



CASE STUDY

Leading Practices Model: Walmart Foundation -- Integrated and Collaborative

Philanthropy

Through financial contributions, in-kind donations, and volunteerism, the Walmart Foundation supports initiatives, focused on enhancing opportunities in four main focus areas: Education, Workforce Development/Economic Opportunity, Environmental Sustainability, and Health & Wellness. In their work supporting veterans, the foundation has pursued a broad but focused giving strategy, which targets those programs and practices, positioned to support sustainable employment opportunities for veterans and military family members. The Walmart Foundation¹ formalized its veterans' grant-making program after 9/11, with the focus on giving at the local, state, and national level. Walmart has made a \$20 million commitment to supporting veterans' employment.

Approach and Innovation: Supporting the Underpinnings of Sustainable Employment

The Walmart Foundation's approach to philanthropy, related to veterans, represents an example of targeting both the immediate need related to employment of veterans, and also a keen understanding of the need for action to address the underlying social and education impediments to sustainable employment.

For example, Walmart recognized the role of family well-being, as it relates to other outcomes, such as employment stability. One of the foundation's efforts is a successful partnership with Sesame Street, where Sesame Street's multi-phase outreach initiative provides much-needed support and practical education to the children and families of deployed service members. This has the power to help kids through deployments, combat-related injuries, and the death of a loved one. Videos, storybooks, and workbooks created especially for this program guide families through such tough transitions by showing how real families—as well as furry monsters—deal with similar circumstances.



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At the same time, Walmart also focuses on programs designed to support skills training positioned to facilitate employment. For example, Walmart supports a program called Dress for Success,² which helps women get the skills they need to get back into the workforce. In a similar way, Walmart recognizes that employment takes many forms, including self-employment. As such, the foundation also supports the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) operated by the IVMF,³ a self-employment training program for post-9/11 veterans with disabilities resulting from their service to our country.

In all cases, one of the strengths of Walmart's philanthropic efforts relates to program assessment and evaluation. The foundation works with grant recipients closely and strategically to develop robust metrics to capture the efficacy of funded initiatives, and as a result not only improves programmatic outcomes for veterans and military families, but also has the effect of positively impacting the programming of its not-for-profit partners. The Walmart Foundation's grants are intentionally made to require formal review, to allow access to projects in progress, and to assure investment in the not-for-profit that best fits the grant.

Challenges to Implementation and Generalizability

- The scale of Walmart's efforts is large, and thus, the firm realizes the benefit of learning from multiple giving situations. Such scale, however, may be difficult for other firms to replicate.
- Walmart highlights a deficit of established, leading principles and practices, related to the most appropriate frameworks, through which to consider potential grantees in the veterans' space.

Recommendations

- Walmart recommends collaboration amongst companies and organizations, in order to allow information sharing, resource leveraging, expertise availability, and reduction of duplications. In turn, this will enable a more focused philanthropic



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effect, avoiding missed opportunities, owing to a lack of understanding and knowledge about other programs and needs.

- Furthermore, Walmart believes that there is too much emphasis on awareness creation, and the company recommends that philanthropic efforts need to be “results oriented.” Walmart funds programs and initiatives that create significant, measurable impact, such as job creation.
- Walmart affirms that the non-profit sector can be mobilized in a short period of time, and that by collaborating with others the company works to reduce duplication of efforts and to share challenges, knowledge, and strategies.

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Citations:

¹ Walmart Corporate. (n.d.). Community Giving: Military Support. Retrieved from

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² Dress for Success Worldwide. (2012). Dress for Success. Retrieved from

<http://www.dressforsuccess.org/>.

³ Institute for Veterans and Military Families. (n.d.). Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities. Retrieved from

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