

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan

FY 2012–2016

*Building a diverse workforce and inclusive workplace to
deliver outstanding public service in the 21st century*



**Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Office of Human Resources and Administration
March 2012**

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Message from the Chief Human Capital Officer

Employees are the foundation of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the key to its success, and there is an obvious connection between the quality of VA's workforce and the quality of VA's programs and services.

In order to ensure a continuous high level of care and service to Veterans, VA must recruit, retain, develop, and engage the best people possible. To do so, VA must cultivate a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment—an environment in which all employees can contribute to the maximum extent possible to VA's success.

VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) has the primary responsibility of providing leadership and guidance for the Department's diversity and inclusion initiatives, and VA's Diversity Council (VADC) serves as a forum to share best practices, consider new initiatives, monitor progress, leverage resources, and ensure accountability. Because of the important roles that they play, ODI and the VADC were tasked with revising the Department's Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion, in response to the President's call for a more comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion.

In the pages that follow are an overview of the current state of VA with respect to diversity and inclusion, along with goals, objectives, strategies, initiatives, and measures of progress for the Department's revised diversity and inclusion strategic plan. Over the next few years, this plan will serve as a guide for the Department's efforts to create and maintain a diverse, results-oriented, high-performing workforce; cultivate a flexible and inclusive work environment; facilitate outstanding service to our Nation's Veterans; and ensure agency accountability and leadership.



John U. Sepúlveda

Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration

Foreword

By the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

In 2008, ODI embarked on a groundbreaking effort to change the dialogue about diversity and inclusion in the public sector and usher in a new paradigm linked to organizational performance. This new paradigm championed two inextricably intertwined precepts: equal employment opportunity (EEO) is foundational to an effective diversity management program; and diversity and inclusion are essential to high performance in the 21st century. VA remains unequivocally committed to ensuring equal opportunity in the workplace. We also understand that EEO is essential but not sufficient to create a high-performing organization in this millennium.

VA defines diversity in its broadest context to include all that makes us unique: race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability status, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, parental status, educational background, socioeconomic status, intellectual perspective, organizational level, and more. By doing so, we are able to harvest the full performance advantages our diversity offers. Inclusion is the means by which we harvest this talent. It is the deliberate effort to leverage diversity and empower all voices to contribute to the mission.

The change in paradigm began by restructuring and renaming our office to reflect the more proactive mission of the new Office of Diversity and Inclusion. That same year, ODI set out to lead the development of VA's first strategic plan for diversity and inclusion. In 2009, the *VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2009–2013* was published. The plan attracted the attention of other Federal agencies, as well as the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Office of Personnel Management (OPM). A year later, OPM convened an interagency task force to develop the Federal sector's first Government-Wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, largely modeled after VA's Plan. This work culminated in President Barack Obama issuing Executive Order 13583, "Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce" in 2011.

In addition to establishing a government-wide initiative, the Executive Order directed individual agencies to develop their own diversity and inclusion strategic plans consistent with the government-wide plan, the agency's overall strategic plan, human capital plan, applicable laws and Merit System Principles. The government-wide plan identifies three strategic goals—workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and sustainability—along with associated priorities. The guidance for agency-specific plans directs Federal agencies to outline the actions they will take to achieve the priorities identified in the government-wide plan.

The *VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for 2012–2016* represents the collaborative efforts and contributions of VA's organizational components and stakeholders to update VA's plan to comport with the Government-Wide Diversity and

Inclusion Strategic Plan's goals and priorities. The original focus on workforce diversity, organizational inclusion, and customer service remains, and new objectives, strategies, and measures have been added to reflect current and emerging priorities. This plan is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to focus on higher priority areas in light of limited resources. At the same time, it is intended to be discrete enough to guide the operational efforts of all VA components.

The Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion

In the 2009 plan, we articulated the business case for diversity. This concept has since become well socialized in the public sector as Federal agencies increasingly understand that government also has a business imperative: fair and effective public service. Since 2009, we have all witnessed the dramatic effects of an interconnected global economy on the public and private sectors. We see with stark clarity that our effectiveness in providing responsive public services is dependent on our ability to rapidly adapt to the changing dynamics of our global environment.

The U.S. Census Bureau projects that in 2042, our Nation will no longer be characterized by one single demographic majority. Foreign-born people and people of color will constitute the majority of new entrants to our labor force. Currently, minority Veterans comprise approximately 20 percent of the Veteran population, and about half of women Veterans are people of color. These numbers are expected to grow exponentially in the coming years. Therefore, for VA to properly serve its client base, it must also have a culturally competent and diverse workforce in all levels of the Department. This will require agility, innovation, and a world view to meet the complex demands of unprecedented societal diversity.

In the decades following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the field of EEO has evolved from an exclusively legalistic model to the more proactive, business-driven framework of diversity management. The globalization of the last decade spawned yet a new focus on *inclusion*, and its relationship to employee engagement and performance. Organizations realized that to remain viable in a global economy, it was not enough to recruit a diverse workforce, but they must also retain and leverage the diverse perspectives and talents of its human capital to sustain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. This too applies to the public sector.

The Inclusion Imperative

Numerous empirical studies have shown a positive correlation between workforce diversity and organizational performance. Research tells us that diverse teams are more creative, perform better in problem-solving, and result in better decision-making than homogeneous teams. Racial diversity yields higher performance when diverse perspectives are leveraged as resources for product development. Similarly, gender diversity results in more effective group processes in people-oriented performance environments (Diversity Research Network, 2002). However, absent the facilitating conditions that integrate diverse perspectives in the organization, the aforementioned

outcomes are reversed. This is the inclusion imperative. Simply put, diversity without inclusion will not work.

Recent studies have shown that legal mandates for EEO and the presence of diversity are necessary but not sufficient to effectively manage organizational diversity (Herring, 2009). Organizations must have conditions in place to ensure that diverse perspectives are heard and all contributors are empowered. To achieve, agencies must look internally at their organizational cultures and the institutional processes that impact employees' ability to fully participate and contribute to the mission. This requires examining and eliminating systemic barriers to inclusion in all aspects of the organizations. The aim is to build an inclusive organization as characterized by equal access to opportunity, culturally competent norms, transparent communications, participatory work processes and decision-making, constructive conflict management, leadership development, equitable rewards systems, and shared accountability. These inclusion characteristics are drivers of employee engagement and organizational performance; inclusion holds the key to actualizing the performance potential of workforce diversity.

Implicit in all this is the notion that diversity goes beyond our race and gender, to include the diversity of thought that accompanies our human identity. It is the inextricable link between who we are and how we think that makes diversity such a potent ingredient in organizational performance. Viewed this way, the concept of inclusion galvanizes the field of EEO and diversity management by stressing inclusion of *all* employees, not only legally-protected classes. It in fact strengthens the commitment to equal opportunity by expanding its stakeholders to the entire workforce, not just segments of it. Inclusion transcends parochial interests, and therefore is championed by all.

