



# Together with Veterans Cambria County Community Network Report

VisibleNetworkLabs

October 2022

VA



## TOGETHER WITH VETERANS

RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

This report for Together with Veterans Cambria County network was produced on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Rocky Mountain MIRECC by **VISIBLE NETWORK LABS** using **PARTNER**.

**VISIBLE NETWORK LABS** is a data science company developing tools and technology to help people measure, understand and evolve the personal and professional networks that influence the communities where they live.

**PARTNER** is a social network analysis data tracking and learning tool designed to measure and monitor collaboration among people/organizations. It is a new, scientifically validated way to design data-driven network strategies that generate social impact.

**PARTNER** is a registered product of Visible Network Labs.



If you have questions on this report or want a deeper understanding of the results, please reach out to Visible Network Labs by emailing [partnertool@visiblenetworklabs.com](mailto:partnertool@visiblenetworklabs.com).

You have access to personally consult with Visible Network Labs around interpreting the data within this report.

Connect with Sara Sprong and Alena Lidey to dive into your results!

VisibleNetworkLabs



**Sara Sprong, M.P.A.**  
VP of Customer  
Experience



**Alena Lidey**  
Customer Success  
Manager

# Project Background

## ABOUT TOGETHER WITH VETERANS

Together With Veterans (TWV) is a community-based suicide prevention program for rural Veterans. Veterans lead local suicide prevention efforts using best practices and in partnership with community members.

More information here: <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/togetherwithveterans/>

## TWV SURVEY RESULTS

In November 2022, 25 organizations were identified as part of the Together with Veterans Cambria County network and invited to participate in a Social Network Analysis (SNA) survey conducted using PARTNER. A total of 22 or 88% of organizations responded.

This report summarizes the results. Those that responded reported that they collectively had 219 partnerships, describing the resulting “network” of partnerships addressing suicide prevention.

## WHAT IS A NETWORK?

A **network** is a formal partnership created between three or more organizations that facilitate public health planning for Veteran Suicide Prevention. Social Network Analysis (SNA) measures the number and quality of connections and increases the visibility of these connections. Using SNA to understand how a network functions can help leaders, members, funders and other stakeholders:

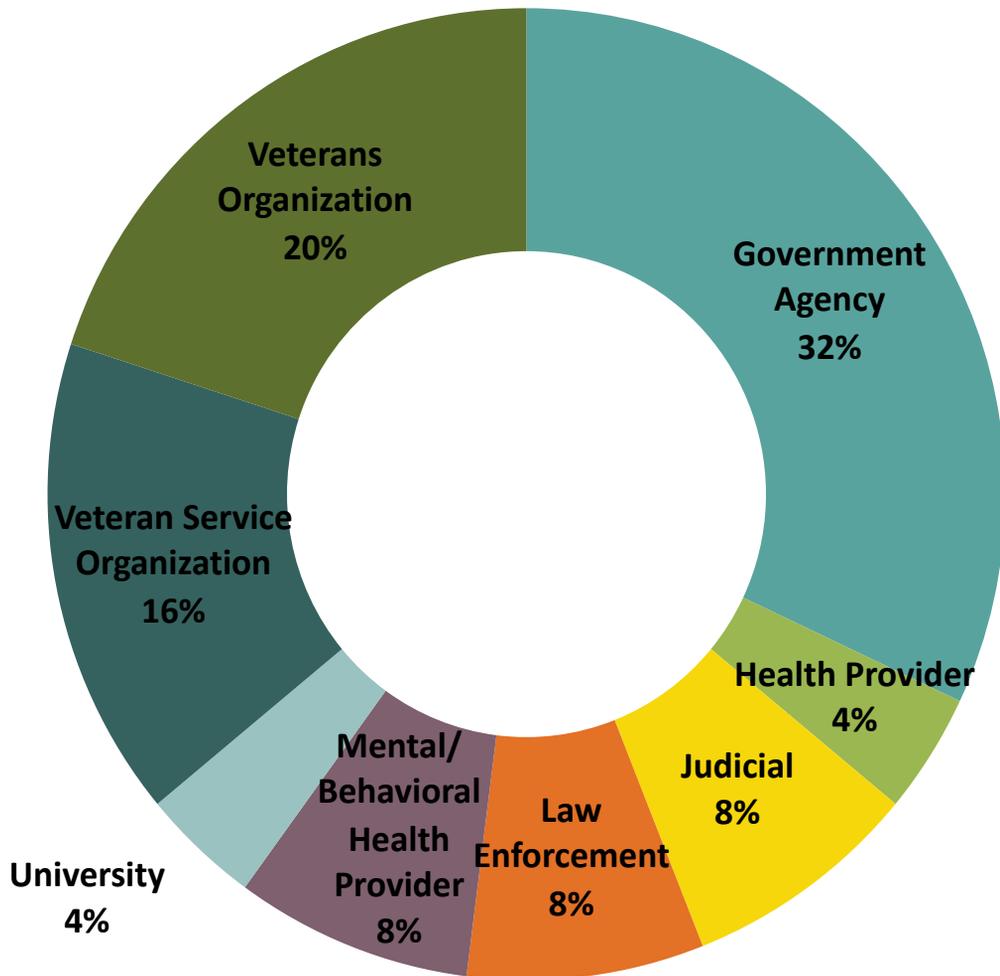
- ❖ Identify ways to improve ways of working to achieve common goals;
- ❖ Plan and implement relationship building and resource leveraging among network partners;
- ❖ Assess the quality, content, and outcomes of connections;
- ❖ Monitor change in networks over time;
- ❖ Develop strategies and action steps to fill gaps and leverage strengths in networks.

