



# U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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## Comprehensive Plan for Processing Legacy Appeals and Implementing the Modernized Appeals System

### Public Law 115-55, Section 3

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#### VA's Mission

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."

**May 2018 Update**

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## Executive Summary

This is the third periodic report in a series of reports which satisfy the requirements of Section 3, of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (Appeals Modernization Act), *Comprehensive Plan for Processing of Legacy Appeals and Implementing the New Appeals System*.

In addition to overhauling VA's current appeals process and providing Veterans, their families, and their survivors with increased choice in handling disagreements with VA's decisions, the Act sets forth specific elements that must be addressed in VA's comprehensive plan. The main topic elements required for this report include the processing of appeals of decisions on legacy claims that the Secretary considers pending; implementing the new appeals system; timely processing under the new appeals system; and monitoring the implementation of the new appeals system, including metrics and goals. VA has made every attempt to provide the highest level of detail and specificity as possible, as guided by Congress and the Comptroller General.

In March 2018, the Government Accountability Office released its report: VA Disability Benefits: Improved Planning Practices Would Better Ensure Successful Appeals Reform (GAO 18-352), in response to VA's November 2017 initial Comprehensive Plan. As detailed below, VA has taken a number of steps to address the recommendations in that report.

### LEGACY APPEALS PROCESSING

Key goals and milestones for reducing the number of pending legacy appeals are detailed below. VA's plan to process legacy appeals is multifaceted. It includes plans to evaluate ways to increase efficiencies, and for modeling that will be completed once VA has received statistically valid data from testing the new process prior to full implementation.

For the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the strategy to reduce VA's pending legacy appeals inventory remains through achieving increased efficiencies; administering RAMP; and adding increased resources requested in the fiscal year (FY) 2019 President's Budget. Further, the realignment and increased accountability for appeals under the Appeals Management Office (AMO) has resulted in continued improved performance. VBA is seeing a greater participation in RAMP as a result of increased outreach and improved marketing campaign. Other plans for legacy processing include establishing separate work teams, increasing training, and strengthening workload management and oversight.

For the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board), reducing legacy appeals remains a priority as demonstrated by the Board's current pace to reach a historic output goal. The Board is collaborating with VBA's RAMP efforts to reduce the appeals coming to the Board. Supporting innovations include: full roll out of the interactive decision template; implementation of a specialty case program; developing a model to assist with key goals and milestones for reducing legacy appeals; and continued partnership with United States Digital Service (Digital Service) to re-engineer processes and implement technological upgrades promoting increased decision production.

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) have continued to participate in enterprise-wide appeals reform and collaborate with the Board as needed.

## IMPLEMENTING THE NEW APPEALS SYSTEM

VA made notable progress in implementing the Appeals Modernization Act. While a draft of the proposed regulations is currently undergoing review at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), VA continues to provide training and outreach to stakeholders, create and disseminate standard operating procedures (SOP) for staff, and draft requirements for information technology (IT) system updates. Moreover, VA continues to collaborate with Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) and other stakeholders and receive their feedback on VA's pre-implementation process for Appeals Modernization.

All VA Administrations have established Appeals Modernization implementation project teams. These teams continue to report out on a regular basis to the project management leads as to the status of each Administration's implementations efforts. The project managers meet regularly to coordinate at the enterprise level and integrate all activities, and timelines from the individual project teams into VA's Master Project Schedule, which is included in Appendix A of this report. Feedback has been well-received and this collaborative process will continue into the coming years as required by the law.

## TIMELINESS OF NEW APPEALS SYSTEM

VA continues to closely track RAMP's progress in order to reach the eventual goal of forecasting VA's expected workload under the new appeals system. The previously stated target of an average 125 days remains the processing goal for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. Initial results from processing RAMP cases indicate VBA will be able to meet this goal. As detailed further in section 4 of this report, the Board is moving forward with two test programs to study all dockets and develop appropriate goals in conjunction with the average processing time goal of 365 days that has been established for appeals where the Veteran does not request a hearing or submit additional evidence. The data gathered will assist in determining how to best focus resources, provide transparency in the appeals process, and identify challenges after full implementation of the new system.

## MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW APPEALS SYSTEM

VA made strides in producing and improving its Integrated Master Schedule (IMS) in order to improve the monitoring of its implementation of the new claims and appeals system. As stated, the main focus has been: rulemaking status, lessons learned from RAMP, training and outreach, and IT development. VA can now add the Board's test programs as part of monitoring implementation.

The draft regulations are undergoing review at OMB. VA still has opportunities to prioritize this area and stay on track in time for full implementation in February 2019.

Regarding lessons learned, these will stem not just from RAMP at the VBA level, but also will be provided for the Board's test programs.

VA looks forward to formal feedback from Congress and the General Accounting Office (GAO) regarding both the February 2018 Update as well as this report. VA intends to continue to outline, track, and collaboratively problem-solve through the challenges brought by implementation to provide the best possible outcome for the needs of Veterans and their families.

# Comprehensive Plan

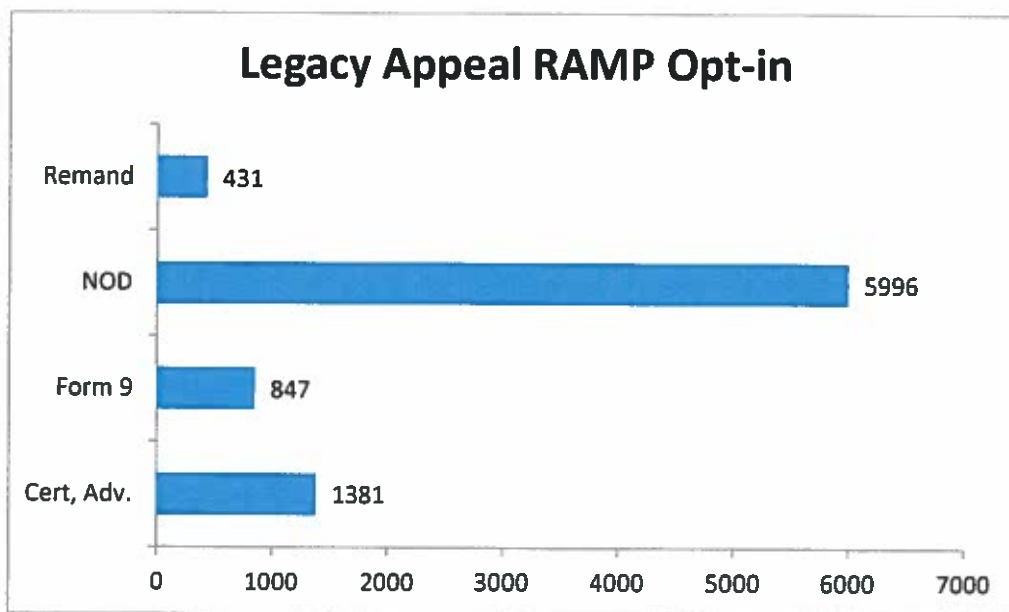
## Implementation Plan Requirements

### Section 3(a)(1) – Processing of Legacy Appeals

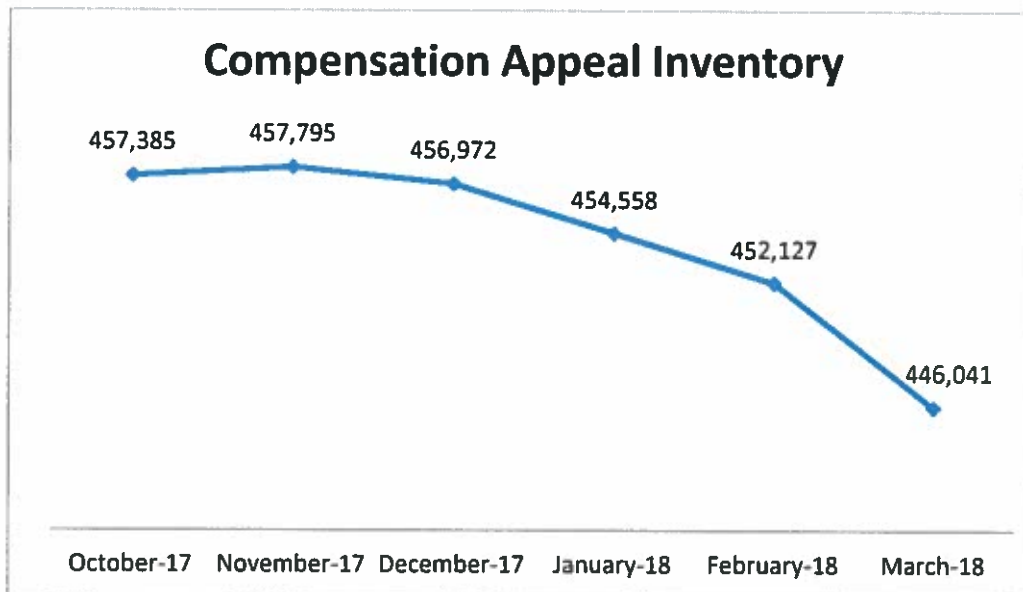
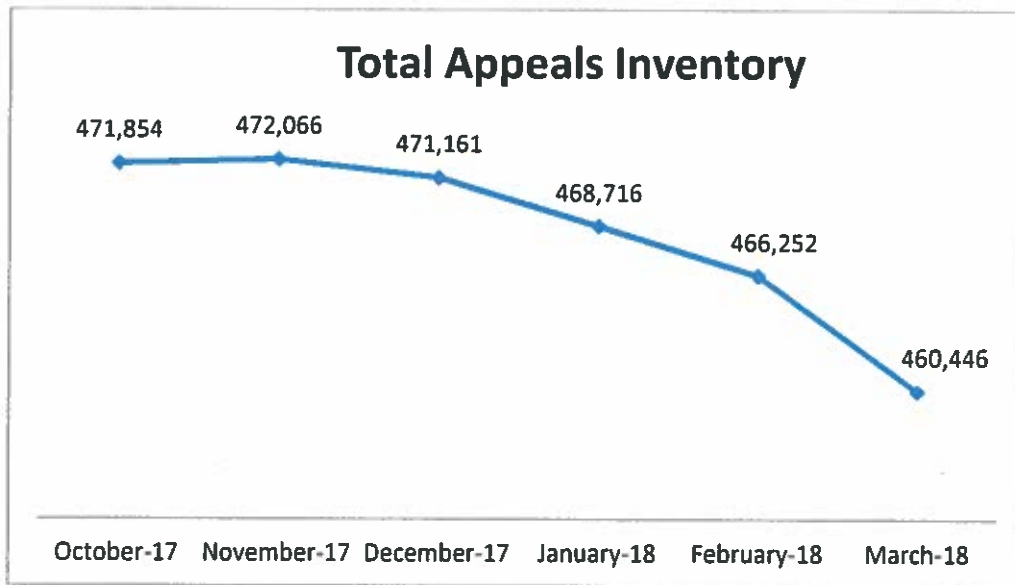
(a) PLAN REQUIRED.—*Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress and the Comptroller General of the United States a comprehensive plan for—*

*(1) the processing of appeals of decisions on legacy claims that the Secretary considers pending;*

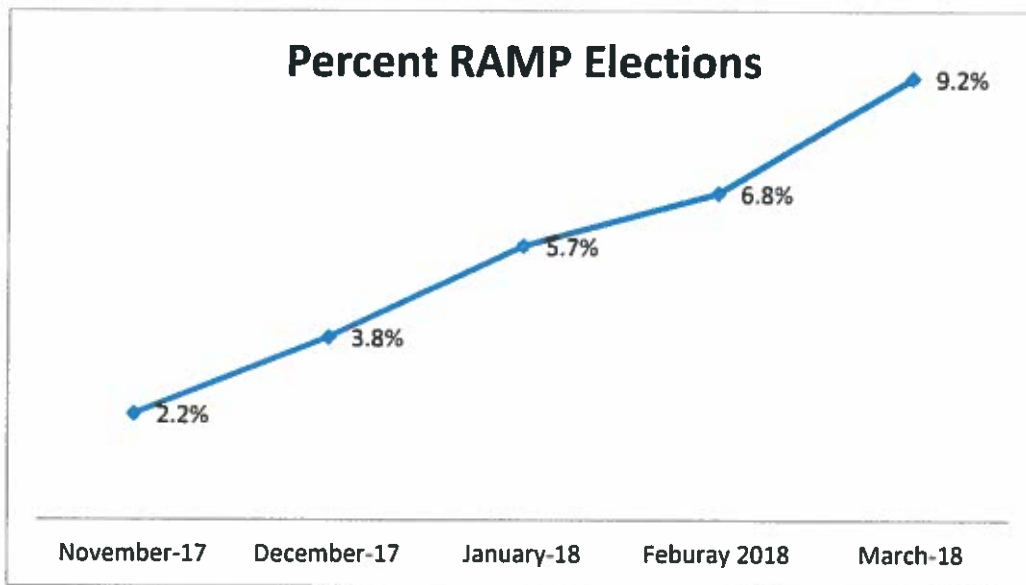
Jurisdiction of legacy compensation and pension appeals processing within the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) remains with the 56 VBA regional offices (RO) and the Appeals Resource Center (ARC). Legacy appeals are addressed by appeals teams at the ROs and the ARC with oversight from the Appeals Management Office (AMO). In an effort to provide most Veterans with the benefits of an early resolution of their appeal, which is inherent to the Appeals Modernization Act, VA initiated the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP). RAMP results in conversion of pending compensation legacy appeals to RAMP appeals and therefore contributes to the overall reduction in pending legacy appeals. As participation in RAMP increases and VA approaches full implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act, AMO is directing adjustment of the workforce and managing the RAMP and legacy appeals inventories of individual stations as dictated as workload necessitates. Participation in RAMP directly reduced the inventory of legacy appeals as 8,655 appeals were transitioned to RAMP through March 31, 2018. The breakdown of the legacy appeal stage from which Veterans have opted into RAMP is shown in the chart below.



Normal legacy appeals processing and the transition of 8,655 legacy appeals to RAMP through March 31, 2018, accounts for the demonstrated reduction in fiscal year (FY) 2018 pending legacy compensation and pension appeals as noted in the graphs below.



The chart below reflects the progress in the opt-in rate for the RAMP. As this rate continues to change as a result of extensive outreach and communications with Veterans, their representatives, and Congressional and other stakeholders, the impact on the legacy appeals inventory will continue to be assessed and reported.



In February 2018, VA opened RAMP to newer appeals to test whether Veterans with newer appeals would be more likely to opt-in to the new program. Initial data, through March 2018, suggest that Veterans with younger legacy appeals may be more likely to opt into RAMP in order to have their claim processed under the new framework. The tables below provide data of VA's distribution of RAMP opt-in election letters mailed to Veterans with the oldest legacy appeals pending in each of the appeals stage of notice of disagreement (NOD), form 9, remand, certified not activated at BVA and newest NOD appeals pending.

February Mailing by Stage	Letters Sent	Opt-Ins	Opt-In Rate
NOD	14,030	1,727	12.3%
Form 9	2,605	335	12.9%
Cert/Not Activated	6,165	683	11.1%
Remand	2,200	181	8.2%
New NOD	10,087	1,433	14.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35,087</b>	<b>4,359</b>	<b>12.4%</b>

March Mailing by Stage	Letters Sent	Opt-Ins	Opt-In Rate
NOD	14,030	1,361	9.7%
Form 9	2,605	276	10.6%
Cert/Not Activated	6,165	493	8.0%
Remand	2,200	127	5.8%
New NOD	8,959	980	10.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33,959</b>	<b>3,237</b>	<b>9.5%</b>

<b>February and March Totals by Stage</b>	<b>Letters Sent</b>	<b>Opt-Ins</b>	<b>Opt-In Rate</b>
NOD	28,060	3,088	11.0%
Form 9	5,210	611	11.7%
Cert/Not Activated	12,330	1,176	9.5%
Remand	4,400	308	7.0%
New NOD	19,046	2,413	12.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69,046</b>	<b>7,596</b>	<b>11.0%</b>

See Section 3(b)(17) Key Goals and Milestones for Reducing Legacy Appeals, for more information as to the forecast model.

Furthermore, VBA is drafting a brokering plan to modify the current workload distribution strategy as well as rebalance the appeals inventory and staffing levels to better serve Veterans who are currently served disproportionately based on the location, age, and stage of their appeal.

The Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) continues to prioritize resources to address the pending legacy appeals inventory through the end of FY 2018. The Board is above pace to adjudicate the historic annual goal by the end of this year, and, as of week 29 in FY 2018, the Board has issued 44,922 decisions, nearly 21,126 more decisions than last year at this time (the Board dispatched 36,743 decisions to Veterans through the end of the second quarter of FY 2018). The Board is required under the current law to work cases in docket order (with a few exceptions, see 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 7107) and the Board prioritizes cases by docket as they are activated at the Board.

The Board is pursuing new ways of doing business to improve efficiencies in adjudication of legacy appeals. As mentioned in the last report, the Board is rolling out a new interactive decision template to draft all decisions, which will increase efficiencies for decision-drafting attorneys and assist Veterans Law Judges in their review. This interactive template automatically pulls specific data points from the Board's case management software and allows attorneys to prepopulate important law specific to the issues on appeal into the decision. This new template simplifies administrative elements and focuses attorney time on legal elements, and will result in less preparation time and allows for more consistency across Board decisions. More importantly, this template will also make it easier for Veterans to understand the decisions they receive from the Board. The Board encountered some bugs in early testing of this new template in the spring, and as a result temporarily slowed the roll-out of the new template while these bugs were corrected. During March 2018, the Board resumed rolling out the new template for further testing. The Board will deploy the template to all judges and attorneys in May 2018.

In April, the Board rolled out a new "One Touch" program to expedite the processing of legacy hearing cases with clear dispositions. Under this program, when a Veterans Law Judge holds a hearing on a case that is within the Board's current docket range and the outcome of the appeal is immediately clear, the judge can activate the case for adjudication. The judge now needs only to touch that Veteran's case once, and can more efficiently get a decision to the waiting Veteran. The Board is now exploring opportunities to expand this program.



As discussed in the previous report, the Board implemented a specialty case program in May 2018. Under this new program, cases dealing with certain specialized areas of law will be adjudicated by a dedicated group of 52 attorneys. The number of specialized attorneys is based on the percentage of the specialty cases which come before the Board. This specialization will allow these highly trained attorneys to more efficiently adjudicate unusual or difficult cases, and will allow for more consistent treatment of these particular issues. The specialized attorneys will also continue to handle cases dealing with more common areas of law.

As also discussed in the previous report, the process modeling effort at the Board was undertaken as a way to find efficiencies in processing legacy, and, to an extent, new appeals. This was a major component of the IMS. This standard process model for the overarching legacy appeals process has been built to not only incorporate what the Board experts think is the "as-is" process, but also efficiency improvements, e.g., eliminating non-value-added steps where appropriate. It also provides hyperlinks to additional detailed information such as sub-organization level SOPs, and will provide easy access to the Board's policies when updated.

The Board is exploring the possibility of using paralegal contract support to aid the Board's legal staff in reviewing case files. The Board will initially explore this through the use of law student interns this summer. The Board selected these interns, and is in the process of finalizing start dates. These summer interns will primarily focus on screening case files (commonly referred to in the legal profession as 'document review') prior to adjudication of appeals by the Board's legal staff. Through this small group of time-limited interns, the Board will be able to test if non-attorney screening gains efficiencies for the Board. The Board also published a Request for Information (RFI) to explore the possibility of contracting with the private sector to further explore this potential efficiency.

As discussed in the previous reports, after implementation, the Board will prioritize reaching timeliness goals in the new system, and devote all remaining resources to processing legacy appeals. The Board continues to work closely with partners at the Digital Service to ensure the Board's legacy appeals remain priorities in case distribution. See also Section 3(b)(17), regarding Key Goals & Milestones for Reducing Legacy Appeals below.

Additionally, as detailed further below, the Board developed a plan to participate in RAMP while continuing to focus resources on reducing the legacy inventory. The focus of RAMP is to address the approximately 400,000 appeals that are not yet activated at the Board and to offer claimants a faster resolution to their existing appeal. The Board currently has approximately 73,000 cases activated and is focusing resources on reducing this pending legacy inventory, including through streamlining processes to allow attorneys and Judges to deliver as many decisions as possible. As of week 29 of FY 2018, the Board issued approximately 44,922 decisions this fiscal year, nearly 21,126 more decisions than last year at this time, and is on pace to reach an historical fiscal goal of more than 81,000 decisions (The Board dispatched 36,743 decisions to Veterans through the end of the second quarter of FY 2018).

