



**Innovators
Network**

2019 IN REVIEW

VHA Innovators Network Annual Report



Welcome

Greetings,

We are so proud to share the first-ever Year in Review – Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Innovators Network (iNET) Annual Report with you. In 2019, iNET navigated through a year of change and restructuring, during which we have evolved into a stronger, smarter, and more confident organization. Stronger knowing that our Network is truly unique and valuable to both Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees and Veterans. Smarter knowing that we enable VHA's workforce to change how they design solutions to solve problems. Confident knowing that empowered employees lead to more thoughtfully designed solutions, which lead to better outcomes for Veterans.

If you are new to iNET, let us give you a more detailed picture of where we were at the beginning of 2019 versus now. In January 2019, iNET was experiencing a gap in leadership and vision. We were living in a time of huge transitions and great uncertainty, as our leadership was stepping down and our future was unclear. It was with great excitement, matched by equal parts fear, that we stepped into our roles as co-directors. We both had a vision of what iNET should be and could be, and we started to make those visions a reality slowly, step-by-step.

The only way the Network was going to thrive and reach our lofty vision was if our amazing team of Innovation Specialists and iNET site leadership were re-energized and re-invested. As we toured the country meeting with iNET site leadership and innovation teams, we realized the passion was clearly still there. The incredible work being done by Innovation Specialists had never ceased. This only propelled us further toward our goals for iNET. The work that Innovation Specialists have done this year has been phenomenal. We want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank them all. We know they are the lifeblood of iNET, with them all things are possible!

We would also like to thank our amazing 2019 class of Spark-Seed-Spread Investees for being flexible during all the programmatic changes. We are so proud of what you have accomplished and we look forward to a continued relationship with you. Finally, thank you to Dr. Ryan Vega, Executive Director of the VHA Innovation Ecosystem, and Kit Teague, Deputy Director of the VHA Innovation Ecosystem. Their confidence in our mission is critical and deeply valued.

Enjoy this deep dive into iNET's 2019. We can hardly imagine what 2020 will bring!

Sincerely,

Allison Amrhein
Director of Operations

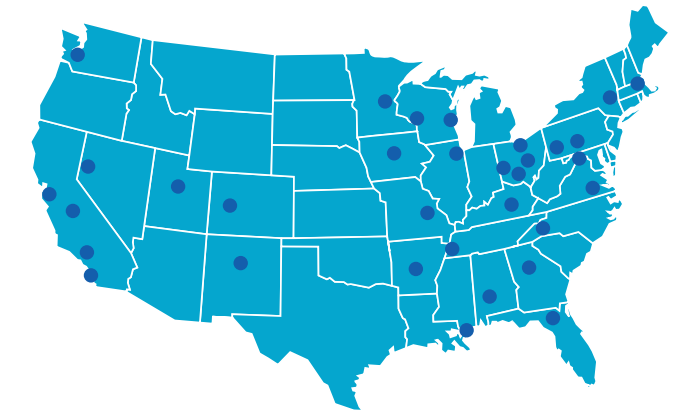
Brynn Cole
Director of Programming

The VHA Innovators Network (iNET) lives as part of VHA's Innovation Ecosystem. The Ecosystem's mission is to enable the discovery and spread of health care innovation that exceeds expectations, restores hope, and builds trust. The Network contributes to the mission by facilitating the discovery of employee-driven innovation.

33 VA MEDICAL CENTERS ACROSS THE U.S.

iNET is a group of unique individuals who:

- ▶ Think outside of the box and use each other and our diverse experiences within VHA to empower change.
- ▶ Lead the change in thinking about how we solve problems.
- ▶ Operate in a world outside of the day-to-day, where change and failure are encouraged and where disruption is safe.



iNET AIMS TO:

- ▶ Build an Innovative Culture: Provide the “in-house” capability of driving a culture of innovation.
- ▶ Develop Innovation as a Competency: Teach and train innovation-related competencies.
- ▶ Empower Employees: Engage employees to solve the problems they face on the frontlines.



2019 At a Glance

January

- ▶ Annual Innovation Accelerator Bootcamp kicks off the FY19 Spark-Seed-Spread Investment cycle in Washington, D.C., at the Kaiser Center for Total Health.
- ▶ Innovation Specialists are introduced to The Three Box Solution by Vijay Govindarajan.