We are proud to lead the effort to build diversity and cultivate inclusion in the VA and beyond. We do so in collaboration with all our partners and stakeholders under the guiding principles of being *people centric, results driven, and forward looking* to provide the best service to our Nation's Veterans.



Georgia Coffey
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

Organizational Acronyms

Center for Minority Veterans	CMV
Center for Women Veterans	CWV
Corporate Senior Executive Management Office	CSEMO
National Cemetery Administration	NCA
National Center for Organization Development	NCOD
Office of Acquisitions, Logistics, and Construction	OALC
Office of Diversity and Inclusion	ODI
Office of Information Technology	OIT
Office of Policy and Planning	OPP
Office of Public Information and Affairs	OPIA
Office of Resolution Management	ORM
Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization	OSDBU
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	VA
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	EEOC
U.S. Office of Personnel Management	OPM
VA Learning University	VALU
Veteran Employment Services Office	VESO
Veterans Benefits Administration	VBA
Veterans Health Administration	VHA

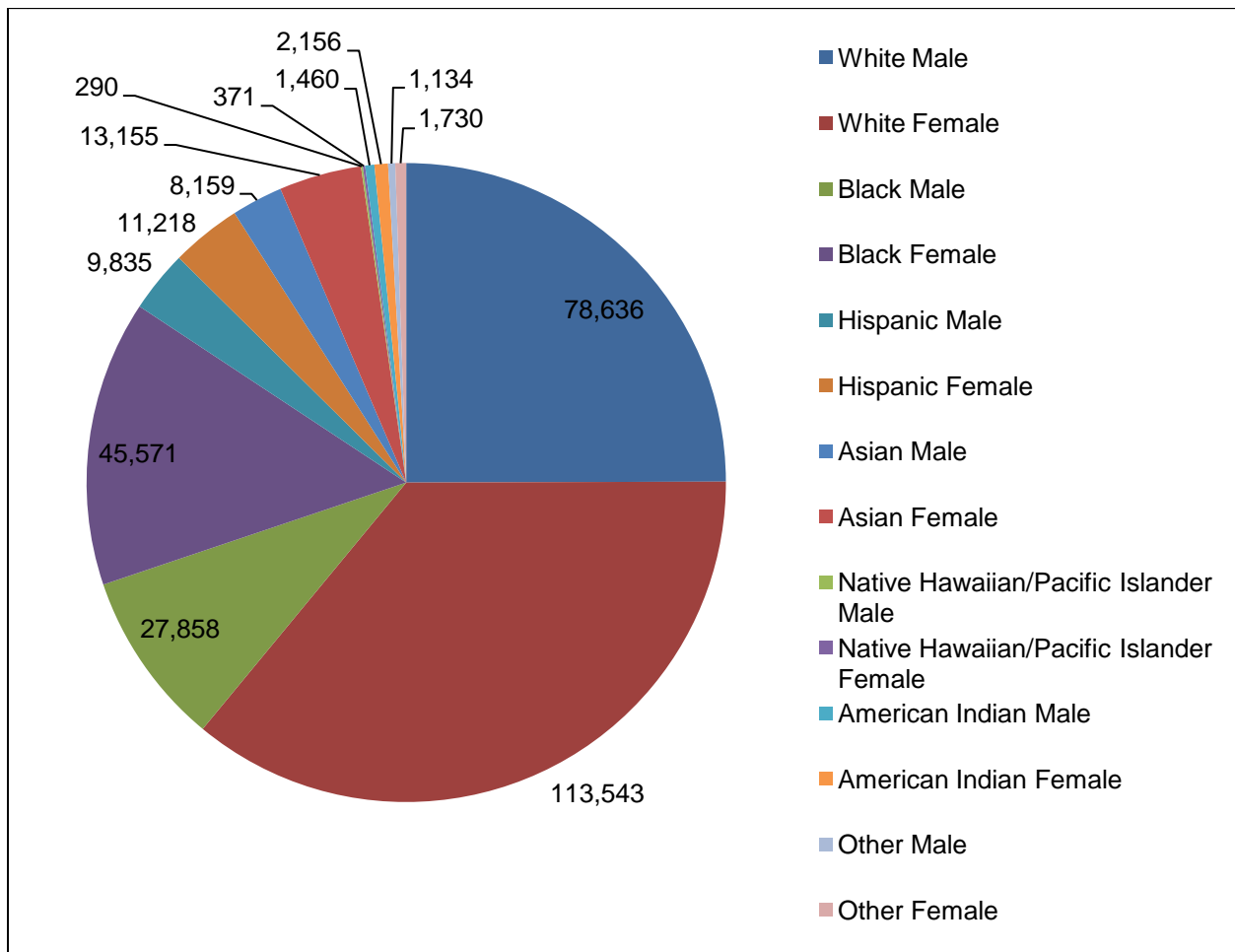
The Current State of VA

To provide the context for this strategic plan, the following information presents a demographic analysis of the VA workforce (workforce diversity) and internal employee perceptions as revealed in organizational climate surveys (workplace inclusion), as of September 30, 2011.

