Determine Need

Gather data from:

- The Homeless Coordinator at the VA Medical Center nearest you.
- Homeless Coalition for city, county or state.
- Local service providers (housing, employment, mental health, and substance abuse).
- Police.
- Formerly homeless veterans.
- State homeless coordinator (usually appointed by Governor).
- State director for veterans affairs.
- County veterans service officer.

To gain a broader perspective on the need, to better understand the complexities of the problem of homelessness, and to develop ideas for implementing a program in your area, visit or talk to other homeless veteran programs. NCHV has a list of providers throughout the nation that can be used as a contact resource. Visit www.nchv.org and click on "Service Provider Network."

From the above sources, ask the following questions:

- How many homeless are there?
- How many of those are veterans?
- What services are currently available?
- What services are needed in order to break the cycle of homelessness?
- What are the short-, medium- and long-range needs?
- What resources are available in the area?
- What additional resources are needed?
- Who is involved now?
- Who could or should be involved?
- What problems that could limit on our ability to establish a program might we encounter (zoning, community opposition, etc)?
- How can we cope with community resistance?
- Can we partner with social service providers who may be better equipped to respond to some of the services homeless veterans need?

Involve Others

Select an organizing committee of individuals who are interested in attacking this issue. At this stage, it is wise to select individuals who can see the big picture and are committed for the long haul. Individuals who are doers have a hard time during the development stage – talking and planning. They want to be doing, not talking!

Consider the various skills they'll need: site selection, organizing and planning, public relations/education, handling finances, legal matters, fundraising and resource development, and working directly with homeless people – some of whom may suffer from serious physical, mental or substance abuse problems. Recruit to ensure that the organizing committee has the skills necessary to make the project work.

Take this test:

- Is there enough commitment to make the plan work? This is especially important because initial enthusiasm may not endure long enough to see the project through.
- What is the scope of services participants are willing and able to provide?
- Is there access to enough resources to make the plan work? Do we know how to compete for resources?
- Will the plan meet the needs of the homeless veterans in our community?

Develop

- Mission: what will you do?
- · Goals and objectives
- Business plan
- Resource plan (how will you obtain the people, things, and money that you will need)
- Budget
- Bylaws
- Program guidelines

Learn About Nonprofit Organization Management

Board of Directors

- Risks, responsibilities, recruitment, demographics, tenure, and client representation
- ► Committee structure and tenure
- ► Executive committee

Financial Management

- Restricted funds versus unrestricted funds
- ► IRS 990 filing requirements
- ► Charitable solicitation requirements
- ▶ Director and officer liability insurance

Annual Reports

Why do you need one and how do you compose it?

Apply for a 501(c)(3) IRS Tax-exempt Status

Obtaining 501(c)(3) status from the IRS gives the organization access to grants from the federal and state governments, and from private and corporate foundations. It takes up to 120 days after filling out an application to receive a ruling from the IRS. You must have a mission, business plan, budget, bylaws, and a board of directors before applying.

Each state has different requirements to be classified as a nonprofit organization. Check with the requirements in your state before completing the IRS application.

Participate in Local Homeless Coalitions

Develop partnerships that will facilitate meeting the needs of the homeless veteran population within the homeless community. Often local coalitions assign or influence the assignment of priorities for government funds. If you are not at the table, you will be less likely to receive a share.

Develop a Public Education and Marketing Campaign

Brochures or one-piece information "fact sheets" are helpful when educating or requesting investments from the community. Make sure they look professional and answer basic who, what, where, why, when, and how questions.

Prepare several individuals to be speakers for the organization. Educating the community often happens at public meetings, and you need a representative who can talk to an audience and gain their support.

Additional Resources

NCHV has several brochures on nonprofit and homeless veteran topics that you may find helpful, including Forming a Nonprofit Organization and Organization Planning.

Community Connections Clearinghouse, the information center for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Community Planning and Development, has several publications to help homeless veteran service providers, including Coordinating Resources and Developing Strategies to Address the needs of Homeless Veterans, A Place at the Table: Homeless Veterans and Local Homeless Assistance Planning Networks, and Placemakers: A Guide to Developing Housing for Homeless People. Call 1-800-998-9999, or visit www.comcon.org/pubs/publist.pdf for a list of available titles.

BoardSource is an excellent nonprofit governance resource. Call 1-800-883-6262 or visit www.boardsource.org.

National Council for Nonprofit Associations. Most states have nonprofit associations that provide technical assistance to nonprofits. Call

202-962-0322 for your nearest association or visit

www.ncna.org.

A.H. Wilder Foundation Publishing Center offers a wide variety of resource materials for nonprofits. Call 1-800-274-6024 for a catalog or visit www.wilder.org.

Jossey-Bass Publishers distributes books on nonprofit organization, governance, operations and planning. For a complete list, visit their website at www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/.

The Society for Nonprofit Organizations publishes Nonprofit World bi-monthly, and Funding Alert, an electronic newsletter about grant opportunities. Call 734-451-3582 or visit www.snpo.org.

Local Libraries and bookstores have books on nonprofit management and related topics.

The Alliance for Nonprofit Management allows you to search for an assistance provider among their members in your area. Areas of assistance include marketing, governance, human resources, and many others. You can also subscribe to their free online newsletter. Call 202-955-8406 or visit www.allianceonline.org.

Government websites for HUD (www.hud.gov), Health and Human Services (www.hhs.gov), Department of Labor (www.dol.gov) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (www.va.gov) provide useful information on federal government resources and programs available to veterans and organizations that support them.

A Final Note

In addition to management and board development, your ability to obtain resources will be critical to your success. The government websites mentioned above will provide information on participation in federally funded programs. The Foundation Center (www.fdncenter.org) is a good place to start your research on sources of community and foundation funding. In addition, NCHV produces brochures on Grantseeking and Fundraising.

Starting a **Homeless** Veteran **Program**



NATIONAL **COALITION** for HOMELESS **VETERANS**

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