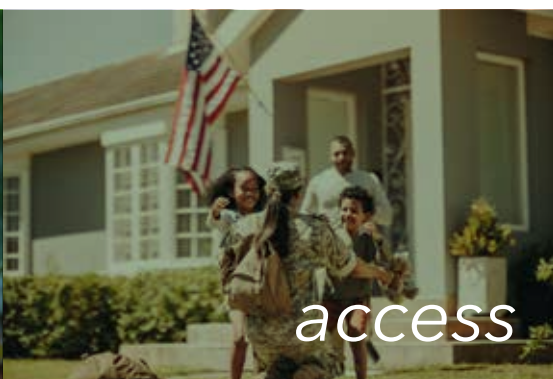


Inland Empire State of Veterans Report

FRiENDS OF VETERANS **FUND**



awareness



access



engagement



Inland Empire
Community
Foundation

I am pleased to share with you the results of an extensive study that we undertook to assess the support and resources available to our Inland Empire military veterans.

The Inland Empire Community Foundation (IECF) is committed to enhancing the well-being of our community members. As with all our community leadership endeavors, IECF believes that data collection, analysis and research are critical for evidence-based decision-making to galvanize the resources needed to positively change community conditions that will reduce struggling and suffering among our residents. With this study, we aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing benefits and services available to veterans and their families, while also identifying areas where we can create efficiencies and strengthen collaboration across the IE. Our goal is to ensure veterans and their families are thriving in the IE and that they receive the recognition, support, and care they earned through their service.

This report, the culmination of months of work, delves into various aspects of veteran benefits and services as well as the diversity of this community, reflective of the Inland Empire's rich ethnic and racial diversity. It covers topics such as healthcare access, employment and underemployment, housing, education, and mental health support, and more.

We believe that this report will serve as a valuable resource for organizations, policymakers, and individuals who are dedicated to the well-being of our veterans. It provides insights, highlights best practices, and offers a clear recommendation for the ways we should organize our diverse service providers and partners that will put veterans and their families at the center of their own solutions.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the well-being of our veterans.

We look forward to your feedback and collaboration as we strive to enhance the services and benefits available to our local heroes.



Sincerely,
R. Michelle Decker
President and CEO, Inland Empire Community Foundation

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It is with great pleasure and a profound sense of purpose that I extend my heartfelt support for the Inland Empire Community Foundation's State of Veterans Report and the critical importance of a community-based approach to their well-being.

This report comes at a crucial juncture in our ongoing efforts to care for our veterans. With countless heroes returning from deployments around the world and making the Inland Empire their home, we must remain vigilant in addressing their needs. It is no secret that veterans often face unique and complex challenges, from physical and mental health issues to difficulties transitioning back into civilian life. A community approach is not merely beneficial, it is absolutely critical.

Consistent themes emerged during this study, which align with established best-practices summarized below:

- **Awareness** – Veteran awareness of where and how to access the benefits and services they earned. Community awareness of challenges and opportunities of our veterans and their families.
- **Access** – Providing wrap-around services through a public-private partnership and multi-solvers, relying on a “no wrong door” policy for benefits and services.
- **Engagement** – Create a movement of community support to embrace our veterans so they have a better sense of belonging, which in turn strengthens our civic muscle.

The strength of our community lies in our ability to unite and support one another, especially those who have given so much of themselves to safeguard our way of life. By working collaboratively, we can offer a comprehensive network of resources, assistance, and compassion that will help our veterans rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society with dignity and purpose.

I commend the Inland Empire Community Foundation for taking the initiative to shine a spotlight on this vital issue. Your dedication to our veterans and the community-based approach is both admirable and essential. This report will undoubtedly serve as a beacon, guiding us toward better policies, increased awareness, and more robust support for our veterans.

I pledge my full support to these endeavors and will continue to champion the cause of our veterans in Congress. Together, we can make a tangible difference in the lives of those who have sacrificed so much for us.

Sincerely,
Rep. Mark Takano
39th District



"By working collaboratively, we can offer a comprehensive network of resources, assistance, and compassion that will help our veterans rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society with dignity and purpose."

- Rep. Mark Takano
39th District





"As the Mayor of Riverside, California, I have the privilege of witnessing the strength, resilience, and dedication of our local veterans firsthand."

*- Patricia Lock Dawson
Mayor, City of Riverside*



It is with great pleasure and a sense of shared commitment that I help to introduce this report, the result of a collaborative research effort across the Inland Empire. This report resonates deeply with our mission to improve the quality of life for all our residents, especially those who have selflessly served our nation.

As the Mayor of Riverside, California, I have the privilege of witnessing the strength, resilience, and dedication of our local veterans firsthand. The sacrifices they made for our country are immeasurable, and it is our duty to ensure that they have the support and resources they need to thrive as they transition to civilian life.

In partnership with our neighboring cities in the Inland Empire, we recognize the importance of a united effort in addressing the challenges our veterans face and enhancing the benefits and services available to them. Through extensive collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Inland Empire Community Foundation, we have produced this comprehensive report.

A report statistic that may be surprising to many is that “compared to neighboring Los Angeles county, Riverside and San Bernardino counties combined have almost double the veteran population.” To this end, this report delves into various aspects of veteran benefits and services in Riverside and the broader Inland Empire. It offers an in-depth analysis of the existing support mechanisms, identifies areas for improvement, and provides recommendations for a more inclusive and responsive system. It is our collective belief that this report will serve as a catalyst for positive change and increased collaboration among cities and veteran-serving organizations for our veterans and their families throughout the region.

Our veterans deserve the best care and support we can provide, and I am enthusiastic about the opportunity for shared efforts to ensure that we meet this responsibility head-on. We believe that through collaboration, we can make a profound impact on the lives of our local heroes and their families.

A **heartfelt** thank you to the Inland Empire Community Foundation for leading this study, for your dedication to the well-being of our veterans, and for your commitment to building a brighter future for them in the Inland Empire.

Sincerely,
Patricia Lock Dawson
Mayor, City of Riverside
Chair, Mayor’s Council

Background and Purpose

For years, our nation's veterans served during a time of war, deploying overseas and operating in challenging conditions. This is selfless service, driven by a passion to support a greater mission, and fueled by an oath to defend our country and protect our way of life. After leaving military service, many of these veterans settled in the Inland Empire, which has been a hub for veterans returning from active duty, including those who have served in conflicts ranging from World War II to more recent engagements in the Middle East.

Now these men and women are in our community. We work and worship alongside them and our children go to school with their children. These veterans are not just in our community, they are a part of our community. Yet, separating from the military can be challenging. Overseas deployments and the rigors of service and combat can leave lasting impacts and can make the transition to civilian life more challenging for some. Moreover, this is a complex and dynamic environment. While many benefits and services are available to veterans and their families, finding the programs, resources, and organizations dedicated to serving veterans in the Inland Empire can be daunting, and this highlights the need for our community to take a proactive role in supporting those who served.

The FRieNDS OF veterans Fund was established by the Inland Empire Community Foundation (IECF) in 2022 to benefit veterans residing in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties whose needs include but are not limited to legal aid services, post-military education and skills-building, housing, basic needs, and physical and mental health.

To ensure a purposeful and efficient use of those funds, IECF commissioned a study to develop a better understanding of the environment as it relates to veteran programs and services and the need for continuum of care for veterans and their families.

This report, which provides an overview of the support system in place for IE veterans, is the result of that study. It explores the accessibility, adequacy, and effectiveness of available benefits and services, as well as potential areas for improvement to better support our veterans and their families. It will uplift the programs and services already in place, address challenges and barriers, and propose short- and long-term solutions towards enhancing the lives of veterans within the Inland Empire community.

Desired Outcomes for the Inland Empire

- Reduction in number of homeless veterans
- Decreased veteran suicides
- Increased demand for and access of mental health services
- Expanded veterans' and military families' access to services
- Veterans engaged and thriving in the community
- Develop a clear road map for wraparound service and "no wrong door" approach to support veterans (a true continuum of care)
- Increase awareness, access, and engagement
- Reduce veteran under/unemployment

Study Methodology

The study was implemented in three steps; qualitative and quantitative information and data collection, an assessment of those findings including the continuum of care for veterans, and the writing of this report.

At the heart of this study is a group of veteran advocates and stakeholders who are the voices of veterans and their families in the IE. These stakeholders formed an active FRiENDS of veterans (FOV) Working Group, meeting monthly to discuss challenges and bright spots, developing a consensus on what works for veterans, and determining where there is opportunity to increase attention and support. The members of this working group played an integral role in gathering the quantitative and qualitative data that informed the research, bringing their personal experiences to the forefront with their respective veteran-serving organizations and jobs.

