



Veteran Focus Group Discussion Topics [This can be adapted for Active Duty Service Members/Reservists]

Introductory talking points

- Introductions – overview of project, staff, partners
 - Introductions of staff and partners
 - Introducing the program
 - Funded to develop a project that will support veterans returning home and rejoining their communities
 - Goals of the project:
 - Increase community understanding of veterans' experiences and needs
 - Strengthen connections between veterans and the broader community
 - Strengthen connections between and among veterans
 - This is phase 1 of a larger project. To start we are trying to speak with as many people as possible and collect information to help inform what direction the project will go – we don't want to just make something up, since you are the ones with the actual experience of what it's like to be a veteran, what things have helped you adjust to being back home, and what challenges veterans face
 - Confidentiality
 - The information that you share with us today is very important to us. We would like to record these conversations so we can go back and listen to them and pick out key points, but the conversations will remain anonymous
 - We will not be asking direct questions about your personal experiences in the military – you don't need to share anything you are uncomfortable with. We are interested in hearing veterans' perspectives on what resources have been especially helpful, what resources are lacking, and what the barriers to accessing or using resources have been
 - Housekeeping
 - Feel free to get up and enjoy the refreshments throughout the discussion
 - Identify location of rest rooms
 - We ask that you turn off your cell phones, or put them on vibrate
 - Each person's contribution to the discussion is valuable. We want everyone to have the opportunity to share their thoughts, and for us to accurately capture what you say. Please, one person speak at a time and be respectful of others' points of view.

Introductory and starter questions (these can be adapted, or icebreaker added)

- Where and when did you serve?
- What is the best thing about being a veteran?
- What is the most challenging thing about being a veteran?



Veterans and Their Communities

- From what you've seen and heard from [Vietnam era vets; vets returning from more recent deployment], how would you describe what it is like to be a veteran in your community?
- What do veterans find most challenging when returning home from deployment?
- What things do returning veterans find most comforting/supportive in their community?
 - What are the things (Probe: services, other vets, recognition of service, jobs, activities, faith community, safety/safe space, quiet, seclusion, companionship...)
 - Do you think the community should play a role in helping returning veterans? IF so, what does that look like?
 - Talk about availability of colleagues, or "brothers"/"sisters" when veterans return(ed) to their community?
 - Do family members have the necessary support systems while military personnel are away? Please explain.
 - What help or support do families need to support their returning family members?
 - What strategies do veterans use to adjust to returning home, or to civilian life?
- What support is not/was not available for returning service members that you think needs to be, or that you wish was? Please explain
- What were/are things you think are important for the community to understand about veterans?
- What are some ways that might give community members a better understanding of veterans and what they have to offer?
- What do you see as roles for veterans in the community?
- How important is it to get together with peers (men/women who have had the same or similar military experiences)?
 - Does this happen often?
 - Currently, where are the places, or opportunities to get together?
 - If you could create a place, what would it look/be like?
 - Who would create it?
 - What would be the best way to let veterans know that a place like that was available for them?

We'd like to hear your thoughts on what activities, community programs, events might bring veterans or veterans and their families together

Are there any questions or topics that you feel are important that we haven't discussed?