

## **MarCom – Team Achievement Award:**

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**Nominator:** Jennifer Askey

**Organization:** Office of Healthcare Transformation (OHT), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

**Title:** Strategic Communications Portfolio Manager

**Email:** [jennifer.askey@va.gov](mailto:jennifer.askey@va.gov)

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### **Nominee: 2023 Strategic Engagement Team (SET)**

Office of Healthcare Transformation (OHT), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

#### **Government Team:**

- Jennifer Askey, Portfolio Manager, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Melodee Mercer, SET Manager, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Elizabeth Andringa, SET Deputy Manager, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Melissa Heinlein Storti, Communications Specialist, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Kristen Schabert, Communications Specialist, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

#### **Consulting Team:**

- Noah Albro, Vice President, Titan Alpha
- Veronica Miller, Manager, Titan Alpha
- Sandy Nelson, Manager, Titan Alpha
- Steve Shreve, Senior Graphic Designer, Titan Alpha
- Kelsey Parrish, Senior Consultant, Titan Alpha
- Tabish Forugh, Senior Consultant, Titan Alpha
- Kristin Laing, Consultant, Titan Alpha
- Brent Lance, Graphic Designer, Titan Alpha

**Type of Creative Team:** Strategic and Crisis Communications

**City/State:** Washington, DC

- 1. Nominee's creative function within the overall organization?** The Strategic Engagement Team (SET) serves as the strategic and crisis communications unit of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Healthcare Transformation (OHT), responsible for many highly visible and politically sensitive national campaigns, often with the attention and review of the White House. The team is repeatedly called upon for their ability to solve complex challenges and deliver superior products. Additionally, due to the exemplary and timely quality of work this team produces under intense pressure timelines, their expertise is often called upon for ad hoc communications consulting and crisis situations across all issues affecting Veterans' health and wellness.
- 2. Why should this team be recognized? What do they do that is exceptional?** As a trusted team with dependable strengths in strategic and crisis communication, SET successfully supports mission-critical communications

campaigns that directly affect the lives of Veterans and employees. Their passion and commitment to serving Veterans is tangible. SET also champions creating a seamless environment between contractors and government employees, working as a team to develop products on quick turns with award-winning quality and proven impact. The work done by SET often aims to resolve critical situations that touch the lives of countless Veterans, making the measure of their success incalculable.

This year’s critical work includes the crisis response to the Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) Delayed Deployment and Sprint Project; the Lethal Means Safety (LMS) Veteran Suicide Prevention External Training Campaign encouraging community care providers to take vital Veteran suicide prevention training; and the VA Health Care Priorities and Strategic Enablers Magazine highlighting new and innovate initiatives for Veterans.

The breadth of their reach can only be appreciated by reviewing the projects they have worked on in 2023 (in no specific order):

<b>2023 Campaigns and Products (to date)</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>
ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease) Care Coordination Project	42
Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) Delayed Deployment	9
Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) Sprint Project	80
Internal VHA OHT Strategic Communications Training	17
Lethal Means Safety (LMS) Veteran Suicide Prevention External Training Campaign	24
Native American & Tribal Veterans Co-Payment Campaign	7
OHT Executive Director’s Weekly Message	54
Recommitting to Dignity and Respect for LGBTQ+ Veterans and Employees	17
VA Health Care Priorities & Strategic Enablers Magazine and Branding Campaign	25
VA’s Future of Work Plan	3
VHA COVID-19 Operational Plan - Masking Update	7
VHA’s Workplace Violence Prevention	7

----- **Total completed in 2023: 185 products** (to date)

3. **Team age, history, or perspective if relevant:** SET was established by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) over seven years ago to answer the Office of Healthcare Transformation’s (OHT) strategic and crisis communications needs. It is unique in that it reports to the Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health (DUSH) and supports an office that manages initiatives for the Under Secretary for Health (USH). The team has been working with Titan Alpha consultants for two years.
4. **Previous recognition: i.e., internal and/or awards:**

### **MarCom Awards:**

- 2022 Team Achievement Award| **PLATINUM**
- 2022 Crisis Communications Plan/Response Award | **GOLD**
- 2022 Communications Plan Award | **GOLD**
- 2022 Specialty Item Award | **GOLD**
- 2020 Print Media /Print Creativity / Design / 100. Illustration/Graphic Design/Infographic | **PLATINUM**
- 2020 Print Media / Publications / Brochure / 41. Informational | **GOLD**
- 2020 Strategic Communications / Communications / Public Relations / 157c: Crisis Communication Plan or Response | **GOLD**
- 2020 Digital Media / Social Media / 213. Social Content | **HONORABLE MENTION**
- 2020 Digital Media / Web Video / 250. Informational | **HONORABLE MENTION**
- 2018 Strategic Communications Communications/Public Relations 154c. Communication Plan | **PLATINUM**
- 2018 Communications/Public Relations 158c. Internal Communication Campaign | **PLATINUM**
- 2018 Print Media Print Creativity 100. Illustration/Graphic Design/Infographic | **GOLD**
- 2018 Strategic Communications Communications/Public Relations 155c. Communication Program | **GOLD**
- 2018 Print Media Employee Publication 53. Internal Communication | **HONORABLE MENTION**
- 2018 Print Media Publications 82. Poster | **HONORABLE MENTION**
- 2018 Strategic Communications Description: Communications/Public Relations 155c. Communication Program | **HONORABLE MENTION**

### **Telly Awards:**

- **2022 Telly Award, Bronze**
  - Government Relations – Non-Broadcast Video: Long COVID video - Three Veterans Journey
- **2021 Telly Award, Silver**
  - Social Video Series - Fighting for Our Lives Campaign: VA Clinicians Talk COVID Vaccine

### **Hermes Awards:**

- 2023 Hermes Creative Award, Gold, Pandemic Response

### **5. Examples of work product:**

- a. Magazine – VA Health Care Priorities & Enablers
- b. Chat Sheet – Help Prevent Veteran Suicide – Lethal Means Safety (LMS) Training
- c. Communications Toolkit – Lethal Means Safety (LMS) Training
- d. Poster – VHA Whole Health System Approach to Long COVID

- e. Video – A Patient’s View – Long COVID
- f. Video – Three Veterans’ Journey – Long COVID