

2014-16 Executive Progress Report

Commonwealth of Virginia
Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
Department of Veterans Services

At A Glance

The Department of Veterans Services serves Virginia's veterans and their beneficiaries by ensuring they receive the benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned through service and sacrifice.

Staffing 575 Salaried Employees, 0 Contracted Employees, 676 Authorized, and 165 Wage Employees.

Financials Budget FY 2015, \$58.22 million, 19.02% from the General Fund.

Trends

- ↑ Veterans hired through the V3 Program
- ↓ Number of homeless veterans in Virginia
- ↑ Services provided by the VWWP
- ↑ Visitors to the Virginia War Memorial
- ↑ Interments at state veterans cemeteries

Key Perf Areas

- Productivity

Legend ↑ Improving, ↓ Worsening, → Maintaining

Legend ↑ Increase, ↓ Decrease, → Steady

For more information on administrative key, and productivity measures, go to www.vaperforms.virginia.gov

Background and History

Agency Background Statement

The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) serves Virginia's 780,000 veterans and their eligible beneficiaries by ensuring they receive the benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned through service and sacrifice.

DVS is organized into six service delivery sections: Veterans Benefits Services; Veterans Education, Training, and Employment Services; Veterans Care Center Services; Veterans Cemetery Services; the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program; and the Virginia War Memorial. Four boards work closely with the agency to support the effective delivery of services to Virginia's veterans: the Board of Veterans Services, the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations, the Veterans Services Foundation, and the Virginia War Memorial Board.

Title 2.2, Chapter 20 provides for the establishment of a Department of Veterans Services and the appointment of a Commissioner of Veterans Services. It sets forth the responsibilities of the department and the powers and duties of the Commissioner.

Major Products and Services

Veterans Benefit Services: Provides free assistance to Virginia veterans and eligible dependents in accessing federal and state veterans benefits. Operates 24 benefit field offices.

Veterans Care Center Services: Delivers skilled nursing, domiciliary, and Alzheimer's care to Virginia's veterans, predominantly those 65 and older, at veterans care centers in Richmond (Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center - 160 beds) and Roanoke (Virginia Veterans Care Center - 240 beds). A 40-bed addition to the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center is under construction and is expected to begin operations in July 2015. New care centers are planned for Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia.

Veterans Cemetery Services: Serves the memorial needs of Virginia veterans and eligible dependents at state veterans cemeteries in Amelia (Virginia Veterans Cemetery), Dublin (Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery), and Suffolk (Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery).

Veterans Education, Training, and Employment Services: Ensures access to higher education opportunities for Virginia veterans and eligible dependents by certifying that programs of instruction at post-secondary education institutions in Virginia meet federal requirements, enabling Virginia veterans and eligible dependents to use their G.I. Bill education benefits. Audits education programs to ensure compliance with federal regulations. Supports the creation of employment opportunities through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program. Assists veterans to transition from military service to employment, education/training, or entrepreneurship through the Virginia Transition Assistance Program (VTAP). Leads DVS activities in support of the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP).

The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP): In cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), monitors and coordinates behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services and support through an integrated, comprehensive and responsive system of public and private partnerships. VWWP provides these services to Virginia veterans, members of the Virginia National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service, and their families affected by stress related conditions or traumatic brain injuries resulting from military service.

Virginia War Memorial: The Virginia War Memorial is the Commonwealth of Virginia's monument to honor the memory of Virginia's men and women who demonstrated a willingness to serve and fight to defend our way of life from World War II to the present. Through its Education Center, the Memorial serves as the Center of Excellence for the Commonwealth in education of Virginian's experience of war from the birth of our nation to the present.

Customers

Customer Summary

The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) serves Virginia's 780,000 veterans and their eligible beneficiaries by ensuring they receive the benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned through service and sacrifice.

Veterans Benefit Services: Customers for the Benefit Services section are those veterans and eligible dependents requiring assistance in accessing federal, state, or local veterans benefits. The primary focus is on the development and submission of compensation or pension claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). DVS Benefit Field Offices had almost 136,000 contacts with veterans and family members in FY2014, including over 52,000 office visits. DVS assisted Virginia veterans in filing over 23,000 claims in FY2014, of which over 17,000 were new claims.

