

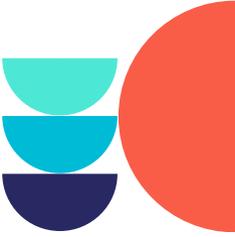


NOVEMBER 2021

“Join the Conversation” Workshop Series Summary

Reimagining Veteran Healthcare



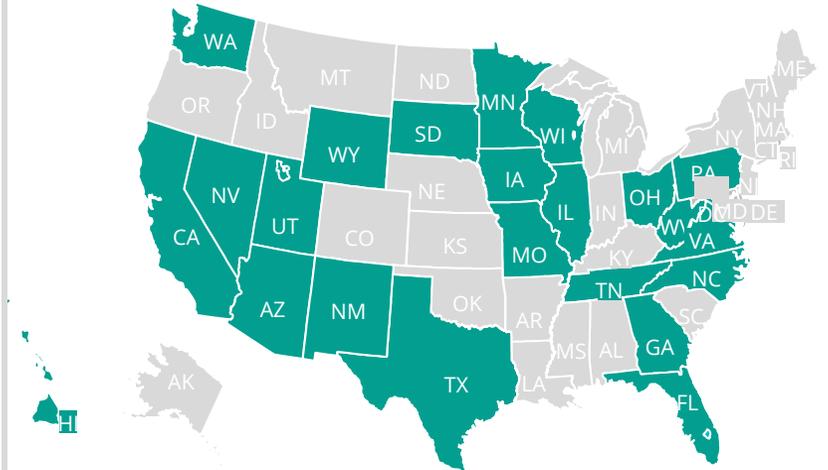


Series Summary

WHAT WE DID

From September through November of 2021, we engaged VHA employees from across the country in a series of six “Join the Conversation” workshops.

Diverse groups of VHA employees -from physicians, to risk managers, to music therapists, innovation specialists, and custodial staff- shared their experiences of working for VHA during COVID-19. We heard **inspirational stories of why employees proudly serve Veterans each day**, and we brainstormed **what changes they would make, both for Veterans and employees, if they could design a new VHA**. The workshop series led to valuable employee insights and received an overwhelmingly positive response from participants. VHA employees are ready for change, and we are eager to take their thoughts and ideas as we shift into Phase 2 of our work. Read on to hear what emerged from these series!



132

EMPLOYEES

43

OCCUPATIONS

23

STATES

6

WORKSHOPS

960+ =

DATA POINTS

6

PRIORITY
INSIGHTS

Priority Insights

Several themes emerged from our discussions with frontline employees across the six workshops and have been distilled into six priority insights. These insights will continue to be prioritized as we move forward with our designs in Phase 2. Here's what we heard:

1. Keep entrusting us with the ability to rapidly innovate.

Throughout COVID-19, we've proven we can make change for the better when given the ability to do so. We ask for that benefit moving forward so we can provide the best care possible for Veterans.

2. Provide our Veterans with personalized pathways to care and empower them to choose what they need.

Our Veterans should have the ability to easily navigate VA healthcare. We want to give them that and empower them to make confident and informed choices about their care, while selecting from diverse options tailored to their geographic, emotional, and physical needs and preferences.

3. Take care of us, as we take care of Veterans.

The employee experience directly affects the patient experience. We are incredibly proud and passionate to go the extra mile for our Veterans, but many of us are burned out. We need our performance metrics to go beyond productivity, time for breaks, appropriate staffing levels, and to know our leaders prioritize our wellbeing.

4. Help us collaborate.

Our siloes impact Veterans' care; help us break them down. We need to easily collaborate across VAMCs, other departments, and with healthcare providers outside of VA in order to give our Veterans a more seamless healthcare experience.

5. Equip us with the technology to do our best work.

With the right tools, we can do more with less. Digital solutions such as telehealth and telework, VR, concierge-like apps for Veterans, and centralized databases will allow us to provide more impactful care, leverage the technological strides we made during COVID-19, and promote more flexible work options for our staff.

