COMMUNITY SALUTE / LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS SERVING
VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Supporting Veterans and Military Families: How to Begin

Museums and libraries have long served as place-based hubs for members of the public to engage in informal learning, access collections for educational or aesthetic purposes, and participate in civic dialogue. Across the country, changing community needs and priorities along with new modes of engagement have created an imperative to connect with and serve the public in ways that extend beyond traditional institutional formats and settings. Museums and libraries have begun to respond to this imperative. In so doing, they are connecting with the public in new and deeper ways, strengthening the social and institutional networks that support community wellbeing, and acting as catalysts to spark positive change.[1]

Community Salute is an initiative of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) with the goal of studying how libraries and museums are responding to the needs of veterans and their families and developing new strategies through community partnerships to provide better services for this important constituency.[2] Community Salute is an example of the ways museums and libraries can work as community catalysts.

Museums and libraries are well positioned to support and engage veterans and military families within their local communities.

As community- and family-oriented institutions, these organizations are built to serve as space for connecting, learning, and engaging with the community.

Because local contexts are different, community-based approaches are useful for engaging the veteran and military family community. This brief provides a series of key action steps to help museums and libraries connect with veterans and military families in their own communities and highlights promising practices from institutions across the country. Insights from librarians, museum staff, and advisors from the military community helped create this resource.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Libraries and museums may find it useful to structure their work in ways that build upon natural strengths, values and expertise, and pre-existing work. Three common roles emerge for these institutions:

Libraries and Museums are Well Positioned to Serve and Support Veteran and Military Family Populations

POTENTIAL ROLES:

CATALYZE CONNECTIONS

Connect veterans to benefits and services

Link veterans with service providers to meet specific needs

Facilitate access to VA benefits and relevant information for veterans and military families

Connect veterans with other veterans for peer-based support systems

CURATE NARRATIVES

Increase the understanding of the veteran and military family experience

Lift up narratives to raise civilian awareness

Record and showcase the diversity of veteran and military family experiences

Host and engage veterans and military families (e.g., Veterans Day) to create community connections

CREATE PROGRAMS

Tailor programming specific to veteran and military families

Develop and host veteran and military family support services (e.g., healing arts programs, children's programs)

Provide training and skills-building programs

Create safe and trusted spaces and opportunities for veterans to engage with their communities

Across the country, libraries and museums are already exploring these roles to enhance their connections to local military communities.

- In Tennessee, the Nashville Public Library **offers library space for service providers** to connect veterans with benefits.

- The Veterans Connect @ the Library initiative in California **connects veterans and their families with services**, Veterans Affairs benefits, trainings, and other support across the state.

- The Library of Congress **collects, preserves, and digitizes veteran and military family war stories** through the congressionally sponsored Veterans History Project.

- The Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington, hosts Hot Shop Heroes to **offer healing arts programs to injured veterans**.

- Veterans interested in film can participate in **eight-week filmmaking workshops** hosted by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

- The Cecil County Public Library offers **specific technical training and small business consulting services** to veterans in Perryville, Maryland.

- The Pierce County Library system provides **Microsoft trainings and certifications** for transitioning service members at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State.

These organizations use a variety of strategies to support and engage veterans and military families. The appendix to this guide contains more detailed profiles for five of the listed institutions and programs listed above: **California State Library, Pierce County Library, the Library of Congress, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Museum of Glass.** These examples illustrate the ways libraries and museums are connecting with this population and include key considerations and decisions each library or museum made to carve out a role that was appropriate for them—from understanding local context to designing and implementing an offering.

FOUR STEPS TO GUIDE YOUR WORK

The examples in the appendix illustrate four steps that museums and libraries take to best support the veterans and military families in their communities. As you think about your work, use the following steps to guide your process:

1. **Understand local needs and contexts.**
2. **Identify organizational capabilities.**
3. **Design your offering (product or service).**
4. **Implement, observe, and adapt.**

This is a dynamic process. As the overlapping steps suggest, determining the best way to engage with any community is not always linear or neatly packaged. You may first decide to identify your organizational capabilities, and then move to understanding local needs and context by researching your community and what is already available. Your specific sequence of steps will depend on what information is available and your knowledge of your military community. To help you through each step, reflect on the following considerations and questions.

