



TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

**Submitted to the
Sunset Advisory Commission
State of Texas**

August 19, 2005

**Texas Veterans Commission
Self Evaluation Report**

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I. Agency Contact Information

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION				
Exhibit 1: Agency Contacts				
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II. Key Functions and Performance

A. Overview of the Texas Veterans Commission's mission, objectives and key functions
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MISSION and PHILOSOPHY

Mission: To guarantee that Texas veterans and their families receive all the rights and entitlements provided for veterans by law.

Philosophy: To be the very best veterans advocacy agency we can by providing claims counseling, development and representation; by training Veterans County Service Officers (IAW Chapter 434, Government Code) and by marketing our services to veterans and their families.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Budgetary

Goal: Through effective training, marketing and advocacy, we will provide effective representation and assistance on issues and claims to veterans, their dependents and their survivors in obtaining veterans' benefits to which they are entitled.

Objective: Assist disabled veterans, their widows and orphans in obtaining entitlements.

Strategy: Provide outreach services and advocacy in claims submitted for veterans, their widows and their orphans by Texas Veterans Commission personnel and through Veterans County Service Officers.

HUB

Goal: We will make a good faith effort to purchase from certified, historically underutilized businesses. (Non-budgetary)

Objective: Include historically underutilized businesses (HUBs) in the total value of purchases by the percentages of unadjusted HUB goals and by expenditure category as established by TBPC each fiscal year.

Strategy: Continue to implement the agency's plan for purchasing from certified HUBs.

Customer Service

Goal: The Texas Veterans Commission will manage Commission resources to produce the highest level of service to our State's veterans and their families. (Non-budgetary)

Objective: To achieve a 95 percent satisfaction level from veterans receiving Commission assistance.

Strategy: Conduct continuing training of Commission employees to maintain a high level of professional competence and customer service.

Functions: The Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) is the advocate for veterans in the State of Texas. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a benefit program to provide financial assistance to these veterans. However, the benefit, like all VA benefits is not automatic. Application for the benefit must be made and eligibility proven. The TVC provides indispensable services for Texas veterans. Among the services provided are statewide dissemination of vital information on veterans' rights and entitlement programs; in depth, professional claims assistance for all federal and State veterans' benefit/entitlement programs and professionally developed and delivered training and certification programs for all Veterans County Service Officers and Assistants. This coordinated effort by the Commission and the Veterans County Service Officers, coupled with marketing and outreach services, has made the Commission's programs one of the most effective in the United States and the most effective of the seven most populous states. The Commission directs special outreach efforts towards those veterans most in need of assistance, i.e. totally disabled, impoverished veterans. Through direct outreach at VA hospitals, clinics, State nursing homes and field offices, public information activities and a strong referral system, the Commission proactively seeks eligible disabled veterans. It then assists the veterans with their claims, represents them before the VA and sees their claims through to final authorization for payment. The Commission also operates proactively in pursuing similar benefit programs for veterans whose disabilities are ruled as service-connected and for the widows and orphans of veterans. This is the principal reason the State of Texas leads all other large States in monetary recovery of veterans' compensation and pension benefits.

B. Do each of your key functions continue to serve a clear and ongoing objective? Explain why each of these functions is still needed. What harm would come from no longer performing these functions?

The basic function of the TVC, which is to help the veterans of Texas, their dependents and orphans, continues and expands with each new war. The veterans of Texas have defended our nation and deserve to receive professional assistance. The veterans of

Texas, like all veterans, are faced with the erosion of their federal entitlements or stricter requirements to prove these entitlements. They must have an advocate to represent them. Their advocate is the Texas Veterans Commission and staff who are serving and will continue to serve our veterans with professionalism and compassion while preserving the veterans' dignity. Additionally, because the Texas Veterans Commission has the closest contact with veterans and understands the impact of economic variables and changes in state and federal regulations, it will continue to provide information to the Legislature on their needs.

The economy has a significant impact on Texas Veterans Commission functions. The effect of the economy is the same as it is for the general population. However, because the government has accepted special responsibilities regarding veterans' needs, there are special implications in a changing economy for the Texas Veterans Commission.

The establishment of the Court of Veterans Appeals in 1988 which was subsequently renamed the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (USCAVC), as well as budget constraints, has made the work of the Texas Veterans Commission more complex. Before the court was established, the Board of Veterans Appeals, which is a division of VA, was the final authority on the veteran's appeal. With the establishment of USCAVC, VA has by necessity become more adversarial in the process of awarding veterans' benefits in that a decision can now be subject to court review. The time required by Texas Veterans Commission employees to develop various disability claims has increased because additional information is required. There is also increased emphasis on procedure, law, process and documentation by VA. Any appeal by TVC must be able to stand full review by a US court.

Budget driven decisions by VA have especially affected low-income elderly veterans. An example of this is that veterans who are in receipt of pension need to annually complete an income questionnaire to take full advantage of their pension benefit. In the past these questionnaires were required from every veteran or survivor who received a VA pension. To save costs and reduce claims processing, the VA has eliminated this requirement in many cases. Those veterans with significant medical expenses during the year, which is the norm for aged veterans, could have some of those expenses reimbursed by reporting them on the questionnaire. Many of those aged veterans can miss this opportunity for this reimbursement because they will not receive a questionnaire. To help them, the TVC is contacting those veterans on our caseload and offering our assistance in reporting their medical expenses. Direct contact on this issue is only available to the veterans on the TVC caseload. Another development is that the VA has changed its policy on who is eligible for VA pension. Under the provisions of a recent change in VA regulations, veterans who are 65 and older are automatically entitled to receive VA pensions if they do not exceed certain income limitations. These new requirements have had an impact on the TVC workload. More veterans are going to be eligible for pension and the TVC will be needed to file their claims for them. This also creates an additional need for public awareness, which the TVC can address through marketing. As a result, the advocacy service which is provided by the Texas Veterans Commission will be needed more than ever. When a veteran cannot receive care in a VA hospital, or does not establish entitlement to VA pension, the burden is shifted to the State, county and/or city.

Two factors have a marked effect on the need for TVC services: 1) veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and 2) the aging of the veteran population, especially the Vietnam veteran. The war against terror (Operation Enduring Freedom) and the war with Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom) have added to the number of young, wartime veterans in Texas.

By FY 2009, the 85+ veterans will have increased by 30%. Males make up the majority of older veterans (age 65 and older) reflecting the high proportion of those men who served in WW II, Korea and Vietnam. At the same time, the proportion of female veterans shows a steady increase because of their increased presence in the military service. The largest number of veterans in Texas is from the Vietnam era. The second largest group of veterans is from the Gulf War periods. This number is expected to continue to increase as the Gulf Wars continue. All of these groups of veterans create challenges for the Commission in tailoring our service to their different needs.

C. What evidence can your agency provide to show your overall effectiveness and efficiency in meeting your objectives?

Program evaluations and audit reports for the past 10 years commend the Commission for excellent performance. The Commission leads the most populous states in monetary recovery for VA compensation and pension recipients per 1,000 veterans. (See chart below)

VA EXPENDITURES PER VETERAN FOR COMPENSATION AND PENSION SEVEN MOST POPULOUS STATES FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2003			
	VETERAN POPULATION	AVERAGE COMPENSATION & PENSION PAYMENT ¹	COMPENSATION & PENSION RECIPIENTS PER 1,000 VETERANS
TEXAS	1,679,056	\$11,060	130.7
California	2,325,634	9,877	99.8
Florida	1,829,761	9,442	119.6
New York	1,211,909	9,015	102.5
Pennsylvania	1,180,309	9,819	88.2
Ohio	1,062,906	9,047	89.3
Illinois	922,087	8,934	72.7

¹ Includes USDVA compensation for service-connected disability or death; veterans' and survivors' pension for nonservice-connected disability.

Source: Compiled from information received from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) for Federal Fiscal Year 2003.

However, despite this success, there are areas that need improvement, and there are further opportunities to improve the lives of Texas veterans. There are approximately 220,000 active cases for veterans in the two VA regional offices. Of these, 127,000 are represented by the Texas Veterans Commission or an organization that the TVC is accredited by VA to provide representation. In Fiscal Year 2001, thirty-eight percent (38%) of veterans were represented. The 127,000 veterans currently on the TVC

caseload represent fifty-five percent (55%) of the active VA compensation and pension cases in Texas. While this is an admirable increase, the fact remains that nearly forty-five percent (45%) of veterans are not represented. This is our marketing and outreach challenge. Historically, the VA makes errors in thirty percent of claims processed; however, the VA error rate for veterans represented by the TVC is minimal. There are remedies for this VA error rate; the principal among these is increasing the number of veterans on the TVC caseload through marketing and outreach.

- D. Does your agency's enabling law continue to correctly reflect your mission, objectives, and approach to performing your functions? Have you recommended changes to the Legislature in the past to improve your agency's operations? If so, explain. Were the changes adopted?

Yes: There have been regular changes to the TVC enabling legislation. During the 79th Legislature, there were two major changes to the legislation. The first (HB 1480) allowed the TVC to accept gifts and grants. It also established a vehicle to create a veterans trust fund. The second (HB 2604) transferred the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP)/ Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) Grant to the Texas Veterans Commission.

- E. Do any of your agency's functions overlap or duplicate those of another state or federal agency? Explain if, and why, each of your key functions is most appropriately placed within your agency. How do you ensure against duplication with other related agencies?

No: The Texas Veterans Commission is the agency responsible for veterans in Texas. While other agencies have programs that effect veterans (Veterans Land Board, Texas Workforce Commission), none of these agencies perform the valuable functions provided to Texas veterans by the TVC.

The unique functions of the Texas Veterans Commission are integrated into four components; training, claims counseling, claims representation and marketing. They build on and enhance each other.

Training: The TVC's basic mission is to ensure veterans receive the rights and entitlements that they deserve in this State. To achieve this they need to have a competent individual to counsel them. This is accomplished through training of our staff and the Veterans County Service Officers. Both TVC staff and Veterans County Service Officers must meet minimum training requirements. The VCSO requirements are outlined in our enabling legislation. TVC counselors must achieve specified training requirements to continue employment. TVC conducts initial and ongoing training of both VCSO and TVC personnel. The Commission believes that this is the key to the success of the operation and has made the State of Texas the model for veterans' representation programs in the United States.

Claims Counseling: The front line troops that prepare the claims for benefits for veterans are the TVC field counselors and the Veterans County Service Officers. The VCSO work in almost every county courthouse in the State. TVC counselors

work in VA Regional Offices (VARO), VA hospitals, VA clinics and on military installations in the State. They assist veterans in completing the initial claim for benefits or gather the information necessary to submit a complete claim for veterans' benefits.

Claims Representation: Claims are submitted to the TVC regional offices where they are reviewed and submitted to VA. The regional offices are in Waco and in Houston. They are collocated with the two U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices (VARO) in Texas. After the VA reviews the claim but prior to a final decision, VA must allow the TVC staff the opportunity to review that decision. If the TVC counselor disagrees, appropriate action can be taken. According to their own statistics, the error rate on claims adjudicated by VA can be as high as 34%. If TVC can't convince the VA that their decision is in error, an appeal can be filed. The appeal may go to a Decision Review Officer at the VARO or to the Board of Veterans Appeals which is a branch of VA, in Washington. Because a claim is usually for multiple issues, an appeal can be for one issue or for multiple issues. The fact that the TVC is reviewing claims also has the positive effect of reducing the number of errors made by VA personnel. Every appeal prepared by TVC must be legally correct because it may be reviewed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims which is a court of jurisdiction over veterans' claims and is part of the Federal judiciary, not the VA.

Marketing: Veterans need to know about their rights and where to get help. The TVC operates a public information program, creates PSAs, news releases, distributes more than 100,000 benefits pamphlets a year, makes every recently discharged veteran's name and address available to the office nearest to them and contacts every veteran's widow so they can learn what the TVC can do for them. The TVC operates a hotline, 1(800) 252-VETS, so veterans can contact the TVC staff if they need help. On average, there are more than 1,000 calls for assistance per month. The TVC has a web page which receives 10,000 hits a month and has links that give veterans single site access to every veterans benefit from every state agency. The TVC is responsible for content on the Texas Veterans Portal of Texas Online.

