

# Getting To Yes: A Step-By-Step Guide To Forming A Partnership With VHA

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) actively engages in nonmonetary partnerships with nongovernmental organizations at the national, regional, state, and local levels so it can better serve Veterans, their families, caregivers, survivors, and other beneficiaries.

VHA has so much more to offer when we collaborate with organizations like yours to bring services and resources to Veterans that improve their access to positive social determinants of health such as education, employment, food security, housing, social connectedness, spiritual support, and transportation. Partnering with VHA also enables you to support America's heroes by leveraging our unique understanding of the issues they face and their priorities for health and well-being.

## Steps to form a partnership



*Please see next page for a detailed description of each step.*

## Discovery

This is an initial meeting between VHA and a potential partner to discuss what services or support the partner wants to offer and how VHA and the partner can leverage each other's strengths, networks, and nonmonetary resources. It is important for both parties to discuss any possible barriers to getting to yes. VHA will come to the meeting with general ideas of how this partnership will benefit Veterans and other stakeholders and what role VHA will play in the collaboration. We encourage our potential partners to do the same.

## Due diligence

The potential partner's mission should be in line with the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) and VHA's goals and objectives. VHA has a responsibility to safeguard Veterans' health information, identifiable information, and overall health and wellness. Therefore, we must ensure that a proposed partnership is the right fit for Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors by assessing an outside organization's abilities, assets, and track record through a formal vetting process. This includes an internet search for positive stories about your organization and any partnerships it may have in place as well as any negative findings.

## Finding a home within VA

VHA's Office of Community Engagement (OCE) facilitates and manages several partnerships, but some are managed by other VHA program offices or a VA facility. A discussion will help determine which VA or VHA entity is the best fit for oversight. OCE will help make the connections between external organizations and the right subject matter experts within VHA and VA.

## Developing the MoA

The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) outlines the purpose of the partnership, responsibilities of both parties, objectives, goals, performance measurements, limitations, and duration (typically no more than three years).

## Finalization

VA's Office of General Counsel/Regional Counsel and VHA subject matter experts review the proposed MoA to ensure that the partnership serves Veterans' best interests, aligns with VA's mission, and meets legal requirements. The partnership is finalized when it has been signed by VHA's executive in charge or appropriate senior leader and the partner's identified senior leader.

## Implementation and expansion

Once the MoA has been executed, the partnership can be implemented. Many of VHA's partnerships have been so successful that they have expanded from a local partnership to a region-wide or national one. Partnerships established at the national level can provide the framework for local facilities and their community partners as a starting point for collaboration, and partnerships implemented at the local level may be identified as a model for other facilities to adopt.

### **OCE: Your trusted resource for assistance**

To share a partnership opportunity or consult with OCE on a nonmonetary partnership, please contact our office via email: [communityengagement@va.gov](mailto:communityengagement@va.gov). Our goal is to provide Veterans with services and resources that will help them achieve and maintain optimal health and well-being. To achieve this, we serve as a subject matter expert and catalyst to getting to yes for the partners who share our passion and meet the safety standards in place to protect those we serve. We look forward to working with you.

**For more information about OCE, please visit our website:**  
[va.gov/healthpartnerships](https://va.gov/healthpartnerships).

