

The Enabling Goal

Create an environment that fosters the delivery of One VA world-class service to veterans and their families through effective communication and management of people, technology, business processes, and financial resources

Objective E-1

Improve communications with veterans, employees and stakeholders to share the Department's mission, goals, and results and to increase awareness of benefits and services for veterans and their families

Objective E-2

Recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed and diverse workforce that provides high quality service to veterans and their families

Objective E-3

Implement a One VA information technology framework that supports the integration of information across business lines and provides a source of consistent, reliable, accurate, and secure information to veterans and their families, employees, and stakeholders

Objective E-4

Improve the overall governance of VA and the management of its business processes



One VA

VA's "enabling" goal, is different from our four strategic goals. The enabling goal and its corresponding objectives represent crosscutting activities that enable all organizational units of the VA to carry out the Department's mission. (VA's functions and activities focus on improving communications, enhancing the workforce assets and internal processes, and furthering a One VA approach to providing seamless service to veterans and their families). As such, many of these functions and activities are transparent to veterans and their families. However, they are critical to our stakeholders and VA managers and employees that implement our programs.

VA will operate as an integrated veteran-focused organization. We will achieve this goal while ensuring full compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and financial commitments.

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Purpose and Outcomes:

The purpose of this objective is to improve communications with veterans, stakeholders, and employees about VA programs. In particular, Objective E-1 recognizes the importance of increasing knowledge and awareness among veterans and their families about benefits and services and clearly communicating VA's vision, mission, goals, and objectives throughout the organization and among its stakeholders. This objective is also aimed at increasing the awareness and understanding of veterans, and stakeholders, and the public, of the results of VA programs.

Strategies and Processes:

Communication with Veterans

To increase awareness of benefits and services provided, VA conducts outreach and education activities for the veteran community and the general public through the use of news releases, articles appearing in veterans service organization publications, public service announcements, and presentations to schools and community organizations.

VA will respond to requests from local and national media, veterans and their families, and the public for information on VA benefits, services, and policy. To ensure timely response to veteran inquiries and complaints, VA has developed and currently maintains an Internet access page that allows direct e-mail contact with veteran consumers.

VA will continue to produce a variety of comprehensive, easy-to-use, understandable

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informational materials regarding VA benefits, eligibility criteria and services, as well as VA activities, and disperse them to the widest possible audiences. These publications include the benefits booklet, news releases, and speeches.

At the state level, VA facilities within specific geographic areas are creating comprehensive directories for veterans and employees that include names and

telephone numbers of VA employees, community care providers, and other Federal government service providers. In addition, many facilities will develop credit card size pocket cards that may attach to employees' name badges and include their local important telephone numbers and/or national 800 numbers.

Another mechanism to increase awareness will be to host large events for sharing information with veterans on available benefits.

VA will continue to be recognized as the government leader in plain language letter writing. VA sends out approximately 30 million pieces of correspondence annually. Since written letters are still the primary way we communicate with our veterans and their families, VA is rewriting hundreds of form letters and paragraphs sent out in response to inquiries.

In addition, VA will convene a National Minority Veterans Conference to identify issues facing minority veterans and to ensure that a comprehensive and effective process is initiated to respond to issues and concerns of the minority veteran community for the 21st Century.

To increase minority veterans' use of benefits, programs, and services for which they are entitled, VA will use data and information compiled from site visits, annual reports, and studies on its benefits and health care programs to develop initiatives. VA will continue to assess minority veterans program coordinators' (MVPC) activity to educate minority veterans, increase their participation in VA programs and minimize barriers to their ability to access health care and benefits, and address the strengths and weaknesses of the agency's ability to deliver services to minority veterans. VA will design and publish a fact sheet that will inform thousands of minority veterans and their family members about VA programs, benefits and services.

To reach the women veterans community, VA will convene a National Summit on Women Veterans Issues to provide stakeholders an opportunity to learn about VA initiatives for women veterans and identify issues of concern to the women veteran community.

VA will conduct town meetings and community-based forums to discuss VA programs and benefits for women veterans at different locations across the country and work with field personnel to ensure outreach activities are incorporated into the performance plans of the Women Veteran Coordinators.

