

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Office of Health Equity

Lauren Korshak, DHealth(c), MS, RCEP
Translation Lead, Office of Health Equity

Lauren.Korshak@va.gov

202-615-8727



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY

Created in 2012

Vision: To ensure that VHA provides appropriate individualized health care to each Veteran in a way that-

- Eliminates disparate health outcomes and
- Assures health equity



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY GOALS

1. **Leadership:** Strengthen VA leadership to address health inequalities and reduce health disparities.
2. **Awareness:** Increase awareness of health inequalities and disparities.
3. **Health Outcomes:** Improve outcomes for Veterans experiencing health disparities.
4. **Workforce Diversity:** Improve cultural and linguistic competency and diversity of the VHA workforce.
5. **Data, Research and Evaluation:** Improve data and diffusion of research to achieve health equity.



Veterans who experience greater obstacles to health related to:

- Race or ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Geographic location
- Religion
- Socio-economic status
- Sexual orientation
- Mental health
- Military era
- Cognitive /sensory / physical disability



OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY WEBSITE

<https://www.va.gov/healthequity>

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Search Contact us Sign in

VA Benefits and Health Care About VA Find a VA Location My VA

VA » Health Care » Office of Health Equity

Office of Health Equity

- Health Equity
 - Office of Health Equity Home
 - Office of Health Equity Home
 - About
 - OHE Leadership
 - Health Equity Coalition
 - Health Equity Action Plan
 - Publications and Research
 - Data
 - Populations
 - Social Determinants of Health
 - Tools
 - News and Events
 - Partners and Stakeholders
 - More Health Care

NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

Among adults with underlying diabetes, veterans are more likely to be diagnosed by a health professional

95.1% Veterans 73.5% Nonveterans

Veteran Diabetes Data

Recent data analysis describes diabetes among Veterans and Nonveterans. Source: Healthy People 2020. [Learn more >](#)

NEW LGB Chartbook Health Equity Video Veteran Diabetes Data

VHA Office of Health Equity

Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans. OHE supports the VHA's vision to provide appropriate individualized health care to each Veteran in a way that eliminates disparate health outcomes and assures health equity.

CONNECT WITH VHA

Facebook Twitter YouTube Blog

Subscribe to Receive Email Updates



Choose VA

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Cultivating equitable research through partnership with the Growing Rural Outreach through Veteran Engagement (GROVE) Center



OUR PRESENTERS



Kelty Fehling, MPH is a Health Science Specialist with the Denver COIN. She serves as a program manager for the Denver COIN and the multi-site VA Collaborative Evaluation Center (VACE).



Ray Facundo, is a Research project manager for studies and projects funded by VA Health Sciences Research & Development and the Office of Rural Health, based at SLVHCS in New Orleans, Louisiana.



OUR PRESENTERS



Leah Wendleton, MPH, MSW is a Health Science Specialist and has worked in the VA since 2013. She strives to create products and disseminate information that is accessible for professionals, Veterans, families, and to their communities around research and suicide prevention.





GROVE

**Cultivating equitable research through partnership with
the Growing Rural Outreach through Veteran
Engagement (GROVE) Center**

October 13, 2021

L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021

The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States government.





Leah Wendleton, MPH, MSW



Ray Facundo, MSW



Kelty Fehling, MPH

L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021

GROVE Team

- Denver VA
 - Kelty Fehling, MPH (Project Lead) – Denver COIN
 - Leah Wendleton, MPH, MSW (Project Co-Lead) – Rocky Mountain MIRECC
 - Kathryn Nearing, PhD – ECHCS GRECC
 - Paige Backlund, DrPH -University of Colorado Hospital
 - Amber Lane, BS – Denver COIN
- Iowa City VA
 - Kenda Steffensmeier, PhD – Iowa City COIN
- Milwaukee VA
 - Jeff Whittle, MD
 - Mark Flower – Dry Hooch Founder
- New Haven VA
 - Katie LaChappelle, MPH – New Haven COIN
- New Orleans VA
 - Gala True, PhD – South Central MIRECC
 - Ray Facundo, MSW

L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021

Veteran Engagement (VE)

...the development of **bi-directional relationships** between Veterans, stakeholders, and researchers “that results in **informed decision-making about the selection, conduct, and use of research**” (Concannon, 2012).

