

Texas Veterans Commission Workforce Plan FY 2008

MISSION STATEMENT

The Texas Veterans Commission is committed to provide superior service through agency programs of claims assistance, employment services and veterans education that will measurably improve the lives of all Texas veterans and their families.

OVERVIEW

The Commission's current organization contains a core of trained veterans' assistance counselors, veterans employment representatives and education program specialist to provide assistance to veterans and their families throughout the state. The agency veterans assistance counselors, veterans employment representatives and education program specialist are supported by a clerical staff. Administration of the Commission is provided by an administrative staff located in Austin. The Commission workforce as it is currently structured with a core of professional well trained staff that currently meets the needs required to accomplish the agency mission and strategic goal.

The key issue facing the Commission is the growth of the veterans' population in Texas. The estimated number of veterans in Texas for 2007 was 1,707,365. The estimated veterans' population has remained steady over the last 10 years, which indicates a net migration of veterans to Texas. This contrasts with a decline in the U.S. veterans' population for the same period.

The TVC has always provided indispensable services for Texas veterans through statewide dissemination of vital information on veterans' rights and entitlement programs; in depth, professional claims assistance for all federal and state veterans' programs and professionally delivered training and certification programs for all veterans' county service officers and assistants of Texas. The TVC will deliver the same level of commitment to its newest programs, Veterans Employment Services and Veterans Education. In every way, the delivery of services to our State's veterans is enhanced because of the synergy created by the addition of the Veterans Employment Services and the Veterans Education Programs to the TVC. The added value to veterans by having the services of the three programs in one agency is significant.

**CURRENT
WORKFORCE
PROFILE**

The current Commission staff has the skills necessary to address business issues of the agency. A majority of the current workforce (83%) consists of employees who have military service. The Commission has a diverse workforce. The Commission workforce consists of 51% White, 23% Hispanic, 24% Black, 1% Native American and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander employees. Males comprise 68% of the workforce and females 32%.

The age and tenure of Commission employees are shown in the following charts:

LENGTH OF STATE SERVICE	
Less than two years	23%
2-4 years	22%
5-9 years	20%
10-14 years	10%
15 years and over	25%

EMPLOYEE AGE	
Under 30	2%
30-39	11%
40-49	18%
50-59	42%
60 and over	27%

The basic business issues of the Commission are administration, veterans assistance counseling, veterans employment services and veterans education. The critical knowledge and skills required in administration are financial, human resources, accounting, marketing, purchasing and basic administrative knowledge and managerial skills required to successfully operate a state agency. The knowledge required to provide successful veterans counseling services, veterans employment services and veterans education services are knowledge of VA and DOL laws and operating policies and procedures. The skills employees must have are the skills to apply the required knowledge within the

VA and DOL system and to successfully provide veterans and their families with all of the services needed to obtain their benefits and entitlements in which they are entitled to.

The average turnover rate of the Commission in the five years from 2003 through 2007 was 15.1%. During this period the turnover rate was as low as 6.9% in 2004 and reached a high of 22.9% in 2007. The Commission turnover rate has consistently been lower than the statewide turnover rate which averaged 16.44%. It is anticipated the turnover rate will remain lower than the statewide rate but may be affected by the number of employees eligible to retire in addition to the normal attrition. A review of current employee records indicates 31% of employees of the agency will be eligible for retirement within the next five years. Even though 31% of employees are eligible to retire, eligibility dates for retirement of these employees are spread out over the years. It is anticipated employee retirements will not greatly affect the turnover rate in any one year. Taking into consideration normal attrition and the number of employees who can retire, it is projected the turnover rate will be approximately 17% each year in the period covered by this strategic plan.

The Commission has responded to attrition by successfully recruiting new employees. The Commission will continue to utilize Work in Texas and the Agency's website to fill positions as they become vacant as this has proven very successful in the past. It is anticipated the Commission can continue to successfully recruit quality employees in a timely manner in response to attrition to meet agency business needs.

