

Working Dogs for Vets: Theory of Change

Introduction

Working Dogs for Vets programs aim to empower disabled veterans by providing them with trained service dogs. This initiative not only enhances veterans' independence and quality of life but also helps reduce the number of dogs in shelters. Our Theory of Change outlines how our activities lead to the desired changes and outcomes.

Activities

1. Dog Selection and Training
 - **Activity:** Select dogs from shelters and train them to become service dogs.
 - **Output:** Trained service dogs ready to assist veterans.
2. Veteran Matching and Training
 - **Activity:** Match trained service dogs with veterans and provide ongoing training and support.
 - **Output:** Veteran-service dog teams with strong bonds and effective working relationships.
3. Support and Mentorship
 - **Activity:** Offer continuous support and mentorship to veteran service dog teams.
 - **Output:** Sustained support network for veterans, fostering community and resilience.

Short-Term Outcomes

1. Increased Independence
 - Veterans experience greater independence in daily activities due to the assistance of their service dogs.
2. Enhanced Emotional Well-being
 - Veterans report improved emotional well-being and reduced symptoms of PTSD and anxiety.
3. Reduced Shelter Overcrowding
 - More dogs are adopted from shelters, reducing overcrowding and euthanasia rates.

Long-Term Outcomes

1. Improved Quality of Life

- Veterans enjoy a higher quality of life, with increased participation in social and community activities.
- 2. Decreased Veteran Suicide Rates
 - The program contributes to a reduction in veteran suicide rates by providing supportive services, comradery, and companionship.
- 3. Sustainable Community Impact
 - The program fosters a supportive community where veterans can mentor new participants, creating a cycle of empowerment and support.

Conclusion

The Working Dogs for Vets program leverages the unique bond between humans and dogs to bring about meaningful change in the lives of veterans and shelter animals. By providing trained service dogs and continuous support, we aim to enhance the independence, emotional well-being, and overall quality of life for our veterans, while also addressing the issue of shelter overcrowding.