



VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) Evidence-based Policy Center RFA

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VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research & Development

QUERI Evidence-based Policy (EBP) Evaluation Centers

- QUERI to fund 2-4 EBP Evaluation Centers, 1 Coordinating Center
 - Rigorous, national “big-ticket” evaluations on high-priority health care topics
 - Support VA fulfillment of the Evidence-based Policymaking Act
- RFA posted Oct 2021, due early Dec 2021, funding Mar 2022
- Centers focus on areas of expertise and assigned evaluations in coordination with QUERI’s [Partnered Evidence-Based Policy Resource Center \(PEPReC\)](#)
- QUERI non-research funding: \$500K - \$1M /year per Center, 4 years
- VA program office, institutional partnerships strongly encouraged
- Quarterly reporting requirements (Office of Management & Budget)

QUERI and the Evidence Act

- Established in 1998, the mission of QUERI is to improve Veteran health by accelerating adoption of evidence into practice
- Evidence-based policy has been a QUERI funding priority
- Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act (“Evidence Act” US PL 115-435) requires federal budgets to be justified using evidence and evaluation
- VHA delegated core VA Evidence Act requirements to QUERI
 - Learning Agenda: alignment of evidence generation with VA strategic plan
 - Capacity Assessments to determine level of evaluation work within VHA
 - VA/VHA Legislative Proposal Evidence checklist
 - **Yearly Evaluation Plans aligned with VA strategic priorities**

Why is the Evidence Act Important to VA?

- The Evidence Act is a law that will ultimately influence agency budgets, evaluation, and evidence needed for additional resources
 - Office of Management & Budget (OMB) oversees Evidence Act
 - Builds on 2010 Government Performance and Results Act, 1996 Clinger-Cohen Act
- Further supported through [January 27 2021 White House Memo](#) on restoring trust in government through scientific integrity and evidence-based policymaking
- Helps VA strategically respond to other Legislative mandates
- Aligned with High-reliability and Learning Organization principles

Evidence Act Evaluation Plans

- OMB requires yearly Evidence Act Evaluation Plans that are developed during the budget cycle (e.g., planning in FY21 for FY 23 Evaluation Plans)
- Evaluation Plans need to meet requirements of “significance”. e.g., VHA priority; critical question related to barriers to optimal service; Veteran-centric; vulnerable, marginalized, at risk population focus; pathway to inform improvements
- OMB M-21-27 defines evaluation broadly to include an “assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency.”
- Evaluation plans ask a range of questions
 - “Does the program work?” (outcomes, quality, equity, patient experience, workforce)
 - “How does it work across different settings/populations?”
 - “What will it take to sustain it?”

