

Enclosure IV. State Veterans' Program Plan Narrative Instructions

In accordance with the Jobs for Veterans Act (JFVA - P.L. 107-288), each grant recipient must have an approved State Veterans' Program and Budget Plan submitted for each year of grant funding. The State Veterans' Program Plan narrative describes the manner in which the States will provide or facilitate the provision of employment, training, and placement services for veterans as required under Chapter 41, Title 38, United States Code (38 U.S.C. 41), as amended. Determinations will be made, based upon criteria provided below, as to the adequacy of each program plan narrative.

Planning and Coordination

To be eligible to receive funds in FY 2004 the State Veterans' Program Plan narratives will:

A. Identify the prevailing labor market conditions in the State. The acceptable State narrative describes:

1. The makeup of the State's labor force, unemployment rates, and the economic and demographic conditions of the State.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the makeup of the labor force, the current unemployment rate, the economic and demographic conditions within the State and any implications of these conditions in developing service strategies.

2. The current and projected employment opportunities and outlook for veterans in the State.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the projected employment opportunities for veterans, considering current and prospective employers, including Federal, State and local employers, and in particular Federal contractors and subcontractors. Analysis should address the types of employment and typical range of salaries and associated benefits that current resident and relocating veterans may reasonably anticipate. The narrative should also identify how the hiring and retention of veterans will be promoted among representatives of such employers.

B. Explain the procedures taken by the State to ensure program integration and coordination regarding services to veterans. The acceptable State narrative describes:

1. How the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) program functions are integrated into the delivery of services to veterans within One-Stop Centers and other locations where mediated labor exchange services are provided.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the process it will follow to ensure that service provider(s) and their staff work together with DVOP specialists and LVER staff to promote employment, training and placement services for veterans through the Workforce

Investment Act (WIA) and other Department of Labor (DOL) funded programs operated throughout the State. The plan should state what steps the State plans to take to ensure collaboration and integration of services among DVOP/LVER staff and other service providers to ensure optimum promotion of the One-Stop services and activities for veterans and other eligible persons seeking jobs or training opportunities.

2. How the State makes optimal use of the services and linkages to other service providers in the State to enhance the employability and placement of veterans who seek employment and training-related services.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the process by which the State will seek out other organizations providing employment services to veterans and how they will include these entities, through partnership or agreements, as part of its service delivery strategy. The plan should demonstrate a level of outreach and partner participation that will enable veterans and eligible persons seeking employment to easily access additional, available employment and training-related services.

C. Address how services will be provided to veterans and other eligible persons within the public labor exchange. The acceptable State narrative describes:

1. How priority of service will be provided and monitored to ensure that priority of services is provided to veterans by the public labor exchange grantees funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe how priority of service is provided to veterans, the order of priority followed, and the processes that ensure priority of service is provided by the public labor exchange.

2. How services are made available and provided within the One-stop centers to veterans transitioning service members, homeless veterans, incarcerated veterans and VA vocational rehabilitation participants.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the services available to maximize the job and training opportunities to the above populations and how the grantee will ensure services will be made readily available to the above populations through the One-Stop centers.

3. How outreach activities and public information will be used to inform veterans of the services available through the labor exchange and workforce system, including employment and job training opportunities.

Criteria: To be considered acceptable the narrative should describe the joint efforts by the State, individual federally funded service providers, DVOP specialists, LVER staff and other applicable service entities to promote the development of employment and job training opportunities for veterans and eligible persons. Descriptions should highlight any efforts to coordinate, network, or expand existing program activities by the State, service providers;

descriptions of the way in which information about these services would be made available to veterans in each community; and a description of how the information being conveyed helps veterans to make decisions based on their individual employment needs.

4. Discuss the processes employed by the State to maintain, monitor, and report compliance with their approved State Veterans' Program and Budget Plan.

Criteria: To be considered acceptable the narrative should describe how the State will ensure each service delivery point is monitoring activities to verify that provisions are being fulfilled in accordance with the approved State plan.

D. Describe the populations of veterans residing or in the labor force of the State in addition to those identified by VETS upon whom the State would like to focus special emphasis, such as Native American veterans, or incarcerated veterans, who have comparatively higher rates of unemployment in local labor markets.

Criteria: To be considered acceptable the narrative should describe how the State will address prioritization of special populations of veterans described by VETS in Section IV. C., above, including strategies to reach all partners to develop a plan to maximize employment, placement and training services for these special populations. The plan should also provide the same information about any additional priority groups of veterans identified by the State.

Performance Awards and Incentives

Background: The JFVA Section 4112 establishes a program for "Performance incentive awards for quality employment, training and placement services" to be administered by States. The intent is to a) encourage the improvement and modernization of employment, training, and placement services for veterans and b) recognize eligible employees for excellence in the provision of such services, or for having made demonstrable improvements in the provision of such services to veterans. It is intended that such awards be granted to recipients on a cash basis, however, non-financial incentives may be awarded in lieu of or in combination with cash awards with the approval of the Secretary.

