

## **NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association**

### **Veterans’ Virtual Living Room (VLR/VALOR)<sup>SM</sup> Proposal**

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs provides telehealth services. These services enable users to access medical treatment from their homes and can replace or augment visits to VA facilities.

The VA has noted room for growth in the program, relating specifically to adoption opportunities by eligible veterans. Current barriers to adoption among otherwise eligible users may include lack of broadband access; cost of broadband access; and, reluctance to adopt technology.

NTCA members have identified existing expertise and capabilities that should enable their ability to promote and facilitate greater use of VA telehealth options. These may be of particular benefit in rural areas served by NTCA members, which may be of great distance from VA medical facilities or other medical or therapeutic specialists.

All of NTCA’s 850 members across rural areas of the U.S. provide broadband. It is anticipated that the NTCA VALOR program would facilitate veterans’ use of VA telehealth services in their homes or, in the alternative, at “virtual living room” locations that would mitigate against various barriers to adoption.

#### ***Location***

“Virtual living rooms” (or, VLRs) could be located at various sites, including, but not limited to, a veterans’ social hall (such as American Legion); a local firehouse; a broadband provider office.<sup>1</sup>

#### ***Operation***

VLRs would provide broadband connectivity to support veterans’ use of VA telehealth services. The VLR would feature a workstation to which users could attach VA-issued peripherals, as applicable.

#### ***NTCA Member Support***

NTCA members would support VLRs by: assisting with the identification of VLR venues; providing a broadband connection; facilitating the furnishing of VLRs; and, assisting with the provision of basic hardware and technical support.

#### ***Anticipated Benefits***

VLRs could encourage greater use of VA telehealth services, as well as adoption at home by providing an introduction to VA provided services in a user-friendly environment.

VLRs could provide a location for access to VA telehealth resources for veterans who lack broadband connectivity at home; veterans could use these facilities to access other VA on-line resources, as well.

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<sup>1</sup> The placement of a VLR in any such facility would warrant review by that facility’s legal counsel.