Imagine coming to campus to find an established group of students who share many of your experiences, understand what you are going through and are ready and willing to offer camaraderie and support. If you are an SVO advisor or leader, you are in a key position to make this scenario a reality for future students. Forming an SVO is social entrepreneurship. It requires thinking outside and beyond traditional notions to address a need. Social entrepreneurs shape, build and then manage sustainable ventures. We call these three steps **Design, Develop and Deliver**.

### Design

Think of the “Design” step as “big picture” planning through which the structure and identity of the SVO are shaped.

**Key Tasks**

- **Form a steering committee** of student service members, veterans, faculty, staff, administrators and others to define the SVO, what and who it should represent, and the needs the SVO should attempt to fulfill.
- **Develop a mission, objectives and value proposition.** Together, these further define the intent of the SVO.
- **Formalize the SVO** by developing governing documents, identifying initial leaders and obtaining official recognition from the school.
Develop

The “Develop” step is the time to build the venture based on the vision created during the “Design” step.

Key Tasks

• **Create a budget and investigate sources of income.** Remember to think about not only how much money is needed for planned activities but also how many people.

• **Establish a leadership transition plan and records management system.** Leaders will come and go. Planning for these changes can help ensure smooth operations and longevity of the SVO.

• **Determine how to market the SVO and its activities** to members and potential members, staff and faculty, the general student population, and the community. Consider email lists, social media and one-on-one contacts.

Deliver

Once the SVO has been designed and developed, you can now “deliver” it to members, the general campus population and the community.

Key Tasks

• **Conduct meetings and activities.** Many SVOs report “if you feed them, they will come.” However, meeting attendance will wax and wane. Activities can include community service projects, year-end celebrations or awareness-raising events on campus.

• **Build relationships** with other student organizations, campus departments, faculty and administrators, and community partners. Learn from these groups as you work side by side on projects and activities.

• **Be proactive about keeping membership constant.** Members will come and go, but make a continual effort to keep existing members engaged and attract new members.

• **Evaluate progress.** Determine whether expenditures of time, effort and funds had the intended results. Use this information to decide which programs to keep, expand or eliminate.
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This manual is a compilation of the collective knowledge and experience of the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University and Student Veterans of America (SVA), from our collective and individual work with student veterans’ organizations (SVOs). It is designed to be a resource for advisors and others who want to know more about supporting an SVO and for student leaders who are thinking about starting an SVO or looking for ways to take their existing organization to the next level.

New SVOs are forming rapidly as the impact of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and other education benefits for service members, veterans and their families is felt on campuses throughout the country. In some areas, the number of SVOs has increased by more than 300 percent since the summer of 2009. Student Veterans of America (SVA), a national association of SVOs, witnessed its chapter membership grow from less than 20 in 2008 to over 500 globally. This growth offered MFRI and SVA rare opportunities to study the evolution of a newly formed organization, observe how existing groups develop into established ones and identify promising practices. In this manual, we share the results of what we have learned as a guide to the “design, develop deliver” approach to forming an SVO or strengthening an existing one.

**Design**
The identity and structure of the SVO is established during this phase. Activities include forming a steering committee and crafting a mission, objectives, and value proposition; identifying intended members; and developing governing documents.

**Develop**
Once the basic structure of the SVO is established, it is time to delve into the details. Activities include identifying events, activities, and projects; creating a budget, planning communication and marketing strategies, and establishing a records management system.

**Deliver**
Now that the details have been defined, the SVO can be “delivered” to members through meetings, events, activities and projects. Building relationships, working toward sustainability, evaluating progress and demonstrating success are also key elements of this step.
Competing for Resources

Once formed, SVOs need resources, such as money, members and time, to ensure that their mission becomes reality. As a result, SVO leaders will likely find themselves in a position of having to compete for resources, both human and financial. Planning and preparation are keys to this activity. Although competing for resources is challenging, it provides the leadership team with the opportunity to think strategically about how best to meet the SVO’s mission and objectives and serve its members. The final section of this manual provides extensive guidance about competing for resources.
Since 2008, Operation Diploma, an initiative of the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University, has had the good fortune to work with, guide, learn from and collaborate with a rapidly increasing body of student veterans’ organizations (SVOs) in Indiana. During this same period, Student Veterans of America (SVA) has worked at the national level to create a unifying framework and voice for more than 500 SVOs around the world.

This manual pairs the collective knowledge and expertise of MFRI and SVA about creating, sustaining and growing SVOs to provide a resource that is relevant to both new and well-established organizations. It offers guidance to help leadership teams take their organizations to higher levels of achievement on their campuses and throughout their communities.

The SVOs we work with are as diverse and remarkable as the student service members and veterans they represent. They take many forms: bricks-and-mortar to virtual; newly-created to well-established; located on the campuses of large, public institutions and small, private colleges. Each is unique, influenced by individual campus culture and SVO leadership. But all have come together because of a common interest in connecting with others who share a singular experience and a desire to create a sustainable network of support for themselves and those who follow. In so doing, the vast majority of SVOs influence their fellow students and the larger campus community in unimagined and transformative ways.

As we support SVOs from creation through sustained development, we learn valuable lessons: what SVOs are and are not, the challenges they face and how they can best serve student service members and veterans. We have learned that advisors and advocates are integral to the success of an SVO.
Some of these individuals are experienced in student services and navigating the post-secondary system. Others have limited experience in student services, but share a common military experience. Still others are simply motivated by the opportunity to support this particular group of students. Some are highly effective and others are learning as they go, but their roles as educators and mentors to SVO members provide a critical link between students and administration.

1.1: About This Manual

Student Veterans of America (SVA), a coalition of 500+ SVOs nationwide, is uniquely positioned to contribute to this manual. Founded by and for student veterans, they have created a wide range of programs and services to help veterans succeed in the classroom and beyond. These programs focus on empowering student veterans to overcome transition challenges so that they can graduate with a market-valued degree in preparation for a rewarding career. As the national voice for student service members and veterans, SVA also advocates on their behalf with legislators, policy makers, and key corporate leaders. Lastly, professionals from global industries, local businesses, government agencies, non-government organizations as well as many supportive faculty mentors have contributed to the lessons contained in this manual.

1.2: About the Military Family Research Institute and Operation Diploma

MFRI is a research and outreach organization based at Purdue University, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., the Office of Military Community and Family Policy in the Department of Defense (DoD) and others. Our mission is to conduct studies that provide insight into the experiences of military members and their families and to design and implement outreach activities that assist veteran and military families.
MFRI builds relationships with partners in both the military and civilian communities. Guided by the belief that discovery, learning and engagement are essential components of a strong research and outreach program, our goal is to create meaningful relationships that bring organizations together in support of a common mission.

Our overriding goal is to support military families in all their diverse forms, including individual service members and veterans. We aim to supplement existing military-family support systems. Building on our strengths as a research-based organization, we strive to generate greater understanding of the unmet needs of military families and to positively affect the civilian and military communities and institutions supporting military members and their families. For more information, visit www.mfri.purdue.edu.

**Operation Diploma**

MFRI created Operation Diploma in 2008 to work specifically with post-secondary institutions and SVOs. To date, Operation Diploma has awarded more than $2.4 million to help campuses create supportive services for student service members and veterans. We have provided resources, consultation and more than $60,000 in grants to SVOs. By supporting campus initiatives, Operation Diploma helps to transform the post-secondary landscape for student service members and veterans.

The strategic goals of Operation Diploma are to:

1. Educate post-secondary institutions about the needs and concerns of student service members and veterans.
2. Engage post-secondary institutions in strengthening their support and services for student service members and veterans.
3. Strengthen the efforts of SVOs.
4. Generate new knowledge about student service members and veterans and the supportive practices that are most promising.
1.3: About Student Veterans of America

SVAs mission is to provide military veterans with the resources, support and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and after graduation. The organization was born from the experiences of young veterans transitioning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to college campuses across the nation. What they encountered were unprepared school environments void of peers with shared experiences. Not only are student veterans typically older than “traditional” students, but they have radically different life experiences. Quite simply, student veterans often felt like outsiders on campus, which exacerbated the challenges of transitioning to life as a civilian and as a student.

To overcome these challenges, student veterans began to organize into SVOs to create campus-wide networks of peer support. In 2008, 20 SVO leaders united to form Student Veterans of America (SVA) and become the organization’s first member chapters. Since inception, SVA has grown to be the largest network of SVOs in the country with over 500 chapters in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Paris, and Rome.

