

SOCIAL PLANNING WORKSHEET

Investigate Locations	Where are locations Veterans live or visit? What locations have Veteran organizations or leaders who have relationships with Veterans? Location 1: _____ Location 3: _____ Location 2: _____ Location 4: _____	
Identify Supports	List any allies/personnel that can help build a Social and how they could help: Other Social host or attendees _____ Veteran Service Officer _____ Veteran Service Organization _____ Veteran Peer Specialists _____ Other: _____	
Strengths & Weaknesses	What are the strengths of each location? Location 1: _____ Location 2: _____ Location 3: _____ Location 4: _____	What are the weaknesses of each location? Location 1: _____ Location 2: _____ Location 3: _____ Location 4: _____
Rate & Rank the Locations	Location 1: _____ Location 2: _____ Location 3: _____ Location 4: _____	Rate (+ 0 -): _____ Rank: _____ Rate (+ 0 -): _____ Rank: _____ Rate (+ 0 -): _____ Rank: _____ Rate (+ 0 -): _____ Rank: _____
Potential Obstacles	What are the potential barriers to holding the Social at the top ranked location? 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____	
Brainstorm Solutions	List some solutions, or ways to overcome these obstacles. Then, think of pros and cons of each solution. Select solutions that are most likely to be effective and achievable. Solution: _____ Solution: _____ Solution: _____ Solution: _____	
Prepare for the Social	Plan a date/time to visit the potential location: _____ Places to advertise: _____ Equipment/materials to prepare for the Social: _____ Starter group attendees: _____	

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Identify Locations and Supports: Identify others in your community who can help you start a Social by giving guidance, promoting or attending the event, or offering resources.

Things to consider:

1. People who have hosted or attended another Social.
 - They can offer recommendations and input about how to successfully implement your Social.
2. A Veterans Service Organization or Veterans Service Officer.
 - They can offer resources and help advertise the event.
 - They know where Veterans in the community already spend time.
 - They may host or attend other Socials.
 - They may be willing to attend your Social at the start to help it build momentum.
3. VA Veteran Peer Specialists.
 - They can support the Social by attending or by providing information about or establishing a connection with VA services or Veteran benefits.
4. Information available to you.
 - Consider places that are already well known for community gatherings.
 - Consult resources that indicate where in the community Veterans reside (e.g., va.gov/vetdata).

Identify Strengths and Weaknesses: Consider the pros and cons of each location, including the space itself and its location.

Things to consider:

1. Hours of operation and when the location will be busiest.
 - The time of your Social may be very important if you are targeting a specific group of Veterans (e.g., retired Veterans may be more available during the day, and working Veterans or those with young families may be more available on weekends).
 - Consider whether you can reserve space for the Social.
2. Accessibility.
 - Consider the distance between the location and parking areas.
 - Consider the proximity to public transportation.
 - Consider whether the location is accessible to people with limited mobility.

Rate and Rank the Locations: List the locations and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Assign each location a plus (+) rating (meaning “generally positive”), a minus (–) rating (meaning “generally negative”), or a zero (0) rating (meaning “neutral”).

Consider the significance of each strength or weakness. Then, rank locations to maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses, assigning greater importance to more significant attributes.

Things to consider:

1. Whether a Social at the top-ranked location will be easy for potential Veterans to attend (e.g., in terms of transportation and existing ties to the Veteran community).
2. Whether you can host Socials at the top-ranked location for the foreseeable future.

Identify Potential Obstacles: There may be challenges associated with preparing to successfully host a Social.

Things to consider:

1. Whether anything could prevent you from having the event weekly or monthly.
2. Whether the Social could still operate if you were absent.
3. Whether costs (e.g., time, money) could interfere with hosting the event.

Brainstorm Solutions: Create a list of as many different solutions as you can think of without stopping to judge each one or evaluate whether it is feasible. Later, cross out any solutions that obviously are not feasible and will not work. Weigh the pros and cons of potential outcomes, considering the short- and long-term consequences of each.

Things to consider:

1. Input from other hosts about solutions they have tried.
2. Others in the community who can help start or sustain the Social.
3. People who are interested in hosting.
4. Funding opportunities.
5. Potential backup locations in case your first choice is no longer available.

Prepare for the Social: After you have identified allies in your community who can help you successfully prepare for the Social, you are ready to take the next steps toward starting the Social.

Steps:

1. Set a date and time to visit the location and introduce yourself to staff members.
2. Choose how to advertise. Consider advertising in places where you know Veterans reside or visit (e.g., Veteran organizations, Vet Centers, VA facilities). Figure out how you can best use social media or local newspaper advertising to reach your audience.
3. Prepare the materials you will need for the first Social.
4. Identify a starter group of people who will attend the Social until four other people are regular attendees. This starter group may include Veterans you already know, hosts and attendees of other Socials, and interested community members.