



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
RECOVERY ACT PROGRAM-SPECIFIC PLAN**

**VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION
HIRING TEMPORARY CLAIMS PROCESSORS**

MAY 2009

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1. Funding Table

A full funding description is provided in the Appendix.

2. Objectives

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA or Recovery Act) provides \$150 million for the hiring and training of temporary surge claims processors through 2010. New staff will consist of approximately 500 permanent employees (who will be retained beyond 2010 to replace losses that VBA experiences as a result of normal attrition) and about 1,000 temporary employees hired under term appointments. The temporary employees will assist in expediting disability claims development and perform other administrative activities to free decision-makers to complete more complex claims processing tasks. As a result, VBA anticipates the following improvements to projected 2010 performance: an increase in production of 10,000 cases; timeliness improvements in average days pending from 107 days down to 105 days; and average days to complete to be reduced from 154 days to 150 days.

The improved performance as a result of increased staffing corresponds with Departmental Strategic Goal 1: Restore the capability of Veterans with disabilities to the greatest extent possible, and improve the quality of their lives and that of their families. In addition, these efforts correspond with Departmental Strategic Objective 1.2: Provide timely and accurate decisions on disability compensation claims to improve the economic status and quality of life of service-disabled Veterans.

3. Activities

Claims processing employees hired on a temporary basis will be trained at their duty stations to assist in claims processing functions, ultimately allowing fully-trained employees to focus on the core elements of claims processing. Permanent employees will receive VBA's existing new employee training curriculum and will be retained as other permanent employees attrite. Supervisory training will also be given to approximately 150 existing employees who will directly supervise the new staff.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funding Administrative Costs for Temporary Surge Claims Processors * (dollars in thousands)

	2009	2010	Total Obligations
Total FTE Levels	385	1500	
Obligations			
Payroll	\$22,149	\$89,771	\$111,920
Non-Payroll	\$11,072	\$27,008	\$38,080
Total Obligation	\$33,221	\$116,779	\$150,000

* Due to potential efficiencies gained in location of new hires and utilization of shift work, funds originally budgeted for space may become available for hiring more temporary claims processors.

4. Characteristics

There are no financial awards associated with the hiring of temporary surge claims processors. All hiring and training will be performed in house.

5. Delivery Schedule

Hiring of temporary surge claims processors begins in April 2009. Terms for the employees who will not be retained full-time will expire in September 2010. VBA expects to have all 1,500 FTE on board by the end of FY 2009. A monthly hiring plan is available on VA's Recovery web site.

6. Environmental Review Compliance

Not applicable

7. Measures

VBA will use three performance measures to assess the impact of ARRA funding. Of the 3 performance measures, 2 are existing.

Measure #1

Rating-related Actions - Average Days Pending

Performance Table

Results 2006	Results 2007	Results 2008	Targets 2009 Approp.	Targets 2009 ARRA	Targets 2010 Request	Targets 2010 ARRA	2011
130	132	121	116	116	107	105	n/a

Other Required Information

New or Existing Measure	Results Data Collection Frequency	Public Accessibility Modality	Results Calculation	Results Data Source	Strategic Goal Link	Strategic Objective Link
Existing	Monthly	PAR and/or www.va.gov/recovery	The results are calculated by counting the number of days for all pending compensation claims that require a rating decision from the date each claim is received through the current reporting date. The total number of days is divided by the total number of pending claims	Benefits Delivery Network and VETSNET	SG 1: Restoration and Improved Quality of Life for Disabled Veterans	SO 1.2: Decisions on Disability Compensation Claims

Impact of ARRA on Performance

VA will employ approximately 1,500 claims processors with ARRA funding. These new hires will assume responsibilities that allow trained employees to focus on the core elements of claims processing, thus speeding completion of claims determinations. The impact will be felt in FY 2010 when the amount of time that claims are pending will decline by 2 days.

Measure #2

Compensation and Pension Rating-related Actions - Average Days to Complete

Performance Table

Results 2006	Results 2007	Results 2008	Targets 2009 Approp.	Targets 2009 ARRA	Targets 2010 Request	Targets 2010 ARRA	2011
177	183	179	168	168	154	150	n/a

Other Required Information

New or Existing Measure	Results Data Collection Frequency	Public Accessibility Modality	Results Calculation	Results Data Source	Strategic Goal Link	Strategic Objective Link
Existing	Monthly	PAR and/or www.va.gov/recovery	The average elapsed time (in days) it takes to complete compensation and pension claims that require a rating decision is measured from the date the claim is received by VA to the date the decision is completed	Benefits Delivery Network and VETSNET	SG 1: Restoration and Improved Quality of Life for Disabled Veterans	SO 1.2: Decisions on Disability Compensation Claims

Impact of ARRA on Performance

VA will employ approximately 1,500 claims processors with ARRA funding. These new hires will assume responsibilities that allow trained employees to focus on the core elements of claims processing, thus speeding completion of claims determinations. The impact will be felt in FY 2010 when claims processing time will decline by 4 days.

Measure #3

The number of ARRA-funded claims processors hired

Performance Table

Results 2006	Results 2007	Results 2008	Targets 2009 Approp.	Targets 2009 ARRA	Targets 2010 Request	Targets 2010 ARRA	2011
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,500	n/a	n/a	n/a

Other Required Information

New or Existing Measure	Results Data Collection Frequency	Public Accessibility Modality	Results Calculation	Results Data Source	Strategic Goal Link	Strategic Objective Link
New	Monthly	PAR and/or www.va.gov/recovery	The number of ARRA-funded employees hired	PAID	SG 1: Restoration and Improved Quality of Life for Disabled Veterans	SO 1.2: Decisions on Disability Compensation Claims

Impact of ARRA on Performance

VA will employ approximately 1,500 claims processors with ARRA funding. VA will complete this hiring by 30-September 2009. Positive performance impacts will be felt in FY 2010.

8. Monitoring/Evaluation

VBA operations reports will provide data on the average days to complete claims and production volume for work performed by the temporary surge claims processors. Reports will be run monthly. Staffing increases will be tracked via bi-weekly pay period reports.

9. Transparency

There will be updates to VA's Recovery web site for information relating to temporary surge claims processors hired.

10. Accountability

VBA has set hiring goals for the temporary surge claims processors which will be monitored via bi-weekly pay period reports. If Regional Office (RO) Directors are unable to meet hiring goals by the end of August, it may be reflected in their performance evaluation. If current claims processors are temporarily promoted to supervise the new hires, their new supervisory duties may be incorporated into their performance evaluations.

11. Barriers to Effective Implementation

There are no anticipated barriers to hiring the temporary surge claims processors.

12. Federal Infrastructure Investments

Not applicable

General Operating Expenses – Claims Processors Funding Table

Table 1A – Account Summary

	TAFS (pick from dropdown)	Appropriated to TAFS (\$000s)	Program Allocations BA Allocation (\$000s)	Program Allocations Program Name
One account funding one program	(36-0150 2009 \ 2011) General Operating Expenses	150,000	150,000	GOE Recovery Act

Table 1B – Obligations/Gross Outlays – January 2009 through December 2010 (\$000)

Funding Type	Funding Year	
Obligation	2009	\$33,221
Gross Outlay	2009	\$31,560
Obligation	2010	\$116,779
Gross Outlay	2010	\$118,440