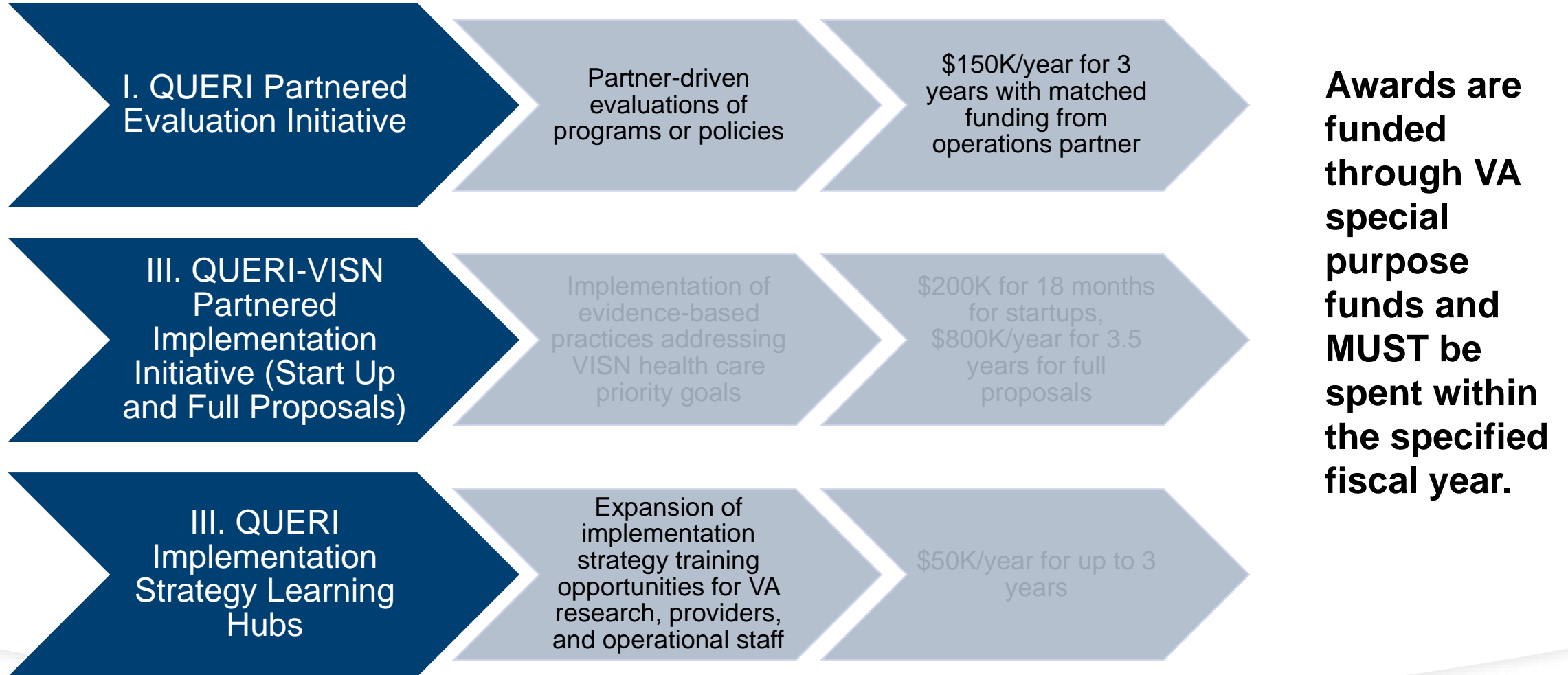- The proposed candidate must also be eligible to become a VA employee/WOC.

