

# TOOLKIT FOR VETERAN EMPLOYMENT + TRAINING PROGRAMS

TO IMPROVE OUTREACH TOOLS, PROVIDE QUALITY  
JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS, AND MEASURE IMPACT



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

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# INTRODUCTION

We are very pleased to present this toolkit to assist employment staff and agency leadership in improving services for veterans. The following information will augment your efforts to deliver much needed job training services and examine ways to improve the sustainability of your program.



# OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Outreach is the starting point for all customer/client interaction and should be rooted in good customer service. Targeted outreach will allow you to connect directly with veterans and receive good referrals from your continuum of care.

We serve many different types of veterans, young and not so young, combat and non-combat, men, women, LGBT and more. We also administer different programs and serve a variety of employer needs. It is important to identify your targeted audience for outreach efforts to get the best return on staff resources and to start your relationship with clients in ways which are relevant and attractive to them.

The following checklists suggest tips for targeted outreach. This material is largely drawn from the webinar delivered earlier in the grant cycle; you can view the archived webinar at [www.youtube.com/vetshelpingvets](http://www.youtube.com/vetshelpingvets).

## GENERAL OUTREACH

### IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET POPULATION

- Are they Post-9/11 veterans? Women veterans? Low income veterans? Veterans who would be well-suited to a specific training program?
- Customize your program, staff, office and materials to attract and meet the needs of your targeted veteran audience.
- Prepare your client service pitch before you set out and be ready to deliver a 30 second, 1-minute, 5-minute, and 20-minute pitch.

### MATERIALS



Be prepared and have materials to distribute. Veterans may not remember all of your program information but they are likely to take a program flyer to contact you later. A good suggestion is to have a small rolling handcart, stocked with outreach materials ready at all times.

#### **Materials should always clearly state:**

- Who you are. (Your services.) Eligibility for your programs.

- How a veteran can access services (drop-in hours, how to make an appointment). Your location, hours of business and contact information.
- Use pictures of the veterans who you are trying to serve (women, people of color, etc). There are many pictures in the public domain. The DoD website is a great resource: [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).
- Avoid the term female as it is off putting to women veterans.
- Avoid stereotypically patriotic imagery like Uncle Sam and flags. These symbols are not universally appealing to veterans who are moving on in their transition to civilian life.
- The materials should not be cluttered. White space makes them easy to read.

## TARGETED OUTREACH

Iraq, Afghanistan and Post-9/11 veterans tend to be younger, and are heavy users of social media. They often do not ask for help even when needed but employment services are often the first touchpoint when seeking care. For this reason, be sure your intake appropriately addresses their potential need for wraparound services. Also, don't ask a potential client if s/he is a veteran, ask if they have served in the military.

- Be sure to conduct outreach through:
  - Social media; especially Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn
  - Colleges, universities, and trade schools
    - Veterans groups on campus
    - Veteran GI bill certifying offices
    - Disability offices
    - Other "non veteran-focused" groups on campus
    - Career centers
  - VA Medical centers
  - OIF/OEF/OND coordinators
  - Reserve and National Guard units
  - Veteran-focused groups that are not VSOs, such as *Team Red*, *White and Blue* and *Mission Continues*

## OUTREACH TO WOMEN VETERANS

### A Note on MST

Incidents of military sexual trauma are far too common, however they are not universal. Make sure staff has resources if it comes up but do not ask if a woman veteran experienced MST.

Women are not only less likely to identify as “veterans” but they are less likely to engage with veteran groups and seek out veteran-specific services. Outreach workers should be sensitive to the needs of these women, especially if doing

outreach at domestic violence shelters or any place where a survivor of intimate partner or sexual violence is seeking help.

Conduct outreach through the media and sites listed above, as well as:

- Women’s clinics at the VA and through your VA medical center women veteran coordinator.
- Women’s domestic violence and homeless shelters.
- Government agencies which serve a lot of women such as WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and SNAP (formerly known as food stamps).
- If possible, reserve an area for women veterans to wait (when preferred).
- Make sure office décor is gender neutral. Are there pictures of women as well as men? What kind of magazines and resource materials are present?

