

# FY 2018 - 2024 Strategic Plan

This strategic plan describes the major changes the Department will undergo over the next five to seven years to deliver better choices for Veterans. Where we are not measuring up, we must fix VA. Opening up options for Veterans to get their benefits, care, and services will force VA to compete for our Veteran customers. Our path to competitiveness is shaped by the Department’s five priorities, which define the operational focus of VA and which will make VA a stronger organization that provides better outcomes for Veterans, taxpayers, and society.

On March 3, 1865, President Lincoln signed legislation that established a network of National facilities to care for the Nation’s wounded Civil War Soldiers. This singular act codified a social contract between the Nation and our Veterans that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) would always be there for them and their families, to help them heal and recover from the illnesses, injuries, or wounds sustained in service to America and to ease their successful reintegration into civilian life. This set of principles drives VA’s mission to this day.

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## Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

### Description:

VA is comprised of a Central Office (VACO), which is located in Washington, DC, the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA), and field facilities throughout the Nation, as well as the U.S. territories and the Philippines. Veteran programs are delivered by VA's three major Administrations: Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and National Cemetery Administration (NCA). VA is the second largest Federal department and has a workforce of approximately 351,540 full-time employees.

### Stakeholder(s):

**David J. Shu/kin, M.D. :**  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Universities, three (3) Education Processing Offices (RPO), six (6) Fiduciary Hubs, three (3) Pension Management Centers, one (1) Insurance Center, nine (9) Regional Loan Centers, 135 National Cemeteries, and 108 Veterans Cemetery Grants Program funded State, Tribal and Territorial cemeteries.

### Veterans :

Veterans are individuals who have served in one of the seven uniformed services who meet the length of service and character of discharge requirements prescribed by law. This includes the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Services, and Commissioned Officer Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), as well as eligible members of the Reserve and National Guard components, World War II Merchant Mariners, and certain members of the Philippine Armed Forces. VA also provides benefits and services to eligible survivors, spouses, dependents, and parents of Veterans, as well as caregivers of certain disabled Veterans ...

### Service Members :

Service members in an active duty status may also be eligible for certain VA benefits and services to include, but not limited to, Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, Traumatic Injury Protection, GI Bill, the VA Home loan program, and certain medical services.

### Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

### Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

### National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

### Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA)

### VA Medical Centers :

Services and benefits are provided through a nationwide network of 145 Medical Centers with hospital service, 25 Medical Centers without hospital service, 300 Vet Centers, 1,008 Clinics, one (1) Extended Care facility (standalone), eight (8) Residential Care facilities (stand-alone), 56 Regional Offices and National Capital Region Benefits Office (NCRBO), 142 additional out-based offices at which VR&E Operates, 122 Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) offices at military installations (VR&E Operates at 71), 94 VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) sites operated by VR&E at Colleges and

## Vision

Veterans receive excellent care and services

## Mission

To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.

## Values

**Integrity:** Our Veterans deserve our very best -- always. The values of Integrity and Respect are the bedrock behaviors of a VA workforce dedicated to treating those Americans who so willingly volunteered their lives in defense of this great Nation.

**Commitment:** Commitment is a thread that runs through all the goals and will remain unchanged through the volatile and complex future VA business environment.

**Advocacy:** VA pledges to Advocate and provide care for all Veterans who come to us, with particular emphasis on those who will need us the most but have the least ability to reach out to us for help. VA will ensure that our most vulnerable Veterans are cared for.

### Respect

**Excellence:** Achieving Excellence is the only performance target acceptable in a VA that is hyper-focused on improving the lives and outcomes of our Nation's Veterans. Pursuit of excellence drives innovation, agility, and better outcomes.

## 1. Information, Access & Choices

### *VETERANS CHOOSE VA FOR EASY ACCESS, GREATER CHOICES, AND CLEAR INFORMATION TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS*

To provide Veterans with better choices and better access to the benefits, care, and services they need, we have to enhance our understanding of what they are experiencing in their lives. VA will combine understanding of the Veteran with continuous market analyses of availability and quality of provider options to provide a better range of choices for our Veterans. This is what we mean by greater choice. Further, VA must compete for our Veteran customers or risk losing them. We welcome the challenge; we believe competing with the private sector to serve our Veterans will make us stronger. In this goal, we also expand easy access beyond making an appointment. It also applies to Veterans being able to use any benefit, care, or service they need no matter where they are. VA, in its quest to better serve Veterans in the manner they wish to be served, has identified three major elements pertaining to enhanced access for Veterans.

#### 1.1. Needs

##### *VA ANTICIPATES VETERANS' CHANGING NEEDS THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES TO ENHANCE THEIR CHOICES*

###### PERFORMANCE GOAL:

- Veterans surveyed are satisfied (or better) with the available choices for Veteran care, benefits, and services.
- Eligible Veterans choose VA as their provider of choice for their care. VA understands our Veterans' lives and relevant experiences to better anticipate what they will need. This includes understanding the evolving nature of military service and combat, understanding the new and pervasive challenges transitioning Service members tell us they are facing, and communicating often with our Veterans to ensure we are achieving the outcomes they desire.

#### Strategy 1.1.1. Understanding

##### *VA UNDERSTANDING OF VETERANS BEGINS WITH THEIR EXPERIENCE IN MILITARY SERVICE AND CONTINUES THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES*

VA will enhance understanding of our Veterans by expanding our knowledge of their experiences in military service, beginning with their entry into the military. We use real-time information shared by DoD via the Veteran electronic health records and other data sources to better anticipate their needs. We communicate with Veterans and their families in advance of their transition and throughout their civilian lives to understand how they are faring. We understand the impacts and outcomes to our Veterans as they use VA benefits, care, and services and use this information to either improve outcomes or to ensure we consistently keep doing what works.