In addition to this critical group of stakeholders are a series of interviews and focus groups with veterans, county leadership, veteran service organizations and service providers that identified the resources, activities, and outputs, augmenting the work of the FOV Working Group. Four focus groups were conducted that aligned with four overarching areas of interest that affect lives of veterans and their families:

- **Healthcare and Wellness**
- **Housing and Homelessness**
- **Education**
- **Employment and Career Services**

These focus areas are important for everyone, especially veterans in transition. Influencing the focus areas are the cross-cutting topics of Benefits, Community Engagement, and Special Populations.

The Veteran's Journey

Veterans' needs vary with their stage in life. To ensure this study accounted for those evolving needs, the veteran's Journey Map was used to identify the important milestones and Moments that Matter following separation from military service. The post-service journey includes critical events that shape a veteran's experience, and to a large degree, influence the opportunities and aspirations a veteran and their family will seek as they navigate the complex environment of benefits and services provided by the multitude of veteran-serving organizations and providers across the IE.

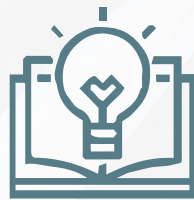
While there are numerous benefits and services available to veterans, awareness of and access to them is a pervasive challenge. Strong community support is key to enhancing the lives of its veterans as they continue this journey. At the same time, a healthy, engaged and integrated veteran population strengthens the civic muscle of the community.



Healthcare
& Wellness



Housing
& Homelessness



Education



Employment
& Career Services

BENEFITS

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Veteran's Journey

Moments
That Matter

SCHEDULING AND PLANNING
A FUNERAL SERVICE

MAINTAINING SOCIAL
& COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

TAKING CARE
OF MY HEALTH

CONNECTING WITH AND
SERVING MY COMMUNITY

ACQUIRING THE APPROPRIATE EDUCATION,
NEW SKILLS, AND CREDENTIALS

- MANAGING PRIMARY CARE
& CHRONIC HEALTH ISSUES
- RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING
MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

- FINDING SOMETHING TO DO
- ATTENDING TO HEALTH

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS
OF SEPARATING



JOINING



SERVING



GETTING
OUT



STARTING
UP



TAKING
CARE OF
MYSELF



REINVENTING
MYSELF



PUTTING
DOWN
ROOTS



RETIRING



AGING

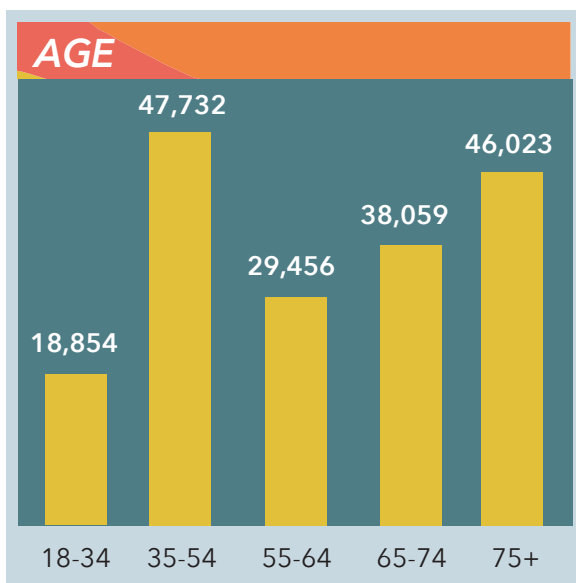


DYING

Demographics

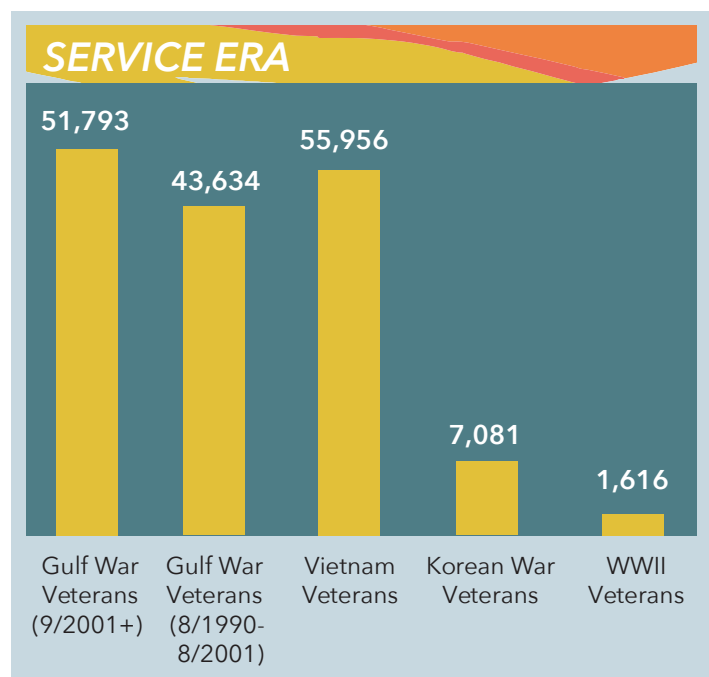
San Bernardino and
Riverside Counties
Combined

The **Inland Empire** is home to a diverse veteran population. The subsequent examination of IE demographics offers a comprehensive insight into the region's veteran population, both in aggregate and broken down by individual counties.



Age - The veteran population in the Inland Empire spans a wide range of age groups. However, there is a notable concentration in the mid-aged and older age brackets. The plurality of veterans are aged 35 to 54, accounting for 47,732, indicating a potential need for increased support and services for the elderly.

Service Era - Periods of service and populations within periods are fairly similar, with the exception of older veterans in WWII and the Korean War. As shown here, Gulf War veterans serving on 9/2001 or later make up the plurality of the veteran population in the Inland Empire at an estimated 51,793. WWII veterans are estimated at 955 of the total population, as they are older, and more are passing away in recent years.



GENDER

163,838

16,286

Gender - The Inland Empire is home to a diverse veteran population in terms of gender. Male veterans comprise the majority, representing 163,838 or 90.8% of the veteran population, while female veterans account for 16,286 or 9.2% of the veteran population. Although men constitute a larger share, it is essential to acknowledge the increasing importance of female veterans and address their specific needs.

DISABILITY STATUS

Reported a Disability - 53,640 or 30.4%

Disability Status - Disability status is an important aspect to consider when providing support to veterans. In the Inland Empire, 53,640 or 30.4% of veterans reported having a disability compared to 14.7% of the general population. This may include physical disabilities, mental health conditions, or a combination of both. It is crucial to develop comprehensive rehabilitation and healthcare programs to address these disabilities effectively.

Educational Attainment - There are 11,111 or 6.5% of veterans in the Inland Empire without a high school diploma. 39,122 or 22.3% of veterans are high school graduates. 75,659 or 43.4% of veterans have some college or an associate degree. Finally, a significant number of veterans have completed a bachelor's degree. 50,957 or 27.8% of veterans have earned a bachelor's degree, which is higher than the general population rate of 24.9%, highlighting the potential value of veterans to the IE workforce.

The educational attainment levels among veterans in the IE showcase their commitment to personal development and skill acquisition beyond their military service. With a significant percentage having completed high school, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees, veterans in the county possess a diverse range of educational backgrounds. Recognizing and leveraging these qualifications can help create tailored educational and career support programs aimed at assisting veterans in their civilian transitions and maximize their potential for success in various fields.

WHY? Understanding the age distribution, gender, ethnicity, education, and disability status of veterans helps policymakers and service providers to develop targeted strategies and initiatives to meet the specific needs of this important population. By acknowledging and addressing these demographics, the Inland Empire can ensure that its veterans receive the support they deserve.

Ethnicity - The Inland Empire reflects great ethnic diversity among its veteran population. The ethnic diversity of the veteran population in the IE reinforces the importance of inclusivity and cultural competency in the programs and services.