### WHAT ABOUT CLIENT

**BEHAVIOR?** Many women veterans relay that they have had unpleasant experiences at VA facilities, including being looked up and down, or asked if they are visiting their husband or father. Make sure that clients as well as staff are respectful

## KNOW YOUR CONTINUUM OF CARE AND ENGAGE WITH YOUR SOCIAL SERVICE NETWORK

No one agency can meet all the needs of our clients, make sure you can make and receive warm referrals.

**STREET OUTREACH** – there appear to be fewer current-era veterans on the streets but this can be a effective outreach tool for veterans of the Vietnam era, however, these veterans may be in need of stabilization and housing before employment services are warranted.

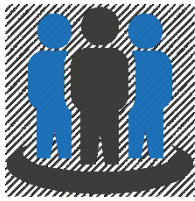
**OUTSIDE THE BOX OUTREACH** – many veterans will not come in for services even if desperately needed. Make your programs visible throughout the community, you never know where a potential client may see or hear about you. This community outreach will also raise awareness of your services to potential funders and supporters.

Ideas to consider include:

- Sporting events, professional, as well as high school and college
- Concerts
- Church events
- Festivals and holiday events

When your team is out and about at these events make sure to be ready with your short pitches and materials, but don't be too prescriptive. Take the opportunity for an informal chat and follow it up with your materials.

## OFFICE SPACE



If veterans visit your office it is important that the space is safe for them and anyone they bring with them, including children. Small things that we may not otherwise think about can be a trigger for veterans with PTSD and/or MST.

Make sure your space is accessible for people with disabilities, including invisible disabilities. *Know the triggers for PTSD and MST.*

- Avoid photos taken in war zones which include scenes of destruction, or of even service members with weapons.

If your target population includes young veterans, women veterans, and family members, make sure the space is child-friendly.

- Consider having toys and coloring books to keep children occupied while you engage with their parents. This is especially important if you want to create a comfortable space for the veteran to share.

Do not display just one branch of the military – if you choose to display – display all five branches.

## IMPROVE YOUR OUTREACH THROUGH INTAKE



Think of intake as an extension of outreach and an opportunity to identify new strategies. You want to learn as much as you can and be sure your staff documents the information and identifies the most frequent avenues where they are referred so you can continue to target your outreach.

- Always ask how the veteran heard about your agency and services.
- Ask the veteran if they had any difficulty finding your office, making an appointment, or understanding what your organization does.
- Make sure your intake questions effectively gather all the information needed, but make sure the veteran does not have to re-answer the same questions at different stages of service.
- Avoid "social services and program" language. For example: consider asking –
  - "What is your living situation?" Rather than, "Do you have stable housing?"
  - "Can you pass a drug test for a job?" Rather than, "Are you clean and sober?"

## **PROGRAM COMPLETION INTERVIEW**

This is an opportunity for the veteran to get closure for the services at-hand, but is also made aware of other services offered. It is also a key opportunity to learn how service models are working in order to improve on them, to define successful retention models, and to identify success stories for our funders and supporters.

- Would the veteran recommend your services to other veterans? Why? Why not? If yes, tell them how.
- Were ALL the veterans' needs met? What else could have been done?



## EMPLOYER OUTREACH: EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

**HIRING  
VETERANS  
IS GOOD  
BUSINESS!**

In order to serve veterans best it is important to adopt a dual customer service approach. Both clients and employers are our 'customers' and we seek to serve them both with a productive employer/employee match. We also have to be creative in our outreach and educate employers while seeking to serve them. There have been good intentions in recent years in campaigns to support veterans and *hire our heroes* but difficulties related to the military-civilian divide can hamper those efforts. Common myths and stereotypes are prevalent and veterans still have difficulty translating military skills and experience for a civilian resume. Businesses have to look at the bottom line and **it is our job to demonstrate that hiring a veteran is not an act of charity or patriotism; hiring veterans is good business.**

