



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Office of Audits and Evaluations

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Staffing and Vacancy
Reporting under the
MISSION Act of 2018

REVIEW

REPORT #19-00266-141

JUNE 25, 2019



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Executive Summary

VA has experienced chronic healthcare professional shortages since at least 2015. The VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) performed this review as required by the VA MISSION Act of 2018 (the Act). The Act established a permanent community care program and requires the Secretary to report annually on steps taken to achieve full staffing capacity and the additional funds needed to achieve that staffing level. Section 505 of the Act mandates that VA publicly release, on a quarterly basis, certain staffing and vacancy data to provide transparency on VA's progress toward full staffing. Section 505 also requires the OIG to assess the administration of the quarterly reporting and make recommendations for its improvement.

What the OIG Found

VA partially complied with the requirements of Section 505 of the Act. VA reported current personnel and time-to-hire data as prescribed. However, VA's initial reporting of staff vacancies and employee gains and losses used alternative aggregation methods and lacked sufficient transparency to permit stakeholders to use this information to track VA's progress toward meeting full staffing capacity. This lack of compliance, if not corrected, may impact the transparency of VA's future staffing and vacancy reporting.

VA's vacancy data were organized by broad position categories rather than occupation as required. For example, most reported vacancies were generalized under a broad occupational group that included clinical and nonclinical positions. Specific occupations, such as physicians or nurses, were not identified. Without the required specificity, a user of the data cannot identify shortages by occupation, such as those who provide direct patient care to veterans. VA should identify specific jobs or positions so that the public can better understand its staffing needs. VA also did not follow the Act's specifications for reporting gains and losses; data were aggregated by fiscal year, instead of by quarter. VA should adjust its methodology for aggregating gains and losses to ensure that data are reported appropriately and transparently.

As required by the Act, the OIG team identified opportunities for VA to improve its data reporting. For example, VA did not disclose that its medical facility vacancy numbers were overstated or that there were ongoing efforts to correct this data. VA should disclose these efforts to improve the value and utility of the data. Further, VA's public website only reported data for the current quarter and did not maintain historical versions of the published data. The overall transparency of VA's staffing and recruitment website would be improved by maintaining historical data for public review.

Additionally, the OIG found labeling errors in the reported information. VA inaccurately labeled time-to-hire information in two instances. Data reported by fiscal year was mislabeled as being by quarter, and certain mission-oriented occupations were reported to be excluded but were not

actually removed from the data. VA should review its labeling to ensure accuracy prior to public release.

Finally, the OIG team noted VA's improvements in its administration of the reporting process. Although VA lacked a documented methodology for the first two website postings of staffing and vacancy data in August and November 2018, VA established a methodology on February 7, 2019, that described how to compile the personnel information. In addition, VA improved its method for sharing data with its staff offices. This allowed for more precise quality reviews and greater assurance that the published data were accurate.

What the OIG Recommended

The OIG recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration ensure that the staffing and vacancy data are reported as required, disclose limitations in the data, maintain historical data publicly, and update the methodology.

Management Comments

The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration concurred with all recommendations and submitted acceptable corrective action plans. The OIG will monitor implementation of planned actions and will close the recommendations when VA provides sufficient evidence demonstrating progress in addressing the issues identified.



LARRY M. REINKEMEYER
Assistant Inspector General
for Audits and Evaluations

Contents

Executive Summary	i
Abbreviations	iv
Why the OIG Did This Review	1
What the OIG Found	2
Conclusion	8
Recommendations 1–5	8
Appendix A: Scope and Methodology	10
Appendix B: VA MISSION Act of 2018, Section 505	11
Appendix C: Management Comments	12
OIG Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	14
Report Distribution	15

Abbreviations

FTE	full-time equivalent
FY	fiscal year
HR&A	Office of Human Resources and Administration
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration
VHA	Veterans Health Administration
WPA	Workforce Planning and Analysis Service