None of the above mentioned functions are performed by another agency of Texas State Government. That is because of the TVC's unique mission.

F. In general, how do other states carry out similar functions?

Almost every other state has a veterans' advocacy agency of some sort. Many, like Texas, have a system of state offices and county offices (e.g. New York, Florida). Some have county offices without state offices (California); some have offices that deal with other aspects of veterans' benefits such as veterans' trust funds, educational assistance, conservatorship, etc. House Bill 2604, 79th Texas Legislature has mandated that veterans' employment be transferred from the Texas Workforce Commission to the TVC. To our knowledge this is the only State in which that has occurred. Most U.S. territories

(American Samoa) and commonwealths (Puerto Rico) also have veterans' agencies. The ways other states carry out the function of veterans assistance are as varied as the number of states and territories. However, with regard to the Claims Assistance and Representation function, Texas is the model other states want to emulate.

G. What key obstacles impair your agency's ability to achieve its objectives?

The objective of the Texas Veterans Commission is to ensure that every Texas veteran and their widow and/or orphan receive every benefit to which they are entitled. The obstacles are reaching those veterans so that they know they are entitled to benefits (in other words, "getting the word out") and ensuring that when a veteran walks into a county courthouse they receive adequate assistance. The TVC has worked on both issues over the past twenty years.

The TVC has asked for and received increases in the amount of funding for marketing and outreach. A result of these appropriations has been production of Public Service Announcements for TV, radio and print media, targeted direct mail, establishing a call center with a shared toll free line with the Veterans Land Board, enhanced TVC web site, and a veteran's portal on Texas Online. The object of all these efforts is to let the veterans of Texas know about the service that the TVC offers with regards to claims assistance. Texas is vast and TVC resources are limited. The agency has seen a continued growth in the number of veterans availing themselves of TVC services. Nevertheless, the TVC is still not one of the better known agencies and the resources to accomplish our objective are limited. The TVC believes that if more resources were available, there would be even more veterans and their families receiving their entitlements.

Veterans County Service Officers (VCSO) are hired and paid by counties. Only counties with a population of more than 200,000 are even required to have a VCSO. The TVC recognizes that many counties do not have resources or sufficient veteran population to employ a full time VCSO. Because there are approximately 230 VCSO, there is going to be a wide variance in the level of ability and expertise among them. The TVC does not have control over the employment of VCSO and therefore does not have the ability to ensure that they meet minimum standards. That being said, most of the counties are diligent about making sure that the VCSO is doing a good job for the local veterans' population. The problem is that in cases where they are not, the TVC does not have any real control either through enforcement or positive reinforcement to remedy the situation. This fact is exacerbated by the fact that if the operation of a VCSO office is too much trouble, a county can choose not to have one. Quality veterans' service in a county is a positive factor to the county, in that it can alleviate the costs of welfare, homelessness, etc. and can add to the economic vitality of a community through the additional payments of federal funds into that community. In recognition of this, the TVC pursued and achieved the objective establishing in law requirements for new VCSO to attend week long initial training and minimum continuing training requirements. Funding for travel to this training is fully paid for initial training and partially subsidized for continuing training by the TVC. The TVC, in cooperation with the TDCJ, initiated a program to have surplus computers refurbished and supplied to those VCSO offices that can not afford them. All of these efforts have the purpose of improving claims assistance at the local level. Nevertheless, there are instances where the service is lacking. The

TVC lacks the capability or the resources to provide counties with incentives to provide better service.

H. Discuss any changes that could impact your agency's key functions in the future (e.g., changes in federal law or outstanding court cases).

House Bill 2604 will have an impact on the TVC in that it nearly triples the number of FTE of the agency, adds offices at local workforce development boards and gives the TVC a completely new goal of enhancing veterans employment opportunities. It also adds federal funding of \$12 million per year. The transition of this program from TWC to the TVC is going to be a significant issue that the TVC will be involved with over the next biennium.

I. What are your agency's biggest opportunities for improvement in the future?

The TVC strives to continuously improve its operation; that is why it is one of the most respected veterans' assistance agencies in the United States. However, the biggest opportunity for improvement for the TVC lies with the new program for veterans' employment. This program will be moved from the Texas Workforce Commission to the TVC no later than October 1, 2006. The program was moved from the Texas Workforce Commission because of the desire of the Texas Legislature, the Governor and the veterans' community to have the veterans' employment program operated by the TVC which is the State's veterans' advocacy agency. The challenge and the opportunity for the TVC is to successfully transition the program from the Texas Workforce Commission and operate the program in a manner that provides the best service possible to the veterans' community.

J. In the following chart, provide information regarding your agency's key performance measures included in your appropriations bill pattern, including outcome, input, efficiency, and explanatory measures.

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION			
Exhibit 2: Key Performance Measures Fiscal Year 2004			
Key Performance Measures	FY 2004 Target	FY 2004 Actual Performance	FY 2004 % of Annual Target
Outputs			
1 CLAIMS FILED FOR DISABLED VETS	48,000	54,829	114.2
4 ACTIVE VA BENEFIT CASES	116,000	123,553	106.5
6 # VA DECISIONS APPEALED	8,500	9,638	113.4
Outcomes			
1 VA AWARDS - DISABLED VETS (millions of \$)	735	813	110.6
3 VA AWARDS - WIDOWS/ORPHANS (millions of \$)	185	187	101.8

III. History and Major Events

Purpose and Major Changes

The agency was established in 1927 as the State Service Office to assist veterans of the Indian Wars, Spanish-American War, and World War I. The State Service Office was established because of complaints by Texas veterans about the complexity of the veterans' claims process, insensitivity of the Veterans Bureau (predecessor of the Veterans Administration) and Federal bureaucratic red tape. After World War II (1947), the agency was renamed and restructured as the Veterans Affairs Commission. This legislation also established a system of Veterans County Service Officers, and mandated the Commission to train the Veterans County Service Officers and Assistants and coordinate a statewide Veterans Assistance Program. The Commission was renamed the Texas Veterans Commission in 1985. In 1989, the Commission was given greater responsibility for training and certification of training attendance of the Veterans County Service Officers, as mandated with the passage of Senate Bill 252 (71st Legislature, Section 434.038, Texas Government Code).

Chronology

- **1927** - State Service Office founded as a branch of the Adjutant General's Department as a result of an act of the 40th Texas Legislature
- **1947** - 50th Texas Legislature creates The Texas Veterans Affairs Commission as an independent Commission to respond to the needs of the 800,000 plus Texas veterans returning from World War II. Creates two-tiered system.
 1. Texas Veterans Affairs Commission
 2. Veterans County Service Officers (VCSO).
- **1981** - Commission renewed by the 67th Texas Legislature as a result of Sunset Legislation.
 1. Expanded from five to six members
 2. Extended for 13 years. (subsequently extended until August 31, 2007)
- **1985** - Renamed the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) by act of the 69th Texas Legislature.
- **1989** - Senate Bill 252, 71st Texas Legislature gives the Texas Veterans Commission greater responsibility for training of Veterans County Service Officers (VCSO); mandates minimum training requirements for VCSO and requires the Commission to certify the attendance at required training for VCSO. Also, authorized the payment of travel expenses for VCSO to attend training.
- **1996** - Completed Needs Analysis/Feasibility Study - State Veterans Home(s).
- **1997** - Legislature authorizes the Veterans Land Board to build Veterans Homes based on the findings of the Study.
- **1998** - Completed Architecture/Financial Feasibility Study for State Veterans Cemetery(s) as mandated by Texas Legislature.
- **2001** - Texas Legislature authorizes the Texas Veterans Land Board to build State Veterans Cemeteries based on the findings of the Study

- **2003** - Composition of the Commission is reduced from six members to five members
- **2005** - Legislation is passed authorizing the Commission to establish a Veterans Trust Fund and to receive grants and gifts. Legislation also passed to transfer the Veterans Employment Program from the Texas Workforce Commission to the Texas Veterans Commission which will necessitate a major reorganization.

IV. Policymaking Structure

A. Policymaking Body Members

Texas Veterans Commission Exhibit 3: Policymaking Body			
Member Name	Term Appointed Dates Appointed by	Qualifications*	City
Leonardo Barraza	5/17/2000 – 12/31/2005 (Governor George Bush)	Veteran	El Paso
James R. Adams	5/15/2000 – 12/31/2005 (Governor George Bush)	Disabled Veteran	Dallas
Hector Farias	9/20/2002 – 12/31/2007 (Governor Rick Perry)	Veteran	Weslaco
John A. Brieden, III	2/13/1998 – 12/31/2003 (Governor George Bush) 9/10/2003 – 12/31/2007 Reappointed (Gov. Perry)	Veteran	Brenham
Karen S. Rankin	3/5/2004 – 12/31/2009 (Governor Rick Perry)	Veteran	San Antonio

*Information concerning military service, as well as service in community and veterans’ organizations, is included in each respective biographical summary.

B. Describe the primary role and responsibilities of your policymaking body.

The Commissioners develop and evaluate policy that governs the Commission. Often the staff presents suggestions for potential policy changes which the Commission considers and takes final action.

C. How is the chair selected?

The Commission holds an annual election during the 4th quarter of the year for the next calendar year. At that time the Commission members vote during an open Commission meeting to elect all of the officers including the chair.

D. List any special circumstances or unique features about your policymaking body or its responsibilities.

Members of the Commission must be citizens and residents of the state. At least three members must have been honorably discharged or honorably released from active military service of the United States. At least one member must be a person classified as a disabled veteran by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the branch of the United States armed forces in which the person served. This person's disability must be service-connected and compensable.

E. In general, how often does your policymaking body meet? How many times did it meet in FY 2004? In FY 2005?

The Commission by law must meet quarterly. At times, special circumstances may require additional meetings. The Commission met four times in FY 2004 and four times in FY 2005.

F. What type of training do members of your agencies policymaking body receive?

The Commissioners attend The Law and Liability Conference conducted by the Attorney General's Office; Legislative Communications, conducted by the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, and Initial Training for Veterans County Service Officers conducted by the TVC Staff.

G. Does your agency have policies that describe the respective roles of the policymaking body and the agency staff in running the agency? If so, describe the policies.

The Commissioners and Executive Director have certain statutory duties as outlined in Chapter 434 of the Texas State Government Code.

Commission Members ensure that the agency perform the following: Compile federal, state, and local laws enacted to benefit members of the armed forces, veterans, and their families and dependents; collect information relating to services and facilities available to veterans; cooperate with veterans service agencies in the state; inform members and veterans of the armed forces, their families and dependents, and military and civilian authorities about the existence or availability of:

- Educational training and retraining facilities;
- Health, medical, rehabilitation, and housing services and facilities;
- Employment and reemployment services;
- Provisions of federal, state, and local law affording rights, privileges, and benefits to members and veterans of the armed forces and their families and dependents; and other similar, related, or appropriate matters;

In addition, Commissioners also cooperate with all government and private agencies securing services or benefits to veterans and their families and dependents; investigate, and if possible correct, abuses or exploitation of veterans or their families or dependents, and recommend necessary legislation for full correction; coordinate the services and activities of state departments and divisions having services and resources affecting veterans or their families or dependents.

Executive Director:

Places into operation the policies and instructions of the Commission; serves as the executive officer of the Commission, without the power to vote; be in charge of Commission offices; directs paid personnel of the Commission; and is responsible to the Commission for all reports, data, and similar information required by the Commission.

The Executive Director may:

- (1) administer oaths;
- (2) certify official acts under the Commission's seal;
- (3) take depositions inside or outside the state, as provided by law; compel the production of pertinent books, accounts, records, and documents. The Executive Director shall devote the Executive Director's entire time to the duties of the office and may not actively engage or be employed in another business, vocation, or profession.

H. What information is regularly presented to your policymaking body to keep them informed of your agency's performance?

The Commissioners are updated at the Commission's quarterly meetings on budget and finance, information resources, human resources, marketing, training and regional operations by the employees in charge of those respective areas. The Commissioners are also briefed on all other business items by the Executive Director at each meeting as well as through regular communications between meetings.

I. How does your policymaking body obtain input from the public regarding issues under the jurisdiction of the agency? How is this input incorporated into the operations of your agency?