February



The Three Box Solution: A Strategy for Leading Innovation, by Vijay Govindarajan

- ▶ iNET introduces The Three Box Solution to our curriculum during the February Innovation Accelerator webinar.
- ▶ iNET leadership site visits begin! Allison Amrhein visits Milwaukee VA Medical Center and Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital leadership.

March



Lexington Innovation Specialist, Veronica Herst

- ▶ iNET leadership site visits for both Allison Amrhein and Brynn Cole continue in Lexington, Columbus, Tuscaloosa, Jackson, and Biloxi!

April

- ▶ FY19 Spark-Seed-Spread Investees are introduced to Lean Startup and Business Model Canvas theory via the April Innovation Accelerator webinar.

May

- ▶ Innovation Specialists in Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 10 host a regional Human Centered Design (HCD) workshop!
- ▶ The Three Box Solution is launched across iNET sites nationwide via events and activities hosted by Innovation Specialists.
- ▶ First-ever Alumni Network Newsletter is published.

June



Brynn Cole and Katrina Bressler at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center

- ▶ Problem Phase kicks off at iNET sites via local programming in preparation for FY20 Spark-Seed-Spread. Innovation Specialists guide frontline staff to identify and source problems and opportunities.
- ▶ Allison Amrhein and Brynn Cole continue their visits and head west, with site visits to San Diego, Albuquerque, and Salt Lake City.

July

- ▶ Discovery Phase kicks off at iNET sites throughout the country. Innovation Specialists introduce HCD concepts to drive the design of potential Spark-Seed-Spread investments. HCD leads to deep insight into problems and opportunities to better design potential solutions.

August



- ▶ FY20 Spark-Seed-Spread Innovation Investment Program applications open!

September

- ▶ FY20 Spark-Seed-Spread application review period opens. Nearly 200 reviewers are onboarded to review over 300 applications.

October



The Three Box Solution Keynote Address at the VHA Innovation Experience

- ▶ iNET enlists FedTech, a start-up studio, to lead the FY20 Innovation Accelerator training.

2019 At a Glance

- ▶ FY20 Spark-Seed-Spread investment selections are made. 108 projects and teams of employees are selected to participate.
- ▶ Over 50 iNET employee innovators participate in the VHA Innovation Experience (iEx) in Washington, D.C.

November

- ▶ FY20 Innovation Accelerator officially kicks off during Bootcamp in Washington, D.C. Over 100 employees from the field meet to start their innovation journey!

December

- ▶ First-ever iNET end-of-the-year awards are presented to Innovation Specialist of the Year, Liz Williams (Gulf Coast VA Healthcare System), Investee of the Year, Kristina Snell (VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System), and 2019 Tanked Award, Chillicothe Bike Share Program (Chillicothe VA Medical Center).

First-Ever Annual iNET Awards

THIS YEAR, INET INTRODUCED A TRIO OF END-OF-THE-YEAR AWARDS TO HIGHLIGHT THE INCREDIBLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF INNOVATION SPECIALISTS AND EMPLOYEE INNOVATORS.

When considering nominees for Innovation Specialist of the Year, we measured a few important aspects of Innovation Specialist responsibilities: Spark-Seed-Spread project management, local programming and events, regional or VISN events and participation, external partnerships, and communications output. In other words, what did the Innovation Specialist do in 2019 to build a culture of innovation within VHA? Three finalists were selected by iNET leadership and the voting was conducted by their peers — fellow Innovation Specialists. Finalists for Innovation Specialist of the Year included: Kim Bielicki (Minneapolis VA Health Care System), Veronica Herst (Lexington VA Health Care System), and finally, the winner of the 2019 Innovation Specialist of the Year was Liz Williams (Gulf Coast VA Health Care System).

INNOVATION SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR: **Liz Williams**



Over the last year, Liz was part of the team that accredited iNET's HCD programming and she led a number of HCD trainings at the Gulf Coast VA Health Care System and nationwide. What Liz has done for iNET in regard to HCD cannot be overstated.

She has been vital. Liz has held highly attended local programming events. Her Three Box Solution training was incredibly popular and included the participation of local leadership. Liz has also shown smart, shrewd project management skills and an incredible mind for marketing iNET and her local innovation program's achievements. Congratulations, Liz!

2019 INVESTEE OF THE YEAR: **Kristina Snell**



The Investee of the Year recipient was determined by iNET leadership based on their participation in iNET programming and the outcome and impact of their innovative solution on Veterans or employees. We were thrilled to select Kristina Snell as the 2019 Investee

of the Year. Congratulations, Kristina!