- SERVE Toolkit for Veteran Engagement: Overview Page iii

The spread of Veteran engagement in HSR&D

Jam Sessions

Veterans attend HSR&D 2019 as partners

JGIM Special Issue

HSR&D RFA includes Veteran Engagement as priority

National Veteran Engagement Workgroup, est. 2015

2019 Special Issue: *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology*

SERVE Toolkit
https://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/for_researchers/serve/

COINs establish Veteran Engagement Groups (VEG) at every center

GROVE

L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021

What is GROVE?

- The GROVE Center develops capacity and resources **for VA researchers and staff** to be more inclusive of rural Veteran populations and to serve as a **resource center** to support projects interested in including **Veteran Engagement** in their methods.



partner



communicat
e

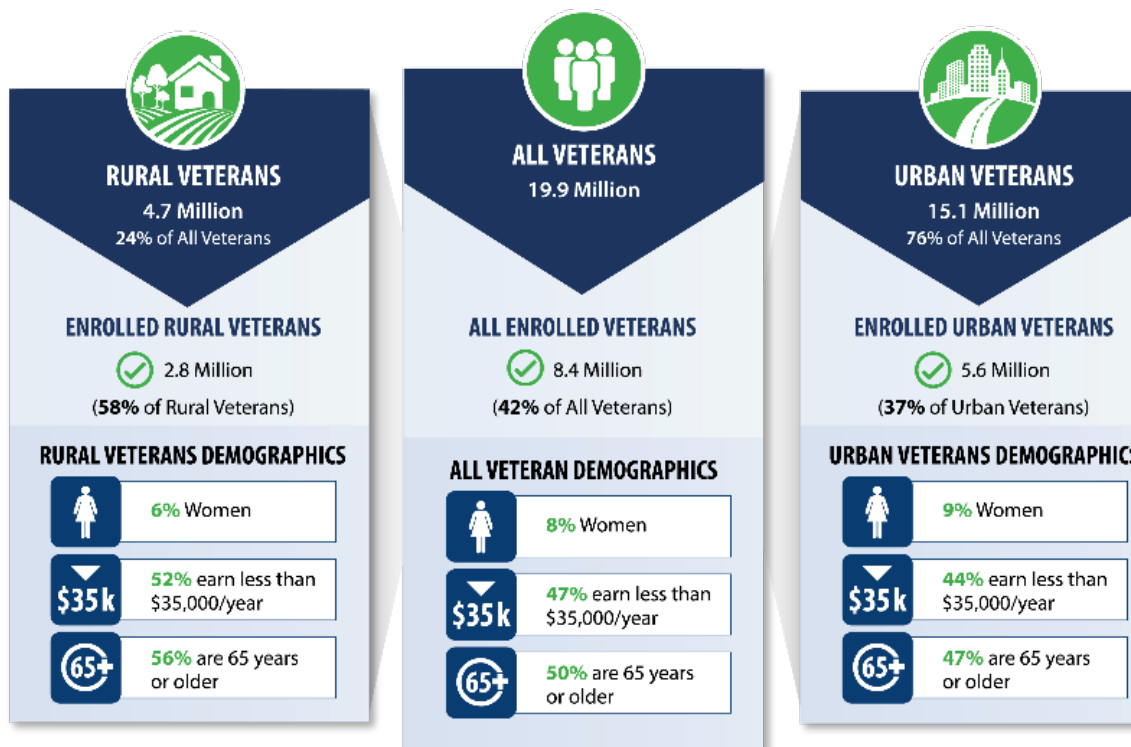


disseminate

GROVE achieves strategies to engage Rural Veterans through:

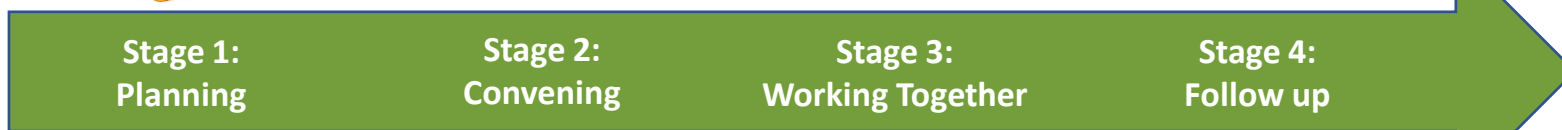
1. Developing and testing on the ground processes and tools to support VE.
2. Targeted consultations, partnerships, and project support for VA program offices and researchers.
3. Promotion of VE practice and dissemination of methods nationally.

Why Rural Veteran Outreach and Engagement



* Data provided by Office of Rural Health

Rural Colorado Veteran Research Engagement Board (RCVREB)



**Stage 1:
Planning**

Dedicated Staff
to do Outreach

Regulatory
review and
Established
MOU

Created a Vision,
member
description,
transparency in
processes

**Stage 2:
Convening**

Recruitment

Interviewing

Orientation

**Stage 3:
Working Together**

Initial Meeting

Social Meetings

Feedback Loops

**Stage 4:
Follow up**

Bi-Directional
agenda setting

Evaluating

Seeking Veteran
Reflection on
Process

L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021



RCVREB Feedback

Wound Care Education
Enterprise-Wide Initiative
Application

Geriatric COVID connection
project

Operation Veteran Strong

- Firsthand experience of the infrastructure and care delivery at rural CBOCs.
- Experience of COVID in rural Colorado and issues for researchers to consider.
- Identifying community champions and dissemination outlets for a suicide prevention resource platform in rural communities.

GROVE Supported/Partnered Projects

Serious Illness Care Conversations

- Assisted development of project-specific rural engagement board.

Women's Health Transition Training (WHTT)

- Used engagement methods to recruit, query, & report out perspectives from unenrolled rural women Veterans for the Office of Women's Health.

