



2024 Annual Report

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STATE OF COLORADO

COLORADO BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT OF
MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS



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January 3, 2025

CBVA ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Pursuant to §28-5-703 (2017) C.R.S., I am pleased to provide you the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Annual Report for the period July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

Executive Summary:

- Veterans Assistance Programs Veteran Trust Fund (VTF) and Veterans Assistance Grant (VAG):
 - o Improved grant execution rates (VTF: 87%, VAG: 95%) with the hiring of a second grants administrator.
 - o Call for increased attention to underserved veterans.
- Identified Veterans' Issues

- o Access to prescriptions, mental health service gaps, and transportation issues.
- o Statewide housing shortage, homelessness, and financial struggles, including fuel and utilities.
- CDLE's Top Veteran Issues:
 - o Mental health, veteran employment, and housing are ranked as the most critical challenges, as they were last year.
- Funding Allocation Impact:
 - o Majority of funds are directed to emergency services, including housing.
 - o Potential mental health improvements through increased funding.
- Legislative Funding Recommendations:
 - o Urgent plea to restore \$500K, out of \$1M, in the next legislative cycle to the VAG and restore \$3M to VTF; both taken by the legislature in 2020.
- Legislative Support Request:
 - o Strong call for continued legislative support in the upcoming session.
 - o Emphasis on addressing veterans' health, unemployment, and homelessness.

The mission of the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs (CBVA) is to ensure that Colorado remains a healthy environment for those who have served and sacrificed for our country and their families. We also advise The Adjutant General at the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) and the Division of Veterans Affairs (DVA). We do this by convening the board monthly and meeting with Veterans, in person when feasible and virtually when not, across the state. In addition, board members annually visit each of the five state-run Veteran Community Living Centers. During this period, we held our meetings at:

- Pueblo County Social Services, Pueblo, CO
- American Legion Post 21, Golden, CO

- Sobriety House, Denver, CO
- Arapahoe County Plaza, Littleton, CO
- Archuleta County, Pagosa Springs, CO
- Joint Forces Headquarters, Centennial, CO
- Veterans Community Living Center at Homelake, Monte Vista, CO
- Western Region One Source, Grand Junction, CO

This year the Board added one new member from Durango, CO. Five of seven Board members are from the I-25 corridor (Aurora, Castle Rock, Centennial, Colorado Springs, Parker, and Superior). Only one member is from rural Colorado; he is a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) in Pagosa Springs. The Board recommends that the next Board member be from the Western Slope and, if possible, a county VSO and that the Board makeup continues to be a mix of rural Colorado and the I-25 corridor.

The Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) and Veterans Assistance Grant (VAG) programs continue to be highly utilized throughout the state. The execution rate for the VTF was 87% and the VAG 95%. Lack of payment turnaround rates has kept many recipients from executing at 100% but with the hiring of a second grants administrator helped resolve this challenge. The payment turnaround timeline is down to 10 days.

The DVA has filled the state's need for a State Woman Veterans Coordinator/Veterans Services Officer. It is estimated the State has 47,329 VA registered women veterans, and an estimated additional 20,000 unregistered Colorado women veterans. Ten percent of VTF grants went to women veterans, up from 9% last year. The Board and the DVA are working together to encourage grant recipients to increase VTF funding to underserved populations, specifically women Veterans. The good news was that 30% of the VAG went to women Veterans, up from 20% last FY.

In our travels across the State meeting Veterans, and from Veteran representatives at our meetings, we have identified the following issues facing Colorado veterans:

- Access to healthcare including a lack of in-network pharmacies for rural veterans.

- Lack of mental health care especially in our rural areas and lack of mental health providers
- Lack of transportation for healthcare
- Statewide shortage of housing and shelters - especially during winter months
- Homelessness
- Inability to purchase fuel, gas, and utilities

In the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment's Annual Report to the Board they listed the top three issues facing Veterans and their families remains this year, the same as last year as:

- Mental health
- Veteran employment
- Housing

The CDLE further reported "Most remaining reported issues are financially related hardships due to the increased costs of living, transportation, and energy, which can be more dependent on location and family size. Any changes that help Veterans with these issues will likely help stabilize their lives and expand their opportunities to obtain a sustainable career and prosper."

One way the State helps to resolve these issues is through increased funding to the Veteran Assistance Grant and Veteran Trust Fund Programs. This year 58% of the VAG and 57% of VTF funds (up from 44% last FY) were expended for emergency services, including housing.

The VTF funds may be used for:

- Short Term Emergency Assistance (e.g. temporary utilities, food, vouchers, medical, clothing, etc.)
- Job Training/Education/Assistance (e.g. direct training, tools, textbooks, clothes)
- Homeless Prevention/Shelter Operations/Temporary Housing Assistance (e.g. housing or

rental assistance, food, clothing, medical, utilities, etc.)

- Mental Health Care and Hygiene (e.g. counseling, retreats, animal therapy)
- Medical Transportation (e.g. vouchers and reimbursements; vehicle purchase, maintenance & operation)
- Veterans Stand Downs
- Special Programs Unique to the Identified Needs of a Particular Community

VAG awards may be used for:

- Mental health services
- Housing for veterans experiencing homelessness
- Job training
- Employment, and
- Family counseling services

In 2020, the Legislature removed \$1M from the VAG and \$3M from the VTF. The Board is asking that \$500K be returned to the VAG in FY 2026. In FY 2025, the VAG had over \$2.3M in grant requests, exceeding the available funding by \$1.1 million. By returning these funds, you would enable the state to allocate more resources to the grant program, directly addressing the issues impacting Colorado Veterans. For instance, mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, are significant risk factors for suicide among veterans. According to the VA, 212 Colorado Veterans committed suicide in 2021, the most recent year for which data is available. In rural areas, there are not enough mental health providers; yet VAG funds, for instance, could be used by grantees for tele-health programs. With winter coming, the additional funds would also support more sheltering and transportation for veterans to receive health care. Restoring the funds to the VAG programs will go a long way to provide the assistance needed for veterans' health and well-being and prevent unemployment and homelessness and ultimately strengthen our State.

Lastly, each FY, in order to put this report together, we request an annual report of

services provided to all Colorado Veterans by all state departments that support veterans. We received reports from the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Natural Resources, Human Services, and Public Health and Environment. We did not receive reports from the Colorado Departments of Local Affairs, Agriculture, and Revenue.

The Board is honored to serve our Veterans who have sacrificed for our country as well as their families. We hope that you will also continue to support our Veterans in this coming legislative session. We hope that you will also continue to support our Veterans in this coming legislative session with the Board's recommendations above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S M Q Scanlon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "M" at the beginning.

Sheila M. Q. Scanlon,

Chair, Colorado Board of Veteran Affairs

STATE OF COLORADO



DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Division of Veterans Affairs
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COLORADO DIVISION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS 2024
REPORT ON SERVICES TO VETERANS DECEMBER 2024

To; Sheila Scanlon, Chair, Colorado Board of Veteran Affairs

Re: State Board of Veteran Affairs Annual Report to the Governor

Executive Summary

In 2024 Colorado veterans continued to have a positive impact on local economies with more than \$6.1 billion in benefits. The Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs assisted with facilitation of direct payments to veterans in the form of compensation and pension benefits of nearly \$3 billion. In other benefits, approximately \$392 million went to education and vocational rehabilitation and more than \$1.6 billion was expended on medical care. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reported the Colorado veteran population at 369,318, which is a decrease from last year by 4,915. This decrease indicates the loss of aging veterans. We anticipate that expenditures for VA health care will continue to increase with the aging population of Vietnam-era veterans and with the necessary care provided for veterans in the wake of the PACT Act.

Activities and Accomplishments:

The Division of Veterans Affairs is comprised of four service units, including Grants, the Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado, Veterans Services, and the Western Region One Source.

Outreach continues to be a leading measure of the Division’s efforts to provide prompt service to veterans across the state. State veterans service officers participated in dozens of outreach events and programs, including Stand Downs for homeless veterans, Transitional Assistance Programs for veterans transitioning from active duty, and county events and activities. These efforts increase the Division’s visibility, and the resulting number of inquiries and claims filed contribute to overall effectiveness.

The annual training conference for county veterans service officers was held in Colorado Springs in September 2024. This event enables the state veterans service officers to meet with and train the county veterans service officers in large and small groups. The event was hybrid, with both in-person and virtual attendance available at no cost to participants and provided participants with the entire CEUs required for the year. A spring conference was held earlier in the year in Grand Junction. That event was also hybrid and available at no charge and provided 10 CEUs for attendees.

The Division continues to support its mission of assisting Colorado veterans in accessing their state and federal benefits by filing claims and processing benefit requests, while training, monitoring, and assisting county veterans service officers to do the same. Please note the table below.

Item Filed	2023	2024
New POAs	9,834	10,614
Claims for Benefits	15,511	10,159
Health Care Enrollment (statewide)	113,890 FFY 2022	115,322 FFY 2023
Appeals	2,858	2,663

Administrative Condition

The Division is currently reimagining its Veterans Services unit to strengthen the regional structure and provide resilient support to county veterans service offices. Under the upcoming model, the state will be divided into three regions, each of which will have three state veterans services officers to support the counties located therein. This year personnel were added to the Grants team, Veterans Services, and the Western Region One Source, and positions were reclassified in Grants, Operations, and at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery to optimize processes and increase flexibility and agility through the Division. Detailed reports on the Veterans Memorial Cemetery, the Western Region One Source, and the Division's program for Women and Marginalized Veterans have also been submitted for your consideration.

Please let me know if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

Bruce Cowan, Director

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS REPORT ON THE COLORADO STATE VETERANS AFFAIRS TRUST FUND FOR FY2024

Subject: Colorado State Veterans Trust Fund

Requirement: Pursuant to §25-1-108.5 (2), C.R.S. as amended, the following report is provided for State Fiscal Year 2024 covering the period from July 1, 2023

- June 30, 2024.

Funds Received: The Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) received a Long Bill appropriation of \$1,182,658 for FY2024. This does not include \$50,000 of additional spending authority of the Tobacco Master Settlement funds authorized for the Western Region One Source (WROS). The Division of Veteran Affairs was authorized to expend \$43,826 for administration of the grant; the actual expenditures were \$43,826 for administration. Of the total non-administrative appropriation, \$15,000 was allocated for Board travel, and \$61,500 allocated to the State Veterans Cemetery in Grand Junction for improvements. \$39,512 was allocated for a Veterans Service Officer Claims Management System, and \$187,000 for a Statewide Veteran Identification Project. A total of \$856,295.00 was awarded in grants to nonprofit organizations and Veterans Community Living Centers throughout the State. Of those grant funds awarded, \$741,337.96 were expended, resulting in an 87% execution rate.

Program Description (with eligible population): The Colorado State Veterans Trust Fund is designed with the overall goal of assisting all veterans in need residing in the State of Colorado, regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender identity, marital or religious status. The key goals of the program are to provide sufficient support and funding to meet the needs of veterans in the four areas defined below:

- State Veteran's Community Living Centers for capital improvements or needed amenities for existing or future state veterans nursing homes
- Operation and maintenance of existing or future State Veterans Cemeteries

- Costs incurred by the Division of Veterans Affairs
- Veterans' programs operated by nonprofit veterans' organizations that meet criteria adopted by the Board and that are selected by the Board as grant recipients

Non-Profit Criteria: Nonprofit veterans' organizations must be nationally recognized by the United States Congress as an organization that can provide services to veterans under Title 38, USC. This includes organizations designated by the IRS as a 501(c)19 or 501(c)23 organization, as well as some 501(c)4 entities.

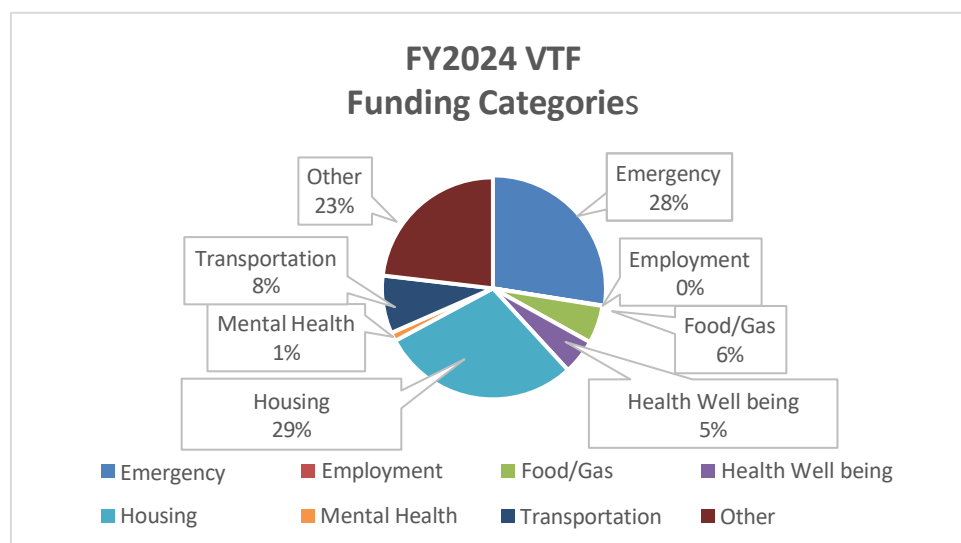
Program Criteria: The Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs (CBVA) established criteria for veteran programs operated by nonprofit veteran's organizations located within the State of Colorado to provide assistance for veterans in need. Examples of such programs are veterans' transportation programs to medical centers and/or clinics, childcare, homelessness prevention and intervention, emergency needs, medical/mental health services not provided and/or covered through the VA, and other needed services such as food and gas or other assistance.

Eligible Population: Veterans within the state of Colorado with an other than dishonorable discharge. There are no income eligibility requirements, although demonstrated need for assistance is required.

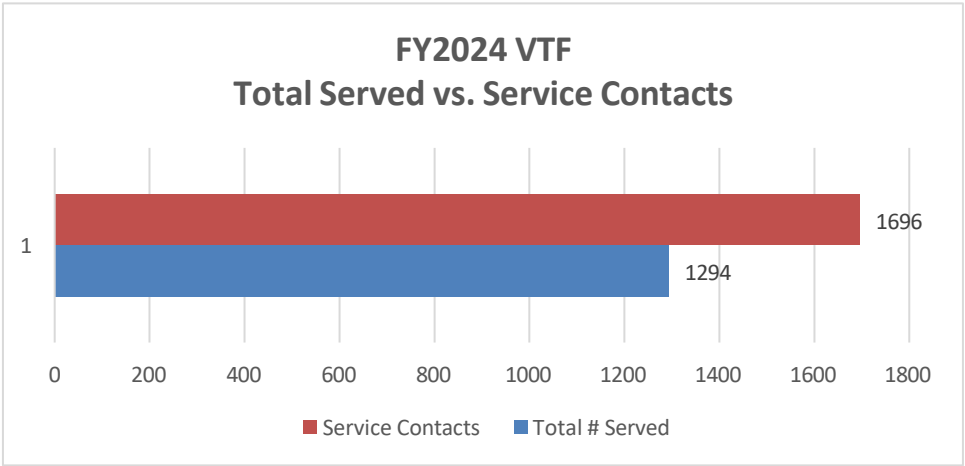
Services Provided: The following represents a breakdown by category of agencies that received funding, grants or awards during the reporting period, to include the type of service and/or assistance provided.

Non-Profit Veterans Service Organizations and State Veterans Community Living Centers: these organizations expended \$741,337.96 in grant funds to support veterans and their needs.

- The Veterans Community Living Center at Homelake in Monte Vista was awarded \$92,210.00 for a park pavilion for the veteran residents. The Veteran Community Living Center Fitzsimmons was awarded \$28,150.00 for activity room chairs. The Veteran Community Living Center McCandless was awarded \$36,269.00 for an outdoor railroad garden, therapy dog, coffee bar items, and a scendent subscription. The Veteran Community Living Center Spanish Peaks was awarded \$11,209.00 for vital sign monitors and patio furniture. The Veteran Community Living Center Rifle was awarded \$63,407.00 to update dining room furniture.
- Non-Profit Veterans Service Organizations expended the remaining amount of grant funds. The services provided were located throughout the state, with the majority of programs in rural areas. As previously noted, services include transportation to medical appointments, emergency assistance, housing support, medical/mental health assistance not provided by the VA, and other services to meet the needs of veterans. The majority of funding (29%) went towards housing assistance. Housing assistance includes help with rental and mortgage payments. Other funding went towards emergency financial assistance (28%), transportation to medical appointments (8%), food and gas assistance (6%), health and well-being (5%), mental health assistance (1%), and other expenses (23%).

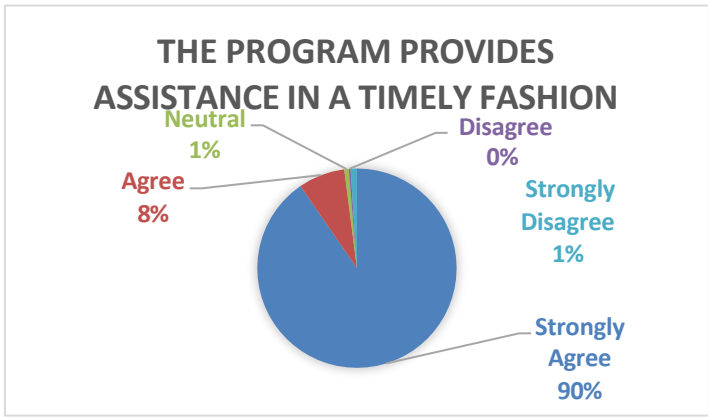


- During FY2024, 1,294 veterans were served through the Veterans Trust Fund grant program, of which 892 were unduplicated and 402 duplicated. There was a total of 1,696 service contacts made. 90% of the veterans assisted were men and 10% were women. The number of women veterans served has significantly increased. Training and outreach to women veterans helped raise the total amount of women served.

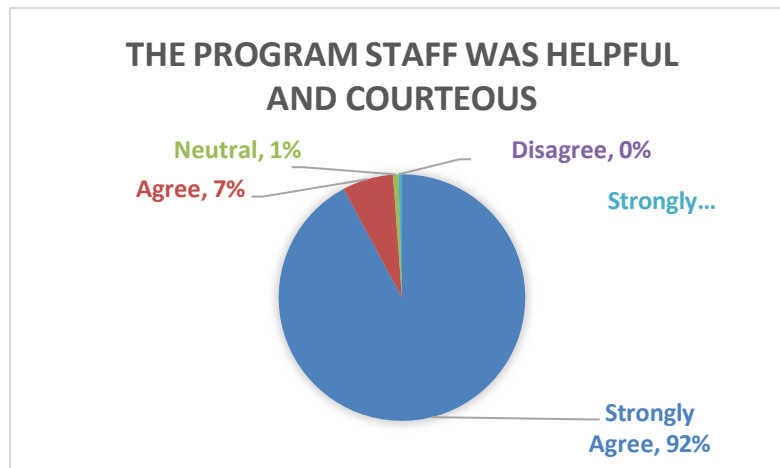


Program Effectiveness: A service recipient survey is utilized to measure the effectiveness of the services provided by the grantees and to measure the outcomes or impact of the services. The survey utilizes a standard Likert scale to rate the grantee program effectiveness and changes in well-being. Results from the current reporting period are listed below:

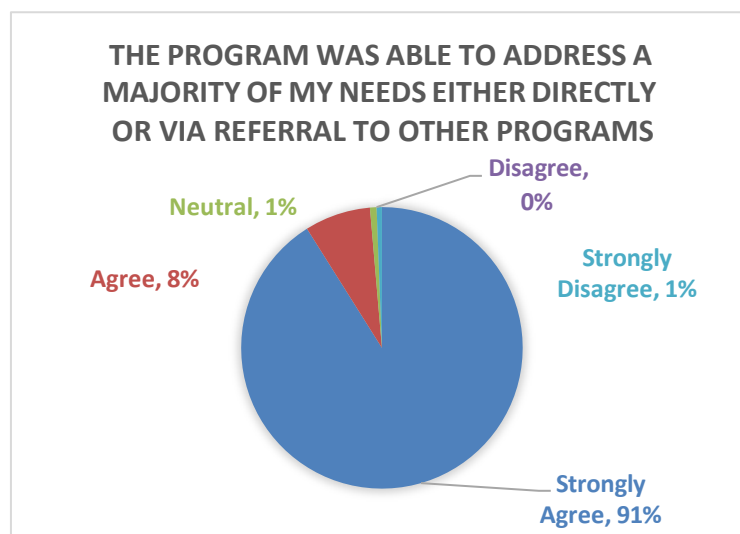
- 99% percent of the veterans surveyed agreed that the program provided assistance in a timely fashion.



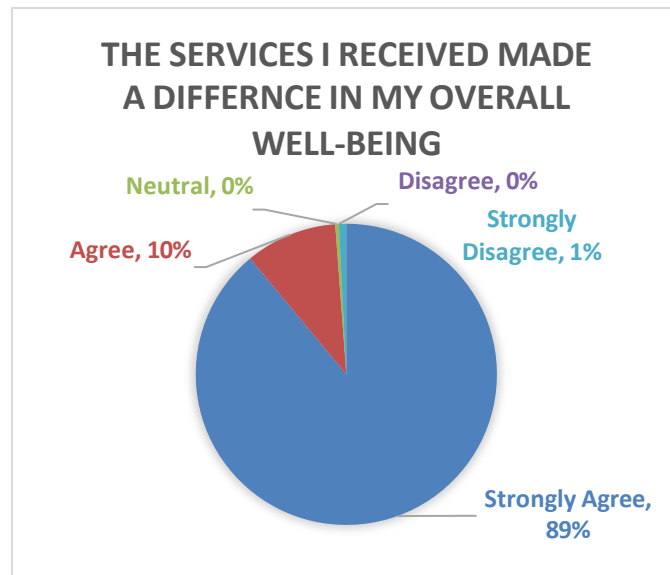
- 99% of veterans surveyed agreed that program staff were helpful and courteous.



