



# I\*DEA

## Media Kit

August 2023

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# WHAT IS I\*DEA?

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is in the midst of a cultural transformation to ensure everyone who enters our facilities and interacts with our people feels safe, welcome, and valued.

We are embracing a new way of operating to promote inclusion, increase diversity, foster equity, and improve access and outcomes for Veterans and employees.

***PLEASE JOIN US ON THIS JOURNEY.***



# I\*DEA

**INCLUSION**

**DIVERSITY**

**EQUITY**

**ACCESS**

“

**IMAGINE EVERYONE WHO ENTERS A VA FACILITY SEES THEMSELVES. WITH THIS GUIDING PRINCIPLE LIGHTING OUR WAY, WE SET OFF ON A JOURNEY TO CREATE A SPACE FOR ALL WHO DO BUSINESS WITH VA. WE INVITE YOU TO JOURNEY WITH US AS WE IMPLEMENT THE I\*DEA INITIATIVE TO TRANSFORM VA'S CULTURAL HEALTH.**

— HARVEY JOHNSON (HE/HIM)

LTC, USA, RET

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

# THE SPARK

**In 2021, Executive Orders 13985 and 14035 and subsequent executive actions signaled a bold new approach to federal employment and service delivery with a clear focus on inclusion, diversity, equity, and access.**

In response, VA seized a unique and meaningful opportunity: To identify and eliminate institutional barriers at VA and build agency-wide practices to ensure all employees, Veterans, family members, caregivers, and survivors are treated with dignity and respect and have access to the care, benefits, and opportunities they need to thrive.

To demonstrate commitment to this goal and improve VA cultural health by weaving these principles into the very fabric of the Department, VA launched an enterprise-wide initiative: I\*DEA. Pronounced “idea,” this initiative represents the four individual yet interdependent principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access.



## **EXECUTIVE ORDER 13985**

Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government



## **EXECUTIVE ORDER 14035**

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility in the Federal Government





I\*DEA

**I\*DEA'S MISSION IS TO ADVANCE AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT VALUES AND SUPPORTS THE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE—ALL WHO DO BUSINESS WITH VA—AND CULTIVATES EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CARE, BENEFITS, AND SERVICES FOR ALL.**

# BUILDING I\*DEA

## 2021

In April 2021, VA Secretary McDonough chartered an I\*DEA Task Force responsible for examining existing policies, programs, and infrastructure and producing actionable recommendations for charting a course to improve inclusion, diversity, equity, and access at VA.

At the end of a 120-day sprint, the Task Force delivered 20 key recommendations and 68 sub-recommendations for implementing I\*DEA over the next four years. The Task Force turned their recommendations to the I\*DEA Sub-Council, which was responsible for ensuring policy decisions align with VA's strategic goals and effectively improve the lives and experiences of Veterans and VA employees.

## 2023

Signed in February 2023, Executive Order 14091 builds on previous orders, requiring nearly every federal agency to integrate equity into planning and decision-making.

In June, VA announced the establishment of an Agency Equity Team to ensure VA delivers on its promise to provide world-class care and benefits to all Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors—regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, or sexual identity. Known as the I\*DEA Council, the team is responsible for helping VA improve outcomes for historically underserved Veterans and formalizes VA's enduring commitment to embedding inclusion, diversity, equity, and access into the fabric of the organization.



**I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE OUR EMPLOYEES HAVE EVERYTHING THEY NEED TO CARRY OUT THE IMPORTANT WORK BEFORE US AND THAT WE OPERATE IN A CULTURE THAT CELEBRATES AND DRAWS STRENGTH FROM OUR COUNTRY'S GREAT DIVERSITY.**

— DENIS McDONOUGH

SECRETARY

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



**AGENCY EQUITY TEAM  
PRESS RELEASE**



**EXECUTIVE ORDER 14091**

Further Advancing Racial Equity and  
Support for Underserved Communities  
Through the Federal Government



# I\*DEA'S FOUR PILLARS

## PROMOTING INCLUSION

Helping everyone who interacts with VA feel safe and welcome. Treating individuals with dignity, integrity, and respect. Providing an environment free of harassment, discrimination, prejudice, and bias so everyone is recognized, included, and valued.

