

# **Veteran Engagement Panel**

**JoAnn Kirchner, MD**

**QUERI for Team-Based Behavioral Health**

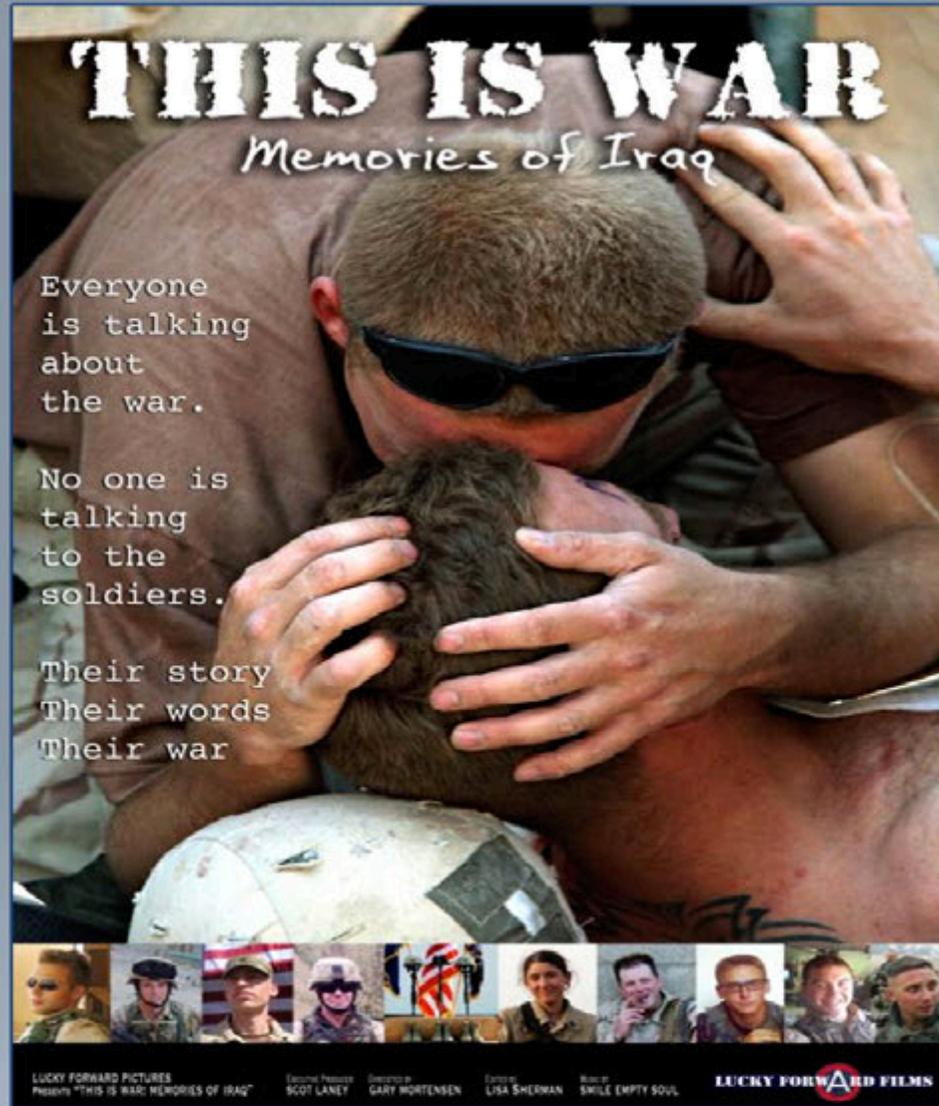
**Kelty Fehling, MPH**

**HSR&D Center for Veteran-Centered and Value Driven Care**

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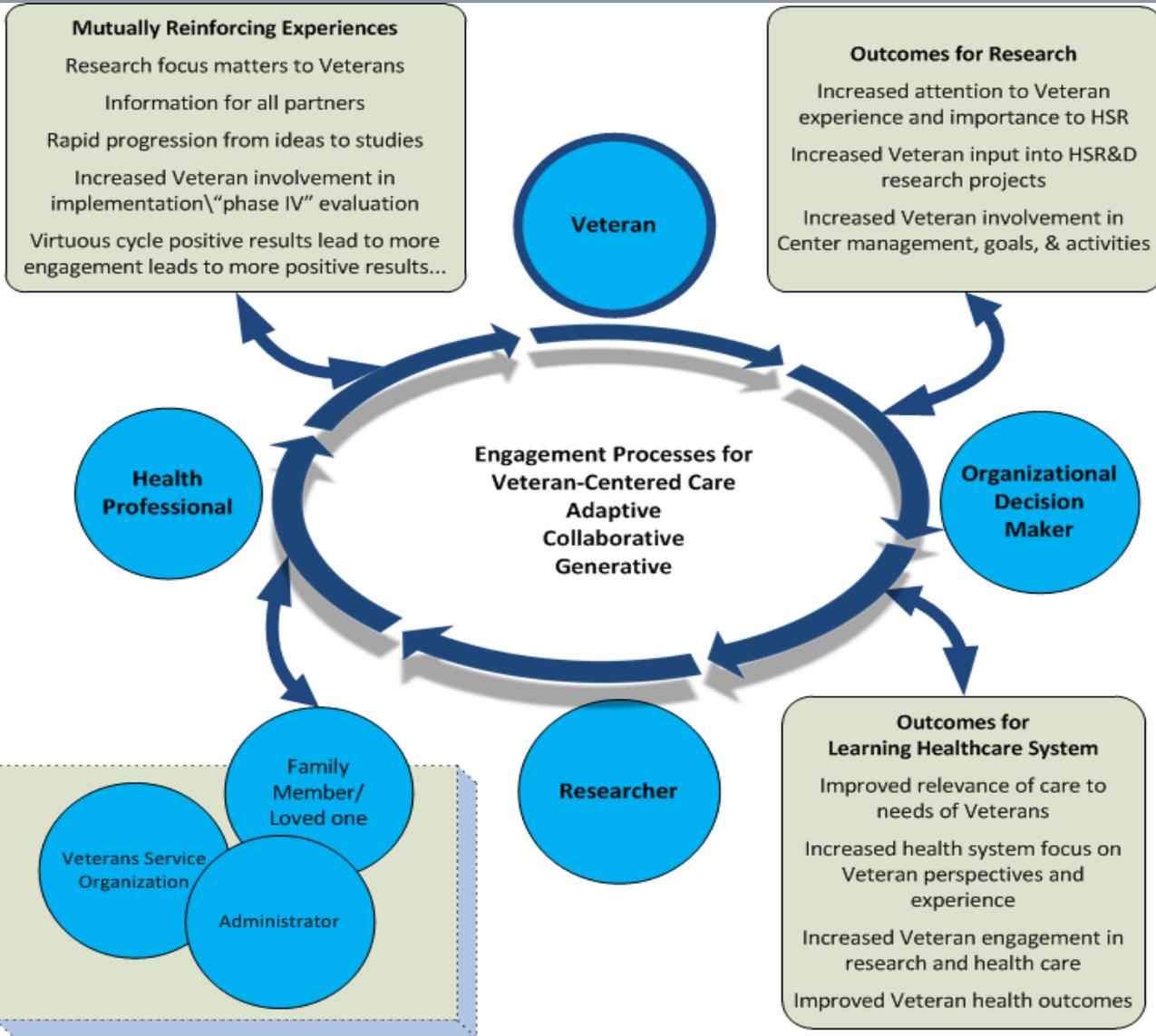
**HSR&D Center to Improve Veteran Involvement in Care**

# Nothing about Us



# Nothing about Us without Us!





## **Strategies:**

***When do you partner with Veterans?***

***Early and Often!***

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# Strategies:

## *How do you partner with Veterans?*

### Types of Veteran Stakeholder involvement

- Strategic
- Tactical
- Evaluative

#### *Hint:*

Be clear on *what role* your Veteran partner will play

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# Strategies:

## *Who are your Veteran partners?*

*Hint: They don't all wear nametags saying 'Partner'*

Look broadly:

- Who cares about the problem
- Who can inform your work
- Who will be your end user

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# Strategies:

## *What BH QUERI did to partner with Veterans*

### *"Stakeholder Council: How to Involve Veterans and Partners in Improving the Quality of Mental Health Services Research in VHA"*

Monica M. Matthieu , Nicole Hart , Bridgette Larkin-Perkins , Jeffery A. Pitcock , Kathy L. Henderson , Angela B. Swensen , JoAnn E. Kirchner