6. Equip us with better skills and direction, and then hold us accountable.

Our training systems feel like they've become a check-the-box compliance activity. Prioritize and invest in training us with the cultural competencies and customer service skills we need to provide excellent care. Reward those that go above and beyond for our Veterans and enact accountability measures to keep standards high.

Workshop Responses

VHA employees are ready for change.

Impromptu feedback in the workshop and formal survey responses highlighted their appreciation for a forum to discuss challenges and solutions with colleagues, excitement about RVH's potential, and hope that lasting change will be made.

SURVEY RESPONSES

4.5/5 Stars

“ Open, honest, empathetic and collaborative. **A truly fresh endeavor pursuing powerful ideas to create a new paradigm** within the largest healthcare system in the US.”

“ An **invigorating atmosphere**”

“ This event **inspired me to think more about how we can continue to think of creative out of the box ways** to make the VA more effective for our patients and staff.”

“ Fun and inspiring, **helps bring creativity alive**”

“ **All employees need to do this workshop!** 5 hearts! The facilitators were so authentic, supportive, and positive. **I can't wait to hear more.**”

“ It was a really nice, cathartic event, to discuss the problems we see inside the VA and the potential solutions. **This was a great first step. I really hope that we see follow through.**”

“ A **fantastic, proactive** effort”

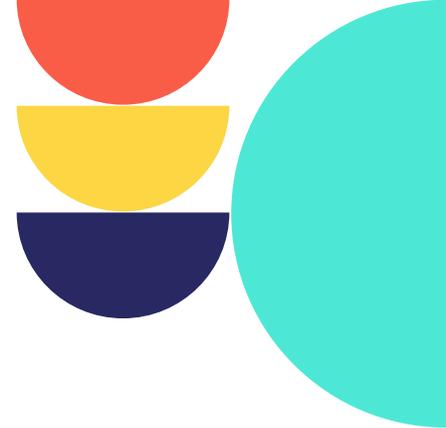
“ I'm really glad there is a group out there doing this work and **I hope they have the power and backing to institute real change.** Many of these initiatives focus a tremendous amount on FEELINGS and not enough on DOING. **I hope this is different.**”

“ I am so excited [about RVH] and **want to help in any way possible.** We need to center veterans at the core of our work.”

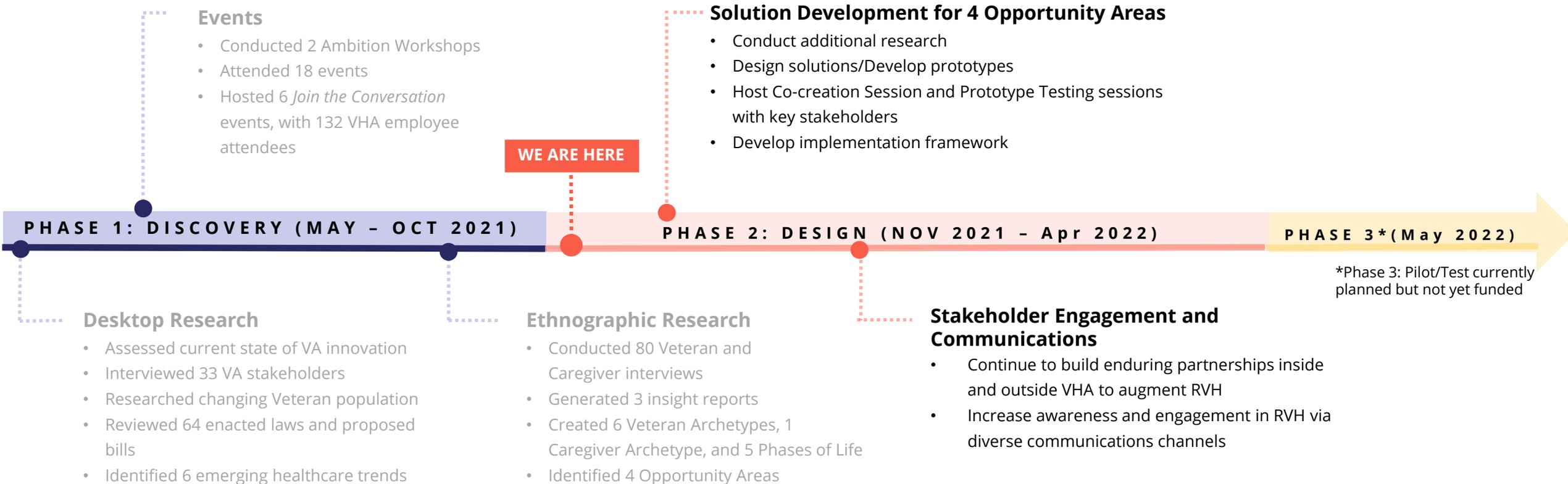
“ It has **given me license to imagine better ways to serve Veterans.** Before, it just felt like I was daydreaming.”



