Veteran e-Post Hub

Prototype Project Report

Whitman County Veteran Department

A logo of a county

Description automatically generated

A black and white logo

Description automatically generated

**Hero’s Hub**

Melvin Manning

Anthony Graves

# Introduction

Veterans' Service Officers (VSO) have been serving the needs of veterans dating back to the First World War, providing vital assistance in navigating the often-complex processes of filing claims, completing forms, and communicating with the Department of Veterans affairs (VA). Traditionally, these services were provided through mail correspondence and in-person meetings, but in the digital age, the methods of veteran assistance have changed. Information that was once gathered and disseminated manually is now managed through online databases, emails, and websites.  
  
As technology has changed, so have the needs of VSOs. In the information age, VSOs are expected not only to assist with official claims but also to keep veterans informed about events, opportunities and services that may benefit them. This change has introduced new challenges – in particular, the need for efficient and user-friendly ways to gather and distribute information.  
  
That is where Veteran e-Post Hub comes in. We aim to address the needs of the modern VSO by enhancing the existing web and email communication systems used by our local VSO. Specifically, we plan to create a website to allow veterans and other interested parties to submit events that may benefit veterans and create a more user-friendly format for her monthly email correspondence (e-Post), and ensure the tools used are efficient and accessible to all.  
  
By building a system that allows for easy event submission and communication, we hope to improve how Veteran’s Services Officers can better serve their communities.

# Background and Related Work

Veteran’s Service Officers (VSOs) have long played a crucial role in supporting veterans by assisting with claims, benefits, and communications with the VA. However, the ways VSOs manage and distribute information has changed dramatically, particularly with the advent of online platforms and other digital tools. In the past these tasks were done through paper forms and mail correspondence, but today, online platforms provide a more efficient way to manage data and keep veterans informed.

Many organizations have begun to employ custom-built websites and applications for event submission and information collection. These applications are useful but can prove to be cumbersome for many, particularly for veterans who are less familiar with rapidly evolving technologies.   
  
For our example, we have chosen the Moscow Idaho Chamber of Commerce’s website: <https://moscowchamber.com/> . What Moscow chamber does extremely well is provide a visually appealing and user-friendly interface for visitors to view events that may be of interest to them. It also sorts events into separate categories, allowing visitors to narrow their search to choose which events may be of interest to them. These are all features that we want to incorporate into our own platform Veteran e-Post Hub.   
  
However, these events are specifically for the city of Moscow and are not created for Whitman County, which is our VSOs area of responsibility. Additionally, it covers a broad spectrum of events, which would not serve the purposes of our VSO. Veteran e-Post hub will be created from the ground up to suit the needs of our VSO and the veterans she serves. Another way Veteran e-Post Hub will set itself apart from the Moscow chamber’s website is that the member login and event submission process is only available to members of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce, which requires annual dues of hundreds of dollars. Veteran e-Post Hub will have no such fees, which serve as a barrier to organizations or parties of interest who may be under a limited budget, but still want to promote their events.   
  
Veteran e-Post Hub also aims to build upon the existing tools our VSO uses and is familiar with, namely her monthly e-Post. The same database used to store the information for the VSOs website will populate her e-Post, dramatically streamlining the process of creating it. By building on tools our VSO already uses, the Veteran e-Post Hub will provide a more intuitive way for veterans and interested parties to submit events, leave feedback, and stay informed about opportunities and services that are relevant to them. Unlike existing platforms and websites, like moscowchamber.com, it will be created with the needs of veterans and their service officers in mind. Offering a user-friendly interface for event submission, feedback collection, and information distribution. The Veteran e-Post Hub is designed to overcome the challenges our VSO may face using other systems and provide a simple and easy to use platform for our VSO and the veterans she serves.

To achieve these goals, we will need to develop and apply skills in HTML and JavaScript to create and update the website, as well as SQL to manage a database that can store relevant information about veterans and events. This will ensure that our VSO has the tools needed to collect and distribute information in an organized and accessible manner.

# Project Overview

Supporting veterans has long been a cornerstone of American policy, reflecting the nation’s recognition of the sacrifices made by those who served. From its early beginnings, where support was largely managed by individual states, the system has evolved to meet the needs of veterans more effectively. The federal government took its first significant steps in the 1790s by establishing pensions for injured soldiers, paving the way for more comprehensive support systems [1].

As the country faced larger conflicts, the federal role in veteran care expanded significantly. The aftermath of the Civil War led to the establishment of national homes for disabled veterans, laying the groundwork for what would become the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). In 1989, the modern Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was formed, elevating the previous Veterans Administration to a cabinet-level department, which signified a stronger commitment to providing veterans with essential care and benefits [1].