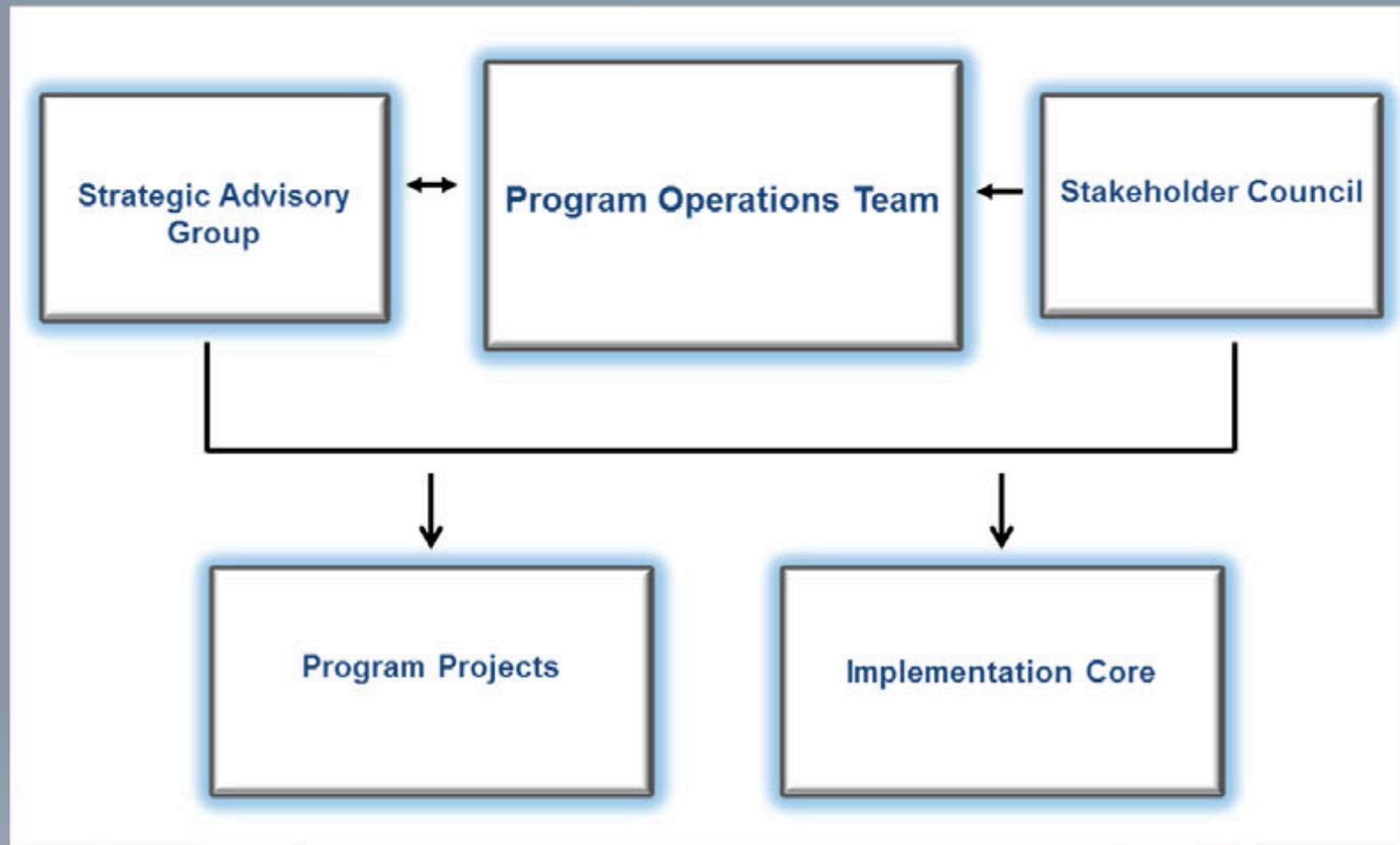
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# Strategies:

## BH QUERI Organizational Chart



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# Strategies:

## *Stakeholder Council Composition*

### Original Members:

- Female and Male OEF/OIF Veterans
- Primary care provider, CBOC Director
- Psychiatrist, front line provider
- Psychologist, Network Mental Health Lead

### Members added in 2013:

- Female and Male Vietnam War Veterans
- Geriatrician and Persian Gulf Era Veteran
- Parents of an OIF/OEF Veteran who died from suicide
- Chief of a Chaplain Service
- Associate Medical Center Director
- Psychiatrist, Network Mental Health Lead

