

OCTOBER 14, 2020



WHY WOMEN WARRIORS?

AN EVALUATION OF FEMALE
VETERAN ENGAGEMENT IN
WARRIORS FOR FREEDOM AND
BEST PRACTICES FOR
CONSISTENT INCLUSION

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01

COVER LETTER



TO: DEREK JUMP, WARRIORS FOR FREEDOM

FROM: TEAM 4

SUBJECT: LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Dear Mr. Jump,

As agreed upon at the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester, we are hereby submitting the attached report entitled *Why Women Veterans?: An evaluation of female veteran engagement in Warriors for Freedom and best practices for consistent inclusion.*

This report examines Warriors for Freedom's problems and opportunities in terms of connecting with current members and the representation of female veterans. The report details why it is important to reach these audiences and measures how the organization has done thus far.

Our team hopes this report provides you with new and useful insights.

Sincerely,
Team 4

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report details information regarding Warriors for Freedom and its stakeholders, especially those that are less represented. Information was gathered through the planning and carrying out of secondary research and primary research in the form of a survey.

Beginning with secondary research, a situational analysis was prepared to analyze where Warriors for Freedom is excelling and falling short. Some of the noted strengths are the organization's strong base of male veterans and social media activity in terms of Facebook. However, there's a notable lack of representation and engagement from female veterans. Therein lies a significant opportunity for the organization to continue expanding its membership and serve a community that is often forgotten.

Secondary research also highlighted several internal and external factors that are either contributing to the organization's current success and/or downfall. As one of more than 20 veteran organizations located in Oklahoma, these sections take a look at how Warriors for Freedom compares to surrounding veterans organizations in Oklahoma City in terms of its official website, social media, and the events being hosted. Additionally, with the topic of the #MeToo Movement so fresh in the minds of the public, there's an intersectionality that occurs between female veterans, sexual assault and other relevant issues that needs to be addressed.

Furthermore, three personas have been included to assist Warriors for Freedom with better understanding three of its most important stakeholders and what forces drive them. These stakeholders include the following: a retired and disabled veteran, a female veteran, and the president of the Warriors for Freedom Board. This is the key to understanding the specific goals, motivations and values, pain points, and the behaviors of each audience.

In addition to secondary research, primary research was conducted to supplement the research results. Due to limited time and participation, only a survey was able to be carried out. However, responses gathered from the survey yielded these general findings: Warriors for Freedom has an immediate need for better communication, female veterans are not being actively engaged, and there is a disconnect between veteran satisfaction and veteran participation.

