

## **BVS POC REPORT**

### **EMPLOYMENT**

1. Date of Report:

August 20, 2020

2. BVS POC(s):

Thurraya Kent and Kathy Owens

3. Service Area/Program:

Employment

4. VDVS Director/Program Manager:

Nicole Anderson and Ross Koenig

5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):

Core functions for Employment (V3); Code of Virginia 2.2-2001.2

A comprehensive program to reduce unemployment among veterans by assisting businesses to attract, hire, train, and retain veterans. Such program shall promote strategies for connecting employers to qualified veterans.

A workforce assessment and training program for participating employers

A certification process for participating employers with the objective of setting measurable goals for hiring and retaining veterans.

6. Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)?

Employers with current or future hiring needs in the Commonwealth of Virginia are the clients of this service line.

7. How is the service/program delivered?

Program is delivered primarily through face-to-face meeting, networking, and training opportunities. Under the current conditions of COVID-19 service provision has modified and is now being provided telephonically and via virtual meeting platforms. This includes Core Curriculum trainings, virtual meetings, and virtual networking opportunities to connect to job seekers. This also includes the virtual Virginia Veterans and Military Affairs Conference and V3 Awards Ceremony and four training opportunities for attendees designed to support business needs in a COVID economy. There are over 329 attendees of this

conference that are clients of the V3 Program, and the Virginia Chamber of Commerce has over 460 registered employers.

8. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans?

By providing employers the insights and best practices in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of veterans and distributing an employment grant for small and medium size employers who hire and retain veterans for one year in the state, the V3 program provides a full life cycle approach for employers engaged in the program to improve the immediate and long term employment condition of Virginia's veterans.

Altria Grant for two years has provided \$100,000 each year in fellowship funding for licensure/certification related to specific trades. Dominion Charity Classic has provided \$420,980.23 from FY 17-21 which has supported the V3 Program and its services to employers directly (V3 Core Curriculum Training, Virtual Networking Events, and workshops to support employers in a COVID environment. V3 Program has 64,329 hires with certified employers since the program began in 2012 till Q2 report collected in July for 2020.

9. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?

By providing employment opportunities for Virginia veterans and improving their employment condition, this increases the purchasing power, gross domestic product, and economic stability of the state. This also decreases the state's unemployment liability thereby reducing the cost to employers and taxpayers. Veterans employed in the state subsequently use their federal benefits for additional education, licensure, and certification. The well-educated and experienced veteran workforce attracts additional businesses to the state, providing to the continuity of Virginia as the best state in the country for businesses.

10. What is the statutory authority for the service area/program?

§ 2.2-2001.2. Initiatives to reduce unemployment among veterans.

A. The Department shall develop a comprehensive program to reduce unemployment among veterans by assisting businesses to attract, hire, train, and retain veterans. Such program shall promote strategies for connecting employers to qualified veterans and include (i) a workforce assessment and training program for participating employers and (ii) a certification process for participating employers with the objective of setting measurable goals for hiring and retaining veterans.

11. Where do the resources for the service area/program come from (general fund, non-general fund, donations, etc.?)

General Funds are appropriated to provide services for the V3 Program. Additional funding sources include the Altria Grant, Dominion Charity Classic, and funding provided in kind by partners such as the Virginia Chamber Foundation. Currently General Fund 1000 has \$2,922,225 appropriated for FY 21. This includes all funding that will provide for the V3 program and staff costs.

12. How has COVID-19 impacted the delivery of services? What service adaptations have been made or are planned?

All relationships have had to move to a virtual format. State requirements for virtual platforms have placed strains on the team's ability to quickly and efficiently virtually meet with their contacts and clients. Some partners are restricted in what platforms or topics can be discussed by their organizations as the business landscape is being redefined by our current conditions. The workforce services and events have largely been moved, suspended, or cancelled due to the instability of the ability to provide a safe business environment for in person meetings. However, the team quickly adapted and were provided cameras to facilitate personable virtual meetings. We have also determined suitable meeting platforms for use for our teams.

