Supporting Veterans and Military Families: How to Begin

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

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

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

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

PROMISING PRACTICES

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POTENTIAL ROLES:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CATALYZE CONNECTIONS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Connect veterans to benefits and services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Link veterans with service providers to meet specific needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitate access to VA benefits and relevant information for veterans and military families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connect veterans with other veterans for peer-based support systems</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CURATE NARRATIVES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase the understanding of the veteran and military family experience</td>
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<td>Lift up narratives to raise civilian awareness</td>
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<td>Record and showcase the diversity of veteran and military family experiences</td>
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<td>Host and engage veterans and military families (e.g., Veterans Day) to create community connections</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CREATE PROGRAMS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tailor programming specific to veteran and military families</td>
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<td>Develop and host veteran and military family support services (e.g., healing arts programs, children’s programs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide training and skills-building programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create safe and trusted spaces and opportunities for veterans to engage with their communities</td>
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</table>
Across the country, libraries and museums are already exploring these roles to enhance their connections to local military communities.

- In Tennessee, the Nashville Public Library offers library space for service providers to connect veterans with benefits.
- The Veterans Connect @ the Library initiative in California connects veterans and their families with services. Veterans Affairs benefits, trainings, and other support across the state.
- The Library of Congress collects, preserves, and digitizes veteran and military family war stories through the congressionally sponsored Veterans History Project.
- The Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington, hosts Hot Shop Heroes to offer healing arts programs to injured veterans.
- Veterans interested in film can participate in eight-week filmmaking workshops hosted by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
- The Cecil County Public Library offers specific technical training and small business consulting services to veterans in Perryville, Maryland.
- The Pierce County Library system provides Microsoft trainings and certifications for transitioning service members at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State.

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

FOUR STEPS TO GUIDE YOUR WORK

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

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

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

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

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

- **Building community connections** to expand social support networks and link up with services and programs in local neighborhoods.
- **Transiting successfully** into non-military life, a pivotal point that often requires identifying initial employment, education and training, as well as navigating access to benefits.
- **Ensuring long-term economic security** through stable employment in fulfilling career paths and knowledge of financial literacy and planning.
- **Preserving health and wellness** that spans physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Also, during an individual’s active duty, his or her family may face specific challenges that arise from the military lifestyle, including:\(^4\)

- **High rates of mobility and separation** that often erode familial stability and lead to single-parent households and amplified emotional needs for children.
- **Low levels of spousal employment** that affect a spouse’s ability to develop long-term, meaningful career paths.
- **Obstacles to financial security** that are often associated with the uncertainty of military life—high mobility and moving costs, and the inability to secure full employment.
- **Difficulty accessing childcare** that is economical and flexible to meet the unique needs and challenges of military families.

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### Where Can Museums and Libraries Begin?

**KEY STEPS TO TAKE:**

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

*These key steps can help museums and libraries determine how best to maximize their contribution to the veteran and military family community*
Using a tool, such as the one depicted here (see Veteran and Military Family Landscape), can help you better understand veterans and military families, capture the different subpopulations within these communities, and highlight the various opportunities to support and engage them.

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

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

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

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

Veteran and Military Family Landscape

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

**GENERATIONS**
- World War II
- Korean War
- Vietnam War
- Gulf War
- Post-9/11

**SPECIAL POPULATIONS**
- Combat Experience
- Wounded
- Women
- In-Crisis (homeless, legally involved)
- Other

**FAMILIES**
- Spouses
- Military Families
- Veteran Families

**OPPORTUNITY AREAS** — There are many ways to engage

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

5"
• **Overview of programs and services.** Remember that you do not need to fill every gap you identify. A variety of programs and organizations may already exist that offer services to veterans and military families. A spectrum of programs and services, such as the one above, illustrates the range of opportunities your library or museum might have to become involved.

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

To help guide this process, ask these key questions:

- How do we **understand** the population we are trying to engage?
- Are there **target segments** of the population to consider?
- What are some of the unique **needs of the population**?
- Are there **Veterans Affairs, military installations, or other organizations** that support this population in our community?
- Who are the other **key players** in this space?
- What **services or programs** do these key players already provide?
2. IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITIES: WHAT ASSETS DO YOU HAVE AVAILABLE?