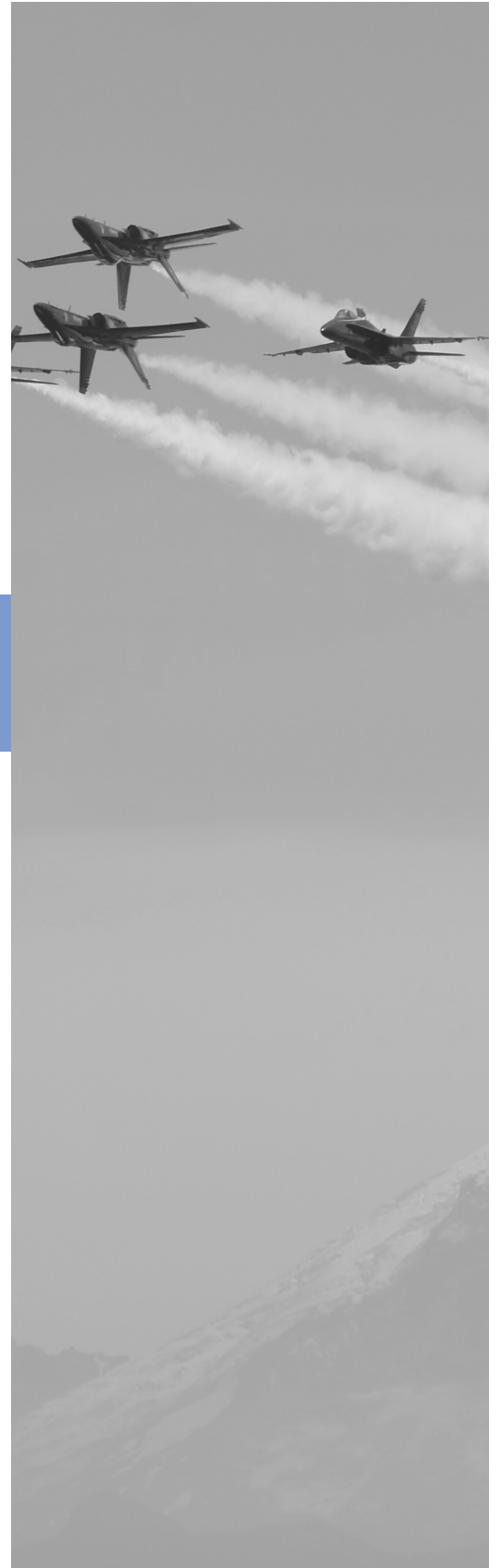
03

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This strategic communications campaign aims to bridge the gap between Warriors For Freedom and vulnerable veterans through engagement, inclusion, and optimization of social media channels and the official website to better communicate with underrepresented groups. This is especially important for female veteran inclusion as they disproportionately seek out services from Warriors For Freedom in comparison to male counterparts.

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SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS



05

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

Warriors For Freedom has a strong demographic of male veterans who are actively and consistently involved with the organization. WFF caters only to Oklahoma veterans, which allows more time and resources to each individual as opposed to a national organization. Scheduled events have strong turnout among male veterans and WFF's Facebook account has a five-star rating, has been liked upwards of 10,000 times, and is utilized for targeted communication with active and engaged publics. Additionally, the organization has an established website with links to services offered through partner organizations. WFF has a female board member and female employees which increases female representation on the organizational level.

WEAKNESSES

Though WFF has female employees and a female board member, the organization severely lacks equal female representation, inclusion, and involvement across virtually all platforms and levels. The organization's mission statement is confusing, long and lacks cohesive and simple messaging. Some of the links to partner organizations featured on the website are faulty and redirect to error pages. The current structure of the organization's website shifts the responsibility to look into partner organizations and their respective services to the viewer, effectively undermining its mission. In addition, some of the services listed for female veterans are not women-centered or tailored specifically towards women. Of the services listed for women warriors under resources, only one explicitly states that it aids in military sexual trauma, something 1 in 4 female service members will experience. Additionally, the organization lacks consistency on Twitter and Instagram, and virtually none of the images are representative of women or encourage women's involvement.

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SWOT ANALYSIS CONT.

OPPORTUNITIES

WFF has an opportunity to grow their user base, increase volunteer involvement and donations, and expand their target audience demographics to serve *all* veterans, but especially female veterans who are far more vulnerable to military sexual assault. Though WFF has fewer employees than competitor organizations and lacks an official public relations position, WFF could launch unpaid internships to increase efficiency and allow official employees to focus on communication and engagement with veterans in need. In addition, WFF has multiple opportunities to strategically connect with female veterans while highlighting their contributions and connecting them with services specialized in aiding women. There are plenty of national holidays and months that serve to raise awareness for women's issues, and all of these dates should have strategic outreach initiatives planned. Some examples include: October is domestic violence awareness month, March is women's history month, and there are plenty of national holidays to highlight women's achievements and services while simultaneously raising awareness about the organization and how it can serve them.

THREATS

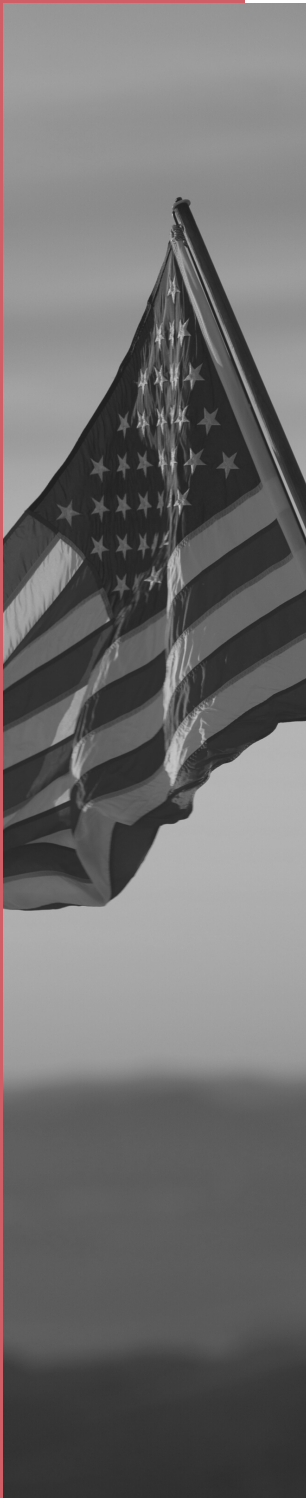
Many of WFF most successful events involve alcohol, which is both a physical and mental health threat to male veterans, but a large deterrent from female engagement as 64% of military sexual assaults involve drinking. Hosting events that are centered around gathering veterans for a beer can have unintentional negative consequences on both veterans and Warriors For Freedom as many veterans face alcoholism. In addition, hosting events that cater alcohol could send mixed signals about what WFF stands for and represents, especially when examining the organization's mission statement. WFF is one of several organizations across the state, causing competition in volunteer recruitment, donations, and amount of veterans served. The organization has a 3-star rating on Charity Navigator and received a failing score of 65/100 for their liabilities to assets ratio. A key potential threat to the organization while attempting to engage women is communicating in an insensitive and unplanned manner when navigating difficult topics. Rather, using selective language that empowers and liberates women will be far more beneficial for female service members and the organization alike.