Beyond the plan to handle compensation and pension legacy appeals, VBA is also taking the following steps to address all legacy appeals pending in VBA:

On February 1, 2018, Pension & Fiduciary Service (P&F Service) published its procedural guidance on processing legacy fiduciary appeals. On April 2, 2018, P&F Service provided training to the fiduciary hubs on processing legacy fiduciary appeals. P&F Service anticipates its inventory of 313 legacy fiduciary appeals will be resolved by December 31, 2018.

Insurance Service currently has approximately 65 pending legacy appeals in its jurisdiction. Insurance Service plans to continue processing appeals under the current procedures and will simultaneously process appeals subject to the new process. It has established a project team to focus on resolving its remaining legacy appeals prior to implementation of the new process.

As of February 28, 2018, Education Service has 1,844 legacy appeals in various stages of the appeals process. They are distributed among the three regional processing offices based on original jurisdiction and capacity. Education Service began issuing monthly legacy appeal workload reports in April 2018. Regional processing offices will provide regular status updates on legacy appeals. Education Service anticipates all legacy appeals will be completed no later than 60 days after implementation of the new appeals process. If the number of legacy appeals grows, Education Service will allocate additional resources to complete these claims within 60 days of implementation of the new process.

On February 28, 2018, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service executed an email data call to each RO with a pending legacy appeal and requested an update and/or resolution of the legacy appeals identified in the Veterans Appeals Control and Locator System (VACOLS) as of January 9, 2018. VR&E Service requested that each RO review the information for accuracy; update VACOLS as needed; and attempt to resolve the legacy appeals that could be resolved at the RO level so those appeals would not have to advance to the Board, as feasible. VR&E Service requested, and received, responses from each identified RO in March 2018. VR&E Service is currently reviewing those responses and will provide follow-up instructions to select offices as needed to ensure all appropriate action is taken on these legacy appeals, to include prioritizing the oldest legacy appeals. It is anticipated that the next step will be to certify all appeals in which VR&E has received a VA Form 9, as appropriate. This will further reduce legacy appeals within VR&E and ensure timely processing of requests.

AMO recently provided Loan Guaranty (LGY) Service a list of approximately 200 legacy appeals, some dating back to the Winston-Salem Eligibility Center, which processed all LGY appeals prior to October 1, 2011. LGY is actively reviewing this list. LGY determined that approximately one-third of the aforementioned legacy appeals had been previously processed and closed. For these cases, LGY updated the records to make note of the final resolution.

Regarding the remaining legacy appeals, LGY's initial strategy will include a complete review of each respective appeal. Each appeal will be categorized, reviewed, and processed accordingly. Any legacy appeals that require a more extensive review will automatically be processed through a "fast lane" track for a second level decision. For any legacy appeal that LGY is unable to process, the designated party will be contacted so that all available options can be explained. For these cases, LGY estimates an estimated timeframe of 120 days (no later than August 2018).

VA's agencies of original jurisdiction continue to prioritize their processing of legacy appeals outside of RAMP. National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) continue to participate in the enterprise-wide appeals reform implementation and collaborate with the Board in addressing legacy appeals. VHA is prioritizing working legacy appeals to reduce the inventory as much as possible prior to the implementation date. VHA is expanding use of its internal tracking tool. Facilities will be able to use the tool to adjudicate appeals (using an SOP) to meet their regional or local needs. The tool is designed and implemented to collect, store, and manage Veterans' appeals, to include generation of standardized letters.

## **Section 3(a)(2) - Implementing the New Appeals System**

### *(2) implementing the new appeals system;*

VA has continued to adjust the governance for appeals modernization and improve its ability to monitor implementation. Leads and project managers for the Board and each administration are meeting regularly to coordinate efforts at the enterprise level. In addition, VBA is conducting monthly update meetings with each line of business to track progress, identify and mitigate risks, resolve issues, provide updates and coordinate actions. Most of the administrations have dedicated project management and the administrations' project managers are meeting on a regular basis to coordinate the IMS at the enterprise level (see Appendix A).

As described in Section 4 of this report, VBA is also conducting the RAMP which, in addition to reducing the number of legacy appeals and validating forecasts and planning assumptions, allows VA to collect empirical data on the efficiency and effectiveness of elements of the new framework. Much of the work being done to implement RAMP will carry over to full implementation for disability compensation claims which constitute the vast majority of appeals in VBA. VA is integrating risks associated with appeals modernization into its Enterprise Risk Management program.

Currently, Veterans who receive a RAMP decision have the option of appealing to the Board. In October 2018, the Board will begin adjudicating these appeals in a phased implementation to test processes and technology. This phased testing of the new appeals process will allow the Board to identify and address potential issues and risks relating to implementation of the new framework.

In May 2018, the Board initiated a small-scale test program, the Board's Early Applicability of Appeals Modernization (BEAAM). The Board is partnering with Veterans' representatives to identify 50 Veterans who are dissatisfied with a recent claim decision. Participants will opt in by requesting review with VBA or the Board under the Appeals Modernization Act. After identifying the participants, the Board will docket and begin to adjudicate their appeals in the early summer. After allowing an applicable 90 day window for evidence submission for the evidence and hearing lanes, the Board will adjudicate most of BEAAM appeals by October 2018. This program will allow the Board to collect preliminary data about Veteran choices and experiences, which will allow VA to construct trend models.

The Board's phased testing of the new process starting with RAMP participants and BEAAM will allow the Board to continue delivering decisions to legacy appellants at historic levels, while collecting valuable data about implementation of the new framework.

The Board's internal Appeals Modernization project management workgroup continues to meet and refine its portion of the overall IMS. In addition to methodically working through the tasks in the IMS, the group regularly meets to discuss overlapping parts of the IMS for overall awareness and to address all ongoing concerns. The regular meetings assist in ensuring all important activities and milestones are identified in the IMS, and meaningful progress is made in conjunction with the schedule for completion.

As a result of internal risk assessments, the Board has undertaken a comprehensive change management strategy to address potential gaps and shortfalls in the appeals modernization strategic communications, training, outreach, and any workforce realignment that may be required. The Board is currently in the process of formulating a sound change management

strategy, which will also be integrated with VBA, VHA, and NCA's change management strategies to ensure a consistent and effective approach is deployed across the appeals modernization effort. While the overarching strategy is captured in the IMS in Appendix A, we expect more detail will be available for the August 2018 report. The Board process mapped all aspects of the legacy system internally and revised standard operating procedures in anticipation of implementation. For example, internal policies and procedures regarding Caseflow Intake took shape, as this tool was newly released, along with its initial reporting capabilities.

Beyond the work that VA has already done to integrate and synchronize all appeals modernization implementation plan efforts across the Department, VA is also taking the following steps to implement the new process for VBA's individual lines of business:

Compensation Service is currently coordinating with AMO and the Board to determine final policy decisions and procedural guidance and is coordinating with IT partners to provide updates to existing business systems such as the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) which would align with the new statute. These efforts are continuous and ongoing.

P&F Service relies on its team of subject matter experts, from both the Pension and the Fiduciary programs to develop and execute its implementation plan for the new claims and appeals system. The team is focused on identifying the necessary changes that are needed to P&F Service policies, procedures, forms, IT systems, metrics tracking mechanisms, training materials, and quality assurance plans. The team completed some of those changes already, such as identifying a way to accept supplemental pension claims without the time-consuming process of developing a new VA form. P&F Service began the process of modifying its current VA forms for pension, survivor's pension, dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) claims, accrued benefits, and parent's DIC claims so they may be used for both initial and supplemental claims.

On March 1, 2018, P&F Service added higher-level review processing functionality to its fiduciary processing system, Beneficiary Fiduciary Field System (BFFS). The Fiduciary Program is currently developing requirements to implement a version of supplemental claim processing functionality in BFFS. P&F Service anticipates adding a supplemental claim processing functionality during the third quarter of 2018. Refer to Section 3(b)(1) for a more detailed description of the team of subject matter experts.

For Insurance Service, Senior Veterans' Claims Examiners and Unit Chiefs currently adjudicate legacy appeals. These are some of the Insurance Service's most experienced employees. Under the new claims and appeals procedures, the same Senior Veterans' Claims Examiners and/or Unit Chiefs who currently adjudicate legacy appeals will adjudicate higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. Review of performance standards and position descriptions for potential changes, which are expected to be minimal, was completed in April 2018. Once the review is completed, Insurance Service will engage its Union partners to the extent required in order to implement the updated performance standards. Training on the new claims and appeals process will be conducted upon completion of the updates to the VA Insurance manual. Insurance Service expects to complete draft changes to the Insurance manual by May 31, 2018, with publication occurring prior to implementation of the new appeals process. In addition, Insurance Service is in the process of rewriting and consolidating 13 variations of notification letters affected by the legislation, with an expected completion date of

August 31, 2018. Once all affected letters have been revised, Insurance Service will provide training to appropriate personnel.

Education Service has a project plan specific to implementing the new claims and appeals system for education claims. The plan details major milestones and deliverables that must be completed before the new process can be fully implemented. Education Service completed a draft operating procedure for higher-level reviews, is finalizing the business line specific metrics, and is updating all applicable Veteran facing letters. Education Service is currently on track to meet the timeline requirements for implementing the new process.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service established a team of subject matter experts to develop and administer an implementation plan to ensure it is prepared for implementation. This team has completed several aspects of the implementation plan, to include the development of revised regulations and new notification letters. The team is actively working on the revision of VR&E policy and procedural guidance; developing a detailed training plan; reviewing position descriptions and performance standards to determine what, if any, changes will need to occur; working cooperatively across several divisions of VA to ensure that IT systems are updated; studying its quality assurance standards to determine how to incorporate the quality feedback loop from the higher-level reviews into its process; and actively participating in the development of communication and outreach plans.

LGY will implement the new claims and appeals process once it publishes a new section of its procedural manual, M26-1, "Guaranteed Loan Processing Manual," which includes policy and procedures regarding the new claims and appeals process. Activities to support program operations nationwide will include system testing, instructional systems design, and, training of the more than 120 loan specialists in the Field.

VHA is exploring adoption of VBMS to process appeals under the Appeals Modernization Act. Several meetings have been held with VBA and Office of Information and Technology (OI&T) personnel to determine the requirements necessary to meet VHA needs. Once the requirements are established, VHA will create an implementation plan and include it into the master schedule. The Integrated Project Team (IPT) that has been appointed in conjunction with the Office of Strategic Integration, Veterans Engineering Resource Center (OSI|VERC) to support this effort continues to meet with AMO to integrate a master project management plan.

As VHA moves forward with planning to modify and implement VBMS, it is continuing to map out the appeals process to adhere to the new requirements of the law. VHA is working with VBA and the Board subject matter experts (SME) to determine all necessary requirements for the adoption and deployment by VHA. Additionally, VHA has met with representatives from Digital Service to discuss implementation of Caseflow.

### **Section 3(a)(3) – Timely Processing Under New Appeals System**

- (3) timely processing, under the new appeals system, of—*
  - (A) supplemental claims under section 5108 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 2(i);*
  - (B) requests for higher-level review under section 5104B of such title, as added by section 2(g); and*

*(C) appeals on any docket maintained under section 7107 of such title, as amended by section 2(t).*

VA continues to project an average processing time of 125 days to complete higher-level reviews and supplemental claims under the new process. Data collected during RAMP through the end of March 2018 indicate that VA is currently processing higher-level reviews in an average of 50 days, and supplemental claims in an average of 60 days. VBA will continue to closely monitor the rate of the RAMP elections, as well as the RAMP inventory, and processing timeliness to track progress. VA will continue to gather data and conduct trend analyses on aspects of Veterans' behavior, to include their decision to elect to participate in the new process, the distribution of elections among the new process lanes, claims processing timeliness, and individual employee productivity. The data collected during RAMP will allow for forecasting of the reduction of the legacy appeals inventory, as well as ensure adequate resources are directed towards RAMP claims.

Furthermore, VA continues to capture the IT systems functionality that will allow it to report on the metrics listed in Section 5 of the Appeals Modernization Act.

At the March 2016 appeals summit, the VA committed to an average processing goal of 365 days for appeals at the Board in which the Veteran did not request a hearing or an opportunity to submit additional evidence. The Board remains committed to this goal, and will allocate resources to ensure this timely processing goal is maintained. The Board plans to use data collected from RAMP and the Board's test programs, including BEAAM, to provide timely processing goals for the other two Board dockets in the modernized appeals system in the future. In the meantime, the Board is working to establish a reasonable forecast model to assist with future projections (see Section 3(b)(17) below).

The Board will also continue to refine and improve its process model to capture additional changes aimed at improving the timeliness of appeals under the new appeals system. Possible improvements include identifying non-value-added activities that might be eliminated, identifying manual activities that may be automated through further development and deployment of the Casflow IT tools, improving integration between the process model and sub-organization specific SOPs, and further refining the Board's policies.

Concerning new process pension claims, P&F Service projects an average processing time of 125 days to complete both higher-level reviews and supplemental claims, which is consistent with the preliminary timeliness findings associated with processing compensation cases under RAMP.

Concerning new process fiduciary claims, P&F Service projects an average processing time of 125-days to complete both higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. However, P&F Service will review the productivity and timeliness data of the fiduciary hubs as they resolve the legacy fiduciary appeals from April to December 2018, as noted in Section 3(a)(1). P&F Service will also review the initial productivity data in the new system gathered after implementation to determine whether the average 125-days timeliness goal is appropriate.

Insurance Service currently has 13 full time equivalents (FTE) under the Senior Veterans Claims Examiner job title and seven FTE under the Unit Chief Job title. Senior Veterans Claims Examiners or Unit Chiefs will conduct higher-level reviews. Veterans Claims Examiners will process supplemental claims. Insurance Service currently has 28 FTE under this job title. Upon completion of the training, all employees will have the knowledge and ability to process

insurance claims under the new claims and appeals process. The proposal noted above to amend both performance requirements and position descriptions for employees working on the appeals will address timeliness goals. When the training and performance requirements are in place, Insurance Service will implement timeliness goals. Insurance Service projects it will be able to meet an average 30-day timeliness goal for the higher-level reviews and supplemental claims; nevertheless, it will capture actual data after implementation to establish or adjust timeliness goals.

Education Service has identified metrics and procedures for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. Education Service is developing tracking reports to manage these claims and identify possible outliers while adhering to processing goals. Regional Processing Offices (RPO) will incorporate new procedures into the daily workload plan. Education Service expects to have control systems and metrics in place by the end of the fourth quarter of FY 2018. The Quality Training Specialist at each RPO will process higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. The claims will be distributed among the three RPOs based on original office of jurisdiction, the alternate higher-level review stations, and the capacity of each office. Education Service is developing a complete workload plan to ensure standards for higher-level review and supplemental claims are met. Education Service will have an overall process to analyze the workload. VA's average processing goal for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims is 125 days. Education Service expects the processing times will be consistent with current Education claim processing standards. Baseline data for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims will be compared with current processing times for regular education claims:

- Target timeframe for processing Education higher-level reviews: 28 days
- Target timeframe for processing Education supplemental claims: 14 days

VR&E's current system to address requests for a review is similar to the higher-level reviews noted in the new claims and appeals process. VR&E refers to these higher-level reviews as administrative reviews. The reviews are completed by VR&E supervisory personnel at VBA ROs, and in a few specific circumstances (e.g. entitlement reviews), by the Director of VR&E Service. VR&E plans to maintain as much of their current system as possible, to include estimated timelines of 90 days to complete higher-level reviews. Concerning supplemental claims, VR&E policy will be to complete reviews at the RO level when new and relevant evidence is submitted within 125 days. VR&E Service believes this practice of seeking to resolve disputes at the lowest possible level in a timely manner is most beneficial to its participants.

LGY is developing policy that will include timeliness requirements for cases processed under the new system.

NCA has met with Digital Service, OI&T, and VBA's Office of Business Process Integration (OBPI) for requirements sessions since the last report, to continue toward developing IT solutions and other processes to focus efforts on timely full implementation.

The VHA appeals reform IPT has begun the process of collecting forms and letters currently in use for claims and appeals by the program lines. The goal is to review all for adequacy in the process of moving to the modernized system. VHA is in the process of standardizing correspondence, developing SOPs, meeting reporting and metrics requirements, expanding use of the internal tracking tool and hiring additional staff that will be dedicated solely to appeals processing. Each of these actions will ensure VHA is more efficient in processing appeals for

our Veterans. The automation of the new processes will ensure the timeliness of processing and tracking of appeals within VHA.

### **Section 3(a)(4) – Monitoring Metrics and Goals of New Appeals System**

- (4) monitoring the implementation of the new appeals system, including metrics and goals—*
- (A) to track the progress of the implementation;*
  - (B) to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation; and*
  - (C) to identify potential issues relating to the implementation.*

VA is on track to implement the new appeals system. At this time, VA does not foresee any insurmountable risks to the schedule, scope, achievement of performance standards or resources; although as noted in section 3(b)(18) VA is closely monitoring the approval process for the rulemaking package. As described in section 4 of this report, VBA is using RAMP not only to reduce legacy appeals, test assumptions and gather data, but to implement systems, processes and procedures, including modification of IT systems, which will carry over to full implementation for the vast majority of higher-level reviews and supplemental claims.

All lines of business have assessed their workforces and have identified the resident experience and what modifications to job descriptions are required to support the new appeals system. The assessment is that VBA has the depth and breadth of experience to meet performance and quality goals for the new appeals system and that minor changes to job descriptions are required. Additional information is in Sections 3(b)(2) - 3(b)(7) of this report.

Similarly, each line of business has reviewed existing training materials, determined what changes and new training will need to be delivered, and has developed plans to deliver training prior to the Secretary's certification. Given the scope of the new training required, VBA has determined that training can be accomplished using existing resources. Additional information is in sections 3(b)(8) - 3(b)(9) of this report.

Each VBA line of business has assessed its ability to report the metrics required in the act and has developed plans to accomplish reporting. Data collection for reporting on the vast majority of claims will be automated through VBMS. Additional information may be found below and in section 3(b)(10).

VBA's implementation of the new claims and appeals process IT functionality is fully resourced through OI&T, Digital Service, and OBPI, as described in detail in section 3(b)(10). VBA anticipates that all required functionality for the new appeals system will be delivered by the end of calendar year 2018.

VA is conducting an aggressive outreach campaign, which is described in section 3(b)(13). This outreach effort is currently focused on increasing the opt-in rate for RAMP, but VA plans to shift messaging from RAMP to the new appeals system to ensure that Veterans and other stakeholders are fully informed.

Each line of business in VBA has assessed internal policies that will need to be changed or created to support the new appeals system and are in various stages of drafting updates. VBA anticipates that these updates will be conducted in time to allow for training materials to be developed and delivered. More information is available in section 3(b)(14).



VA's rulemaking package is currently undergoing OMB review. See Section 3(b)(15) for additional information.

As described in section 4 of this report, VA is also conducting RAMP which, in addition to reducing the number of legacy appeals and validating forecasts and planning assumptions, allows VA to collect empirical data on the efficiency and effectiveness of elements of the new framework.

In the March report examining VA's initial November report to Congress, GAO expressed concern about the agency's readiness regarding monitoring metrics and goals of the new appeals system. Specifically, GAO had recommended, "Secretary of Veterans Affairs should clearly articulate in VA's appeals plan how VA will monitor and assess the new appeals process compared to the legacy process, including specifying a balanced set of goals and measures—such as timeliness goals for all VBA appeals options and Board dockets, and measures of accuracy, Veteran satisfaction, and cost—and related baseline data." VA thanks GAO for their guidance and has made large strides for improvement in this area consistent with GAO's recommendations.

Specifically, since the February 2018 Update, VA has worked diligently to integrate the individual project plans for the Board, VBA, VHA, and NCA into a more robust enterprise-wide Integrated Master Schedule (IMS). IMS itself has scheduled dates laid alongside tasks for goal monitoring. The following indicators were also identified regarding monitoring metrics and goals of the new appeals system: status of the rulemaking, lessons learned from processing of higher-level reviews and supplemental claims in RAMP, and the status of IT systems development. These indicators are addressed in the report below. In addition, lessons learned from the Board's test programs (BEAAM and RAMP) will be provided in future reports to ensure a smooth transformation to the new system.

