

The following project proposal was created by a community partner of the Upstate Institute to describe the way they would like to engage with a Colgate student this summer. The research project proposed will be a full-time research project conducted by a Field School Fellow this summer. Below, the partner describes their organization and the research project, as well as a statement of benefit derived by the community for this project. The proposal also mentions logistical considerations and required skills for a student interested in doing this work.

Clear Path for Veterans, 1223 Salt Springs Road | Chittenango, NY 13037

<http://www.clearpath4vets.com/>

Gauging Clear Path's Market Saturation and Establishing New Communication Channels

Our mission: Recognizing the responsibility of communities to help those who serve, Clear Path for Veterans empowers active service members, Veterans, Guard, Reserves and their families through supportive programs and services in a safe, respectful environment.

Our vision: By equipping Veterans with vital tools such as peer support, community resources and Clear Path programs, all warriors will be restored, reconnected and reintegrated into their community and able to give back in capacity that is comfortable for them.

How well are our communication channels serving the estimated 150,924 Veterans within the 23 counties in New York state that we serve? What changes should we make or what additional communications channels should we invest our time and resources?

According to the 2016 Veteran Population Projection Model from the Department of Veterans Affairs (the most current data available), there are approximately 151,000 Veterans within Clear Path's catchment area; this does not include active duty, Guard, Reserves, immediate family members and caregivers. We estimate the total number of individuals who would benefit from the programs and services offered by Clear Path for Veterans to be conservatively 250,000. While we understand that not every Veteran will utilize our programs and services, we want to be sure that our communications are reaching them all so they can make an informed decision about participating or not.

In order to best gauge Clear Path's market saturation and to identify new communication channels, a Field School Fellow first needs to understand how Veterans currently receive news and information. This could be through an electronic survey(s), postally-mailed survey, phone call or another means. Once this information is derived, then a plan of action can be developed for best communication platform, best time and date to disseminate, and best medium (i.e. text-based, video, photo/graphic, etc.)

All of Clear Path's programs and services are offered complimentary to active and retired members of the armed forces and their support network, regardless of era served or discharge status. Helping us better understand which communication channels are the most effective saves us valuable time and resources that we can redirect to additional programming. The benefit to Veterans in the region would be enhanced awareness of our programs and services that could benefit them and their caregivers. A few examples of this could include better managed PTSD symptoms, more socialization and reduced isolation, and reduction of pain and stress.

We envision a dedicated Field School Fellow could work part-time, or full-time, on this project. It could be accomplished largely remotely – with a weekly project report provided to a Clear Path supervisor – along with one day each week (Wednesdays) to address 150+ Veterans who attend our weekly Canteen lunches. This would give the Field School Fellow an opportunity to ask Veterans directly how they receive information about Clear Path and what forms they prefer. The Field School Fellow would need a strong understanding of the Microsoft Suite – specifically Excel; of statistical analysis; and of best practices for the top social media platforms used by adults age 50 and up: Facebook (used by 55% of adults), YouTube (56%), Instagram (16%), Twitter (14%). The ideal fellow will understand that this project must be results driven from data collected and not based on national surveys or results from younger audiences. Clear Path's general audience is individuals 50 years of age and older, and target audience is individuals 30 years of age and older. Individuals 29 years of age and younger would not be a focus of this project.

A Field School Fellow would refine their skills for survey creation and results analysis. They would also further develop interpersonal skills through phone calls and/or in-person interactions. The ideal fellow would have strong writing skills as they would draft a standard operating procedure for disseminating news about our programs and services.