



## Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs Strategic Plan for 2020-2024

### ***a. Cabinet Number (2 digits) & Cabinet Name***

**31 – General Government Cabinet**

### ***b. Department Number (3 digits) & Department Name***

**074 – Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs (KDVA)**

### ***c. Office/Unit Number (Optional) & Office/Unit Name***

N/A --

### ***d. Agency Strategic Plan Origination Date***

1 September 2019

### ***e. Agency Strategic Plan Update/Revision Date***

1 September 2019

### ***f. Agency Strategic Plan Revision Number***

N/A

### ***g. Agency Mission Statement***

Serve those who have served the Commonwealth and our great Nation by ensuring that Kentucky's veterans and their families receive all the state and federal benefits and services they have earned.



## ***II. Agency Vision Statement***

The KDVA exists to honor Kentucky's veterans and their families, by providing the highest quality of support and care to Kentucky veterans – the men and women who served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces. Customer service and compassionate care is our prime directive and first priority. We are driven by customer feedback, unified departmental data, and employees characterized by a customer-centric mindset to make accessing local, state, and federal services seamless, effective, efficient, and emotionally resonant for our veterans. We will be an organization where people choose to work to serve veterans, and we will be an active governmental partner in helping make Kentucky the most veteran-friendly state in the Nation.

## ***III. Agency Organizational Core Values***

**Customer Centric** – Create an agency that provides every veteran and their Family, the best care and service possible by empowering individuals to provide quality care and service in a fair, compassionate, professional, and timely manner.

**People Oriented** – We are committed to creating a culture that fosters positive interaction, recognition of service, a healthy work environment, and recruitment and retention of dedicated and compassionate staff. The efforts of our employees will be backed by leaders who put veterans first, and who understand the meaning of veteran-centered care and services.

**Proactive** – Our employees will embrace reasonable risk and be assertive in achieving the greatest level of success in the workplace.

**Committed to Excellence** – Strive to becoming the best possible professionals and providing superior customer care and service while managing daily operations to ensure that our department lives up to the best practices throughout the nation.

**Problem solving and Forward Thinking** – Agency personnel use their knowledge, experience, and judgement to solve problems for veterans and their families, and to advancing the mission and goals of the department. They will embrace continuous improvement and adaptability.

**Integrity** – KDVA's employees will adhere to the agencies high standards of professional and ethical conduct, and strive to do the right thing in a reliable way.



**Professional and Accountable** – We will treat others with honesty, respect, integrity and foster openness and trust. We are accountable to our leaders, our subordinates, our customers, and each other.

**Collaborative** – As an agency, KDVA will work together and with private, governmental, and corporate partners to produce the highest quality of life for Kentucky's veterans and their Families.

***IV. Statement of Alignment  
with the Governor's Strategic Themes/Goals***

**A. Provide excellent care and services to Kentucky's veterans who courageously undertook the mantle of defense of the United States of America.**

- Utilize technology to achieve efficiencies to improve processes to make gains in productivity.
- Collect quality information and data relating to the entire operation in order to make effective decisions.

**B. Invest in Education and Workforce**

- Provide enhanced transition and employment opportunities to veterans and their Spouses.
- Expand relationships with businesses, community and technical colleges, as well as, partner with the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet to educate veterans and their Families and prepare them for successful transition from military to civilian life and Kentucky's growing workforce.

**C. Recruit and Retain a Professional and Dedicated Workforce for KDVA**

- Improve recruitment and retention of qualified candidates for employment in the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs Justice with:
  - Increase pay for Veteran Center Nursing and Non-nursing Staff, Cemetery caretakers and administrative staff, and Veteran Benefit Field Representatives (VBFRs).
  - Establish and modernize progressive pay scale for KDVA employees.

**D. Grow Kentucky's Economy**

- Work with the Administration, General Assembly, private and corporate agencies to attract and retain veteran families to Kentucky.