Veterans Care Center Services: The care centers' primary customer base is Virginia veterans age 65 and older, though younger veterans do receive care, especially for short-term rehabilitation at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond. The USDVA forecasts the number of Virginia veterans age 65 and older to increase from 265,310 in 2013 to 276,259 in 2023 and 287,698 in 2033. The number of veterans served annually by the care centers is a function of the number of beds: 160 at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond and 240 beds at the Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke. Potential capacity is measured in terms of a "patient day" - or one veteran occupying a care center bed for one day. DVS care centers have a potential capacity of 146,000 patient days of care (400 beds x 365 days = 146,000). DVS delivered 130,616 patient days of care in FY 2014, for a utilization (occupancy) rate of 89%. The opening of the 40-bed addition to the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond will add a potential capacity of 14,600 patient days of care (40 beds x 365 days = 14,600).

Veterans Cemetery Services: 1,465 interments of veterans and eligible family members were conducted in FY 2014 at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk), Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia), and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin). A 2013 study estimates that this will rise to over 1,500 interments per year by FY 2023. Cemetery customers also include the families of veterans and eligible family members interred in the cemeteries, the veterans community, and the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Veterans Education, Training, and Employment Services: Virginia veterans and eligible dependents may use their G.I. Bill education benefits at over 1,000 programs of post-secondary instruction in Virginia. Additional programs may be certified upon request of a veteran or institution. Over 3,000 veterans were hired through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program in FY2014.

Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP): The VWWP is organized into five regional consortia, consisting of Community Service Boards (CSBs), federal, state, and local agencies, non-profits, and other community partners. Through VWWP, over 5,600 services were provided to veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists not in federal service, and family members in FY 2014. These services, tailored to meet unique individual needs, are often in-depth and involve service delivery through multiple agencies or service providers (federal, state, local, non-profit, etc).

Virginia War Memorial: The number of annual visitors to the Virginia War Memorial has risen significantly - from 10,000 in FY 2010 to over 65,000 in FY 2014 - and is expected to continue to grow. Through its education programs, the Memorial's customers also include Virginia middle and high school students and their teachers.

Customer Table

Predefined Group	User Defined Group	Number Served Annually	Potential Number of Annual Customers	Projected Customer Trend
Veteran	Veterans hired through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program	3,242	5,000	Increase

Veteran	Veterans/family members using their G.I. Bill benefits at approved post-secondary educational and training institutions	63,381	64,000	Increase
Higher Education Institutions	Approved post-secondary educational and training institutions	1,020	1,050	Stable
Veteran	Behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services provided to veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists not in federal service, and family members	5,606	7,500	Increase
Veteran	Patient Days of Assisted Living (Domiciliary) care provided to care center residents	15,905	21,900	Increase
Veteran	Patient Days of Skilled Nursing care provided to care center residents	114,711	124,100	Increase
Veteran	Number of interments at state veterans cemeteries (veterans and family members)	1,465	2,000	Increase
Veteran	Veterans and family members for whom DVS has filed a disability or pension claim with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	23,241	25,000	Increase
Resident	Visitors to the Virginia War Memorial (includes all visitors, some of whom are not Virginia residents)	65,592	100,000	Increase

Finance and Performance Management

Finance

Financial Summary

The department's funding comes from a variety of general and nongeneral fund sources:

General Fund:

- Operations for the Veterans Benefit Services section, the Virginia War Memorial, the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, and the Virginia Transition Assistance Program (VTAP). Note: the V3 and VTAP Programs are aligned under the Veterans Education, Training, and Employment (VETE) section of DVS;
- The majority of operations for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, the Veterans Cemetery Services section, and the Administrative Services section.

Nongeneral Fund - Federal Trust:

- G.I. Bill program certification and audit operations of the VETE section;
- Part of the operation of the Veterans Care Center Services section, the Veterans Cemetery Services section, and the Administrative Services section. The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program also receives federal grant funds for specific program services (ex. - the Virginia Veterans Corps, funded in part through an AmeriCorps grant).

Nongeneral Fund - Special:

- Medicaid and Medicare (Part A and B) reimbursement covers a portion of the operating cost of the Veterans Care Center Services section.
- A portion of the Veterans Care Center Services and the Veterans Cemetery Services sections' operating budgets comes from private funds (fee for service).

Nongeneral Fund - Dedicated Special Revenue:

- Private donations supplement the funding for the Veterans Care Center Services and the Veterans Cemetery Services sections, and the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program.

