Department of Veterans Affairs
FY 2007 E-Government Act Report

The Department of Veterans Affairs' E-Government annual report is prepared in response to OMB Memorandum M-07-20 dated August 14, 2007, and pursuant to Section 202(g) of the E-Gov Act of 2002.

Section 1 provides the description of two internal agency- specific E-Government initiatives that have demonstrated improved enhancement of access and delivery of services to veterans, their families and beneficiaries as it relates to benefits received from VA. The initiatives include: the Web-Enabled Approval Management System that is managed by the Veterans Benefit Administration and the E-1330 Web Project that is managed by the National Cemetery Administration. Section 2 provides the requested website for Agency Information Management Activities and corresponding website link.

SECTION 1 – IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) - Web-Enabled Approval Management System (WEAMS) Initiative

The Web-Enabled Approval Management System (WEAMS) was launched on February 1, 2007. WEAMS is an integral component within The Education Expert System (TEES) program. WEAMS assists with VA's processing of educational benefits with little or no human interaction. VA requires all education, license and certification, and national exam support service providers to veterans or eligible beneficiaries, to be VA approved or approved by other compliance authorities, as applicable. Users can now search for approved programs via VA's website. The user can conduct nationwide searches for any approved programs, colleges, non-college degree granting institutions, licensing and certification granting providers, and national testing providers at anytime or any place in the Continental United States (CONUS) and overseas.   This online capability provides a useful tool for veterans to quickly find educational sources and in planning their future educational goals.

A. Describe how the initiative is transforming agency operations

WEAMS is a national locator source that provides the user with ready access to all VA approved information and data as it pertains to finding veterans educational related benefits. The development of WEAMS involved the re-engineering of two legacy systems, On-Line Approval File (OLAF) and the Licensing and Certification Approval System (LACAS) and the development and incorporation of the functionality to support national exams benefits. The OLAF and LACAS databases were converted and moved to the VBA Corporate Database.

This application not only allows veterans and the general public to search the repository for VA approved education programs but also reduces the amount of time VA employees spend in providing information and data.   This capability is provided on the Education website – http://www.gibill.va.gov/ (under "What's New"). WEAMS Public averages 8,799 daily hits and 228,794 monthly hits within the site.

Department of Veterans Affairs
FY 2007 E-Government Act Report

VA Education Service has seen a 26 percent drop in total call volume as evidenced in Table 1.

Table 1 – Drop in Total Call Volume

Month	2006	2007	Percent Decrease
Feb	433516	368639	15%
Mar	324851	235974	27%
Apr	197142	175567	11%
May	304189	185120	39%
Jun	274371	179885	34%
Jul	276373	198379	28%
Aug	350095	228662	34%
Average			26%

In addition, WEAMs provides the traceability for additions and modifications to program and facility approval information; allows nationwide access to information on approved training facilities and programs; creates the ability to add, modify and archive records; generate forms and reports as well as convert data from existing systems into a corporate environment.

B. Explain how your agency maintains an ongoing dialogue with interested parties to find innovative ways to use information technology for the initiative;

Veterans and their families access WEAMS mailbox which allows them to comment on WEAMS and provide VA with ideas to improve and enhance the application according to user preferences.

C. Identify external partners (e.g., Federal, State, or local agencies, industry) who collaborate with your agency on the initiative

WEAMS is an internal VA initiative. VA's Education Service and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment use the data in WEAMS to process claims for educational benefits.

D. Identify improved performance (e.g., outcome measures) by tracking performance measures supporting agency objectives and strategic goals

WEAMS Improved Performance

VA Strategic Goals	VBA Goals	Improved Performance
Improve the standard of living and income status of eligible survivors of service-disabled veterans through compensation, education, and insurance benefits. (VA Strategic Goal 1, Objective 1.4)	Process requests for benefits and services rapidly and accurately through the use of technology, stream-lined business processes and simplification of rules and regulations. (VBA Goal II)	Enhanced capabilities to process and maintain facility information with timeliness and accuracy.
Provide timely and accurate decisions on education claims and continue payments at appropriate levels to enhance veterans' and service-members' ability to achieve educational and career goals. (VA Strategic Goal 2, Objective 2.2)	Serve as a good steward of the resources entrusted to us with efficient and effective benefit programs and service delivery. (VBA Goal V)	Provided the public with the capability to access, search, and retrieve online information. Enhanced data integrity and information sharing for the OLAF central database. Improved historical information tracking and report capabilities.
Implement a One-VA information technology framework that supports the integration of information across business lines and that provides a source of consistent, reliable, accurate and secure information to veterans and their families, employees and stakeholders. (Enabling Goal, Objective E-3)	Train and develop employees to meet VBA's human capital requirements and develop a fully integrated workforce planning process that promotes the recruitment and retention of a committed and competent workforce. (VBA Goal VI.)	Streamlined legacy work processes across new WEAMS functionality. Increased proficiency in the utilization of new WEAMS functionality.

