

# Veteran Suicide Prevention: Evaluation Demonstration Project

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# Purpose

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1. Increase understanding of the work and experiences of grantee Veteran Serving Organizations (VSOs).
2. Generate interest specifically in the work of the VSOs, and generally in the integration of evaluation into suicide prevention efforts.
3. Facilitate deeper connections between the VSOs and a variety of suicide prevention stakeholders.

# Agenda

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1. Introduction | CDC Foundation
2. Evaluation Demonstration Project and Veteran Suicide Prevention | CDC
3. Grantee Presentations
4. Breakout Sessions / Q&A
5. Wrap-Up | CDC, CDC Foundation

# CDC Foundation

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We **unleash the power of collaboration** between CDC and philanthropies, organizations, corporations, governments and individuals to protect the health, safety and security of America and the world.



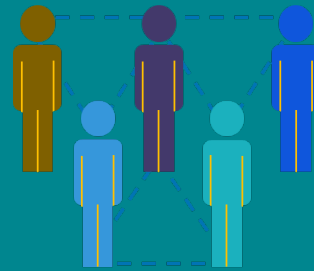
**CDC Foundation**

# CDC Foundation

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Since 1995, the CDC Foundation and partners have:

Provided more than  
**\$800 million**  
to support CDC's work



**Built a network**  
of individuals and  
organizations committed  
to CDC and public  
health protection

Launched more than  
**1,000** programs



**Saved and improved  
millions of lives** in America and  
across the globe

# Background and Impetus for Project:

CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

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# Veterans are disproportionately impacted by suicide

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- Suicide rate **1.5 times higher** for Veteran than non-Veterans in 2017
- **Male Veterans ages 18-34** years old experienced highest rates of suicide in 2017
- Large increase in rate of suicide among **Veterans who were not in Veterans Health Administration care** from 2016-2017

# Seven strategies to prevent suicide

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**Strengthen economic supports**



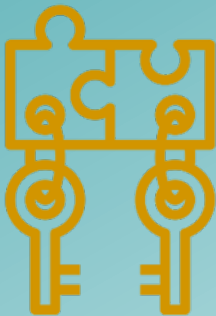
**Strengthen access to and delivery of suicide care**



**Create protective environments**



**Promote connectedness**



**Teach coping and problem-solving skills**



**Identify and support people at risk**

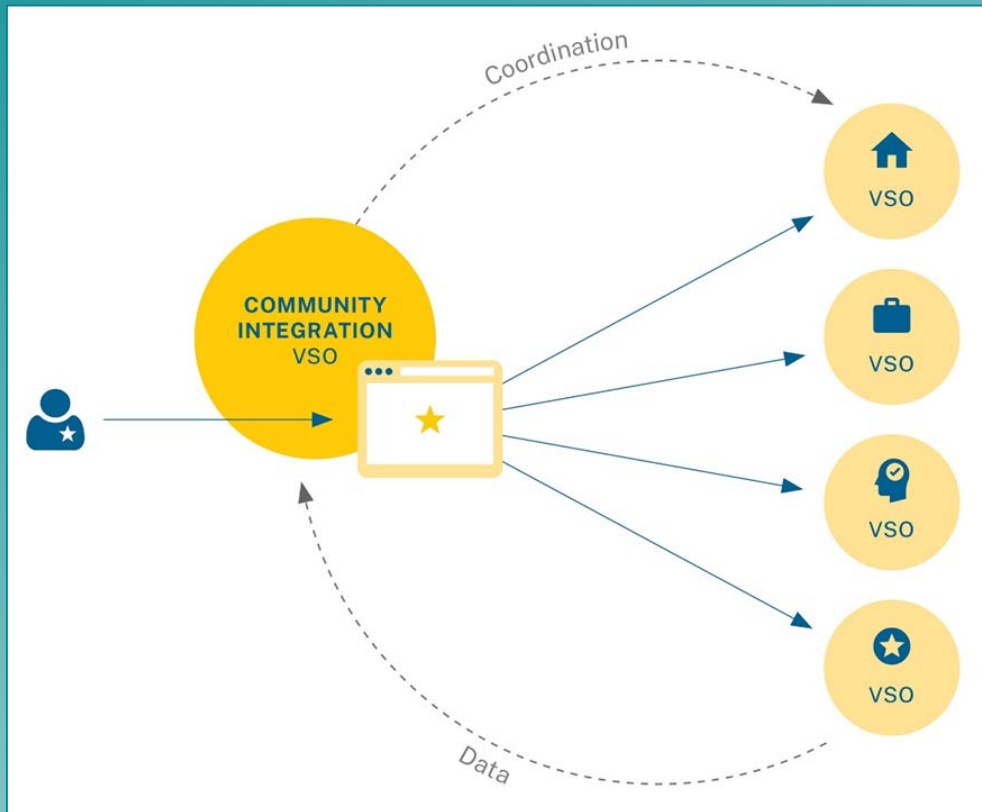


**Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk**

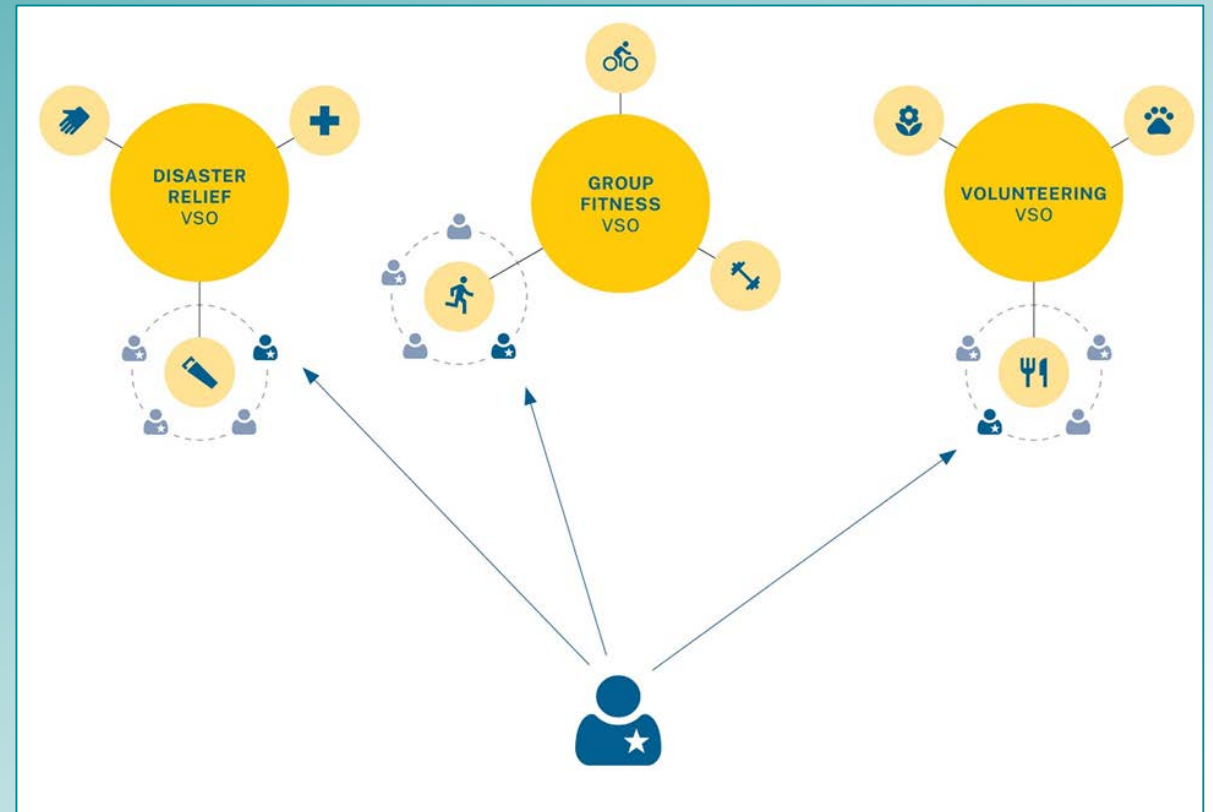


# Existing VSO program models potentially in alignment with CDC's approach to veteran suicide prevention

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**Community Integration Model**



