

# Veteran Engagement In Research Toolkit

By the Chronic Pain Centre of  
Excellence for Canadian Veterans



A toolkit to support meaningful and successful  
Veteran engagement in research

**Chronic Pain  
Centre of Excellence**  
for Canadian Veterans



**Centre d'excellence  
sur la douleur chronique**  
pour les vétérans canadiens

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**Canada**

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# Introduction

Through consultations with Veterans<sup>2</sup>, families, researchers, clinicians, and other members of the community, the Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans (CPCoE) found there was a need for improved cultural competence, understanding, and connection between Veterans and researchers interested in partnering together in research. As a result of those consultations, this toolkit was developed to provide valuable information and resources for research teams to apply for meaningful and successful Veteran engagement in research.<sup>1</sup>

This toolkit is designed for all members of research teams<sup>4</sup>, including including Principal Investigators, co-investigators, trainees, research assistants, clinicians, policymakers, Veteran Research Partners<sup>3</sup>, other patient partners, administrative members, and other knowledge users.

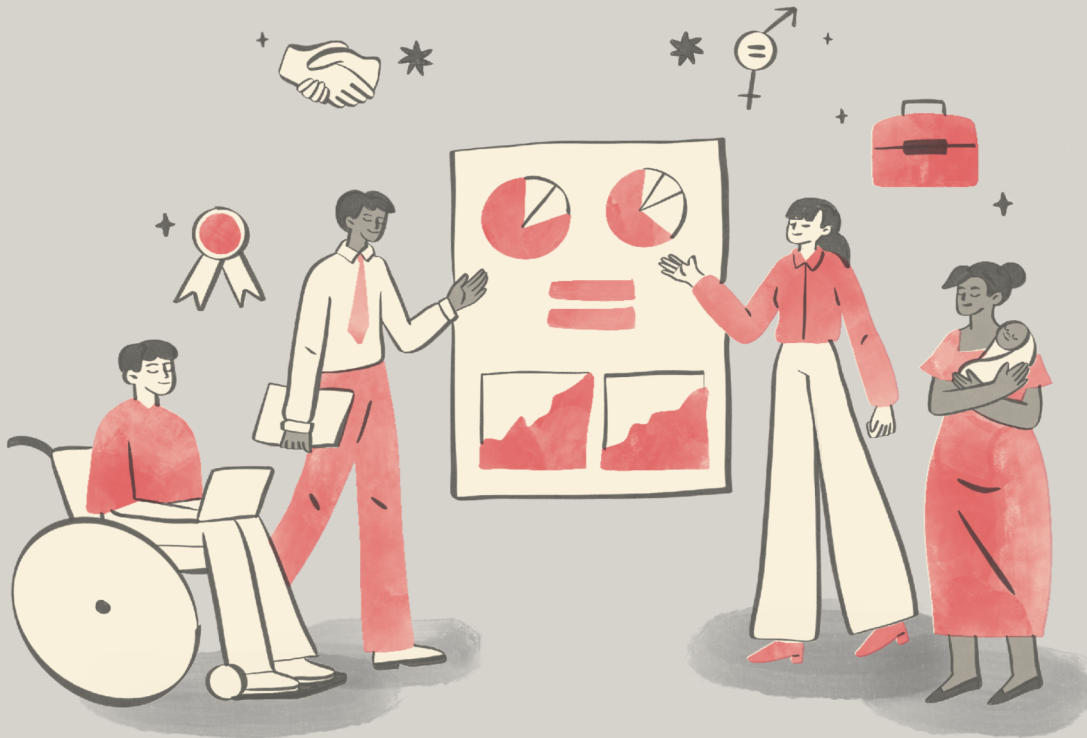
This toolkit was co-created with Veterans. A full list of acknowledgements is provided at the end of the toolkit.



# Veteran Engagement in Research

As you learn about the information and resources in this toolkit, it is important to understand the meaning of Veteran engagement in research. The CPCoE defines Veteran engagement in research as meaningful and active collaboration in all aspects of research. This can include activities such as setting research priorities, conducting research, and planning knowledge mobilization<sup>5</sup> activities to share the results of research.

Veteran engagement in research is not the same as Veteran participation in research, where Veterans volunteer as study participants to have data collected from or about them to answer a research question. It is also not Veterans making decisions about their healthcare, or reporting on their health care experiences.



# Veteran Engagement Education

As you begin engaging in research, an important first step is for everyone on the research team to get educated about one another and how best to work together. In recognizing the need for improved cultural competence training between Veterans and researchers, the CPCoE has developed a suite of educational modules to provide this bi-directional education.