SVA’s chapters are the “boots on the ground” that help veterans reintegrate into campus life and succeed. Therefore, SVA’s main focus is to provide chapters with high-quality programs and services that will enable them to support a maximum number of veterans.

Since 2008, SVA’s work has been praised by numerous veterans’ advocates, including U.S. Senator Jim Webb of Virginia and Secretary Eric K. Shinseki of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Secretary Shinseki noted that SVA is the “premier advocate for veterans seeking better jobs and better futures through education.” To learn more about Student Veterans of America, please visit www.studentveterans.org.
1.4: Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the many individuals who made this manual possible, chief among them the student service members and veterans for their leadership and dedication to their cause and the SVO advisors who champion the students’ efforts and provide encouragement and direction.

MFRI is also grateful to the judges who have supported our SVO competitions and provided invaluable feedback, among them Nathalie Duval-Couëtil, director of the Certificate in Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program and associate director of the Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship at Purdue University, and Don MacKay, director of business integration for Sears Holdings Management Corporation. We gratefully acknowledge Student Veterans of America for their national leadership as well as their thoughtful input to this manual. Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to all the staff and students at MFRI who assisted in planning and implementing our SVO competitions, holding our monthly SVO conference calls, providing hands-on consultation to SVO members and advisors, and assisting SVOs with writing impact reports and budgets. We also thank Lynn Hegewald for her assistance in preparing this manual.
An SVO is a student organization that provides an affinity group for students transitioning to campus and serves as a conduit for positive engagement with the campus. SVOs have existed on campuses in various forms since the years following World War II. Like contemporary SVOs, these original groups focused on issues veterans faced as students, including the transition to college life (Summerlot, Green, & Parker, 2009).

Today, as a result of extensive educational benefits, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill, service members and veterans are enrolling in post-secondary schools in greater numbers. New SVOs are forming rapidly (Hawthorne, Bauman, & Ross, in press). Each will reflect the unique attributes and expectations of its members and the distinctive culture of its campus.

SVOs are typically a source of camaraderie and support to student service members and veterans in their transition to campus life and often seek to raise awareness among the campus and local community. But they serve their members in other ways as well. Many SVOs work to improve campus services and strengthen policies for student service members and veterans (Summerlot et al., 2009). They reach out and create synergy with other student groups and they frequently engage in community service and philanthropy. Although SVOs are not the only way to ease the transition to campus, the American Council on Education (ACE) cites them as an essential component of high quality, comprehensive post-secondary programming (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010). While many SVOs develop and flourish independently, many others find the unifying mission, resources and support provided by membership in SVA to be a key part of their success. Membership in SVA is free and any SVO is welcome to apply by visiting www.studentveterans.org.
The SVOs we have worked with come in various forms. While all are open to student service members and veterans, some welcome military family members and others are open to anyone on campus. Some even involve service members who are deployed. Some SVOs draw members from a single campus, while others span multiple campuses.

SVOs also vary in how they operate and where they focus their resources. Some are very structured and hold regular meetings interspersed with special events. Others meet only as needed. Some have dedicated space on campus, while others meet in local cafés. Some SVOs have multiple mentors, while others are constantly challenged to find a willing campus advisor. Attracting members comes easily for some SVOs, while others spend most of their time attempting to find members. Some SVOs are able to engage with the larger community socially and through philanthropic projects, while others must attend to more immediate needs of their members, such as transitioning to academic life and dealing with service-related injuries. There is no one correct “recipe” for an SVO. A successful SVO abides in the culture where it resides, is flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of its members, and recognizes that an important measure of success is to “lose” members to engagement with the larger community and graduation.
Since 2008, the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) and Student Veterans of America (SVA) have worked together and separately on our common goals of supporting the transition to campus for student service members and veterans and raising awareness of their attributes and challenges.

### 3.1: MFRI’s Work with SVOs

Observing that SVOs sometimes struggled with sustainability and in many cases were not reaching their potential, MFRI began a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening communication and networking, access to resources, and promising practices among these organizations. Beginning in 2008, we reached out to our post-secondary partners, who were working with military students, and enlisted the assistance of a cadre of student veteran leaders who were dedicated to building more substantial SVOs. We listened to their ideas, explored the literature, and provided support for their work.

### Objectives

Our work with SVOs is based on four objectives:

- Create a forum for communication and networking. Members need to know they are not alone, that they share many of the same challenges and can collectively find solutions.
- Guide SVOs to plan for orderly transitions in leadership, which are an anticipated part of successful, long-term organizations.
• Develop meaningful connections with the larger campus and engagement within the community.
• Improve the post-secondary experience for members and contribute to policy improvements by working with faculty, staff and administration.

Ongoing Support

We provide hands-on support in the following ways:

BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

Creatively addressing an unmet need using untested approaches, such as creating an SVO, is a very entrepreneurial activity. So we enlisted assistance from the Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship at Purdue University. Our premise is that the best way to help student leaders think strategically, plan for sustainable success, address members’ needs, and increase engagement with the campus and local communities is to approach the process with a business plan. Modeled after competitions commonly held in business and management programs across the country, our business plan competitions BPC allow SVOs to compete for awards of up to $2,000. While grants are the incentive, participants tell us the real value of the competitions is in the immediate feedback of the expert panel of corporate, academic, and peer judges. See the Appendix for additional details.

STATEWIDE NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATION

SVO members and advisors each want regular, cost-effective opportunities to network and share information. To meet this need, MFRI hosts monthly, toll-free, conference calls. The calls are a forum where ideas, news, and resources are shared for the benefit of multiple SVOs. Our SVO networking group on Facebook supplements the monthly calls and allows generally unrestricted communication among participants. MFRI, as part of a public institution, monitors postings under the following statement:
“By joining this group, you agree not to post abusive, obscene, vulgar, slanderous, offensive, hateful, threatening, sexually-oriented, or other material that may violate applicable laws.”

To date, we have never needed to remove a post under the provisions of this statement.

**STATEWIDE SVO CONFERENCE**

Originally conceived during the monthly conference calls as a way to take the virtual meeting place to a face-to-face level, the first statewide SVO conference was held in Indianapolis in April 2011. As an attempt to create a gathering in which personal relationships could be strengthened, common challenges shared and future directions sketched out, we invited national experts and local leaders from the political, corporate and academic communities to consult with participants. Hosted as a partnership between MFRI Operation Diploma and the Indiana chapter of Student Veterans of America (SVA), the goals of the event are for participants to:

- network and learn from one another;
- obtain expert advice about strengthening their organizations; and
- interact with political, business, and academic leaders.

In 2012, the students used the MFRI model to successfully plan, implement, and host the statewide conference themselves. These events lead to a number of outcomes, including career connections, increased awareness of mental health resources for student service members and veterans, and multigenerational partnerships among SVOs and veterans’ service organizations. The continued interactions of one such pairing led to the creation of the first campus-based American Legion Post in the nation, Post 360, on the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Local and national events like this help SVOs better understand one another, work together more productively, and collectively make a positive impact on their campuses and the larger community.
3.2: SVA’s Work with SVOs

Student Veterans of America is the nation’s largest coalition of SVOs that have united under a shared vision that all student veterans will succeed in post-secondary programs and contribute to society in meaningful ways. All SVOs are welcome to join SVA as a member chapter by submitting an online application. Since the original 20 chapters in 2008, SVA has since grown to over 500 campuses nationwide. While a vast majority of these SVOs are new, some date back to the 1940s and ‘50s.

Early in SVA’s history, chapter members mobilized across the country to advocate for the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. As these grassroots leaders met with local congressional officials, SVA trumpeted the cause in the Nation’s Capitol. Ultimately, these activities were instrumental in the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Senator Jim Webb actually noted that “SVA played a powerful role in shaping the debate in Congress for a reformed GI Bill.” This early legislative victory propelled SVA to enormous growth in just several short years.

While SVA still plays a strong advocacy role, the organization’s primary focus is to provide programs and resources that enable student veterans to overcome administrative, integration, and academic barriers to graduation. Collectively, SVA and their member chapters provide a variety of support that address three challenges via a local, peer-based model. In fact, a 2010 RAND report found that 61% of student veteran respondents noted the support they received from fellow veterans as “quite or extremely helpful to the pursuit of their educational goals.”

Objectives

SVA is guided by five main objectives, all focused on bolstering the local campus peer-support structure:

1. Provide increased support and resources to chapters.
2. Collect credible data and information on student veteran outcomes.
3. Advocate more effectively based on quality data regarding the needs of student veterans.
4. Invest in high-impact partnerships that can provide supplemental services to chapters.
5. Develop an alumni base to support future student veterans.