KEY STEPS TO TAKE:

UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS	IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES	DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE)	IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT
What does your community look like?	What assets do you have available?	What activities or programs should you pursue?	What have you learned from this work?

These key steps can help museums and libraries determine how best to maximize their contribution to the veteran and military family community

1. UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS: WHAT DOES YOUR COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

Every community is unique. Population type, needs, and community-based assets vary, and so must your services and programs. An approach that works in one community may not replicate as successfully in another. Not only does this hold true in your community at large, but also when engaging with subpopulations such as veterans and military families.

So where can you begin? Consider available research and lessons learned, and think about how they might apply to your specific community and its needs. Understanding some of the larger trends within the military community is an important part of this process. A strong starting point for engaging with veterans and military families comes from research that reveals four core areas of needed support:[3]

- Building **community connections** to expand social support networks and link up with services and programs in local neighborhoods.

- **Transitioning successfully** into non-military life, a pivotal point that often requires identifying initial employment, education and training, as well as navigating access to benefits.

- Ensuring long-term **economic security** through stable employment in fulfilling career paths and knowledge of financial literacy and planning.

- Preserving **health and wellness** that spans physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Also, during an individual's active duty, his or her family may face specific challenges that arise from the military lifestyle, including:[4]

- **High rates of mobility and separation** that often erode familial stability and lead to single-parent households and amplified emotional needs for children.

- **Low levels of spousal employment** that affect a spouse's ability to develop long-term, meaningful career paths.

- **Obstacles to financial security** that are often associated with the uncertainty of military life—high mobility and moving costs, and the inability to secure full employment.

- **Difficulty accessing childcare** that is economical and flexible to meet the unique needs and challenges of military families.

Using a tool, such as the one depicted here (see *Veteran and Military Family Landscape*), can help you better understand veterans and military families, capture the different subpopulations within these communities, and highlight the various opportunities to support and engage them.

For example, your library or museum could explore which military subpopulations are most prevalent in your community (e.g., your community may have a large population of young military families with a deployed parent). You may also unearth a specific opportunity for which you are well positioned to provide support (e.g., your community has Post-9/11 service members who are struggling to find employment or meaningful career pathways).

As you develop an understanding of your local community, consider:

- **Connecting with the local Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) office and other government agencies.** For many within the military community, these organizations are the primary touch points in the civilian world. Local VA offices can also inform you about benefits and services that are already available.

- **Learning about the unique characteristics of your local military community.** Most communities have demographic data that can help you better understand the veterans and military families in your region. Census data is often a great first resource to learn about the local characteristics and demographics of your community. Consider also reaching out to organizations that serve veterans and the military community to learn more about relevant issues (e.g., health and wellness, homelessness, underemployment). For an example, check out the Military and Veteran Community Collaborative in San Antonio, Texas, which recently published a report that effectively explores the local military community and its needs.[5]
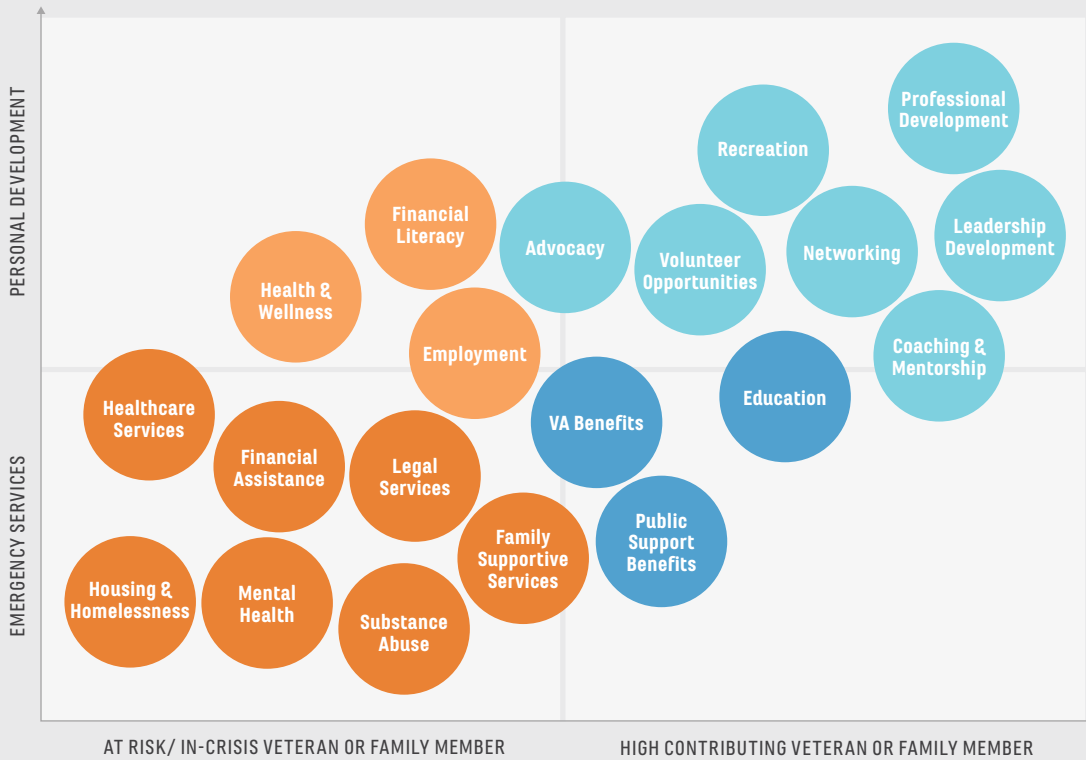
Veteran and Military Family Landscape

