

Veterans Defense Project Minnesota Veterans Treatment Court Expansion Program

*2017-2018 Veterans Defense Project Grant
Year 1*

Veterans Defense Project

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FollowUp Form

Project Name*

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INTRODUCTION

Information provided in this report may be used by the Minnesota Humanities Center in whole or part, in whatever medium deemed appropriate. We look forward to sharing your feedback with others in a good way.

Please note that character count in your responses includes spaces.

Board of Directors

Please list the members of your governing body.

Thomas Plunkett, John Kingrey, Keith LeBlanc, Evan Tsai, Michael Dickinson, Sarah Sommerstrom, Caroline Dunrham, Hank Shea, Karl Carlson, Patrick McClain, Bruce Richardson, Raymond Wilson and Pete Orput.

REPORT NARRATIVE

Please list proposed significant outcomes for this project or program.

1. The number of additional counties have a VTC available to a criminally involved veteran, with the objective that the cross-jurisdictional model will allow every county to have a VTC available. Ideally, all ten judicial districts would have access to a VTC.
2. The percentage of the VTC staff that is fully trained in the history and culture of criminally involved veterans, and in the best methods for ensuring the criminal case is used as an intervention point to address a service-related disorder and prevent recidivism. Ideally, all ten judicial districts would have all relevant staff trained.
3. The creation and implementation of a statewide model the VTCs are expected to follow. This model could be either a statutory law or judicial branch rule, but the model must present best practices in a manner that requires the VTCs to conform to a consistent model that ensures veterans receive similar outcomes regardless of the county of the case.

Please describe significant outcomes as a result of this funding. How did you determine and/or measure these outcomes?

Our Goals have not changed. Since last report, our working group has made significant progress in drafting new legislation that will A. Enable a fix to the "dispositional" issue that has held back Veterans Treatment Courts (VTC) from really meeting their potential. It will also allow the Chef Public Defender to put

his people back in the courtrooms and give the public defenders cause to support referring their clients to the VTC's.

At our last working group, no judges were present so that the prosecutors and defense attorneys could try and work out an agreement that they both can work with. That happened, and we now have a draft of legislation that both sides can take to their constituents and feel confident that they can get the buy in they need to get this fully supported and that in turn will help us meet our goals.

Please share stories and/or anecdotes that demonstrate the impact of this project or program.

What I can tell you is that since the Public Defenders have left the VTC's, referrals are down exponentially in the two largest counties in the state. Hennepin County at one time had upwards of 120 participants and now is down in the 30 range. In Ramsey County, they were running up in the mid to upper 30's and now have about 15.

To validate this in a Hennepin County report that came out within the last year: There have been 808 individuals charged with criminal cases that require an appearance in front of a judge (this excludes traffic cases and anything that is payable without a court appearance, as well as some low-level misdemeanor offenses) who have self-identified as veterans in Hennepin County since May 2016. Of these 808 individuals who self-identified as Veterans, 78 had a referral to Veterans Court...so, less than 10% are being referred. This is unacceptable.

Describe the populations and communities served during this grant period. How did the proposed activities benefit the community in which they occurred?

The veteran population is multi cultural. The community that we work with obviously have legal issues as well as substance abuse, mental health or a combination thereof issues. A lot of them are unemployed and homeless. This is the case all over the state, not just the metro counties. By allowing this portion of the veteran population the opportunity to have the stability, support and structure of the full VTC team, they truly will have an opportunity to change the circumstances that brought them to the justice system in the first place.

What counties were served by this project or program?

All 87 will have the opportunity to participate.

How many individuals were served by this project or program? Please provide a brief explanation.

This project will have the opportunity to serve every veteran in the state that is involved in the criminal justice system. I can't put an exact number on it as I don't have the data to back it up. I can tell you that in a Hennepin County Report published on 9 December, 2016 That 808 self identified veterans had been charged with supervision level criminal offenses from May 2016 until the end of November, 2016 of these 808, only 78 were referred to their VTC This is <10%. Not Acceptable. The number of veterans this effort will eventually serve will be in the thousands over time.

How did this project or program broaden access and/or increase engagement?

We have brought all parties, County Attorney's, Public and Private defense attorney's and the Judicial Branch to fix the issues that have precluded perhaps thousands of veterans from taking advantage of the

program that can help them get back on their feet. A agreement has been forged, but there is still plenty of work left to do. The legislation needs to pass and based upon this past session where we testified before both the house and senate committees on veterans affairs, we believe the political will is there to make this happen.

