

At Your Service**Snapshot of Service****The Square Covering Where the Triangle Misses: Non-Government Funding**

According to issue experts working at Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantees, helping homeless veterans find employment is challenging work. Many of these veterans have multiple barriers to employment that require creative solutions. However, limitations on both the amount and use of Federal funds have motivated grantee agencies to get creative to fill the gaps. Successful grantees use private funding to create innovative programs to support veterans returning to the world of work.

Swords to Plowshares (SWORDS), an HVRP grantee in San Francisco, combines private funding and federal grants to create comprehensive programs. Dave Lopez, Deputy Director of Program Operations describes their approach this way: “Through foundation support we are able to go outside the box and create a program within a program.”

One example of this approach is SWORDS’ earn and learn program. Based on the job-driven training principle of the same name, veterans in the SWORDS program earn a stipend while participating in on-the-job training. Federal funds from HVRP pay for allowable grant expenses including case management and job search training while private funding is used to pay the client stipends. The program uses an employer-driven curriculum, either created or approved by the employer, to ensure relevance and buy-in.

This approach, as Mr. Lopez explains, benefits the veterans, employers, and private funders. First, the program provides veterans with a source of income and on-the-job training that often leads to employment. Second, the employer has the opportunity to test the program and potential employees with little initial investment. SWORDS plans to leverage positive results by asking employers to cover the stipends for future training groups. Finally, private funders see the direct impact of their investment – income for veterans – without the burden of supporting administrative costs. SWORDS is currently piloting this approach in the healthcare and IT industries and hopes to expand to other areas.

As the SWORDS example demonstrates, leveraging private funding sources to complement HVRP funding increases program flexibility and opens up additional opportunities for serving homeless veterans. *Identifying private funding helps HVRP grantees fill gaps, ensuring the square covers where the triangle misses.*