



The 911-Veterans Project

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GOAL STATEMENT

Work with the non-profit community to establish an information referral mechanism that will serve Post-911 veterans and orient them to the spectrum of services currently available across the Northeast Ohio community.

SYNOPSIS

In the post-911 era, there will be an increasing demand for veterans' services. There is a diverse mix of veteran programs and services across Greater Cleveland, and these providers include federal, state, municipal, and private non-profit organizations. It is expected that the veteran pool from Northeast Ohio will be older with a greater tendency to have a spouse and/or dependents than was the case in past generations. Unlike earlier eras, deployed reservists and older active component veterans will comprise a larger demographic for this generation.

Our assessment determination was that there is a need for an information resource that will take into account the entire range of 911-VET concerns, and offer user-friendly referral information. This mechanism will take the form of a topic-driven referral web page. The target audience for this resource is both the veterans themselves as well as appropriate sub-groups within the greater community (e.g. employers, educational institutions, spouses / families, and affiliated veteran support organizations). Once these web pages are published, local government agencies and non-profit veteran service organizations will be given the opportunity to lend their support by providing hosting services to the site and providing future webmaster maintenance.

BACKGROUND

The federal government has a vital interest in ensuring that its agencies function effectively and deliver services that are important to our communities and to our way of life. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy mandated the creation of regional Federal Executive Boards to improve coordination among the agencies, activities, and programs in local communities. On the local scene, this objective is combined with an innovative employee development and training program.

Under the auspices of The Cleveland Federal Executive Board, federal employees across Northeast Ohio are nominated to attend an annual personal-skills course. This skill building opportunity is known as the Cleveland Federal Community Leadership Institute (CFCLI).

The CFCLI mission is to identify and develop leaders committed to advancing greater cooperation among federal agencies to strengthen community partnerships. Participation in the CFCLI course provides mid-level federal supervisors opportunities for growth on an individual, community, and agency-wide basis. The CFCLI curriculum has three important growth and learning objectives:

- Develop individual leadership skills
- Network with colleagues from other federal agencies
- Interact with local "grass roots" community organizations.

PROJECT RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

The culmination of CFCLI seminars is to implement a group project at the community level consistent with the course learning objectives and the Federal Executive Board. Each team faced the challenge of devising a project that would benefit the local community and enhance networking among federal service agencies while providing individual team members with personal growth through leadership opportunities.

Participants formed into groups in order to assess areas of need across the community and develop project strategies. Much emphasis was given to focusing the project's scope and to defining tangible benefits within the project's area of concern.

ANALYSIS OF TARGET AUDIENCE

The 911 Veterans Project team began with discussions about the various concerns that military members might face upon leaving active duty in the Global War on Terrorism. One of the most salient points in our discussion was the changing demographic of Post-911 Era Veterans what types of assistance would be most beneficial.

Before considering the special needs of this new generation of vets, the team attempted to define their pertinent characteristics as a target audience. Personal experiences from team members were very helpful during this initial analysis phase. Three members of our team provide various services as Department of Veterans Affairs employees; another member enforces veterans' reemployment regulations through the Department of Labor. Other team affiliations include one active duty military officer, one drilling reservist, and several veterans from different eras.

A Changing Veteran Demographic

Diverse recruiting efforts to support the All-Volunteer Military and a patriotic upsurge has resulted in an older pool of enlistees than in past eras. The prevalence toward married personnel (often with children) is also greater than it was during the Vietnam-era. The Department of Defense Under-Secretary for Personnel Readiness points out in a Fiscal Year 2002 Executive Summary that the mean age of active duty enlisted members is 27-- officers is 34. The report goes on to say that in FY-2002, 48% of enlisted members were married -- 68% for officers. The report suggests that marital status will also increase for Post-911 vets. "In FY-1973 approximately 40% of enlisted members were married. Today, nearly half of all soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen are married." (<http://www.dod.mil/prhome/poprep2002/summary/summary.htm>).

These statistics don't even take into account the demographic profile of Post-911 Vets coming from the ranks of Reserve Components and National Guard units (which are facing increasingly longer deployments). These part-time military members are traditionally older and more established in the community; consequently they must contend with *BOTH* veteran readjustment issues *AND* with family, occupational, financial, and educational commitments associated with their civilian obligations.

ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

The team turned its focus on the Northeast Ohio community and types of veteran services available to our target audience. As represented by our team, the area exhibits a very strong Department of Veterans Affairs presence; there is also a fairly large military entrance processing station in Greater Cleveland indicating that the community provides a significant pool of enlistees (and future veterans). As a team of federal employees, we began to take stock of just how many different federal agencies are involved with programs pertinent to veteran concerns: *Re-employment Rights* (Dept. of Labor); *Civil Service Hiring Preference* (Office of Personnel Management); *Tax Relief* (Internal Revenue Service). The list of U.S. government programs alone was extensive.

