



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-10-15-0234-15
Project Category: Learning Experiences
Funding Level: \$25,001-\$150,000

Chicago Botanic Garden

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$141,682
Amount of cost share:	\$150,129

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing narratives for FY2016 applications differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2014 and FY2015 applications. Most obviously, the names of the three narrative sections and the order in which they appear have changed. Be sure to use the narrative instructions in the FY2016 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

**Chicago Botanic Garden
Institute of Museum and Library Services
Museums for America 2015
Military Workforce Reintegration Program**

The Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG) seeks a two-year \$141,682 grant from IMLS to develop and pilot a two-year transitional employment program for military service members who have recently returned from overseas conflicts and are reintegrating into civilian life. Post-9/11 veterans struggle with unemployment and underemployment; many have difficulty finding a position that provides a livable income. Transitioning service members are confronted with unique challenges that impede employment, which can include combat-related injuries and disabilities, difficulty translating military experience to civilian professions, and a delay in launching a job search upon their military separation, when they lose a mission focus and deep camaraderie. Pre-employment civilian work-experience for veterans has proven valuable for transitioning service members not ready for civilian employment. CBG has worked with veterans for 35 years, including employing and mentoring one veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury and serving veterans in a stress reduction program in the Buehler Enabling Garden.

Through collaborative partnerships with veteran service organizations, including the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs and Illinois Joining Forces, CBG will develop and implement an institution-wide transitional employment training program for post-9/11 veterans. The Military Workforce Reintegration program will reflect the tenets of military service—a supportive team environment, contribution to mission, and service. Fifteen Chicago-area military men and women will work in 14-week mentored internships with CBG supervisors. Interns will also meet in a cohort and individually with the project leader and coordinator to build workforce readiness skills and create a career plan of action. Bi-weekly horticultural therapy activities will teach methods of stress reduction through gardens, nature, and relaxation techniques, providing veterans with coping mechanisms to adjust from military service to their civilian lives. Horticultural therapy services staff will consult with regional veteran service organizations on the program's development, implementation, and dissemination of results to a broad audience.

Program outcomes include the following:

- Develop an institution-wide transitional employment program that encompasses mentored internships with Garden supervisors, therapeutic horticulture, workforce readiness, and goal-setting;
- Employ and train 15 Chicago-area military service members at CBG for 14-week mentored internships, preparing them for employment in the civilian workplace; and,
- Educate public gardens and museums about a viable model for creating a bridge to the civilian workplace for returning military, while communicating the value that veterans can bring to a cultural institution and their communities.

CBG staff members will use a variety of tools to evaluate the impact of the Military Workforce Reintegration program and measure the benefit to veterans, CBG staff, the museum community, and veteran service organizations and initiatives in Illinois and nationally. Military service members will achieve the goal of enhanced ability to enter and participate in the civilian workforce and an increased capacity to address reintegration and post-combat stressors, as measured by attendance and retention, the use of a pre-, interim, and post-program assessment survey, follow-up assessments on a quarterly basis for a year, and supervisor and project coordinator observations. CBG staff will achieve the goal of increasing the institution's capacity to employ and serve the reintegration needs of veterans, as measured by a pre- and post-program survey and observational data. Staff will conduct an interim and final project analysis and track and report on dissemination of the program model and publicity for the program. CBG will support the reintegration goals of military service organizations and government agencies by contributing a museum model to the challenge of reintegrating returning veterans into their communities and the workforce.

CBG staff members will disseminate program results through their service in Illinois veteran service and workforce development organizations, the American Public Garden Association, and local and national museum organizations. CBG's 50,000 member households and more than one million annual visitors will learn how a cultural institution can lead in providing meaningful education, work or volunteer experience, and a support system for the mutual benefit of veterans, the organization, and society at large.

1. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Proposed project: The Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG) seeks a two-year \$141,682 Museums for America - Learning Experiences grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to develop and pilot a transitional employment program for military service members who have recently returned from overseas conflicts and are reintegrating into civilian life. Based within CBG's horticultural therapy program, the Military Workforce Reintegration program will combine training, pre-vocational internships, and therapeutic horticulture to help 15 individuals transition into the workforce, while addressing their physical and emotional reintegration challenges in a supportive environment. The program will focus on teamwork, commitment to mission, and service--characteristics of successful transitional employment programs. This project will integrate CBG's 40 year history and leadership in horticultural therapy services and accessible gardening by teaching veterans to use interactions with nature and plants to support reintegration challenges and post-combat trauma. It will contribute a museum model to the challenge of reintegrating recently returning veterans into their communities and the civilian workforce.

Need, Problem, Challenge: The unemployment rate of veterans runs consistently two percentage points higher than the national average. Young veterans, ages 18-24, have an unemployment rate upwards of 23%, and women veterans, ages 18-24, experience twice the unemployment rate of their non-veteran counterparts. With an estimated 744,700 military veterans, Illinois has the tenth largest veteran population in the country. According to a study by the Social IMPACT Research Center at Heartland Alliance, approximately 76,000 new service members who have recently returned from active duty were living in Illinois in 2012, a number that has continued to increase as military men and women return home. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that post-9/11 veterans in particular have struggled to find work more than the general workforce. Post-9/11 veterans continue to struggle with unemployment and underemployment; and many struggle to find a position that provides a livable family-supporting income. The Illinois Discharged Service Member 2014 Annual Report states that among post-9/11 veterans, 46% of those who are employed earn less than \$30,000 annually, and 12% have incomes of between 100% and 200% of the poverty line.

Transitioning service members are confronted with unique challenges to their employment prospects. These can include combat-related injuries and disabilities, difficulty translating military experience to civilian professions, and a delay in launching a job search upon their military separation. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, veterans who are able to secure employment change jobs twice within the first three years of civilian work. Trends show it takes veterans on average of three employment experiences to find a best-fit job match.

The transition to the workplace is not the only reintegration challenge that service members face when returning home from active duty. The Blue Star Families Fifth Annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey, released in September 2014, reports that 53% of veterans and 55% of spouses described their transition from military service as "difficult," and noted concerns about family, employment, health care, and education as their top transition concerns. Accustomed to the intense camaraderie of their military service, service members express feelings of isolation in their communities. One thread in successful veteran reintegration programs, such as The Mission Continues and Leave No Veteran Behind, is the integration of opportunities for veterans to impact their communities—to "continue to serve."

Over the past four years, CBG has focused efforts on serving post-9/11 service members. In 2011, CBG collaborated with the USO of Illinois to offer a Military Appreciation Day for 250 military family members. The following year, CBG engaged 48 healthcare professionals, landscape designers, and therapists from across the region and country with a three-day symposium focusing on health gardens for veterans and children with sensory processing disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). In addition to serving older veterans at the region's three Veterans Affairs medical centers with horticultural therapy services, in 2013 CBG began to provide horticultural therapy services to post-9/11 veterans at Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center's Day Hospital Program. This year, CBG horticultural therapists partnered with Thresholds, a local mental health organization, to develop and launch a special gardening curriculum in a monthly series of retreats at CBG for veterans in treatment for anxiety and stress disorders.