The Commissioners may be addressed by the public during quarterly Commission meetings. The public is allowed to attend the meetings and to request to speak on Commission meeting agenda items or Commission policy. Commissioners also receive direct communication by Texas veterans concerning issues. These communications can take a number of forms (e.g. letters, phone calls or direct verbal communication at venues such as town hall meetings). Input received by Commissioners is evaluated to determine if further action is required.

J. If your policymaking body uses subcommittees or advisory committees to carry out its duties, fill in the following chart. See Exhibit 4 Example.

The Commission does not have any current standing subcommittees in place at this time.

V. Funding

A. Provide a brief description of your agency's funding.

Until FY 2006, the Texas Veterans Commission is 100% funded by the General Revenue Fund. Because of the passage of HB 2604, 79th Texas Legislature; the federally funded Veterans Employment Program is to be transferred to the Texas Veterans Commission not later than October 1, 2006.

B. List all riders that significantly impact your agency's budget.

There is a rider to the General Appropriation Act (GAA) that has a small impact on the agency’s budget. It has to do with the distribution of license plate receipts. It has been determined that this rider has no “significant fiscal impact.” A second rider requires that the Commission “visit wounded and disabled veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom and other war zones that Texas veterans have served.” This rider directs the Commission to allocate \$52,000/year out of funds appropriated in the GAA to the Commission for this outreach. Despite the fact that the GAA does not go into effect until September 1, 2005 the agency has already begun to implement both riders.

C. Show your agency’s expenditures by strategy. See Exhibit 5 Example.

Texas Veterans Commission Exhibit 5: Expenditures by Strategy — Fiscal Year 2004 (Actual)	
Goal/Strategy	Amount
Goal 1: Ensure Veterans, Their Dependents and Survivors Receive All Benefits - Strategy 1: Provide Claims Assistance to Veterans and Their Dependents.	\$3,447,020
GRAND TOTAL:	\$3,447,020

D. Show your agency’s objects of expense for each category of expense listed for your agency in the General Appropriations Act FY 2004. Add columns and rows as necessary.

Texas Veterans Commission		
Exhibit 6: Objects of Expense by Program or Function Fiscal Year 2004		
Object-of-Expense	Claims Assistance	Indirect Administration
Salaries and Wages	\$2,481,703	\$355,638
Other Personnel Costs	101,459	27,530
Professional Fees and Services	4,600	14,034
Consumable Supplies	19,729	1,949
Utilities	1,754	881
Travel	103,081	21,167
Rent - Building	8,933	120
Rent - Machine and Other	6,432	
Other Operating Expenses	258,014	33,297
Capital Outlay	0	6,698
Total	\$2,985,705	\$461,315

E. Show your agency’s sources of revenue. Include all local, state, and federal appropriations, all professional and operating fees, and all other sources of revenue collected by the agency, including taxes and fines.

Texas Veterans Commission	
Exhibit 7: Sources of Revenue — Fiscal Year 2004 (Actual)	
Source	Amount
OO1 General Revenue Fund	\$3,447,019.92
TOTAL	\$3,447,019.92

F. If you receive funds from multiple federal programs, show the types of federal funding sources.

Texas Veterans Commission Exhibit 8: Federal Funds — Fiscal Year 2004 (Actual)				
Type of Fund	State/Federal Match Ratio	State Share	Federal Share	Total Funding
n/a				
TOTAL				

G. If applicable, provide detailed information on fees collected by your agency.

Texas Veterans Commission Exhibit 9: Fee Revenue — Fiscal Year 2004				
Fee Description/ Program/ Statutory Citation	Current Fee/ Statutory maximum	Number of persons or entities paying fee	Fee Revenue	Where Fee Revenue is Deposited (e.g., General Revenue Fund)
n/a				

B. If applicable, fill the chart below listing field or regional offices.

Texas Veterans Commission			
Exhibit 10: FTE's by location Fiscal Year 2004			
Headquarters, Region or Field Office	Location	Number of Budgeted FTE's FY 2004	Number of Actual FTE's as of August 31, 2004
Headquarters	Austin	12	12
Region	Houston	16	15
Region	Waco	17	16
Field Hospital	Waco	0*	0*
Field Military Installation	Fort Hood	2	2
Field Military Installation	Fort Sam Houston	2	2
Field Military Installation	Lackland AFB	2	2
Field Courthouse	Marshall	1	1
Field County	Midland	0*	0*
Field Military Installation	Sheppard AFB	1.5	2
Field Hospital	Amarillo	2	2
Field Hospital	Big Spring	0*	0*
Field Hospital	Bonham	0*	0*
Field Hospital	Dallas	5	4
Field Hospital	Houston	4	3
Field Hospital	Kerrville	1	1
Field Hospital	Marlin	0*	0*
Field Hospital	San Antonio	4	4
Field Hospital	Temple	4	4
Field Clinic	Austin	2.6	2.6
Field Clinic	Beaumont	0*	0*
Field Clinic	Cedar Park	1	1
Field Clinic	Corpus Christi	1	1
Field Clinic	El Paso	2	2
Field Clinic	Fort Worth	1	1
Field Clinic	Laredo	0	0
Field Clinic	Lubbock	1	1
Field Clinic	Lufkin	1	1
Field Clinic	McAllen	2	2
Field Clinic	San Antonio	4	4
Field Clinic	Victoria	1	1
Total		90.1	86.6

* Offices served part-time on itinerary

C. What are your Agency’s FTE caps for fiscal years 2004 – 2007?

Texas Veterans Commission FTE CAP			
2004	2005	2006	2007
93	93	97	97

D. How many temporary or contract employees did your agency have as of August 31, 2004?

The agency did not employ any temporary or contract employees.

E. List each of your agency’s key programs or functions, along with the expenditures and FTE’s by program.

Texas Veterans Commission Exhibit 11: Program FTE’s and Expenditures Fiscal Year 2004		
Program	FTE’s as of August 31, 2004	Actual Expenditures
Central Administration	6.5	\$461,315
Marketing	4.0	\$152,947
Claims Assistance	76.1	\$2,832,758

VII. Guide to Agency Programs

Program 1. Claims Assistance

1. A. Provide the following information at the beginning of each program description.

Name of Program or Function	Provide Claims Assistance to veterans and their Dependents
Location/Division	28 Field Offices/ 2 Regional Offices Approximately 230 County Offices
Contact Name	Charles A. Buerschinger
Actual Expenditures, FY 2004	\$2,832,758
Number of FTEs as of August 31, 2004	76.1

1. B. What is the objective of this program or function? Describe the major activities performed under this program.

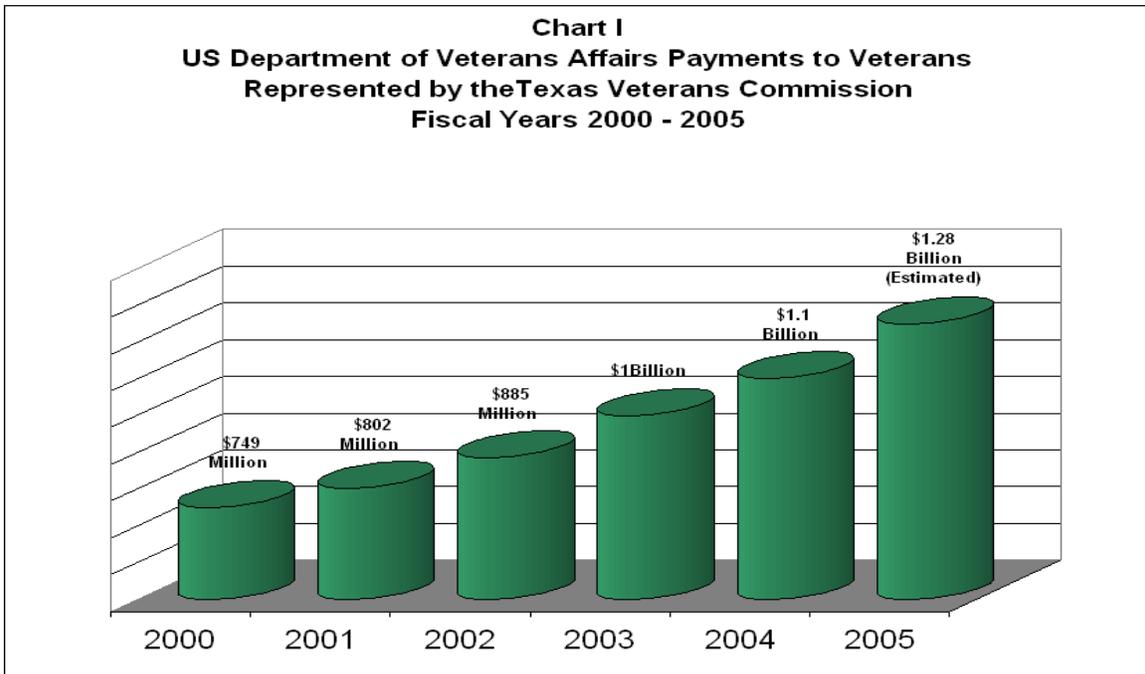
Chapter 434 of the Texas Government Code mandates the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to assist veterans and their families.

The major activities involved in the program provide a far reaching economic benefit for our State’s veteran population by recovering federal veterans’ benefits. The elements of the program are:

1. Affording every veteran the opportunity to receive assistance by competent professionals at Commission or Veterans County Service Offices.
2. Ensuring effective representation for veterans at the VA regional offices in Waco and Houston.
3. Ensuring competent claims assistance is available in every community in the State of Texas through an information and training program for TVC personnel and Veterans County Service Officers.

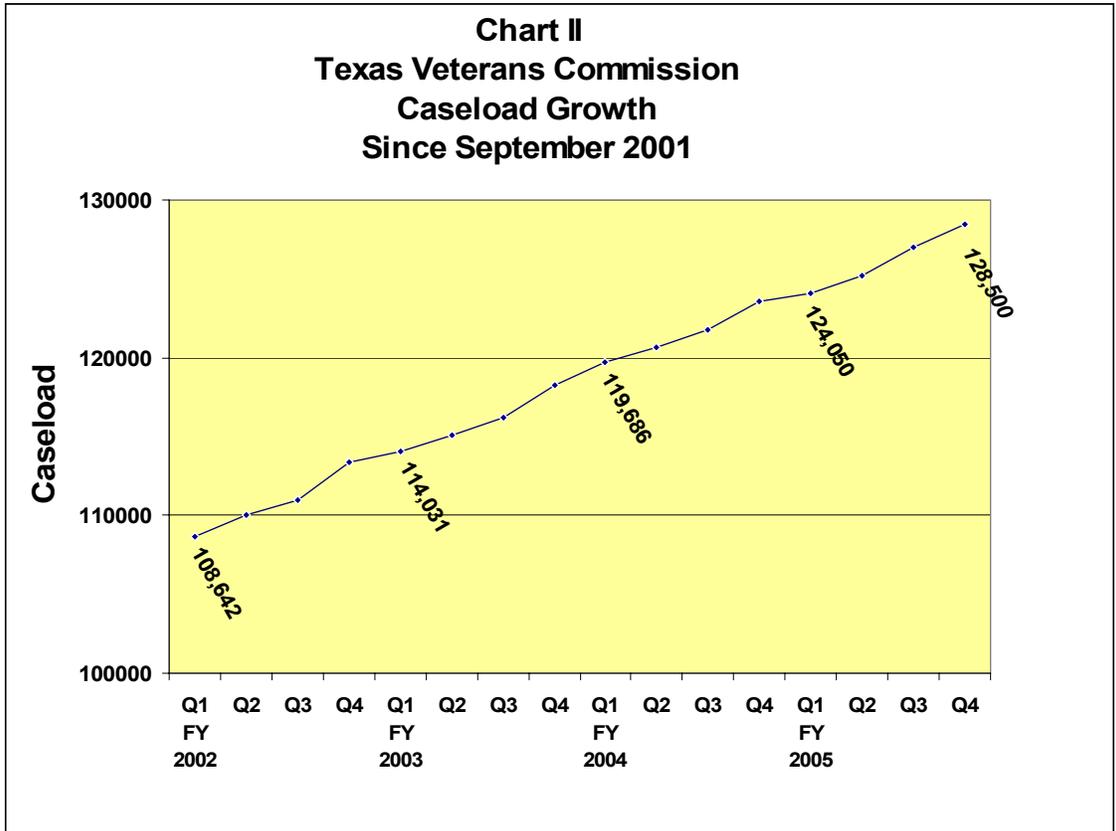
1. C. What evidence can you provide that shows the effectiveness and efficiency of this program or function? Provide a summary of key statistics and performance measures that best convey the effectiveness and efficiency of this function or program.