Workforce Diversity

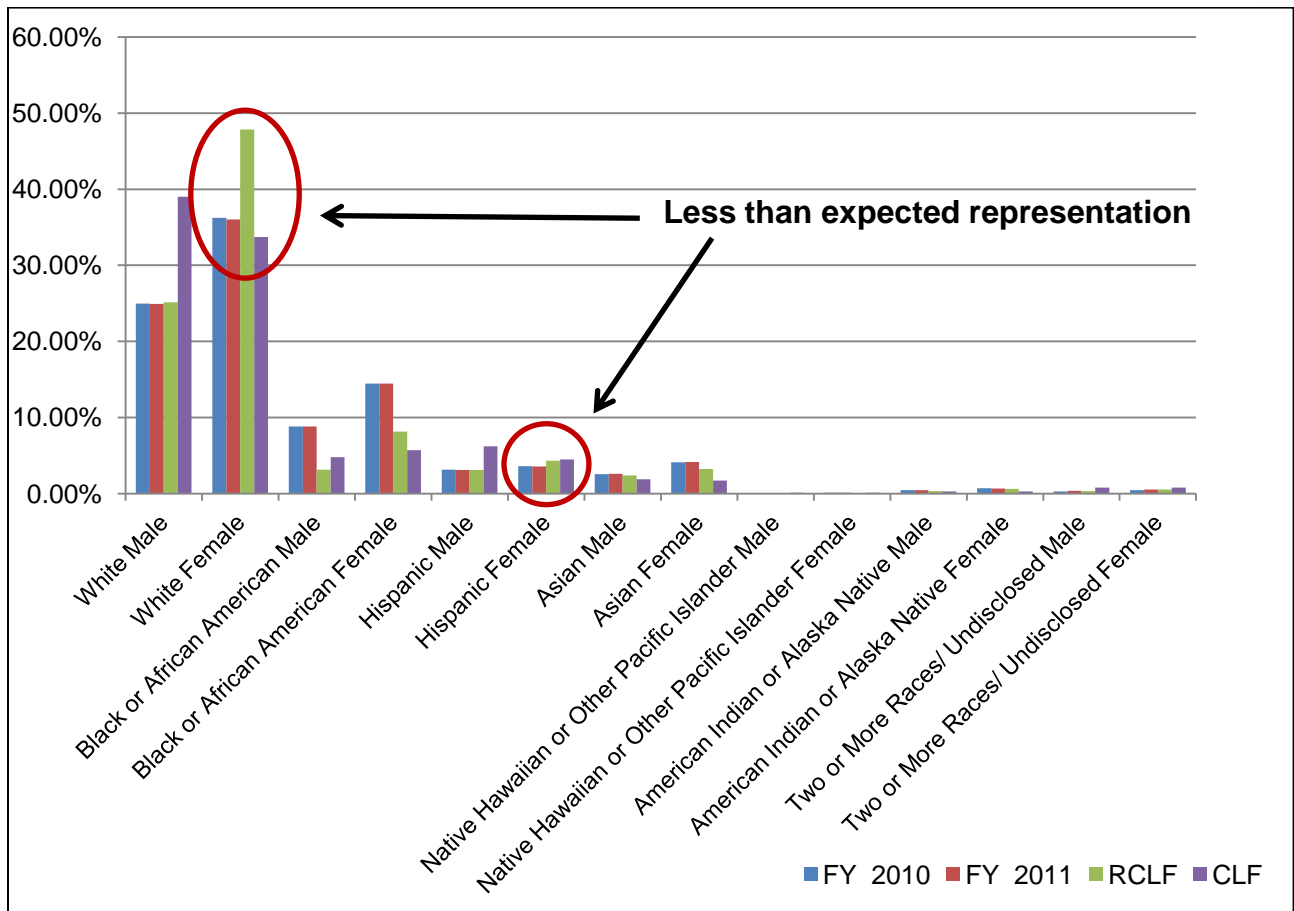
At the end of fiscal year (FY) 2011, VA's workforce totaled 315,116 employees, including 19,657 temporary employees. The overall breakdown of the VA workforce in FY 2011 by race, ethnicity, and gender is depicted below:

VA's FY 2011 Workforce



EEOC requires that Federal agencies compare their workforce composition by race, ethnicity, and gender (REG) with corresponding groups in the Civilian Labor Force (CLF)¹, and Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF).² Currently, this data is based on the 2000 census. Compared to the RCLF, VA's workforce is at, or above, RCLF representation in all areas except White males, and White and Hispanic females. For the purposes of this plan, we will focus on the barriers to groups with historically low participation rates. While White females have low participation rates when compared to the RCLF, they are the largest group in VA. The following graph depicts a comparison of the VA workforce with the RCLF for FY 2010 and FY 2011.

VA Workforce vs. RCLF (FY 2010 and FY 2011)



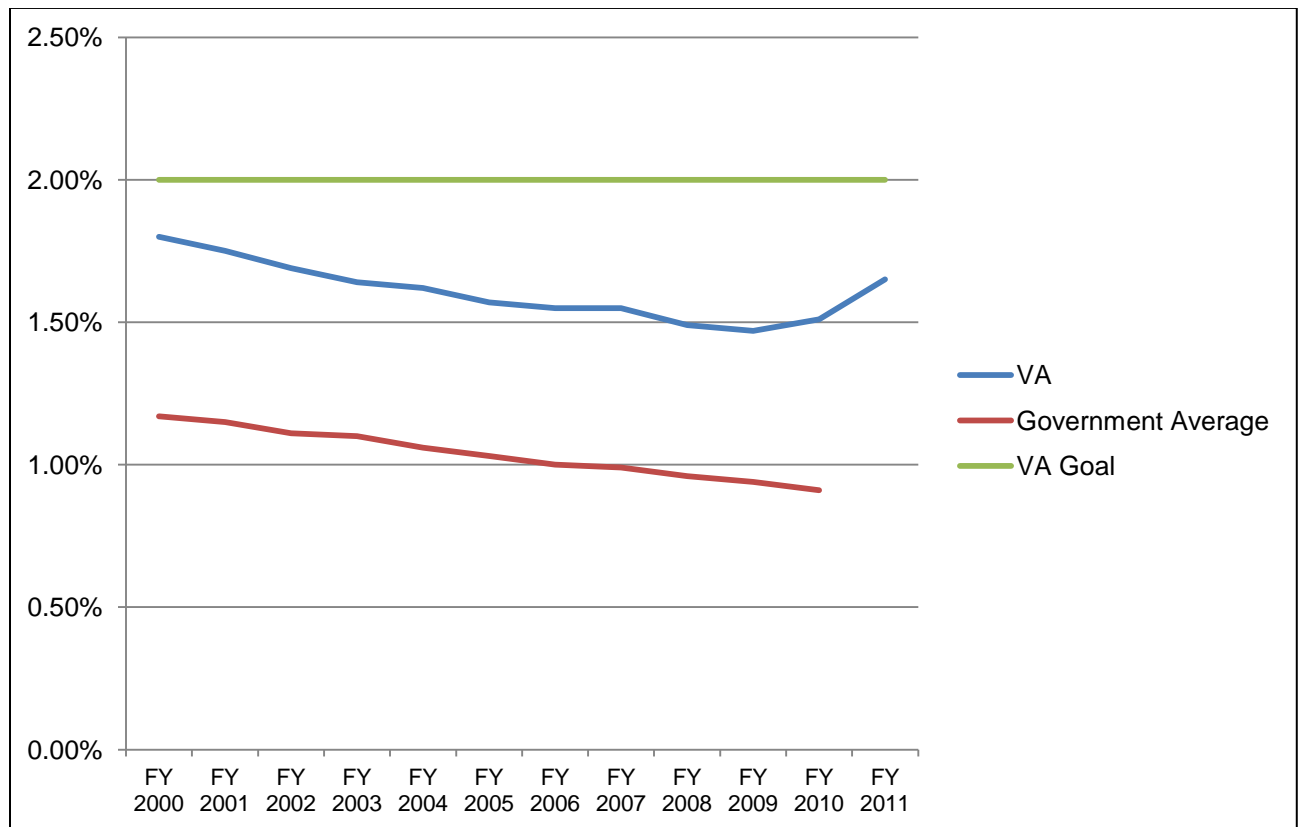
¹ CLF reflects all individuals 16 years of age and older employed or seeking employment in the United States, excluding the Armed Forces.

² RCLF is the CLF in occupations specific to VA.