### **E. Make Kentucky the Most Veteran-Friendly State in the Nation**

- Propose, draft, and present legislation that enhances the quality of life for veterans and their families living in Kentucky, and that creates an environment for transitioning military personnel and their families to want to move to or remain in Kentucky following military service.
- Work with other state agencies to improve the economic conditions in Kentucky that will attract veterans and their families to Kentucky.

### ***V. Statement of Alignment with the Agency's Budget Request & 6-Year Capital Plan***

The goals and objectives outlined within the department have been developed within the requested levels of funding in the 2020-2022 Biennial Budget submission and the 2020-2026 Capital Plan.

### ***VI. Situation Analysis/Environmental Analysis***

#### **A. Organizational Description**

The KDVA was originally created in 1921 to assist WWI veterans. It has been in place since that time in order to assist all veterans and their families. In 1998, Governor Paul Patton established the modern-day KDVA by charging the Department with helping veterans and their families obtain all federal, state and local veteran benefits to which they are entitled. The duties of the KDVA is defined in KRS Chapter 40.310. Since then, Kentucky has built a Department capable of significantly assisting Kentucky's large veteran population. KDVA's motto "*Serving those who have served the Commonwealth and our great Nation*" sums up its work: ensuring that Kentucky's veterans receive all the benefits and services they have earned. Today, the Department offers free services and benefits counseling provided by a network of experienced and dedicated paid staff, provides representation before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs during formal and informal hearings, and is operating four state-of-the-art veterans nursing homes. KDVA also operates and maintains five state veterans cemeteries. Responding to an unfilled need, in 2004 the department established a program to help homeless veterans.

#### **B. SWOT Analysis**

##### **1. Strengths**

- Experienced and dedicated leadership.
- Expertise and dedication of mission-driven staff.
- Valuable partnerships with stakeholders at national, state, and local level.
- Reorganization of departments for efficiencies creating stronger operational units and enhanced organizational structure.



- Balance of support and oversight of departments to provide accountable service to the Commonwealth and its citizens.
2. Weaknesses
- Budgetary reductions will cause necessary government expenses to increase, and critical shortages in staffing at the veteran centers.
  - Retaining employees due to increased workloads and low salary competition as compared to other entities.
3. Opportunities
- Collaboration with stakeholders to improve care and services to Kentucky veterans and their families.
  - Increase drug treatment courts in Kentucky.
  - Attract and retain a trained workforce.
  - Adjust department priorities to enhance customer service and satisfaction.
  - Reinvest any cost savings into KDVA programs.
  - Public Private Partnerships to build, renovate, and maintain additional veteran centers, providing efficient, cost-effective and well-run facilities focusing on care and services to veteran residents.
4. Threats
- Critical shortages in staffing within state veteran centers preventing full utilization of all beds and creating a waiting list to admit new veterans.
  - Budget restrictions that may reduce services provided to veterans and their families.

## ***VII. Measurable Goals, Objectives & Key Performance Indicators***

### **Goal 1: Recruit and retain professional, dedicated, compassionate staff that serves the mission of KDVA.**

Objective 1: Recruit top talent to the KDVA.

Objective 2: Retain employees to reduce turnover and training costs.

Objective 3: Develop and implement strategy to implement competitive salaries for Nursing Staff in order to increase veteran census at veteran centers.

Objective 4: Reduce KDVA's reliance on temporary hires and contract staff.

Objective 5: Implement shift differential reform and revise shift differential policy.

Objective 6: Implement comprehensive salary reform for all KDVA employees over the next three years.

Objective 7: Implement new and innovative recruiting and retention programs.

### **Goal 2: Improve customer care and service experience.**

Objective 1: Make KDVA the preferred go-to organization for assistance for Kentucky's veterans and their families.



Objective 2: Ensure that veterans and their families feel welcomed and that KDVA employees have exhausted all means to gain a favorable outcome to their issue or situation.

Objective 3: Implement innovative solutions that are authentic, effective, and cost-efficient to enhance the customer experience.

Objective 4: Use innovation to connect with customers and stand out from all other veteran service organizations.

