

# Veteran Service and Empowerment Organizations

Engaging with Veterans to drive collaborative innovation

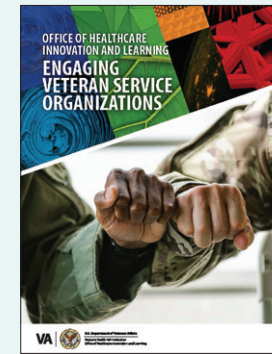
VSOs and VEOs work directly with Veterans and caregivers to provide guidance, assistance, and expertise with healthcare benefits and access. These organizations serve as advocates to protect, improve, and create positive solutions for healthcare services and Veterans who receive them. There are more than 100 VSO/

VEOs providing personalized, on-the-ground engagement with their members, and advocating on behalf of Veterans through national and state level legislative representation. The dedication of these organizations to Veterans and supporting priorities align closely with field-based and national scale opportunities for collaborative innovation.

Long-standing VSOs like Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America and Disabled American Veterans represent over 6 million members.

After 2001, Post-9/11 VEOs emerged as highly engaged advocates for a “new generation” of Veterans. VEOs like Wounded Warrior Project, Team Rubicon, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Team Red White and Blue, The Mission Continues, Travis Manion Foundation, and Student Veterans of America amplify the strengths and challenges of this community, empower Veteran connection, and widen opportunities for millions of post 9/11 members to engage with VHA.

Additionally, many organizations exist at a local or regional level to support the Veteran community. County-based Veteran service officers work hand-in-hand with local Veterans to support them in navigating their local VA and assist in developing, preparing, and submitting claims.



## Engaging Veteran Service Organizations Playbook

To effectively navigate engagement and innovative collaboration with the VSO/VEO community, OHIL has published a playbook to serve as a guide for internal stakeholders in understanding collaborators, organizations and roles, engagement vehicles and structure, and processes. The

playbook includes additional details on the six plays mentioned below and provides a checklist of activities and key questions to consider when engaging VSO/VEOs.

**PLAY 1: Understanding Veteran Service Organizations.** Identify and understand the VSO/VEO landscape and community to better empathize with their missions and membership and begin to identify areas of potential collaboration.

**PLAY 2: Engaging VSOs in Your Community.** Connect with VSO/VEOs and state/county Veteran associations through VISNs or VAMCs to ensure VHA innovation is led by the voice of the Veteran/caregiver.

**PLAY 3: Sharing Innovative Stories and Opportunities with VSOs.** Participate in ongoing, focused and programmatic networking, and communications that improve OHIL's ability to reach Veteran members with relevant and meaningful information on available innovative solutions.

**PLAY 4: Leveraging VSO Advocacy and Legislation.** Engage VSO/VEO communities early and often to address emerging Veteran legislative and policy priorities (e.g., burn pits, mental health, suicide prevention) through innovation.

**PLAY 5: Collaborating on Emerging Technology and Healthcare Solutions and Advancing Pilots.** Connect with VSO/VEOs and state/county Veteran associations to help inform, pilot, launch, and sustain innovative collaboration and scale pilots.

**PLAY 6: Creating Collaborative Agreements.** Leverage existing tools and templates, such as the Collaboration Playbook, to put in place a variety of collaborative agreements in support of VSO/VEO engagements activities.

VHA and VSO/VEOs are tackling innovative solutions around areas such as: military service transition, suicide prevention, novel care coordination models for a personalized healthcare experience, digital health experiences pre and post enrollment, and fellowships designed to bring student Veterans into government service. Together, VHA and the VSO/VEO communities are working arm-in-arm on uncovering Veteran challenges and co-creating solutions to improve the lives of Veterans and their caregivers.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### Student Veteran Fellowship

Student Veterans of America (SVA) is the premier organization leading service, research, programs, and advocacy for Veterans in higher education. To accomplish their vision of empowering student Veterans to lead and live their best lives, they act as a catalyst by providing student Veterans with resources, network support, and advocacy beyond higher education. In collaboration with SVA, OHIL engaged in nationwide discovery to better understand Veteran needs and found that over 650,000 post 9/11 Veterans are leveraging the GI Bill and have expressed interest in the following career areas: Healthcare, Business, and STEM. Additionally, 42% of student Veterans interviewed shared that they are strongly interested in a career at VA.

Launching in 2023, VA is designing a professional talent pipeline for student Veterans to easily access federal employment at VA or other federal agencies through an innovation fellowship. This fellowship will provide valuable real-world experience for Veterans and emphasize the following:

- Focusing on areas of innovation including healthcare, STEM, data analytics, and business strategy
- Leveraging the Pathways Recent Graduates program, fellows should be in a non-competitive hiring posture
- Strengthening entrepreneurial and innovation skills for student Veterans as they embark on their second careers