Why the OIG Did This Review

Congress has shown an interest in VA's occupational shortages by passing at least three laws since 2014 requiring a periodic accounting of vacancies within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).¹ Beginning in 2015, the OIG's Office of Healthcare Inspections has issued annual reports that identified occupations in VHA with the largest staffing shortages. The most commonly identified occupational shortages were physicians, nurses, physician assistants, psychologists, physical therapists, and medical technologists.²

The VA MISSION Act of 2018 (the Act) established a permanent community care program, a capital asset review process, and several initiatives to minimize healthcare provider shortages with improved recruitment and retention.³ To monitor whether VA is effectively addressing these staffing shortages, the Act requires the Secretary to report annually on steps taken to achieve full staffing capacity and the additional funds needed to achieve this staffing level. The Act also requires the Secretary to publish a report by January 31, 2022, that recommends modernization and realignment of VHA facilities based on a variety of factors, including the extent to which VHA "has appropriately staffed the medical facility."

To provide transparency on VA's progress in achieving full staffing capacity, the Act establishes a requirement for VA to publish staffing and vacancy information on an Internet website.⁴ Specifically, Section 505 of the Act requires VA to publish by departmental component, or by medical facility for VHA, the following items:

- The number of current personnel
- The number of employment gains and losses processed during the previous quarter
- The number of staff vacancies by occupation

¹ Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, Section 301; VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017, Section 201; and VA MISSION Act of 2018, Section 505.

² *OIG Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Occupational Staffing Shortages, FY 2018*, (Report No. 18-01693-196, June 14, 2018). This report summarized a survey of VHA facilities that identified occupations experiencing staffing shortages, which the facilities attributed to conditions such as a lack of qualified candidates, noncompetitive salary, and high staff turnover.

³ VA MISSION Act of 2018, Sections 101, 202, 203, and 301 through 306.

⁴ VA MISSION Act of 2018, Section 505. The full text of this section is located in Appendix B.

- The percentage of new staff who were hired within the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) time-to-hire target of 80 days⁵

The Act requires VA to publish the data 90 days after enactment of the law with updates each following quarter. VA's Office of Human Resources and Administration (HR&A) coordinates the quarterly retrieval and aggregation of data required under Section 505 of the Act. Subsequently, HR&A sends these data to representatives from each departmental component for verification and quality review.⁶ Once the data have been validated, HR&A publishes it on a public-facing website.

The data are drawn from two systems—HR Smart and USA Staffing. HR Smart is VA's human resources information system that supports personnel suitability, payroll, and position management. HR Smart organizes data by position, rather than by employee, and allows for real-time human resources transaction processing for all of VA. Data pertaining to current staff, gains and losses, and vacancies are obtained from HR Smart.

USA Staffing is an OPM-administered system that federal agencies use to recruit, assess, certify, select, and bring employees into their organizations. The system provides related tools, including data analytics, which allow VA to calculate time-to-hire percentages for new employees.

What the OIG Found

Section 505 mandates the OIG perform this review, which assessed VA's administration of staffing and vacancy reporting under the Act. The OIG reviewed compliance with the Act's four reporting requirements noted above, the presentation of the staffing and vacancy data, and VA's disclosure of related reporting matters. This is the OIG's first review under the Act.

The OIG found that VA partially complied with the requirements of Section 505 of the Act. VA did report current personnel and time-to-hire data as prescribed. However, VA reported the number of staff vacancies by broad position categories, rather than by occupation as required. VA also did not follow the Act's specifications for reporting gains and losses because the Department aggregated the data by fiscal year rather than by quarter. VA needs to ensure that data are reported appropriately.

The OIG team identified other opportunities to improve VA's administration of the public-facing website. The published staffing and vacancy data lacked transparency in certain instances. This included inadequate disclosures related to limitations, exclusions, or other conditions that had the

⁵ OPM's End-to-End Hiring Initiative defined time-to-hire as the number of elapsed calendar days between when the hiring need is established and when the new employee arrives for the first day of work. This initiative also set the time-to-hire target as 80 days.

