

# Agency Workforce Plan and the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

## Overview

The Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) contains a core of well-trained veteran assistance counselors, veteran employment representatives, veteran education program specialists, and grant specialists to aid veterans, their families, and survivors throughout Texas to meet the needs required to accomplish the agency mission and strategic goal. They are supported by a clerical staff. TVC administrative staff is located in Austin, Texas.

With approximately 1.68 million veterans living in Texas, the population of veterans in the state has remained steady for the past decade, while the overall United States veteran population has declined during the same period. This indicates a net migration of veterans to Texas. Several key issues impact the growth of the veteran population in Texas, specifically in two age groups that tend to have the greatest need for assistance. These fall at the opposite end of the age spectrum, younger veterans usually needing education or employment assistance, and older veterans usually need services associated with aging.

## Current Workforce Profile

The current commission staff has the skills necessary to address business issues of the agency. A majority of the current workforce (83 percent) has prior military service. TVC has a diverse workforce that is 43 percent White, 28 percent Black, 26 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent Other. Males comprise 57 percent of the workforce and 43 percent are females.

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

The average turnover rate of TVC in the five years from 2017 to 2021 was 15.25 percent. During this period, the turnover rate was as high as 19.28 in 2018 and reached a low of 11.05 percent in 2020. TVC turnover rate was lower than the statewide turnover rate, which averaged 19.66 percent. It is anticipated the turnover rate will remain under the statewide rate.

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

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

TVC will maintain agency career ladders to help employees identify development paths to prepare for jobs with higher-level skill requirements, as well as develop a searchable database to inventory employee training and skill sets so that employees may be identified for development and possible promotional opportunities. Supervisors will be made aware of what skill sets are critical to meeting their objectives and can plan for employee attrition. Succession planning will also address staffing or skill imbalances due to turnover and retirements.

### **Gap Analysis**

A significant percentage (20 percent) of the agency's employees are either eligible to retire now or will be eligible within the next five years. Succession planning and knowledge transfer offer the opportunity for the next generation of TVC employees to launch new ideas that appreciate historical progress while moving services to new levels. TVC programs have high impact staff that cannot be easily replaced because of the employee's expertise and talents. In some cases, there are no natural feeders within the agency from which to draw. In other cases, the person occupying the position has a unique set of skills that cannot be readily found in the marketplace. TVC has a large contingent of tenured staff with institutional knowledge that cannot be quickly gained through the completion of training courses.

Currently the commission is staffed at 97 percent, though a shortage of personnel due to losses from retirement, an increased workload and competition from federal agencies is likely. Personnel shortages and the required time to train replacements as well as additional skills for existing personnel that will be required to deal with technical advances when funds become available may have a negative impact on the ability to meet future functional requirements. Of additional concern is the allocation of funds for the staff and support sections of the agency. The mandate to increase programs and services led to a significant increase in staff. However, the allocation to grow support staff was limited. The ability to stay competitive with the private sector and federal governments will continue to be a challenge to the agency.

### **Strategy Development**

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

#### **Development**

- Encourage employee development by continuing TVC's training program that requires employees to earn a minimum number of training credit each year.
- Offer employee training to help develop critical skills. Continue to provide both internal and external classroom training, as well as online and DVD training to make training available to field employees and accommodating employees' schedules. Continue to inform employees about training opportunities, including those offered by the TVC's Employees Assistance Program and by other agencies that TVC employees may attend at no or little cost.
- Continue to provide thorough leadership training to all levels of agency managers, as well as potential managers.
- Encourage managers to create programs that allow employees who are seeking new challenges to work on special projects, rotations, and developmental

assignments (to help them increase their knowledge and experience even if promotional opportunities are temporarily stagnant).

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

### **Recruitment**

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

- Hiring and selection methods for best fit;
- Compensation;
- Awarding bonuses;
- Promoting state benefits;
- Integrating staff development with career ladders;
- Establishing formal and informal orientation programs;
- Creating positive work culture and conditions;
- Maintaining work/life balance and family friendly policies including flexible work hours;
- Telework opportunities;
- Ensuring sufficient salaries and merit increases; and
- Creating recognition programs.

### **Retention**

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

### **Career Development**

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

### **Leadership Development and Replacement**

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

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

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

## **Workforce Plan Evaluation and Revision**

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

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

## **Future Workforce Profile**

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

It is expected that TVC's mission, goals, and strategy will not change significantly over the next five years. Claims assistance counselors, veteran employment representatives, veteran education program specialists, and grant specialists, who are the core of the Commission's professional workforce, require strong knowledge of state and federal veteran benefit programs and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor (DOL) policies and procedures which affect the administration of benefits to the Texas veteran population and their families. Developing the skills required by claims assistance counselors, veteran employment representatives, veteran education program specialists, and grant specialists to competently serve Texas veterans will remain a priority in future agency workforce plans. To accomplish commission goals and meet statutory requirements, competent training must continue with Veterans County Service Officers who are critical in assisting the Commission to meet its established mission, goals, and strategy. The TVC staff will need support through training and equipment to keep abreast of ever-changing computer technology.

## **Expected Workforce Changes**

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

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

Commission administrative personnel will require ongoing training to keep up with changes in federal budget procedures (OMB Circulars), accounting and human resource best practices and policies to efficiently use both fiscal and human resources made available to the Commission by the Legislature. Training of commission personnel and Veterans County Service Officers will remain a critical function as the Commission plans for future service to veterans and their families. Currently, commission personnel have the necessary skills to perform their jobs due to the training made available to them. With the expectation of continued migration of veterans to Texas over the next five years, the commission may require additional Veterans Services Representatives to meet the demand. Requests for additional personnel will be for areas of the state where the projected demand for service is growing.

### **Employment Service Satisfaction**

It is imperative to understand the employers' needs and expectations when attempting to match qualified veterans to the employers' needs and when promoting the benefits of hiring eligible veterans. TVC Veterans Employment Services uses a strategic approach by evaluating employment trends within the labor market by using the various tools provided by the Texas Workforce Commission.

The Veterans Employer Liaison (VEL) staff are fully integrated with the Workforce Business Units across the state. The VEL's also work very closely with Veteran Career Advisors to identify the skill sets of veterans seeking employment to match those skill sets with employers' needs. To anticipate the changing employer needs and ensure those needs are met, TVC employs several methods to accurately assess the current level of satisfaction and to be able to better project the future needs of the employer. Those methods include but are not limited to:

- Employer panel discussions
- On-site outreach visits
- Active participation in employer organizations such as the local chamber of commerce and other professional business organizations

To accurately evaluate and measure employer satisfaction, TVC conducts an employer/customer feedback survey that is administered throughout the year. The results are reviewed and evaluated for trends and for future improvement.

### **Data-Driven Program Improvement**

TVC Veterans Employment Services continues to evaluate program data supplied by the Texas Workforce Commission. The Workforce Management Information System (MIS) provides federal and state reporting data through the Workforce Investment Performance Report (WISPR). TVC Veterans Employment Services is mandated to report on intensive services provided by Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff, Veteran Entered Employment, Retention on and average earnings to the Department of Labor, and the Legislative Budget Board. In addition to the reporting requirements, TVC Veterans Employment Services analyzes the data supplied by MIS to identify trends, shortfalls, staffing needs and benchmarks for the future.

### **Continuous Improvement and Innovation**

TVC Veterans Employment Services continues to evaluate services to veterans and employers through partnerships and data collection. In addition, TVC continues to share information on and best practices with stakeholders, state, and federal agencies, as well as veteran employment service providers nationwide.