These educational modules have been co-developed and co-designed with a Working Group of Veterans from the CPCoE's Advisory Council for Veterans. The Working Group directly informed everything about these educational modules, including the accessibility, look and feel, content, narration, characters, knowledge checks and scenarios, and learning management system.

These educational modules are free of charge, accessible, self-directed, online, and available in both English and French. They are open to Veterans, families, researchers, trainees, clinicians, and other research team members. Each module is expected take approximately 20 minutes. Certificates of completion are provided.

The following educational modules are available (please see the next page):





# Veteran Engagement Database

Once Veterans and researchers are educated about Veteran engagement in research, it is important for Veterans and researchers to find ways to get connected. In addressing the need for Veterans and researchers to have a platform to connect, the CPCoE has worked with Veterans and researchers to co-develop and co-design a Veteran Engagement Database to facilitate those connections.

The way CPCoE's Veteran Engagement Database works is that Veterans interested in partnering in research are asked to complete the [Veteran Intake Form](#), and researchers seeking Veteran Research Partners for their research projects are asked to complete the [Researcher Intake Form](#). If and where there are matching criteria between Veterans and researchers, the CPCoE facilitates those connections.

Once connected, it is the role and responsibility of the Veteran Research Partners and researchers to meet, get to know one another, have a conversation about the reasons for partnership, and ensure that there is a good match between all research team members.

Note: It's important to remember that, even with the best intentions and preparation, partnerships in research sometimes don't work out. This can happen for various reasons. For example, Veteran Research Partners may experience unforeseen circumstances where their life and/or health need more attention, or any member of a research team may decide that the fit is not, or is no longer, right for the research project.

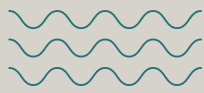
Visit this [Matching Researchers' Needs and Patients' Contributions](#) research paper if you'd like to reflect more on the fit of Veteran Research Partners and the types of experiences and perspectives that work best for a project.

To sign up for CPCoE's Veteran Engagement Database, please click the appropriate links below:

[Veteran Intake Form](#)

[Researcher Intake Form](#)

This Veteran Engagement Database is free of charge and available in both English and French.



# Principles of Veteran Engagement in Research

Once Veteran Research Partners and researchers decide to work together and form a research team, the research team should think about the principles of engagement that resonate with everyone, and how those principles of engagement can be meaningfully actioned.

To assist in this, the CPCoE worked with Veterans to establish principles of engagement that are important for research teams.

While these principles have been identified by Veterans, these principles are generalizable to all members of a research team. Depending on who is part of the research team, other principles may also be identified as being important in working together.

## **Trust:**

Usually takes multiple meetings and time to build. It's about getting to know each other as people and acknowledging the value everyone brings to the team.

## **Accountability:**

Setting expectations and responsibilities for each team member.

## **Provide Feedback:**

Providing constructive and timely feedback along with regular team updates to foster trust and better collaboration.

## **Cultural Competence:**

Showing initiative by learning about team members, their backgrounds, and/or where their perspectives come from.

## **Co-Build and Co-Create:**

Working together and asking questions from a place of curiosity.

## **Diversity and Inclusiveness:**

Creating a safe space where diverse opinions are encouraged and everyone is welcome to contribute in ways that work best for them.

## **Due Diligence:**

Agreeing not to cause harm in getting to know one another and working together.

## **Mutual Respect:**

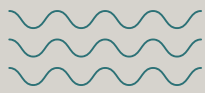
Valuing everyone's contributions, experiences and expertise, no matter their background or education.

## **Support:**

Understanding that, sometimes, people have tough days because of health or life. However, they can still contribute in ways that work for them, or they can contribute another time.

## **Education:**

Providing skill-building and educational opportunities for team members.



# Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations

After the research team's principles of engagement are identified, the research team is expected to think about the various roles and responsibilities needed to complete the research project. To support research teams in defining these roles and responsibilities, the CPCoE has created a list of possible roles, responsibilities, and expectations that members of research teams may have. This list is not exhaustive, but will provide an understanding of the diverse roles that can exist.

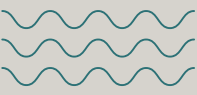
Remember: Veteran engagement in research is a two-way street where all members of a research team, including Veteran Research Partners, have a voice. Every member of the research team will bring unique expertise and experience. While there are distinct roles, responsibilities, and expectations for research team members, everyone is expected to work together as a team.




