ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR VETERAN-SERVING NON-PROFITS (VSNPS)

A FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While organizations serving the broader veteran population are certainly not new, the sub-sector of organizations serving post-9/11 veterans has only existed for 13 years, and many of these organizations are relatively immature in terms of the organizational development. There is a significant and enduring need for transition support this generation of veterans across the spectrum of social, economic and health and wellness. At the same time funding environment for organizations serving post-9/11 veterans is likely to become significantly more restricted as public attention wanes post-Afghanistan drawdown. Now is an important time to focus on organizational effectiveness to ensure that each dollar is used most efficiently and effectively to create the greatest impact. Organizations across this landscape realize this need and are working to advance along this organizational development spectrum in order to solidify their place within the fabric of our nation’s web of social services. To that end and leveraging the research described above, the Bush Institute has developed an organizational effectiveness and impact development tool, designed to assist veteran-serving non-profits to:

- *Determine organizational standing in areas of effectiveness, measurement and feedback and veteran-serving differentiators;*
- *Determine barriers to improvement and what strengths can be leveraged to overcome those barriers, and;*
- *Compare internal practices to observed leading practices in other non-profits.*

Seeking to inform leading practice in veterans’ services and veteran-directed philanthropy, the George W. Bush Institute (Bush Institute) partnered with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) to conduct an in-depth study of leading service-delivery practices represented across a sample of veteran-serving, not-for-profit organizations operating in the United States. The following questionnaire is designed to integrate key lessons from that study, as well as leading knowledge from the field of organizational effectiveness, to provide an assessment tool for non-profit leaders to assess the current status of their organizations. This tool will ask the non-profit leader to examine his or her organization both through the traditional lens of what is considered a high-performing organization but also through the additional lenses of the veteran-focused themes highlighted by the Bush Institute/IVMF study.

This tool is intended to be completed by the Leadership of the organization, such as the Executive Director, CEO, or COO. However, it could also be provided to all members of an organization to obtain a more holistic view of the organization’s performance. For each statement below, please rate how true it is of your organization. Complete honesty is essential to the success of this exercise.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND RANKING

1. Name and Position

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2. Why are you completing this assessment at this time?

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3. What do you hope to learn by completing this assessment?

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4. The following is a listing of the assessment subareas, with a definition of each item. Please consider the definitions, and then rank each item in order of importance to your organization with 1 being "most important" and 3 being "least important."

________ **Organizational Effectiveness** represents the organization's ability to use resources to achieve the organization's goals.

________ **Measurement & Feedback** represents the tools and methods of gathering quantitative and qualitative data that can be used to improve an organization's decision-making and promote transparency to the organization's stakeholders.

________ **Veteran-Serving Themes** represent the elements of a veteran's transition back to civilian life that are addressed by the organization.

5. The following is a listing of the assessment subareas, with a definition of each item. Please consider the definitions, and then rank each item in order of importance to your organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS (1= "most important"; 6 = "least important")

________ **Leadership** is defined as the cornerstone of the organization; the organization's management team, and the processes and systems with which they lead; influences all levels of the organization. Changes in an organization's leadership result in impact to all other aspects of an organization. Structure, Systems/Processes and Human Capital are all the result of Leadership's articulation of Values.

_________ **Culture** is the behavior exhibited by members of the organization and the meaning they attach to those behaviors. The culture has direct impact on the recruiting, hiring, and professional development processes of an organization and is an extension of Leadership's priorities and values. Openness and collaboration should be encouraged as part of the culture. Their Values are the communicated beliefs or ideals that are the guiding principles for operating the organization.

_________ **Strategy** is also an outgrowth of Leadership's communicated values; the organization's documented and/or communicated plans to achieve objectives and meet priorities. An organization's strategy should include short- and long-term objectives to promote sustainability of operations into the future and incorporate the results of measurement and feedback to adjust organizational Structure, Systems/Processes, and Human Capital, as necessary to drive toward these objectives.

_________ **Structure** is the framework of the organization's operations, which is the base from which the organization's mission and objectives are carried out. This includes lines of reporting and decision-making, which should not be duplicative or over-complicated. Leadership should evaluate short and long-term objectives to determine the best structure to meet those objectives.

_________ **Systems** represent interconnected manual or automated processes leveraged as tools to accomplish the organizations objectives, including supporting data collection for measurement efforts. To promote consistency, repeatability and sharing institutional knowledge through the organization, processes should be standardized whenever possible, and staff should be trained.

_________ **Human Capital** represents the human resources/staffing function of an organization and the staff itself. These factors should be influenced by the values, strategy and structure of the organization and supported by hiring, training, certification and continuing education requirements. For example, HR should consider candidates' ability to connect with the organization in terms of cultural fit, synergies with the existing staff and how their skills support the short and/or long-term objectives as determined by leadership. In addition, once staff join the organization, the organization should support their development through formal or informal mechanisms.

MEASUREMENT & FEEDBACK (1 = "most important"; 3 = "least important")

_________ **Measurement & Feedback Methods** represents how qualitative and quantitative data are collected and how the organization defines performance metrics.

_________ **Role of Measurement & Feedback** in Operations and Continuous Improvement represents how qualitative and quantitative data are collected and used to support service delivery in an organization.

_________ **Transparency to Stakeholders** represents the organization's accountability to clients, funders and regulators, as well as availability of information.

VETERAN-SERVING THEMES (1 = "most important"; 9 = "least important")

_________ **Community Connectedness** represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization's program and service delivery model supports a comprehensive reintegration strategy through connection to the web of various social supports provided by the broader community.

