



Health Care Collaboration Playbook

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U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

CHANGING LIVES. SAVING LIVES.

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 Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning, 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 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). 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. Be sure to describe the specific deliverables each party will provide to the other parties in 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 collaboration. VHA works with a collaborator(s) to develop the SOW, defining details such as the project title, background, scope, and goals. Provide the legal corporate name of the collaborator(s). Also include the duration of the project. 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. In most cases, innovation collaborations are documented under a CRADA.

CRITICAL ENTITIES TO HIGHLIGHT:

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

COLLABORATION CHECKLIST

1

YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED A PROBLEM + A POTENTIAL SOLUTION/COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITY. NOW WHAT?

Q: HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO THE POTENTIAL COLLABORATOR?



“NOT YET!”

Speak to the collaborator in-person or virtually to gauge mutual interest.



“ALL DONE!”

Reach out to Anne Bailey (anne.bailey2@va.gov) for the most up-to-date Statement of Work (SOW) template.



2

WITH THE POTENTIAL COLLABORATOR, CREATE A SOW.



Return the SOW, along with a completed Conflict of Interest Form, to Anne Bailey who will share with appropriate Office of General Counsel (OGC) team.



OGC will review and recommend the appropriate legal agreement.



The drafted legal agreement will then be returned to the VHA Project Manager to review and then share with the collaborator.



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



Following the collaborator's signature, the VHA Project Manager should return the document to the VHA Project Manager for VHA routing and

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GO FORTH AND DO GREAT THINGS!

Statement of Work Template

OHIL Statement of Work

[Title]

[Collaborator] Point of Contact:

Name

Title

Address

Email

Phone Number

[Collaborator] Signatory:

Name

Title

Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning Point of Contact:

Name

Title

Address

Email

Phone Number

OHIL Signatory:

Name

Title

Goals

What is the value proposition of this collaboration? What does VHA receive as a result of this collaboration? What does the collaborator receive? How is this in line with our Mission? How does this benefit Veterans? (If this aligns with a specific VHA:IE priority or focus, **highlight that here**)

How will you tell the story of this collaborations' success both internally and externally? *Example opportunities for Our mission is to enable the discovery and spread of health care innovations within VHA that exceed expectations, restore hope, and builds trust within the Veteran community – and to imbed innovation as a core fabric of VHA, build a collaborative innovation community, and deliver a repeatable process for scaling innovation.*

Scope

2-3 sentences or bullet points leading into the roles/responsibilities of each individual collaborator. What is each VHA bringing to the table? The collaborator? Give specific examples of any “tools,” “materials,” and/or “resources.” Clearly define “space.” Whose is it? Where is it? How will Veterans/employees access it? If data is being shared, what kind? Is it de-identified? How will Veterans/staff access this project or be invited/included/enrolled (where applicable)? What resources from VHA will be required for this collaboration to be successful? The collaborator? Any pertinent timelines, necessary approvals/consents/etc.? Funds?

CRADA

Under the current workflow, OGC will review each SOW and determine the most appropriate type of agreement for each collaboration. The most common template agreement for an innovation collaboration is a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA).

Thank You

On behalf of the OHIL 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 throughout the VHA enterprise. We look forward to growing our collaborations and continuing to make an invaluable difference in the lives of those we serve.

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 and Director for Clinical Tech Innovation.

COLLABORATING ENABLES VHA TO:

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