**Connectedness Model**

# Vision for this project

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- **Build evaluation capacity among VSOs that are implementing existing programs that follow either the Community Integration or Connectedness model**
- **Help VSOs understand the role that they potentially play in an upstream, public health approach to veteran suicide prevention**
- **Strengthen relationships among VSOs, CDC, & CDC Foundation**

# Introduction:

## Grantee Organizations (Group 1)

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### 1. **America's Warrior Partnership**

Augusta, GA

### 2. **Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors**

Lincoln, NE

### 3. **Swords to Plowshares**

San Francisco, CA

# Grantee: America's Warrior Partnership

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# Veteran Suicide Prevention Evaluation



*America's Warrior Partnership*



# Our Why

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- **We Empower Communities to Empower Veterans**
  - This includes every veteran, their family members, and caregivers.
- **Example: Apache County, AZ: Diné Naazbaa' Partnership (DNP)**
  - Works alongside the community to empower the Navajo Nation's military veterans through proactive holistic support.



A World War II veteran was not aware of the full scope of assistance available to him from the VA - intimidated by paperwork and concerned about transportation, he resolved not to bother with benefits.

Using our 4-Step Plan (Connect, Educate, Advocate, and Collaborate), DNP helped him navigate the processes for receiving financial benefits along with both hearing aids and dentures.





# Why Participate in the VSPE Project?

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- **To finish what we started!**
- Our year 1 project laid the foundation for an evaluation and formed our questions to be investigated.
  - We did not conduct the data collection and analysis to answer those questions.
  - We are investigators by nature and want to refine our approach so this year we look forward to continuing our evaluation project and to be able to answer the important questions about the impact of the Community Integration program.

# Challenges: COVID-19

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- Operational Changes:
  - Team shift to remote work and balancing the ever changing environment.
  - We turned these challenges into opportunities like:
    - outreaching to communities about our program, The Network, to ensure they were aware of us as a resource
    - shifting our annual Warrior Community Integration Symposium to a virtual event and expanding our audience
- Resources were shifted around and we put all hands on deck as necessary to work through the crisis. **Thank you to our staff, board, and partners for rising up to meet the needs of the communities and veterans we serve!**





# Challenges: Narrowing Our Focus

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- We are always challenged by our grand vision and passion to do more.
- We knew for this project we wanted to focus on Community Integration, but it is always a struggle prioritizing the most important questions that are achievable to answer with the given resource constraints.
- The additional questions we had still need to be investigated, but at a later time.



# Revelation

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- **COVID-19 Community Survey**
  - Communities who have a strong program and are using our 4-step plan were confident in their ability to tackle the global pandemic.
  - Communities that did not have a strong foundation were concerned, specifically those in rural areas.
- **SWOT Analysis**
  - Revealed lack of awareness of community integration as an impactful way to support veterans their families and caregivers.
    - Affiliates and partners have a difficult time raising cause for support for community integration due to this lack of awareness.

***Now is the time to refine our approach so we can raise awareness and share our model with others.***





# Evaluation Plan

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- Two important questions:
  1. **What is required vs. optional to implement our Model?**
  2. **Which implementation plans have allowed the Model to be implemented effectively and efficiently?**
- Analyzed over 7 years of qualitative and quantitative data from our past implementations, affiliate outcomes, veteran feedback, partner feedback, and staff interviews to find the best answers.



# Our Findings

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- The four most important elements were identified.
  1. Leadership
  2. Proactive Outreach
  3. Available Resources
  4. Community Collaboration/Coordinated Services
- These elements must work in harmony in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the Model.



# What is Next?

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- Take our findings back to our stakeholders and get their perception on these elements.
  - What are we missing?
  - Refine our approach and implementation
- Continue to empower new communities to empower veterans.
  - Allow our Model to still be a one-size-fits one approach aiming for both the veteran and community to be strengthened.



# THANK YOU

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[AmericasWarriorPartnership.org](http://AmericasWarriorPartnership.org)



# Grantee:

Nebraska Association of  
Local Health Directors

.....



**CDC** Foundation

SERVING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES:



# A Public Health Approach





# OUR WHY

## THE REST OF THE STORY

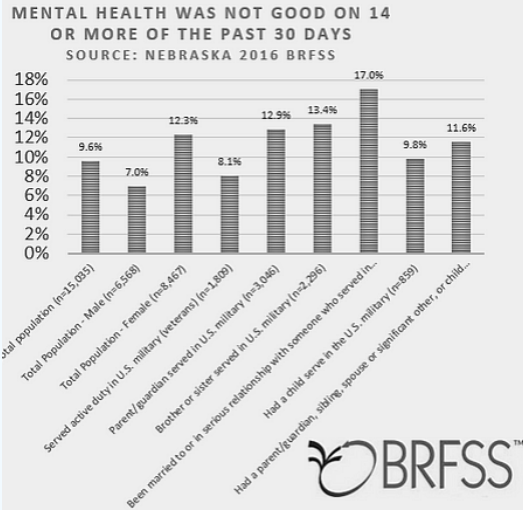
**VETSET**  
NEBRASKA



Serve. Educate. Transition.



