



Joining Forces For Women Veterans

Summit Toolkit

Section VI: Webchat Guide

Whether you hold a webchat as a marketing/educational tool leading up to your JFWV Summit, or as a way to conduct virtual affinity group or brown-bag discussions on key women veteran's issues, this guide will walk you through the logistics of holding a webchat. Webchat online services are user-friendly, and event planners who have not hosted a webchat before may want to explore this new type of discussion tool.

This guide will prepare you to host an online discussion on any topic in your Summit. Contained in this section are:

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A.) Webchat Actions Overview & Responsibilities

Webchat Actions Overview:

- ✓ Develop the webchat content
- ✓ Set up a webchat registration & include a pre-evaluation survey
- ✓ Promote the webchat
- ✓ Host the webchat
- ✓ Send out thank-yous and program evaluation

The main players will be the program manager, host, host assistant, a subject-matter expert (based on your topic), and a woman veteran.

Program Manager

The program manager is in charge of the success of the webchat and will see it through from setting the date, creating the content, and sending out a post-program evaluation.

The program manager will complete the webchat actions (listed above). The program manager may also be the host, or can assign that role to a content expert or other appropriate person. If the program manager is not the host, that person can act as the host assistant.

Host

The host will introduce the webchat, give a brief overview of the topic, introduce the speakers, and lead the discussion between the speakers and the live chat. Before the call, the host/host assistant, along with the program manager, should come up with questions to ask the speakers (see Discussion Guide in Section II, for a series of questions by topic), but should also react to the speakers and call participants to discuss trending topics as they appear. The host also acts as a facilitator, bridging the gap between pauses and should be prepared to manage the flow of discussion appropriately.

Host Assistant

The host assistant should be in charge of all technology issues and monitoring the online chats and sending relevant information to the host, such as trending chat topics and questions. The host assistant will also be involved with pre-webchat duties, as assigned by the program manager.

Women Veteran

Each call should feature one woman veteran that has a compelling story to tell about her reintegration into the civilian world. The woman veteran should feel comfortable talking about her situation, for example: how she felt leaving the military; any particular life-shaping instances during her service that impacted her transition; where she went after she left the military (to family, new job, new home, etc.,); how she felt in the beginning stages of her transition; how she dealt with those feelings; what types of services she secured, or ignored; where she is now; and what advice she'd give women veterans about to transition. [Click here](#) for sample testimonials from the Inaugural Summit.

Subject Matter Expert

Each call should feature one content expert about the area of women veteran reintegration into civilian society. The host or program manager should look for a content or subject matter expert at the local Veterans Administration hospital, a local veteran support group, or a local veteran-focused non-profit. The expert should have first hand experience of dealing with women veterans coming out of the military. An expert that is a veteran is a plus.

Audience

The audience will be able to participate in the call via the dynamic online chat feature. The host assistant will get the chat conversation going by asking questions of the audience and responding to chats. Due to the unpredictability of live radio, the audience should only be able to interact via chats. Because of this, it is imperative that the host assistant is monitoring the chat and relaying chat topics to the host. Many key issues will be brought up between audience members in the live chat.

The audience should be a diverse group of people who are interested in getting to know more about women veterans. For example, they can be the general public, government workers, women veterans, [veteran service organizations \(VSOs\)](#), non-profit workers,

employers, small business owners, HR professionals, diversity officers, social workers, and elected officials. You may want to distribute a [woman veteran questionnaire](#) in addition to your pre-Summit survey (see p. 4 below), to get a better understanding of the background and experiences of the women veterans in your audience.

B.) Curriculum Format

Purpose

Webchat can be an excellent tool for conducting educational/outreach in the months and weeks leading up to your JFWV Summit. Perhaps you prefer holding affinity group or virtual brown-bag discussions on key issues impacting women veterans. As an example, we will use the topic of Family and Community Reintegration for women veterans.

The online call will have two parts – voice and chat interaction. This will allow both the experts and the audience to express opinions and debate subject matter. This is not meant to be a lecture, but a dialogue.

Delivery Mechanism

Your organization or a program partner may have its own webchat service available that you can use for little or no cost. If not, some basic online services are available free of charge. A web-search should provide a list. One such service is TalkShoe, an interactive service – a live radio show – that allows experts and audience members to discuss issues of importance. While the featured presenters are talking, the audience members will be live chatting (instant messaging) their reactions. The calls can be listened to live or downloaded after the webchat once it is posted on a website or blog. Easy to follow instructions can be found on [TalkShoe](#). [See FAQs for information](#) or [videos](#).

C.) Promotions Checklist

Set the Date

It is very important to confirm a date for the call and then to secure speakers who are available for that date. As soon as the date is secured, it's time to set up an event registration and invite people. If speakers can be confirmed immediately, then they should be listed in the initial invitation. If that is not possible, set up the event, send it out and when speakers are confirmed, send out an updated invitation.