ETHNICITY

Hispanic/Latino: 52,796 or 29.35%

Caucasian/White: 97,791 or 53.8%

African American: 21,072 or 12%

Asian American: 8,373 or 4.8%

Native American: 2,206 or 1.1%

Two or More Races: 26,736 or 14.8%

Other Race: 23,989 or 13.6%

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

No High School Diploma - 11,111 or 6.5%

High School Graduate - 39,122 or 22.3%

College or Assoc. Degree - 75,659 or 43.4%

Bachelor's Degree - 50,957 or 27.8%

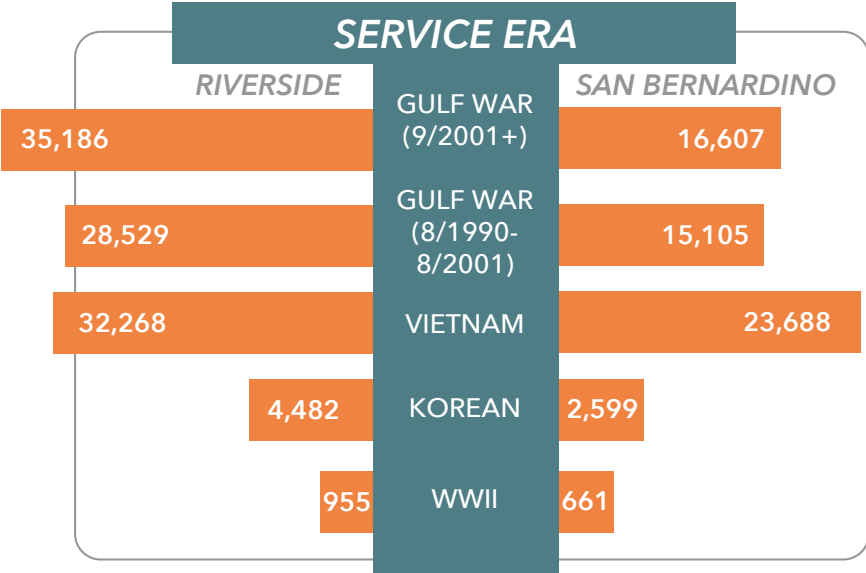
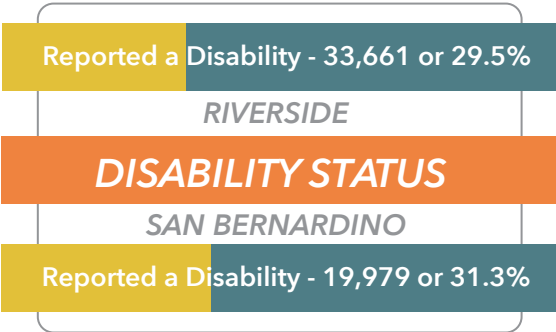
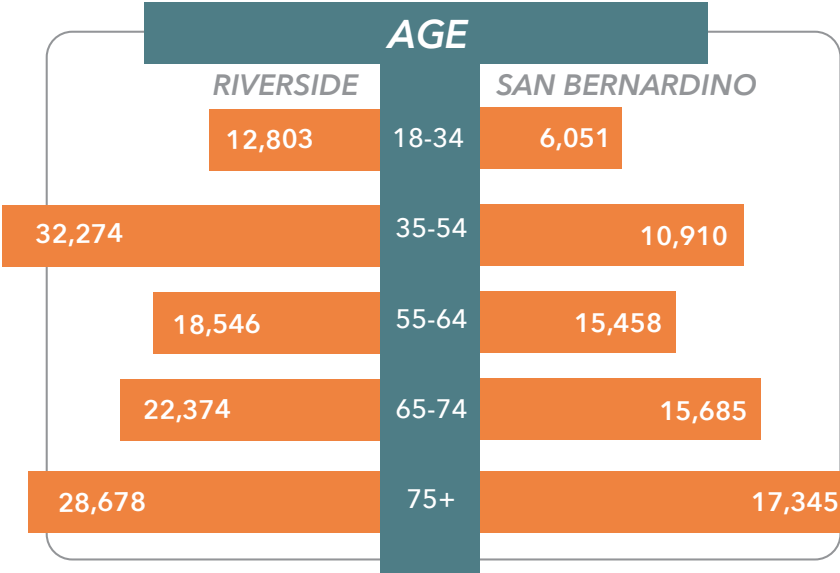
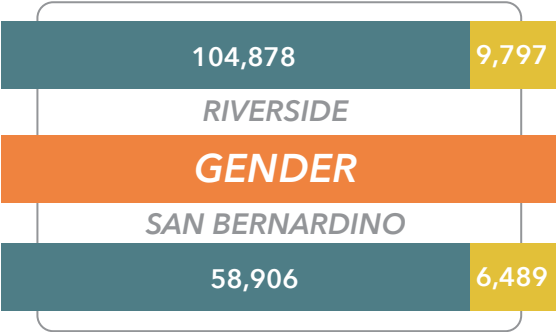
Demographics

by County

In comparison to the neighboring Los Angeles County, when combined the veteran population percentage in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties nearly doubles that of Los Angeles County. This analysis of IE demographics presents an overview of the veteran population within each county.

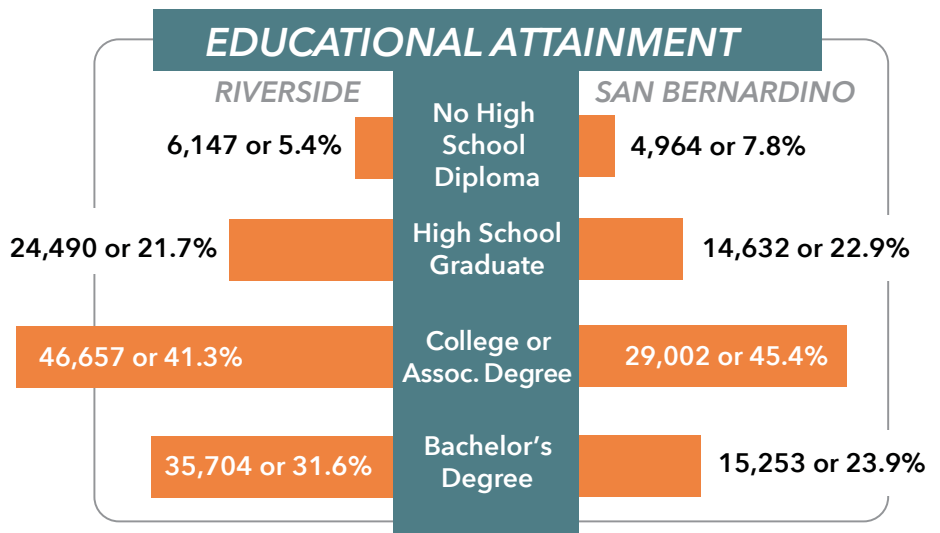
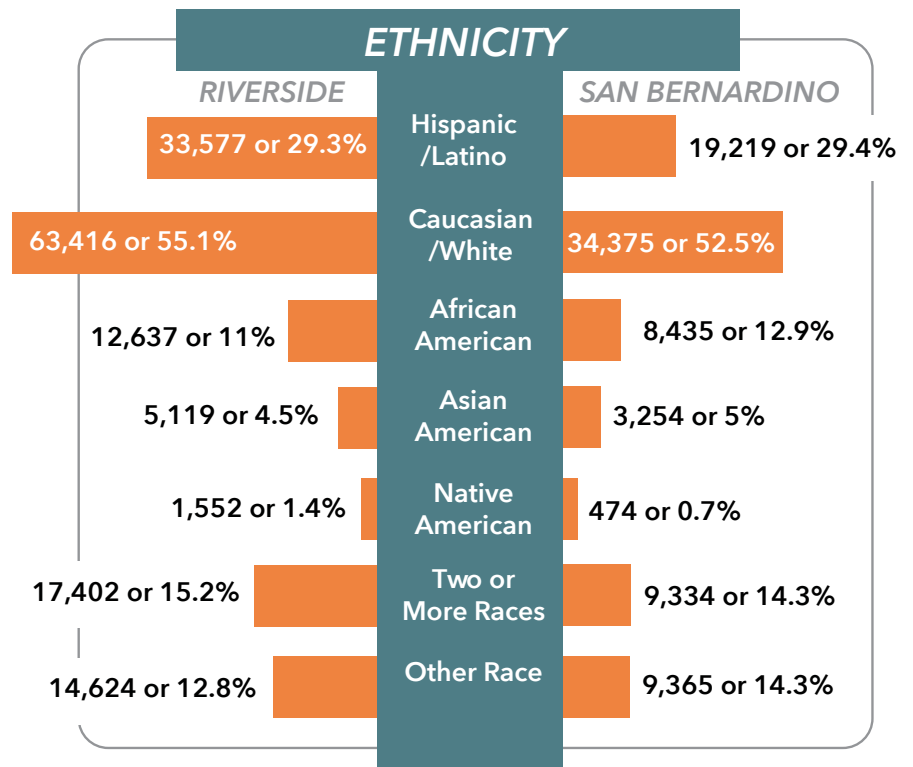
Riverside