Programs
SVA’s programs have been developed to provide optimal support to chapters and individual student veterans.

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
SVA’s National Leadership Institute is a cohort-based training program that takes place each summer. The event, previously titled the Leadership Summit, is solely focused on training chapter officers how to develop and manage efficient, sustainable SVOs. The crux of that training is this manual and each student veteran attendee will have the opportunity to begin developing their chapter-specific business plan under the tutelage of SVA and MFRI staff and with the support of their fellow chapter officers. Due to the support of generous donors, SVA covers the cost of attendance for all participants.

LEADERSHIP SUMMITS
SVA also hosts a number of local Leadership Summits each fall to supplement the annual Leadership Institute. Each summit is held in a local community that has a high student veteran population and concentration of chapters.

All events mirror the training delivered at the Institute, thus maximizing the number of chapters that are trained to think about “designing, developing, and delivering” a highly efficient SVO. Summits are also great opportunities for SVA chapters to discuss regional issues and network locally.
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
The National Conference is SVA’s culminating annual event. It is open to student veterans nationwide and SVA’s supporters. It is an opportunity for chapters to network with one another nationally and for non-SVA-affiliated SVOs to learn more about the benefits of becoming a member chapter. In that sense, the National Conference is a means of continuously bolstering the network with fresh ideas and resources. Each year’s event is developed around a central theme, which informs all of the seminars, workshops, and keynote speakers. For example, the 2011 Conference theme was “Combating Veterans Unemployment.” Each conference also features the year’s accomplishments, officer meetings, award presentations, and National Leadership Council elections. Past events have been held in Chicago, Illinois (2008), San Francisco, California (2009), Washington D.C. (2010), and Las Vegas, Nevada (2011).

CHAPTER GRANTS
SVA recognizes that chapter funding is often difficult to obtain, thus instituted the chapter grant program to offer some much needed assistance to support chapter programming. Past grants have ranged in size and have been used for campus advocacy campaigns, awareness raising events, camaraderie building activities, and general chapter operations. Moving forward, these grants will be disbursed to chapters that complete a business plan, per this manual, and submit a completed budget to SVA. Once evaluated per the grant guidelines, chapters will be eligible for a grant award.

SCHOLARSHIPS
While the Post-9/11 GI Bill is a robust benefit, many student veterans still face undue financial hardships. SVA actively partners with organizations that have scholarship opportunities available for student veterans; SVA also offers three of its own scholarship awards annually.
Two such scholarship partners are Google and The Illinois Patriot Education Fund (IPEF). The 2012 Google-SVA Scholarship awarded eight high-caliber student veterans pursuing a degree in Computer Science each with a $10,000 scholarship. The main objective of the scholarship was to reward academic excellence in a demanding field while also incentivizing degree completion. The 2012 IPEF-SVA scholarship awarded seven student veterans with a $1,000 scholarship for their community service and academic achievements in the state of Illinois.

SVA’s three scholarships are all in the amount of $10,000 and awarded annually to members of SVA. The Chapter Leader Scholarship is for an outstanding chapter officer who has volunteered to help better the lives of his or her fellow veterans and simultaneously balances chapter activities, a full course load, and family obligations. The STEM Scholarship is similar to the SVA-Google Scholarship in that it supports a student veteran pursuing a demanding degree in the fields of science, technology, engineering, or math. The final award, the Yellow Ribbon Scholarship, is given to any student veteran at a private or out-of-state university that has demonstrated academic excellence, but is facing an undue financial burden.

INTERNERSHIP SUPPORT PROGRAM
The Internship Support Program (ISP) provides student veterans with a monthly stipend to offset the financial burden of an unpaid position. SVA recognizes that student veterans are nontraditional students with many financial obligations. In fact, some student veterans use their GI Bill benefits as a primary source of income, and thus cannot take a semester off to pursue an unpaid internship. As a result, they miss out on valuable professional experience. This monthly stipend encourages and allows student veterans to bolster their professional resume with an internship.
Forming an SVO is no different from forming any other student organization. The organization must be defined and fashioned into a workable unit and then delivered to actual and potential members. If you are an SVO advisor or leader, you are in a key position to influence the direction this process takes. This section of the manual provides guidance on designing, developing and delivering an SVO as well as tips for success acquired during our work with SVOs.

4.1: Design the SVO

“Design” is the first serious step in forming an SVO. Up until this point, students may meet informally and toss around ideas. They share common interests and may even have talked about setting goals, but at the design stage members begin to think seriously about what the SVO ought to be, and to define it as distinct from other student organizations. Through this process, the structure and identity of the SVO is established—think of this as the “big picture” planning.

Form a Steering Committee

Early in the design phase, form a steering committee. Just as the name implies, this committee guides the course of what the SVO will become. This committee is made up of individuals who have a vested interest in the success of the organization and are willing to do the planning, research and preliminary tasks necessary to get the SVO up and running. The most important work at this point is to define the organization—what it should represent and what need(s) it should attempt to fulfill—and to begin to think about “mission.” Lots of SVOs get hung up at this point on identifying leadership roles and setting policy. Avoid this trap.
In most functional organizations, leaders will emerge naturally over the course of the design phase and may or may not be members of the initial steering committee. Legitimate policy can be set only after defining the “who, what and why.”

Student service members and veterans naturally belong at the steering committee table. Other possible committee members may include student life representatives, faculty and staff who are veterans or who have demonstrated interest in and support for the issues, administrators who coordinate campus veterans’ affairs, and possibly even representatives from local veterans’ service organizations. No two steering committees will look the same; each campus will capitalize on the expertise available.

A steering committee does not have to be a formally organized group—it is a team of like-minded individuals willing to work toward the common goal of creating, or in some cases resurrecting, the SVO. Although it is essential to have a facilitator or coordinator to keep the committee on task, do not spend valuable time creating structure at this point. Because of the busy schedules of students, faculty and staff, it is better to have regular, short meetings augmented by email or chat than to expect people to commit to marathon sessions that typically result in rapid drop-off in participation. Committee members need a clear idea of the general goals but can be encouraged to brainstorm and think outside the box. This is your opportunity to create an organization that reflects your unique campus environment, meets the needs of SVO members and is supported by key campus advocates. Consider identifying someone to record minutes of early meetings so important ideas and decisions are not lost.

One specific task of the steering committee is to determine requirements that must be met for a student organization to become officially recognized on campus. Know the requirements before starting the planning process. It is important to note that SVA requires its chapters to be officially recognized by their respective institutions.
Being a recognized student group has several advantages, such as the potential for space on campus, access to institutional resources and possibly even limited financial support, but it is not essential. For various reasons, the steering committee may decide that seeking official recognition is not in the best interests of the SVO, but by knowing the requirements it will be a well-informed decision.

**Develop a Mission, Objectives and Value Proposition**

Now you can begin to define your organization. Consider why your organization is unique. What does the organization do that no other student group on campus does? What needs do you plan to address and for whom? What can the SVO accomplish in the first three months, six months and year? How many members are needed to meet these objectives? Use this information to further define the intent of the SVO through your mission, objectives and value proposition.

**DEFINE THE SVO MISSION**

**Mission** (noun): A short, concise and succinct statement defining an organization’s purpose.

A mission is a “what” statement. It addresses what the organization is working towards as its ultimate achievement—its reason for existing. A mission statement should be simple and direct. It does not need to address how something will happen, but it definitely needs to let everyone know who you are and what you hope to achieve.
IDENTIFY THE SVO OBJECTIVES

Objectives (noun): Practical steps needed to achieve short-term and long-term goals.

Objectives are also “what” statements, but they are smaller in scope than a mission statement. They are the ends towards which action will be directed. You may identify numerous objectives, but they should always support your organization’s overall mission. Once the SVO is established, the objectives will guide decisions as you develop and prioritize programs and events.

An SVO’s objectives might include the following:
- Connect members with on-campus resources needed for college success.
- Support members as they transition from the military to civilian life.
- Generate awareness of veterans on campus.
- Create and promote camaraderie.
- Serve as a voice for student service members and veterans on campus.

IDENTIFY THE SVO VALUE PROPOSITION

Value proposition (noun): A statement that clearly identifies the benefits a consumer will get from a product or service.

