Overview
In October 2015, VA’s Under Secretary for Health initiated the VA Diffusion of Excellence Initiative (DEI), which identifies the best projects and prototypes that can be replicated to improve the quality of VA healthcare. The DEI aims to empower VA employees to develop promising practices in care and administrative processes, institutionalize the processes for implementing and spreading promising practices, and minimize negative variation in these practices across the VA healthcare system. A key feature of the DEI is the VA “Shark Tank,” in which VA employees who developed promising practices pitch their ideas to VA medical center and Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) directors (the “Sharks”) who bid resources to implement the practices.

The Spreading Healthcare Access, Activities, Research and Knowledge (SHAARK) QUERI Partnered Evaluation Initiative is designed to provide rapid and frequent feedback to DEI partners by:
• Addressing factors aimed at increasing participation in the DEI;
• Increasing organizational readiness for change within VA facilities to successfully implement “gold status best practices;” and
• Addressing key contextual factors that are associated with successful implementation of gold status practices at medical facilities across the VA.

The SHAARK Partnered Evaluation Initiative will address the following aims:
• Identify factors associated with participation in the DEI.
• Examine VA leaders’ (i.e., medical and VISN directors) decision-making processes when choosing to bid resources for implementation of gold status practices, and relate processes to perceived organizational readiness for change.
• Conduct process evaluations to understand influences on implementation success within implementing facilities and grassroots facilities.
• Use Qualitative Comparative Analysis to identify pathways toward broader diffusion and successful implementation of gold status practices.

This evaluation will rely on quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods to evaluate the DEI, primarily through using the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) in combination with the Theory for Organizational Readiness for Change to explain adoption decisions and subsequent implementation experiences.

Implementation Strategy
The results of the evaluation will contribute to the increased ability of DEI partners to provide effective “personalized implementation” (organizational level and person level human-centered design) of promising practices.