Employers who are successful at hiring and retaining veterans will likely have a “**veteran friendly**” work environment. A crucial piece to this is becoming culturally competent in veteran and military issues and experiences. Human resources personnel and hiring managers, who have baseline knowledge of veteran issues, and most importantly the unique resources available for veterans, can better provide essential workplace support. Veteran mentorship and affinity groups help to create a supportive network for veterans in the workplace. TiVo, for example, has a veteran mentorship program within the workplace in which new veteran employees are teamed up with established veteran employees. Other successful veteran friendly practices include providing on-the-job training opportunities which can harness the skill sets that veterans bring to the company. Talk with your employers about creating avenues to support veterans in the workplace. **This should be an essential component of your job retention strategy.**

We also need to broaden our employer pools as we serve a more diverse client base. Prior to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, mainstream veteran employment services funded through the VA and Department of Labor largely served an older population which had struggled with chronic homelessness. We still serve this cohort but now are also addressing the need of a younger demographic, more women veterans, and young families. These veterans are at different stages of their career trajectory and possess different skills and challenges.

Creating relationships with the corporate community can overcome these obstacles and garner both employment partners as well as funding and in-kind support.

## EXAMPLES OF EMPLOYMENT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Host a Veteran Employment Summit during which you can educate employers in military veteran cultural competency. Explain your services and highlight a panel of employers with whom your agency has worked with. Make sure to invite hiring managers, recruiters and HR personnel, who are the gatekeepers to employment.	Identify corporations and employers in your community which have veteran affinity groups and reach out to its members. Those veteran members may not be in a position to directly hire, but you can explore ways together to support veteran hiring in their workplace.	Deliver veteran cultural competency training to your employers. Swords to Plowshares presents either formally or informally and provides Human Resources Certifying Institute continuing education credit for credentialed HR professionals.
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# JOB TRAINING AND COHORT MODELS

Cohort training, job brokering and on the job training are effective ways to improve the quality and longevity of job placements. These methods also strengthen the relationship between your agency and the employer as well as the employer and veteran candidate.

**“SELLING” VETERANS TO EMPLOYERS** Veterans may be an easy population to sell ‘on paper’ with veteran hiring initiatives in the news but you have to be prepared at the outset of the agency/employer relationship to explain the value of your partnership and your veterans.

## **BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS**

- Make sure they understand the soft and hard skills veterans can bring to their company.
- Be as specific as possible explaining work ethic, leadership skills, adaptation, and punctuality.
- Build relations with HR staff, hiring manager, supervisors, and executives.

**INTERACTING WITH EMPLOYERS (DUAL CUSTOMER SERVICE)** The more you know about the employer needs the better the match for your veteran.

- How would they like to receive resumes?
- What skills are most/least important?
- What sort of candidate training will be relevant?
- Educate employers on your client base and provide them with cultural competency training.

## **SERVING THE VETERANS (DUAL CUSTOMER APPROACH)**

- What are the needs of the veteran?
- Ensure they would want the job train them for.
- Make sure they have the skills needed to excel at the job.
- Are there obstacles to success? Housing, family issues, stressors.
- Does this position meet or contribute to the veterans’ long term goals?
- Balance your desire to get the veteran a job and to challenge them with their ability.

## **JOB BROKERING**

Offer your employment partners the service of acting as a job broker in which you actively recruit and screen candidates for the employer. Hiring managers are busy, they may sincerely want to hire a veteran but shuffling through a mountain of resumes and then trying to understand a military resume can just be too much. If you place an ad and screen the potential candidates you can orchestrate the best matches, build trust and save your employment partner time.

- Place job opportunity ads which call for candidates with prior military service, consider listing relevant MOS or other military job codes in the advertisement. Describe the job in some detail but do not identify the employer.
- Deliver multiple qualified candidates for the application and interview process.
- Send only applicants that would be happy and excel at the position.
- Provide assistance in making sure the veteran is prepared including honing softskills such as interview techniques and resume development, as well as job related skills related computer programs, etc.
- Screening applicants also serves as client outreach, so be ready to enroll and work with veterans who are not suited for the particular job but who may be ready to train in other areas.

## **JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS**

Employers often want to hire employees who are an exact fit for the position; indeed, those who have a demonstrated ability to do the specific job. This can be problematic for veterans who may have performed jobs which do not translate directly to the civilian workplace.