The SVO’s value proposition is the benefit the organization creates for others through its work. If you cannot explain in three or fewer jargon-free sentences why the SVO is important to student veterans and the greater campus community, you do not have a value proposition.
As you define your value proposition, think about what intended members might want or need, such as friendship, support or resources. Think about how the SVO will differentiate itself from other student organizations on campus. What will the SVO offer that others do not? In turn, consider how you can communicate the value of the SVO to campus and community administrators and advocates. Every member of the SVO should know the essentials of your organization and be able to communicate them in simple, clear terms to anyone (fellow student, faculty member, college president, family member, or friend) in the time it takes to get from one floor to the next in an elevator. This is your SVO’s “Elevator Pitch.”

Solicit Advisors and Advocates
Most campus student organizations are required to have a faculty or staff advisor. This person is your liaison to campus administration, and can provide valuable insight about campus policies and procedures and valuable background information about campus history and politics. While advisors are often veterans’ service representatives, such as the School Certifying Official (SCO), faculty and other staff members can also serve in this role. Advisors are a crucial link between the SVO and the larger campus, especially when the organization is newly-established and during leadership transitions. SVO members are typically involved with the SVO for only two to four years during their academic careers, but the SVO advisor provides continuity to help the organization thrive long after its founding members have graduated.

Identify Intended Members
When forming a new SVO, identifying intended members is a key step. Will the SVO open membership to student service members and veterans only? To family members? To faculty and staff with military experience? To Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) candidates? The answers to these questions will be determined by your mission, objectives and the unique culture of your institution.
Work with your campus to determine how many student service members and veterans are enrolled. This will be your maximum potential audience. Decide on a realistic proportion of the maximum as your membership target, keeping in mind not everyone will join the SVO. How many members do you want in the first six to 12 months? Your campus may have a minimum membership quota in order to qualify for official recognition. Consider this requirement when setting your initial membership goal.

**Tips for Success**

- Learn about other SVOs. SVA provides an online platform to seek out and contact fellow chapter leaders via its website.
- Ask about lessons other SVOs have learned that might apply to yours and ideas you can model. Also discuss opportunities to collaborate.
- SVOs are not the only groups serving a unique group of students. Think about what your organization might have in common with other student groups and reach out to these organizations. They too have lessons to share, and your efforts may be rewarded by gaining an established campus partner.

**Formalize the SVO**

**DEVELOP GOVERNING DOCUMENTS**

Governing documents, like a constitution or bylaws, can help an organization function in an orderly and sustainable manner. Most schools require that registered student organizations submit governing documents to become officially recognized, but governing documents are important even if your steering committee has decided not to seek official recognition.
These documents do not need to be complex or detailed. They usually address procedures and the organization's purpose, membership, leadership, committees, election guidelines and meetings. Your campus may be able to provide sample governing documents. In addition, you can find many examples from SVOs and other student organizations on the Web.

IDENTIFY LEADERS
You will have identified the SVO’s leadership positions while drafting your governing documents. In some cases, it will be easy to identify the people to fill these positions, because they demonstrated their leadership ability during the early planning stages. If this is the case, now is the time to make these leaders official. Sometimes more than one person is qualified for the job, and other times you may have difficulty recruiting the right person to fill a particular position. This is a normal part of the process and is not unique to SVOs. All organizations have varying levels of success in filling their leadership positions. The guidance of your advisor or a discussion with a more established SVO can be very helpful in these cases.

OBTAIN OFFICIAL RECOGNITION
Becoming officially recognized on campus can be an important strategy for an SVO, even though this optional step may seem like a “check-the-box” exercise. The process of becoming officially recognized can help ensure that you have addressed the qualifications needed to take advantage of benefits reserved for student groups, including use of campus facilities, access to student government or student activity fees, officer training or even opportunities for office or meeting space. MFRI and SVA feel this is so important that we require evidence of official recognition to participate in our activities.
CONSIDER SVA MEMBERSHIP

As noted throughout this manual, SVA is a national 501c(3) coalition of more than 500 SVO chapters nationwide. These chapters exist at all types of institutions of higher education throughout the United States. In addition to providing direct resources and support to the chapter as a whole, SVA offers scholarships, internship opportunities, and annual events for chapter members (Student Veterans of America, 2011). While its main focus is high-quality programming for chapters, SVA is also a strong advocate for student veteran benefits at the federal level. Both individuals and established SVOs can apply to become members of SVA online at www.studentveterans.org. Individuals can also find a number of resources to assist in creating an SVO on the website as well.

Tip for Success

✓ Use your student life staff. These professionals have experience assisting student organizations on your campus and can clarify requirements and help you avoid unnecessary mistakes and red tape. They also come in contact with a large number of students and can help promote your organization to potential members.
4.2: Develop the SVO

“Develop” is the second step in forming an SVO. While the “design” phase involved establishing the identity and structure of the SVO, the “develop” stage takes things a bit further. This is where you delve into the details. In developing the SVO, you will consider your stated mission and objectives, devise a strategy for meeting these objectives and formulate the plan for implementing these strategies. This section covers the steps in developing your SVO.

Create a Budget

The SVO leadership team should develop a budget early in the develop phase. A budget is a valuable planning tool that outlines expenses related to the planned activities of the SVO. Not only do budgets help the SVO stay within its means, they also serve as a record for future planning. Include in the budget not only financial resources but human capital as well.

When you defined the SVO’s mission, objectives, and value proposition during the “design” phase, you considered what SVO leadership wanted to accomplish in the SVO’s first months and years. Before you develop a budget, revisit the SVO’s mission and objectives, take a closer look at events and activities planned for the next six to 12 months, and estimate how much money and time and how many people will be needed to turn these plans into reality.

When developing the SVO budget, anticipate future income and expenditures, but realize that the budget for each SVO will be unique. Typical SVO budget items might include refreshments for meetings and events and costs related to planned activities, including facility rental, publicity, or speaker travel and honoraria. Budget items typically overlooked include administrative costs, such as for printing and supplies, and travel to network with other SVOs or to attend conferences.
Developing your budget also involves realistically considering how many members you currently have and how much time they can afford to give to the SVO. When assessing human capital needs, realize that members vary in their level of commitment and ability to be involved and that their availability may change each term. Some may attend meetings but not special events, while others may attend special events but not meetings. Ask yourself if the person-hours available are adequate to meet your goals. If not, revise your plans and adjust your budget.

With respect to financial resources, record actual expenditures. This will help you be accountable to your funders as well as guide future planning. Consider if the amount of time and money needed for a project was justified by the outcome.

**Tips for Success**

- Some SVOs are tempted to use their financial resources to support philanthropic projects and other worthy causes, but this will deplete funds intended for your own members. Achieve immediate impact and benefit for your members before reaching out to others.

- If your SVO is committed to philanthropy, leverage your resources to create a call to action that will get members involved in a worthy cause that will help others, raise awareness about your organization and preserve your own funds.
Opportunity often lies in partnerships with community establishments. As part of its Veterans Day celebrations, one SVO partnered with a local restaurant to sponsor “Hacienda Night.” The restaurant donated a percentage of sales to the SVO. In exchange, members of the SVO, college faculty and staff, and even the school president served as wait staff for the evening. The restaurant won praise (and customers) for its support of military students and the SVO had a very successful fundraiser.

Do not forget your school’s alumni association. Many of its members are veterans who want to know about you. They can become strategic partners, and an important source of funding and human capital.

**SOURCES OF REVENUE**

Budgets should identify more than just planned spending. They should also identify sources of revenue including:

- Funds from campus student life and/or student government
- Fundraisers
- Grant support
- Membership dues
- Donations

**Tips for Success**

✅ SVOs often hold t-shirt, baseball cap, or other merchandise fundraisers only to find that the items are difficult to sell to non-members. T-shirts and other merchandise promote the SVO on campus when worn by members and **only** if contact information is included, but they are generally not effective as a fundraising item.

✅ Carefully consider the amount of effort required to execute a fundraising project. Complex, time-consuming events may not generate revenue to make the effort worthwhile, although these events may significantly raise awareness among both potential members and the general campus population.

**Plan Communications and Marketing**

The SVO communications and marketing efforts will promote your SVO and its activities, build membership, strengthen relationships on campus and in the community, and solidify your identity or “brand.”
Multiple audiences exist for communications and marketing, including SVO members and potential members, advisors, staff and administrators, the general campus population and community members.

