

Due Diligence: Evaluating Partnership Risks and Benefits

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) [National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships \(HAP\)](#) facilitates formal and informal partnerships with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). To ensure partnerships align with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) mission to support Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors, all NGOs are thoroughly evaluated.

Importance of Due Diligence in Partner Evaluation

Due diligence is a critical process of thoroughly researching and analyzing organizations before forming a partnership. It ensures that organizations providing services to Veterans are reputable, financially sound, and operate with integrity. This protects both Veterans and VA from adverse impacts. Through due diligence, VA evaluates a potential partner's capabilities, assets, and historical performance — important predictors of future success. Entering a partnership also links VA's reputation with that of the external organization, making this evaluation essential for maintaining the trust and standards of VA and VHA.



The Due Diligence Process

Before collaborating with an NGO, due diligence must be completed by VA staff to determine:

- How the NGO's mission and goals align with [VA's mission, goals, priorities, and strategic enablers](#).
- If the NGO can demonstrate programmatic effectiveness through positive impact.
- If the NGO is reputable and ethical.
- Potential risks of Veteran exploitation or misrepresentation.
- Any real or perceived conflicts of interest, including past or present VA partnerships, grants, or contracts.



Partnership Due Diligence: Goals and Process

Formal and informal partnerships expand options for care, services, and benefits beyond those available at VA medical centers (VAMCs). VHA establishes formal partnerships, resulting in a Memorandum of Understanding signed with NGOs. These partnerships involve NGOs having specific responsibilities, such as data collection, implementation, and documentation of outcomes. Informal partnerships allow for collaboration without clearly defined commitments of time, resources, roles and responsibilities, and outcomes.

Formal partnerships

- VA staff examines risks and benefits of partnering.
- VA staff thoroughly evaluates NGO background through publicly available information.
- VA staff consults with regional or general counsel and VAMC leadership for determination if due diligence concerns arise.
- VA and NGO staff coordinate to determine plans, goals, roles and responsibilities, and outcome measures.
- VA leadership of relevant programs review and approve partnership, then Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Key Official, or designee gives final partnership approval.
- VA and NGO begin formal collaboration.
- VA staff conduct ongoing due diligence reviews of existing partnerships with NGOs, particularly when considering renewal or amending the relationship.

Informal partnerships

- VA staff examines risks and benefits of partnering.
- VA and NGO staff coordinate to complete the due diligence process.
- VA staff evaluates NGO background through publicly available information.
- VA and NGO staff coordinate to determine partnership purpose and identify needs and shared goals.
- VA and NGO begin working together informally.
- VA staff initiate due diligence reviews at the onset of every new partnership and continue them periodically as needed to maintain informal partnerships with NGOs.



Collaborate to Serve Veterans

HAP aims to expand access to health care resources and services through formal and informal partnerships with NGOs. By collaborating with VA, an organization contributes to enhancing the quality of life for Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. We invite interested NGOs to explore nonmonetary partnership opportunities with HAP.

If you have questions about forming partnerships or the due diligence process, please visit the [HAP website](#) or contact HAP by email at VHA_Partnerships@va.gov.