MILITARY COMMUNITY — You can think about the military community in many ways

GENERATIONS	SPECIAL POPULATIONS	FAMILIES
World War II	**Combat Experience**	**Spouses**
Korean War	**Wounded**	**Military Families**
Vietnam War	**Women**	**Veteran Families**
Gulf War	**In-Crisis** (homeless; legally involved)	
Post-9/11	**Other**	

OPPORTUNITY AREAS — There are many ways to engage

Community Connection	Successful Transitions	Economic Security	Health & Wellness
Community engagement	Education & training	Full employment & meaningful career pathways	Healthcare access
Social network	Initial employment & workplace integration	Benefits & retirement	Mental, emotional, & physical well-being
Participation in arts & culture	Spouse employment	Financial literacy	Housing
Peer-to-peer relationships	Access to services & benefits		Family stability

In Each Community, a Variety of Programs Offer Services to Veterans and Military Families[1]

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Professional Development

Recreation

Financial Literacy

Health & Wellness

Advocacy

Volunteer Opportunities

Networking

Leadership Development

Employment

Coaching & Mentorship

Healthcare Services

Education

VA Benefits

Financial Assistance

Legal Services

Family Supportive Services

Public Support Benefits

Housing & Homelessness

Mental Health

Substance Abuse

AT RISK/ IN-CRISIS VETERAN OR FAMILY MEMBER

HIGH CONTRIBUTING VETERAN OR FAMILY MEMBER

- **Overview of programs and services.** Remember that you do not need to fill every gap you identify. A variety of programs and organizations may already exist that offer services to veterans and military families. A spectrum of programs and services, such as the one above, illustrates the range of opportunities your library or museum might have to become involved.

- **Learning about the community-based assets already available to veterans and military families.** Connect with veteran-serving organizations (VSOs) that are already working with veterans and military families, such as the American Legion or Team Red, White & Blue. Consider connecting to faith-based institutions and community foundations that may also have deep connections to military communities.

To help guide this process, ask these key questions:

- How do we **understand** the population we are trying to engage?

- Are there **target segments** of the population to consider?

- What are some of the unique **needs of the population**?

- Are there **Veterans Affairs, military installations, or other organizations** that support this population in our community?

- Who are the other **key players** in this space?

- What **services or programs** do these key players already provide?

2. IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITIES: WHAT ASSETS DO YOU HAVE AVAILABLE?

As you begin to identify where you can make a contribution, understand the assets and capacities your organization has or may tap into. Because funding, staff, and time are limited, it is important to be clear about the opportunities that are the best fit with your organization's values and expertise. These insights also provide opportunities to identify key areas for collaboration.