People with Targeted Disabilities

VA continues to increase its representation of employees with targeted disabilities. As of September 30, 2011, people with targeted disabilities represented 1.65 percent of the VA workforce (temporary and permanent). Of the cabinet agencies, VA has the second highest ratio of this population. Beginning in FY 2009, VA reversed a decade long decline in the representation of people with targeted disabilities. For FY 2011, the Secretary's two percent hiring goal for all of VA was nearly met, 1.90 percent of the total hires (permanent and temporary) have a targeted disability. An eleven year trend of the percentage of the VA workforce with a targeted disability is provided in the graph below. The government average for FY 2011 was not available at the time of this publication; the FY 2010 government average is 0.91 percent.

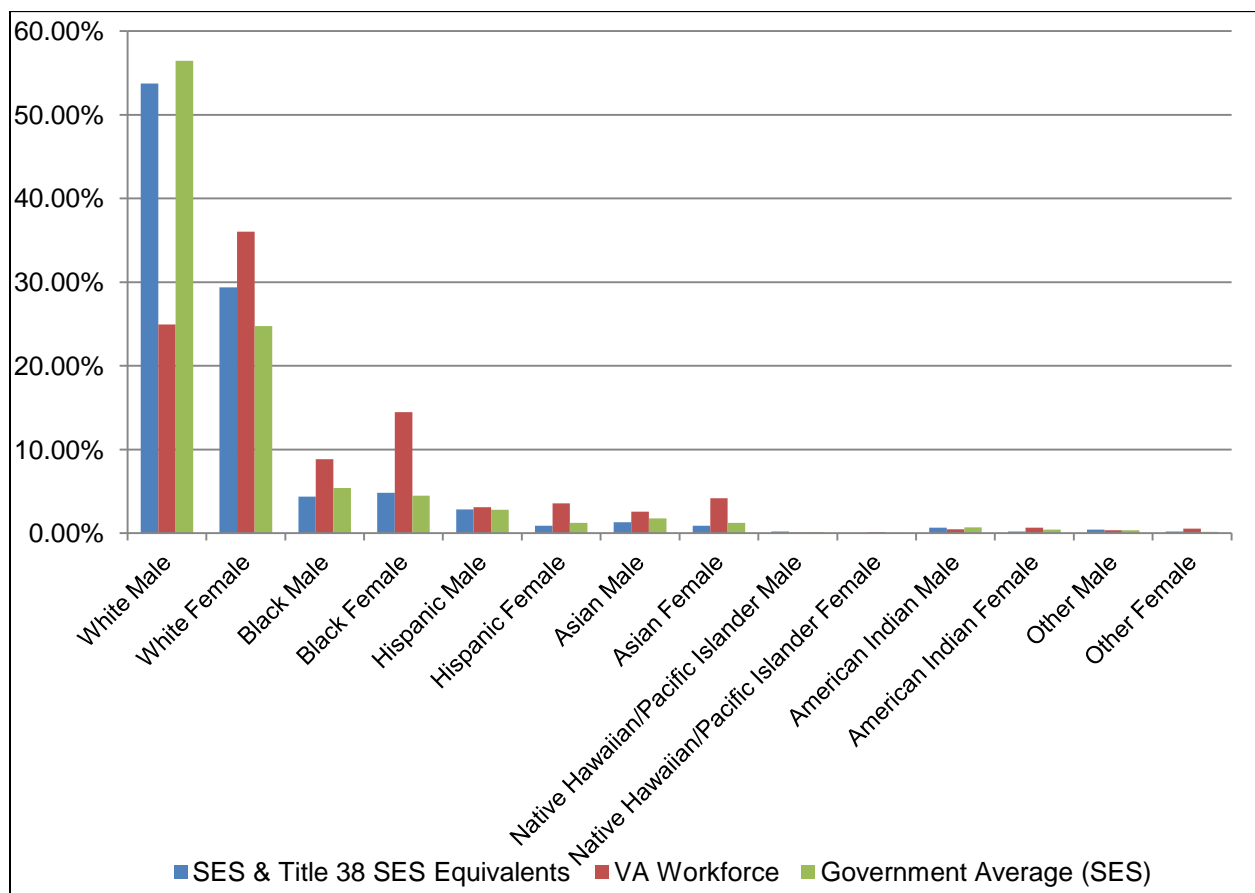
People with a Targeted Disability (percentage of total workforce) FY 2000–2011



Senior Executive Representation

As of September 30, 2011, the Senior Executive Service (SES) and Title 38 SES Equivalent population was 456, an increase of 26 from September 30, 2010. The graph below provides the representation of the SES and Title 38 SES Equivalent population by race, ethnicity, and gender. In addition, the representation of the entire VA workforce is included in the graph for comparative purposes. Compared with the government average for SES, the representation of White and Black females in the SES and Title 38 Equivalent population are above the government average. Similarly, the representation of the Hispanic and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander male SES population are above the government average.

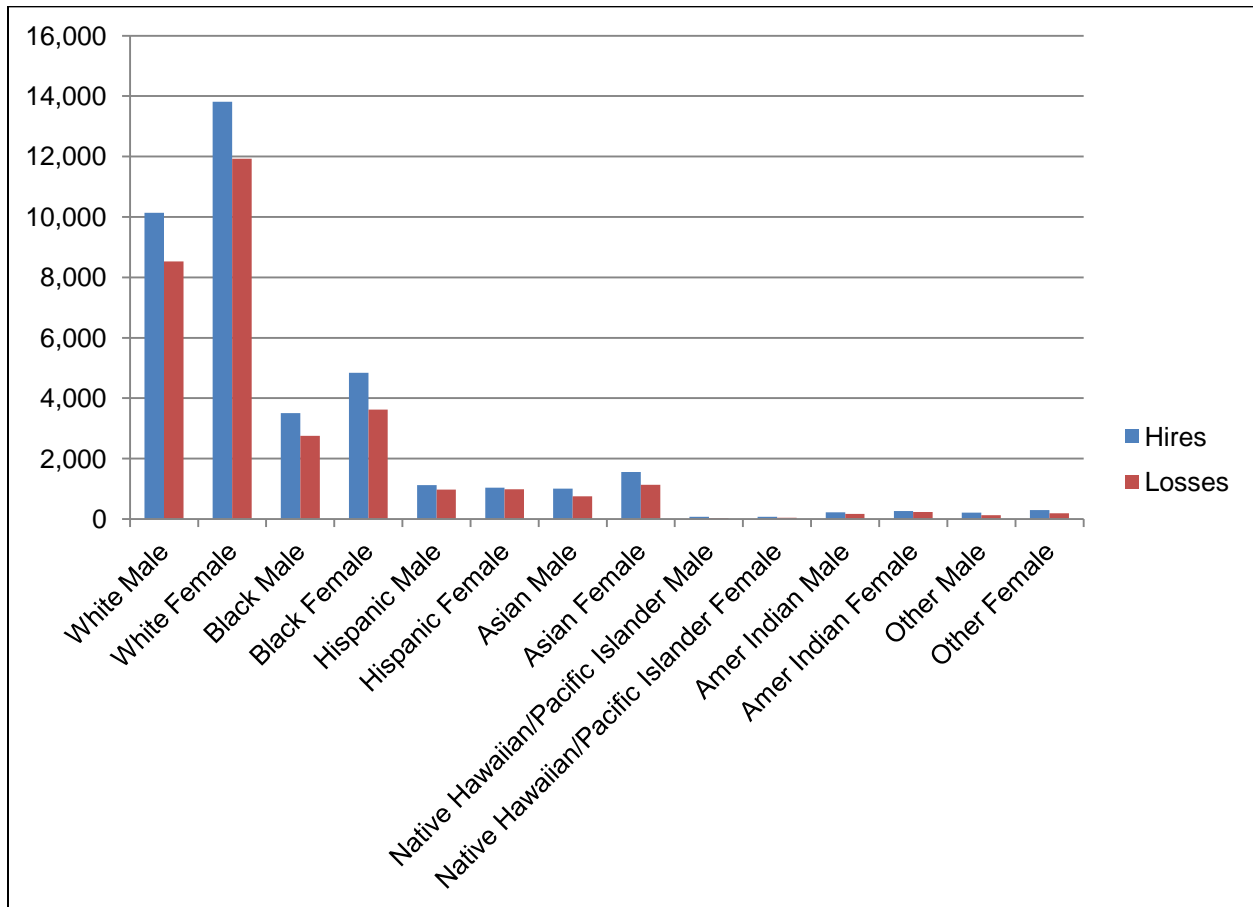
SES and Title 38 SES Equivalent Representation in FY 2011