What's Next?



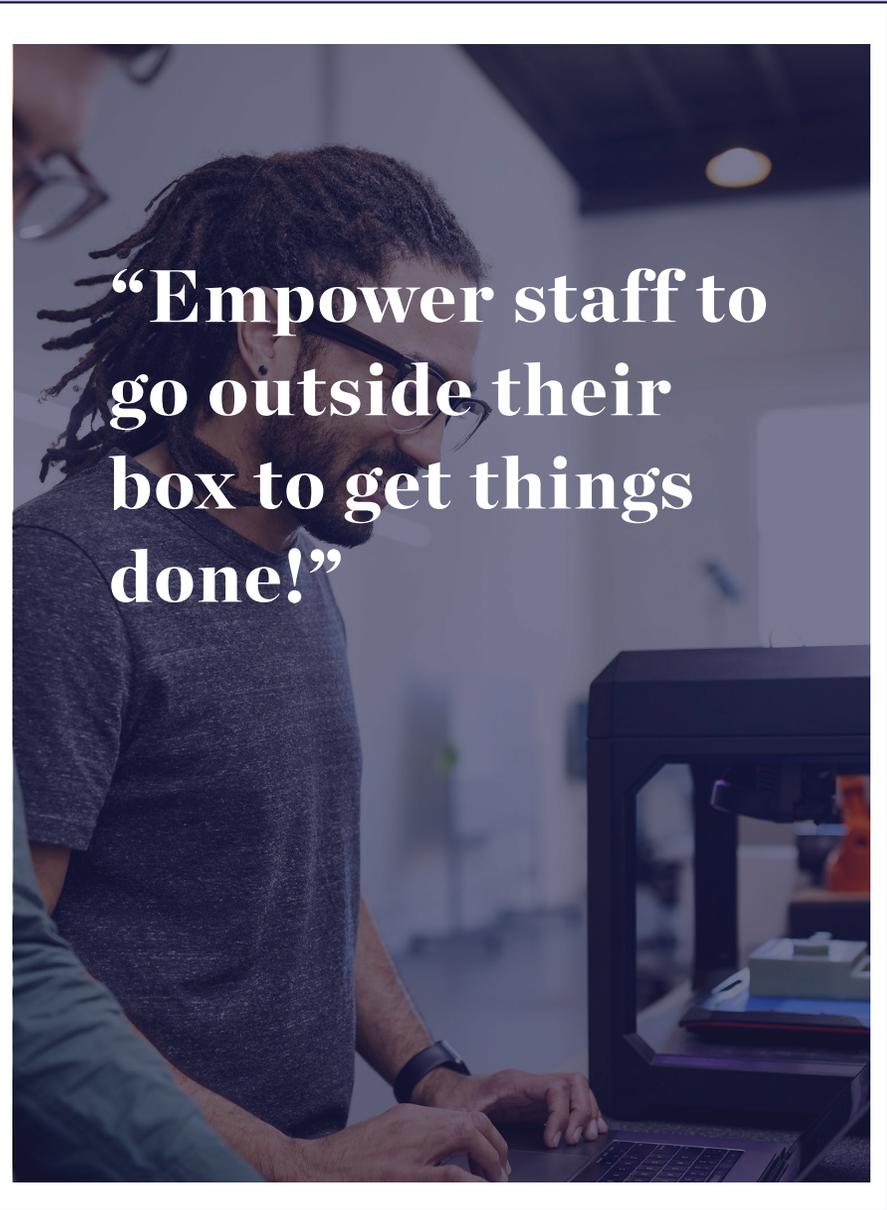
RVH is at the beginning of Phase 2. The Discovery phase focused on developing a rich, contextual understanding of the current state of healthcare at VA. Next, **we will design and prototype transformative solutions for emerging opportunity areas through extensive research and co-creation with Veterans and VHA stakeholders.**