## Veteran Research Partner Roles

- Provide insights that may validate or change the direction of the research or concepts to be explored (for example, exploring outcomes that are important to Veterans);
- Provide a Veteran's perspective, feedback, and insight into tools and resources that are being planned or developed;
- Partner in regular research team meetings to provide feedback or insight on the project;
- Co-design, review and comment on informed consent forms or case report forms;
- Co-design, review and comment on research protocols to identify potential hurdles or enablers for research participants;
- Co-develop questionnaires or interview guides for participants in the research project;
- Review and participate in discussions about the analysis and findings of the research project;
- Review, inform or collaborate on knowledge mobilization plans and products such as infographics, videos, research summaries, and social media posts as well as participate in meetings and webinars to share research findings with colleagues, Veterans, and other target audiences.






# Roles for Researchers, Trainees, Clinicians, Policymakers and Other Non-Veterans

- Involve Veteran Research Partners in a meaningful and engaging way in all aspects of the research project. This includes, but is not limited to: developing research questions, project design, recruitment, interviews, data collection, analysis, and knowledge mobilization planning;
  - Invite Veteran Research Partners to consult on, or directly participate in, knowledge mobilization product development;
  - Acknowledge Veteran Research Partners as authors or co-authors of publications (please see guidance on co-authorship [here](#));
  - At the end of the project, ensure research outcomes and final knowledge mobilization products have been shared with Veteran Research Partners (for their reference and to facilitate sharing with other Veterans, if of interest)
  - Provide Veteran Research Partners compensation (see next section)
- 

## Shared Expectations

- ✓ Declare all actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest
  - ✓ Cultivate a safe, inclusive, collaborative environment for everyone to express their opinions
  - ✓ Demonstrate openness and willingness to listen and consider feedback
  - ✓ Show respect for everyone's individual and unique experiences, knowledge, and the vulnerability engagement may bring
  - ✓ Manage differences of opinion and conflict in a respectful manner
  - ✓ Provide everyone with education and training on necessary subject matter to ensure they can contribute meaningfully and efficiently, and communicate terms in plain language, where possible
  - ✓ Schedule meetings at times that work for everyone
  - ✓ Demonstrate preparedness for meetings
  - ✓ Take part in all relevant meetings and teleconferences (as health and life permit)
  - ✓ Draw upon knowledge, personal and professional networks, and experience to provide informed input into discussions and decisions
- 



# Compensating and Acknowledging Veteran Research Partners

## Compensation

Compensation is an important consideration when engaging Veteran Research Partners. Research teams are expected to provide Veteran Research Partners with compensation to ensure their time and expertise is valued.

To support research teams in building a budget for Veteran Research Partners as part of research projects, the CPCoE has established a minimum recommendation for Veteran Research Partner compensation below. This recommendation is the result of reviewing patient partner compensation guidelines across Canada, as well as recognizing and honouring Veterans for their unique lived and living experiences serving Canada.

**At minimum: \$50.00 per hour (Canadian dollars)**

Principal Investigators, their administering institutions, and Veteran Research Partners should be aware of all relevant reporting requirements through the Canada Revenue Agency.

## Acknowledgement

In addition to Veteran Research Partners being compensated, Veteran Research Partners should also be acknowledged in research publications. Acknowledgement can include naming Veteran Research Partners as authors or acknowledging them in other ways. [Acknowledgement can look different for Veteran Research Partners, depending on their involvement and contributions.](#)

 [Click here for more information](#)

Note: Some Veteran Research Partners may choose to decline compensation or acknowledgement for various reasons (for example: personal preference, privacy, interruptions to existing government benefits, etc.)—and that choice should be respected.

# Getting Started: Bringing Everything Together

To bring everything together, here are some steps for research teams to get started with Veteran engagement in research:

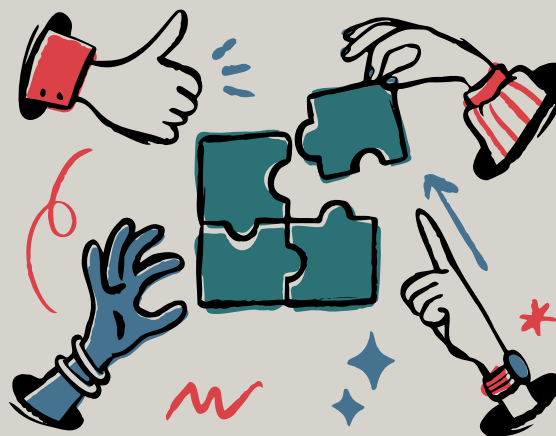
- Get educated through [CPCoE's Veteran Engagement Education](#).
- Get connected through CPCoE's Veteran Engagement Database.
- Have a pre-meeting so everyone can get to know one another, see how everyone gets along, and see if there is a good fit.
- Identify principles of engagement that are important to the research team and how those principles can be meaningfully actioned.
- Co-develop a Project Charter that includes the principles of engagement, how they will be meaningfully actioned, roles and responsibilities, timelines, communication protocols, contact information, etc.

