



# MyVA Integrated Plan (MIP) Overview

July 30, 2015

## MyVA

MyVA is what we are calling our transformation from VA's current way of doing business to one that puts the Veterans in control of how, when, and where they wish to be served. It is a catalyst to make VA a world-class service provider. It will modernize VA's culture, processes, and capabilities to put the needs, expectations, and interests of Veterans and their families first. MyVA represents an opportunity to affect fundamental changes in VA's systems and structures to align with our mission and values. ***The MyVA vision is to provide a seamless, unified Veteran Experience across the entire organization and throughout the country.***

Today, VA faces unprecedented demands for services and benefits. The service offerings themselves have multiplied over the years through expanded eligibility for existing benefits and new benefits programs. Both the number and types of benefits and services have expanded dramatically, and many Veterans have increasingly complex needs, expectations, and requirements of VA. Part of this is driven by Veteran demographics. In 1975, there were two million Veterans over the age of 65. By 2017 that number is expected to be near 10 million, the majority of whom served in the Vietnam era. As Veterans age, service-connected issues become more chronic and more acute. Additionally, service-connected issues for those returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are more complex than in prior eras. Demands for mental health care and suicide prevention are rising dramatically. The standards for care are changing, challenging our ability to meet expectations. Overall, this has increased the complexity in caring for America's Veterans.

This challenging environment required VA to re-examine its operating norms and institute new programs to meet these challenges. The Department's 2014-2020 Strategic Plan instituted a Veteran-centric approach to services and benefits delivery. Further, it continued to focus the Department's fiscal year (FY) 2014 and FY 2015 Agency Priority Goals on the most pervasive issues facing Veterans, specifically increasing access to innovative health care and benefit services, eliminating the disability claims backlog, and ending Veteran homelessness.

Despite these efforts and accomplishments, the past year has demonstrated we must do better. VA has been rocked by crises related to patient wait times; construction cost overruns; procurement and acquisition irregularities; and financial management missteps. These crises have caused some to lose trust in VA, while creating a lack of confidence within VA. More significantly, these events point to fundamental problems that we must address before even more devastating events emerge. Failure to act on our own to address these issues could result in catastrophic changes being thrust upon VA that could jeopardize our ability to meet the sacred commitments made to our Nation's Veterans.

In the fall of 2014, Secretary McDonald announced the transformational movement, MyVA, with an emphasis on actually executing and cascading the principles embedded in the 2014-2020 Strategic Plan throughout the organization. The movement toward MyVA will also begin the process of building the high-performing organization required to serve America's Veterans. "As we begin to create an organization that puts the Veteran in control of how, when, and where they want to be served, we will reorganize around Veterans' needs while integrating programs and organizations to optimize productivity and efficiency. Veterans will call it "MyVA," and it will be an organization that employees will be proud of."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY – MY VA," e-mail from Secretary Bob McDonald to VA employees, October 6, 2014.

## Approach: Building a High Performing Organization

This is an enormous undertaking and will not happen overnight. By revamping our functions to fit Veteran needs, rather than asking Veterans to navigate our complicated internal structure, we are rededicating ourselves to the proposition General Omar Bradley expressed in 1947:

“We are dealing with Veterans, not procedures; with their problems, not ours.”

Our plan has three integrated elements, or horizons. First, we plan to leverage those existing programs and initiatives that are delivering better services and benefits to Veterans. There is already a great deal of positive transformation taking place in VA and those efforts must be exploited and leveraged.