Were there any unanticipated results, either positive or negative?

The biggest unanticipated result was that we found out a that we would need to change some policy and establish best practices before we go around training the state's judicial districts. Once we started digging into the issues, we quickly realized that the obstructions were huge barriers to the ultimate goal of getting our veterans back on track to a substantial life outside of the military.

On the positive side, through the working group and engaging more stakeholders as time has progressed, we have seen a shift at some of the county attorneys offices with established VTC's to embrace the changes we are working on, even prior to them becoming law. This is huge.

What did you learn because of this funding?

We learned that we need to coordinate with different stakeholders outside the organization to form a consensus model. That the task at hand is much larger than just the training model that we originally thought. We realized that we had to get to the root of the problem before we could go out and train people. It made no sense to us to go out and tout a model that clearly wasn't/isn't working. We felt that would not be good stewardship of the state funding.

Will you make any changes based on these results? Please explain.

Forming the working group and working on a consensus model. Working with the stakeholders we have assembled, agreement is there that there needs to be changes to the current statues. We are working on a model that all stakeholders can agree to. We believe that political climate is receptive to these issues and hope that the changes that we present will be accepted and made the rule. If we can accomplish this, it will put Minnesota at the forefront of criminal involved veterans justice issues in the United States.

What are your future plans for sustaining this project or program?

We hope to institute the model being developed in the working group and then move forward with the training of the county's judicial systems. To do that, we are going to need more funding. We are working on a strategy for private financing and will likely be asking the legislature for future appropriation as well. After discovery of the real issues holding back veterans from getting the help they need/deserve and moving forward with rectifying those issues, it is going to take us longer to get out there and train the statewide system. With that being said, we have done several trainings so far with different groups like Sterns and Carver Counties as well as the Treatment Court Initiative (TCI), which we have actually been offered a seat. We have the County Attorneys Association and the County Veterans Service Officer Associations on tap for September and the Judges association, hopefully in December.

What is your plan to share your results or findings?

We are currently doing video interviews with a number of different stake holders; Judges, Prosecutors, Defense Attorneys, Participants, Probation, Mentors, etc. That we will use on our website, Facebook Page, and trainings for different groups around the state. If click the link below, you will see a early draft of our first video. It is very powerful and is the beginning of much larger effort to educate everyone that has a stake in these issues. This video was posted on our FB page on Friday the 20th and had over 1k views by Saturday morning. It has opened up some new doors to us that I will be prepared to talk about next report. We are working on the next "teaser" video and then after that will be a longer one to tell the whole story. These are very powerful and the results will speak for themselves.

<https://storyboardfilmsmn.wistia.com/medias/qp89nb3ime>

Were there any full-time equivalent (FTEs) funded under the project (include staff and independent consultants)? If so, please give a brief description of the role(s) funded.

No. 1 Half time and 2 quarter time.

Please provide any additional comments that you feel are important to report.

We are grateful for the State's confidence in our organization to tackle this issue and come through with a program that will work for our veterans who deserve the opportunity, after serving us, to have a chance to put the military behind them and get on with there life. The job is not done as there is still much to do. Thank you for allowing us to make this a reality!

Please attach any related audio, video, images, etc.

FINANCIAL NARRATIVE AND REPORT

GRANT EXPENSES - Report total direct expense and total administrative cost paid by this grant. The sum of these two numbers should equal your total grant award.

Direct expenses of the project

\$1.00

Administrative costs of the project

\$1.00

TOTAL

Direct expenses and Administrative costs (from above)

\$1.00

Amount of Other Funds Leveraged

\$1.00

Description of Funds (description/source of other funds, if leveraged)

All reports have been filed with and approved by Minnesota Humanities Center

When submitting this report, attach a statement of actual program income and expenses to date compared to the original budget. Any significant variances must be explained.

AGREEMENT

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE

Enter your full name, business title, and the date of submission. (e.g.: Emi Sakura, Executive Director, 1 November 2010)*

Donn Alan Lindstrom
Executive Director 22 July, 2018

By entering your signature information above and clicking "I Agree" below, you certify that: 1. The statements contained in this report are true and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief. 2. You are authorized to submit this proposal on behalf of your agency. *

I Agree

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

No files were uploaded