Training is a routine part of military life; employers may not know that throughout a military career candidates have engaged in any number of focused trainings, whether they are related to hard skills, or leadership and management.

We all provide training for our veterans through publicly available programs, from technology fields to phlebotomy. If resources allow we can send our clients to training which suits their individual skills and aspirations. When choosing a training course, make sure they are:

- Accredited.
- Industry recognized.
- Produce a needed certification or degree.
- Build training paths around the needs of identified future employer.
- Would the employer value classroom trainings or practical learning? Both?
- Would the employer consider adding an on-the-job training to supplement formal training?
- Ask the employers to suggest the best trainers and curriculum for the job field.

Monitor the veteran as they go through the training course. We know that life gets in the way of the best intentions. Make sure you keep in contact with your clients; help them overcome obstacles, and stay focused.

**COHORT MODEL** Group training is efficient and provides a peer-based supportive environments as veteran transition to the civilian workforce. This also models military training in that these trainings are relatively short, from one week to several months, and are focused and practical in nature.

- Work with a local employer or industry to develop and implement training.
- Identify specific current or future opportunities.
- Decide what size cohort is best. Groups can be large or small.
- How many jobs are available? How many veterans can you place in the specific vacancies and elsewhere? What will your attrition be?
- Arrange to assist the employer in all stages of candidate recruitment, training and placement.
- Work with the employer to develop or purchase training. Identify and secure training space.
- Partner with local institutions like community colleges or trade/technical schools to develop and deliver training.
- Try to obtain donated or discounted training space with local schools or businesses.
- Make sure you screen veterans for skillsets and potential as well as for their ability to engage in training programs. Know how they will address transportation, income assistance, childcare, etc.

We have found that job fairs are not very effective in getting clients positions. They often cast too wide a net and there are few opportunities to actively place, interview and hire veterans during these events. Worse, they can be very disheartening for the veterans who attend. Expectations may be high, but in the end they feel that they have just spent an hour or so milling about at information tables with no structured purpose or outcomes.

Well planned intimate hiring events are far more effective than job fairs. Work with employers who are filling multiple openings. Act as a job broker to screen candidates prior to employer interaction, and then present the employer with several candidates to interview for each position. Ensure that interviews occur at the event.

### **A WELL PLANNED HIRING EVENT**

Offer approximately three veteran candidates per job. Make sure that your clients know that they are not guaranteed a position. They will get an interview, but if it doesn't result in a job it is good practice and you will continue to work with them in the future.

Thoroughly prepare your veterans and your HR hiring partners.

If you have a client who is not an easy fit but you have reason to believe they are suited for the position, explain that to the hiring staff prior to the event.

**TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT** – often veterans seek services when they needed a job yesterday. Be responsive to their needs but address short-term needs, as well as long-term career plans.

- Customize their employment plan to allow for long-term plans
- Maintain relationships with employers who have a need for temporary or flexible employment
  - Continue to case manage the veteran to ensure s/he do not stall at the temporary job
  - Continue to build the veteran's resume and interview skills

## SCENARIO

Swords to Plowshares works with many employers, both public and private. Recently East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) tried to hire more veterans, but the veterans they recruited had trouble with the civil service exam; particularly the math section. EBMUD approached Swords to Plowshares to help them get a more qualified pool of candidates. Swords to Plowshare helped organize a cohort training program with a local community college that not only focused on the math skills needed for the test, but also classroom materials that would help the candidates when they were on the job. Simultaneously, Swords to Plowshares partnered with EBMUD to establish a paid internship through which veterans would gain hands-on experience working in the field, and possibly with their assigned supervisors, if hired. This does not circumvent of the civil service exam rules; but is however a way to help veterans gain the skills needed so they could pass the exam and showcase their talents in the job market. Meanwhile Swords to Plowshares' policy team worked with EBMUDs HR staff and supervisors to ensure EBMUD becomes a veteran-friendly employer from the executive level down.

# PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a daunting term for nonprofits. Year-to-year we must juggle short-term grants and contracts, while remaining dedicated to serving our community. Strategic planning for our programs and organization involves getting creative and taking a hard look at fundraising goals and leadership.