Despite the advancements in veteran support, many veterans encounter challenges when trying to access the full range of services offered by the VA. The complexity of benefits, healthcare, and memorial services can be daunting, especially for older or disabled veterans. Traditional methods of communication, such as postal mail and phone calls, can be slow and inefficient, leaving many veterans unaware of important updates regarding their benefits and services. Recognizing the need for more effective communication, the Veteran e-Post Hub aims to provide a modern solution for veterans seeking information about events and resources. By creating a centralized platform, the hub will enable veterans to easily access relevant events that can enhance their well-being and community engagement.

The e-Post Hub will feature a user-friendly interface, allowing clients to submit and view events categorized by type, such as outdoor activities, local gatherings, and charitable opportunities. This categorization will help veterans quickly find events that suit their interests and needs. The platform will also offer customization options for filtering events, ensuring that users can tailor their experience. An important aspect of the hub will be its administrative functionalities. The first admin will be given a code that allows for the creation of new admin accounts. When creating an account, admins will first be prompted to enter this code, which can be edited by current admins and is visible only to them. Otherwise, the user would only be able to create a client type account. This ensures that only authorized individuals have administrative rights, maintaining the integrity, simplicity, and the security of the platform. Administrators will be able to create, approve, and manage content to maintain the relevance and quality of information shared on the platform. This oversight will ensure that veterans receive timely updates and access to related resources. To enhance community engagement, the hub will include interactive features such as a commenting system for each event, enabling users to share insights and ask questions. Additionally, a “Question?” link will facilitate direct communication with administrators, allowing users to seek assistance or clarification without leaving the site. They would only need to input their contact information for a later reply.

The Veteran e-Post Hub will feature tailored functionality based on user types. Admin users will have moderator control, allowing them to approve or reject posts, as well as delete posts and comments to maintain content quality. Regular users(clients) will be able to submit posts for approval and participate in discussions by commenting on posts. Meanwhile, guest users will have the ability to view all event postings, view the comments per post, print out documents containing these posts, and utilize the "Question?" feature to seek assistance. Importantly, all users, including guests, will have access to the core functionalities of viewing events and engaging with the platform. This tiered system ensures that the platform remains accessible to all, while also maintaining a level of administrative oversight to ensure a safe and relevant space for veterans.

The development of the Veteran e-Post Hub will utilize HTML, JavaScript, CSS, and SQL to create a robust, accessible platform. Emphasizing user-friendliness, the design will cater to individuals of all ages, ensuring that the hub captures and maintains user interest. By balancing usability with engaging content, the project aims to meet the diverse needs of the veteran community effectively. Ultimately, the Veteran e-Post Hub seeks to modernize how veterans interact with their resources, enhancing connectivity and support for those who have served. Through this initiative, we hope to empower veterans to stay informed and actively engaged in their communities.

# Client and Stakeholder Identification and Preferences

Our primary client is Whitman County’s Veteran Department, with Mrs. Buri, a local Veteran Service Officer, serving as our main point of contact. The final project will function as a centralized hub for all events beneficial to veterans and their families within the local community. The main stakeholders will include Whitman County’s Veteran Department, veterans, their families, and community organizations supporting veterans.

To ensure maximum effectiveness, the hub must be fully compatible with all major web browsers, including mobile platforms. This accessibility will allow veterans and their associates to easily access the hub from various devices.

In addition to the primary stakeholders, potential clients may include veteran support organizations, local businesses that cater to veterans, and fundraising entities. To appeal to this diverse audience, the hub must be user-friendly and engaging. All stakeholders will benefit from well-documented code and a flexible, easily modifiable web design, allowing for ongoing updates and enhancements.

While the needs of the Veteran Service Officer will be prioritized, the requirements of all clients will be taken into account throughout the design and development process. Additional stakeholders to consider may include local government agencies, healthcare providers, and educational institutions that offer services to veterans.

# Glossary

**CSS** - (Cascading Style Sheets) is a stylesheet language used to describe the presentation and layout of HTML elements on a web page.

**HTML** - (Hypertext Markup Language) is the standard language used to create and structure content on web pages.

**JavaScript** - a versatile programming language used to create interactive and dynamic content on web pages, enabling features like form validation, animations, and real-time updates.

**SQL** - (Structured Query Language) is a standard programming language used to manage and manipulate relational databases, enabling tasks like querying, updating, and managing data.

# References

[1] “VA History Summary - Department of Veterans Affairs,” VA History, Aug. 6, 2024. [Online]. Available: https://department.va.gov/history/history-overview/. Accessed: Sep. 13, 2024.

[2] “Discover Moscow Idaho with the Moscow Chamber of Commerce,” Moscow Chamber of Commerce + Visitor Center, https://moscowchamber.com/ (accessed Sep. 21, 2024).