



STAND SMART FOR HEROES

ISSUE/CHALLENGE

Many of the nearly 19 million U.S. military veterans thrive in their communities, but some struggle. Local organizations—individually or as part of community-based partnerships—play an important role in responding to the needs of the military and veteran population. Service members and veterans are community members themselves; they have the same range of needs as other community members, plus additional needs stemming from their military service.

American communities cannot address every unique need of each service member and veteran, but many endeavor to do so. Community-based efforts play a key part in service members' and veterans' wellness, even though many of the organizations behind those efforts lack resources, capacity, or knowledge to sustain their impact efficiently.

The Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF) finds, funds, shapes, and accelerates equitable solutions that help veterans, service members, their families, and their caregivers thrive. BWF's Got Your 6 (GY6) Network provides resources for local initiatives to ensure that communities are supportive and welcoming places for those military and veteran families. BWF provides funding, along with opportunities for learning, networking, and sharing successes, to support the local partners in the GY6 Network as they strive to make their American community a safe landing zone for current and former service members.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED

Through its Local Partner Self-Assessment Tool (LPSAT), BWF collects data from its community partners on the needs of the military and veteran population and on how well communities are meeting those needs. Responses to the LPSAT survey provide BWF with data about efforts to serve that population around the nation. In addition to sharing insights from the survey, BWF curates resources for maximizing communities' impact in addressing the needs of military and veteran families.

GOT YOUR 6 PARTNERS An American Solution to Serving the Military and Veteran Community

KEY FINDINGS

The Bob Woodruff Foundation partners with leading organizations to address current and emerging needs of veterans, service members, their families, and their caregivers. Targeted community efforts play a fundamental role in the integration and well-being of the military and veteran population. By making significant investments to increase local communities' capacity to organize and respond to the needs of that population, BWF supports efforts to have a broader and deeper impact than what a single organization can do on its own.

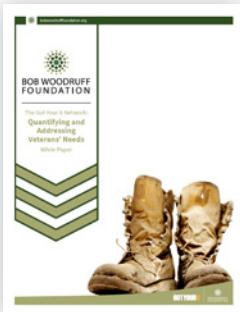
Given the tremendous needs of the military and veteran population (see References), BWF provides ongoing support to American communities. Many community efforts operate with limited resources, making it especially important for those efforts to be efficient. Here are essential things to know about that work:

- The community-based partnerships in BWF's GY6 Network include diverse, engaged, and committed stakeholders, such as local business leaders, non-profits focused on the military and veteran population as well as those serving the broader community, institutions of higher education, individual volunteers, elected officials, and representatives of government agencies.
- GY6 community-based initiatives involve partnership agreements with as many as 100 or more collaborating stakeholders, increasing their ability to respond to the needs of the military and veteran population.
- When communities are unable to resolve the needs of the military and veteran population, it is because their services are focused too narrowly or because they lack the capacity to assist everyone seeking help with those needs.
- The most effective collaborations provide "warm referrals" between community organizations to lessen the challenge of having a single entity try to address a broad range of needs by itself. A warm referral involves engaging with another service provider on a client's behalf, rather than simply providing clients with contact information they must follow up on themselves.
- The most effective community-based efforts use a common data tool to cultivate a culture of collaboration, to share information among community partners, to reduce the requirement for individual service members and veterans to explain their needs multiple times, and to assess the partnership's collective impact and shortcomings.



REFERENCES

Bob Woodruff Foundation, Quantifying and Addressing Veterans' Needs (June 2022), https://bobwoodrufffoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/BWF_2022_LPSAT_VeteransNeeds_Final.pdf



Bob Woodruff Foundation, Community Collaboration For America's Veterans: Insights From The Bob Woodruff Foundation's Local Partner Self-Assessment Tools (June 2020), https://bobwoodrufffoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/BWF_LPSAT_CommunityCollab.pdf



Bob Woodruff Foundation, Assessing and Improving Community Support for Veterans (December 2020), https://bobwoodrufffoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/BWF_2020_LPSAT_AssessingImprovingCommunitySupportforVeterans-1.pdf



GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

Working in more than 130 localities, BWF's GY6 partners are an example of how American communities are increasing their capacity to ensure that all military and veteran families thrive. Going forward, communities can take the following steps:

- **Review the organizations within the community.**
 - Who can provide services to address the needs of the military and veteran population?
 - Who is missing from the table of those already active in the community effort to support veterans, service members, their families, and their caregivers?
- **Look for opportunities to strengthen the bonds between community organizations.**
 - Where are successes happening in the shared work?
 - Where are there opportunities to increase the community's impact?
- **Determine if the community-based partnership is agile** by asking whether it can be resilient and sustainable through unexpected change.
- **Make specific plans to increase the use of data.**
 - How are individual organizations tracking and using data?
 - Is the community partnership collecting data on its efforts as a whole?
 - Can the available data be used to highlight successes and identify gaps?
- **Use data to develop and improve the collective effort.**
 - What are community organizations' shared goals to support the military and veteran population?
 - How can the community use data to garner the necessary resources to work on its shared goals?
- **Develop a community-wide plan for increasing effectiveness.**
 - How are organizations referring service members and veterans to one another?
 - Are there regularly scheduled meetings for community organizations to review their progress on shared goals?
 - How can the community prepare for complex challenges?
- **Partner with the Bob Woodruff Foundation for additional support and resources.**
 - Have you visited the [BWF website](#)?
 - Have you connected with a [GY6 partner](#) near you?
 - If there isn't an existing GY6 partner, have you considered [becoming a local partner](#) of BWF?

ABOUT STAND SMART FOR HEROES

The Bob Woodruff Foundation is proud to partner with best-in-class scientific organizations to provide important research findings to the community of organizations that represent and serve post-9/11 veterans, service members, families, and caregivers. For more information on the Bob Woodruff Foundation and Stand SMART For Heroes, please see bobwoodrufffoundation.org.