⁶ Departmental components include VHA, the Veterans Benefits Administration, the National Cemetery Administration, and various staff offices.

potential to impact the reader’s interpretation of the data. Additionally, VA lacked a formal methodology for the staffing and vacancy reporting until February 2019, despite releasing reports in August and November 2018. Finally, VA’s reporting contained several errors in labeling that misrepresented the published data. Unless VA corrects these issues, the public cannot reliably monitor the Department’s progress toward reaching full staffing capacity.

Vacancy Information Lacked Sufficient Detail to Identify Specific Positions in Need as Required

Section 505 of the Act requires that VA publish the number of vacancies by occupation.⁷ However, in each quarterly release, VA presented its vacancy data by occupational groups and job families. Occupational groups and job families are broad categories that cover a set of associated or related job functions. For example, positions such as human resources specialists, human resources assistants, and equal employment specialists are organized under the Human Resources Management Group (0200). In general, reporting vacancies in this manner does not offer sufficient specificity to identify shortages by occupation, such as those who provide direct patient care to veterans.

Most of the reported vacancies were generalized under the Medical, Hospital, Dental, and Public Health Group, referred to as the 0600-occupational group. However, this group includes clinical positions, such as doctors, nurses, and pharmacists, as well as nonclinical positions in medical records administration, housekeeping management, and consumer safety. The lack of specificity is significant because, as currently reported, vacancy numbers for the 0600-occupational group do not sufficiently identify positional staffing needs in VHA. For example, VA reported in November 2018 that the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System had approximately 347 full-time equivalent (FTE) vacancies within the 0600-occupational group. Using HR&A’s source data, the OIG team identified the five highest vacant occupational series, which are illustrated in Table 1. Without the specificity exemplified by the table below, a user of the data cannot identify whether VHA has significant nursing vacancies as compared to openings among other clinical or nonclinical occupations.

Table 1. Healthcare Occupations with the Highest Vacancies at the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System

Occupational series	Occupational title	Vacancies (FTE)
0610	Nurse	79
0679	Medical Support Assistant	58

⁷ In implementing 5 U.S.C. § 51, OPM identified 676 occupational series (or occupations) divided into 59 occupational groups and job families as of September 2018.

Occupational series	Occupational title	Vacancies (FTE)
0602	Physician	36
0620	Practical Nurse ⁸	26
0640	Health Aid and Technician	23

Source: OIG summarization of raw HR Smart vacancy data, as of September 30, 2018.

Overall, the groupings are too broad to provide meaningful insight on specific occupational vacancies within VA. According to the director of HR&A’s Workforce Planning and Analysis Service (WPA), VA did not list vacancies by series because it would reduce the readability of the report. The director also stated that WPA did not have sufficient staff to break down the data by series. While these concerns may have merit, the OIG maintains that the value of the reported data would be improved if VA identified specific jobs or positions so that the public would understand its staffing needs.

Gains and Losses Not Reported as Required

VA did not follow the Act’s specifications for reporting gains and losses. Specifically, the Act required that VA publish the number of employment gains and losses that were processed during the quarter preceding the data’s publication date. The OIG team found, however, that the published data encompassed all actions that took place during the fiscal year (FY). For example, the report issued November 14, 2018, included gains and losses data for all four quarters of FY 2018, instead of only the fourth quarter of FY 2018 as required. All three iterations of gains and losses data were reported in this manner. The director of WPA and an HR&A management analyst responsible for compiling the information confirmed that the data were obtained by fiscal year. The director explained that a report covering a single quarter would not capture losses that were initiated but not processed until after the quarter concluded. However, the Act does not require a complete accounting of all gains and losses, only those that were processed during the quarter. VA should adjust its methodology for aggregating gains and losses to ensure that data are reported appropriately to fully comply with the Act’s requirements.