In the BEAAM project, the Board's goal is to establish an understanding of Veterans' choices and preferences in the new system. The Board will collaborate with Digital Service to collect user data starting May 1, and ending in approximately October 2018. Throughout BEAAM, the Board plans to produce reports that explain which Veterans elected which docket. The Board will be able to provide more information about Veteran choices starting in the spring, but will not be able to collect information on adjudication until the fall, after the 90 day window for evidence submission closes for the evidence and hearing lanes at the Board. This test program will also help identify administrative issues and allow the Board time to correct these concerns before further testing and implementation. Finally, the Board will be able to use data collected from BEAAM to better inform modeling efforts to plan for efficient allocation of case distribution rates for each docket at the Board.

For the Board's phased implementation of RAMP, the purpose is to identify and address potential issues and risks relating to implementation of the new framework. For example, the Board will need to ensure that the notice letters are effective and that the policies and procedures in place will be sufficient during full implementation of the law. Additionally, part of the purpose of the Board's phased implementation of RAMP is for the testing of Caseflow Queue, the new software application created by Digital Service that will be used to maintain dockets and distribute cases for adjudication. This testing includes: making sure that cases move efficiently through the system; enabling parallelization of tasks; reducing processing times at each core location; and reducing routing errors due to incorrect data (this will be measured when appeals data is established in Caseflow). Finally, a major goal will be ensuring direct

review cases can be adjudicated within 365 days while also balancing adjudication of the legacy appeals.

Compensation Service will continue to work to ensure timely implementation of the new appeals statute and will meet on an as-needed basis with other business lines. This includes coordinating with AMO on the publication of procedural guidance with the new regulations and updating all training materials for field personnel; coordinating with OBPI and the Office of Field Operations (OFO) to ensure that business systems are able to support any new functionality or changes in functionality to align with the draft proposed rulemaking; and working with OFO on disseminating procedural and training guidance as well as providing OFO with any new or changes to quality standards to Veterans Service Centers.

As previously stated, P&F Service has established one project team to implement the new appeals system for both pension claims and fiduciary decisions. This team meets on a bi-weekly basis to review the progress of implementation and to resolve issues that arise. The team tracks the progress of its implementation of the new claims and appeals system by creating timelines of its implementation activities. These lists identify the necessary updates for the procedural manual sections, policies, forms, IT systems, and training materials in order to implement the new appeals system. P&F Service will use these lists to evaluate the progress of implementation until it is complete. P&F Service has established higher-level review functionality in its fiduciary processing system. It has begun the process of updating its pension processing system with higher-level review and supplemental claim functionalities, and it has begun updating its claim forms for use as a supplemental claim form. In addition, P&F Service will evaluate the effectiveness of its implementation and identify potential issues by incorporating an analysis of the Pension Management Centers (PMC) and fiduciary hubs appeal processing operation in its site visit criteria. P&F Service will also evaluate the effectiveness of its implementation for both Programs by conducting quality reviews of new appeals processing in the PMCs and fiduciary hubs.

Insurance Service established individual implementation project teams that comprise all phases of the appeals modernization process. These teams meet on a bi-weekly basis to track their progress with implementation, address identified issues, and make needed organizational changes to ensure successful implementation of the new appeals system. Potential issues and risks relating to implementation of the new system are identified by analysts and managers, raised to Insurance Service and VBA management as needed, and resolved.

Education Service is actively monitoring implementation of the new appeals system through its project plan. The project team created the project plan with due dates for milestones and deliverables. Milestones and deliverables are tracked and reviewed bi-weekly to ensure adequate progress is being made. Success of the implementation plan is based on completion of milestones and deliverables. This process also identifies potential issues early in the process so they may be fixed or mitigated. Education Service completed a draft operating procedure for higher-level reviews, will finalize the business line specific metrics in the third quarter of FY 2018, and is updating all applicable Veteran facing letters so they will be ready for full implementation.

VR&E's Project Plan Schedule, which has been incorporated in VA's IMS, identifies the coordination required with other offices; status; start date; target due date; dependencies; risks; risk response; and remarks on a number of various milestones. VR&E's Project Management Plan is reviewed and updated bi-weekly, and as needed, to ensure that VR&E Service remains on track for all implementation activities.

LGY Oversight staff will review 100 percent of all decisions. LGY will track progress, and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation by incorporating the appeals process as a component of its annual audit of Regional Loan Centers (RLC), and through the annual controls assessment. LGY's Quality Assurance team maintains an oversight SharePoint site where the supporting audit data, review activity, and findings are archived for additional program-level evaluation. The aforementioned ensures that LGY will have the ability to monitor the metrics and goals of the new appeals system, and identify potential issues relating to implementation. LGY is developing policy that will include timeliness requirements for processing appeals at each level.

NCA has submitted more detailed project plan inserts for the Master Schedule, and will continue to refine as implementation proceeds (see Appendix A).

VHA is working with OSI|VERC for project management support to build project plans and schedules for implementation of VBMS. As a collaborative effort, through the IMS, VA has integrated cross-functional groups to address monitoring, track progress and the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation.

## Plan Elements

The following sections provide information on each element of the comprehensive plan as required in Sections 3(b) through 4(a)(2) of the Act.

### **Section 3(b)(1) - Resource Requirements**

*(1) Delineation of the total resource requirements of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Board of Veterans' Appeals, disaggregated by resources required to implement and administer the new appeals system and resources required to address the appeals of decisions on legacy claims.*

VA will use existing resources already devoted to regulations, hiring/space/resource allocation, human resources issues, IT systems, internal procedures, metrics/performance tracking, training, and communications/outreach for implementation of the new system.

As requested during the January 30, 2018 oversight hearing entitled, "Appeals Reform: Will VA's Implementation Effectively Serve Veterans?" VA prepared a model to assist in the projection of resources required to address the legacy appeals inventories while simultaneously implementing and processing the new appeals system. The model enables the Department to change assumptions for a number of different variables that will impact both VBA and Board resource requirements. Those assumptions include, but are not limited to, notice of disagreement rates, RAMP opt-in rates, lane selection, remand rates, re-file rates, and productivity rates.

The responses the Board provided in the prior update remain valid, and accuracy of the model will likely hinge upon actual data results during both RAMP as well as actual results analysis post-implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act. This model is described further below in Section 3(b)(17).

VBA is requesting an additional 605 FTE for FY 2019 in order to increase the total allocation to legacy appeals and the new process (supplemental claims and higher-level reviews) to 2,100 FTE. VBA intends to allocate field resources in an efficient manner to accomplish timely processing in the new process and will allocate all remaining resources to address the inventory of legacy appeals. Based on current assumptions, VA's modeling suggests that in FY 2019, VBA would allocate 420 FTE to timely processing of the new system and 1,680 FTE to legacy appeals.

Compensation Service is utilizing approximately 15 FTE to implement the new appeals system. These employees consist of analysts from the Policy, Procedures Maintenance, Training, Quality, and Business Management staffs. These analysts and chiefs are responsible for reviewing draft regulations; drafting updated procedural guidance; ensuring accuracy and consistency of new policy and procedural guidance; drafting training materials which align with new guidance; and coordinating with OBPI on any changes in business systems and programs.

P&F Service is utilizing 16 FTE to implement the new appeals system. These employees consist of seven analysts from the Pension Program and seven analysts from the Fiduciary Program. Analysts are responsible for making changes to internal procedures, VA forms, IT systems, training materials, metric tracking mechanisms, and quality assurance plans. Another full-time employee is a human resources liaison that will evaluate the impact of the new appeals

system to ensure that the PMC and fiduciary hub employees' position descriptions appropriately encompass the job functions associated with processing new appeals. The remaining full-time employee serves in a supervisory capacity for the 15 analysts.

Concerning the resource requirements to administer the new appeals system and to address legacy appeals, P&F Service anticipates converting half of its legacy appeals processing units in both the Pension and Fiduciary Programs into higher-level review teams at the beginning of its full implementation. As the inventory of new appeals steadily increases, the Pension Program will convert most of its legacy appeals processing units into higher-level reviewers to increase its capacity to process new appeals.

The Fiduciary Program does not anticipate having any pending legacy fiduciary appeals at the time of full implementation. Regardless, half of the legacy fiduciary appeals units will remain available to process legacy appeals if needed. P&F Service will convert more of the legacy fiduciary appeal units to higher-level reviewers as the new appeals inventory grows.

Insurance Service does not have a designated section that processes appeals. There are currently 20 FTE addressing the legacy appeals. To implement the new process, there will be 42 FTE adjudicating appeals as well as supplemental claims and higher-level reviews. Current Senior Veterans' Claims Examiners and Unit Chiefs who handled appeals prior to the new appeals modernization statute will now adjudicate higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. To prepare and deliver training on the new appeal process, Insurance Service will utilize three FTE to preparing the training and two FTE to conduct the training.

Education Service has not identified any additional resources needed at this time.

- a. To implement the statute Education Service is using existing resources that work on regulations, procedures, forms, human resources, workload management, performance metrics, IT solutions, training, quality assurance and communications.
  - There are 10 employees working on implementation of the plan
  - These employees are updating impacted procedures (including quality assurance processes) forms, and training. They are developing updated workload management plans, position descriptions, and performance metrics. They are assessing the impact to current IT systems and working to ensure necessary updates are made if needed. Finally, they are creating a communications and outreach plan to ensure both employees and Veterans are familiar with the new process and requirements.
- b. Existing regional processing office resources will manage the higher-level review and supplemental claims workload.
- c. Existing resources will process higher-level review and supplemental claims and address appeals of decisions on legacy claims. These changes will affect approximately 50 employees. These employees will work legacy appeals (part of their current workload), higher-level reviews, and supplemental claims. Education Service believes they will be able to handle the new workload based on historical appeal rates and current procedures which include a process similar to higher-level reviews. Current positions descriptions are being updated to include the new responsibilities.

VR&E Service has developed an Integrated Project Team comprised of eight subject matter experts who are actively working on each aspect of the implementation plan. VR&E Service will use existing resources already devoted to regulations, IT systems, internal procedures, training, communication, and outreach to meet the requirements of the implementation plan. Regarding legacy appeals, VR&E Service staff, in collaboration with the OFO, will assist current VR&E field

staff in identify and resolving legacy appeals. VR&E will use existing field/VACO staff to process legacy appeals.

LGY Service's new claims and appeals policy is still under development. Upon completion, LGY Service policy staff will consult with LGY Training and Program and Data Integration staff to identify next steps on how to best implement the new appeals system. In order to administer the program, LGY Service will take into consideration resources available at the RRLCs for processing purposes. LGY is currently reviewing legacy claims to determine the appropriate course of action.

Both new appeals and legacy appeals will be handled by the existing NCA appeals office personnel. Additional personnel needs would be dependent on national response to the new system. NCA will require additional IT developments to support the new process, and since the last report has met with Digital Service, VBA VBMS, and OBPI personnel to identify specific IT requirements toward the estimated timeframe for delivery.

VHA completed a comprehensive assessment of the resources currently processing appeals and continues to assess resources needed to manage and process legacy claims and transition to the new system. As of Quarter 2 of FY 2018, there are 35 dedicated appeals staff processing appeals associated with non-VA care. This includes care under: 38 U.S.C. §§ 1703, 1728 and 1725; authorized care; unauthorized emergency care for service-connected Veterans; and unauthorized emergency care for nonservice-connected Veterans. Other VHA lines of business which currently process appeals do not have dedicated appeals staff. VHA has identified the current personnel resources and allocation as a risk and is developing a plan to address this concern, as discussed in more detail in section 3(b)(2).

As VHA moves forward to aggressively resolve the current inventory of appeals and develop a plan to deploy VBMS, it has identified a tool will be needed in the interim to address the current inventory. VHA will continue to work with OI&T to develop requirements to support deployment of VBMS. It continues to work with OI&T on the specific IT requirements and estimated timeframe for delivery.

### **Section 3(b)(2) - Personnel**

*(2) Delineation of the personnel requirements of the Administration and the Board, including staffing levels during the—*

*(A) period in which the Administration and the Board are concurrently processing—*

*(i) appeals of decisions on legacy claims; and*

*(ii) appeals of decisions on non-legacy claims under the new appeals system;*

The time in which VBA and the Board are concurrently processing legacy appeals and appeals under the new system will be dependent on the opt-in rate of Veterans who have appeals under the legacy system, as well as gains made through more efficient and direct oversight of the appeals workload under the VBA realignment of appeals FTE under the AMO. Within VBA, which accounts for an overwhelming majority of the appeals inventory, VA has allocated 1,495 FTE to process appeals with an addition of 605 FTE in 2019. These employees will work legacy appeals and claims under the new appeals system. Employee allocation for the new appeals framework will be based on station capacity and opt-in rate of RAMP claims in order to establish timely processing in the new process and resolving the remaining inventory of legacy appeals.

RAMP inventory will be distributed in a cascading-format. Processing of RAMP claims began at the ARC in November 2017. The influx of RAMP inventory will be routed to the first of 10 RAMP ROs (Denver, Phoenix, Waco, Seattle, St. Petersburg, Atlanta, San Diego, St. Paul, Winston-Salem, and Cleveland). Capacity for RAMP claims is 45 higher-level reviews per month per DRO/Higher-Level Adjudicator. Capacity for supplemental claims is approximately 16.6 claims per FTE per month for VSR and RVSR. All positions are based on a 75 percent availability rate. Higher-level reviews and supplemental claims will be sent to the RO appeals teams.

The Board has 630 decision-drafting attorneys, 83 judges, and 192 support staff, and is on pace to deliver over 81,000 decisions to Veterans in FY 2018. During FY 2018, the Board plans to hire up to 1,050 FTE. These additional FTEs will include approximately 100 more attorneys, eight additional Veterans Law Judges, and additional support staff for Veteran facing positions. With this staffing level, the Board plans concurrent processing of legacy and non-legacy appeals under the new system.

P&F Service anticipates converting half of its legacy appeals processing units in the Fiduciary Program to higher-level review teams at the start of full implementation.

Insurance Service does not have a designated section that processes appeals. There are currently 20 FTE addressing the legacy appeals. Regarding the new process of reviewing a supplemental claim, there will be 42 FTE adjudicating appeals. To develop and deliver training for the new appeal process, the Insurance Service will have three FTE preparing the training and two FTE conducting the training. Higher-level reviews and supplemental claims will be handled by current Senior Veterans' Claims Examiners and Unit Chiefs who handled appeals prior to the new statute. Insurance Service currently has approximately 65 legacy appeals which it is in the process of resolving prior to February 2019. Insurance Service is reviewing performance standards and position descriptions for potential changes, which are expected to be minimal.

Education Service established the Quality Training Specialist (QTS) position to replace the existing Training Coordinator position. Approximately 50 employees will hold this position and will process legacy appeals, higher-level reviews, and supplemental claims.

Given the small number of appeals related to VR&E issues, VR&E does not expect to require additional staff during the period in which the Administration and the Board are concurrently processing appeals in the legacy system, as well as those under the new appeals system.

At this time it is anticipated that no additional personnel or office space will be needed in LGY. Resources will consist of personnel hours and workload will be in addition to current duties.

For NCA, both new appeals and legacy appeals will be handled by the existing NCA appeals office personnel. NCA future personnel needs would be assessed dependent on national response to the new system (from Veterans, their families, VSOs, and attorneys).

Now that the first review of VHA's comprehensive assessment is complete, VHA is developing a plan to address dedicated personnel versus those with appeals as a collateral duty. VHA has identified 35 full-time staff in the Non-VA care program. A plan has been developed to increase this team to 90 full-time staff over the next year. That increase will include leads and supervisors who will be responsible for adjudicating higher-level reviews under the Appeals Modernization Act.

As phase two of VHA's comprehensive assessment, a plan will be developed to address personnel in other areas such as Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service, Clothing Allowance, Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA), and Automobile Adaptive Equipment. This also includes Member Services who are responsible for Enrollment and Eligibility and Beneficiary Travel which are also appealable services in VHA. These programs have a smaller number of appeals; therefore, their staff process appeals as a collateral duty. Phase two of this assessment will determine if dedicated personnel will be needed to support the Appeals Modernization Act.

VHA will realign personnel if necessary to manage the new processes required by the law and reassign those staff members once legacy appeals have been resolved.

### **Section 3 (b)(3) - Legal Authorities for Hiring and Removing Employees**

- (3) Identification of the legal authorities under which the Administration or the Board may—*  
*(A) hire additional employees to conduct the concurrent processing described in paragraph (2)(A); and*  
*(B) remove employees who are no longer required by the Administration or the Board once the Administration and the Board are no longer processing any appeals of decisions on legacy claims.*

There is no substantive update to provide since the prior reports were completed. VA will continue to monitor resource requirements and adjust plans as necessary pursuant to applicable legal authorities as originally provided. Additionally, in the 2018 March report, the GAO did not disagree with VA's assessment of the relevant legal authorities for hiring and removing employees.

### **Section 3(b)(4) - Estimated Time for Hiring Employees**

- (4) An estimate of the amount of time the Administration and the Board will require to hire additional employees as described in paragraph (3)(A) once funding has been made available for such purpose, including a comparison of such estimate and the historical average time required by the Administration and the Board to hire additional employees.*

The President's FY 2019 budget allocated funds for the hiring of 605 appeals employees for VBA's implementation of appeals modernization, with the specific goals of resolving legacy appeals and timely processing decision reviews in the new system. VBA's Office of Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) developed a workgroup and dedicated resources to developing a hiring strategy to ensure hiring is sufficiently expedited for onboarding in FY 2019. In doing so, the AMO and OCHCO plan to begin the recruiting, hiring, interviewing, and selection process in May 2018 in order to onboard as many employees as possible on October 1, 2018. AMO and OCHCO developed a list of 60 priority hires in Washington, D.C., and nationwide to prepare for the onboarding and initial training of new employees. These priority positions are covered by current funding and vacancies. OCHCO also plans to utilize college and university job fairs, as well as direct hire authority to reduce delay.

The Board is continuing its aggressive hiring strategy to meet its hiring target of 1,050 FTE by the end of FY 2018. The Board has on boarded 22 new attorney advisors in the second quarter of FY 2018. The success of the newly implemented recruiting strategy improved the Board's ability to select and extend offers of employment to highly qualified candidates and will assist to



reduce turnover in the attorney advisor positions for those hired in FY 2018. Currently the Board has ongoing recruitment opportunities for a Senior Budget Analyst, Attorney Advisors, and Operations Research Analysts. As stated, the Board expects it will require an average of 90 days to hire attorneys. The Board announced job openings for Veterans Law Judges in February 2018 and has current openings for Supervisory Attorney-Advisors for the Offices of Litigation Support and Quality Review. The average time to hire Veterans Law Judges is approximately six months.

For the second quarter, the NCA average was 34.6 days to make a tentative offer to a new employee.

VHA developed a comprehensive plan to recruit personnel in the Claims Adjudication and Reimbursement (CAR) program. The Voucher Examiners associated with program office have been approved for priority hiring and will continue to build out from the current 35 dedicated staff to 90 staff to include leads and supervisors who will be responsible for the second level review under the Appeals Modernization Act.

On average, it takes VHA roughly 90 days to hire a key position once approved. As a recruitment strategy that is used in CAR to hire Appeals Representatives, VHA will be looking to host Direct Hiring Events which can decrease the average time to hire by half (when effective).

### **Section 3(b)(5) – Higher-Level Adjudicator Training and Experience Requirements**

*(5) A description of the amount of training and experience that will be required of individuals conducting higher-level reviews under section 5104B of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 2(g).*

VBA has no update to provide since the initial report on the description of the amount of training and experience required by individuals who will conduct higher-level reviews of compensation and pension disability rating decisions.

P&F Service will allocate GS-11, Fiduciary Service Representatives (FSR) to conduct higher-level fiduciary reviews. These FSRs will have at least 2 years of experience or a doctoral degree equivalency in the relevant field. In addition, P&F Service will require the FSRs who conduct higher-level reviews to complete 15 hours of new appeals system training.

