National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Community of Practice (CoP)
Innovative Outreach Strategies
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NVTAC Staff

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Key Points

- **Introduction**
  - NVTAC Coach Chris Taylor reminded attendees that, while best practices would be discussed during the presentation, it is imperative that recipients consult with their Grant Officer's Technical Representative (GOTR) before implementing any proposed strategies.
  - The focus of the June Community of Practice was on exploring innovative, client-centered, and coordinated approaches to outreach, aiming to enhance how programs find, engage, and connect with veterans, community partners, and employers.
- **Forms of Outreach**
  - Enrollment-Focused Outreach
  - Employment-Focused Outreach
  - Resource-Focused Outreach
  - NVTAC emphasized that effective outreach requires balancing all three areas simultaneously. Recruiting participants, connecting them with employers, and ensuring access to supportive services are all critical components of successful HVRP service delivery.
- **Reimagining Outreach**
  - In the past, many organizations relied heavily on office-based outreach, referrals, telephone calls, emails, and waiting for veterans to seek assistance. Similarly, organizations often worked independently, creating divided service systems where veterans were responsible for navigating multiple agencies on their own.
  - NVTAC encouraged participants to transition toward a more community-centered outreach model by:
    - Maintaining an active presence within the community
    - Meeting veterans where they already spend time
    - Utilizing technology to support field-based outreach
    - Developing coordinated systems of care rather than isolated service delivery
  - NVTAC emphasized that no single organization possesses all the resources necessary to address every barrier a veteran may face. Instead, HVRP programs should intentionally develop reciprocal relationships with employers, housing providers, behavioral health organizations, veteran service organizations, workforce agencies, and other community partners.

- **Enrollment-Focused Outreach**
  - Enrollment-focused outreach is the foundation of every successful HVRP program. NVTAC explained that achieving enrollment goals requires a strategic plan designed specifically for identifying and engaging veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness within each service delivery area.
  - Relying solely on traditional referrals, grantees were encouraged to evaluate the characteristics of their service delivery area, identify where eligible veterans naturally gather, and develop outreach strategies specific to those locations.
- **Direct Engagement**
  - NVTAC discussed the importance of direct engagement through face-to-face interaction with veterans. Examples included:
    - Street outreach and encampment visits
    - Conducting eligibility assessments within emergency shelters
    - Holding office hours at VA Medical Centers and American Job Centers
    - Participating in Stand Downs and veteran resource fairs
    - Hosting networking events, career fairs, and employment workshops
- **Engagement with Secondary Providers**
  - NVTAC emphasized the importance of strengthening referral relationships with organizations already serving veterans and other vulnerable populations. Examples included Grant and Per Diem (GPD) providers, supportive services for veteran families (SSVF) grantees, Department of Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) programs, continuums of care, emergency shelters, veteran service organizations, and local resource directories.
- **Marketing and Public Awareness**
  - Marketing was presented as another essential outreach strategy. Examples included:
    - Utilizing social media platforms
    - Sharing participant success stories
    - Posting informational flyers throughout the community
    - Participating in community awareness events
    - Developing strategic partnerships that increase program visibility
- **Discussion. Who is a Veteran?**
  - NVTAC Outreach Coach challenged grantees to rethink where veterans can be found. Rather than assuming veterans primarily interact with VA facilities or veteran service organizations, NVTAC encouraged grantees to recognize that veterans are also parents, students, volunteers, citizens, people of faith, and active members of their communities.
- **Veterans as Parents and Caregivers**
  - Many veterans experiencing housing instability are actively caring for children or family members. Potential outreach locations included Head Start programs, Title I schools, McKinney-Vento programs, YMCA facilities, Boys and Girls Clubs, School resource fairs, Family courts, Domestic violence shelters, WIC offices, SNAP and TANF offices, Pediatric clinics and Family shelters.

- **Veterans as Students**
  - NVTAC Outreach coach highlighted higher education as an overlooked outreach opportunity. Potential partners included:
    - Campus Veteran Resource Centers
    - Student Veterans of America chapters
    - Financial aid offices
    - Disability resource centers
    - VA programs
    - Off-campus housing offices
- **Veterans as Citizens**
  - Veterans continue participating in civic life regardless of housing status. Potential outreach opportunities included:
    - Department of Motor Vehicle offices
    - Voter registration locations
    - Tax preparation sites
    - USPS General Delivery locations
  - These locations frequently serve individuals experiencing housing instability and provide opportunities to share HVRP information.
- **Veterans as Persons of Faith**
  - Strong partnerships include clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Potential outreach partnerships include:
    - Churches
    - Mosques
    - Synagogues
    - Faith-based food pantries
    - Religious housing programs
    - VA Chaplain Services
- **Veterans as Volunteers and Community Members**
  - Veterans frequently remain engaged within their communities through volunteerism and civic participation. Outreach locations include Team Rubicon, Habitat for Humanity, Wounded Warrior Project, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, public libraries, bus stations, community recreation centers, parks, laundromats, community gardens, food banks, and local events.
- **Innovative Enrollment Strategies**
  - NVTAC highlighted several innovative approaches, which included:
    - Utilizing peer navigators with lived experience
    - Conducting targeted digital outreach campaigns
    - Creating technology-based assessments
    - Simplifying intake processes to reduce barriers to enrollment
- **Employment-Focused Outreach**
  - NVTAC explained employment-focused outreach by emphasizing that employer engagement is about building long-term partnerships rather than simply requesting

employment opportunities. HVRP programs should position themselves as workforce development partners capable of helping employers address staffing challenges while simultaneously assisting veterans in securing meaningful employment.