The Texas Veterans Commission is a valuable asset to the people of Texas. It acts as an ombudsman for veterans and their families when they encounter difficulties in dealing with one of the largest agencies in the Federal government, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It has a tremendous economic impact on the State. In FY 2005, the Commission projects \$1.28 billion will be paid to Texas veterans, their widows and orphans who are represented by the Commission or an organization with which the TVC has been appointed as a representative. (Chart I, *US Department of Veterans Affairs Payments to Veterans Represented by the Texas Veterans Commission Fiscal Years 2000 – 2005*). The Commission fulfills a moral obligation by this State to its veterans. Abraham Lincoln described this obligation as a need to care for those citizens "who have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan... to preserve this nation." In addition to meeting our moral obligation, these payments circulate through the State's economy producing a multiplier effect that benefits all of Texas. The steady growth of these payments is a strong indicator of the effectiveness of the TVC programs of veterans' assistance.



Growth in payments to veterans represented by the Commission is generated by a steady increase in caseload. In essence, veterans and their survivors are choosing the

Commission in increasing numbers to represent them. From FY 2002 to the end of FY 2005, the caseload will have increased by nearly 20,000 veterans and their families. (Chart II, *Texas Veterans Commission Caseload Growth Since September 2001*)



Texas has outstripped other states of similar size in the growth of compensation and pension payments (Chart III, *Growth in Compensation and Pension (C&P) FFY 1999 to FFY 2004 Seven Most Populous States*). Veterans are a large segment of the population. As a result, their demographics tend to be similar across the entire US population. Given that the veteran population is constant, the one significant variable in Texas is the Texas Veterans Commission. The five-year growth in Compensation and Pension payments to Texas veterans is twenty-five percent greater than the average for the other six most populous states.

Chart III
Growth In Compensation and Pension (C&P)
FFY 1999 to FFY 2004
Seven Most Populous States

State	Compensation & Pension*			Percent Growth
	Federal Fiscal Years			
	1999		2004	
TEXAS	\$ 1,702,837		\$ 2,607,508	153%
California	\$ 1,713,442		\$ 2,446,911	143%
Florida	\$ 1,552,188		\$ 2,186,155	141%
New York	\$ 957,273		\$ 1,176,283	123%
Pennsylvania	\$ 819,960		\$ 1,069,222	130%
Ohio	\$ 696,472		\$ 907,249	130%
Illinois	\$ 471,991		\$ 632,899	134%
Average w/o TX	\$ 6,211,327		\$ 7,958,534	128%

* in \$000's

Texas has one of the most successful programs of any of the states of comparable size and veteran population. The growth in the amount of payments of compensation and pension relative to other states is also reflected in the per capita payments to veterans. Texas leads the seven most populous states in per capita payments to veterans. (Chart IV, *Compensation & Pension (C&P) Payments Comparison, Seven Most Populous States, FFY 2004*).

**Chart IV
Compensation & Pension (C&P) Payments Comparison
Seven Most Populous States**

STATE	Veteran Population	Total VA C&P Paid	Per Capita	
			C&P ¹	Variance ²
TEXAS	1,681,748	\$ 2,607,507,861	\$ 1,550	\$ - 0 -
California	2,310,968	\$ 2,446,911,420	\$ 1,059	\$ (492)
Florida	1,788,496	\$ 2,186,155,293	\$ 1,222	\$ (328)
New York	1,171,900	\$ 1,176,283,168	\$ 1,004	\$ (547)
Pennsylvania	1,145,919	\$ 1,069,221,912	\$ 933	\$ (617)
Ohio	1,051,683	\$ 907,249,097	\$ 863	\$ (688)
Illinois	896,640	\$ 632,898,745	\$ 706	\$ (845)
AVG ³	1,394,268	\$ 1,403,119,939	\$ 933	\$ (617)

¹ The total USDVA payments divided by the veteran population.

² Texas average payments minus comparative state average.

³ Excluding Texas.

In fact, if Texas veterans received the same per capita payments as the average for the other six most populous states, payment to Texas veterans would be one billion dollars (\$1,000,000,000) less than they currently receive. In the worst-case scenario, if per capita payments were the same as those of the state of Illinois, which has the lowest per capita payment of the populous states, Texas veterans would receive one billion, four hundred million dollars (\$1,400,000,000) less!

Statistics are a barometer of the value of a state program of assistance. However, the dollar amounts presented here are more than a barometer of success. They are indicative of the power of a properly run state program of assistance to change the lives of part of the population; in this case, a very deserving segment of the population, those men and women who served their country in the military.

1. D. Describe any important history regarding this program not included in the general agency history section, including how the services or functions have changed from the original intent.

The War in Iraq has had a significant effect on this strategy. The Commission is making a major effort to contact these returning veterans, especially Reserve and National Guard personnel. While the Outreach and Marketing effort is geared toward making initial contact, this strategy focuses on assisting these veterans with claims for service-connected issues after their return from deployment. The Commission continues to have a significant increase in the number of claims. Rulings by US Court of Appeals

for Veterans Claims increase the stringency of rules of evidence, resulting in greater demand for case development for service-connected claims. At the same time, VA has liberalized requirements for claims for nonservice-connected pension for veterans. The decision to grant presumptive disability for a number of conditions related to Agent Orange exposure continues to have an effect on the agency's workload. Veterans Affairs is changing its strategic plan for its medical program. They have gone from being hospital centered to concentrating their efforts on Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC). Because we have determined that in order to achieve the best market penetration, we must locate our services in places where veterans tend to be, it has made it necessary for us to refocus our efforts into the communities in which these clinics are located. Additionally, changes in law continue to have an impact on the quality of case development from the TVC and the VCSO.

1. E. Describe who or what this program or function affects. List any qualifications or eligibility requirements for persons or entities affected. Provide a statistical breakdown of persons or entities affected.

The program is focused on three classes of beneficiaries. They are:

1. Veterans with service-connected disabilities that are a result of injuries or illnesses incurred while serving in the military.
2. Wartime veterans who are totally disabled and have incomes near or below the poverty line but do not have a service-connected disability.
3. Survivors of veterans who are entitled to VA assistance because of the service of a veteran who is now deceased. The qualifier for this assistance is the reason for the veteran's death. If it was related to service (service-connected), the survivors are entitled to VA Death Indemnity Compensation (DIC), which is not based on income. If the veteran has wartime service and did not die from a service-connected disability, generally speaking, the survivor is entitled to a pension if the survivor's income is less than an amount set by the VA.

All income related benefits are subject to regulations established by the VA. Income for VA Purposes (IVAP) excludes certain categories of income and deducts certain categories of expenses, e.g. any medical expenses that the VA deems excessive; generally speaking, any expenses that exceed 5% of the maximum allowable pension rate.

1. F. Describe how your program or function is administered. Include flowcharts, timelines, or other illustrations as necessary to describe agency policies and procedures. List any field or regional services.

The Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) is the focal point for veterans' assistance in the State. It is an agency whose functions are an outgrowth of demands for help by Texas veterans who were experiencing difficulties in dealing with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), formerly the Veterans Administration. The claims assistance,

counseling and outreach services contacts, counsels, and assists Texas veterans with rights and entitlements in all areas of veterans' benefits.

The primary focus of this activity is veterans' assistance. This assistance is directed toward ensuring that all Texas veterans receive every benefit to which they are entitled; and, as a corollary benefit, increase the federal payments to Texas veterans and their survivors, thereby benefiting the economy of the State of Texas. This purpose is accomplished by counseling potential beneficiaries concerning their entitlement, helping them apply for that entitlement, and preparing the evidence which will prove their entitlement. Counseling is conducted in Commission field offices throughout the State, which are manned by trained Veterans Assistance Counselors. Hospitalized veterans are contacted by Commission personnel located at VA hospital offices. In addition to the Commission offices, most counties maintain Veterans County Service Offices, which are dependent on Commission offices for technical assistance, training and representation at the Department of Veterans Affairs regional offices.

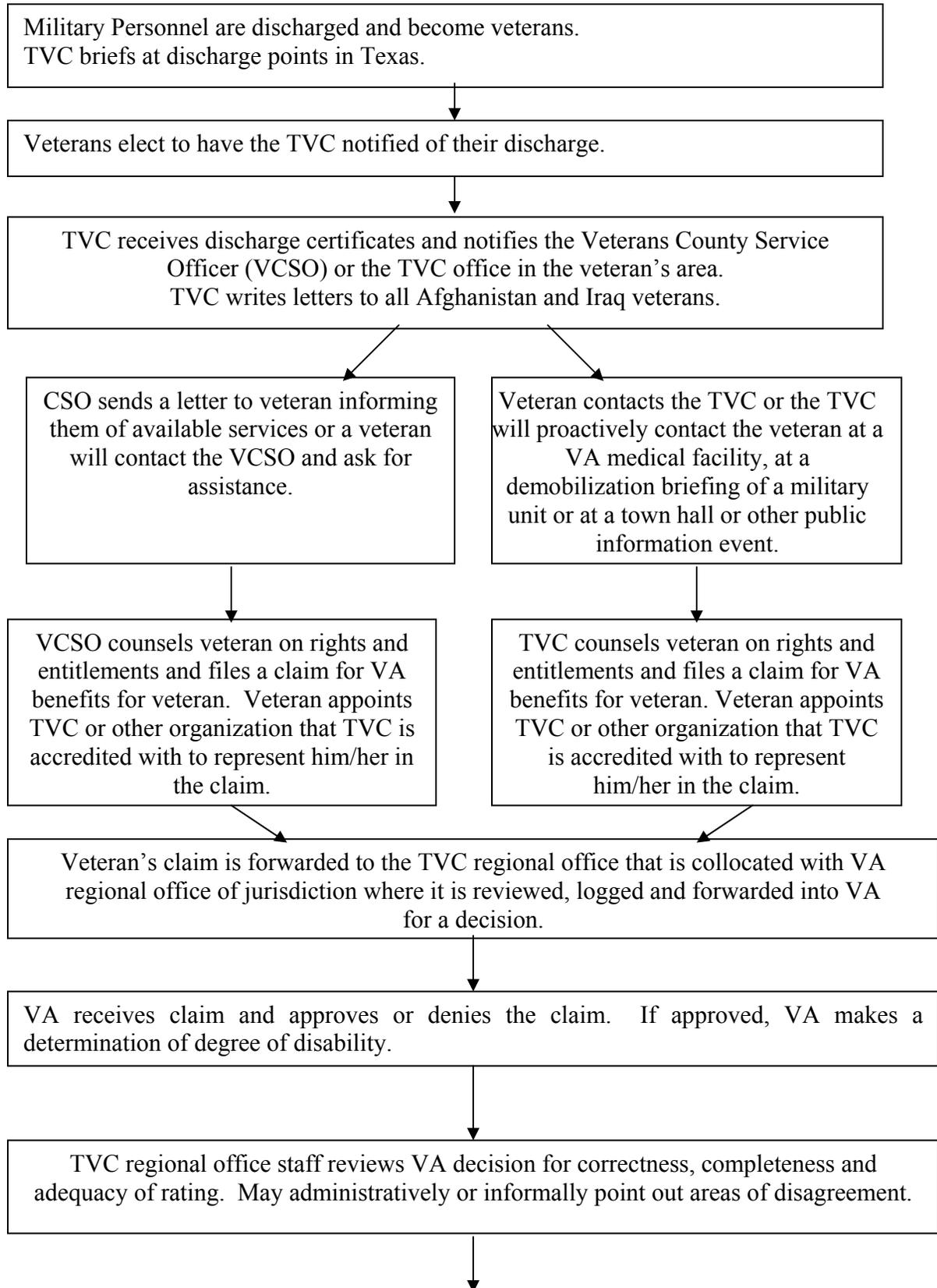
A comprehensive program needs to extend service and claims assistance for financial benefits to disabled veterans and survivors who are unable to come to a Texas Veterans Commission office or County Service office.