#### Strategy 1.1.2. Outcomes

##### *VA FOCUSES ON VETERAN OUTCOMES TO TAILOR CHOICE*

To tailor the choice of benefits and services, as well as access to them for Veterans, VA must constantly assess how, why, when, and where Veterans are accessing benefits, care, and services. VA must also understand the outcomes and impacts Veterans experience as a result of services provided by VA or VA's partners. VA can no longer simply measure internal activities like the number of forms processed or appointments made on time. We must focus on understanding whether or not our efforts improved Veteran health or well-being, independence, economic security, or memorialization. This focus on enhanced outcomes also requires VA to implement choice

as a system based on clinically and/or customer-driven priorities informed by Veterans' needs, rather than the administrative rule-based system currently in place today. VA will provide Veterans with the information they need to make the choices that work best for them.

### Strategy 1.1.3. Journey Maps

#### *VA USES VETERAN JOURNEY MAPS TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING*

VA's pledge to be Veteran focused means we must "walk in our Veteran's shoes." In addition to communicating more with our Veterans, VA will increase its use of Veteran journey maps, which describe the major life events and moments Veterans routinely experience. This will help us provide Veterans with benefits, care, and services more appropriate to the stage of life they are experiencing. VA will expand the use of the Veteran journey maps to enhance our business functions, such as acting on operational risks that impact Veteran outcomes; measuring true impacts to Veterans using our benefits and services, and anticipating changes to service offerings based on Veteran stages of life. Most importantly, the use of the Veteran journey maps will help VA personnel understand the Veteran's journey and relate better to our Veterans — a critical component of excellent customer service.

## 1.2. Benefits, Care & Services

### *VETERANS ARE INFORMED OF, UNDERSTAND, AND CAN AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THE BENEFITS, CARE, AND SERVICES THEY CHOOSE*

#### PERFORMANCE GOAL:

- Veterans agree that they received timely, relevant, and easy to understand information from VA that empowered them to make informed choices about their benefits, services, and care.
- Veterans agree that the statement "I felt like a valued customer" is true. As the chief advocate for our Veterans, VA proactively educates and informs all Veterans about what they are entitled to, or eligible for, as well as what other non-VA provided benefits are available to them based on their personal needs, location, and desires well before they depart military service.

### Strategy 1.2.1. Navigation

#### *VA HELPS VETERANS NAVIGATE THE FULL ARRAY OF CARE, BENEFITS, AND SERVICES*

VA will ensure Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors know about and understand the full range of Veteran benefits, care, and services available to them through VA, as well as resources available from other Federal, State, Tribal, Local Government entities, and Veteran servicing organizations. VA will help Veterans navigate the often diverse and complex range of resources by engaging military Service members early, well before they transition to civilian life, so that they can make more informed choices. Further, VA will engage Veterans often, and in anticipation of major life events (seeking jobs, retiring, aging, etc.) to ensure Veterans receive timely and relevant information of benefits and services applicable to their stage of life or particular needs. VA will make it extremely simple for each Veteran to access the information and services they need. Veterans will have multiple ways to access benefits, care, and services through a variety of channels—person-to-person interactions, virtual, and digital methods (e.g., websites, apps, telehealth, and mobile devices).

### **Strategy 1.2.2. Communications**

#### *VA TAILORS COMMUNICATIONS TO MAKE IT EASY TO UNDERSTAND OPTIONS*

VA will tailor communications across the generational, geographic, cultural, gender, military experiences, and future goals spectrum of the Veteran population. We also make it easy to understand us. VA has begun to do this by simplifying the language in our correspondence to Veterans and by tailoring information on our websites for our Veterans' families, caregivers, and supporters so they can better help their Veteran. We also improve awareness training for employees to be more sensitive and understanding of the wonderful diversity of our Veteran population.

### **Strategy 1.2.3. Advocacy**

#### *VA ADVOCATES FOR VETERANS*

VA will advocate for Veterans by exploring and establishing partnerships to address Veterans' needs, enrich their experience, augment options for Veterans, drive innovative practices, and enhance Veteran outcomes.

DEMONSTRATION ONLY

## 2. Well-Being & Independence

### *VETERANS RECEIVE TIMELY AND INTEGRATED CARE AND SUPPORT THAT EMPHASIZES THEIR WELL-BEING AND INDEPENDENCE THROUGHOUT THEIR LIFE JOURNEY*

VA will deliver integrated and seamless benefits, care, and support resulting in increased quality of life for Veterans and their families, caregivers, and supporters. Improved quality of life means Veterans are independent, economically secure, socially engaged however they choose, and enjoy enhanced well-being. The strategic objectives associated with these desired outcomes focus on:

- Ensuring Veterans receive highly integrated and coordinated benefits, care, and support services that include care management and that are tailored to meet their economic and health needs, thereby mitigating negative outcomes such as poverty, homelessness, and unaddressed mental and health challenges.
- Working with DoD and Local community programs to ensure a seamless and less burdensome transition, and ensuring Veterans have a clear path to economic security and well-being.
- Incorporating the use of technology into our delivery systems as well as driving the rapid expansion of other mobile capabilities to enhance delivery of benefits, care, and services anywhere the Veteran is located.

#### 2.1. Delivery Networks

##### *VA HAS COLLABORATIVE, HIGH-PERFORMING, AND INTEGRATED DELIVERY NETWORKS THAT ENHANCE VETERAN WELL-BEING AND INDEPENDENCE*

###### PERFORMANCE GOAL:

- Veterans are satisfied with the results of the Veteran benefits, care, and services they received.
- VA's organizational performance matches or exceeds industry standards for excellence in all of its lines of business. VA will leverage highly integrated partnerships with both the public and private sector to ensure Veterans get the best care and services available, even if that is outside of VA. If the community provides a better outcome, and the care or service is not considered a foundational VA offering, Veterans deserve the opportunity to get the best rather than have to settle for sub-par outcomes. This means that VA will excel at its foundational service offerings. VA will also, in partnership with the DoD and Department of Labor (DOL), better prepare Veterans for employment and reintegration into civilian life.