## INCREASING DIVERSITY

Recognizing and embracing the strengths of our diverse Veterans and employees. Engaging and supporting underserved communities including women, people of color, persons with disabilities, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+).

## FOSTERING EQUITY

Identifying and mitigating barriers to access and opportunity. Providing every individual with the support they need to access health care and benefits and achieve success. Alleviating systemic inequities and institutional obstacles to improve outcomes for Veterans and employees.

## IMPROVING ACCESS

Ensuring availability and access of services, support, and opportunity for all Veterans and employees. Developing institutional pathways and accommodations to promote access and improved outcomes for underserved and historically marginalized communities.



# OPENING BOOKS

## 2021

VA issued enterprise policy guidance that instructed VA adjudicators to determine that all discharged Service Members whose separation were due to sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status should be classified as eligible Veterans for VA benefits.

## 2022

540+ employees and stakeholders convened virtually for the Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) Summit to collaborate on DEI best practices and participate in experiential learning activities to build an inclusive work environment and foster a culture that values and leverages individual diversity.

ORMDI established the electronic Reasonable Accommodation Management System (RAMS) to streamline the processing for all Reasonable Accommodation requests; RAMS is a one-stop shop for National Reasonable Accommodation Coordinators.

VA initiated enterprise-wide virtual training on a weekly and/or bi-weekly basis for over 235 RACs to ensure they know how to use RAMS.

VA announced that it is closing a gap in survivor benefits for certain LGBTQ+ Veterans and survivors.

## 2023

Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs) represent 5.3% of the Relevant Civilian Labor Force and 9.7% of VA employees—an increase of over 5,300 employees from fiscal year 2020; AANHPIs make up 4.7% of the 123,647 Veterans employed by VA.

National Cemetery Administration and ORMDI initiated nationwide in-person training sessions for Supervisors, Managers, and Staff in the Advanced Leadership Program focused on the following topics:

- Managing Implicit Bias in VA
- Managing Generational Diversity in the Workplace
- Managing Gender Diversity in the Workplace
- Understanding Micro Behaviors in VA Work Environment
- Applying Cultural Competence in a Multicultural VA

VA launched the I\*DEA Influencer Network to engage advocates to share their experiences, promote I\*DEA messaging, and help improve the cultural health of the organization; there are currently 700+ I\*DEA Influencers from all 18 VISNs, 45 states, and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.





# 30%

30% of new Veterans enrolled in VA health care are women

# \$9.8B

\$9.8B of VA's 2023 budget was allocated for women Veteran health care, including \$767M for women's gender specific care

# 16M

16M Veterans received VA's annual anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy and education

# 10

10 languages including English, Spanish, and Tagalog will be included in the development of agency fact sheets

# 10%

10.2% is the goal for VA to contract women-owned small business and small disadvantaged businesses—the Department is currently exceeding this goal

# \$750k

\$750k was distributed to support 25 VA Medical Center projects to address inequities and support improvements