Event Registration

Setting up an event registration will allow you to invite people to join the program and give them the necessary information about speakers and call times. You can use [Eventbrite](#), a free and easy service, to create the event registration and assist in other aspects of the promotions. Using Eventbrite allows you to track attendance and participant email addresses. You may also adapt free online survey forms as registration forms using [www.surveymonky.com](#) or [www.zoomerang.com](#), for example.

Custom Registration

When setting up registration, choose the custom registration option to make sure you

can capture the most information about each attendee. Make sure to collect their work information as a required field.

Pre-Program Survey

You can also create custom questions to learn more about the participants. You can then send out a post-program survey to compare what attendees have learned and what they thought of the webchat. Your survey should be tailored to capture the key issues related to your topic. Please see the Summit Toolkit Issue Briefs and Inaugural Summit Report (Sections II and III of the Toolkit), for a list of sample discussion questions by topic.

Sample Pre-Program Survey:

1. Do you personally know any women veterans? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, how are you related to them?
2. Does your organization currently employ women veterans?
3. _____Yes _____No _____I don't know
4. If yes, can you estimate how many?
Yes (please indicate approximate number) _____ No _____
5. Does your company/organization currently have a policy or program that specifically targets women veterans?
_____Yes _____No _____I don't know If yes, please explain.
6. Has your company/organization ever participated in an education or workforce public-private partnership?
_____Yes _____No _____I don't know If yes, please explain.
7. Which statement best describes your opinion toward public-private partnerships supporting women veterans?
_____ I think that the public sector should be responsible for meeting the needs of women veterans.
_____ I think that the public sector should be primarily responsible for meeting the needs of women veterans but I do see a role for the private sector.
_____ I think that the public and private sectors should work together to assist women veterans.
8. Which statement best describes your opinion about the challenges faced by women veterans?
_____ I do not think women veterans face unique challenges; the transition issues are the same for men and women.
_____ I am not sure what challenges women veterans face, and I do not know if they are relevant to my work or organization.
_____ I think that addressing the challenges women veterans face is important but I am not sure how it directly relates to my company, organization or agency.
_____ I think that addressing the challenges women veterans face is important and relevant to my company/organization's goals and mission.

9. What statement best describes your understanding of the challenges faced by women veterans?
- _____ I am not aware of the unique challenges women veterans face.
 - _____ I am aware of some challenges women veterans face.
 - _____ I am aware of challenges faced by women veterans and familiar with promising practices for addressing those challenges.
 - _____ I am aware of challenges faced by women veterans, familiar with promising practices, and have programs/policies to address those challenges.
10. What do you expect to take away from today's webchat?

In addition to these questions, you may also want to include an optional [woman veteran questionnaire](#), to get a better understanding of the background and experiences of the women veterans who will be in your audience.

Sending Invitations

Once you've created the event registration, create an invitation using a system such as Eventbrite. Send the invitation to your networks (upload excel files of emails). Tell your partner organizations and selected speakers to send the invitation to their networks as well. Send out the first invitation one month in advance, and then every week thereafter, or as new information is available (such as speaker confirmations.) Send a reminder the day before the call to let them know it's not too late to sign up and to remind people who have already signed up to call in.

Social Media Outreach

Eventbrite also lets you create custom widgets and buttons to promote the event. Post these buttons on your website, partner websites, blogs, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Also, it creates a hashtag on Twitter for the call to draw attention to the subject and create a community around the issue ([Hashtag 101](#)).

D.) Call Outline

Pre-Call

Once speakers are secured, arrange a conference call or in-person meeting so they can meet each other and the host can explain the flow, purpose of the webchat, and answer any questions. This can also be used as a brainstorming session, and the host can let the speakers help build the content. The host and host assistant (and/or program manager) can draw questions from this discussion and can use this session to trigger discussion in the live chat portion of the webchat.

The host should also send pertinent background materials about the topic, which can include research documents, news articles, websites or other documents. The host should also review participants' pre-programming survey results for audience background and possible questions and issues to highlight.

Just prior to the webchat, it is recommended that the program manager, host, and speakers hold a rehearsal to ensure everyone is comfortable with the webchat service, and that they have a chance to run-through their discussion points. Rehearsals do not have to be lengthy and may last anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes.

Sample Call Outline [60 min total]

Host [3-5 min] – Introduces the call, background topic information, the speakers and flow of the call. The host will encourage insightful, courteous live chatting from both the audience and the speakers. The host will also let participants know that the call is being recorded and will be made available to the public. (See sample language below.)

Woman Vet [10-15 min] – Tells reintegration story (hits points mentioned above in telling of compelling story).