Currently there is 37% of the Commission's upper level management that are eligible to retire. It is anticipated the Commission may be faced with the challenge of recruiting new employees with the needed administrative and managerial skills to meet agency needs in these areas.

FUTURE WORKFORCE PROFILE

It is expected that the Commission mission, goals, and strategy will not change significantly over the next five years. Veterans assistance counselors, veterans employment representatives and veterans education program specialists who are the core of the Commission's professional workforce require a very strong and competent knowledge of state and federal veterans benefit programs and VA and DOL policies and procedures which affect the administration of benefits to the Texas veterans population and their families. Skills required by veterans assistance counselors, veterans employment representatives and veterans education program specialists to competently serve Texas veterans will remain a priority in developing future agency workforce plans. To accomplish Commission goals and meet statutory requirements, competent training must continue to veterans county service officers who are critical to assisting the Commission meet the established mission, goals and strategy. The TVC clerical staff will need support through training and equipment to keep abreast of ever changing computer technology.

Commission administrative personnel will require ongoing training to keep up with changes in Federal budget procedures, accounting and human resource best practices and policies to efficiently use both fiscal and human resources made available to the Commission by the Legislature. Training of Commission personnel and veterans county service officers will remain a critical function as the Commission plans for future service to veterans and their families. Currently Commission personnel have the necessary skills to perform their jobs due to the training made available to them. With the possible migration of veterans to Texas over the next five years the Commission may require additional veterans assistance counselors to meet the demand. Requests for additional personnel will be for areas of the state where the projected demand for service is growing.

The Commission began a marketing program in FY 2002. The goal of this program is to reach the veterans of Texas and their families and to make them aware of federal and state benefits to which they are entitled and services available through the Commission and other state agencies providing service to veterans and their families. As the marketing program matures and the number of veterans and their families reached by this program increases, additional personnel may be required in the next five years to provide counseling and informational services.

GAP ANALYSIS

Currently the Commission is experiencing a shortage of personnel due to losses from retirement an increased workload and competition from federal agencies. Personnel shortages and the required time to train replacements as well as additional skills for existing personnel that will be required to deal with technical advances when funds become available may have a negative impact on the ability to meet future functional requirements. Of additional concern is that the funding of over two-thirds of agency personnel is from federal grants which may be reduced from one year to the next which could result in a shortage of staff to provide services unless General Revenue is available to fill the gap in funding.

As with other state agencies, if the economy picks up the agency may face difficulties in finding qualified staff to fill professional positions. The ability to stay competitive with the private sector and federal governments will continue to be a challenge to the agency.

As discussed in the Current Workforce Profile section, 23% of Commission personnel will be eligible for retirement over the next five years. Employees included in those eligible for retirement will be approximately 26% of the veterans assistance counselors and 57% of the Commission's upper level managers. There is a high probability that 57% of upper management personnel will retire over the next five years which will require replacement with new management personnel.

STRATEGY

DEVELOPMENT

The Commission has incorporated succession planning and succession management in order to develop job requirements and skills needed to replace key managerial personnel. Key management personnel include Financial, Human Resources and Administrative personnel. Personnel should be cross trained to the extent necessary to continue operation of the Commission during the intervening time. A study has been completed and a list of recruitment resources to draw upon has been identified in the event that an announcement of retirement by a key manager is received.

Recruitment and replacement of veterans assistance counselors, veterans employment specialist, veterans education program specialist and clerical personnel as they resign and retire has been an ongoing process over the years. We will continue to utilize “Work in Texas” and the agency’s website to fill those positions. This method has worked well in the past and is expected to meet the needs of the Commission over the next five years.

Staff development and training programs should be emphasized to allow for cross training of employees and to provide leadership development. Funding for the Commission career ladder was requested and appropriated during the 80th Legislative session for veterans assistance counselors and should be requested in future Legislative Appropriations Requests to continue the support the Commission retention effort.