# WHY NOW?

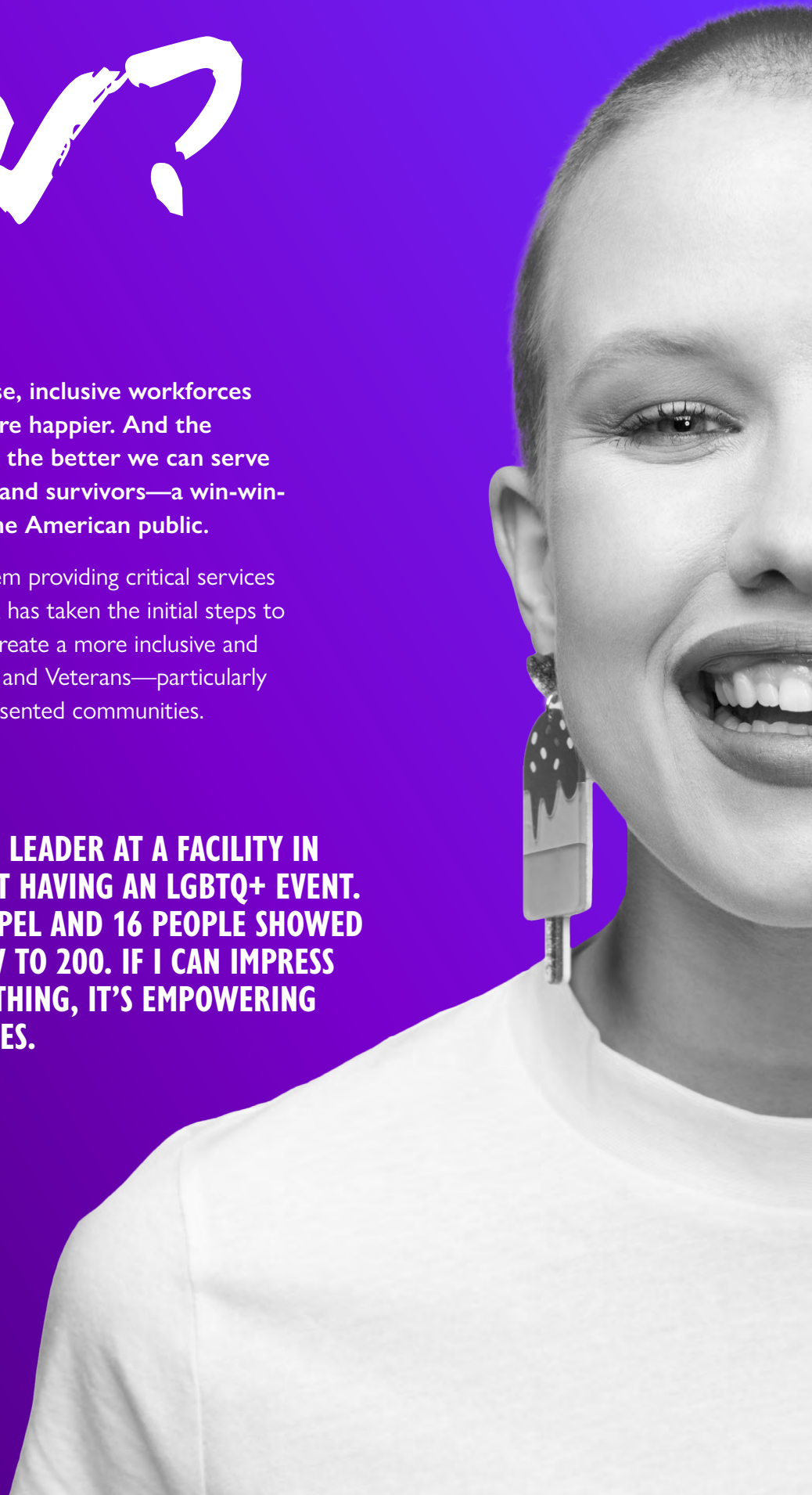
**It's a fact: Organizations with diverse, inclusive workforces are stronger, and their employees are happier. And the stronger and happier our workforce, the better we can serve Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors—a win-win-win for employees, Veterans, and the American public.**

As the nation's largest health care system providing critical services and benefits to our nation's heroes, VA has taken the initial steps to understand why disparities occur and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for employees and Veterans—particularly those from underserved or underrepresented communities.

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**I REMEMBER SPEAKING TO THE LEADER AT A FACILITY IN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS ABOUT HAVING AN LGBTQ+ EVENT. WE HAD AN EVENT IN THE CHAPEL AND 16 PEOPLE SHOWED UP; FIVE YEARS LATER IT GREW TO 200. IF I CAN IMPRESS UPON LEADERSHIP TO DO ANYTHING, IT'S EMPOWERING YOUR PEOPLE TO BE THEMSELVES.**

— TONI HIGHTOWER (SHE/HER)  
MAJ (RET) USAR  
HUMAN CENTERED DESIGNER  
Veterans Experience Office  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



# 34%

33.7% of the 2,294 women Veterans aged 18 to 45 surveyed at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System perceived gender-based discrimination at VA<sup>1</sup>