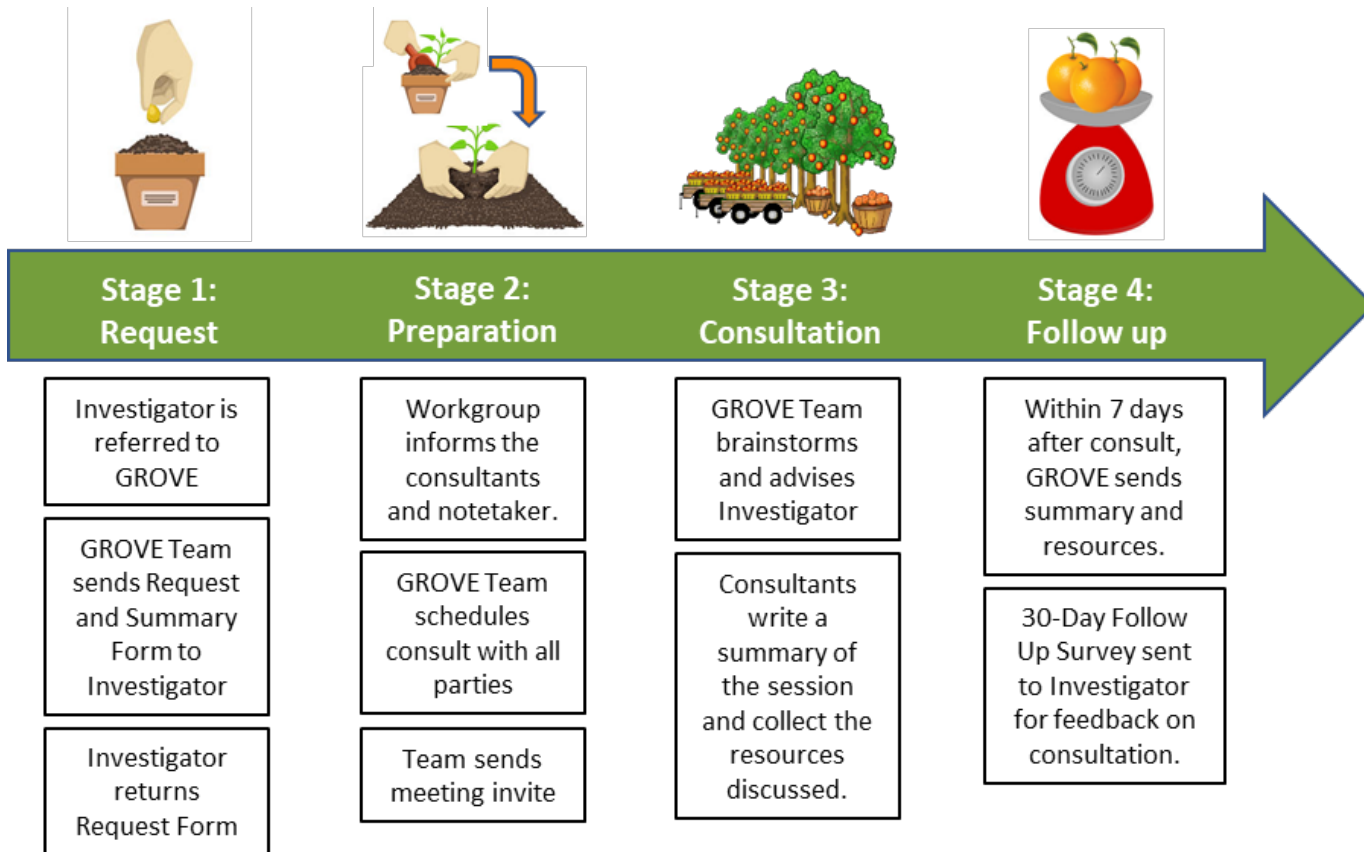
Assessing Social and Community Environments with National Data Survey

- Diversified engagement efforts to reach rural populations.

Understanding Suicide risk and Enhancing Suicide Prevention

- Diversified engagement efforts to reach Asian American and Pacific Islander Veterans.