It was noted that Celebreeze Federal Building is also home to a large number of independent, non-profit Veteran Services Organizations (VFW, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Jewish War Veterans, etc.). Veteran service agencies on the state, county, and municipal level are also accessible to members of the community. Several team members have established affiliations and networked with many of these organizations. In total the team was able to identify a host of non-federal veterans programs provided by state, county, municipal and charitable organizations.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The team surmised that the scope of services being offered to our community's veterans is enormous; moreover, these diverse programs and services are sponsored by a myriad of organizations. We devised an assessment survey tool to assess our respondents' range of concerns and gauge their awareness of programs. Team members to Guard and Reserve Units distributed this survey questionnaire (See Appendix-A). Our assessment experience produced a subsequent conclusion: the problems, needs and concerns of our target veteran audience would be fairly complex and sophisticated in that the current anti-terrorism campaign is not being conducted like other military operations. Our analysis and discussions concluded that our target audience would require diverse services, and that the local community had much to offer veterans from many diffuse sources. It was also noted that our community (like

the nation at large) exhibits a broad, grass-roots base of support for military people and especially for those who are veterans of The Global War on Terrorism. Our ultimate project goal and implementation plan could now come into focus.

DETERMINATION

Upon consideration of the project mission, target audience, and needs assessment, the team began to concentrate on manageable and obtainable objectives. Rather than make specific recommendations about the type and quality of assistance, we would focus our efforts in such a way as to enhance awareness and coordination among the various programs and services already being provided by various veteran organizations. It was determined that what our target audience needed most was a user-friendly means of getting basic pertinent information about what kind of veteran services are available throughout our community.

GOAL: Our project would seek to fill the need for an information resource that will take into account the entire range of 911-veteran concerns and offer user-friendly referral information. The 911-Vets target audience would be the direct beneficiary of this resource, but it should also be available to appropriate sub-groups associated with the targeted veteran population (e.g. spouses, dependants, extended families, civilian employers, educational institutions, and affiliated support organizations).

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The task before the 911-Vets Project Team was to implement some type of information referral tool that could be a useful resource to assist our target audience – a type of resource that would also be accessible to the community at large. The group had to take into account the timeline of the CFCLI course and duration of the project. Team members also wanted to include some type feature that would help encourage greater awareness and coordination among the various kinds of veteran organizations.

The initial plan called for compiling an index of contact information and publishing a pamphlet. The problem of this approach was that there would be too much emphasis placed on organizational details and not enough attention devoted to the types of programs that are available to target the needs of veteran users. Another problem with

this type of "yellow pages" approach is that junior military personnel are usually not familiar enough with governmental and private non-profit bureaucracies to navigate their way toward a solution (especially junior Guard and Reserve personnel).

Another tentative proposal to help guide veterans toward answers took the form of a symposium of leading service providers-- especially those skillful in providing referrals for unique needs. This symposium would've been staged in a public auditorium venue, featuring an extensive guest list from the Northeast Ohio veteran provider community. This would've provided an opportunity for networking and the pertinent information would be also be videotaped and edited for viewing by our wider target audience. The video would've been edited and distribution to local public access channels on cable networks across the region—an audio version of the material would've also been made available as a part of local radio station's public service announcements. This idea was ultimately rejected after considering the extensive logistics involved with producing, filming, editing, and distributing such a project.

Ultimately, the team concluded that the best way to collect and disseminate referral information was to design a web page that would allow users to link directly to service provider information. The design philosophy of this web site would be that it would present information to the viewer in a topical fashion reflecting the needs and concerns of the veteran target audience. The web page design **WOULD NOT** simply list providers in an alphabetical roster format.

IMPLEMENTATION

The immediate concerns in launching a start-up web site were twofold: (1) who would create the initial design and (2) what file servers would be used to host the site into the future. One of our team members volunteered to use the Information Technology skills afforded by her occupation with the Dept. of Veterans Affairs to design the web page. Another team member's affiliation with a local non-profit (The Cleveland Grays Armory) led to an arrangement to obtain web hosting services. The leadership of The Cleveland Grays Armory Museum was receptive to forming a partnership with The 911 Veterans Project and hosting a web site for the first year. Our team's objectives were nicely suited to the Grays membership mission of supporting the men and women

of our armed forces and maintaining public awareness of veteran issues. The Grays Armory Museum's own web page would also provide users a link to our 911-Veterans page-- a mutually beneficial and cross-promotional relationship!

Once these initial feasibility issues were resolved the team turned its efforts toward the structural and functional design of the web site. One of the major considerations in designing the web page would be the arrangement and structural placement of various topical issues and areas of veterans concerns. The survey questionnaires that were used to assess target audience needs would serve as a guide to choosing the dynamic links for prominent display on the home (referral page).

In the middle center of the page would be a series of links from organizations that were judged to be good starting places to address specific needs. Family Resources, Health Care, and Re-employment Issues are to be mentioned per se and amplifying information included in the description block next to each link. More multifaceted topics would be managed by breaking up the "more complex" issue buttons into a sub-topical heading page. These "intermediary" jumps would take the viewer to a user-friendly and cogent secondary link list. Category sub headings through secondary links is a useful technique to take the user from the general (e.g. civilian workplace issues) to the specific (e.g. small business loans).