QUERI: Implementation-informed Evidence-based Policy

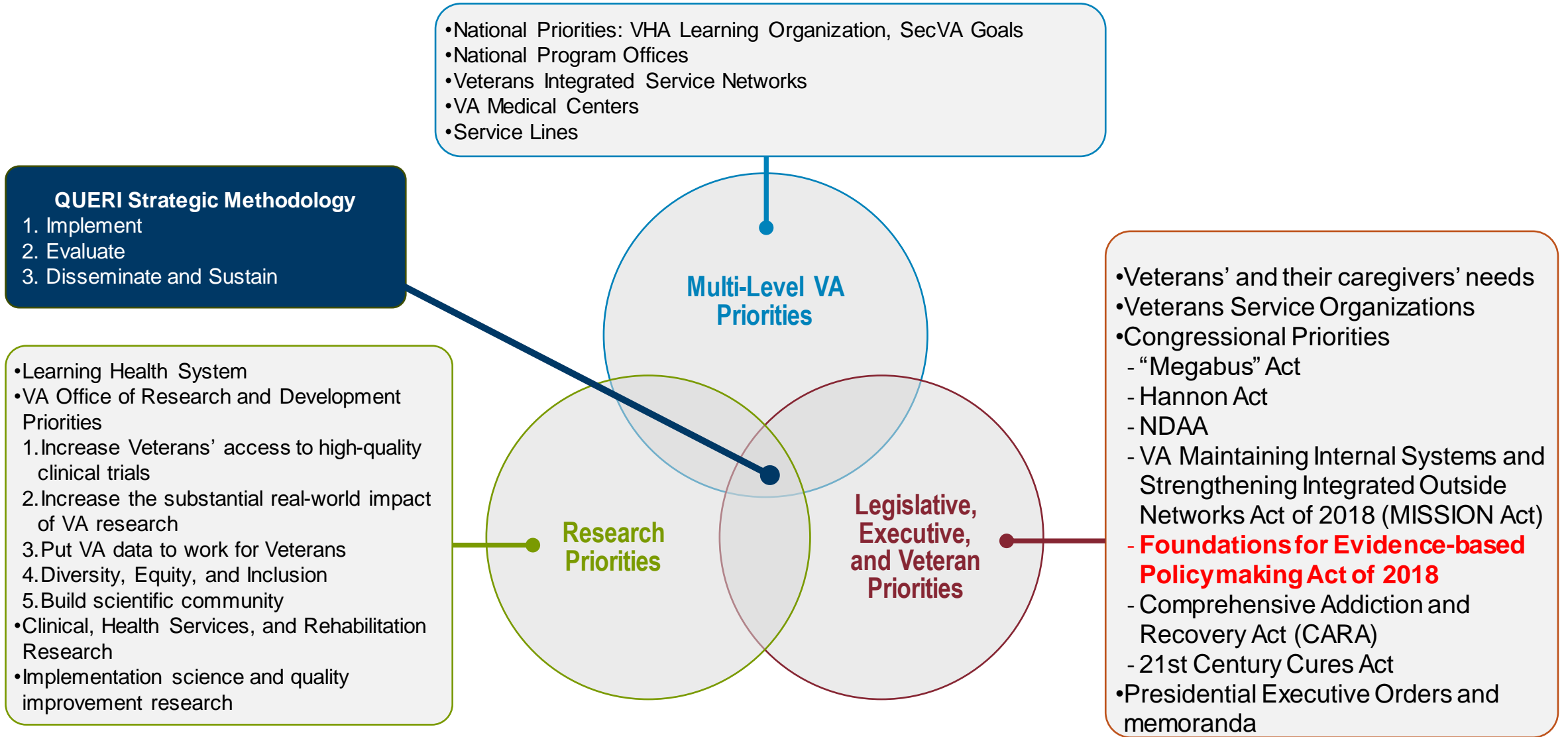
- QUERI strives to ensure national programs and policies work at the clinic level for Veterans
- QUERI Implementation Roadmap for Quality Improvement aligns evaluation, QI goals to inform program and policy implementation
- QUERI engages VA leaders, stakeholders to identify national health care priorities to inform Evidence Act Learning Agenda and Evaluation Plans



Braganza, et al. HSR, under review, 2021

[The QUERI Roadmap for Implementation and Quality Improvement - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\):](#)
[Link for Cyberseminar recording](#)
[Link for Cyberseminar slide deck](#)

QUERI Alignment of Multi-Level Partnerships and Priorities



QUERI Spectrum of Evaluations Supporting Evidence Act, VA Goals

1-6 Months

**QUERI Program
Rapid Response
Teams**

Time-sensitive national
evaluation requests

Example: COVID
vaccine acceptance
evaluation

1-2 Years

**QUERI EBP
Evaluation
Centers**

Evaluation topics
assigned to
interdisciplinary groups
with regular reporting to
OMB

Example: Access to
virtual care

2-3 Years

**QUERI Partnered
Evaluation
Initiatives**

Evaluation centers
directed and co-funded
by operations partners

Example: Whole Health
system of care (with
OPCC-CT)

All may inform Evidence Act evaluation plans aligned with top VA priorities

QUERI EBP Evaluation Centers: Distinctions

- Time-sensitive
- Broader array of evaluation expertise
- Rigorous (e.g., randomized designs)
- Multi-level partnerships
- Topics/content of evaluations more directive
- High visibility to OMB

QUERI Evaluations are Not Considered Research

- QUERI receives medical services funding, which does not require formal IRB review
- **Primary purpose** intended to inform VA programs and policies
- Non-research protocols may involve **randomization (e.g., cluster-randomization)**; randomization by itself does not define research
- The activity is not designed to produce information that expands the knowledge base of a scientific discipline (or other scholarly field).