ADIL RFA Updates

- FY23 QUERI Funding Priorities (slide 14)
- Up to 3 Application Submissions Allowed
- Non-Research Cyberseminar Resources (slide 6)
- ADIL Cyberseminar Resource: "QUERI Advancing Diversity in Implementation Leadership (ADIL): Examples from the Field on Optimizing and Leveraging VA Leadership Opportunities"

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QUERI Implementation and Evaluation Coordinating Center

- **Objective:** Create a national resource to promote the use of evidence-based implementation, evaluation, and quality improvement methods in the scale-up and spread of effective policies, practices, and programs across VA
- **Anticipated Impacts:**
  - Coordinate and support time-sensitive evaluation needs across diverse interested groups
  - Implement training in evaluation and implementation methods
  - Coordinates key QUERI rapid response mechanisms, implementation support, and mentoring/training opportunities
- **Funds Available:** Up to $820,000 per year for 5 years

QUERI Global Request for Applications (RFAs)

I. QUERI Partnered Evaluation Initiative	Partner-driven evaluations of programs or policies	$150K/year for 3 years with matched funding from operations partner	Awards are funded through VA special purpose funds and MUST be spent within the specified fiscal year.
III. QUERI-VISN Partnered Implementation Initiative (Start Up and Full Proposals)	Implementation of evidence-based practices addressing VISN health care priority goals	$200K for 18 months for startups, $800K/year for 3.5 years for full proposals	
III. QUERI Implementation Strategy Learning Hubs	Expansion of implementation strategy training opportunities for VA research, providers, and operational staff	$50K/year for up to 3 years	

I. QUERI Partnered Evaluation Initiative (PEI)

- **Objective:** Support rigorous evaluations of programs or policies that are primarily directed and funded by a VA operations (VA Program Office, VISN), federal agency (e.g., NIH, CDC, AHRQ, HHS), or not-for-profit foundation partner

- **Anticipated Impacts:**
  - Support VHA's compliance to the Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act (Evidence Act) of 2018
  - Promote VA's transformation into a Learning Health System
  - Focus resources more efficiently and improve consistency, spread, and sustainability of best practices that benefit Veterans and their families

I. Overview of PEI Funding Announcement

- **Data Driven Decision-Making Focus.** Goal is better integration of more rigorous but practical research methods (e.g., stepped wedge comparisons, cluster-randomized implementation or population-based studies) into VA health care.
- **Operations Partner Directed.** Project goals should be aligned with VA national priorities and specific goals to be achieved by the partner.
- **Funds Available.** QUERI 870 funding will be a maximum of $150,000 each year for up to three years.

I. Funding Level Commitments for QUERI PEIs

Partner Match Source (minimum one-year commitment)	Minimum Requirement for Match Commitment	Additional Requirements
VA Central Office (VACO) Program Office	$200,000/year	Letter of support from VACO program office lead confirming funding commitment
VISN	$100,000/year	Letter of support from VISN Director confirming funding commitment and describing how the proposed evaluation addresses VISN priorities
Other Federal Agency (e.g., NIH, CDC, AHRQ, HHS)	$200,000/year	Interagency Agreement or letter detailing funding commitment that specifies funding to be routed to not-for-profit corporation or University affiliate. Agency letter must specify how program supports improved care for Veterans.
Not-for-profit Foundation	$200,000/year	Letter detailing funding commitment that specifies funding to be routed to Applicants' VA Facility's not-for-profit corporation or University affiliate. Other requirements, such as a CRADA, MOU and/or OGC review may apply.

*Other means of matching support from the partner such as FTE, data, or other resources can be considered.

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II. QUERI-VISN Partnered Implementation Initiative

- **Objective:** Implement evidence-based practices (EBPs) at the frontline clinical level for health care priorities chosen by VISN leadership

- **Anticipated Impacts:**
  - Modernize systems and reduce clinical variation through scale-up and spread of EBPs across VISNs
  - Improve Veteran health by rapidly implementing EBPs, particularly in sites experiencing quality gaps in that health care area

II. Overview of PII Funding Announcement

- **Quality Improvement Focus.** Proposals should focus on deployment of EBPs that support at least one of the health care priority goals selected by Network Directors.
  - A specific implementation strategy or set of strategies used to promote the uptake of the EBP, especially for facilities that demonstrate gaps in quality or outcomes related to the priority, must be described.
  - Outcomes must include quality indicator benchmarks and/or other VA Performance Goals

- **VISN Directed.** PIIs must be co-led by a VISN leader (Director or CMO) and a VA implementation expert. The VISN chooses the priority, and implementation activities must support VHA Performance Plan goals of modernizing systems through better consistency and spread of EBPs.