In addition to the main body of links the left-hand column of the page would contain "hot buttons" represented by a military crest representing each branch of the armed forces and reserve components. Selecting the appropriate button would link the user to each of the military department's web resource pages pertaining to post-deployment support programs. These fast link buttons represent all seven of the Armed Forces Reserve and National Guard components.

In the right hand column would be links to various veterans support organizations that had omnibus home pages representing broad-ranging services. Examples of this category might the Department of Defense of the Uniformed Services Organization.

Near the bottom of the page, the project sponsors and collaborative partners would be recognized.



Army



Air Force



Navy



Marines



Coast Guard



Army Reserve

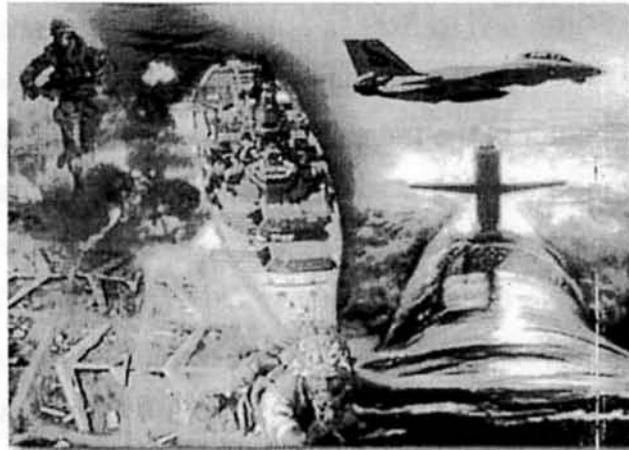


National Guard

<http://www.911veteran.com>

A Resource for Northeast Ohioans

Welcome to the OEF/OIF
(Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom)
Support Page



"...to care for him who bore the battle, and his widow and his orphan..."

Abraham Lincoln
Second Inaugural Address
March 4, 1865

Family Resources— Information, assistance, and resources for spouses and dependents

Deployment Support Resources—Resource guide and information for you & your family

Health Care Information— Treatment Disability Benefits, resources, and more.

Veteran Resources— Specialized Programs, Retirement, VA loans and more.

Reemployment Rights— Will your civilian job be there for you when your return?

County Resources— Immediate Financial Aid & Assistance with applying for Benefits

State Resources— Programs for Job Seekers and the Families of Veterans

Other links— A full spectrum of Veteran Resources

Web Page sponsors-
Bill Forester and Cleveland Grays Armory Museum

POST IMPLEMENTATION FOLLOW-UP / PROJECT LIFESPAN

The use of implementation funds was not required to develop, publish or host the web site. The team decided that the best use of any Federal Executive Board funding support would be to procure promotional items to advertise the web site address to our target audience. One of the most effective options would be the use small refrigerator magnets or a similar novelty item. Team members in their regular governmental interactions with veterans would distribute these handouts during the first year of this pilot project. Once users begin to access the site, team members intend to use their contact among military reservists and distribute an evaluation tool of the web design.

Awareness and support from the community would also be an on-going activity in the future. Long term hosting of the webs site beyond the first year would be sought via team members' continued affiliations with public and independent Veteran Service Organizations. Both continuity and notoriety would be sought by soliciting other non-profit agencies to sponsor the hosting and maintenance of the site in future years. In addition, the team could maintain continuity of purpose by submitting a proposal to future CFCLI courses to consider projects to further update and assess the continued need for this web site.

Needs Assessment Survey ~ A Questionnaire Tool

The purpose of this survey is to determine:

- a) **What local (city/state/federal) service organizations (i.e. Veterans organizations / military organizations etc.) that you are aware of**
- b) **What sort of services did they provide to you**
- c) **What sort of services or information would be beneficial to you and your family during and after your deployment**

1. What service organizations are you aware of and what type of services have they provided for you since your deployment?

2. In what areas or services have the various support agencies been lacking since your deployment?

3. In what areas were they strong in their support of you and/or your family?

4. What types of concern(s) and/or problem(s) have you or your family had since your deployment?

Financial?

Please explain _____

Medical?

Please explain _____

Educational?

Please explain _____

Family?

Please explain _____

Other?

Please explain _____

5. Would a web site that contained information about various local organizations and the services they provide be beneficial to you and/or your family?

6. What type of Information would you find beneficial if it were to be provided on this web site?

7. For survey purposes, would you please provide us with the name of your organization and your Title?

8. If you would like to be notified of the web page address after its publication, please provide your e-mail address

9. Any additional comments are welcome



VETERANS

Your service in the war against terror may entitle you to

VETERANS

Your service in the war against terror may entitle you to special assistance.

HELP is available to navigate your way through Vets Programs & Benefits !