_________ **Social Connectedness** represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization purposefully advances societal engagement in the concerns of those who have served by thorough efforts to increase the community's understanding of the military/veteran experience and efforts to connect veterans and their families with members of the broader community.

_________ **Independent Sector Engagement** represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization utilizes collaborative strategies across sectors private industry, NGOs, philanthropy in support of their efforts to serve veterans.

_________ **Veteran Programming Differentiation** represents the degree by which, or methods by which, an organization differentiates its program and service delivery model based on varying needs within subsections of the post-9/11 cohort (women veterans, veterans with disabilities, etc.).

_________ **Women Veterans Efforts** represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization's programs identify and address the distinct set of challenges faced by women veterans during their military service, and the consequences resulting from that service.

_________ **Reintegration with Family** represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization identifies post-9/11 veterans' family-related reintegration challenges and tailors its programming and service delivery model to meet these needs.

_________ **Employment & Education** represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization identifies securing employment and advancing education as seminal concerns of post-9/11 veterans and ensures that its programs, services, and/or integrated support network advances these concerns for veterans it serves.

_________ **Media Engagement** represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization leverages media to tell the stories of its mission and its veterans, and to bridge the civilian-military divide by raising awareness of veterans' issues.

_________ **Life-Course Transition** represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization's programs and services ensure that veterans and their families are adequately prepared for post-service life, such as readying them to make informed decisions, related to transition, employment, education, family concerns, and community reintegration.

When you complete the assessment, compare this section against the answers you provide to the questions in Sections II-IV. You can use the ranking to prioritize your action items based on the results of the assessment.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

This section of the assessment is intended to help you identify areas of strength and weakness in general organizational effectiveness. This will include statements about the organizations' policies and procedures, role clarity, culture and values and the organization's strategy. As you work through this section, consider what you know about your organization's operations, short and long-term goals, and the people you work with. At the end of this section, you will identify barriers to success, opportunities to improve and ways to maintain performance in already-successful areas.

LEADERSHIP	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. Leadership clearly defines and communicates the mission of the organization to all stakeholders.				
2. Mission statements identify the purpose and goals of an organization. The organization's strategic planning process should begin with the mission statement - it should consider "who are we and what do we do" as a means to begin thinking about "how we will do it".				
3. Leadership takes direct responsibility for:				
a. Policies and Procedures				
b. Compliance with state, local and federal laws and regulations				
c. Funding Strategy				
d. Fiscal Accountability				
4. Leadership promotes a culture that is adaptable and open to change. This includes providing opportunities for staff to offer new ideas on how to perform daily tasks and improve service delivery, and openly encouraging all members of the organization to "challenge the way things are" within reasonable limits.				
5. Leadership promotes and rewards cross-functional collaboration. This includes providing opportunities for different functions, divisions or teams to share knowledge and work together to solve the organization's problems. This can be done via weekly staff meetings or newsletters, knowledge sharing software such as a SharePoint site, formal trainings or other mechanisms.				

6. Leadership has an effective relationship with the Board of Directors. "Effective" will be defined by the organization and how working relationships with the Board support the organization's mission and objectives. Some indicators might be that lines of communication are open and that the Board trusts Leadership to perform their duties and is not overly involved in the day-to-day activities of the organization.				
7. Leadership has effective relationships with funders. "Effective" will be defined by the organization and how working relationships with funders support the organization's mission and objectives. Some indicators might be that lines of communication are open, funders provide continued support over a period of time and funders are not overly involved in the day-to-day activities of the organization.				
8. Leadership reflects the diversity of the community being served. In addition to traditional organizational diversity of terms of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, educational levels or professional experiences, it includes veteran/military family diversity.				
9. Leadership encourages investment and development of the "right" programs for the intended client base. This means that they consider the needs of the community in which the organization intends to operate and allow those needs to inform program offerings.				
10. Leadership Identifies and develops relationships in the appropriate community with partners that can supplement or support the organization's mission, vision and objectives. This means that Leadership: - Target organizations and other potential partners that offer complementary services. - Performs due diligence on the potential partner and makes a determination as to their integrity, availability and willingness to collaborate. - Seeks opportunities to develop working relationships with the potential partner and whenever possible, formalize the partnership agreement with documentation clearly defining roles and responsibilities for the partnership.				

CULTURE AND VALUES	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization has a clearly stated mission, vision and values statement, which is approved by the Board of Directors and reviewed periodically. The Board should review and approve the mission and vision statements to ensure that all members of the organization have consistent messaging about the purpose and long-term goals of the organization. These statements should be revisited periodically to address changes in the environment.				
2. The organization has a clear values statement, consistent with the mission of the organization. Values are beliefs or ideals shared by the members of an organization. Leadership's values can be communicated through in-person meetings, formal or informal trainings, newsletters or blogs, or in an email.				
3. The organization has an approved conflict of interest policy that is applicable to all members. This can be achieved through written policies, self-disclosures, and careful review of opportunities for funding or partnerships.				
4. The organization is nonpartisan in fact and appearance. This can be achieved through written policies (conflict of interest, etc.) and careful review of opportunities for funding or partnership.				
5. The organization's culture encourages collaboration and knowledge sharing. Leadership can demonstrate this kind of culture by providing transparency into administrative processes. Involving program managers in strategic planning, requesting "upward feedback" from staff on leadership's performance, deploying knowledge-sharing tools like shared drives or document repositories or even team-building retreats or exercises can be ways to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the organization.				
6. Cultural standards and values are communicated, known and embraced at all levels of the organization. This can be communicated through in-person meetings, formal or informal trainings, newsletters or blogs, or in an email.				
7. The organization's culture encourages continuous improvement at the individual, program and organization levels. This can mean that the organization empowers members to take calculated risks to improve processes or services. Leadership should foster an environment where people are not afraid to try new things, and where failure is not always met with punitive measures.				