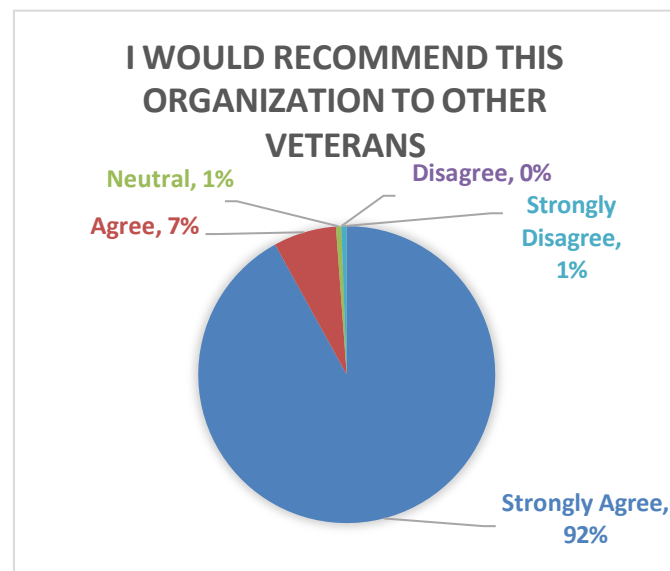
- 99% of veterans surveyed agreed that the program was able to address a majority of their needs, either directly or through referral to other programs.

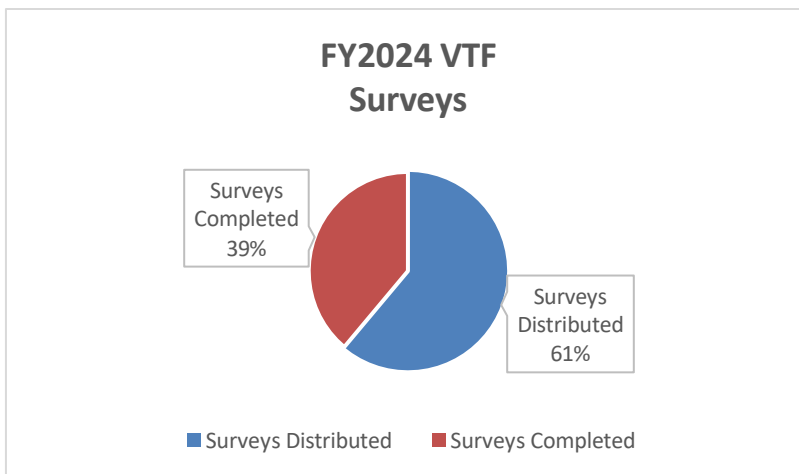


- 99% of veterans surveyed agree that the services they received made a difference in their overall well-being.



- 99% of veterans surveyed would recommend the organization to other veterans.





Evaluation of the Operation of the Program:

The grant programs continued to address housing stability needs for veterans not eligible for relief fund assistance, emergency financial assistance, transportation to medical appointments, Stand Down events, and recreational activities.

Process improvement is a primary focus in terms of the grant program operations. Minor changes in processes led to more efficiency and effectiveness in programming. The increase in the number of grantee trainings via webinars and one-on-one sessions continued throughout the year. The Grant Manager conducted 11 application trainings.

Grantee input was sought several times throughout the reporting period. Office hours were held on a weekly to bi-weekly basis to cover unmet training needs, provide technical assistance, and allow grantees to learn about one another and their programming. Office hours have increased communication among grantees and have improved grant management and execution rates. Specific training topics were included during each office hour session. Topics consisted of reimbursement documentation, reporting requirements, referrals, underserved veterans, application training, and overall grant management.

The Grant Manager provided 1:1 technical assistance to numerous grantees over the fiscal year. An updated and improved Grantee Handbook was provided to all grantees with specific details on VTF policies, procedures, and processes.

We continue to seek input from grantees for further program enhancements.

In April of 2024, a Grant Specialist was hired to focus on the grantee reimbursements. Due to the additional staff person, grantees received reimbursements within a 10-business day turnaround.

The training of Board members to determine an organization's capacity and to make funding decisions accordingly is ongoing. The Board received application and ongoing grant training.

As always, we continued to expand outreach to eligible entities to increase the saturation throughout the state. Outreach has been focused on the eastern part of the state which represents the biggest gaps in VTF funding. Due to the increased outreach efforts, seven new applicants applied for VTF funding.

Grantee Success Stories:

American Legion Post 62

The American Legion Post 62, located in Moffat County, helps veterans with housing, emergency financial assistance, heating costs, and any other unforeseen emergency assistance which may arise for veterans in need.

Veteran Trust Fund monies were able to help a veteran in need, who after abdominal surgery, lost his career as a plumber. His car was not running due to much needed repairs. Not having a car created a hardship for this veteran as he could not get to work. American Legion Post 62 was able to pay for his auto repairs, through VTF funding, and now he has reliable transportation to get to and from his place of employment.

VFW Post 5231

VFW Post 5231 assists veterans in need of material and financial assistance including housing, emergency car repairs, food security, gas, and health and well-being in Montezuma County.

On September 16, 2023, VFW Post 5231 held their annual Stand Down event. The Veterans Trust Fund grant provides monies to ensure the success of this event. The event is designed to help veterans find the help they need while understanding that everyone runs into difficulties. The event served 220 veterans. During the event, veterans received medical help, housing assistance, employment assistance, coats, blankets and sleeping bags, and food.

VFW Post 4031

VFW Post 4031, serving La Plata County, provides financial assistance to local veterans to pay for rent or temporary housing, vehicle repair, utility bills, small appliances, groceries, and other emergency needs.

VFW Post 4031 helped a veteran with the Veteran Trust Fund grant that was experiencing housing instability. Through grant funds, they were able to assist him with warm clothing, boots, and food. With the help and support, this veteran was able to turn his life around and now has many months of sobriety behind him. Grant funds were also used to help this veteran refurbish his bike, enabling him to get around town and have some mode of transportation.

Please see the attached list for all grantees awarded Veterans Trust Fund monies.

In Closing: Over the past nineteen years, the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs, through the Colorado Veterans Trust Fund, have provided direct benefits to tens of thousands of veterans throughout the State, ranging from emergency assistance, housing assistance, employment related assistance, utility assistance, and transportation to Veterans Affairs medical facilities. We respectfully request the full amount of funding of 1% of the total Tobacco Master Settlement for FY2025.

FY2024 Veterans Trust Fund Grantees

Grantee	Location	Purpose	Amount Awarded
American Legion Post 0009	Bent, Crowley, Otero counties, Kiowa, Prowers, Pueblo	Transportation, Emergency Financial Assistance	\$25,000.00
American Legion Post 11	Las Animas County	Emergency Financial Assistance, Mental Health Services, Transportation	\$26,000.00
VFW Post 12063	Custer, Fremont, Huerfano, and Pueblo County	Emergency Financial Assistance	\$60,000.00 Modified Budget
Westcliffe Post #170 American Legion	Custer, Fremont, Pueblo, Huerfano counties	Emergency Financial Assistance	\$40,000.00
American Legion Post 2	Pueblo, Huerfano, Las Animas	Emergency Financial Assistance, Emergency Medical and Dental Care	\$30,000.00 Modified Budget
American Legion Post 22	Adams, Jefferson, Weld, Boulder, Larimer	Housing, Emergency Financial Assistance	\$60,000.00
American Legion Post 44	Routt, Hayden, Oak Creek, Steamboat Springs, Yampa,	Transportation, Emergency Financial Assistance	\$4,200.00

	Moffat, Jackson Counties		
American Legion Post 62	Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt, counties	Financial Assistance, Transportation	\$8,000.00
Justin Bauer Memorial American Legion Post 67	Larimer, Bellevue, Berthoud, Drake, Estes Park, Fort Collins, Glen Haven, Laporte, Livermore, Loveland, Masonville, Red Feather Lakes, Timnath, Wellington	Financial Assistance, Stand Down Event	\$32,000.00
American Legion Post 75	Montezuma, Dolores, La Plata counties	Financial Assistance, Stand Down Event, Transportation, Mental Health Services	\$45,000.00
American Legion Post 88	Grand, Summit, Jackson, Chaffee, Eagle, Routt, Park counties	Financial Assistance, Transportation, Health Care	\$35,000.00
Disabled American Veterans Chapter 44	Montezuma, Dolores, LaPlata counties	Financial Assistance, Recreation Passes	\$65,000.00
Disabled American Veterans Chapter 21	Denver Metro Area, Adams,	Housing, Transportation,	\$22,500.00

	Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert	Electric Wheelchair lifts, Canteen Books for VA Patients	
Disabled American Veterans Chapter 48	La Plata, San Juan, Archuleta, Mineral, Montezuma, Dolores Counties	Financial Assistance, Mental Health, Recreation Passes, Transportation	\$35,000.00
Veteran Community Living Center Fitzsimmons	Denver metro, state-wide	Chairs for Activity Rooms	\$28,150.00
Veteran Community Living Center Homelake	Rio Grande, Alamosa, Mineral, Conejos, Costillo, Saguache	Park Pavilion for Veteran Residents	\$92,210.00
Veteran Community Living Center McCandless	Fremont County	Outdoor Railroad Garden, Therapy Dog, Coffee Bar Items, Scandent Subscription	\$36,269.00
Veteran Community Living Center Rifle	Rifle, Western Slope	Tabletops, Bases, and Chairs for Dining Room Tables	\$63,407.00
Veteran Community Living Center Spanish Peaks	Southeast Region/Huerfano County	Vital Sign Monitors, Patio Furniture	\$11,209.00
VFW Post 2788	Fremont, Custer, Pueblo Counties	Financial Assistance, Stand Down Event,	\$15,000.00

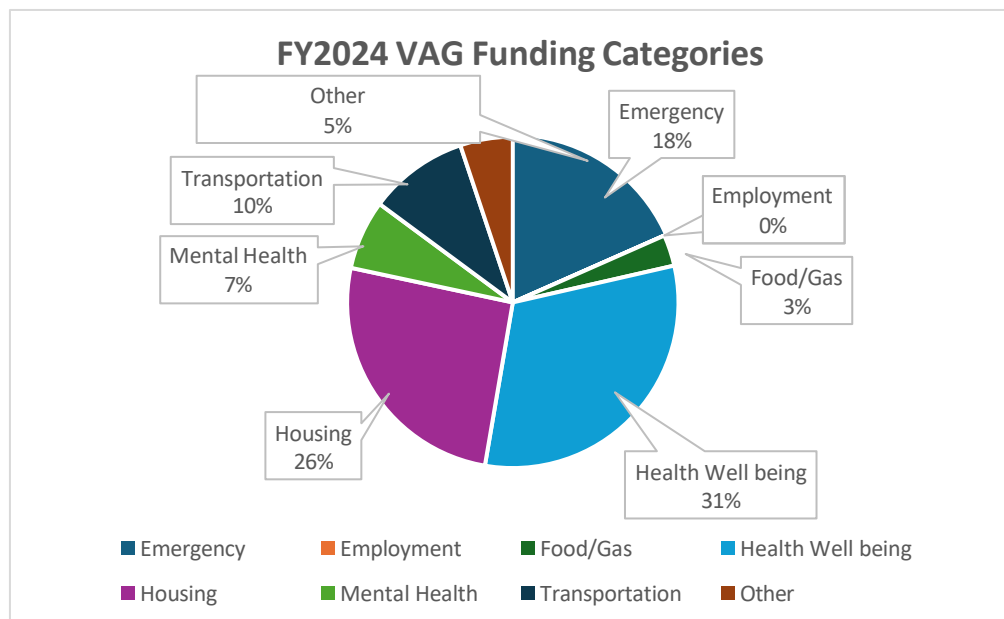
		Housing, Mental Health, Medical, Transportation	
Lee Marts VFW Post 3571	Delta County	Financial Assistance	\$3,500.00
VFW Memorial Bldg Post 4031	La Plata, Archuleta, Dolores, Mineral, Montezuma, San Juan Counties	Financial Assistance, Post Relief Fund	\$20,000.00
VFW Post 4051	Colorado Springs and El Paso County	Financial Assistance, Mental Health, Transportation, Well-being	\$25,000.00
VFW Post 5843	Northwestern Colorado, Rio Blanco County	Transportation, Financial Assistance	\$3,850.00
VFW Post 5231	Montezuma County, Mesa, Montrose, Dolores, La Plata Counties	Stand Down Event, Transportation, Financial Assistance	\$70,000.00
TOTAL AWARDED <i>(This amount reflects mid-year budget modifications)</i>			\$856,295.00

Veterans Assistance Grant

FY 2024

Pursuant to C.R.S. 28-5-712, legislative appropriations authorized the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) Veterans Assistance Grant (VAG) to receive \$850,000 from the general fund for FY 2024, with \$50,000 going to administrative functions. Of these funds, a total of \$800,000 was designated to be granted to non-profit or governmental agencies to provide assistance to veterans in the state. Additionally, a total of \$157,886 from the VAG Cash Fund was allocated, all of which was designated for grant funding. This resulted in a total of \$957,886 of funds available to be awarded to organizations throughout the state serving veterans. \$957,000 was awarded to grantees for FY2024. The following is a final report of the administration of those monies.

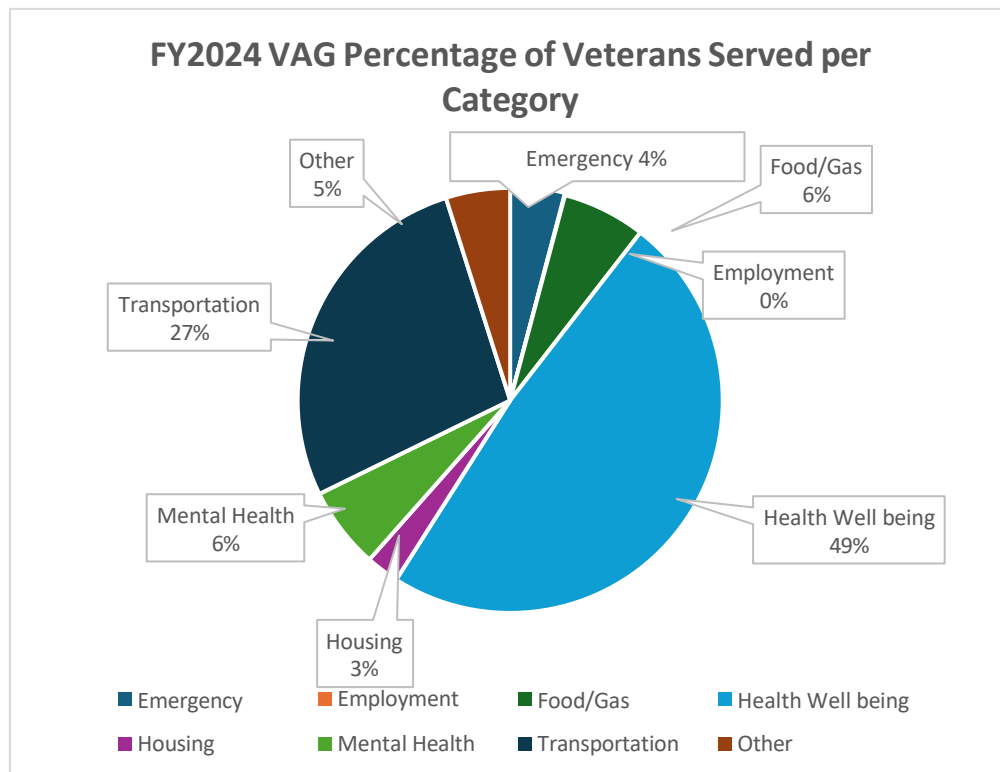
A total of 28 non-profit organizations and governmental entities throughout the state were awarded grants totaling \$957,000. The direct services provided through the grants include the provision of health and well-being (31%), housing (25%), 502 emergency financial services (18%), transportation (10%), mental health (7%), food/gas cards (3%), and other services (5%).



Categories Served

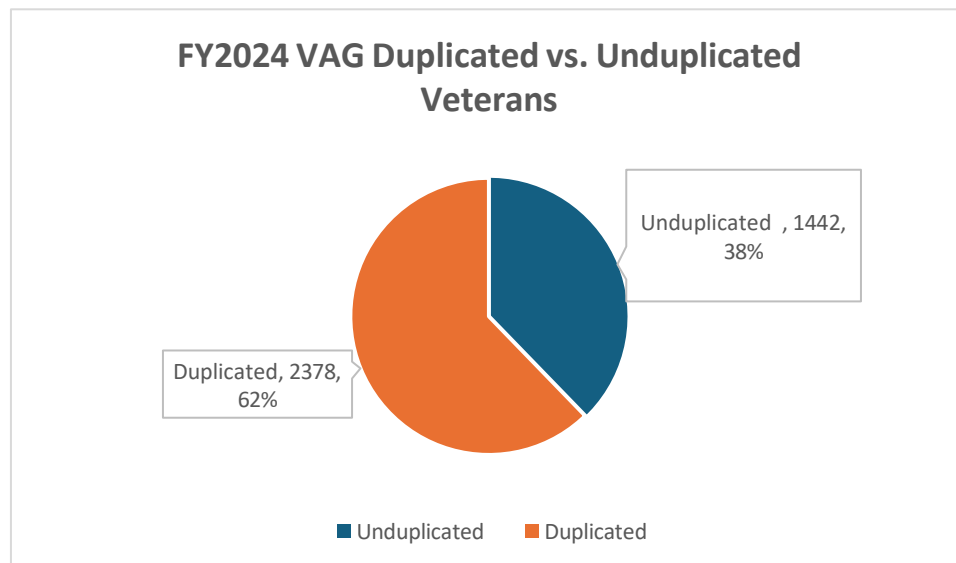
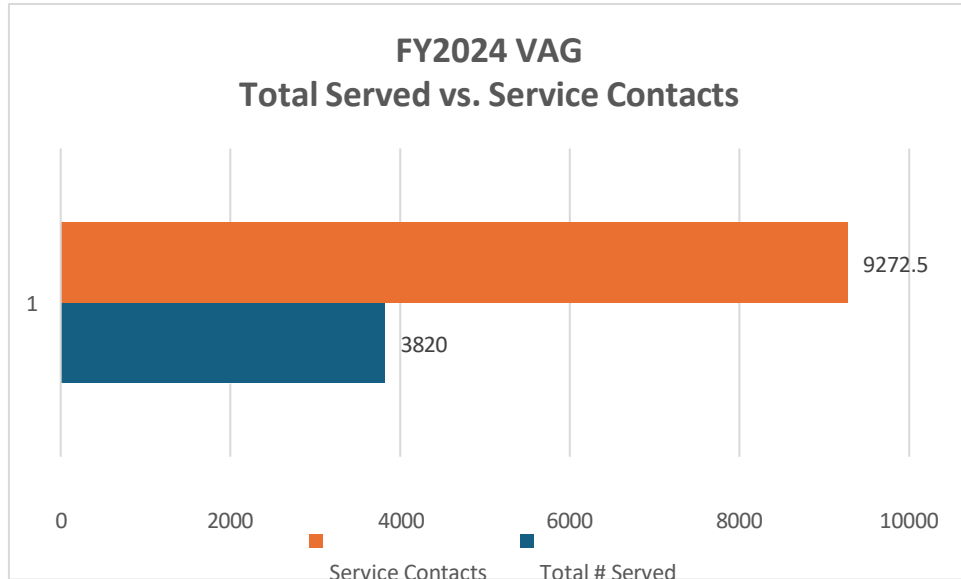
A total of \$906,332.21 was expended by the grantees, resulting in an 95% execution rate, which is 6% higher than the prior fiscal year. The grant programs continued to address health and well-being for veterans, spending 48% of the funds in this category. Programs addressed health and well-being by providing Veterans with emotional support animals, therapeutic recreational activities, and equine therapy.

With the rising cost of living, VAG funds were instrumental in providing emergency financial assistance to veterans in need. Funds were used to assist veterans with high utility costs, home repairs, home necessities, childcare, and other emergency needs.



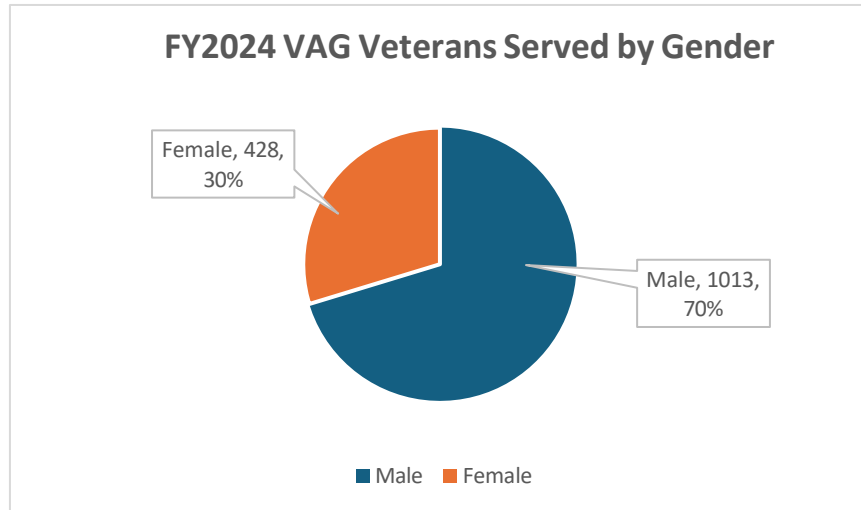
Number of Veterans Served

During FY 2024, 3,820 veterans were served through the Veterans Assistance Grant. Of those, 2,378 were duplicated service contacts and 1,442 were unduplicated. A total of 9,272 service contacts were made.



