Job-Driven Training Principle Four: Measure Results
MACV Spotlight on Service Case Study

In 2014, the Federal government held a review of federal training programs in order to identify and implement steps to make these programs more "job-driven." Job-driven training, defined as "training that is responsive to the needs of employers in order to effectively place ready-to-work Americans in jobs that are available now or train them in the skills needed for better jobs," includes seven core principles.

Seven Core Principles of Job-Driven Training

- Principle One: Engage with Employers
- Principle Two: Earn and Learn
- Principle Three: Use the Data
- **Principle Four: Measure Results**
- Principle Five: Stepping Stones
- Principle Six: Opening Doors
- Principle Seven: Regional Partnerships

Principle Four, Measure Results, states that programs should measure and evaluate the employment outcomes of participants to assess the quality of training programs. Having this information allows training providers and job seekers to make informed choices about the training they choose. For agencies serving homeless veterans, providing a hand up to training and employment requires a comprehensive package of services that support employment goals. Measuring results allows these service providers to make informed choices about investments in various program activities.

For more than 25 years, the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) has served veterans in need and their families by providing comprehensive services including employment, transitional and permanent supportive housing, financial assistance for housing, utilities, transportation, and legal services. MACV has a long history of measuring the results of these programs to drive local resource planning, to include planning out how they use funds devoted to their employment programs.

In 2014, MACV served more than 1,800 veterans and their families across Minnesota through a variety of government and privately funded programs. Each of these programs – including three HVRP grants, two SSVF grants, and five HUD Continuum of Care grants– comes with its own data collection requirements on demographics, services rendered, and outcomes. Looking at the enormous amounts of data being collected, and the staff time required to collect it, MACV President and CEO Kathleen Vitalis

Grantee Spotlight: Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)

HVRP grantee since: 1999

Current HVRP grants: Three

Other federal grants/services: GPD Transitional Housing, SSVF, HUD SHP, ESG, CDBG

Kathleen Vitalis, President and CEO; Nathaniel Saltz, Program Director

started to wonder: How could this data be leveraged to advance the mission and address longer term goals that support employment retention?

Identifying Social Return on Investment Using Data

As they thought about and discussed it, MACV staff came to the realization that while they understood that the true measure of success went beyond the goals of each individual program (e.g. employment for HVRP) to the full success of each veteran coming into contact with the agency, what was needed was an overarching method to quantify and analyze this holistic success, a challenge while data was being collected on a program by program basis. With this philosophy in mind, MACV sought out and received grant funding to perform a Social Return on Investment (SROI – see insert) study. The goal of the project is to measure and evaluate the social impact of MACV's work and demonstrate results at the community level.

The project began with a thorough examination of MACV's Theory of Change as represented by the logic model. The logic model describes MACV's vision of how its services will impact veterans by capturing inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, both short- and long-term. Based on the program inputs – everything from staff time to in-kind donations – the evaluators will determine the costs of the program. Direct costs will be taken from MACV's financial statements, while indirect costs such as volunteer time are estimated. Indirect costs to society, such as the increased public benefits veterans receive through assistance from MACV staff, will also be included. A similar process will be applied to determine the benefits of MACV's programs, including increased personal income from employment and reduced public health care and shelter utilization costs.

Calculating the Case for Investment

The vast majority of information needed for the project comes from data that MACV already collects. Where necessary, program and financial data will be supplemented through surveys and/or the redesign of current processes and forms. Once all of the data is collected, the SROI will be calculated using a fairly simple formula:

$$ \text{SROI} = \frac{\text{Present value of all benefits}}{\text{Present value of all costs}} $$

The resulting SROI will provide a rate of return for each dollar invested in MACV – i.e. $1 invested in MACV yields $xxx in benefits to participants, taxpayers, and society as a whole.

Results from the SROI project are due in Spring 2016, but the preliminary data suggests a strong return on investment. MACV plans to use the results to leverage additional funding for support of its statewide mission and programs to include employment services and training. The data collection review process has already helped MACV to assess their current data collection tools and make adjustments to better align their data collection with their long-term goals.