Host – [5 min] While vet is speaking, reviews any relevant information from the chat (via the Host Assistant) and asks one or two follow up questions, which could be pulled from the live chat. Segue to content expert.

Content Expert [10-15 min] – Frames reintegration picture using examples and can specifically react to woman vet’s story.

Host – [15 min] Asks follow up questions, pulling from audience chats and stock questions.

Host [5 min] – Summarizes the call with any findings; adding one or two follow up ideas and/or questions for audience to think about (host assistant will send ideas too); thanks speakers and audience; tells the audience where to find more information on women vets; final housekeeping (e.g., next audio call).

Call Introduction

Welcome callers and thank them for joining you for a JFWV Summit webchat on [insert topic]. For sample purposes, we will use the topic of Family and Community Reintegration. Outline the topic and purpose of the call. Provide an overview of the agenda and the timeframe (how long the call will last). Introduce the speakers and their affiliation.

Remind participants that while the chat is going on, they should keep the dialogue going in the instant message component of the program. The host will be taking questions and shaping the call in part around their comments. Remind them that there will also be a question and answer period after the first speaker and again at the end.

Sample language:

“Thank you for joining us today for Joining Forces for Women Veterans Webchat on Reintegration. Every day women in the military proudly serve our country, but when they return home they often do not receive the recognition, benefits, and services they have earned. Women represent 15% of the military and are the fastest growing veteran population. Yet, tools and programs are still largely designed with men in mind and do not necessarily meet the unique needs of women veterans. Gender shapes men and women’s military experience as well as their multidimensional transition process.

Today we have (name, rank,) who has been a veteran for (number of years) and served in (branch) for (number of years) and (highlights of service). Today she will tell us about her transition home and her struggles to (one or two key points of her story).

We also have (name, position, employer) who has (work / veteran background) and will tell us how her/his organization is assisting women veterans and what we can do to better support women veterans in our community.

While the chat is going on, I encourage you to keep the dialogue going in the instant message component of our program. We will be taking your questions and shaping the call in part around your comments. We will also have a question and answer period after the first speaker and again at the end.

Now, I will have (women veteran name) start.”
####

Program Questions

These questions can be used to prompt discussion in brainstorming the content of the call or directed toward the speakers during the call. Think of these questions as a way to start a dialogue and not questions that have one perfect answer.

- How can women veterans find support networks once they leave the military?
- How can women veterans explain to their family members that they need and deserve time to decompress without alienating them in the process?
- What are some easy ways family members and friends can ease the reintegration period of the women veteran in their life?
- How can the VA make a more welcoming environment for women veterans and their children?
- What are some signs that a women veteran needs professional help for physical, emotional or mental needs?

Post-Call

The audio portion of the call can be live-streamed or downloaded into an mp3 (and edited) for future usage. The audio can be pasted on blogs and websites for others to listen to at a future time. Before closing the live chat, the host assistant should copy the chat, and paste it into a word document for their records; the chat history is not collected by TalkShoe (unlike the audio portion). From the emails collected through Eventbrite, send a thank you to the attendees and send additional follow-up information (e.g. articles, books, or legislation discussed on the webchat). Let them know where the audio mp3 (include this link) will be located and encourage the attendees to share it with their networks. If there are future calls, list the dates and if possible, an invitation to join. Send the speakers a thank you note as well. Also, please send BPW Foundation a link to your webchat's recording to be shared in the [Rawalt Online Library](#). Thank you!

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E.) Program Evaluation

One way to gauge the program’s success and attendee satisfaction is through a program evaluation. Within a few days of the call, or even later that day, email the participants a post-program survey. It’s best if you prepare the post-program evaluation ahead of time so it is ready to send soon after the call. You can take advantage of [SurveyMonkey](#), a free, basic service to create surveys. Below are sample questions, but feel free to create your own and tailor it to the specific issues brought up during your webchat.

Sample Survey:

How would you rate your . . .		Low	Medium	High		
Overall knowledge of challenges and solutions to transition issues faced by women veterans	Before the webchat	1	2	3	4	5
	After the webchat	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of challenges and solutions related to women veterans and family and community reintegration	Before the webchat	1	2	3	4	5
	After the webchat	1	2	3	4	5

- A. In your opinion, what is the most important take-away from the webchat?
- B. Was an appropriate amount of material covered during the webchat? If not, was too much material covered or too little?
- C. Was an appropriate amount of time allotted for discussion? If not, was too much time allotted or too little?
- D. To what extent do you see public-private partnerships having an impact on supporting women veterans’ successful reintegration into their families, communities and the workplace?

1	2	3	4	5
No Impact				Great Impact
- E. To what extent do you see assisting women veterans in their successful reintegration as something relevant to your organization’s goals or mission?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Relevant				Extremely Relevant
- F. Additional comments?