What We Heard

VHA Employee Insights + Ideas





“Empower staff to go outside their box to get things done!”

1. Keep entrusting us with the ability to rapidly innovate.

We have adapted and innovated in unprecedented ways to respond to COVID-19. Many of us feel frustrated and limited by historically rigid organizational systems. Now we’ve seen the impact that is possible when we’re empowered to respond in a crisis, and we desire to the same freedom moving forward.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Balance the tension between a united experience for patients and employees, and giving areas full creative freedom to try new ideas”

“We need to maintain the momentum of change we saw in COVID-19.”

“Sometimes going the extra mile actually can actually get you in trouble!”

EMPLOYEE IDEAS

“Continue to demonstrate flexibility, use of video, thinking about what can continue to be done not in person”

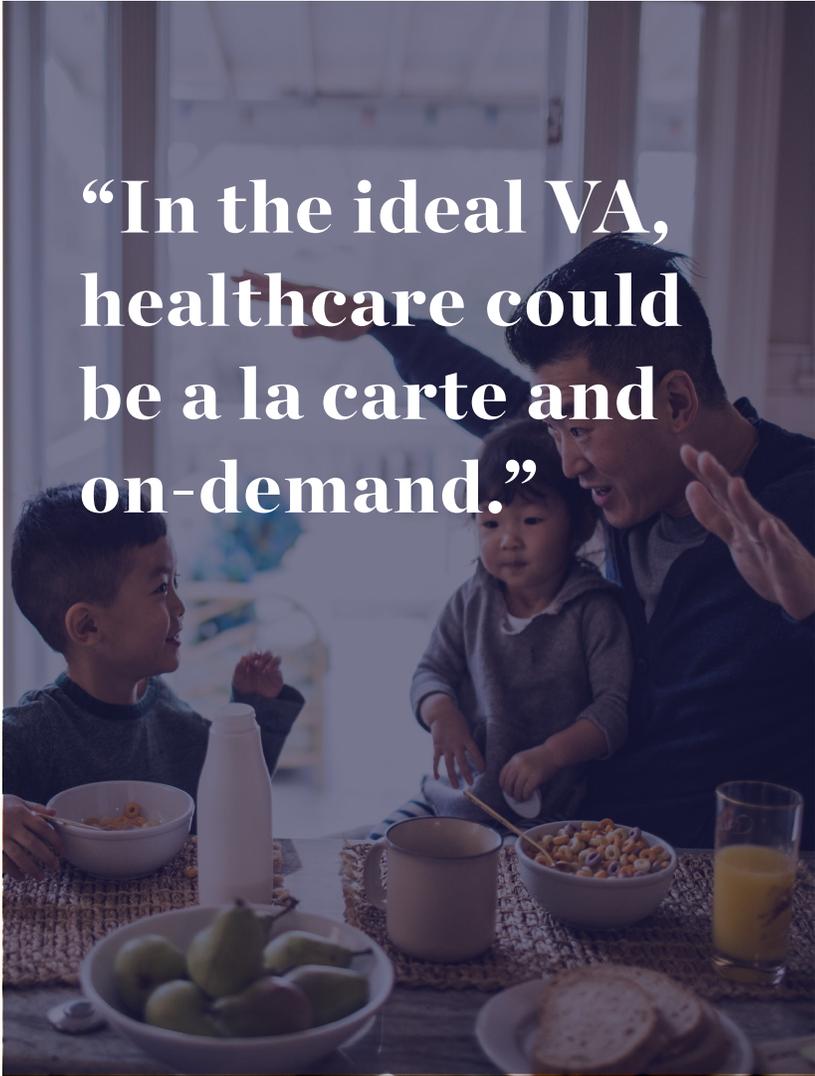
“Bring resources together to innovate for future problems.”