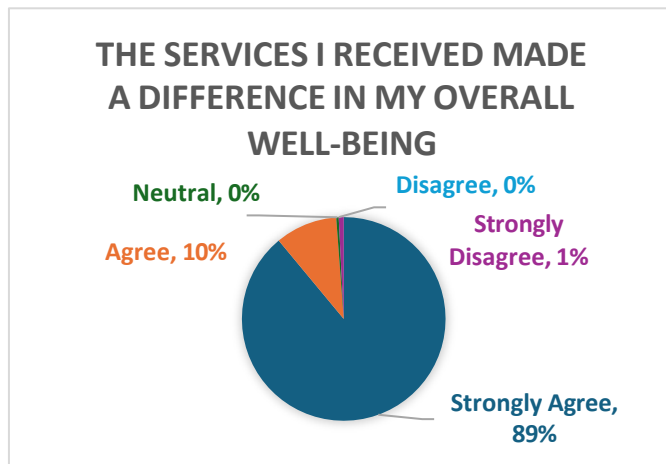
Veterans Served by Gender

70% of the veterans assisted were men and 30% were women. The number of women veterans served has significantly increased. Training and outreach to women veterans helped raise the total amount of women served.

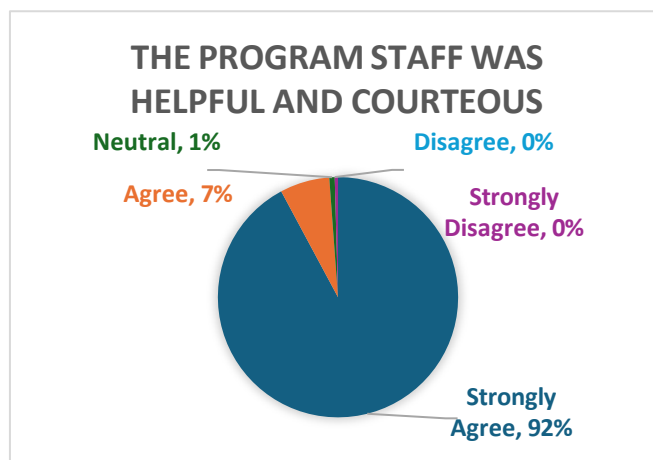


Program Effectiveness

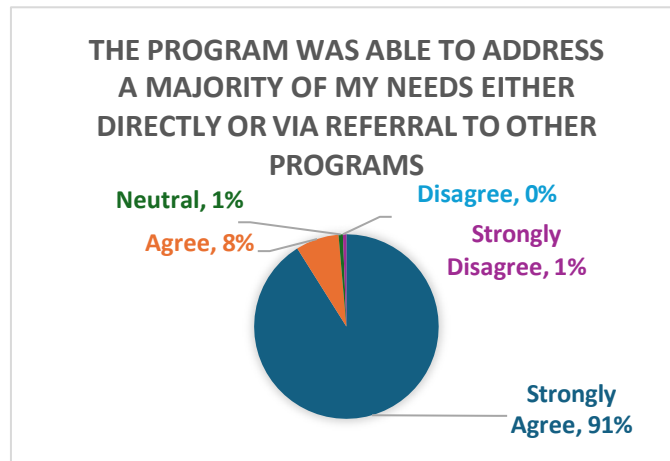
Program evaluation measures include a service recipient survey to measure the effectiveness of the services provided by the grantees; and to measure the outcomes or impact of those services. The survey uses a standard Likert scale to assess both the grantee program and changes in the overall health and well-being of veterans served. Overall, most veterans rated the services positively, with the majority reporting an improvement in their own well-being, as well as an increase in the well-being of their families.



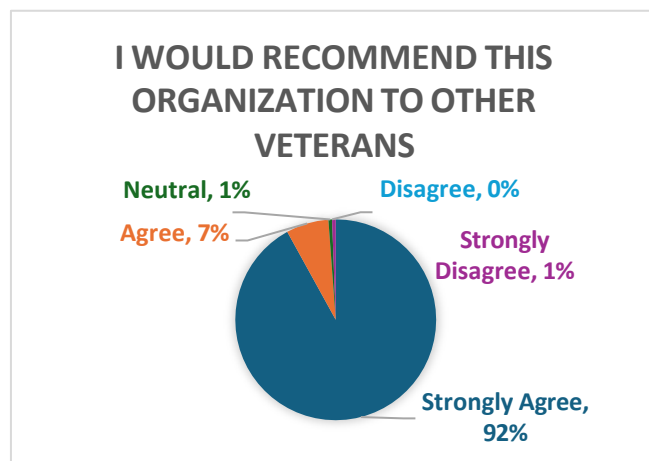
These indicators demonstrate that the services provided align with the statutory intent of improving veterans' overall health and well-being, as well as increasing mental health support.



The majority of respondents indicated that program staff were helpful and courteous.



The majority of respondents indicated that the program met most of their needs, either directly or through referral to another program.



The majority of respondents indicated that they would recommend this organization to other veterans.

Evaluation of the Operation of the Program

The grant programs continued to address health and well-being, emergency financial assistance, family counseling, holistic activities, recreational and therapeutic activities, transportation, and mental health needs.

Process improvement is a primary focus in terms of the grant program operations. Minor changes in processes led to more efficiency and effectiveness in programming. The increase in the number of grantee trainings via webinars and one-on-one sessions continued throughout the year. The Grant Manager conducted 11 application trainings. Grantee input was sought several times throughout the

reporting period. Office hours were held on a weekly to bi-weekly basis to cover unmet training needs, provide technical assistance, and outreach to underserved veterans, while allowing grantees to learn about one another and their programming.

Office hours have increased communication among grantees and have improved grant management, along with execution rates. Specific training topics were included during each office hour session. Topics consisted of reimbursement documentation, reporting requirements, referrals, underserved veterans, application training, and overall grant management. The Grant Manager provided 1:1 technical assistance to numerous grantees over the fiscal year. An updated and improved Grantee Handbook was provided to all grantees with specific details on VAG policies, procedures, and processes. We continue to seek input from grantees to further program enhancements.

In April of 2024, a Grant Specialist was hired to focus on the grantee reimbursements. Due to the additional staff person, grantees received reimbursements within a 10-business day turnaround.

The training of the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs to determine an organization's capacity and to make funding decisions accordingly is ongoing. The Board received application and ongoing grant training.

We continued to expand outreach to eligible entities to increase the saturation throughout the state. Outreach was focused on the eastern part of the state and underserved veteran populations, specifically women veterans. Because of the outreach efforts, 13 new programs applied for FY2024 grant funding.

Success Stories

Black Ops Rescue

Black Ops Rescue is dedicated to pairing homeless pets with veterans in need for the good of both the veteran and the pet. Black Ops Rescue builds relationships with the veterans they serve and documents outcomes with performance surveys throughout the companion animal's lifetime. Funding through the Veteran's Assistance Grant assisted veterans with new pet adoptions.

An Air Force and Army veteran and Purple Heart recipient, reached out to Black Ops

rescue shortly after his beloved small dog passed away. He and his wife were heartbroken. Despite the currently high population at shelters and rescues, small dogs are often hard to find. Black Ops Rescue reached out to their partner rescues and were able to make a match for the veteran and his wife. VAG funds were used to pay his adoption fee, provided all supplies, and provided medical care.

Women Marines Association Colorado Columbines

The Women Marines Association provides financial assistance to veterans in need who have tried other resources and have been unable to get the assistance needed. This agency serves the entire population of Colorado, as they do not limit themselves to the Denver area.

One veteran that they assisted had been to the Rocky Mountain Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment Center three times and was recommended to do an alternative treatment. He needed to stay in a Residence Inn during the treatment in Denver, as he lived in Colorado Springs. The housing was going to cost the veteran approximately \$6,000. VAG funds were used to pay for some of his stay to complete the treatment successfully. This veteran would not have been able to receive treatment without the assistance of the VAG program.

Veterans Community Project

The Veterans Community Project (VCP) believes that true solutions to homelessness look at the whole problem and the unique needs of the individual veteran. For this reason, Veterans Community Project focuses on transitional housing, supportive programming, and everything in between. The VCP understands that rapid rehousing and prevention matter in the total equation to obtaining and maintaining permanent housing solutions. The VCP provides veterans and their families with support to cover rent and other household expenses, such as utilities and other costs that contribute to housing stability during a financial crisis.

A Marine Corps veteran came to the VCP for help after being laid off from his job. With the support from the Veterans Assistance Grant program, this veteran was connected with the local county workforce office and VCP continued to provide ongoing case management support and navigation throughout the process. With

emergency assistance, he was able to focus on searching for a new job to support himself, and his 14-year-old son, without the worry that he would lose his housing options. After receiving rental assistance, through the Veterans Assistance Grant, he was able to find a job and is now self-sufficient once again.

FY2024 Veterans Assistance Grantees

Agency	Geographic Area(s) Served	Services to be Provided	Amount Awarded	Amount Expended
Alamosa County	Alamosa County, Rio Grande, Mineral, Saguache, Costilla, Conejos	Financial Assistance	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00
Arapahoe County	Arapahoe, Aurora, Adams Counties	Financial assistance, program costs, physical and mental well being	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Lodge #1319	Prowers, Kiowa, Bent, Baca, Otero Counties	Financial assistance	\$17,690.00	\$17,651.00
Black Ops Rescue	Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Douglas, El Paso, Jefferson Counties	Pet Therapy	\$15,000.00	\$14,949.23
Boulder County	Boulder, Firestone, Frederick, Dacono, Mead, Berthoud, Allenspark, Nederland	Financial Assistance	\$15,000.00	\$11,999.94
City and County of Broomfield	Broomfield County	Financial Assistance	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00

Colorado Coalition for the Homeless	Denver Metro Area	Employment related services	\$5,000.00	\$4,661.30
Costilla County	Costilla County	Financial assistance, suicide prevention, counseling, vehicle repair and other emergency services	\$21,000.00	\$21,000.00
Douglas County	Douglas County	Financial Assistance	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
Grand County	Grand, Lake, Routt, Eagle, Chaffee, South Park, Park counties	Transportation, financial assistance	\$26,600.00	\$26,595.45
Gunnison County	Gunnison, Hindsdale Counties	Mental well being, physical well being, emergency financial assistance	\$21,000.00	\$20,985.19
Healing Warriors	Larmer, Pueblo, Fort Collins, Denver, Longmont, Colorado Springs	Integrative Healing Therapies Non-narcotic treatment	\$53,000.00	\$53,000.00

Home Front Military Network	Statewide	Financial Assistance	\$65,000.00	\$65,000.00
La Puente Home	La Puente	Transportation, tuition, rent	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00
Las Animas County Veterans Council	Trinidad and Las Animas County	Financial services, behavioral health	\$20,000.00	\$19,115.91
Mount Carmel Veterans Service Center	El Paso, Teller, Pueblo, Las Animas, Custer, Rio Grande	Financial Assistance, case management, Stand Down, Transitional Housing Initiative	\$65,000.00	\$65,000.00
Operation Revamp	Mesa, Grand Junction, Palisade, Fruita, Clifton, Delta, Loma, Parachute, Montrose	Healing Arts, Art Therapy, Financial Assistance	\$50,000.00	\$23,624.56
Park County	Park County	Emergency financial assistance, mental health, transportation	\$30,000.00	\$24,153.83

Pikes Peak Workforce Center	El Paso, Teller, Pueblo	Work force assistance, emergency financial assistance	\$10,000.00	\$9,994.50
Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing	Denver	Fishing equipment for outdoor recreation	\$3,825.00	\$3,825.00
Pueblo County	City and County Pueblo	Stand Down event	\$7,000.00	\$6,997.10
Regents of the University of Colorado	Denver, Front Range	Dental Services	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Remount Foundation	Front Range, El Paso County	Equine-assisted Therapy	\$66,885.00	\$62,750.66
Sobriety House	Denver, Statewide	Residential substance abuse treatment	\$65,000.00	\$64,628.00
Telluride Adaptive Sports	Statewide	Outdoor recreation	\$50,000.00	\$42,674.64
Veterans Community Project	Northern Colorado, Metro Denver	Emergency assistance, project costs, transitional housing support	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00

Vets 4 Vets Archuleta County	Southwest Colorado	Emergency assistance, mental health transportation	\$90,000.00	\$87,725.90
Women Marines Association	Statewide	Financial Assistance	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00
			\$957,000.00	\$906,332.21

Status Report
Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado November 1,
2023, through October 31, 2024
to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs
December 1, 2024

1. Background

The Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado was authorized by the Colorado Legislature in 1999 to honor Colorado veterans. A grant to build the cemetery was obtained from the United States Veterans Administration (VA). Construction began in June 2001 and was completed in September 2002. The cemetery is located on 22.5 acres at 2830 Riverside Parkway, Grand Junction, Colorado, just east of the Grand Junction Regional Center and south of the Grand Junction Readiness Center.

The cemetery opened on September 5, 2002, with an initial capacity of 3,337 units; 1,758 units for casketed remains and 1,579 units for cremated remains (of which 861 were columbarium [wall] niches). Additionally, 775 memorial garden plots were available for veterans whose remains were scattered, not recovered, buried at sea or were donated to science. In 2011, two new columbaria were added to the cemetery, providing an added 336 niches. At this time, 392 in-ground niches were also added. In 2015, a substantial expansion project increased spaces by 1,979 gravesites, 672 columbarium niches, and 628 in-ground niches, along with infrastructure improvements. In 2020 a third Capital Construction project added eight new columbaria holding an additional 1,344 niches. Improvements to the irrigation and retention ponds also took place at this time. Two of these newest columbaria were designed to be double sided, to reduce footprint and allow for future land space needs. The cemetery's capacity can be expanded, as necessary, to meet future needs.



The cemetery is intended to be a dignified final resting place for Colorado's veterans of the armed services, their spouses and eligible dependents. It has been designed to provide a place of meditation and quiet contemplation for veterans, their families and friends. There are memorial walks on either side of the creek running northeast to southwest through the cemetery. These walks pass by five columbaria in front of which are benches for visitors' convenience. The other fourteen columbaria surround the cemetery against the bordering exterior berms. There are landscaped areas for in-ground interments, which are enhanced by thoughtful placement of trees, shrubs, and other plantings. All areas are designed to provide places for individual reflection.

The Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado conveys the appreciation of the people of Colorado to its veterans and their families for answering the call to duty and faithfully and honorably serving the United States of America and the State of Colorado. *Status Report, Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado, November 1, 2023, through October 31, 2024, to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs, December 01, 2024*

2. Physical Layout and Facilities (Figure 1)

The Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado occupies 22.5 acres of land owned by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Approximately 15 acres of this land is developed and in use. There are four facilities onsite: an Administration Building; a Committal Shelter; a Pump House; and, a Maintenance/Storage Building, (known as the West Shop).



Status Report, Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado, November 1, 2023, through October 31, 2024, to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs, December 01, 2024

3. Organization

The organizational structure of the cemetery includes a Cemetery Director, one Cemetery Program Assistant II and one Cemetery Support Assistant, a Grounds Superintendent, one Grounds Lead and three full-time Grounds Staff.

The cemetery is an approved VA Work Study site, and there is currently a US Army veteran from Colorado Mesa University filling the position. This veteran student contributes 20 hours a week in the administration office.

This year, the cemetery was approved to participate in the CMU intern program and has one intern that contributes 15 hours a week and serves as the Cemetery Historian.

4. Functions

There are essentially four functions at the cemetery: management/administrative, operational, maintenance and landscaping. They involve various and diverse duties and responsibilities as listed below.

Management/Administrative Function

ELEMENTS

Interaction/coordination/scheduling (with funeral service providers and/or next- of-kin), to include:

Confirming eligibility of veterans, spouses, dependents for interment
Scheduling interments

Scheduling Committal Shelter
Assigning gravesites, plots,
niches Scheduling use of
Visitors Room

Preparations for interment, to include assisting families, (as needed), with military funeral honors, burial flags, Presidential Memorial Certificates

Making records requests through the National Eligibility office on behalf of the veterans and family members

Interaction with veterans, spouses, dependents, to include:

Responding to inquiries

Distributing forms

Completing early registrations, i.e., early determinations of eligibility Conducting tours

Community outreach events

Assisting with records requests

Records and documentation, to include:

Preparing interment record packages (VMC Forms 01 and 02, copies of discharge documentation, residency paperwork, and interment worksheet) Preparing Interment Remembrances

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Preparing interment tags and temporary markers

Preparing and distributing daily interment schedule & attachments with detailed interment instructions and map locations

Preparing, filing and distributing burial permits to appropriate boards of health Preparing and maintaining manuals

Developing, maintaining and updating procedures Generating and maintaining records, to include:

-Records of interment (using USVA Burial Operations Support System [BOSS])

- Interment logs and registers
- Early registration logs
- Property lists and inventories
- PM schedules
- Non-exempt time records
- Demographic and statistical records
- Maintaining and updating grave locator system
- Preparing work schedules for operations personnel
- Preparing and distributing reimbursement requests for US Department of Veterans Affairs

Monitoring, reporting and, when necessary, taking action in regard to systems, equipment and fleet vehicle service, warranties, guarantees

Performance of routine office tasks to include:

Responding to in-person, telephone, email and written inquiries
Generating routine correspondence and reports

Ordering supplies and equipment
Filing

Tracking non-exempt time records

Initiating and working with division accounting office to provide accuracy with necessary processes

Coordinating volunteer efforts

Assigning tasks, monitoring, generating and approval of VA Intern
Time records

Assigning tasks, monitoring and maintaining appropriate records of
Criminal Justice Community Service clients

Awareness and marketing efforts to include:

Developing, preparing, and distributing presentations, pamphlets, booklets, posters, etc.

Making presentations to Veterans Service Organizations and other groups
Attendance of Community Outreach events and Scheduled VA Town Hall

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Establishing and maintaining liaisons with appropriate agencies and organizations, to include:

National Cemetery Administration and other USVA agencies
Veterans Service Organizations

Veterans Service Officers

USVA Medical Center - Grand Junction
Grand Junction Regional Center

CDHS Division of Facilities Management
Community Service Groups

Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Colorado Army National Guard

Active-Duty Military Honor Guard Teams

Training and instruction to include:

Attendance at appropriate seminars and training sessions
Training of new hires and support personnel

Research and registration for position appropriate training
Weekly safety training with staff

Headstones, niche covers, monuments and memorial plaques to include:

Providing guidance for ordering headstones and niche covers along with those wishing to erect monuments, purchase memorial pillar, niche vases, rose and/or tree plaques

Ordering headstones and niche covers

Inspecting headstones and niche covers upon receipt for accuracy of inscription and compliance with standards

Processing associated paperwork and making required entries into BOSS
Selecting appropriate locations for monuments

Assigning memorial plaques

Generating and maintaining associated records and correspondence

Advising families when headstones, niche covers, and/or memorial plaques have been set

Gifts and donations to include:

Processing financial gifts and donations for memorial plaques, niche vases and general cash donations, and distributing associated funds

Preparing and sending personalized 'Thank you' or tax receipts to donors

Operational Function

ELEMENTS

Burial Operations, to include:

Preparing and cleaning committal shelter for services, to include setting flags, tables and sweeping, removal of snow and webbing, and the cleaning of benches

Preparing and transporting casket carriage to committal shelter

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Setting up and preparing interment locations, to include identifying, marking, opening graves/niches, placing drapes and placement of temporary markers

Transporting caskets/urns and flowers to gravesites
Placing caskets and urns in gravesites

Opening and closing of gravesites and placement of sod and flowers
Setting and removing headstones, niche covers and vases

Planning, preparation and hosting veterans' events, to include:

Memorial Day Ceremony

Female Veterans Recognition
Day Veterans Day Ceremony

Veterans Day Parade

Wreaths Across America Ceremony

Quarterly Military Honors for Unaccompanied Veterans
National Vietnam War Veterans Day

Saluting Branches Day
Missing in America Project

Safety and security to include:

Operating fire and security alarm system

Monitoring and operation of facilities security cameras

Monthly inspect of on-site and equipment fire extinguishers and scheduling of yearly servicing

Monthly inspection of on-site AED units, and scheduling of yearly inspection and service

Maintenance Function

ELEMENTS

Installing monuments, memorial plaques and vases

Custodial maintenance (i.e., janitorial services) to

include:

Maintain administrative office including restrooms Sweep, mop, dust and vacuum floors

Empty trash and transport to dumpster
Wash windows

Replace consumables

Fleet vehicle and equipment maintenance to include:

Change oil

Replace filters

Lubricate as needed
blades Clean equipment

Sharpen/balance

Effect minor repairs

Schedule more extensive repairs and servicing

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Facilities repair and upkeep to

include: Monthly facility inspections Replace light bulbs

Replace filters

Clean and maintain facilities Effect minor repairs

Schedule more extensive repairs and servicing

Snow removal to include:

Remove snow from walkways and roadways using plow and/or sweeper
Remove snow from committal shelter using handheld tools

Removal of snow from rooftops utilizing snow brooms

De-icing

De-ice walkways, Committal Shelter and roadways using commercial product and/or handheld tools

Landscaping Function

ELEMENTS

Developing landscaping schedule of services

Based on varied and diverse input, develop schedule(s) for different landscaping tasks

Irrigation system management and operation to include:

Install, repair, replace sprinkler heads and/or other components
Monitor and adjust watering times in zones

Monitor, operate and maintain irrigation system
computer Service and lubricate pumps

Monitor system to ensure proper operation
Maintain ponds, stream corridor and water features

Implement contingency measures in event of system failure
Test system at beginning of season and ready for operation
Shut down and winterize the system at end of season

Landscape maintenance, to include:

Installing/replacing sod	Aerating	Mowing
Seeding	Fertilizing	
Weeding	Pruning	
Pest control	Trimming	
Irrigating	Planting	

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5. Extra-Curricular Activities

In addition to their daily functions, staff at the cemetery are heavily involved in other veterans-related tasks and activities on the Western Slope.