A turning point came in 2012 when the Garden partnered with The Mission Continues, a national veteran service organization, to employ and mentor an Iraq war veteran with PTSD and TBI. Matt, who had difficulty functioning prior to this opportunity, explained how the CBG work experience transformed his life: “Once I started here, it immediately helped me boost my confidence level and keep my mind active and get back in shape.” He said, “When I was in the military I was always in the field. When I got here (CBG), I had to refresh my computer and office social skills, there is a whole ton of stuff I hadn’t done in a while.” This positive experience—for both the military service member (who is now working full-time) and the organization—helped CBG envision its role as a transitional employer for post-9/11 service members.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service website states that “the value of a pre-employment civilian work-experience is unparalleled” for transitioning service members not ready to jump into civilian employment. It explains that a pre-employment work-based experience can offer a “safe” opportunity for veterans to learn and practice the “intricacies of the civilian workplace” and help those with new physical and psychological disabilities adjust and learn how to navigate in a work setting. The Military Workforce Reintegration program mirrors what CBG staff members have found to be successful when helping vulnerable populations transition into the workplace—team learning and support, mentored internships, and supplemental training to build vocational skills. Over the past five years, CBG’s Windy City Harvest program has successfully practiced this approach when recruiting and training veterans in sustainable urban agriculture and vocational readiness.

Botanic gardens and cultural institutions are well positioned to serve military service members and their families. Many provide free admission to active duty military personnel on their own and through the Blue Star Museums program, while some organize special exhibitions and events for military audiences. Botanic gardens offer a calming, nurturing environment, beneficial for veterans managing anxiety, stress, or hypervigilance. The Denver Botanic Gardens and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (Claremont, California) have developed innovative vocational training program models to engage post-9/11 veterans. The CBG pilot project will differentiate itself by integrating veterans into its own workforce, rather than providing a stand-alone program. The integration of work in a nature-rich environment, along with horticultural therapy activities of proven therapeutic value, demonstrates how a public garden can bring its resources to a transitional employment program for this population.

Beneficiaries: The project’s direct beneficiaries will be men and women who have returned from overseas military conflicts in the past five years. Participants will include service members facing difficulties transitioning to non-military careers, including those who have completed a physical and/or mental rehabilitation program and are work-ready; those who have not decided upon a vocational direction; and those who face challenges translating their military experience and skills to the civilian workforce. CBG will benefit from gaining experience with military culture and serving the military community. In addition to directly providing veterans with a therapeutic and tangible work experience outside the military, public gardens and museums across the region and country will benefit from another model for veteran reintegration. CBG’s 50,000 member households and more than one million annual visitors will learn how a cultural institution can provide meaningful education, work experience, and a support system for the mutual benefit of veterans, the organization, and the metropolitan region.

Intended Results: This initiative will result in transitional learning and workforce opportunities for post-9/11 veterans, while demonstrating CBG’s ability to support veterans’ career prospects and communities.

Outcome 1: Program Development: With input from veteran service organizations, CBG develops a recruitment plan and institution-wide transitional employment program that encompasses mentored internships with Garden supervisors, therapeutic horticulture, workforce readiness, and goal-setting.

Outcome 2: Education and Training: Fifteen Chicago-area military service members work at CBG for 14-week mentored internships. Participants gain experience, skills, a work history, and references that will be beneficial in seeking long-term employment. CBG horticultural therapy expertise is enhanced, and other participating CBG staff supervisors better understand military culture and can create a welcoming climate for returning military.

Outcome 3: Dissemination of Program Model: Public gardens and museums learn about a viable model for creating a bridge to the civilian workplace for returning military, while communicating the value that veterans can bring to a cultural institution and their communities.

Advancement of Strategic Plan: CBG's ten-year strategic plan (www.strategicplan.chicagobotanic.org)—finalized in December 2009—provides a foundation for CBG's operations and growth. The plan, entitled "Keep Growing," reflects the Garden's vision for its future as well as its commitment to individual growth among the constituencies it serves. In alignment with this vision, CBG has made a concerted effort over the past five years to understand and serve the region's military service members transitioning from active duty to civilian life in the Chicago metropolitan area. With three major Veterans' Affairs medical centers, six Vet Centers, and the Naval Station Great Lakes located 14 miles from CBG, military personnel and their families are an increasingly important outreach constituent. The Military Workforce Reintegration program will advance the following key priorities outlined in CBG's strategic plan.