As you define your organizational capabilities, consider:

- **Leveraging assets.** Museums and libraries have many assets to contribute. Physical space, research expertise, community trust, and deep networks are all valuable to veterans and military families.

- **Understanding gaps in your assets and capabilities.** Your organization may not always be best equipped to pursue certain activities single-handedly. As you assess your organizational strengths and weaknesses, identify partners such as faith-based organizations or businesses that may bring complementary assets to the work. Approaching organizations from across sectors for partnership and collaboration can help fill any gaps your library or museum may face on its own.

To help guide this process, reflect on these key questions:

- What **organizational assets and capabilities** do we currently have available?

- What are the **constraints** that our organization faces?

- What types of activities fit within our **scope, values, and mission**?

- Are there **external community-based assets** we can tap into?

- Who are the key players that we can **partner** with in this effort?

3. DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE): WHAT ACTIVITIES OR PROGRAMS SHOULD YOU PURSUE?

Understanding your local context and organizational capabilities is critical to seeing where and how your organization can best contribute. This knowledge will, in turn, help customize your approach to your community. Ask for input and leadership from your veteran, military family, and community partners.

Fellow librarians and museum staff advise:[6]

"Remember to ASK what local vets need/want/know at every step of the programming process, from brainstorming to implementation."

"Every community is unique. Survey the veteran [and military family] landscape before embarking on new programming/initiatives for true ability to collaborate."

"Don't work in a silo. This is community-wide work with many sectors needed at a community table."

As you begin to develop your offering, also consider:

- **Acknowledging and understanding cultural differences.** Military culture is significantly different from civilian culture, and there is often a perceived disconnect between the two.[7] Civilians may believe that all veterans experienced active combat or know how to navigate veterans' benefits systems. Recognizing these differences can help build rapport and trust with your communities. For additional information on building cultural competency, reference Kristen Mulvihill and Sarah LeMire's book, *Serving Those Who Served: Librarian's Guide to Working with Veteran and Military Communities*.

- **Incorporating assets unique to the population.** Veterans and military families often have an interest in volunteering and have a strong team orientation. Find ways to incorporate and highlight these qualities within your programs and services. For example, you can create peer-to-peer volunteer opportunities that connect veterans who have similar experiences.

- **Incorporating assets unique to your partners.** After identifying potential partners, consider the ways you can use assets unique to them, such as content expertise and relationships.

- **Learning from your peers.** Not all approaches, programs, or ideas need to be new or created from scratch. Complementing, scaling, and piloting existing approaches can be very successful. Reach out

LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS HAVE UNIQUE ASSETS THAT CAN BE LEVERAGED

Resources and research expertise

"Libraries have resources, [librarians] are expert researchers and if they don't have the information you need, they will know how to get it."
-Library program coordinator

Physical space

"It's important to connect nonprofits doing well with people who will benefit from services. Partnering with an existing brick and mortar location like a museum or library is a fantastic opportunity." -Veteran

Strong and large networks

"The library systems are widely distributed, they are closer [to communities], and they can be a disseminating channel to share information."
-Researcher

Neutral spaces

"When we talked about finding space where no one had an advantage, where there was common ground... A couple of different times that was at a library." -Funder

Places of community connection

"Art and museum programs can engage someone in their own treatment and get them invested in their own health and well-being."
-Veteran

Safe and private spaces

"Libraries still have a viable character in our culture of being safe places where people care and want to help, and where core professional values of respect and confidentiality are upheld." -Veteran

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to other libraries or museums that are working with veterans and military families and learn about their services and programs. Connect with other partners to learn about their work and to find areas where you may be able to contribute.

- **Defining what success means for your program or service.** Setting meaningful goals for this work and defining the change you hope to see as a result of your program or service (e.g., outcomes) will allow you to track progress.

To help guide this process, answer these key questions:

- Is there **specific knowledge** about the veteran and military population to be aware of and consider (e.g., misperceptions about this population)?
- What are some of the **assets** this population brings to the table?
- Are there s**pecific skills or attributes that are necessary** to create a program or service for veterans and military families (e.g., recruiting volunteers with military experience, having a technology trainer)?
- Are there **promising practices** or models to leverage? What do our **partners** bring to the table?
- Who are the **key stakeholders** to engage in the design process (e.g., potential partners, users)?

4. IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT: WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THIS WORK?

Flexibility and iteration are key to creating long-term successful services and programs. Your offerings must bend to embrace a diverse military population, ever-changing communities and partners, and limited assets.

After the initial roll-out, reconnect with your community. Listen to your patrons about what worked, what didn't work, and what suggestions they have. These insights will help you improve and scale your work.

As you implement, observe, and adapt, consider:

- **Creating space for feedback.** In addition to observing what your community is reacting and responding to, be reflective, and be intentional about seeking out feedback. Implement formal and informal feedback methods such as surveys or a suggestions box.

Over the last few years, there has been an increase of non-VA organizations that serve veterans and military families, particularly in the social sector. More than 40,000 U.S.-registered nonprofit organizations are dedicated to serving veterans and the military community. And since 2008, this sector alone has seen a 41 percent increase in the number of veteran-serving charities.

Many non-VA providers offer a variety of resources to support military populations

PROVIDER TYPE

Intermediary (e.g., funders)	**Nonprofit/NGO** (e.g., FBOs; VSOs)	**Private** (e.g., businesses)	**Public** (e.g., colleges, cultural institutions)

APPROACH

National Endowment for the Arts partners with the DOD and The Writer's Center to provide writing workshops to help veterans in the healing process	**Team Rubicon** provides emergency relief during disasters through a corps of trained veteran volunteers	**JPMorgan Chase** supports an industry-wide commitment to hire one million veterans	**University of Nebraska-Lincoln** created a Military and Veteran Success Center to support student veterans

- **Encouraging continued refinement.** Not all programs and services will work on the first try. Be flexible and willing to improve their design. Incorporate your lessons learned and modify accordingly.

To help guide this process, consider some of these key questions:

- **Who** should we ask for feedback?

- What have been individuals' **experiences**? What do they highlight was **successful**? Are there opportunities to **modify**?

- **Are veterans and military families using** our programs and services? What have been their **experiences**?

- What has **changed** within our local context? Are there changes within the **population**? Are there new needs? Are there **new players and partners** to consider?

- Are there **additional opportunities** that can be leveraged?

- How can we ensure **long-term and meaningful engagement** with this community through our product or service?

Authentic Engagement Often Requires Specific Cultural Competencies

ADVICE PRACTITIONERS SHARED ON PROGRAM DESIGN:

Create welcoming environments	Create spaces that avoid loud noises, bright lights, or large crowds. Intimate settings that are open and welcoming, without calling too much attention to veterans, are often more comfortable
Emphasize collaboration & team-based approaches	The military community is service-driven and strongly values teamwork. Creating programs that emphasize these qualities can help provide opportunities for veterans to support one another and form new connections
Learn about military culture	Military culture is different from civilian culture. Familiarize yourself with the different branches and the military language to help build understanding of the diversity of military experiences and to build rapport and trust with the individuals you engage

CONCLUSION

Understanding your local context and your organizational capacities will help you identify opportunities to engage veterans and military families. Design programs and services that build from these opportunities, but remain flexible to ensure their longevity. There is no one way to engage a community that works best in every situation; define how best to support your local veterans and military families given your unique circumstances and context.

APPENDIX

A SNAPSHOT OF THE VA SYSTEM

The federal government's Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the largest service agency for many veterans and military families. The VA system is large and complex, serving the community through three main branches: the Veterans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefit Administration, and the National Cemetery Administration. For many libraries and museums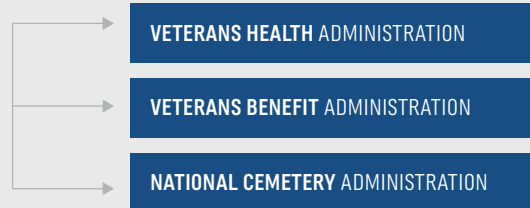, connecting to the VA network often occurs at the local community (Vet Centers) and county (County Veteran Service Officer) levels. State Veterans Affairs departments provide state-funded services to veterans and their families. Connecting with the VA can provide great insights into the military population around you, information about the services and benefits currently available, and tools to help you learn about veterans and military families.

