

ATTACHMENT – FORMAT FOR BVS POC REPORTS

1. Date of Report: 22 June 2023
2. BVS POC(s): Terry McKnight, Melissa Watts
3. Service Area/Program: Communications
4. DVS Director/Program Manager: Tina Parlett-Calhoun
5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):

The Comms team's primary mission is to drive awareness of DVS services to include directing the agency media relations program, public communications program, external website, and social media initiatives. Tactics include overseeing the development of news media strategies and materials, digital resources, special projects, and other direct marketing activities.

Other activities in support of the mission include managing the development and implementation of communication initiatives, speeches, articles, op-eds, talking points, e-news, and additional publications to inform the public about agency issues and activities. Serving as the agency media liaison for all matters concerning veteran centric issues with the Governor's office and media representatives from local, regional, and national markets. Directing agency work groups and preparing talking points for senior staff, the Secretary of Veterans & Defense Affairs in addition to the Governor on demand.

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

The Comms team ultimately serves veterans and their families; however, this division serves as one of the most on-demand agency departments, expected to serve every directorate of the agency, the Governor's office, the Veterans Service Foundation and the office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs.

7. What are the service line's primary objectives?

Primary objective is to spread awareness of all DVS services with limited resources and staff using a variety of creative and proactive strategies.

8. What are the key results that support the objective(s)?

The DVS Comms initiative is tracked by a variety of key metrics to include but not limited to reach, engagement rate, open rates, and earned media value (EMV). Strategically, comms initiatives are tracked very closely to ensure the ROI of limited budget dollars and staff time is efficient and effective.

9. What specific objectives has the service line established and what progress has the service line/program made toward achieving the objective(s).

The Comms team develops mini marketing plans for every project it works on, with very specific objectives regarding reach and engagement.

10. What are some operational highlights from the past year?

See Appendix A (report from Tina).

11. What type of outreach did the service line conduct and what are the results?

The Comms team develops and manages on site media events, extends opportunities for outreach events to the Governor's team, produces a monthly Enews letter with 200,000+ subscribers. Manages agency social media and digital campaigns and engagement. Leads the most aggressive state agency earned media campaign in the Commonwealth, resulting in an average of \$300,000 in Earned Media Value (EMV) each year across the Commonwealth and beyond.

12. What, if any, new initiatives / innovative solutions were launched during the past year?

See Comms report regarding *Virginia Is for Veterans* co-branding campaign. Also initiated some direct mail campaigns to segmented veteran audiences using recently obtained Trans Union veteran data.

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

Legacy of very little or no dedicated marketing budget to the communications effort and until this fiscal year only one FTE dedicated to the Comms effort for the entire agency - making it very difficult to strategically plan sustainable outreach efforts year over year. However, this fiscal year the comms team was afforded a small budget dedicated to outreach and marketing research and an additional FTE.

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

By spreading awareness regarding DVS services, we assist in driving veterans to our offices, reducing the stigma of requesting behavioral health service connections and ultimately help to provide a better quality of life for veterans and their families in Virginia.

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

Veterans have a long legacy of contributing a great deal to the Commonwealth to include filling crucial positions in its workforce. By informing veterans and their families of the vast array of resources and support available to them, we aim to keep and/or attract them in/to Virginia. To that

end, the Comms team recently developed a “Why Virginia” presentation that is being used at all TAP briefings. (attached)

16. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

Comms will begin a DVS website redesign overhaul in the beginning of July. (Website is 10 years old, new site to incorporate new technology and lay the foundation for an improved user experience.) We will also use the results of the brand awareness survey to develop direct marketing campaigns targeted to a variety of specific veteran and military spouse audiences across the Commonwealth.

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

Comms team recently developed a video in collaboration with Justice Involved Veteran (JIV) program team members that describes the mission of this program. The video now airs in all state prison common areas, reaching veterans before they are released and informing them of DVS services that can assist with their re-entry journey.

Additional video content production is underway for a variety of programmatic areas.