II. QUERI VISN PII Funding Mechanism

Startup PII Award $200K

Implement evidence-based practice in at least two sites within 18 months

Full PII Proposal $800K/year for 3.5 years

Implement EBP in at least 30 sites across at least 3 VISNs

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II. FY23 VISN Priorities, Performance Plan

- **FY23 Network Director Priorities:**
  - Improve workforce recruitment, onboarding, and retention of VA employees and trainees
  - Improve clinical care and organizational efficiency (e.g., administrative documentation, technology, supply chains)
  - Evaluate the increase in virtual work on employee and trainee outcomes (e.g., virtual training, virtual supervision)

- **Key themes to come out of this year's Performance Plan:**
  - New metrics relate to VHA Goals such as PACT Act needs assessment and screening for toxic exposures, assessment and evaluation of Veteran care experience, and ~40% of the Performance Plan is weighted to focus on hiring under PACT Act authorities.

III. QUERI Implementation Strategy Learning Hubs

- **Objective:** Expand training opportunities for VA employees in the use of specific implementation strategies, including strategies to support the uptake and sustainment of effective practices in Veterans experiencing health disparities

- **Anticipated Impacts:**
  - Increase VA community awareness and expertise with implementation science
  - Support the role of implementation science as standard aspects of VA research improvement and health equity efforts

III. Overview of Learning Hub Funding Announcement

- **Real World Focus.** The goal is to provide frontline providers, investigators, and operational staff with the practical skills needed to implement effective practices in routine care.

- **Funds Available.** QUERI 870 funding will be a maximum of $50,000 each year for up to 3 years. QUERI expects to fund only one hub for a specific implementation strategy. Funds can be used to cover training faculty time related to the development of materials and delivery of the training program, purchase materials relevant to the training program, and cover the material cost of conducting the training.

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QUERI Global Scientific Merit Review Timeline

Summary of HSR&D and QUERI Funding Pathways

Capacity-Building

- HSR&D Pilots
- HSR&D Researchers in Residence
- HSR&D & QUERI Career Development (ADIL)
- QUERI Rapid Response Teams

