

SUCCESS REPORT

Homeless Veterans Partners & Providers
June 2018 Convening



Event Summary

The Homeless Veterans Partners and Providers June convening was the second conference held this year to specifically address the distinct needs of veterans experiencing homelessness in communities across Oregon. Service providers from 28 counties around the state, including caseworkers, administrators, housing developers, VSOs, and directors, in addition to our Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) federal partners, were invited for a 1 ½ day conference on ways to best serve our homeless veteran population. The event was hosted at Broadway Commons in Salem, Oregon and was facilitated through a joint effort between Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) and Oregon Department of Veteran Affairs (ODVA) along with the help of many speakers and panelists from multiple agencies throughout Oregon.

Nearly 100 local leaders from across Oregon discussed effective local strategies to housing veterans experiencing homelessness and how to build effective partnerships, shared resources, and best practices. Attendees were inspired by Governor Kate Brown's kick-off video highlighting recent investments in veterans' services, affordable housing, and the focus she, the Legislature, and state agencies are putting behind the effort to effectively end veteran homelessness across Oregon. Director of OHCS, Margaret Salazar, followed the governor's video by speaking about the importance of collaboration and working towards new strategies for the benefit of all.

Sessions throughout the two days included topics on the power of partnerships and building veteran communities, strategies that are working in local communities, services and benefits for veterans and a demonstration of the veteran's resource map and dashboard that OHCS has been working on. Attendees also spent a good portion of the convening in breakout groups discussing local best practices, issues they are facing, and what information they would like to share with funders. The convening drew to a close with an ardent message from Claire Seguin, Assistant Director of Housing Stabilization at OHCS, thanking everyone for their thoughtful participation and looking forward to the next steps we can all take in ending veteran homelessness.



Governor Kate Brown addressed participants by video. She highlighted OHCS's recent investments in 75 new units of Veteran affordable housing for using Veteran General Assistance Program (VGAP) capital financing for projects in Clackamas, Coos, Klamath, Multnomah, and Polk counties.

Attendance & Operating Costs

Nearly 100 participants from regions all over Oregon attended. Attendance increased from the previous Homeless Veterans convening; 81 people attended in December and 82 attended in June. Most attendees participated in both days; a few attended only one day. Moving forward, the planning committee hopes to increase the participation of agencies across Oregon by bringing in varied speakers with lived experience who will be able to provide unique insight on strategies for assisting veterans out of homelessness. Staging conferences in different locations around Oregon and host organizations is another strategy for increasing attendance.

Attendance Breakdown

Day One Attendees	82
Day Two Attendees	65
Speakers/Staff	21
Total Participants	96

Operating Costs Breakdown

Facility Rental	\$1400.00
Food Services	\$2108.42
Beverage Services	\$311.00
	\$3819.42

As this was a joint endeavor, both OHCS and ODVA contributed funds to ensure the success of the event. Facility fees were covered by OHCS through the Veteran’s lottery fund. ODVA provided the food and catering services through their department funds. To ensure participation for all who were interested, there was no cost for attendees. Numerous attendees had their travel expenses covered through federal grants such as the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program.

Breakout Group Discussions

Peer Group Response- Participants were broken out randomly into groups of mixed region, job type and agency. The intent was to allow communication and the free exchange of ideas between individuals who might not always get to work with each other. Each group was assigned a facilitator, a chart writer, and asked to answer selected questions. Below are common themes that emerged from those discussions:



What is working well in your community?

- **Setting Goals:** Example - Lane County Mayor's challenge; goal was to house 316 Households, they housed 404.
- **Leveraging Collaboration:** Veterans Leadership Teams are providing space to collaborate, network, and case conference.
- **Sharing Resources:** Partners using Expanded Coordinated Entry system and By-Name Lists.

Where is there room for improvement?

- **Expanding resources for hard to place veterans:** Veterans with dishonorable discharge, housing for Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs), damaged credit history.
- **Encouraging more collaboration:** Not all agencies are at the table, HMIS systems are closed, communities do not have By-Name Lists.
- **Training and outreach support for agencies:** Limited housing resources, outreach is difficult in rural areas, technical assistance is needed

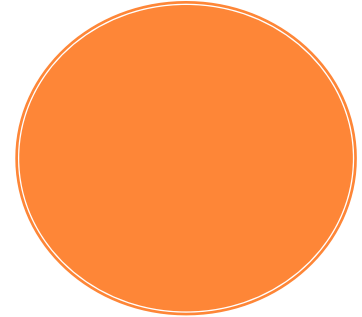
What are some best practices shared with the group?

- **Establish a Veteran Leadership Team:** Co-located service providers, sharing data across service areas,
- **Be creative:** Be aware of all types of funding and know how to maximize utilization i.e. prioritization based on discharge status and need
- **Outreach to the community:** Landlord engagement strategies i.e. a 24 hour landlord hotline

A few recommendations and take-a-ways:

- Review how the State of Oregon Defines Veteran
- Look for ways to share more HMIS information and or create more Veteran By-Name Lists
- Utilize more Grant Per Diem (GPD) in Oregon

Regional Group Response- Participants were broken out in groups by region – Coastal, Central/Eastern, Eugene/Salem Metro, Portland Metro, Southern. The intent was to foster partnerships and connect individuals to other service providers in their jurisdiction. Each group was assigned a facilitator, a chart writer, and asked to answer selected questions. Below are common themes that emerged from those discussions:



Working well in your community?