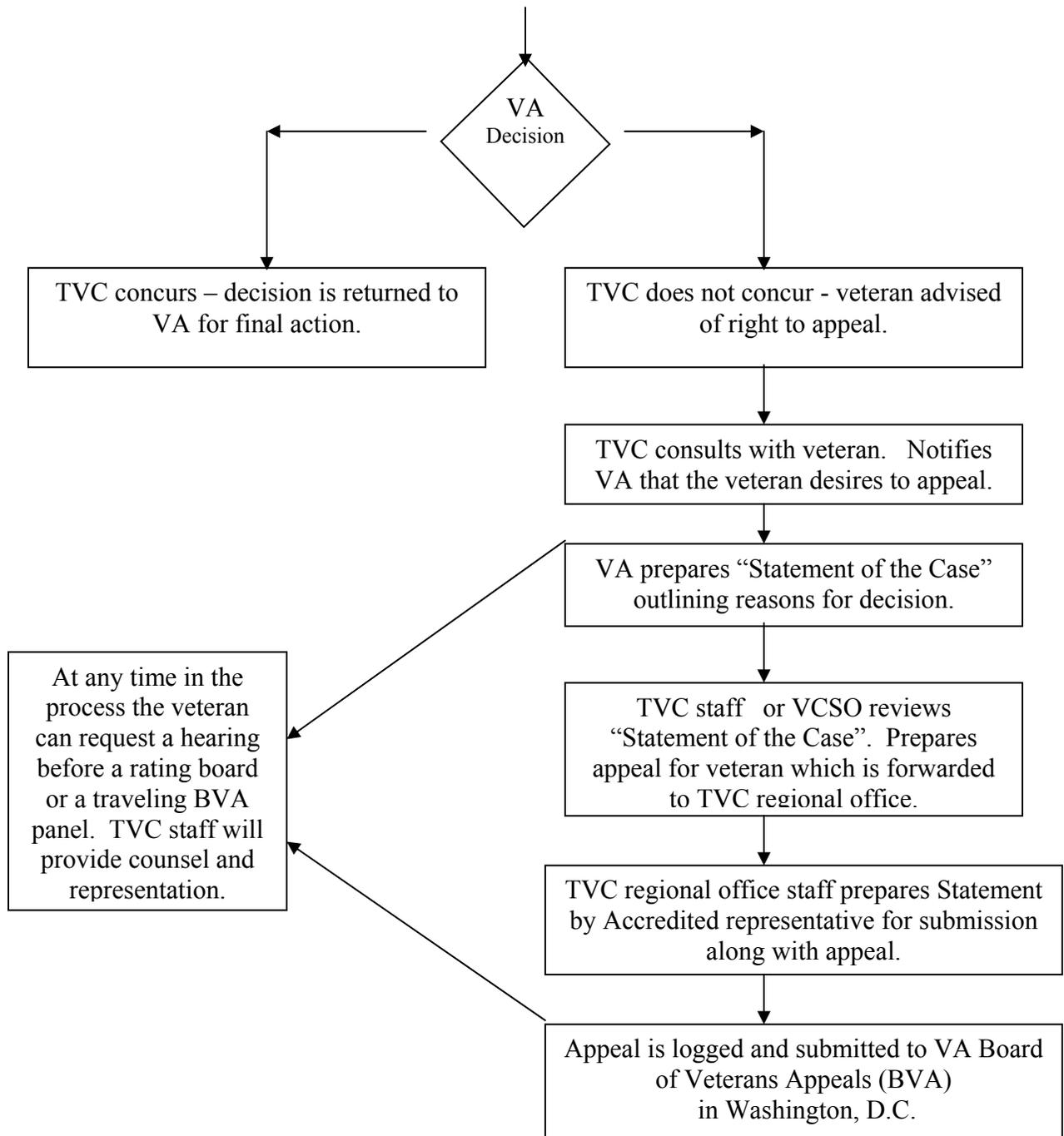
Texas Veterans Commission Veterans Counselors are stationed at established field offices with assignments concentrated on outreach service to institutions and other related facilities throughout the State. Services are provided through briefings, individual counseling and review of patient medical records. Incarcerated veterans are assisted with educational benefit applications and claims for VA benefits. Institutionalized patients receiving mental health care, nursing home residents and helpless children are assisted in applying for VA pension or compensation benefits. Eligible recipients in under-served areas are provided the full gamut of TVC services through outreach by TVC counselors.

Regardless of the location where the assistance begins, the normal flow of work is from the originating office (e.g. a TVC office or VCSO office) to a TVC regional office. Because the basis for originating a veteran's benefit is a claim, the process for a claim describes the normal flow of work in this program. In this process, a veteran or survivor would file their initial claim at a TVC office or VCSO office and appoint the TVC as their representative in their claim. In either case, in the process of completing the claim, the service officer or counselor would review available evidence and counsel the veteran on what was necessary for a successful claim. Usually, this would also involve a review of any medical records, income and dependency information and other pertinent facts that would further the claim. The counselor or VCSO would also assist in developing and obtaining evidence in support of the claim. When the claim is completed, it would be forwarded to the TVC Regional office, which is collocated with the VA regional office of jurisdiction. At this level, the claim is logged in, reviewed and submitted to VA. The claim is reviewed by VA personnel and determination of eligibility for and/or degree of compensation is made. Also, any requests for additional evidence and for medical evaluations are made during this period. This process normally takes between six and nine months to complete. The reason for this length of time is that VA is facing a significant backlog of claims. If there is a dire situation or in cases of terminal illness, the TVC counselor or VCSO will so note on the initial claim and special consideration will be given to expediting that claim. The personnel at the originating office will also assist the veteran with obtaining any additional evidence that may be requested and will

brief the veteran on procedures in medical examinations. If an exam takes place at a VA hospital or clinic, a TVC staff member at that location will also be available to assist the veteran with the exam and will also assist in ensuring the exam be adequate.

After all evidence is gathered, VA will render a decision. Prior to finalizing a decision, in cases that the veteran has appointed the TVC as his representative, VA must allow a final review by TVC. At this point, a TVC counselor at a regional office would review the decision and advise VA if they agree with the decision. In cases where the TVC counselor agrees with the decision, they would sign off on the claim. If the counselor does not agree and it is a matter of oversight or a simple matter, the TVC counselor will contact the VA personnel who made the decision and ask them to reconsider their decision. If VA agrees with the TVC counselor the claim is released. In cases where VA does not agree, the TVC will advise the veterans and the initiating office that an appeal of the decision is in order. The choice to appeal the VA decision belongs to the veteran. Should the veteran make the decision to appeal, TVC will assist the veteran in developing evidence and will prepare the appeal documents. If the veteran requests a personal appearance, TVC will act as counsel in that appearance. Appeals of decisions are made to the VA's Board of Veteran's Appeals. Appeals can be very involved and if denied can be further appealed to a federal court outside the VA, the U.S Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. From that court, decisions can be appealed all the way to the US Supreme Court. As is the case with all appeal courts, the courts rule on law, not the facts of the case. Nevertheless, the possibility of court review requires that all appeal documents prepared by TVC meet a test of being able to pass judicial scrutiny. (In fact, the TVC originated the first case, *Brown v. Gardener*, for a veteran, which was decided by the US Supreme Court). Once a claim is appealed, the process can take two years or more for a final decision. During this period, the case can be remanded for additional development which would involve further TVC actions on behalf of the veteran. For further clarification see flowchart which follows: "Basic Flow Chart of Texas Veterans Commission Claims."

Basic Flowchart of Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) Claims



1. G. Identify all funding sources and amounts for the program or function, including federal grants and pass-through monies. Describe any funding formulas or funding conventions. For state funding sources, please specify (e.g., general revenue, appropriations rider, budget strategy, fees/dues).

All funding for this activity is General Revenue. After transition is completed to add the Veterans Employment Program into the Commission, there may be some partial funding through that Federal Grant.

1. H. Identify any programs, internal or external to your agency, that provides identical or similar services or functions. Describe the similarities and differences.

The VA provides claims assistance to veterans; however, they do not provide claims representation. They are also subject to their own regulations and cannot challenge those regulations as the TVC has successfully done in the past.

1. I. Discuss how the program or function is coordinating its activities to avoid duplication or conflict with the other programs listed in Question H and with the agency's customers. If applicable, briefly discuss any memorandums of understanding (MOUs), interagency agreements, or interagency contracts.

Veterans Service Organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Disabled American Veterans provide assistance and representation; however, they have limited resources and few personnel located only in Houston or Waco. They also tend to prefer that a veteran be a member of their organization. The two largest organizations, the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars depend on the TVC to provide them with administrative and clerical support. In the cases of other smaller organizations, the TVC presently or at times will be called on to handle their claims.

None of the organizations have a field staff at VA clinics and hospitals or have the Veterans County Service Officer system, which is an integral part of the TVC program.

The TVC is the only organization which offers a training program for Veterans County Service Officers. The TVC provides initial training and ongoing training for VCSO's.

1. J. If the program or function works with local, regional, or Federal units of government include a brief description of these entities and their relationship to the agency.

The program is the link between the veterans of Texas and the Federal VA. The TVC has the responsibility of ensuring that Texas veterans receive those federal benefits to which they are entitled. The TVC provides claims representation and counseling to every area of the State of Texas. The service is provided either through Commission

field offices or through a local Veterans County Service Office. There are five categories of State and local government veterans' advocacy offices. None of the offices in this program pay for office space. Under the provisions of 38 USC and 38 CFR, the TVC receives free office space from the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, TVC receives furniture, equipment, telephones and miscellaneous office items from VA at no cost to the State or TVC. The items the TVC are able to obtain from VA usually depend on the budget of each particular federal facility where a TVC office is located (i.e., Dallas VA Medical Center, Houston VA Medical Center, etc.). Similar support is provided by counties and the military.

- **TVC Regional Offices** are collocated with the two VA Regional Offices in Waco and Houston and serve as central processing points for claims for all county offices and TVC offices in the region. In the process of providing claims representation to veterans, TVC personnel interact on a daily basis with Federal employees who are assigned to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) branch of VA. These TVC employees also are a point of direct contact with county personnel. TVC employees at all levels prepare appeals of veterans' decisions. The TVC regional offices are the clearinghouses for all appeals, which after final review are completed by TVC regional office staff. These appeals are sent to VA Board of Veterans Appeals, which is a distinct branch of VA. In general, original and reopened claims originate in the field, medical center, clinic or Veterans County Service Offices. The functions of these offices, their interactions and their relationship to each other are described in the following office descriptions.
- **TVC Area Field Offices** are located in six strategic areas of the State. They are on military installations or in under-served areas of the State. In general, they are collocated with either a Federal military installation (Fort Hood, Fort Sam Houston, Lackland and Sheppard AFB) where the TVC is the guest of the installation because we provide valuable assistance to military personnel at the point of discharge. The TVC also provides service in strategic locations which may be underserved. For example, the TVC has an office that is collocated with the County Office in Harrison County which provides the TVC a base from which to serve Texas veterans at the VA hospital in Shreveport.
- **TVC Medical Center Offices** are located at the ten VA Medical Centers. Claims counseling, completion and development is provided for bedridden veterans at bedside and in a TVC office for ambulatory veterans. Because there is a need for the development of medical evidence, there is a significant interaction between hospital personnel, who are employees of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) branch of VA. This often involves one on one contact with VA administrators, doctors, nurses, etc. Often the TVC employee is called on to obtain additional evidence for a claim directly from a VA doctor or social worker.

- **TVC VA Clinic Offices** are located in the eleven VA clinics in the state and other clinic offices are served on itinerary. These offices have a similar relationship with employees who are assigned to VHA branch of VA, as is the case in VA hospitals. The principal focus of assistance is for veterans who are outpatients at these facilities.
- **Veterans County Service Offices** are located in approximately 230 counties in the State. In addition to providing claims representation and processing at the VA regional offices, TVC is mandated by law to provide training to the Veterans County Service Officers (VCSO). This training is provided to VCSO as ongoing in service training in the Spring and Fall. Specialized in-office training, as well as a week long initial training class is provided for newly appointed VCSO. Advanced level training is also available to VCSO who want to enroll in a TVC accreditation program.