Hires and Losses

The graph below provides the number of hires and losses (permanent and temporary workforce) data by REG. In FY 2011, VA hired individuals from each group at a rate equivalent or greater than their separations.

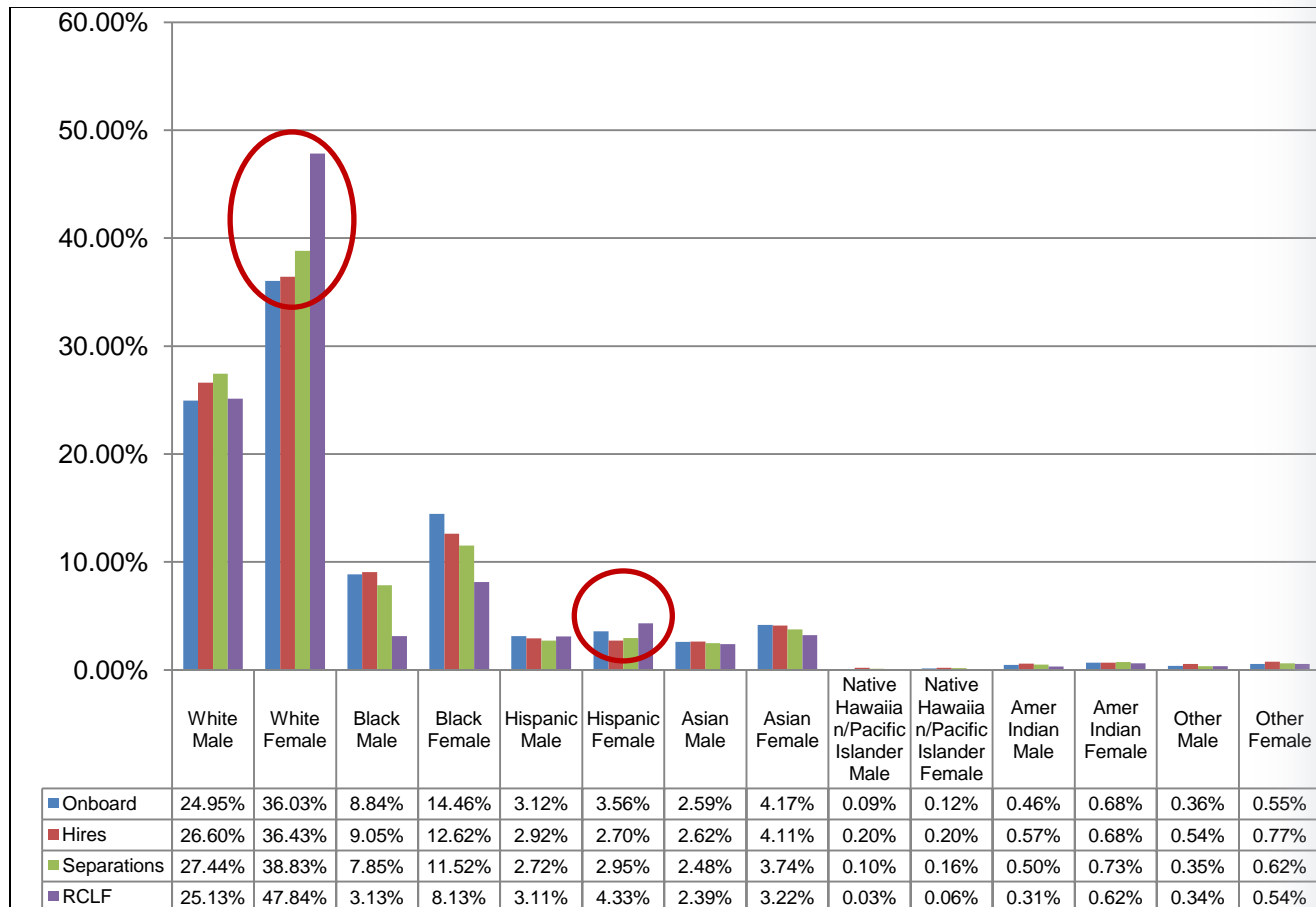
Hires and Losses by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in FY 2011



Comparison of Separations, Hires, and On Board Representation Rates

The graph below provides the representation rate of the workforce as of September 30, 2011, and the losses and hires that occurred during FY 2011. White women and Hispanic women fell below their expected representation rate based on the RCLF. The hire rates for White and Hispanic women also fell below their respective rate in the RCLF.

Separations, Hires, and On-Board Representation Rates in FY 2011



Workplace Inclusion

There are many ways of assessing workplace inclusion. One commonly accepted method is to examine employee perceptions based on their responses to inclusion-related items in employee surveys.

The Partnership for Public Service summarized the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results by creating various indexes using different combinations of survey items. The collective indexes make up the “Best Places to Work in the Federal Government.” This list ranks 308 total Federal organizations including 33 large agencies, 35 small

agencies, and 240 subcomponent agencies.

The following table portrays VA's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results and VA's ranking by the Partnership for Public Service for the past two years. From 2010 to 2011, VA experienced the highest increase in the survey items related to "Support for Diversity."