# Network Summary

## Invited Members

Together with Veterans Cambria County is made of 25 organizations across eight distinct groups.

*For each category, the number and percentage of members is listed.*



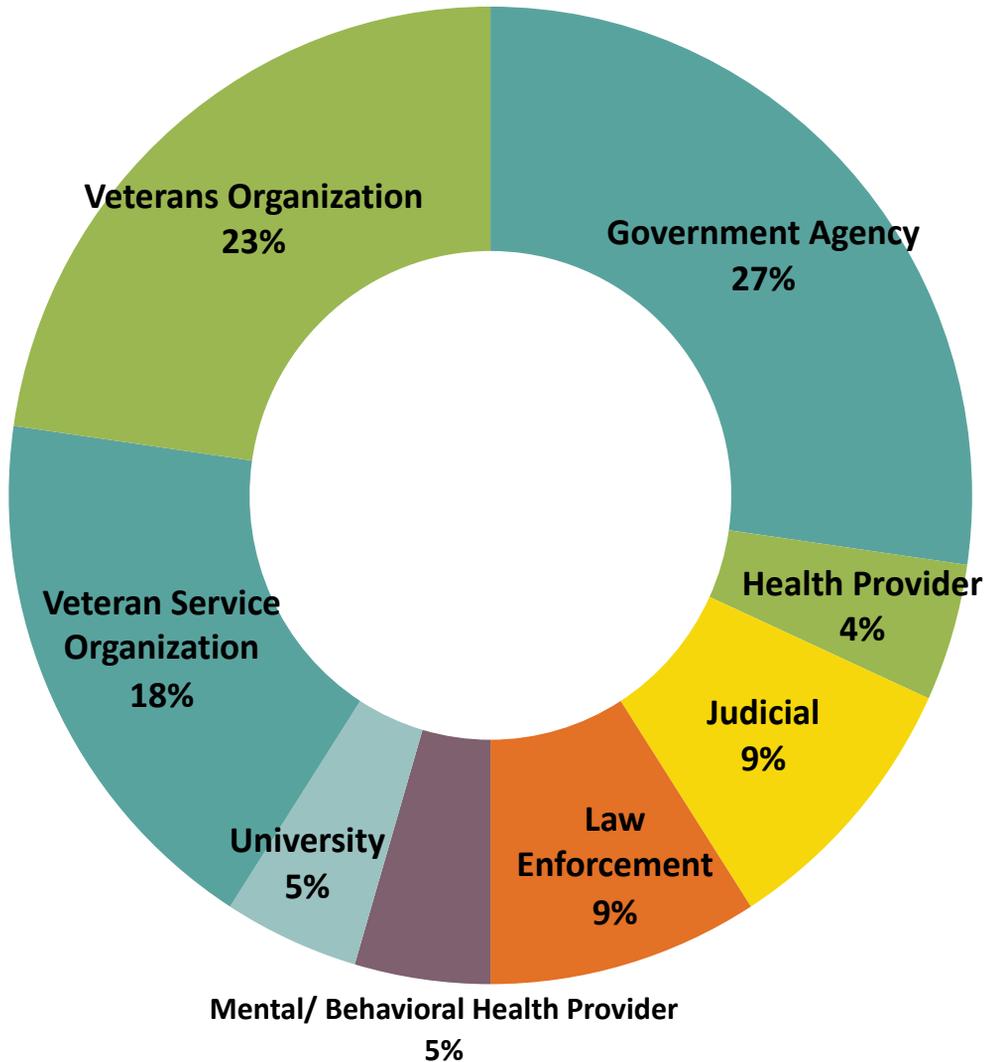
This diverse set of partners from many sectors demonstrates a cross-sector collaborative initiative. Government Agencies make up 32% of the membership, while Veterans Organizations make up 20% and Veteran Service Organizations make up another 16% of the membership.