Fund Sources

Fund Code	Fund Name	FY 2015	FY 2016
0100	General Fund	\$11,073,397	\$14,088,521
0200	Special	\$30,312,194	\$30,109,004
0941	Veterans Services Fund	\$510,000	\$735,000
1000	Federal Trust	\$16,320,974	\$16,262,974

Revenue Summary

Department of Veterans Services (DVS) revenues are received as reimbursement for services provided. Almost all of the revenue collected is a result of direct patient care provided at Virginia's two veterans care centers. This revenue comes from Medicaid, Medicare, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) per diem, and private pay. The remaining revenue collected is a result of burials performed at Virginia's three veterans cemeteries, and comes from two sources – USDVA burial reimbursement and the fee charged for spouse/dependent burials.

Performance

Performance Highlights

The Department of Veterans Services measures its service performance through performance measures tied to the goals outlined in the Department's Strategic Plan and in the objectives set forth in the Service Area Plans.

DVS has seven key measures:

1. Number of veterans hired annually through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program (3,242 in FY 2014);
2. Number of Virginia employers making the "Our Patriot Pledge" to hire veterans (new measure for FY 2015);
3. Percentage of G.I. Bill program approval requests processed within 30 days of receipt (100% in FFY 2014);
4. Number of homeless veterans in Virginia (617 in FY 2014);
5. Percentage of Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS)-submitted veteran claims approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (68% in FY 2014);
6. Number of family members served by Virginia Wounded Warrior Program family programs (91 in FY 2014);
7. Number of services delivered by the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (5,606 in FY 2014).

Selected Measures

Measure ID	Measure	Alternative Name	Estimated Trend
91246701.001.001	Percentage of Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS)-submitted veteran claims approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA)		Maintaining

Key Risk Factors

Benefit Services funding and staffing (hiring/retention): DVS operates 24 benefits offices. Staff turnover and funding constraints have impacted the section's ability to keep all offices fully staffed and operational. This is especially significant because it takes approximately two-three years for a new veterans service representative (claims agent) to become fully trained and proficient. State human resource (HR) policies provide agencies with the HR tools to help agencies recruit and retain qualified staff; however, funding constraints have limited the section's ability to offer competitive salary/benefits packages to attract, train, and retain claims agents. Increased FY16 funding will begin to remedy turnover and training issues.

Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (funding to support increased service demands): the number of veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists, and family members served by the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) continues to increase. VWWP resources (funding/staffing) may constrain the program's capacity to support any additional growth in services, yet the demand for VWWP resources is forecast to continue to grow, especially with the ending of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Virginia War Memorial (funding and staffing to support the increased number of visitors, expanded education mission, and new wing): with the opening of the Paul & Phyllis Galanti Education Center in September 2010, the number of annual visitors to the Virginia War Memorial has increased significantly: from 10,000 in FY 2010 to over 65,000 in FY 2014. This has been accompanied by a significant expansion of the Memorial's education mission, with its broad focus on all Virginians and more specific focus on middle and high school students and their teachers. It is critical that the resources provided to the Memorial be commensurate with its Code-defined mission to honor the memory of Virginia's men and women who demonstrated a willingness to serve and fight to defend our way of life from World War II to the present. The new wing of the Virginia War Memorial is scheduled to open in FY 2018; additional funding will be required to operate and staff the new wing.

Cemetery Services (staffing, maintenance reserve, and equipment replacement): through the support of the Governor, General Assembly, and the veterans community, funding and staffing shortfalls at the state veterans cemeteries have been eliminated. Significant maintenance reserve and equipment replacement projects have been completed, are underway, or are planned. Close attention must be paid to ensure continued alignment of cemetery resources with the increasing number of burials, and to ensure that critical maintenance reserve and equipment replacement requirements continue to be addressed. Cemetery staffing must also be closely monitored to ensure adequate manpower to perform an increasing number of interment services and to maintain the cemetery grounds to national shrine standards.

Department succession planning and continuity: like all state agencies, DVS faces significant challenges in the area of succession planning and continuity due to an aging workforce. A number of senior leaders are eligible to retire. DVS will continue to take such steps as resources permit to prepare for the retirement of key leaders, but additional resources will be necessary to ensure an effective transition.

Agency Statistics

Statistics Summary

Over 780,000 veterans reside in the Commonwealth of Virginia. One in every 10 Virginians is a veteran. Virginia ranks #7 in the nation in

overall veterans population.

