



TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION



TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION WORKFORCE PLAN Fiscal Years 2015-2019

OVERVIEW

The Commission's current organization contains a core of well-trained Veterans' assistance counselors, Veterans employment representatives, education program specialists and grant specialists to provide assistance to Veterans and their families throughout Texas to meet the needs required to accomplish the agency mission and strategic goal. They are supported by a clerical staff. The Commission's administrative staff is located in Austin.

It is estimated that 1.7 million Veterans live in Texas. A key issue is the growth of the Veterans' population in Texas in two age groups that tend to have the greatest need for assistance. These fall at the opposite end of the age spectrum. Younger Veterans usually need education or employment assistance; older Veterans have the needs for assistance associated with aging. The overall U.S. Veteran population has declined over the past ten years while the Texas Veteran population has remained steady for the same period. This indicates a net migration of Veterans to Texas.

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 percent) has military service. The Commission has a diverse workforce. The Commission workforce is 51 percent White, 23 percent Hispanic, 25 percent Black and 1 percent Other employees. Males comprise 64 percent of the workforce and females 36 percent.

The basic business issues of the Commission are administration, Claims assistance counseling, Veterans employment services, Veterans education and the Fund for Veterans' Assistance. The knowledge required to provide successful Claims assistant counseling services, Veterans employment services and Veterans education services are knowledge of VA and DOL laws and operating policies and procedures. Employees must have the skills to apply the required knowledge within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) system to successfully provide Veterans and their families with all of the services needed to obtain their benefits and entitlements. The critical knowledge and skills required in administration are financial, human resources, accounting, communications, purchasing and basic administrative knowledge and managerial skills required to successfully operate a state agency.

The average turnover rate of the Commission in the five years from 2008 through 2012 was 17.20 percent. During this period, the turnover rate was as high as 20.8 in 2011 and reached a low of 13.7 percent in 2012. The Commission turnover rate was lower than the statewide turnover rate, which averaged 17.3 percent. It is anticipated the turnover rate will rise slightly above the statewide rate due to the number of employees eligible to retire in addition to normal attrition.

The Commission has responded to attrition by successfully recruiting new employees. The Commission will continue to utilize the Veterans Employment program and the Agency's web site 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.

GAP ANALYSIS

A significant percentage of the agency's leaders and managers are either eligible to retire now or will be eligible within the next five years. Succession planning and knowledge transfer offer the opportunity for the next generation of TVC employees to launch new ideas that appreciate historical progress while moving services to new levels. TVC Programs have high impact staff that cannot be easily replaced because of the employee's expertise and talents. In some cases, there are no natural feeders within the agency from which to draw. In other cases, the person occupying the position has a unique set of skills that cannot be readily found in the marketplace. TVC has a large contingent of tenured staff with institutional knowledge that cannot be quickly gained through the completion of training courses. 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. This could result in a shortage of staff to provide services unless General Revenue is available to fill the gap in funding.

The state is facing large budgetary shortfalls and will need to make adjustments (such as budget cuts, significant increases in benefit costs and/or reduced benefits, reorganizations, etc.). The workforce may experience low morale, less productivity and loyalty, and more conflict, skepticism, and fear of job loss. Employees may delay retirement resulting in an even wider variety of generations working together.

As the economy continues to recover, there may be a surge of retirements by those who had delayed leaving the workforces in tougher times. The ability to stay competitive with the private sector and federal governments will continue to be a challenge to the agency.

Strategy Development

A. Goals

Goals to address TVC's projected workforce gap will include the following:

Development:

Encourage employee development by continuing the TVC's training program that requires employees to earn a minimum number of training credit each year.

Offer employee training to help develop the critical skills. Continue to provide both internal and external classroom training, as well as online/DVD training to make training available to field employees and accommodating to employees' schedules. Continue to inform employees about training opportunities, including those offered by the TVC's Employees Assistance Program and by other agencies that TVC employees may attend at no or little cost.

Continue to provide thorough leadership training to all levels of agency managers, as well as potential managers.

Encourage managers to create programs that allow employees who are seeking new challenges to work on special projects, rotations and/or developmental assignments (to help them increase their knowledge/experience even if promotional opportunities are temporarily stagnant).

Conduct regular training needs assessments to identify training of interest to employees and managers.