Communication with Employees

One of the key aspects of the Department's *One VA* initiative is to enhance communications with employees. As part of this initiative, VA held a series of five *One VA* regional conferences and events to communicate and promote increased understanding of VA wide programs.

The Department has also developed the *One VA Employee Strategic Plan* as a companion document to the Strategic Plan. This document attempts to succinctly communicate the Department's strategic

framework to all employees. Specifically, the *One VA Employee Strategic Plan* will assist VA staff at all levels to identify how their work contributes to achieving VA's overall mission and goals, thereby improving their line-of-sight connection with the strategic direction of the Department. VA will use other communication vehicles including the VAnguard, internet, and videos to communicate the VA strategic direction to employees.

Part of a campaign to institutionalize seamless service is the creation of *One VA* state councils to oversee collaborative initiatives and improve communication with employees and veterans advocates within their geographical areas.

Communication with Stakeholders and the Public

VA will provide timely and accurate delivery of service and information to Members of Congress and their staffs regarding the results of VA programs, as well as veterans' concerns, including constituent casework. VA will provide more frequent briefings to Members and their staff on VA benefits and services and initiate new Member orientations and casework conferences. In addition, VA will ensure that VISN Directors will meet at least twice a year with their respective delegations to inform them of progress made in key areas, issues, and veterans concerns pending within their area of jurisdiction.

VA will use its strategic planning process to increase internal and external understanding of its strategic direction and priorities. In FY 2001, VA will expand its outreach through the production of a 20-30 minute video that will depict its current mission, goals and services. In addition to the video, 2-3 public service announcements supporting specific VA outreach priority goals (covering homeless veterans, women veterans, Gulf War veterans, and Hispanic veterans) will also be produced for broadcast across the country to help increase the public awareness of VA's activities and their

results. VA will also develop a Veterans Benefits Learning Map that will be made available to VSO facilities and state VA offices to help veterans better understand the benefits and services they are eligible to receive.

External Factors:

- Extent to which cooperative crosscutting partnerships with other Federal, State and local governments, and private organizations can be developed.
- Extent to which veterans have internet access.

Performance Measures

Objective E-1 Service Delivery Measures		FY 2006 Performance Targets
Employee Feedback ó	Percent of VA employees who indicate they understand VA's strategic goals	85%
Direct Access for Veterans ó	Number of interactive points of contacts on VA web site available to veterans	150
Veteran Awareness ó	Percent increase in the number of veterans who believe that they understand their VA benefits	10% ¹

¹ Baseline number will be established based on the 2000 - 2001 National Survey of Veterans.

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Purpose and Outcomes:

The purpose of this objective is to ensure that the VA has the workforce it needs to serve veterans and their families, today and in the future. Like many organizations today, VA is faced with an unprecedented set of human capital challenges—an aging workforce, a shifting and expanding mission, a tight and competitive labor market, and the emergence of profound new technologies—that present both risks and opportunities. The ability of VA to prepare its workforce to meet these challenges will largely determine the extent to which the goals and strategies laid out in this strategic plan are achieved. Each of the major themes incorporated into this plan—enhanced health care delivery, expedited claims processing, partnerships, accountability—can come to life only through the efforts of a workforce with the capabilities, competencies, commitment, and compassion to make it happen.

*Objective E-2
Recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed and diverse workforce that provides high quality service to veterans and their families*

- Define the set of competencies and requirements for the future VA workforce;
- Define a strategy for bridging the gap between the current workforce and what will be needed in the future.

To achieve the desired result, these tasks must be integrated into the “way we do things” among executives, managers, supervisors, and employees at all levels of VA. Workforce planning must be seen as an essential, ongoing part of mission accomplishment. The strategy that comes out of this process will be the roadmap for building the organizational capacity to bring the mission to life.

In support of this goal, VA will provide managers with a desktop workforce forecasting system that will facilitate the definition of current and future competencies and provide data for sound decision making.

Employee Education

The VA Learning University (VALU) provides leadership for learning initiatives spanning the three Administrations and Staff Offices of VA. It serves as a catalyst for VA-wide learning initiatives that develop and sustain a high performance workforce. VALU coordinates the various educational entities within VA, and maximizes educational resources through collaborative efforts. To support achievement of VA’s goals and objectives, VALU will identify strategic VA-wide learning priorities, promote innovation in approaches to learning, and

Strategies and Processes:

Workforce Planning

Workforce planning is at the heart of building sustainable excellence into all parts of VA. It is also a disciplined activity that will require a major commitment of time, energy, and resources throughout the life of this Strategic Plan.