Communicate regularly with existing members about meetings, special events and important news. Also communicate regularly with potential members. If your campus administration allows you access to email addresses, they will probably be your primary mode of contact. If institutional policy prohibits access to email accounts, be smart about building your own list. Building the contact database and establishing a social media presence are key to SVO success and something each member should consider a personal responsibility. Consider these tactics:

- At each SVO meeting and event, have a sign-in sheet for all attendees. Include spaces to enter email addresses and phone numbers. Consider regularly sharing an updated contact list with the membership, but only after obtaining permission from each member. This can be done by including a check box on the sign-in sheet next to the statement “By checking this box, I give the SVO officers permission to share my contact information with members of the SVO.”
- Use personal one-on-one contacts as opportunities to meet as many student service members and veterans as possible. These opportunities can come at any time, so being well-versed in your elevator pitch and having your contact information ready will come in handy.
- Consider creating a Facebook page, Twitter handle and/or other social media tools.
- Provide other organizations and offices related to the military, such as ROTC or the school certifying officials with a flier or business card with information about the SVO and contact information. Individuals in these organizations may also be willing to send emails on behalf of the SVO. Consider reaching out to the command and staff at local military units. They may be willing to promote the opportunity to any of their service members who are enrolled at your campus.
• Take advantage of marketing and communications opportunities, such as posting notices through your school’s online bulletin boards or calendars and participating in the school’s student organization fair.
• Provide takeaway information, such as a “Did You Know” flier for non-veterans students.

Other Considerations
Evaluate the cost of communication and marketing efforts you implement, and decide whether they resulted in a good return on investment. Did one medium work better than another? Perhaps paper fliers and sidewalk chalk in common areas work better on your campus than virtual communication and marketing. Learn what works best in your unique environment, but regardless of the preferred medium, all communication and marketing costs should be documented and taken into consideration when planning the next year’s budget.

Tips for Success
✓ Marketing your SVO to potential members is easier if the SVO meets the needs of student service members and veterans on campus. If you do not know what your members or potential members need and expect from the SVO, find out.
✓ Most of the responsibility for communication and marketing falls to officers and active members, so leverage the good will of supportive faculty and staff to help spread the word. On one campus, the student government leadership, none of whom were service members or veterans, took on the mission of raising campus awareness.
✓ Be sure all printed materials include contact information.
Develop a Brand

**Brand** (noun): A name, term, design, symbol or other feature that identifies your organization as distinct from another organization.

(Adapted from the American Marketing Association)

While a brand is not essential to your operations, it may lead to more distinctive recognition of your SVO. A logo or motto can serve as a symbol of shared mission and pride; it can also help non-members instantly identify the SVO and its purpose. To develop a brand for the SVO, consider soliciting designs from members or request the assistance of marketing or graphic design students on campus. The sample below is a good example.

**SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY LOGO**

**Symbolism of the logo:**
- *MMVI* is the Roman number 2006, the year the SVO was founded.
- *Arrows* beneath the coat of arms represent members’ past involvement in conflicts.
- *Olive branches* on each side of the coat of arms represent our goals for peace.

**Within the coat of arms:**
- *Celtic knot* represents unity.
- *Scroll* represents knowledge.
- *Hand* represents humanitarian efforts (community service).
- *Scales* represent justice.
- *Eagle* above the coat of arms represents ties to the United States of America; ribbon within the eagle’s beak it carries a ribbon that reads the Latin words for knowledge, service and unity.

**Warning:** College and university logos, tag lines, and all related branding are trademarked property of the institutions, so follow campus guidelines if the school’s symbol or even its name is integrated into your branding.
SVOs, once approved member chapters of SVA, are also invited to use SVA’s logo and brand to lend the SVO national credibility. Many current chapters have recognized this as a useful tool when advocating at the campus-level.

Establish a Records Management System

Membership turns over quickly in student organizations, and an SVO is no different. To record SVO history and activities and to prevent duplication of efforts in successive years, create a records management system. The records management system preserves important documents and ensures that they are accessible to current and future members, especially SVO leadership. Consider these three steps when developing your system:

- **Document**: Documenting SVO efforts may take many forms, including written meeting minutes, saved event fliers, notes from conferences or resources such as contacts at your local veterans’ service organizations or particularly helpful staff members on your campus.
- **Organize**: Records can be organized using a simple file plan, whether a physical file or an electronic file.
- **Store**: Many options exist for storing your records, including paper files and binders, flash drives, external hard drives, and online storage sites.

**LEADER RECORDS**

In addition to documentation affecting the SVO as a whole, individual officers and various project leaders will also have documentation and notes that apply to their specific roles and projects. In developing a leadership transition plan, described below, it is important to plan for these records to be made available to successive leaders. For this reason, SVO leadership may want to consider continuity binders that can be easily passed down to future leaders.
Continuity binders, or books that detail duties and responsibilities, financial information, summaries of past events and activities, and contact lists, can be invaluable in ensuring SVO sustainability as well as smooth operations. During their terms, SVO leaders should add to their continuity binders.

**Create a Leadership Transition Plan**

Change is inevitable and even desirable for student organizations. As school, work and family commitments ebb and flow, leaders and members will come and go. Most SVOs consider helping their members to successfully achieve academic goals and transition to employment as essential to their mission. By extension, **successful SVOs regularly lose their members!** Maintaining consistent leadership can be a challenge. Proactively planning for changes in leadership can help ensure the SVO remains in existence once your current crop of leaders and active members has moved on.

**ACTIVELY RECRUITING AND GROWING NEW LEADERS**

As is the case in many corporate settings, some SVO leaders are adopting the practice of recruiting their replacement. Whether formally or informally, outgoing officers should be on the lookout for members who want to get involved, demonstrate a good fit with the organization and may be willing to take on more responsibility.

**Tips for Success**

✓ Consider conducting an annual leadership transition retreat for SVO officers and advisors, both incoming and outgoing.
✓ If leadership transitions have become difficult, SVO advisors can assist by providing increased direct support.
Engaging with these members and grooming them to move into leadership positions will help ensure a well-informed leadership pipeline with minimal disruption in continuity. While continuity ensures strong leadership, strive for a balance between leader entrenchment and smooth secessions. Leadership turnover is healthy for the group and new leaders bring fresh ideas and creative approaches.

Many SVOs are finding their leadership transitions to be smoother and more successful when elections are held with enough time for outgoing leaders to mentor incoming officers. Some hold elections during the fall semester, so that past officers can spend the spring semester in an advisory role. Alternatively, the president-elect position is very popular among SVOs. This allows a “leader in waiting” to gain first-hand knowledge of the role, the responsibilities and the special interests of the members. Other SVOs are tapping the knowledge of graduating members by inviting them to serve as alumni mentors.
Now that the SVO has been designed and developed, it is time to “deliver” it to members, the general campus population and the community. This section describes tasks and activities for the deliver phase.

**Meetings and Activities**

SVOs should hold regular meetings. Not everyone will be able to attend every meeting and, depending on their schedules, some members will not be able to attend a single meeting. Identify a time, duration and interval that work best for the most members and hold meetings in a consistent location. Consider holding separate meetings for general membership and the leadership team. If some of your members never attend meetings, personally check in with them and tell them you miss their contributions. Find out if there is something about the SVO that is not working for them. Consider setting aside time for informal get-togethers during lunch or after classes so that members can touch base and enjoy some camaraderie if they are not able to attend regular meetings.

Use meeting time wisely and provide an opportunity for learning or a sense of mission. Inviting speakers from different support areas on your campus, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), or a local veterans’ service organization will give your members a chance to gain valuable information and may serve as motivation to attend the meeting. Try to take care of operational details and planning at the executive board level so that general meetings can be more about camaraderie and sharing information.
The activities and events the SVO sponsors can take on many forms and will meet the needs of different audiences at different times. SVA suggests several programming efforts, including:

- Advocacy campaigns
- Participation in research
- New student orientation programs
- Sponsor, mentor or buddy-to-buddy programs
- Campus veterans’ centers
- Veteran monuments

Tips for Success

☑️ Many SVOs have found “if you feed them, they will come.” Refreshments do not need to be elaborate, but they should be provided regularly.

☑️ Ensure that meeting minutes are available to members whether they attend meetings or not. Email them as soon as possible after the meeting or make them available on your web page, social media or an online campus blackboard system.

☑️ While it is tempting to have a flexible or floating meeting schedule, hold regular meetings. This creates an expectation and reduces confusion.

☑️ Set your SVO meeting schedule for the entire semester and publish it conspicuously.

☑️ Oftentimes, members will not attend regular meetings but will attend special events. Keep in mind that the SVO exists to meet the needs and expectations of your student service members and veterans.
• Community service projects
• Intramural sports teams
• Campus events such as veterans’ discussion panels, special lecturers and screenings of military-focused films

Additionally, SVA recommends that SVOs consult the ACE Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions (www.vetfriendlytoolkit.org) to identify programs and policies that chapters can advocate for and implement to have a broad impact on the entire campus community.