# Network Summary

## Respondents

Of the 25 organizations, 22 or 88% responded across all those groups.

*For each category, the number and percentage of members is listed.*



This diverse set of respondents from many sectors demonstrates a cross-sector collaborative initiative. Government Agencies (27%), Veterans Organizations (23%), and Veteran Service Organizations (18%) together make up 68% of all the respondents.

Diverse partners are thought to bring new ideas and resources to a network. At the same time, the more diverse organizations are, the more difficult it can be to manage them.



- ✓ Focus on partner recruitment, based on identified gaps or redundancies.
- ✓ Think about the roles different partners play; are all required roles filled?
- ✓ Focus on stability, turnover, and consistency within partner organizations.

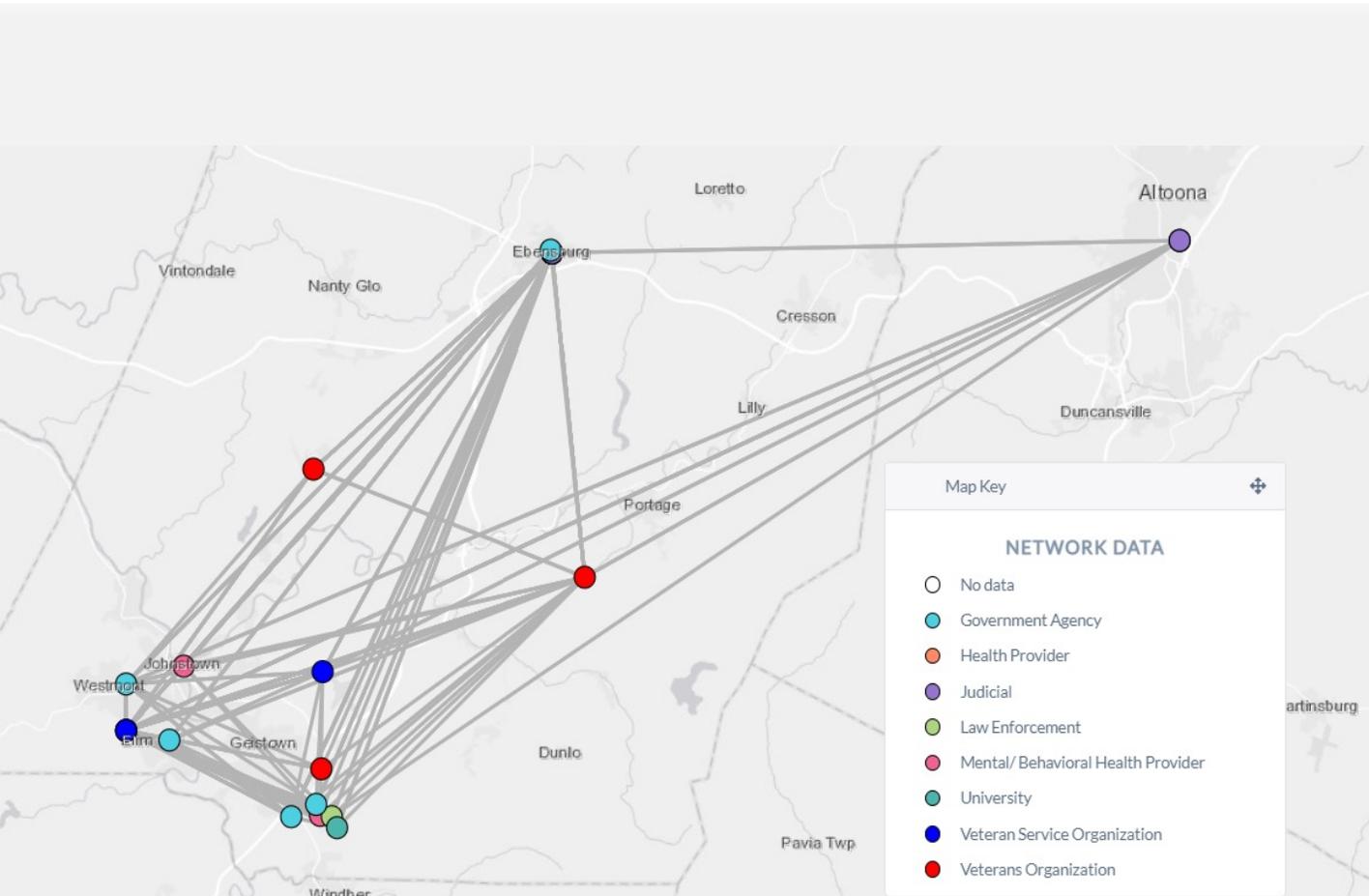


## Considerations for Action Planning

- Does the network have all the essential partners in the system?
- If not, which partners are missing and what can be done to recruit them to the network?
- Are there any areas where additional/fewer partners would help to strengthen the network?