- **Strategic Employer Engagement**
  - Employment-focused outreach begins with understanding the local labor market. Grantees were encouraged to identify the following:
    - High-demand industries
    - Growing occupations
    - Employers that are actively hiring
    - Certifications that are valued within their service delivery area
    - Employers offering second-chance hiring opportunities
- **Direct Employer Engagement**
  - Understanding employer expectations allows HVRP staff to better prepare veterans before interviews and improve placement success. Examples of direct employer engagement included:
    - Visiting businesses
    - Touring worksites
    - Meeting hiring managers
    - Participating in job fairs
    - Hosting employer networking events
    - Learning employer hiring practices firsthand
- **Engagement with Secondary Providers**
  - Organizations should provide introductions that strengthen employer engagement. Rather than approaching employers independently, participants were encouraged to leverage organizations already connected to the business community, including:
    - Chambers of Commerce
    - Business associations
    - Economic development agencies
    - American Job Centers
    - Apprenticeship programs
    - College career centers
- **Marketing/Public Awareness**
  - Building organizational credibility increases employer confidence. NVTAC explained that employers frequently research organizations before agreeing to partnerships. Effective organizational marketing should include:
    - Success stories
    - Employer testimonials
    - Veteran employment outcomes
    - Active social media presence
    - Professional websites

- **Value-Driven Pitch**
  - Presenters stressed that employers should view HVRP as a workforce solution rather than a social service provider. Rather than focusing on veterans' barriers, grantees were encouraged to highlight veterans' strengths. Examples include mission driven, adaptable, reliable, team oriented, and experienced working under pressure.
  - HVRP's value proposition should emphasize pre-screened candidates, individualized case management plans, supportive services, ongoing follow-up and workforce development expertise.
- **Employer Benefits and Resources**
  - Employer resources help reduce employer risk while encouraging the hiring of veterans facing employment barriers. Employer incentives include:
    - Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
    - Federal Bonding Program
- **Outreach Tips and Strategies**
  - Before contacting employers, NVTAC recommended researching each organization, preparing a concise elevator pitch, understanding hiring needs, and approaching employers with a clear objective. Examples of potential referral partners include SSVF programs, HUD-VASH, emergency shelters, food pantries, behavioral health providers, legal aid organizations, VA medical centers, and veteran treatment courts.
- **Resource-Focused Outreach**
  - NVTAC concluded the presentation by discussing resource-focused outreach and its role in helping veterans overcome barriers to employment. NVTAC explained that employment success often depends upon access to stable housing, transportation, healthcare, childcare, behavioral health services, legal assistance, and other supportive services. Resource-focused outreach, therefore, centers on building strong relationships with organizations capable of addressing these barriers.
- **Building Community Partnerships**
  - Successful HVRP programs view community organizations as collaborative partners rather than simply referral sources. Strong partnerships are built through regular communication, mutual trust, and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
  - Developing these relationships requires ongoing engagement beyond requesting referrals. Presenters encouraged HVRP staff to participate in Continuum of Care meetings, workforce development events, local veteran coalitions, housing provider meetings, and other community forums where service providers regularly collaborate. These opportunities allow HVRP staff to educate community partners about program eligibility, available services, and employment-focused resources while learning about additional community resources that may benefit participants.

- **Leveraging Technology**
  - Technology is a valuable tool for strengthening outreach, improving communication, and coordinating services among community partners. Presenters encouraged HVRP grant recipients to utilize technology that simplifies referrals, improves resource identification, and enhances collaboration across organizations.
  - Examples discussed included utilizing local 2-1-1 systems, Unite Us, and other community resource platforms to identify available services and facilitate participant referrals. Technology can also support outreach through social media, electronic resource directories, virtual meetings, online referral forms, and shared databases that allow organizations to communicate more efficiently. Technology should complement and not replace relationship building. While digital tools improve efficiency, successful outreach continues to depend on strong partnerships, regular communication, and trust among service providers.

Discussion Questions

- **Question:** What strategies can HVRP staff use to explain the program to employers without focusing on participants' barriers while still maintaining transparency and trust?
  - **Response:** NVTAC highlighted leading with the strengths and value veterans bring to the workplace rather than introducing the conversation by discussing homelessness or other barriers. Employers should first hear about veterans' skills, reliability, adaptability, leadership, and mission-focused work ethic. Once a positive foundation has been established, HVRP staff can discuss any employment barriers and explain how ongoing case management and supportive services help veterans overcome those challenges. Presenters noted that leading with barriers may unintentionally shape an employer's perception, whereas leading with strengths allows employers to focus on the candidate's potential before discussing available supports.
- **Question:** How can HVRP staff build employer confidence while continuing to support veterans after placement?
  - **Response:** NVATC Coach explained that grantees should present themselves as an ongoing resource not only for veterans but also for employers. Rather than ending the relationship once a veteran is hired, HVRP programs should continue providing follow-up services that support both employee retention and employer success. Maintaining communication with hiring managers and human resource staff allows HVRP programs to address concerns early, provide additional support when needed, and strengthen long-term employer partnerships that benefit future participants.

Conclusion

The June 2026 Community of Practice emphasized that effective outreach extends far beyond participant recruitment. Successful HVRP programs intentionally develop relationships with veterans, employers, and community organizations to create coordinated systems of support that improve employment outcomes and long-term housing stability.

Throughout the session, NVTAC reinforced that innovative outreach requires organizations to move beyond traditional approaches by meeting veterans where they are, building reciprocal partnerships, utilizing technology strategically, and maintaining consistent communication with referral partners. By strengthening enrollment-focused, employment-focused, and resource-focused outreach efforts simultaneously, HVRP grant recipients can expand access to services, improve participant engagement, and better position veterans for long-term success.

The session concluded by encouraging grantees to continually evaluate their outreach strategies, strengthen community relationships, and remain open to innovative approaches that increase opportunities for veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness to access meaningful employment and supportive services.