

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the purpose of a community learning model? How is a community learning model used?

A community learning model captures a series of inspiring goals inside a single visual snapshot. This visual modeling approach draws from well-documented literature on the importance of using visual literacy¹ and mind-mapping skills² to support conceptual understanding. The model acts as a springboard, encouraging key stakeholders to gather ideas, analyze information, and think critically as they communicate VA’s new expectations for leadership.

Why does the community learning model begin with seven milestones in VA’s history?

Seven milestones in VA’s history serve as concrete reminders of two important ideas:

- VA’s people-centric, results-driven, and forward-thinking approach to problem-solving
- Change is not a new concept for VA

Each of the nine historical facts was selected to show concrete examples of how VA has embraced change over the years. The examples show how VA applied a people-centric, results-driven, and forward-thinking approach to problem-solving. As far back as 1636, the Pilgrims of Plymouth offered the first government support for disabled Veterans. That decision captures VA’s historical willingness to embrace change and put Veterans first.

How are VA’s guiding principles integrated into the community learning model’s design?

Each of the eight thematic initiatives, sketched as arrows along the model’s pathway, exemplify VA’s guiding principles.

¹ Donis, D. (1973). A Primer of visual literacy. New York: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Messaris, P. (1994). Visual "literacy": image, mind, and reality. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

² Prashnig, B. (1998). The Power of diversity: new ways of learning and teaching through learning styles. New Zealand: Network Educational Press, Ltd. Understanding human behavior. (1994). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

What is the visual significance of the color guard?

The significance of the color guard is meant to remind all users to continue to put the needs of Veterans first as the journey of exploring VA's thematic initiatives begins. The color guard appears on the model in a traditional military march. Flanked on each side by riflemen, soldiers carry flags, representing the U.S. military, in the following order: United States, Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard.

Why are various puzzle pieces positioned along the path and labeled "Challenge?"

Puzzle pieces labeled "Challenge" are positioned throughout the printed and interactive community learning model. These puzzle pieces ask model users to consider the challenges faced when implementing these ambitious initiatives. Although the puzzle pieces on the printed model are simply labeled "Challenge," the accompanying training materials and interactive version of the community learning model offer specific challenge questions aligned to the initiatives.

Are major initiatives visually represented on the printed version of the community learning model?

No, VA's major initiatives are too large to capture succinctly on the print model. Instead, eight thematic initiatives depicted as arrows, creatively combine one or more major initiatives. The interactive version of the community learning model does contain VA's major initiatives and the thematic ones. Viewers can click on interactive links to see the relationship between the two.

What is the significance of fact signs?

Fact signs are positioned near the eight thematic initiatives on the model. They give model users additional information to consider when studying the present and future drawings of each thematic initiative.

Are the four goals listed on the community learning model tied to specific initiatives?

Yes, each of the four goals is tied to one or more specific thematic initiatives.

For the first goal of increase Veteran and client satisfaction, four thematic initiatives are aligned as follows:

- Automate records
- Improve healthcare and contain costs
- Integrate services
- Build relationship management capability

Under the second goal or improve quality and accessibility of services, six thematic initiatives align:

- Eliminate Veteran homelessness
- Automate records
- Improve healthcare and contain costs
- Perform research and development
- Integrate services
- Build relationship management capability

Only one thematic initiative – ensure emergency preparedness - is associated with the third goal of raise readiness.

On the fourth goal or make VA an employer of choice, four thematic initiatives are associated:

- Automate records
- Improve healthcare and contain costs
- Integrate services
- Recruit, hire, train, and retain quality employees

How does VA's mission fit into the overall design of the community learning model?

VA's mission in the present – to serve Veterans by increasing their access to VA benefits and services, to provide them with the highest quality of health care available, and to control costs to the best of our abilities – is wrapped around the roadway of thematic initiatives on the model. Each word of the present mission aligns around the path, encouraging model users to measure the value of each initiative against VA's present mission.

What is "I CARE"? What are VA's core values and characteristics?

"I CARE" is VA's acronym that spells out the Core values in use throughout the organization.

The five Core Values define “who we are,” VA’s culture, and how VA cares for Veterans, their families, and other beneficiaries.

The five “I CARE” Core Values are:

- Integrity
- Commitment
- Advocacy
- Respect
- Excellence

The six Core Characteristics define “what we stand for,” and help guide how VA will perform the core mission. These characteristics shape VA’s strategy, and will influence resource allocation and other important decisions made within VA.

The six Core Characteristics are:

- Trustworthy
- Accessible
- Quality
- Agile
- Innovative
- Integrated

The future of VA will be shaped through the Core Values and Core Characteristics of “I CARE”.

What is the intended use of VA’s community learning model?

The printed model is intended to be displayed on a wall and used in large table-top discussions with VA employees. It can viewed separately or in tandem with additional training materials such as the leader’s guide, discussion cards, frequently asked questions, and a Community Learning Model slide presentation.

What support is available for using the model?

Training materials provide support for using the model. Specific training materials include:

- A training aid to accompany the community learning model. The aid describes elements on the model and how employees and managers will use it.
- An overview presentation of the model intended as a high level introduction to the model and discussion tool for managers, describing the elements on the model and how

employees and managers will use it. The presentation contains discussion points for managers.

- A leader's guide or booklet describing how best to use the model in large or small groups.
- Discussion cards composed of challenge questions and factual information aligned to initiatives.
- Facilitator guides on how to use the discussion cards in one-on-one and group discussions
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)
- Marketing and communications materials
- Tools to evaluate the success of the overall community learning model effort
- VA staff will also use an electronic version of the model that will be interactive, enabling them to experience additional content, individually, or in a group setting.

Who is the intended audience for the model?

The intended audience for the model is all VA employees, stakeholders, and interested community members.