Continue the TVC mentoring program to match experienced/skilled employees with employees seeking to learn from them. These mentoring relationships can also help less experienced/skilled employees identify their career goals and plan their career development. Because agency turnover is disproportionately high for TVC employees with less than four years of service, mentoring needs to continue to be offered and emphasized.

Maintain agency career ladders to help employees identify development paths to prepare for jobs with higher-level skill requirements.

Develop a searchable database to inventory employee training and skill sets so that employees may be identified for development and possible promotional opportunities.

Succession planning – Supervisors will be made aware of what skill sets are critical to meeting their objectives and can plan for employee attrition. Succession planning will also address staffing or skill imbalances due to turnover and retirements.

B. Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment:

Every area has the need to attract and retain high performing people with valuable skills. Therefore, a variety of recruitment and retention strategies are available throughout the agency including

- Hiring and selection methods for best fit
- Compensation
- Retention bonuses
- Promoting state benefits
- Integrating staff development with career ladders
- Formal and informal orientation programs

- Positive work culture and conditions
- Work/life balance and family friendly policies including flexible work hours
- Telecommuting opportunities
- Sufficient salaries and merit increases
- Recognition programs

Retention:

TVC's Executive team is committed to preparing for the future by continuously retaining and developing highly qualified personnel who will be prepared to transition into leadership and mission-critical positions in the future.

Career Development

All supervisors are responsible for planning for the development needs in their areas of responsibility. Through analysis of a position's job duties, management will work with individual employees to create individual development plans based on the required knowledge and skills. The development plans must address current and future knowledge and skill needs.

Leadership Development and Replacement

The following elements of discovery are essential to the leadership development and replacement process:

- Key replacement needs and critical positions to include in the succession plan
- Key competencies of job performance in all critical positions
- Key high potential people, and the individual development plans necessary to prepare them to be replacements in critical positions
- Methods for preparing and developing employees for advancement
- Processes for knowledge transfer
- Possible obstacles that make knowledge transfer difficult and possible solutions
- Priorities, desired outcomes, expected results, and timelines for implementation

Leadership succession integrates competency-based learning tracks with career development. The long-range goal is to prepare staff to perform competencies within specific at-risk functions, and to prepare them to be competitive for future career opportunities.

C. Workforce Plan Evaluation and Revision

The Workforce Plan will be implemented in connection with TVC's Strategic Plan. Strategic Plan changes due to leadership or legislative changes may result in adjustment to the Workforce Plan.

Human Resources (HR) will develop a stronger business partnership with each of the programs and divisions to determine training needs, assist with workforce strategic and succession planning. HR will provide divisions with information regarding turnover, retirement eligibility and tenure in addition to assisting in recruiting a diverse workforce.

FUTURE WORKFORCE PROFILE

As a market-driven system, the Texas workforce system will continue to evolve and improve to meet Veterans needs and deliver outstanding customer service. Accordingly, the agency's critical functions will adjust to meet the new challenges. Overall fluctuations in the economy, both up and down, will have an impact on TVC in terms of the agency's workforce and the need for the services our staff oversees and provides to the public at large. Legislation on the federal and state levels also impacts the operations of TVC.

It is expected that the Commission mission, goals, and strategy will not change significantly over the next five years. Claims assistant counselors, Veterans employment representatives, Veterans education program specialists and grant 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 Claims assistance counselors, Veterans employment representatives, Veterans education program specialists and grant 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 in assisting the Commission to meet its established mission, goals and strategy. The TVC clerical staff will need support through training and equipment to keep abreast of ever-changing computer technology.

Expected Workforce Changes

The immediate future is easier to predict, but long term planning is more difficult. Although more unknown variables exist, past experience and short term future trends are helpful when planning for the next few years. Flexibility is the key, but anticipated critical functions and workforce changes carrying TVC into the future may include:

- Changes in leadership as retirements occur
- Increased demand for efficiencies to make best use of available budget/FTEs
- Increase in less-tenured/less-experienced staff
- Improved communication and understanding of employers' needs
- Marketing services to the business community and workers
- Providing enhanced statistical analysis of data collected
- Increasing advanced research and evaluation
- Increasing focus on program integrity and fraud prevention
- Increased use of technology throughout the agency
- Increased demand for more sophisticated and integrated information and analyses
- Increased demand for knowledgeable technical assistance staff

Commission administrative personnel will require ongoing training to keep up with changes in Federal budget procedures (OMB Circulars), 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 Services Representatives to meet the demand. Requests for additional personnel will be for areas of the state where the projected demand for service is growing.