The model Kristina designed with her team allows VA medical facilities to better visualize the opportunity and potential of incorporating Intermediate Care Technicians (ICT) into clinical care teams and other venues within medical centers. Working with VA human resources is

never an easy task; thus, making her accomplishment of standardizing an ICT position description even more impressive. ICTs are now officially onboarded as VHA assets and are currently at 36 VA Medical Centers — and that number is rapidly increasing. Kristina is a multi-year Spark-Seed-Spread Investee and participated in our programming and events each cycle. She has represented iNET twice at VHA iEx and has always been a spring of positivity and fun! It has been an absolute pleasure working with Kristina.

2019 TANKED AWARD: **Chillicothe Bike Share Program and Matt Cox**

Finally, we introduced the iNET Tanked Award, which acknowledges a project/employee who turned a “failure” into a success — an individual whose project “tanked” but was revitalized. iNET is proud to announce the first-ever iNET Tanked Award to Matt Cox and the Chillicothe Bike Share



Program for the amazing turnaround and resurgence Matt led to make the Bike Share Program successful in Chillicothe.

By sheer determination and passion, Matt has shaped the Bike Share Program into an opportunity for mental and physical health improvement for Chillicothe Veterans and employees. He has also included the community in the effort — all this in addition to his everyday duties. The future is full of possibilities with Matt at the helm of the Bike Share Program. Congratulations, Matt!

New Network Sites

Congratulations to our newest iNET sites! In April, iNET Finalist Sites were invited to apply for full site status. A competitive pool of Finalist Sites were evaluated based on their participation in iNET and implementation of iNET programming at their sites.

The following sites were selected to officially join iNET:

- ▶ Cincinnati VA Hospital (Cincinnati, Ohio)
- ▶ Charles George VA Medical Center (Asheville, North Carolina)
- ▶ Memphis VA Medical Center (Memphis, Tennessee)
- ▶ VA Palo Alto Health Care System (Palo Alto, California)
- ▶ VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System (Reno, Nevada)

With their acceptance into the Network, these sites will further spread our mission and empower employees to disrupt the norm to find innovative solutions for Veterans. Dr. Indra Sandal, Innovation Specialist of the Memphis VA Medical Center, noted the work done at her facility to aid Veterans, “As an engaged Finalist Site, we shifted the focus from piecemeal and incremental fixes — to providing support and leading a culture of innovation and learning across local, network, and national levels at the forefront of service delivery, collaboration, and frontline empowerment at the Memphis VA Medical Center.”



Dr. Anne Bailey, Innovation Specialist, Charles George VA Medical Center and Brynn Cole, Director of Programming, iNET

Innovation Specialist, Dr. Anne Bailey of the Charles George VA Medical Center, noted, “Our employees are more aware of the potential of innovation-driven impact across our local facility, as well as throughout the entire VHA, which has served to inspire more innovative ideas and to continue to encourage our employees and Veterans with the knowledge that VHA is truly one of the most innovative health care systems and on par with the private health care industry.”

Innovation Specialists and staff at these sites are already a huge contributing factor to the impact iNET is making toward our mission. Please join us in welcoming and congratulating our newest members!

iNET and QUERI: Combining Accelerated Innovation With Research

Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) leverages scientifically supported quality improvement methods — paired with a deep understanding of Veterans’ preferences and needs — to implement evidence-based practices. Thus, the partnership between iNET and QUERI has incredible value potential for both parties.

During their collaboration with iNET in FY19, the QUERI INPOWR team focused on three primary objectives:

- ▶ Implementing a new data collection approach and providing numerous reports on Spark-Seed-Spread projects, Innovation Specialist activities, site activities, and iNET site characteristics.
 - ▶ Specific results of the data collection can be found in the “Network by the Numbers” section of this report.
- ▶ Qualitative Spark-Seed-Spread and programmatic data collection, analysis, and evaluation.
 - ▶ The evaluation found that iNET participants in diverse roles value the program for the intangible support it provides as a network; this informed the operational decision to keep networking support central to program design and delivery.
- ▶ Analyzing return on investment for targeted Spark-Seed-Spread projects.
 - ▶ The team examined the ICT program in Cleveland. Working with Innovation Specialists, the team completed an environmental scan of innovation sites that implemented ICTs into clinical care. The scan captured the range of care models and hospital units that employed ICTs, including the number of ICTs,

“Innovators partnering with researchers is one of VA’s best-kept secrets: our best ideas come from Veterans and the providers who serve them, and researchers in turn help bring the science behind them to maximize impact.”