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

As you define your organizational capabilities, consider:

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

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

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

- What organizational assets and capabilities do we currently have available?
- What are the constraints that our organization faces?
- What types of activities fit within our scope, values, and mission?
- Are there external community-based assets we can tap into?
- Who are the key players that we can partner with in this effort?

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

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

Fellow librarians and museum staff advise:

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

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

“Don’t work in a silo. This is community-wide work with many sectors needed at a community table.”

As you begin to develop your offering, also consider:

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

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

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

- **Learning from your peers.** Not all approaches, programs, or ideas need to be new or created from scratch. Complementing, scaling, and piloting existing approaches can be very successful. Reach out
to other libraries or museums that are working with veterans and military families and learn about their services and programs. Connect with other partners to learn about their work and to find areas where you may be able to contribute.

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

To help guide this process, answer these key questions:

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

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

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

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

As you implement, observe, and adapt, consider:

- **Creating space for feedback.** In addition to observing what your community is reacting and responding to, be reflective, and be intentional about seeking out feedback. Implement formal and informal feedback methods such as surveys or a suggestions box.
Over the last few years, there has been an increase of non-VA organizations that serve veterans and military families, particularly in the social sector. More than 40,000 U.S.-registered nonprofit organizations are dedicated to serving veterans and the military community. And since 2008, this sector alone has seen a 41 percent increase in the number of veteran-serving charities.

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

**PROVIDER TYPE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intermediary (e.g., funders)</th>
<th>Nonprofit/NGO (e.g., FBOs; VSOs)</th>
<th>Private (e.g., businesses)</th>
<th>Public (e.g., colleges, cultural institutions)</th>
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**APPROACH**

**National Endowment for the Arts** partners with the DOD and The Writer’s Center to provide writing workshops to help veterans in the healing process.

**Team Rubicon** provides emergency relief during disasters through a corps of trained veteran volunteers.

**JPMorgan Chase** supports an industry-wide commitment to hire one million veterans.

**University of Nebraska-Lincoln** created a Military and Veteran Success Center to support student veterans.

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

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

  - **Who** should we ask for feedback?
  - **What have been individuals’ experiences?** What do they highlight was successful? Are there opportunities to modify?
  - **Are veterans and military families using** our programs and services? What have been their experiences?
  - **What has changed** within our local context? Are there changes within the population? Are there new needs? Are there new players and partners to consider?
  - **Are there additional opportunities** that can be leveraged?
  - **How can we ensure long-term and meaningful engagement** with this community through our product or service?
Authentic Engagement Often Requires Specific Cultural Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADVICE PRACTITIONERS SHARED ON PROGRAM DESIGN:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Create welcoming environments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasize collaboration &amp; team-based approaches</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learn about military culture</strong></td>
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**CONCLUSION**

Understanding your local context and your organizational capacities will help you identify opportunities to engage veterans and military families. Design programs and services that build from these opportunities, but remain flexible to ensure their longevity. There is no one way to engage a community that works best in every situation; define how best to support your local veterans and military families given your unique circumstances and context.
The federal government’s Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the largest service agency for many veterans and military families. The VA system is large and complex, serving the community through three main branches: the Veterans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefit Administration, and the National Cemetery Administration. For many libraries and museums, connecting to the VA network often occurs at the local community (Vet Centers) and county (County Veteran Service Officer) levels. State Veterans Affairs departments provide state-funded services to veterans and their families. Connecting with the VA can provide great insights into the military population around you, information about the services and benefits currently available, and tools to help you learn about veterans and military families.


**Organization: American Legion**

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

**Organization: Team Red, White & Blue**

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

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

- Wounded Warrior Project
- Team Rubicon
- United Service Organizations (USO)
- Blue Star Families
- American Red Cross
PEER EXAMPLE 1: CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY

ROLE ILLUSTRATED: CATALYZE CONNECTIONS

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM ORIGINS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formally developed after the California Department of Veteran Affairs identified the value of libraries in connecting veterans to benefits and services</td>
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<tr>
<th>What Services and Programs are Offered?</th>
<th>What are the Key Issues?</th>
<th>Why is it Interesting?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Resource Centers in libraries to connect veterans with dedicated benefits at the library and with the CalVet agency</td>
<td>VA benefits</td>
<td>Demonstrates a strong partnership with the state Veterans Affairs department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-on-one consultations on a variety of veteran specific topics</td>
<td>Education and skills-building opportunities</td>
<td>Represents a flexible and scalable model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran-related programming (e.g., exhibits, community-wide dialogues)</td>
<td>Transition support and employment opportunities</td>
<td>Illustrates a statewide approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing resources</td>
<td>Health services</td>
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<td>General benefits</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>California State Library (CSL) identified a large veteran population across the state of California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several organizations, such as the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) and the County Veterans Service Officer, already provide resources and supports to veterans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The library learned that a majority of the veterans in the state are not accessing and using these dedicated benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES |
| CalVet connected to CSL after recognizing the value of libraries in helping connect veterans and CalVet benefits and services |
| CSL allocated funding from the Library Services and Technology Act for designing support programs |

| DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE) |
| CSL partnered with CalVet to create the in-the-box Veterans Connect @ the Library model with a range of engagement levels for individual libraries |
| Participating libraries could establish Resource Centers specific to veteran services and veteran programming |
| CalVet and SCL collaborated to design resources for training librarians and volunteers on veteran services |
| Individual libraries recruit volunteers to staff programs |

| IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT |
| Actively reaching out to local communities helped expand awareness and success of programs |
| Flexibility of the model (e.g., volunteer-based, low-cost to set up) permitted scalability and replication in libraries across the state |
PEER EXAMPLE 2: PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY

ROLE ILLUSTRATED: CREATE PROGRAMS

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

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

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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open Lab Program</strong> (now the Microsoft Military Program) at Rally Point 6, designed to assist transitioning military members**</td>
<td>Employment and transition Skills building</td>
<td>Demonstrates a multisector partnership approach to delivery Illustrates library-nonprofit partnership Uses grant funding to support program development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailored Microsoft training programs and globally recognized certifications to program participants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>One-on-one career counselling and skills translating for individuals transitioning out of military employment to civilian employment</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS

UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS
- Large population of active service members at Joint Base Lewis-McChord transitioning into the civilian world due to downsizing
- Many transitioning individuals are seeking careers in the technology field or were uncertain about potential career paths

IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES
- Pierce County Library already provides technology training courses in some of the public branches
- Grant funding from Washington State Library and Microsoft to provide a modified training program to military community
- Nonprofit partner Rally Point 6 (RP/6) had strong connections to the military community on base

DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE)
- Developed the Open Lab Program to assist military members in obtaining globally recognized Microsoft technologies certifications to support transition into the workforce
- Active outreach to local base helped expand awareness and reach of program
- Opted to host program at partner’s (RP/6) location to create a familiar and accessible environment to participants

IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT
- Success of the pilot program and flexibility of the grant allowed growth of the program when demand was evident
- Partnerships across sectors filled gaps in funding and other resources (e.g., connections to base)
- Recently, the program moved its location to the on-base library at JBLM and has changed its name to the “Microsoft Military Program”
PEER EXAMPLE 3: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

ROLE ILLUSTRATED: CURATE NARRATIVES

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Project includes digital, oral, and written personal accounts from war veterans and civilians nationwide from all wars since WWI</td>
<td>Community connections</td>
<td>Illustrates collaboration between the Library of Congress and local communities to collect stories. Illustrates a government-sponsored, nationwide effort to connect to veterans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS

UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS
- Population trends illustrated a natural decline of WWII veterans and their families
- Participating communities develop understanding of veteran demographics locally

IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES
- Library of Congress received congressional support to launch an initiative to record and preserve histories and stories of the military community
- Identified corporate and other cross-sector partners to support (sponsor and fund) the project
- Acknowledged that local initiative would lead the story-gathering process and that the Library of Congress would serve as the repository of narratives

DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE)
- Designed the Veterans History Project with a national scope to reach all segments of the population (e.g., all branches, military families)
- Leveraged support from local partners to understand unique local contexts
- Incorporated flexible submission methods (e.g., oral, written, digital, artifacts)
- Intend to digitize collections over time to make them accessible to the public

IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT
- Designed tools for community engagement (e.g., provide workshops led by professional Oral Historian and Folklorists)
- Re-emphasized scope to include stories from veterans returning from recent conflicts (e.g., Persian Gulf Wars)
### PEER EXAMPLE 4: LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

**ROLE ILLUSTRATED:** CREATE PROGRAMS

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

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

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filmmaking classes for veterans and film screenings to share veterans’ work and stories</td>
<td>Community connections</td>
<td>Illustrates effective partnerships between museum, libraries, and artists alliances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills building</td>
<td>Modified existing programs to target veterans as the main audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS**

#### UNDERSTAND LOCAL NEEDS AND CONTEXTS
- Identified a large military community in the Los Angeles area
- Identified a significant military-civilian divide and a large population of veterans that did not fit typical depictions of the “broken” veteran
- Observed that many veterans within the community were creative/artists interested in filmmaking and art programs at the LACMA

#### IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES
- LACMA already hosts a filmmaking program for the general public
- Leveraged museum art collections and movie series; spaces and online platforms; equipment and professional filmmakers on staff
- Received grant funding from corporate and government agencies

#### DESIGN YOUR OFFERING (PRODUCT OR SERVICE)
- Designed eight-week filmmaking workshops and community screenings for veterans
- Created safe spaces by diversifying gender and era of service participants and hiring veterans to lead the classes
- Partnered with an art therapist to provide training for staff and serve as an ad hoc advisor
- Partnered with Los Angeles Public Library Veteran Resource Center to host filmmaking classes
- Partnered with Veterans in Film and Television to advertise the program

#### IMPLEMENT, OBSERVE, AND ADAPT
- Began working with a professional evaluator to assess the program’s strengths and outcomes, as well as identify opportunities to improve the program design
- Piloting local afterschool program for military children after demand for a similar family program was identified
### PEER EXAMPLE 5: MUSEUM OF GLASS

**ROLE ILLUSTRATED:** CREATE PROGRAMS

**MUSEUM OF GLASS**

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

#### PROGRAM ORIGINS

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

#### What Services and Programs are Offered?

- **Hot Shop Heroes**: A quarterly eight-week glassblowing class for injured and transitioning service members and veterans

#### What are the Key Issues?

- Community connections
- Health and wellness

#### Why is it Interesting?

- Illustrates partnership between museum, the local military base, and Veterans Affairs
- Provides opportunities for veterans and transitioning service members to connect
- Represents a scalable model that can be replicated at other museums

#### CRITICAL DESIGN CHOICES AND DECISION POINTS

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<td>Identified a population of service members and veterans at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) with severe mental and physical health issues. Many of these service members were waiting on specific healthcare services and were preparing to transition into civilian life. Veterans and service members participating in the healthcare support programs covered a range of ages and generations.</td>
<td>Determined funding partners (e.g., the National Endowment for the Arts) to support the program development and expansion. Identified a core of long-standing and highly skilled class instructors with a strong sense of community.</td>
<td>Designed quarterly eight-week glassblowing and flame-working classes for service members and veterans with psychological health conditions and traumatic brain injuries. Created safe and comfortable environments by beginning each class with a meal to build camaraderie. Partnered with the Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) and JBLM to recruit students interested in the class.</td>
<td>Difficulty with recruiting students (due to downsizing of military in 2014) led to the expansion of the program to include service members outside of the WTB. Developed a partnership with the Veterans Affairs American Lake healthcare system to create a pipeline of interested participants. Success of the program led to plans to scale and replicate similar programs in museums in Virginia and Maryland.</td>
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1. In 2016, the Institute of Museum and Library Services launched the Community Catalyst Initiative geared toward identifying new ways for museums and libraries to strengthen community involvement. To learn more about the Community Catalyst work led by the IMLS and its partners, please read the IMLS press release and the recently published report, Strengthening Networks, Sparking Change: Museums and Libraries as Community Catalysts.

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


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

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

FSG is a mission-driven consulting firm supporting leaders in creating large-scale, lasting social change. Through strategy, evaluation, and research, we help many types of actors—individually and collectively—make progress against the world’s toughest problems.

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The Institute of Museum and Library Services is celebrating its 20th Anniversary. IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and approximately 35,000 museums.

Our mission has been to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. For the past 20 years, our grant making, policy development, and research has helped libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive.


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