Build Relationships
Building relationships with other student organizations, faculty and staff, campus departments and community groups is an easy way to strengthen the SVO and broaden its reach. You will discover you have a lot in common with many of these groups and your goals are very similar. Learn from and work with them. They in turn will learn about you as you work side by side on projects.

Tips for Success
✓ Assign project leaders for special events and activities. Taking on a project will often provide motivation for members to get more involved.
✓ Hold a year-end celebration or social event for graduating veterans.
✓ Hold events in the heart of campus to generate awareness.
✓ Take advantage of local and campus media, including newspapers, community calendars, alumni magazines and campus radio, to obtain coverage of events and create awareness of the SVO and veterans on campus.
OTHER STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Successful student organizations work within their campus culture. Working closely with other student organizations on your own or nearby campuses can help the SVO be proactive in identifying emerging needs or issues, crafting broad based solutions and engaging with non-military students. Leaders from other organizations have different experiences and can offer advice and tips that you would otherwise have to learn on your own. Working with other student groups creates synergies that allow you to achieve more together than each organization could achieve individually. Other groups are often looking for participants in their activities, just as the SVO is looking for participants. Creating a team for another student organization’s fundraising challenge or partnering with them for a community service project are good ways to become engaged in campus life, get the SVO name out and show support for other groups’ programs. In addition, it provides valuable opportunities to share your message and help non-veteran students understand the perspective of SVO members.

Do not forget about collaborations among SVOs at other schools. These SVOs are often trying to accomplish the same goals with a similar population of student service members and veterans. You all share the same community. Work together to reach out to local veterans’ service organizations and other community groups.

CAMPUS DEPARTMENTS

Cross-campus partnerships are a valuable resource for the SVO. Student service members and veterans interact with a wide variety of campus departments and these departments have a vested interest in serving you well. Reaching out to them and exploring opportunities to combine efforts can lead to increased productivity for both you and your future partners. Consider these possibilities:

• Work with your admissions office to determine how the SVO might help recruit service members and veterans who are admitted to your campus.
• Find out if there are faculty committees or other groups that advise your institution on military issues. Request ad hoc membership or an opportunity to brief them about student service members and veterans. Remember your elevator pitch and be prepared to offer recommendations to the group.

• Reach out to the alumni relations office to determine how you can increase awareness of your SVO’s mission among the alumni. Could the alumni publication highlight the SVO or profile one of your members? Could SVO members serve as hosts if prominent military alumni come to campus? Military-affiliated alumni may rally behind the SVO’s initiatives and serve as advocates and mentors. They may also offer valuable networking and career resources. Be sure the SVO has a plan in place for maintaining contact with members once they graduate or move on from your campus. Your alumni office may be able to assist you in maintaining correct contact information.

• Learn about what the career services office provides to student service members and veterans and be prepared to share information about employment issues. Can the SVO assist in promoting contacts with supportive and informed employers?

• Explore other campus departments for opportunities. Consider working with the equal opportunity office, campus interfaith council, performing arts center or athletics department. Does your campus currently have a military appreciation event? Is a color guard ever used to present the flags? Are student organizations allowed to assist at events and share in concession sales or earn money by performing custodial tasks after events?

• Does your institution have an ROTC program with which you might want to partner on activities or service projects? Consider reaching out to the military science department to promote your organization and explore opportunities for partnerships. Not only can ROTC and Officer Candidate School (OCS) students provide manpower, but faculty and staff in the program can prove to be valuable allies in furthering the SVO’s cause.
The connections and partnerships formed on your campus will be very beneficial to the SVO as it becomes more engaged with campus and as the word spreads about the good work the SVO is doing. The SVO’s advisor can also serve as a valuable resource in initiating and maintaining campus relationships.

**FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS**

Engage faculty and administrators early and often. Although it might be tempting to approach them with a list of things they are not doing or should be providing, keep in mind you are on the same team. Meet with key people to introduce them to the SVO and its objectives. Be responsive to their questions and emails. Become a trusted, responsible resource to them in helping to make campus a welcome and accommodating place for student service members and veterans. Veteran faculty and staff members, as well as those from military families or who are just supportive, may embrace and advocate for your organization.

For those with little or no experience working with student service members and veterans, there are a number of ways they can learn, including presentations of basic information about the military, panel discussions, and frequently-asked-question (FAQ) handouts. Examples of successful faculty and staff engagement efforts include:

- Recognize and reward faculty and staff who go out of their way to support veterans. The Indiana State University SVO has implemented an annual “Above and Beyond” award that includes a public ceremony and reception, as well as media coverage.
- Invite faculty and staff from various campus departments to serve as guest speakers at your meetings or events. This is particularly helpful when student services personnel such as counseling staff and career and academic advisors are included. Not only can they provide valuable information, they can learn first-hand from SVO members about their experiences, challenges and expectations.
• Engage advocates who are higher up the administrative chain. Get these high-ranking administrators on your side by keeping them informed and involved in the life of the SVO. If you do not target your SVO’s influential partners, how can they advocate for you?

• Involve campus leadership, faculty and staff in key events. Will the institution’s president or chancellor attend your Veterans Day commemoration? Would he or she be willing to speak? Is your alumni association president planning to attend your celebration for graduates?

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Even the smallest and most rural communities typically have organizations affiliated with the military. Once the SVO has a firm footing on campus, think about how you might extend your reach into the community. Consider:

• Military-affiliated organizations and groups may offer opportunities for partnerships and promotion and serve as valuable resources and advocates. These include local veterans’ service organizations, such as the American Legion, VFW and AMVETS; staff at local military institutions and military recruiters; and county veterans’ service officers. Veterans’ service officers provide one-on-one assistance to all veterans and families in your area. If this representative is not currently engaged with your campus, invite him or her to attend SVO meetings.

• Other patriotic organizations in your community are likely to be supportive of your efforts. Opportunities for future partnerships may exist with your local USO, firefighter and police organizations, the American Red Cross or faith-based groups, among others.

• Many communities sponsor celebrations during Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Veterans Day and patriotic holidays. Explore opportunities to participate in local parades, provide a color guard for special events or set up an information booth at community festivals.
Work Toward Membership Sustainability

Membership is a challenge for all SVOs. In fact, membership is a challenge for most student and community organizations. The fact is that people are busy and have many competing interests. This is especially true for student service members and veterans, who may also have work, family and military commitments in addition to school responsibilities. For this reason, you can expect a few things to happen at some point in the life of the SVO:

• Membership will wax and wane. One semester there may be a roomful of members at every meeting, and the next semester it may be a struggle to recruit enough attendees to get anything done.
• Most of the “heavy lifting” will fall to a core group of members.
• Leadership turnover will be significant. At some point, it may seem that all the SVO leaders are graduating or moving on at once.
• Interest in membership will spike. An enthusiastic leader or an outstanding event can draw significant positive attention to the SVO.

Some things, like mobilizations or members’ personal milestones, like new babies, are out of your control, but simply riding the tide and wishing things to improve is not a good policy. In the words of business author Rick Page, “Hope is not a strategy” (2003). SVOs must be proactive about keeping membership constant. Consider these tactics:

• Address the needs and expectations of the student service members and veterans on campus. If you have not asked, do a survey and find out. To compete with other interests, the SVO will need to give leaders and members something they need, want or both.
• Constantly reevaluate the SVO’s goals and objectives in relation to your mission, which should stay fairly stable. If the goals and objectives are unrealistic or failing to help you achieve your mission, fix them.
• Work within the campus culture, not against it.
4: DESIGN, DEVELOP, DELIVER

- Maintain communication. Missing meetings does not mean a member is not interested in being involved in special events or is not receptive to the information shared by the SVO.
- Engage new members immediately. Make a focused effort to make them feel included and valued. If they express interest in assuming some responsibility, help them identify how they could contribute most effectively.
- Capitalize on and learn from successes. Share your successes widely through your campus media and other outlets.
- Never miss an opportunity to provide contact information to potential members and partners. Carry business cards or fliers. Put contact information on all promotional materials. Make sure student veterans and service members have multiple ways to reach your SVO.

Tip for Success

✓ Have a plan for dealing with some of the challenges student service members and veterans may be facing. It is tempting to personally try to help them through their challenges, but realize there are professionals on campus and in the community who are trained to provide therapeutic and consistent support for military service-related issues, as well as financial, domestic and spiritual matters. Be familiar with available resources and know how to put members in touch with professionals.