Administrative staff is responsible in assisting and working with the Grand Valley Combined Honor Guard. The cemetery director is a member of the Executive Board of Directors. As such, the director is tasked with the responsibility of helping to oversee the Honor Guard and ensuring its efficient and effective deployment. The current cemetery program assistant II, also a member of the Executive Board as well as being a member of the Honor Guard is the custodian of the Honor Guard Rifles. The Grand Valley Combined Honor Guard has performed over 4,301 Military Funeral Honors and numerous flag presentations, parades, school appearances and other ceremonies during its seventeen-year existence.

The Honor Guard's popularity has increased to the point where it is in constant demand. Again, this year the Honor Guard, which consists of approximately 29 active members, has had to decline numerous invitations because of a lack of resources.

Since implementation in October of 2016, The Quarterly Military Honors Service continues every quarter. During this service, the Grand Valley Combined Honor Guard performs military honors as a tribute and final salute in memory of all veterans who had no military honors or were unaccompanied during their committal, for the preceding three months. The Commander reads a list of the veterans' name, Branch of Service, and War Period served. Along with the GVCHG, the ceremony includes the Patriot Guard Riders, COARNG Team III, the Rocky Mountain Scots (Bagpipers), the Veterans Memorial Bell, and a cannon shot. We have provided Military Honors Quarterly for twenty-nine veterans during this reporting period.

The cemetery's management/administrative staff have been, and continue to be, responsible for many other events, including:

Vietnam War Veterans Day - Annually in March

Ceremony at the Vietnam War Memorial Park in Fruita, CO

Ensure proper decoration and set up at the park

Memorial Day Activities - Annually in May

Ensuring proper decoration of Cemetery and placement of individual flags on gravesites
Retreat Ceremony the night before Memorial Day

Flag Retirement and Burning Ceremony the night before Memorial Day
Memorial Day Program and Ceremony at Cemetery

Female Veterans Recognition Day - Annually in June

Ceremony at the Cemetery

Veterans Day Activities - Annually in November

Ensuring proper decoration of cemetery

Veterans Day Service and proper decoration at the park

Veterans Day Parade supporting the Grand Valley Combined Honor Guard

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Other Veterans-Related Activities (in Grand Junction, Fruita and Palisade)

Fourth of July Parades and Ceremonies Veterans Caregiver Summit

Fall Festival Parade Veterans Community Resource
events Wreaths Across America Program Saluting Branches Program

Local School

Presentations Veterans

Stand-downs Town Hall

meetings

6. Burial Operations

Gravesite Utilization (Figure 2)

Currently, cremation is the preferred disposition, making up 71% of all interments. 68% of those opting for cremation choose a columbarium niche over an in-ground niche.

	Total Available	In Use	Remainder Available	Percent In Use	Percent Available	Average Monthly Use	Months Remaining to Zero	Approx. Date of Zero
Wall Niche	3213	2294	919	71.40%	28.60%	8.50	108.06	9/15/2033
In-Ground Niche	1545	1137	408	73.59%	26.41%	4.22	96.79	10/12/2032
Single Vault	733	318	415	43.38%	56.62%	1.18	352.01	9/29/2053
Double Vault	1748	907	841	51.89%	48.11%	3.36	250.11	5/17/2045
Conventional	177	33	144	18.64%	81.36%	0.12	1,177.02	7/5/2121
Memorial Garden Plot	775	259	516	33.42%	66.58%	0.96	537.38	12/20/2068
	8,191	4,948	3,243					

**Cemetery
Opened: 9/5/2002**

Figure 2

(Note: Reserved spaces are allowed when there are family members who are also veterans and they choose to exercise their right to an individual gravesite. In those cases, a space is reserved for the survivor next to the decedent; totals do not reflect double occupancies)

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2022 - 2024 Interments by Month (Figure 3)

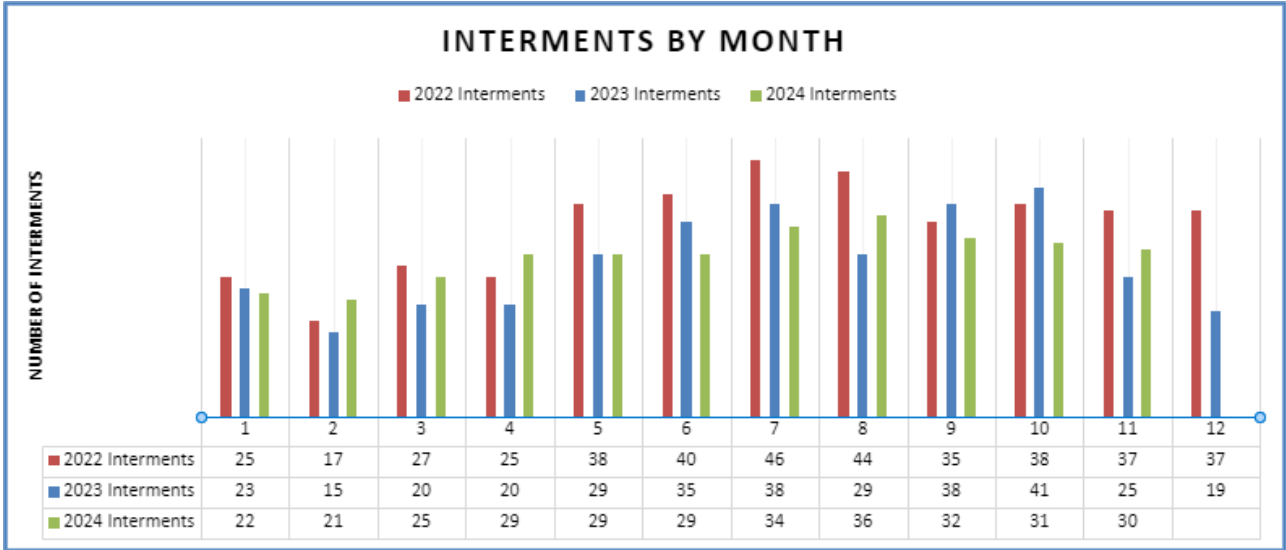
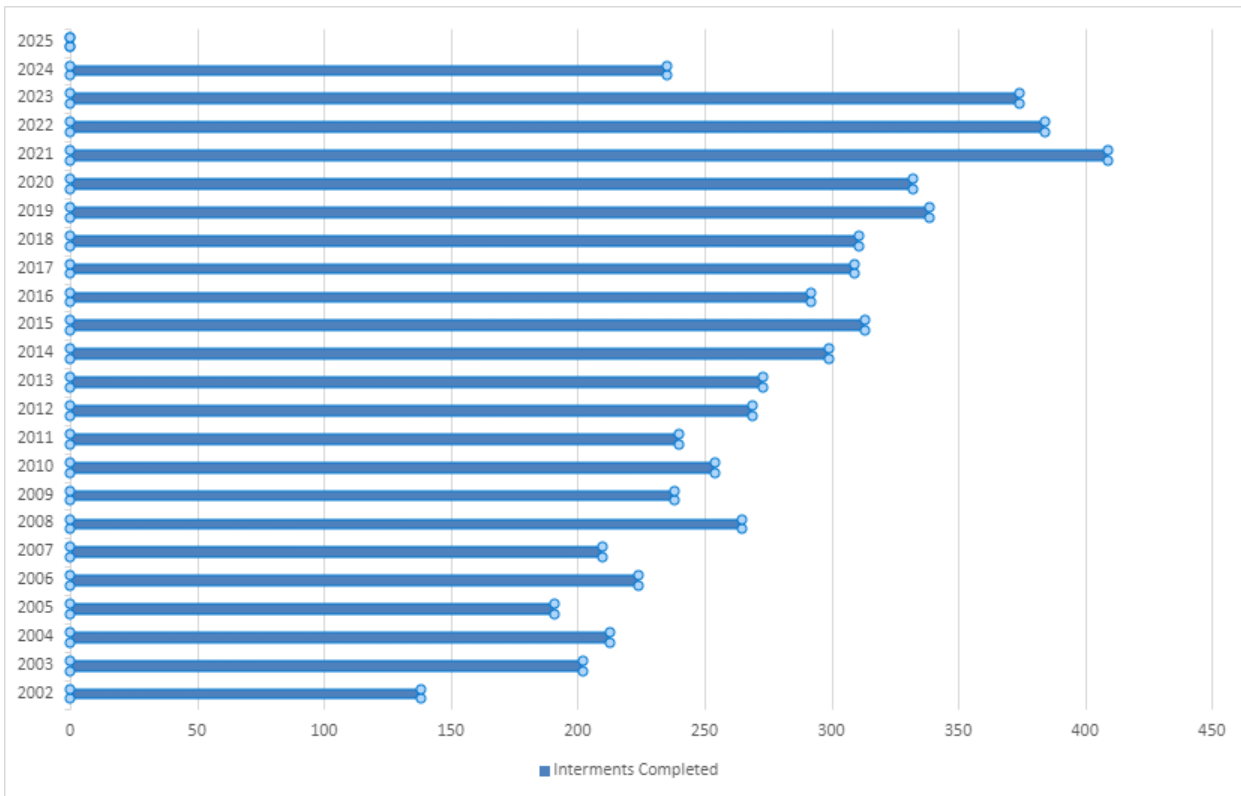


Figure 3

Interments by Year (Figure 4)

The interments of 6,367 veterans, spouses and/or dependents are broken down by year below



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7. Customer Satisfaction

In 2022, The cemetery chose to transition back to paper surveys that are handed to families by cemetery representatives. In 2021 we found that our families were not comfortable using the previously implemented computerized Qualtrics surveys. On the surveys, there is room for any comments a respondent may wish to make. The responses the cemetery has received from the most recent surveys remain positive and appreciative of staff and services provided.

All responses are kept on file at the cemetery and are available to anyone wishing to review them. In addition, the cemetery has maintained a log at the front desk where visitors were invited to share their opinions.

8. Early Registrations

To better serve the local veterans' community, and at the same time attempt to predict future needs, the Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado offers an Early Registration, a service that is not usually provided at most veteran's cemeteries. Six years ago, the National Cemetery Administration started a similar program to pre-determine eligibility in a National Cemetery. The NCA's turn-around time is approximately twelve months from the date of mailing to receipt of acknowledgement.

The Early Registration services we provide, allows a veteran to receive an early determination of eligibility for interment at this cemetery. A veteran will complete a cemetery form, (VMC Form 1) and submit it with a copy of his/her discharge paper, (e.g., DD214). If the veteran's home of record was not in Colorado, proof of current Colorado residency is required.

The cemetery determines the veteran's eligibility for interment and keeps copies of the paperwork on file so that at the time of death, it will be one less task for the family to worry about. For those who have not completed early registration, instances where eligibility for interment could not be immediately determined, (i.e., the family could not find the discharge paper) slows the process.

Although the cemetery has the ability to expedite the receipt of documentation, (in the event a death has occurred), a delay of interment still exists until National Personnel Records Center is able to locate and supply the information.

The ancillary benefit to the cemetery of such a program, is that it allows cemetery staff to estimate future interment needs and incorporate the information into short-, and long-range planning. Being able to anticipate the future needs of our veteran community and their families, allows us to serve them better in the future.

As of October 31, 2024, 2,316 veterans have completed the early registration. This represents 5,340 likely interments, including these veterans, their spouses and eligible dependents.

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9. Issues and Concerns

Cemetery Funding

Burial reimbursements from the VA were increased to \$978.00 per veteran in October 2024. This is up from \$948.00 as previously reported. This amount represents 70% of the actual cost to inter an individual veteran. Spouses or other eligible dependents are not reimbursed. Federal reimbursements only account for about half of the cemetery's budget.

Currently, the accrued balance of outstanding reimbursements is at \$15,255.00 for this reporting period.

Equipment Replacement/Repair

The usage of cemetery equipment has increased greatly as interment numbers continue to rise. This leads to an increased cost of scheduled equipment maintenance as well as unforeseen equipment failure.

We foresee future needs to include additional commercial mowers, and UTV.

The three military Jeeps that are utilized for interment services, have broken down this year. At this time, the Navy Jeep has been fully repaired and is functioning for services. The Army Jeep is in for maintenance and the Us Air Force jeep is down, is awaiting parts for repair. Regular and continued maintenance on these vehicles, will be required to keep them all functioning without fail.

Personnel Issues and Needs

The cemetery staff currently consists of eight FTE's, three in the office, one grounds supervisor, one grounds lead and three level 1 grounds crew members.

As interments increase yearly, so does the number of columbaria niches and headstones to maintain. There will be future need to increase the grounds crew by an additional FTE to continue to maintain the cemetery.

Due to the different ages of our engraved markers (Upright and Niche), the painted lettering (Lithichrome) was designed to fade. However, with our markers (grey granite) the markers become illegible. Changes within the NCA, no longer allow the cemetery to reorder illegible

markers. With funding from the CBVA, we have been able to contract an individual to re-lithichrome the markers on the upright headstones and niche covers. This allows the cemetery to continue to honor the veterans, spouses and dependents with their markers being readable. In the future, this contract person will need to be replaced with an FTE to continue with the restoration of the markers.

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Roadway and Sidewalks

Concrete maintenance is a continued need at the cemetery. Concrete hazards are currently being mitigated with temporary repairs. As the cemetery ages, yearly expenses will increase for the care and maintenance of the roadways, and concrete pathways. An estimated \$25,000/year could be easily spent on repairs and maintenance.

In-Ground Gravesites

We did not experience any issues with in-ground gravesites due to heavy snow and freezing during the current 2023 winter season. Our winter has been mild and remains easy to excavate with the mini- excavator or by hand digging graves.

Stonework

A combination of water and weather conditions continue to create damage to those older Columbarium with stone veneer.

Columbaria, (up to 22 years old), are starting to show evidence of damages to the stone grouting. These damages are also caused by the winter weather conditions of freezing and thawing. Treatment to these columbaria will be needed in the next two years.

It has been determined that the sloped precast tops that were added as a design change to the newest columbarium, would benefit these older units, (with stone veneer), and impede future damages. In February 2021, these additions were priced out at \$25,000 for the four older columbaria. Capital Construction funds were not available to cover this expense. Capital Improvement Project planning is currently taking place and will possibly cover this need.

Main Line Irrigation System Breaks

We continued to experience major breaks in the irrigation system water lines this past year. This is due to the age of the system, its heavy usage and, in some cases, faulty installations. It continues to be a costly spring ritual.

Status Report, Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado, November 1, 2023, through October 31, 2024, to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs, December 01, 2024

Burial Operations Support System (BOSS)

BOSS is up and running without any issues. With the hiring of the new cemetery support assistant in September, it has given us the ability to devote specific time to the BOSS system in ordering markers without delays. The new support assistant has started the process in obtaining the required credentials to access BOSS and has started training by the Cemetery Support Assistant.

The new Dyna Touch Kiosk Operating System has started having problems and will require further attention and possible additional equipment. (Touch Screen).

NCA Audit

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) triennial compliance audit is scheduled for May 6-7, 2025, for the Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

GJ Regional Center

At this time, The Regional Center has been closed and all residents have been relocated. The Native American Tribes are concerned about the burial location (s) of the students who died at the location, when it was an Indian School. The Colorado School of Mines did come out and used ground penetrating radar in an attempt to find the possible burial sites. As of this date, we have no updated information on that search.

We have expressed interest in a two-acre strip of land adjacent to the cemetery, at no cost to us. This additional land can be utilized for additional burial expansion and/or parking. This zero-dollar exchange has not been approved as of this date and time.

10. Monuments and Memorial Benches

A granite bench was placed by the Patriot Guard Riders, in Honoring all Volunteers of the Grand Valley Combined Honor Guard and Patriot Guard Riders.

VFW Post and Auxiliary 3981 donated additional benches to the cemetery. These donations have been placed in the cemetery assembly area.

The Mount Garfield Chapter of the daughters of the American Revolution started a 'Memorial Walk of Remembrance' at the cemetery in May. The initial donation consisted of three bronze plaques presenting historic moments of the Revolutionary War. It is the intention of the cemetery to continue the walk by adding historical moments and inspirational quotes from different war eras throughout history.

Status Report, Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado, November 1, 2023, through October 31, 2024, to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs, December 01, 2024

A reconditioned Vietnam era ship anchor was donated to the cemetery to honor the navy veterans interred at the cemetery. This massive static display was unveiled on Memorial Day and was donated by a local community member and navy veteran.

A new cemetery sign donated by a Navy Veteran was installed by the Battlefield Cross, just inside the main entrance.

The monument sign at the cemetery gates was renovated to eliminate staining to the granite.

11. Saluting Branches

Saluting Branches was held this year on September 18th, and resulted in the removal of 13 trees, stump grinding, tree pruning, placement of tree stakes, fertilizers, deer guards, watering receptacles and the planting of 25 new trees throughout the cemetery. Participants for this day included 50 volunteers and 8 employees/interns. The cemetery grounds supervisor was the lead on this program and did the coordinating the purchase of trees, organizing and leading the program.

There was a large give-away which consisted of items donated by community partners. Donations for breakfast, lunch, and refreshments, were generously provided by the Mount Garfield Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (breakfast), Little Ceasars Pizza and the Rose Ladies provided the pizza and salad.

Previously established partnerships with Colorado State University, local tree care companies, city arborists and Vermeer made the event a successful one that will continue to benefit the cemetery for years to come.

12. Future Capital Improvements

Plans being developed to add square footage to the administration building for the provision of additional space. This will accommodate staff, interns and work study, as well as to provide private space to meet with grieving families.

13. Honor Guard Stipend

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) pay a stipend to a local veteran's service organization for providing an honor guard detail at the funeral of an honorably discharged veteran. Senate Bill 21-015 appropriates of \$70,000 to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs for this program which is managed through the Veterans Memorial Cemetery. On average, the cemetery pays out \$5,000/month for honor services provided throughout the state.

Status Report, Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado, November 1, 2023, through October 31, 2024, to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs, December 01, 2024

14. In Closing

The Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado continues to be revered in not only the local community, but within the entire State of Colorado. You cannot enter the cemetery without admiring the beauty of the meticulously cared for grounds. Families gather here, not only to grieve, but to celebrate lives, remember friends, and reflect. This location serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made and the commitments promised. It is a history lesson to children and a civics lesson to all. The State, its residents, the Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs are dedicated to veterans, and this cemetery reflects how grateful we are for the service that was selflessly given to our nation.

In addition to the rewarding purpose of the cemetery, we strive to be a contributing presence in the veteran community. With event participation, building of partnerships, outreach and involvement, our purpose spreads wider than our 22 acres.

As this cemetery ages, additional funding to maintain this monument will be needed. Since the opening of the cemetery in 2002, we have grown at an unexpected pace, and we continue to see that this pace is not slowing. Looking forward to future demand, aging facilities, budget constraints and minimal increase in federal funding, there is concern. Exploration of additional funding continues, with the intention to maintain the high levels service, owed to those who have served, and the families who sacrificed.

As the Cemetery Director, I am proud, and thankful, to be a part of such a rewarding purpose. It is my intention to see that our objectives remain clear and focused on the development, care, efficient operation, and management of this facility. All of this, without compromising the quality of service to our community.

The cemetery and its staff continue to express gratitude for the support from the veterans' community. Because of our benefactors, we are allowed to focus on, and effectively serve, the needs of families who have faithfully and honorably served this country.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Ingalls

Director

Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado

Grand Junction, Colorado

STATE OF COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Western Region One Source

482 28 Road

Grand Junction, CO 81501

(970) 257-3760

10 December 2024

Darin Collazo

WROS Administrator



Executive Summary

The Western Region One Source has achieved many of the goals from the previous year, and the WROS team is looking forward to continuing with this momentum. The mission statement of the Western Region One Source is to connect Veterans, Military Service Members, and their families with service providers and resources in order to enhance their opportunities and quality of life. In following our mission statement, the Western Region One Source collaborates with community partners to provide resources to Veterans in one central location. Through weekly, monthly and annual events we are able to engage with our veterans as well as their families. Over the last year, we have faced some set-backs but also are pleased to report some successes and goals that have been achieved. As a unique facility that aims to serve an underserved population, the Western Region One Source will continue to provide the highest level of service and assistance to our Colorado Veteran Population.

Significant Activities and Accomplishments

Over the last year, the Western Region One Source team has attended, hosted and supported many events in collaboration with our community partners. Each event

attended or hosted has raised awareness of the WROS and connected more Veterans to services and benefits.