## FUNDRAISING

Program sustainability for nonprofits can seem like it begins and ends with funders. As nonprofits continually plan for sustainability, they must seek funding that aligns with their program goals.

## 5 STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE FUNDRAISING ARE AS FOLLOWS:

### 1. CREATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FUNDERS

Funding is not only about a good program and a well-written proposal; it's about creating a relationship with potential and current funders. Initiating, developing, and cultivating relationships with grant makers at an individual level is a critical important step to sustainability.

Figure out who the program officer is and get to know them. Conduct meetings with current and potential grant makers about your organization, the success of your program (with data to back it up), and your understanding of the nature and scale of the problem that you address through your work.<sup>1</sup> Convey the findings of your work in a translatable way that the funder can identify with. Long-term commitments are often gauged when a strong relationship with your program officer is made.

- Call to check-in or notify your program officer of something exciting, whether it be an event, a breakthrough with a veteran, a new and exciting training program, etc.
- Invite funders to visit your site for a tour. Make sure key members of your staff are available to talk about your programs. Prepare them with talking points prior to the meeting.
- **Do not miss established reporting deadlines!** Make sure you write down important reporting dates and notify the funder that you are working on the report **before** the approaching deadline.
- Establish meetings before and after your reports are due to discuss your findings and answer any questions they may have so they can better understand the workings of your programs.

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<sup>1</sup>York, Peter. "The Sustainability Formula: How Nonprofit Organizations can Thrive in the Emerging Economy." TCC Group.

- Establish measurable, definable goals before you solicit funding. Make sure that these goals are well within your program's reach – don't over-inflate.
- If you will not meet these goals, contact your program officer prior to submitting your report to discuss and be honest about why the goals were not met. It could be the difference between additional funding and never being funded again.
- Do not try to make your program fit into a funders' focus if it is beyond your mission and current program goals. If you are unsure, contact the funder and discuss your program's goals.

## 2. MEASURE YOUR IMPACT

Data for measuring progress, outcomes and impact are gaining traction in the non-profit community, and funders are now asking for the evidence that their investments are making a difference.<sup>2</sup> Creating a proven track record and conveying the success of your program to the funder is a clear step in the process of establishing an ongoing relationship.

We hear the term “data-driven” with more and more frequency. Being data-driven means valuing the process of learning from your data and applying those values to your programs. Nonprofit organizations have struggled to employ big data methods, which describe the whole picture of their services, even while the landscape of data has changed and more organizations are driving their process as a result of their learning. Nonprofits should implement data-driven strategies, but being in the community in which you serve, you must also rely on the value of your experience and figure out how to incorporate the two to collect meaningful information. While funders value data, they also stress the importance of the narrative. Your reports and proposals are a reflection of your services. A well-written narrative represents the caliber or services that you provide.

- Does your proposal/report tell your story?
- Does it hold meaning beyond the operational numbers you're required to report on?  
Provision of quality reports and narratives should include both quantifiable information and success stories.
- Can the funder get a sense of the dedication of the organization to its cause, of the impact of the organization on the veterans you serve?

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<sup>2</sup> Pastor et al. “Transactions, Transformations, and Translations: Metrics that matter for building, scaling, and funding social movements.” USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. October 2011.



As the tools and philosophies of big data evolve and spread across nonprofit organizations, they can change ideas about the value of experience. Data for nonprofits should be mission driven and describe the big picture of your organizational values, and data tools should be used so that they can easily reflect this. The process for collecting data should examine how best to concisely gather and analyze information without overly collecting data. Too many nonprofits providing employment services assess performance through program quantity as monitored by implementers (# served, # provided jobs) rather than program quality derived from client data. Let objective, client-centered data about the relationship between program quality and outcomes determine performance metrics.

If you collect information in a way to which your funder prescribes, but the methods are different, talk to your funder before you modify your data tools. Funders know what information they want collected and want to see the overall picture of how you are serving veterans, but they don't want to burden the organization. They also don't always understand the process of how you are collecting data. If your current data provides a complete story to the funder, that's likely acceptable. (Federal contracts, however, are usually pretty prescriptive and less adaptable in terms of what metrics they require.)