The strategic plan states, "The Garden's excellence in education and community programs will make a powerful, measurable impact on people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds." Through programs onsite and in Chicago communities, programs will: "Reach and affect more people...and advance the Garden's international reputation by publishing a variety of environmental education, horticultural therapy, and horticultural job training resources and curricula." CBG's vision for a pre-employment work-based transitional experience is to develop a model that will contribute to the conversation about how best to serve returning military, , aligning with CBG's strategic commitment to deepening the institution's impact locally and nationwide. The goal for the horticultural therapy services program is to be "an international leader in creating and using plant-centered therapies, people-plant research, publications, and professional training programs to serve the health and wellness needs of people of all abilities from birth through death." The Military Workforce Reintegration Program will demonstrate how the use of therapeutic horticulture, in tandem with workforce readiness training, can benefit the health and wellness of returning veterans, an increasingly important community constituent. In fact, the proposed project carries on an institutional commitment that is older than CBG, beginning with the Chicago Horticultural Society's horticultural therapy activities after World War II.

A personnel goal outlined in the strategic plan states, "The Garden will strive to ensure that the composition of the staff reflects the diversity of the communities we serve." The deliverable on this objective, which is evaluated annually by CBG executive staff and the board, is to: "Offer outreach to veterans and minorities; enhance existing recruitment practices to ensure more of a presence within the diverse communities we serve (i.e., veterans and minorities)." CBG's human resources department recently implemented new recruitment strategies to encourage veterans to apply for open positions through Illinois Hires Heroes. The Military Workforce Reintegration program will support a demonstrated commitment to create a veteran-friendly work environment. CBG anticipates that interested program graduates will pursue CBG job opportunities as they become available.

2. PROJECT WORK PLAN

The Military Workforce Reintegration Program will take place over two years from November 1, 2015 through October 31, 2017. The project will be overseen by Barbara Kreski, director of horticultural therapy services, and managed by Alicia Green, horticultural therapist and coordinator of the Buehler Enabling Garden.

Activities A paid pre-employment transitional work program tailored to the workforce reintegration needs of military service members will be held five days a week over 14 weeks for six hours a day from May through mid-August at CBG. A reduced full-time schedule will provide a structured platform for workforce reintegration and time for veterans to tend to other reintegration needs. The program will reflect the tenets of military service—a supportive team environment, contribution to mission, and service. The curriculum will be developed using existing resources, including best practices in vocational education and horticultural therapy services. CBG will consult with its established network of collaborative partners to develop and implement a program that meets the needs, culture, and challenges that returning military service members face when reintegrating into the civilian job market. The project will be comprised of the following components.

Internships. CBG will hire veterans to work in paid CBG internships alongside staff, other seasonal interns, and volunteers. Utilizing its network of veteran service organizations, including the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, Illinois Joining Forces, the Thresholds Veterans Project, and Growing Healthy People, CBG will recruit candidates, and the human resources department will screen them against established criteria and application procedures. CBG departments involved with this project may include horticulture, living plant documentation, visitor services, education and community programs, maintenance and construction, and plant conservation science

research. Human resources, horticultural therapy services, and staff supervisors will interview and hire candidates for select positions that match the background, interests, and abilities of promising candidates. Staff supervisors will create a clearly defined job description for each participant, then manage and mentor interns to fulfill the requirements of their position. Interns will be fully functioning members of their respective work teams. CBG departmental staff will undergo training in sensitivity to military workforce reintegration issues and military culture prior to the program. The project coordinator will liaise with the participant and staff supervisor informally on a daily basis and more formally in weekly meetings to monitor performance.