- February 4th: Outreach Fair @ First Presbyterian, shared information with 100 veterans.
- March 16th: Survivor Symposium hosted @ WROS, 70 veterans attended.
- March 28th: Vietnam Veterans Day @ Fruita War Memorial Park, 70 contacts
- April 6th: ERPO Town Hall hosted @ WROS, 14 attendees in person, but live streamed
- April 11th: Vietnam Pinning @ Moose Lodge, 25 Veterans reached
- April 12th: Stand Down @ WROS, 250 Veterans served, 13 haircuts received
- April 18th: Beacon Fest Grand Junction, 300+ in attendance
- April 24th: Parole Community Resource Fair, 75 in attendance
- May 2nd: Military Signing Day @ Central High School, 12 veterans contacted
- May 3rd: VA 75th Anniversary, 150 Veterans contacted
- May 4th: Women Veterans Tea Social, 80 women Veterans in attendance
- August 29th: Vet Fest @ Farmer's Market, 70+ interactions with Veterans
- September 12th: Montrose Beacon Fest, 65 Veterans contacted
- September 19th: WROS Stand Down, 280 veterans attended, 32 haircuts given
- October 24th: Delta Resource Fair, 6 Veterans contacted
- November 7th: Montrose Resource Fair, 65 Veterans contacted
- November 9th: Veterans Day Parade, walked the parade
- November 11th: Veterans Day Ceremony @ Fruita War Memorial, 250 Veterans contacted
- November 13th: Veterans In Business Luncheon @ WROS, 40 Veterans in

attendance

In addition to revitalizing our outreach and networking efforts, the WROS team was able to complete some short-term goals from last year. With the support from the CBVA and Grants funding, we were able to expand our south parking lot, adding 29 new paved spots. This creates a safer environment for our Veterans to park their vehicles and walk to the building. Heading into the new year, we are pleased to announce the addition of Comeback Yoga to our weekly events calendar. Bringing this well recognized and established program into our facility for Veterans is huge, and we look forward to improving the lives of our visitors through mind and body wellness. We were able to utilize grant funding to design and purchase improved signage for the WROS, which properly executed a grant and improved visibility for the facility. Working with Amy Demenge, the DVA's Women's Veteran Service Officer, we were able to fill an entire display case with Women Veteran's memorabilia items in Fall of 2024. All efforts and successes were accomplished with teamwork, collaboration and community support.

Challenges and Opportunities

During the first quarter of 2024, the Western Region One Source lost the State DEERS Operator to the DMVA. Mr. DeBruyn was selected to take the Protocol Officer position, which was a fantastic opportunity for him and his skillset, although it left a vacancy at the WROS from January 2024 to September 2024. This vacancy gave us the opportunity to find a new dynamic team member, and we were able to attract Mariah Turman, who was serving as the Readiness Transition Assistance Advisor. Her prior experience with veterans and active service members has translated well into her new role with the Western Region One Source. We are waiting on Ms. Turman's security clearance in order for her to fill her role as the State DEERS Operator, where she will be offering DEERS Support two days per week, as well as overrides for the Federal DEERS Operator. In the meantime, Ms. Turman has been promoting the WROS, spearheading outreach efforts and playing a supportive role with the special events we host at the Western Region One Source and with our community partners.

In April of 2024, Support Representative, Emily Currier, was approached by a former supervisor with the Colorado Division of Natural Resources and offered a position closer to her home. With Ms. Currier's departure, this position was technically vacant

from April of 2024 until August of 2024. Fortunately, we were able to have a temporary staff member join the WROS and assist us with bridging the gaps until the Human Resources Office was able to post our vacancies. Temporary hire, Becki Smith, proved to be a fast learner and was given the opportunity to interview for the fulltime position when it was posted. She was a standout candidate and has been a major help in maintaining the front office duties.

A continual challenge affecting the Western Region One Source long term is to secure sustainable funding. This facility is beholden to a Sunset Review, with the expectation to be fully functioning independently of any State Funding upon the sunset in December 2030. When our tenant leases came up due for renewal in October of 2024, the rental rate of each office was increased to accommodate for rising operating costs. If the WROS maintains all leased office spaces, there will be a deficit of \$100,300 per year that is currently supplemented by Grant funding and the cash fund provided by the DVA. At full rental capacity, the facility will generate about \$149,700 annually. The annual budget for the WROS for Fiscal Year 22/23 is about \$250,000, with an anticipated increase in utility costs with more people in the facility. Having five years to resolve this challenge presents the opportunity to make community ties and seek support from pillars of the community, which will in turn further the awareness of the facility.

Administrative Condition

As of September 2024, the Western Region One Source returned to being fully staffed and remains very active in supporting the mission statement. The Administrator has reestablished the Advisory Committee to work towards satisfying the Sunset Review by measuring the effectiveness of the WROS. Utilizing a feedback company, Qualtrics, the WROS team has been receiving quantifiable feedback and input from the community we serve, with 174 surveys collected to date. With two DEERS Officers, the facility will be able to work on clearing up the backlog of individuals needing overrides due to fingerprint issues. We are working with the Director of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Bruce Cowan, to establish a second DEERS station in order to travel the state and reach Veterans who live in rural areas that are underserved. With two support representatives, the facility is able to maintain open hours while attending outreach events in different counties or outside of business hours.

Supporting Statistics

For the calendar year of 2024, the Western Region One Source has served approximately 10,562 Veterans, Service Members and their families. Phone calls represent 1,323 conversations leading to support and benefits and Events/Walk-ins add up to 9,492. By way of special events, outreach and routine events and activities are indicators of the successful impact that we are having in this community. In both April and September of 2024, we served more than 1,200 each month largely due to the Stand Down events hosted in each month. Year over year, the WROS is pleased to report approximately 852 additional contacts with Veterans comparing 2023 to 2024.

As of December 1st, 2024, the Western Region One Source has been open for 1,231 working days and has served 34,668 veterans, military members and their families.

Short-term goals

- The Western Region One Source will create a Challenge Coin to share with our community partners and our biggest supporters by June 30, 2025.
- Construct a library wall in the common room of the WROS to display memorabilia items, books, games and provide working space to our visitors. Complete by June 30, 2025
- WROS staff participates in 2 outreach events per month on average by June 30th, 2025.
- Secure grant funding to continue to improve parking improves to the North Parking lot, to include adding additional handicap parking for our disabled veterans. Complete by June 30, 2025.

Long-term goals

- Create a WROS centric community event that addresses a gap in service in Western Colorado. Establish by September 2026.
- Continue to improve facilities by paving the North parking lot and correcting the drainage issues on the property by June 30th, 2026.

- Connect with a legal resource to provide legal services and advice to Veterans Free of Charge at the WROS by December 31st, 2026.
- Add events that support Mental Health, Employment and Overall wellness programs to the monthly events calendar at the WROS by June 30th, 2026.
- Provide Housing, Employment, Training, Education, Counseling, Life Skills, Wellness, DEERS, Transition, and VSO services by June 30, 2026.
- Receive additional DEERS/RAPIDS equipment to better serve the Western Region of Colorado by December 31st, 2026.
- Increase funding by gifts, grants & donations to the WROS by \$20,000 by December 31st, 2026.
- Identify a purpose for the lot space behind the facility, by June 30, 2030.

We are committed to serving and assisting our Veterans, Service Members and families to the best of our ability. We are grateful for the support we receive from our counties, state and federal partners and look forward to making 2024 an even more successful year. Thank you for the support and the opportunity to make a difference in our western slope community.

Respectfully submitted,

Darin Collazo

Darin Collazo

WROS Administrator

Division of Veterans Affairs

January 3, 2025

CDVA Veteran Services Report on Services for Women and Marginalized Veterans

The Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) Women and Marginalized Veteran Coordinator is part of the Veteran Services team. During the 2024 calendar year, significant efforts were made to ensure women and marginalized veterans had on their earned benefits and resources available throughout the state.

Events

Participation in relevant events allows the CDVA to interact and inform veterans and their friends and families on programs and benefits. The Women and Marginalized Veterans Coordinator participated in the following events.

- Informal Women Meetups were virtual meetings held during evening hours and designed to let women veterans communicate with their peers. These were conducted three times before lack of attendance resulted in a pause in the meetups.
- Set up and manned an information table at the Women Veteran Air and Space Symposium.
- Attended a lunch and learn at Metro State University with General Laura Richardson
- Hosted the Women Veteran's Tea Social in Grand Junction in partnership with the Western Regional One Source
- Attended the Wounded Warrior Round Table for Women Warrior initiatives with the results informing the 2025 Women's Warrior Report

- Attended the Center for Women Veterans Summit
- Attended Patriot Day at the Colorado Springs Mount Carmel Center
- Attended the Southern Colorado Mental Health Summit

Programs

The Women and Marginalized Veterans Coordinator participated or led multiple programs throughout the year.

- Proposed legislation for Women Veterans Appreciation Day. HB 24-1236 establishes June 12th of each year as an observed holiday in tribute to the service and sacrifice of women veterans. It was signed by the governor on June 5, 2024.
- Updated the Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs Women Veteran's website to ensure it was current and easier to navigate.
- Several members of Veteran Services including the Women and Marginalized Veteran Coordinator present at the Transition Assistance Program's monthly classes at Buckley SFB, USAFA, and Shriever SFB.
- A quarterly women and marginalized veteran newsletter is disseminated to approximately 550 recipients monthly. This newsletter highlights the latest information and resources.
- Created a Military Women's Display at the Western Region One Source in Grand Junction. This display contains items from many women who achieved success and set precedent from across the all branches of the military.
- Colorado's Women and Marginalized Veteran Coordinator was voted as the Secretary for the Executive Committee of the National Association of State Women Veteran Coordinators.

Presentations

Throughout the year, the Colorado Division of Veteran Affairs Women and Marginalized Coordinator presented at events to increase knowledge of programs and

resources for women and marginalized veterans. Some of the major events and organizations are listed below.

- Daughters of the American Revolution
- Joining Community Forces (an entity of the Colorado National Guard)
- Women Veteran Townhall - Grand Junction, CO
- Women Veteran Meeting - Canon City, CO
- EmpowerHER Conference
- Women's Army Corps Veteran Association - Colorado Springs, CO
- VFW District 5 Auxillary Women of Service Tea
- University of Colorado, Colorado Springs Veterans

Center Visits and Meetings

The Women and Marginalized Veteran Coordinator visited and met with numerous organizations throughout the year to learn about their programs and the benefits they can provide.

- Stephen A Cohen Military Family Clinic
- Representatives from Senators Bennett and Hickenlooper
- Veterans Community Project. Toured tiny homes in Longmont to learn about the program and donate pet food and supplies to assist the veterans with animals
- Freedom Service Dogs of America
- Denver Women's Correctional Facility

Thanks to the efforts of veteran programs across Colorado, Colorado's Women Veterans are using the Veteran's Affairs resources including healthcare at a higher rate than the national average. CDVA's Women and Marginalized Veteran Coordinator has established relationships with resources and organizations which will allow this good news story to

continue to increase in the future. In the future, focusing more on marginalized veteran groups will allow for growth and an increase in programs for those populations as well.



January 1, 2025 Michelle
Barnes

Executive Director, Colorado Department of Human Services

The Honorable Jared Polis Governor, State of Colorado

The Colorado Department of Human Services, in response to reporting requirements set forth in Section 26-12-402, C.R.S., respectfully submits the attached Commissioners of Veterans Community Living Centers Report.

“(7)(i)(I) On or before January 1, 2008, and on or before each January 1 thereafter, make an annual report of issues and recommendations developed by the board of commissioners to the executive director of the state department and the governor; and

(II) Transmit electronic versions of each annual report to:

- a. The members of the general assembly who sit on the health and human services committee of the senate, the public health care and human services committee of the house of representatives, and the state, veterans, and military affairs committees of the senate and the house of representatives, or any successor committees; and
- b. The members of the state board of veterans affairs.”

The recommendations contained within this report are a product of the Board of Commissioners of Veterans Community Living Centers of Colorado and should not be construed as recommendations or specific opinions of the Colorado Department of Human Services.

If you have any questions, please contact Angelica Granados, CDHS’ Legislative Analyst, at 303-877-0562.

Sincerely,

Christina Beisel
Christina Beisel

Deputy Executive Director, Financial Services



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Board of Commissioners of Veterans Community Living Centers of Colorado

Submitted to:

The Honorable Jared Polis, Governor, State of Colorado, Michelle Barnes, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Human Services, Members of the Colorado Senate Committee on State, Veterans, and Military Affairs and the Committee on Health and Human Services Members of the House Committee on State, Veterans, and Military Affairs and the Committee on Health Care and Human Services and Members of the State Board of Veterans Affairs

Colorado has four state Veterans Community Living Centers: Bruce McCandless VCLC at Florence, Fitzsimons VCLC at Aurora, the VCLC at Rifle, and the VCLC at Homelake. In addition to the skilled nursing facility at the Homelake VCLC, a domiciliary provides a 50-bed housing unit for greater independent living for veterans. A locally operated fifth center in Walsenburg is part of the Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center, not one of the state operated VCLCs. The Board of Commissioners maintains a close relationship with the Spanish Peaks VCLC.

Members of the Board of Commissioners are appointed by the Governor with specific statutory qualifications. Current members of the Board are Tiara Stingley, Chair, practicing clinical experience in nursing home operations; Thomas Brown, Vice Chair, veteran; Christine Merriman, Secretary, expertise in multi-facility nursing home management; John Freeburg, veteran; Pat Hammon, veteran and designee of the state Board of Veterans Affairs; Charity Linenburger, experience in the financial operations of a nursing home; and Leah McMahon, state long-term ombudsman.

The Board of Commissioners met one time in each quarter of this year primarily using virtual technology and a fifth meeting is scheduled in December. Planned visits to each of the VCLCs had to be cancelled mostly due to some mild cases of Covid infections of the residents at the time of the planned visits. We hope to return to on-site visits next year



The Board of Commissioners is in agreement with actions underway by the VCLC Division in making cost reductions at the VCLCs. Difficult, but necessary, decisions are being made to achieve reductions in force of the nursing staff in order to reverse the deficit in the VCLCs finances that has been prevalent ever since the Covid pandemic caused severe declines in the resident population. Staff personnel is by far the largest expense for the VCLCs, roughly 67 percent of the budgets, with RNs, LPNs and CNAs having the greatest number of employees.

The steady loss of revenue to fund our homes has left the cash reserve in an unprecedented situation. If changes were not made, the VCLCs would expect to have a net loss of \$6 to \$8 million at the end of the current fiscal year. That amount of money does not exist in the VCLC Central Fund, the source of funds used to pay the expenses at the homes.

A decline in the resident census beginning with the Covid pandemic is at the root of this predicament. In the five years preceding the pandemic, the census average for the four state VCLCs was 410 residents; in October this year, the census was 318. Post Covid, the census numbers have shown some slow growth but the increase has been by only a few percentage points. This modest recovery has not provided enough revenue to keep up with expenses.

Other actions have been taken to reduce expenses but the savings, while significant, have not been enough to offset the cost of operation. One area of saving money has been through the decreased use of private agency employees in the nursing staff whose expenses are significantly greater, in the range of three to four times more expensive, than that of permanent employees. At the McCandless, agency staffing has been completely eliminated and at Fitzsimons, private staffing has been reduced by 50 percent. The other homes have had little or no private agency staff. Another cost saving change was made at McCandless by the closing of one of the wings to consolidate the residents in the other wings and provide for more efficient delivery of service to the residents without diminishing their quality of care. In addition, a freeze has been imposed on new hires at the homes.

The Board of Commissioners has been assured, by CDHS, that the reduction in staff



The layoffs are to take effect on January 1, 2025. There are 50 open positions in the four VCLCs that can be frozen and not filled plus as many as 49 existing positions that may be eliminated. Impacted staff will receive information and support for pursuing other opportunities in the Department of Human Services and in other departments of the state.

Agency Staffing: In previous years, the VCLCs have relied on agency staff to fill nursing positions. Staffing with agency staff comes with a cost at three or four times that of hiring permanent staff. One caveat is that employment emergencies may require the temporary use of agency staff when situations require immediate help and the statewide shortage of nursing personnel makes permanent employees difficult to find.

The Board of Commissioners concurs with the steps taken to reduce the number of private agency staff used by the VCLCs. The September report shows that Fitzsimons has reduced its number of agency staff since the beginning of the year by well over 50 percent, from over 25 to 11, largely in the ranks of Certified Nursing Assistants. Homelake and Rifle had three and five CNA agency staff in September and McCandless reported having zero such staff. CNA classes are continuing at Rifle, McCandless and Spanish Peaks but these students do not always choose to become permanent employees with the result that agency staff may be necessary on a temporary basis.

Marketing: The Board of Commissioners has offered its suggestions in the efforts taken to increase the VCLC census which includes making the homes better known throughout the state. Comprehensive marketing plans have been developed for Fitzsimons and McCandless with strategies for informing the public about the homes and developing relationships with important referral services such as individual medical providers, hospitals, and assisted care facilities among many others.

Other strategies being used by the marketing teams to increase public awareness of the homes include the updating of the websites for each facility, creating press releases and social media articles, and revamping the information packets for each facility for distribution to interested families and organizations. Billboards have been placed in high traffic areas in Denver, Aurora and Colorado Springs to let people know that the Fitzsimons VCLC is a great home for veterans and is open for business.



Monthly average of residents being served - 485; VCLCs 320; Regional Centers 165
Monthly average of prescriptions being written - 5,300 to 5,500

This arrangement benefits both the VCLCs and the Regional Centers. The residents of the Regional Centers save money on their pharmaceuticals and avoid mistakes. The VCLCs also receive profits from the prescriptions being sent to the Regional Centers.

Mental Health Services: A part of the financial picture is the approximately \$600,000 appropriated by the 2024 General Assembly for mental health services for veterans that is not reflected in the profit/loss reports for the homes and is not part of the VCLC Central Fund. These funds cover services not previously provided to the veterans at the homes for outpatient treatment from mental health professionals. The funds are administered by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs under an agreement with the Department of Human Services. The Board of Commissioners supports cooperation between CDHS and the DMVA in working out this rather complex situation. A report to the 2025 legislative session will provide further updates on this program and its funding status.

Surveys: The Board of Commissioners has always taken an interest in the surveys of the homes conducted by the Veterans Administration and the state Department of Public Health and Environment. This year the survey teams from the VA and the DPHE resumed their surveys after a four-year hiatus due to the Covid pandemic. Considering the long delay, the VCLCs did quite well with mostly minor deficiencies and a few major deficiencies.

Homelake received five deficiencies from the VA survey, all at the no harm level. For their state survey, Homelake received only 2 citations, both with minimal harm level. At McCandless, the VA survey cited two minor deficiencies, with one corrected before the survey team left the building, and the state survey cited seven deficiencies, which compares favorably with the state average of 12. For Rifle, during their annual survey they received 5 citations with minimal potential for harm. At the date of this report Rifle was undergoing the annual state survey that had not been finalized. Fitzsimons received 8

citations from their VA survey with minimal potential for harm and with their annual survey they received 13 citations but the harm levels were not released as the final report has not been submitted.

Covid: The pandemic may be over but the homes have had a few mild outbreaks this year, usually involving one case per home. One death was attributed to Covid but the resident had other underlying conditions as well. The homes continue to encourage Covid and influenza vaccinations for residents and staff. Other precautions continue, following guidance from local health officials in considering illness or outbreaks at the facilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Board of Commissioners of Veterans Community Living Centers

Tiara Stingley, Chair

Thomas Brown, Vice Chair

Christine Merriman, Secretary

John Freeburg

Patricia Hammon, RN

Charity Linenburger

Leah McMahon



COLORADO
Department of
Labor and Employment

Employment and Training Division

633 17th Street, Suite 700

Denver, CO 80202-3660 | (303) 318-8000 | cdle.colorado.gov

August 31, 2024 David Callahan

Director, Division of Veterans Affairs
Department of Military and Veteran
Affairs 1333 South Colorado Blvd.
Building C, Suite 113 Denver, CO 80222

Dear Mr. Callahan:

The attached reports reflect the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), Division of Employment and Training (E&T) employment services support for Program Year 2023 (PY 2023). E&T is dedicated to providing Colorado's veterans with outstanding employment and training services and to providing Colorado businesses with qualified veteran candidates.

The report outlines the services provided to veterans through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) and the Veterans Service to Career Program (VSCP). CDLE administers these programs, while services are provided by staff housed in state and/or county-operated [Workforce Centers](#). These services are provided by state employees (JVSG) and county employees (VSCP). Services include but aren't limited to the following:

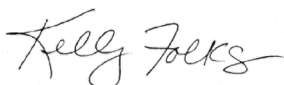
- Resume Assistance
- Mock Interviews
- Providing Labor Market Information
- Networking Events
- Veteran-Focused Job Fairs and Hiring Events

Both programs are dedicated to supporting veterans in their career goals, utilizing both state and federal funds. When possible, staff working with veterans seek to braid funds from other programs to provide supportive services that cover the cost of items such as training, certifications, tools, travel assistance (bus passes, car repairs), and

other needs to secure or maintain employment.

As always, CDLE looks forward to the continued partnership with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Office to meet the employment needs of Colorado veterans and their families. If you have any questions about these reports, feel free to contact Colin Schneider, JVSG Program Coordinator, colin.schneider@state.co.us or Julie Palacios, VSCP Grant Coordinator at julie.palacios@state.co.us.

Sincerely,



Kelly Folks

Director, Employment & Training Division





COLORADO

Department of
Labor and Employment

Colorado Veterans Service-to-Career Program

House Bill 18-1343 and Senate Bill 23-302

Employment and Training Division

Annual DMVA Report July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024



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Executive Summary

The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) is committed to providing comprehensive support and services to Colorado veterans, recognizing their invaluable contributions to our state. The CDLE plays a pivotal role in assisting veterans in their transition to civilian life by offering a range of services tailored to their unique needs.