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INTERNAL FACTORS

Warriors For Freedom (WFF) is an established veterans organization founded on the premise of connecting Oklahoma veterans with services specific to the needs of each individual. WFF partners with The Folds of Honor Foundation, the Silent War Foundation, Homeless Alliance, North Care, and A Chance To Change to help combat the disproportionate rate in which veterans experience homelessness, mental illness, suicidal thoughts, and lack of community. Many veterans familiar with WFF are aware of these organizations, however the services and initiatives tailored to female veterans are far less likely to be utilized due to faulty website links, lack of consistent and strategic communication with female service members, and absence of events created for women by women.

Warriors For Freedom has a relatively small employee base in comparison to competitor organizations, making implementation of large organizational goals more difficult. Additionally, WFF has only one female board member: Alissa Lautenbach, Board Director. In the age of the #MeToo movement and the current shift in social discourse concerning sexual assault, especially as it pertains to the military, female representation in veterans organizations is essential. As more female members join WFF, “Organizational leaders need to be aware of...differences [as they pertain to decision-making and agenda-setting] to increase the opportunities and meaningfulness of the opportunities for women” (Exploring Volunteer...2014). WFF is limited in terms of female leadership and representation, however Alissa Lautenbach has an opportunity to increase organizational legitimacy from the perspective of female veterans. She can be an advocate in organizational decision-making by shifting the prioritization of monetary resources, time and labor towards creating an inclusive environment for female service members.



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EXTERNAL FACTORS

Warriors For Freedom (WFF) faces unique external challenges in involving and strategically communicating with female veterans in the organization. WFF is one of over 30 veterans organizations in Oklahoma and is in competition with several other veteran non-profits, many of which have a stronger female base and more consistent donations. The Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual assault is not specific to veterans, however it is likely that female veterans will seek its services due to their success in women's outreach programs that benefit sexual assault survivors. In light of recent events pertaining to sexual harassment, assault and rape in the military, it is necessary and extremely important for WFF to navigate sensitive subject matter with caution and empathy. Roughly 90% of sexual assaults go unreported, causing sexual assault data to be skewed, especially in military assault cases due to lack of transparency in reporting and little to no consequence for perpetrators. In addition, social repercussions have long been an obstacle for women who experience sexual assault, contributing to the small amount of those who come forward.

WFF has an opportunity to offer Oklahoma's female veterans a safe, inclusive space for women to be connected to services specializing in recovery and healing. Military assault and rape have recently captured the attention of the nation and it is more important than ever for WFF to connect female veterans with services catered to their experiences as reporting on these events could bring up trauma and PTSD. Many of the organization's events involve alcohol, which could prove to be a large deterrent for female service members as "over 62% of military assaults involve alcohol" (Vanden Brook, 2019). In addition, many female service members do not seek out veteran benefits or services because they were never deployed or did not participate in active combat (cite). This distinctive cognitive dissonance could become a problem area for WFF as they push to increase female involvement.

NARRATIVE

Primary - Definitive

The primary stakeholder is a retired and disabled military veteran. According to data gathered from the official Veterans Affairs website, there are more male veterans residing in Oklahoma than female veterans (U.S. Department..., 2019). In addition, about 30% of all veterans over the age of 18 are affected by some sort of disability. It is likely, then, that several of Warriors for Freedom's members fit into this demographic, as well (Holder, 2016).