These respondents were more likely to be of increased age, have a medical illness, and have a history of military sexual trauma

# 36%

36% of LGBTQ+ participants in a national study of U.S. households reported experiencing discrimination based on their race or ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, economic status, immigration status, or age<sup>2</sup>

# 62%

62% of transgender participants in a national study of U.S. households reported experiencing discrimination in the past year<sup>2</sup>

# 78%

78% of surveyed VA employees said racism was a moderate to serious issue, and another 76% said they'd "experienced racially charged actions" while working at VA<sup>3</sup>

# 55%

55% of surveyed VA employees said they witnessed racial discrimination leveled at Veterans while at work<sup>3</sup>

# 46M

46 million Americans could not afford necessary health care services because of system inequality<sup>4</sup>

# 29.5%

29.5% of Black Veterans were denied disability compensation by VA compared to the 24.2% of white Veterans<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Third of Women Treated in VA System Perceive Gender-Based Discrimination, Brenda Mooney, 2020, U.S. Medicine  
<sup>2</sup> The State of the LGBTQ Community in 2020: A National Public Opinion Study, Center for American Progress (in conjunction with NORC), 2020  
<sup>3</sup> The VA to be investigated following "staggering" reports of racism and discrimination, lawmakers say, James Clark, 2020, Task & Purpose  
<sup>4</sup> Survey: 1 in 5 Americans can't afford necessary care, Anuja Vaidya, 2021, MedCity News  
<sup>5</sup> VA has systemically discriminated against Black Veterans for decades, lawsuit alleges, Jalen Brown, 2022, CNN

# I\*DEA LEADERS



## **HARVEY JOHNSON (HE/HIM)**

**LTC, USA, RET  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY**

Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion (ORMDI)  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Harvey Johnson is a seasoned Senior Executive Service leader focused on promoting race and gender equity, resolving conflict, building diverse and inclusive organizations, driving large scale organizational change, strategic planning, and business transformation.



## **JENNIFER MOFFIT, LP.D. (SHE/HER)**

**USAF VETERAN  
PROGRAM MANAGER, STRATEGIC INITIATIVE GROUP/CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY**

Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion (ORMDI)  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Dr. Jennifer Moffit is the Program Manager for I\*DEA and Harassment and Assault Prevention at the Department of Veterans Affairs, responsible for leading a cultural transformation based on the I\*DEA principles.

 **EMAIL IDEA@VA.GOV**  
to connect with Mr. Johnson or Dr. Moffit



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**I\*DEA IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE WE OWE IT TO THE VETERANS WE SERVE AND THE PEOPLE WE WORK WITH TO CONFIDENTLY BRING OUR AUTHENTIC SELVES TO WORK EVERY SINGLE DAY. PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT MUST BE INTENTIONAL UNTIL IT BECOMES THE NORM.**

— **LEILA JACKSON**  
USMC VETERAN  
DIRECTOR

VHA Assault & Harassment Prevention Office (AHPO)  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



# THE BRAND

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**I\*DEA IS EXCITING. IT'S POWERFUL. IT'S ANYTHING BUT BORING, AND IT DESERVES A BRAND THAT MAKES PEOPLE PAUSE AND TAKE NOTICE. IN DEVELOPING THE LOOK AND FEEL OF THIS INITIATIVE WE EMBRACED BOLD, OPTIMISTIC COLORS THAT GIVE US ENERGY. THE BRIGHT ORANGES, PINKS, AND PURPLES HIGHLIGHT WHAT REALLY MATTERS: THE RICH DIVERSITY OF OUR EMPLOYEES AND OUR VETERANS AND THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE AND CARE FOR THEM. I\*DEA IS ALL OF US—OUR UNIQUE, COLORFUL SELVES AND OUR EVER-EVOLVING KALEIDOSCOPE OF TOGETHERNESS.**

— JENNIFER MOFFIT, LP.D. (SHE/HER)  
USAF VETERAN  
I\*DEA PROGRAM MANAGER  
Office of Resource Management, Diversity & Inclusion  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE  
AWARD-WINNING BRAND** 





The I\*DEA brand is big and bold—designed to capture the hearts and minds of the VA employees and Veterans who play a critical role in shaping a culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and has access to the care, benefits, and opportunities they need to thrive. The I\*DEA values are reflected in its brand mark: a stylized asterisk. The asterisk is a foundational component of the brand. It represents a promise to Veterans, VA employees, and the American public.