STRATEGY	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization has a strategic planning process, which is completed at least annually and includes input from all levels of the organization. "All levels" means all major divisions and functional areas. A division or functional area may include a single large program or family of programs, or administrative functions such as accounting or legal counsel.				
2. Strategic goals are developed with input from all programs/functions in the organization. This helps identify "blind spots" that leadership may have by providing visibility into the day-to-day operations of the organization. Functional/program managers may have insights that are not apparent to leadership. This also helps identify opportunities for internal and external collaboration.				
3. Strategic goals are broken down into measurable objectives. This will allow leadership and program managers to better assess performance and identify improvement actions.				
4. The organization provides visibility into the strategic plan at the "front lines" of the organization, and encourages incorporating strategic objectives into individual annual performance management plans. Visibility can be provided in a variety of ways, including emails, postings on the organization's website, or live meetings.				
5. The strategic plan addresses both short-term and long-term strategic objectives. Short-term goals should support longer-term goals at all levels of the organization. For example, an organization might have a long-term goal to build a presence in 10 out of 50 states over the next three years. A short-term goal might be to open 3 new offices over the next year, and then go on to identify funding sources, skills required, etc.				
6. The strategic plan addresses internal and external factors, such as funding, compliance with laws and regulations, incentives for staff, etc.				
7. The organization engages in periodic, recurring reviews to compare operating performance against the strategic plan. Leadership should implement continuous improvement programs that evaluate operations against a set of agreed-upon metrics. Metrics should be influenced by strategic objectives, availability of data and attainability given the current resource mix of the organization.				

STRUCTURE	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization's structure is aligned with strategic goals and objectives.				
2. Decision-making roles and responsibilities are clearly defined via an organization chart or other document. An alternative to an org chart might include written job descriptions for each position with lines of reporting.				
3. The organization's structure should support performance management processes. Consider the balance of supervisory positions to direct reports to facilitate frequent informal coaching, mentoring and annual or semi-annual formal evaluations.				
4. The organization's structure allows for cross-functional collaboration. In other words, the organization's structure makes it easy for the different divisions, functions or teams inside the organization to work together to solve internal and external problems.				
5. The organization's structure is periodically evaluated to identify "gaps" in coordination, collaboration or control. For example, if there is a reorganization to accomplish a strategic objective, the actions should be revisited at a specified time to determine whether performance objectives were achieved.				

SYSTEMS/PROCESSES	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. Systems and processes support data collection efforts and thereby the strategic planning, continuous improvement, and performance management processes.				
2. Systems and processes are standardized where possible and common elements are developed to accommodate multiple processes. For example, an organization with multiple programs might have a common intake form to minimize administrative burden. The steps to any process should be clearly documented and repeatable. One way to achieve this is to develop desktop guides or standard operating procedures for frequently executed processes.				
3. Processes are documented and communicated throughout the organization. The steps to any process should be clearly documented and repeatable. One way to achieve this is to develop desktop guides or standard operating procedures for frequently executed processes.				
4. Systems and processes are periodically evaluated for improvements.				

HUMAN CAPITAL	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization has written personnel policies and procedures for: a. Hiring and Orientation b. Performance Reviews c. Benefits d. Grievances e. Non-discrimination f. Separation (termination or resignation) g. Payroll, record-keeping and confidentiality h. Professional development and continuing professional education i. Volunteers				
2. Strategic goals and objectives are incorporated into the performance management process. Performance management is an important tool in driving the professional development of personnel as well as promoting continuous improvement throughout the organization. Evaluations should be completed periodically (semi-annually or annually) with opportunities for informal feedback and mentoring throughout the year.				
3. Employees have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, which are documented in job descriptions or other documents. In addition to job descriptions, the structure of the organization can support clarifying roles and responsibilities by having the right balance of supervisory to non-supervisory roles. Formal training, as well as informal coaching and mentoring by a superior can be ways to help personnel understand how their duties support the organization's strategy.				
4. Employees have a broad range of responsibilities requiring multiple skills. Requiring employees to have a broad range of skills can help improve efficiencies in operations and can help the organization avoid having a single person with all the institutional knowledge of a program.				

5. Compensation includes incentives for furthering strategic objectives. Bear in mind that compensation includes more than just a salary and that personnel can be rewarded in other ways for going above and beyond expectations. Simple recognition at a staff meeting or a casual attire day in the office, flexible schedules, or an award of paid time off can be ways to encourage behaviors that bolster the organization's strategic objectives. The compensation system is effective at rewarding collaboration and furtherance of strategic objectives both: a. Individually b. Collectively				
6. Relevant training is offered and encouraged. These trainings may be external or internal. For example, the organization can utilize senior staff and leadership to develop and provide trainings on things such as new regulatory requirements, new system features, or any other relevant topics to the organization. Alternatively, paid trainings from outside sources can be included in the annual budget as part of the compensation package.				
7. Cultural fit is considered in the recruiting and hiring process. Hiring managers should consider candidates personal style, background and experiences to determine if the individual will support and enhance the culture of the organization.				