✓ Many SVOs are establishing SALUTE Veterans National Honor Society (www.salute.colostate.edu) chapters on their campuses. This can serve as a means to recruit, involve and recognize the academic successes of your members. Consider whether the SVO has the time and resources necessary to become a chapter.

✓ Consider holding a celebration when your membership goal is reached.
Evaluate Progress and Demonstrate Success

SVO efforts should be regularly evaluated for evidence of progress and to make sure expenditures of time, effort and funds have the intended result. Evaluating progress requires two components:

- **Demonstrating outputs.** Outputs indicate counts and activity and answer the question, “What did we do?”
- **Measuring outcomes.** Outcomes show benefits, influence, and effect and answer the question, “What difference does it make?” (Taylor-Powell, Jones, & Henert, 2003)

Measuring outputs and outcomes are both important, but only outcomes are meaningful indicators of progress toward your mission. Once measurement criteria are established, they should be evaluated regularly to assess progress and documented in continuity binders. See Table 1 for examples of output vs. outcome.

**Table 1. Examples of Output vs. Outcome**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership grew from 10 to 15 in one month.</td>
<td>The number of peer mentors in the Engineering Technology program increased by 50% with the addition of five new members from that department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We conducted two activities with other student organizations.</td>
<td>SVO members collaborated with the student senate and the student newspaper on initiatives to raise awareness of military issues on campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SVO hosted a seminar attended by 12 SVO members.</td>
<td>We connected with campus support services to familiarize our members with on-campus resources they might need for college success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When assessing an initiative, ask questions like:

- Did the event have immediate value to your members?
- Did it meet the needs and expectations of your intended audience?
- Is there any evidence that the event made an impact on campus?
- Did the investment of people, time, energy or money generate an acceptable return?
- Is it worth doing again, and if so, how could it be improved?

Use the answers to these questions to determine which programs to keep and possibly expand and which to eliminate.

4.4: Conclusion

Whether creating an SVO or revamping an existing one, designing, developing and delivering a student organization for service members and veterans will be a remarkable adventure. As with any organization, there will be unpredictable times. Members, leaders, and advisors will experience rewards and successes as well as challenges while working to establish and maintain the SVO. By keeping the focus on the group’s mission and objectives, the SVO can achieve overall forward progress. The SVO’s role to support student service members and veterans in their transition from military service through post-secondary goals and on to meaningful employment is ongoing and will take many forms, according to expectations of members and each institution’s unique culture. The successful SVO will work within that culture to develop strategies to support its members in their academic pursuits.

Realize that most SVOs, and in fact most student organizations in general, struggle with regular meeting attendance. Do not base the success of your SVO on the number of attendees at your meetings. Meeting attendance is just one indicator of success and illustrates the importance of having other metrics in place to measure your progress. These other metrics might include social media traffic, special event attendance, the number of new members recruited, and campus partnerships established.

**Tip for Success**

A good time to develop SVO objectives and review survey results is at an annual leadership transition retreat.
The information in the previous section of this manual is designed to help you create, grow or strengthen an SVO. However, like any other non-profit organization, SVOs must secure and direct resources, including money, people and community support. While all these resources are important, monetary resources like grants are typically needed to ensure SVOs’ budgeted expenses become reality.

For those who want to take it to the next level and compete for all types of resources, this section is for you. Here we describe how to prepare a business plan, how to best present your plan and how to implement it.

5.1: **SVO Business Plan**

To help SVOs think strategically about their programs, plan for sustainable success, better serve their members, and increase engagement with campus and local communities, a high quality business plan is essential. Collaborating with the Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship at Purdue University, MFRI created a business plan model. To incentivize our SVOs, we are also able to sponsor semi-annual business plan competitions that result in awards of up to $2,000 for each SVO. Regardless of whether your SVO participates in an actual competition, the elements of positioning your SVO to compete for resources are essential.

**Why a business plan?**

The U.S. Small Business Administration describes a business plan as an essential roadmap for success that guides an organization forward. While your SVO’s business plan will be different...
5: COMPETING FOR RESOURCES

“T judge the SVOs in the same way I judge my corporate team when they pitch to me. Do they clearly understand what they want to do, and can they communicate it to me in a way that makes me want to commit company resources?”
– SVO competition judge

“Beyond grants, the process has encouraged our organization to become responsible for taking care of ourselves to ensure our future existence.” – SVO competition participant

from that of a for-profit company, it will none-the-less outline your goals and plans for reaching them. It is also evidence to the outside world that you are a viable, legitimate entity.

5.2: Prepare, Present and Implement an SVO Business Plan

Preparing a business plan is hard work, but can lead to short- and long-term benefits.

Prepare

Thoroughly consider key aspects of the SVO—mission, objectives, membership goals, budget, and sustainability. Formulating the plan is strategic and entrepreneurial, because each SVO is different. There is no road map, but we offer a few recommendations to consider:

• Create a clear, concise mission statement and defined objectives. Test their power and impact by shopping these around to your members, campus advisors, and business professionals.

• Develop objectives and goals that are realistic, achievable, and measurable. Do not overlook the importance of establishing metrics to assess your impact. You want to be able to demonstrate your success and the process will help you set priorities and allocate resources. It will help you demonstrate your value to prospective members, partners and funders.

• Demonstrate evidence of your organization’s sustainability. Show that you are prepared to stand the test of time with your resources and in your leadership plans. How are you recruiting new members and transitioning leaders? How do you manage your records? How are you motivating others to invest time and money in your organization?

• Be inclusive and show that you value diversity. Might your SVO be open to ROTC candidates? Family members? Faculty and staff who are military veterans or advocates?

• Have immediate value for your members. What is the immediate impact of joining the SVO? Why should new members want to join? Long-term goals of philanthropy and community service are important, but your SVO must first focus on benefit to members.
Business Plan

Table 2 shows the elements of a typical SVO business plan. A well done plan pulls everything together in a concise, easily communicated or presented format. You will note in the table that the bar is higher for established SVOs.

**TABLE 2: BUSINESS PLAN OUTLINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission statement</td>
<td>Provide the SVO’s mission statement (a short, concise and succinct statement defining an organization’s purpose; see page 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>List the SVO’s objectives (practical steps needed to achieve short-term and long-range goals; see page 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background and setting</td>
<td>Describe how and why the SVO was created and how it reflects the campus culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy and implementation</td>
<td>Explain the methods, plans and actions the SVO will use to achieve its mission and objectives (see page 29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and membership development</td>
<td>State the SVO’s membership goal; explain how the SVO will recruit members and communicate with current members, potential members, supporters, and partners (see page 31).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Present the SVO’s budget, including all anticipated income and planned expenditures. The budget should reflect the SVO mission and objectives (see page 29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Describe the SVO’s plan for sustainability, including membership development, leadership transition, records management and financial viability (see pages 35 and 45).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5: COMPETING FOR RESOURCES

Table 2: Business Plan Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOR ESTABLISHED SVOs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments and lessons learned</td>
<td>Describe the SVO initiatives that have had the greatest impact and any lessons learned, both positive and negative. If possible, include measurable results (number of attendees, amount of money raised, etc.) (see page 47).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking outward and building relationships</td>
<td>Describe efforts and plans to engage military-affiliated groups and organizations, faculty and staff, alumni, local businesses, community stakeholders, and others to expand the SVO mission and strengthen connections (see page 40).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consider these suggestions:

- Involve a core team that is committed to the work.
- Get your advisor involved early in the process and listen to his/her feedback and advice.
- Give the budget serious consideration. Think beyond the first year and be sure line items are linked to outcomes that can be measured.
- When using percentages, ensure they have meaning. A 50 percent increase in membership for an SVO of 10 is quite a bit different than the same increase for an SVO with 40 members.

Present

Professionals are often called upon to present or “pitch” ideas. The ability to clearly communicate ideas and persuade others is a natural skill for most student service members and veterans, but it must be practiced and polished. Consider the tips in Table 3.

TIPS FOR ADVISORS

- Make sure you are familiar with your school’s grant policies and requirements. You may want to consult with the grants office early in case they need to review competition materials.
- Make sure students review and follow the competition requirements and pay attention to key dates.
- Continually monitor progress and begin reviewing drafts early in the process.
- Build in revision time.
- Review and endorse the presentation before it is submitted.
Few people are naturally comfortable presenting to an audience. For most of us, confidence comes with practice. Do not be discouraged by your first few efforts.