1. K. If this program or function is contracted out, provide a description of how you ensure accountability for funding and performance.

The program is unique to the State. Contracting the work would be very difficult and would involve a transition that would most likely be detrimental to the best interest of veterans. Likewise, from experience the level of performance of government and service organizations is not on a par with that of the TVC. The most likely candidate for contracting would be a service organization. TVC would be contracting with an organization which is also a special interest group that lobby's for veterans. That could present significant complexity and conflicts of interest. The TVC also is considered one of the premier agencies for veterans' advocacy in the United States.

1. L. What statutory changes could be made to assist this program in performing its functions? Explain.

At this time, we cannot think of any that have not already been proposed.

1. M. Provide any additional information needed to gain a preliminary understanding of the program or function.

The claims assistance and counseling program uses outreach services contacts at military installations, Reserve and National Guard units and at any other location where there are a significant number of veterans. The program also offers in-office counseling at TVC field offices at military installations, under-served county locations and VA hospitals and clinics. The TVC also provides bedside counseling at VA hospitals. All counseling has the purpose of assisting Texas veterans with rights and entitlements in all areas of veterans' benefits.

The primary focus of this activity is veterans' assistance. This assistance is

directed toward ensuring that all Texas veterans receive every benefit to which they are entitled; and, as a corollary benefit, increase the federal payments to Texas veterans and their survivors, thereby benefiting the economy of the State of Texas. This purpose is accomplished by counseling potential beneficiaries concerning their entitlement, helping them apply for that entitlement, and preparing the evidence which will prove their entitlement. Counseling is conducted in Commission field offices throughout the State, which are manned by trained Veterans Assistance Counselors. Hospitalized veterans are contacted by Commission personnel located at VA hospital offices. In addition to the Commission offices, most counties maintain Veterans County Service Offices, which are dependent on Commission offices for technical assistance, training and representation at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs regional offices.

A comprehensive program needs to extend service and claims assistance for financial benefits to disabled veterans and survivors who are unable to come to a Texas Veterans Commission office or County Service Office.

Texas Veterans Commission Veterans Counselors are stationed at established field offices with assignments concentrated on outreach service to Texas State Veterans' Homes, institutions and other related facilities throughout the State. Services are provided through briefings, individual counseling and review of patient medical records. Incarcerated veterans are assisted with educational benefit applications and claims for VA benefits. The Commission assists veterans seeking admission to Texas State Veterans' Homes by providing assistance in applying for VA benefits. Institutionalized patients receiving mental health care, nursing home residents and helpless children are assisted in applying for VA pension or compensation benefits.

A successful program needs to provide TVC counselors and Veterans County Service Officers who serve veterans and their dependents and survivors an ongoing, comprehensive training program and information on their rights and benefits available to veterans.

The training relates to assisting veterans, and the laws and procedures pertaining to benefits entitlement. The activity fulfills the agency's statutory mandate to ensure that all of the State's County Service Officers meet minimum training requirements.

Informational materials are disseminated through publications and related media. Recently deceased veterans' survivors are advised of benefits available. A bimonthly *Journal* is published outlining news of importance to the veteran community. Because all claims activities have the same focus, there is coordination by the marketing program of public information briefings, which are provided through outreach services.

TVC counselors and Veterans County Service Officers (VCSO) are provided both initial and ongoing training. The focus of initial training for VCSO is to bring newly appointed Veterans County Service Officers and Assistants to a minimum standard of ability needed to serve the veterans in their community. Ongoing and refresher training is provided to develop the Veterans County Service Officers into effective advocates for the veteran. A bi-monthly pamphlet is published to inform Veterans County Service Officers of changes in procedures and veterans' laws.

1. N & O. N/A - Questions do not apply.

Program 2. Marketing

2. A. Provide the following information at the beginning of each program description.

Name of Program or Function	Outreach and Marketing
Location/Division	Austin/Headquarters
Contact Name	Amanda Palm
Actual Expenditures, FY 2004	\$152,947
Number of FTEs as of August 31, 2004	4.0

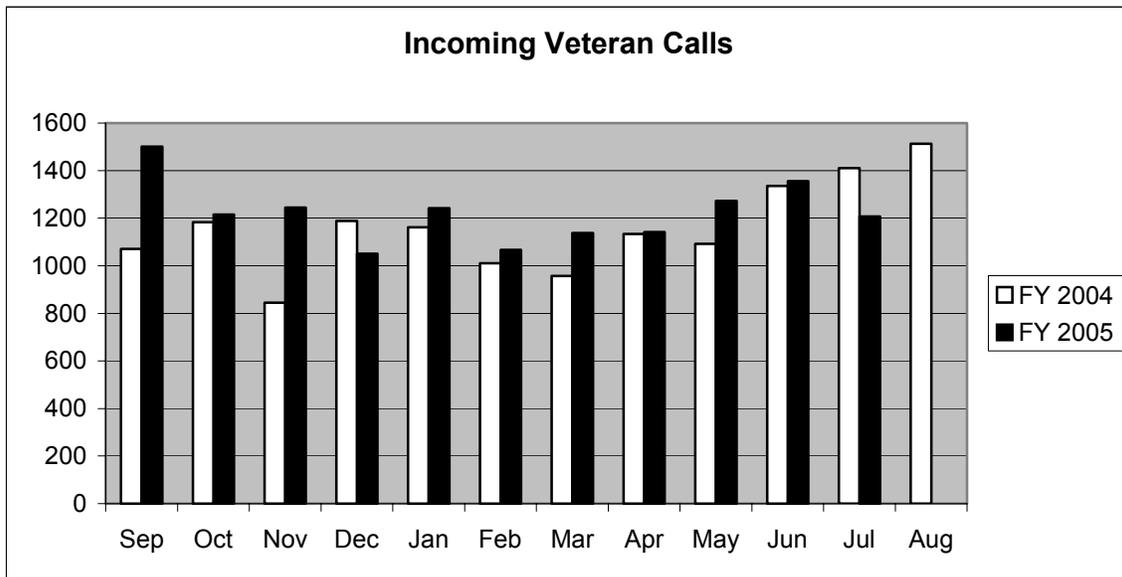
2. B. What is the objective of this program or function? Describe the major activities performed under this program.

The TVC marketing program is an initiative designed to reach veterans throughout the State of Texas. Through public service announcements on radio and television, print media, and public information seminars, the program seeks to provide veterans and their families current information on veterans’ benefits and the role the Texas Veterans Commission can play in ensuring they receive their entitlements. In a collaborative effort with the Texas Veterans Land Board, the TVC has established a shared “Veterans Hotline,” which is being publicized through collateral marketing and publication in the media. The “Hotline” gives the general public a means to reach the appropriate source for answers to their questions and a starting place for assistance. To increase public awareness, the marketing program has begun hosting benefits seminars in conjunction with the Commission’s initial training and spring conferences. The seminars serve to inform veterans of the variety of benefits available to them from the TVC as well as other state agencies and organizations. The seminars also give veterans an opportunity to deal directly with representatives. In addition to the small-scale seminars, the marketing program plans to host annual one-day benefits seminars in cities with a high veteran population. As a result of the war on terrorism, there has been a significant increase in the number of National Guard and Reserve members who have been called to active duty. The TVC recognizes the need these servicemen and women will have for benefits and has begun a targeted marketing campaign, consisting of direct mail outs, to contact these individuals and ensure they get quality services from TVC personnel. The ultimate goal of the TVC marketing program is to increase awareness of veterans’ benefits and the advantages of representation by the TVC. The program is for the benefit of the veterans of Texas. This will ultimately increase the number of Texas veterans and their families who have the benefit of the Texas Veterans Commission representing them before the VA.

The Marketing program is also available to help County Service Officers with marketing strategies in rural areas. The agency has a variety of press releases and scripted letters to the editor that can be helpful in educating the county populations of the representatives in their areas.

2. C. What evidence can you provide that shows the effectiveness and efficiency of this program or function? Provide a summary of key statistics and performance measures that best convey the effectiveness and efficiency of this function or program.

The shared veterans’ hotline is the primary means of communication used by the call center in marketing to the veteran public. Incoming calls have increased nearly three-fold since the inception of the call center in 2002. Since March of 2004, incoming calls have held steady at more than 1,000 per month.



The outreach events the TVC participates in have expanded since the inception of the call center. The TVC annually participates in hundreds of events, contacting tens of thousands of veterans and their families. In addition, the Marketing program has expanded its Town Hall meetings to include six meetings per year in an effort to expand its reach to veterans across the state.

2. D. Describe any important history regarding this program not included in the general agency history section, including how the services or functions have changed from the original intent.

In May 2004, the Texas Veterans Commission implemented a National Guard/Reserve initiative to contact those who were called to active duty service. This initiative was unanticipated at the time the marketing program was created and has expanded the scope of the program to include thousands of Reserve and National Guard personnel who attained veterans status as a result of this extensive call-up to active duty.

2. E. Describe who or what this program or function affects. List any qualifications or eligibility requirements for persons or entities affected. Provide a statistical breakdown of persons or entities affected.

The program is focused on veterans, their dependents and survivors. In addition, the marketing program has created special initiatives to contact those National Guard and Reservists who have been called to active duty status and will therefore be eligible for VA benefits.

2. F. Describe how your program or function is administered. Include flowcharts, timelines, or other illustrations as necessary to describe agency policies and procedures. List any field or regional services.

The marketing and outreach efforts of the TVC are to ensure Texas veterans are made aware of the rights and entitlements they are eligible for and to refer veterans in need of claims assistance, counseling or other help to Texas Veterans Commission counselors located across the state.

The flow of work for the marketing program originates at the headquarters office in Austin, where the call center is managed. Work managed from this office includes answering and referring veteran inquiries in the call center and manage direct mail outs to veterans, next of kin and Guard/Reservists who have been called to active duty service.

Veteran inquiries that come in via the shared veterans' hotline (1-800-252-VETS), the direct line (512-463-5538), the administrative line (512-463-6564) and via email are handled here. When a veteran calls in, information regarding the veteran's name, location, inquiry and method of contacting the TVC is collected. Any veteran inquiry that can be answered by the call center (i.e.: education, DD 214 request) is handled directly. All other inquiries are referred to the appropriate TVC counselor, VCSO, VA office, etc.

The call center employees collect information for each call in order to make the best referral possible. The call center must determine where the veteran is located, whether or not a Veterans County Service Officer is available to the veteran, the closest TVC office to the veteran and who is best suited to assist the veteran with his or her

inquiry. In most cases, referrals are made to either the veteran's local Veterans County Service Officer or the nearest Texas Veterans Commission office. For those matters that must be handled directly by VA, the call center refers the veteran to the appropriate VA department. For matters not directly related to TVC or VA, the call center refers veterans to the appropriate Federal, State or community agency.

In addition, much of the outreach performed by the marketing department is done through direct mail of DD 214 letters, next of kin letters and Guard/Reserve post cards. The DD 214s of the majority of discharged servicemen and women from Texas come through the call center. Per an agreement with the Texas Veterans Land Board, all 214s are then forwarded to the VLB, which pulls addresses from the DD 214s for their mailing lists. The DD 214s are then returned to the call center, where they are sorted by county of the individual's home of record. The call center then forwards the DD 214s to the respective Veterans County Service Officers. If a veteran lives in a county with no VCSO, a DD 214 letter is mailed to the veteran from our office. The letter includes notice of possible entitlements to benefits, brochures with information on state benefits and service-connected disability benefits and a 1-800 business card with additional contact information on it.

Beginning April 2005, the marketing program created a female veteran DD 214 letter that is sent to all female veterans in Texas, regardless of the county in which they reside. This female veteran DD 214 letter includes notice of possible entitlements to benefits, a listing of the six Texas Veterans Commission Women Veteran Coordinators in the state, brochures with information on service-connected disability benefits and women veteran benefits and a 1-800 card with additional contact information on it.

Along with contacting veterans, the TVC makes a point to contact the next of kin of a deceased veteran. The same format for DD 214 letters is followed for next of kin letters with the exception of forwarding the death notices to the VLB. If the next of kin live in a county with no VCSO, a letter is mailed to the family from our office. The letter includes notice of possible survivor and/or dependent benefits, contact information for the TVC, brochures on survivor benefits and service-connected disability benefits and a 1-800 business card with contact information on it.