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# Challenges

Partnering with Veterans' takes

- *Time*
- *Planning*
- *Long-term Commitment*

and frequently means a change in culture

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## Lessons Learned

- Partnering is *a process* not an event
- Partners rarely speak your language, but it is imperative that *you speak theirs*
- *Tailor your approach* to your partner
- Partnering is *based on mutual respect* and an understanding of the value of each stakeholder
- *Honor your partner's time and contribution*

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# Veteran Engagement in Research at the Center Level

Kelty B Fehling, MPH  
Denver COIN



FEBRUARY 2016

# Planning and Implementation – Denver COIN and MIRECC experience

- **Step 1: Conceptualization, Purpose, and Formation**
  - Denver Center of Innovation for Veteran Centered and Value Driven Care (COIN) and Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC) formed a collaborative partnership to engage Veterans in research in an ongoing manner. Spent several months researching engagement and stakeholder models to determine options for board structure and functioning.
- **Step 2: Regulatory Requirements**
  - Presented plan to local R&D committee and Voices for Veterans Council for endorsement. Obtained an MOU from the Denver VAMC Director and COS. Ensured Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) compliance.
- **Step 3: Recruitment**
  - Determined method for identifying potential Veterans. Call put out through email and at meetings to researchers and providers for help identifying Veterans that fit a formal member description.

# Planning and Implementation – Denver COIN and MIRECC experience

- **Step 4: Interviewing and Selection**

- Interviewed 12 candidates that provided written statements of interest. Candidates were rated by two interviewers independently on scales assessing accessibility, interest and knowledge in research, interest or personal experience with the two Center’s missions, and history of participation in groups, boards or councils. COIN and MIRECC investigators convened a formal selection meeting and selected nine Veterans.

- **Step 5: Conduct a Center Investigator Orientation**

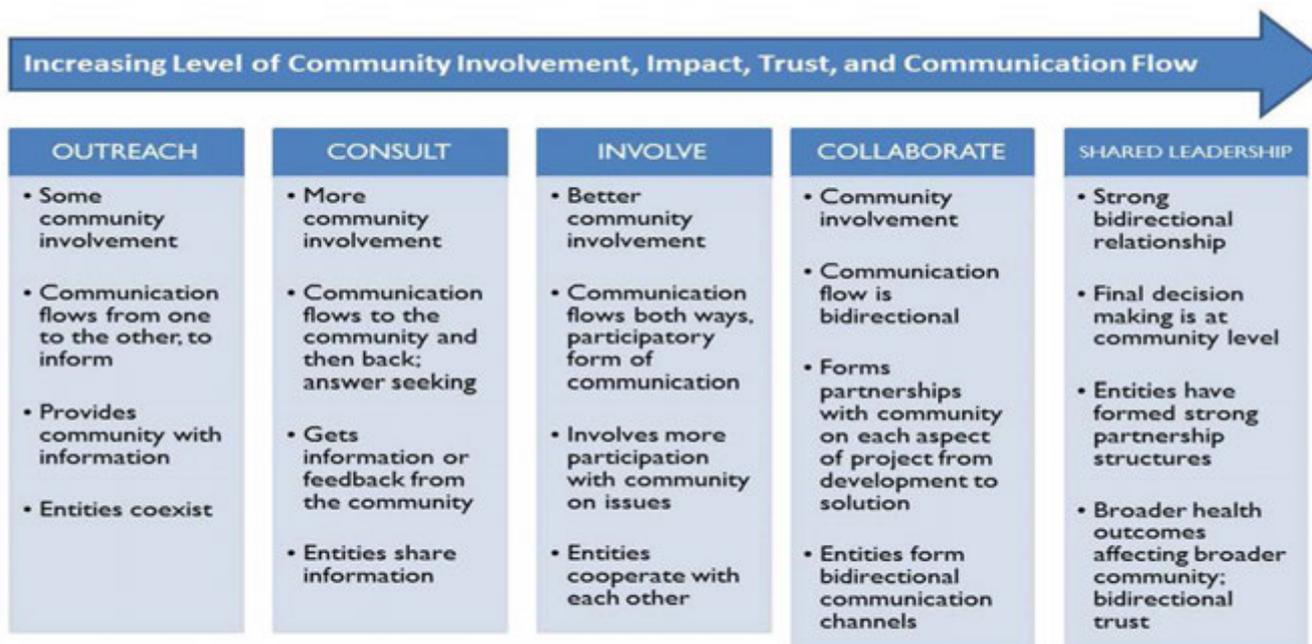
- Presented concepts of community engagement and partnership, discussed board demographics and cultural sensitivity, and formal research review and board engagement processes.