### TABLE 3: PRESENTATION TIPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentations Element</th>
<th>Advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Presentation delivery | • Practice your presentation ahead of time.  
• Convey passion and enthusiasm for your SVO.  
• Make eye contact with the audience and speak with confidence and authority.  
• Be persuasive and stick to the message.  
• Pace your presentation to stay within allotted time.  
• Dress professionally.  
• Savor the process! You have worked hard to define your SVO and communicate its value to experts. Be proud of your efforts! |
| Presentation materials | • Outline only key points in your presentation. Avoid large amounts of text. Use notes to remember what you want to say.  
• Ensure tables, charts, and other graphics are clear, correct, and easy to read.  
• Include relevant photographs of your SVO’s members and events.  
• “Think outside the box” for your presentation format. PowerPoint is always acceptable, but there are others to consider. |
| Question and answer session | • Listen to the question being asked and be prepared for follow-up or more probing questions from the judges.  
• Be intimately familiar with the content of your presentation, including goals, activities, and budgets (this applies to all presenters on your team). |

**Implement**

Whether you are participating in a business plan competition, addressing your school’s administrators or the business community, or simply creating a business plan, the real goal is to apply what you have gained in the process to strengthening your SVO and positioning it competitively.
5: COMPETING FOR RESOURCES

TIPS FOR ADVISORS

- Encourage students to analyze, report and record results after each event or initiative. This leads to more effective learning and accurate reporting, as well as less work and frustration for everyone when an impact report is due.

While successfully securing resources is in itself an accomplishment, a track record of successfully attracting and managing resources often opens doors to unexpected opportunities and can increase access to additional resources.

REVIEW YOUR PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Ensure your organization stays on track with its mission and objectives and try not to be distracted by “pop-up” projects. Do not let the urgent or emergent distract you from the important!

ASSEMBLE EVIDENCE AND EVALUATE PROGRESS

Refer to page 47 for guidance on how to collect high quality, meaningful evidence. Baseline data that allow you to demonstrate your progress are essential, but are the most often overlooked aspect of evaluation. Administrators and funders expect to see evidence of your value and impact.

BEGIN WRITING YOUR IMPACT REPORT IMMEDIATELY

End of year or end of funding cycle reports that describe accomplishments, account for funds, and discuss lessons learned are expected. To ensure the fullest and most accurate accounting and to avoid last minute “fire drills,” start writing your impact report on day one.

5.3: Summary

The process of identifying, attracting and effectively using resources is ongoing for SVO leaders. Whether requesting funds from a student government or campus organization, launching a membership drive, seeking partnerships with other organizations, or participating in a grant competition, the SVO should regularly re-visit its business plan. In order to “sell” the SVO to potential advocates and sponsors, the leadership team must present a strong mission, achievable objectives, a realistic plan for sustainability, a sensible budget, and sound implementation strategies. This process will help your SVO accomplish its goals and continue to thrive as an invaluable resource to current and future student service members and veterans.
6.1: References


6.2: Further Reading


7.1: Business Plan Competition Implementation Plan

An implementation plan is a helpful tool that the project team can use as a blueprint for planning, executing and evaluating a successful business plan competition. To ensure that your event runs smoothly and maximize the potential for competitors to shine by minimizing disruptions and delays, some sort of organizational plan is essential. An implementation plan communicates tasks and an associated timeline to all members of the team. Like any Gantt-type chart, the plan can and should be revised as needed, keeping in mind that a change in one due date usually affects all others. Everyone involved must commit to meeting assigned deadlines and communicating progress.

A sample implementation plan that identifies staffing needs and suggests lead times for important tasks, such as preparing competition guidelines and publicizing the event, begins on page 58. Your project team will want to adjust the general timeline to reflect your unique situation. Regardless of the format used to plan and support the competition, the essential tasks for a successful event are provided below.

It may be helpful to identify a few terms used in the plan:

- **Competition guidelines** are the written rules of the competition. They describe the goals of the competition and funding initiatives and include specific instructions for the proposal and presentation, such as required topics and page and slide limits. The guidelines also specify deadlines, highlight the submission process, and provide contact information of the event organizers. Publish the guidelines for potential competitors several months in advance of the registration deadline.
• The **registration deadline** is the date by which all SVOs interested in participating in the competition must express their *intent to compete*. Not only does this deadline help the event team anticipate the number of participants, it requires the SVOs to make the commitment needed to jump-start their planning and writing process.

• The **proposal and presentation submission deadline** is the date that all written business plans, presentation media, contact information, application documents and W9 form (if required) are due. This deadline is the threshold between SVOs simply exploring the idea of competing and seriously committing to compete, so anticipate that some SVOs may drop out at this point.

• An **impact report** is an end-of-cycle report submitted by grant recipients. This type of report helps competition organizers evaluate how outcomes were met and identify ways to improve future support. It also provides useful information to funders about the impact of their support. Most importantly, the process of writing an impact report requires the SVO to reflect on its activities, achievements and lessons learned. This activity a valuable learning tool.
## SAMPLE SVO COMPETITION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competition Date:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competition Registration Deadline:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal &amp; Presentation Submission Deadline:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### PRE-COMPETITION TASKS

#### 6 MONTHS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Create an implementation plan.
  - Set registration deadline for 6 weeks before competition.
  - Set proposal and presentation submission deadline for 4 weeks before competition.

#### 5 MONTHS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Write competition guidelines. Plan to make them available in electronically and in limited quantities of hard copy.
- Finalize event budget.

#### 4 MONTHS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Secure a venue.
- Confirm catering, if food is planned.
- Verify and technology availability (computer, projector, internet access) and make arrangements as needed.
- Identify, invite and confirm judges.
- Coordinate travel arrangements for judges.

#### 3 MONTHS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Publish competition guidelines on the Web and launch online registration.
- Begin publicizing the competition.
- Confirm registration and provide more detailed instructions as SVOs register.
## PRE-COMPETITION TASKS, continued

### 2 MONTHS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Plan photography.
- Draft and approve event evaluation survey for participants.

### 7 WEEKS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Send reminder email to registered SVOs about materials submission deadline.

### 6 WEEKS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Close online competition registration.
- Obtain honoraria gifts for judges.
- Reconfirm judges. Confirm contact information and request bios.

### 5 WEEKS BEFORE COMPETITION
- As submissions are received:
  - Confirm receipt of all expected materials.
  - Check submissions for completeness.
  - Notify SVOs of any required revisions.

### 4 WEEKS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Draft competition agenda with assigned presentation times for each SVO.

**Note:** *Four weeks before the competition is the proposal and presentation submission deadline.*

### 3 WEEKS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Provide competition time assignments to SVOs.
- Confirm presenters’ travel plans or remote presentation needs and contact info.
- Draft media release shells (competition details and results will be added later).
- Create nametags for judges, participants and attendees. Create table signs for judges.

### 2 WEEKS BEFORE COMPETITION
- Send competition package to judges, including all presentation submissions, agenda, map, event day contact information and special instructions.
### PRE-COMPETITION TASKS, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 WEEK BEFORE COMPETITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Assemble competition-day binders for judges.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY OF COMPETITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Administer and collect evaluations from participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Obtain participant quotes for press release.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Work with judges to determine award levels and grant amounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Document judges’ deliberations and recommendations about award amounts and competition rankings.</td>
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</table>

### POST-COMPETITION TASKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING COMPETITION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Finish, approve and distribute final press release.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Notify awardees and send instructions for obtaining funds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Update Web site with published press release.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 DAYS AFTER COMPETITION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Send thank-you letters to judges.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 WEEK AFTER COMPETITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Conduct post-event team meeting using event evaluations to inform the discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify post-event action items and assign responsibilities to planning team members.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 WEEKS AFTER COMPETITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Send impact report template to SVOs; follow-up by phone and email to answer questions or provide guidance.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SAMPLE BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION AGENDA

7:00 a.m. Competition planning team arrives for set-up
7:30 Pre-event staff meeting begins
7:45 Pre-event staff meeting ends
7:50 Judges begin to arrive
8:00 Continental breakfast
  Welcome and judges’ briefing
8:20 Break
8:30 Competition commences
8:30 SV O #1: Presentation begins
8:40 Question and answer session begins
8:50 Presenters excused and judges’ deliberation begins
9:00 Presenters return to competition room for feedback
9:15 SV O #2: Presentation begins and proceeds as above
10:00 Break
10:15 SV O #3: Presentation begins
11:00 SV O #4: Presentation begins
11:45 Lunch
12:30 p.m. SV O #5: Presentation begins
1:15 SV O #6: Presentation begins
2:00 Break
2:15 SV O #7: Presentation begins
3:00 SV O #8: Presentation begins
3:45 Judges’ final deliberation begins