Additional guidance for the development of Performance Incentive Award Programs was provided in Veterans' Program Letter (VPL) 08-03, issued on May 29, 2003. States may wish to reference this guidance in outlining the plan for incentive awards.

To be eligible to receive funds in FY 2004 the State Veterans' Program Plan narratives will:

A. Indicate the total amount of funds designated for performance incentive awards.

Criteria: The State's narrative should identify the percentage of the total grant funds that will be used as performance incentive awards (1% of total award).

- B. Address the expected outcomes to be achieved through the State's incentive awards program.

Criteria: The narrative should describe the State's incentive award program and how it will encourage individuals to achieve excellence in the provision of services to veterans and/or to demonstrate improvements to the system for the delivery of such services.

- C. Describe the planned selection criteria and award process.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe how awardees will be selected, and the general criteria used for selection. Describe how the award process will consider a broad array of employment and training service delivery staff.

- D. Describe the planned process and timing for the disbursement of incentive award funds.

Criteria: The State's narrative should identify the entity within the State that will administer funds, and should identify cash and/or non-cash award items representing the total amount of designated funding. (Example: \$5,000 to be distributed as ten \$500 cash awards, OR \$5,000 to be distributed as ten items of merchandise, during which FY quarters, etc.) If cash awards are not to be utilized, the narrative should explain the rationale.

Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Utilization:

Background: Title 38, Section 4103A, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP), requires that "a state shall employ such full- or part-time disabled veterans' outreach program specialists as the State determines appropriate and efficient to carry out intensive services under this chapter to meet the employment needs of eligible veterans."

NOTE: In accordance with Congressional intent, no individual will be employed as both a half-time LVER and a half-time DVOP, and although the range of roles fulfilled by DVOP specialists may differ in certain locations or circumstances, no DVOP specialists shall be assigned duties that are in conflict with the distinct LVER staff roles and responsibilities.

To be eligible to receive funds in FY 2004 the State Veterans' Program Plan narratives will:

- A. Describe the duties the State assigns to DVOP specialists.

Criteria: These duties may be enumerated in the State's narrative, the service categories may be listed, or the narrative may simply refer to the applicable Veterans' Program Letter (VPL) (See VPL 11-02, dated September 16, 2002.). The narrative should so indicate the planned number of half time and the number of full-time positions assigned.

- B. Describe the State's strategy for integrating DVOP specialists into the workforce system to provide intensive services and identify the veterans they will serve.

Criteria: The State’s narrative should indicate how the DVOP specialists assigned to One-Stop Centers are integrated into the One-Stop service delivery system. The narrative should verify that DVOP specialists are primarily assigned to assist the needs of disabled veterans and those veterans and eligible persons who have employability barriers that require intensive services in order to obtain and retain employment. The narrative should also explain how the services of the DVOP specialist, other WIA partners, or employability development specialists (who may be assigned to or assist at various locations), are made available to eligible veterans to improve their ability to successfully compete in local labor markets.

- C. Describe how veterans requiring intensive services will be identified and assessed; how they will be assigned to DVOP specialists; and how DVOP specialists will facilitate the provision of services.

Criteria: The narrative should indicate how the State will utilize DVOP staff to assess, facilitate and provide intensive services. In cases in which DVOP staff do not directly provide all of the services required, the narrative should indicate how the provision of those services by other trained and available staff is facilitated at each work location, or through networking with other providers.

NOTE: Services that qualify as intensive services under section 134(d) (3) of the Workforce Investment Act, while not identical to the roles and responsibilities of the DVOP specialist, parallel these services in a way that is not in conflict. The following chart demonstrates the relationship between WIA intensive services and DVOP roles and responsibilities outlined in Veterans’ Program Letter (VPL) 11-02, dated September 16, 2002.

Per Section 134 (d)(3) of WIA, Intensive services may include:	DVOP Specialists’ Roles and Responsibilities for Intensive Services include:
Comprehensive and specialized assessment;	Assessment;
Development of individual employment plan;	Development of a plan that is documented;
Group counseling;	Group counseling (may be part of the documented employability plan);
Individual counseling and career planning;	Career guidance; and
Case management.	Case management -- requires a minimum of assessment and the development of an employability plan.

- D. Describe the procedures to ensure that every effort is made to hire qualified veterans for DVOP positions to the maximum extent possible, and that State Workforce Agencies’ hiring preference policies for DVOP specialists reflect the following order of priority:

1. Qualified service-connected disabled veterans;
2. Qualified eligible veterans; and
3. Qualified eligible persons.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the process used to fill vacancies both from within, and outside the agency as applicable, indicating how preference over other candidates is applied for any vacant DVOP positions, and describing efforts made to recruit qualified service-connected disabled veterans. The narrative should indicate how vacancy announcements are broadly distributed throughout all areas of the State and within commuting areas to the State, using electronic and print media, and in coordination with VA, veterans' service organizations, and other stakeholders.