“Create a safe space for ideas and encourage innovation.”

“Smaller groups, virtual solutions; leadership buy-in [for protected] time away from assigned work.”

RELEVANT RVH OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- Complementary & Integrative Health
- Care Delivery
- Customer Experience
- Transition to VA



“In the ideal VA, healthcare could be a la carte and on-demand.”

2. Provide our Veterans with easy, personalized pathways to care and empower them to choose what they need.

Our Veterans should have the ability to easily navigate VA healthcare. We want to give them that and empower them to make confident and informed choices about their care, while selecting from diverse options tailored to their geographic, emotional, and physical needs and preferences.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“VA could offer a continuum of care outside VA facilities.”

“Offer up services for women at more facilities, improve flexibility of services for families and female Veterans.”

““[Today] VA is a labyrinth....Ideally, it's not the Veterans job to navigate the system alone.”

EMPLOYEE IDEAS

“We need to be taking care of the Veterans, rather than forcing them to come to us. Let's reassess 'where Veterans are.'”

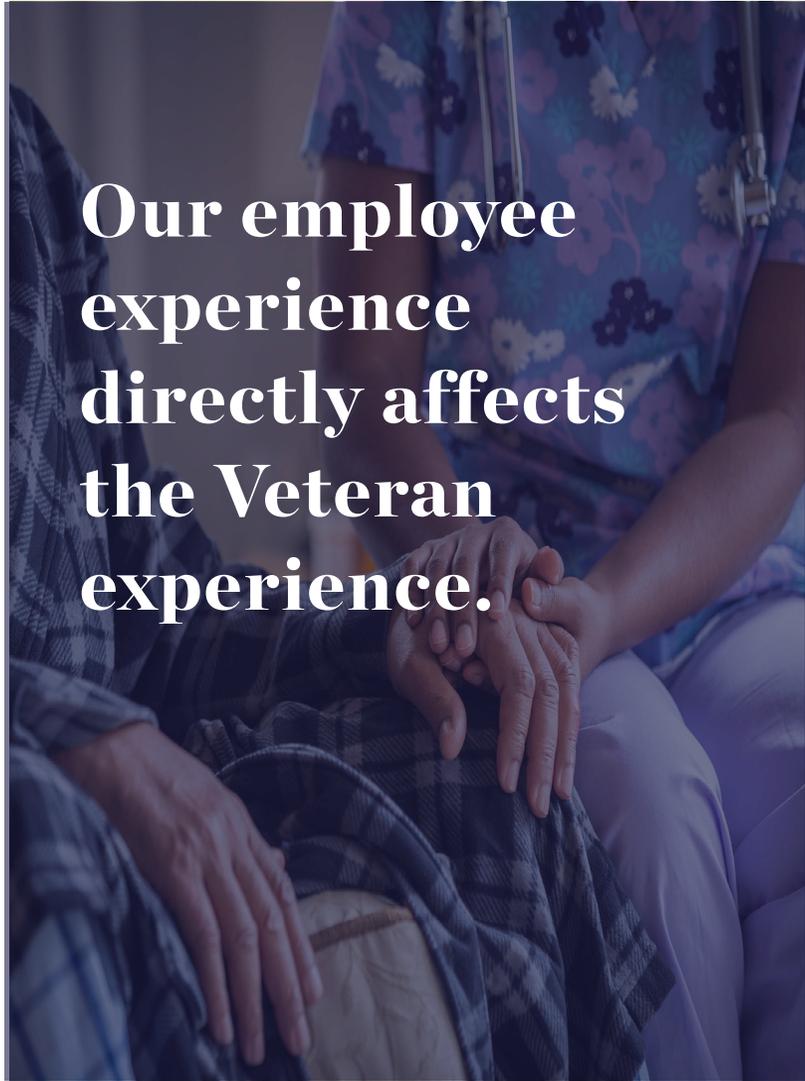
“Gamification of healthcare to incentivize Veterans to be engaged in the VA”