Workforce planning at VA involves three overarching tasks:

- Define the set of competencies and requirements for the current workforce;

facilitate internal and external learning partnerships. VALU promotes building a *learning culture* within VA.

One current strategy already in progress is to develop and roll out a *One VA* employee orientation package that provides new and existing employees a better understanding of all VA programs, benefits, and services. Part of that package will include a *One VA* learning map to provide employees with a greater understanding of the realities driving change around them and to enhance their participation in VA initiatives for addressing those realities.

Diversity

VA is committed to promoting efforts to ensure that its workforce reflects the diversity of the customers we serve, the Nation's veterans and their dependents. Diversity is essential to building a creative and innovative environment that can best understand and address the needs of the customers we serve. In order to foster this type of environment, VA will:

- Establish a diversity business model that capitalizes on the business, cultural, legal, and demographic dimensions and values of diversity in the workplace;
- Establish a *One VA* Diversity Business Council to examine and monitor VA's Employee Diversity Profile;
- Establish and communicate diversity competencies to VA leaders; and
- Reward VA leaders for crosscutting diversity initiatives.

Employee Satisfaction

Employee attitudes are important drivers of employee behaviors, such as turnover, absenteeism, lost productivity, and grievances. These behaviors can help drive organizational outcomes, such as customer satisfaction, quality, and costs. When employees are satisfied with their jobs and work environment, they take pride

in their work and are motivated to provide high quality service to veterans and their families.

To assess and improve employee satisfaction, VA will administer the *One VA* employee survey, determine where opportunities for improvement exist, and develop and implement integrated improvement plans around the priority opportunities. VA will:

- Identify employee satisfaction indicators which are highly correlated with measures of organizational outcomes;
- Utilize contractor assistance to administer the survey and create a baseline on those indicators;
- Establish action plans to raise employee satisfaction;
- Re-administer the survey annually to measure improvement in satisfaction and revalidate the correlation with organizational measures; and
- Help educate managers on the relationships between employee attitudes and organizational performance;
- Help leadership develop mechanisms to hold managers accountable for employee satisfaction as part of their annual performance plans.

Further, VA will help educate employees on how to actively encourage and support a workplace free of discrimination, sexual harassment, unfairness and inequity.

VA's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program for workplace disputes emphasizes VA's commitment to the early use of mediation at all levels to the maximum extent practicable in an appropriate and cost-effective manner. VA has established an agency-wide policy and process to support using mediation, in which an impartial third party assists parties in resolving workplace

disputes through their own negotiations. A steering committee is responsible for facilitating the exchange of ADR information and resources among various VA elements.

VA will develop and implement a system to monitor and evaluate whether the option of mediation is available to all VA employees for all workplace disputes. VA will also develop and implement a system to monitor and evaluate whether each VA employee is provided a basic understanding of mediation and the program available at their facility, so that they can make informed decisions about the mediation option. VA expects to fully implement this system for mediation by the end of FY 2001.

VA will enhance its relationship with its labor partners by working with the VA National Partnership Council (NPC). The NPC will continue to promote the establishment and improvement of partnerships through:

- training;
- consulting assistance; and
- assessments of the health of partnerships.

External Factors:

In conjunction with the economy (job-market/competitive salary issues), VA recognizes that funding to implement HR strategies will be the key to recruiting and retaining a highly skilled workforce.

Performance Measures

Objective E-2 Service Delivery Measures		FY 2006 Target
Workforce Planning¹	Percent of current and future job categories that have defined competencies and requirements	100% (By 2002)
	Percent of job categories where gaps have been defined between current and future capabilities and requirements	100% (By 2002)
Diversity²	Percent of agency leadership, performance plans and/or performance agreements that contain diversity competencies	100%
Employee Satisfaction²	Percent increase in the aggregate score on the <i>One VA Employee</i> Satisfaction Survey using FY 01 baseline	10% ² (see footnote)
Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)²	Percent of employees that are aware of ADR as an option to address workplace disputes	100%

¹ Once system requirements have been defined, the outcomes of those systems can be established and measured.