## A ASTERISK

In writing, an asterisk is used to mark text—typically as a reference to an annotation or to stand for censored or omitted content. As the brand mark, what traditionally represents an afterthought becomes embedded in and central to the message. The asterisk represents historically underserved and marginalized communities. It celebrates difference and signifies conscious inclusion. In math, an asterisk indicates multiplication; I\*DEA is amplifying opportunity and success for Veterans and VA employees.

## B VA

The abstract Vs and As that comprise the asterisk are a nod to VA.

## C ARROW

The arrow represents movement, action, and forward progress.

## D ONE

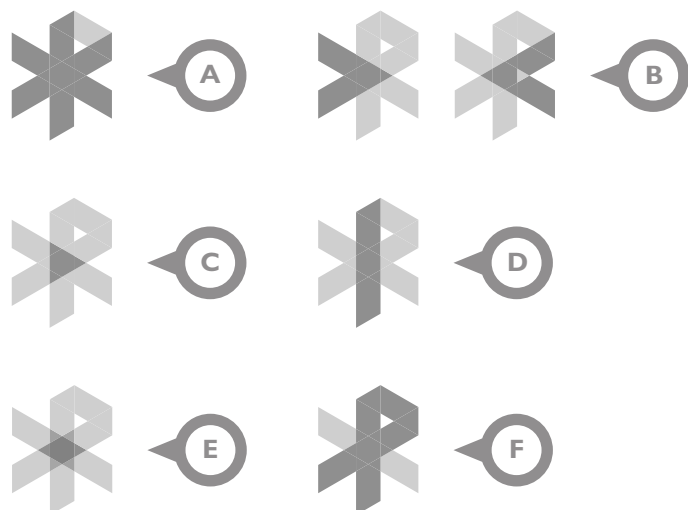
The number one represents unity and “e pluribus unum,” or “out of many, one.”

## E KALEIDOSCOPE

The kaleidoscope evokes the vibrant, ever-shifting, fluid spectrum of human diversity.

## F AWARENESS RIBBON

The ribbon shows support for inclusion, diversity, equity, and access at VA.



# TOOLS & ASSETS



**EQUITY ACTION PLAN** 



**VA STRATEGIC PLAN** 



**I\*DEA ACTION PLAN** 



**I\*DEA BRAND GUIDE** 







**I\*DEA IS ABOUT BEING INTENTIONAL IN A HUMAN-CENTERED WAY. IT'S ABOUT RECOGNIZING THAT WE ALL HAVE UNIQUE EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE GREATER GOOD OF SERVING VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES, CAREGIVERS, AND SURVIVORS. TO BRING THIS VISION TO LIFE, VA IS CONVENING EXPERTS FROM ACROSS THE DEPARTMENT, OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS, EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND INDUSTRY. WITH EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING AS OUR SHINING NORTH STAR, THE OPPORTUNITY FOR I\*DEA TO POSITIVELY REACH AND IMPACT ALL VETERANS—FROM EVERY BACKGROUND—IS UNPARALLELED.”**

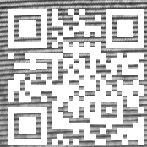
— **BARBARA MORTON (SHE/HER)**  
DEPUTY CHIEF VETERANS EXPERIENCE OFFICER  
Veterans Experience Office  
Department of Veterans Affairs

 **EMAIL IDEA@VA.GOV**



**Over the next few months and years, VA will become a model for I\*DEA—a place where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and has access to the care, benefits, and opportunities they need to thrive.**

This cultural change will endure as VA grows, evolves, and experiences leadership changes. With the support of our employees and Veterans, VA is creating a space for all to feel safe, welcome, and valued.



VISIT [VA.GOV/ORMDI](https://va.gov/ormdi)   
TO LEARN MORE



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