San Bernardino



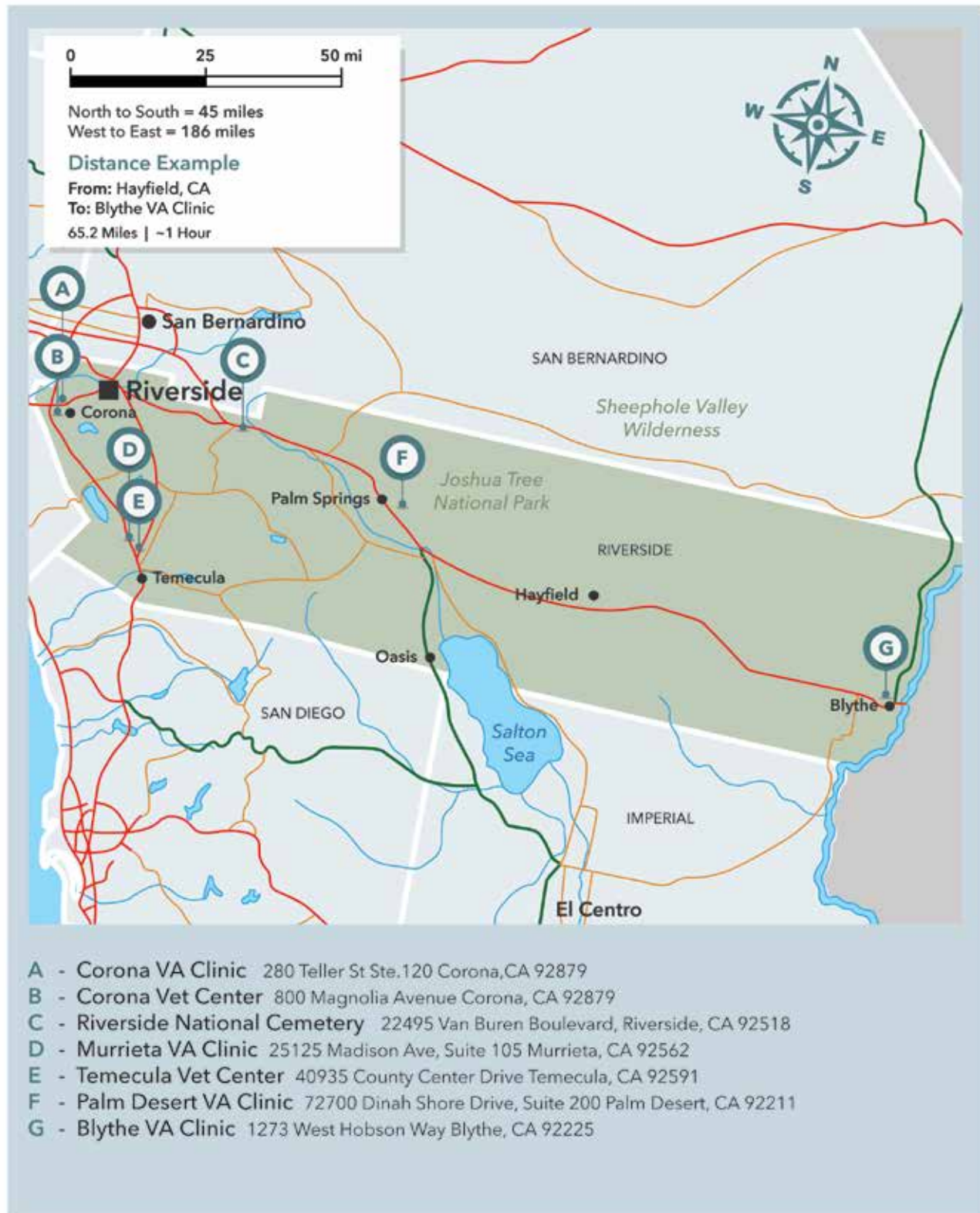
" Veterans are typically very appreciative of information that will help them. "

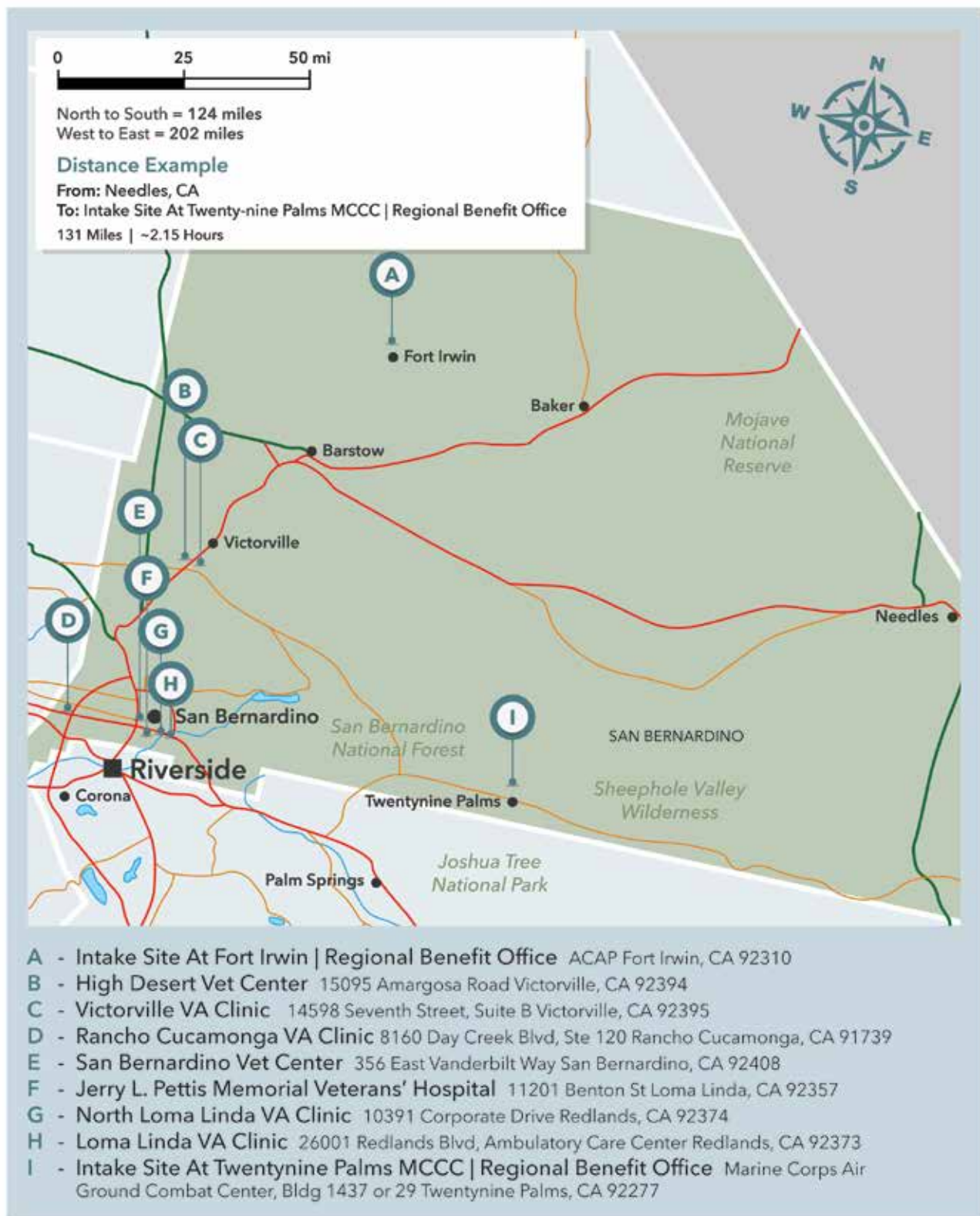
- Healthcare and Wellness Focus Group Participant



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The VA is the federal cabinet-level organization responsible for caring “for those who have served in our nation’s military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.” Locally headquartered at the Loma Linda VA Medical Center in San Bernardino County, the Healthcare System serves all of the Inland Empire and includes eight Health Clinic locations, four Vet Centers, and two Intake Sites (for pre-discharge claims assistance) spread throughout the two counties. There is a VA National Cemetery located in Riverside County. Given the size of the IE, serving the veteran community is a daunting mission that requires the support of community partners and veteran-serving organizations.





Observations and Opportunities

The IE is a strong community that spans two counties, each committed to the support and service of their veterans and families. This section will examine in detail how the IE aligns with the four areas of interest for this study, detailing where the IE has established support for veterans and their families, and highlighting opportunities to tailor efforts and activities to that end. The comments below provide a summary of specific strengths and opportunities, which are followed by detailed discussions of each of the study's focus areas.

"We spend a lot of time on outreach - we go to their units before they get out to try to get information to veterans before they separate. It is a lot of networking to get this information out there."

-Employment Focus Group Participant

Strengths

- Strong community support for veterans and their families.
- The community of the IE is vocal and visible in their support for their veterans.
- Functional partnerships among county and private organizations already exist. There is a passionate and committed nonprofit community that really cares about this community and wants to help our veterans.
- Political officials are interested and invested in our veterans and their journey.

Summary of Recommendations

Consistent themes, which align with established best-practices seen in neighboring counties, emerged during this study. They are summarized below:

- **Awareness** - Veteran awareness of where and how to access the benefits and services they earned. Community awareness of challenges and opportunities of our veterans and their families.
- **Access** - Providing wrap-around services through a public-private partnership and multi-solvers, relying on a "no wrong door" policy for benefits and services.
- **Engagement** - Create a movement of community support to embrace our veterans so they have a better sense of belonging, which in turn strengthens our civic muscle.

These three areas are the basis for a community-based network of veteran-serving organizations that relies on the power of peer-support, similar to Los Angeles Counties Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN).

