

Equity and Inclusion Plan

Dane County Veterans Service Office

VISION: The Dane County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) assists veterans and family members of veterans in a manner that is fair, equitable, and accessible. We will engage our veterans and family members of those veterans with cultural respect and humility, and we will remain ever vigilant of our mission to leave no veteran or family member of a veteran behind regardless of race, gender or gender identity, disability, or sexual orientation.

CONTEXT: The CVSO is by its nature a tool to increase equity and inclusion broadly for Dane County. On any given day, we are helping a disabled veteran connect with compensation benefits for service-related injuries, advocating for a veteran of color who unjustly received a military discharge characterized as less than fully honorable, or providing a Veterans Ride with Pride bus pass to a veteran receiving needs-based income VA benefit, to name just a few examples. In short, equity and inclusion are inherent in the work we do – our challenge is to *reach out and provide our services in a manner that is appealing to and inclusive of ALL of our veterans.*

EQUITY AND INCLUSION PLAN: The CVSO has enacted an equity and inclusion plan consisting of three pillars:

LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT – ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT – COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH

I. LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

- a. Above all, the leaders of the office (Dane County Veterans Service Director and Deputy Veterans Service Director) will always lead by example by treating each and every veteran with dignity, respect, and openness regardless of race, gender or gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, financial stress, case complexity, or interpersonal communication barriers/challenges.
- b. Leadership continues to attract, retain, and develop diverse staff reflective of Dane County's veteran population and the community more broadly.
 - i. Recent successes: engaged with OEI with for 2019 staff vacancy. Currently, 85.7% of our staff are veterans; 42.9% of our staff are women; 14.3% of our staff are persons of color.
 - ii. **2020 goals/opportunities:** our office is expecting at least one staff vacancy in 2020. Director/Deputy will work closely with Employee Relations and OEI in the hiring process to ensure process is equitable, inclusive, and accessible.
- c. Veterans Service Director and Deputy Veterans Service Director continually engaged with personal growth and education in the areas of equity and inclusion.

- i. Recent successes: Director and Deputy attended OEI implicit bias training, Deputy participated with Dane County Veterans Treatment Court equity and implicit bias training.
- ii. **2020 goals/opportunities:** Director and Deputy attend additional trainings in cultural competence/cultural humility, implicit bias, effective communication to sustain growth in this area.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

- a. Dane County direct-provided benefits administered in equitable, objective fashion
 - i. Recent successes: recent revision of policies and procedures related to our Donated Aid (DA), Veterans Service Commission Emergency Assistance (EA), and Veterans Ride with Pride (VRWP policies) to erase actual and perceived bias in the administration of those programs.
 - 1. Clear, objective limits on the provision of DA and EA funds.
 - 2. Clear, objective policy on replacement of lost/stolen VRWP passes.
 - ii. **2020 goals/opportunities:** continued vigilance in the provision of these county-provided benefits. Unlike state and federal benefits for which we assist and advocate for the veteran (but ultimately do not determine), these local programs are facilitated directly by the CVSO.
- b. Full staff engaged with sustained growth in the areas of equity, inclusion, and explicit bias.
 - i. Recent successes:
 - ii. **2020 goals/opportunities:** full staff attends formal training in the areas of equity and inclusion, implicit bias, cross-cultural communication, cultural competence/humility.

III. COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH

- a. Dane County Veterans Service Director and Deputy Veterans Service Director engaged personally or directing outreach to full spectrum of community.
 - i. Recent successes: continued our partnership with the Dane County Veterans Treatment Court, doubled our hosted service hours for the Veterans Law Center (free UW Law school legal clinic), *new* collaboration with the Veterans Pod (housing unit) at the Dane County Jail, *new in 2019* outreach event at the Darbo Salvation Army during the annual Ruck 22 event, *new in 2019* outreach events in collaboration with the Triangle Communities Ministry, the Dane County Job Center, the Veterans Reentry Program of the South Madison Probation and Parole office, among others.
 - 1. From September 2018 to September 2019, Veterans Service Director was privileged to serve as president of the County Veterans Service Officers Association (CVSOA) of Wisconsin. This provided a bigger platform to represent Dane County and the CVSOA in awareness and advocacy for veterans' issues.

2. Deputy Veterans Service Director elected Co-Chair of the Veterans Community Action Network of South-Central Wisconsin (“VetsCAN”), a federally-recognized VA Community Veterans Engagement Board.
 3. Deputy was elected as a member of the CVSOA’s Legislative Committee where he will work to ensure legislation impacting veterans will remain fair and equitable.
 4. Dozens of other ongoing community engagement/outreach events.
- ii. **2020 goals/opportunities:** identify additional diverse/marginalized groups or organization for collaboration or outreach.
- b. Branding and Marketing the Dane County Veterans Service Office in an effective and efficient way that reaches and appeals to the full spectrum of our community.
- i. Recent successes: established and maintained Facebook account for social media engagement, ongoing pamphlet effort in all previously mentioned areas of outreach.
 - ii. **2020 goals/opportunities:** investigate new platforms to broaden appeal. Engage with OEI and other partners for creative solutions to reach marginalized communities.