

## 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 enabling users to enhance the Veteran experience. Map activities can be tailored to meet the need of individual MyVA communities, including local Community Veterans Engagement Boards (CVEB) and Veterans Experience Office (VEO) employees.

### Mode of Delivery

Either CVEB co-chair or VEO employee can facilitate the activity, preferably in person.

### Target Audience

CVEB members and other stakeholders.

### Group Size

Up to 20 participants or five participants per printed map.

### Targeted Outcomes

After completing this activity, participants will:

- Generally understand the journey map and its features.
- Identify local CVEB and partner services that meet the needs of Veterans in the community.
- Make a correlation between CVEB services and the point at which they impact Veterans and their families.
- Identify existing services (and gaps) uncovered by completing the activity.

### Materials Needed

- Four poster-size (approximately 18" x 24") copies of the blank Veterans Journey Map.
- Pens or markers (one per participant)
- Tape
- Four copies of the completed Veterans Journey Map (optional)
- Name tags (optional)

### Estimated Completion Time

Two 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. If participants do not have an existing relationship with each other, consider conducting a short icebreaker prior to starting the activity. Note: The facilitator should not allow participants to review the completed journey map until later in 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 life stages and moments that matter—the focal point of the day’s activity. Note: Facilitators new to the blank journey map should conduct the additional reading specified at the end of this guide prior to leading this activity.
- **Divide participants into four 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. For example, VA employees should be grouped with individuals who don’t work within the same office or administration.
- **Identify services provided (15 minutes or more)**  
Ask participants to look at the life stages and think of the services the CVEB (collectively and individually by agency) provide to Veterans. Direct participants to use pens or markers to write the name of the service on the line corresponding 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 participate. You may give an example or two of services to energize the brainstorming process. Examples: A VBA Director may write “VA home loans” under “Starting Up” (finding a place to live); an educational institutional representative may write the name of its Veteran scholarship program under “Reinventing Myself” (acquiring the appropriate education, new skills, and credentials). Participants will readily identify many services, and they may conclude writing well under the 15-minute mark. Urge participants to use the full time allotted to complete this part of the activity to help develop a comprehensive list. Some services may be listed under more than one life stage or moment, which is encouraged.
- **Facilitate differing viewpoints (15 minutes)**  
Ask participants to reconsider the journey map using a Veteran’s perspective whose demographics differ from their own, such as a minority, homeless, or Vietnam-era Veteran. Have participants write additional services on the journey map that this new persona would need. Explain that considering the map through a different lens will encourage diverse points of view and may prompt them to identify services not previously considered. For example, a male participant may think of “Women Veteran’s health care” and add it to the journey map.
- **Debrief 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 debrief the large group, explaining what services they identified on their journey map. Note: This should take approximately five minutes per spokesperson. If another group hears a service they had omitted, they can add it to their journey map at this time. After all spokespersons have debriefed, ask questions that allow participants to process the information and stimulate discussion.

Sample questions: Did you find some services applied to more than one life stage? Did you see any duplication of effort, such as the same service provided by more than one agency, and, if so, how can these 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 allow participants 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 (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 and Q&A (30 minutes)**

Inform participants of any next steps in relation to this activity. For example, CVEB co-chairs can make copies of the completed journey map and disseminate to board members or can keep a copy for future reference when considering how CVEB services align with strategic goals or exploring potential partnerships. Answer additional questions participants may have, thank them for their time and effort, and conclude the meeting.

### **Follow Up Actions**

At the conclusion of the activity, the facilitator should:

- Take photos of each completed map. A best practice is to take one picture of the entire map and 3-4 close-up pictures that show what participants wrote on the map. These photos can be included in an After Action Report and can act as references for CVEB members in future gap analysis activities or related projects.
- Complete the After Action Report, highlighting activity proceedings and documenting lessons learned, including best practices identified, suggestions for new ways to use the journey map to maximize the tool's effectiveness, and recommendations for improving the journey map and activity guide.