# Network Summary

Network measures show connectivity and activity among network partners. Of all the possible connections in the network, 37% were reported. This means that there is some amount of connectivity already taking place within this network with opportunities to develop additional connections between organizations in this network.

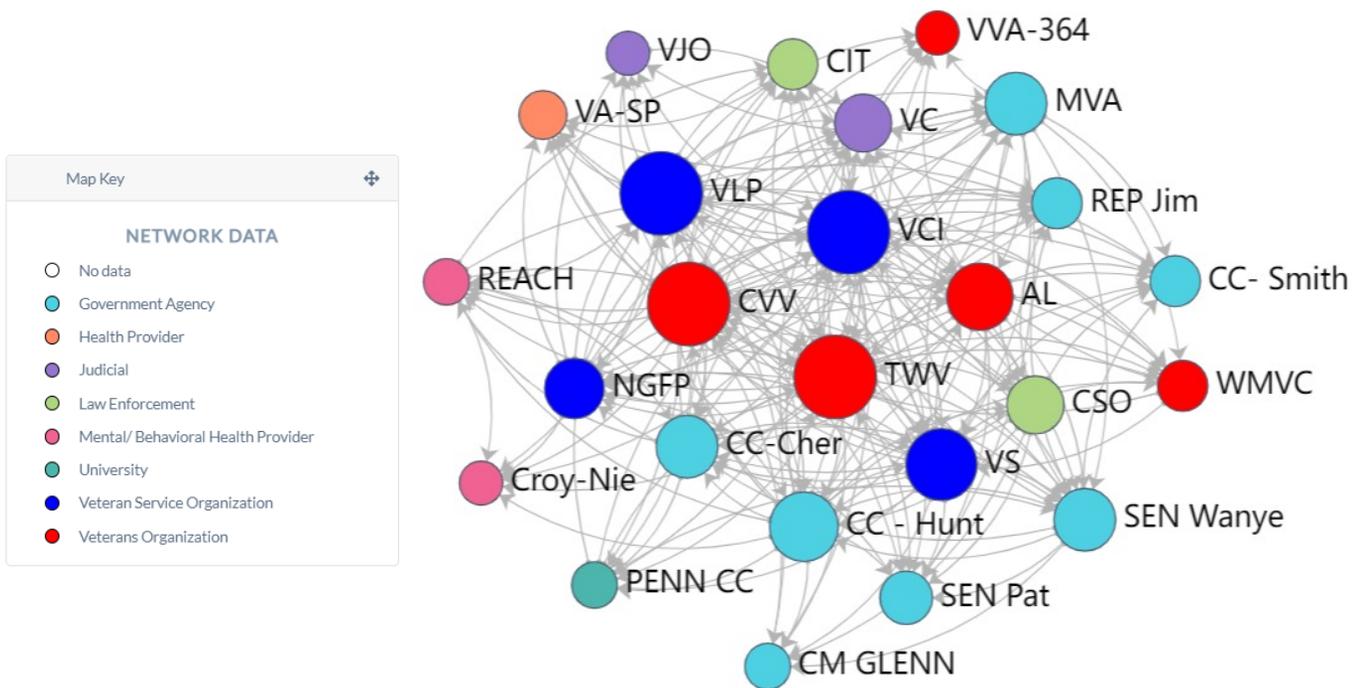


Above is a GIS social network map of the Together with Veterans Cambria County network that shows each organization represented in the survey as a circle (node) and the lines shown demonstrate all relationships that were reported by respondents (selected to show all reported relationships). **Nodes** are colored by partner organization type. The 22 organizations that responded described 219 unique **partnerships** (a partnership is defined as any two organizations and their relationship) around Veteran Suicide Prevention in Cambria County.

# Network Summary (Cont.)

Four organizations emerged as key actors in the network, indicated by their high number of network connections. These include Conemaugh Valley Veterans (CVV, 100%), Together With Veterans - Cambria County (TWV, 100%), Veteran Community Initiatives, Inc. (VCI, 100%), and Veterans Leadership Program (VLP, 100%). A **key player** is a member of the system who is connected to most of the network. The Veteran service network in this community heavily relies on these key players. If they no longer participate in the network, there is a risk that the system may not function as effectively.

Overall partners reported positive perceptions of power and influence among their connections (82%). **Power and influence** is defined as an organization/program holding a prominent position in the community by being powerful, having influence, showing success as a change agent, and showing leadership. Scores over 75% are considered the most positive.