“Offer auto-enrollment at the point of transition.”

“Accommodate preferences for tele versus in person care, can meet rural Veterans, staff can also WFH.”

RELEVANT RVH OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- Transition to VA
- Care Delivery
- Complementary & Integrative Health



**Our employee
experience
directly affects
the Veteran
experience.**

3. Take care of us, as we take care of Veterans.

The employee experience directly affects the Veteran experience. We are incredibly proud and passionate to go the extra mile for our Veterans, but many of us are burnt out. We need for our performance metrics to go beyond productivity, time for breaks, appropriate staffing levels, and to know our leaders prioritize our wellbeing.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"People are resources, and we need to have enough!"

"Is it our bosses who disincentive us from taking breaks, or our coworkers? It can be stressful to take breaks b/c it means more work later."

"We need our Veterans to be first, and Employees ...not last! (quality of life, work life balance, and avoiding burnout matter)."

"Decision makers will force decisions even when they don't work."

EMPLOYEE IDEAS

"Rethink how we measure success for physicians or how they meet the quota (example: pushing video over telephone visits since telephone visits are not coded as high, less reimbursement)."

"Modernizing our concept of timekeeping, tour of duty, telework vs. onsite."

"Provide opportunities for those who live their lives in multiple places."

"MORE FACILITY DOGS!! :D"

RELEVANT RVH OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- Customer Experience



**Our siloes
impact Veterans'
care. Help us
break them
down.**

4. Help us collaborate.

To break down siloes, we desire more connectivity. We need to easily collaborate across VAMCs, other departments, and with healthcare providers outside of VA in order to give our Veterans a more seamless healthcare experience.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"There would be value to have more transparent data sharing across the agency and services."

"The ideal VA would have warm handoffs and greater collaboration between specialties."

"VA should be more 'predictable' [for Veterans]. Accessing care should be the same throughout and across VAs. 'I know what to expect at VA because VA is this.'"