The Best Places to Work Ranking – VA Scores for FY 2011 and 2010

Index	2011		2010		Variance
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	
Support for Diversity	56.7	20 of 31	52.9	23 of 28	3.8
Effective Leadership - Supervisors	60.1	27 of 30	56.5	27 of 28	3.6
Effective Leadership	52.3	22 of 30	49.7	23 of 28	2.6
Strategic Management	58.1	11 of 30	56	18 of 28	2.1
Work/Life Balance	56.8	23 of 30	54.7	26 of 28	2.1
Performance Based Rewards and Advancement	43.7	23 of 30	42.5	23 of 28	1.2
Teamwork	62.8	24 of 30	62.3	21 of 28	0.5
Training and Development	61.4	13 of 30	61.3	13 of 28	0.1
Pay	53.3	30 of 30	53.2	28 of 28	0.1
Effective Leadership - Fairness	53.7	15 of 30	No Data	No Data	0
Effective Leadership - Leaders	47.3	21 of 30	No Data	No Data	0
Effective Leadership - Empowerment	45.1	22 of 30	No Data	No Data	0
Employee Skills/Mission Match	80.7	5 of 30	81.7	2 of 28	-1
Family Friendly Culture and Benefits	25.7	29 of 30	26.7	28 of 28	-1

Source: Partnership for Public Service retrieved on January 20, 2012 at <http://bestplacestowork.org/BPTW/rankings>.

Customer Service and Stakeholder Relations

VA currently gauges customer satisfaction by examining the results of customer surveys. The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) provides information on the satisfaction of some VA customers. For example, the ACSI measures the satisfaction of outpatients at VA clinics, inpatients at VA medical centers, relatives of Veterans interned at VA national cemeteries, and users of VA's main Web site and the My HealthVet Web site. By those measures, VA customer satisfaction is fairly high, especially for the National Cemetery Administration.

American Customer Satisfaction Index Scores for Years 2007 to 2010				
	2007	2008	2009	2010
VHA: Inpatients at VA medical centers	83	85	N/A	85
VHA: Outpatients at VA clinics	83	81	N/A	82
VHA: Users of the Civilian Health and Medical Program	82	N/A	88	N/A
NCA: Relatives or individuals responsible for interment	95	N/A	N/A	94
VA Web sites	72	72	73	72

Source: <http://www.theacsi.org>

Note: Cells marked not applicable (N/A) signify that the identified dimensions were not measured for that specific year.

Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan

Overview

Mission

The mission of the VA diversity and inclusion program is to build a diverse workforce and cultivate an inclusive workplace to deliver the best services to our Nation's Veterans, their families, and beneficiaries.

Vision

VA is a leader in creating and sustaining a high-performing workforce by leveraging diversity and empowering employees to achieve superior results in service to our Nation and its Veterans.

Values

VA's diversity and inclusion program adheres to the Department's core values of integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence (*I CARE*).

Goals

To fulfill the diversity and inclusion program's mission and vision, VA will pursue the following goals:

1. **A Diverse Workforce:** Build a diverse, high-performing workforce that reflects all segments of society.
2. **An Inclusive Workplace:** Cultivate a flexible, collaborative, and inclusive work environment that leverages diversity and empowers all contributors.
3. **Outstanding Public Service:** Facilitate outstanding, culturally competent public service and stakeholder relations through effective leadership and accountability.

Implementation

The following pages identify the objectives, strategies, and measures designed to achieve the aforementioned goals. In cases where an organization has primary (but not exclusive) responsibility for the execution of a specific strategy, that organization has been identified in parentheses at the end of the strategy. In all other cases where there are joint or overlapping responsibilities, the responsible office may not be specifically identified. The *VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan* is intended to be a multi-year effort, and changing conditions, including budget constraints, may require refinement to the plan's components. Implementation will be led by VA ODI, in partnership with VA's three Administrations (VHA, VBA, NCA), and staff offices. Progress made pursuant to

this plan will be reported annually in the *VA Diversity and Inclusion Annual Performance Report*.

Goal 1: A Diverse Workforce

Build a diverse, high-performing workforce that reflects all segments of society.

Federal agencies are required to take appropriate actions to ensure there is equal opportunity in the workplace by identifying and removing barriers to EEO. Actions include comparing the demographic composition of the workforce to the demographic composition of the relevant labor market, removing internal barriers, conducting strategic outreach to communities and utilizing special hiring authorities for members of groups with less than expected participation rates. Building a diverse, high-performing workforce will involve these established strategies as well as new, proactive strategies aimed at attracting broader, emerging aspects of our diversity.

Objective 1A: Eliminate barriers to EEO at all levels and in all occupations.

Strategies:

- Implement the VA Diversity Index³ to monitor the status of VA's diversity and provide quarterly workforce diversity reports to leadership (ODI, VHA, VBA, NCA).
- Identify barriers to EEO by REG, disability status, Veteran status, in hiring, promotions, separations, and career development; and by grade levels and major occupations annually in accordance with EEOC Management Directive 715 (ODI, VHA, VBA, NCA).
- Establish baseline metrics and a reporting system to enable VA offices to identify and eliminate any barriers present in the processes used to recruit or select Hispanic, White female, and people with disabilities (PWD) applicants for initial employment (VA-wide).
- Establish baseline metrics and a reporting system to enable VA offices to identify and eliminate any barriers present in the processes used to recruit or select White, Black, Asian, and American Indian females, and PWD for promotion (VA-wide).
- Establish baseline metrics and a reporting system to enable VA offices to identify and eliminate any barriers present in the processes used to recruit or select women, Black and Asian men (groups with less than expected SES participation) for appointment to the Senior Executive Service (VA-wide).
- Perform applicant flow/adverse impact analyses in recruitment and leadership selection processes (ODI).
- Implement EEO, Diversity and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) dashboard to provide real time status of EEO, workforce diversity and ADR usage (ORM, ODI).
- Utilize staffing flexibilities and special hiring authorities (e.g., Veterans, Schedule A for people with disabilities, student internships, fellowships); use ODI's *Recruitment and Selection Best Practices Guide* (<http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/files/RSG.pdf>) (VA-wide).

³ The VA Diversity Index is a new metric developed by VA ODI that measures VA's aggregate workforce composition by race, ethnicity, and gender as compared with the corresponding CLF/RCLF.

- Develop strategic partnerships with affinity organizations, professional associations, and educational institutions focused on groups with low participation rates to perform recruitment outreach (VA-wide).
- Establish hiring and on-board goals for people with targeted disabilities (VA-wide).

Measures:

- Report VA Diversity Index in quarterly workforce diversity reports and in Monthly Performance Review beginning in FY 2012 (NOTE: this Index is intended for use as an indicator of program impact and overall progress, not as a target metric).
- Deliver timely, accurate quarterly workforce diversity analysis reports to leadership and annual reports to external agencies (EEOC Management Directive 715 Report; diversity reports to OPM) as appropriate.
- Implement applicant flow/adverse impact analysis system by end of FY 2014 and increase representation of groups with low participation rates in recruitment and leadership development applicant pools.
- Implement EEO, Diversity and Alternative Dispute Resolution dashboard by end of FY 2013.
- Participate in a minimum of six national/local job fairs or events targeting outreach to groups with low participation rates.⁴
- Increase on-board representation of employees with targeted disabilities to 2.5 percent by end of FY 2016.