These services comprise job placement and training programs, career counseling, and apprenticeship opportunities, all of which ensure that veterans can seamlessly integrate into the civilian workforce. The CDLE also collaborates with employers to promote the hiring of veterans, recognizing their strong work ethic, discipline, and skills acquired during military service. Through these initiatives, the CDLE not only honors the sacrifices made by veterans but also empowers them to thrive in the civilian job market, fostering their continued success and well-being.

Just one of the myriad of ways that Colorado champions our veterans is through the Veterans Service-to-Career Program (VSCP). On May 24, 2018, Governor Hickenlooper signed the Colorado VSCP into law, marking a significant milestone in the State's commitment to its veterans and eligible participants. The core objective of the VSCP is to provide comprehensive support to veterans, their spouses, and other eligible individuals as they navigate the journey of seeking, securing, and sustaining meaningful employment. Allowable services encompass a range of options such as skills training, registered apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities. Supportive services are allowable as necessary to aid veterans in securing gainful employment or facilitating participation in educational or skills training programs.

One distinctive aspect of the Veteran's Service-to-Career Program is its ability to extend assistance to veterans beyond the scope of federal programs like the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including specialized career counseling, access to integrated support centers, and tailored programs that address the unique needs of veterans and their families. The Program's success is evaluated through key performance indicators such as the achievement of

gainful employment, active participation in skills training, and engagement in educational pursuits.

The Veteran's Service-to-Career Program's inception was made possible through an initial one-year appropriation of \$1,000,000 from the Marijuana Tax Cash Fund. Over subsequent years, the Program received additional financial support, with \$300,000 allocated in July 2020 and \$500,000 in July 2021, July 2022, and July 2023 respectively.

Notably, unspent funds at the end of each fiscal year roll over to the following year, ensuring sustained support for program participants.

The Veteran's Service-to-Career Program is currently operational in five workforce areas in the State, including Denver, Larimer, Mesa, Pikes Peak, and Weld. Each area tailors its approach to best serve the needs of its local veteran populations, and consistently displays innovative practices that diligently serve veterans through targeted programs and partnerships within their communities.

The Veterans Service-to-Career Program (VSCP) serves as a lifeline for at-risk veterans, offering them a pathway to stability and success. This invaluable program combines comprehensive support with targeted resources to address the unique challenges that at-risk veterans face. Through personalized career counseling, job placement assistance, and access to vital social services, the Program helps veterans overcome obstacles such as unemployment, homelessness, and mental health challenges. By facilitating their transition into meaningful civilian careers, the VSCP not only empowers at-risk veterans but also restores their sense of purpose and self-worth. VSCP is a testament to Colorado's commitment to leaving no veteran behind and to ensuring that those who have served our nation receive the support they need to thrive in their post-military careers.

Cumulative Impact of VSCP Funding

Since the inception of the VSCP grant in the state of Colorado, **616** participants have become employed in careers that are beneficial to themselves, their families, their communities, and their new employers.

During State Fiscal Year (SFY) 24:

- 201 new veterans or eligible participants enrolled in VSCP.
- 59 program participants received training (i.e., apprenticeship, on-the-job, and skills training).
- 163 program participants received supportive services including, but not limited to, counseling, work search, transportation, and rent assistance; and
- 54 program participants obtained new employment in their chosen career pathway.

Grant Awards

In 2023, the Division of Employment & Training (E&T) within the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment selected the five grantees through a competitive process. The current outcomes for each grantee are detailed below.

1: Grantee: Denver Office of Economic Development

Contractor: Volunteers of America, Colorado Branch

Amount Awarded: \$210,998.24

Amount Spent through 6/30/23: \$27,044.64

Total Individuals Enrolled to date: 173 Participants Served: 114

Participants In Training: 13

Cumulative Number of Participants who Received Supportive Services: 114

Cumulative Number of Participants who Entered Employment: 18

2: Grantee: Larimer County Workforce Center

Contractor: N/A

Amount Awarded: \$29,684

Amount Spent Through June 30, 2024: \$26,502.94

Total Individuals Enrolled to date: 11

Participants Served: 11

Participants In Training: 6

Cumulative Number of Participants who Received Supportive Services: 5

Cumulative Number of Participants who Entered Employment: 5

3: Grantee: Mesa County Department of Human Services - Workforce Center

Contractor: N/A

Amount Awarded: \$70,499

Amount Spent through June 30, 2024: \$70,499

Total Individuals Enrolled to date: 5 in WIOA, 1 in Vetworks

Participants Served: 10

Participants In Training: 5

Cumulative Number of Participants who Received Supportive Services: 3 out of 5 from WIOA, 1 in Wagner Peyser, 4 VetWorks

Cumulative Number of Participants who Entered Employment: 1 after CNA license was obtained through WIOA funding, 1 Self-Employed after purchasing equipment

4: Grantee: Pikes Peak Workforce Center

Contractor: Mt. Carmel Center for Excellence

Amount Awarded: \$100,183

Amount Spent through June 30, 2024:

\$48,458.67 Total Individuals Enrolled to date:

319 Participants Served: 55

Participants In Training: 28

Cumulative Number of Participants who Received Supportive Services: 28

Cumulative Number of Participants who Entered Employment: 23

5: Grantee: Employment Services of Weld County

Contractor: N/A

Amount Awarded: \$29,684.00

Amount Spent through June 30, 2024:

\$23,023.81 Total Individuals Enrolled to date:

11 Participants Served: 11

Participants In Training: 7

Cumulative Number of Participants who Received Supportive Services: 8

Cumulative Number of Participants who Entered Employment: 6

Summary of Activity

Three grant recipients, including the workforce centers in Weld, Mesa, and Larimer counties, effectively use the grant funding to complement their existing programs, further enriching the services offered.

Furthermore, the Denver Office of Economic Development collaborates with the Volunteers of America, Colorado Branch, to deliver grant-funded services, while the Pikes Peak Workforce Center partners with the Mt. Carmel Center for Excellence, leveraging their expertise to administer services supported by the grant.

Denver Office of Economic Development: The Denver Metro Veteran's Service-to-Career Program (VSCP) operates in close collaboration between the Denver Workforce Center and Volunteers of America Colorado (VOAC). Within this framework, participating veterans are paired with dedicated case managers to formulate personalized plans that support their employment needs and help to surmount any barriers they may encounter.

The primary objective of this program is to facilitate the discovery of meaningful, sustainable employment opportunities for veterans that offer a livable wage. A wide array of services are available, encompassing education, skills training, resume enhancement, mock interviews, and mediation with potential employers. To ensure the success of veterans in their employment journey, VOAC is equipped to provide temporary financial assistance to support housing, access to public benefits, healthcare needs, as well as assisting with the acquisition of necessary tools, uniforms, and covering license-related expenses.

The Denver Workforce Center and Volunteers of America Colorado's Veteran's Service-to-Career Program have cultivated numerous robust community partnerships and conducted fruitful outreach initiatives that have yielded referrals and noteworthy projects. Among these initiatives is the Woman's Veteran Initiative, which is specifically designed to offer comprehensive support and wrap-around services to female veterans by female veteran providers. Additionally, the program has fostered a partnership with Workforce Warriors, a collective of Veteran Employment providers who collaborate to offer valuable resources such as resume writing, LinkedIn guidance, and job search assistance workshops to veterans and their families, all free of charge.

Best practices: Using Individualized Placement Services (IPS) principles, The Denver Workforce Center and Volunteers of America Colorado's (VOAC's) Veteran's Service-to-Career Program (VSCP) offer a comprehensive employment service approach. Situated within the Bill Daniels Veteran Service Center, they are well-positioned to address veterans' diverse challenges. Their proximity to Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) ensures smooth referrals for combined housing and employment support. Additionally, having an on-site Veteran Service Officer (VSO) allows veterans to fully access their VA benefits or start new benefit applications.

This collaborative arrangement creates a streamlined support system, enabling veterans to access multiple services concurrently. As a result, it significantly diminishes obstacles to competitive employment and enhances the overall effectiveness of the assistance provided.

Challenges: During the period from January 1, 2024, to September 30, 2024, Volunteers of America Colorado's (VOAC's) Veteran's Service-to-Career Program (VSCP) did not have an active contract with the Denver Office of Economic Development. This gap was due to confusion surrounding the previous and new Notice of Fund Availability (NFA), leading to a delay in the re-issuance of funds. The Denver Office of Economic Development has since decided to postpone the re-issuance of remaining funds to allow for additional guidance and training for VOAC. As a result, VOAC's VSCP funding contract will be reinstated on October 1, 2024, and will run through June 30, 2025. This reinstatement will enable VOAC to resume its vital services to veterans.

The Volunteers of America Colorado (VOAC) team is eager to continue their work and serve veterans with the renewed funding, ensuring that the program's objectives are met effectively.

Larimer County Economic & Workforce Development: The Larimer County Veteran Services Office (VSO) is situated within the Larimer County Economic & Workforce Development's (LCEWD) Comprehensive One-Stop facility in Fort Collins. This strategic placement enables seamless access to Wagner-Peyser and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services, providing tailored support for veterans, their eligible spouses, and families through enhanced staff resources.

The collaboration between local VSO teams and LCEWD staff has led to the effective integration of funding sources, addressing the employment and training needs of those served. During Program Year 2023 (PY23), spanning from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, the LCEWD department assisted 11 veterans through the Veterans Service to Career Program (VSCP). Of these veterans, 5 have exited services within PY23, with Quarter 2 post-exit CUBS data confirming a 75% employment rate for these individuals. The remaining 6 veterans continue to receive services into the new program year. Additionally, 6 veterans benefited from Occupational Skills (OC) related training services, and 5 veterans received Supportive Service funds.

Best Practices: Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development (LCEWD) has recognized several benefits to co-enrolling WIOA Title I-eligible veterans in

the VSCP Grant, especially when:

- A veteran requires tuition assistance,
- The training aligns with the veteran's career goals and LMI data but is not ETPL- approved,
- Funding is needed for Supportive Service expenses as appropriate.

Co-enrollment has enhanced the availability of funds, allowing more veterans to receive support through both WIOA and VSCP programs and ensuring a more effective integration of VSCP resources. The policy change in PY22, which allowed the use of VSCP funds before depleting WIOA co-enrolled funds, has streamlined access to these resources for eligible veterans.

Challenges: Without additional VSCP funding for the 2024 Program Year, LCEWD faces limitations in several areas: the number of new enrollments into the VSCP Grant, the total number of veterans it can serve until the grant's end date, and the funding available for currently enrolled veterans. Although the grant has been extended, the absence of new funds means LCEWD does not expect to enroll any new veterans. The remaining VSCP funds are projected to be depleted by Q1 of PY24, with the focus remaining on supporting those currently enrolled in the program.

Mesa County Workforce Center: The Mesa County Workforce Center offers the Veteran's Service-to-Career Program (VSCP), locally known as "VetWorks," through its dedicated Veteran Services Office (VSO). The VSO collaborates closely with the one-stop office and various local veteran-focused organizations to facilitate access to benefits and services for veterans, their spouses, and dependents. Situated within the workforce center, the VSO's office is conveniently located next to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) team, enabling direct referrals to VetWorks for veterans who may not meet WIOA eligibility criteria. VetWorks provides funding for and addresses the additional needs of customers who have reached the WIOA spending limit but have yet to complete their services.

Mesa County Workforce Center has established a valuable partnership with the

local Consolidated Veteran Services Representative through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant to provide necessary supportive service referrals for work-ready customers. Notably, there have been several referrals from a local Emergency Medical Technician training provider, which has proven to be a productive collaboration. The VSO maintains extensive connections within the veteran community, including veterans and their families, as well as with local partners dedicated to veterans' welfare, to help customers access Veteran's VSCP funding.

The Veterans Service Office (VSO) actively participates in community outreach events, disseminating information about available VSCP services. Additionally, the VSO maintains multiple social media platforms to share details about VSCP services with a wider online audience.

During this reporting period, Mesa has seen significant progress in their Veteran's Service- to-Career Program. Currently, they have three veterans engaged in internships, one participating in full-time on-the-job training, and another who has completed Occupational Training as a CNA and secured full-time employment. Additionally, they have provided funds for various needs including business start-up expenses, certification, and training.

This support underscores their commitment to helping veterans transition successfully into the workforce.

Best Practices: Having a dedicated Veteran Services Office (VSO) overseeing the Veterans Service-to-Career Program (VSCP) significantly enhances the ability to connect with potential VSCP participants. The local Consolidated Veteran Service Representative (CVSR), operating under the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), works closely with the Employment Services team and maintains strong connections with both staff and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) team. The CVSR and VSO collaborate effectively to ensure that veterans receive comprehensive support, and the partnership between JVSG and VSCP grant staff fosters a seamless approach to serving veterans.

Another noteworthy aspect of Mesa's approach is the meticulous review process for potential VSCP participants. All referrals are channeled through the WIOA team, which conducts a thorough assessment of each application to determine

eligibility. The WIOA team is in constant communication with VetWorks to ensure that funding is utilized appropriately. All triage forms completed through WIOA are submitted to both VetWorks and Vet Services, ensuring that veterans receive all necessary services and support.

WIOA case managers complete detailed documents outlining the reasons for an individual's eligibility or ineligibility, ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the process.

Challenges: A challenge encountered is that the follow-up process practiced by case managers is not always successful, resulting in recurring veterans with the same situation every few months. Although efforts are made to encompass all aspects of the Veteran Services offered, not all veterans take advantage of these resources.

Pikes Peak Workforce Center: The Pikes Peak Workforce Center has established a subrecipient agreement with the Mt. Carmel Center Veterans Services Office (MCVSO) to facilitate the delivery of program services and offer case management for the Veteran's Service-to-Career Program (VCSP).

MCVSO plays a crucial role in helping eligible veterans enhance their job search skills and provide valuable on-the-job and short-term training certificates. A Veteran Navigator within the Pikes Peak Workforce Center team is responsible for confirming eligibility for both the WIOA and VSCP.

Within this grant-funded program, the Pikes Peak Workforce Center has allocated resources for four essential staff positions. This includes a Pikes Peak Veteran Navigator, a Workforce Program Manager, and one Peer Navigator employed by Mt. Carmel. This dedicated Peer Navigator specializes in job coaching for transitioning service members, focusing on how to best support veterans during their transition while demonstrating the effective transferability of their military competencies to civilian employment.

The Mt. Carmel Center Veterans Services Office (MCVSO) has showcased an outstanding performance in forging community partnerships and conducting outreach activities. Their efforts extend to networking events, hiring events, and

interview workshops. They actively participate in briefings at Ft. Carson, Schriever Space Force Base, Peterson Space Force Base, and the U.S. Air Force Academy. Furthermore, they offer regular, complimentary resume workshops (covering both civilian and federal formats), LinkedIn classes, and more, all provided free of charge to their valued veterans and their families.

Best practices: The Pikes Peak Workforce Center and Mount Carmel's Veteran's Service- to-Career Program (VSCP)'s standout feature is the personalized one-on-one care that they deliver to their clients, complemented by comprehensive wrap-around services.

Discovering that they can access a wide range of support beyond just employment assistance on-site provides them with a reassuring sense of comfort and security.

Challenges: This program year, the primary challenge for the Pikes Peak Workforce Center and the Mt. Carmel Center Veterans Services Office (MCVSO) has been fluctuating funding and PGL changes.

Weld County Workforce Center: Employment Services of Weld County (ESWC) operates in a unique manner, enabling it to offer a comprehensive range of services to veterans under the Veteran's Service-to-Career Program (VSCP), which the ESWC has aptly named "Weld Project Salute." ESWC takes a customized approach to VSCP funding, tailoring it to fill any identified service gaps.

Employment Services of Weld County (ESWC) maintains ongoing partnerships with the Northern Colorado Veterans Resource Center and the Veterans Services offices at both Aims Community College and the University of Northern Colorado. Moreover, ESWC has established a seamless referral process between itself and the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist who, operating under the Jobs for Veterans State Grant, is stationed at the ESWC One-Stop. The organization also has one Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act veteran specialist who prioritizes veterans in need of employment, providing tailored support to help them secure job opportunities. This collaborative effort ensures that veterans receive the assistance they need efficiently.

Employment Services of Weld County (ESWC)'s primary service delivery goal is to

provide veterans with employment-related supportive services. This encompasses a wide spectrum, including assistance with transportation, housing, access to food, personal care items, and mental health services. Weld County takes pride in its community-wide collaboration, which results in the pooling of resources, the elimination of service duplication, and, notably, continued maintenance of a debt-free status.

To further support its veteran population, ESWC continues to reserve the initial thirty minutes of on-site job fairs exclusively for veterans, demonstrating its commitment to their success.

Best practices: The Veterans Service Office (VSO) has significantly enhanced its operations by expanding from one VSO to three fully accredited and certified staff members recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, the team has been strengthened with the inclusion of a Consolidated Veterans Employment Representative, complementing the existing Disabled Veterans Outreach Program. These improvements have led to a reduction in wait times from 6 months to just 4 weeks and increased capacity to accommodate daily walk-ins. To further support clients with critical mobility needs, an office has been established on the first floor.

These advancements reflect a strong commitment to improving accessibility and service delivery for veterans on campus.

Supportive services remain a primary focus of VSCP funding. This year, notable support included assisting a veteran with insurance, truck and car payments, auto repairs, tires, and equipment necessary for training and employment.

Challenges: In the 2022-2023 program year, the Employment Services of Weld County (ESWC) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult unit was introduced to the program. Reflecting on the 2023-2024 program year, Weld County identified a key area for improvement in outreach. Initially, staff focused on familiarizing themselves with WIOA and Veteran programs. It was acknowledged that more proactive promotion of the Veterans Service-to-Career Program would have been advantageous, particularly in addressing gaps left by Title 1 program services. The placement of flyers and brochures in work areas was found to

significantly enhance outreach efforts.

Success Stories

Denver Office of Economic Development: During the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, a veteran faced the unexpected loss of his employment. Seizing this moment to pursue a long-held passion, he decided to train as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

With support from our braided funding sources—including Workforce Innovation Grants, Veteran Services to Career, and the Veteran Assistance Fund—we were able to provide him with the resources needed to complete EMT school.

While completing his rotations, he was offered a job contingent upon his graduation. His hard work and dedication paid off, and he successfully graduated from the program. As a testament to his gratitude, he invited us to his graduation ceremony and shared a photo of his proud moment.

This success story highlights the positive impact of collaborative support in helping veterans transition to new career opportunities and achieve their goals.

Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development (LCEWD): An honorably discharged Navy veteran with six years of active-duty service faced challenges transitioning to civilian employment despite extensive IT security experience and a top- secret security clearance. The veteran found it difficult to secure a position in the non- military IT cybersecurity field without additional formal training. To support themselves and their mother, who relied on them for housing costs and bills, the veteran took a temporary job as a delivery driver at FedEx.

Eligible for Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development’s Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services, the veteran was awarded a Tec-P scholarship to attend the University of Denver’s Cybersecurity Bootcamp. With new training and a strong military background, the veteran excelled, achieving straight "A's" in the 24-week program.

The veteran recently accepted a job offer with Leidos, a high-level IT security firm, in Washington. After relocating with their mother to a heavily forested area they both enjoy, the veteran is now working as a city employee, awaiting their secret clearance and start date of 08/21/2024. With a significant increase in wages, the veteran is now able to comfortably support themselves and their mother.

Mesa Workforce Center: A notable success story involves a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) client who began CNA training on May 28 and completed it on June 20. By June 24, she had secured full-time employment related to her training.

The client expressed gratitude for the VetWorks grant, which provided the necessary tools to start her business strongly. With the grant, she was able to purchase office furniture, a computer, a printer, and business cards. This support enabled her to assist clients immediately, and her business has already begun to grow. She credited the grant with giving her a strong start and expressed deep appreciation for the assistance it provided.

Pikes Peak Workforce Center (PPWFC): In July 2023, a veteran sought funding for their SysML Certification through Systems Strategies and Analysis Inc. They contacted Mt.

Carmel to inquire about VSCP funding and discovered they were eligible. Their training was paid for, and they began the certification training.

During this time, they actively engaged in job searching, maintaining profiles and applications with 33 companies in Colorado and aggressively pursuing opportunities with four of them. Despite facing setbacks due to their age and a delayed security clearance re-activation, the veteran continued their search with support from Mt. Carmel and the Pikes Peak Workforce Center. They attended Tuesday morning MOAA network meetings and continually improved their resumes.

The Veterans' efforts paid off when they secured a position with Odyssey Consulting as a Program Controller, earning \$160,000 annually at Peterson Space Force Base. Although they did not pursue level 2 training for full credentialing,

their initial training was instrumental in securing this new job.

Weld County Workforce Center: Kyle, a military veteran with extensive service experience, transitioned to the plumbing industry after leaving the military. Initially employed by a company specializing in new construction, he encountered difficulties when laid off, particularly due to the lack of a plumbing license. Determined to advance his career, Kyle decided to pursue certification as a master plumber.

Kyle enrolled in a master plumber exam preparation course through the Veteran's Service- to-Career Program (VSCP), a provider not listed on the Eligible Training Provider List, which precluded the use of Title 1 programs for financial support. VSCP covered the cost of his examination. Additionally, Kyle required assistance to purchase new tires for his vehicle, essential for his commute to work. With this support, Kyle was able to continue his journey towards becoming a licensed master plumber.

Conclusion

The Veterans Service-to-Career Program (VSCP) stands as a testament to Colorado's unwavering commitment to its veterans and eligible participants. Since its inception, the VSCP has played a pivotal role in helping veterans and their families navigate the complexities of their post-military journey toward meaningful employment. With a focus on bridging the gap between veterans and vital employment resources, the VSCP has made a lasting impact on individuals and communities across the state.