### 3. DEFINE YOUR SUCCESS STORY

Once you've established the big picture metrics and understand the importance of telling your story, figure out how you define your success.

#### EMPLOYMENT PLANNING

- ? How do you assess barriers to employment among veterans who are not job ready?
- ? How do you measure wraparound care to address barriers to employment among veterans?
- ? Does employment preparation include a review of disability benefits (and the impact of employment on these benefits)?
- ? Do employment opportunities reflect informed veteran choice?
- ? Do training programs address the unique skill sets of veterans?
- ? Were the veteran's strengths, abilities, and interests considered when establishing job goals?
- ? Did the veteran lead the planning and job assessment process formulating a job plan?

#### EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT

- ? Do veterans served achieve truly meaningful job outcomes?
- ? Was it a quick job placement, or did you take into account a career path for the veteran?
- ? Does the veteran have a livable wage in relation to the geographic region?

#### EMPLOYMENT RETENTION

- ? Do you have a well-coordinated job retention support system in place?
- ? Can you determine if the veteran employee is integrated in the workplace and participating in the community?
- ? Does the employer provide opportunities to integrate and support the veteran? Do they have affinity groups? Are they "culturally competent" of veteran experiences?
- ? Does the employer receive ongoing support services from your organization?

#### 4. TRY TO EASE REPORTING BURDENS

Reporting requirements placed on nonprofits can be particularly burdensome, especially for those of us with both federal and foundation requirements. We find that we are collecting data on everything under the sun and even though we are collecting an enormous amount of data, it is all piecemeal and doesn't provide a big picture for scaling and measuring the effectiveness of programs.

Data can help organizations articulate the needs of veterans, successful employment and training programs, and useful methods in providing services. Data should serve as a tool for lessons for the field and funders.<sup>3</sup> This is the most important piece. Often enough, the funders are not the people we serve. They rely on us to inform them of the needs on the ground and how they should align their funding priorities to serve those needs. More often than not, programs are adapting to meet the needs of funding requirements to meet their numbers and illustrate "success" when the challenges they are really experiencing would serve as a better learning tool for both the organization and the funder.

**BE HONEST WITH YOUR FUNDER ABOUT YOUR CHALLENGES.** It's not all about success, it's also about learning. Every challenge we experience should be communicated to funders so that they can examine the priorities as they pertain to the needs on the ground and the communities we serve.

#### 5. DIVERSIFY YOUR FUNDING SOURCES

Veteran employment services is becoming more common among funding priorities and nonprofits should access these sources while the attention to veteran unemployment has traction. Sustainable nonprofit organizations, whether large or small, raise funds from a variety of institutional grant makers such as private foundations, corporations and government agencies. This is difficult when grant writers must juggle multiple grants and contracts, and grant writers and program staff need to stay on top of timelines and grant deadlines. If a veteran can co-enroll in grants and contracts the burden is lessened.

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<sup>3</sup> Pastor et al. "Transactions, Transformations, movements." USC Program for Environmental



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ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATIONS EXHIBIT LEADERSHIP THAT IS:		
1	Visionary	<p>Leaders of sustainable organizations apply result-based planning and management, are visionary and inspiring, and are able to adapt quickly to the changing pace of nonprofit work.</p> <p>The majority of us work in nonprofits because we are tied to the mission, believe in the value of social service, and want to improve the lives of underserved communities. This dedication should be continuously inspired through leadership. Program managers should remind staff how their day-to-day work is tied to their mission and enriches the lives of veterans, even if it's completing daunting paperwork. This will seek to motivate staff to continue to work effectively. Managers are inclusive in decisions they make for the program and value the input of their staff.</p>
2	Strategic	
3	Inclusive	
4	Decisive	
5	Inspirational	
6	Motivational	
7	Accountable	

Leaders in sustainable nonprofits are also *adaptable*. Although the scope of our work is typically the same year-to-year, funding variations can greatly change program operations. The landscape of veteran care is also constantly changing and leadership must stay informed on the ground of veteran needs. This can be a juggling act, but effective leaders need to keep the vision of the organization aligned with these changing mechanisms. Funding must align with the organization’s mission, and the organization’s mission must align with the needs of veterans. This is why leaders must also be **strategic** and **decisive** when it comes to adapting their programs to meet the changing needs of those they serve.