Vocational training. Interns will meet in a cohort—a service team—and individually with the project leader to build workforce readiness skills and create a career plan of action. Through weekly group sessions, participants will learn and discuss general job-hunting topics, such as resume-writing, interview skills, and recommendation letters and references. Group meetings will also cover soft skills, such as transferring military etiquette and culture to the civilian workplace. Each individual will develop and report on progress toward a specific vocational action plan, which can include further education or training with a specific career goal, a second internship with a compatible organization, a job search plan, a completed resume or job application(s), and/or scheduled interviews. CBG will adapt training modules from an established workforce readiness curriculum, such as Roots of Success, an award-winning environmental literacy curriculum that is used by workforce training, environmental, and advocacy organizations nationally. CBG’s urban agriculture certificate training program, Windy City Harvest has successfully used this curriculum, which covers general content knowledge about green careers and also specific job skills preparation and skills required for people entering or re-entering the workforce.

Horticultural therapy services. The program will incorporate horticultural therapy activities to teach methods of stress reduction through gardening, nature, and relaxation techniques, providing participants with coping mechanisms to adjust from military service to their civilian lives. This will include creating meditative dish gardens, nature-based journaling, and garden-based sensory activities used for stress reduction. Additionally, participants will visit and participate in guided field trips to CBG display gardens and natural areas to learn about career opportunities and components of CBG’s mission. For example, they will visit natural areas and the Plant Conservation Science Center to learn about job opportunities in science research as well as the Fruit & Vegetable Garden and the Windy City Harvest Apprenticeship programs to learn about sustainable agriculture and relevant CBG training opportunities.

Project Staffing and Oversight: Key CBG program personnel for the project are as follows:

- **Barbara Kreski, director of horticultural therapy services,** will supervise the project’s development, implementation, evaluation, dissemination of results, and explanation of the program model. Kreski, a registered and licensed occupational therapist and registered horticultural therapist, oversees the Garden’s horticultural therapy services area, which encompasses direct services, consultations, research, publications, education, and the world-class Buehler Enabling Garden. Kreski joined CBG five years ago after 30 years of experience in a wide range of clinical settings, including a VA hospital, psychiatric hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and public schools. Kreski also holds a master’s of health science degree (concentration in neuroscience) from the University of Indianapolis.
- **Alicia Green, coordinator of the Buehler Enabling Garden,** will serve as the project manager, with responsibilities for curriculum and program development, staff and participant recruitment, intern placement and oversight, evaluation, reporting, and dissemination of results. For five years, Green has led horticultural therapy services in the Enabling Garden, including the recent program for returning military, as well as for children and adults with physical, cognitive, and psychological disabilities. She recruits and manages volunteers; leads Enabling Garden tours for local, national, and international audiences; and plans the Enabling Garden’s horticultural displays. She is a registered horticultural therapist, a national certified counselor, and holds a master’s degree in counseling from Northeastern Illinois University.
- **Patsy Benveniste, vice president of education and community programs,** will provide guidance throughout the project’s implementation and will report on progress to the CBG board and other stakeholders. Benveniste has 30 years of senior-level experience in nonprofits, including 14 years with CBG. She holds a master’s degree from the University of Chicago’s Harris School of Public Policy.

- **Jennifer Schwarz-Ballard, associate vice president of education**, will assist in developing and overseeing the project's evaluation tools and procedures. Schwarz-Ballard has nine years of CBG experience and a Ph.D. in Learning Sciences from Northwestern University with dissertation research on evaluating middle school science programs. She will bring education curriculum and evaluation expertise to the project.
The project coordinator will oversee and maintain regular communications with interns and their supervisors, set and monitor intern workforce readiness goals and address workplace issues as they arise, and organize and lead therapeutic horticultural and workforce readiness training sessions. The candidate will have an undergraduate degree, and background in therapeutic horticulture, military culture, and vocational education.
- **Department managers** will support the project through staff supervision of interns. Each is an expert in their respective field and has experience supervising staff and/or interns.