– Amy Kilbourne, Director, QUERI

functional roles; onboarding dates; and points of contact. An in-depth cost accounting of ICT training activities was completed at one site in partnership with the Innovation Specialist, and included block training, preceptorships, work in the simulation lab, and documentation of clinical and technical skills. This investigation is ongoing and others are simultaneously being completed on other Spark-Seed-Spread projects.

Spotlight on Programming: Human Centered Design

One of iNET’s primary objectives is to develop innovation as a competency. We do this through programming led primarily by Innovation Specialists. The bedrock of our innovation curriculum is HCD. Why? Because at any moment across the VA health care system, Veterans, their families, and VHA employees feel frustrated. No matter how we engineer the system, pull together teams to redesign care models, or implement best practices, at times, we are still unable to achieve solutions that meet the true needs of our community of health care recipients and providers.

Enter HCD. Problem becomes opportunity when viewed through the lens of HCD, shifting mindsets from “we can’t do that” to “how might we?” An incredibly powerful — yet simple — approach, HCD aims to eliminate preconceived notions about the necessary solution, and instead, go out and ask, observe, and interact with the people experiencing the problem. Armed with these insights, solutions are considered and designed for true human needs, wants, and expectations. Feelings of helplessness turn to helpfulness, working side by side with patients and their families to design true solutions that are tailored for their unique needs.

Innovation Specialists held nearly 20 facility, regional, and national HCD trainings and workshops in 2019. The Network is proud to support the HCD learning needs of VA enterprise-wide, not just VHA. For example, Debra Whittingham-Short, Innovation Specialist at Central Ohio VA Healthcare System, and Amanda Purnell, PhD, Innovation Specialist at VA St. Louis Health Care System and VHA Innovation Ecosystem Entrepreneur in Residence, delivered HCD training to the 2019 Leadership VA (LVA) cohort. Teaching VA’s next generation of leaders the techniques to develop user-focused solutions to complex problems not only helps drive better outcomes, but also encourages leadership support for innovation, which is one of the most crucial factors for innovation culture-building.

“Amanda and I were delighted to work with the more than 85 LVA 2019 program participants. We provided a two-day training, spread out over several sessions, to help the



Participants at an HCD training

fellows develop their program, interview and gather data, and use HCD to develop insights and action plans. The LVA team was motivated, engaged, and delightful to work with,” said Debra Whittingham-Short.

We invite you to experience an HCD workshop for yourself. Our Innovation Specialists will lead you through problem and opportunity framing (it’s harder than you might think), walk you through the discovery phase (where you’ll go out into the world to interview and observe), teach you how to design solutions based on true human needs (suspending your own preconceived notions about what might work), and show you how delivery of an HCD-driven solution can impact users. Contact an Innovation Specialist today to find the next HCD workshop near you!

FY19 Spark-Seed-Spread Portfolio

Creating opportunities for VHA employees to turn ideas into reality is one piece of what iNET does best. The Network engages VHA employees through a three-tiered, evidence-based Spark-Seed-Spread Innovation Investment Program. The Program invests funding back into VHA employees and VA Medical Centers, allowing them to test and develop their ideas and solutions through an accelerated lifecycle. During this prototype development and pilot lifecycle, Investees receive VHA-specific innovation competency training via the VHA Innovation Accelerator. Simply put, iNET identifies deeply committed employees via Spark-Seed-Spread as a sourcing mechanism, then trains them to design differently as they develop and implement their solution.



“I just had an idea; I didn’t think it could actually happen.”

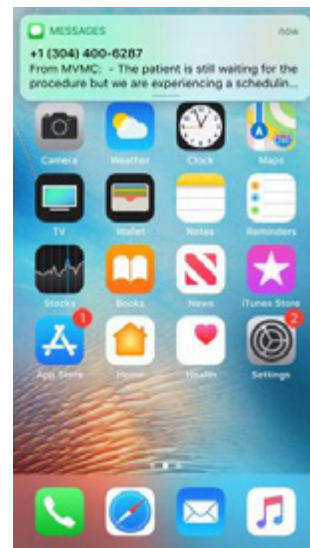
– Martinsburg VA Medical Center Operating Room Nurse Manager and iNET Investee, Kimberly Taylor