- **Step 6: Conduct a Veteran Board Member Orientation**

- Focused on board cohesion, Research 101, community engagement, confidentiality and intellectual property, media interactions, and the formal research review and investigator engagement processes.

# Planning and Implementation – Denver COIN and MIRECC experience

- **Step 7: Create a Veteran-Investigator Feedback Loop**
  - Implemented evaluation to assess engagement and impact of Veteran’s input on research studies.



Reference: Modified by the authors from the International Association for Public Participation

# Initial Impacts

- **Post Meeting Survey**
  - Results show that both Veterans and Investigators are consistently engaging in a manner that promotes trust, open communication and partnership, and high levels of awareness and understanding of research topics.
- **One Week Investigator Follow-Up Survey**
  - Investigators have rated their interactions from “helpful” to “very helpful” to their research projects.
  - Themes emerged around the changes investigators are making to their projects based on meetings with the Board:
    - Clarifying recruitment and enrollment procedures and documentation
    - Personalizing and simplifying intervention materials
    - Pursuing Board identified partnerships in the community to facilitate studies and center activities

# Veteran Research Engagement Board Member's Voices

*“Its changed my opinion of what goes on behind the scenes at the VA.”*

*“The makeup of this group dictates open and honest discussion and I feel comfortable doing just that.”*

*“There is a trust factor in place that makes me feel more involved in the process.”*

*“The power is not given to one individual. Everyone is equal.”*

*“I am excited about this opportunity, to engage in what's practical, and relevant and real, beyond the restrictions of science. I have never been a part of a system, where I can be in the position to be on both sides. It's exciting.”*

# Questions?

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# Veteran Engagement Activities at the Center to Improve Veteran Involvement in Care (CIVIC)

Steve Dobscha MD  
February 9, 2016



# Background/milestones

- Proposal to fund CIVIC included:
  - Plans to create Veteran Advisory Council
  - Bring Veterans onto research teams
  - Develop best practices for Veteran Engagement
- CIVIC engagement committee: Drs. Ono, Saha, Barton, and Ganzini
- Initial steps: review models, plan, name, address compensation, etc.
- Convened Veteran Advisory Council (VAC) Seed Committee (February 2015)
- CIVIC VAC convened (July 2015)—finalize charter and guidelines