Healthcare and Wellness



BACKGROUND

The provision of healthcare and wellness services to veterans in the Inland Empire is a multifaceted endeavor. With a sizable veteran population, the region is home to various facilities and programs aimed at ensuring that veterans receive the healthcare, mental health support, and wellness services they deserve. Collaboration between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), local healthcare providers, and nonprofit organizations plays a pivotal role in delivering comprehensive care to veterans. The VA Loma Linda Healthcare System, based in San Bernardino County, serves all veterans across Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The Jerry L. Pettis Memorial Veterans' Hospital is located in Loma Linda, CA, and is supported by eight Health Clinic locations, and four Vet Centers throughout the IE.

The Inland Empire hosts community events and support networks that are instrumental in promoting the physical and emotional well-being of those who have served their country.

The Veteran's Journey

CONNECTING WITH AND SERVING MY COMMUNITY

- *MANAGING PRIMARY CARE & CHRONIC HEALTH ISSUES*
- *RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS*

- *FINDING SOMETHING TO DO*
- *ATTENDING TO HEALTH*

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF SEPARATING

GETTING
OUT

STARTING
UP

TAKING
CARE OF
MYSELF

PUTTING
DOWN
ROOTS



Healthcare and Wellness

STRENGTHS

Committed Veteran-Serving Organizations and Individuals

Health and wellness providers in the Inland Empire are driven by a strong commitment to assisting veterans. Their ongoing efforts reflect a well-established momentum in collaborating and supporting the local veteran population. Providers, peers, and advocates demonstrate a remarkable willingness to work together across county lines and transcend political divides. Through nonprofit organizations and partnerships with a network of veteran-serving entities, these stakeholders are dedicated to ensuring that every veteran receives the healthcare and support they require.

Moreover, across the Inland Empire, stakeholders engage in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to participate in and raise awareness about significant events such as the VA Loma Linda Healthcare System's 11th Annual Mental Health Summit: Suicide Prevention through Community Partnerships. This participation underscores the shared commitment to addressing critical issues and promoting mental health and wellness within the veteran community.

“ One of the biggest challenges in transition is just getting veterans connected to the benefits and services they have earned. Sometimes they don't even know what they have earned. ”

– Healthcare and Wellness
Focus Group Participant

Well-established Battle Rhythm of Meetings

Providers dedicated to the holistic well-being of veterans engage in regular meetings aimed at information sharing and addressing concerns. This represents just a glimpse of the many collaborative efforts involving the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, city and county staff, and veteran-serving organizations, all with the ultimate goal of enhancing the lives of the region's veterans.

The Loma Linda VA hosts weekly Tuesday meetings open to anyone in the region who provides resources to veterans, creating a platform for collaboration and coordination.



Healthcare and Wellness

The San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health conducts monthly Veterans Awareness Sub-Committee meetings, facilitating networking opportunities for community providers. These meetings serve as a forum to exchange information about available resources and upcoming events, ensuring a collective effort to support veterans.



The Inland Empire Women Veterans Collaborative convenes on the fourth Friday of each month. Led by women veterans and community veteran stakeholders, the collaborative actively embraces women veterans and enhances their access to services. It also raises awareness of the unique needs and challenges faced by women veterans, reinforcing a commitment to their well-being.

Strong Support for Veteran Constituents

Congressional, State Senate, and State Assembly members and their dedicated staff actively collaborate with veterans and service providers to address healthcare needs and provide support in various capacities. Their involvement goes beyond individual assistance, as they actively engage in the community and often sponsor events.

For instance, State Senator Kelly Seyarto hosts one of the largest and most comprehensive annual Veterans Expos in the Inland Empire. This event, which was originally initiated by his predecessor, State Senator Melissa Ann Melendez, has seen substantial growth under his leadership. Recent Expos featured over 80 vendors and resource providers, including businesses offering employment opportunities, local nonprofit organizations, and government resource agencies. Veterans, their families, and members of the community are all welcome to attend the Expos, which are open to the public. This active involvement of political leaders and their staff exemplifies their commitment to the well-being of the region's veterans and the broader community.



Healthcare and Wellness

Numerous Resource Fairs

Across the Inland Empire, a multitude of organizations host resource fairs that draw substantial attendance from a diverse array of service providers. These resource fairs serve as valuable platforms for sharing information and staying up-to-date on the latest developments, including new organizations offering services to veterans across various domains.

Healthcare navigators actively participate in these resource fairs, ensuring they are well-informed and equipped with the most current information. Their role extends beyond healthcare, as they are prepared to collaborate with other veteran-serving organizations to address the comprehensive needs of each veteran. Recognizing that an individual facing housing or financial crises may not be immediately ready or able to prioritize their health, healthcare navigators are committed to delivering holistic support that considers the entirety of a veteran's well-being. This collaborative approach underscores the dedication to treating the whole person and improving the overall quality of life for veterans in the Inland Empire.



Recognizing the Growing Women Veterans Population

The population of women veterans has seen remarkable growth, increasing by over 30% in the last decade. To address the unique healthcare needs of female veterans and provide them with a safe and welcoming environment, the Loma Linda VA has established a dedicated Women's Health Center. This center offers comprehensive care and serves as a place where female veterans can connect with one another.



Healthcare and Wellness

In March 2023, the VA Loma Linda Healthcare System organized an open house at the Women's Health Center for Veterans. This event was attended by congressional representatives, VA staff, and community members, offering them the opportunity to tour this innovative new space. Congressman Mark Takano addressed the crowd and participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony, underscoring the commitment to providing specialized and inclusive healthcare services for women veterans in the Inland Empire.

Transportation to Appointments from March Veterans Village

While much of the focus group discussion around transportation addressed challenges, U.S. VETS contributed a bright spot. The organization received a grant to increase their vanpool from one to three vans to transport veterans to and from medical appointments.

OPPORTUNITIES

Referral Management

The Unite US platform currently serves as a valuable tool for physical, mental, and rehabilitation service providers in the Inland Empire. This platform offers a user-friendly interface where providers of various services can easily register and list their offerings. For referring providers and case managers, the platform facilitates the process of obtaining digital consent from their patients. This consent allows them to make referrals to multiple community partners using the platform, streamlining the coordination of care and support for veterans in the region.

Healthcare Pilot Programs

Riverside University Health System-Public Health has initiated a pilot program with a specific focus on promoting health equity and addressing the needs of underserved populations. Following discussions during the Healthcare & Wellness focus group, one of the participants recommended expanding the scope of this pilot to include the veteran population. This proposal highlights the recognition of the unique healthcare requirements and challenges faced by veterans and the intention to ensure their needs are addressed within the framework of health equity and improved access to care.



Healthcare and Wellness

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with CalVet to establish a virtual repository of transition resources for the IE.
- Educate veterans about their VA benefits and services during transition and post transition.
- Partner with organizations that are doing outreach or events that target veterans in the Inland Empire (e.g., US VETS and CalTAP, DAV).
- Partner with DAV (Disabled American Veterans) to support their workshops for benefits; especially claims assistance.
- Through proactive engagement with veteran-serving organizations in the IE, create a positive atmosphere to help the veterans. Facilitate partnerships and build civic muscle.
- Because veterans prefer to speak with and work with veterans, hire a veteran to lead IECF's veteran-focused initiatives.
- Become a visible and vocal proponent of veteran-focused events (e.g., Veteran Stand-downs; Job Fairs; Resource Fairs)



Housing and Homelessness



The Veteran's Journey

BACKGROUND

Permanent housing, marked by stability and predictability, represents a crucial and distinct requirement during each life stage of a veteran's journey. For veterans embarking on a new chapter, securing a place to live is paramount, with homeownership serving as a significant milestone. Meanwhile, aging veterans require support, whether it's maintaining their homes, staying in place, or transitioning to long-term care to address their housing and healthcare needs. Collaborative endeavors involving local organizations, government agencies, and the community play a pivotal role in addressing this issue, ensuring that veterans in the Inland Empire have access to secure and stable housing.

MAINTAINING SOCIAL
& COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

CONNECTING WITH AND
SERVING MY COMMUNITY

- FINDING SOMETHING TO DO
- ATTENDING TO HEALTH

STARTING
UP

PUTTING
DOWN
ROOTS

AGING



Housing and Homelessness

According to the VA, Riverside was one of 83 communities in America to announce an end to veteran homelessness as of November 2022.* Since then, in certain areas, the overall number of veterans experiencing homelessness has risen across both counties according to the most recent *Point-in-Time Counts*:

Riverside Point-in-Time Count Veteran Subpopulation	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
2020	50	112	162
2022	49	77	126
2023	58	198	256

San Bernardino Point-in-Time Count Veteran Subpopulation	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
2020	51	134	185
2022	29	137	166
2023	28	175	203

STRENGTHS

Wraparound Services and Warm Handoffs

In the Inland Empire, veteran-serving organizations are dedicated to addressing the comprehensive needs of veterans and their families. From prominent organizations like U.S. VETS and LightHouse Social Service Centers to grassroots groups like Faith in Action, social workers in the Inland Empire meet veterans and their families where they are and ensure seamless transitions when another provider can better address their needs.