For Insurance Service, Senior Veterans' Claims Examiners and Unit Chiefs, who are experienced employees, are currently the primary staff members who adjudicate appeals. Under the new process, higher-level reviews and supplemental claims will be handled by the same Senior Veterans' Claims Examiners and Unit Chiefs who adjudicate legacy appeals. Insurance will provide its employees multiple 2-hour training sessions that will include training on new procedures; the higher-level review process; new appeal/notice letters; and an explanation of the appeal tracking tool. See attached Insurance Service Training Plan, included in Appendix B.

Education Service employees in the role of a Quality Training Specialist (GS-12) will process higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. They will be required to have journey-level experience processing all types of VA education benefits. They will have knowledge of various resources to confirm and validate procedures and will be familiar with education claim processing systems. Education Service expects minimal training on the higher-level review and supplemental claim process. Education Service has a current process that is similar to the

higher-level review framework. Employees will attend training sessions covering the new process; changes to the current process; and the tracking and quality feedback loops. The training package is scheduled to be completed by September 30, 2018. Employee training will begin once the training package is complete. Refer to Appendix B for details on training requirements for the Quality Training Specialist.

As the VR&E program currently has a higher-level review currently in place, it expects minimal training on the new higher-level review process. VR&E Service will provide multiple 1-hour training sessions that will include an overview of the new process; the changes to its current higher-level review to ensure compliance with the new process; and to explain tracking and quality feedback loops. Please see attached VR&E's Training Plan, included in Appendix B. Higher-level reviews will be completed by VR&E supervisory staff. There is not a specific experience requirement to attain a supervisory position in VR&E; however, there is a statutory educational requirement, as provided in 38 U.S.C. § 3118. In addition, VA requires all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to obtain a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, including an internship; or a master's degree in counseling psychology or a related field, including 30 semester hours of course work in such areas as foundations of rehabilitation counseling, human growth and development, vocational assessment, career development, job placement, case management, and medical/psycho-social aspects of disability.

Upon receipt of the policy/procedure document, the LGY Training group will provide a training plan that addresses training delivery, audience, and course pre-requisites. LGY Training will perform a high-level review of the policy to ensure compliance is maintained throughout the proposed training plan.

NCA will undertake training, per Appendix B for NCA specific matters, and will continue to work with the Board and VBA to identify shared functional training resources for effective training management.

VHA will utilize existing leads and supervisors to serve as higher-level adjudicator. Stratification will be at the facility level and then at the higher Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) headquarters-level when needed. VHA has been working in conjunction with Office of General Counsel (OGC) and the Board to develop a training program that will be deployed VHA-wide for all staff that process appeals to include higher-level adjudicators. This training is scheduled to deploy during 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter FY 2018.

### **Section 3(b)(6) - Estimated Percentage of Higher-Level Adjudicators Who Were Decision Review Officers**

*(6) An estimate of the percentage of higher-level adjudicators who will be employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs who were Decision Review Officers on the day before the new appeals system takes effect or had experience, as of such date, comparable to that of one who was a Decision Review Officer.*

RAMP will utilize 414 full-time appeals personnel from 10 ROs, (Denver, Phoenix, Waco, Seattle, St. Petersburg, Atlanta, San Diego, St. Paul, Winston-Salem, and Cleveland). Of the 414 FTE at the 10 ROs, 140 (or approximately 34 percent) are Decision Review Officers (DROs) and/or Higher-Level Adjudicators. Under current appeal standards the DROs are expected to complete 45 actions per month with a 75 percent availability rate. VBA is using those same standards to determine the capacity for higher-level review decisions.

The current NCA personnel handling appeals has experience comparable to that of DROs, including: completing de novo reviews; holding informal telephonic conferences; making a decision (including reversals of prior denials); making direct contact with appellants and their representatives; employee training and development; jurisdiction over appellant issues; and certification and transfer of appeals.

VHA does not currently have DROs. Currently, leads and supervisors have experience equivalent to that of a DRO who will be responsible for the higher-level adjudication for the appeals process as VHA transitions to the new system. VHA will assess this status moving forward and plan accordingly.

### **Section 3(b)(7) - Decision Review Officer Functions in New System**

*(7) A description of the functions that will be performed after the date on which the new appeals system takes effect by Decision Review Officers who were Decision Review Officers on the day before the date the new appeals system takes effect.*

As previously reported, VBA anticipates that DROs will continue to perform the same functions after the date on which the new claims and appeals system takes effect. VA will transition DROs from the legacy appeals process to higher-level review processing in a phased approach as the legacy appeals inventory is drawn down through RAMP, legacy appeals production, and implementation of the new appeals system.

NCA anticipates that the current personnel with experience comparable to that of DRO will be involved in conducting higher-level reviews, holding telephonic conferences, contacting Veterans, training and developing employees, ensuring quality, and working on legacy appeals.

VHA does not currently employ DROs, however, the personnel that perform these duties will still adjudicate VHA higher-level reviews. Leads and supervisors in respective areas will serve in the role of DRO after the date on which the new appeals system takes effect until additional information is reviewed to determine if a different process will be needed.

### **Section 3(b)(8) - Training Identification and Timeline**

*(8) Identification of and a timeline for—*

*(A) any training that may be required as a result of hiring new employees to carry out the new appeals system or to process appeals of decisions on legacy claims; and*

*(B) any retraining of existing employees that may be required to carry out such system or to process such claims.*

AMO has been actively training and engaging with VBA employees regarding the Appeals Modernization Act. VBA's AMO continues to use the ARC in Washington, D.C., as the initial site to process the elections received for Veterans who participate in the RAMP program. The close proximity of ARC to AMO aids with the continued development of training and allows for swift adjustments to the RAMP and Appeals Modernization training materials. Training has since expanded to appeals teams in ROs across the Nation that have been selected to process RAMP cases. Designated RO appeals teams have received both instructor-led and refresher training, with more offices being added based on workload capacity needs. VBA anticipates minimal additional training for all stations participating in RAMP. AMO has utilized the feedback received during these trainings to improve the training materials as VA continues to expand the RAMP pilot. VBA will incorporate the training materials developed for RAMP into the

development of training materials for full implementation. In addition to the training timelines identified in this section, additional training requirements specific to RAMP are identified in section 4 of this report.

VBA's AMO has continuously provided updated training for employees directly involved in the Public Contact Teams (PCT) and Intake Processing Centers (IPC). AMO has also developed Appeals Modernization 101 training, which provides a comprehensive overview of full implementation and a greater awareness of the RAMP pilot. The Appeals Modernization 101 training is expected to be delivered and completed by June 2018.

In addition to the training timelines identified in this section, additional training requirements specific to RAMP are identified in section 4 and in Appendix B of this report.

Since the February 2018 Update, the Board's Knowledge Management (KM) and Legislation, Regulations, and Policy (LRP) teams provided large-scale trainings on RAMP to all Board staff, and have collaborated with VBA/AMO to provide a large-scale training to Board co-located VSO staff. The Board will continue to be in close communication with VBA/AMO to ensure that all developments and changes to the new statutory framework are addressed jointly. KM and LRP also provided training for administrative managers and administrative staff who are processing RAMP appeals, and responded to case-specific questions from administrative and legal staff regarding RAMP.

KM and LRP also provided large-scale trainings on the new appeals system for all Board staff. The large-scale training compared and contrasted the legacy system and the new system, with a focus on how claims are processed within VBA, when additional evidence may be submitted, how claims arrive at the Board, how remands will be handled, how and when medical opinions may be developed, and how docketing of appeals will be handled. In addition, KM and LRP held a brown bag question-and-answer session open to all Board staff.

KM continues to develop training for all Board staff that will address the concurrent processing of appeals under the legacy system and the new system. KM is currently identifying SMEs for each phase of a claim's journey through the Board. The Board will utilize the SMEs to serve as points of contact to assist in the training of each respective office within the Board. Continuous contact between KM, LRP, and the SMEs will ensure that all process-related training materials remain accurate as IT functionality evolves. KM will develop and conduct surveys to facilitate updates to training materials and determine whether additional training is needed.

The Chairman is collaborating with VSOs and stakeholders to provide general information about Appeals Modernization. The Board collaborated with VSOs and provided overview training since December 2017 on the differences between the legacy appeal process and the new system process.

The Board will implement training focused on specialized or complex subjects in August 2018. The Board will continue to conduct surveys and utilize the SMEs to ensure that training information remains accurate and up to date over time.

Compensation Service estimates that all Challenge and Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC) training materials and M21-1 updates associated with Appeals Modernization will be updated and published within the VBA Learning Catalogue by December 30, 2018, based on the following implementation schedule:

- Create training products within 60 days of the proposed regulations publication (anticipated to be created by October 2018);
- Allow 30 days for the Compensation Service's policy and procedures peer review, Assistant Director approval, and publication to Talent Management System (TMS) and VBA Learning Catalog (anticipated to be December 2018); and
- Deliver training to field personnel within 30 days of TMS publication (anticipated to occur by December 30, 2018).

Concerning pension appeals, P&F Service estimates creating four new training lessons and updating nine current training offerings to facilitate new appeals system training. P&F Service estimates all training materials will be completed by November 30, 2018, based on the following implementation schedule:

- Create training products within 60 days of the proposed regulations publication (anticipated to be created by October 2018);
- Allow 30 days for the Pension Program's policy and procedures peer review, Chief approval, and publication to the TMS and VBA Learning Catalog (anticipated to be November 2018); and
- Deliver training to field personnel within 30 days of TMS publication (anticipated to occur by November 30, 2018).

Concerning fiduciary appeals, P&F Service estimates creating five new training lessons to facilitate new appeals system training. P&F Service estimates its training products will be completed by December 31, 2018, based on the following implementation schedule:

- Create training products within 60 days of the proposed regulations publication (anticipated to be created by October 2018);
- Allow 30 days for the Fiduciary Program's policy and procedures peer review, Chief approval, and publication to TMS and VBA Learning (anticipated to be completed by November 2018);
- Conduct 'train-the-trainer' for the fiduciary hubs' Quality Review and Training (QRT) Specialists within 30 days of publication in TMS (anticipated to occur by November 30, 2018); and
- Deliver Hub QRT Specialists training to field personnel within 30 days of receiving train-the-trainer instruction (anticipated to occur by December 31, 2018).

Insurance Service anticipates conducting training in January 2019 for the new appeal process. The Insurance Service Training Staff will conduct four (2-hour) training sessions, and a make-up session for employees who will be processing appeals under the new system. Because appeals will continue to be decided by senior employees who handle legacy appeals, Insurance Service anticipates that two sessions will be sufficient.

Education Service will update training for all Education claims involving denials, reconsiderations, waivers, delimiting date extensions, and Equitable Relief. Education Service will confirm training material aligns with new procedures to ensure consistency and accuracy. Training material is in the process of being updated and created. Education Service expects all training will be ready by September 30, 2018, and training for employees will begin in October 2018. All training will be completed by December 31, 2018. Dates and duration for specific training events are still to be determined. See Appendix B for details on training requirements for the Quality Training Specialist.

VR&E Service will provide a series of 1-hour training sessions that will include an overview of the new process; the changes to the current higher-level review process to ensure compliance with the new process; and to explain tracking and quality feedback loops. See Appendix B for VR&E's detailed Training Plan.

LGY will train all pertinent RLC employees on the new process in advance of implementation and will conduct supplemental training after implementation. LGY will begin working on identifying training needs based on policy (Manual revisions), procedure, and system changes. The proposed timeline would include the following estimated dates/time:

- Within 14-days upon receipt of the policy update, LGY Training will work with LGY Policy to perform a needs analysis to determine training needs and create a course outline.
- Within 30-days of the creation and review of the course outline, LGY Training will begin the process of designing and developing training materials to be delivered virtually to the field.
- Within 60 days of the design and development of training materials, the LGY Training will deliver an initial draft for review by the policy team.
- Upon final approval of training curriculum, a TMS item will need to be created for tracking purposes.
- Within 30 days of receiving final approval of the training curriculum and TMS items, the LGY Training will seek final approval of the training products by the policy team.

August 2018 is the proposed date for implementation and delivery of training to the field, if all previously mentioned milestones are met.

NCA has new training planned, and will also remain in contact with the Board and VBA to assess for cross-functional training material.

Training timelines for VBMS will be established once the system modifications are identified. VHA will utilize existing VBA and VBMS training material and modify it for VHA use. Training will consist of both live classrooms and virtual-based training applications. In the interim (pre-deployment of VBMS), VHA is working in collaboration with OGC and the Board to develop a training program that will be deployed VHA wide for all staff that process appeals to include higher-level adjudicators. This training is scheduled to deploy during 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter FY 2018. This training will include, but is not limited to: refresher training on the duty to assist under the law; proper documentation of decisions; and providing timely notice of appeal rights.

### **Section 3(b)(9) - Costs of Training**

*(9) Identification of the costs to the Department of Veterans Affairs of the training identified under paragraph (8) and any additional training staff and any additional training facilities that will be required to provide such training.*

VBA projects a cost of \$67,000 for FY 2018 and \$20,000 FY 2019 associated with administering RAMP training to the ROs that will be processing RAMP claims. All costs are related to train-the-trainer travel and will be funded internally by VBA. VBA will reassess any additional training travel costs for FY 2019 associated with the hiring of the additional 605 FTE requested in the FY 2019 President's Budget. As provided in previous reports, the Board also does not anticipate

any costs related to training. In the 2018 March report, the GAO did not disagree with VA's assessment that no additional cost of training is anticipated.

VHA is unable to determine training costs at this point. VHA is working with project management staff to ensure cost and training hours will be documented by facility in both the training plan and the master implementation schedule. However, VHA will minimize the cost of training by utilizing current materials and training plans in VBA to the extent possible.

### **Section 3(b)(10) - Modifications to Information Technology Systems**

*(10) A description of the modifications to the information technology systems of the Administration and the Board that the Administration and the Board require to carry out the new appeals system, including cost estimates and a timeline for making the modifications.*

This provides an update on the modifications to information technology systems necessary to implement the new appeals system as defined in the Appeals Modernization Act. Refer to the February 2018 Update for: an initial overview of VBA systems modifications; general functions; ratings functionality; correspondence functionality; National Work Queue (NWQ) functionality; the high-level VBMS Appeals Modernization Schedule timeline; VBMS systems modifications budget; Caseflow product visions; Caseflow development schedule; original Caseflow scope; adjustments to the product plan; and Caseflow timeline. These portions are unchanged for this report and are not reproduced here.

### **VBA Systems Modifications Status Update**

The VBMS development team is still in the "design" phase of system modernization. Full business epics and sub-epics are developed. Technical requirements continue to be refined as business requirements are further decomposed by business partners and as business leadership finalizes the integration of needs across all Administrations and business lines. To date, the most challenging requirements have revolved around tracking contentions versus claims, managing the resulting increased workload volume in NWQ, and tracking multiple Powers of Attorney within individual claims. Overall, the projected schedule remains essentially unchanged. The "design" phase will be followed by two "development" phases in which the business solution will be developed, tested, and deployed as detailed in the February update.

### **Joint VBA/Board IT Collaboration**

Moving forward, the Caseflow team is coordinating with VHA, NCA, and other VBA lines of business to provide a solution to receiving and processing requests for review from these other, non-Compensation lines.

Specific Caseflow functionality is expected to include:

- the ability to establish appeals in Caseflow;
- the ability to establish End Products (EPs) in VBMS for supplemental claims and higher-level reviews;
- the ability to route supplemental claim and higher-level review EPs to NWQ;
- the ability to establish a list of work items for supplemental claim and higher-level review requests received by VHA, NCA, and other entities that are outside of the VBMS ecosystem;
- the ability to correctly track reviews in the supplemental claim, higher-level review, and appeal lanes to meet Appeals Modernization Act tracking requirements; and

- the ability to collect and store all necessary routing data for all Appeals Modernization review requests to enable VA to comply with Appeals Modernization Act reporting requirements.

### **Modifications to Board IT Systems**

The Board's required IT modifications are being accomplished via work with Digital Service at VA. In light of the Appeals Modernization Act, Digital Service has directed its focus for calendar year 2018 towards building necessary functionality to ensure that Caseflow will be minimally ready for the Appeals Modernization Act. This is not to say that Digital Service will be building only the minimum functionality required, but recognizes that in order to implement the law, at minimum; Caseflow must provide such functionality as to permit the Board and VA to accomplish necessary processing tasks. To accomplish this, Caseflow must provide the ability to accomplish certain tasks:

#### **Caseflow Queue**

- the ability to receive new framework appeals at the Board processed through Caseflow Intake;
- the ability to assign new framework appeals to the appropriate Board docket;
- the ability to manage multiple Board dockets to assist the Board in meeting its timeliness goals;
- the ability to assign work items to Board employees for processing of appeal-related tasks; and
- the ability to move new framework appeals through the Board, from beginning to end.

#### **Caseflow Hearing Scheduling**

- the ability to support the Board in scheduling hearings to ensure readiness for managing multiple hearing dockets under the new framework.

#### **Vets.gov Appeals Status**

- the ability to provide Veterans clear information about the status of their appeal, in both the legacy and new framework environments; and
- the ability to inform Veterans of their options and the impact of their choices under the new statute.

Digital Service is likewise continuing to work on tools focused on increasing the Board's accuracy and efficiency of Board decisions, including Caseflow Reader, a tool designed to provide focused, higher-fidelity claims folder review for Board judges and attorneys, which deployed to all Board legal staff in November 2017, and Caseflow Hearing Prep, designed to streamline the work judges must accomplish to prepare for Board hearings.

Additionally, the statute tasks VA with satisfying 37 new reporting requirements. Many of these will be Board specific, and Caseflow will have to capture necessary data and provide an appropriate reporting mechanism to comply with the reporting needs. Some of the reports will require data from multiple systems, and functionality to either generate or integrate these data must exist in Caseflow or another VA system. As noted above, Caseflow Intake will serve as one of the primary tools to accomplish the necessary data collection.



## Caseflow Budget

For the most part, the Caseflow development has been able to fold implementation of the new law into the existing development plan and adjust the release of specific functionality to incorporate features necessary to implement the Appeals Modernization Act accordingly. There has been some impact to the overall budget as well as the timing of the VACOLS decommissioning aspects of the effort. The team is actively working with OI&T to address this.

## Caseflow Status Update

Plans for Caseflow intake have been refined to accommodate what has been learned regarding the tracking of contentions versus claims. Small updates have been made to the schedule below given greater clarity over the status of specific Caseflow modules. Additionally, the team is working with business sponsors to ensure that business requirements from all Administrations and business lines are fully integrated. Finally, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, given the strong emphasis on ensuring on-time implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act, there has been slippage in the VACOLS decommissioning aspects of this effort. The team is currently working with OI&T to assess this and determine what, if any, remediation is necessary.

## High-Level 2018 Calendar

Caseflow Product	Q1 (Jan-Mar)	Q2 (Apr-Jun)	Q3 (Jul-Sep)	Q4 (Oct-Dec)
Status	Release Status V2 on 3/20/2018	Discovery on changes required for AMA appeals. Understand status requirements based on pilot findings	Ongoing discovery, development on changes required for AMA appeals. Continued focus on pilot results	Ongoing discovery, development on changes required for AMA appeals
Reader	Add features based on user feedback			
Queue	Kickoff Queue pilot with attorneys, Define MVP for judges	Launch check-out functionality to small group of attorneys Release Queue functionality and judges. Test prototype functionality w/ admin staff	Release new functionality to additional users, Ongoing discovery & development	Support Board pilot of RAMPed appeals, Release new functionality to additional users. Ongoing discovery & development
Intake	Ongoing discovery, Implement functionality to receive RAMP NODs. Release initial reporting capability	Develop functionality to track dispositions for SCs and HLRs	Ongoing discovery, Support processing of official forms	Ongoing discovery & development. Integrate with NWO
Hearing Prep	Complete pilot with Judges	Release to all Board Judges (April)		
Hearing Scheduling	Onboard product owner for Hearing Scheduling	Discovery & Development	Development; Release schedule allocation for FY18	Ongoing discovery & development focused on placing Veterans into hearing slots

Releases to users will occur throughout timeline, even if not specifically indicated; all dates and work subject to change based on evolving VA policies and processes.