Objective 1B: Achieve diversity in the broadest context throughout the workforce.

Strategies:

- Implement diversity-focused internship and fellowship programs, including centralized Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), centralized National Diversity Internship Program (NDIP), and Career Pathways Programs (ODI, OHRM).
- Work with VESO, CWV, and CMV to ensure that employment outreach programs target disabled, female, minority, and multigenerational Veterans and spouses of Veterans (VA-wide).

Measures:

- Sponsor 20 WRP interns and 100 NDIP interns annually, budget permitting.
- Increase on-board representation of Veterans to 40 percent of the workforce by end of FY 2014.
- Increase participation in Veteran outreach events targeting demographic groups with low participation rates.

⁴ Six outreach events by ODI and per Administration.

Goal 2: *An Inclusive Workplace*

Cultivate a flexible, collaborative, and inclusive work environment that leverages diversity and empowers all contributors.

In order to reap the benefits of workforce diversity, work environments must maintain the facilitating conditions that enable diverse perspectives to be heard and empower all participants to contribute. This requires deliberate efforts by leadership to provide flexibility with respect to where, when, and how work gets done; promote robust collaboration through teamwork, participatory work processes, and cross-functional work experiences; and engage all employees through cultural competency, leadership development, reasonable accommodation, and constructive conflict management. These are more than retention strategies; they are strategies that engage and develop our human resources to their fullest potential so that they may advance the VA mission.

Objective 2A: Leverage workforce diversity and empower diverse perspectives throughout the organization through career/leadership development.

Strategies:

- Develop workforce succession plans addressing barriers to EEO and diversity; analyze attrition by REG (VA-wide).
- Incorporate diversity and inclusion in the curricula of all leadership development programs (ODI, VALU, CSEMO, VHA, VBA, NCA).
- Aggressively market broad as well as targeted outreach for leadership development and mentoring programs (Aspiring Leaders, Leadership VA, SES Candidate Development Program, Technical Career Field programs) (VA-wide).
- Perform adverse impact analyses of leadership development application and selection processes (ODI).
- Promote and utilize *ADVANCE* and MyCareer@VA (career mapping system) to facilitate career development and upward mobility (VA-wide).
- Track training and development participation rates by REG in VA Talent Management System (TMS) (VALU, OHRM, ODI).
- Support for broad participation in inter-office/inter-agency details and rotations including Inter-governmental Personnel Act Mobility Program (VA-wide).

Measures

- Reduce “regrettable losses” (non-retirement voluntary separations/resignations) by 10 percent of current baseline for groups with higher than expected attrition rates by end of FY 2016.
- Increase diversity in leadership development and mentoring program applicant pools.
- Develop the ability to track training and development participation rates by REG and disability status in TMS by end of FY 2013.

Objective 2B: Cultivate a flexible, collaborative, and inclusive organizational culture for all employees.

Strategies:

- Implement VA Inclusion Index⁵ to measure organizational inclusion (ODI).
- Employ ORM's Organizational Climate Assessment Programs (OCAP) in organizations experiencing high workplace conflict/per capita complaints (ORM).
- Employ Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workplace (CREW) initiatives in organizations experiencing high workplace conflict/per capita complaints (VA-wide).
- Analyze the results of VA's All Employee Survey and Voice of VA survey and implement corrective strategies as appropriate (VA-wide).
- Conduct EEO program technical assistance reviews in headquarters and field organizations (ODI, VHA, VBA, NCA).
- Support special emphasis programs (SEPs), employee affinity and resource groups, and expand these groups to represent new, emerging aspects of diversity (multigenerational; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender [LGBT]; etc.) (VA-wide).
- Modify existing electronic employee exit survey to include questions focused on diversity and inclusion issues (OHRM, ODI).
- Implement work/life flexibilities (wellness, telework, flexible work schedules) as appropriate (VA-wide).
- Support and participate in ADR processes and promote effective labor/management collaborations (VA-wide).
- Implement and promote use of centralized reasonable accommodation funding and tracking system (ODI).
- Ensure compliance with Sections 501, 504, and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, by monitoring accessibility of program delivery, physical infrastructure, and electronic/information technology (EIT) (OIT, ODI, VHA, VBA, NCA).

Measures:

- Implement VA Inclusion Index by end of FY 2013 and determine baseline to inform future goal-setting.
- Implement responsive action plans in accordance with the employee survey results annually.
- Enhance standardized electronic employee exit survey to include questions on diversity and inclusion by end of FY 2014.
- Increase work/life initiatives and telework usage for suitable positions by 10 percent above current baseline by end of FY 2016.

⁵ The VA Inclusion Index is a new metric developed by ODI to measure organizational inclusion based on employee responses to empirically-validated survey items related to inclusion in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

- Increase overall ADR participation rate to 55 percent and resolution rate of informal EEO complaint rate to 50 percent by end of FY 2014.
- Reduce per capita formal EEO complaints to below the government average by end of FY 2016.
- Reduce per capita grievances by five percent below current baseline by end of FY 2016.
- Increase usage of wellness and telework programs by five percent above current baseline by end of FY 2014.
- Conduct a minimum of six technical assistance reviews annually.
- Process 90 percent of reasonable accommodation requests in accordance with established timelines by end of FY 2016.
- Perform compliance review of physical, EIT, and program accessibility standards in VA Administrations in collaboration with the Office of Information and Technology and Office of Acquisitions, Logistics, and Construction by end of FY 2016.

Goal 3: *Outstanding Public Service*

Facilitate outstanding, culturally competent public service and stakeholder relations through effective leadership and accountability.

Research has shown that a diverse workforce and inclusive workplace are associated with greater organizational performance. The ultimate goal of having a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment is to deliver better services to our customers (internal and external) and meet the needs of our stakeholders. The transformation of an organization's culture to this end requires a long-term commitment. Effective leadership and accountability are critical to sustaining this organization-wide commitment. The following strategies and objectives are aimed at facilitating and sustaining the effort to achieve the ultimate goal.

Objectives 3A: Provide outstanding, culturally competent services to Veterans, their families, and beneficiaries.

Strategies:

- Deliver cultural competency, diversity and inclusion training to the VA workforce (ODI, VALU).
- Support implementation of patient-centered care (VHA).
- Promote use of Small, Disadvantaged, Veteran-owned businesses (OSDBU).
- Monitor customer service surveys and indicators and take action as appropriate (Staff Offices, VHA, VBA, NCA).
- Target outreach to Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native, American Indian, and other indigenous/rural populations that historically do not avail themselves of VA services (VA-wide).