Published Staffing and Vacancy Data Lacked Transparency

As required by the Act, the OIG team identified opportunities for VA to improve the administration of posted personnel data. For instance, the transparency of the published staffing and vacancy information could be enhanced. Specific characteristics of the data or their organization were not clearly articulated such that the public would have a complete understanding of the published figures. Further, VA did not maintain previous iterations of the

⁸ Unlike the 0610-nursing series, the practical nurse occupation does not require a full professional nurse education. The incumbent must still have the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain the practical nurse license.

published data on its Internet website. Preserving historical data would allow for trending or comparisons over time.

Vacancy Numbers for VA Medical Facilities Were Unreliable

VA did not disclose that its medical facility vacancy numbers were overstated. Both WPA and VHA officials told the OIG team about this overstatement and attributed it to inconsistent position management in HR Smart. Beginning in December 2017, VA has been undergoing a position management cleanup to correct this issue. However, to improve the value and utility of the data, the public should be informed of the facility-level inaccuracies.

HR Smart is position-based and maintains records independent of the individual who fills the particular position. The position exists regardless of whether it is filled. To manage this, VA policy requires human resources staff to reuse existing HR Smart positions when an employee leaves a job.⁹ However, the director of WPA and VHA's acting director of Human Capital Systems and Services told the OIG team that human resources staff were creating new positions in HR Smart after employees leave, which was inflating the vacancy numbers. In this scenario, the system would show two vacancies for that facility—the original slot and the newly created position.

VHA's manpower management lead also stated in October 2018 that the discrepancy between the number of full-time equivalents (FTE) in HR Smart and the authorized FTE level averaged only about one percent nationwide for VHA. However, by November 26, 2018, VHA calculated that the national discrepancy had increased to 2.4 percent. According to a December 3, 2018, internal VHA memo, some individual VA medical facilities had HR Smart position counts that were overstated as much as 20.7 percent or understated as much as 8.1 percent. In these instances, the vacancies noted on the public website for a specific facility were higher or lower than the authorized number for that location. Table 2 provides examples of discrepancies between HR Smart position counts and the authorized FTE level for the same facility.

⁹ VA Human Resources Management Letter 05-18-10.

Table 2. Examples of Discrepancy Rates for VA Medical Facilities

Facility name	HR Smart FTE	Authorized FTE	Discrepancy rate (%)
VA Maryland Health Care System	4,045.4	3,352.1	20.7
VA Northern Arizona Health Care System	1,365.7	1,171.0	16.6
VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System	3,963.2	3,425.0	15.7
VA Boston Healthcare System	5,320.5	5,584.0	-4.7
VA Western Colorado Health Care System	842.1	916.0	-8.1

Source: VHA Memorandum, VHA Critical Sites for Position Management, issued December 3, 2018, representing data as of November 26, 2018.

Overall, the variance between HR Smart and the authorized FTE for each location means that VA cannot precisely report on vacancies by facility as required by Section 505 of the Act. Also, because of this issue, VA medical facilities risk reporting vacancy numbers that do not accurately reflect their needs.

The three VA administrations recognized that their position counts were inaccurate and enacted efforts to correct these figures before the initial release in August 2018. In general, their process consisted of reconciling approved organizational charts with FTE counts in HR Smart.

Unapproved positions were required to be deactivated in the system.¹⁰ As of February 2019, the efforts to clean up HR Smart position counts and to correct VA vacancy numbers were ongoing.

If VA had disclosed these efforts, the value and utility of the vacancy data would have been improved, as the disclosure would have informed the public that the provided figures were not exact. Additionally, it would have presented an opportunity for VA to report on active improvements within its human resources data.

VA Did Not Maintain Historical Staffing and Vacancy Data

VA’s public website did not maintain each iteration of the published data. This limited the public’s ability to compare data sets or trend the data over time. For example, on November 14, 2018, VA posted the second quarterly iteration of the staffing and vacancy information. Rather than posting it as a subsequent release, VA replaced the previous publication. The same scenario occurred for the February 15, 2019, release. According to the director of WPA, HR&A did not maintain the previous publications due to concerns that users may download and manipulate the spreadsheet data. However, the director was open to publishing the reports in a different manner.