Above is a social network map of the Together with Veterans Cambria County network that shows each organization represented in the survey as a circle (node) and the lines shown demonstrate all relationships that were reported by respondents (selected to show all reported relationships). **Nodes** are colored by organization type. The size of the node shows which organizations have the greatest number of connections (they are larger).

# Considerations for Action Planning

Network structure can tell us about key players in the network. Consider the connectivity among members of the network – this data can help assess whether there are vulnerabilities in the network (places where the connections are weak and/or need to be developed), find partners that are not well connected, and cut down on redundancy in connectivity.



✓ If there are numerous organizations, it is not feasible to have a high connectivity score because organizations do not have time to foster many meaningful connections.



## Considerations for Action Planning

- What is the level of connectivity?
- Are most members connected to one another?
- Are there members who are isolated, meaning not connected to any partner?
- How can they be brought into the network?
- Do members perceive each other as valuable and influential?

# Network Activities — Level of Intensity

More connections and more intensity of connections do not necessarily result in a thriving and sustainable network. **Level of intensity** refers to the amount of effort required to maintain a certain level of collaboration in a partnership. While the appeal to create a more diverse network is strong, we are equally challenged with the reality that we have limited relationship budgets – that is, limited resources to build and manage diverse networks. We know that networks have advantages, but there is a limit on how many relationships we can manage before we lose the collaborative advantage altogether. And while it is our intuition that more network connections should indicate a better functioning network, this approach can be endlessly resource intensive.

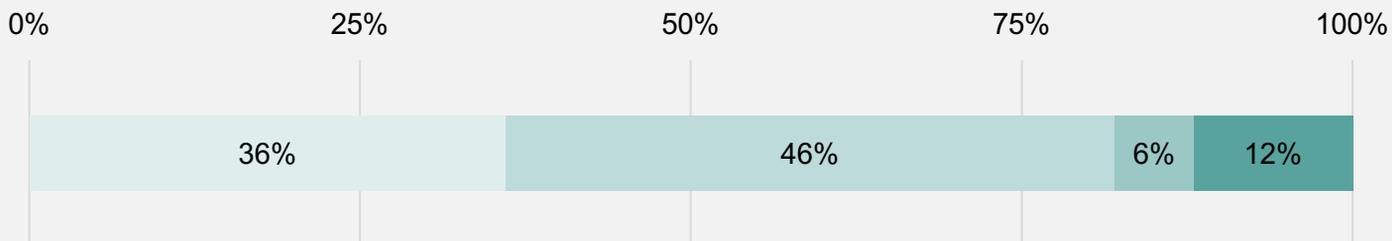
Q4: Please describe the nature of your relationship with this organization/program [note: the responses increase in level of collaboration] in relation to the services you provide for Suicide Prevention among Veterans?

Of the 219 relationships reported for this question:

Cost of relationship increases with increase in intensity



Awareness	Cooperative	Coordinated	Integrated
Awareness of this organization's services for Veteran's (Example: understanding of Veteran services offered, resources available, mission/goals.)	Involves exchanging information, attending meetings together, informing other programs of available Veteran services (Example: your org understands how to coordinate Veteran services/how to access Veteran services from this organization).	Includes cooperative activities in addition to exchange of resources/service delivery; coordinated planning to provide services for Veterans; sharing administrative processes (Example: shared fiscal agents, or other coordinated processes.)*	In addition to cooperative and coordinated activities, this includes shared funding, joint program development, combined services, shared accountability, and or shared decision making (Example: a formal program with funding exists between your org and this organization.)



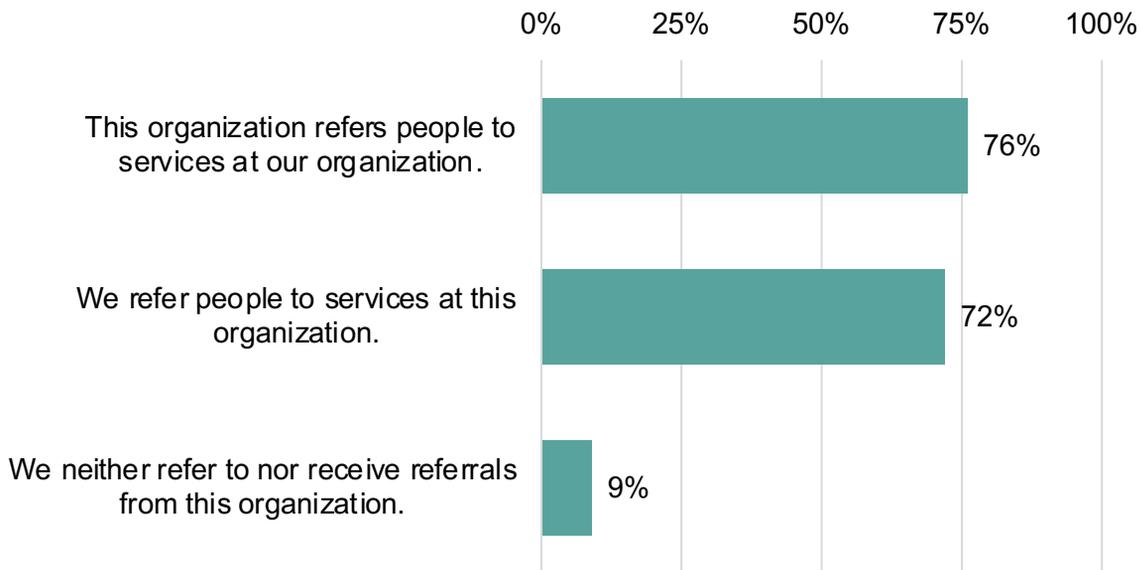
Just less than half of respondents reported having a cooperative relationship with members (46%), while 36% of respondents indicated having awareness of their partners.