**CyberSeminar:
Everything You Need
to Know About QUERI
Non-research
Protocols**

[Link for Recording](#)
Password: queri-093019

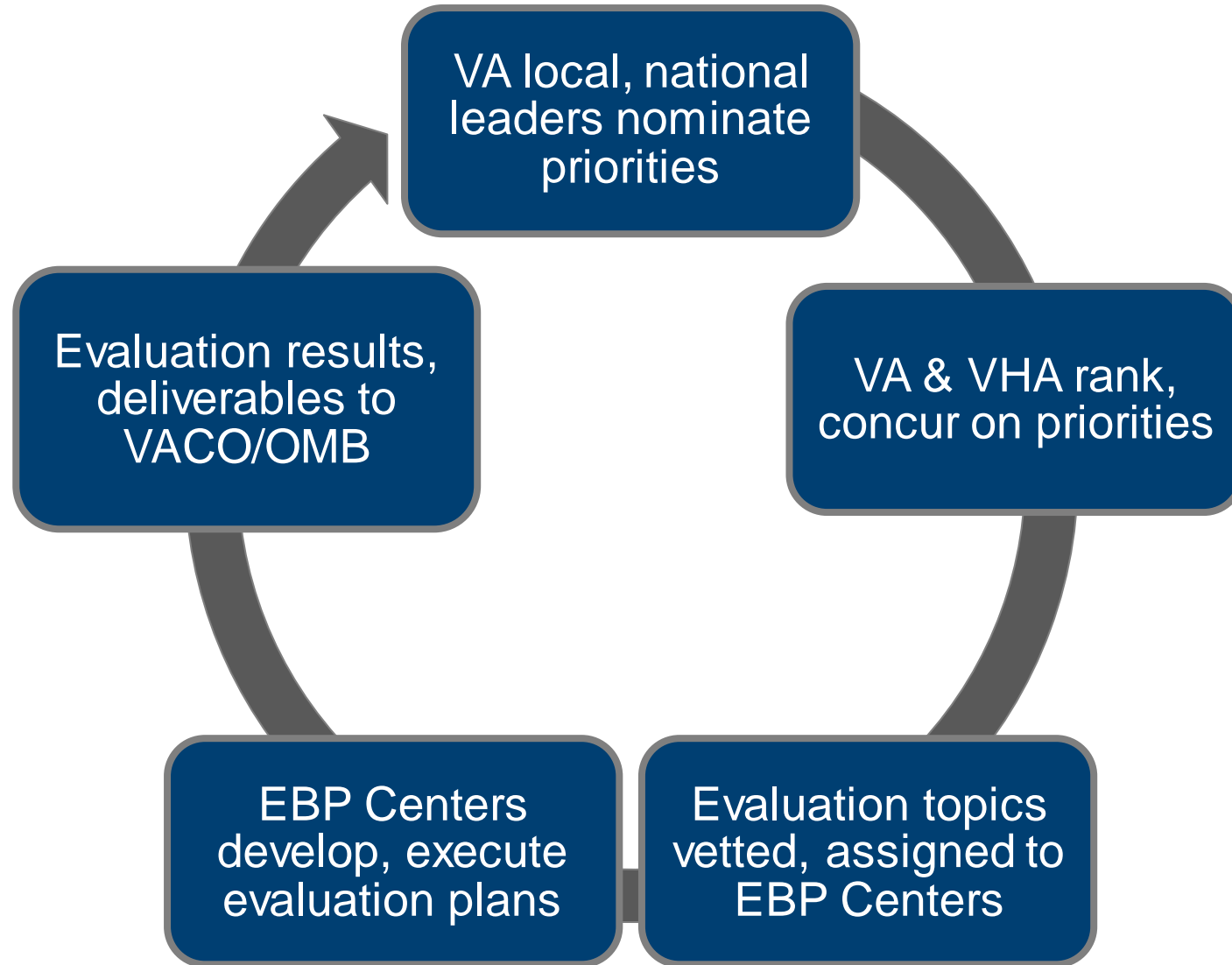
[Link for Slide Deck](#)

- FY22-23 Evidence Act Evaluation Plans (virtual care, COVID, opioid/pain treatments, suicide prevention)
- FY21 Capacity Assessment – evaluations conducted across >35 VHA program offices
- FY21 Strength of Evidence Assessments for VHA legislative proposals
- FY21 Evidence Act Evaluation Plans
- QUERI Advancing Diversity in Implementation Leadership (ADIL)

QUERI Evidence-based Policy RFA

- Support infrastructure to conduct “big-ticket” rigorous evaluations of VA national programs or policies selected by VA national leadership to inform Veteran care and outcomes.
- Expand QUERI’s ability to support VA and VHA fulfillment of the Evidence Act required annual Evaluation Plans and other legislative mandated evaluations
- Build national capacity amongst VA investigators and affiliates to conduct rigorous evaluations in VA with a focus on implementation, QI, and clinical outcomes in addition to economic/business case analysis

QUERI Evidence-based Policy Evaluation Plan Lifecycle



RFA: Current Evaluation Priorities

- Military toxic exposures (e.g., burn pits), including clinical, health services, and organizational policies
- Women's health initiatives (e.g., reproductive health, prosthetics)
- Veteran employment outcomes, including programs to facilitate employment for Post-9/11 Veterans
- EHR modernization, including effective quality improvement/change management strategies
- Suicide prevention initiatives for Veterans and transitioning servicemembers
- Veteran experience and quality of virtual care options in VA and community care
- Health disparities and Veteran social determinants of health

RFA: Current Evaluation Priorities (cont.)