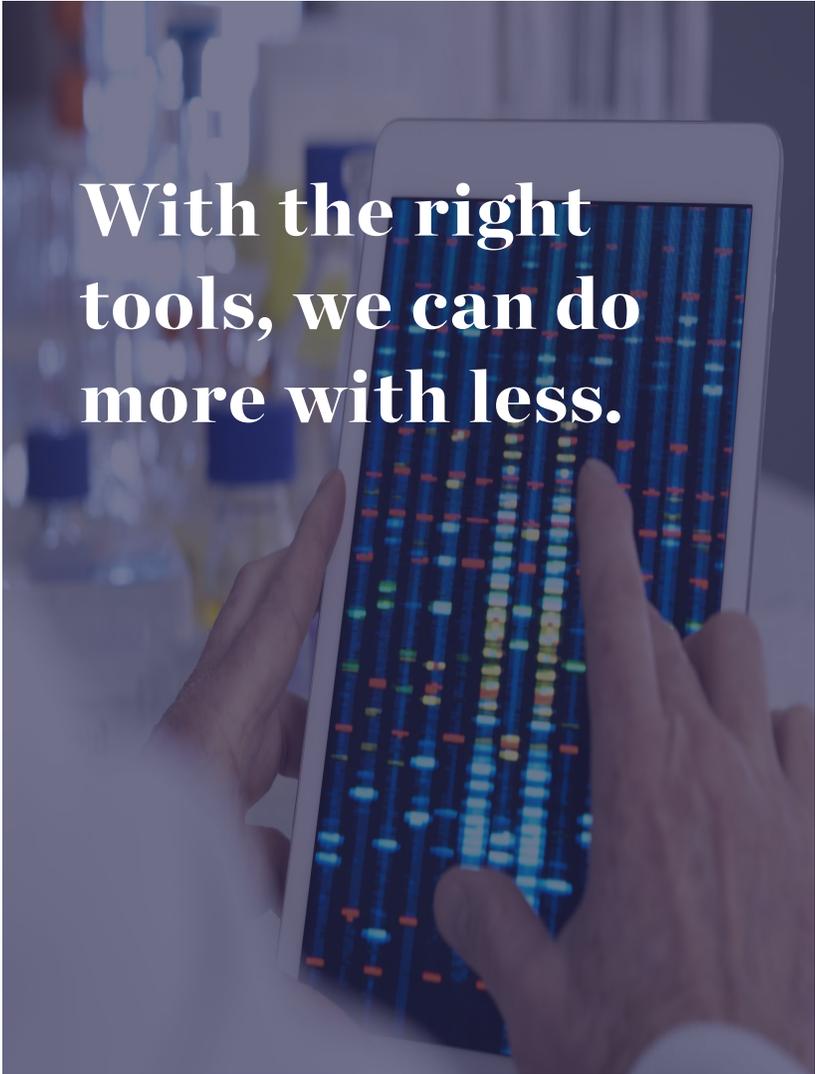
EMPLOYEE IDEAS

"Develop national hub to manage patients across sites (can be extended across time zones which could extend hours)"

"Provide a system like the Traveling Vet, providers could pull records from anywhere at any time, share responsibility via that electronic record - can get Rx anywhere, not location dependent."

RELEVANT RVH OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- Transition to VA
- Care Delivery
- Customer Experience



**With the right
tools, we can do
more with less.**

5. Equip us with the technology that supports our best work.

In order to work as effectively as possible, we need more relevant and innovative technology. Digital solutions like telehealth, VR, concierge-like apps for Veterans, and centralized databases will allow us to provide more impactful care, leverage the technological strides we made during COVID,-19, and promote more flexible work options for our staff.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"If we utilize digital tools and technology, we can facilitate prevention."

"We need to be bringing the outside world to the Veterans and implement virtual reality experiences."

"We can do more with less with a strategy for centralizing information."

"Behind the times in tech. All we hear is 'no' when we try to innovate or use new tech."

EMPLOYEE IDEAS

"The option for telework should be the standard, and not the exception."

"Using VR to train mental healthcare workers; create simulations of interacting with difficult situations."

"Using virtual reality to imagine what will happen during a surgery."

"Positions have telework agreements as standard -telework ineligibility paperwork must be filed to justify if not."

RELEVANT RVH OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- Care Delivery
- Complementary & Integrative Health
- Transition to VA
- Customer Experience



**Invest in
training us and
reward us for
high standards.**

6. Equip us with better skills and direction, then hold us accountable.

Our training systems feel like they've become a check-the-box compliance activity. Prioritize and invest in training us with the cultural competencies and customer service skills we need to provide excellent care. Reward those that go above and beyond for our Veterans and enact accountability measures to keep standards high.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Right now, there is a zero-consequence culture – we don't even audit calls."

"All employees should be able to do some very basic things to greet, support, and provide resources to Veterans."

"We need increased presence of people who understand mental health symptoms on phones."

"We NEED cultural training for staff - gender, culture, religion, etc."

"No standardized staff onboarding ... [or] new employee orientation."

EMPLOYEE IDEAS

"We should have customer service training; even non-customer-focused employees would be let go after a probationary period [for service issues]."

"1 week+ [new] staff orientation, similar to VBA model."

"Offer courses/seminars for clinicians taught by Veterans for building trust with Veterans/Veteran patient populations."

"Consistency in onboarding [could positively impact] institutional memory."

RELEVANT RVH OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- Customer Experience