### **Section 3(b)(11) - Estimate of Office Space by Phase**

*(11) An estimate of the office space the Administration and the Board will require during each of the periods described in paragraph (2), including—*

- (A) an estimate of the amount of time the Administration and the Board will require to acquire any additional office space to carry out processing of appeals of decisions on legacy claims and processing of appeals under the new appeals system;*
- (B) a comparison of the estimate under subparagraph (A) and the historical average time required by the Administration and the Board to acquire new office space; and*
- (C) a plan for using telework to accommodate staff exceeding available office space, including how the Administration and the Board will provide training and oversight with respect to such teleworking.*

In order to meet the space demand caused by hiring 605 additional FTE in FY 2019, AMO is actively working with the Office of Management and GSA to identify adequate space available to accommodate training and workspaces for new employees. Several possible locations were identified, and VBA Facilities is currently working to define lease and minor construction costs to determine the most cost efficient available option. VBA estimates that office space sufficient to accommodate the initial hiring of supervisors and employees at a 1:10 ratio beginning in FY 2019 will be available and ready to accommodate onboarding employees by no later than September 2018. The Office of Management and AMO have identified that the current space options also contain space that is available and ready to accommodate an early onboarding of supervisory cadre. In identifying available space, AMO has worked with VBA's OFO to maximize desk sharing for teleworking employees in VBA-owned and leased locations. Individual RO management and AMO currently provide and manage a robust telework program and will continue the procedures and oversight with current and newly-hired employees when they reach telework eligibility.

Since the February 2018 Update, the Board continues its robust telework plan and has had no additional changes to office space acquisition. VHA is working with internal stakeholders to determine additional space requirements and cost estimates. VHA has a robust telework and virtual program that could meet any additional demand if needed. Additionally, in its 2018 March report (GAO-18-352), the GAO did not disagree with VA's assessment of estimated office space.

### **Section 3(b)(12) - Projections for the Productivity of Individual Employees**

*(12) Projections for the productivity of individual employees at the Administration and the Board in carrying out tasks relating to the processing of appeals of decisions on legacy claims and appeals under the new appeals system, taking into account the experience level of new employees and the enhanced notice requirements under section 5104(b) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 2(e).*

For VBA, the compensation and pension legacy appeals production projections is measured by completed actions per FTE/FY rate. That number is 181 appeal actions per FTE/FY based on the FY 2017 completed actions of 271,081 and 1495 FTE. The resolution rate of legacy appeals is 83, based on 124,666 compensation and pension legacy appeal resolutions in FY 2017 and 1,495 FTE. This is an updated production rate from the previous 90 day plan report. The data

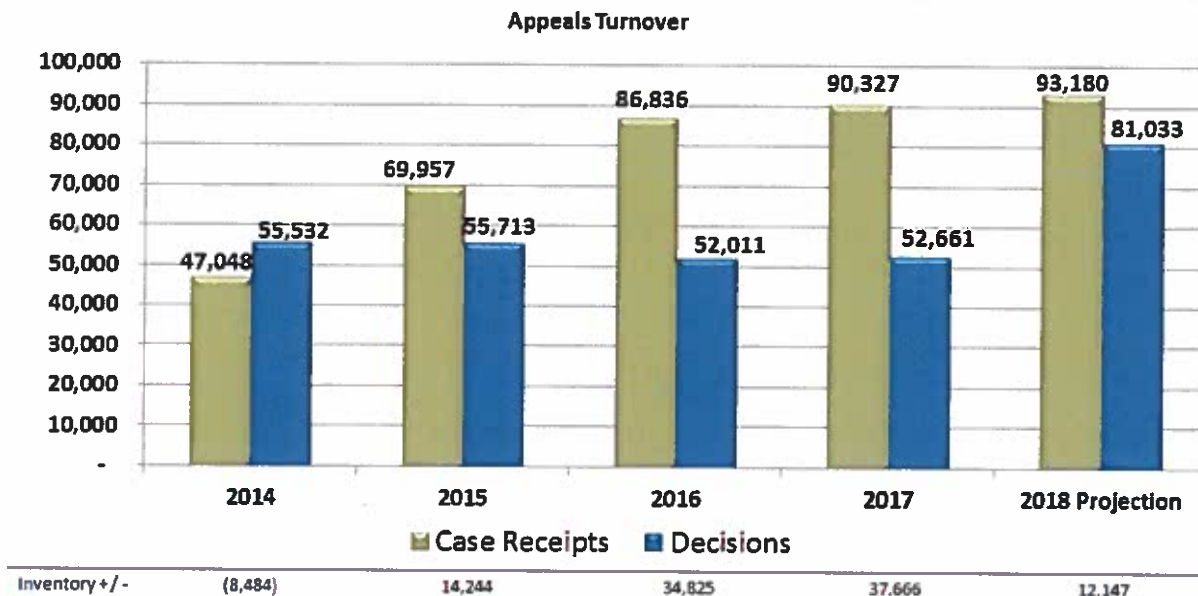
are now based on FY 2017 actual production information, whereas the previous report was based on forecast FY 2017 production data.

The Appeals Modernization Act higher-level review lane and supplemental claim lane individual annual production performance is based on total production FY 2017, total FTE, and initial performance factors of RAMP average days to complete data. Higher-level review individual annual production rate estimate is 224.9 decisions per FTE and supplemental claim lanes annual production rate is 182.8 decisions per FTE. These are early estimates.

Through the end of the second quarter of FY 2018, the Board dispatched 36,743 decisions to Veterans and claimants with a staffing level of 913 cumulative (average) FTE, which represent approximately 80.5 decisions per FTE on an annual basis. In terms of decisions signed by Veterans Law Judges through the second quarter, the Board signed 39,604 decisions, which is equivalent to 86.8 decisions per FTE annually. The current performance standard is 79 decisions per FTE per the negotiated agreement with the Union. This standard takes into consideration additional staff as well as the Board's demonstrated decision output trends. This production standard equates to an annual average of 144 decisions per attorney with consideration of leave and holidays.

The Board has noticed significant improvement in productivity since implementation of the new attorney productivity standards. As of week 29 of FY 2018, the Board has signed 44,922 decisions, which is 21,126 more decisions compared to week 29 of last fiscal year. The Board's annual production goal for FY 2018 is set at 81,033 decisions, an increase of approximately 28,000 more decisions above FY 2017 and represents a historic high in decision output. This historically high annual decision goal is needed to keep pace with the amount of decisions certified to the Board from VBA, which has nearly doubled since 2014. (See the chart below). Due to the innovations outlined above, the Board is currently well on-pace to meet the historically high annual production goal.

## Board of Veterans' Appeals



**\*Case Receipts**

2014 - From physical receipt/activation  
 2015-2018 - From certification (form 8)

The Board is currently at 100 percent of its year-to-date goal and is on pace to meet its target. With the efficiencies that the Board is implementing in FY 2018, the success of the Board's current production plan, the addition of attorneys and Judges, and the impact of RAMP on current legacy appeals, the Board projects a strong decision output under the Appeals Modernization Act provided the Board and the Union continue to work together to deliver results to Veterans.

During the Board's test program involving RAMP adjudication, individual employee productivity will be considered to the extent that it is determined to be reliable in gauging projections. This will be done with the support of our Union partners.

P&F Service will review the productivity of the fiduciary hubs as they resolve the legacy fiduciary appeals from April to December 2018, as noted in section 3(a)(1), and use that data to project employee productivity in the new appeals system.

Insurance Service has performance standards in place to review appeals for quality and timeliness. On a daily basis, VA Insurance Service uses production reports to track the work products that Insurance employees generate and performance review is conducted using these reports. This current resource will be utilized when tracking quality and timeliness under the new appeals process. Based on the small number of appeals that the VA Insurance Service receives and the fact that there are currently staff members who work on appeals, the impact on productivity is expected to be minimal.

Education Service has identified the use of end products for each step of the higher-level review and supplemental claims process. RPOs will use employee productivity reports to calculate

individual employee production. Education Service expects to have this completed by the end of the third quarter FY 2018. Education Service will manage higher-level review and supplemental claim workload and metrics using The Imaging Management System (TIMS) and end products. Education Service is creating a national performance standard to improve employee production. Education Service expects the new standard to go into effect at the beginning of FY 2019. Additional individual performance measurements will need to be evaluated when the Benefits Delivery Network (internal system) is decommissioned.

VR&E's current system to address requests for a review is similar to the higher-level reviews noted in the new claims and appeals process. VR&E refers to these higher-level reviews as administrative reviews. The reviews are completed by VR&E supervisory personnel at VBA ROs, and in a few specific circumstances e.g. (entitlement reviews), by the Director of VR&E Service. VR&E plans to maintain as much of our current system as possible, to include estimated timelines of 90 days to complete higher-level reviews. Concerning supplementary claims, VR&E will be to complete reviews at the RO level when new and relevant evidence is submitted within 125 days. VR&E believes this practice of seeking to resolve disputes at the lowest possible level in a timely manner is beneficial to participants.

LGY's pending legacy appeals will be reviewed by current and experienced LGY staff. Their productivity will be measured in accordance with existing performance standards and monitored using WebLGY. WebLGY is LGY's system of record used to capture data and work-products. Additionally, LGY's goal is to reduce the number of appeals that are processed by the Board under the new appeal system via administrative review processes such as, opt-in notifications and higher-level reviews. To ensure timely and responsive decisions within LGY's unique loan processing framework, higher-level and supplemental reviews will be handled at the RLC Loan Specialist(s) and Team Lead(s) level. These employees' productivity will be measured and monitored using WebLGY and documented at mid-year and on an annual basis as outlined by accepted performance standards.

NCA will use data from the new system to develop productivity projections for processing legacy appeals, and endeavor to attain VA enterprise-wide goals.

VHA is working with OGC, the Board, and VBA to determine new system requirements and metrics, as well as processes to continue to address the legacy inventory. Once the revised processes and corresponding metrics are developed, an accurate estimate of productivity can be determined.

### **Section 3(b)(13) - Outreach Plan**

*(13) An outline of the outreach the Secretary expects to conduct to inform veterans, families of veterans, survivors of veterans, veterans service organizations, military service organizations, congressional caseworkers, advocates for veterans, and such other stakeholders as the Secretary considers appropriate about the new appeals system, including—*

- (A) a description of the resources required to conduct such outreach; and*
- (B) timelines for conducting such outreach.*

VA has worked to increase awareness of appeals modernization and RAMP, during the reporting period, primarily through a combination of direct outreach, and increased communications products.

Starting 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of FY 2018, as VA expanded RAMP processing to other sites, VBA significantly expanded its direct local outreach; focusing first on providing information at VA ROs that were selected to process RAMP claims. VA provided information on RAMP and appeals modernization to VA outreach personnel, VSOs, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders. These sites included the Phoenix, Oakland, Los Angeles, San Diego, Denver, Seattle, Waco, San Antonio, and Houston ROs. Additional direct local outreach will occur at the Atlanta, St. Petersburg, and the San Juan ROs through May.

Beyond the local outreach that VBA conducted, VA has worked with Veteran stakeholders to disseminate information through national conferences and training events. These events include: National Organization of Veterans' Advocates; the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Bar Association; the Disabled American Veterans' (DAV) Mid-winter Conference; American Legion National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meeting; National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) Winter Conference; Congressional Caseworker Briefing on RAMP; Sacramento County VSO Conference; DAV's Supervisors' Conference; Senate Staff RAMP training; Minnesota CVSO Conference; and VBA's Leadership Symposium.

In addition, to ensure that VSOs, Congressional stakeholders and other Veteran advocates are fully informed on how VA is implementing RAMP and appeals modernization, VA holds and attends regular monthly meetings and briefings at the national level. These meetings include attendance at Congressional roundtable events, and VBA's regularly scheduled VSO bi-weekly meetings. Generally, these presentations have allowed VA to receive feedback on implementation and to determine if any problems are arising.

VA has also sought opportunities to leverage other information forums to increase awareness. One opportunity consisted of providing live and recorded training on appeals modernization and RAMP through the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). FDLP sends government publications to member libraries in exchange for the libraries allowing free access to anyone to those publications. Currently there are 1,142 libraries, of all types, in the FDLP. By providing live training, VA was able to inform and answer the questions of numerous librarians, who have frequent interactions with Veterans. In addition, the recorded training will be accessible to partner libraries free for use. VA is aware that some low-income Veterans do not have access to internet and rely on local resources such as libraries as a source of information about VA programs.

VA is currently looking to expand its communications and has VBA initiated discussions with VA RO Change Management Agents (CMA) centered on how VBA can leverage the CMAs relationships with the VSOs located in their respective ROs to promote and encourage Veterans to opt into RAMP. The AMO is currently taking the feedback from that discussion to design and execute an outreach plan employing CMAs.

Appendix C provides a timeline of outreach/communication activities occurring during the implementation period.

The Chairman of the Board has reached out to stakeholders to create a sense of urgency, ownership, and visibility regarding Appeals Modernization. This has been accomplished by securing the support of stakeholders to collaborate on the Board's test programs. The Board is now including language in correspondence that encourages Veterans to login to the appeal status tracker on Vets.gov for status updates on their appeals. In phone calls and e-mails, the Board encourages Veterans and Congressional staff to visit the RAMP website for more

information about the program. An overall plan for training and education of stakeholders with a target date of summer 2018 still exists via the project implementation plan (see Appendix A).

The Board solicited and recently obtained comprehensive change management support to identify and mitigate risk. The Board has taken action to ensure that this change management strategy is aligned, synchronized, and integrated across the appeals modernization effort with all VA administrations. This integrated change management effort will ensure that VA's efforts involving outreach, strategic communications, training, and any workforce realignment needs are consistent and coordinated across the enterprise. Details regarding the timeline and resources required to implement this plan will be included in the next appeals modernization report.

Insurance Service has joined the VA and VBA communication efforts regarding timelines and the tools utilized as notification vehicles identified in Appendix C. As for internal information releases, Insurance Service will provide information for staff and divisional units impacted by the appeals reform as needed as part of the training resources that will be deployed in January 2019. Insurance Service will also engage all employees regarding the new appeals process through regular employee engagement sessions.

Education Service is building a communication and outreach plan to ensure Veterans who apply for VA Education Benefits are aware of their rights in the event they disagree with a VA decision. Education Service is updating call center scripts so beneficiaries who contact the call center will get the most current and accurate information. Information will be posted to the [Post 9/11 GI Bill Facebook page](#). All Education Service decision letters will also include the required information about the new process. No additional outreach and communication efforts are planned at this time.

VR&E Service will coordinate messaging and outreach activities across VA. VR&E has provided links to information VA has released on the new appeals process on VR&E-specific intranet and internet sites to increase awareness. This enterprise-wide approach provides Veterans and other external stakeholders with a consistent message and understanding of how the new system works.

LGY will publish Servicemembers' and Veterans' specific correspondences, to include letters that will be mailed to all Servicemembers and Veterans with a pending appeal. To further increase awareness, LGY will post information on LGY's intranet and internet sites on behalf of the Secretary, as approved.

NCA will utilize VA enterprise-wide resource materials for review for NCA outreach activities.

VHA will develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan to inform Veterans, family members, VSOs, Military Service Organizations, Congressional caseworkers, Veterans' advocates, and other stakeholders of the new system, its benefits, and the implementation timeline. VHA does not anticipate requiring additional resources to support outreach.

### **Section 3(b)(14) - Timeline for Policy Updates**

*(14) Timelines for updating any policy guidance, Internet websites, and official forms that may be necessary to carry out the new appeals system, including—*

*(A) identification of which offices and entities will be involved in efforts relating to such updating; and*

(B) historical information about how long similar update efforts have taken.

VA remains on target to release updated policy guidance, websites, and official forms by February 2019 in support of the new claims and appeals framework.

### Policy Guidance

As previously noted in this report, VBA is conducting a test program, known as RAMP, to gather data and test certain facets of the new law with regard to compensation benefit claims. In developing materials for RAMP, VBA's Compensation Service and AMO worked closely with VSOs and other stakeholders to gather feedback on opt-in notices, decision notification letters, call center scripts, and RAMP standard operating procedures. Since the start of the program, VBA has received and reviewed feedback from external stakeholders and Veterans. VBA is using that feedback to make adjustments in policy guidance for RAMP and for full implementation of the new law in February 2019.

After the February 2018 Update, the Board revised its policy plan and broke down tasks more discretely. SOPs for specific internal offices have been gathered and revisions are being identified to implement Appeals Modernization. The next step is to work to generate some new SOPs for affected offices. These policy changes are prompted as new technology is being rolled out to support the new system.

Depending on when the proposed and final regulations will be published, Compensation Service will coordinate timing of publication of updated manual guidance with the publication date of the regulations. P&F Service estimates updates to all of the relevant policies and procedures will occur by December 31, 2018. Insurance Service manual updates are to be completed by May 31, 2018; improved Notification Letters to be completed by August 31, 2018; and SOPs are to be completed by December 3, 2018.

Education Service expects to have updates to policies, and procedures by December 2018. These functions are completed by existing Education Service staff. Based on historical timelines all policy and procedure updates should be ready for publication no later than September 30, 2018. VR&E Service expects to have all policy and procedural updates completed and published by December 2018. These functions are completed by existing VR&E Service staff. Similar changes to policy and procedural updates historically take about four months from development to publication. LGY Service anticipates final approval of the policy updates by June 2018.

The VHA Office of Regulatory and Administrative Affairs (ORAA) is analyzing the new public law to modify existing VHA regulations to ensure all directives and policies are in compliance with the law.

### Forms

As noted in VA's last update to this report, VA has created an enterprise-wide standard form for requests for a higher-level review, VA Form 20-0996, *Request for Higher-Level Review*. VA has completed its review of stakeholder feedback and adjusted the form to ensure it meets the needs of claimants. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will review the forms concurrently with the proposed regulatory package. In addition, VA has created an enterprise-wide standard supplemental claim form, VA Form 20-0095.



The Board is finalizing work on internal forms and has initiated the approval process for forms containing information collections under the Paperwork Reduction Act. These information collection requests were submitted along with the regulations to OMB. The rulemaking and forms package will be published in the Federal Register later than initially indicated in IMS. However, the Board has taken every opportunity to provide improved forms by completing user testing (in conjunction with Digital Service); consulting with stakeholders and considering the role that the form plays in the new process.

Depending on when the proposed and final regulations will be published, Compensation Service will coordinate timing of publication of updated forms with the publication date of the regulations. P&F Service is reviewing and updating relevant forms that pertain to both new pension and fiduciary appeals. Insurance Service has joined VBA efforts to create a form regarding the new appeals process and has provided feedback. VR&E Service expects to have all updates to any forms or letters completed and published by December 2018. These functions are completed by existing VR&E Service staff. Similar changes and updates to forms that do not require a respondent burden, historically take about four months from development to publication. Upon final approval of the policy and selection of an implementation date, the LGY forms will be updated accordingly.

#### Internet Sites

VA continues to provide updates to the Appeals Modernization content at: [www.benefits.va.gov](http://www.benefits.va.gov), which serves as VA's external site. The most significant update was to provide external stakeholders with information relating to VBA's RAMP program, such as the links to the updated RAMP fact sheet and opt-in documents, which allow Veterans with eligible disability compensation appeals pending to opt into RAMP without waiting for an invitation. Furthermore, VA continues to publish on this page its quarterly updates to its Appeals Modernization Implementation Plan.

Digital Service worked closely with VA to develop an appeal status tracker on Vets.gov. This tracker, which allows Veterans to obtain real-time information regarding the status of their appeals, including an estimated wait time and place in line, went live in March 2018. In demonstrations to stakeholders, Digital Service believes that the initial response has been positive. Digital Service is building infrastructure to continue to support the status update for appeals.

P&F Service estimates updates to relevant internet websites will occur by December 31, 2018. Education Service expects to have updates to websites on the new process published to the Education Service inter/intranet sites by December 2018. These functions are completed by existing Education Service staff. Based on historical timelines, all website updates should be ready for publication no later than one month from all policies, procedures and forms being finalized. Updates to VR&E inter/intranet sites can be completed in a matter of weeks. Upon final approval of the policy and selection of an implementation date, LGY Service websites will be updated accordingly.