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TARGET STAKEHOLDERS

PRIMARY STAKEHOLDER- DEFINITIVE

Name: Jeremy Stevenson

Age: 40 years old (GenerationX -- the TV Generation)

Type: Dipper

Title: Retired Disabled Veteran



“IM PROUD TO HAVE SERVED
THIS COUNTRY AND BE ABLE TO
LIVE THE AMERICAN DREAM.”

Motivations and Values:

- Traditional values that are reflective of a perceived “simpler” time
- Patriotic
- Hardworking and independent

Pain Points:

- Job stability
- Marital stability
- General family cohesion
- Downward turns in the economy

Behaviors:

- Familiar with technology, but not enough to be “tech savvy”
- Civically engaged
- Involved with community

Goals:

- A rewarding career and family life
- Sending the kids to college
- Having a financially secure retirement

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NARRATIVE**Secondary - Dependent**

The dependent secondary stakeholder is a female veteran who now volunteers with Warriors for Freedom.

Information from the Veterans Affairs shows that this would likely be a woman under the age of 45 (VA.gov). And as of 2017, about 31.3% of these veterans belong to some racial or ethnic minority (2017 Demographics).

This individual has been selected as a persona because their needs are urgent and legitimate, but they often lack the necessary power to advocate for themselves.

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TARGET STAKEHOLDERS

SECONDARY STAKEHOLDER- DEPENDENT

Name: Audre Anderson

Age: 38 (Older Millennial)

Type: Activist

Title: Warriors for Freedom Volunteer, Veteran



“GIVING BACK TO THOSE
WHO GAVE TO ME”

Motivations and Values:

- Achievement-oriented
- Family-Centric
- Team-Oriented
- Feedback-seeking
- Tech-savvy
- Job-hopping

Behaviors:

- More critical of war and political decisions than male counterparts
- Less likely to be deployed than male counterparts
- Familiar with technology, frequents social media
- More comfortable posting political opinions online

Pain Points:

- Lack of survivor-specific resources
- Perception bias due to lack of deployment
- Job inequalities
- Financial stability

Goals:

- Seek to change the world around them in the workplace and in social and political arenas

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NARRATIVE

Secondary - Dominant

The third and final stakeholder is the secondary dominant stakeholder. This stakeholder represents the President of the Warrior's for Freedom Board of Directors.

Members on a nonprofit's board decide the future of an organization by determining what is important and steering the organization in that direction (Board Roles and..., 2020).

As a result, the president of any given nonprofit's Board of Directors holds power, especially.

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TARGET STAKEHOLDERS

SECONDARY STAKEHOLDER- DOMINANT

Name: Jordan Williams

Age: 59 (Baby Boomer)

Type: The Black Booker

Title: President of the Warrior's for Freedom Board of Directors



“AS BOARD PRESIDENT, I STRIVE TO
HELP MAKE THIS ORGANIZATION THE
BEST IT CAN BE.” ”

Motivations and Values:

- Self-disciplined
- Goal-centric
- Strong work ethic
- Team Orientated

Behaviors:

- Desire to be in control
- Optimistic
- Tend to believe they 'know better' than younger generations
- Executive decision-making
- Most concerned with the bottom line

Pain Points:

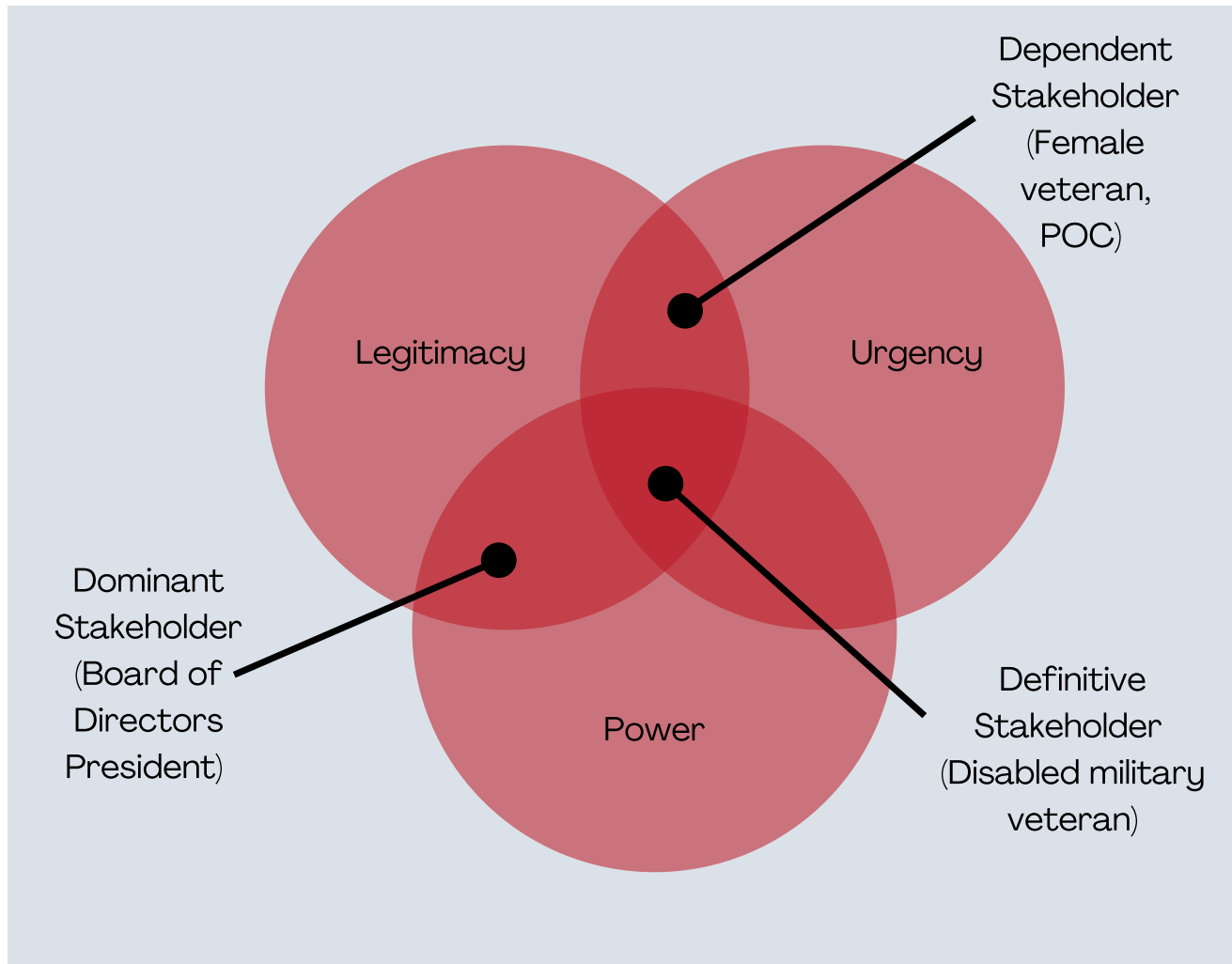
- Not a veteran,
- may lack close/consistent communication with veterans,
- lack tech skills,
- Others will have to adjust according to the person's (lack of) ability/availability/knowledge
- Likely to not understand the value of PR on ROI

Goals:

- Work with executive director directly to help improve organization as a whole
- Spokesperson for the organization
- Liaison to board of directors
- Create consistent revenue and attract consistent volunteers

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VENN DIAGRAM



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COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS:

To develop a strategic plan for the organization, it's necessary to understand the industry in which the business will operate and the surrounding competitive forces. The following are Warriors for Freedom's primary competitors: Honoring America's Warriors (HAW), Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma (WVO), and the Oklahoma Women Veterans Organization (OWVA). The aforementioned organizations provide similar services to Warriors for Freedom and operate in the same general area.

Both Honoring America's Warriors and Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma alike focus their attention on male veterans. In contrast, the Oklahoma Women Veterans Organization targets women. Honoring America's Warriors is led by a female board president. However, there are only four women on the 15 person staff. Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma has 14 staff members, yet only 4 are women. Being that one in ten veterans in Oklahoma are women, this is not currently being reflected by neither the number of women involved in veteran organizations nor representation of women sitting on nonprofit boards (Suarez, 2019).

An organization's official website tends to be the primary and initial point of contact for those who are seeking more information. Taking an in-depth look at what WFF's competitors are doing in terms of their websites further emphasizes what changes should be implemented. Honoring America's Warriors, for starters, has a website that is user-friendly and image driven. Their use of high quality images keeps audiences engaged while scrolling through, and drop-down menus make it easier for individuals to find the desired information quickly. Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma also has a rather user-friendly website, and it is equally driven by images and text. The organization's website is well organized, overall, but the layout and tone come across as less professional. Lastly, the Oklahoma Women Veterans Organization possesses the most outdated website of the group. Despite this detail, the website is up-to-date. In general, there's a lack of images and text.