For comparison, VA has maintained its annual budget submission for public use dating back to FY 2008. Additionally, VA has preserved public reports detailing veteran population and

¹⁰ VA Human Resources Management Letter 05-18-10.

expenditures for compensation and pension benefits, medical care, construction, and readjustment and vocational rehabilitation for each state, congressional district, and municipality dating back to FY 1996. The OIG recognizes that VA's efforts to make improvements to the accuracy and composition of reported data are ongoing. Historical comparisons may not be valid due to the changing characteristics of the data. However, the overall transparency of VA's staffing and recruitment website would be improved if VA maintained the historical data for review, analysis, and trending going forward.

VA Established a Methodology for Data Reporting, But Additional Improvements Are Needed

VA lacked a documented methodology for implementing the Act's requirements until February 7, 2019. While the establishment of formal procedures is a positive step, other improvements are still needed to ensure that the reported data are accurately represented. VA did improve its method for sharing data with its different administrations and staff offices such that quality assurance checks would be more accurate.

VA Lacked a Documented Methodology until February 2019

VA did not have a documented methodology for the initial two website postings of staffing and vacancy data in August and November 2018. VA's process to aggregate data was undocumented and responsibility rested with one HR&A data analyst. Multiple HR&A officials told the OIG team that standardized processes were necessary for staffing and vacancy collection. In February 2019, VA established a methodology that described how to compile the information supporting the Act's four requirements. The formalization of this methodology ensures the work is not dependent on a single individual, allows for consistency across quarterly reporting, and provides an opportunity for VA to review each step of the process.

VA's Published Data Contained Errors

The OIG team identified several errors in the reported data that should be corrected to ensure accurate representation to the public. VA misreported time-to-hire information in two instances. VA's website incorrectly reported figures in November 2018 as pertaining to the fourth quarter of FY 2018 only, when in fact it represented time-to-hire data for all of FY 2018. Similar mislabeling occurred in February 2019 when VA's time-to-hire data noted that occupational groups 0600 and 0900, occupational series 4754, and Senior Executive Service positions were excluded.¹¹ Many of the positions within these groupings perform the mission-oriented work of

¹¹ The 0600-occupational family includes physicians and nurses, who would be providing direct care to veterans. The 0900-occupational family includes veterans claims examiners and veterans service representatives, who would be processing veterans' benefits. The 4754-occupational series is for cemetery caretakers, who would be providing burial for veterans and maintaining the cemeteries.

the administrations. The director of WPA told the OIG team that this exclusion statement had been made in error and these positions were not being excluded from the report. In both instances, VA should have verified that these labels were accurate. VA's methodology should be updated to include quality control steps to verify the accuracy of its data labeling.

VA Did Improve Internal Data Sharing

Prior to publication, HR&A shared the data with the administrations and staff offices for quality review and to obtain their concurrence that the staffing and vacancy figures were accurate. For the third and fourth quarters of FY 2018, VA organized the vacancy information into four broad categories: VHA, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and "Staff Offices." The fourth group contained all other offices within VA, such as the Office of Information and Technology and HR&A. Because the Staff Offices figures were aggregated and not broken out individually, those units were limited in their ability to verify whether the draft data matched their records.

Beginning in the first quarter of FY 2019, HR&A separated vacancy data for each staff office. This allowed for more precise quality reviews and greater assurance that the published data were accurate.

Conclusion

VA partially complied with Section 505 of the Act, but action is needed to ensure that VA reports vacancy information by occupation as required. VA has made progress in establishing a formal methodology for retrieving and aggregating its staffing and vacancy information and in strengthening the verification process by partitioning the vacancy data by its staff offices. However, VA needs to improve the transparency of its data releases, the staffing aggregation figures, and the accuracy of reporting descriptions. Unless VA implements these changes, stakeholders may receive information that is inaccurate, subject to misinterpretation, or of limited value.