## Data



# CALL TO ADVENTURE

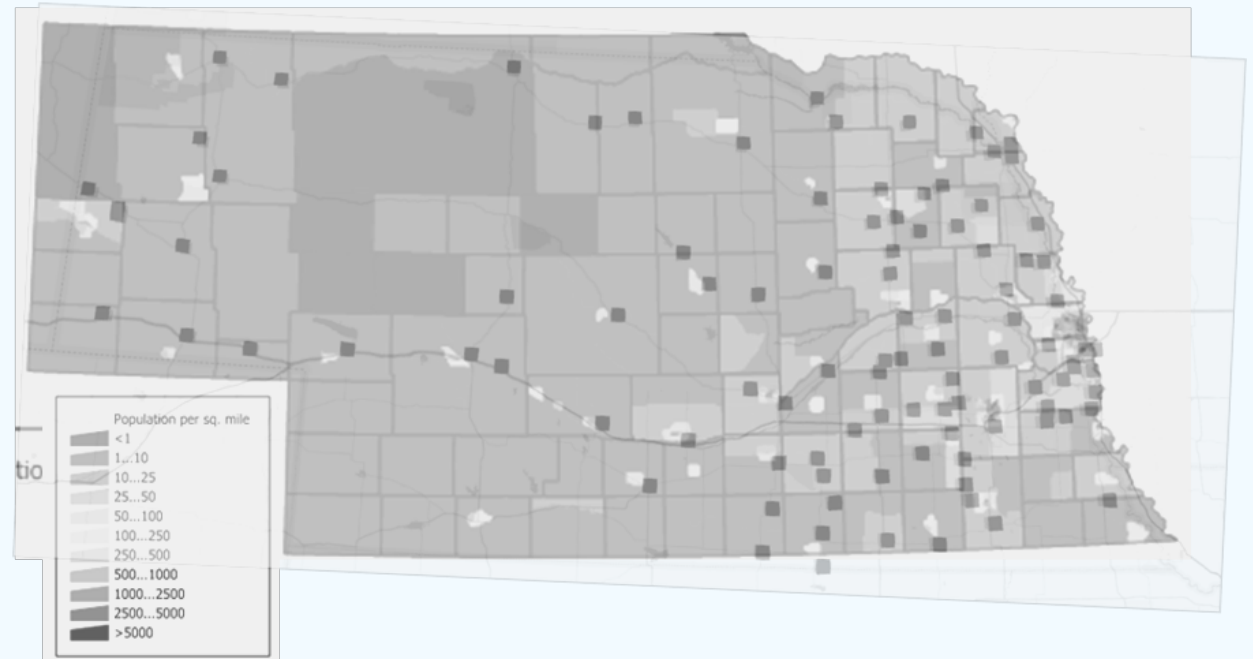
## PURSUIT OF GOAL



## Partners

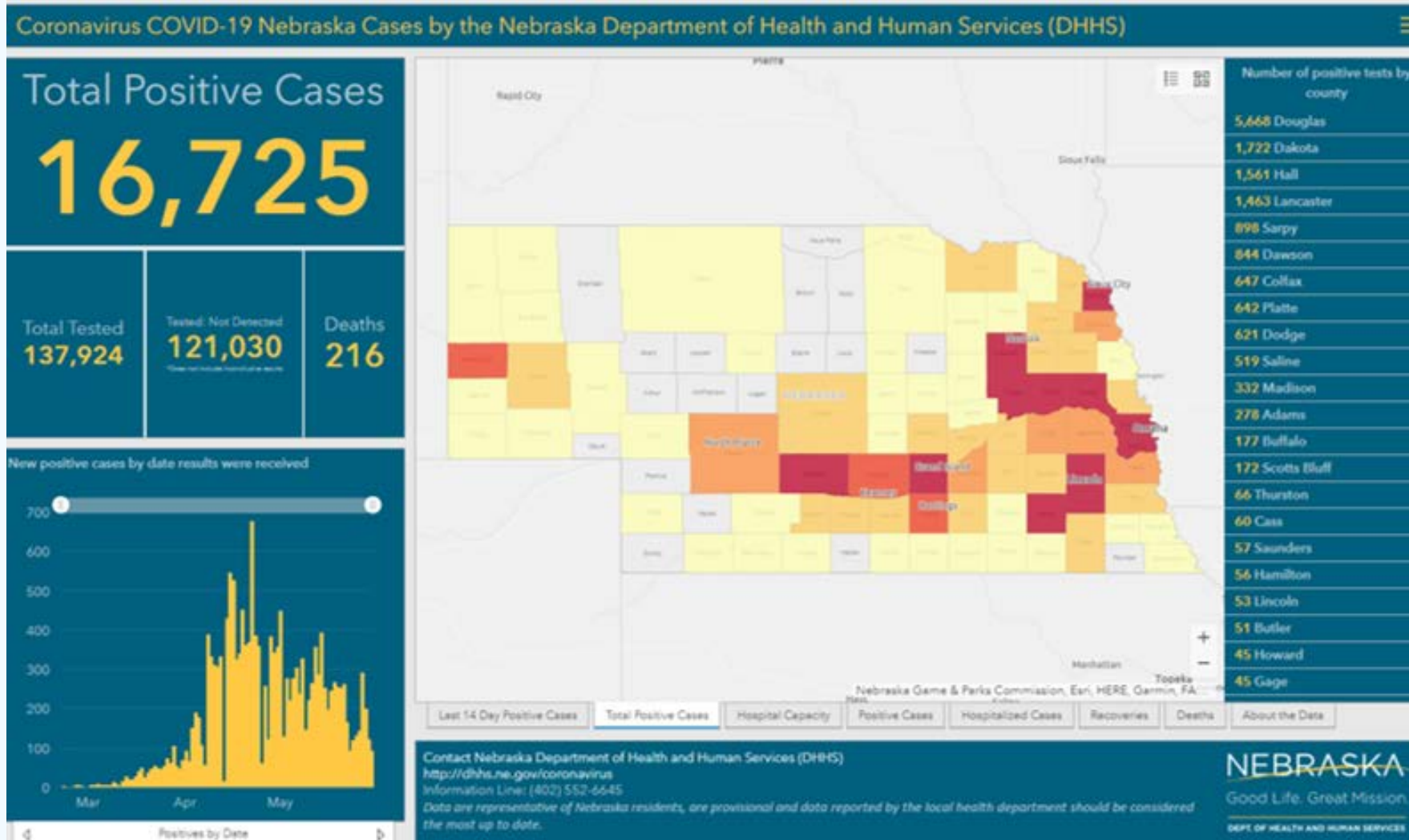


## Reach





# COVID-19 IMPACT

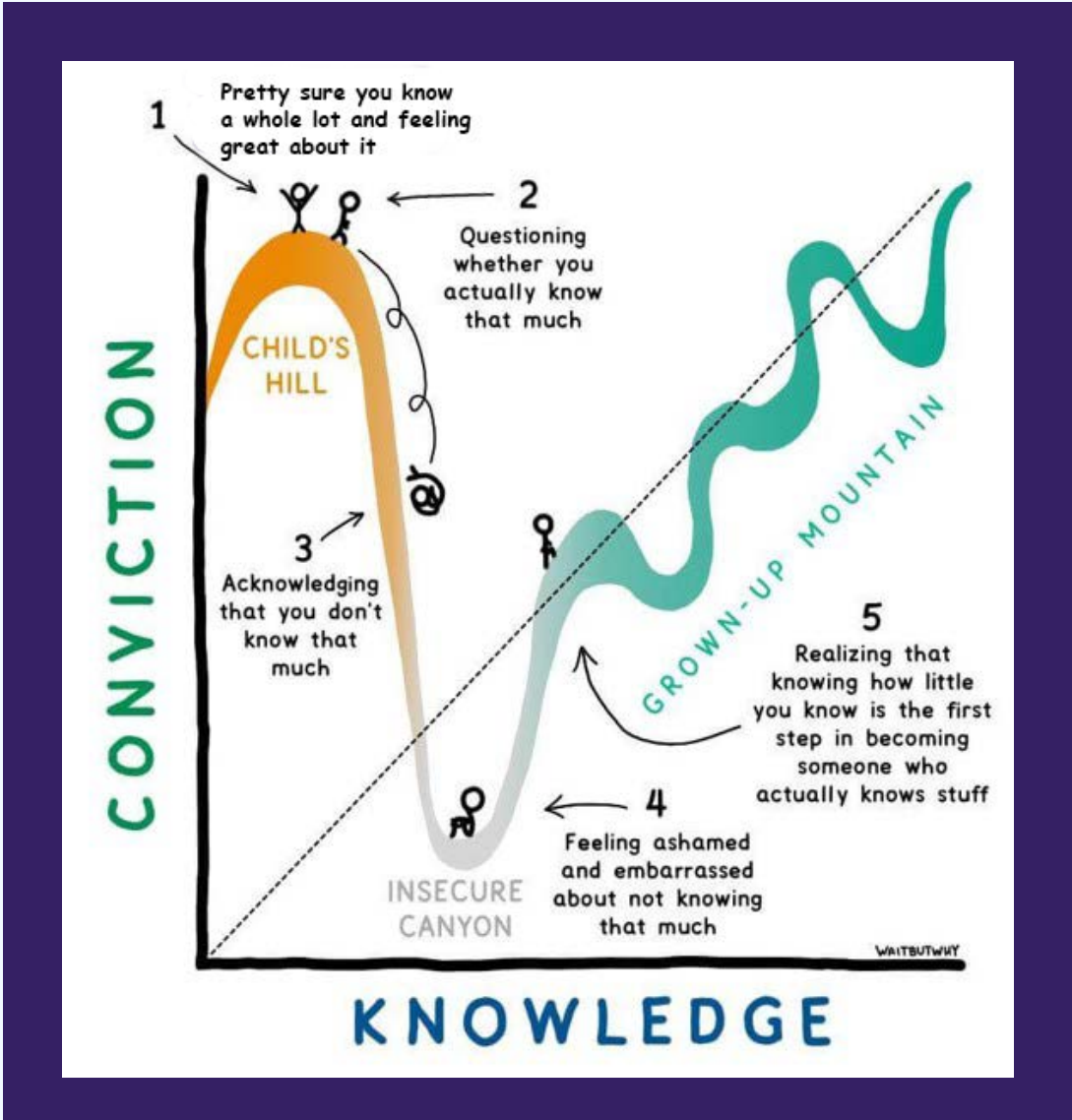


# REVELATION - STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand the extent to which our data sharing efforts are helpful to key decision-makers.

Ultimately, our intent is to arm local state policy makers with relevant data