#### Strategy 2.1.1. Performance & Integration

##### *VA BUILDS HIGH-PERFORMING AND INTEGRATED DELIVERY NETWORKS THAT LEVERAGE BOTH VIRTUAL AND PHYSICAL DELIVERY OF BENEFITS, CARE, AND SERVICES*

VA will clarify and simplify eligibility requirements for providers, as well as streamline clinical and administrative processes that emphasize care management and coordination for Veterans. An example is the "Anywhere to Anywhere Care" initiative that will eliminate out of date regulations that unnecessarily restrict VA licensed providers to serve Veterans in any other state. VA is rapidly expanding the use of telehealth, mobile app, online applications, and videoconferencing capabilities to deliver benefits and care to Veterans no matter where they live. Most importantly, improvements to mobile devices and apps, including our VA Video Connect app and Provider Connect features, will enable VA providers to connect to Veterans across the country to provide timely and convenient care. This will help reduce the amount of time a Veteran needs to wait to see a provider, eliminating the need to travel to a VA or other Federal facility to be examined. Video-based delivery of services is used by VA's business lines, like the Board of Veterans' Appeals, which uses video hearings to prevent unnecessary Veteran travel and to expedite adjudication of Veteran appeals. Veterans are also able to apply for any of their benefits via eBenefits and will soon be able to check the status of their claims, and/or

applications, online or on their mobile devices. VA will continue to invest in infrastructure that supports seamless and secure data sharing with key external partners and the virtual delivery of benefits care and services for Veterans. VA will also ensure reasonable access to a burial option through the physical delivery of new National cemeteries and grant-funded State and Tribal Veterans cemeteries. Approximately 95 percent of the Veteran population will be served by these facilities within 75 miles of their homes. VA will explore innovative options to address the remaining five percent of the Veteran population without access coverage.

### Strategy 2.1.2. Separation

#### *IMPROVED SEPARATION PREPARATIONS AND COMPENSATION SUPPORTS VETERAN INDEPENDENCE*

VA will partner with the DOL and DoD to holistically prepare Service members for transition from active duty to their civilian lives. VA will help Veterans pursue economic opportunities and professional or career development. Concurrently, VA will modernize and enhance the claims and appeals process to ensure eligible Veterans receive appropriate and timely compensation for wounds, illnesses, and/or injuries sustained in service to their country. VA will regularly review and update its compensation policies and processes to reflect ongoing modern-day advances in health and biotechnology and take into account their positive impact on a Veteran's independence. Most importantly, a reformed compensation system will focus on supporting Veteran wellness, focus on service connection, and will provide financial security for our most severely ill, injured or wounded Veterans. The combination of all these efforts will emphasize each Veteran's abilities and restoration to a functional capacity so they may lead productive and dignified lives after military service.

### Strategy 2.1.3. Foundational Services

#### *VA WILL EXCEL AT FOUNDATIONAL SERVICES TO INCLUDE CARE MANAGEMENT*

VA will excel at its foundational health services, which include: Primary Care Services, Urgent Care Services, Mental Health Services, Geriatrics and Extended Care Services, Rehabilitation Services, VA Care Coordination, Post Deployment Health Services (PDHS) and War Related Illness and Injury Study Centers (WRIISC), and Pain Management and Opioid Safety. VA's emphasis on foundational services ensures Veterans receive quality care for those conditions most attributed to military service and best provided by VA that optimizes their health, wellbeing, and quality of life. For those services provided by external partners, VA will institute care management as a core business competency that ensures VA's foundational services are highly integrated with any care the Veteran receives outside of VA. This means VA sets clear standards, ensures continuum of care between the external providers and VA, and develops community partnerships in complementary services to fill service gaps to Veterans. When reviewing whether a service should be provided in-house or in the community, key considerations will always be safety, quality, expertise, and enhanced access for the Veteran.

### Strategy 2.1.4. Health & Wellness

#### *EMPHASIZING VETERANS' AND THEIR FAMILIES' WHOLE HEALTH AND WELLNESS*

VA will significantly improve Veteran health outcomes by shifting from a system primarily focused on disease management to one that is based on partnering with Veterans throughout their lives and focused on whole health. VA will provide personalized, proactive, patient driven health care to empower, equip, and encourage Veterans to take charge of their health, well-being, and to adopt healthy living practices that deter or defer preventable health conditions. Programs like MyHealthVet engage the Veteran in managing their own health care and provide access to their providers without the burden of traveling to a facility. Support and consideration of the needs of the Veterans' families, caregivers, and supporters will be included in this approach to Veteran wellness. A whole health system focuses not only on treatment but also on self-empowerment, self-healing,

self-care, and improvements in the social determinants of health. VA will also reinforce preventive health care practices to include incorporating complementary and integrative health care practices to reduce addiction, manage chronic pain, and improve mental health and other conditions that respond well to these interventions. VA will stress preventive interventions for healthy Veterans that eliminate or significantly reduce conditions that impair Veteran quality of life such as diabetes, obesity, chronic pain, addiction, chronic kidney disease, and other similar conditions. VA will emphasize education on healthy life practices for Veteran and their families. VA will also improve health outcomes by assisting Veterans with the social determinants of health to include education, vocational rehab, employment, disability income where appropriate, housing or home loan guarantee, life insurance, and planning for memorial services.