Sequence of Activities: Upon notification of grant funding, CBG will refine the program curriculum and recruit participants, utilizing its network of relationships. CBG human resources and horticultural therapy services staff will recruit, interview, and select program participants, matching their interests and experience with CBG departments. CBG will hire a project coordinator to work with the project manager to organize daily activities. CBG staff from all participating departments will undergo training in military culture before the summer internships begin. The project coordinator will begin working at CBG three weeks prior to the start of the internship program; together with the project manager, he/she will orient participants in advance of the program. From May through mid-August, the program will engage its participants in the internships. In addition to pre-, interim, and post-program assessments to evaluate program reception and make changes as needed; staff will follow up with participants on a quarterly basis for a year. Following the first year, staff will evaluate and adapt the program, share findings to date, and begin planning for 2017. After repeating the program with a new set of participants, staff will write a final report, disseminate program results, and provide support to other organizations interested in replicating all or parts of the program. Staff will follow up with 2017 participants through the following August to monitor and report on their progress. Throughout the program's implementation, CBG will publicize its model and participant success stories to its members, the general public, and community, government, and philanthropic leaders.

Project Resources: CBG is requesting \$141,682 for this project. CBG will contribute staff time—\$86,053 total in salaries and benefits of permanent staff—and \$64,076 in indirect costs toward the project. Components of requested funds include the salary and benefits for the project coordinator, internship stipends, participant transportation expenses, and materials and supplies including work uniforms. CBG's horticultural therapy program staff members will provide their expertise and a solid track record of delivering therapeutic horticultural therapy programming and accessible gardening opportunities, including 35 years serving veterans. CBG will lend additional human resources expertise, including the vice president and director of human resources, to this employment, workplace diversity, and internship program (CBG manages and mentors approximately 165 interns annually). The director of CBG's sustainable agriculture training and transitional employment program, Windy City Harvest, will provide transitional employment and workforce readiness resources.

Evaluation CBG staff members will use a variety of tools to evaluate the impact of the Military Workforce Reintegration program. Participant changes in workforce readiness will be evaluated by attendance and retention, the use of a pre-, interim, and post-program assessment survey, and supervisor and project coordinator observations. Progress toward a vocational goal will be evaluated in weekly meetings between the intern and project coordinator, and follow-up assessments through telephone meetings will be administered on a quarterly basis for a year following each year of the program. Staff observational data will be considered throughout. Staff will conduct an interim and final project analysis and track and report on dissemination of the program model. See project results section for additional details.

Tracking Progress The project team, including horticultural therapy staff, supervising staff, and the project coordinator will meet on an as-needed basis—likely weekly during the internship—to plan and monitor program implementation. Project staff will report regularly on progress to the vice president of education in bi-weekly meetings and at education and community program division meetings, held four to six times a year. CBG's senior staff will receive relevant project updates at their weekly meetings, and project updates will be shared with CBG's board of directors and other stakeholders. Program staff will adapt program components, including recruitment

strategies, internships, the vocational training curriculum, and schedule based on ongoing staff and participant feedback from formal surveys and weekly meetings between the project coordinator and staff supervisors and between the coordinator and each intern. If an individual or the program appears off-track, a project team meeting will be held to strategize and implement necessary adaptations. When needed, CBG staff members will seek guidance from individuals skilled in veterans’ issues and military culture through its extensive network of military service organizations. The program will be thoroughly reviewed after its first year, with adjustments made for the second year as indicated in the post-program review process.

Sharing Project Results The program model and participant outcomes will be reported to colleagues in CBG’s veteran networks, in CBG publications and training programs for horticultural therapy certificate students, and others. As appropriate, outcomes may be reflected in marketing and fundraising materials, including in CBG’s member magazine, *Keep Growing*, on the Garden’s website and blog “My Chicago Botanic Garden,” and through other social media opportunities. CBG will solicit and respond to media requests from broadcast, print, and electronic media for community-based, city-wide, and national coverage opportunities. CBG’s government affairs department will invite local, county, state, and federal elected officials, staff, and agency personnel to learn about the program and meet participants. Periodic reports will be provided to the Forest Preserves of Cook County’s Board of Commissioners and Cook County leadership. CBG staff members will disseminate program results through their service in the Chicago Military Professionals Network, the Chicago Commercial Club’s Veterans Working Group (focused on employment), Illinois Joining Forces, and the Illinois Workforce Development Investment Board. They will share the program model with public gardens at American Public Garden Association meetings and conferences, and with cultural institutions through Museums in the Park, a coalition of Chicago Museums, the American Alliance of Museums, and other local and national museum organizations.