that can drive policy and financial decisions that support Veteran family wellbeing.





# CAPACITY BUILDING

**VETSET**  
NEBRASKA



Serve. Educate. Transition.

# BUILDING A FUTURE WITH THRIVING FAMILIES & VETERANS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES



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LEARN MORE AT  
[WWW.NALHD.ORG](http://WWW.NALHD.ORG)



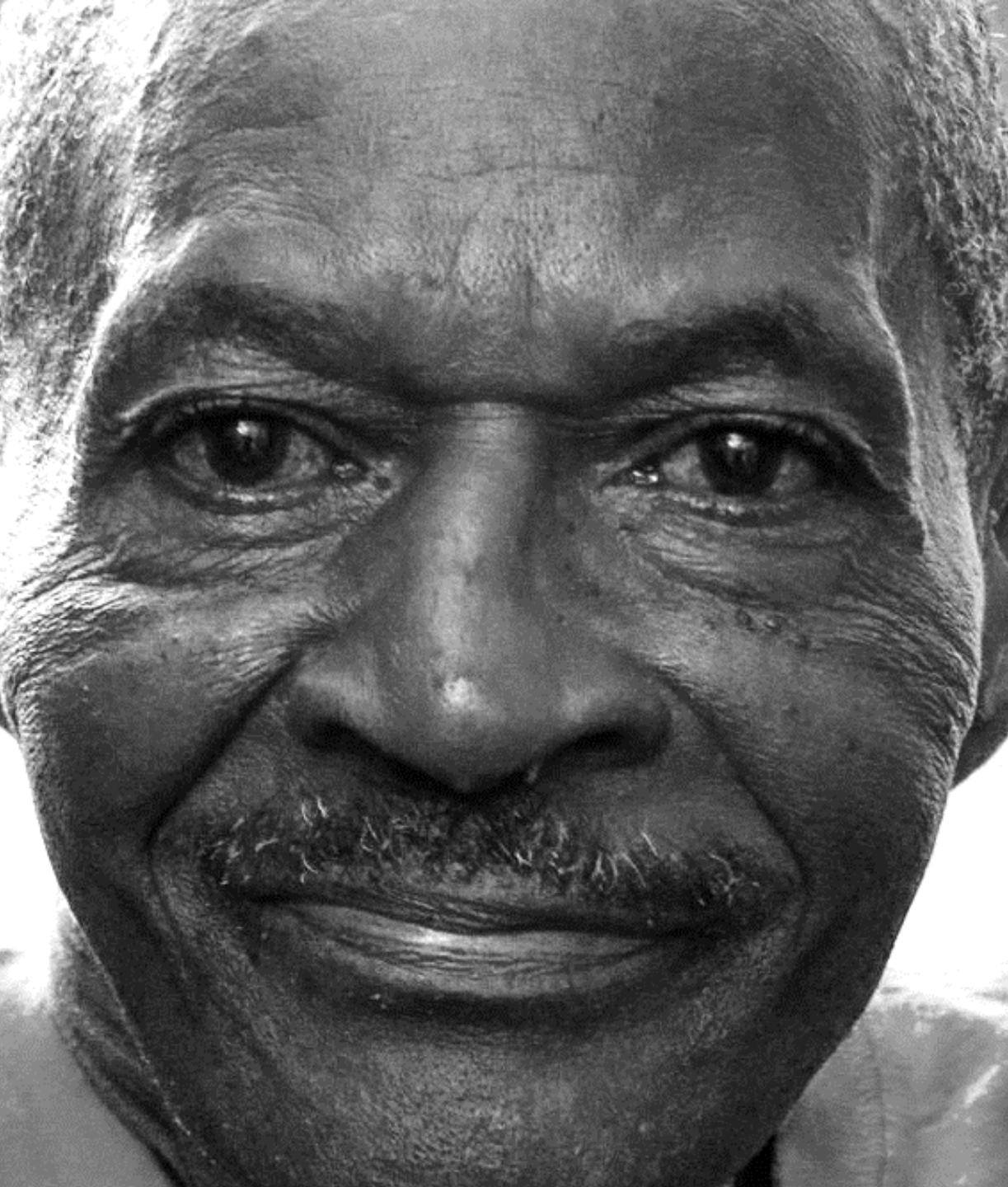
Serve. Educate. Transition.