Housing and Homelessness

Best practices emphasize collaboration among service providers and co-facilitation of outreach efforts to establish trust with veterans. Having multiple organizations, mobile crisis units, and clinical therapists available for on-site healthcare services significantly contributes to building this trust. Focus group participants shared an example of U.S. VETS partnering with non-veteran service providers during street outreach events to ensure that no individual in need is turned away. The unified approach aims to provide immediate assistance to those ready and instill trust in those considering help from the providers they encounter.



Regional Equitable Community Building

San Bernardino's Neighborhood Partnership Housing Services (NPHS) plays a vital role in supporting veterans through various initiatives. NPHS assists veterans in accessing capital to finance homeownership, offers educational resources to guide them through the homebuying process, and provides foreclosure intervention services to help veterans preserve their homes. Moreover, NPHS administers a grant program specifically tailored to disabled seniors, including a significant number of veterans, to address essential home repairs. Additionally, NPHS is actively involved in helping homeowners enhance climate resiliency, thus making homes more resilient to wildfires.

"Our Homelessness Outreach Teams now include behavioral health specialists so we can address the health and mental health aspect of life while we are addressing homelessness."

- Housing and Homelessness
Focus Group Participant



Housing and Homelessness

Shared Information Systems

The implementation of information systems that are uniformly adopted in both counties greatly enhances service providers' ability to coordinate care for veterans and their families in need. The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), a veterans affairs program used in both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, serves to ensure equitable housing stability services for low-income veteran families, whether they are currently residing in permanent housing or in the process of transitioning.



OPPORTUNITIES

Cultivate a Culture of Philanthropy

Collaborations with philanthropic organizations offer the potential to significantly enhance fundraising efforts, allowing veteran-serving organizations to focus more on their core competencies in assisting veterans. The diversification of funding sources becomes essential since certain government funding can be insufficient or come with overly restrictive conditions that hinder achieving their goals. Within the Riverside and San Bernardino Continuums of Care, various veteran-serving organizations often compete for limited funding resources. Increasing awareness about this growing region and its community-funding requirements can help these organizations secure adequate funding to ultimately resolve the issue of veterans experiencing homelessness, rather than merely making incremental progress.



Housing and Homelessness

Investing in the Population that Serves Veterans

Allocate funds to update and maintain both human and information resources. Provider burnout and compassion fatigue pose challenges and can lead to knowledge management issues, including the understanding of each individual veteran's case and awareness of available resources.

Give top priority to the health and well-being of community caregivers who tend to those in need and address the issue of turnover in these critical roles. By setting a standard that highlights the Inland Empire's commitment to caring for others, it becomes evident that the community's ability to provide effective care is linked to the well-being of those in caregiving roles.

Compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondhand trauma are key factors contributing to staff turnover. Unaddressed staff turnover results in knowledge management challenges and disrupts trust in long-term veterans cases. Given the considerable time it often takes to build a veteran's trust, it becomes imperative to ensure a seamless transition from one case manager to another, especially when someone is departing or retiring from their position.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with veteran-serving organizations to develop a veteran-specific coordinated entry system for proper reintegration into the civilian sector.
- Case Management
 - Wrap around services are necessary to continue to support the veterans in their journey to achieve a sense of achievement and accomplishment.
 - Unify the data collected by veteran-serving organizations to develop a comprehensive understanding of homelessness across the IE. (This can apply to all veteran-focused services, not only homelessness).
 - Leverage that data to develop a case for support.
 - Provide mobile services to veterans in specific communities with limited transportation available.
 - Provide a warm handoff to organizations that can solve veteran problems.
- Case Workers
 - Staff turnover is a big issue with work focused on veterans because of compassion fatigue. Promote the health and wellbeing of employees in addition to that of the veteran.



Education

BACKGROUND

Service in the military provides several critical skills for veterans. Nonetheless, post-service education is a crucial step for veterans reinventing themselves. Education offers veterans the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge that can help them transition successfully into civilian life, including finding employment. Education improves veterans' quality of life by enhancing their personal and professional development. Additionally, it provides a sense of purpose and a pathway to long-term career opportunities, helping veterans contribute positively to their community. Finally, education supports their mental and emotional well-being, aiding in the reintegration process and mitigating potential challenges they may face post-service.

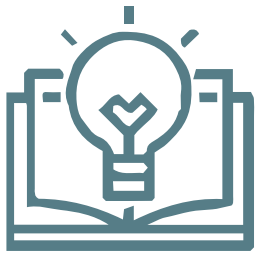
The Veteran's Journey

ACQUIRING THE APPROPRIATE EDUCATION,
NEW SKILLS, AND CREDENTIALS

- FINDING SOMETHING TO DO
- ATTENDING TO HEALTH



Education



STRENGTHS

Passionate Education Stakeholders

Education stakeholders are passionate about attracting veterans to the Inland Empire, helping them get the most out of their benefits, and preparing them for successful careers within the community. They recognize veterans need assistance navigating the next steps in their careers, whether it is a journey into higher education, vocational or technical schooling, or apprenticeships.

Education Finance Opportunities

California offers more finance opportunities for education than any other state. G.I. Bill benefits attract separating veterans looking for what to do next. Other benefits are available to veterans with dependents preparing to enter college. The California Promise Grant and the CalVet Fee Waiver offer financial incentives for veterans and their families to pursue education opportunities here. In addition, California community colleges are required to admit any California resident possessing a high school diploma or equivalent. California community colleges may admit any nonresident possessing a high school diploma or equivalent or any person over the age of 18 who, in the judgment of the board, is capable of profiting from the instruction offered. Community colleges may admit minors who do not hold high school diplomas, or equivalent, to its credit courses as special part-time or special full-time students.

“ The traditional route of higher education may not fit a veteran’s life goals. Veterans need to understand that one pathway is not perfect for everyone – some need to consider industry or the trades. ”

-Education Focus Group Participant



Education

OPPORTUNITIES

Full Adoption of California MAP

The California Military Articulation Platform (MAP) Initiative is a home-grown Inland Empire initiative based out of Norco College, which is part of the Riverside Community College District and the larger California Community Colleges system. MAP equates Joint Services Transcripts (JSTs) to military Credits for Prior Learning (CPLs), reducing the time a veteran must stay in school. Adopting the MAP initiative across the Inland Empire would positively impact the veteran journey beyond class credit. Knowing their service translates into credit validates their time in service and adds value to their service experience. MAP also alleviates some financial burden of earning a degree or certification and frees up space for more students to take courses.

Scholarship Application Assistance

IECF provides scholarship application support for the Inland Empire community. By submitting a single application at iegives.org, students are shown any scholarships for which they're eligible. Raising awareness of this resource among veterans Service Coordinators and college counselors can promptly ease some of the educational challenges veterans encounter, simplifying their decision-making processes and reducing the time and effort required for scholarship research and applications.



Education

Education and Employment Stakeholder Collaboration

Local higher education and workforce development stakeholders are keen to collaborate in identifying workforce needs and opportunities within the Inland Empire. Their joint efforts can inform veterans about local career options, as well as the required degrees and coursework.

Introducing employers to the VA Work-study program to expand work-study opportunities benefits both colleges and businesses.

The dedicated employees of the local America's Job Centers in Riverside and San Bernardino counties are enthusiastic about connecting with local employers.



More Funding for Veterans Resource Centers

Robust Veterans Resource Centers within higher education institutions are a compelling draw for veterans and contribute to their successful academic journeys. Veterans value organizational structure and effective leadership. Augmented financial support for staffing, volunteers, and the management of these centers, along with incentives like stipends for faculty chairpersons, could significantly enhance the success of both veterans and the colleges they attend.

Outreach to Recently Separated Service Members

The Education focus group primarily emphasized the need for increased awareness. Often, separating service members either don't fully engage with or feel overwhelmed by the information offered during the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Informed veterans are better equipped to choose their optimal educational path, whether it be at a community college, a four-year institution, a vocational or trade school, or through an apprenticeship. Collaboration with TAP programs at nearby military bases provides an opportunity for local and regional educators to get the right information to veterans.



Education

Peer Mentors

For many veterans, the most trusted voice is another veteran. Veteran peer mentors operate independently of educational institutions and can offer trusted guidance to veterans navigating their post-military paths. While career counselors and veterans Services Coordinators within colleges play vital roles, an external mentor can provide a more objective perspective, aiding veterans in making informed decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with IE colleges and universities to establish Veterans Resource Centers that are staffed by veteran peers.
 - “One stop shop.”
 - Work with educators/professors to increase engagement with veteran students.
 - Childcare – Many veteran students work full-time jobs as well.
- Develop an IE Work-Study program. Work with IE colleges and universities and IE employers to develop a work-study program and a study-to-employment program. Determine interest among veterans in pursuing counseling as a career, since veterans are more comfortable speaking to their peers.
- As part of IE support to veteran transition, be a vocal advocate for the California MAP initiative.
 - Full implementation of CA MAP across the region to ensure veterans derive the best benefit of their experience in service.
 - Develop an oversight component of the program to ensure colleges and universities are implementing best practices consistently for their veteran students.
- As part of IE support to veteran transition, develop an improved orientation to the education landscape, including undergraduate, trades, technical training and certificate program options available to veterans.
 - Leverage veteran success stories.
 - Must be veteran peer-led.
- Partner with local industry to develop a pathway for transition from education/training to employment.