Research & Evaluation

Scale-up, Sustain
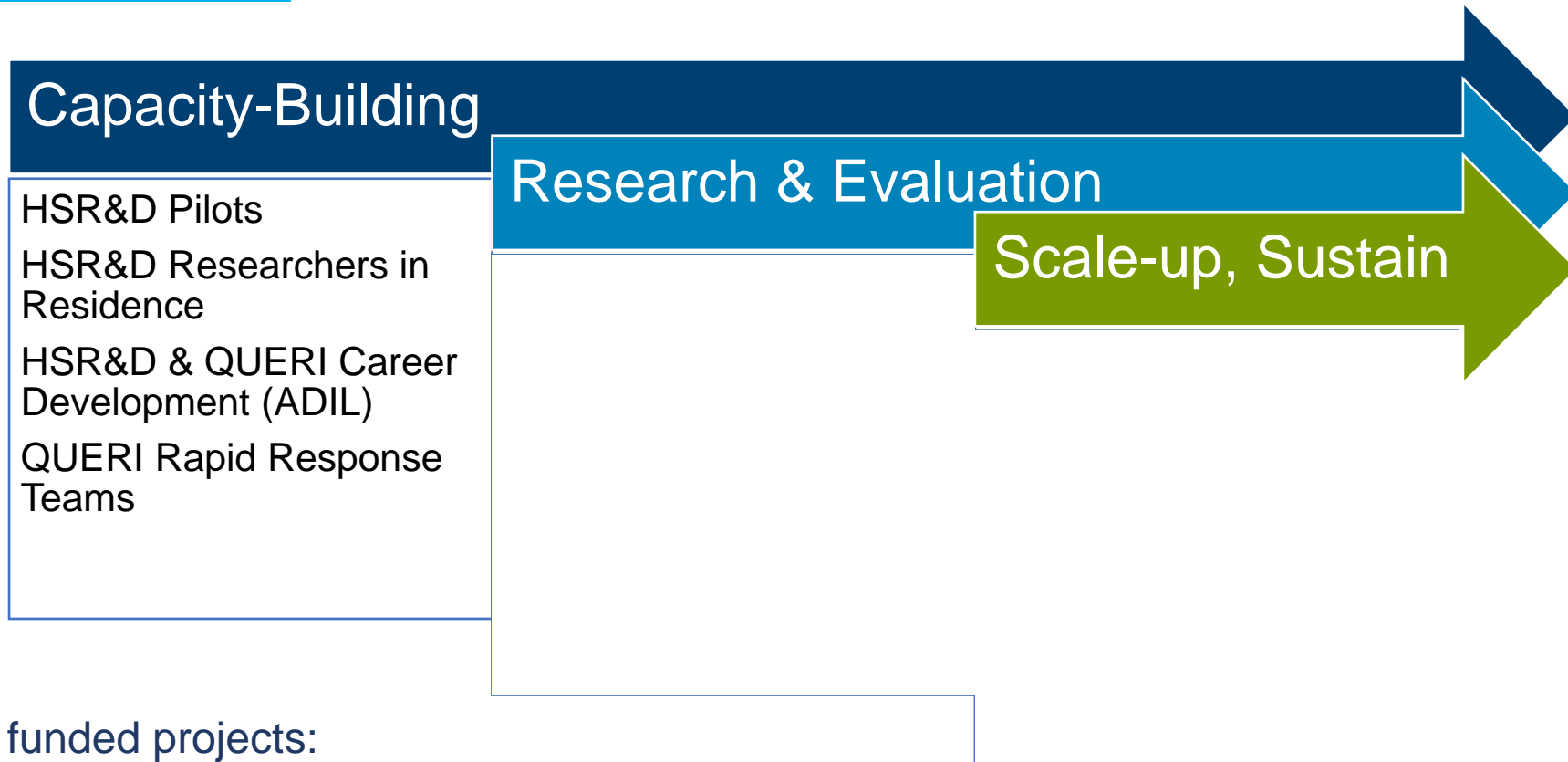
List of current funded projects:

Current HSR&D studies

Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) brochure

How QUERI Leverages ORD/HSR&D Research

	HSR&D	QUERI
Goal	**Development** of evidence to address Veteran needs	**Application** of evidence to accelerate care improvements
Primary Questions	Does the treatment work? How does the treatment work?	How do we scale-up, spread, and sustain the **effective** treatment across VHA?
Approach	Testing clinical interventions that address Veteran needs and research gaps	Implementing **evidence-based** interventions addressing VA priorities and sponsored by a Program Office or VISN

QUERI Global RFA Updates

- Updated FY23 priorities (slide 14)
- Updated FY23 VISN priorities (slide 27)
- Learning hub focus expansion
  - Includes training on an evidence-based strategy or set of strategies that supports the uptake and sustainment of effective practices in at risk, marginalized, and/or underserved Veterans.
  - Examples of possible focus areas include: homelessness, rural health, and/or racial/ethnic disparities.
- Automated transcription options encouraged
- Non-Research Cyberseminar Resources (slide 6)

Resources

Applicants are encouraged to consult the following HSR&D/QUERI resources for:

- Selecting and assessing fidelity to implementation strategies: QUERI's Center for Evaluation and Implementation Resources (ceir@va.gov)

- Cost/economic analyses and evaluation appropriate for the selected strategies and training on data science/organization: HSR&D's Health Economics Resource Center (HERC)

- VA data resources and considerations regarding Cerner implementation: HSR&D's VA Information Resource Center (VIReC)

- Aligning evaluations and implementation projects with legislative mandates, including the Evidence Act and MISSION Act Partnered Evidence-based policy Resource Center (PEPREC)

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Questions

We are happy to answer any questions! Please feel free to reach out to Kara Beck at kara.beck@va.gov.

The QUERI Global RFA are found under the Health Services Research & Development section on the ORD RFA website: https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm

The QUERI ADIL RFA is posted on the QUERI website: https://www.queri.research.va.gov/QUERI-ADIL.pdf

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