#### **Section 3(b)(15) - Timeline for Promulgating Regulations**

*(15) A timeline, including interim milestones, for promulgating such regulations as may be necessary to carry out the new appeals system and a comparison with historical averages for time required to promulgate regulations of similar complexity and scope.*

The Board and VBA closely collaborated to draft proposed regulations to implement the Appeals Modernization Act. The proposed regulations are currently undergoing review at OMB. VA is addressing delays in the timeline for promulgating regulations and still anticipates that it will remain on schedule for publication of final regulations by February 2019. VA is also working with external stakeholders by doing training and informal educational outreach in preparation for the public comment period. Although internal review of the proposed regulations took longer than anticipated, there is adequate time remaining to publish the final rule by the established deadline of January 2019. Timely publication of the final rule depends on a variety of internal and external factors, to include completion of VA's internal review, timeliness of OMB's review, and review of any changes necessary in light of public comments.

VHA's ORAA is still working with the Board and OGC to determine the impact of appeals modernization changes on existing VHA regulations, policies, and processes. As stated in the February 2018 Update, once this impact has been determined, ORAA will work with individual program offices to bring their existing regulations, policies, and processes into compliance with the updated requirements. VHA still anticipates publishing one or more proposed rulemakings in 2018. However, the rulemaking process takes an average of more than two years and additional time may be required to update policies and other guidance following publication of final regulations.

### **Section 3(b)(16) - Outline of "Opt-In" Circumstances**

*(16) An outline of the circumstances under which claimants with pending appeals of decisions on legacy claims would be authorized to have their appeals reviewed under the new appeals system.*

The Board will begin to participate in RAMP with a gradual phase-in starting in October 2018. Additionally, the Board will conduct its BEAAM test program under the authority of section 4, Pub. L. 115-55. BEAAM will allow the Board to test assumptions made in developing the implementation plan. Lessons learned during BEAAM will allow the Board to quickly pivot and make necessary adjustments for full implementation. The section 4 authority terminates in February 2019, and as noted, the Board expects that BEAAM appeals will be adjudicated by October 2018. The Board will provide analysis on its test programs as soon as results are available. VA continues to further refine methods for evaluating the success of RAMP and informing efforts toward full implementation of the new appeals system. The detailed lessons learned regarding RAMP and preliminary data at the Board level will be provided in the next report, consistent with the GAO's recommendation.

VBA has no substantive update to provide since the February 2018 report was completed.

### **Section 3(b)(17) - Key Goals & Milestones for Reducing Legacy Appeals**

*(17) A delineation of the key goals and milestones for reducing the number of pending appeals that are not processed under the new appeals system, including the expected number of appeals, remands, and hearing requests at the Administration and the Board each year, beginning with the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, until there are no longer any appeals pending before the Administration or the Board for a decision on a legacy claim.*

## HISTORICAL DATA

As stated in the February 2018 Update, VA does not have a timeliness goal that measures legacy appeals processing from the date the appeal is filed to when it is finally resolved. That is because the current legacy process has no defined endpoint; therefore, the agency cannot set a goal for appeals resolution time. The current multi-step process is too inefficient; splits jurisdiction for processing appeals between the agency of original jurisdiction and the Board; and features an open record and ongoing duty to assist. As a result, the continuous evidence gathering and readjudication prolong the ability to reach a final decision. In FY 2017, Veterans waited an average of approximately 3 years for resolution of their appeal by VA and, on average, seven years from the date they initiated their appeal at the AOJ until resolution by the Board. Therefore, VA tracks the inventory of legacy appeals by each cycle in the process, as published in the Budget's Annual Performance Plan.

<https://www.va.gov/budget/docs/summary/fy2018VAbudgetVolumelsupplementalInformationAndAppendices.pdf>

The rate at which the legacy appeals inventory can be resolved is dependent on a number of factors and variables, including funding made available to appeals processing through the annual budget appropriations process in future years and the rate of election of claimants with legacy appeals pending who opt-in to the new process.

In the February 2018 Update, the Board provided the following projections for legacy appeals in FY 2018 and FY 2019 using historical data. These projections are for the total numbers of appeals expected. With the passage of the Appeals Modernization Act, these projections could be reduced by a number of factors, including RAMP participation and Veteran choice between the AOJ lanes and Board lanes in the new system. Further, efficiencies such as the new interactive decision template and Caseflow applications may have a positive impact on productivity per FTE. Once the Board obtains more data from RAMP and its test programs, the Board will revise these projections with more accurate information.

Board of Veterans' Appeals - Workload Estimate			
	2017 Actual	2018	2019
		PROJECTIONS	
Board FTEs	840	1,050	1,025
Start of Year (SOY) Appeals Inventory (from date of certification (Form 8) in field)	115,847	153,513	165,660
Appeals Received (Case Receipts)	90,327	93,180	116,639
Appeals Decided	-52,661	-81,033	-80,483
End of Year (EOY) Appeals Inventory (from date of certification (Form 8) in field)	153,513	165,660	201,816

As a result of the legacy open record process and VA's ongoing duty to assist the Board's remand rate for legacy appeals has ranged between 46.4 percent and 43.5 percent in the last

four years, as reflected in the chart below. These returning remands of legacy appeals will also need to be adjudicated by the Board, as well as the new appeals received based on the above projections. In February 2020, one year after the last rating decision is issued under the legacy system, no further new legacy appeals will be received. As a result, legacy inventory on that date will not increase, and will decrease at a rate dependent on the factors described above.

<b>Board Decisions*</b>					
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Decisions</b>	<b>Allowed</b>	<b>Remanded</b>	<b>Denied</b>	<b>Other</b>
2014	55,532	29.2%	45.5%	21.5%	3.8%
2015	55,713	31.0%	46.4%	19.1%	3.5%
2016	52,011	31.8%	46.0%	18.0%	4.2%
2017	52,661	29.9%	43.5%	21.6%	5.0%

\*The historical reporting system for Board decisions with multiple issues identifies the disposition of an appeal based on the following hierarchy: allowance, remand, denial, or other (*i.e.*, dismissals). When there is more than one disposition involved in a multiple issue appeal the "reported disposition" for Board Statistical Reports will be categorized based on the disposition hierarchy noted above.

#### FORECAST MODEL

The 2017 Government Accountability Office report recommended that VA conduct additional sensitivity analyses of its forecast modeling to more accurately estimate future appeals inventories, timeliness, and cost factors. The model previously utilized did not provide adequate granularity or flexibility to implement this recommendation. However, VA has developed a more robust, scalable model that allows for the recommended analysis.

VA designed the new model on a Microsoft Excel platform, with the overall purpose of forecasting future inventory under the decision review process prescribed in the Appeals Modernization Act, as well as VA's legacy appeals inventory under current law. Specifically, after setting VA's timeliness goals for VBA supplemental claim and higher-level review lanes (125-day average) and the Board's direct docket (365-day average), the model allows users to change assumptions through adjustment of all relevant variables. These variables include: RAMP opt-in rate, refile rate (Veterans who request additional review after receiving a decision on higher-level review, supplemental claim, or appeal to the Board), the Board's legacy and new system remand rates, annual number of VBA decision on claims, claim disagreement rate, Veterans' choices in the various decision review and appeal lanes, and VBA's and the Board's productivity in the legacy and new systems. As a second order variable, users may also adjust annual distribution of staffing among each of the legacy and new system inventories (supplemental claim and higher-level review, and the Board's separate direct, evidence, and hearing dockets).

Outputs from the model are depicted in total, VBA, and Board inventory charts, and can be used to forecast the impact of timeliness standards, actual or projected changes in VBA or Board productivity, potential budgetary needs, and potential staffing requirements for both reducing the legacy inventory and timely maintenance of decision reviews and appeals in the new system.

Moreover, these outputs allow VA to more accurately predict when it might complete the resolution of legacy appeals given a selected set of assumptions. The model allows for any combination of changes in these assumptions, so VA can quickly update the model based upon actual data as it becomes available and then timely complete many variations to forecast future trends. As a result, VA will be able to quickly react to changes in its pending legacy and new system inventories, as well as claimant behavior and other trends.

Among other things, the model may serve several specific purposes, to include:

- Estimating the legacy inventory remaining as implementation of appeals modernization approaches;
- Calculating how an increasing RAMP opt-in rate, when combined with known VBA and Board production levels, affects reduction of legacy inventory;
- Determining the impact of the claim disagreement rate on the new system inventory;
- Determining the distribution of resources given Veterans' choices among new system lanes;
- Determining the efficiency of the new process and the allocation of resources based on estimated employee productivity rates across the various new system decision review and appeal lanes; and
- Adjusting, as needed, resources required to eliminate the legacy inventory as quickly as possible, while also meeting established timeliness goals in the new system.

VA will continue to verify and validate the model to ensure the accuracy of its outputs and its utility in VA's appeals modernization forecasting.

**VBA's Plan: Early Election of VBA's new Supplemental Claim and Higher-Level Review lanes:**

- Reduce VBA's legacy appeals inventory by as many as 31,000 legacy appeals through inventory control and election of legacy appeals into the new process by April 2019 based upon a 10 percent opt-in rate;
- RAMP opt-in allows VBA to transition workforce from appeals to claims being processed in the new claim lanes as shown in Section 4 - Pilot Program to Test Assumptions; and
- Decision timeliness of claims worked under new appeals process – Depends on early election rate (goal = less than 125-day average).

**VBA's Milestones of Remaining Legacy Appeals Model**

- Based on the assumption that VBA has 1,495 FTE with the production capacity per FTE outlined in Section 3(b)(2) and will gain an additional 605 FTE by FY 2019, legacy appeals will be reduced by approximately 250,000 appeals by the end of FY 2020. This is based on forecasting with the assumption of a 10 percent opt-in rate of legacy appeals to be processed as shown in new claim lanes shown in Section 4 - Pilot Program to Test Assumptions. The remainder of legacy appeals inventory will then be completed by FY 2025. This forecasting does not include projections for adding opt-ins for appeals that have been issued and are pending a Statement of the Case or Supplemental Statement of the Case.

VBA will further maximize the productivity of existing resources leveraging technology and optimizing distribution of workload, either by utilizing the National Work Queue and/or by consolidating appeals processing. VBA will have the capacity at the ROs to process RAMP claims in a timely manner (within an average of 125 days). VBA will utilize the additional 605

FTE requested for FY 2019 to resolve the legacy appeals inventory and ensure an average timeliness goal of 125 days is met in the new framework.

P&F Service projects that its legacy fiduciary appeals inventory, which is currently just above 300 appeals, will be completely resolved before the beginning of the one-year period beginning on the date of the effective date of this Act. Therefore, any legacy fiduciary appeal that arises after the enactment of this Act will be prioritized for resolution as quickly as possible to ensure that there are no longer any legacy fiduciary appeals pending before the Administration as close to end the of the one-year period as possible.

Insurance Service will complete processing of legacy appeals in its jurisdiction by the third quarter of 2018. In the interim, VA Insurance Service will process the current 65 legacy appeals under the current procedures and will continue to use the Insurance Appeals Tracking System to monitor these legacy appeals. If an appellant returns a Form 9 or the Board remands an appeal to Insurance Service, the legacy appeals will not be resolved until a final decision is reached or the appellant withdraws the appeal.

Education Service plans to review and process all pending legacy appeals by the end of fourth quarter FY 2018. Education Service will establish control over any new legacy appeals based on metrics described in the Appeals Modernization Act by the end of the fourth quarter FY 2018. Education Service will amend current appeals processing procedures and implement a national higher-level review procedure by the end of first quarter FY 2019. Education Service anticipates the following number of claims during the first year after enactment of this Act:

- Higher-Level Reviews: 2,500
- Supplemental Claims: 1,500
- Appeals to the Board: 250
- Remands: 75

On February 28, 2018, VR&E Service extended an e-mail data call to each RO with a pending legacy appeal and requested an update and/or resolution of the legacy appeals identified in VACOLS as of January 9, 2018. VR&E Service requested that each RO review the information for accuracy; update VACOLS as needed; and attempt to resolve the legacy appeals that could be resolved at the RO level so those appeals would not have to advance to the Board, as feasible. VR&E Service requested, and received, responses from each identified RO in March 2018. VR&E Service is currently reviewing those responses and will provide follow-up instructions as needed to ensure all appropriate action is taken on these legacy appeals, to include prioritizing the oldest legacy appeals. It is anticipated that the next step will be to certify to the Board all appeals in which VR&E has received a VA Form 9, as appropriate. This will further reduce the legacy appeals inventory.

LGY has a goal of making contact with all Veterans that have a pending legacy appeal by October 2018, and to have all legacy cases processed by March 31, 2019.

VHA is seeking to eliminate existing legacy appeals by 75 percent prior to implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act. VHA is working to deploy an automated system that will assist with processing 93 percent of the current pending legacy inventory. Pending legacy claims have been identified and are being tracked monthly. VHA will similarly establish control over remaining pending appeals based on metrics described in the Appeals Modernization Act by the end of the fourth quarter FY 2018.

## **Section 3(b)(18) – Risk Factors**

*(18) A description of each risk factor associated with each element of the plan and a contingency plan to minimize each such risk.*

The Department has identified the following risks and mitigation strategies:

### **1. Resource Requirements (Section 3(b)(1))**

**Risk:** VBA remains at an opt-in rate of 10 percent or less regarding the number of Veterans with legacy claims who opt-in to the new appeals system by invitation into the RAMP. VBA cannot forecast how many Veterans will refile claims subsequent to decisions under the new system and how many times into each of the new process lanes. This could result in prolonged management of two separate workloads of legacy appeals and claims under the new appeals system with risk to achieving performance objectives, or overstaffing, with risk to efficient use of resources.

**Mitigation:** VBA is conducting additional outreach opportunities through e-mail listings, and follow-up letters to Veterans inviting them to participate in the new appeals process lanes. Additionally, the Director of the AMO has engaged in site visits to speak with agents, attorneys and service organization representatives to gain support of the new appeals system. The goal of the site visits is to provide information and clarity of the new appeals process so that representatives may request, on behalf of whom they represent, participation in the new appeals process.

As described in Section 4 of this report, VBA is conducting RAMP to validate assumptions used in planning. Through this program, VA is obtaining actual data on the percentages of eligible Veterans who opt for the new system, impact of the new notice requirements on employee productivity, processing times, resource requirements, challenges, and best practices. The phased nature of the program will allow VA to adjust its course prior to the full implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act.

**Risk:** Forecasting Veteran behavior continues to be the hindrance in the VA's ability to accurately project the total resource requirements to administer the new appeals system and address the appeals decisions on legacy claims.

**Mitigation:** The Board is working to gather data through their current process to provide information on Veteran behavior under the new system through test programs BEAAM and RAMP implementation at the Board. The Board has posted two operational analysts (GS-13 and GS-14 positions) on USAJOBS to support future operations modeling efforts. These positions will ensure that the Board is actively working on future modeling to fully support our appeals modernization efforts.

NCA can rely in part on actual VBA RAMP data and Board test programs for projections. Should actual results be impactful beyond expectations, a process performance methodology would be utilized to refine process and/or resource allocation.

**Risk:** VA OI&T may not have sufficient resources to modify VBMS for VHA use prior to February 2019.

Mitigation: VHA will use the most efficient claim processing resources available at that time. This may include reliance on the existing processes, including VBMS, until necessary modifications are complete.

### **2-3. Personnel (Section 3(b)(2)-(3))**

Risk: Current statutes may constrain VA's ability to scale its workforce to address the growing inventory of appeals in a timely manner, resulting in risk to meeting performance goals.

Mitigation: VBA will use any appropriate applicable legal authority to hire Federal employees; therefore, the risk to VA's hiring plan from insufficient authority to hire is negligible.

Risk: Current statutes may constrain VA's ability to scale its workforce to address reduced workload once the inventory of legacy appeals has been exhausted.

Mitigation: VA will use any appropriate applicable legal authority to remove employees, if required as a last resort. However, because exhausting the inventory of legacy appeals will be a long-term effort, VA anticipates use of more routine workforce management methods, such as normal attrition of permanent employees, to address any necessary staffing changes as a result of elimination of the legacy appeals inventory. Furthermore, VA may also reassign employees to address other workload inventories. Residual risk is low.

Risk: The number of appeals received under the new system surpasses the Board's ability to reduce the pending inventory of legacy appeals.

Mitigation: The Board will continue to monitor actual workload allocations and report to all stakeholders accordingly. The Board's strategy to reduce pending inventory of appeals is to re-engineer its processes. For example, the Board has launched a specialty case team to focus on complex legal areas within Veterans' benefits law. Additionally, Digital Service is providing products to streamline processing. For example, the goal of Caseflow Queue is to assist VA in the management and distribution of appeals in all dockets after full implementation. The Board is also exploring the possibility of using contractors to assist the Board's legal staff in reviewing the case files.

Risk: The number of NCA-specific cases received in the new system may surpass the workload capability of the current NCA trained and experienced personnel.

Mitigation: NCA has endeavored to continually address appeal matters with its unique case types as part of a learning organization with a symbiotic relationship with other VA offices including the Board, VBA, and VHA. NCA future personnel needs would be assessed dependent on national response to the new system from Veterans, their families, VSOs, and attorneys.

Risk: The number of dedicated personal working appeals in VHA outside of the Claims Adjudication and Reimbursement team has not yet been identified. This poses a risk if no staff has been identified and facilities have not planned for this unforeseen requirement.

Mitigation: VHA will continue to monitor incoming appeals and communicate the need to host stand-downs, offer overtime, and utilize other methods of increasing productivity when hiring staff can not immediately be addressed.



#### **4. Estimated Time for Hiring Employees (Section 3(b)(4))**

Risk: As the Board's hiring practices for the attorney advisor position have been refined, overall selection numbers were initially impacted. Unintended delays may occur in onboarding additional FTE's to achieve the goal of 1,050 FTE.

Mitigation: The Board continues to be aggressive in advertising additional attorney vacancy announcements in USAJOBS in the second and third quarters of FY 2018. The Board's compelling mission statement and robust telework program ensures the Board continues to attract quality applicants. The Board onboarded 25 new attorneys in the month of March and is finalizing the selection of summer legal interns. The process for hiring VLJs is also moving forward.

#### **5. Training and Experience Required of Higher-Level Adjudicators (Section 3(b)(5))**

Risk: VA might not have a sufficient pool of experienced personnel to adjudicate both higher-level reviews under the new process and appeals pending under the legacy system simultaneously.

Mitigation: The experience and training required to conduct higher-level reviews in the new process exist already and the employees conducting the reviews will be able to perform the reviews under both the legacy and modernized systems with relatively little additional training. As VA expands RAMP, VBA is training employees to conduct higher-level reviews and supplemental claims, growing a trained and experienced workforce that will be ready to process these claims upon implementation of the new system.

#### **6. Estimated percentage of higher-level adjudicators who were Decision Review Officers (Section 3(b)(6))**

VA has not identified any risks with this element of the plan.

#### **7. Decision Review Officer functions in new system (Section 3(b)(7))**

VA has not identified any risks with this element of the plan.

#### **8. Training Timeline (Section 3(b)(8))**

Risk: VA may not be able to complete required training on schedule resulting in risk to performance objectives.

Mitigation: VA's strategy of leveraging existing systems and processes to the extent practicable in the new appeals system avoids the requirement to conduct extensive training on an entirely new system. Training will focus on the differences in processing legacy versus new appeals, but the substance of how higher-level reviews, as well as supplemental claims and appeals to the Board, are adjudicated remains unchanged. Furthermore, training will be largely decentralized to meet the unique requirements of each line of business. This flexible, adaptive approach avoids risks associated with large-scale, top-down training development. Risk is spread to the lines of business, which allows leadership to prioritize resources to the lines of business with the greatest number of appeals, and allows senior leaders in each line of business to manage internal risks associated with training for the new appeals system.

Risk: Because the Board is not currently participating in RAMP, insufficient awareness of Board employees regarding the RAMP program may result in RAMP opt-in letters being improperly interpreted by the Board.

Mitigation: The Board has developed an internal system to handle misfiled opt-in documents and has been in close contact with VBA's AMO. The Board's KM and Office of Legislation, Regulations, and Policy (LRP) have also provided continuous training activities both internally and between the Board and VBA to ensure proper handling of all RAMP communications, including the creation of a RAMP FAQ document which was distributed to all Board staff. The Board is preparing to participate in RAMP beginning in October.

## **9. Costs of Training (Section 3(b)(9))**

Risk: Insufficient personnel resources for developing and delivering necessary training to support the new appeals system may result in incomplete training, which risks timely or incomplete implementation of the new appeals system.