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COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS:

The resources list for Honoring America's Warriors possesses a hefty program that includes programs that differ from Warriors for Freedoms. The resources listed, however, does not pertain to a specific gender. These are the following: service dog program, adaptive sports, which includes rowing team, archery, combative sports, and CrossFit for the disabled veterans of all ages and abilities.

Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma events include Honoring America's Warriors and Kiss where members got a meet and greet with the band Kiss, Veterans Christmas Story, Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma Carry and conceal class, University of Oklahoma shooting events and Roever Foundation Field Trip.

WVO's website includes a tab labeled "Projects" with pictures and descriptions of items they are raising money for, such as a track chair, boat project and the Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma Ranch. Upon completion, the Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma Ranch will be the first veterans ranch in the entire United States, providing a wellness center, arts and crafts center, women's veteran center, hunting and fishing lodge. It will include marriage classes and counselors. Another tab is the honor wall that showcases personal testimonies that Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma has helped.

If any of Oklahoma Women Veteran's current or prospective members would like to see the list of future events, it is as easy as looking on Facebook under the events tab. However, OWV seems to be lacking in terms of photos because they are all listed under one album rather than multiple.

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COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS:

In terms of social media, all three of WFF's competitors have an active presence on Facebook. This is especially true of Honoring America's Warriors, which has over 200 thousand likes and follows to its page. When HAW does post on Facebook they are very consistent posting multiple times enough receiving around 300 likes a post. Although HAW has not posted since 2018 on their Instagram, they have been able to maintain over 1800 followers and receive around 50 likes on their pictures.

Wounded Veterans of Oklahoma's Facebook has eight thousand followers, going live quite often to bridge the gap and connect with their audience. They make sure to post every week, but it does depend on when they have events. WVO's Twitter contains 54 followers with a total of 70 tweets with their last tweet being in 2016. WVO's Instagram has 244 posts total, has a following of less than 500 followers, and the most recent post is from 2018. WVO's last YouTube video was from 4 years ago. They have been able to maintain a following of 13 subscribers with 85 videos total.

Oklahoma Women Veteran's headquarters official website link does not work. OWV's only source of social media seems to be Facebook, where they post at most 5 times a month, with posts decreasing as the months go on. Their Facebook was created in 2017, however, they only have 400 followers.

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RESEARCH GOALS



Analyze and understand why female veterans are less likely to engage with Warriors for Freedom than their male counterparts.



Gain further understanding on how to better engage Warriors for Freedom's primary audiences.



Gauge the general sentiments of female and male veterans towards Warriors for Freedom.

Through secondary research, it was learned that female veterans are more difficult to engage with and potential reasonings behind this. However, additional research is needed to note why this is occurring *specifically* with Warriors for Freedom.

The general goal of every organization is to increase member participation. This can only be achieved once further information is collected regarding why members are currently engaging or *not* engaging with the organization.

Overall, how does Warriors for Freedom's audience feel about the organization? Taking notice of whether they are generally satisfied or dissatisfied grants the organization a strategic vantage point.

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RESEARCH RESULTS:

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING APPROACH

Utilizing a survey as a method of primary research is beneficial in terms of cost-effectiveness, safely gathering information from individuals in the midst of a pandemic, and being able to collect data from a variety of people (DeFranzo et al., 2020). Through the brief survey that was administered to individuals who are involved with Warriors for Freedom, the team was able to learn basic information about the best ways to contact its members, how they became involved, and which event(s) members would like to see implemented in the future. Taking this survey approach was necessary because, while information is already available regarding ways to increase veteran participation, pre-existing information was not specific to Warriors for Freedom and its members/volunteers. Results from the survey provided further general insights on what the organization is doing well and where it seeks to improve, overall.

