

**National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Community of Practice (CoP)
Year in Review**

Thursday, December 29, 2022, 3:00–4:00 p.m. ET

NVTAC Staff

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Key Points

- **Introduction**
 - NVTAC coaches welcomed grantees to the December 2022 HVRP CoP event covering HVRP Program Year (PY) 2021 – Year in Review. Sarah asked attendees to introduce themselves in the Zoom chat.
 - This session highlighted HVRP grantees' PY 2021 results, NVTAC's observations and accomplishments, and plans for 2023.
- **HVRP Program Year 2021 Data**
 - NVTAC coaches highlighted the following key data points from PY 2021:
 - The total number of participants served was 16,923.
 - The total number of participants co-enrolled at American Job Centers (AJCs) was 12,117.
 - The average hourly wage at placement for participants was \$17.47.
 - The placement rate (exit-based) for veterans was 61.3 percent.
 - The placement rate for episodically homeless (exit-based) veterans was 61.2 percent.
- **NVTAC's Observations and Accomplishments**
 - Facilitated peer-to-peer sessions were held between grantees on a regional level. Additionally, NVTAC facilitated peer-to-peer sessions as part of individual grantee technical assistance (TA) activities. Peer-to-peer meetings will continue to be held for different groups in the new year.
 - NVTAC created the [Menu of Services](#), which describes the types of services coaches can provide to grantees free of charge.
 - Throughout 2022, resources on nvtac.org were updated (e.g., [Welcome Packet](#), [Program Guide](#)).
 - The [Find A Grantee map](#) was introduced to offer a user-friendly way of locating specific grantees, including their service delivery area. Grantees can be located using state, county, and zip code search features.
 - NVTAC coaches conducted proactive outreach efforts to increase NVTAC's exposure and reach. NVTAC continues to encourage grantees to reach out with requests for training and TA through contact@nvtac.org.

- NVTAC's website was continuously improved throughout the year. During the [August CoP](#), NVTAC gathered grantee feedback about the website to further improve the user experience.
- NVTAC coaches provided individualized TA based on content requested by grantees (e.g., outreach and enrollment, and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analyses [SWOT]).
- NVTAC participated in the [HVRP Post-Award Conferences](#) in 2022 to welcome new and returning grantees. Grantees were provided with information about terms and conditions, partners and resources, the Technical Performance Report and Technical Performance Narrative, information technology systems, and incremental funding and closeout.
- In December 2022, NVTAC facilitated the [HVRP Bidders' Conference](#) to provide an overview of the HVRP grant, including information about the application process.
- **Looking into Next Year**
 - In 2023, NVTAC coaches will focus on providing leadership skills training for grantees, as it is evident through interactions with grantees that there is a high turnover rate for HVRP employees.
 - Also in the new year, NVTAC will offer support and training to regional Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Services (DOL-VETS) staff.
 - NVTAC will continue to emphasize promising best practices for HVRP grant implementation.
 - NVTAC will continue to provide micro- and macro-assistance for grantees. Micro-assistance will focus on individual HVRP grantees during which coaches provide one-on-one TA, and macro-assistance will focus on facilitating peer-to-peer sessions, CoPs, Virtual Learning Classes, forwarding best practices to the federal staff, etc.

Discussion

- **Discussion Question:** What are some best practices and lessons learned regarding rural communities, transportation, resource management, etc.?
 - **Grantee Response:** Best practices include utilizing NVTAC coaching and listening to veterans. Lessons learned include setting expectations with the veteran about HVRP and employment, ensuring the veterans are heard, assisting them with their needs, and providing services.
- **Discussion Question:** Feedback from grantees this year included post-COVID services. Were there any changes made this year in grantees' programs?
 - **Grantee Response:** We had to make drastic changes. It was critical to work with our community, including the Continuum of Care, and utilize NVTAC resources for training, best practices, information sharing with other grantees, and creating a peer-to-peer group where we talked about making safe spaces for the veterans. It was helpful to meet people in the community instead of just having people come

to the office. We also used Zoom and drove to job fairs, which were shared in the peer-to-peer sessions when differences and changes were discussed. This has strengthened us. When new people come in, they can be hesitant to serve vulnerable populations, and these practices have helped in providing care. I picked up something different every time there was a peer-to-peer session. Networking with community partners and getting involved with Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and the AJC were strong ways to build the program.

- **Grantee Response:** When COVID started, we had to determine how we would reach out to clients. We decided to work with a company that customized and mirrored grantee files to include video capabilities created by NewOrg. We went through our Director of Veterans' Employment and Training. When the state went into lockdown, we were able to audit files. Grantees worked from home and could still meet veterans virtually, follow up with them, and keep track of everything electronically. We are still using this electronic database to this day for almost everything. Additionally, DOL has completed two audits electronically.
- **Grantee Response:** We have learned to foster meaningful partnerships. We identified employers and community-based organizations that put their words into action and followed through. Many say yes, but do not necessarily follow through. It is part of the business. We do not take it personally; we just focus our energy on what we can control. Part of fostering and maintaining relationships includes sending thank you cards and small gifts. In the beginning, the team was frustrated, but I taught them to work with the ones who want to work with us. Thanks to NVTAC's coaching, we are improving our goals. Our assigned coach, Sarah, is always helpful and resourceful.
- **Coach Response:** One of the challenges coaches heard during other CoPs was the importance of creating robust relationships with other organizations, especially in this climate. Sometimes, you must think outside of the box to build rapport. You do such a good job of building rapport with your clients, but building rapport with other community organizations is completely different. What kind of systems can we put in place that make serving veterans easier?
- **Discussion Question:** What would you like to see next year? An example is leadership training. It is needed throughout the lifecycle of the grant because the person who writes the grant may not be the one administering the services. What other things would help next year?
 - **Grantee Response:** Perhaps organizations that have an excellent HVRP program could have meetings with others that are struggling to share best practices. Each state is different, but that may be a good idea. Locally, it can be seen as a competition, but a best practice is to talk to each other. I try to reach out to local HVRP providers. Tons of homeless veterans need assistance. Perhaps NVTAC can spearhead something to encourage grantees to share with one another. I think building one-on-one rapport is best, but an idea like this might work on a larger

scale. We are all in the same boat. I would love to see locals work together, as they have the same goal.

- **Grantee Response:** I would like to see a quarterly session for new employees. Since there is a lot of turnover that happens during a grant cycle, it would be nice if all the new employees could get on a call together and share things they are feeling hesitant about or discuss any questions they may have. It is different when you have a whole room full of people, even if it is virtual. To say, “This is the intention of the grant. This is the history of it. This is where we are. What are some of the things that would help you succeed?” I have a great team, but I inevitably have turnover once a year. There are three people on the team, and they are getting some guidance with assisting veterans, but they are not getting the whole picture. Interactive listening sessions are important, too—particularly since we have not had any type of conference. When I go to a conference, I will connect with a few people on a deeper level. It is a safe place where you can share information and connect with others.
- **Grantee Response:** A leadership travel allowance can expand best practices and cooperation. Regional conferences, including training, best practices, and networking opportunities with other HVRP grantees, could also be beneficial.
- **Grantee Response:** New staff orientation and quarterly sessions would be great.
- **Grantee Response:** We hosted a meeting to discuss veteran employment with the whole division during which we had other programs and other grants. It was so powerful and touching to hear how employed participants’ lives are changing. Staff members and unemployed participants were also in attendance. Perhaps that could be another great tool because sometimes we are so caught up in the details and the administrative side that we forget why we are doing so much paperwork in the first place. A session where participants who are interested share their stories on a quarterly basis could be useful, particularly if participants who are still not employed are in attendance. We are planning another meeting to discuss veteran employment in the summer. We also plan to include staff from other divisions and organizations because we get referrals. We all have participants with amazing stories. Also, we participated in another conference where there were some testimonies.
 - **Coach Response:** Word of mouth is very powerful. When veterans who have experienced unemployment or homelessness hear from each other directly, it is far more effective than receiving a brochure about services.
- **Grantee Response:** A unified software for grantees could be helpful.

Conclusion

- The coaches thanked participants for their time and expressed their appreciation in getting to know them through the training sessions and individualized TA. NVTAC looks forward to cultivating relationships in the new year.
- The coaches reminded participants that setting aside time with NVTAC to do a SWOT analysis on a specific challenge area can be a huge benefit.

- NVTAC reminded participants that services are free to grantees and can be scheduled by email at contact@nvtac.org.