**VETERANS JOURNEY MAP (BLANK)**

**ACTIVITY GUIDE**

**Introduction**

The blank version of the Veteran’s Journey Map is a tool that has many uses and functions that can enable the user(s) to enhance the Veteran experience. Activities involving the map can be tailored to meet the need of individual MyVA communities, including local Community Veterans Engagement Boards (CVEB) and employees with the Veterans Experience Office.

**Mode of Delivery**

Either CVEB Co-chair or Veterans Experience employee (i.e., Relationship Manager or Field Consultant) can facilitate the activity. Activity should be conducted in a face-to-face setting.

**Target Audience**

CVEB Members and other stakeholders

**Group Size**

This activity has been designed to accommodate up to 20 participants, or 5 participants per printed map.

**Targeted Outcomes**

After completing this activity, participants will:

* Have a general understanding of the journey map and its features, including life stages and moments that matter.
* Identify services provided by the local CVEB and its partners that meet the needs of Veterans in the local community.
* Make a correlation between the services provided by the CVEB and the point at which the service impacts Veterans and their families.
* Identify existing services that were uncovered by completing the activity.
* Identify gaps in services provided by the CVEB.

**Materials Needed**

4 poster-size copies of the blank Veterans Journey Map (approximately 18” x 24”)

Pens/Markers (one per participant)

Tape

4 copies of the completed Veterans Journey Map (optional)

Name tags (optional)

**Estimated Completion Time**

2 hours

**Activity (times are approximate):**

* **Pre-activity planning and set up:** Tape one copy of the blank journey map in each corner of the room. Ensure pens/markers and name tags are available. (NOTE: Facilitator should not allow participants to review the completed journey map until later in the activity). If participants do not have an existing relationship with each other, consider conducting a short icebreaker prior to starting the activity.
* **Introduce participants to the Blank Veterans Journey Map (5-10 minutes)**

Show participants the blank journey map and briefly describe what it is. Highlight features of the map including, but not limited to, life stages and “moments that matter”. Tell them it will be the focal point of today’s activity. (NOTE: If facilitator is new to the blank journey map, he/she should conduct the additional reading specified at the end of this guide prior to leading this activity).

* **Divide participants into 4 groups of 3-5 people (5 minutes)**

Ideally each group should be comprised of no more than one individual from a specific agency. This applies even if participants are VA employees; that is, it is advised that VA employees are grouped with individuals who do *not* work for their specific administration (VBA, VHA, or NCA).

* **Identify services provided (15 minutes or more)**

Ask participants to look at the life stages and think of the services they (both the CVEB collectively and their individual agency) provide to Veterans. Direct participants to use their pen/marker and write the name of the service on the line that corresponds to the moment Veterans and their families would use the service. Members within each small group should alternate writing to allow each person a chance to write. You may give an example or two of services to begin their thinking process. Some examples you could give: a VBA Director may write “VA home loans” under “Starting Up” (Finding a place to live); the representative from an educational institution may write the name of its Veteran scholarship program under “Reinventing Myself” (acquiring the appropriate education, new skills, and credentials); and so on. Many of the services will be readily identified by the participants, and they may conclude writing well under the 15 minute mark. However, encourage participants to use all of the time allotted to complete this portion of the activity so that they can develop a comprehensive list. You may notice that they will list some services under more than one life stage/moment, and this is not only acceptable but encouraged.

* **Facilitate differing viewpoints (15 minutes)**

Now that participants have filled in many of the lines, ask them to reconsider the journey map using the perspective of a Veteran whose demographics differ from their own (e.g., a minority Veteran, homeless Veteran, or OEF/OIF Veteran if they are a Veteran of the Vietnam era, etc.). Have them write additional services on the journey map that this new persona would need. Explain to participants that considering the map through a different lens will encourage diverse points of view and may cause them to identify services they had not previously considered. For example, a male participant may think of “Women Veteran’s health care” and add it to the journey map.

* **De-Brief and discuss (45 minutes)**

Have each small group select a spokesperson and then bring the groups back together into one large group. Give each spokesperson an opportunity to de-brief the large group, telling what services they identified on their journey map. (NOTE: depending on the number of small groups you have, this should take approximately 5 minutes per spokesperson). If one of the other three groups hears a service that they had omitted, they can add it to their journey map at this time. After all spokespersons have debriefed, ask questions that allow the participants to process the information and stimulate discussion. (Sample questions: Did you find that some services applied to more than one life stage? Did you see any duplications of effort (i.e., the same service provided by more than one agency), and if so, how can these two agencies better collaborate? What services are you hearing about for the first time? What did you learn from this activity?). If you choose to use the completed journey map, you can distribute copies of it at this time and give participants time to compare it to the map they created. If there are services listed on the completed journey map that are available in their community, they can add these services to their journey map. The group should then look at the journey maps they created to see if there are gaps in services (that is, moments on the journey map where no service exists). Explain to them that these gaps in service represent opportunities for future strategic partnerships.

* **Wrap Up/Q&A (30 minutes)**

Inform participants of any next steps that will be taken in relation to this activity. For example, RM/FC or Co-Chairs may decide to make copies of the completed journey map and disseminate to board members, CVSOs, and other stakeholders to use as a resource guide; or RM/FC or Co-Chairs may keep a copy of the map and refer to it at a later point in time, such as when the CVEB is considering how its services align with its strategic goals or with what organizations they should partner. Answer additional questions participants may have. Thank them for their time and effort in completing the activity and conclude the meeting.

**Follow Up Actions**

At the conclusion of the activity, facilitator should:

- Take photos of each map that was filled out. A best practice is to take one picture of the entire map, and then also take 3 – 4 close-up pictures that show what participants wrote on the map. These photos can be included in an after action report (see next bullet point) as well as acting as reference for the CVEB members in future gap analysis activities or related projects.

- Complete an after action report. Report should highlight activity proceedings and document lessons learned– including, but not limited to: best practices identified through use of the journey map in order to spread among MyVA communities; suggestions for new ways in which the journey map could be used in order to maximize the tool’s effectiveness; and input on suggested improvements to the design of the journey map and/or this activity guide.

**Additional Reading**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2016). “Defining and Measuring the Outpatient Experience” (VA Patient Experience Storybook). Retrieved from



(This document, although focuses specifically on the patient experience, provides the facilitator with a better understanding of journey maps).

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2016). “Journeys of Veterans Map”. Retrieved from <https://innovation.ed.gov/files/2016/08/journeysofveteransmap.pdf>

(This is the completed Veterans Journey Map).