# Referrals with Organizations

## Referrals

A total of 76% of partnerships refer people for services, while 72% of partnerships lead to referrals for their organization, and 9% do neither.

Q8: We are interested in all the ways the organizations refer people to outside services or receives referrals from others. In what ways are you referring or receiving referrals with this organization? (Check all that apply); 207 relationships reported for this question.



# Considerations for Action Planning

Quality of relationships help describe the network, including who is working with whom on what kinds of activities or at what level. This information can be useful in building network strategies.

- ✓ Remember, a more connected, higher percentage of ties at the integrated or coordinated levels may not be the ideal resource balance for your region.
- ✓ Rather, it may only be necessary that partners be connected at a cooperative level or aware of one another to have strong enough relationships to accomplish this network's goals.

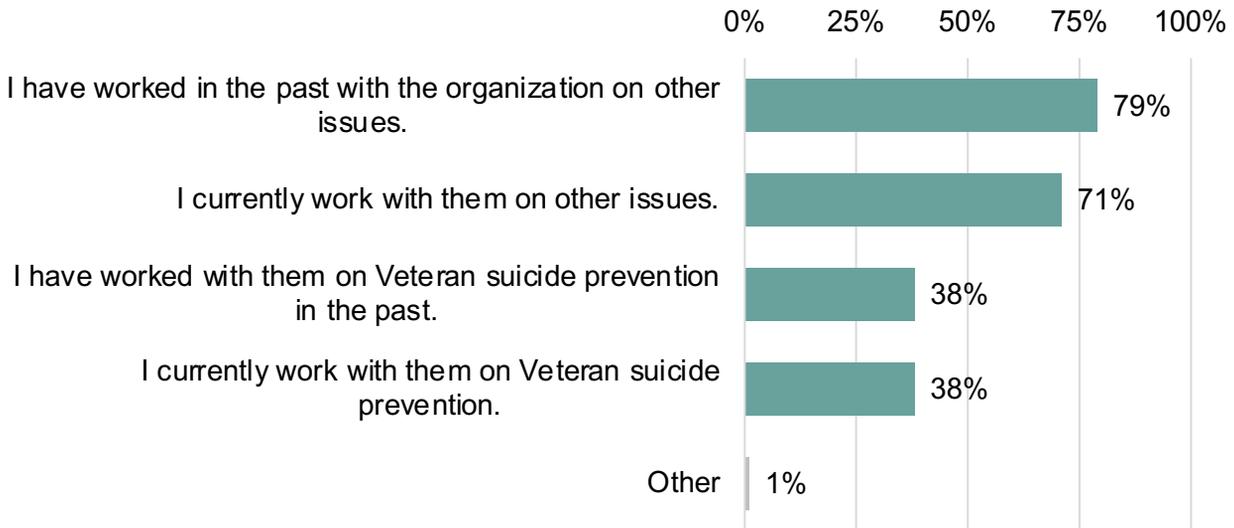


## Considerations for Action Planning

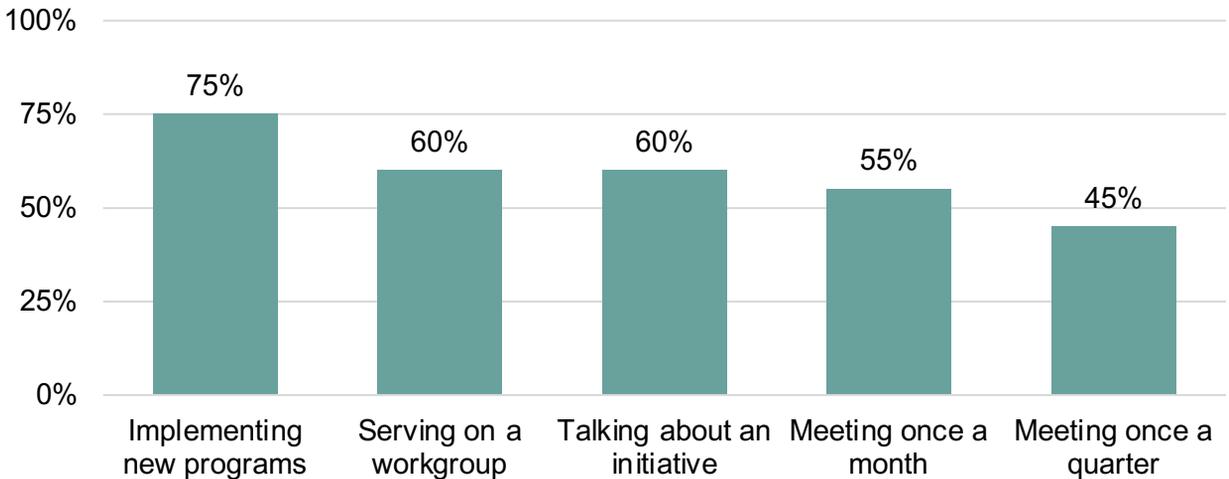
- Are organizations most connected through awareness, cooperative, coordination, and/or integrated level activities?
- Are these the appropriate or necessary relationships for this region? If not, why?
- Is the distribution across the activity levels sustainable for the network partners' relationship budget?
- How are organizations connected to one another?
- What can the network do to increase specific connections around Veteran suicide prevention work?

# Ways of Connection and Network Time

Q6: We are interested in all the ways the organizations connect with one another, and how that relates to building community networks. In what ways are you connected to this organization? (Check all that apply); 192 relationships reported for this question.



Q2: If an effort was undertaken to work together as a collaborative group to address Veteran Suicide Prevention, what level of involvement would you anticipate your organization would be willing to contribute? (Choose all that apply); 20 respondents answered this question.