During the fall of 2018, iNET opened the FY19 Spark-Seed-Spread Innovation Investment Program application period. Topics of interest included mental health, specialty care, and Veterans’ experiences. A pool of subject matter experts, iNET site local leadership, and iNET leadership, ultimately selected 90 investments to support for the 2019 fiscal year:

- ▶ 44 Spark
- ▶ 31 Seed
- ▶ 15 Spread

INFORM-A-VET – SEED Martinsburg VA Medical Center

Kimberly Taylor’s solution, “Inform-A-Vet,” is a cloud-based text messaging tool used daily in six VA Medical Centers. It provides family and friends with real-time texts regarding the progress of their loved one’s surgical procedure on their own mobile device, without having to join a portal or download an app. With Inform-A-Vet, an average of 60 Veterans’ waiting families per day are receiving updates from anywhere, rather than waiting by the infamous red phone in the surgical waiting room.



MYCHEMO CALENDAR – SPARK Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

As more cancer treatments are moving outside of the infusion setting and into the home, adherence to oral anticancer drugs continues to be a challenge. Failure to follow instructions can affect outcomes and survival. “MyChemo Calendar” provides a tool that allows Veterans to better understand the details of their regimen and better adhere to their cancer treatment plan.

SLING SHIFT – SPARK Minneapolis VA Health Care System

This patent-pending mechanical invention, which is still in development, is a low-cost, simple way to provide the equivalent of an automatic transmission for manual wheelchair users. Like an automatic transmission vehicle downshifting up a hill, the mechanism changes the gear ratio of the drive wheels without the user having to let go of the push rim to shift gears; it also reduces friction losses associated with variable speed pulleys. No batteries, motors, or user training are necessary. It is as simple to use as a traditional wheelchair, but for our aging Veterans with limited strength, it means the difference between needing a push from a caregiver and independence.



PRIDE IN ALL WHO SERVE – SPREAD Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center

PRIDE in All Who Serve seeks to bring together a community of LGBT Veterans to educate them on health risk factors as well as better ways to communicate with VA providers to improve their health and well-being. To date, the group has been implemented in 12 VAs and there is an immediate demand to expand. Veterans participating in the group have shown a 30 percent decrease in suicidality.



“My life has gotten better by coming... and I now have the sense of community that was missing in my life.”

–Anonymous Veteran Participant of the PRIDE Program

THE SEEING LENS – SEED Lebanon VA Medical Center

The Seeing Lens: Therapeutic Photography Group is a 10-week photography-based therapeutic intervention designed to foster self-exploration and self-discovery in Veteran populations. In FY19, 12 Veterans completed the program. Outcome data indicates an increase in confidence, emotional regulation, and being present and decreases in loneliness, stress level, distractibility, and anxiety. The majority of participants reported feeling more present, increased mindfulness, increased social connections, and new ways of “seeing.” The programming will be expanding to three VA Medical Centers this year with a demand for continued expansion at other VA facilities.

POPULATION IMPACT OF THE FY19 INVESTMENTS TO DATE

▶ **122,921** UNIQUE VETERANS

▶ **3,307** UNIQUE VA EMPLOYEES

▶ **1,554** UNIQUE VETERAN CAREGIVERS



Attendees at the FY19 Innovation Accelerator Bootcamp



“We are so thrilled to be supporting the vital work of the VHA Innovators Network in developing and nurturing the DNA of innovation throughout the organization, which will ultimately benefit our Veterans and their families. That to us, is so meaningful. We passionately believe the VHA Innovators Network has the great potential of changing the narrative of innovation within government – the fact that VA is investing real dollars into their employees, and giving them an opportunity to share their ideas, and turn that into a reality within the ecosystem, is so powerful.”

– Sarah Chen, Principal, FedTech

FY19 Innovation Accelerator Bootcamp

The FY19 Spark-Seed-Spread Investees met in Washington, D.C., in January to kick off their investment lifecycle at Innovation Accelerator Bootcamp. Bootcamp provided employee innovators the opportunity to begin their education in innovation-related competencies like the Three Box Solution and HCD, as well as operational project management functions, including contracting, data collection, and communications. Investees

received guidance on VHA Program Office priorities and opportunities for sponsorship from VHA leadership. They also engaged in meaningful networking opportunities with fellow employees across the VA health care system.