Mitigation: The VA enterprise-wide appeals modernization workgroup focused on training meets routinely to ensure all offices are proactively developing training during implementation period to ensure all offices are able to have fully developed materials well before February 2019.

VA has decentralized training and existing training resources across business and administration lines. Risk is spread to the lines of business and administrations, which allows leadership to prioritize resources to the lines of business with the greatest number of appeals, and allows senior leaders in each line of business to manage internal risks associated with training for the new appeals system. At this point, VA's assessment is that sufficient resources exist for the timely accomplishment of required training.

## **10. Information Technology (Section 3(b)(10))**

Risk: Delays in the development of information technology required to implement appeals modernization may prevent VA from certifying readiness in January 2019. Additionally, lack of effective coordination across all VA offices may have an adverse impact on development.

Mitigation: Continued coordination with VBA's VBMS and OBPI and Digital Service. Digital Services has a record of delivering throughout FY 2017 and continues to do so in FY 2018. All offices of VA continue to communicate and coordinate with IT personnel.

Risk: The lack of an existing, integrated IT system may prevent VA from timely or fully implementing the new appeals system, or from achieving timeliness and reporting requirements.

Mitigation: VA has worked with the Digital Service at VA to create a single, integrated point of entry for receiving and processing review requests under the Appeals Modernization Act. This tool, Caseflow Intake, serves to integrate claims and appeals data such that a Veteran's lane selections can be tracked linearly. Further, with this functionality, all necessary data will be captured at the front end of the process, enabling VA to properly prioritize review requests to address questions of timeliness and to capture necessary data to enable VA to meet reporting requirements.

In addition to building new functionality to support intake of review requests, VBA will enhance existing infrastructure to support end-to-end processing of review requests, issuance of

improved decision notices, and other claims functionality required under the Appeals Modernization Act. VBA processes 98 percent of its legacy appeals inventory in the VBMS digital environment. VBMS and other existing systems will be modified to support the new processes, procedures, and reporting requirements mandated by the law. Some of the VBA lines of business not currently using these systems will be brought into this framework. In the event all required IT updates are not available, VA can still implement the new law through manual processes in lines of business with low numbers of appeals until such time where VA IT can support the creation of functionality that will allow all Appeals Modernization reviews to be performed electronically.

#### **11. Estimate of office space by phase (Section 3(b)(11))**

**Risk:** The Board's telework program is a volunteer program. If not all Board employees continue to select telework, the Board would be short workstations.

**Mitigation:** As stated in February 2018, the Board's telework program has been operational for nearly 20 years and is a strong incentive for all staff. In February and March 2018, 53 additional Board employees signed up for telework. The Board is currently exploring telework capabilities to further expand the popular telework program.

Recent space requirement projections assume telework commitments remain constant at 533 employees. As the Board grows staff size to 1,050 FTE, the Board will have 930 total seats including, 167 overflow seats. The Board will assign telework attorneys who are out of the office more than 50 percent to one of the 167 overflow seats. The Board is continuing to identify underused space and create work stations. This project is scheduled to be completed in the 4th quarter of FY 2018.

#### **12. Projections for the productivity of individual employees (Section 3(b)(12))**

**Risk:** There could be an unanticipated decrease in VBA employee productivity, leading to a risk of not meeting performance objectives.

**Mitigation:** RAMP will yield actual data that will assist VBA in creating a forecasting model, identifying best practices, and making changes to its procedures, processes, and systems in order to gain efficiencies and faster adjudications. Should RAMP and subsequent full implementation of the new appeals system not yield the expected increase in productivity, VBA may consider reallocating internal resources to meet performance objectives.

**Risk:** Negotiations with Union partners over Board productivity levels may impact decision output.

**Mitigation:** The Board is committed to working with its Union partners to assist in reaching optimal solutions for productivity and delivering results to Veterans.

#### **13. Outreach Plan (Section 3(b)(13))**

**Risk:** RAMP may continue to experience a lower-than-expected opt-in rate if Veterans do not receive adequate information about RAMP, if they remain confused about RAMP, or if they receive erroneous information from third party sources.

Mitigation: VA has expanded outreach activities in support of RAMP with VBA and Board collaboration on these efforts. The results of this outreach are encouraging and have resulted in higher opt-in rates and increased support for RAMP. The communication channels, messaging, and lessons learned during RAMP will significantly facilitate VA's outreach efforts in support of full implementation. Additionally, the Board is supporting RAMP and working with an expert in change management to develop an overarching outreach plan.

Risk: If VA lines of business do not coordinate Veterans may receive inconsistent messaging.

Mitigation: Through the creation of a refined IMS, included as attachment Appendix A below, all VA lines of business have committed to coordinating messaging and outreach to Veterans. The Chairman is working across the leadership lines of VBA, VHA, OGC, and with stakeholders to ensure consistent messaging.

Risk: VA enterprise-wide outreach for P.L. 115-55 could fail to communicate that the law will apply to each administration.

Mitigation: VA will work to ensure that an enterprise-wide outreach plan is coordinated with involvement across all administrations with an eye toward educating the public and stakeholders.

#### **14. Timeline for Policy Updates (Section 3(b)(14))**

Risk: VA will not be able to develop and publish policy to support the new appeals system in a timely manner, thus putting the implementation schedule at risk.

Mitigation: As noted above, VA is taking a decentralized approach to revising internal policy to support the new appeals system, which allows for each line of business to work in parallel. As some internal procedures will be put into effect during RAMP and BEAAM, the overall risk of failing to update policy in a timely manner is commensurately reduced. Although VA anticipates that policy revisions will take nearly 15 months to complete (see policy category of the IMS), this risk is low for the reasons specified. Additionally, information gathered during RAMP and BEAAM will allow VA to test interim policy and procedures to address any issues prior to full implementation.

#### **15. Timeline for Promulgating Regulations (Section 3(b)(15))**

Risk: VA has fallen behind the schedule for promulgation of the regulations as laid out in the integrated project plan, resulting in a risk that the final rule may not be published in the Federal Register prior to implementation in February 2019.

Mitigation: While VA has missed some deadlines for internal review and concurrence of the proposed regulations, VA has taken proactive steps to ensure that publication of a final rule will be timely.

VA has submitted the draft regulations to OMB and will closely monitor the regulatory public comment and OMB approval process to expedite publication to the extent possible. VA has alerted OMB of the shortened timeline for timely implementation, and VA leadership has requested expedited review. VA plans to prioritize this area to ensure that it will remain on schedule for the publication of final regulations by February 2019.

## **16. Outline of “Opt In” Circumstances (Section 3(b)(16))**

**Risk:** There may be a low opt-in rate to the new system.

**Mitigation:** The Board and VBA conduct monthly meetings with VSOs to help educate them about the benefits of the new system, answer questions, and listen to feedback. The Board will also provide structured trainings to explain the new system. In cooperation with Digital Service, the Board is also using design thinking to help minimize misunderstandings with its NOD form. The Board will work with VBA to accurately communicate all aspects of the new system to all stakeholders.

As a result of early RAMP results, VBA has recognized the need for increased communications with Veterans and other stakeholders and, as described in Section 4 of this report, has taken actions to improve the opt-in rate for RAMP. See also the Risks and Mitigations for the Outreach Plan, Section 3(b)(13) above.

## **17. Key goals and milestones for reducing legacy inventory (Section 3(b)(17))**

**Risk:** Regarding the necessary IT infrastructure and Digital Service product rollout, it’s possible that IT development delays may impact deployment, reducing the ability to decrease legacy appeals.

**Mitigation:** At the Board, the rollout of Caseflow Reader went fairly smoothly and has assisted with improved productivity in the adjudication of the legacy claims. For example, approximately 94 percent of decisions dispatched in the month of April were drafted using Reader. Digital Service has successfully deployed other applications on or ahead of schedule, and the Board expects Digital Service will continue their record of success. In addition to technological improvements, the Board is: still working with external partners to educate them as to the potential benefits of the new system for certain claims, as opposed to the legacy system; working on internal process efficiencies such as a template update; and hiring additional staff that will assist with the adjudication of legacy appeals.

**Risk:** The backlog of Board legacy hearings will make it extremely difficult to reduce legacy inventory; the new law itself will not mitigate the backlog.

**Mitigation:** The law does change the manner and scheduling of hearings, which should allow for the Board to better manage this risk. The Board is looking into different ways to schedule hearings in the most efficient manner. Currently there is a designated team in Digital Service to assist with hearing scheduling.

## Section 4 - Pilot Programs to Test Assumptions

### (a) AUTHORIZATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—*The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out such programs as the Secretary considers appropriate to test any assumptions relied upon in developing the comprehensive plan required by section 3(a) and to test the feasibility and advisability of any facet of the new appeals system.*

(2) REPORTING REQUIRED.—*Whenever the Secretary determines, based on the conduct of a program under paragraph (1), that legislative changes to the new appeals system are necessary, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives notice of such determination.*

### **VBA's Test Program: RAMP**

VA is using the authority under Section 4(a) of the Appeals Modernization Act to test assumptions on which it relied in development of this comprehensive plan for processing of legacy appeals and implementing the new system. With the support of external stakeholders, VA has administered a new program known as RAMP to test certain facets of the new process. RAMP allows eligible Veterans with active legacy compensation benefit appeals to opt into VBA's supplemental claim or higher-level review lanes in the new appeals system. As noted in VA's last update to this comprehensive plan, RAMP has been in operation since November 1, 2017. RAMP continues to provide data that will inform VA of many matters such as: Veterans' preferences and behavior, Veterans' decisions to elect to participate in the new process, the distribution of elections among the new process lanes, appropriate work credit for claims adjudicators, Veteran's preferences for resolution of disagreements, workload and resource capacity estimates for ROs, and many other processing metrics for the new system.

#### Startup Phase

In the startup phase for RAMP VBA began by testing 500 of the oldest appellants who have a compensation-related benefit appeal pending. VA determined that compensation appeals were the most appropriate to develop modeling assumptions due to the need to test the complex workload and capacity issues involved with compensation claims. In addition, as the majority of the pending legacy appeals inventory involves compensation claims, it is critical that VA accurately forecast and develop assumptions associated with compensation-related staffing, production, and inventory.

VBA consolidated the processing of the first 500 potential responses to the ARC to facilitate data collection and rapid change management. The close proximity of the ARC to VBA decision makers allowed for improved communication and response times.

VBA developed and implemented processes, procedures, and system updates that will not only be used during RAMP, but will support the new framework upon full implementation. Some of these developments included:

- Opt-in and decision notices;
- Caseflow Intake;
- Tracking of election responses;
- Claim labels to control higher-level review and supplemental claim elections;

- Training and outreach materials; and
- Review rights.

In developing materials for RAMP, VA worked closely with VSOs and other stakeholders to gather feedback on opt-in notices, decision notification letters, call center scripts, and RAMP standard operating procedures. As VA received feedback on the message content, structure, and readability, VA made adjustments to the materials. In addition, VA worked directly with Veterans to obtain their opinions and suggestions on what VA can do to make RAMP opt-in letters clear and concise.

For certain tasks related to processing incoming elections, claims processors will use a new system developed by Digital Service known as Caseflow Intake. Caseflow Intake is a semi-automated system that automatically establishes EPs and closes VACOLS records on RAMP-eligible cases. The system is more streamlined than current manual EP establishment procedures and minimizes human error, and improves efficiency by reducing the complexity of analysis.

Roll-Out Phase

In the rollout phase, which began in April 2018, VBA will continue to collect and analyze data as RAMP expands to more stations to determine production metrics per job title, cycle times, and production and workload capacities. VBA is currently rolling out RAMP to additional ROs, with a target of expanding to 10 ROs by the conclusion of the program. The tentative roll-out schedule is below; however, stations will begin to participate in RAMP based on workload capacity needs. When the workload capacity of one station is met, the next station will be introduced. In addition, by rolling out the program to other ROs, VA will be able to determine how workload allocations will impact modeling assumptions.

RAMP processing site personnel include appeals personnel such as Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSR), Veterans Service Representatives (VSR), Senior Veterans Service Representatives (SVSR), and DROs, and Veterans Service Center Intake Personnel and Quality Review Specialists (Authorization and Rating).

RAMP Site	Go Live Date
Denver	April 2, 2018
Phoenix	April 15, 2018
Waco	April 15, 2018
Seattle	April 29, 2018
St. Petersburg	April 29, 2018
Atlanta	May 13, 2018
San Diego	May 27, 2018
St. Paul	June 10, 2018
Winston Salem	August 5, 2018
Cleveland	August 5, 2018

Training Requirements

All RAMP processing site personnel must complete mandatory training courses before processing claims under RAMP. The mandatory RAMP training curriculum includes RAMP prerequisites, overview courses, and refresher trainings with variations in the subjects taught

and duration of training based on employee positions. VBA conducts training using in-person and virtual learning environments. Employee feedback is used to support updates to the curriculum and development of training materials for full implementation of the new system. The following table provides a description of the core training courses. See appendix B for a detailed list of the training courses that includes the audience, delivery methods, and course numbers.

Course Title	Description
Introduction to P.L. 115-55 & RAMP	This course will provide an overview of the Appeals Modernization Act. It will provide students with an understanding of RAMP and the supplemental claim and higher-level review lanes.
RAMP Intake Procedures	This course will provide an overview of the intake procedures for receiving opt-in elections and lane selections and how to route misdirected mail. This training will explain the required actions and systems used to track and control RAMP elections.
RAMP Higher-Level Review Procedures	This course will provide an overview of the higher-level review process to include how to conduct informal conferences. This course will provide students with an understanding of the term "maximum benefit" and when a claim must be deferred for further development.
RAMP Development Actions	This course will outline the development actions required under RAMP. This course will cover Withdrawal Letters, deferrals, and other development actions completed under RAMP. By the end of the course, students will be able to make a RAMP end product ready for decision.
RAMP Decisions	This course will provide an overview of the new 8-point notice requirements in P.L. 115-55 and how VA will implement those requirements through RAMP decisions.
RAMP Improved Decision Notices	This course will explain the notification letter requirements for RAMP decisions. The course will discuss the "RAMP Review Rights" and "RAMP Selection" documents.
RAMP Refresher Training	This course will provide additional in-depth training on RAMP processing, discuss best practices and issue an end-of course assessment. This course will use virtual instructor led demonstrations with live casework assigned to all participation employees.

As of April 2018, VA has provided training to personnel at the ARC and the following ROs: Denver, Phoenix, Waco, Seattle, and San Diego. As the election rate increases and the need for additional offices to process RAMP elections arises, VA will continue to provide training to ROs prior to their participation in RAMP.

#### Outreach/Communications

While VA has received positive feedback and support for RAMP from Veterans and their representatives at the national and headquarters level, VA has identified an opportunity to conduct more deliberate outreach and communication with VSOs and other stakeholders across the nation. As such, the AMO conducted targeted outreach travel events to several ROs to meet with Congressional staffers, VSO representatives, private attorneys, and claims agents on RAMP. VA will be scheduling and carrying out outreach to other ROs in following months.



In an effort to increase the opt-in election rate, VA has employed several strategies. During January 2018, VA released a comprehensive communications package and hosted a call with all of VBA's RO Directors to discuss the materials that will assist with the marketing of the program through regularly scheduled local outreach events. VA is also in the process of developing a strategic engagement and communications plan to support the RAMP program and later the full implementation of the new appeals process. VA is exploring the use of phased communications products that encourage transparency of the process as well as inform Veterans of their choices through educational videos, print media, updated web content, and email communications.

Beginning on January 15, 2018, on the 15th of every month, VA mails follow-up letters to those Veterans who received initial invitations at the beginning of the prior month, but had yet to opt-in after 45 days of the initial mailing. VA also amended the list of eligible Veterans who would receive an invitation in the monthly batch mailings. The initial assumption was that Veterans whose appeals have been pending the longest would most likely choose to opt-in to RAMP for the prospect of a faster decision on the appeal. After a slower than anticipated start with obtaining RAMP participants, VA altered the targeted mailings to also include Veterans who filed an NOD with a VA decision on a compensation benefit within the last month. This produced a very positive impact on the participation rate as approximately 70 percent of notice recipients left the legacy NOD stage to participate in RAMP.

As of April 2, 2018, VA sent notices to approximately 184,000 eligible Veterans inviting them to opt into RAMP. VA will continue to disseminate monthly batches of letters of increased size and scope of the appellant population through December 2018 to extend invitations to more than 400,000 Veterans with legacy appeals pending. Additionally, on April 2, 2018, VA removed the requirement for eligible Veterans to have received an invitation or notice letter from VA prior to participating in the program. VA will now accept opt-in elections from any Veteran that meets the eligible criteria for the program. A copy of the notice letter and RAMP opt-in election form are now available on VA's internet site, [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov), for use by all eligible Veterans. Veterans can also check to see if they have an appeal that meets the RAMP eligibility criteria by visiting [Vets.gov](http://Vets.gov), which now features a new tool that allows Veterans to check the status and stage of any pending appeals.

### Overall Status

As of March 31, 2018, 7,105 Veterans opted into RAMP, resulting in the withdrawal of 8,856 legacy appeals. Under the RAMP process, multiple legacy appeals are combined into one RAMP claim, therefore, legacy appeals inventory has been reduced at a rate nearly 20 percent greater than that of the count of RAMP participants. The tables below provide information on RAMP elections, production, timeliness, decision outcomes, and award payments through end of March 2018.

RAMP Data as of March 31, 2018:

Higher-Level Review vs Supplemental Lane Selection (Pending & Completed):				
	Pending	% of Total	Total Completed	Average Days to Complete
Higher-Level Review	4353	64.9%	435	49.9
Supplemental Lane	2352	35.1%	93	60.4
<b>Total RAMP</b>	<b>6705</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>51.8</b>

Amount Paid To Date	
Higher-Level Review	\$7,769,113.67
Supplemental Lane	\$904,501.61
Total	\$8,673,615.28

Claim and Issue Decision Outcomes				
Lane	Claims Granted	Claims Denied	Issues Granted	Issues Denied
Higher-Level Review	216	187	547	1117
Supplemental Lane	36	52	68	242
Total	252	239	615	1359

Grant & Denied Rates				
Lane	Claims Granted	Claims Denied	Issues Granted	Issues Denied
Higher-Level Review	53.6%	46.4%	32.9%	67.1%
Supplemental Lane	40.9%	59.1%	21.9%	78.1%
Total	51.3%	48.7%	31.2%	68.8%

### Lessons Learned

VBA has already gained valuable lessons learned from the first 5 months of RAMP and made adjustments as needed. Since November 2017 to end of January 2018, a total of 15,500 initial batch mailings were sent to appellants with some of the oldest appeals by stage. Starting in February 2018, VA continues to mail invitations to the oldest appellants in each stage, but also sends approximately 12,000 invitations to newly established appeals. This allows VA to test the assumption whether the age and stage of pending appeal impacts the election rate.

Additionally, slowly removing the restrictions related to who may qualify to participate in RAMP has significantly aided in allowing VA to assess and refine the process. As of April 2, 2018, a Veteran is no longer required to be invited to participate in RAMP.

The average processing time is within the goal of 125 days or less. Although the sample size is small, the early success is encouraging. VBA has been able to baseline processing times under the same framework as the new appeals system, allowing VBA to more accurately model capacity.

While the opt-in rate was 2.8 percent as of the end of January 2018, VA recognized that only about 5,500 Veterans had the notices for the full 60-day response period in which to respond to the invite, although this time period is not required for RAMP processing. Since that time, the opt-in rate has more than doubled to 8.3 percent as of March 31, 2018. With the April 2, 2018 removal of the requirement that a RAMP eligible Veteran must receive a RAMP opt-in letter prior to participation, VBA anticipates a significant increase in RAMP participation. VBA

continues to send follow-up letters to Veterans invited to opt-in, is conducting outreach, is conducting follow-up phone calls with Veterans, and is working with VSOs and Military Service Organizations to inform Veterans and their representatives about RAMP. VBA is providing RO Directors fact sheets and talking points to aid in their communications with stakeholders and providing them lists of monthly opt-in letter recipients that they can share with the Veterans' local representatives. VBA's alterations to the processes have had a positive effect, resulting in nearly tripling the RAMP opt-in rate from the end of January to the end of March, from 2.8 percent to 8.3 percent.