### Strategy 2.1.5. Interment & Memorialization

#### *CONTRIBUTE TO VETERAN WELL-BEING BY PROVIDING INTERMENT AND MEMORIALIZATION SERVICES*

VA will ensure all Veterans will be honored and memorialized in a dignified and respectful manner by providing Veterans and eligible family members with final resting places in national shrines with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our Nation. VA will enhance its existing burial and memorial benefits through the Veterans Legacy Program. VA's national cemeteries are being used as platforms for community engagement and public education, with emphasis on empowering student-based research on site. NCA will sustain and expand university partnerships, eventually covering all 50 states. Legacy products are also being used beyond the classroom. NCA is partnering with various stakeholders who are committed to ending Veteran suicide. These groups will share the inspirational stories researched by students to demonstrate how Veterans can lead meaningful and impactful lives after leaving military service. VA also took the first steps toward a major transformation of Veteran memorialization through digital engagement. This effort will create an interactive website enabling virtual memorialization of Veterans. When fully implemented, the platform will allow online visitors to pay their respects and access/share information about the Veterans memorialized by NCA. Most importantly, it will allow families to upload letters, pictures and videos related to a Veteran's service. NCA plans to launch the platform to the public by the end of 2018. In addition, VA will pursue an initiative to streamline operations and promote efficiency in the Federal government by assuming responsibility of Veteran cemeteries maintained by other Federal agencies.

## 2.2. At-Risk & Underserved Veterans

#### *VA ENSURES AT-RISK AND UNDERSERVED VETERANS RECEIVE WHAT THEY NEED TO ELIMINATE VETERAN SUICIDE, HOMELESSNESS, AND POVERTY*

##### PERFORMANCE GOAL:

- Veterans have a good quality of life (presence of positive emotions in daily activities, participation in society, satisfying relationships, and overall life satisfaction).
- Zero Veteran suicides.
- Zero Veterans are homeless.
- Veterans achieve independence and economic security. VA will proactively identify at-risk Veterans. While most Veterans reintegrate successfully into civilian life, some face social, economic, and health challenges that impede their successful transition into civil society. Through "REACH VET," VA now understands the conditions that put Veterans at higher risk of suicide, homelessness, and poverty. We will expand the use of this tool to reach out to Veterans before they transition and leverage our integrated network to provide them services catered to their specific needs. We are no longer waiting until Veterans are in crisis to reach out to them. This is the only way to truly end Veteran homelessness and suicides. Further, VA will improve support to the Veteran families and caregivers to better prepare and sustain them as they take care of their Veteran.

**Stakeholder(s):****Underserved Veterans****At-Risk Veterans****Strategy 2.2.1. Care***COMPREHENSIVE CARE FOR COMBAT AND/OR CATASTROPHICALLY ILL, INJURED, WOUNDED*

VA will emphasize coordination of care and services, both within VA and with external providers, to deliver lifetime comprehensive support for the diverse and complex medical conditions and life challenges suffered by combat and/or catastrophically ill, injured, or wounded Veterans. This is where VA will bring to bear its expertise in foundational services and ensure close coordination between providers of medical, psychological, life skills, home support services, and quality of life needs for our severely wounded, ill, and injured Veterans. VA will further ensure the Veterans' caregivers and families receive the support they need.

**Strategy 2.2.2. Mental Health & Suicide***EARLY INTERVENTION AND FULL ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION*

VA and DoD will integrate their efforts to conduct early diagnosis of Service members/Veterans with potential mental health challenges and quickly coordinate delivery of continuing care and coping skills they need to drive down Service member and Veteran suicide and complications associated with depression and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Further, VA will provide physical and mental health services to eliminate Veteran suicide and poor well-being due to physical and mental health challenges associated with trauma. VA will lead the Nation in caring for people suffering from mental health conditions associated with trauma and work to change the misconceptions associated with PTSD and other mental health challenges.

**Strategy 2.2.3. Caregivers & Aging Veterans***SUPPORT TO CAREGIVERS AND SEAMLESS CARE OF AGING VETERANS*

VA will focus on finding alternatives to institutionalized care. Our goal is to keep all Veterans in their homes if that is their desire. To support the growing numbers of aging Veterans, VA is removing and updating outdated policies and regulations to make it easier to support caregivers. VA will identify and cultivate social and community support networks that enhance Veterans' and their caregivers' experience during times of extended illness or when long-term care is needed. Knowing that there may be times when a Veteran desires to be, or needs to be, cared for outside of their home, VA is simplifying and making available more grants to States so they can build Veteran nursing homes as needed.

**Stakeholder(s):****Caregivers****Aging Veterans****Strategy 2.2.4. Rural Veterans***INCREASED ACCESS FOR RURAL VETERANS*

VA understands many of the challenges Veterans living in rural areas face. The VA Office of Rural Health will continue its efforts to increase access to health care for rural Veterans by providing opportunities for the delivery of virtual health care services into rural Veterans' homes, expanding health care provider virtual consultation

services in underserved rural areas, and creating strong partnerships with Local, State, and National organizations to better serve Veterans, their families, and the communities where they live.

**Stakeholder(s):**

**Rural Veterans**

**Strategy 2.2.5. Housing**

*IMPLEMENT HOUSING FIRST AND PROVIDE INTEGRATED SUPPORT TO IMPOVERISHED/HOMELESS VETERANS*

VA's first priority for homeless Veterans and their families, and those at risk for homelessness, is to provide them a safe place to live. VA will focus grants on partners who embrace this "housing first" philosophy and cut ties with those who do not embrace this approach. VA's housing and foreclosure assistance programs are also augmented with employment and health care assistance.

**Stakeholder(s):**

**Impoverished Veterans**

**Homeless Veterans**

**Strategy 2.2.6. Families**

*VA IS THERE FOR FAMILIES*

VA understands that families and caregivers are on the front line in preventing Veteran suicide, homelessness, and addiction. More than that, they are critical to the whole health of the Veteran. VA will continue to expand programs designed for caregivers to include caregiver support coordinators, caregiver training and mentoring groups, and the Caregiver Support Line. VA will engage families and caregivers in the Veterans' health care decisions. We will continue to enhance online support programs like "Family Connect" during telehealth consults so family members can be part of the Veterans' health care experience and provide amplifying information that will enhance care for the Veteran. We will include family and caregivers in our communications with Veterans before and after they seek VA services to ensure we add their perspectives to the improvements we make.