# Grantee: Swords to Plowshares

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VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

**CREATING COMMUNITY  
FOR FORMERLY  
HOMELESS VETERANS**



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

# Evaluation Plan Implementation

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## PROJECT TEAM

- Amy Fairweather, JD, Policy Director: overall project supervision.
- Megan Zottarelli, MPA, Assistant Policy Director, co-leader of the project
- Pauline Lubens, PhD, MPH, Policy Analyst, co-leader the project
- Tramecia Garner, LPCC, Chief Operating Officer
- Jong Lee, IT Director, will support the data collection and retrieval

[IVP@stp-sf.org](mailto:IVP@stp-sf.org)

<https://www.swords-to-plowshares.org>

# Introduction:

## Grantee Organizations (Group 2)

---

### 4. **Arizona Coalition for Military Families**

Phoenix, AZ

### 5. **Objective Zero Foundation**

Fort Leavenworth, KS

### 6. **Combined Arms**

Houston, TX

### 7. **Volunteers of America of Illinois**

Chicago, IL

# Grantee:

Arizona Coalition for  
Military Families

.....



**CDC** Foundation



# A Public Health Approach to Veteran Suicide Prevention: Data & Tools for Collective Impact

**Nicola M. Winkel, MPA**  
*Project Director*



[www.ArizonaCoalition.org](http://www.ArizonaCoalition.org)  
[www.BeConnectedAZ.org](http://www.BeConnectedAZ.org)

**Nicola M. Winkel, MPA**  
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# Grantee: Objective Zero



**CDC** Foundation

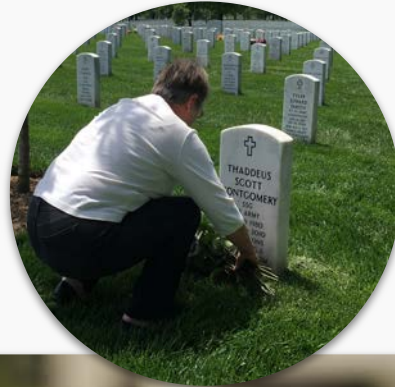


# OBJECTIVE ZERO

VSPE Presentation June 2020



# Introduction



# Why pursue the evaluation demonstration project?



- Demonstrate Impact
- Build Relationships
- Communicate Effectiveness
- Maintain Momentum



## Scaling Back



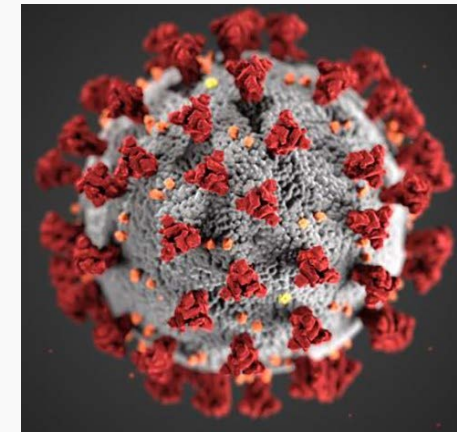
- Refining logic model & evaluation plan
- Concentrate on user satisfaction and awareness of resources

## Data Collection



- Filling holes in data collection
- Limitations to current business intelligence tool

## COVID-19



- Higher app usage starting mid-March
- Essential workers and medical professionals
- Built COVID-19 resource section within app

# Implementation

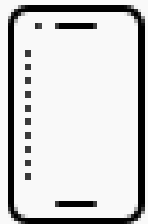
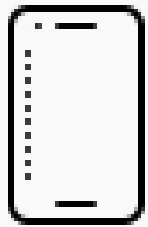


1: After support texts, video calls or voice calls, some ambassadors and app users receive a 4-question survey about their experience.

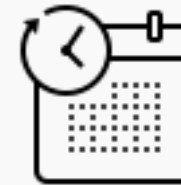
2: Participants who affirm, "I would like to provide additional feedback" receive a follow-up email.

3: These participants are given the option of scheduling an 10-minute, semi-structured interview OR answering a survey.

Give Support



"Yes, I would like to provide additional feedback"



Different versions of the interview and survey exist for individuals who are primarily getting support and individuals who are primarily giving support.

Get Support

## Insights from the process

1. Leverage research - see <https://www.objectivezero.org/research-evidence>
1. Maximize data collected by the app
1. Invite (not force) participation

## Insights from the data

1. Success in engaging female military community members
1. Long-tail distribution - some very highly engaged ambassadors and users
1. Concrete data on user retention

# Results of evaluation capacity-building experience



**Recruitment:** Some branches are under-represented and we may want to do more targeted outreach.

**Ambassador Support:** We can further adjust the training and ongoing support that Ambassadors receive.

**Future:** We can use our feedback infrastructure to continue exploring our short and medium-term outcomes

Inputs

Activities

Outputs

Outcomes

Impact

**Retention:** We need to continue exploring retention to determine whether short-term app users experienced a benefit, despite not continuing to use the app

# Acknowledgements

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CDC Foundation

Paul Collier & Coeffect

Aimee Johnson & The Department of Veterans Affairs

PsychArmor Institute

StackUp

For questions or additional information contact:

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# COMBINED ARMS

Grantee:  
Combined Arms

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**COMBINED**  
**ARMS**



# **CDC FOUNDATION**

# **SAFARI ADVENTURE**



Elisa Borah, PhD, MSW

Monique Rodriguez, LMSW

Johanna Zollmann, LCSW



**@combinedarmstx |**  
**#UnitedAfterTheUniform**

# Table of contents

- **Introduction**
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- **Achieving Success**
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## OUR MISSION:

**To unite the community to accelerate the impact of veterans on TEXAS.**

Combined Arms is dedicated to evidence building in order to validate and prove that our process and model create and provide for positive impact to the veteran community. Combined Arms uses an innovative approach to technology to collect in-depth data that can help VSOs better serve veterans and their families in real time. In doing so, we are aiding Texas cities in understanding the impact veterans and their families have on our communities while delivering with pinpoint accuracy, the exact services the veteran and their family is requesting.

# CALL TO ADVENTURE & PURSUIT OF GOAL

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- Combined Arms' primary purpose is to provide an integrated technology platform that connects clients to the resources they need quickly, and with accountability. Through streamlined assessments and customized resources based on individual veteran needs, Combined Arms seeks to simplify and accelerate the connection point between veterans and resources.
- We naturally recognized steps of the referral process that could be improved in our day-to-day to work with clients to ensure they complete the online client profile and assessment. We needed a way to analyze potential weak points so that we could improve them and increase retention.
- Upon hearing about the opportunity to receive CDC's expert consultation around evaluation of our processes, we began this adventure!



# -----> Challenges

- Our first challenge was specifying exactly what aspect of the referral process we would evaluate.
- Communication with CDC Evaluation Staff:
  - Different language, technology terms
  - Backbone Organization v. Service Organization



# -----> Challenges

- Narrowing our focus was challenging because so many steps of the referral process are connected. The logic model exercise helped us to zoom in on a key activity that we wanted to address.
  - By focusing in on the online process alone, we identified a manageable and distinct set of activities that we could create an evaluation plan.





# COVID-SPECIFIC IMPACT

**Time Management.** When the crisis began, we had to prioritize our organization's COVID response and this project was put on hold.

