

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE RURAL VETERANS OUTREACH PILOT

Our goal is to improve access to employment opportunities for Veterans in rural America.

Veterans in rural areas are an underserved population and are in need of additional service to achieve meaningful careers. Access to federal, state and local government resources is limited in many instances, so government must be more proactive in reaching out to this population.

Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is developing an innovative national initiative that will allow Department of Labor (DOL) and states to greatly improve outreach to Rural Veterans and provide them access to better programs, services and information, as well as connection to a wide variety of services. VETS and our state partners understand that successful employment is inextricably linked to other quality-of-life issues, so this initiative will also offer access to these other important services as a follow on to the pilot.

- VETS has chosen Washington State to be the first pilot state for this initiative. After a significant vetting process, Washington was chosen for the following reasons:
- A proven history of innovation in employment and Veteran programming
- A track record of providing strong employment services to the Veteran population and a commitment from the leadership in the state government to continue providing a high level of service to the large Veteran community in the state.
- A strong network of Veteran service organizations committed to volunteering their time and energy to support their fellow Veteran.
- A geographically diverse state with significant rural Veteran population and a well managed statewide network for launching a new initiative.
- Senior Congressional leadership in Washington, DC, and leadership in Washington Governor's Office have expressed their support for this initiative.

VETS has met with key individuals in the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) and Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), the Governor's Director for National and Community Service, The US DOL Secretary's Liaison in Seattle amongst other key stakeholders. All the stakeholders continue to show strong support for this initiative and are committed to beginning this pilot on September 7, 2010.

Background/Statement of Concept

Service: The core service envisioned is a team of volunteers who will make contact with Veterans, check on how their careers are going, and if needed, making them aware of additional support available from DOL, ESD, WDVA, VA and other government and non-government organizations.

Outreach: The outreach will likely be driven by in two ways:

- 1) *Partnership:* Work with existing non-government networks and state organizations to initiate the program and reach Veterans. The outreach team may offer in-person, internet, and/or phone based intake for self/friend-registration to schedule a volunteer visit.

- 2) *Media*: Significant opportunity for generating a national and local exposure, but only when at full national scale and the pilot is deemed successful with performance outcomes. Until this time, media or marketing outreach will focus on targeted populations in the pilot states.

Scope

VETS has worked to determine the size and scope of this pilot. At this point we have identified approximately 21 counties in Washington State that fit the pilot criteria, with approximately 40,000 rural Veterans identified in this area. Of this population, 12,500 have not been in contact with employment services in the last five years. This will be the baseline for the outreach effort.

Based on these numbers, VETS has a goal of identifying approximately 5-20 community driven Veteran volunteers, per county, to perform the outreach activities. These volunteers may not be unique per county as several may work in multiple counties. VETS envision that these volunteers may come from veterans' service organizations and community based organizations.

Detailed Metrics

Detailed metrics have been developed to connect the pilot's activities to output and outcome measures. They are listed below.

Impact of outreach. We will gather information through phone and in person conversations to determine the number of Veterans interested in our services. We will measure the impact as a percent of customers we contact who express an interest in actively participating in the program. The pilot will determine a baseline of success. However, interest of less than 5% of all Veterans contacted will be a threshold for low impact of the program.

Quality of information. We will measure the percent of Veterans highly satisfied with the outreach they receive and the accuracy of information given out by volunteers as measured by an independent monitor. We will use the first phase of counties to set a baseline and develop goals for improvements for the future.

Quality of service. We intend to determine the quality of the outcome desired through our service provided with surveys as a short term measure, and, as a future measure, linking to entered employment rates, employment retention rates, and average earnings. Industry standards show that a 10% return on surveys should be expected. From this, we will determine a baseline measure of acceptable positives responses to be used in the multi-state rollout phase.

Launch Timetable: We presently envision launching this pilot in Washington on September 7, 2010. Please refer to the attached project plan for additional steps and milestones.

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