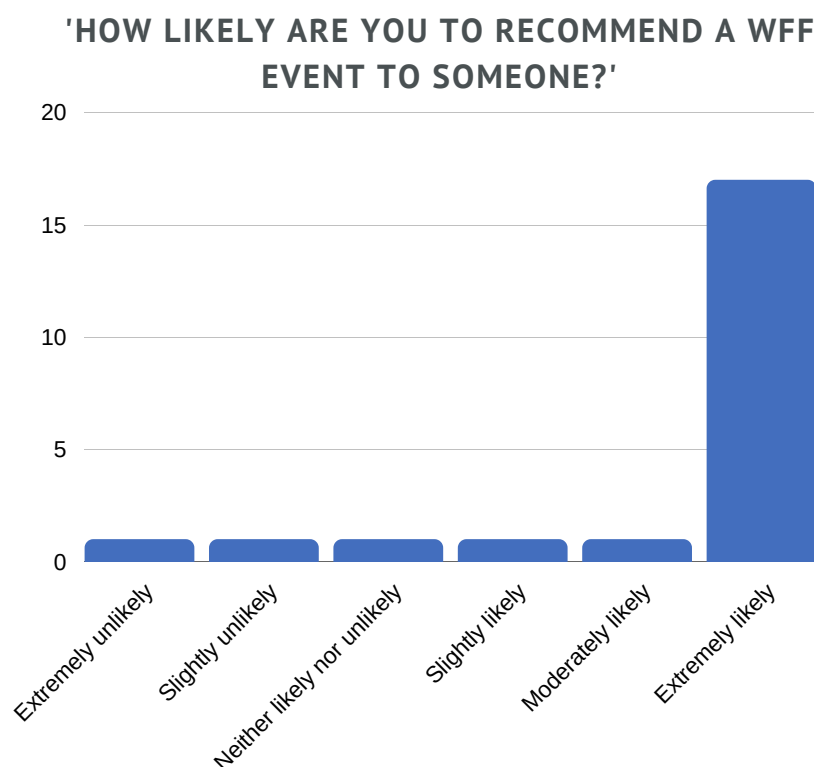
In addition to conducting a survey, it was deemed appropriate to conduct one-on-one interview sessions with one to three female veterans involved with Warriors for Freedom. Interviews would provide a more intimate environment, which creates a more appropriate space to discuss sensitive issues that are of concern to those who served in the military. Furthermore, pressing issues, such as sexual assault, suicide, and others, are of varying concerns to certain demographics. Suicide triggers, for example, tend to vary between male and female veterans (Seck, 2020). Engaging in interviews with veterans would offer the chance to ask more probing questions, thereby gaining more qualitative data, and being able to tailor questions towards female veterans and other minorities whom Warriors for Freedom is seeking to serve.

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RESEARCH RESULTS

Despite the inability to conduct one-on-one interviews with veterans involved with Warriors for Freedom, key information was still able to be gleaned from the 28 question survey. The survey revealed a host of sentiments towards the nonprofit, ranging from deeply satisfied to dissatisfied.

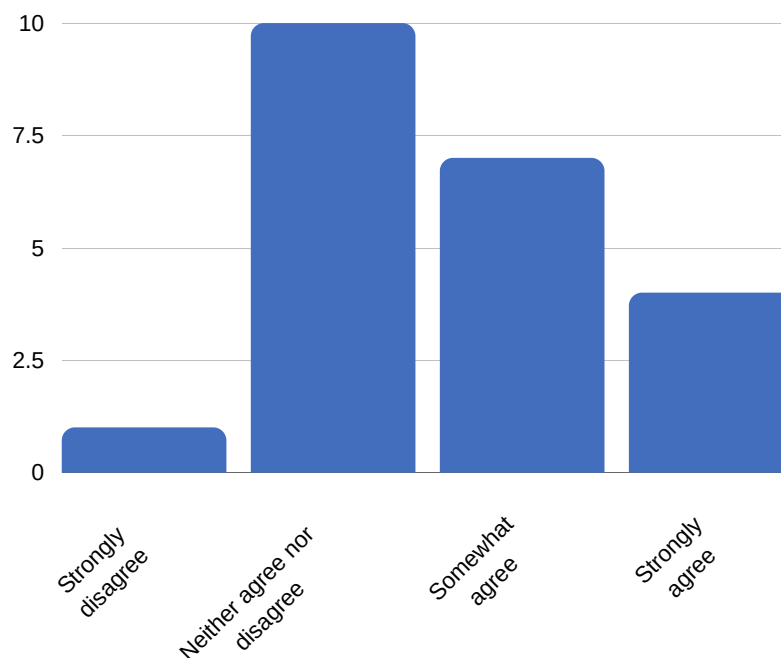
One of the trends revealed from the data is the need for increased communication and outreach efforts. When asked what WFF could be doing better, roughly eight of the 18 responses correlates to the need for better general communication about events, resources, and expressing personal interest in veterans. In spite of these critiques, 16 out of 22 respondents would be 'extremely likely' to recommend a WFF event to a friend or family member. This demonstrates that the majority of individuals who took part in the survey are satisfied with the nonprofit, regardless of the aforementioned changes that need to be made involving communication.