The Veterans Service-to-Career Program has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness through tangible results. VSCP funding has been instrumental in facilitating access to training, supportive services, and educational opportunities, ultimately leading to gainful employment for participants. Veterans who have faced adversity and uncertainty have found new opportunities and careers through the VSCP's support. The success stories included in this report, as well as the many others that have transpired since the VSCP began, reinforce the belief that with the right resources and unwavering commitment, veterans can overcome their unique challenges to achieve their career aspirations.

In May 2024, SB24-109 was passed, authorizing the Veteran’s Service-to-Career Program (VSCP)’s continuation for an additional two years. However, the fiscal note attached to the bill was removed, resulting in no new funding. As a result, the VSCP will be supported only by remaining unspent funds from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. Despite these funding challenges, the VSCP remains committed to supporting Colorado’s veterans and ensuring their successful transitions to civilian careers.

As the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment reflects on the cumulative impact of the Veteran’s Service-to-Career Program funding, it is clear that this program has changed lives for the better. By extending aid to those who have served our country, the VSCP not only honors their sacrifices but also invests in their future success. With continued dedication and adaptation to address challenges, the VSCP will remain a vital resource for Colorado’s veterans on their journey to fulfilling employment and prosperous post-military lives.



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Program Year 2023 Report on Service to Veterans July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Annual Report to the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs



Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) Employment and Training Division

Program Year (PY) 2023 Report on Service to Veterans July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

For the Colorado Department of Military and Veteran Affairs Annual Report to the Governor

The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) provides a wide array of labor and employment services to Colorado veterans throughout the state in county-run Workforce Centers and satellite offices. The CDLE effectively uses the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) and the State Workforce System to promote the hiring and retention of eligible veterans, spouses, and caregivers of wounded warriors. State and county Labor and Employment Specialists provide employment services that include, but are not limited to:

- Resume and cover letter writing
- Interview tips and techniques
- Translation of military experience to civilian knowledge, skills, and abilities
- Navigation of online job boards and career fair resources
- Targeted job searches by industry
- Provision of labor market information and wage data
- Identification of community-based education and training opportunities
- Remote and in-person provision of services

Workforce Centers also refer to eligible veterans according to appropriate Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) career services, training programs, and registered apprenticeship programs throughout the state. Colorado Workforce Centers make referrals to various federal, state, and local agencies, and to non-profit partners in the community that provide supportive services to

those in need.

As shown in the table below, 14,661 veterans registered for employment assistance during PY 2023 through the CDLE's statewide database, Connecting Colorado. Connecting Colorado provides a web-based platform that matches qualified job seekers with employers in need of skilled workers. Employers can post job openings, view resumes, search for qualified candidates, and learn about the hiring incentives offered by the state. Veterans can post resumes, conduct job searches, access employment resources using self-directed virtual employment tools, and receive in-person or virtual staff-assisted services through their local Workforce Center. Of note:

- There was a notable increase in all categories for the number of veterans seeking employment services. The most significant increases were in the Special Disabled

>30% group (888), the Post 9/11 category (793), and the 18-44 age group (568).

Overall, the percentage of veteran registrants increased, only for those in special veteran categories did the rate of receiving services decrease, even though more veterans were served than last PY. This increase in veterans served could be associated with the expanded availability of in-person and virtual service options, which provide customers with greater flexibility in receiving services.

- Veterans who receive staff-assisted services are more likely to display higher average wages as well as higher rates of entered employment and employment retention. For this reason, the CDLE strongly encourages veterans to visit their local Workforce Center to receive one-on-one staff-assisted services.

The table below provides a demographic breakout of all veterans registered in the system and those who received staff-assisted services.

Colorado Veteran Demographics of Veterans Served by Workforce Center Staff

	Total Vets	Ages 18-44	Ages 45-54	Ages 55+	Post 9/11	Disabled Vets <30%	Special Disabled >30%	Recently Separated
PY 2023	14,661	7,514	2,798	4,305	4,799	5,637	4,596	2,477
Received Staff Assisted Service	8,095	3,532	1,652	2,888	2,810	2,948	2,351	1,100
Percent	55%	47%	59%	67%	59%	52%	51%	44%
PY 2022	13,860	6,946	2,784	4,052	4,006	4,596	3,708	1,919
Received Staff Assisted Service	7,515	3,252	1,580	2,652	2,592	2,701	2,154	935
Percent	54%	47%	57%	65%	68%	59%	58%	49%

*Source: CC 9002, PY 2023 (7/1/2023 - 6/30/2024, report run 8/9/24)
 Note: Veterans may be counted in more than one category with the exception of age categories.*

US Code Title 38, Veterans’ Benefits, requires the CDLE to provide priority of service to veterans for all Employment and Training programs funded by the US Department of Labor (DOL). A “veteran” is defined as a person who served in active military service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. “Priority of service” means that the veteran or eligible person either receives access to employment, training, and placement services provided by a local Workforce Center or through a job training program such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), ahead of or earlier in time than non-veterans, notwithstanding any other legal provisions. The CDLE has issued statewide guidance on this requirement and is in full compliance with the federal mandate. Colorado takes priority of service even further. The names of qualified veterans appear at the top of all employer-generated electronic applicant referral lists. As a result, in PY 2023, the Workforce Centers referred 56% of registered veteran job seekers to job openings compared to 43% of non-veterans.

During PY 2023, Connecting Colorado posted 575,504 job openings from 8,531 employers. Most of these job openings were a result of the CDLE's active participation with Job Central, a public service employment website owned and managed by leading US employers through their membership in the Direct Employers Association. It enables employers to outreach through a network of 50 state sites and over 6,200 cities and communities nationwide.

In addition to the state and county Labor and Employment Specialists who provide front-line services to all veterans, the JVSG Program in CDLE employs 15 full-time Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists, 6 full-time Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER), and 4 full-time Consolidated Veteran Employment Specialists (CVSRs are half-time DVOPs and half time-LVERs), all of whom are assigned to workforce areas around the state. The primary role of DVOP Specialists is to provide intensive services to "eligible veterans and eligible persons." In order to effectively serve eligible veterans or eligible persons and efficiently target their services, the DVOP Specialists use a case management approach. Under federal law, services are limited to eligible veterans and eligible persons who meet the definition of an individual with a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE).

DVOPs provided staff services to 511 registered veterans, 511 (100.0%) of whom received intensive employment services to help them obtain suitable employment. Veterans in need of intensive services (2,420 provided in PY23 by JVSG staff) fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Disabled veterans
- Wounded warriors
- Homeless
- Formerly incarcerated
- Vietnam era
- Recently separated
- Low income
- Lacking a high school diploma
- Between ages 18-24

- Receiving public assistance
- An eligible spouse or caregiver

Intensive services require more staff time than regular employment services and are coordinated with comprehensive employment plans to ensure access to the necessary training and supportive services. Intensive services provide support both during program participation and after job placement. The following table breaks out the types of barriers for the veterans who received staff-assisted services from a DVOP Specialist during PY 2023.

Colorado Veteran Demographics of Veterans Serviced by DVOP Specialists PY2023						
Total Vets	Post 9/11	Disabled Vets <30%	Special Disabled >30%	Recently Separated	Homeless	Female
511	223	296	252	89	24	73
<p><i>Source: CC Vets 200, PY 2023 (7/1/2023 - 6/30/2024, report run 8/9/2024)</i></p> <p><i>*Participants can be counted in multiple categories</i></p>						

DVOP Specialists conduct outreach with community partners to identify eligible SBE veterans and other eligible persons who, without the receipt of intensive services, would be unable to obtain employment on their own. DVOP Specialists expand the scope of their outreach and its effectiveness by working in partnership with a wide range of public and private agencies and organizations. This includes involvement in the “Homeless Veteran Stand Downs” that take place in Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Grand Junction, Denver, and Fort Collins, where homeless veterans can receive winter clothing, personal hygiene products, haircuts, hot meals, flu shots, dental exams, and mental health resources, as well as employment services.

The LVER Specialists primary role is to conduct employer relations and advocate

on behalf of veterans regarding the valuable knowledge, skills, and abilities they bring to the workforce. LVER Specialists accomplish this through virtual and in-person customized hiring events, networking events, job fairs, job search workshops, employer panels, and personal visits to local businesses. These events are designed to bring groups of veterans and employers together to fill employer vacancies while providing veterans with vocational and career guidance as well as information for on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and work experience opportunities offered by private employers. JVSG performance measures are subject to change and are effective October 1 of each year with the start of the new Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). Below are the performance measures that started in October of 2023.

Performance Measures US DOL VETS			
Negotiated Performance Indicators	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome	Goal Met Y/N
Jobs For Veterans State Grant Funded Services <i>(Table Source: ETA-9173 for JVSG)</i>			
Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit <i>(Source: Item D.1, Total Current Period column)</i>	55.0%	55.1%	Yes
Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit <i>(Source: Item D.2, Total Current Period column)</i>	54.0%	56.8%	Yes
Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit <i>(Source: Item D.3, Total Current Period column)</i>	\$8,925	\$10,833	Yes
<i>Data Source: WIOA Quarterly Performance Report, PY (7-1-23 to 6-30-24, run 8-9-2024)</i>			

During the 2023 Program Year, the State has provided a number of services to veterans through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant, our partners, their local training programs, and job referrals through Connecting Colorado. In all categories, the number of veterans has increased, and the number of services provided to each individual has also increased. This increase is likely associated with the expanded availability of in-person and virtual services as well as seamless program integration that gives customers more options and greater flexibility to receive the services they are looking for. Even with new increased

performance metrics, the State continues to exceed all three of our performance measures, namely, employment after exit (Q2 and Q4, respectively) and median earnings. These outcomes are the result of the great partnerships between the State and our local Workforce Center partners.

In addition to the increased number of veterans served, the program has also had a large impact in assisting other State partners such as the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC). Our LVER in Pueblo County partnered with the CDOC to run hybrid

in-person/virtual events to help with their 1,500 correction officer position vacancies. Through the use of streamlined and innovative hiring processes and 3-5 events a month, the department was able to make on-the-spot job offers. Due to the tremendous efforts and collaboration between the JVSG program and CDOC, that backlog of vacancies was eliminated and turned into a waiting list that now consists of over 125 applicants. Over the last 2 years, this led to 245 veterans hired and an award from the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) 2024 Winter Policy Forum Employment and Training Committee, Pinnacle Award for Business Development and Best Practices for our JVSG LVER in Pueblo.

Despite the services and support that the State provides to veterans, there are other challenges that veterans face. The best way to assist veterans is to address all issues concerning them and to help stabilize their current situation. In this “holistic” approach the JVSG program provides assistance through referrals to partner agencies and nonprofits to help veterans find overall stability in their lives. Over the years, we have found that there are a number of issues that veterans and their families face. The top 3 issues that we hear from veterans remain:

- Mental health
- Veteran employment
- Housing

Most remaining reported issues are financially related hardships due to the increased costs of living, transportation, and energy, which can be more

dependent on location and family size. Any changes that help veterans with these issues will likely help stabilize their lives and expand their opportunities to obtain a sustainable career and prosper.

DOLA MVSU Grant - Program Close Out Report Aug 2022 - June 2024

Background: The VCP Mobile Veteran Service Unit grant was used to establish a VCP V-HOT program to provide Veterans Homeless Outreach Teams using the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) model that has been successfully nationally implemented. This model implements a community partner approach to addressing homelessness issues and involves a variety of community partners, including first responders, mental health providers, healthcare providers and other local stakeholders that share the goal of building trust and communication with homeless communities or encampments as an effective way of engaging and assisting those who are homeless.

VCP used the initial funds to purchase and retrofit an ADA compliant mobile outreach unit to serve Veterans in rural areas and where access to appropriate social service support is not available, primarily in the northern Colorado counties such as Boulder, Weld and Larimer - but also to include more rural regions down to the Front Range up to the Wyoming border, no further south than I-70, and no further east than Fort Morgan.

V-HOT has provided outreach supplies such as hygiene packs, clothing, snack packs (food that does not require a kitchen to prepare) and food boxes (pantry items for those who have some type of housing and access to a kitchen). The V-HOT unit has also provided trained and specialized case managers to assess, engage and refer Veterans to a variety of resources depending on the individual's needs.

VCP's mobile outreach unit officially launched for services in August of 2022, and has been making trips to local catchment areas since, as well as further areas of rural Colorado, making between four and twelve trips per month covering over 8,000sq miles of Northern Colorado and the Front Range.

The first few months were focused on relationships and trust-building in rural communities. The program then evolved as we expanded to include a greater number of outreach partners, and services have been focused more and more on the areas where VCP has had the greatest success in connecting directly with Veterans - places where service providers have helped to create the

greatest vetting and insurance that Veterans will be present for our outreach events. This vetting process has continued to be increasingly important to ensure that we can connect with Veterans in these areas when we are there for an outreach event and ensure that trips out result in actual Veterans served which has at times been a challenge.

In early 2024, we were seeing a stall in our outreach progress, where we were not connecting with Veterans as often as we'd hoped when going on outreach trips, often making the travel difficult to justify. We instead began focusing on where we had the greatest success, why we had that success, and how to maintain it. We also looked at how best to use our remaining time in the pilot and the remaining resources to have the greatest impact with the time we had left and mapped a 90 day close out plan.

Since the program launched in August 2022, the VCP outreach van has traveled nearly 10,000 miles.

Data Point Information of Note:

Data tables for the duration of the grant are included in this report as an attachment.

For clarification, Veterans who had an intake for services or supplies have information entered the spreadsheet branch, Veteran status. Verification method and eligibility was conducted with either a DD- 214 in hand or through Squares VA eligible confirmation.

Those without the above information are engagement only connections. This means they visited the mobile unit and with staff, however, did not opt for services.

VCP Data Recap for V-HOT outreach efforts for August 1, 2022 to June 30, 2024

- 179 unduplicated Veterans were served, with 53 repeat engagements (232 total Veteran interactions)
- 81/179 Veterans we connected with were currently experiencing homelessness
- 64 Veterans were served through case management and services navigation engagement
 - 21 who received full case management services and access to EA and other support
 - 43 who received a referral resource or other navigation resource but did not have direct case management through our program

- 127 who had some level of interaction but did not receive services
- In addition to Veterans, we connected with 44 Veteran family members
- VCP V-HOT completed 122 community/outreach visits
- V-HOT traveled total miles in 23 months of services
- We were able to support the attainment of housing for 3 Veterans
- We prevented homelessness/eviction for 3 Veterans
- We are currently housing 1 Veteran who we met through outreach services in the VCP tiny home village, services that were added to our VCP network of supportive services in September of 2023

90 Day Close Out Plan:

During the final close-out of VCP's two-year pilot rural mobile outreach grant funded by DOLA, VCP focused in with case on the originally intended key outcomes and goals of the grant through analysis of data to date, synthesis of the qualitative information collected, and through focused efforts to leverage the last 90 days of this grant to accomplish the following:

1. Meet Veterans who may not have the ability to access services due to proximity to supportive help and/or transportation challenges
2. Identify which locations services are needed most using a combination of service provider input, Point in Time data, and the results of VCP mobile outreach efforts to date
3. Aid in connecting Veterans to services in their area, providing case management and other VCP services to those in need, and being a resource for transportation support as appropriate and necessary to meet the needs of Veterans with the highest needs (medical appointments, job resource fairs).

Findings to be reported on include:

- What counties have the greatest need for increased Veteran support services for Veterans who are experiencing homelessness or at risk for homelessness/poverty?

- What types of services are needed most in the communities targeted by this grant?
- What are the greatest resource limitations to providing needed services?
- What suggestions can be made to improve Veteran access to essential services across the regions this grant supported?
- Which services were needed most by those Veterans VCP case managed or working through navigation services?
- What geographic areas showed the greatest return on investment? Why?

To answer these important questions and close out this grant pilot successfully, VCP will:

1. Focus on the rural areas we've had the greatest success in connecting with Veterans in Boulder, Larimer, Adams, and Weld County. These locations were each be visited once a month for the duration of the grant's current life.
 - a. Deacon's Closet
 - b. Almost Home
 - c. Ned Resource Fair
2. Engage in listening sessions with 10 area agency leader groups in the following counties and tried to include members of that County's Built for Zero leading team, and with the support of VFW's and American Legions as host partners.
 - a. Boulder
 - b. Larimer
 - c. Adams
 - d. Weld
 - f. El Paso
 - g. Morgan
3. Complete new outreach efforts in the following counties/cities that have shown

promise to be an effective place to connect with Veterans in need, and/or show a significant PIT need for support of homeless Veterans; include overnight outreach efforts with scheduled partner participation and coordination.

- a. Larimer - Fort Collins
- b. Weld - Greeley
- d. Morgan County - Fort Morgan, Brush, Wiggins
- e. El Paso County - Colorado Springs, Monument, Fort Carson

4. Decide upon the regular outreach efforts VCP can do in our primary services location in Northern Colorado and what an annual schedule of outreach outside of the Northern Front Range will look like as this program evolves into a long-term piece of our overall outreach services.

Success

We were able to provide direct case management supportive services to 21 Veterans in need. Annually VCP serves between 250-300 Veterans from more than 20 Colorado counties. Connecting with every Veteran means one less individual facing homelessness alone.

- We have continued to make consistent contact with various service partners, gaining greater community trust and a better understanding of the regions that VCP's presence can have the greatest impact - this has resulted in a greater number of referrals to walk-in services lowering the need in many cases for us to go to those service areas, but actually resulting in veterans walking through our doors from more resource areas providers
- VCP has been able to engage in the annual PIT (Point in Time) counts in a greater way than in the past because of the mobile unit, contributing to the point in time data collection of Boulder County unhoused individuals, which included capturing the best possible data on our unhoused Veterans that we could.
- With the success of VIP's support with stand-down events in 2022, VCP Longmont owned the Boulder County Stand Down 2023, conducting all the resource gathering, planning and execution of services. This meant a greater number of Veteran services providers available to those attending the events (30 plus service providers in Boulder County), greater care

in verifying Veterans status (using Squares at the event to ensure resources went only to qualified Veterans), and deeper engagement with all attendees through a passport program that required Veterans at the event to engage in services before collecting winter gear and other supplies. Additionally, VCP instituted an exit survey to better understand the needs of the Veterans in attendance. We are excited to be more actively involved again in 2024, ensuring connection to resources for our Veterans in need.

- The MVSU grant has helped us to better understand the need of various regions for Veteran support services, and where we should travel to each month.
- Listening sessions pointed out the strengths of each of our key rural communities, and the gaps that we may be able to fill or advocate to be filled.
- DOLA adding the approval for fuel charges to be billed back in this grant greatly increased our ability to make further trips and close out this grant with greater flexibility in our mobility
- The allowance for overnight hotel stays allowed us to send two team members out to three overnights in more removed locations, and to spend more time in those locations making Veteran connections and gaining greater partner understanding for future success.
- Listening sessions and a focused 90 day close out that homed in on where we have had the greatest success and where the greatest needs still are, allowed us to better outline a future plan for VCP street and mobile outreach, and how it will include rural regions.
- We have built and established more than 20 strong and active partnerships in reaching Veterans across the state of Colorado.

Challenges:

- Success depends a great deal on the willingness of local VSOs to partner. We've had success with this in more local regions, but not in all areas. There is still a lot of outsider resistance in rural communities.
- Veteran transportation to events is a challenge, as is Veteran transportation as a whole. Many of the Veterans we serve need transportation support to services such as those we partner with, to healthcare appointments, and other needs. There are minimal available

supportive services for transportation and the need continues to climb.

- An additional non intended use of the mobile outreach unit has been transportation of Veterans to medical appointments - still we cannot keep up with this need even in the Veterans in our case management services, let alone a greater number of Veterans.
- Supplies and what qualifies under the grant has been a challenge. Sleeping bags are one example of something that provides immediate support for life saving needs for those sleeping outdoors, but these are rather expensive. We have relied on individual community support to purchase such supplies.
- Older adults are among those in the greatest need who we have encountered in outreach services. There is a significant gap in services to ensure they receive the healthcare they need. Most live 2-3 hours from the nearest available care. This is a gap unfortunately we don't have the bandwidth to fill with this program alone either.

Lessons from our Listening Sessions:

Listening sessions were conducted with representatives from Boulder, Larimer, Weld, Adams, Morgan, and El Paso Counties (with representatives from Otero and Alamosa Counties present). During these sessions we explored strengths of the community resources available and gaps that exist for those areas. We also asked for input on solutions and suggestions that could be made to improve the resources available.

Current Programs Meeting Needs of Rural Veterans

- Northern Colorado (Larimer & Weld Counties) feel fairly covered between VCP, Volunteers of America (VOA), and Northern Colorado Veteran Resource Center (NCVRC).
- Veteran Employment Services (VES) has been successful in employment assistance, but this often leads to the Veteran becoming over income for housing programs.
- Rising Up in Fort Morgan sees some Veterans who are highly rural and at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness.
- Veteran Treatment Court (VTC) consisting of a District Attorney, public defender, mental health counseling, and a Veteran Justice Officer have been needed and successful, with other counties wanting to have this service option for justice-involved Veterans.