**Stakeholder(s):**

**Families**

**Caregivers**

### 3. Accountability, Transparency & Trust

#### *VETERANS TRUST VA TO BE CONSISTENTLY ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT*

VA's pledge to build lifelong, trusted relationships with its Veterans is the basis for delivering relevant and excellent benefits, care, and services to our Veterans that enhance their lives. VA understands that earning our Veterans' trust is the gold standard we aspire to achieve and is critical to our long-term success. How VA delivers on its promises is just as important as what it delivers. VA will earn trust and be the natural choice for Veterans by holding itself accountable, being transparent about how we are performing, and showing how we adhere to our core values with every single interaction. Specifically, VA will focus on accountability, transparency, and value.

- **Accountability:** The Secretary set the standard for excellence in his State of VA address, stating simply that Veterans deserve the best, no matter where they are or who serves them. Accountability occurs at all levels and is translated as follows:
- **Organizational accountability:** VA has clearly stated outcomes and consistently measures and shares the value of its efforts on behalf of Veterans, measures the change for Veterans, acts on data, and works within communities to build integrated networks of access and delivery.
- **Personnel accountability:** Veterans deserve the best and brightest the Nation has to offer. VA only hires and retains individuals who embody our values. Leaders and staff incorporate VA values into everything they do and are measured by their adherence to those values for achieving positive outcomes for Veterans; those who do not adhere to VA's values will no longer work for VA.
- **Transparency:** VA publicly and consistently shares critical information, outcomes, and metrics showing how it improved the Veteran's experience, and their well-being, independence, and quality of life.
- **Value:** Value to the Veteran is achieved by VA delivering excellent outcomes that enhance their lives and provide what they need in the most competitive manner possible. This is how VA will meet the highest standard of performance.

#### 3.1. Transparency

##### *VA IS ALWAYS TRANSPARENT TO ENHANCE VETERANS' CHOICES, TO MAINTAIN TRUST, AND TO BE OPENLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR ITS ACTIONS*

VA will assess itself based on how well it delivers positive outcomes to its Veterans and how well the Veteran is satisfied. Further, VA will share its performance with Veterans and the Nation to keep ourselves honest about how we are doing.

##### **Caregivers**

#### Strategy 3.1.1. Performance Data

##### *PUBLIC SHARING OF VA AND PRIVATE SECTOR PERFORMANCE COMPARISON DATA*

##### PERFORMANCE GOAL:

- Veterans say, "I trust VA to fulfill our country's commitment to Veterans."
- VA publishes health care benchmarks aligned with the private sector.
- VA publishes benefits and service delivery performance data. VA will consistently and publicly share critical information about its mission effectiveness, Veteran outcomes, and internal/external provider performance that is easily understood and compares to industry standards. We are specifically sharing data about quality of care, wait times, accountability actions, and satisfaction scores to ensure VA and external benefits, care, and service providers are held accountable. VA will routinely meet or exceed community standards for quality of care and customer service. This results in Veterans consistently choosing VA because we are the best at what we do, and we can be trusted to deliver on our promise to enhance Veteran wellness and well-being.

### Strategy 3.1.2. Feedback

#### *VETERANS HAVE A VOICE IN VA*

VA will solicit and use Veteran feedback on internal/external providers to continuously adapt benefits and care offerings to meet Veterans' changing needs and expectations. VA actively incorporates the voice of the Veteran into all its business lines to enhance outcomes, service, and transparency.

### 3.2. Accountability

#### *VA HOLDS ITS PERSONNEL AND EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR DELIVERING EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE AND EXPERIENCES WHILE ELIMINATING FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE*

VA will achieve accountability by establishing and ensuring high-quality care and service standards are delivered consistently across our integrated delivery networks. This ensures that VA and community providers are held to the same high standards no matter where they are, and that Veterans can count on us to deliver the same quality of care and services no matter what VA facility or community provider they choose in the network. A Veteran should be able to walk into any VA facility and receive the same excellent level of care and service. PERFORMANCE GOAL\*

- VA eliminates fraud, waste, and abuse.
- Performance based action will be initiated against all proven poor performers within 90 days of substantiation of poor performance.
- Appropriate disciplinary or adverse action will be initiated against all employees within 90 days of substantiation of misconduct.

#### **Stakeholder(s):**

**VA Personnel**

**VA Service Providers**

### Strategy 3.2.1. Customer Service

#### *ALL EMPLOYEES PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE*

VA will ensure that leaders and staff have the resources, training, and capabilities to support and empower Veterans and deliver excellent customer experiences.

#### **Stakeholder(s):**

**VA Employees**

**VA Customers**

### Strategy 3.2.2. Rewards

#### *GOOD PERFORMERS ARE REWARDED*

VA leader and employee advancement and incentives will be based on delivery of superior customer service, process improvements for heightened efficiency, and ability to produce positive outcomes and enhanced value for Veterans.

#### **Stakeholder(s):**

**VA Leaders**

**VA Employees**

### Strategy 3.2.3. Accountability

#### *ALL EMPLOYEES ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE*

VA will swiftly and justly address consistently poor performance, inappropriate behavior, fraud, waste, and abuse, and ensure appropriate protections for whistleblowers. VA will improve employee accountability by applying improved legislation, regulations, and supervisory tools that enable supervisors to manage their staff appropriately. Specifically, VA is applying Public Law 115-41, the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, to expeditiously address performance and conduct issues and take corrective actions against employees who do not meet the needs of our Veterans or demonstrate VA core values.

