



## How a comprehensive learning management strategy can raise the bar for nonprofits

Social services providers deliver a critical safety net to those most at risk within local communities. To be able to best serve those clients in ways that deliver real impact — as well as adhere to local and state regulations — it's essential that employees receive the best training possible. Unfortunately, due to barriers such as a lack of accessible, cost-effective tech-based solutions, delivering and monitoring that critical training has been a hit-or-miss scenario.

The Northern California & Northern Nevada affiliate of Volunteers of America (VOA NCNN) is all too familiar with those barriers. Founded in 1911, the organization is one of the region's oldest and largest social services providers. It must meet the serious mission of helping people in dire circumstances by serving at-risk populations.

As is the case with all social services entities, VOA NCNN's mission requires the best possible training for its 400-plus employees. That includes areas such as more effectively working with clients, staying compliant, adapting to new laws, training for the latest social services trends and more. With 50 programs across its three main locations, VOA NCNN needed to overhaul its training and compliance strategy.

"Managing training has been a heavy lift for us," says Jill Fox, VOA NCNN's quality assurance director, who helps manage training within the organization. "We needed to take our learning strategy to a higher level."

To get there, the agency turned to the Brainier Learning Management System (LMS), a platform known for its flexibility and innovation. Purchased through [ADP Marketplace](#), a digital HR storefront that allows ADP® clients to customize their HCM ecosystem, [Brainier](#) easily integrates with VOA NCNN's ADP Workforce Now® platform.

VOA NCNN programs — spread among its Reno, Nevada, and Sacramento and Oakland, California, locations — include housing, employment services, substance abuse and recovery services to families, individuals, veterans, seniors and youth. Client-wise, the agency provides shelter or housing to about 2,000 men, women and children every night.

**Company:** Northern California & Northern Nevada affiliate of Volunteers of America

**Location:** Sacramento, CA

**Industry:** Nonprofit and social services

**Employees:** 450

**ADP Marketplace Partner:** Brainier

**Learn more about Brainier:**

<https://marketplace.adp.com/brainier>



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Fox says by choosing [Brainier](#), VOA NCNN has raised the bar considerably from the agency's former, more traditional learning strategy, which was ineffective and costly. "Everyone is very excited [about Brainier]," she says. Previously, learning presenters either traveled to field offices to conduct sessions with clients or staff or held training sessions at the agency itself. In either case, to keep travel costs down, VOA NCNN could only facilitate in-person training sporadically, every few months at most.

"In terms of getting formal, specific training to everyone quickly, we were seeing a growing disconnect between our evolving training needs and the ability to meet them," Fox says.

With Brainier for ADP Workforce Now, the agency believes it has found an effective platform that ensures everyone is receiving the same information and learning in a timely, cost-effective manner. The team can also track whether employees are getting the proper training without using labor-intensive spreadsheets, says Fox.

The primary driver in choosing Brainier, Fox explains, was ensuring employees could get evidence-based practice via training on a regular basis. For example, employees can train in motivational interviewing, a counseling method that helps people find the internal motivation they need to change their behavior. It's a key skill set for interacting with populations who are marginalized or homeless, including many of VOA NCNN's clients.

"The clients we work with have a lot of issues they're bringing to the table," she says. "We're trying to give our staff the best tools possible to work with the clients we serve."

Most of all, Fox says Brainier's platform means everyone is speaking the same language when it comes to client care. "That's very important," she says. "We know our clients are getting the same service, no matter which program they're in."

VOA NCNN primarily uses the Brainier system to upload its own content, including topics like trauma-informed care, active shooter training or motivational interviewing. Brainier also offers a prepackaged library with a wide variety of practical content on topics like building leadership skills and using Microsoft Office applications.

"The ability to tailor training to exactly how we want it was really critical for us," Fox says. "This is making everyone's life lot easier."

The new system benefits the organization's fundraising efforts, too: VOA NCNN can create metrics to demonstrate to funders that the agency is properly training its staff.

"We can now speak to the fact that our staff is well trained in best practices for effectively working with our client base," Fox says, adding that VOA NCNN can separate itself from the herd on the funding front via its training effectiveness. "As a nonprofit, we're always seeking new funders. We look attractive as a provider when we can add that we have an automated LMS, and everyone is up to speed. It gives us an edge."

Fox says she would "absolutely" recommend [ADP Marketplace](#) and Brainier to peers and would also look to ADP Marketplace for future HCM-related needs.

"If, like Brainier, it would help our agency, we would purchase again from ADP Marketplace," she says. "This solution, and the ease with which it blends with ADP, has given us exactly what we needed."

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**Jill Fox**  
Quality Assurance Director,  
VOA NCNN



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