E. *Quantify the cost savings and cost avoidance achieved through implementing the initiative (e.g., by reducing or eliminating other investments in information technology)*

VA utilized Information Architecture (IA) for migration of the legacy data from OLAF and LACAS to WEAMS. In order to implement migration of the legacy data, OLAF and LACAS were converted and moved to the VBA Corporate Database. Replacing the two legacy applications with WEAMS will provide a cost savings to VA for maintenance and operations of IT.

F. *Explain how this initiative ensures the availability of Government information and services for those without access to the Internet and for those with disabilities*

WEAMS is 508 compliant. To ensure the application continues to meet Section 508 standards, the VA Section 508 compliance team routinely tests WEAMS. Veterans, dependents and other stakeholders who do not have access to the Internet continue to access information about VA education benefits by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551).

G. *Explain how the project applies effective capital planning and investment control procedures*.

WEAMS effort is an integral part of the TEES OMB-300 Capital Asset Planning documents for FY03 through the five year cycle to the FY08 planning documentation. WEAMS has been tracked through monthly progress reports. Initial project planning included specific requirements to track and report Earned Value Management Data through VA's accepted methodology and reporting procedures. Project tracking was implemented with the project initiation and has been tracked throughout the project life-cycle including close-out. The project team utilized proper change control procedures and tracked requested enhancements as part of the development efforts.

National Cemetery Administration (NCA) - The E-1330 Web Project

The National Cemetery Administration honors veterans with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service to our Nation. VA provides headstones and markers for the graves of eligible persons in national, state, other public and private cemeteries. There are approximately 350,000 headstones and markers furnished annually, in which over 70 percent go to cemeteries other than VA national cemeteries.

The E-1330 web project has been designed to be used as the primary method for submitting VA Form 1330, Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private Cemetery or A State Veteran's Cemetery, via a National

Department of Veterans Affairs
FY 2007 E-Government Act Report

Cemetery Administration/VA web site. The first fully completed E-1330 was received in late September 2007.

A. Describe how the initiative is transforming agency operations

Currently, VA Form 1330 must be submitted to the NCA for processing via toll free fax or regular mail. On average, 850 applications are submitted daily; 540 by mail and 310 by fax. The on-line appearance of VA Form 1330 will remain exactly as the current paper form with minor changes that take advantage of Web functionality. NCA is moving toward a more efficient and paperless environment.

B. Explain how your agency maintains an ongoing dialogue with interested parties to find innovative ways to use information technology for the initiative

VA is in the pilot implementation phase for E-1330. This phase includes an open and on-going dialogue with several funeral homes who are pilot testing this application. VA is working closely with these partners to ensure site usability and the timely delivery of benefits.

C. Identify external partners (e.g., Federal, State or local agencies, industry) who collaborate with your agency on the initiative

NCA collaborates with its customers, (i.e., funeral homes, private cemeteries, and state cemeteries) that submit VA Form 1330. NCA also collaborates with the International Cemetery, Cremation, and Funeral Association, by participating in their annual conventions.

D. Identify improved performance (e.g., outcome measures) by tracking performance measures supporting agency objectives and strategic goals

The E-1330 Web Project supports: Goal # 3: "Honor and serve veterans in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifices on behalf of the Nation". Objective 3.5: "Provide veterans and their families with timely and accurate symbolic expressions of remembrance".

Improved performance will be measured by tracking the number of days to process headstone and marker applications received via the Internet. Applications currently received by regular mail, or electronically via toll free fax may take up to 20 days to be processed. We anticipate Internet applications will be processed in 5 days or less, reducing the delivery time of the markers by 2 weeks.

Department of Veterans Affairs
FY 2007 E-Government Act Report

E. *Quantify the cost savings and cost avoidance achieved through implementing the initiative (e.g., by reducing or eliminating other investments in information technology*

Cost savings and cost avoidance are anticipated in the area through a significant reduction in VA employee data entry keystrokes for processing the VA Form 1330, improved information from the public due to programmed error and validity checks, and expedited application processing from the online capability. Data will be gathered for the next 6 to 9 months to quantify and baseline cost savings and avoidance figures.

F. *Explain how this initiative ensures the availability of Government information and services for those without access to the Internet and for those with disabilities*

The public can still submit VA Form 1330 for processing via toll free fax or U.S. mail service. The E 1330 Web project is 508 compliant.

G. *Explain how the project applies effective capital planning and investment control procedures.*

This project is a component of the Automated Monument Application System (AMAS) that uses the Capital Planning and Investment control procedures.