3. PROJECT RESULTS

Impact Category	Goal	Intended Impacts (change in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes)
Military Service Member Participants		
Workforce Readiness	Enhanced ability to enter and participate in the civilian workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase knowledge, confidence, and competence in the civilian workplace • Increase content knowledge of vocational opportunities and job-hunting skills
Health and wellness	Increased capacity to address reintegration/post-combat stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use nature and therapeutic horticulture techniques to benefit health and well-being
CBG Staff and Members		
Departmental staff development	Increased capacity to employ and serve the reintegration needs of veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase knowledge of military culture and skills/confidence supervising veterans • Increase knowledge of the needs, employment, and other transitional challenges of post-9/11 veterans to better serve this constituency
Membership education	Institution becomes sensitive to and supportive of military needs	Raise awareness of the importance and value of supporting and integrating veterans into CBG and their communities

Botanic Gardens and Museums		
Program replication	Support the reintegration goals of military service organizations and government agencies	Increase awareness, knowledge, and confidence to replicate components of the veteran workforce reintegration model

Performance Indicators and Measuring Success:

PARTICIPANT success measurements will include the following:

- 1) Participants will demonstrate a minimum 30% increase in work readiness, indicated on the self-reporting survey
- 2) At least 13 of the 15 interns will complete the 14-week internship and develop a viable plan of career next steps.
- 3) At least nine participants will make progress on their vocational plan for up to one year after their CBG internship, evaluated in quarterly check-in phone meetings with CBG staff. Evidence toward a vocational goal during and after their internship will include accomplishment of one or more of the following: a) Completion of a resume and/or sample job application; b) Practice interview by CBG human resources department; c) Identification of a targeted list of employers; d) Completion of informational or job-specific interview with a targeted employer; e) Selection of educational or vocational training leading to a volunteer or internship position compatible with their vocational plan, and f) obtain and maintain full time employment.

CBG DEPARTMENTAL STAFF involved with the project will demonstrate a 30% increase in confidence and competence understanding military culture and supervising military service members, as indicated on a self-reporting pre- and post-program survey. Education and community program staff will publish at least three program-related articles and/or social media posts on the program and present the model at two or more national and/or local conferences and events and at least four military service, workforce development, and museum committees and working groups. CBG will share the program model and results with at least five community, government, and funding organizations.

Value to the Field. CBG will demonstrate how a botanic garden or other cultural institution can provide an inclusive and accessible learning environment to address the workforce readiness and community reintegration needs of returning military service members. Components of the model can be replicated at other institutions to engage service members and help them to translate their military background and skills into civilian jobs or volunteer opportunities. Cultural institutions are well suited for this role because of the diversity of employment and training opportunities, including internships and volunteer programs, inherent in their structure and operations. The model will demonstrate how and why cultural institutions should move beyond free admission and special programs for veterans to create a military-friendly culture—for training, employment, volunteerism, and other forms of engagement.

Sustainability. CBG will pursue partnerships with the public and private sector to sustain and evolve the program. Staff members envision that once the Military Workforce Reintegration program is successfully launched and refined, relationships with veteran service organizations and related government agencies will lead to new funding opportunities, as was the case with past IMLS-funded projects, such as Green Youth Farm, Windy City Harvest, and Science Career Continuum. By creating and promoting a veteran-friendly workplace, it is anticipated that more returning service members will seek employment, training, and volunteer opportunities, not only at CBG, but at other museums across the region and beyond. CBG will evolve the program and determine next steps for service to veterans based on the needs and feedback of program staff, participants, and veteran service organizations.