While these efforts provide a solid base to build from, the improvements are not sufficient. Thus, the second horizon of the transformation concentrates on a relatively small set of catalytic efforts focused on five initial priorities. They will accelerate the transformation now underway: expect to see significant and demonstrable progress in these targeted areas between now and the end of 2016. These initial priorities include:

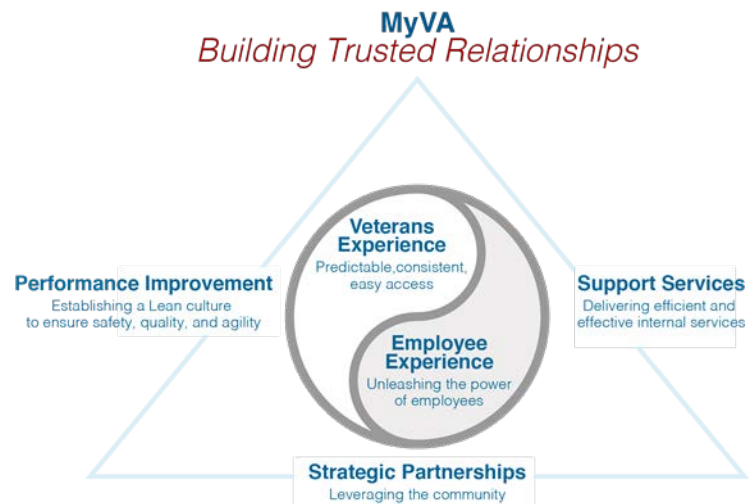
- Improving the Veterans experience. At a bare minimum, every contact between Veterans and VA should be predictable, consistent, and easy. But we’re aiming to make each touch point exceptional.
- Improving the employee experience. VA employees are the face of VA. They provide care, information, and access to earned benefits. They serve with distinction daily.

While improving the Veteran and employee experiences are central to our efforts, three complementary efforts will help build more robust management systems, enhance productivity, and deliver more effective results.

- Achieving support services excellence will let employees and leaders focus on assisting Veterans, rather than worrying about “back office” issues.
- Establishing a culture of continuous performance improvement will apply lean strategies to help employees examine their processes in new ways and build a culture of continuous improvement.
- Enhancing strategic partnerships will allow us to extend the reach of services available for Veterans and their families.

The third horizon is optimizing and scaling successful initiatives from the previous horizons, and growing small wins into big ones. This horizon will extend into and beyond 2017.

Concurrent with and throughout all of the horizons, we’ll focus on management reforms creating a high performing organization. We will invest in long-term capabilities that will enable sound strategies based on Veterans’ needs, a high performing culture, passionate leadership, and robust management systems.



## MyVA Summary: Outcomes for Veterans, Employees, and Citizens

Thanks to the work of VA's employees, we have made significant progress in recent years to reduce the disability claims backlog; reduce Veteran homelessness; and increase the number of appointments and access to health care. We intend to build upon these accomplishments and we know we must move quickly.

Recently, thanks to suggestions from employees, we have:

- Improved **customer service at call centers**;
- Started up **VA 101 training** for employees;
- Improved Veteran **access to audiology and optometry** appointments;
- Modernized **Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) operations**;
- Implemented memorial affairs **pre-need eligibility screening**, and;
- **Stopped printing and mailing certain unnecessary and costly paper reports.**

Between now and the end of 2016, we expect to make even more tangible, demonstrable progress for Veterans, employees, and the American public.

### For Veterans

Previously, VA has had no consistent approach to customer service. That's about to change. We've been studying the best practices of America's top customer service organizations to learn how they excel at delighting customers. They've shared their methods with us, so we can create a holistic frontline customer service program to make access to the care and services Veterans have earned predictable, consistent, and easy.

By the end of 2016, we will have:

- A **single customer facing website** that Veterans can use to do business with VA (initial capability in fall 2015, with additional incremental capability being built through June 2017, when capability is complete).
- A unified **"VA311" enterprise-wide approach** that Veterans can use to easily find information via telephone.
- A way for Veterans to **update or change their authoritative data in one place**, one time, and have that information available and securely shared throughout VA.
- Greater **VBA presence in VHA facilities** to increase benefits access and enhance service.
- **100+ MyVA Communities** established across the Nation.
- A more consistent level of customer service in every interaction—enabled by **consistent front-line training** across VA and measured by operational metrics.
- A **Veterans Experience (VE) office** established at both national and district levels to bring a new lens to how we analyze and design the services we provide to Veterans. VE will not be another layer of management or bureaucracy, but will:
  - Work collaboratively with local facilities in analyzing and designing better customer interactions and the tools that support them;

- Develop and deliver customer service training curricula and methodologies;
- Keep a close eye on customer service performance to make sure the right issues are being addressed in the right ways, and;
- Implement better ways to help Veterans navigating through the range of services within VA.