SECTION 2 – AGENCY INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

In the following paragraphs, VA provides the website links as required by the OMB memorandum (M-07-20). NOTE: When there is no website link listed, a brief comment provides status information.

A. *Your agency's information Resource Management (IRM) Strategic Plan;*

VA IT Strategic Plan, 2006-2011 was approved by VA's Strategic Management Council on August 23, 2007. During the concurrence phase for official release, there were changes required in some of the appendices, therefore, OI&T has delayed posting. The officially release and posting on the OI&T website will be accomplished in mid- quarter of fiscal year 2008.

B. *Final determinations, priorities, and schedules. Also include your agency's information dissemination product catalogs, directories, inventories, and any other management tools used to improve the dissemination of and access to your agency's information by the public*

VA's Content Inventory and Publication Schedule is available at:
http://www1.va.gov/webinventory. Public comments may be made via VA's on-line

Inquiry Routing and Information System (https://iris.va.gov/). VBA provides a direct link to a query system in order to allow public access to resource materials relative to VBA. This site is available at: http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/vbahome3bk.htm. Additionally, a web-content working group has been created in order to address current content and future changes to VA websites to ensure adequate dissemination of information to the public.

C. Your agency's FOIA handbook, the link of your agency's primary FOIA website, and the website link where frequent requests for records are made available to the public

VA's Office of Records Management Service maintains and manages VA's FOIA program. The agency's FOIA handbook, frequently asked questions, annual reports, FOIA regulations, FOIA/Privacy Act Offices, electronic reading rooms and the FOIA implementation improvement plan are posted at http://www.va.gov/oit/egov/rms.   VA is currently revising the FOIA handbook to align with a revision to its FOIA regulations, which is also under way. The newly developed guidance will provide FOIA offices with consistent guidance on how the Department should process and release information to the public." VA's Inquiry Routing and Information System (IRIS) (https://iris.va.gov) provides a link in which the public can communicate electronically with VA. The incoming inquiries are routed to the appropriate VA office and they are responsible for providing accurate and timely information.

D. A list of your agency's public websites disseminating research and development (R&D) information to the public, describing for each whether the website provides the public information about federally funded R&D activities and/or provides the results of Federal research

The Office of Research and Development (R&D) aspires to discover knowledge, develop VA researchers and health care leaders, and create innovations that advance health care for our veterans and the Nation. The electronic version of VA's R&D information to the public is located at: http://www.research.va.gov/.   The Center for Information Dissemination and Education Resources (CIDER) is a VA Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) national resource center. Established in June 2004, CIDER's mission is to improve the health and care of veterans by disseminating important HSR&D findings and information to policy makers, managers, clinicians, and researchers throughout VA and the broader health care community. The electronic version of VA's final determinations, priorities, and schedules, and information dissemination product catalogs, directories, inventories is located at: http://www.cider.research.va.gov/.

E. An inventory describing formal agency agreements (e.g., contracts, memorandum of understanding) with external entities (e.g., partnerships with State and local governments, public libraries, industry and commercial search engines) complementing your agency's information dissemination program,

Department of Veterans Affairs
FY 2007 E-Government Act Report

briefly explaining how each agreement improves the access to and dissemination of government information to the public

There is no centralized inventory that describes VA's formal agency agreements. Each Administration and Staff offices maintain their respective agreements.

F. An inventory that describes your agency's NARA-approved records schedules(s) or the link to the publicly-posted records schedules(s), and a brief explanation of your agency's progress to implement NARA Bulletin 2006-02. For the brief explanation please report the number of systems for which a record schedule was submitted to NARA in FY 2007 and the number of systems still requiring records schedules.

VA currently has a decentralized Records Management Program in which each Administration and Staff office maintains their own record schedules. The oversight of this process resides with VA's Records Management Service (RMS) within the Office of Information and Technology.

The following VA Record Control Schedules (RCS) have been approved by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA):

Veterans Health Administration, RCS 10-1 which is available at VA's Intranet:
http://vaww1.va.gov/vhapublications/rcs10/rcs10-1.pdf
Veterans Benefit Administration RCS VB-1, Part I and Part II which is available at:
http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/vbahome3bk.htm
National Cemetery Administration RCS which is available at VA's Intranet:
http://vaww.nca.va.gov/mgmt_supp/mgmt_recmgmt.asp
OM/ Office of Finance RCS which is contained in MP-4, part X, which is available at:
http://www.va.gov/publ/direc/finance/M4P10.htm
Handbook 6300.1, Records Management procedures Appendix A: which is contained in OI-1 Appendix A, which is available at:
http://www1.va.gov/vapubs/viewPublication.asp?Pub_ID=19&FType=2

 RMS has disseminated the NARA bulletin 2006-02 to all applicable VA organizations for their respective implementation actions. To date, no systems requiring an approved RCS have been submitted to NARA.