#### **Stakeholder(s):**

**VA Employees**

### Strategy 3.2.4. Waste, Fraud & Abuse

#### *FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE IS PROACTIVELY IDENTIFIED, DETERRED, OR ELIMINATED*

VA's key business processes (contracting, acquisition, finance, etc.) will continue to be assessed to identify risk exposure to fraud, waste, and abuse. This includes non-compliance with laws, regulations, and policies, and requires strong internal controls that apply to VA and external providers. If risks are identified, then mitigation actions and internal controls are put in place to deter or address the risk. Mitigation actions are closely monitored for effectiveness. Persons engaged in fraud, waste, or abuse are quickly identified and dealt with appropriately.

### Strategy 3.2.5. External Providers

#### *EXTERNAL BENEFITS, CARE, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE*

VA will clarify roles and responsibilities and set clear performance and customer service standards for VA and external benefits, care, and service providers. This ensures high-quality and excellent customer experience outcomes for Veterans and their families whenever they access VA's integrated and collaborative delivery networks.

## 4. Systems & Resources

*VA WILL MODERNIZE SYSTEMS AND FOCUS RESOURCES MORE EFFICIENTLY TO BE COMPETITIVE AND TO PROVIDE WORLD CLASS CAPABILITIES TO VETERANS AND ITS EMPLOYEES*

Two major forces are driving VA's continuing transformation:

- The emphasis on using the Veteran's perspective to shape its program delivery and business operations.
- The need to modernize our systems and focus resources in order to ensure VA is here for generations to come. The cross-cutting objectives and strategies in this goal adapt the organization's behavior in four critical categories that will enable it to perform in an ever-changing business environment. It also addresses two critical functions (Human Resources (HR) and Information Technology (IT)) that must be optimized for the Department to realize its modernization aim. The strategies will help the Department make future choices about its strategic footprint (capital assets and construction); rapidly deploy the right human capital capabilities as mission requirements evolve; put in place an IT infrastructure that supports its Veteran engagement and delivery goals; and emphasize value analytics so VA makes smart, implementable, and relevant business decisions every day. VA will either develop or avail itself of shared services to dramatically improve hiring, procurement, and IT to drive better service and delivery.

### 4.1. Infrastructure, Protocols & Services

*VA'S INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS, IMPROVED DECISION-MAKING PROTOCOLS, AND STREAMLINED SERVICES ENABLE VA TO AGILELY ADAPT TO CHANGING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTS AND VETERAN NEEDS*

PERFORMANCE GOAL:

- VA has aligned its strategic footprint and services to ensure it can adapt quickly to changing Veteran needs. Organizational agility will ensure VA is able to adapt quickly to market forces in order to deliver quality customer experiences and service to our Veterans in a competitive way. Institutionalizing a data-driven governance structure in which leadership rapidly makes time-sensitive decisions that are quickly deployed must become a hallmark of VA operations. Ever-evolving Veteran needs and a changing business environment mandate an agile strategic footprint, allowing VA to make quick infrastructure and personnel shifts that best serve Veterans. VA has an extremely robust research and development capability and innovates to improve services to Veterans and employees. The rapid incorporation of new approaches to how we serve Veterans is critical to achieving agility and delivering best-in-class health care and benefits. The future focus of VA medical research will be on personalized medicine driven by application of clinical genomics to tailor medicines and treatments to individual Veterans. VA must shape the business operating environment and champion legislative change recommendations that reduce bureaucracy, shift more resources and employees toward direct services for Veterans so we can address Veterans most important needs, and give VA leeway to rapidly adapt operations to serve Veterans in the most competitive manner possible. By working with Veterans' communities, other Government agencies, Federal, State, Local, and other public and private institutions to shape smarter and better approaches to service delivery, VA can focus on its strengths and ensure Veterans receive what they need, wherever they are.

#### Strategy 4.1.1. Agility & Value

*AGILE STRATEGIC FOOTPRINT*

A will ensure agile response to changing Veteran needs and marketplace volatility and incorporate a value management approach to capital investments. VA ensures facilities are modern, located to best serve Veterans,

and designed to offer access to or information about the full range of VA benefits and services. Optimally, Veterans will be able to have all their benefits and care needs addressed at a single location to the maximum extent possible. To achieve this, VA will build infrastructure using public/private partnerships and leverage existing capability in the private sector where possible. VA will focus on providing more ambulatory centers and consolidating more inpatient care in partnership with community systems to provide Veterans with better access to care no matter where they are.

### Strategy 4.1.2. Business Environment

#### *VA DRIVES CHANGE IN EXTERNAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT*

VA will shape the business environment it must operate in by engaging Congress for needed legislative changes and shape external market forces to favor Veteran outcomes wherever possible. VA will do this by collaborating with key partners, such as the Veteran serving organizations, other non-profit and private sector organizations, to develop and implement Veteran-focused policies. VA will also factor into its operational planning the changing capabilities of Federal and State Government, where many complementary benefits and services from other. Governmental agencies may have uncertain futures, and expand partnerships with businesses and organizations that provide Veterans with services and opportunities.

**Stakeholder(s):**  
**Congress**

### Strategy 4.1.3. Innovation

#### *RAPID INTEGRATION OF PROVEN INNOVATION*

VA will use innovation, agile integration of technology into business operations, and rapid dissemination of best practices from internal and external sources to continuously deliver tangible improvements to, and integration of, all its business and operational functions.

### Strategy 4.1.4. Restructuring & Reorganization

#### *DELAYERING AND ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN*

VA will restructure and reorganize to reduce fragmentation, overlap, and duplication by consolidating similar functions and program offices to shift resources toward delivering direct services for Veterans. This means reducing administrative and logistic positions. VA will use horizontal and vertical delayering, which will also increase efficiency and quality of decisions by pushing them to the appropriate level with fewer required approvals and concurrences. Concurrent with delayering, VA will optimize its workforce by ensuring appropriate managerial span of control and clarifying staff roles by establishing "business rules of engagement."