Notes about the ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS section: *For every "NO" response, what are the barriers to success in this area and what your plans to address these items?*
For every "IN PROGRESS" response, what are the barriers to success in this area? What strengths can you leverage in this area to close the gap?
For every "YES" response, what are your plans to sustain this item?

For every "NOT APPLICABLE/I DON'T KNOW" response, what information needs to be gathered to give you insights in this area? Who should be responsible for obtaining and reviewing it?

III. MEASUREMENT & FEEDBACK

This section of the assessment is intended to help you identify areas of strength and weakness in the way your organization gathers qualitative (feedback) and quantitative (measurement) data. This will include statements about how data are collected, what resources are allocated to data collection, clarity of metrics and desired program outcomes, and how that information is balanced between the needs of the organization and the needs of stakeholders. As you work through this section, consider what you know about your organization's metrics, feedback mechanisms and how it is used to impact operations. At the end of this section, you will identify barriers to success, opportunities to improve and ways to maintain performance in already-successful areas.

METHODS	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization allocates sufficient resources to measurement, feedback and evaluation.				
2. Metrics and outcomes are clearly defined. Metrics should be clearly communicated and incorporated into strategic plans and performance management processes (goal-setting, evaluations, etc.). Metrics should also be realistic and attainable given the current resource mix of the organization.				
3. The organization deploys a variety of methods to collect data. These methods can include reports from IT systems, surveys or comment cards from clients, budgetary reports, etc.				
4. Data are collected from all levels of the organization.				
5. The benefit of measurement/feedback is weighed against the cost. Generally, the cost of gathering data should not be more than the value obtained from having it.				
6. The organization analyzes and monitors standard costs of various programs, and identifies opportunities to reduce those costs. Understanding the cost of various programs is important for compliance, but also for determining ways to maintain or improve a baseline level of service with scarce resources.				

7. Performance in areas such as functional costs, client service, and productivity (case load) is regularly compared to operational standards set by the organization. If available, compare to other organizations with similar missions. Where such information is not available, consider developing metrics for the organization and evaluating year over year performance.				
8. The organization uses qualitative (client feedback, internal feedback) and quantitative information to identify areas of improvement, independent of measurements required by funders/partners. Frequently an organization will not adopt metrics unless required by funders. This misses an opportunity to develop the organization's people, programs and processes, and to drive efficiency with scarce resources. Leadership should gather data from all available sources to use in the continuous improvement, performance management, professional development and strategic planning processes.				

ROLE IN OPERATIONS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. Measurement and feedback are considered in the strategic planning process.				
2. Information from the measurement and feedback process are used to support greater consistency of program outcomes.				
3. Measurement and feedback are considered in the continuous improvement process.				
4. Metrics and outcomes are refined year-over-year based on experience and to support strategic objectives.				

TRANSPARENCY TO STAKEHOLDERS	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. Measurement and feedback are used to promote operational transparency to stakeholders. For example, certain information about program costs, outcomes and other measures are compiled from internal data collection efforts and made publicly available.				
2. In developing internal measures, stakeholders' desire for feedback is balanced against requirements for measurement and reporting. In other words, the organization has metrics that can be used to satisfy funders, regulators and other interested parties, but also metrics that can be useful to the organization in terms of planning and decision-making, avoiding an imbalance or preference for one over the other.				

3. Annual reports and tax filings are prepared timely.				
4. If applicable, an annual financial statement audit is performed and the results are made available to the public.				
5. Reporting requirements for funding are met on a timely basis.				

Notes about the MEASUREMENT & FEEDBACK section: *For every "NO" response, what are the barriers to success in this area and what your plans to address these items?*
For every "IN PROGRESS" response, what are the barriers to success in this area? What strengths can you leverage in this area to close the gap?
For every "YES" response, what are your plans to sustain this item?
For every "NOT APPLICABLE/I DON'T KNOW" response, what information needs to be gathered to give you insights in this area? Who should be responsible for obtaining and reviewing it?

IV. VETERAN-SERVING THEMES

The Bush Institute has learned that the most impactful veteran-serving organizations are those that are not only effective and efficient by traditional measures, but that have also incorporated into their models of governance, service-delivery, partnership, and assessment with a purposeful focus on impacting a particular set of veteran-specific issues and concerns. These concerns, referred to as veteran-serving themes, are outlined below with a series of questions designed to identify and examine an organization's ability to adapt its model accordingly in order to drive high-quality service delivery.

This section of the assessment is intended to help you identify areas of strength and weakness of the unique elements of your service delivery model relevant to the ways in which your organization provides support or services to veterans and their families. This will include statements about how the organization chooses partners, how family and community are integrated into services, and how the organization meets veterans' unique needs. As you work through this section, consider what you know about your organization's programs, whether they exclusively serve veterans or also serve non-veterans and what the organization's partners are and how their missions support yours. At the end of this section, you will identify barriers to success, opportunities to improve and ways to maintain performance in already-successful areas.

Community Connectedness

Community Connectedness represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization's program and service delivery model supports a comprehensive reintegration strategy through connection to the web of various social supports provided by the broader community.

While partnering relationships are arguably important across the non-profit landscape, such relationships are particularly critical for veteran-serving organizations – specifically because veterans in need of services and supports typically demonstrate multiple areas of needs. However, this principle appears applicable on a sliding scale; that is, for those organizations serving veterans in the direst of circumstances, a robust referral network is strongly related to impactful service-delivery. For those serving veterans in less critical circumstances (those simply needing assistance with job coaching, for example), the ability to enact and leverage organizational partnerships is less critical. Further, for community-based providers, programming is enhanced as a function of collaboration with other, community-connected providers.

COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization provides opportunities for community involvement in its programs. This can take the form of offering opportunities for casual volunteers and other, nonmilitary members of the community to interact with veterans at their events.				

2. The organization engages in strategic identification and vetting of community partners. The organization seeks out community partners that can either support their primary mission through services that supplement existing programs, or partners that offer services that complement existing programs for referrals. The organization performs due diligence on the community partner prior to entering any formalized agreements.				
3. The organization makes, where appropriate, formalized partnership agreements with community partners (MOUs, MOAs, contracts). This may be most appropriate for long-term agreements or larger budget projects.				
4. The organization is part of a community of practice, which facilitates collective knowledge sharing and development. Organizations participating in communities of practice train each other to support professional development and capacity building, benefiting from each other's individual skillsets and unique expertise, and elevate the performance of all similar organizations within the community.				
5. The organization participates in VA-sponsored "Stand Downs" or similar events that bring community providers together. These events seek to amass resources for veterans in a single place on specific days of the year both to provide access and raise awareness.				
6. The organization provides resource handbooks to help staff members understand the organization's community-based network and answer basic questions. The handbook can be compiled by the organization or the organization can choose to leverage existing resources. Regardless of which is chosen, the staff should be able to answer basic questions about the organization's partners and be knowledgeable enough about their services in order to make referrals.				
7. The organization leverages relationships with community partners for additional support and referrals, when necessary. For example: a. A workforce development organization might partner with an organization that provides donated clothing for interviews, (supplementary) or; b. A housing organization that provides services to the homeless might coordinate with an organization that provides job placement services, etc. (complementary)				

8. The organization facilitates frequent communication/ engagement between stakeholder groups, partner organizations, local government, etc. This can take the form of periodic formal or informal meetings, newsletters or email communications.				
9. The organization has a defined outreach strategy to connect with community organizations for support. This is maintained in an outreach strategy and revisited periodically. A single point of contact or a team dedicated to outreach should own this strategy and have responsibility for execution.				

Social Connectedness

Social Connectedness represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization purposefully advances societal engagement in the concerns of those who have served by thorough efforts to increase the community's understanding of the military/veteran experience and efforts to connect veterans and their families with members of the broader community.

While some organizations are explicitly designed to bridge the civilian-military divide, other organizations can purposefully incorporate mechanisms to advance social and community connections for (and between) veterans and non-veterans, as a byproduct of their service-delivery models. For example, effective employment-focused organizations realize that bridging this divide is a key component of their success – helping employers understand the value of veterans, and helping veterans understands how to fit into the workplace.

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization provides opportunities to connect veterans with civilian/non-military members of the community through social events, volunteerism or other means.				
2. The organization, either directly or indirectly, works to educate the civilian population about the challenges servicemembers face in transition.				

Independent Sector Engagement

Independent Sector Engagement represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization utilizes collaborative strategies across sectors private industry, NGOs, philanthropy in support of their efforts to serve veterans.

Organizations serving veterans should look to the independent sector for more than just funding. While financial support is critical, private sector and philanthropic partners can help non-profits obtain supplies and volunteers, but most importantly, help them innovate through the provision of pro-bono services, consulting, and service on boards, helping them design cutting edge business models, data and measurement systems, and communications platforms, to say the least. These types of strategic collaborations can empower non-profits to higher levels of performance and overcome resource and human capital constraints.

INDEPENDENT SECTOR CONNECTEDNESS	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. Business relationships are vetted for compatibility with the organization's mission and strategic objectives. Organizational background checks (reputation, funding sources, risk assessment) and other due diligence should be conducted. A clear understanding of how the partnership will "work" and what the desired outcomes are should be obtained prior to working with other organizations.				
2. Business relationships represent a variety of sectors, including government, non-profit/community-based organizations and private entities.				
3. Whenever possible, the organization makes use of pro bono services from partners to improve or support service-delivery. These pro bono services might include program evaluations, data analytics, performance improvement, or other consulting services.				
4. If the organization heavily leverages volunteers, it has a dedicated volunteer management strategy. Many organizations require the skills of consistent volunteers with specific, dedicated skillsets, and these organizations work best with a dedicated volunteer management strategy, such that large one-time influxes of "unskilled" volunteers are inappropriate for the type of sensitive work that these organizations do. Part of a volunteer management strategy might include a single point of contact in the organization to accept and train volunteers.				
5. For longer-term relationships or large projects, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined via formal agreements (MOU, MOA, formal contract). Some organizations do not enter into partnerships that are less than a certain number of years. However long the partnership lasts, having a clear understanding of each parties' roles, responsibilities and available resources can help make service execution more successful.				

Veteran Programming Differentiation

Veteran Programming Differentiation represents the degree by which, or methods by which, an organization differentiates its program and service delivery model based on varying needs within subsections of the post-9/11 cohort (women veterans, veterans with disabilities, etc.).

Veterans must be treated as individuals, with unique goals, aspirations, challenges, opportunities, and barriers. Designing programs with an "all veterans are the same" mindset not only leads to poor outcomes, but also represents a barrier to program accessibility. Excellence is driven through individual case management, individually designed programming, or individually tailored care. The best veteran-serving organizations respect the broad diversity within the veteran population, and take efforts to tailor their programming as best as possible in response to this diversity.