“I was so proud of our iNET team. What an amazing display of passion and ingenuity.” – Allison Amrhein, Director of Operations, iNET

FY20 SPARK-SEED-SPREAD

The FY20 class of Spark-Seed-Spread Investees was formally welcomed at the November 2019 Innovation Accelerator Bootcamp! This year’s Bootcamp marks another huge change for iNET’s programming. Bootcamp is the first interaction between Investees and our new partner, FedTech. iNET has recruited FedTech to lead VHA employee innovators through an experiential learning process to develop their competencies in building and testing both incremental and transformational innovations that can change the way VA delivers care and service.

iNET at iEx

In October, iEx celebrated another year of innovation at VA. Over 50 employee innovators represented iNET during iEx Talks, iEx Demos, the Shark Tank Competition, and a poster networking event. This year's event was the largest to date: 400+ individuals attended the event in-person, while over 2,000 viewed sessions on the VA YouTube channel's live stream option.

SPOTLIGHT ON... IEX TALKS

Amanda Purnell

Innovation Specialist, VA St. Louis Health Care System
VHA Innovation Ecosystem
Entrepreneur in Residence

"I was so honored so be able to speak at such an energizing and exciting event, filled with people who are committed to testing out new ideas and making them available to our Veterans. HCD is central to innovation work for several reasons: it places the human experience at the center of the process by first focusing efforts on the contextual experience of the problem, empowering staff to creatively develop potential solutions, and then testing the human experience of the solution for impact. It's inspiring to hear from so many people all over the country who are working on so many varied and impactful projects."

SPOTLIGHT ON... DEMOS

Kimberly Jones

Blood Pressure Support Frame
VA Boston Healthcare System

"Being able to demo at the Innovation Experience was humbling, as I was surround with so many brilliant people with state-of-the-art ideas and quality improvements. I am

beyond honored that I was able to demo my idea (blood pressure support frame) and be part of the ongoing accomplishments that set the VA above all other healthcare institutions! I look forward to being part of the upcoming years events as I further my prototype."

Amanda Gillion

Beta Lactam Allergy Assessment
Memphis VA Medical Center

"My demo was about using a pharmacist-driven beta lactam assessment template and skin test clinic to clear Veterans' penicillin allergies. This has allowed Veterans to receive more appropriate antibiotics, decrease the chance of resistant infections, and lower health care costs. I was inspired by what I saw at Demo Day. Seeing how people from all disciplines are working together to create innovative solutions for health care problems has motivated me even more."

Alyssa Welch

Recreation TV
Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

"I was very excited to be selected



Top left: Innovation Specialists, Indra Sandal and Kim Bielicki; bottom, left: Spark-Seed-Spread Investee, Larry Hillson; above: Innovation Specialist, Anu Osideko

to share my project this year. Of course, I love talking about Rec. TV, Channel 74, and how it is impacting the Veterans in our community living centers. By including bedbound Veterans via live broadcasts, they can be involved in Bingo, Resident Council, and other activities and events not just by seeing and hearing the event but being able to participate! They can interact, call in with a win, ask questions, or offer input. I really enjoyed sharing my demo. I received great, useful feedback and experienced valuable facetime with leaders, researchers, makers, and engineers. The whole experience validated all the time and effort that goes into implementing these innovative projects."

INET REPRESENTED IN SHARK TANK

GERI-VET
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

"As a co-director of the Cleveland VA Medical Center's GERI-VET program, it was an incredible honor to

participate in this year's VHA Shark



Tank experience. Interacting with the other Shark Tank fellows was a wonderful networking opportunity. Perhaps more than anything, it was humbling — there are so many incredibly dedicated, on-the-ground VA employees working to better Veteran health care."

Rebecca Schlueter

Healthier Kidneys Through Your Kitchen
Lexington VA Medical Center

"Being part of Shark Tank experience at iEx was such an exciting opportunity. I gained a revived



sense of enthusiasm for innovation by attending the event and I enjoyed meeting other VA employees from across the nation who share the same passion for prevention as our team does. To put the Healthier Kidneys Through Your Kitchen program in the spotlight was an honor and a great chance to show that a simple solution to a complex problem is possible. We can't wait to continue to diffuse this practice throughout the country and are thankful for iNet for the support to do so!"