GROVE Consultation Overview



L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021

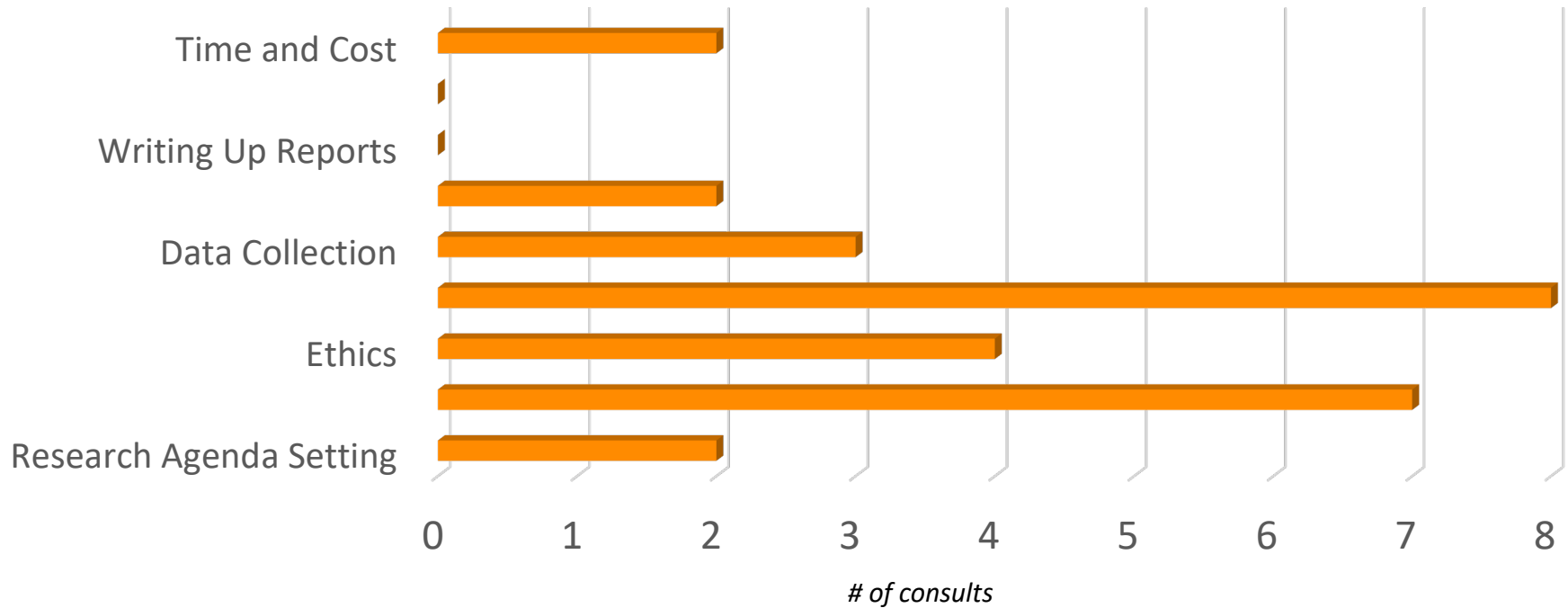
GROVE Consultation Areas of Focus



L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021

Areas of Focus Impacted by GROVE Consultations

(n=9)



*Data sourced from 30-day Follow-up Feedback Surveys

Impact of GROVE Consultations



“The **diversity [of the consultants] was a big plus** – hearing different perspectives from Veterans as well as research and coordination staff provided varying helpful views.”



“I really appreciated that the team gave **actionable feedback that was feasible** to change within my project. I would definitely use and refer other investigators to use this valuable resource.”



“It felt great to **build upon existing templates, models, and experiences** and helped me feel like our group is **connected to a larger VA-wide effort** to enhance Veteran and caregiver engagement.”

Veteran Community Outreach

- 🍊 American Legion
- 🍊 Vietnam Veterans of America
- 🍊 Wisconsin Heroes on the Water
- 🍊 Veterans Health Coalition
- 🍊 Veteran Suicide Prevention Coalition
- 🍊 Disabled Veterans of America (DVA)
Wisconsin
- 🍊 State & County VSOs
- 🍊 Black Veterans Project
- 🍊 Black Veterans Empowerment Council
- 🍊 Minority Veterans of America
- 🍊 Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley
- 🍊 United Veterans' Coalition
- 🍊 Veterans of Foreign Wars
- 🍊 War Memorial Center
- 🍊 VA/MCW Peer Outreach Program
- 🍊 Veteran Mental Health Advocacy Council
- 🍊 Guitars for Vets
- 🍊 Feast of Crispian
- 🍊 HAVEN canine support training and
equine therapy
- 🍊 About Face: Veterans Against the War
- 🍊 FARMAID Farmer-Veteran Coalition
- 🍊 Colorado AgraAbility
- 🍊 Joining Community Forces

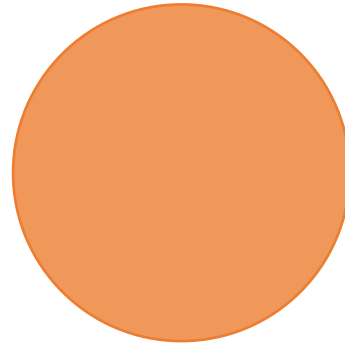
L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021

GROVEHUB.org

The image shows a screenshot of the GROVEHUB.org website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, About Us, How We Work, Contact Us, and Join Us, along with a LOG IN button. The main heading reads "Growing Rural Outreach through Veteran Engagement Center". A large red sign with the text "Coming SOON" is overlaid on the left side of the page. On the right, there is a video player showing a group of people in a virtual meeting. The video player interface includes a timestamp of 37:49, a "Change scene" button, and a "DISCOVER" button with the text "Find new interesting projects".