- The Benefit Services section filed 23,241 disability compensation or pension claims on behalf of Virginia veterans in FY 2014. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) adjudicated 14,868 claims and approved 10,157 claims - a 68% approval rate. The USDVA paid almost \$2.3 billion in compensation and pension benefits to Virginia veterans and dependents in FFY 2013 - #6 in the nation.
- The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) provided 5,606 individual services to veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists not in federal service, and family members in FY 2014.
- Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program-certified employers hired 3,242 veterans in FY 2014.
- 63,381 Virginia veterans and dependents used G.I. Bill benefits in FY 2013 - #4 in the nation. Over 1,000 institutions of post-secondary instruction in Virginia are certified for G.I. Bill usage.
- The Virginia Veterans Care Center (Roanoke) and the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (Richmond) delivered 130,616 patient days of care in FY 2014.
- Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries performed 1,465 interments of veterans and eligible dependents in FY 2014, including 1,017 interments at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk), 307 interments at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia), and 140 interments at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin).
- There were 65,592 visitors to the Virginia War Memorial in FY 2014.
- The Department of Defense (DoD) paid \$4.98 billion to military retirees in Virginia in FFY 2013 - #2 in the nation.

Statistics Table

Description	Value
Claims submitted by DVS to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in FY 2014	23,241
Individual services delivered by the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program in FY 2014	5,606
G.I. Bill-approved education institutions in Virginia as of September 30, 2013	1,029
Number of veterans hired through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program in FY 2014	3,242
Patient days of care provided at Virginia's veterans care centers in FY 2014	130,616
Interments conducted at Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries in FY 2014	1,465
Visitors to the Virginia War Memorial in FY 2014	65,592

Management Discussion

General Information About Ongoing Status of Agency

Compact with Virginia's Veterans: making Virginia America's most veteran-friendly state.

The Code of Virginia requires the Commissioner of Veterans Services to: *"Establish and implement a compact with Virginia's veterans, which shall have a goal of making Virginia America's most veteran-friendly state. The compact shall be established in conjunction with the Board of Veterans Services and supported by the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations and shall (i) include specific provisions for technology advances, workforce development, outreach, quality of life enhancement, and other services for veterans and (ii) provide service standards and goals to be attained for each specific provision in clause (i). The provisions of the compact shall be reviewed and updated annually. The Commissioner shall include in the annual report required by this section the progress of veterans services established in the compact."*

In support of the Compact, the Department of Veterans Services (DVS), in conjunction with the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) and the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) established the following long-range goals:

1. Ensure Virginia veterans and eligible family members receive timely assistance in filing for federal and state disability benefits.
2. Deliver long-term skilled nursing and domiciliary care, assisted living (domiciliary) care, and short term rehabilitation services to Virginia veterans.
3. Connect veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists not in federal service, and their family members to a network of community-based services designed to help them overcome the challenges of stress-related and traumatic brain injuries and rehabilitative needs that result from military service.
4. Provide Virginia's veterans and their spouses a final resting place at state veterans cemeteries that meet national shrine standards.
5. Ensure veterans and their dependents have approved educational programs through which they may receive their educational benefits.
6. Reduce the number of homeless veterans.
7. In conjunction with other state agencies, create employment opportunities for Virginia veterans in state government and the private sector.
8. Honor patriotic Virginians who rendered faithful service and sacrifice in the cause of freedom and liberty for the Commonwealth and the nation in time of war and honor all of Virginia's veterans by preserving their history, educating the public, and inspiring patriotism in all Virginians.
9. Coordinate with other state agencies to afford Virginia's veterans business, employment, transportation, and other appropriate opportunities through technology advances, workforce development, outreach, quality of life enhancement, and other services for veterans and their families.

The following objectives were established for FY 2016 by the JLC and BVS in conjunction with DVS:

JLC Objectives: on July 16, 2014, the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) adopted six initiatives for consideration by the Governor and General Assembly for the 2015 session:

