

VA Names Stop Soldier Suicide a First-Place Winner in Mission Daybreak Grand Challenge

\$3 Million Grand Prize Will Fund Innovative Project to Reduce Veteran Suicide

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES, February 16, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The U.S.

Department of Veterans Affairs has [named Stop Soldier Suicide a first-place winner in Mission Daybreak](#) — a \$20 million challenge designed to develop and accelerate new Veteran suicide prevention solutions. As a first-place winner, Stop Soldier Suicide (SSS) has earned a \$3 million award.

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Chris Ford, CEO of Stop Soldier Suicide

Stop Soldier Suicide's winning solution, [Black Box Project](#), is a pioneering innovation that leverages artificial intelligence, namely machine learning, to redefine our understanding of suicide risk among Veterans.

“We're incredibly honored to receive this landmark award, which builds on VA's long history of advancing health

innovation,” Stop Soldier Suicide CEO Chris Ford said. “Together, Stop Soldier Suicide, VA, and the other outstanding awardees will advance our nation's efforts to dramatically reduce the Veteran suicide rate this decade.”

Without individual-level, real-world data on how to reach suicidal Veterans in their last days, weeks, and months, current prevention efforts will continue to fall short. Black Box Project will bridge those gaps by not only producing never-before-known insights that inform risk level assessment based on digital behaviors, but also by reimagining methods of outreach and care that will advance the field of suicide prevention as a whole.

Black Box Project employs digital forensics to collect and process data from smartphones, tablets, laptops and similar devices of Veterans who have died by suicide and supplements that information with open-source intelligence from the Veteran's last year of life. Machine learning algorithms, natural language processing, and entity extraction techniques are then used to build models of pre-suicidal behaviors highly correlated with suicide, which will further sharpen our understanding of risk among Veterans.

From May to July 2022, Phase 1 of the [Mission Daybreak](#) grand challenge received 1,371 concept

submissions from solvers that included Veterans, Veteran service organizations (VSOs), community-based organizations, health tech companies, startups, and universities. Multidisciplinary panels of reviewers and judges assessed submissions according to the evaluation criteria.

Following Phase 1, Stop Soldier Suicide was named one of the thirty challenge finalists that each received \$250,000 and advanced to the Phase 2 virtual accelerator program, which helped them develop ambitious but achievable roadmaps for prototyping, iteration, testing, and evaluation. Technology partners supporting the accelerator included Amazon and Microsoft. In November 2022, finalists had the opportunity to speak about their solutions with challenge judges and representatives from VA, Veteran Service Organizations, Capitol Hill, and policy institutes at Demo Day, held at the Samsung Executive Briefing Center in Washington, D.C.

The multidisciplinary judging panel — representing a diversity of perspectives, from Veterans and clinicians to social workers and technical experts — evaluated submissions from the thirty finalists in Phase 2. The panel recommended the 10 winners based on the official evaluation criteria.

To learn more about Black Box Project and Stop Soldier Suicide's challenge-winning innovation, please visit StopSoldierSuicide.org/MissionDaybreak. For more information on the Mission Daybreak grand challenge, please visit MissionDaybreak.net.

Please direct media inquiries to media@stopsoldiersuicide.org, and our team will follow up directly.

About Stop Soldier Suicide

Stop Soldier Suicide (SSS) is the only national nonprofit focused solely on reducing the military suicide rate. Our vision is a nation where service members and veterans have no greater risk of suicide than any other American. The goal of SSS is to reduce military and veteran suicide rates by 40 percent no later than 2030, saving more than 2,400 lives per year. SSS was co-founded in 2010 by three Army veterans and has grown over the last decade into the most innovative suicide intervention effort the country. SSS provides consistent, confidential, suicide-specific care for service members and veterans at highest risk for suicide through its one-of-a-kind suicide intervention model, innovative use of data insights, and a technology-first approach. These services are all provided completely free of charge to our clients, regardless of period served or discharge status. To learn more, please visit our website.

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