### Strategy 4.1.5. Sourcing

#### *STRATEGIC SOURCING*

VA will align contracting offices across the Department and create full service supply chains that address total acquisition and material life cycles and result in efficient delivery of Veteran benefits, care, and services. VA will begin by creating a full service medical supply chain that allows VA to capitalize on the positive attributes of the current VA Pharmacy Program, and Group Purchasing Organization (GPO)/Integrated Delivery Networks (IDN) used by over 90 percent of health care systems in the U.S.

### Strategy 4.1.6. Force Protection & Mission Assurance

#### *FORCE PROTECTION, MISSION ASSURANCE, AND FEDERAL DISASTER RESPONSE*

VA will align facilities, infrastructure, policies, processes, programs, and systems to provide force protection of people and assets and mission assurance of services. VA will be the lead for meeting Veterans' needs and will support Federal disaster response and preparedness on a day-to-day basis and in times of crisis. VA will continuously provide medical, hospital, benefits, and interment services, in compliance with Federal statutes, policy, regulation, and executive orders.

## 4.2. Workforce & Human Capital

### *VA WILL MODERNIZE ITS HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES TO EMPOWER AND ENABLE A DIVERSE, FULLY STAFFED, AND HIGHLY SKILLED WORKFORCE THAT CONSISTENTLY DELIVERS WORLD CLASS SERVICES TO VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES*

#### 4.2 PERFORMANCE GOAL:

- VA attracts a quality workforce as a result of being identified as one of the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government.
- VA retains a quality workforce. A robust human capital management capability is paramount to VA's ability to effectively and efficiently employ its workforce in service to Veterans. The needs of our Veterans are ever-growing, putting a greater and greater demand on our workforce. We must optimize their skills and abilities to fulfill our service mission.

### Strategy 4.2.1. Human Capital Policies

#### *STANDARDIZE HUMAN CAPITAL POLICIES ENTERPRISE-WIDE*

VA will develop consistency and governance around all human capital functions and capabilities, and facilitate consistent implementation of policies, processes, and HR programs across the VA enterprise. VA will move toward a single learning platform to disseminate human capital policies and learning throughout the Department. Individual performance management and performance management systems shall also be standardized across the Department to enhance accountability, productivity, and performance. VA will implement new performance appraisal processes to better support employee growth and performance when coupled with enhanced employee engagement.

### Strategy 4.2.2. Staff Skills

#### *IMPROVE STAFFING TO ENSURE A QUALIFIED VA WORKFORCE IS IN PLACE*

VA will ensure the right people are in the right place at the right time with the right skills to serve our Veterans and their families. VA will do this by consistently reviewing, updating, and developing the positions required to perform the functions VA needs to achieve its mission successfully. VA will address its persistent vacancy and capability challenges by exploring and implementing optimal organizational structures for achieving all our recruiting needs, to include consolidation of recruiting capabilities, recruiting centers of excellence, and outsourcing unique recruiting requirements to close key staffing gaps. VA will implement tools and systems to identify and fill vacancies quickly. The deployment of a modern staffing system will enable frontline supervisors to directly request, create, and validate position modifications via an electronic interface to ensure recruitment actions are based on current needs and not legacy position descriptions.

### Strategy 4.2.3. Leadership & Competency

#### *IMPROVE LEADERSHIP AND WORKFORCE COMPETENCY*

VA understands that it must foster an environment of trust, accountability, adaptability, and performance to improve competency across the Department and that this begins with having competent leaders in place at all levels. VA will institute robust succession planning along with comprehensive identification of the skills and competencies necessary for each position to assure a capable workforce Department-wide. Further, VA will deploy new supervisor and management training to convey policy updates and guidance that enhance the employee experience and support adherence to the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017. VA will implement a modernized performance appraisal system that focuses on enhanced dialogue rather than periodic and static evaluations. VA will train managers to implement adaptive work environments that enhance employee performance. Finally, VA will implement a common leadership development model for employees at all levels — individual, supervisor, manager, pre-executive and executive — to ensure a consistent understanding of leadership across the department.

### Strategy 4.2.4. Staffing Levels

#### *INSTITUTE MANPOWER MANAGEMENT TO OPTIMIZE VA HUMAN CAPITAL RESOURCES*

VA will use manpower management to determine the staffing levels needed to accomplish VA's mission and program objectives. The staffing requirements will be based on models, time studies and/or industry benchmarking data that will devise staffing standards. The staffing standards will be validated and revised periodically to ensure the Department is always prepared to support Veterans. VA's Human Resources management system, coupled with improved staffing processes (i.e. recruitment, hiring, retention, etc.), will optimize the workforce and assure VA has the right people to successfully and consistently meet Veterans' evolving needs and priorities. VA will also ensure the Department operates within approved staffing levels and budgets to contain personnel costs.

## 4.3. IT Modernization

*VA IT MODERNIZATION WILL QUICKLY DELIVER EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS THAT WILL ENABLE VA TO PROVIDE IMPROVED CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PROVIDE A SECURE AND SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE WHILE DECREASING ITS RATE OF SPEND*

Performance Goal:

- VA attracts a quality workforce as a result of being identified as one of the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government.
- VA retains a quality workforce. VA will invest in the replacement and modernization of systems and processes that better respond to the needs of Veterans, business partners, and employees; rapidly changing technology; and pervasive security threats.

### Strategy 4.3.1. COTS

#### *BUY FIRST*

VA will apply a buy-first strategy for all acquisitions, focusing primarily on the procurement of managed services through cloud vendors. Secondly, VA will procure internally hosted Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) solutions, followed by in-house development.