1. **JLC Priority 1 – Hiring, Training, and Retention of DVS Claims Agents:** the JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly support the recruitment, hiring, training, and retention of Benefits Section staff by increasing the DVS Benefits Services section budget in FY16.
2. **JLC Priority 2 – Virginia Wounded Warrior Program:** the JLC recommends that Governor and General Assembly support the delivery of mental health and rehabilitative services for Virginia veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and family members through continued and increased funding for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) in the FY16 budget.
3. **JLC Priority 3 – Virginia War Memorial:** the JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly authorize five additional positions for the Virginia War Memorial in FY16 and appropriate the necessary funding for these positions.
4. **JLC Priority 4 – Virginia Homeless Veterans Programs:** the JLC recommends that the Governor and the General Assembly support the further reduction of veteran homelessness by approving additional funding in FY16 for:
 - Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to support increases in general statewide homeless prevention, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing funding to help veterans living in rural areas and/or ineligible for VA services.
 - DHCD for development of a statewide homeless data warehouse system to permit a better understanding of the needs of veterans accessing mainstream homeless services.
 - DVS/VWWP to add three new Housing Resource Specialist (HRS) positions in order to expand coverage to Roanoke and Northern Virginia, and to add a second HRS position in Hampton Roads.
 - DVS/VWWP to add one position to work with the criminal justice system to facilitate statewide coordination of federal, state, and community resources.
5. **JLC Priority 5 – Alternate Revenue Sources for Veterans Programs and Services:** the JLC recommends that the General Assembly and the Governor approve the establishment of a veterans' lottery as part of the Compact with Virginia's Veterans to supplement the General Fund's support of approved veteran's requirements, with any residual lottery funding reverting back to Education.
6. **JLC Priority 6 – Veterans Care Centers:** the JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly continue state support for the Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia veterans care center construction projects and continue certification of the availability of 35% state funding to match the federal grant funds, thereby maintaining both projects on the VA Priority List Group 1.

BVS Objectives: on July 22, 2014, the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) adopted two initiatives for consideration by the Governor and General Assembly for the 2015 session:

1. **BVS Priority 1 – DVS Benefit Services:** the Board of Veterans Services recommends that the Governor and General Assembly support the recruitment, hiring, training, and retention of Benefits Section staff by increasing the DVS Benefits Services section budget in FY16.
2. **BVS Priority 2 – Centenarian Veterans:** the Board of Veterans Services recommends that the Governor implement procedures to identify and recognize Virginia's Centenarian Veterans and the centenarian spouses of such veterans.

Information Technology

Overview of the current state of IT in the agency:

The current state of information technology for the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is very good. The DVS IT Department continues to achieve full compliance/top score ratings for all COV and VITA/NG mandates (Continuity Plan Assessment, IT Security Program, Agency Preparedness Assessment, etc.).

Our IT Security Program continues to protect our agency data by:

1. Creating and enforcing DVS IT security policies to ensure compliance with all COV and VITA/NG security requirements;
2. Educating all DVS staff on IT security best practices for safe data management and communications;
3. Utilizing VITA/NG security services at our DVS locations in order to provide a secure computing environment for our agency networks and devices; and
4. Continuing to achieve full compliance/clean evaluations from the Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) and Department of Accounts (DOA) on our IT systems and security audits.

Although our IT staff is few in number, we continue to provide timely and effective IT services and excellent customer service to our agency employees and customers. All DVS employees are currently receiving the necessary technology tools (newer computers with current operating systems, updated office productivity software, new/upgraded business systems applications/services, e-mail/device encryption services, etc.) to conduct general business functions as required by our agency mission statement. Several of our business applications and functions, used for daily operations, have been upgraded to utilize web/cloud based technology and now have the ability to interface with other systems when they come online.

Within DVS there are three mission-critical business applications:

1. The Mitchell-Humphries Financial Management System II (FMSII);
2. The Point Click Care Clinical Accounts Receivable (AR) and Financial System (PCCS); and
3. The BeneVets claims development system.

The FMSII application has allowed implementation of an internal automated financial management system, reduced audit problems relating to internal controls and financial reporting, and reduced delays associated with producing financial information and management reports. In 2015/2016 this application functionality will be transitioned to the Cardinal financial system, which is a Commonwealth of Virginia Enterprise level project being implemented for use by COV agencies.

The PCCS AR and Financial applications are utilized at both DVS veterans care centers: Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) in Roanoke and Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) in Richmond. It is used to track medical and financial information for all veterans admitted into both care centers.

BeneVets is the web-based, hosted claims processing system that replaced our Representatives Veterans Database (RVD) application. Benevets was implemented in January 2013 at DVS and is also utilized by the AMVETS veterans service organization to process claims for veterans. BeneVets is utilized by all of our DVS Benefit Services offices located around the Commonwealth for performing veteran's claims development, tracking, and reporting.

