

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
[OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS]



Open Government Report 2014

To institutionalize a culture of transparent and open government, accountability, and to expand opportunities for resident participation and collaboration, this Report describes how the **Office of Veterans Affairs** has and will continue to develop and enhance transparency, public participation, and collaboration. In accordance with Mayor's Order 2014-170, this report addresses the following topics:

I) Transparency

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to be more transparent. Please include a description of:

- *How and to what extent your agency shares information with the public, e.g. publication of information in the District register and on the agency website, press releases, and documents in the agency's FOIAXpress reading room.*

To date the OVA does not have access to the FOIAXpress due to the limited number of licenses during the first roll out. However any FOIA information relative to the OVA is forwarded to the Mayor's Correspondence Unit. The OVA routinely posts press releases, reports and other pertinent information to the agency's website (www.o.va.dc.gov). We also share via email blasts, website updates and our twitter account https://twitter.com/dc_o.va.

- *How the agency meets its obligations pursuant to the District's Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.*

The OVA continues to respond to FOIA requests in accordance with the FOIA statute and directives on open government. In addition, the OVA posts information and news releases relating to high profile veterans activities on its website, www.ovca.dc.gov, to reduce the need for the public to specifically request information. OVA has a relatively small FOIA workload averaging less than 5 requests per year. The OVA is working with the BEGA Office to ensure that all meeting documents are posted in a timely manner for compliance.

- *Steps your agency will take to increase public access to information.*

The OVA's contributions to the statistical data of our veteran population is posted on our website and included in the INDICES Report for the Office of Planning. Working with the Department of Defense and the US Census Bureau to obtain manipulative data sets to encompass our targeted

population. This data is also available via the Agency Dataset Report. OVA shares information with the public in a variety of ways, which include the OVA website, Press Releases, printed materials in the office and at tables set up at various events and locations and meetings open to the public. OVA also uses its Open Government and FOIA webpage links to share information with the public. We have 148 followers on our newly created twitter page and 232 persons on our Facebook page. We expect this number to increase with the return of the veterans from the newer wars/conflicts.

- *Steps your agency will take, including an implementation timeline, to webcast live and archive on the internet board or commission meetings. (This question only applies to agencies that are overseen or advised by a board or commission that is subject to the Open Meetings Act.)*

The OVA is working with BEGA to ensure that all meetings and compliance with Open Meetings Act are completed. We are working to ensure that all meetings from January 2015 to date are in compliance no later than November 7, 2014.

- *How your agency has taken or plans to take steps to make more of its data available to the public.*

The Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA) is working closely with the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to identify a significant number of datasets that OCA and OCTO expect to publish online later this year. If no dataset from the Office of Veterans Affairs is selected to be included in this 2014 release, we will continue to work with OCA and OCTO to identify datasets appropriate to publish in 2015. In the future, requirements for open data reporting will be provided by the Chief Data Officer.”

2) Public Engagement and Participation

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand opportunities for the public to participate in agency decision-making. Please include a description of:

- *How your agency provides online access to proposed rules and regulations and secures public input on them. Please list links to specific websites.*
- *How your agency shares information and resources to keep the public properly informed, e.g. community meetings, public hearings, FAQs, and ways the public can provide input such as Twitter, grade.dc.gov, email contacts.*

- *How your agency identifies stakeholders and invites their participation.*
- *Steps your agency will take to improve public engagement and participation including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering.*

3) **Collaboration**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand cooperation among departments, other governmental agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities in fulfilling its obligations. Please include a description of:

- *How your agency currently collaborates with the above parties. Please list links to specific websites if appropriate.*

To ensure that accurate information relative to veteran issues is provided to the veteran population we link press releases from the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs on our website and facebook pages via - <https://www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs?fref=ts> as well as share information from the VA Medical Center facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonDCVAMC?fref=ts> Also notices of upcoming events are sent via email to our listserves of veterans service providers – veterans that have signed up to receive notifications and those that are following us on twitter and facebook.

Links to frequently requested number for the veteran benefit entitlements - <http://ova.dc.gov/page/helpful-phone-numbers>. The OVA also holds monthly Veteran Leadership Forum Meetings to obtain information and feedback from Veteran Service Providers.

- *Steps your agency will take to improve collaboration with the above parties including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering, e.g. prizes, competitions, and other innovative methods.*

The OVA will continue to partner with various organizations by way of outreach events and recognition events where we partner to share information to veterans and stakeholders.