### Strategy 4.3.2. Systems & Processes

#### *MODERNIZE LEGACY SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES*

VA will transition existing, internally developed solutions to the private sector or shared service providers for modernization and long-term sustainment, beginning with VA's electronic health record system and financial management systems. Other major legacy systems targeted for replacement include benefits delivery systems, interment and memorialization support systems, and Veterans appeals systems. Additionally, VA will ensure that rigorous business process analysis and reengineering are conducted before the procurement or development of new solutions.

### Strategy 4.3.3. Digital Platform

#### *LAUNCH DIGITAL VETERANS PLATFORM*

VA will create the Digital Veterans Platform that will allow Veterans to centrally manage their information to include personal, benefit, and health data. It will enhance transparency for Veterans, their care providers, and Veteran service organizations; enhance interoperability between Federal and community partners; and expand the use of data with real-time analytics to support automated recommendations for care.

### Strategy 4.3.4. Medical Research & Graduate Education

#### *ENHANCE THE NATION'S MEDICAL RESEARCH AND GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION CAPABILITY*

Improved informatics will allow VA research data to become a national resource. Discovery and translation will be facilitated by creating tailored data analyses of VA's massive longitudinal health data repositories for the general medical and pharmaceutical industry. The data analyses will include aggregating, customizing, and updating Veteran data for research purposes. VA will use this information to teach advanced techniques to those engaging in graduate medical education with VA.

### Strategy 4.3.5. Business Lines

#### *ENHANCE SERVICE TO VA BUSINESS LINES*

IT Modernization will result in timelier, integrated, and repeatable delivery of application development and support solutions to internal VA business lines, to include scaling software development and maintenance to handle the strategic and tactical requirements needed to deliver solutions effectively. VA will continuously review business requirements and demands for IT solutions and services to ensure that Veteran care and services are appropriately supported.

### Strategy 4.3.6. Digital Services

#### *MODERNIZE AND UNIFY VA'S DIGITAL SERVICES*

VA services will be fronted by a single, high-quality, mobile-friendly self-service tool. Use of that tool will be the preferred way for people to interact with VA for routine transactions, reducing the use of more costly and slower channels such as paper forms and call centers. Services will be accessible from a single online "front door," with a single user account, and will be customized for the individual using the service. All of VA's channels will direct users to these tools.

### Strategy 4.3.7. Cybersecurity

#### *ENHANCE CYBERSECURITY*

VA will ensure network security, endpoint protection, data loss prevention, disaster recovery, and IT continuity by implementing IT solutions that incorporate secure technology practices into their service delivery models.

### 4.4. Decision Making

#### *VA WILL INSTITUTIONALIZE DATA SUPPORTED AND PERFORMANCE FOCUSED DECISION MAKING THAT WILL IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUTCOMES*

##### PERFORMANCE GOAL:

- Employees report easy access to the information/ data needed for effective decision-making.
- Increase the number of VA initiatives and programs that deliver better outcomes/value for Veterans. To ensure modernization efforts are effective and resources are focused efficiently, VA will use value analytics to quantify improved outcomes for Veterans that are also efficiently and effectively using taxpayer funds and reducing non-monetary costs. Further, VA will consistently analyze ways to improve its efforts, will make appropriately aligned high-value investments, and will continuously assess the improvements achieved. Implementing this value management approach along with data-driven decision making will constitute VA's approach to value management. Consistently reliable, accessible, comprehensive, and up-to-date data is critical to achieving VA agility and implementing value management in the Department. This will also support data-driven decision making. VA will ensure that managers and decision makers have the right information to drive their data-based analytics and management efforts. Further, VA will institutionalize enterprise-wide modeling, value analytics, and forecasting capabilities. This, in turn, will enable VA to project future needs and to make adjustments quickly to ensure VA is providing excellent care and services to our Veterans.

### Strategy 4.4.1. Analytics & Value

#### *INSTITUTIONALIZE VALUE MANAGEMENT AND ANALYTICS*

VA will institutionalize a value management capability to better understand the outcomes VA provides for Veterans and identify areas for improvement; understand how costs are distributed within and across programs and initiatives; identify new ways to optimize processes, reduce costs, and improve outcomes; and identify best practices among different stakeholders. This capability will support decision making that focuses resources on direct Veteran services and drives operational efficiency.

### Strategy 4.4.2. Data Standardization

#### *STANDARDIZED ACCESSIBLE DATA*

VA will use comprehensive data to drive uniform understanding of our Veterans, to describe Veteran-facing and internal business processes, to provide baseline information used by the enterprise, and to reflect appropriate customer and market segmentation. VA will use an enterprise-wide data repository/tool that supports secure and seamless data sharing and enables leadership at all levels to make timely Veteran-focused decisions based on comprehensive, single source data. This enhanced data capability will support value based decisions and enable easy access to data.

### Strategy 4.4.3. Veteran Needs & Market Forces

#### *INSTITUTIONALIZE CONSISTENT MODELING/PREDICTIVE ANALYSES*

VA will use robust modeling and predictive analyses to anticipate changing Veteran needs and evolving market forces. Coupled with value analytics, VA will leverage its known competitive advantages to adapt better VA care, benefits, and services to address Veterans' changing needs and continually enhance outcomes.

### Strategy 4.4.4. Governance

#### *INSTITUTIONALIZE GOVERNANCE*

VA will use a governance structure that results in responsive decision making for near term solutions that will achieve long-term organizational objectives. VA governance will achieve cross-organizational unity of purpose and execution, will consistently promulgate critical decisions throughout the enterprise, will track progress toward established outcomes, and will ensure organizational compliance with laws, regulations, policies, and Executive Orders. The enterprise governance framework consists of architecture, practices, and enterprise decision-making norms. It will also drive use of value analytics as the basis for data informed decision making within the Department.

## Administrative Information

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