A Snapshot of the VA System

THE VETERAN AFFAIRS (VA) SYSTEM IS LARGE AND COMPLEX, SERVING THROUGH THREE MAIN BRANCHES AND OPERATING ACROSS MULTIPLE LEVELS

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

VETERANS BENEFIT ADMINISTRATION

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION

FOR MANY LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS, CONNECTING TO THE VA OFTEN OCCURS AT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND COUNTY LEVELS

State

State Department of Veteran Affairs

Federal

Federal Department of Veteran Affairs

County

County Veteran Service Officer

Community

Local Vet Centers

VSO AND NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHTS

Organization: American Legion

The American Legion is one of the largest chartered veteran-serving organizations in the country. The organization is managed by volunteer veterans. It supports activities and assistance programs for veterans at Veterans Affairs hospitals and clinics. The American Legion also lobbies and advocates for policy that furthers the interests of veterans and service members, including benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (e.g., healthcare coverage, pension).

Organization: Team Red, White & Blue

Team Red, White & Blue (Team RWB) is a nonprofit organization that promotes the personal enrichment of veterans. Team RWB focuses on three core areas: connecting veterans to create authentic relationships and develop a sense of belonging; creating opportunities for veterans to engage in physical activity; and engaging veterans in meaningful service and purpose-driven, community-based work.

Hundreds of other organizations similar to these serve veterans and military families. Visit the Department of Veterans Affairs VSO directory to discover what is available in your area, and check out the following list of veteran-serving organizations:

- Wounded Warrior Project
- Team Rubicon
- United Service Organizations (USO)
- Blue Star Families
- American Red Cross

PEER EXAMPLE 1: CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY

ROLE ILLUSTRATED: CATALYZE CONNECTIONS

veterans connect@ the library

California State Library (and public branches) partner with the California Department of Veteran Affairs to connect veterans to services and benefits

PROGRAM ORIGINS

Formally developed after the California Department of Veteran Affairs identified the value of libraries in connecting veterans to benefits and services

What Services and Programs are Offered?	What are the Key Issues?	Why is it Interesting?
Veteran Resource Centers in libraries to connect veterans with dedicated benefits at the library and with the CalVet agency **One-on-one consultations** on a variety of veteran specific topics **Veteran-related programming** (e.g., exhibits, community-wide dialogues)	VA benefits Education and skills-building opportunities Transition support and employment opportunities Housing resources Health services General benefits	Demonstrates a strong partnership with the state Veterans Affairs department Represents a flexible and scalable model Illustrates a statewide approach

CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS

UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS	IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES	DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE)	IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT
California State Library (CSL) identified a large veteran population across the state of California Several organizations, such as the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) and the County Veterans Service Officer, already provide resources and supports to veterans The library learned that a majority of the veterans in the state are not accessing and using these dedicated benefits	CalVet connected to CSL after recognizing the value of libraries in helping connect veterans and CalVet benefits and services CSL allocated funding from the Library Services and Technology Act for designing support programs	CSL partnered with CalVet to create the in-the-box Veterans Connect @ the Library model with a range of engagement levels for individual libraries Participating libraries could establish Resource Centers specific to veteran services and veteran programming CalVet and SCL collaborated to design resources for training librarians and volunteers on veteran services Individual libraries recruit volunteers to staff programs	Actively reaching out to local communities helped expand awareness and success of programs Flexibility of the model (e.g., volunteer-based, low-cost to set up) permitted scalability and replication in libraries across the state

PEER EXAMPLE 2: PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY

ROLE ILLUSTRATED: ☑ CREATE PROGRAMS

Pierce County Library partners with Rally Point 6 to provide technical skills-building programs and career counseling for transitioning military members

PROGRAM ORIGINS

Developed from a grant from the State Library and in partnership with Microsoft and Rally Point 6, a nonprofit located on Joint Base Lewis-McChord

What Services and Programs are Offered?	What are the Key Issues?	Why is it Interesting?
Open Lab Program (now the Microsoft Military Program) at Rally Point 6, designed to assist transitioning military members Tailored **Microsoft training programs and globally recognized certifications** to program participants **One-on-one career counseling and skills translating** for individuals transitioning out of military employment to civilian employment	Employment and transition Skills building	Demonstrates a multisector partnership approach to delivery Illustrates library-nonprofit partnership Uses grant funding to support program development

CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS

UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS	IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES	DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE)	IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT
Large population of active service members at Joint Base Lewis-Mc-Chord transitioning into the civilian world due to downsizing Many transitioning individuals are seeking careers in the technology field or were uncertain about potential career paths	Pierce County Library already provides technology training courses in some of the public branches Grant funding from Washington State Library and Microsoft to provide a modified training program to military community Nonprofit partner Rally Point 6 (RP/6) had strong connections to the military community on base	Developed the Open Lab Program to assist military members in obtaining globally recognized Microsoft technologies certifications to support transition into the workforce Active outreach to local base helped expand awareness and reach of program Opted to host program at partner's (RP/6) location to create a familiar and accessible environment to participants	Success of the pilot program and flexibility of the grant allowed growth of program when demand was evident Partnerships across sectors filled gaps in funding and other resources (e.g., connections to base) Recently, the program moved its location to the on-base library at JBLM and has changed its name to the "Microsoft Military Program"

PEER EXAMPLE 3: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

ROLE ILLUSTRATED: CURATE NARRATIVES

The Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress collects, digitally preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans

PROGRAM ORIGINS

The program originated from Congressional mandate to preserve the stories of World War II veterans and their families as the population began to age significantly. It has now been expanded to include stories from veterans from other war generations.

What Services and Programs are Offered?	What are the Key Issues?	Why is it Interesting?
The Project includes **digital, oral, and written personal accounts** from war veterans and civilians nationwide from all wars since WWI	Community connections	Illustrates collaboration between the Library of Congress and local communities to collect stories Illustrates a government-sponsored, nationwide effort to connect to veterans

CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS

UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS	IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES	DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE)	IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT
Population trends illustrated a natural decline of WWII veterans and their families Participating communities develop understanding of veteran demographics locally	Library of Congress received congressional support to launch an initiative to record and preserve histories and stories of the military community Identified corporate and other cross-sector partners to support (sponsor and fund) the project Acknowledged that local initiative would lead the story-gathering process and that the Library of Congress would serve as the repository of narratives	Designed the Veterans History Project with a national scope to reach all segments of the population (e.g., all branches, military families) Leveraged support from local partners to understand unique local contexts Incorporated flexible submission methods (e.g., oral, written, digital, artifacts) Intend to digitize collections over time to make them accessible to the public	Designed tools for community engagement (e.g., provide workshops led by professional Oral Historian and Folklorists) Re-emphasized scope to include stories from veterans returning from recent conflicts (e.g., Persian Gulf Wars)

PEER EXAMPLE 4: LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

ROLE ILLUSTRATED: 📅 CREATE PROGRAMS

LACMA

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art hosts Veterans Make Movies, an eight-week filmmaking workshop for veterans

PROGRAM ORIGINS

The program developed after LACMA program coordinators observed a large interest from the local military population in participating in LACMA's general filmmaking workshop series.

What Services and Programs are Offered?	What are the Key Issues?	Why is it Interesting?
Filmmaking classes for veterans and film screenings to share veterans' work and stories	Community connections Skills building	Illustrates effective partnerships between museum, libraries, and artists alliances Modified existing programs to target veterans as the main audience Recruited veterans to staff the program and an onsite art therapist to provide ongoing support

CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS

UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS	IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES	DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE)	IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT
Identified a large military community in the Los Angeles area Identified a significant military-civilian divide and a large population of veterans that did not fit typical depictions of the "broken" veteran Observed that many veterans within the community were creative/artists interested in filmmaking and art programs at the LACMA	LACMA already hosts a filmmaking program for the general public Leveraged museum art collections and movie series; spaces and online platforms; equipment and professional filmmakers on staff Received grant funding from corporate and government agencies	Designed eight-week filmmaking workshops and community screenings for veterans Created safe spaces by diversifying gender and era of service participants and hiring veterans to lead the classes Partnered with an art therapist to provide training for staff and serve as an ad hoc advisor Partnered with Los Angeles Public Library Veteran Resource Center to host filmmaking classes Partnered with Veterans in Film and Television to advertise the program	Began working with a professional evaluator to assess the program's strengths and outcomes, as well as identify opportunities to improve the program design Piloting local afterschool program for military children after demand for a similar family program was identified