² Annual performance targets are subject to the results of the first two (FY 01 and 02) administrations of the survey. These surveys will establish baselines and determine what percent increase of employee satisfaction is reasonable.

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Purpose and Outcomes:

The purpose of this objective is to develop a seamless IT framework within VA that enhances and enables world-class service to veterans and their families.

Strategies and Processes:

To achieve this objective, VA will develop a *One VA* framework plan that supports the vision of making VA appear as one entity instead of several administrations. The framework will be guided by the *One VA* Vision of Information Technology (IT) Enhanced Customer Service. The vision describes IT functional capabilities or concepts, which contribute in a coordinated way to an environment of integrated services. The concepts fall into four categories: (1) Customer Service Access Environment; (2) Internal Data Sharing and Exchange; (3) External Data Sharing and Exchange; and (4) Customer Service Information Technology Infrastructure. VA will also implement an agency-wide information security management and planning program.

*Objective E-3
Implement a One VA information technology framework that supports the integration of information across business lines and that provides a source of consistent, reliable, accurate, and secure information to veterans and their families, employees, and stakeholders*

A number of information technology initiatives and activities based on similar strategies have been completed. The report, "Establishing *One VA* Access to Information," was approved by the Chief Information Officer (CIO) Council and the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The report recommends expanding the Intranet BIRLS/BDN Access (IBBA) initiative, currently under development, to meet the needs of all VA employees. An NT Enterprise Network Workgroup charter has been developed. The workgroup has been issued a directive by the CIO Council to explore options for initiating a *One VA* approach to enterprise network management. VA established an Information Security Working Group and coordinated a VA-wide, multi-year program budget plan for information security.

VA has begun using smart card technology to improve service to veterans. When the VA smart card is fully developed, veterans will be able to access services at any VA facility.

Performance Measures

Objective E-3 Service Delivery Measures		FY 2006 Target
One VA Architecture ó	Percent of major VA IT systems that conform to the <i>One VA Architecture</i> (The plan to implement the <i>One VA Architecture</i> is currently under development and will be completed by September 2001.)	100% (by 2005)
IT Security ó	Percent implementation of the Department-wide IT Security Program	100% (by 2003)

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Purpose and Outcomes:

The purpose of this objective is to enhance the overall governance of VA and the integration of its programs and major management functions to better serve our Nation's veterans and their families.

Strategies and Processes:

Strategic Management

VA's Strategic Plan will be fully integrated with budget formulation, performance management, data collection and analysis, and program evaluation. The strategic direction of the VA will be communicated clearly and concisely through the Strategic Plan, the Secretary's Annual Statement, a Strategic Plan for VA Employees, a VA Strategic Planning Handbook, and other publications and resources.

Each Administration will develop a strategic plan to provide a greater level of detail regarding the strategies and initiatives that the Administration will implement to support achievement of the broad goals and objectives present in the VA Strategic Plan.

VA will consult extensively with strategic partners and stakeholders to improve coordination of all VA activities. These consultations will include meetings with stakeholders, which bring together representatives from veteran service organizations, OMB and GAO, key Congressional Committees, and senior VA leadership. These meetings will continue to focus

*Objective E-4
Improve the overall
governance of VA and
the management of its
crosscutting processes*

on key planning issues that confront VA, and they are aimed at external alignment with the agency's strategic direction. Other external alignment efforts include *Conversations with America*, and associations, such as the American Medical Association, American Hospital Association, American Association of Medical Colleges, and other organizations.

Data Collection and Analysis

VA is developing a substantially enhanced veteran population model as well as actuarial models for projecting benefit costs and workload in VA programs. The enhancements to the veteran population model will enable estimates and projections of the population at the national, state, and county levels and will provide data on over 20 variables/characteristics of the population. By establishing effective data exchanges with the Defense Manpower Data Center, Office of DoD Actuary, Bureau of Census, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Office of Personnel Management, VA will be able to draw on these relevant and reliable sources to contribute data to the veteran population model.