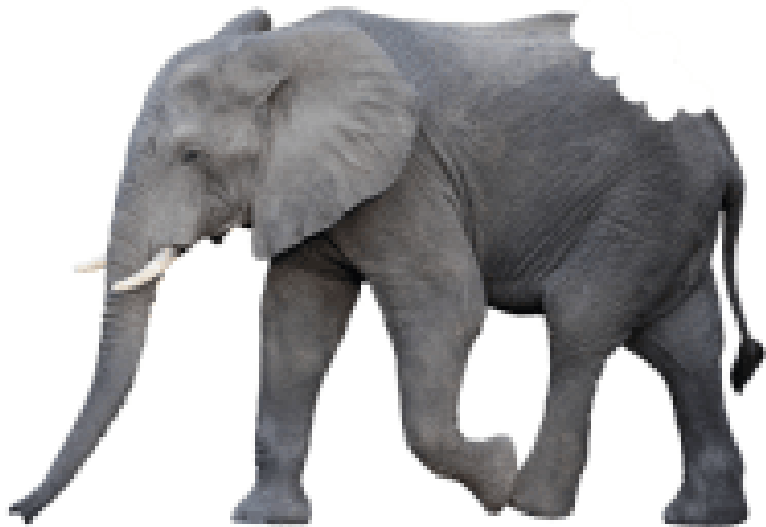
**Engaging Stakeholders.** Our program staff, tech team, other stakeholders and service partners were similarly focused on crisis management with our veterans. Priorities shifted very quickly for everyone.

**Keeping Focus.** In time, we all adapted as well as we could to our new work style and circled back and re-focused on this project. We recognize even more now how the outcomes of this project will also benefit clients affected by COVID as we improve the referral process to meet any needs they may have.

# REVELATION

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EAT YOUR ELEPHANT. ONE BITE AT A TIME.



**MOOLAH**  
MARKETING CLUB

- **Seeing the Big Picture - any referrals to needed services have the potential to prevent veteran suicide.**
- **We had to make a very concerted decision to not include other aspects of our work, and instead identify a key activity to focus on.**
- **By focusing on one piece, we can apply this approach to other steps in our overall referral process.**



# REVELATION - CONT'D

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## More 'Aha' moments:

- Our process indirectly affects suicide prevention. Getting it to work really well can make a big impact on veterans' lives.
- We need direct client feedback to ensure the platform is designed to work for all types of clients.



# ACHIEVING SUCCESS

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**Understanding clients' experience using the online platform is a necessary part of ongoing quality management to ensure connections are made.**

# ACHIEVING SUCCESS - CONT'D

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**When Combined Arms staff follows the clients' lead, we can better respond to their needs.**



**Combining academic and programmatic points of view creates a better outcome for clients and makes the journey more rewarding.**

# ACHIEVING SUCCESS - CONT'D

---



**When Combined Arms Program staff and Tech team communicate frequently, we can share knowledge that strengthens the system.**

**COMBINED**   
**ARMS**



**THANK YOU**



**Combinedarms.us**

**@combinedarmstx**

**#UnitedAfterTheUniform**

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# Grantee:

Volunteers of  
America-Illinois

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CDC Foundation

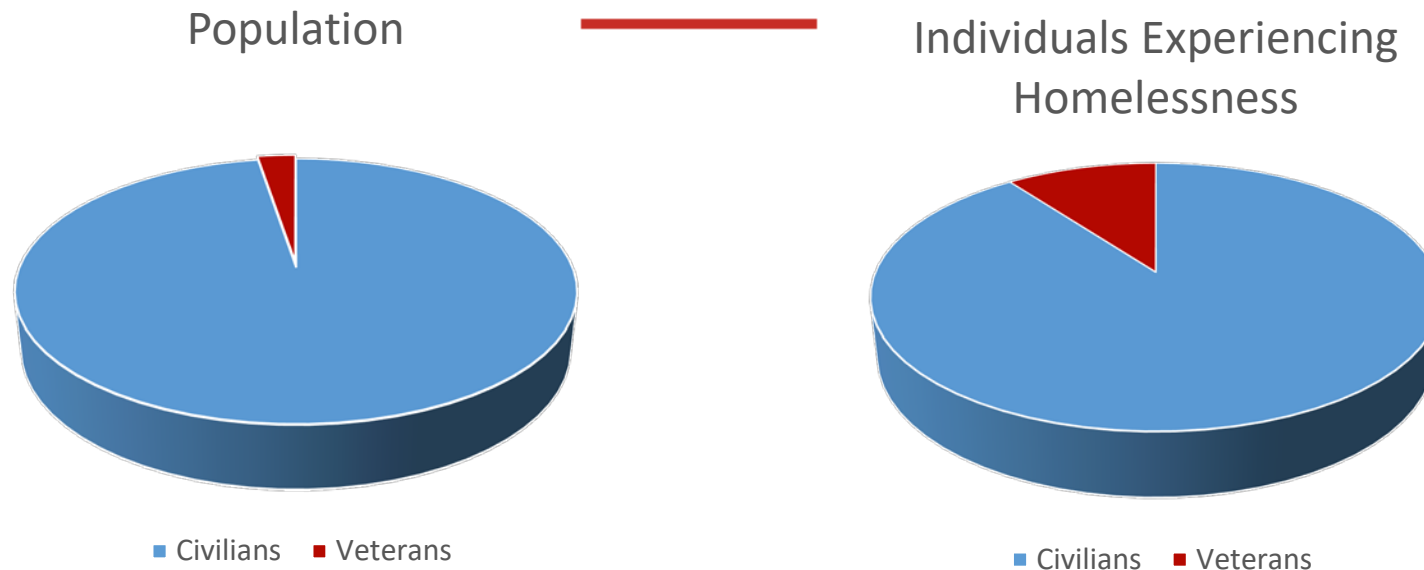


VOA Illinois VSPE 2020

Final Presentation  
True North Project

"TO GO WHEREVER WE ARE NEEDED AND DO WHATEVER COMES TO HAND."

Our mission: VOA Illinois supports individuals, families, and communities who need it most, when they need it most.