In May 2004, the marketing program began a National Guard/Reserve initiative in an effort to contact those Guard and Reservists who have been called to active duty status and are therefore eligible for benefits. All incoming DD 214s are sorted by those that list a National Guard or Reserve member as having been activated for Federal status. The call center then mails a postcard that was designed specifically for those called to active duty service. The postcard explains that the service member could be eligible for benefits as a result of his or her active duty service and advises them to contact the Texas Veterans Commission or their local Veterans County Service Officer for assistance.

2. G. Identify all funding sources and amounts for the program or function, including federal grants and pass-through monies. Describe any funding formulas or funding conventions. For state funding sources, please specify (e.g., general revenue, appropriations rider, budget strategy, fees/dues).

The Marketing program is funded fully by the General Revenue Fund. After transition is completed to add the Veterans Employment Program into the Commission, there may be some partial funding through that Federal Grant.

2. H. Identify any programs, internal or external to your agency, that provides identical or similar services or functions. Describe the similarities and differences.

There are no other programs that market similar services or functions.

2. I. Discuss how the program or function is coordinating its activities to avoid duplication or conflict with the other programs listed in Question H and with the agency's customers. If applicable, briefly discuss any memorandums of understanding (MOUs), interagency agreements, or interagency contracts.

N/A

2. J. If the program or function works with local, regional, or federal units of government include a brief description of these entities and their relationship to the agency.

Through Transition Assistance Program (TAP) briefings, the Texas Veterans Commission currently works with the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Services (VETS) program, as well as the Texas Workforce Commission, which manages the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP). However, under the provisions of HB 2604, the agency will be assuming total responsibility for the VETS, LVER and DVOP briefings. In cooperation with the National Guard & Reserve and the Department of Defense, the Commission provides both pre- and post-deployment briefings across the state. The VA, as well as state, county and community agencies participate with the Commission in a variety of events, including town hall meetings, information seminars, veterans' conferences and retirement briefings. The Commission shares its 1-800-252-VETS phone with the Texas Veterans Land Board. All incoming calls on the hotline are routed first to the VLB, which answers the calls and then forwards all veterans benefits inquiries to the TVC call center.

2. K. If this program or function is contracted out, provide a description of how you ensure accountability for funding and performance.

N/A

2. L. What statutory changes could be made to assist this program in performing its functions? Explain.

There may be cost allocation changes with the addition of the VETS employment program that should be addressed in the next General Appropriation bill.

2. M. Provide any additional information needed to gain a preliminary understanding of the program or function.

N/A

2. N & O. N/A - Questions do not apply.

Program 3. Central Administration

3. A. Provide the following information at the beginning of each program description.

Name of Program or Function	Central Administration/Indirect Administration
Location/Division	Austin / HQ
Contact Name	Charles A. Buerschinger
Actual Expenditures, FY 2004	\$461,315
Number of FTEs as of August 31, 2004	6.5

3. B. What is the objective of this program or function? Describe the major activities performed under this program.

Chapter 434 of the Texas Government Code mandates the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to assist veterans and their families. The Central Administration strategy administers and supervises all agency programs, including development and implementation of goals, program objectives, policies, planning and follow-up action to ensure those agency goals are accomplished. Administration provides centralized purchasing, supply, information resources support and financial administration. The Central Administration Strategy is an integral part of all of the Commission’s functions.

3. C. What evidence can you provide that shows the effectiveness and efficiency of this program or function? Provide a summary of key statistics and performance measures that best convey the effectiveness and efficiency of this function or program.

Central Administration has had no significant write-ups in any audit in recent history.

3. D. Describe any important history regarding this program not included in the general agency history section, including how the services or functions have changed from the original intent.

Central Administration is a new strategy in that until the 79th Legislative session was part of the Claims Assistance strategy which was the only strategy of the TVC. With the transfer of the DVOP/LVER program to TVC, the Central Administration strategy will also administer that program.

3. E. Describe who or what this program or function affects. List any qualifications or eligibility requirements for persons or entities affected. Provide a statistical breakdown of persons or entities affected.

Central Administration is the controlling administrative and leadership function for all agency programs.

3. F. Describe how your program or function is administered. Include flowcharts, timelines, or other illustrations as necessary to describe agency policies and procedures. List any field or regional services.

Central Administration provides the administration, management, supervision and leadership to the Commission. All non-management functions are routine and recurring; to include payroll preparations, leave and financial accounting, personnel management, training, Commission business, etc. Central Administration implements and enforces policy for the Commission.

3. G. Identify all funding sources and amounts for the program or function, including federal grants and pass-through monies. Describe any funding formulas or funding conventions. For state funding sources, please specify (e.g., general revenue, appropriations rider, budget strategy, fees/dues).

All funding for this activity is General Revenue. After transition is completed to add the Veterans Employment Program into the Commission, there will be proportional funding through that Federal Grant and General Revenue.

3. H. Identify any programs, internal or external to your agency, that provides identical or similar services or functions. Describe the similarities and differences.

Every Agency has a central administration function.

3. I. Discuss how the program or function is coordinating its activities to avoid duplication or conflict with the other programs listed in Question H and with the agency's customers. If applicable, briefly discuss any memorandums of understanding (MOUs), interagency agreements, or interagency contracts.

To our knowledge because of the uniqueness of agency programs, to date the central administration functions do not conflict with other agencies. After the transfer of the veterans employment program the Commission intends to investigate using some TWC programs for payments to vendors.

3. J. If the program or function works with local, regional, or federal units of government include a brief description of these entities and their relationship to the agency.

The executive staff of the TVC is part of the Central Administration function. Their interactions with local, regional and federal units of government are described in previous areas of this section.

3. K. If this program or function is contracted out, provide a description of how you ensure accountability for funding and performance.

It may be possible to contract out certain functions, but the management and leadership functions would be impossible to contract. In essence because the TVC uses USAS and USPS the payroll and personnel functions are contracted with the Office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts.

3. L. What statutory changes could be made to assist this program in performing its functions? Explain.

N/A

3. M. Provide any additional information needed to gain a preliminary understanding of the program or function.

This Central Administration function is universal to all agencies. The TVC uses USAS and USPS as their internal accounting and payroll systems. Because of this, the accounting and payroll functions are identical to other internal users of the statewide systems. It is often proposed that the Commission contract for payroll and HR. The fact is that if an agency uses the Comptroller's USAS and USPS, these functions are in effect contracted out and the agency function is basically data entry and updating information.

3. N & O. N/A - Questions do not apply.

VIII. Statutory Authority and Recent Legislation

A. Fill in the following chart, listing citations for all state and federal statutes that grant authority to or otherwise significantly impact your agency. Do not include general state statutes that apply to all agencies, such as the Public Information Act, the Open Meetings Act, or the Administrative Procedures Act. Provide information on Attorney General opinions from FY2001 – FY 2005, or earlier significant Attorney General opinions that affect your agencies operations.

Texas Veterans Commission
Exhibit 13: Statutes/Attorney General Opinions

Statutes	
Citation/Title	Authority/Impact on Agency
Chapter 434, Government Code, Veterans Assistance Agencies	Provides the structure of the Commission and outlines the duties and responsibilities of Commission members, Executive Director, paid employees and County Veterans Service Officers.
38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §14.629	Sets the criteria for Accreditation of TVC Employees and Veterans County Service Officers by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Attorney General Opinions	
Attorney General Opinion No.	Impact on Agency
N/A	

B. Provide a summary of recent legislation regarding your agency by filling in the chart below or attaching information already available in an agency-developed format. Briefly summarize the key provisions. For bills that did not pass, briefly explain the key provisions and issues that resulted in the failure of the bill to pass (e.g., opposition to a new fee, or high cost of implementation).

Texas Veterans Commission		
Exhibit 14: 79th Legislative Session Chart		
Legislation Enacted – 79th Legislative Session		
Bill Number	Author	Summary of Key Provisions
SB1	Senator Ogden	Provided The Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) with current funding. Provided the TVC with funding for seven (7) additional counselors and additional operating funds.
SB1480	Senator Shapleigh	Establishes a permanent fund for veterans’ assistance, which is a special fund in the state treasury outside the General Revenue fund. In addition allows the Texas Veterans Commission to accept gifts of money and property and grants. Both of these items will enhance the agency’s ability to operate veterans’ programs and help local communities to assist veterans in the form of grants. However, SB 1605 effects the status of this fund in that the fund was not exempted from remaining in the State treasury as a General Revenue fund.
HB2604	Representative Guillen	Transfers Veterans Employment and Training Program from the Texas Workforce Commission to the Texas Veterans Commission.

Texas Veterans Commission		
Exhibit 14: 79th Legislative Session Chart (cont.)		
Legislation <u>Not</u> Passed – 79th Legislative Session		
Bill Number	Author	Summary of Key Provisions/Reason the Bill Did Not Pass
SB1714	Senator Van De Putte	Provisions incorporated into HB 2604.

IX. Policy Issues

Issue 1. Veterans County Service Officers Training

1. A. Brief Description of Issue

The Texas Veterans Commission is responsible for providing training to Veterans County Service Officers (VCSO). Attending a week long initial training session and at least twelve classroom hours of Commission sponsored training each year is mandatory. The fact that a VCSO attends training is not a guarantee that the VCSO is competent to provide quality claims representation and counseling at the county level. While the vast majority of VCSO are very competent and dedicated individuals, there are some occasions in which a VCSO does not meet the standards that the veterans deserve. In other instances, VCSO simply choose not to attend any training. When VCSO do not attend training, the Commission informs the County Judge of that County that the VCSO has not met State mandated minimum training requirements. This may or may not carry any weight with the county. In both cases, the TVC does not have the ability to ensure that the veterans of a community receive proper assistance.

1. B. Discussion

In order to enhance the quality of service veterans receive at the county level, the TVC asked for funds to fully offset the cost of attending an initial training conference. In addition, the TVC pays for the lodging and meals at the State employee per diem rate for VCSO to attend one Commission sponsored training session each year. The Commission has also instituted a higher level of training for those VCSO who want to achieve that level. This level makes the VCSO an “accredited representative” of the Commission. VCSO who are accredited have to meet the same basic requirements for training as do TVC counselors. This program was instituted to instill a higher degree of pride and professionalism in those VCSO who enroll in the program. VCSO who choose to become accredited representatives of the TVC must first spend a year being mentored by a senior TVC counselor. During this time, they receive extra training at TVC offices. They also receive advanced level training at the TVC annual training conference for VCSO. They must be tested annually in basic knowledge of veterans’ benefits programs and counseling. Of the 230 VCSO there are approximately 38 VCSO who are “accredited representatives.” The majority of the remaining VCSO possess core competencies to do a good job for their veteran clientele. However, in some cases VCSO do not attend training or do not have a desire to provide the quality of service that the veterans of their community deserve. Although the TVC is well aware of these VCSO, there is nothing other than the exercise of moral suasion to attempt to bring these VCSO up to standard. This issue is exacerbated if the VCSO meets minimum training requirements, which in essence means that they attended training.

1. C. Possible Solutions and Impact

Because the TVC does not have any authority over counties and other than partially funding training for VCSO, there does not seem to be a readily available solution. The fact that with the exception of certain counties any pressure to enhance quality service could result in the county simply deciding to abolish the VCSO office certainly puts a constraint on the TVC. The fact is that a well trained and competent VCSO will not only provide veterans with the assistance they deserve, but also have a positive impact on the economy of the county and the State of Texas. As part of the sunset process, we feel that the issue of enforcing a level of core competency in VCSO should be explored.

Issue 2. Should TVC be able to audit the work of VCSO accredited with the TVC?

2. A. Brief Description of Issue

Should the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) be given operational and office audit authority over the Veterans County Service Officers (VCSO) who are accredited with the TVC?

2. B. Discussion

The Texas Veterans Commission provides training to all Veterans County Service Officers and certifies to their individual County Judges that they have attended and completed said training.

Some Veterans County Service Officers choose to participate in the TVC accreditation program. Those who meet the requirements of the administrative rules and federal regulations (*Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Part 15, Chapter 451, Rule 451.3 and 38 Code of Federal Regulations §14.629*) are mentored by a TVC counselor and receive specialized training and testing.