PEER EXAMPLE 5: MUSEUM OF GLASS

ROLE ILLUSTRATED: 📅 CREATE PROGRAMS

MUSEUM OF GLASS

Museum of Glass in Tacoma, WA, provides glassblowing classes for veterans and transitioning soldiers with the most complex devastating physical and mental injuries

PROGRAM ORIGINS

The program developed from the desire to maintain a relationship between nearby Joint Base Lewis-McChord and the Museum after the success of a one-day free admission event for veterans, service members, and their families

What Services and Programs are Offered?	What are the Key Issues?	Why is it Interesting?
Hot Shop Heroes, a quarterly eight-week glassblowing class for injured and transitioning service members and veterans	Community connections Health and wellness	Illustrates partnership between museum, the local military base, and Veterans Affairs Provides opportunities for veterans and transitioning service members to connect Represents a scalable model that can be replicated at other museums

CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS

UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS	IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES	DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE)	IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT
Identified a population of service members and veterans at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) with severe mental and physical health issues	Determined funding partners (e.g., the National Endowment for the Arts) to support the program development and expansion	Designed quarterly eight-week glassblowing and flame-working classes for service members and veterans with psychological health conditions and traumatic brain injuries	Difficulty with recruiting students (due to downsizing of military in 2014) led to the expansion of the program to include service members outside of the WTB
Many of these service members were waiting on specific healthcare services and were preparing to transition into civilian life	Identified a core of long-standing and highly skilled class instructors with a strong sense of community	Created safe and comfortable environments by beginning each class with a meal to build camaraderie	Developed a partnership with the Veterans Affairs American Lake healthcare system to create a pipeline of interested participants
Veterans and service members participating in the healthcare support programs covered a range of ages and generations		Partnered with the Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) and JBLM to recruit students interested in the class	Success of the program led to plans to scale and replicate similar programs in museums in Virginia and Maryland

ENDNOTES

1. In 2016, the Institute of Museum and Library Services launched the Community Catalyst Initiative geared toward identifying new ways for museums and libraries to strengthen community involvement. To learn more about the Community Catalyst work led by the IMLS and its partners, please read the IMLS press release and the recently published report, *Strengthening Networks, Sparking Change: Museums and Libraries as Community Catalysts*.

2. In 2016, the IMLS launched Community Salute: Libraries and Museums Serving Veterans and Military Families to help strengthen museums and libraries' ability to develop community-based solutions in response to veterans and military families' needs. To learn more about IMLS and its partners, please read the IMLS press release and visit the Community Salute blog.

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5. The Military and Veteran Community Collaborative (MVCC) recently published its 2016 Needs Assessment for the military community in San Antonio, Texas. The Needs Assessment maps the major demographic characteristics of the military community in the San Antonio area and elevates the major issues, including employment, health and wellness, and homelessness rates within the community. The Needs Assessment represents the first comprehensive scan of the San Antonio military community and aims to help align community efforts to support the population. To learn more about the 2016 Needs Assessment, visit the MVCC website.

6. Community Salute Town Hall, 16-17 November, 2016. San Antonio, TX; FSG Interviews. Note: The advice presented in this document was gathered from input from librarians, museum staff, and other experts in the field during a two-day workshop, Community Salute Town Hall, hosted by the IMLS in San Antonio, Texas.

7. "The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era," Pew Research Center (2011), http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/05/war-and-sacrifice-in-the-post-911-era/; Carter, Phillip and David Barno, "Military bases are our most exclusive gated communities—and that hurts veterans," *The Washington Post* (2013), www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/military-bases-are-our-most-exclusive-gated-communities--and-that-hurts-veterans/2013/11/08/27841b1e-47cb-11e3-a196-3544a03c2351_story.html?utm_term=.77fe1f4a4111; Eikenberry, Karl and David Kennedy, "Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart," *The New York Times* (2013), www.nytimes.com/2013/05/27/opinion/americans-and-their-military-drifting-apart.html?_r=1&; FSG Interviews.

FIGURE ENDNOTES

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