Partners varied in their willingness to contribute involvement in the network. Three-quarters of respondents (75%) are willing to implement new programs. While 60% of respondents are willing to serve on a workgroup or talk about an initiative.

# Considerations for Action Planning

Partners vary in their willingness to engage and get involved in the network. Partners within the community are likely already overwhelmed with meetings and the time needed to engage in cross-sector opportunities. Ideally, to get the most “collaborative advantage” of the time and commitments of partners in this community, a balance is needed between creating avenues for information exchange among shared partners while not requiring too many meetings.



- ✓ Consider availability and contribution when scheduling meetings and assigning tasks.
- ✓ TWV encourages monthly meetings for first year to build the team recognizing some fall away. This information is more relevant during implementation.

## Considerations for Action Planning



- Is there an adequate willingness to contribute to a specific level of involvement from the partners of the network?
- What level of involvement is needed from partners for the network to reach its goals?
- How can partners participate in limited ways based on their role, interest and time?

# Resource Contributions

Partners reported many resources that they contribute towards Veteran Suicide Prevention efforts. The top resources contributed are advocacy, training and education, and volunteers. The least contributed resources are clinical staff who provide crisis support as part of their jobs and sustainment funding. No respondents reported contributing expertise in primary care.

Q1: Please indicate what your organization/program/department contributes, or can potentially contribute, to the network. (Choose as many as apply);  
22 respondents answered this question.



Taking an inventory of resources that network partners can contribute explains which resources and information are shared between network partners, the types of resources needed by the network, and the extent that these resource exchanges increase community capacity around Veteran suicide prevention.