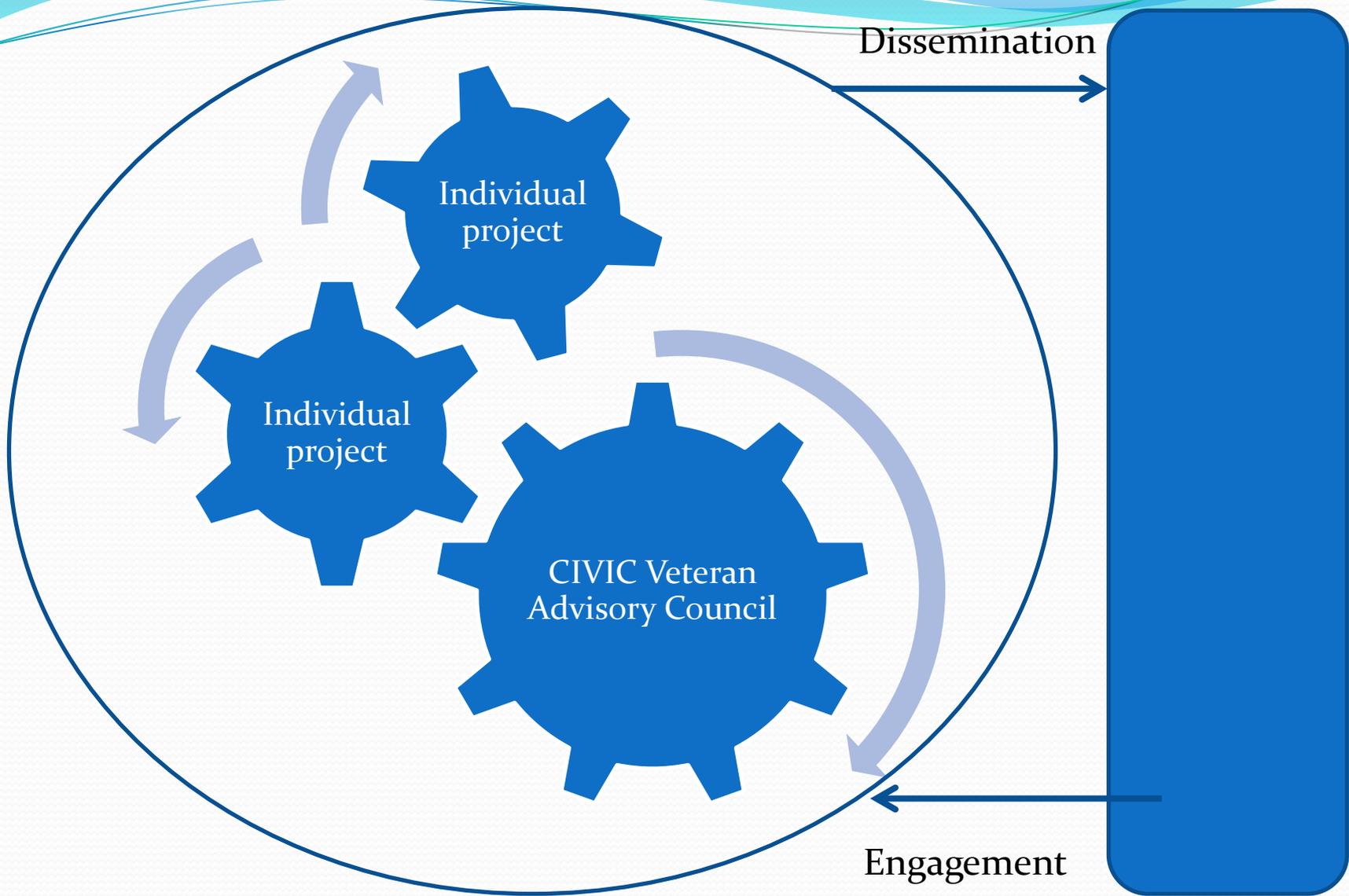
# Working Objectives of CIVIC's Veteran Advisory Council

Objective 1 (**informing research**): Make the Veteran advisory group a sounding board for grant and research ideas and give voice to Veteran perspectives.

Objective 2 (**conducting research**): Assist in the development of a pool of Veterans interested in participating in individual studies.

Objective 3 (**disseminating research**): Provide guidance on the dissemination of research and best practices by:

- Identifying strategies to improve the spread and utilization of information.
- Evaluating products and informational materials to ensure they are relevant and useful to consumers
- Identifying ways to measure the impact of dissemination efforts.



# The VAC at Work

## **Study Example: Does PTSD Treatment Improve Cognitive Outcomes in Veterans?**

- Junior Investigator/K Scholar presented to the VAC
- Mixed methods study conducted in VA PTSD Clinic with Veteran patients
  - PI to also interview PTSD clinic providers and administrators

## **Questions to the VAC:**

- Is the research topic important to Veterans?
- Are the qualitative interview questions appropriate? Understandable? Anything missing?
- Are the proposed assessment tools appropriate?
- How should the assessments be implemented in the clinic, and how should results be shared with patients?

# VA OpenNotes in Mental Health

- Incorporates clinician and Veteran engagement
- Phase I qualitative interviews—invite Veterans and Clinicians to become stakeholder consultants
  - 5 Veterans and 4 clinicians
- Participate in:
  - Review of qualitative findings
  - Review of web-based course content/design
  - Review of preliminary surveys
  - Discuss dissemination
- Enrolled as special study subjects; Veterans compensated
- Plans for final interviews to gather info on VE process

# Other CIVIC VE Activities/Next steps

- Individual HSR&D Projects:
  - Site for TBI Photovoice project (PI: True)
  - PMDB's to evaluate dual opioid prescribing (PI: Carlson)
- Center level:
  - Ongoing evaluation of process
  - Local guidelines
  - Evolving network of interested Veterans
- National Level
  - Consulting to other COINs
  - DIPEX (Helfand/Cottrell)
  - Disseminate evaluation results/toolkit/ “case study”