Effective survey research and data collection functions employ a variety of approaches to acquiring useful information. Collection activities within VA include the National Survey of Veterans 2000 (NSV 2000). Data for NSV 2000 will be collected in 2000 and results will be available in 2001. Substantive analyses will be conducted and a report will be published in 2001. Additional subpopulation surveys are

planned for subsequent fiscal years. A Survey of Women Veterans is planned for 2001. Analyses of these survey results will provide critical demographic, socio-economic, benefit needs and customer expectation information to enhance VA planning and operational activities.

HR LINK\$

Through the HR LINK\$ project, VA is committed to providing fast, efficient, and cost competitive delivery of human resources and payroll services. HR LINK\$ will:

- provide the highest quality payroll services at a cost competitive price;
- streamline payroll processes through technology and business reengineering;
- enable employees and managers to initiate and conduct personal and personnel transactions on-line; and
- bring about operational improvements by centralizing all processing at a single Shared Service Center.

Benchmarking Best Practices, Organizational Assessment and Improvement

VA will ensure that it uses best practices to foster high performance by individuals and teams. VA will establish *communities of practice* to share their best practices and determine how to expand their use throughout the Department. VA will also look at external best practices that can be imported to augment our business processes. This effort will enhance individual, team, and organizational accountability and help align training/development and incentives with organizational goals and objectives.

VA will also promote increased understanding and use of organizational assessment tools to improve its operational performance and increase levels of customer satisfaction. VA will

work throughout the Administrations and staff offices to increase the use of the entire range of organizational assessment and other tools including the Baldrige assessment, the Carey Quality Award Program, benchmarking, customer and employee surveys, application of a balanced set of measures, program reviews, data assessments and audits.

Capital Investment Planning

VA will maintain a portfolio of capital investments that maximize return at an acceptable level of risk and sets investment priorities. The Capital Investment Board will review individual Administration's capital plans, and propose a strategic mix of assets to the VA Resource Board for approval and inclusion in the Department Capital Plan (DCP) submitted to OMB.

Information Technology

VA will use an integrated framework to continue aligning VA's information technology investments with its business lines:

- The IT Strategic Plan will be revised annually to provide organizations the overarching strategy and priorities to guide the capital, budget, operation, and tactical planning for IT;
- The CIO Investment Panel will continue to review IT capital investment proposals and recommend approval of well-planned and coordinated efforts. The panel will also continue to conduct quarterly execution reviews of approved capital investment projects and evaluate each initiative against technical IT criteria; and
- The CIO Council will continue to review VA's IT investment portfolio package,

ensuring IT investments are made from a corporate perspective.

Financial Management

VA will continue to achieve an unqualified (“clean”) audit opinion on its Annual Consolidated Financial Statements and Franchise Fund Financial Statements. VA will migrate to the core Financial and Logistics System (coreFLS), a new system, that will correct weaknesses identified with VA’s current system; meet federal financial and logistics system requirements and standards; allow VA the flexibility to adapt to external and internal best business practices; and better support and facilitate VA’s strategic business and technology plans. VA will also continue to incorporate and take advantage of technology and best business practices to further improve VA financial management, to include cost accounting, electronic commerce, and entrepreneurial operations, such as VA’s Franchise Fund.

Inspector General Investigations and Audits

VA will continue to focus its existing investigative resources in areas that affect service delivery to veterans and protect scarce VA resources. These areas include benefits fraud, equity skimming, product substitution,

and theft of government resources. Recent investigations have substantiated the need for criminal investigative expertise in protracted investigations into allegations affecting patient care issues. VA will continue to address high profile investigations involving patient abuse and health care fraud.

VA will also continue to focus on improving its overall program performance. The Office of Audit has increased staff in several of its field offices, which along with the planned outsourcing of the CFO financial statement audit in 2000, will enhance the its opportunity to address high priority work. The Office of Inspector General (IG) will also assist VA with the objective verification and validation of data used to support key performance measures. The IG has completed performance audits on five key measures to date, and plans to conduct audits on other key measures in the next 5 years.

External Factors:

External factors that will affect this objective include the pace of information technology and access to it throughout society, the development of “E-gov” initiatives, and other future Congressional directives.

Performance Measures

Objective E-4 Service Delivery Measures		FY 2006 Target
HR LINKS / Shared Service Center 6	Percent of time customers are satisfied with SSC services	85%
Stakeholder Consultation6	Percent of stakeholders who are satisfied or very satisfied with their level of participation in VA’s planning process	85%