Employment and Career Services



The Veteran's Journey

BACKGROUND

Employment and career services for veterans in the Inland Empire actively assist veterans in securing meaningful employment and advancing their careers. These services offer job placement assistance, resume building, interview coaching, and networking opportunities, empowering veterans to successfully transition into civilian work roles and contribute to the region's workforce.

American Job Centers (AJCs), often called OneStops, are designed to support anyone who walks through their doors, but veterans receive a priority of service. Additionally, several sub-programs are operating with congressional funding to provide services to veterans through staffing in these centers.

The Inland Empire has at least 17 named Veterans Employment Representatives staffing these Workforce and Employment Development Centers across Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Riverside County has three locations: Riverside, Hemet, and Moreno Valley – San Bernardino County also has three locations in the East Valley, the West Valley, and the High Desert.

- *TRANSLATING MY MILITARY SKILLS*
- *FINDING THE RIGHT JOB*
- *FINDING ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INCOME*

- *FINDING SOMETHING TO DO*



Employment and Career Services

STRENGTHS

Hiring Events and Support

Hiring events are abundant in the Inland Empire, with U.S. VETS hosting quarterly events at March Air Reserve Base to connect veterans and their families with employers. In September 2023, they organized the Camo to Careers Job & Resource Fair, featuring participation from over thirty local partners. Local government officials and their staff have established strong partnerships, actively keeping veterans informed through Information Fairs and facilitating direct connections with other community partners.

Collaboration Among County and Community Partners

County, Veterans Affairs, and special population subgroup meetings take place monthly, fostering collaboration among community partners to disseminate information on job opportunities, resume workshops, and events focused on professional attire and success. The Loma Linda VA maintains a strong working relationship with the San Bernardino Employment Development Department (EDD). When job openings arise at the VA, Loma Linda Human Resources promptly notifies EDD. Additionally, they reach out to EDD when a HUD-VASH program successfully houses a veteran, ensuring they receive assistance in securing employment.

CalJOBS Job Bank

Employers who fully register with the CalJOBS Job Bank gain complimentary access to recruitments, candidate searches, and the National Job Exchange, which includes Indeed.

CareerOneStop, American Job Centers California (AJCC) are Strong

Employees at the Inland Empire AJCC are actively informed about and actively engaged with federal and state programs, as well as national VSOs, to facilitate benefits for both veteran employees and employers seeking to hire veterans.

- Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)
- Work Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
- Veterans Hiring Incentive Programs
- DOL VETS Hire Vets Medallion Program
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) Assistance Program
- AMVETS
- Apprenticeship programs

Community College Career Pipelines

The Veterans Resource Center at Riverside Community College District (RCCD) facilitates connections between veteran students and local and regional employment opportunities. RCCD also implements the California MAP initiative, which converts the Joint Services Transcript (JST) into college credits, potentially saving veteran students up to thirty credits when pursuing a degree.



Employment and Career Services

OPPORTUNITIES

Pilot Programs - Local organizations like Riverside Community College District (RCCD) and U.S. VETS actively participate in pilot initiatives aimed at recruiting and hiring veterans within the community. The success of these programs paves the way for increased involvement from both potential employers and veteran candidates.

RCCD operates the Inland Empire Technical Trade Center, fostering collaboration with various industries in the region and partnering with trade and labor unions to establish paid apprenticeships and internships, thereby enhancing the local workforce. Given the anticipated significant growth in the Inland Empire over the next 15-20 years, the objective is to provide applicants with paid training opportunities that lead directly to well-compensated, sustainable jobs at both local and regional levels.



The Inland Empire Naval X Tech Bridge, strategically aligned with the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Corona Division (NSWC Corona), has formed a strategic partnership with RCCD. This partnership functions as a manufacturing incubator, assisting individuals with military backgrounds in transitioning their skills into local employment opportunities. It also promotes entrepreneurship and supports veteran small business owners in navigating the intricacies of securing government contracts.

U.S. VETS achieved a successful collaboration with United Parcel Service (UPS) during the 2022 holiday season to train and hire veterans for managerial roles. Amidst the seasonal hiring surge, six veterans completed a rigorous nine-week management program. All six met the program's requirements, resulting in UPS hiring three veterans as managers, while the other three opted to remain with the company in non-managerial positions. [Related article on this pilot: <https://about.ups.com/us/en/our-stories/people-led/ups-trains-veterans-for-careers.html>]



Employment and Career Services

Veterans' Employer Information Sessions

A Riverside County Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) created a Veterans' Employer Information Session to solicit feedback from local employers' decision-makers and hiring managers. This presents an opportunity to establish this as an Inland Empire best practice, implementing it across all major regional employers with a robust community outreach plan and support.

- The LVER forged working relationships with decision-makers from prominent local organizations, connecting them with the AJCC's programs, hiring incentives, and veteran candidates. In exchange, these decision-makers provided feedback on the outcomes of veteran candidates who were not selected. This action enabled the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists in the Riverside EDD team to address any shortcomings with the veterans, assisting them in becoming stronger candidates for future opportunities.
- Prior to adopting this best practice, some veterans applied repeatedly and received nothing more than an email stating they were not selected, with the suggestion to reapply. Now, the team can provide these veteran candidates with personalized, constructive, and positive feedback to enhance their readiness for future job interviews.



“ We host job fairs - Camo to Careers - every quarter at U.S. Vets so we can bring employers here and overcome some of those barriers to access for veterans as well as their spouses or other family members they bring with them. ”

- Employment and Career Services
Focus Group Participant



Employment and Career Services

Increased Awareness of Federal and State Transition Training Programs

Off-Base Transition Training (OBTT) is a pilot program initiated by the Department of Labor, encompassing the subjects covered in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for separating service members. Frequently, service members find themselves overwhelmed by the information provided in TAP, or they may lack the life experience to fully grasp its relevance. DOL VETS has developed OBTT to offer training tailored to veterans, those currently serving in the National Guard and Reserve, and their spouses. This program includes online webinars and some in-person classes held in proximity to the Inland Empire, primarily in parts of Los Angeles County and Orange County.

California Transition Assistance Program (CalTAP), created by CalVet, serves as a platform to educate and link veterans of all eras with their rightful federal and state benefits. CalTAP offers five distinct pathways that veterans can explore to aid them in understanding the array of benefits and services accessible to them: Core Curriculum, Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, and Service Providers. While CalTAP conducts its training through online webinars, there is potential to advocate for CalVet to arrange in-person training sessions in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with local employers and state and federal employment/labor staff (work force leaders) to:
 - Develop paid apprenticeship opportunities.
 - Organize quarterly Informational/Career Fairs.
- Develop a veteran-led program to increase veteran skills in:
 - Networking.
 - Interview skills – soft skills.
 - Résumé writing to link military skills to employment requirements/needs in the IE.



Benefits

Community
Engagement

Special
Populations

Focus group participants and interviewees discussed benefits, community engagement, and special populations across each area of interest.

Benefits

The focus group participants and individual interviewees highlighted challenges and obstacles that veterans face in accessing their entitled benefits. Several organizations, such as Loma Linda VA and CalVet, endeavor to tackle these concerns by raising awareness about the available benefits. Additionally, staff members from Congressional, State Senate, and State Assembly offices are actively engaged in assisting veterans and their families on a case-by-case basis, facilitating their connection to the benefits they deserve. Furthermore, Veterans Service Organizations employ healthcare navigators and housing caseworkers who play a vital role in guiding veterans and their families through the process of comprehending and securing their entitled benefits.

Community Engagement

Addressing the challenges and obstacles veterans face in the Inland Empire requires a mechanism or platform through which individuals and organizations offering their services can coordinate and encourage veterans and their family members, reducing redundancy and creating efficiencies in helping veterans receive the benefits and services they earned. It is important to engage the community in serving and supporting the veterans who are part of the community.



Benefits Community Engagement Special Populations

Special Populations

The Inland Empire is home to a diverse population of veterans who have unique needs and challenges. Addressing the needs of these special and often underserved populations has the potential to become a driving force for broader change. Some challenges include:

1. Women Veterans:

- The growing population of women veterans brings about a unique set of needs. Women veterans often have distinct healthcare needs and may require gender-specific services. Providing access to specialized women's health clinics and support for military sexual trauma survivors is crucial.
- Sufficient transitional housing for women veterans is often a barrier to getting women veterans experiencing homelessness the assistance they need.