## For Employees

To engage and empower employees, we will have taken the following steps by the end 2016:

- Delivered **VA 101 training** to approximately 50 percent our employees to improve their knowledge and understanding of VA's history and services offerings;
- Conducted **front line customer service training** pilots in each of our five Districts;
- Expanded **leadership development** programs;
- Vastly improved **employee communications**;
- Completed standardized staffing models, with **vacancies filled for mission critical occupations**;
- Improved and streamlined **recruitment and hiring practices** for VA facilities; and,
- Established better linkage of **organizational and performance measures** to VA Goals and Objectives.

## For Citizens and Taxpayers

VA must be a good steward of public resources. Citizens and taxpayers can expect to see new efficiency in how we run our internal operations. While not every item on this list will be fully complete and transformed by December 2016, we do expect significant progress and will measure ourselves against these outcomes.

### *Support Services Excellence Outcomes*

- Governance and framework established to optimize a subset of **support services** and provide better support to front-line managers and employees.
- Vastly improved **hiring; contracting and supply chain practices; and IT service support** across the enterprise.

### *Performance Improvement Outcomes*

- **Veterans Crisis Line improvements completed**, enabling focus exclusively on Veterans in crisis.
- Approximately 30,000 VA employees **trained in Lean techniques** (up from 0.28 percent today) and a fully implemented **Knowledge Management System**, enabling more sharing of best practices across the Department.
- **Requirements-based budgeting, programming, and resource allocation process** in place, to include a strategic review of facility and network optimization.

### *Strategic Partnership Outcomes*

- A dynamic **Strategic Partnership Needs Portfolio** to efficiently and effectively triage and leverage external partnership opportunities.
- A **Strategic Partnership relational database** that captures and catalogs engagement activities between VA and external stakeholders at the national, regional, and local level.
- An **external website** for current and potential strategic partners established.
- An **internal website** that will empower employees to disseminate information, share best practices, and be proactive in engaging with community stakeholders.

## VA's New Map: The Road to Better Integration

Finally, as part of our transformation VA will also transition to a **five-district configuration** to align the disparate organizational boundaries of the Department into a single framework based upon state boundaries. This will:

- Ease internal coordination challenges;
- Enhance collaboration amongst all of VA's nine business lines, which will continue to remain responsible for their respective services and benefits;
- Standardize performance measurement;
- Enhance collaboration with external stakeholders, and finally;
- Prepare for the rollout of the **Veteran Experience office**, which will support VA product and service lines in the delivery of excellent care and benefit experiences.

## Welcome to MyVA

At its best, VA is a powerful, nationwide expression of caring—the concerted energy of more than 330,000 employees, and countless volunteers and contractors, joined together in service of America's Veterans. MyVA will promote an environment in which all VA employees see themselves as members of one team. It will be one of continuous learning, facilitated by risk-taking and balanced by personal integrity and constructive, sustainable accountability.

We will fuel employee momentum, by significantly improving how we hire, buy goods and services, and build IT products. Processes will be thoughtfully reconceived and improved using Veteran-centered design. And, since VA does not—and cannot—do everything that Veterans need or want we will partner with communities and the private sector to extend the reach of services available to Veterans and their families.

Our transformation will take time. If done properly, it will build a high-performing organization that continually changes and improves. The benefits of this will be profound and evident in every task an employee undertakes. But the reason for all of it circles back to one clear and simple mission: serving Veterans.

If we do our jobs well, Veterans won't think much about what we've done or how we've done it. They will just know they're receiving some of the best health care anywhere in the world. They'll know it didn't take too long to apply for and receive their deserved benefits. They'll enjoy the home we helped them to finance. Their lives will be richer because of educational opportunities and community connections VA helped to create. And their families will know they've been given the utmost respect and final honors when laid to rest.