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Furthermore, this research is intended to take a closer look at how female veterans view the organization. Unfortunately, data was only able to be gathered from two female veterans involved with WFF. The recorded data shows that both of these women have been involved with the nonprofit for five to seven years. However, their experiences appear to differ greatly. One woman noted extreme dissatisfaction with events hosted by WFF while the other opted that she felt 'extremely satisfied'. This disparity could be for a number of reasons that the survey was unable to delve into. Based on survey participation, though, female veterans are not being engaged at the same rate as their male counterparts. When asked whether WFF's official website has plenty of information or not for female veterans, only 4 of the 22 respondents stated that they 'strongly agree'.

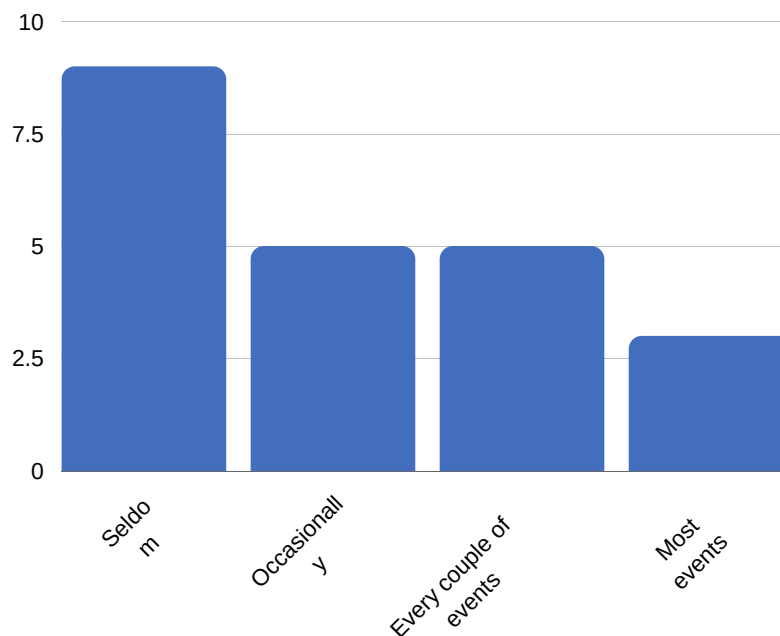
'I FIND THE WFF WEBSITE TO HAVE PLENTY OF INFORMATION FOR FEMALE VETERANS.'



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Lastly, maintaining and increasing veteran participation in WFF events is of special interest. It's worth noting, then, that 9 of the 22 respondents remarked that they seldom attend events hosted by the organization.

'HOW OFTEN DO YOU ATTEND EVENTS HOSTED BY WFF?'



Questions asked later in the survey divulge that this may be due to lack of time, money, and overall communication about when and where events are taking place. Data also suggests that most veterans require at least a month's notice before an event takes place in order for them to attend.

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OVERALL RESEARCH FINDINGS

Warriors for Freedom has an immediate need for better communication.

Survey data and other research have shown that the veterans involved with WFF are, for the most part, pleased with the organization and how it conducts its affairs. That being said, not all of the nonprofit's desired audiences are being reached with the current communication efforts. Several factors were detailed in the survey as to why individuals could not participate or what WFF could be doing better, but communication was frequently identified as an issue.

Female veterans are not being actively engaged.

Only 2 out of the 22 survey responses were taken from women. This in and of itself expresses that female veterans are not being engaged at the same level as male veterans. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents did not agree with the statement that the WFF website hosts an adequate amount of information for female veterans. It should be noted that the majority of these responses did come from men, but secondary research also supports the notion that female veterans are typically less engaged, as well.

There is a disconnect between veteran satisfaction and veteran participation.

WFF's various audiences are, for the most part, satisfied with the organization. Even so, this is not reflected in how often veterans are attending events. The desire is there, but for one reason or another this is not translating to attendance numbers. Data shows that this can be attributed to lack of communication, lack of time (i.e. not knowing about events far enough in advance), transportation, etc.

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WHY WOMEN WARRIORS?

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WARRIORS FOR FREEDOM



**THANK
YOU**