L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021

THE GROVE CENTER PRESENTS
VETERAN ENGAGEMENT
JAM SESSIONS
Summer Festival Edition



The Road Crew (l-r): Kenda Stewart Steffensmeier, Katie LaChappelle, Ray Facundo, Mark Flower, Leah Wendleton

Questions?: Contact Raymond.Facundo@va.gov

GROVE
Growing Rural Outreach through
Veteran Engagement Center

The Line-up:

MAY: “Don’t Let Me Down”

Prepping investigators to engage with Veterans

JUN: “Wild World”

Virtual team building & interpersonal interaction in the time of COVID-19

JUL: “Reeling in the Years”

The importance of reflection and feedback loops to process improvement

AUG: “Long Train Running”

Facilitation and how to empower and support Veterans’ knowledge production.

SEP: “Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word”

Anti-Racism and Inclusivity in Veteran Engagement.

Impact of Jam Sessions



“I have learned a great deal from this group - everyone has been so helpful and willing to share, had great ideas and experience, and is open to talking about topics as questions about them arise.”



“Hearing the experiences of others has been really helpful, just to have some ideas when things pop up of what others have done is like having a tool ready just in case. I have learned some really good facilitation skills from the members who have more experience than I do!”



“The group is a really helpful and affirming, supportive community of practice...”



“Because of this discussion, I will... ask my group what they like/don't like about the post meeting survey; consider discussions rather than just surveys.”



“The topic of approaching Veterans as professionals but keeping communication informal was something I had not thought about before! It's an excellent way to describe the balance needed of professional and personal.”



“Because of this discussion, I will reach out to different organizations to find more diverse group of vets for my panel(s).”

Strengthening Excellence in Research through Veteran Engagement (SERVE) Toolkit

- Originally released in 2018 through a collaborative process between 7 VA hospitals
- Developed to provide guidance to VA research centers and investigators to support the development of opportunities for Veterans to be engaged in research.
- https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/serve/

SERVE Toolkit Updates

Photovoice/Photo Elicitation FAQ



Obtaining IRB approval
Capacity Building
Publication, and more!

Rural Engagement Strategies



Flyer posting, social media
& internet, word of
mouth, and more!

Best Practices during COVID-19



Setting up virtual meetings,
arranging virtual social
time, lessons learned, and
more!

Distributing Technology



How to guide,
considerations, best
practices, and more!

Facilitation Resources



Best practices, tips &
tricks, examples, and
more!

Compensation Options



Options to consider,
navigating local systems,
and more!

VSO Connections: Best Practices



White paper related to
making connections with
Veteran Service
Organizations.

How we can help you



Consultation to support Veteran Engagement methods and maintenance



GROVE is continuing to grow. **Keep in contact** for latest resources available through or from GROVE.



Stay tuned: use GROVE to connect with rural Veteran groups nationally

Veteran engagement moves research toward inclusion & equity

- Changes the power dynamic from researcher/participant to research *partners*.
- Builds trust between Veterans, VA research, *and* the health care system.
- Knowledge is held and produced by *all* parties involved.
- Co-production of knowledge can lead to co-ownership of outcomes.



GROVE

Kelty.Fehling@va.gov, Co- Project Lead

Leah.Wendleton@va.gov, Co-Project Lead

Raymond.Facundo@va.gov, Project Coordinator

L WENDLETON, R FACUNDO, KS STEFFENSMEIER, A LANE, K FELHING, October 13, 2021



Questions?