Once accredited, the TVC has no operational authority or office audit capability over the VCSO. We do test them annually, but this is only a measurement of their basic knowledge and not the quality of the representation they provide to the veterans who they serve. TVC can revoke the accreditation of a VCSO for just cause, but we have very limited means of determining the quality of their daily operations.

2. C. Possible Solutions and Impact

A possible option to consider is that the respective TVC Regional Directors be given office audit and claims activity authority with respect to those VCSO's who are accredited. Without this authority, TVC will continue to shoulder the liability of this group of VCSO's without having any authority to direct their activities.

This recommendation would allow the TVC Regional Director to audit the accredited VCSO's office operations, as well as give specific direction with respect to

problems that are identified. Once problems are identified, further training and personal instruction could be initiated and results monitored. A possibility does exist for a negative reaction from some of the VCSO's as they are accustomed to operating with very little if any supervision.

X. Other Contacts

A. Fill in the following chart with updated information on people with an interest in your agency, and be sure to include the most recent e-mail address.

Texas Veterans Commission Exhibit 15: Contacts			
INTEREST GROUPS (groups affected by agency actions or that represent others served by or affected by agency actions)			
Group or Association Name/ Contact Person	Address	Telephone	E-mail Address
Texas Coalition of Veterans Organization* /Glen Gardner	P.O. Box 14468 Austin, Texas 78761	(512) 834-8535	glen@texasvfw.org
Veterans County Service Office Association of Texas/Olie Pope	P.O. Box 1748 Austin, Texas 78767	(512) 854-9340	Olie.pope@co.travis.tx.us
*The coalition includes all of the major statewide veterans' service organizations.			
INTERAGENCY, STATE, OR NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS (that serve as an information clearinghouse or regularly interact with your agency)			
Group or Association Name/ Contact Person	Address	Telephone	E-mail Address
Texas Homeless Network/ Ken Martin	200 East 8th Street Austin, TX 78701	(512) 482-8270	ken@thn.org
Texas State Agency Business Administrators Agency/Ronnie Jung	P.O. Box 13164 Austin, TX 78711	(512) 542-6576	ronnie.jung@trs.state.tx.us
National Association of County Veterans Service Officers/Ann Knowles	2200 Wilson Blvd. Arlington, VA 22201	(910) 592-2862	aknowles@sampsonnc.com
National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs/Leslie Beavers	1111 Louisville Road Frankfort, KY 40601	(502) 564-9203	les.beavers@ky.gov
National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators/ Delilah Washburn	1501 Garfield Street Wichita Falls, TX 76309	(940) 782-2460	Delilah.washburn@sheppard.af.mil
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans/ Linda Boone	333 ½ Pennsylvania Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20003	(800) 838-4357	nchv@nchv.org

LIAISONS AT OTHER STATE AGENCIES with which your agency maintains an ongoing relationship, e.g., the agency's assigned analyst at the Legislative Budget Board, or attorney at the Attorney General's office)			
Group or Association Name/ Contact Person	Address	Telephone	E-mail Address
Legislative Budget Board/ Agency Analyst/Natasha Rosofsky	1501 Congress Ave., 5 th Floor, Austin, TX 78701	(512) 463-1200	Natasha.rosofsky@lbb.state.tx.us
Attorney General's Office/Assigned Attorney/Eugene Clayborn	209 W14th St. Austin, TX 78707	(512) 475-4300	Eugene.clayborn@oag.state.tx.us
Office of the Governor Advisor/Mike McElhaney	P.O. Box 12428 Austin, TX 78711	(512) 463-1975	mmcelhaney@governor.state.tx.us
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Liaison/Jewell Williams	P.O. Box 12788 Austin, TX 78711	(512) 427-6456	Jane.Caldwell@THECB.state.tx.us
Texas Workforce Commission/Liaison Luis Macias	101 East 15 th St. Austin, Texas 78778	(512) 463-2654	Luis.Macias@twc.state.tx.us
Texas Veterans LandBoard/Liaison /Ken Wallingford	1700 North Congress Ave., Suite 700 Austin, Texas 78778	(512) 475-1386	vlbinfo@glo.state.tx.us
Texas Department of Health and Human Services/Legal Liaison/Kenneth Owens	701 West 51 st Street P.O. Box 149030 Austin, TX 78714	(512) 438-3098	Kenneth.owens@dhs.state.tx.us
Adjutant General's Department/Liaison Wallace Meehan	P.O. Box 5218 Austin, TX 78763	(512) 413-7574	Wallace.meehan@tx.ngb.army.mil
Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs and Military Installations/ Jennie Costilow	1100 Congress Austin, TX 78701	(512) 463- 2211	Jennie.Costilow_SC@senate.state.tx.us
Comptroller of Public Accounts/ Patrick Connelly	111 E 17 th Austin, TX 78774	(512) 463-2626	patrick.connelly@cpa.state.tx.us
House Committee on Defense Affairs and State-Federal Relations / Donovan Burton	P.O. Box 2910 Austin, TX 78768	(512) 463-1393	

XI. Additional Information

A. Fill in the following chart detailing information on complaints regarding your agency. Do not include complaints received against people or employees you regulate. The chart headings may be changed if needed to better reflect your agency’s practices.

Texas Veterans Commission Exhibit 16: Complaints against the Agency Fiscal Years 2003 & 2004		
	FY 2003	FY2004
Number of complaints received	5	6
Number of complaints resolved	4	6
Number of complaints dropped/found without merit	1	0
Number of complaints pending from prior years	0	0
Average time period for resolution of a complaint	30 days	25 days

B. Fill in the following chart detailing your agency’s Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) purchases.

Texas Veterans Commission Exhibit 17: Purchases from HUBs FISCAL YEAR 2002				
Category	Total \$ Spent	Total HUB \$ Spent	Percent	Statewide Goal
Heavy Construction	0	0	0	11.9%
Building Construction	0	0	0	26.1%
Special Trades	0	0	0	57.2%
Professional Services	0	0	0	20.0%
Other Services	43,483.00	29,759.00	68.4%	33.0%
Commodities	\$67,681.00	\$43,662.00	20.4%	12.6%
Total	\$111,164.00	\$43,662.00		

FISCAL YEAR 2003				
Category	Total \$ Spent	Total HUB \$ Spent	Percent	Statewide Goal
Heavy Construction	0	0	0	11.9%
Building Construction	0	0	0	26.1%
Special Trade	0	0	0	57.2%
Professional Services	0	0	0	20.0%
Other Services	\$33,454.00	\$13,871.00	41.4%	33.0%
Commodities	\$32,248.00	\$12,727.00	39.4%	12.6%
Total	\$65,702.00	\$26,598.00		

FISCAL YEAR 2004				
Category	Total \$ Spent	Total HUB \$ Spent	Percent	Statewide Goal
Heavy Construction	0	0	0	11.9%
Building Construction	0	0	0	26.1%
Special Trade	0	0	0	57.2%
Professional Services	0	0	0	20.0%
Other Services	\$38,956.00	\$26,447.00	67.8%	33.0%
Commodities	\$94,903.00	\$46,663.00	49.1%	12.6%
Total	\$133,859.00	\$73,110.00		

C. Does your agency have a HUB policy? How does your Agency address performance shortfalls?

The Agency's policy is outlined in the procedure guide. The agency consistently stays above the statewide goal for HUB purchases due to the diligence of the agency's purchasing officer. The field offices are encouraged to use a HUB when making all purchases.

D. For agencies with contracts valued at \$100,00 or more.

N/A - This agency does not have any contracts of \$100,000 or more.

E. For agencies with biennial appropriations exceeding 10 Million, answer the following HUB question.

	Response/Agency Contact
1. Do you have a HUB coordinator? (Tex. Government Code, Sec. 2161.062; TAC 111.126)	Yes/Debi Driscoll (512) 463-6564
2. Has your agency designed a program of HUB forums in which businesses are invited to deliver presentations that demonstrate their capacity to do business with your agency? (Tex. Government Code 2121.066; TAC 111.127)	No, the agency consistently exceeds the standard set by the State for HUB participation.
3. Has your agency developed a mentor-protégé program to foster long-term relationships between prime contractors and HUBs and to increase the ability of HUBs to contract with the state or to receive subcontracts under a state contract? (Tex. Government Code, Sec. 2161.065; TAC 111.128)	No, the agency consistently exceeds the standard set by the State for HUB participation.

F. Fill in the chart below detailing your agency’s Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statistics.

Texas Veterans Commission							
Exhibit 18: Equal Employment Opportunity Statistics Fiscal Year 2002							
Job Category	Total Positions	Minority Workforce Percentages					
		Black		Hispanic		Female	
		Agency	Civilian Labor Force %	Agency	Civilian Labor Force %	Agency	Civilian Labor Force %
Officials/Administration	1	0%	7%	0%	11%	0%	31%
Professional	62	12.3%	9%	21.5%	10%	26.15%	47%
Technical	0	0%	14%	0%	18%	0%	39%
Protective Services	0	0%	18%	0%	21%	0%	21%
Para-Professionals	6	50%	18%	0%	31%	100%	56%
Administrative Support	23	13.04%	19%	30.4%	27%	100%	80%
Skilled Craft	0	0%	10%	0%	28%	0%	10%
Service/Maintenance	0	0%	18%	0%	44%	0%	26%

Texas Veterans Commission							
Exhibit 18 (cont): Equal Employment Opportunity Statistics Fiscal Year 2003							
Job Category	Total Positions	Minority Workforce Percentages					
		Black		Hispanic		Female	
		Agency	Civilian Labor Force %	Agency	Civilian Labor Force %	Agency	Civilian Labor Force %
Officials/Administration	1	0%	7%	0%	11%	0%	31%
Professional	62	8%	9%	22.5%	10%	20%	47%
Technical	0	0%	14%	0%	18%	0%	39%
Protective Services	0	0%	18%	0%	21%	0%	21%
Para-Professionals	7	42.8%	18%	14.2%	31%	100%	56%
Administrative Support	23	21.7%	19%	26%	27%	100%	80%
Skilled Craft	0	0%	10%	0%	28%	0%	10%
Service/Maintenance	0	0%	18%	0%	44%	0%	26%

Texas Veterans Commission							
Exhibit 18 (cont): Equal Employment Opportunity Statistics Fiscal Year 2004							
Job Category	Total Positions	Minority Workforce Percentages					
		Black		Hispanic		Female	
		Agency	Civilian Labor Force %	Agency	Civilian Labor Force %	Agency	Civilian Labor Force %
Officials/Administration	1	0%	7%	0%	11%	0%	31%
Professional	62	11%	9%	20%	10%	25%	47%
Technical	0	0%	14%	0%	18%	0%	39%
Protective Services	0	0%	18%	0%	21%	0%	21%
Para-Professionals	9	33%	18%	11%	31%	88%	56%
Administrative Support	21	19%	19%	28%	27%	100%	80%
Skilled Craft	0	0%	10%	0%	28%	0%	10%
Service/Maintenance	0	0%	18%	0%	44%	0%	26%

G. Does your agency have an equal opportunity policy? How does your agency address performance shortfalls related to the policy?

The agency has an EEO policy which is part of the Agency’s Procedure Guide. Training is conducted on EEO every two years at the agency’s Fall Conference.

EEO complaints and shortfalls are brought to the Executive Director’s attention by the Director of Administration and Training. The complaint is investigated and an attempt is made to correct the problem at the lowest level possible.

XII. Agency Comments

The Texas Veterans Commission believes that the foregoing document adequately reflects the Commission as it exists today. However, the TVC will greatly expand its scope and responsibilities over the next two years. The largest part of the expansion is the addition of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program/Local Veterans Employment Representative (DVOP/LVER) program that was mandated by HB 2604. There is also a strong possibility that the Veterans Education Program will be transferred from the Texas Workforce Commission to the TVC. These changes will have the effect of expanding the agency by approximately 220 FTE and increasing the Commission budget by an additional \$13 million. The agency's budget and FTE would more than triple. This increase in responsibility is a profound statement by the Texas Legislature that it has a high degree of confidence in the commissioners, the management and staff of the Texas Veterans Commission.