Objective 5: Improve processes to reduce errors through quality control measures.

Objective 6: Double the number of Benefits Branch field representatives from 20 to 40 throughout the state in order to increase the number of veterans and their families served and reduce the wait time to see a field representative.

Objective 7: Modernize and replace outdated furniture and décor and renovate patient care and dining service areas, common areas, and veteran rooms.

### **Goal 3: Enhance operational efficiency and productivity.**

Objective 1: Enhance operational programs by eliminating wasteful and duplicative spending. Ensure that all appropriated and non-appropriated funds are accounted for and spent on programs and items that enhances the mission of the department.

Objective 2: Increase productivity of KDVA personnel by replacing aging computer and telephone systems, and where feasible modernizing information technology infrastructure and systems throughout the department.

Objective 3: Ensure all employees have the necessary equipment, tools, and information to effectively and efficiently perform their jobs.

Objective 4: Increase funding to Maintenance Pool for out dated equipment.

Objective 5: Simplify veteran center admission process in line with private market.

### **Goal 4: Ensure KDVA leadership and staff have the information necessary to effectively advocate for veterans and their families.**

Objective 1: Strengthen data collection process of relevant operations to support operational needs and support legislative initiatives that support veterans.

Objective 2: Leverage technology advances in tele-conferencing and video-conferencing to enhance communication, information flow, training, and operations.

### **Goal 5: Establish the KDVA as one a premier veteran service agency in the state and nation.**

Objective 1: Establish pilot programs, improve outreach, and conduct community engagement events that support federal Veterans Administration programs.

Objective 2: Achieve at least a 90% on all National Cemeteries Admin assessments.

Objective 3: Achieve and sustain a 5-star rating at all Kentucky State veteran centers.

Objective 4. Improve KDVA name recognition within the state and among Kentucky's veteran population and their families.



Objective 5: Implementation and sustained TV, radio, and social medial presence to enhance KDVA name recognition.

**Goal 6: Ensure continuity of operations is sustained following natural or man-made disasters.**

Objective 1: Increase participation at the regional and state level, utilizing ESAC as the directing agency for integration with the State Wide System.

Objective 2: Centralize agency wide plans when appropriate.

Objective 3: Monitor compliance on a regular basis through bi-annual audits and exercising of emergency plans.

Objective 4: Leverage State Veterans Home Grant Program grants for life safety code projects and other eligible capital projects to reduce state costs.

**Goal 7: Adequately plan for and fund daily operations.**

Objective 1: Align State Regulations with NCA Regulations for allowable Federal Grants

Objective 2: Terminate the practice of using non-appropriated funds from the Veteran Program Trust Fund (VPTF) and the I Support Veteran License Plate (SVLP) fund to supplement operational program costs.

Objective 3: Reduce dependence on General Fund support for operation of Kentucky's four veteran centers by creating opportunities to leverage available revenue from the Medicare program and the private rate structure that will improve operating margins (decrease our losses).

Objective 4: Incrementally adjust to the point that the private rates in addition to the VA basic per diem actually covers the cost of care at Kentucky's veteran centers.

Objective 5: Leverage Medicare billing opportunities to shift cost centers away from the agency.

**Goal 8: Adequately plan for future operations and capital projects.**

Objective 1: Gain support from the Administration and General Assembly to increase appropriated funding for KDVA programs and capital projects.

Objective 2: Renovate existing facilities where feasible and cost effective to sustain operations for the next 20 years.

Objective 3: Obtain federal/state grants and obligate funds for approved capital projects to ensure funds are available to repair cemeteries and veteran centers.

Objective 4: Obtain federal/state grants and obligate funds for construction of a 9-bed veterans center in Bowling Green, KY.



## **VIII. Strategic Plan Progress Report on Goals & Objectives Operable in the Last year**

### **Goal 1: Recruit and retain professional, dedicated, compassionate staff that serves the mission of KDVA.**

*Objective 1 Update:* The Office of the Commissioner was successful in filling several key vacancies within the department headquarters. This included a new Deputy Commissioner, Chief of Staff, Budget Manager, Budget Specialist II, Homeless Veterans Program Coordinator, and Veterans Employment Coordinator, and Benefits Branch Training Coordinator.