VETERAN PROGRAMMING DIFFERENTIATION	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization identifies services based on challenges, perceptions, or attitudes within a particular demographic group or cohort, and differentiates those services. This can be achieved by performing a demographic study, gathering information from intake forms, or surveying the clientele.				
2. The organization has a holistic, personalized case management system. The case management system should track a client from first contact until the conclusion of the program. It should also allow for periodic follow-up, and let case managers assess a client's needs for post-program support.				
3. The organization makes strategic, long-term identification of audience, with sensitivity to age – in other words, the organization projects changes in demographics. This can be achieved by performing a demographic study, gathering information from intake forms, or surveying the clientele.				
4. The organization demonstrates cultural competency by hiring veterans or family members, providing specific training, or other means.				
5. The organization provides peer-to-peer training or programming that allows clients to work one-on-one with veterans or their family members.				

Women Veterans Efforts

Women Veterans Efforts represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization's programs identify and address the distinct set of challenges faced by women veterans during their military service, and the consequences resulting from that service.

Most are aware of the unique and challenging aspects of military service as a woman – including, but not limited to, military sexual trauma, societal misperceptions about service, family care needs, and challenges regarding identity after service. Those serving women veterans in the direst of circumstances need to be the most aware of these challenges and adapt their services as such. All providers, however, need to welcome women veterans into their services at every step, from marketing materials, to creating a welcoming environment and ensuring positive outcomes.

WOMEN VETERANS EFFORTS	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization recognizes the unique needs of women veterans and promotes cultural competence in its programs through training. It may not be possible for the organization to have dedicated staff and resources for women veterans. As such, if women veterans are part of the clientele, the organization should train staff to recognize the specific sensitivities and challenges faced by women veterans, and what accommodations can be made within the program.				
2. The organization promotes woman veteran/military cultural competency amongst the leadership and staff by recruiting and hiring women veterans and their family members. This should not suggest that the organization needs an all-female staff to work with women veterans. Rather, the organization should be willing to accommodate a request for a female case worker and having a woman veteran in that position provides an additional layer of credibility and empathy.				
3. The organization has partnerships with programs/other organizations that are adept at identifying and meeting the needs of women veterans. For example, a workforce development organization might partner with an organization that collects donated women's work attire so that program participants can go on job interviews. Another example might be a housing organization that partners with an organization that deals exclusively in crisis counseling for women.				
4. The organization uses inclusive terms on its intake forms and questionnaires to encourage women veterans to self-identify as such and provide needed information for services. For example, rather than asking "Are you a veteran?" on an intake form, the organization might ask "Have you served in the US Armed Forces?"				

5. The organization or its programs make reasonable accommodations for women veterans with service-related disabilities (TBI, PTS) or have been victims of military sexual trauma (MST). For example, an organization can provide private space in the building, women case managers and referrals to counseling.				
6. For women veterans with families, the organization extends services to their spouses and/or children. This might include childcare on-site or vouchers for childcare, family counseling or parenting classes, or referrals.				

Reintegration with Family

Reintegration with family represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization identifies post-9/11 veterans' family-related reintegration challenges and tailors its programming and service delivery model to meet these needs.

A veteran and his or her family must be treated as one unit – they served together as one, and they transition together as one. The presence of family members during military service and post-transition both complicates the experience – providing additional responsibilities and burdens on the veteran – and enhances the experience – supporting resiliency and providing emotional comfort. Successful organizations learn to support the challenges that veterans' families bring to the transition process, as well as leverage the strengths that they provide throughout.

REINTEGRATION WITH FAMILY	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization supports reintegration with family by providing opportunities for family members to participate Wherever possible, programs allow spouses or children of the servicemember or veteran to participate and use services.				
2. The organization provides resources or makes referrals for family support services, such as stress management training, family counseling/therapy, parenting courses and child care. This should not suggest that every veteran-serving organization should have explicit family focus. Rather, an organization without this focus should be prepared to make referrals to vetted partners that canprovide services. Such services can include stress management training, emergency financial assistance, emergency food assistance, family counseling/therapy, parenting courses and child care.				
3. The organization provides family-related resources or training to accommodate the unique needs of veterans seeking services at their facility, such as on-site child care or parenting classes.				

Education & Employment

Education & Employment represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization identifies securing employment and advancing education as seminal concerns of post-9/11 veterans and ensures that its programs, services, and/or integrated support network advances these concerns for veterans it serves.

"Tough love" – giving veterans a clear sense of the hurdles they face and what they need to accomplish to achieve success – is vital, and organizations providing employment and education services must help veterans help themselves integrate into the workforce as model employees through individualized, high-touch training to give them the confidence they need to succeed. All providers serving veterans should recognize that employment and education are the bedrock of post-transition success – and supporting these two efforts prevents a host of other negative outcomes, as well as prevents the backslide for those who have already overcome challenges from their past.

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization or its programs has a mature case-management framework from which the clientele are individually and collectively supported in their job/school placement efforts. In a "high-touch" model, clientele must be tracked from start to finish and should receive frequent and individualized attention from a case manager or equivalent. The case manager should be the single point of contact and primary interface between the client and the organization. However, the case manager must also be able to quickly connect the client with others in the organization should the need arise.				
2. The organization focuses on careers over jobs and steers clients towards growth industries. It is both in the organization's and the veteran's interest to identify a satisfying career path for the veteran rather than simply a job. Planning for educational and employment opportunities focuses on the client's long-term goals and aspirations. The organization should also identify and steer clients towards majors/opportunities in high growth industries that are a match to the client's background and experience.				
3. Whenever necessary, the organization provides temporary employment opportunities. Temporary employment can help veterans meet immediate needs and build valuable work experience which can later be used to gain long-term employment in a desired career or field.				
4. The organization also provides resources to obtain industry standard certifications. Some veterans may have experience in these fields in the military, but simply lack the necessary certification to get hired by a civilian employer, so the non-profit organization fills this critical gap.				