- Delayed or suppressed care due to COVID-19
- Climate change, including on Veteran health, well-being, health equity, and economic opportunity
- Burnout, provider experience and outcomes among VA employees and trainees
- Non-institutional care, long term care and home care service options for older Veterans
- Effectiveness and implementation of programs to eliminate homelessness among Veterans
- Quality and cost of community care

Overview of Funding Announcement

- **Evidence-driven Decisions.** Goal is to promote the use of rigorous but practical scientific methods and evidence to inform VA programs and policies
- **Review cycle.** Follows typical Winter HSR&D/QUERI timeline with applications due in December 2021 and scientific merit review in March 2022
- **Funding and Duration.** QUERI funding \$500K - \$1M per year for up to 4 years
- **Partnerships.** Applicants are encouraged to partner with National Program Offices, VISNs, and academic and other institutions.
- **Reporting Requirements.** To ensure timely responses to requirements of the Evidence Act, legislative mandates, and OMB, EBP Evaluation centers will need to respond quickly to requests for information and materials from VACO QUERI & PEPRReC in addition to submission of midyear & annual reports describing key activities and impacts

Center Types

- **2-4 Evaluation Centers** to conduct rigorous, time-sensitive evaluations based on high priority topics aligned with the Evidence Act and VA legislative mandates, in coordination with QUERI's Partnered Evidence-based Policy Resource Center (PEPReC)
- **1 Implementation and Evaluation Coordinating Center** to support implementation of multiple national evaluations in partnership with PEPReC, facilitate peer review, assignment of short-term, time-sensitive evaluations to QUERI Programs, train VA employees in evaluation, implementation, and QI methods, and track impacts of evaluations to meet Evidence Act goals.

EBP Evaluation Centers

- Conduct approximately 2 evaluations per year identified by VHA leadership as top policy priorities
- Evaluation plans may last 1-3 years
- Evaluations >1 year may include additional evaluation objectives or questions in subsequent years
- Evaluation topics assigned by QUERI/PEPReC to Centers based on areas of expertise and capacity
- Centers develop evaluation plans using a standard template (quarterly milestones, objectives, design, data sources)
 - QUERI ACTION impact measures, Quintuple Aim outcomes

EBP Evaluation Center Features

- Independently operated but will meet regularly with QUERI/PEPReC staff and VA and VHA leadership
- Multi-disciplinary teams willing to take on >1-2 priority topic areas
 - Quantitative, qualitative methods expertise
 - Economic, budget impact analyses, policy analyses, implementation and improvement science, systems integration, and clinical informatics
- Experience working with operations partners
- Proven track record of producing deliverables on a tight timeline
- Interest and track record in diversity and inclusion