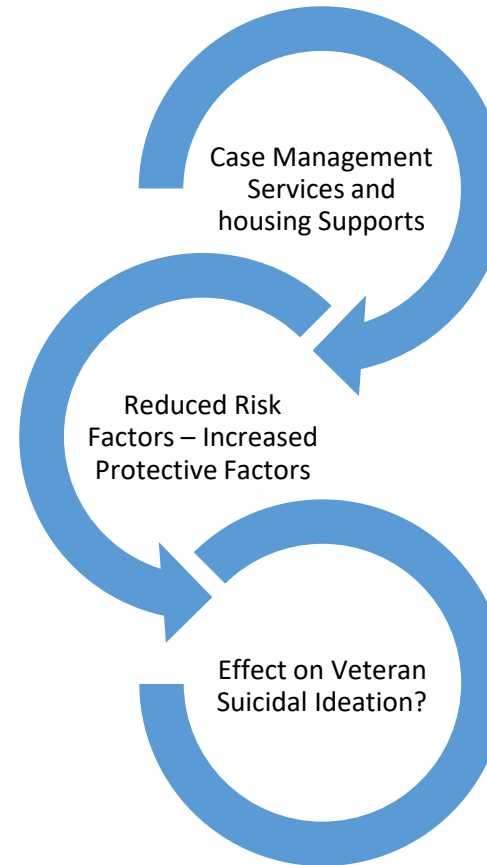
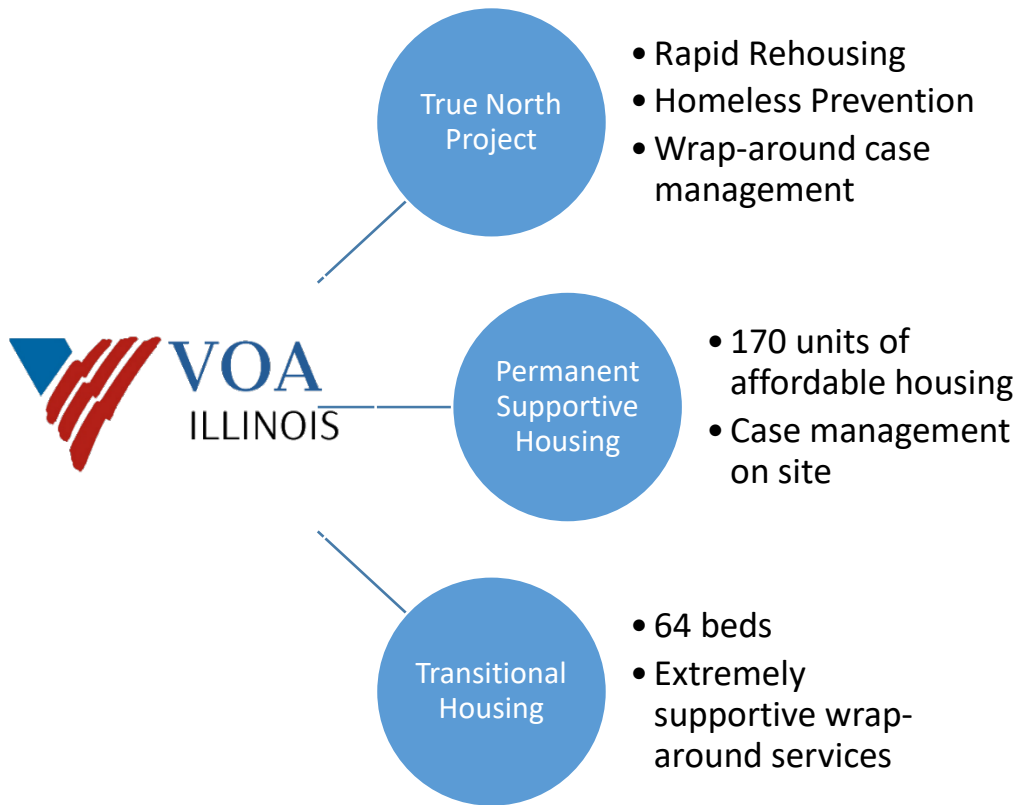


U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Chicago city, Illinois; United States. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/chicagocityillinois,US/VET605218>

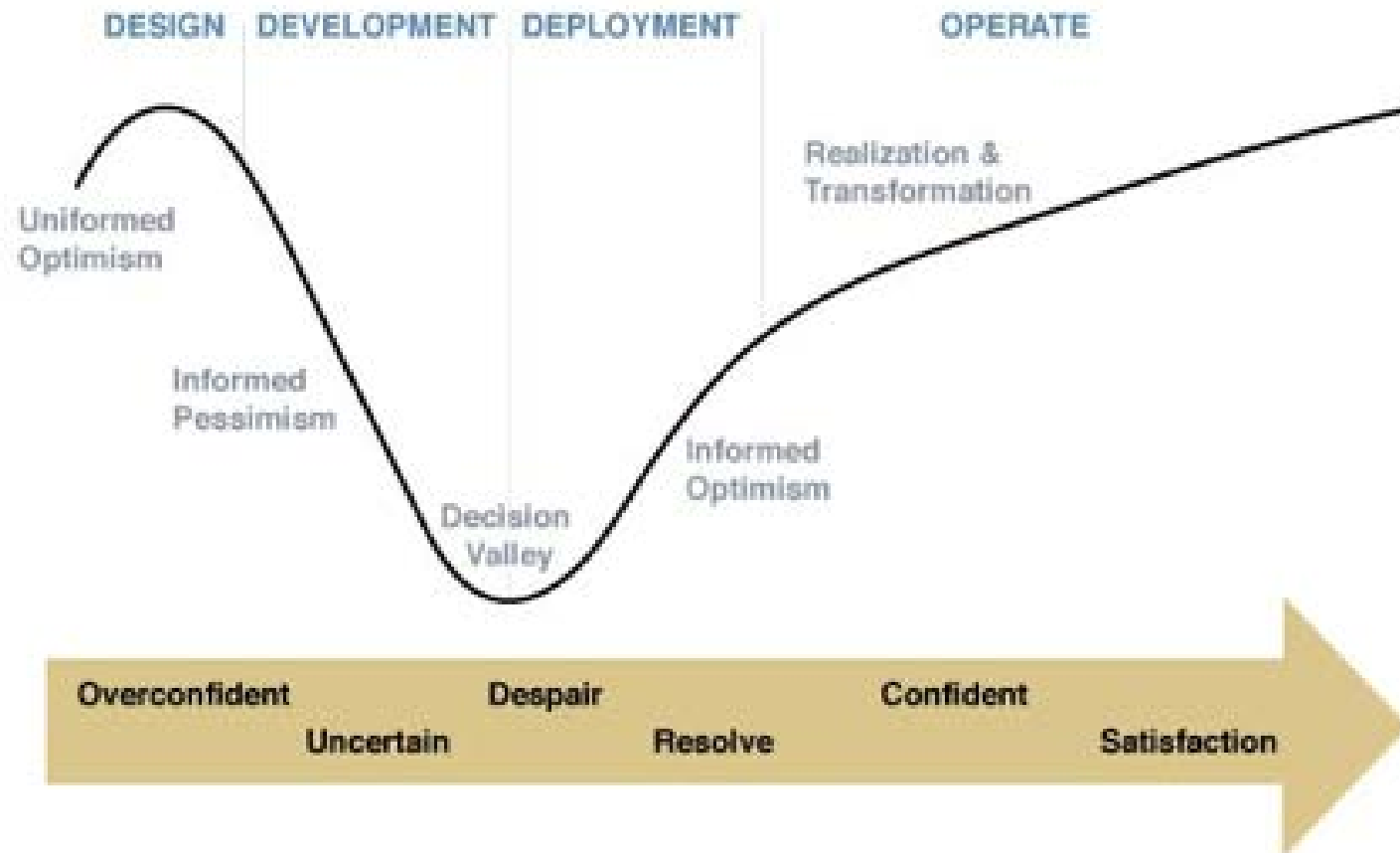
FAQs/Studies. (2020, May 19). Retrieved from <https://www.chicagohomeless.org/faq-studies/#:~:text=The city reported that 10.2,in 2016, at 21.6 people.>