Local Veterans' Employment Representatives Utilization:

Background: Title 38, Section 4104, Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) program, requires that "a State shall employ such full- and part-time local veterans' employment representatives as the State determines appropriate and efficient to carry out employment, training, and placement services under this chapter (38 U.S.C. 41)."

NOTE: In accordance with Congressional intent, no individual will be employed as both a half-time LVER and a half-time DVOP, and although the range of roles fulfilled by LVER staff is broad, and may differ in certain locations or circumstances, no LVER staff shall be assigned duties that are in conflict with the distinct DVOP specialist roles and responsibilities. VETS acknowledges that certain situations may arise in which a DVOP responsibility may need to be undertaken by an LVER. This does not preclude an LVER from assuming DVOP-related duties in the absence of DVOP staff and vice versa. For example, a veteran who attends a local employment office and needs intensive services should receive intensive services from an LVER in the absence of available DVOP staff. While Congressional intent is to respect the distinct roles and responsibilities sound judgment must prevail in certain situations where an LVER or DVOP might not be available."

To be eligible to receive funds in FY 2004 the State Veterans' Program Plan narratives will:

- A. Describe the duties (roles and responsibilities) assigned to the LVER position.

Criteria: The narrative should indicate how the State will utilize LVER staff as described in the enclosure to Veterans' Program Letter (VPL) 11-02, dated September 16, 2002. In addition, the narrative should identify how the LVER will conduct and coordinate employer outreach. In cases in which LVER staff do not directly provide all of the services required, the narrative should indicate how the provision of those services by other trained and available staff is facilitated at each work location, or through networking with other providers.

- B. Discuss how the State ensures that the required quarterly Managers Report on Services to

Veterans (previously referred to as the LVER quarterly report) is submitted for each State-defined local workforce investment area. Indicate the extent to which the DVET is consulted regarding the area definitions determined by the State administrator, wherever Department of Labor funds are allocated to provide employment and training services to veterans.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the State's procedure to ensure that the required report is accurate, complete and submitted in a timely manner to the manager of the work location, with a copy to the Director for Veterans' Employment and Training (DVET) assigned in that State.

- C. Describe the procedures to ensure that every effort is made to hire qualified veterans for LVER positions to the maximum extent possible, and that State Workforce Agencies' hiring preference policies for LVER staff reflect the following order of priority:
1. Qualified service-connected disabled veterans;
 2. Qualified eligible veterans; and
 3. Qualified eligible persons.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the process used to fill vacancies both from within, and outside the agency as applicable, indicating how qualified disabled veterans are given preference over other candidates for any vacant LVER position, and describing efforts made to recruit qualified service-connected disabled veterans. The narrative should indicate how vacancy announcements are broadly distributed throughout all areas of the State and within commuting areas to the State, using electronic and print media, and in coordination with VA, veterans' service organizations, and other stakeholders.

Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

Background: Explain procedures that will be taken by the State to ensure coordination regarding Transition Assistance Program services provided to separating service members and spouses at all TAP sites within the State.

To be eligible to receive funds in FY 2004 the State Veterans' Program Plan narratives will:

- A. Describe the involvement of Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives or other State SWA staff in the delivery of Transition Assistance Program services and workshops.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the procedures it will follow to ensure that DVOP specialists, LVER staff or other State SWA staff members are utilized as labor market experts in providing relevant information that is current and useful to transitioning service members and their spouses. Further, the State must show full qualifications of those selected SWA personnel who will facilitate TAP workshops. This should include date received required NVTI training and a Qualification Statement that supports the selection of this

person to become a facilitator. Individuals who have not attended TAP Facilitator training must complete the training prior to conducting workshops.

B. Describe how the State will provide Transition Assistance Program services.

Criteria: The State's narrative should describe the process it will follow in the provision of TAP services. Specifically, the narrative should indicate how the State intends to use DVOP specialists, LVER staff or other SWA staff. The narrative must provide additional planning information, e.g., cost estimates - in accordance with the applicable VPL; a full listing of all TAP sites within the State (see Enclosure IX), the number of desired workshops each site is requesting and the number, by site, the State intends to facilitate.

Special Initiatives:

This section is available for States that have contacted or been contacted by VETS' National Office to submit "Unique or Innovative" proposals for programs or services for veterans. Proposals for such programs as those serving Incarcerated Veterans, ProVET or similar initiatives are included among approvable programs pending the availability of additional funding for these purposes.

Please note that unsolicited proposals, that have not received prior authorization from VETS' National Office, may not be considered for funding.

The State Veterans' Program Plan narratives considered eligible to receive additional funds for proposed Special Initiatives in FY 2004 will:

- A. Demonstrate and describe the scope of the program;
- B. Provide an understanding of the need for the proposed services and planned activities; and
- C. Indicate the expected quantifiable outcomes of the proposal.