The number of in-person networking events has decreased, due to our inability to schedule the Hire Vets Now networking events on military installations that would be held at a rate of approximately one per month. Since March, two virtual events have been provided compared to the six planned. Services provided have also been modified, so that the V3 team can connect their employers with resources and grants to stabilize their workforce and support the continued success of their organization and subsequently the employment of veterans.

13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area/program at present?

Currently the administrative burden for the team to manage over 1,100 certified employers and 900 enrolled with a team of four field staff is significant. The Customer Relationship Management system implemented in 2019, Zoho, has not delivered on the efficiencies it was designed to provide. Further discussions with the developers have identified that due to the system supporting all of VETE and VVFS it is not possible to modify the system to provide the efficiencies needed by the V3 team. Additionally, there have been several instances of data loss and a need to maintain records outside of the system to verify data accuracy. De-duplication efforts take considerable time from the team each month for resources duplicated from other DVS Service lines, approximately 5 hours each month. This is an ongoing burden that will continue to require staff time.

#### 14. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

In May and June, the V3 team provided two virtual networking events in collaboration with the Virginia Chamber Foundation. DVS paid half of the cost, \$6,000 for each event, which allowed 40 employers for each event to network with over 400 transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses. These events had 200% higher attendance than events hosted on base in person, and allowed employers from a wider area to network with the job seekers. There is significant opportunity to continue to provide a virtual networking platform to allow two events per quarter at an annual cost of \$48,000 per year.

Military spouse unemployment and underemployment continues to be a national challenge. Military spouse unemployment is identified at 24% in 2017, over six times what the average American faces. Military spouses are 30% more likely to have a college degree. They are an underutilized talent pool that will further strengthen the Virginia economy. Increasing the V3 employment grant and services to support military spouse employment as fully as the Commonwealth has embraced the mission of supporting veteran employment is an excellent strategic opportunity to continue to make Virginia the most veteran friendly state in the nation.

Using legislative action to add VTAP into the V3 code is another advantageous opportunity. There has been confusion surrounding the brand of the Virginia Transition Assistance Program (VTAP) and the specifics of how the program addresses the needs of Veterans. The lack of clarity often stems from the transition component which can be construed as providing transition services to homeless veterans or those that are justice involved and transitioning back into society. Also, there is a perception of duplication of services with the Virginia Employment Commission's JVSG program that serves a similar population. Aligning VTAP with the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program would clarify VTAP's purpose and services offered to Veterans and strengthen the V3 brand in the process. Adjusting the code to be more inclusive and reflective of the services provided by VTAP promotes easier communication about the services being offered and for service members and spouses to seek out our services. The current language only implies that VTAP's services are offered, but does not specifically codify all that is offered to transitioning service members and spouses. This change would expand the language to include the additional services offered by VTAP such as assisting with civilian employment skills, and connections to Virginia apprenticeships, internships, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/pay-benefits/2020/07/25/to-solve-military-spouse-unemployment-it-needs-to-be-tracked-report-says/>

<https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Military%20Spouses%20in%20the%20Workplace.pdf>

15. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?

The V3 team has surpassed the 1,000 certified employer mark in the previous year and our Communications team identified that the V3 has one of DVS strongest brand recognition. At this point, the V3 team no longer has to focus on recruitment of employers, with the exception of Southwest Virginia. Instead, they focus on quality client service and the volume of clients. For this reason, it is critical that the team receive a more functional CRM platform and virtual networking platform to provide services for these employers, as the program will continue to grow without recruitment effort of the team.

The current CRM platform was identified in the VTAP OSIG audit as deficient and structurally unsound as it allows anyone with permission to the platform to delete records without leaving any record of the action being taken. This means the team would be unaware data was lost, or who took that action. This leaves the team's data in a very vulnerable position, and the OSIG recommendation was that another CRM be utilized.

Additionally, the current CRM was developed by Zoho, which is headquartered in India. The proposed CRM developers, DB Driven are headquartered in Virginia, SWAM Certified, and a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business.