*Objective 3 Update:* The Commissioner requested the support of the General Assembly to provide funding to enact competitive salaries for Nursing Staff in order to increase veteran census. KDVA initiated a salary review for all KDVA employees to be implemented in FY2020 providing funding is available.

*Objective 6 Update:* The Commissioner and staff developed and implemented a comprehensive salary reform strategy for all KDVA employees that will be incrementally phased in over the next three years.

*Objective 7 Update:* Implemented new and innovative recruiting and retention program through legislation creating the Nurse Student Loan repayment program.

### **Goal 2: Improve customer care and service experience.**

*Objective 2 Update:* The Chief of Staff and Benefits Branch Manager enacted several reforms to ensure that veterans and their families feel welcomed and that KDVA employees have exhausted all means to gain a favorable outcome to their issue or situation.

*Objective 6 Update:* Commissioner requested support from the General Assembly to double the number of Benefits Branch field representatives from 20 to 40 throughout the state in order to increase the number of veterans and their families served and reduce the wait time to see a field representative.

### **Goal 3: Enhance operational efficiency and productivity.**

*Objective 1 Update:* Management enhanced operational programs by eliminating wasteful and duplicative spending by ensuring all bills and recurring expenditures are reviewed by management before being paid.

*Objective 2 Update:* Fielded new computer systems to all Benefits Branch Field representatives and updated the telephone system to Voice over Internet Protocol in the KDVA headquarters.





**Goal 4: Ensure KDVA leadership and staff have the information necessary to effectively advocate for veterans and their families.**

*Objective 1 Update:* Working with the Benefits Branch Manager, the Chief of Staff initiated a data collection process ensure all productivity can be measured. KDVA was successful in getting 8 pieces of veteran-friendly legislation enacted in 2019 General Assembly.

**Goal 5: Establish the KDVA as one a premier veteran service agency in the state and nation.**

*Objective 1 Update:* Members of the department attended a Veteran Engagement Action Center (VEAC) event in Iowa in preparation for a first-of-its-kind event in Kentucky in June 2020.

*Objective 2 Update:* The Kentucky Veteran Cemetery North received a 96% on their NCA assessments achieving the highest score of all National Cemeteries in the nation.

*Objective 3 Update:* Two of Kentucky's Veteran Centers achieved a 5-star rating. One facility is rated a 4-stars, while the fourth facility is not yet rated.

*Objective 5 Update:* Implementation and sustained TV, radio, and social medial presence to enhance KDVA name recognition.

**Goal 6: Ensure continuity of operations is sustained following natural or man-made disasters.**

*Objective 1 Update:* The Thompson-Hood Veterans Center (THVC) participated in active shooter and severe weather drills.

*Objective 2 Update:* Centralize agency wide plans when appropriate.

*Objective 4 Update:* Completed installation of a new emergency generator system at THVC.

**Goal 7: Adequately plan for and fund daily operations.**

*Objective 2 Update:* Commissioner requested appropriated funds from the General Assembly in order to terminate the practice of using non-appropriated funds from the Veteran Program Trust Fund (VPTF) and the I Support Veteran License Plate (SVLP) fund to supplement operational program costs.

**Goal 8: Adequately plan for future operations and capital projects.**

*Objective 1 Update:* The Commissioner requested support from the Administration and General Assembly to increase appropriated funding for KDVA programs and capital projects.

*Objective 2 Update:* KDVA developed a comprehensive plan to renovate existing facilities where feasible and cost effective to sustain operations for the next 20 years.



*Objective 3 Update:* KDVA completed all cemetery expansion projects with the assistance of federal grants that will ensure adequate space for Kentucky veterans for the next 75 years.

*Objective 4 Update:* KDVA has obligated funds for developing the plans for construction of a 9-bed veterans center in Bowling Green, KY.