2. Senior Veterans, Widows, and Widowers:

- Elderly spouses of veterans often require support and care for themselves. Many of these spouses have put their career aspirations on hold to provide flexible support for their loved one's military career, leading to their basic needs being closely tied to the veterans' benefits. When the veteran spouse passes away, their surviving widow or widower may encounter challenges in navigating the changes in benefits and could require supplemental assistance to maintain their quality of life. It is crucial to provide guidance and resources to help these elderly spouses transition through these significant life changes and access the support they need.
- Elderly veterans may require long-term care, home healthcare services, and support for aging-related health issues. Assisting them in accessing VA benefits and healthcare resources is important.

3. Homeless Veterans:

Homeless veterans face housing instability and require targeted outreach and services, including shelter, transitional housing, and access to mental health support.

4. Disabled Veterans:

Disabled veterans may need assistance with mobility, adaptive housing, and accessibility to healthcare services. Specialized medical care for injuries and disabilities is essential.



Benefits

Community Engagement

Special Populations

5. Veterans with PTSD and Mental Health Conditions:

Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health conditions require accessible mental health services, counseling, and support groups.

6. Veterans with Substance Use Disorders:

Veterans struggling with substance use disorders need access to addiction treatment and rehabilitation services, as well as support for recovery and relapse prevention.

7. LGBTQ+ Veterans:

LGBTQ+ veterans may face unique challenges related to identity and discrimination. Providing inclusive and respectful healthcare and mental health services is vital.

8. Rural Veterans:

Veterans in rural areas may have limited access to healthcare and resources. Expanding telehealth services and mobile clinics can help bridge the gap.

9. Immigrant Veterans:

The Inland Empire boasts a substantial immigrant population, with a 2018 University of California, Riverside report indicating that “One in five residents of the Inland Empire is an immigrant.” Immigrant and first-generation citizen veterans frequently return home to live with their parents upon separation from the military. However, these parent caregivers may not be well-acquainted with veterans Affairs and the benefits their children have earned. It is imperative to conduct outreach to immigrant communities, disseminate public service announcements, and ensure the availability of informational brochures in multiple languages to effectively reach and support these caregivers. This approach will enable them to understand and access the resources and benefits that their veteran children have rightfully earned.

10. Veterans in the Criminal Justice System:

Veterans involved in the criminal justice system may benefit from specialized diversion programs, mental health courts, and reentry support to reduce recidivism.

11. Student Veterans:

Student veterans pursuing higher education need assistance with GI Bill benefits, academic support, and career services to transition successfully into civilian life.

Benefits Community Engagement Special Populations

12. Minority Veterans:

Minority veterans, including Black, Hispanic, and Native American veterans, may have unique cultural and social needs. Tailoring services to their backgrounds and experiences is important. Native American veterans may need culturally competent care and support that respects their tribal affiliations and traditions.

13. Disabled Veteran Caregivers:

Spouses and family members serving as caregivers for disabled veterans require support, respite care, and assistance in navigating the VA system.

14. Veterans with TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury):

Veterans with traumatic brain injuries need access to rehabilitation services, cognitive therapy, and support for managing cognitive and physical challenges.

Recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of these special veteran populations in the Inland Empire is vital to providing comprehensive and inclusive support for all veterans in the region. Tailored services and outreach can help ensure that every veteran receives the care and resources they deserve.



Southern California Veteran Initiative

Several observations rose to the surface during this study that highlight the tremendous energy and effort San Bernadino and Riverside Counties are investing in supporting veterans and their families. Existing partnerships among nonprofits, county and corporate resources set a strong foundation for serving our veterans, and several of the initiatives and programs align with best practices seen in neighboring counties in Southern California. Nonetheless, for all the positive work being done, there is no single organization in the Inland Empire to coordinate activities, prevent duplication or create efficiencies to maximize the impact of information and resources available.

The recommendations discussed in this report point to a long-term solution to improve and maximize veteran access to housing, wrap-around services (i.e., health, mental health, substance abuse support, education, training, employment, benefits, legal), and veteran-serving organizations. Developing this long-term solution will require a traditional organizational design effort to develop an inter-county organization, coupled with a more entrepreneurial, flexible and adaptive approach to providing services in an evolving and adapting environment.

Given the scope of this effort, success will rely on a wide range of deeply committed partners to help guide the effort, including County departments, government entities at the local, state, and federal levels, families, advocacy groups, academic institutions, the media, a vast network of providers, and many others in the public and private sectors. Aligning these partners will require **Executive Sponsorship** that has the authority to plan, implement and manage this solution in both counties of the IE.

This long-term solution will leverage the strengths and will address the opportunities and recommendations identified in this report to increase awareness and access for the rich set of services and support already available to veterans and their families in the Inland Empire. While many veteran-serving organizations in the IE are engaged in serving and supporting our veterans, no single entity has the authority or influence to provide the infrastructure, elicit collaboration, or effectively coordinate a focused and impactful application of benefits and services available. This can be accomplished through the establishment of a Coordinating Authority to improve awareness and access to services.

Recommended Next Steps

Founded on the successful Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN) that has been operating in LA County for the past three years, establishing a similar organization in the IE as the Coordinating Authority is a credible, proven model that can work to facilitate access to the housing, health and wellness, education and employment services that are spread among the government and non-government agencies. The scope of the initial undertaking in the Inland Empire should include:

1. Solicitation of **Executive Sponsorship** for the design and establishment of a VPAN-like organization, the Coordinating Authority in the Inland Empire that will serve as a catalyst to improve the hope, wellbeing, and life trajectory of IE veterans and their families.
2. Using the VPAN structure as a model, establish a cross-counties team to validate the concept and design and implement a peer-based organization that will align with the Inland Empire requirements.
3. Develop a coalition of partners that already provide services to veterans and their families to form the supportive infrastructure for this peer-access network.
4. Develop a time-phased Strategic Action Plan to guide the design, funding, leadership, staffing, governance, and performance measurement for this organization. This plan should be organized around a series of Goals and Objectives for People, Processes, Functionality and Tools required to establish and operate such an organization.

As the Coordinating Authority, this organization will integrate and synchronize the collective efforts across the IE and will increase awareness of easily identifiable access pathways, reduce or remove existing barriers to access, and increase the engagement of veterans and their families most in need of the benefits and services available to them.

Veteran Peer Access Network

The need:

Despite the wealth of resources available, there is a lack of awareness and access to benefits and services for veterans and their families.

The solution:

A community-based network of Veteran Peer Advocates, working in the communities they support to connect veterans and their families with the benefits and service providers.

Supported by:

A robust network of health, housing, education, and employment service providers committed to serving veterans, working through a case management process to ensure a “no wrong door” approach to service and support.

The process:

A Veteran Peer Advocate engages with a veteran in need; works with that veteran to understand the challenge(s); finds the right provider in the community support network; makes a warm handoff of the veteran to the right caseworker or service provider; tracks the veteran to resolution; closes case.

Supporting Organizations

- American Job Centers California (AJCC) Employment Development Department - Riverside County
 - AJCC Employment Development Department - San Bernardino County
 - CA MAP Initiative
 - Cal State San Bernardino
 - CalVet
 - City of Riverside Mayor Lock Dawson and Staff
 - City of Riverside Housing Authority
 - Congressman Mark Takano and Staff
 - Department of Veterans Affairs - Loma Linda
 - Inland SoCal United Way and Inland SoCal 211+
 - Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative
 - Neighborhood Partnership Housing Services, Inc.
 - Norco College
 - Office of Assemblyman Bill Essayli (FOV Working Group Meetings)
 - Office of California State Senator Kelly Seyarto (host of largest Veterans Expo in the IE, FOV Working Group Meetings and Focus Group Participant)
 - Office of Congressman Ken Calvert (FOV Working Group Meetings and Focus Groups)
 - Office of Congressman Jay Obernolte (FOV Working Group Meeting)
 - Office of Congressman Raul Ruiz (Focus Group Participant)
 - Riverside County Continuum of Care (CoC)
 - Riverside County Sheriff's Department
 - Riverside University Health Systems
 - Riverside Community College District
 - San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
 - San Bernardino Department of Mental Health
 - University of Southern California
 - U.S. VETS
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1956
-

We would like to salute our partners who made this report possible.

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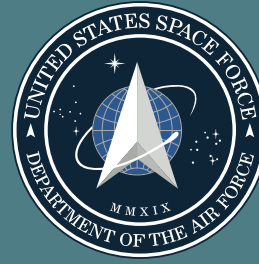


" Thank you for your continued dedication to the well-being of our veterans. We look forward to your feedback and collaboration as we strive to enhance the services and benefits available to our local heroes. "

R. Michelle Decker

President and CEO, Inland Empire Community Foundation





Resources

Veterans Crisis Line

*Available 24/7: Dial 988 then Press 1, chat live, or text 838255.
A caring, qualified responder will listen and help.*

If in Crisis, Reach Out for Help - NAMI Washington DC

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Inland Empire Community Foundation: www.iegives.org

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