Recommendations 1–5

The OIG made five recommendations to improve the administration of VA's staffing and vacancy reporting. The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration should take the following actions:

1. Ensure VA vacancy data are reported by occupation as required by Section 505(a)(1)(C) of the MISSION Act.
2. Make certain that VA staffing gains and losses data are reported by quarter as required by Section 505(a)(1)(B) of the MISSION Act.

3. Annotate limitations clearly within the staffing and vacancy data to improve transparency and usability of the data, to include changes from HR Smart data-cleansing efforts.
4. Ensure that the staffing and vacancy reporting website maintains historical information on the data elements required by the MISSION Act.
5. Update the methodology for collecting and reporting on VA staffing and vacancy data to ensure consistency in future quarters.

Management Comments

The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration concurred with the OIG's recommendations. For Recommendation 1, the Assistant Secretary stated that HR&A will report vacancy data by occupational series. However, implementation will require the VA Office of Information Technology to provide a VA data warehouse and appropriate resources, such as FTE and software. The Assistant Secretary anticipated implementation of this corrective action by February 2020.

For Recommendation 2, the Assistant Secretary stated that gains and losses data would be reported by quarter. However, that data may be incomplete because of a time lag in processing gains and losses. In addition, for Recommendations 3, 4, and 5, the Assistant Secretary stated that HR&A will annotate limitations with the reporting data, retain historical information on the public website, and update the methodology for collecting and reporting on the staffing and vacancy data. The Assistant Secretary anticipated implementation of these corrective actions by August 2019. Appendix C provides the full text of the Assistant Secretary's comments.

OIG Response

The Assistant Secretary's comments and corrective action plans are responsive to the intent of the recommendations. The OIG will monitor implementation of planned actions and will close the recommendations when VA provides sufficient evidence demonstrating progress in addressing identified issues.

Appendix A: Scope and Methodology

Scope

The OIG team conducted its review work from December 2018 through May 2019. The team reviewed three iterations of VA staffing and vacancy data posted on VA's public website:

- Data as of June 30, 2018, posted August 31, 2018
- Data as of September 30, 2018, posted November 14, 2018
- Data as of December 31, 2018, posted February 15, 2019

Methodology

To conduct this review, the OIG team interviewed and obtained relevant testimonial information from 13 employees in HR&A, VHA's Workforce Management and Consulting Office, VBA's Office of Human Resources, and NCA's Human Capital Management office. The OIG team also identified and reviewed applicable laws; OPM guidance; HR&A, VHA, and VBA policies; and operating procedures. The OIG team reviewed publicly released staffing and vacancy information, raw vacancy and time-to-hire data, database queries, and data definitions. Finally, the OIG team obtained supporting documentation to HR&A's concurrence process for publishing the data and the position vacancy cleanup initiatives conducted by the administrations.

Data Reliability

The OIG team did not evaluate the reliability of computer processed data or use VA's staffing and vacancy reporting data to support the findings or conclusions. The OIG team accepted VA's data at face value and assessed the presentation of the reported figures without performing substantive analysis or testing of the data's accuracy. As such, the OIG does not make any claims about the validity of the information being published.

Government Standards

The OIG conducted this review in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*.

Appendix B: VA MISSION Act of 2018, Section 505

Sec. 505. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PERSONNEL TRANSPARENCY.

(a) PUBLICATION OF STAFFING AND VACANCIES.—

(1) WEBSITE REQUIRED.—Subject to paragraph (2) and not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall make publicly available on an Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs the following information, which shall, subject to subparagraph (D), be displayed by departmental component or, in the case of information relating to Veterans Health Administration positions, by medical facility:

(A) The number of personnel encumbering positions.

(B) The number of accessions and separation actions processed during the quarter preceding the date of the publication of information.