## Considerations for Action Planning

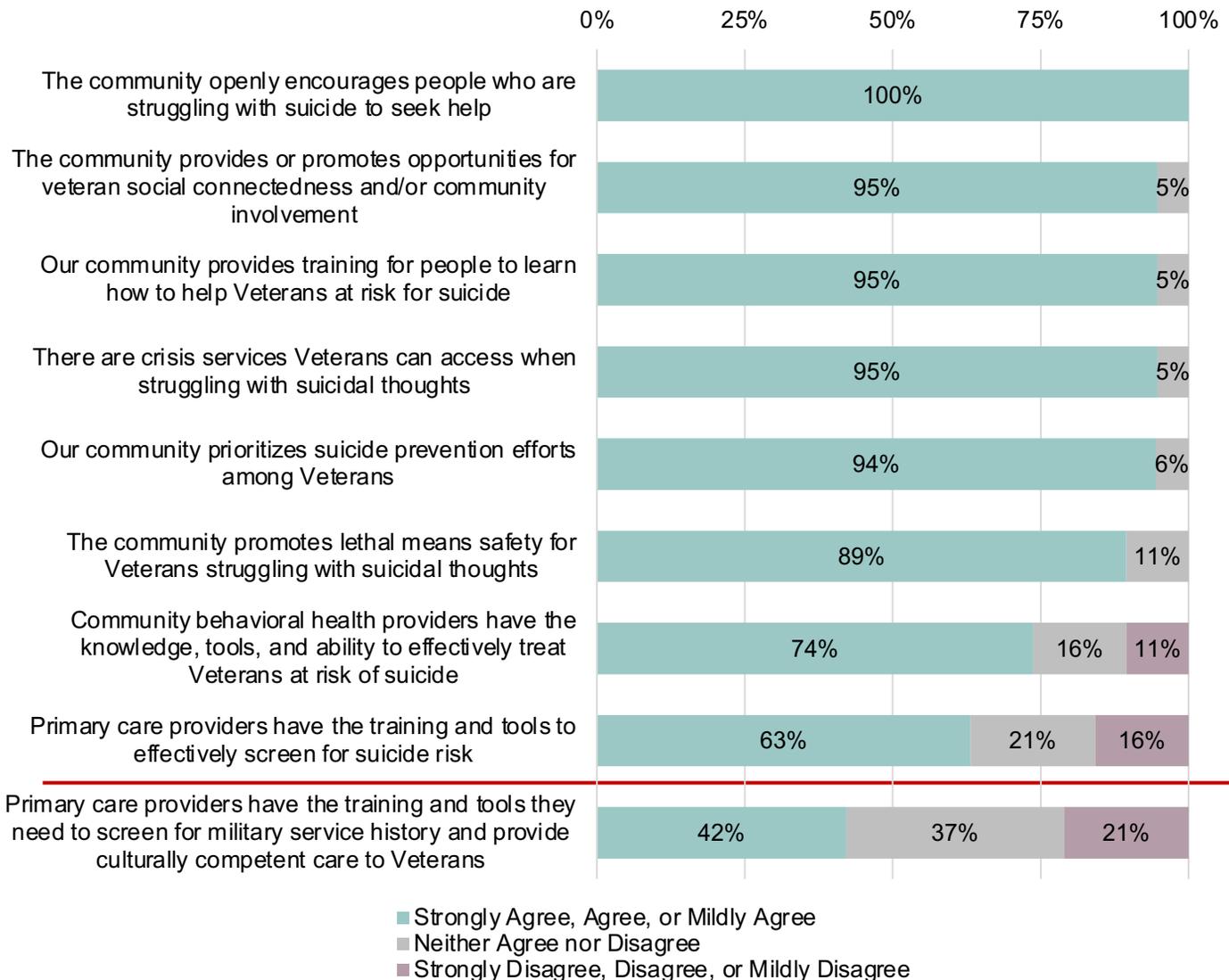
- Are there any resources that are overrepresented by partners?
- What resources are underrepresented or not represented at all? Why is that the case?
- What steps could be taken to acquire this resource either through a new organization or an existing organization?

# Strengths & Weaknesses

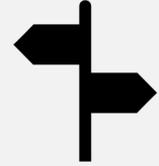
## STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES OF SUICIDE PREVENTION OUTREACH

The following 9 characteristics below were assessed by the partners in the community. The **teal** bar demonstrates agreement amongst partners on whether each characteristic is a strength. The **purple** bar represents agreement that each characteristic is an area for improvement. The **gray** bar represents agreement that partners do not identify this characteristic as either a strength or an area for improvement. The **red** line separates the items where there is less than 50% agreement among members.

Q10: Please rate the following 9 items assessing characteristics of your community.  
19 respondents answered this question.



The Strengths and Weaknesses data illustrate how partners perceive what is working and what needs to be addressed to support Veteran suicide prevention efforts in your community.



## Considerations for Action Planning



- Which characteristics do partners agree are successfully supporting Veteran suicide prevention efforts?
- What network relationships help explain this success?
- Which characteristics do partners agree are lacking in supporting Veteran suicide prevention efforts?
- How can we address those characteristics that have the least agreement from partners (below the Red line)?
- What resources and activities can improve these characteristics?

Evaluating partner feedback about Veteran suicide prevention strategies builds alignment when prioritizing efforts. These results highlight areas of disagreement about what is important to inform further discussion.



## Considerations for Action Planning

The following may be considered by the network to strengthen their Veteran suicide prevention system. These include:

1. Consider partner engagement and involvement when conducting your TWV action planning.
2. Determine the levels of activity among members. What is the minimum amount of effort required to reach goals? Where are gaps present?
3. Discuss resource contributions of the Cambria County network members during the action planning process.
4. Strengthen and implement Veteran suicide prevention trainings and outreach in Cambria County.