Measures:

- Establish baseline of employees completing cultural competency/diversity and inclusion training utilizing TMS by end of FY 2014.
- Increase VA scores that fall below industry standards on customer satisfaction index in all populations by end of FY 2014.
- Increase timeliness in approval/certification of Veteran-owned businesses annually.
- Meet or exceed OSDBU socioeconomic procurement goals annually.
- Increase culturally competent services to Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native, American Indian, and other indigenous/rural populations.

Objectives 3B: Strengthen relations with stakeholders.

Strategies:

- Leverage, support, and coordinate with internal and external VA stakeholders, including but not limited to the following:

- American Indian Science and Engineering Society
- Asian American Government Executive Network
- Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies
- Blacks in Government
- Center for Minority Veterans
- Center for Women Veterans
- Department of Defense's Computer Assistance Program
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Labor's Workforce Recruitment Program
- Disabled American Veterans
- Disabled Veterans National Foundation
- Federal Asian Pacific American Council
- Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Employees Organization
- Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
- Hispanic Serving Health Professional schools
- Human Rights Campaign
- International Association of Latino Public Administration Executives
- International Leadership Foundation
- League of United Latin American Citizens
- Minority Access
- National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
- National Coalition for LGBT Health
- Office of Faith-based Initiatives
- Office of Health Equity
- Office of Rural Health
- Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
- Office of Tribal Government Relations
- Organization of Chinese Americans
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- State Cemetery Grant Program
- The Washington Center
- VA Advisory committees
- Veteran Service Organizations
- Washington Internships for Native Students
- White House Initiatives on Diversity Issues (Women and Girls, Asian American Pacific Islander, etc.)

Measures:

- Increase participation in national/local outreach and partnership events involving stakeholder/affinity organizations to ten, budget permitting, by end of FY 2014
- Meet or exceed OSDDBU goals in contracting activity annually.

Objectives 3C: Equip leaders with diversity and inclusion knowledge and skills to effectively lead their workforce.

Strategies:

- Implement updated mandatory EEO, Diversity and Inclusion, and Conflict Management Training for all Senior Executives, Managers, and Supervisors (ODI, ORM, VALU).
- Implement and monitor mandatory EEO, Diversity and Inclusion, ADR performance standards in all leadership (SES and Title 38 equivalents) and supervisory performance plans (ORM, ODI, CSEMO, OHRM).

Measures:

- Implement updated mandatory EEO, Diversity and Inclusion, and Conflict Management Training for Senior Executives by end of FY 2013.
- Implement Executive Dashboard reporting EEO, diversity and inclusion, ADR performance metrics by end of FY 2014.
- Achieve 95 percent timely completion rate on biennial mandatory EEO, Diversity and Inclusion, and Conflict Management Training for all managers and supervisors.
- Increase overall ADR participation rate to 55 percent and resolution rate of informal EEO complaint rate to 50 percent by end of FY 2014.

Objective 3D: Institutionalize shared accountability for a culture of diversity and inclusion.

Strategies:

- Issue a *VA Diversity and Inclusion Annual Performance Report* reporting progress made on the *VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan* (ODI).
- Issue annual VA-wide diversity and inclusion policy directives and statements issued by the VA Secretary (ODI).
- Implement standardized VA-wide diversity and inclusion performance elements and standards in all employee performance plans (ORM, ODI, CSEMO, OHRM).
- Provide EEO, diversity and inclusion, and conflict management training for all employees (ODI, ORM, VALU).
- Maintain VA Diversity Council, comprising representatives from all VA components, reporting to the Secretary of VA (ODI).
- Promote participation in Secretary's Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards Program and in the Secretary's Alternative Dispute Resolution Excellence Awards Program (ODI, ORM, VHA, VBA, NCA).
- Incorporate broad-based diversity and inclusion content in agency branding and communication strategies (media outreach, public awards, various communications tools and vehicles, strategic communications, Web sites) (ODI, OPIA, OHRM).

Measures:

- Issue timely and accurate *VA Diversity and Inclusion Annual Performance Report* reporting progress made on *VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*.
- Implement on-line EEO, diversity, and ADR dashboard to report subject metrics, including VA Diversity and Inclusion Indices, to VA leadership, by end of FY 2014.
- Update VA Directive 5975 (EEO and diversity management) and 5975.1 (reasonable accommodation) by end of FY 2013.
- Issue timely annual EEO and diversity policy statements by the VA Secretary.
- Implement standardized VA-wide diversity and inclusion performance elements and standards in all employee performance plans by end of FY 2014.
- Increase nominations for Secretary's Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards Program and the Secretary's Alternative Dispute Resolution Excellence Awards Program.
- Increase dissemination and readership of the *Diversity@Work* newsletter, *NewsLink*, *Diversity News* broadcasts, and other diversity and inclusion communications annually.
- Maintain updated content on the VA diversity and inclusion Web site (<http://www.diversity.va.gov>) annually.

Applicable Laws (not exhaustive)

- Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended – prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin; the law also makes it illegal to retaliate against an individual because he/she complained about discrimination, filed a complaint, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit;
- Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, as amended – prohibits employment discrimination against individuals 40 years of age or older;
- Equal Pay Act of 1963, as amended – prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in compensation for substantially equal work performed under similar working conditions;
- Sections 501, 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended – prohibits employment discrimination and reprisal against people with disabilities in the Federal government or applicants for Federal employment; Section 501 requires reasonable accommodation for known disabilities; Section 504 requires that all Federal programs be accessible; and Section 508 requires that all electronic technology be accessible;
- Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act of 2008 – prohibits employment discrimination based on genetic information;
- Title V, United States Code Section 2301 – provides that recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources from all segments of society; selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of merit, after fair and open competition so that that all receive equal opportunity; and fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights;
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Title 1, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008 – revises the definition of “disability” to more broadly encompass impairments that substantially limit a major life activity. The amended language also states that mitigating measures, including assistive devices, auxiliary aids, accommodations, medical therapies and supplies (other than eyeglasses and contact lenses) have no bearing in determining whether a disability qualifies under the law. Changes also clarify coverage of impairments that are episodic or in remission that substantially limit a major life activity when active, such as epilepsy or post traumatic stress disorder. The amendments took effect January 1, 2009.

Merit System Principles (5 USC § 2301)

1. Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity.
2. All employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.
3. Equal pay should be provided for work of equal value, with appropriate consideration of both national and local rates paid by employers in the private sector, and appropriate incentives and recognition should be provided for excellence in performance.
4. All employees should maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.
5. The Federal work force should be used efficiently and effectively.
6. Employees should be retained on the basis of adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance should be corrected, and employees should be separated who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet required standards.
7. Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance.
8. Employees should be--
 - a. protected against arbitrary action, personal favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes, and
 - b. prohibited from using their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for election.
9. Employees should be protected against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information which the employees reasonably believe evidences--
 - a. a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or
 - b. mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an absence of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

For more information,
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