(C) The number of vacancies, by occupation.

(D) The percentage of new hires for the Department who were hired within the time-to-hire target of the Office of Personnel Management, disaggregated by administration.

(2) EXCEPTIONS.—The Secretary may withhold from publication under paragraph (1) information relating to law enforcement, information security, or such positions in the Department that the Secretary determines to be sensitive.

(3) UPDATE OF INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall update the information on the website required under paragraph (1) on a quarterly basis.

(4) TREATMENT OF CONTRACTOR POSITIONS.—Any Department of Veterans Affairs position that is filled with a contractor may not be treated as a Department position for purposes of the information required to be published under paragraph (1).

(5) INSPECTOR GENERAL REVIEW.—On a semi-annual basis, the Inspector General of the Department shall review the administration of the website required under paragraph (1) and make recommendations relating to the improvements of such administration.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress an annual report on the steps the Department is taking to achieve full staffing capacity. Each report shall include the amount of additional funds necessary to enable the Department to reach full staffing capacity.

Appendix C: Management Comments

Department of Veterans Affairs Memorandum

Date: May 30, 2019

From: Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security, and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006)

Subj: Draft Report, Review of Staffing and Vacancy Reporting Under the MISSION Act of 2018 (Project No. 2019-00266-D2-0001)

To: Assistant Inspector General for Audits and Evaluations (52)

1. Section 505(a)(5) of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Outside Networks (MISSION) Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-182), established a requirement for the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to review the administration of the Web-site required under paragraph (1) of Section 505(a) and make recommendations relating to the improvement of such administration.

2. HRA/OSP received the draft report, and concurs with all recommendations as follows:

Recommendation 1. Ensure VA vacancy data are reported by occupation as required by Section 505(a)(1)(c) of the Mission Act.

HRA/OSP concurs with reporting data by breaking down occupational family to occupational series. Implementation of such will require the Office of Information Technology to provide a VA data warehouse, and the appropriate resources, including FTE and software.

Target Completion Date: Before publishing FY 2020 Q1 MISSION Act Quarterly Report, which will occur in February 2020.

Recommendation 2. Make certain that VA staffing gains and losses data are reported by quarter as required by Section 505(a) part (b) of the MISSION Act.

HRA/OSP concurs with reporting the gain and losses data by quarter with a caveat that data may be incomplete based on point in time that report is run due to time lag in processing gains and losses.

Target Completion Date: Before publishing FY 2019 Q3 MISSION Act Quarterly Report, which will occur in August 2019.

Recommendation 3. Annotate limitations clearly within the staffing and vacancy data to improve transparency and usability of the data, to include changes from HR Smart data cleansing efforts.

HRA/OSP concurs with annotating the limitations within the staffing and vacancy data.

Target Completion Date: Before publishing FY 2019 Q3 MISSION Act Quarterly Report, which will occur in August 2019.

Recommendation 4. Ensure that the staffing and vacancy reporting Web-site maintains historical information on the data elements required by the MISSION Act.

HRA/OSP concurs with retaining historical information on the va.data.gov website.

Target Completion Date: Before publishing FY 2019 Q3 MISSION Act Quarterly Report, which will occur in August 2019.

Recommendation 5. Update the methodology for collecting and reporting on VA staffing and vacancy data to ensure consistency in future quarters.

HRA/OSP concurs with updating the methodology for collecting and reporting on VA staffing and vacancy data.

Target Completion Date: Before publishing FY 2019 Q3 MISSION Act Quarterly Report, which will occur in August 2019.

4. Questions may be directed to Mr. Joseph Thele, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary, Human Resources Information Technology Systems and Analytics, Office of Human Resources Management, HRA/OSP, at (202) 461-7765 or Joseph.Thele@va.gov.

(Original signed by)

Daniel R. Sitterly

For accessibility, the original format of this appendix has been modified to comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

OIG Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

Contact	For more information about this report, please contact the Office of Inspector General at (202) 461-4720.
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