

Bridging the Valley of Death in the Health Innovation Ecosystem

A recent Health Community of Interest (COI) meeting brought together people from many corners of the ecosystem to share thoughts on moving from R&D to implementation and production. This fatal gap from inception to fruition is often described as the “Valley of Death.” The COVID-19 pandemic created an urgency to bridge this gap, but the question remained, *could accelerated innovation implementation be institutionalized to occur in times of normalcy?* During the meeting, Heath COI Facilitator Macon Hardy noted that sharing and maturing innovation can be a daunting, rate limiting factor due to complexity of the health ecosystem, which includes federal health agencies, the Department of Defense, academia, regulatory agencies, pharmacies, industry leaders and venture capitalists. The discussion explored contributions and roles in the ecosystem with representatives from a venture capital firm, [Defense Innovation Unit \(DIU\)](#), [Navy PEO Digital](#), and [Advanced Research Project Agency for Health \(ARPA-H\)](#). Each party emphasized the importance of aligning mission partners with proven solutions for the American people; agreeing that “*delivering the right solution with the intended outcomes*” yields the greatest return on investment.

Dr. Niels Olsen, chief medical officer at DUI, noted how his organization is proactively identifying proven technologies that can be implemented quickly to benefit mission partners from companies that would like to do business with DoD. Craig Gravitz of ARPA-H said success is defined through optimal patient experiences where transformational change is recognized by the consumer. He listed cutting emergency room wait times in half as an example. The result can be exponential improvement of overall patient experience and operating efficiency. Justin Fanelli, technical director from Navy PEO Digital, wanted his organization to be more “forward leaning in their engagement of industry and would like to see greater innovation make it to the other side.” Dr. James Coates, principal for Health and Human Services with Decisive Point, noted his organization serves as primary investors of early-stage technologies. He also mentioned how his company is instrumental in navigating these investments through the arduous governmental contractual process.

It was encouraging to hear how leaders in the health innovation ecosystem contribute to accelerated identification, solicitation, acquisition, funding, and implementation processes. These actions may drive deployed health innovation, help practitioners avoid the Valley of Death, and lead to improved consumer health.

It is essential for more stakeholders within the industry to be aware of these channels and prospective opportunities. Care to listen to the conversation firsthand? ACT-IAC members can access this panel discussion [here](#).

The Health COI is a group of government and industry stakeholders committed to advancing federal health goals and objectives through increased collaboration and IT enhancement. Moreover, the Health COI welcomes participation from:

- Government – Federal CXOs (CIOs/CDOs/CTOs), senior management executives especially in healthcare and the public health sector. This includes those responsible for information sharing, collaboration, and maintaining the IT infrastructure of health-related agencies.
- Industry – company executives, solution architects, and technical project managers who support federal health agencies from acquisition through deployment.
- Academia/Other – those supporting cross-domain solutions, knowledge sharing across federal agencies, and related multi-accreditation activities.

Kyle Keenan

MBA, MHA, BSN

Health Provider SME, Peraton Health Solutions