From the Director's Chair: Director of Programming, Brynn Cole



I've been with the VA for over 12 years, and like any seasoned VA employee, I am well-versed in the critical need and subsequent processes to execute projects to meet performance metrics, improve operational efficiencies, and expand access to current services. We engage the Rapid Process Improvement Workshop (RPIW), Kanban, and charter improvement teams, and we get meaner and "Leaner" with every Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control (DMAIC) cycle.

We know how to close the performance gap. But what about the possibility gap?

"How do you create the future while managing the present? How do you shape the evolution of the year 2030 when you are squarely executing projects in the year 2019?" asked Vijay Govindarajan (VG), author of The Three Box Solution, of hundreds of VA employees during his keynote address at the 2019 VHA iEx.

Primarily, we've done this instinctually and intuitively. Our rich culture of innovation has often occurred in spite of the system — think of VistA and the Underground Railroad. Imagine what we can achieve when we actively foster, nurture, and reward the process of innovation. This is what iNET sees within the Three Box Solution: a framework to unbundle and support the various stages of innovation. Within this structure, we are taught to tap into weak signals, identify roots versus chains, assess our forgetting problem, prepare for the unknowable future, and simultaneously harness and unleash the boundless creativity of VA's workforce.

Balancing the present while selectively forgetting the past and simultaneously building the future is no easy task! Watching VG's keynote address will help position what this work really is; how Mr. David Dunning, Director of the Memphis VA, is operationalizing this framework; and why VG has become one of iNET's top innovation advisors.

And if that's not enough to interest you, he'll also teach you the top 11 things you can do with a dead horse.

Watch and see why VG's The Three Box Solution is so fundamental to our army of innovators: <http://bit.ly/iNET-iEx19>

2019 Network by the Numbers



33
SITES



46
INNOVATION
SPECIALISTS



90
FY19 SPARK-
SEED-SPREAD
INVESTMENTS

Three Spark-Seed-Spread innovations disclosed to the Tech Transfer Program

Two Spark-Seed-Spread innovations patent pending

In less than one year since launch, **FY19 Spark-Seed-Spread** innovations have impacted



122,921

VETERANS
3,307 VA employees
1,554 caregivers



108
FY20 SPARK-
SEED-SPREAD
INVESTMENTS

204
INNOVATION
EVENTS HOSTED
BY INNOVATION
SPECIALISTS

FUELED BY



8,416 attendees



49
VISN-
LEVEL
EVENTS



1,107
iNET TWEETS
1,802
retweets
per Twitter



1,298
iNET
FACEBOOK
POST
LIKES

Look Ahead to 2020

From the Director's Chair:

Allison Amrhein, Director of Operations



Over the past year, I have consistently communicated that iNET's mission is dually focused on employees and Veterans: empowering employees to design innovative solutions to improve care for Veterans. Our success — operationalizing and accelerating the development and implementation of innovative products or programs within VHA — will fail without investing in VHA employees by giving them the power, tools, and confidence they need to be successful innovators.

The FY20 Spark-Seed-Spread cycle was designed to place as much importance on the individual's development, as it was that of their innovative solution. We use Spark-Seed-Spread to identify deeply committed employees as a sourcing mechanism and then train them to design differently as they develop and implement their solutions. With this training and education, we change the way employees think and reintroduce them into to their normal environment with a new view of how to solve problems, which when compounded, creates an entire workforce of creative thinkers.

The FY20 Spark-Seed-Spread application and submission requirements asked more of employees than ever, so it was a pleasant surprise to receive 300+ applications. A pool of 200 reviewers, VISN leadership, facility leadership, and iNET leadership narrowed those 300+ applications to 108 eventual selections, spanning 40+ sites and 17 VISNs. The end of 2019 is just the beginning for these folks. They are in for a wild ride and, in the end, the Investees and Veterans will both reap the benefits of what iNET offers. I'm tremendously proud and excited for this year and to work with these wonderful people.

For the FY20 Spark-Seed-Spread application period, iNET experimented with a way to expand access to Spark-Seed-Spread resources beyond iNET sites. Go Fish! was a VHA-wide opportunity for employees to "pitch" their innovative ideas to Innovation Specialists to find a "match." If a match was made between an employee and an Innovation Specialist, the Innovation Specialist's site would essentially adopt the employee and their idea as their own and the Innovation Specialist would help the employee complete the Spark-Seed-Spread application. 40 pitches were heard, 19 matches were made, and one employee was chosen as one of the 108 Investees. Congratulations Brian Storts from the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center!





**Innovators
Network**



**VHA INNOVATION
Ecosystem**