

Guiding Principles for Serving Veteran and Military Communities

These guiding principles and goals should be at the forefront of decision making, partnership, and program development. Framing them in the context of your work as well as the larger goals of well-being and suicide prevention is key to building more resilient communities.



Keep Veterans at the Center of All Decision Making

- What are some ways you can incorporate veterans into your decision making process?
- Shift from statistics to stories to build genuine relationships.
- Engage communities to better understand their needs and desires in veteran support.



Shift from a Competitive to a Collaborative Mindset


- What aspects of your organization or program are competitive and not collaborative?
- Develop an ecosystem of trust by ensuring processes and structures are transparent and collaborative.
- Adopt a mindset where your success is not another organization's loss and vice versa.



Acknowledge and Design Around Complexity

- What aspects of your work are static or fluid? Can more aspects be fluid to account for complexity?
- Respond to dynamic needs and listen to the community at times of uncertainty to build trust and integrity.
- Consider unintended consequences and the risk they pose to short and long term goals.

Understanding Challenges and Opportunities

 Challenge	 Opportunity
Misaligned Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a shared vision between partners including values/community agreements, focus areas, and goals for every project. • Practice humility and listening to learn other's strategies and organization priorities.
Language and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be intentional about using consistent language that is inclusive and sensitive.
Inconsistent Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data to communicate findings with others. • Invest in data infrastructure to add to collective data sources and make data visible and accessible.
Limited Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the veteran and team member perspective is included in decision making. • Define benchmarks of success and points at which to pivot ideas.
Limited Funding and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from other organizations' sustainable strategies and strengths in programming, resourcing, and development.
Slow Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set and regularly revisit short, mid, and long term goals when accounting for success and improvements.
Burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize and plan for how work situations, social factors and world events impact staff. • Prioritize staff as an integral part of program success by building material support into grant proposals or overall organization capacity.