- Mt. Carmel and Home Front Military Network (HFMN) in the central and southern parts of the state are doing great work.
- El Paso County Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) are doing exceptional work in the community and working closely with Veteran Service Providers.
- Murphy Center, Catholic Charities, Fort Collins Rescue Mission, and Outreach Fort Collins are working well together to meet needs alongside the co-responders program.
- Gaps in Services and Resource Limitations
 - Accessible mental health options outside of Veterans Affairs (VA) - we heard this across every county we engaged with.
 - Highly rural Veterans do not want anything to do with the VA or any programs affiliated with the VA - other healthcare and resource solutions may help to fill their needs.
 - Community education on available programs that exist within and outside of the VA was a need in many regions.
 - Transportation is a barrier in most areas but especially for highly rural Veterans.
 - Lack of safe parking options and RV parking options.
 - Food insecurity is a problem in highly rural areas, especially for seniors.
 - Access to healthcare options—many experiencing homelessness are visiting the Emergency Departments (EDs) for unnecessary things and don't have a primary care they can follow up with.
 - Rural areas are battling communication barriers with a lack of cell phones and access to computers and the internet.
 - Housing on the western slope and outlining areas—waitlists are long even for market-rate housing options.
 - Eligibility for services and programs to Veterans with discharges that are other than honorable is an issue in most rural areas.

- Crisis intervention services are strictly held to county lines—many service providers who Veterans call are not in the areas where they live.
- Lack of dental health care is an issue in all rural regions for Veterans.
- Veteran Service Officers in many counties are short-staffed making it difficult to get timely resources in hand.

Suggested Solutions for Investment of Time & Resources:

- More tiny home communities with wrap-around case management to ready those who are higher barrier and in need of life skills to reach permanent housing readiness to sustain housing long- term.
- On-demand micro-transit that is public transportation - city of Longmont is exploring
- Mobile units deploying to rural areas on a consistent basis to provide healthcare, mental health, and housing and resource navigation services.
- Rehab and intensive outpatient for substance use and mental health issues.
- More community in the community, with peer support being a priority.
- Community resource and education training. Working with local communities, service providers can provide in-person resource education to those who have direct contact and rapport built with rural Veterans, such as American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars members and bartenders, local police departments, etc., and provide physical programmatic resources for these community members to provide to Veterans who mention they need assistance. Future of Mobile Outreach Programming:

The MVSU program has allowed us to learn a lot about Veteran needs across the state of Colorado, but specifically a lot about the needs across the Front Range which is our primary service area. We know that the future will involve a lot deeper engagement with Veterans in Boulder, Larimer and Weld County through partner agency organizations. We have also learned a lot about the challenges of Veterans who live in the further regions of rural Colorado.

While VCP did not ultimately spend down the remainder of our allocated MVSU funds, we were thankful for the option to spend the last 90 days with deeper investment in listening sessions,

and travel to more remote regions to better understand what the community needs are in the areas we'd not had a greater opportunity to spend that time, and how we can reasonably help to fill the gaps in need going forward.

We have learned a great deal about exactly where the greatest needs are rurally for VCP mobile services, and through a 90-day listening session close out project were able to better understand the community gaps that exist in each of the communities we work with. This data helps us to provide the state of Colorado with valuable information on what types of resources would best fill the gaps in Veteran need and has helped us to better focus our outreach efforts going forward.

While VCP will continue mobile outreach services beyond 2024, mobile visits will be appointment-based with a team member making a trip to partner locations to meet with Veterans on site, rather than drop-in based outreach. Rising Up in Fort Morgan, the Nederland Resource Fair, and Almost Home in Brighton will remain three key locations in which we have found that a need exists and where partners can help us ensure Veterans get connected.

With strong relationships established with partners in rural areas of the state, we will be able to continue to facilitate rural Veteran needs with our partners acting as local liaisons to make that connection.

VCP intends to establish a presence at the Northern Colorado VA Clinic once a month for three months and reassess, with the hope of connecting with Veterans lacking resources or who come into the clinic from more rural areas. We are also exploring the logistics of implementing the suggestion for community education and resource training with VA Outreach, VCP, VOA, and other providers.

We will focus on relationship building and maintenance across the state of Colorado to continue to be a trusted resource for all Veterans in need, and we will continue to listen to our community to understand where the need is and adjust as it changes.



COLORADO
Department of Local Affairs
Division of Local Government

Mobile Veterans Support Unit Colorado Revised Statute 24-32-118.5

SMART ACT REPORT

January 2024



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SMART ACT REPORT

Mobile Veterans Support Unit Grant Program

January 2024

Section 24-32-118.5, of the Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S) requires the Department of Local Affairs, Division of Local Government, to provide an update and submit a request to continue the grant program. This document serves as a response to this reporting requirement.

Program Overview

The Mobile Veterans Support Unit grant provides funding to an eligible Veteran-owned and focused organization, experienced in serving military Veterans, for the provision of services to all military Veterans in rural Colorado areas who have experienced homelessness and/or are without the ability to access essential services.

The Mobile Veterans Support Unit grant is a two-year grant to provide services to military Veterans of any discharge status.

Colorado Senate Bill 21-032, signed into law on June 23, 2021, to establish the Mobile Veterans Support Unit grant, administered through the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). This legislation came from a gap in support for military Veterans, of any discharge status, to access transportation, resources and housing in rural Colorado areas.

Grant Purpose as provided in statute 24-32-

118.5(2)(b): The grant program must include funding for:

- (I) A two-year grant program;
- (II) Two staff members; and
- (III) The purchase of a vehicle to distribute supplies or transport veterans in rural areas who do not have access to public or private transportation. Every effort must be made to ensure the vehicle is compliant with the federal “Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990”, 42 U.S.C. sec. 12101 et seq., as

amended, in order to serve veterans who live with a disability.

Total appropriation: \$229,070

Total funding Award: \$182,580

Grantee: Veterans Community Project (VCP)

The grant has been used to establish a program using the Veterans Homeless Outreach Team (V-HOT) model that has been successfully implemented nationally. This model implements a community partner approach to address homelessness issues, which involves a variety of community partners, including first responders, mental health providers, healthcare providers and other local stakeholders that share the goal of building trust and communication with homeless communities or encampments as an effective way of engaging and assisting those who are homeless.

Program Status

VCP used the initial funds to purchase and retrofit an ADA compliant mobile outreach unit to serve Veterans in rural areas and where access to appropriate social service support is not available. These services are primarily provided in the northern Colorado counties of Boulder, Weld and Larimer but also include more rural regions down to the Front Range, up to the Wyoming border, no further south than I-70, and no further east than Fort Morgan.

The VCP mobile unit has provided outreach supplies such as hygiene packs, clothing, snack packs (food that does not require a kitchen to prepare) and food boxes (pantry items for those who have some type of housing and access to a kitchen). VCP also provides trained and specialized case managers to assess, engage and refer Veterans to a variety of resources to stabilize housing, access mental health services, behavioral health programs, addiction care services, healthcare, legal services, and other Veteran specific programs. They also provide mobile case management and assistance with workforce development efforts, which includes career coordination, connection to employers, career counseling and employer referrals.

VCP has utilized resources to assist with housing placement and housing stability for Veterans by using local social service agencies and coordinated entry efforts through access points with community partners and other invested stakeholders in each area. This established true wrap-around assistance and case management in each area of service.

VCP's mobile outreach unit officially launched for services in August of 2022, and has since been making trips to local catchment areas, as well as further areas of rural Colorado between four and twelve trips per month. Outreach is currently covering over 8,000 sq miles of Northern Colorado and the Front Range, and the VCP outreach van has traveled a total of 8,179 miles since its launch in August 2022. The first few months were focused on relationship and trust-building in the rural communities. The program has since expanded to include a greater number of outreach partners, and services have been focused more on the areas with the greatest success in connecting directly with Veterans. Service providers in these areas have helped to create the greatest vetting and insurance that Veterans will be present for our outreach events.

Veterans who had an intake for services or supplies have information gathered regarding

Veteran status. Verification method and eligibility was conducted with either a DD-214 in hand or through Squares VA eligible confirmation. Those that do not complete an intake for services are considered engagement only connections, which means they visited the mobile unit VCP staff, but did not opt for services.

Program Successes

The following successes were identified by the grantee.

- 21 Veterans were served through case management, which is 7% of all Veterans served through the VCP outreach and housing program. Of these 21 served, they assisted 3 with attaining housing and prevented 3 from being evicted.
- 31 Veterans received a referral resource or other navigation resource but did not have direct case management through our program.
- 99 Veterans had some level of interaction but did not receive VCP services.



- In addition to Veterans, VCP connected with 40 Veteran family members who were directly connected to the Veterans above.
- VCP V-HOT completed 105 community/outreach visits.
- Continued to make consistent contact with various service partners, gaining greater community trust and a better understanding of the regions where VCP's presence can have the greatest impact.

Program Challenges

The following challenges were identified by the grantee:

- One of the most effective ways to help spread the word about the mobile outreach unit and their outreach services is through community partner connections. Without the support of local services, VCP is very challenged to meet community needs or even understand the community needs.
- Success depends a great deal on the willingness of local organizations to partner. They have had success with this in more local regions, but not in all areas.
- There is still a lot of outsider resistance in rural communities. There is a need to continue to develop trust further if they want to have success in those areas.
- Veteran transportation to events is a challenge, as is Veteran transportation as a whole. Many of the Veterans served need transportation support to services, to healthcare appointments, and other needs. There are minimal available supportive services for transportation and the need continues to climb.
- The model of a mobile support unit does not allow for a deep impact with those served. Investing in partner organizations that already provide services would make them more effective and more impactful to Veterans overall.

Report Requirement and recommendation to continue:

While this one time program has fostered learning about Veteran needs and challenges across the state of Colorado, and having successfully funded the capital needs of the

program, the vendor does not believe additional funding for this program is necessary. This program has created a better understanding of needed services for Veterans that can be used to better allocate resources and tap into existing programs to fill the gaps across Colorado.

This report serves as the complete report as required by March 21, 2024, per C.R.S. 24-32-118.5(3)(d).



COLORADO

Department of
Natural Resources

July 15, 2024

Colorado Board of Veterans
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Sheila Scanlon, Chair
1355 South Colorado Blvd. Building C, Suite 113
Denver, CO 80230

Dear Ms. Scanlon,

Per your annual request, under State Statute and Wildlife Commission regulation, the Division of Parks and Wildlife offers, the following types of licenses, passes and services to our states' veterans or active military:

State Park Access

C.R.S. 33-12-106 - (1) (a) Any resident who displays on the resident's vehicle a Colorado disabled veteran's license plate pursuant to section 42-3-304 (3)(a) or a purple heart special license plate pursuant to section 42-3-213 (2) must be allowed free entrance to any state park or recreation area, not to include campgrounds, on any day of the year such park or area is open. For the purpose of this section, display of such license plates entitles the disabled veteran and passengers in such veteran's vehicle to enter such park or recreation area free of charge. (b) Any resident who presents the documents necessary to satisfy the requirements of section 42-3-304 (3)(a) at a regional office or the central office of the division, or at such other locations as may be determined by the division, may obtain a transferable annual parks pass free of charge from the division.

C.R.S. 33-12-108 established the Keep Colorado Wild Pass that offers an annual state parks pass for \$29 to all Coloradoans that can be purchased at the time of registering a motor vehicle with the Colorado Department of Revenue. Colorado residents with



any of the applicable fee-exempt military license plates, Colorado Disabled Veterans license plates, or Purple Heart license plates may access Colorado State parks for free - receiving the Keep Colorado Wild Pass at no cost. The following license plate types receive a Keep Colorado Wild Pass at no charge: Air Force Cross, Disabled Veteran, Distinguished Flying Cross, Distinguished Service Cross, Disabled Woman Veteran, Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, Navy Seabees, Purple Heart, Prisoner of War, Pearl Harbor, Silver Star, and World War II Veteran. Further data on how many Keep Colorado Wild Passes were issued to these license plate holders can be obtained through the Department of Revenue.

Commission Regulation - P-7 #701(4): A disabled resident may obtain an Independence annual parks pass pursuant to 33-12-106 (1) (b), C.R.S. An Independence annual parks pass shall be issued following the Division's receipt of a completed application from a qualified resident of the state. The pass will only remain valid as long as the individual maintains their Colorado residency as defined in 33-10-102 (21), C.R.S. a. In order to qualify for an Independence annual parks pass, a resident must provide the following written proof to the Division: (1) DD 214 Form or other documentation indicating the veteran received an Honorable Discharge from a branch of the Armed Services of the United States, AND (2) A qualification letter, on official stationary/letterhead, from the Veteran's Administration, Department of Veteran's Affairs, or the branch of service from which the veteran is receiving compensation that states one of the following: a. 50% or greater, service-connected permanent disability; b. Loss of use of one or both feet; c. Loss of use of one or both hands; or a d. Loss of vision in both eyes

For pass holders who are 64 years of age or older, the pass provides a \$3.00 discount on camping, except on weekends and holidays. The applicant must be a Colorado resident and submit an application to our Denver office via online, email, mail or in person. If the applicant is on VA disability, they may contact the Veteran's Administration to request a letter of documentation as to their disability. In return, The Veteran's Administration can provide a form letter which will fulfill the



required documentation.

C.R.S 33-12-106 - (2.3) The commission may promulgate rules to allow free entrance to any state park or recreation area, not to include campgrounds, yurts, or other amenities and services offered, for veterans on one day each year. The commission may determine by rule which day veterans are allowed free entrance to state parks and recreation areas.

Commission Regulations - P-7 #700(2)(j): Any vehicle occupied by a current, reserve or honorably discharged member of any United States military service, on the State observance of Veteran's Day. At least one form of past or present military identification shall be presented at the Park entrance. Acceptable forms of military identification include:

- DD214;
- DD Form 2;
- DD Form 2765;
- Active, retired or veteran military cards;
- A current Colorado Driver's License or state issued identification card with the
- word 'Veteran' printed on it as specified in 42-2-303 (5)(a), C.R.S.;
- VA medical card;
- The display of military license plates.

C.R.S. 33-12-106 (2.4) (a) The commission shall promulgate a rule to allow veterans, including active duty personnel, free entrance to any state park or recreation area, not to include campgrounds, yurts, or other amenities and services, for the month of August each year. The commission may promulgate a rule setting evidence standards to show a person is a veteran and issue a sticker or other device that identifies a



person as a veteran for future entrance. The commission may also charge a fee for issuing the sticker or other device that identifies a person as a veteran, but the fee must be based on the direct

and indirect cost of issuing the sticker or other device.

In addition to those very specific programs, Veterans may also qualify for:

Veterans 64 years of age or older who are Colorado residents may also qualify for the Aspen Leaf (Senior Citizen) Annual Pass at a cost of \$70 per year. Aspen Leaf Pass holders also receive a

\$3.00 discount on camping, except on weekends and holidays.



Hunting and Fishing Access

C.R.S. 33-4-104 - (1) Any active or retired member of the United States armed forces while stationed as a resident patient at any United States armed forces hospital or convalescent station located within Colorado, any resident patient at a veterans administration hospital may obtain a fishing license free of charge, valid for taking fish during the period of residency only, under rules and regulations of the commission. (2) Any Colorado resident on active duty outside this state with any branch of the armed forces of the United States may obtain, from the division of wildlife, a fishing license free of charge, valid for taking fish while such person is in this state on temporary leave from such duty, but not to exceed a total of thirty days during any year. (3) (a) Any resident of this state who has received a purple heart for service in the United States armed forces or who is a disabled veteran may obtain from the division of wildlife, free of charge, a lifetime resident combination small game hunting and fishing license. (b) For the purposes of this subsection (3), “disabled veteran” means an individual who is a resident as defined in section 33- 1-102 (38), has served on active duty in the armed forces, has been separated therefrom under honorable conditions, and has established to the division of parks and wildlife the presence of a service-connected disability which has been rated by the veterans administration at sixty percent or more through disability retirement benefits or a pension because of a public statute administered by the veterans administration or the department of the Army, Navy, or Air Force.

(4) The commission may adopt appropriate rules to establish a preference for active duty members of the United States armed forces who are stationed at any military facility located in Colorado or are Colorado residents upon their return from service outside of the United States for licenses left over after completion of the division’s annual limited license draw. The preference may allow for such a member of the United States armed forces to apply for preference points for any limited license draw that occurred during the member’s absence. (5) A person assigned to the warrior transition battalion may obtain from the division a fishing license free of



charge.

Commission Regulation W-0 #002(Q)(1): Veterans Resident Lifetime License - Any resident of the state who has received a purple heart for service in the United States armed forces or who is a disabled veteran as defined in state statute 33-4-104 (3) (b) may obtain, free of charge, a veterans resident lifetime combination small game hunting and fishing license, pursuant to 33-4-104 (3),

C.R.S. The lifetime license will only remain valid as long as the individual maintains their Colorado residency as defined in 33-1-102 (38) (a), C.R.S.

a. In order to qualify for a veterans resident lifetime combination license, a resident must provide the following written proof to the Division:

i. A letter from the Veterans Administration indicating a 60% or greater overall combined rating for service connected disability; or i

i. A Purple Heart award certificate; or

iii. A DD214 Form from the United States Defense Department showing decoration of a Purple Heart.

This application, the Veteran's License and Pass Application, can be obtained online, at any CPW office or park, or by requesting it via email. The application and documentation can be returned to the Division via email, mail, or online.



Commission Regulation #206(B)(4)(g): Wounded Warrior Hunting Licenses - The Director may make certain deer, elk, and pronghorn licenses available to qualified participants in any United States Armed Services wounded Warrior programs.

Applicants must be members of the United States Armed Forces, who are residents of, or stationed in, Colorado returning from post-September 11, 2001 overseas contingency operations who have been so severely injured during combat, including combat-related support activities that they will require years of intense, ongoing care or assistance.

Additionally, applicants must be members of a United States Armed Services Wounded Warrior program, as defined in 33-4-102(1.9) C.R.S., and must be assigned to a military medical treatment facility at the time of application for this program.

Commission Regulation- #206(B)(4)(i)(1)(ee): In lieu of applying through the regular limited license draw, any active duty member of the United States Armed Forces who is stationed at any military facility in Colorado and actively deployed outside the United States, or any active duty member of the United States Armed Forces who is a Colorado resident and is deployed outside the United States, shall, upon their return to the United States, be eligible to apply for preference points for any limited license draw that occurred during their absence. Applications for preference points shall be made on forms provided by the Division and filed within six months upon the member's return to the United States.

Commission Regulation- #206(B)(6)(d): Any active duty member of the United States Armed Forces stationed at any military facility in Colorado and actively deployed outside the United States, or any active duty member of the United States Armed Forces who is a Colorado resident and is deployed outside the United States, shall be allowed a preference for the purchase of leftover licenses prior to their sale to the general public.



Between July 1st, 2023 and June 30th, 2024, the Division issued 5314 free Independence Parks Passes, 1497 free lifetime fishing licenses, and 1788 free combination small game and fishing

lifetime licenses to veterans with disabilities or purple heart recipients. During this time frame, we received 1 request for military leftover license privileges and 5 requests for military applications for preference points.

We look forward to continuing to serve those who have sacrificed so much. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Dan Gibbs, Executive Director



Darrin Bodner
Executive Deputy Director



darrin.bodner@state.co.us

TO: Sheila Scanlon - CDPS

FROM: Darrin Bodner - CDPHE for Jill Hunsaker Ryan - CDPHE

DATE: 2024-08-28

RE: Submission by Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Annual Report to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs (CBVA)

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) is pleased to submit this report to the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs, in compliance with the Colorado Revised Statutes §28-5-703 (2017) C.R.S. In alignment with our commitment to the welfare of Colorado Veterans, we are providing detailed information on one of our key programs that specifically supports the health and well-being of veterans in our state. While CDPHE's scope of direct services to veterans is limited to this program, we believe that the impact it has on the veteran community is significant. We hope that this report will assist the Board in its ongoing efforts to evaluate and enhance veterans' services, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration to improve the lives of Colorado Veterans.

Program Overview: Operation Veteran Strong Platform

The Operation Veteran Strong Platform is a digital health initiative funded by CDPHE, designed to support Colorado Veterans by providing mental health resources, crisis intervention, and wellness tools. It offers an online platform where veterans can access confidential support services, connect with peers, and find resources tailored to their unique needs, helping them navigate challenges and improve their well-being.

Program Usage:

- **Number of New Registered Users in FY24:** 798
- **Cumulative Total Users: 3,477****Comparison to Previous Year:** The number of new registered users increased significantly from 431 in FY23 to 798 in FY24, indicating growing engagement with the platform.

Accomplishments and Challenges:

- No specific accomplishments or challenges were reported for the Operation Veteran Strong platform in FY24.

Funding:

- **Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24):**
 - Total Funding: \$115,000
 - Source Breakdown:
 - Office of Suicide Prevention General Fund (OSP GF): \$35,000
 - Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHS): \$80,000
- **Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23):**
 - Total Funding: \$130,000
 - Source Breakdown:
 - Office of Suicide Prevention General Fund (OSP GF): \$25,000
 - Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHS): \$105,000

Veteran Feedback:

- No specific feedback or concerns were reported by Veterans using the Operation Veteran Strong platform in FY24.

Resource Adequacy:

- No assessment of resource adequacy was provided for FY24.

Recommendations:

- No specific recommendations or proposed legislative changes were reported for FY24.

In conclusion, CDPHE remains committed to supporting Colorado's veterans through the provision of essential health services, exemplified by The Operation Veteran Strong Platform. This digital health initiative, funded by CDPHE, plays a critical role in enhancing the well-being of Colorado Veterans by providing access to mental health resources, crisis intervention, and wellness tools. We

recognize the significant impact this program has on the veteran community, offering confidential support, peer connections, and tailored resources to help veterans navigate their unique challenges. We appreciate the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs' ongoing advocacy and look forward to collaborating on future initiatives that further enhance the quality of life for veterans across the state. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly.