

**National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Virtual Learning Courses (VLC)
Session 1 of 4: What is Meaningful Employment?
April 23, 2024, 2 p.m. ET**

NVTAC Staff

Sarah Chung, NVTAC Coach

Key Points

- **Introduction**
 - NVTAC reminded attendees that HVRP best practices would be shared during this session. NVTAC encouraged all grantees to utilize best practices that may improve their service delivery. Before implementing a practice discussed during this session, grantees must review their award statement of work and contact their Grant Officer Technical Representative (GOTR) to discuss if it is an allowable cost or activity or if it requires an amendment to their approved plan.
 - **NVTAC Overview:** NVTAC provides individualized technical assistance (TA), training, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and additional support to HVRP grantees. To contact NVTAC or request TA, reach out to contact@nvtac.org.
- **What does meaningful employment mean to the veteran?**
 - An important part of HVRP is assisting veterans to find employment that is meaningful and sustainable. Finding employment that aligns with their values, interests, strengths, and priorities may help the veteran retain employment.
 - Helping the veteran find meaningful employment opportunities may contribute to their idea of fulfillment and gratification.
 - HVRP staff can help the veteran identify specific skills to showcase, hone, or advance as a way to help the veteran feel a sense of accomplishment and possibly pave the road for future career advancement.
 - Meaningful employment may look different for every veteran you serve based on their personal interests and goals. The Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) should outline the goals and objectives for each veteran to attain meaningful employment.
- **Good Jobs Principles**
 - The U.S. Department and Labor (DOL) and the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) have identified and developed what is considered a “good job.”
 - DOL and DOC have compiled eight principles for workers, businesses, labor unions, advocates, researchers, state and local governments, and federal agencies for a shared vision of what a quality job looks like.
 - The eight principles as stated on the [DOL website](#):

“Recruitment and Hiring: Qualified applicants are actively recruited – especially those from underserved communities. Applicants are free from

discrimination, including unequal treatment or application of selection criteria that are unrelated to job performance. Applicants are evaluated with relevant skills-based requirements. Unnecessary educational, credentials and experience requirements are minimized.

Benefits: Full-time and part-time workers are provided family-sustaining benefits that promote economic security and mobility. These include health insurance, a retirement plan, workers' compensation benefits, work-family benefits such as paid leave and caregiving supports, and others that may arise from engagement with workers. Workers are empowered and encouraged to use these benefits.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA): All workers have equal opportunity. Workers are respected, empowered, and treated fairly. DEIA is a core value and practiced norm in the workplace. Individuals from underserved communities do not face systemic barriers in the workplace. Underserved communities are persons adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality, including Black, Indigenous, people of color; LGBTQ+ individuals; women; immigrants; veterans; individuals with disabilities; individuals in rural communities; individuals without a college degree; individuals with or recovering from substance use disorder; and justice-involved individuals.

Empowerment and Representation: Workers can form and join unions. Workers can engage in protected, concerted activity without fear of retaliation. Workers contribute to decisions about their work, how it is performed, and organizational direction.

Job Security and Working Conditions: Workers have a safe, healthy, and accessible workplace, built on input from workers and their representatives. Workers have job security without arbitrary or discriminatory discipline or dismissal. They have adequate hours and predictable schedules. The use of electronic monitoring, data, and algorithms is transparent, equitable, and carefully deployed with input from workers. Workers are free from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation at work. Workers are properly classified under applicable laws. Temporary or contractor labor solutions are minimized.

Organizational Culture: All workers belong, are valued, contribute meaningfully to the organization, and are engaged and respected especially by leadership.

Pay: All workers are paid a stable and predictable living wage before overtime, tips, and commissions. Workers' pay is fair, transparent, and equitable. Workers' wages increase with increased skills and experience.

Skills and Career Advancement: Workers have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs within their organizations or outside them. Workers have transparent promotion or advancement opportunities. Workers have access to quality employer- or labor-management-provided training and education.”

- **State and Federal Employment**

- Benefits of Federal Employment
 - There are many benefits to working for the federal government, such as competitive salary, incentives, awards, student loan repayment or forgiveness, alternate work schedules, pay and leave flexibilities, and telework options.
- Benefits of State Employment
 - The benefits of federal employment are similar to state employment in terms of competitive salaries and benefits. Specific benefits may differ depending on the state or territory.
- Find State Employment Benefits for Your State or Territory
 - NVTAC provided a direct link for each state or territory in the [VLC slides](#).
- Veterans’ Preference
 - Disabled veterans are entitled to hiring preference for most federal government jobs. This preference is for veterans who are disabled who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns.
 - As guidance for both employers and employees, the Veterans’ Preference Advisor is one of the Employment Laws Assistance for Workers and Small Businesses (elaws). Advisors help all parties know their rights and responsibilities under federal employment laws.
 - The law is aimed to help both employers and veteran employees understand their rights and responsibilities under federal employment laws.

- **Practical Applications**

- Motivational interviewing (MI) can be a helpful tool for HVRP staff and participants alike as it teaches skills such as active listening and asking open-ended questions.
- Developing and consistently updating the IEP identifies and lays out a strategy for achieving the veteran’s overall employment goal.
- Helping the veteran highlight and showcase their transferable skill sets and credentials can help with motivation and buy-in.

- Help the veteran to identify and learn new skills that are currently in demand regionally. Seek out training opportunities to help enhance the veteran’s skill sets. Building rapport with your local American Job Centers (AJC) to partner on training opportunities, and employment opportunities can assist the veterans with skill development and will in turn look to help the veteran be more competitive for positions.
- Help HVRP participants find a mentor in their chosen career field, as it can help motivate the veteran to think toward their future career goals and upward career advancement opportunities.
- Career searching tools and platforms, such as Indeed, LinkedIn, and Career Builder, can be used to help filter for specific wages, location (remote, onsite, or hybrid), experience level, etc.
- O*NET OnLine is an online platform that helps search for occupations based on the veteran’s goals and needs.
- To help the veteran get an edge during the interview, have the participant research the company's websites ahead of time. Learn everything possible about the company, mission, vision, values, etc.
- Mock interviewing, resume, and cover letter building can help better prepare the veteran for the interview.
- **Discussion Questions**
 - **Question:** What other tools or platforms do you use aside from the ones mentioned in the course?
 - **Response:** We use the AJCs as a valuable tool to help our veterans get jobs.
 - **Question:** What are your strategies to help veterans find meaningful employment?
 - **Response:** We get contact information for hiring managers from the offer letters that our veterans receive.
 - **Response:** We discuss past employment and military experience to see what skills the veteran is not currently using or thinking about to add to a resume and highlight at an interview.
 - **Response:** I work with various agencies in the community that have resources for job readiness and training.
 - **Response:** We meet one-on-one and in group sessions to discuss different employment sectors to see if the veterans have an interest.
 - **Response:** Making sure the veterans have transportation resources is critical.
 - **Response:** The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has employment opportunities for workers 55+.
 - **Response:** We work with various agencies and other resource providers to mitigate transportation barriers and get them to interviews and work. [Ticket to Work](#) is a program that gives free rides.

- **Response:** When working with older veterans who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), focus on finding part-time opportunities to balance benefits and income. Have regular discussions about the pros and cons of staying within income limits to not lose benefits, or finding a job that provides more than SSI/SSDI does.
 - **Question:** What are some lessons learned about finding meaningful employment?
 - **Response:** Communication is the key and ensuring you are connecting often with the resources in your area to breach the barriers.
 - **Response:** A lesson learned is the veteran's first job after enrollment may not last too long.
 - **Response:** Some challenges are when veterans receive SSI and other benefits, and additional income may interrupt benefits. Finding the right balance is very important to help the veteran be successful.
 - **Response:** The humbling of oneself when you realize that your efforts just changed the life of another human being in need. The innately thankful smile that accompanies the tears that you see when they squeeze the feeling from your hand. It is very rewarding for the extra 10 percent effort you put in to help the veteran.
 - **Response:** As a former HVRP participant who became a case worker, my advice to new grantees is to be patient. When an individual experiencing homelessness reaches out for help, they are receiving services from many sources at once and may drop the ball. Patience is key to guiding them through the process.
 - **Response:** Find a meaningful job placement that suits the veteran well promotes veteran attendance at interviews and on the job and increases retention.
 - **Response:** We use the buddy system; we noticed that veterans “clique up” into friend groups. It is much easier to find members of that group employment when one has found a job and can often find placements with the same employer so they can support each other on the job. This also promotes accountability from the veterans and helps keep case managers in the loop by getting updates from other members of the friend group.
 - **Response:** We use [SERJobs](#). It is an agency that has many programs to help workers, including one specifically for people who are 55+.
 - **Response:** We have started talking to employers first and building relationships with them to mitigate issues before they start. We have built such a strong connection that the employers that they now reach out to us when there is a problem.
 - **Response:** We are struggling with assisting veterans with criminal justice backgrounds, especially felonies and those no longer considered for re-

entry. It seems no one wants to give them a chance, and it is frustrating not knowing how to help them. How are you helping this population?

- **Response:** To help justice-involved veterans, we maintain a second-chance employer list of local employers that hire individuals with a criminal background. We work closely with the probation and parole office and organizations like Goodwill to remain up-to-date and involved in the community. We share information about HVRP with employers about some of the challenges the population may face. With the permission of the veteran, we disclose the criminal background up front.
- **Response:** Helping justice-involved participants find virtual jobs has been successful. We have connections with companies that do telephone surveys. They are low-paying, but they give some employment experience that will look good on a resume.
- **Additional Resources**
 - [“Pay for Success” helps veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\) find and keep meaningful jobs](#)
 - [Meaningful Work Kit - Stanford University](#)
 - [DOL Good Jobs Principles](#)
 - [O*NET OnLine](#)
 - [U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#)
 - [Veterans Employment Opportunity Act of 1998 \(VEOA\)](#)
 - [Veterans’ Preference](#)
 - [Veterans’ Preference Advisor](#)
 - [Federal Employee Compensation Package](#)
 - [Salaries & Wages](#)

Conclusion

One of the main goals of HVRP is to help veterans find meaningful employment that aligns with their values, interests, strengths, and priorities. Helping a veteran find and maintain meaningful employment may contribute to their sense of self-worth and fulfillment. There are important frameworks, such as [Good Jobs Principles](#), that can help employers and employees alike better understand what a “good job” really is. Equitable recruitment and hiring practices, excellent benefits package, ensuring DEIA is practiced, as well as a living wage and time off are priorities. Equipping HVRP staff with tools such as MI and developing a robust IEP can be an asset to any HVRP. Encouraging the veteran to learn new skills that are currently in demand is also a plus. Additionally, working with the local AJC on training and employment opportunities can be a helpful strategy to support veterans in obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment.

Throughout the three remaining VLC sessions, NVTAC will discuss strategies to help veterans obtain and maintain meaningful employment. Session two will cover employment-focused outreach. Session three will cover employer engagement and post-placement follow-up, and the fourth and final session will cover strategies to enhance veteran engagement.

HVRP grantees can request individualized TA for their program at any time by emailing contact@nvtac.org.

For more information, please visit www.nvtac.org.

You can review the presentation through the following link: [NVTAC HVRP Virtual Learning Course Session One: What is Meaningful Employment?](#)