DVS also works closely with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to serve Virginia's veterans. A primary IT modernization goal of DVS is to improve service to veterans by utilizing information technology to enhance the claims process and to be able to share data within all DVS offices, other Commonwealth agencies, and the VBA. DVS has partnered with AMVETS to pilot test with the VBA for transmitting electronic claims directly to the VA, which is currently not possible at this point.

Other operational initiatives that the DVS IT Division must manage are: VITA/NG Partnership program requests and projects, DVS information security and data integrity, and DVS systems and applications support; all which are critical to the agency being able to meet its mission and objectives.

Factors impacting agency IT:

The DVS IT Department currently has three classified positions and one wage (P-14) position:

1. One Chief Information Officer (CIO): who serves as:
 - The DVS IT Director / Lead System Support Engineer;
 - The Agency Information Technology Resource (AITR) for COV and VITA/NG IT coordination and management; and
 - The Emergency Coordination Officer (ECO) for the Governor and Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) disaster recovery and continuity of operations coordination and management.
2. Two IT System Support Engineers; and
3. One IT Program Assistant (P-14).

These four positions support all of DVS, which possesses over 650 FTEs spread across business units located around the Commonwealth. Due to this low support to staff ratio, DVS IT has limited ability to provide internal applications development or IT audit functions to meet DVS' growing business needs. As a result, these services must be handled and prioritized by the DVS CIO and either out-sourced or utilize other COV agency services where needed and is possible.

Simultaneously, the management of VITA projects and IT activities, equipment procurements, and VITA/NG infrastructure and billing issues continue to impact the DVS IT staff's ability to always effectively serve internal and external customers due to the multiple requests for information and tasks these efforts require on a daily basis. Increasing VITA/NG charges continue to have a financial impact on DVS operations and the ability to obtain and afford all required/beneficial IT systems and services to keep DVS operations going smoothly and at low operating costs. Many VITA/NG solutions and technologies, such as the VITA/NG wireless network solutions, new voice/telephony systems, MPLS Internet/data transfer circuits and devices, etc. may be too costly for our agency to justify these expenditures and usually cannot afford to implement at all/any locations. We are in need of these technologies and have new expansions and projects that will require these capabilities, but really need VITA/NG to make them affordable in order for us to implement and utilize them in order to better serve our customers. DVS hopes to interact with more veterans/outside entities using web-based and other automated systems. Since these transactions would require DVS to purchase the necessary hardware and software to implement these solutions, this will cause an increase to agency expenditures and possibly necessitate the hiring of additional qualified DVS IT staff to support these solutions.

Anticipated or desired changes to agency IT:

Due to only minor increases in financial capital for IT projects and possible increased VITA billing rates for the current and upcoming budget cycles, no major IT Projects are anticipated in the near future. IT recommends that one additional IT full-time position be added to the IT section to serve as a system support engineer. This position will be especially critical when additional facilities (new care centers, cemeteries, etc.) are opened.

Workforce Development

As noted in the "Key Risk Factors" section, the Department of Veterans Services faces several challenges in the area of workforce development, including:

- Benefit Services section funding and staffing (hiring/training/retention);

- Virginia Wounded Warrior Program funding and staffing (increased service demands/service delivery);
- Virginia War Memorial funding and staffing (increased number of visitors and expanded education mission, opening of new wing);
- Cemetery Services staffing (must keep pace with increased number of burials and workload);
- Department succession planning and continuity.

Physical Plant

The DVS Physical Plant (agency owned/operated) consists of two veterans care centers, three veterans cemeteries, and the Virginia War Memorial. The Benefit Services section, Education, Training, and Employment Services section, Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, and Administrative Services section operate from state-owned or leased offices, or from space provided by community partners.

The veterans of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and, indeed, all of its citizens, hold DVS facilities to the highest standard. The Virginia War Memorial is the Commonwealth of Virginia's monument to honor the memory of Virginia's men and women who demonstrated a willingness to serve and fight to defend our way of life from World War II to the present. Virginia state veterans cemeteries have or will achieve USDVA-designated "national shrine" status. Virginia's veterans care centers are held as model facilities for the delivery of long-term, assisted living, Alzheimer's, and short-term rehabilitative care.

The Department's physical plant is excellent, due to the exceptional work and dedication of all DVS employees and to the continued support of the Governor and General Assembly. Operating, maintaining, and improving the DVS physical plant will continue to be a top priority of the Department.