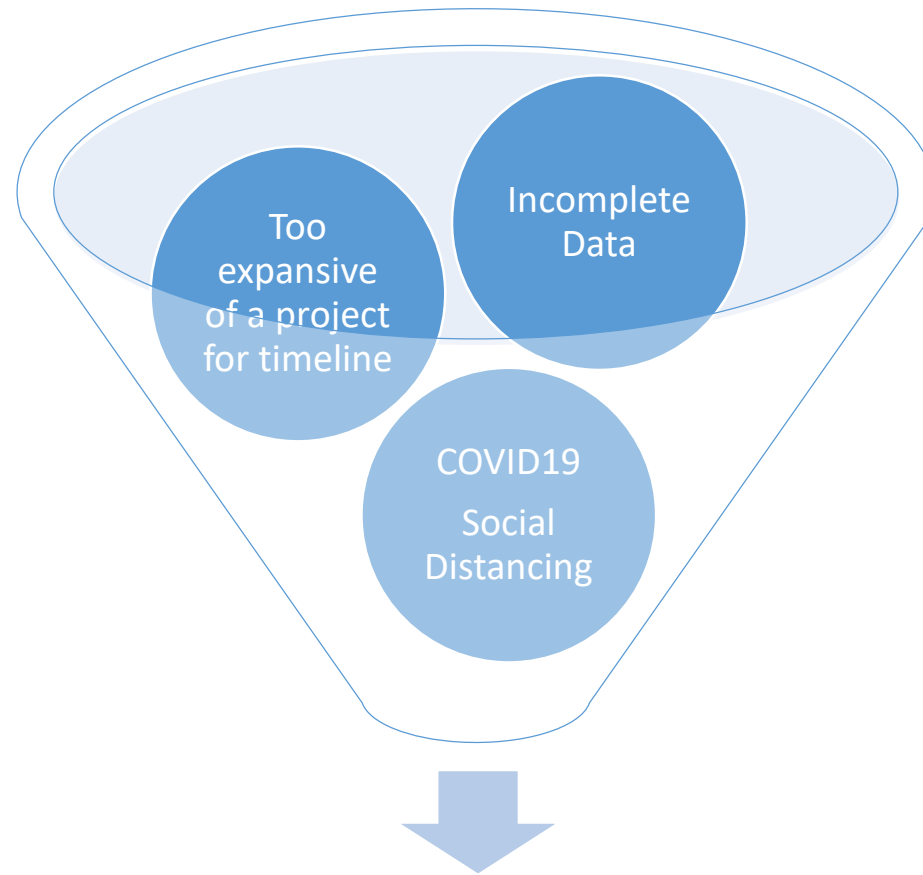
# Call to Adventure and Pursuit of Goals



# Challenges and Moments of Despair



# Challenges and Moments of Despair



More Than A Home

Focus on Staff Training and What we *can* accomplish in this moment

# Revelation

## Evaluation Questions

- Do TNP staff feel confident to deliver upon evidence-based services from the training they receive?
- Do the trainings provided adequately cover all of TNP's comprehensive services?
- What is the impact of training upon the overall quality of life for the Clients TNP serves?



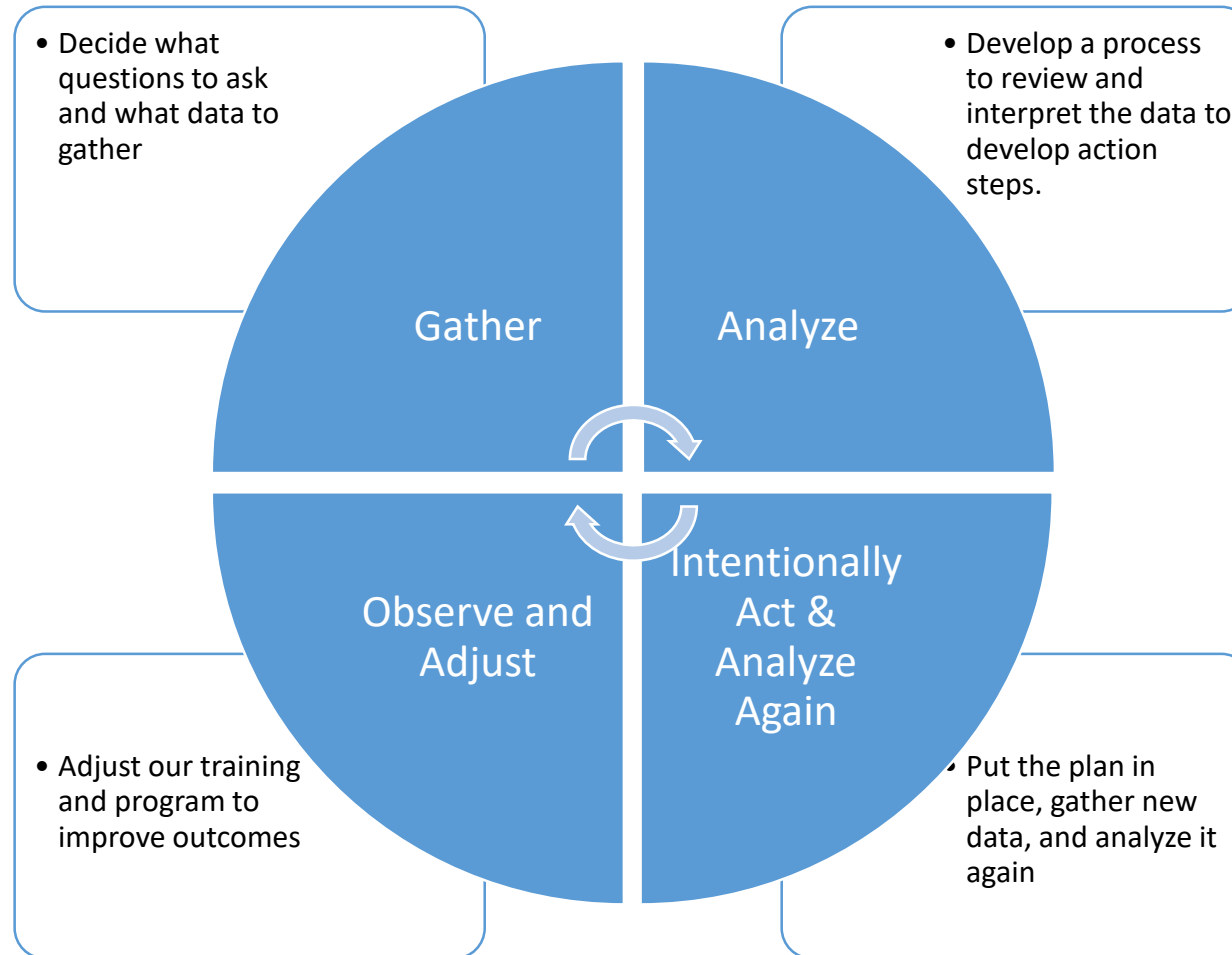
# Achieving Success



More Than A Home



# Achieving Success





Stay Connected

Webpage:

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Twitter: @VOAIllinois

# Contact Us

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# Veteran Suicide Prevention: Evaluation Demonstration Project

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Debrief | Closing Remarks



# Project Team

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- **C. Leah Chan**, MPH, Public Health Advisor, Office of Policy and Partnerships
- **Katrina Kennedy**, MPH, ASPPH/CDC Public Health Fellow
- **Shezza Shagarabi**, MPH, Synthesis and Translation ORISE Fellow
- **Susanne McGhee**, MPH, PPEO Evaluation Fellow

## CDC Foundation

- **Lola Oguntomilade**, MPH, Federal Project Manager
- **Rob Abraham**, Director of Public-Private Partnerships, Noninfectious Diseases and Federal Funding

# THANK YOU!

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