- **Team models:** Collaboration amongst service providers, cross-sectional partnerships i.e. housing and employment
- **Co-located service providers:** Strong relationship with Continuum of Care, sharing resources

Where is there room for improvements?

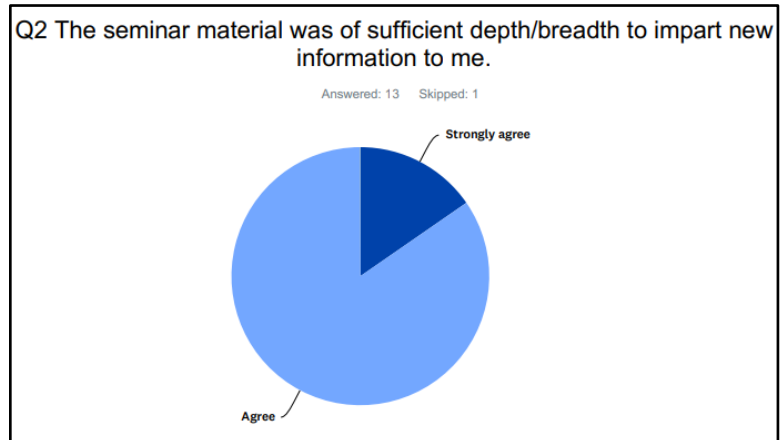
- **Working with hard to place veterans:** Housing Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs), dishonorably discharged veterans.
- **More community involvement:** Lack of housing, navigating no cause evictions and rent increases,
- **Leveraging Partnerships:** Limited or strained relationship with the VA, high case worker turnover, navigating all of the systems of care

What will you take home and employ in your community?

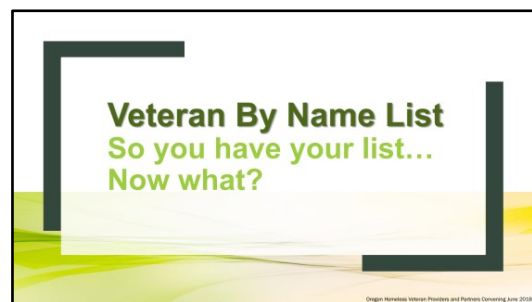
- **Leverage partnerships for success:** Partner with Parks & Recreation of use of facilities for showers, laundry, and restroom, connect with Veteran Service Officer (VSO), contact with Fair Housing Council, work the By Name Lists, philanthropy
- **Target undeserved veterans:** Work with people with barriers ahead of time i.e. before they are released from prison/jail, Look for ways to engage Women Veterans
- **Engage elected officials:** Leverage elected officials to engage landlords. Change the way homelessness is viewed – update the image of homelessness to what it looks like now i.e. families with jobs but...

Post-Convening Survey Responses

Of the nearly 100 participants, a handful filled out a post-convening survey sharing their opinions and feedback about the event. The response was primarily positive, citing just a few areas for improvement. Additionally, there were some nice compliments for the speakers. Here are some common themes from the survey.



- **Valuable use of time:** Most surveyed attendees rated the convening as exceptional (10 out of 10), Material presented was thought provoking and sufficient with many learning new things to take back to their agencies. Some attendees found the overview for incarcerated veterans very beneficial
- **Fine tuning future locations:** One of participants mentioned too many tables in the main meeting room. However, another participant felt that “the venue was the best” and didn’t see any need for improvement. Maybe moving the convening around the state.
- **Collaboration with others:** Sharing best practices from other agencies in the state gave attendees different ways to get the same job done and hopefully a better idea of options and workarounds for difficult scenarios. Dialogue between cohorts was an important element of this convening. For many, the breakout sessions were an essential part of the convening where they had their biggest connections and light bulb moments.
- **Discussing hard topics:** One topic that came up again and again was the By-Name-List and finding ways to use it effectively and encouraging others to do so as well
- **Add other voices to the speaker/panels:** Hold panels consisting of: Veterans’ experiencing homelessness, County Commissioners/elected officials, creative alternatives for using private funds. Give the Association of Oregon Counties and the League of Oregon Cities representatives a time to speak. Engage philanthropic organizations



Next Steps/Resources

Many commented during and after the convenings these two events were a great place to start but help is needed for momentum to continue. In order to end Veterans experiencing homelessness we have to commit to continuing to learn from one another, collaborate on efforts, share resources, and bolster the use of By-Name Lists. Here are some next steps/resources to help in your efforts.

We as a group are powerful voices, but we need collective action and teeth in our creative ideas. We are spinning our wheels without real systemic change.

– *Homeless Veteran Convening Attendee*

- OHCS is soliciting for a technical assistance company to help communities create by-name lists and strengthen Veteran Leadership Teams
- The convening committee is looking at hosting future convenings around the state for greater opportunity for participation by smaller agencies
- Access and utilize the resources on [OHCS Ending Veterans' Experiencing Homelessness website](#)
- Join the new E-News list; [click here](#). Keep upto date on news related to veterans business (e.g. next round of NOFAs for Veterans Funding)
- Contact the new Veterans' Homelessness Integrator, Gus L. Bedwell for assistance at gus.L.bedwell@oregon.gov or by phone at 971-718-7222