[Click here to download a Project Charter template](#)



- Set up regular meetings and touchpoints to talk about how things are going.

All these actions will help to build relationships as a team and make it easier to talk about what's going well, or what might need adjusting, as you work together.



Remember, engagement is a relationship. Not everything is going to go according to plan, and that's okay—do not let bumps in the road discourage you from working together!

# Glossary of Terms

**1 Veteran Engagement in Research:** The CPCoE defines Veteran engagement in research as meaningful and active collaboration in all aspects of research. This can include tasks such as setting research priorities, conducting research, and sharing the results of research ([Reference](#)).

**2 Veteran:** Any former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who successfully underwent basic training ([Reference](#)).

**3 Veteran Research Partner:** A Veteran (or Veteran family member or other support person) who is meaningfully and actively involved in all aspects of a research project ([Reference](#)).

**4 Research Team:** All members who make up research teams, including Principal Investigators, Co-Investigators, trainees, research assistants, clinicians, policymakers, Veteran Research Partners, other patient partners, administrative members, and other knowledge users.

**5 Knowledge Mobilization:** The CPCoE uses the term knowledge mobilization (interchangeable with knowledge translation) to refer to the planning, activities, and processes used to disseminate and make research findings accessible to various target audiences.

**6 Life After Service Survey (LASS) :** The Life After Service Survey (LASS) program of research was established to better understand the transition experiences of Canadian Veterans as they move from military to civilian life and the ongoing effects of military service. The first round of LASS was completed in 2010 with cycles every three years. ([Reference](#)).



# About the Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans

Funded by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), the Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans (CPCoE) was established as a not-for-profit organization on April 1, 2020.

The launch of the CPCoE was prompted by the VAC Life After Service Survey (LASS)<sup>6</sup>, which found that Veterans were twice as likely to have chronic pain compared to the equivalent Canadian population. The CPCoE was established as a research centre dedicated to improving the understanding of Veteran-specific chronic pain and how best to manage it.

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The CPCoE aims to enable research and improve the well-being of Canadian Armed Forces Veterans, and their families, living with chronic pain. Research funded by the CPCoE is prioritized and directly informed by Veterans through a James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnership, which provides patients and clinicians with the opportunity to shape research by identifying research areas important to them. The findings and recommendations of the research are mobilized to help Veterans, and their families, manage their pain and reconnect with life.

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Consultation and engagement with Veterans, which includes an Advisory Council for Veterans (ACV), began prior to establishing the CPCoE and continues as a leading priority. This ongoing engagement helps the CPCoE to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Veterans, and their families, living with chronic pain. That understanding is used to shape research to ensure that it will have a genuine and practical impact on the well-being of Veterans and their families.

To learn more about the CPCoE, visit our [website](#).



# Veteran Engagement Strategy

From 2023-2025, the CPCoE embarked on a comprehensive Veteran Engagement Strategy to strengthen its Veteran engagement across its research activities. The resulting strategy is highlighted below. This toolkit is a result of consultations with Veterans, their families, researchers, clinicians and other members of the CPCoE community as part of this strategy.

1

## Priority Setting Process

### Vision

To have Veterans living with chronic pain inform research.

### Goals

1. Establish a process.
2. Implement priorities.
3. Influence others.

2

## Veteran Engagement in Research

### Vision

To be the industry leader in Veteran-researcher engagement.

### Goals

1. Develop educational resources.
2. Facilitate connections.
3. Establish evaluation metrics.

3

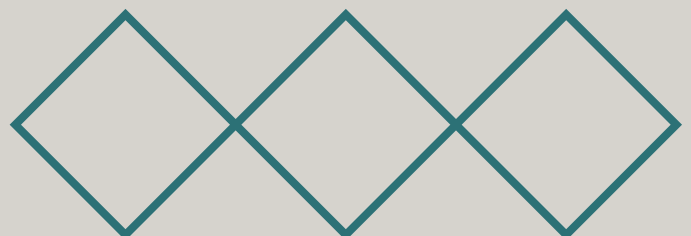
## ACV Ambassadorship

### Vision

To enable ACV members to represent CPCoE and its research/KM across Canada.

### Goals

1. Define ambassador role.
2. Educate on organizational stewardship.
3. Share resources.



# Acknowledgements

The CPCoE wishes to extend a sincere thank you to the following Veterans, families, researchers, clinicians, and other members of the CPCoE community who provided their time and expertise to create the products resulting from CPCoE's Veteran Engagement Strategy and the contents of this toolkit:

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