These qualities should extend to the **board of directors**, as well. Too often nonprofits are not taking full advantage of the ways in which the board can and should participate in fundraising and program planning. Some nonprofits prefer the board to be more hands-off, but they should still require the board to participate in ways that benefit the operations and funding of the organization.

- Make sure the board renews their commitment to the organization every year, especially during strategic planning.
- Operationalize the objectives you think the board should meet.

<sup>4</sup> York, Peter. “The Sustainability Formula: How Nonprofit Organizations can Thrive in the Emerging Economy.” TCC Group.

- Make sure the board is doing outreach for the organization, talking to potential funders, advocates, and other stakeholders.
- Provide the board with talking points about the success of your organization. Give them data on your program.

# MOVING FORWARD

## A. APPRENTICESHIPS AND ON THE JOB TRAINING

Apprenticeships and on the job training have enormous potential to help us overcome obstacles to quality veteran employment. One, we as veteran employment service providers have long recognized the need for employers to be willing to train up our veterans. While we know that our veterans have tremendous skills, potential and adaptability, in many cases, employers want candidates with the exact job experience needed for open positions. Two, often veterans need income immediately and cannot sustain through a long training program without some support, OJT and apprenticeship allow for stipends and wages while veterans train up and demonstrate their value as full time hires.

On the job training appears to be coming back in the employment and training world. The DOL has released a major grant opportunity, to release 100 million in 25 grants in the states. Registered Apprenticeships are earn-and-learn models that meet standards for registration as a Registered Apprenticeship with the U.S. Department of Labor through the state Apprenticeship Agency (in California, this is the Department of Industrial Relations– Division of Apprenticeship Standards). While our individual agencies are not in a position to administer a state wide program, we hope that if a grant is awarded in California that we can help direct veterans to programs.

That said, direct service providers and employers can currently work together to take advantage of existing apprenticeship opportunities and to develop new programs. The California Division of Apprenticeship standards allows for a variety of apprenticeship opportunities for veterans which allow use of Montgomery and GI bill education benefits. In addition, employers and employment service providers can craft apprenticeships in a variety of fields beyond the traditional trades. Their website includes industry standards for established apprenticeship trades as well as guidance to creating new apprenticeship models to suit a particular field or employer. You will find regional representatives contact information at their website <http://www.dir.ca.gov/das/das.html>.



## **B. LONGER TERM INVESTMENTS IN VETERAN EMPLOYMENT**

Veteran employment service agencies rely on main stream government funding through the Department of Labor and Workforce Investment Act, and other programs to survive. These grants provide an essential backbone to our programs. It is important for leaders on veteran services to keep abreast of these funding streams and the state and federal agencies which administer them to ensure that veterans get their fair share of overall workforce development dollars.

Ensuring long term support for veteran employment requires an investment of time. As stated earlier, close relationships with your grant program managers can help maintain interest in the veteran workforce development. In addition, developing deeper long term relationships with employers will pay off. This should include forging and maintaining relationships with veteran leadership, staff and affinity groups within local businesses and professional entities.

## **C. NEW MODELS FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

The heightened interest in veteran employment offers us an opportunity to explore new models and adapt to changing client demographics. Many private and community foundations are choosing to direct veteran giving in the employment realm. These grants can vary greatly in size, just as with this program, California Veterans Employment and Training Collaborative Program, these funds may be used to leverage other funds and maximize flexibility and creativity.

While some funders will continue their commitment to veteran employment and well-being, history teaches us that others will move on to different program priorities. It is important that we make the most of this interest now. In the short-term, we can use the increased interest not only to increase our numbers served but to craft new programs for the future.



**SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES** is very pleased to present this toolkit to assist employment staff and agency leadership in improving services for California Veterans. The toolkit is made possible by the generous support of the **WALMART FOUNDATION** through a re-granting and technical assistance project administered by Swords to Plowshares.



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