5. The organization properly vets its partners by identifying employers/institutions with a commitment to placing, developing and retaining veterans/servicemembers and their families. A common complaint of workforce development programs is that employers do not hire after going through training and interviews. This can be resolved by identifying potential employers who are: a. Seeking the skill sets that a veteran/servicemember has to offer. b. Understands the business case for hiring veterans. c. Have stated commitments to recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining veterans. This could manifest as a peer advisor or counselor program, or a veterans’ support/ affinity group in the organization. This effectively helps the organization "create demand" for graduates of their employment programs.				
6. The organization provides training, counseling, etc. for clientele for all phases of the placement process. Such training could include resume workshops, social media workshops, mock interviews, job search engines/bulletin boards, advice or training on how to maximize time at acareer fair, cultural training ("how to be civilians") andother professional development topics. Counseling couldinclude role playing (mock interviews) and problem-solving exercises to identify appropriate responses to different scenarios that job-seekers and/or new employees face. However, training should not be favored over actual placements.				
7. Training is “high-touch” and individualized, such that each veteran gets focused attention on his or her specific employment situation and has a clear understanding of their skills and challenges and the path to employment.				
8. The organization or its programs track and use data and outcomes to inform program structure and offerings in the future. For example, an organization might track the amount of time between first contact with a client to the point where the client goes on their first interview. They might also track sustained employment/post-graduation placements and salaries. This kind of data should be considered and used to focus resources in the organization to improve, sustain or eliminate efforts in the applicable program area.				
9. The organization or its programs provide pre- and post-employment/enrollment support to clients.				
10. The organizations provides, or can refer, the veteran/ military family member to a peer and/or non-peer mentor to facilitate the process to plan, find, apply, negotiate, and integrate into prospective employers/schools.				

Media Engagement

Media engagement represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization leverages media (traditional and social) to tell the stories of its mission and its veterans, and to bridge the civilian-military divide by raising awareness of veterans' issues. Engagement through media platforms represents an opportunity to inform and cultivate a positive narrative in service to both veterans and the veteran-serving organization.

Most non-profit organizations serving veterans lack the resources to meaningfully engage with the media – to tell their stories at all, let alone to influence this narrative broadly. We found that large, nationally prominent non-profit organizations did tend to have a broader communications capacity, however, and thus a responsibility to attempt to shape this misleading narrative. Doing so improves outcomes not only for the veterans and families they serve, but also for the entire veteran and military family community.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization has a defined strategy for engaging the media. This is maintained in an organizational media strategy and revisited periodically.				
2. The organization leverages social media tools to raise awareness of programs and military family issues. This may be facilitated by identifying a social media point of contact within the organization that has responsibility for gathering content, making posts and responding to inquiries generated from social media sites.				
3. The organization leverages social media to communicate with its constituents as well key stakeholders.				
4. Where resources allow, the organization employs a media liaison or has a dedicated media point of contact. Where possible, there should be a single media point of contact to allow for consistent messaging and access. This can take the form of a singular media liaison or a media team, which may or may not be solely dedicated to publicly promoting the organization.				
5. The organization leverages a variety of media types to provide information, gather data to be used in programs and operations or solicit support. This can include direct mail, a website that is either for informational purposes only or allows enrollment/intake into programs, email, television commercials or local TV or print news coverage, etc. These can be veteran-focused or non-veteran-focused media.				
6. The organization seeks opportunities to increase its media presence in non-traditional ways.				

7. The organization promotes balanced media coverage of veterans/servicemembers' challenges, successes and viewpoints. The organization encourages positive media coverage by promoting the successes/outcomes of its programs in response to a particular veterans'/servicemembers' issue or challenge.				
8. The organization is adept at leveraging "free" media coverage to promote their organization and raise awareness of their mission and programs. "Free" sources such as press releases, social media, unpaid endorsement arrangements (celebrity causes) should be leveraged to raise awareness and brand recognition of the organization and its programs.				

Life-Course Transition

Life-Course Transition represents the degree to which, or methods by which, an organization's programs and services ensure that veterans and their families are adequately prepared for post-service life, such as readying them to make informed decisions related to transition, employment, education, family concerns, and community reintegration. Transition from military service spans multiple social, economic, and wellness concerns, and as such a whole-of-the-person approach to service-delivery is required for many veterans.

Incredibly few organizations profiled were engaged with clients prior to their transition from military service – but almost all indicated the critical need for such engagement.

LIFE-COURSE TRANSITION	YES	NO	IN PROGRESS	NOT APPLICABLE/ I DON'T KNOW
1. The organization provides peer mentoring. This is distinct from peer-to-peer programming, which pairs the veteran with a single point of contact within the organization. This may be a program that pairs the newly discharged veteran with another veteran who has been back in civilian life for a longer period of time. The mentor works with the veteran one-on-one as a resource to answer questions about the program and about transition in general.				
2. The organization advocates for the veteran's rights, either through direct advocacy or by referrals to legal advocates. The organization either engages in direct advocacy with regulators through participation on community councils or other means, or makes referrals to lawyers who can petition the courts for the veteran's needs, such as discharge upgrades or VA benefits.				

