



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

Hold a Faith and Community Roundtable in Support of Veterans



The Challenge



The transition from military to civilian life can be challenging. The men and women in your community who have served in the military may need assistance with preparing for the job market, identifying housing, or handling legal or other issues. On MLK Day, gather the community for a dialogue on helping local veterans make a successful transition from military to civilian life.

Organize a [Veterans Roundtable](http://www.va.gov/cfbpartnerships/) (<http://www.va.gov/cfbpartnerships/>) to bring together faith-based and community organizations with the VA to hear about the programs the VA has for Veterans, their families, survivors, and caregivers. The goal of Veterans Roundtables is for local community leaders to understand ways to collaborate with the VA to provide support and employment services for veterans.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting



Prepare

Learn Associated Terms

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.

- **VA:** The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides patient care and federal benefits to veterans and their dependents. The VA's mission is: To fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans.
- **Roundtable Discussion:** This is a specific way to meet and discuss. Participants agree on a specific topic to discuss and debate. Each person is given equal right to participate. For a faith and community roundtable in support of veterans, you could have one large group all discussing the same topic or several smaller groups in the same room that discuss various aspects of military to civilian transition and job preparedness that is shared with the larger group.
- **Religious Leaders:** Browse through [this index of religious honorifics and titles](#) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index_of_religious_honorifics_and_titles) to become familiar with the titles of some of the faith-based guests you will be inviting to your roundtable.



Identify a Location

The groups that you want to engage in this project may help to determine the location for the event. Seek to partner with faith-based institutions, colleges and universities, and social service agencies as well as the local Veterans Affairs (VA) Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships office.

One of these groups may have meeting rooms or banquet halls that can be used for the event. The size of your venue will determine the number of people you can invite.

Browse Helpful Resources

- [The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs](http://www.va.gov/) (<http://www.va.gov/>)
- [Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships](http://www.va.gov/cfbnpartnerships/) (<http://www.va.gov/cfbnpartnerships/>)
- [Join VA's CFBN Partnerships](http://www.va.gov/CFBNPARTNERSHIPS/VA_Center_for_Faith_based_and_Neighborhood_Partnerships_Distribution_List.asp) (http://www.va.gov/CFBNPARTNERSHIPS/VA_Center_for_Faith_based_and_Neighborhood_Partnerships_Distribution_List.asp)
- [Grants and Resources from Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ofbnp/resources) (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ofbnp/resources>) (White House)



Plan

A successful group effort requires a motivated team whose members agree upon clearly defined tasks, set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.

Build a Team

- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s impact and your own.



Set Goals

Build your planning team

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
- Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
- Communications Team
- VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
- Fundraising Team
- Event Team

- Set goals, such as number of people trained, items supplied, and folks pledging to pass along what they've learned to others.
- Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

Plan Your Project

There are a number of ways that you can plan a faith and community roundtable in your community. Here are a few ideas for planning tasks to complete:

- Join the VA's Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (**VA CFBNP**) **LISTSERV** (http://www.va.gov/CFBNPARTNERSHIPS/VA_Center_for_Faith_based_and_Neighborhood_Partnerships_Distribution_List.asp) OR email VApartnerships@va.gov (<mailto:VApartnerships@va.gov>) to get more information on the needs of Veterans.
- Engage the VA-FBNP representative in your community for thoughts and ideas about the roundtable. Include veterans on your planning committee.
- Brainstorm a list of potential invitees by name or by title and affiliation. For example, "let's invite Pastor Grant and also the Imam of the mosque down the street." Be as inclusive as possible and seek out people who can help to provide the services that vets need--involve both those that are currently working with vets and those who are not.

- Develop a packet of information about the roundtable and its intent that you can share with those that you invite.
- Decide how you will invite participants. Phone calls will provide the personal touch. Utilize personal contacts to make calls where possible or volunteers who are part of the community groups you are inviting. Give people plenty of lead time and recognize that some invitees may already have an annual event scheduled for MLK Day.
- [Incorporate learning into any service you do \(node/292\)](#) by sharing information about the issues your project addresses and about Dr. King's work and teachings as it relates to the issue.
(<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/>)

Raise Resources for Equipment and Supplies

Involving and engaging kids

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to promote the roundtable in your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project
- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they're ready to go on MLK Day.

Manage Your Project

Think about implementing the following tasks to manage your roundtable service project. These resources and ideas will help you complete a successful event.

- Utilize to do lists for the days leading up to, day of and post event day.
- Make sure team leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers or community members as they arrive.
- Even if some volunteers will be doing door-to-door distribution of materials, it is important that the group start

off the day together and review what you are trying to accomplish.

- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: providing this community roundtable in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or distributing materials.
- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far [about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings \(node/292\)](#).
- Document the day and be sure to have volunteers sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to participants.



Communicate Your Message

Communication is a key part of any service project. You will need to communicate about:

- Getting volunteers to help you plan or implement your service activity
- Raising funds or in-kind donations for your project
- Informing potential participants who might benefit from your service

Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

Low-tech Outreach

- Post flyers in public places
- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups

Traditional Media

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(node/252\)](#).
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

Digital and Social Media

- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event



- After your event, [share your service story](http://mlkday.gov/share/index.php) (<http://mlkday.gov/share/index.php>) .
- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs

Share Impact

Assess and Reflect

Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day. Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:

- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?
- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What roundtable resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example: If you hosted a one-day community and faith-based roundtable, what else could you provide to veterans after the roundtable that would help veterans to obtain the support services they need? What other organizations or programs in your community could you collaborate with to offer these services?



Share Your Story

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a roundtable event for veterans once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered you service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>)

27 reads

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