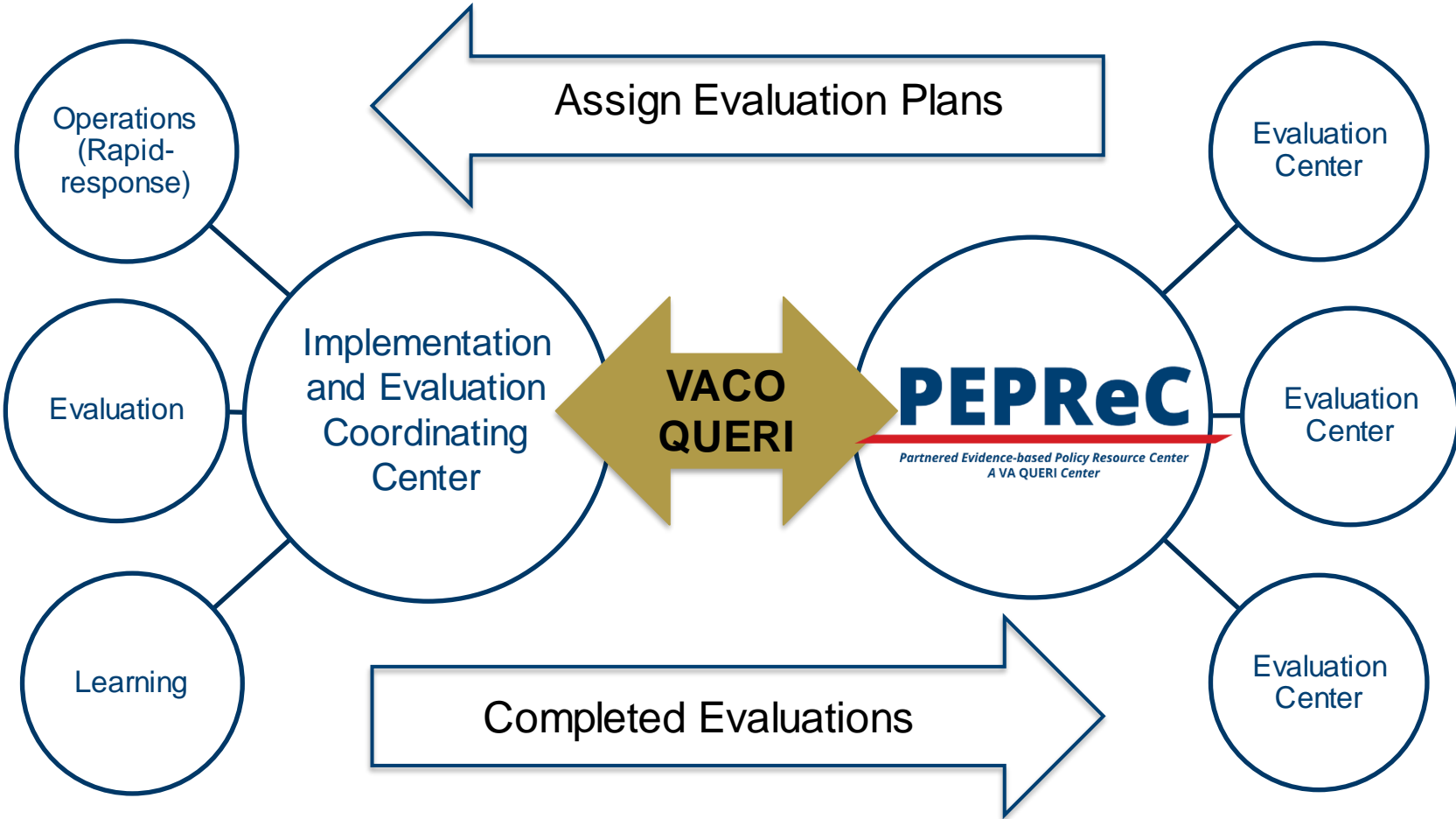
EBP Evaluation Center Features

- Cores:
 - Operations- Coordinates Evaluation Plan deliverables
 - Methods- Prepare and execute Evaluation Plans
 - Knowledge Translation- Communicate evaluation impacts, mentoring (e.g., ADIL)
- Funding: 4 years contingent on meeting key milestones

EBP Coordinating Center Features

- Support implementation of multiple national evaluations, peer review and assignment of short-term, time-sensitive evaluations to QUERI Programs, train VA employees in evaluation, implementation, and QI methods, track impacts of evaluations to meet Evidence Act goals
- Cores:
 - Operations- Administration and Rapid Response
 - Evaluation- Implementation/QI focused evaluations
 - Learning- Training in evaluation and implementation methods
- Funding: 4 years contingent on meeting key milestones

QUERI EBP Evaluation Center Coordination



Resources

Applicants are encouraged to consult with HSR&D/QUERI resource Centers:

- [Partnered Evidence-based Policy Resource Center \(PEPREC\)](#)
- [HSR&D's Health Economics Resource Center \(HERC\)](#)
- [HSR&D's VA Information Resource Center \(VIReC\)](#)

OMB Resource on Evidence-Based Policymaking: Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans: [M-21-27 \(whitehouse.gov\)](#)

QUERI Scientific Merit Review Timeline

November 2021
ITS Submission

December 2021
Application
Submission

March 2022
QUERI Scientific
Merit Review
March 2022
Notification of
Review Outcome

April 1, 2021
New QUERI
Center Start Date

Questions

Happy to answer any questions! Please feel free to reach out to Melissa Braganza at vacoqueri@va.gov.

The QUERI RFAs will be posted on October 1 under the Health Services Research & Development section on the ORD RFA website:

<https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm>

The QUERI Advancing Diversity in Implementation Leadership (ADIL) RFA is posted on the QUERI website:

<https://www.queri.research.va.gov/QUERI-ADIL.pdf>