3. Wherever possible, the organization provides services directly on the military base and/or coordinates closely with Warrior Transition Units or other Transition Assistance Program (TAP) points of contact. This can allow for consistent messaging and information about transition. It can also provide access to transitioning servicemembers farther in advance. This can help the servicemember get more and better information about the transition and assist in building an adequate, realistic transition plan.				
4. The organization supports the servicemember and their family in making the cultural and social transition from military to civilian culture. This means that the organization does not just address the logistics of transitioning - living arrangements, employment, access to healthcare, etc. Rather, the organization supports the servicemember in reconnecting with the community, either through sponsored events or referrals.				
5. Whenever possible, the organization starts providing services prior to the servicemember's discharge. Having adequate information concerning living arrangements, employment and educational opportunities, family resources and how to get assistance can make or break an otherwise successful transition from military service. Providing such information well in advance of discharge (months, not weeks or days) allows the servicemember and their family to make informed decisions and build an adequate transition plan. It also helps temper the servicemember's expectations about prospects outside the military (salaries, additional expenses previously covered by DoD, etc.).				
6. For servicemembers in transition, the organization leverages its partnerships to provide resources (information, referrals, direct services etc.) that can support its clientele in making the transition from the military to civilian life. For example, the organization can help servicemembers and their families find doctors, schools, daycare, etc.				
7. The organization tracks the long-term progress of its program participants throughout the transition to civilian life. This can be accomplished through after-action surveys, follow-up meetings or phone calls, etc. A mature case management system can also facilitate this tracking.				

Notes about the VETERAN-SERVING THEMES section: *For every "NO" response, what are the barriers to success in this area and what your plans to address these items?*
For every "IN PROGRESS" response, what are the barriers to success in this area? What strengths can you leverage in this area to close the gap?
For every "YES" response, what are your plans to sustain this item?
For every "NOT APPLICABLE/I DON'T KNOW" response, what information needs to be gathered to give you insights in this area? Who should be responsible for obtaining and reviewing it?

V. COMPARE RESULTS TO RANKINGS*

1. Reconsider your rankings in Section I above. How did your answers compare against your expectations?

____

____

2. Imagine you were starting a continuous improvement program for your organization. Based on your understanding of the areas after completing the assessment, please re-rank each section based on which areas you think you would focus on first.

_________ **Organizational Effectiveness** represents the organization's ability to use resources to achieve the organization's goals. Efficiency is prized here.

_________ **Measurement & Feedback** represents the tools and methods of gathering quantitative and qualitative data that can be used to improve an organization's decision-making and promote transparency to the organization's stakeholders.

_________ **Veteran-Serving Differentiators** represent the elements of a veteran's transition back to civilian life that are addressed by the organization.

3. Why did you assign the ranking you did for each item? Take a few moments to document your rationale.

RANK	AREA	RATIONALE FOR RANKING
1		
2		
3		

4. Take a few moments to write down your initial thoughts on 3-4 action items for the area you ranked #1.

RANK	AREA	ACTION ITEMS
1		
2		
3		

*As you consider and reflect on the self-assessment, it's often difficult to prioritize remedial action and continuous improvement. To work toward both effectiveness and impact, how do I prioritize my effort?

On one hand, there is an argument to be made that there is no, 'one right answer' to this question. On the other hand, research suggests that the relative importance of the elements, processes and structures that support organizational effective do vary, most typically, as a function of the lifecycle of the organization – and specifically as a function of the characteristics and attributes of the organization given its stage of development.

Lifecycle Stage	Organizational Attributes
Inception/ Early Growth	Informal Structure Subjective Reward Systems Informal Communications Low Adherence to Formal Process Generalist Human Capital Judgement or 'Gut' Decision-Making
Growth	Centralized *and* Formal Structure System-Based Reward Structure Moderately Formal Communications High Adherence to Formal Process Specialist Human Capital Analytical Decision-Making
Maturity	Decentralized *but* Formal Structure Formal Reward Structure, Data Driven Formal Communications; Rule-Based Process: High Formalization/Low Adherence Strategist Human Capital Decision-Making based on Bargaining

Generally, there are three stages of evolution that represent the organizational lifecycle: 1) Inception, 2) Growth, and 3) Maturity.[1] Each of these stages, along with the process and structural attributes characteristic of each stage, are detailed in the figure at left.

With regard to prioritizing remedial action and continuous improvement, research suggests that the best outcomes will be realized by focusing on impacting those processes, structures, and practices most central to peak performance, given the organization's stage of development. Specifically, in the inception/early stages of the organizational lifecycle, outcome accountability is best supported by ***technical efficiency***; that is, if your organization is young and new (0-5 years), enact your self-assessment such that you prioritize remedial action and continuous improvement efforts toward positively impacting the structures and processes in the organization that are central to producing high-quality and consistent outcomes. During the growth stage of the organizational lifecycle, outcome accountability is best supported by a focus on ***organizational coordination***; that is, if your organization is in the growth stage of its lifecycle (5-9 years), enact your self-assessment such that you prioritize remedial action and continuous improvement efforts toward positively impacting systemic relationships between units and tasks, and processes positioned to manage organizational complexity. At the maturity stage of the organizational lifecycle, outcome accountability is best supported by a focus on ***relational and political capital***; that is, if your organization is mature (10+ years), enact your self-assessment such that you prioritize remedial action and continuous improvement efforts toward advancing organizational legitimacy, exploring new market opportunity, and cultivating future resources.

1 Smith, K., Mitchell, T., & Summer, C. (1985). Top Level Management Priorities in Different Stages of the Organizational Lifecycle. Academy of Management Journal; 28:4, 799-820.