



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services

Charles M. Zingler
Commissioner

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July 1, 2024

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Craig Crenshaw
Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Don Scott
Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
President Pro Tempore, Senate of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Delivered via electronic mail

Re: 2023 Annual Report of the Department of Veterans Services on diversity, equity, and opportunity goals

Dear Governor Youngkin, Secretary Crenshaw, Speaker Scott, and President Lucas,

Section 2.2-602 of the Code of Virginia requires state agencies to establish and maintain a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan in coordination with the Governor's Office and report annually.

Please find attached the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) 2023 annual report detailing our goals in support of the plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I may provide additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chuck Zingler".

Charles (Chuck) Zingler
Commissioner

Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion Plan
AGENCY: Department of Veterans Services
YEAR: 2023
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

GOAL 1: Access and Success

Recruit and retain a diverse workforce by increasing access to diverse populations for recruiting.

Objective 1: *Continue to improve hiring processes and increase access to potential applicants from diverse populations.* In 2023, the Department of Veterans Services (DVS):

- a. Expanded resources to recruit diverse talent with Virginia's colleges, universities, and community colleges through partnership and technology including LinkedIn and Handshake.
- b. Attended the "Hire Vets Now" recruitment event to recruit and increase awareness of the agency.
- c. Continued to utilize the "Alternative Hiring Process" for applicants with disabilities.
- d. Ensured all job postings include updated language regarding education and additional considerations.
- e. Utilized diverse interview panels of employees from different backgrounds.

Objective 2: *Continue to retain and promote a diverse workforce.* In 2023, DVS:

- a. Evaluated the overall candidate experience. Based on feedback, implemented significant changes to the New Employee Orientation.
- b. Evaluated staff compensation and implemented adjustments based on market analysis.
- c. Through partnership with VCU Performance Management Group, promoted leadership development and training (VEI, CMI, etc.)
- d. Ensured access and accommodations for individuals with mental or physical disabilities.

GOAL 2: Welcoming and Respectful Culture

Create and sustain a culture that welcomes and embraces diverse opinions, independent thinking, and respectful interactions to deliver optimal results for the organization and its customers.

Objective 1: *Create and maintain a climate that is supportive and respectful and that values and integrates differing perspectives and experiences.* In 2023, DVS:

- a. Promoted respect of all employees and ensure understanding and compliance with the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) Civility in the Workplace Policy.
- b. Worked to create an environment free from employment discrimination based on protected categories.
- c. Implemented monthly staff luncheons to facilitate diverse dialogue and experiences.

Objective 2: *Continue to provide an environment where conflicts, concerns, and complaints are aired and addressed expeditiously.* In 2023, DVS:

- a. Addressed conflict resolution through respectful coaching, counseling, and mediation.

- b. Ensured employees were aware of the appropriate chain of command and leadership channels necessary to address concerns.
- c. Promptly addressed inappropriate workplace behavior and concerns for employee safety.

GOAL 3: State Agency DOI Infrastructure & Training

Maintain a plan and infrastructure that continues to provide individualized skills training and career development for state employees. Agencies report annually on DOI goals and accomplishments.

Objective 1: *Continue to amplify opportunities to advance the goals outlined in this framework.* In 2023, DVS:

- a. Developed and outsourced training opportunities to educate and ensure understanding of differences.
- b. Conducted change management training to ensure leadership alignment with goals and emphasize the role of leaders as DOI change champions and role models.

Objective 2: *Continue to create structures and processes of accountability to increase organizational effectiveness with the Department of Veterans Services.* In 2023, DVS:

- a. Evaluated and updated agency policies and procedures to ensure consistency and compliance with DHRM policies and federal and state employment laws.

Objective 3: *Continue to provide training and educational workshops available to all employees.* In 2023, DVS:

- a. Offered employee development and skills training to promote career development and learning.
- b. Consistently promoted professional development training, including attendance at conferences, virtual learning, or classroom sessions.
- c. Increased training opportunities.

Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion Plan
AGENCY: Department of Veterans Services
YEAR: 2024
GOALS and OBJECTIVES

Agency Goal 1: Access and Success

Recruit and retain a diverse workforce by increasing access to diverse populations for recruiting.

To achieve this Goal, the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has set these objectives for 2024:

- a. Expand diversity recruitment programs that have a clear pathway to employment.
- b. Ensure applicants for employment are informed of DVS' commitment to diversity, opportunity, and inclusion.
- c. Utilize exit interview survey results and other methods to adopt recommendations to improve retention, promotional opportunities, and increase compensation.
- d. Evaluate agency development opportunities and implement pathways to education and career growth and access to all employees.
- e. Ensure representation and language on agency website encourages applicants with disabilities.

Agency Goal 2: Welcoming and Respectful Culture

Create and sustain a culture that welcomes and embraces diverse opinions, independent thinking, and respectful interactions to deliver optimal results for the organization and its customers.

To achieve this Goal, DVS has set these objectives for 2024:

- a. Include information regarding DVS's commitment to diversity, opportunity, and inclusion in new employee orientation materials.
- b. Cultivate a culture that encourages employee collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable them to contribute to their full potential.
- c. Encourage all DVS employees to take responsibility for an enhanced culture of diversity, opportunity, and inclusion. Provide the necessary tools and training to support them.
- d. Promote an equitable work environment that recognizes that team members from diverse backgrounds bring different perspectives and experiences that will enhance how DVS serves our veterans and families.
- e. Provide guidance and training on communicating with individuals from diverse background.

Agency Goal 3: State Agency DOI Infrastructure & Training

Maintain a plan and infrastructure that continues to provide individualized skills training and career development for state employees.

To achieve this Goal, DVS has set these objectives for 2024:

- a. Develop and implement an agency Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion (DOI) strategic plan with measurable actions.
- b. Engage members of DVS' senior leadership team to lead the agencies commitment to DOI goals and objectives.
- c. Convene a DOI committee to implement and support agency goals.
- d. Identify a single agency point of contact to ensure DOI tasks are coordinated and implemented across the agency.
- e. Increase cross-cultural competency communication through training, education, and understanding of different perspectives.
- f. Assess the agency and analyze current practices, policies, and data with a focus on diversity, opportunity, and inclusion.