In order to increase the numbers of opt-ins, which is important to both rapidly reducing legacy appeals and validating systems, processes, and procedures for the new claims and appeal system, VBA is encouraging VSOs to act on a Veteran's behalf to elect participation in RAMP. By both expanding the number of eligible cases and improving the opt-in rate, VBA intends to create a positive experience for Veterans, achieve a meaningful reduction in legacy appeals, and capture solid data on which to continue development of the new claims and appeals system.

#### Close-Out

During the close-out phase, VA intends to assess the results from RAMP as they relate to Veteran behavior, work production, and inventory measures. VA intends to use this information to more accurately forecast the field resources required to implement and administer the new appeals system and resources required to address the appeals of decisions on legacy claims.

VBA is working to further refine methods for evaluating the success of RAMP and informing its efforts towards full implementation of the Appeals Modernized Act.

## **Boards' Test Programs: BEAAM and Implementation of RAMP**

The Board is implementing two test programs that will allow VA to make predictions regarding Veteran behavior, resource allocation, and timeliness in the new system.

**BEAAM:** On May 1, 2018, the Board implemented a small scale test program, BEAAM. The Board and Digital Service are partnering with Veterans' representatives to identify 50 Veterans who are dissatisfied with a recent claim decision. These Veterans will participate in a study that allows them the option of appealing directly to the Board or seeking a review in RAMP. This program will allow the Board to collect preliminary data about Veterans' choices and experiences, which will allow VA to construct models and tests that account for observed preferences.

BEAAM at a glance:

- Partner with Paralyzed Veterans of America, California Department of Veterans Affairs, and the National Organization of Veterans' Advocates to target approximately 50 Veterans who are dissatisfied with a recent claim decision.
- Participants opt in by requesting review by the Board under the new process or seeking a review in RAMP with VBA.
- BEAAM will rely on representatives (not VBA) to identify participants.
- Digital Service user research will collect data on Veteran preferences.

**Board's Phased Implementation of RAMP:** Currently, Veterans who receive a RAMP decision have the option of appealing to the Board. In October 2018, the Board will begin adjudicating the first of these appeals in a phased-in test of processes and technology. The Board will prioritize legacy appeals and RAMP appeals in which the Veteran did not submit additional evidence or request a hearing. Implementing RAMP will allow the Board to identify and address potential issues and risks relating to implementation of the new framework.

Board's Phased Implementation of RAMP at a glance:

- Draw from RAMP participants who appeal to the Board after receiving a RAMP decision
- Reduce risk by incrementally rolling out processes and technology in the months leading up to full implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act.
- Identify and address potential issues and risks relating to implementation of the new framework.

The phased implementation approach to RAMP implementation and the BEAAM program will allow the Board to continue delivering decisions to legacy appellants at historic levels, while collecting valuable data about implementation of the new framework. The Board has and will engage all stakeholders before rolling out these test programs.

The Board will begin to participate in RAMP with a gradual phase-in starting in October 2018. The Board does not anticipate allocating any FTEs exclusively to this test program. Instead, all FTEs involved in the program will incorporate decisions on RAMP appeals into their current workflow. All attorneys and Veterans Law Judges at the Board will be well-equipped to adjudicate appeals in both systems, as the Board has already begun training regarding RAMP and full implementation. Therefore, it will not be necessary to allocate dedicated personnel to the Board's RAMP participation.

Together, the Board's two test programs will assist in determining how best to monitor and assess the new appeals process compared to the legacy process. For example, BEAAM will assist with the collection of data on Veterans' preferences. The implementation of RAMP at the Board will test processes and technology. The information learned from these programs will shape and inform how the Board sets a targeted and balanced set of goals and measures, to include timeliness goals and measures of accuracy, satisfaction, cost and related baseline data.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A –Integrated Master Schedule

ID	Name	Start	Finish	In Progress Complete	Owner
1.0	<b>Policy Infrastructure</b>	1/18/2018	2/24/2019		VA
1.1	<b>Regulations</b>	1/24/2017	2/24/2019		VBA/BVA
1.1.1	Proposed Rule (PR) to OOREG		1/24/2018	Complete	VBA/BVA
1.1.2	OGC clears PR	1/24/2018	3/25/2018	Complete on 4/20/2018	VBA/BVA
1.1.3	OOREG submits PR to OMB	3/25/2018	4/7/2018	Complete on 4/26/2018	VBA/BVA
1.1.4	OMB clears PR, PR published in Federal Register	4/7/2018	7/6/2018		VBA/BVA
1.1.5	Public comment period	7/6/2018	9/4/2018	Not Started	VBA/BVA
1.1.6	Edits based on public comment & send to OOREG	9/4/2018	11/3/2018	Not Started	VBA/BVA
1.1.7	Publish regulations	11/3/2018	1/19/2019	Not Started	VBA/BVA
1.2	<b>Forms</b>	1/18/2018	11/5/2018		VBA/BVA
1.2.1	Draft forms		1/18/2018	Complete	VBA/BVA
1.2.2	Receive VSO/Stakeholder feedback on external forms	1/18/2018	1/23/2018	Complete	VBA/BVA
1.2.3	Submit package for Federal Register notice	4/11/2018	4/25/2018	In Progress	VBA/BVA
1.2.4	Federal Register notice of proposed forms and changes	4/25/2018	5/2/2018	Not Started	VBA/BVA
1.2.5	Public comment period	5/2/2018	7/1/2018	Not Started	VBA/BVA
1.2.6	Respond to public comments	7/1/2018	7/31/2018	Not Started	VBA/BVA
1.2.7	Final Federal Register notice	7/31/2018	8/30/2018	Not Started	VBA/BVA
1.2.8	Submit to OMB	8/30/2018	9/6/2018	Not Started	VBA/BVA
1.2.9	OMB reviews/approves forms	9/6/2018	11/5/2018	Not Started	VBA/BVA
1.3	<b>Policy</b>	11/22/2017	2/1/2018		VA

1.3.1	Gather SOPs for current Board policy	3/1/2018	3/30/2018	Complete	BVA
1.3.2	Identify revisions needed to SOPs to implement AMA	4/1/2018	5/31/2018		BVA
1.3.3	Work with Board leadership to generate AMA SOPs	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started	BVA
1.3.4	Draft update to Purplebook (Board policy guide) to include AMA SOPs	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started	BVA
1.3.5	Internal Board concurrence on Purplebook changes	9/1/2018	9/30/2018	Not Started	BVA
1.3.6	Share drafted Purplebook updated with VSOs	10/1/2018	10/14/2018	Not Started	BVA
1.3.7	Publish updates to Purplebook	10/15/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started	BVA
1.3.8	Draft Notice Letters	2/1/2018	11/1/2018	In Progress	VBA
1.3.9	Higher-Level Review	1/26/2018	12/3/2018	In Progress	VBA
1.3.10	Manual updates	3/1/2018	1/31/2019	In Progress	VBA
1.3.11	Opt-In Notices	1/17/2018	10/30/2018	In Progress	VBA
1.3.12	Supplemental Lane	10/1/2017	12/3/2018	In Progress	VBA
1.3.13	Supplemental Lane - National Cemetery Administration	8/24/2017	8/28/2018	In Progress	NCA
1.3.14	HLR Process - National Cemetery Administration	8/24/2017	9/3/2018	In Progress	NCA
1.3.15	Notice Letters - National Cemetery Administration	11/28/2017	9/3/2018	In Progress	NCA
1.3.16	Opt-In Notices - National Cemetery Administration	3/1/2018	1/31/2019	In Progress	NCA
1.3.17	Opt-In Procedures - National Cemetery Administration	8/28/2017	12/29/2017	In Progress	NCA

1.3.18	Manual updates - NCA	8/24/2017	1/31/2019	In Progress	NCA
1.3.19	Policy Updates - VHA				VHA
2.0	<b>Process Modeling (Revised Legacy and New)</b>	1/12/2018	3/24/2018		
2.1	Preliminary Design Review (Legacy)	1/12/2018	1/28/2018	Complete	BVA
2.2	Final Design Review (Legacy)	1/29/2018	2/14/2018	Complete	BVA
2.3	Redirection - combine legacy and new process efforts and accelerate	2/15/2018	2/26/2018	Complete	BVA
2.4	Conduct site visit	2/27/2018	3/1/2018	Complete	BVA
2.5	Provide draft 80 percent solution (Legacy and New process models) to Board	3/2/2018	3/8/2018	Complete	BVA
2.6	Board review and feedback	3/8/2018	3/14/2018	Complete	BVA
2.7	Provide Final 80 percent solution (Legacy and New Process Models) to Board	3/15/2018	3/21/2018		BVA
2.8	Finalize Final Process mapping and focus on continuous improvement – 90 percent solution	3/22/2018	3/24/2018		BVA
2.9	Finalize Final Process mapping and focus on continuous improvement – 95 percent solution	4/28/2018	5/31/2018	Not Started	BVA
2.10	Monitor Implementation and Make Adjustments as needed	3/24/2018	2/14/2019		BVA
3.0	<b>Information</b>	1/1/2018	12/31/2018		



	<b>Technology Modernization</b>				
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Caseflow Intake</b>	1/1/2018	6/30/2018		OI&T/DSVA
3.1.1	Discovery and development	1/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.1.2	Implement functionality to receive RAMP NODs	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.1.3	Release reporting functionality and integrate with national work queue	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.1.4	Support processing of official forms	7/1/2018	9/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.1.5	Release initial reporting capability	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.1.6	Develop functionality to track dispositions for SCs and HLRs	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Caseflow Queue</b>	1/1/2018	12/31/2018		OI&T/DSVA
3.2.1	Discovery and development	1/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.2.2	Release mocks to attorney staff	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.2.3	Release functionality to initial user base, test with admin staff	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.2.4	Release new functionality to additional users	7/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.2.5	Support Board pilot of RAMPed appeals	10/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Caseflow Status</b>	1/1/2018	9/30/2018		OI&T/DSVA
3.3.1	Finalize language, develop backend, and release v.2	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.3.2	Discovery on changes required for modernized appeals	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA

3.3.3	Ongoing discovery and development on changes required for modernized appeals	7/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.4	<b>Caseflow Reader</b>	1/1/2018	3/31/2018		OI&T/DSVA
3.4.1	Add features based on user feedback	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.5	<b>Caseflow Hearing Prep</b>	4/1/2018	6/30/2018		OI&T/DSVA
3.5.1	Complete pilot with judges	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.5.2	Release to all judges	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.6	<b>Caseflow Hearing Scheduling</b>	1/1/2018	3/30/2018		OI&T/DSVA
3.6.1	Onboard product owner for hearing scheduling	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.6.2	Present development plan and obtain FY 2019 scheduling policy from Board	1/1/2018	3/31/2018		OI&T/DSVA
3.6.3	Discovery and development	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.6.4	Release schedule allocation for FY 2019	7/1/2018	9/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.6.5	Discovery and development focused on placing Veterans into hearing slots	10/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress	OI&T/DSVA
3.7	<b>eFolder Express</b>			Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.8	<b>Caseflow Certification</b>			Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.9	<b>Caseflow Dispatch</b>			Complete	OI&T/DSVA
3.10.0	<b>VBMS</b>	10/9/2017	2/26/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.1.0	Routing of VBA-Level Reviews	12/19/2017	10/28/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.1.1	Routing of Higher-Level Reviews in NWQ (BSD290)	12/19/2017	8/12/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI

3.10.1.2	Auto-establish status of EP030 to RTW/RFD (CO_UC150)	1/22/2018	10/28/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.1.3	Add EP 030s and 040s to NWQ (CO_UC502)	1/22/2018	8/12/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.1.4	Route HLRs to ROs from NWQ (Rating Claims) (CO_UC501)	1/26/2018	8/12/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.1.5	Auto-Establishing Status for EP 030 (ACR788)	1/19/2018	1/16/2019	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.2.0	IT Impacts to VBMS Rating	12/14/2017	1/16/2019	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.2.1	Capture and persist the disposition of all decisions for reporting purposes (BSD295)	2/26/2018	8/12/2018	In Planning/Design	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.2.2	Create functionality to capture all favorable findings of fact for ratings claims (BSD296)	2/26/2018	8/12/2018	In Planning/Design	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.2.3	Update all standard data fragments to include all applicable regulations (TBD)	2/16/2018	10/28/2018	In Planning/Design	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.2.4	Auto-establish a supplemental review upon finding of a DTA error (disposing of claim as DTA error in VBMS-R) (BSD295)	2/26/2018	10/28/2018	In Planning/Design	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.2.5	Functionality to capture an additional grant of benefits (this is a reporting	2/26/2018	10/28/2018	In Planning/Design	OI&T/OBPI

	requirement—will need further defining) (TBD)				
3.10.2.6	Tracking “favorable findings of fact (FFF)” for Rating decisions (BSD296)	2/26/2018	8/12/2018	In Planning/Design	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.3.0	VBMS-Awards Enhancements	2/2/2018	10/28/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.3.1	All FF must be applied to all future decisions. (BSD294)	2/16/2018	10/28/2018	In Planning/Design	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.3.2	The VBMS-A application will need to be able to capture whenever there is an “additional grant of benefits” for reporting purposes.	2/16/2018	10/28/2018	In Planning/Design	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.3.3	The VBMS-A application will need to be able to capture whenever an HLR is returned due to a DTA error/reporting purposes. (BSD293)	2/2/2018	8/12/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.4	Metrics & Reporting	2/1/2018	10/28/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.10.5	Improved VBA Decision Notice (Automated - VBMS)	10/9/2017	2/9/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.11	Appeals Claims Establishment	5/1/2018	12/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.12	Appeals Processing Support	5/1/2018	12/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.13	Tracking and Reporting	5/1/2018	12/30/2018	In Progress	OI&T/OBPI
3.14	IT Plan - VHA	3/26/2018	12/31/2018		VHA
3.15	VBMS (Veterans Health				VHA

	<b>Administration)</b>				
3.16	Communications				VHA
3.17	Change Management				VHA
3.18	Implementation				VHA
3.19	Training				VHA
3.20	Hosting				VHA
3.21	<b>Internal Tracking Tool</b>	4/27/2018	6/30/2018		VHA
3.22	Communications				VHA
3.23	Change Management				VHA
3.24	Implementation				VHA
3.25	Training				VHA
3.26	Hosting				VHA
3.27	<b>Caseflow Software</b>				VHA
3.28	Communications				VHA
3.29	Change Management				VHA
3.30	Implementation				VHA
3.31	Training				VHA
3.32	Hosting				VHA
3.33	<b>VACOLS</b>				VHA
3.34	Communications				VHA
3.35	Change Management				VHA
3.36	Implementation				VHA
3.37	Training				VHA
3.38	Hosting				VHA
3.39	<b>Epics</b>	3/26/2018	5/30/2018		VHA
3.40	Cross Reference VHA/VBA Congressional requirement in Public Law for VHA compliance differences				VHA
3.41	Establish Independent VHA requirements (NON-VBA requirements)				VHA
3.42	Establish SME for each VHA	Mon 3/26/18	Mon 3/26/18		VHA

	organization				
3.43	Receive updated current denial letter from SME's (with 8pt requirement from Veterans Appeals Improvement Modernization Act of 2017)	Mon 3/26/18	Mon 3/26/18		VHA
3.44	Capture the business rule decision points from SME's and updated letters	Mon 4/2/18	Fri 4/6/18		VHA
3.45	Populate Decision Point Library with all information provided from SME's	Mon 4/9/18	Mon 4/9/18		VHA
3.46	Request Approval to send updated letters to OGC and Regulatory Affairs for Approval	Mon 4/9/18	Mon 4/9/18		VHA
3.47	Meet Core Leadership team on Decision Point Library - Edit or disseminate to EPIC team	Mon 4/9/18	Mon 4/9/18		VHA
3.48	Work with EPIC team to compile Decision Point Library into OIT EPIC template	Mon 4/9/18	Fri 4/13/18		VHA
3.49	Work with EPIC team to compile Decision Point Library into OIT EPIC requirements document	Mon 4/9/18	Fri 4/13/18		VHA
3.50	Work with EPIC team to Develop VBMS and System requirements				VHA

	specification document in Word				
3.51	New Cross Reference paragraph number from Systems Requirements Specifications Documents to Decision Point within Decision Point Library				VHA
3.52	Work with EPIC team to Develop IT system requirements				VHA
3.53	Work with EPIC Team to compile information				VHA
3.54	Meet Core Leadership team to review internal tool- Edit or disseminate to EPIC team	Mon 4/9/18	Mon 4/9/18		VHA
3.55	Submit both Epics to OIT				VHA
4.0	<b>Enabling Infrastructure</b>	1/1/2018	10/1/2018		BVA
4.1	<b>Office Space / Logistics</b>	1/1/2018	5/1/2018		BVA
4.1.1	Board obtains furniture	1/1/2018	5/1/2018		BVA
4.1.2	Board FTE move into new finished space (2E.515)	12/1/2017	4/1/2018	Complete	BVA
4.1.3	Board FTE move into new finished space (5E.408)	12/1/2017	5/1/2018		BVA
4.1.4	Board FTE move into new finished space (3E.OALC)	12/1/2017	3/15/2018	Complete	BVA
4.1.5	Board utilizing conference room space, as needed, to fill any gaps	3/1/2018	4/1/2018	Complete	BVA
4.1.6	Ongoing planning	1/9/2018	1/31/2018	Complete	BVA

	and collaboration with Office of Administration (OA) to meet the Board's space needs				
4.1.7	Obtain IT equipment for new Board FTE and add telework bandwidth as needed (ongoing)	1/31/2018	2/10/2018	Complete	BVA
4.1.8	Acquire facilities and equipment (Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC))	8/1/2017	12/1/2017	Complete	BVA
4.1.9	Event Management Systems (EMS) training (to manage telework space)	12/1/2017	2/15/2018	Complete	BVA
4.1.8	<b>Enabling Infrastructure</b>	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.1.9	<b>Office Space / Logistics</b>	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.1.10	Ongoing planning and collaboration with OA to meet the Standup's space needs	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.1.11	Acquire Space	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.1.12	Obtains furniture	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.1.13	FTE move into new finished space	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.1.14	Obtain IT equipment for new Standup FTE and add telework bandwidth as needed (ongoing)	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.1.15	Acquire facilities and equipment (OALC)	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA



4.1.16	EMS training	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.2	Hiring & HR	1/18/2018	10/1/2018		BVA
4.2.1	Post vacancy announcement	1/18/2018	1/31/2018	Complete	BVA
4.2.2	Review certificates of qualified applicants (CHRMO) and BVA Ranking Panel	1/31/2018	2/16/2018	Complete	BVA
4.2.3	Conduct interviews, written assessments, tentative offers, fingerprinting, background investigations, salary negotiations, EOD negotiations (confirmed EOD)	2/21/2018	3/23/2018	Complete	BVA
4.2.4	Onboard new employees (1st EOD - 3/5, 2nd EOD - 4/2, 3rd EOD - 4/30, 4th EOD - 6/11, 5th EOD - 7/9, 6th EOD; 8/6, 9/5, 10/1, 10/29, 11/26 and 12/10)	3/5/2018	10/1/2018		BVA
4.2.5	HLR Position - National Cemetery Administration	8/23/2017	4/6/2018	Complete	NCA
4.2.6	Enabling Infrastructure				VHA
4.2.7	National Team	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.2.8	Formation of National Office	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.2.9	Develop Master Operating Plan (VBA Model?)	2/26/2018	6/30/2018		VHA
4.2.10	Org Chart	2/26/2018	6/30/2018		VHA
4.2.11	SOP	2/26/2018	6/30/2018		VHA
4.2.12	Stand up 10-15 Staff 1-GS15, 1-GS14, Remainder GS9,11,12,13's	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA

4.2.13	Meet with VBA Contracting Offices				VHA
4.2.14	Digitization contract				VHA
4.2.15	Mail service contract				VHA
4.1.16	EMS training	2/26/2018	11/30/2018		VHA
4.3.0	Position Descriptions & Other HR	10/1/2017	6/1/2018	In Progress	VBA
4.4.0	Notify Union (VHA)				VHA
4.5.0	HLR Position - National Cemetery Administration				
5.0	Change Management Strategy (Strat Comms, Outreach, Workforce Realign*)				BVA
5.1	Create Change Management Strategy (expected start 4/23)				BVA
5.1.5	Execute Change Management Plan				BVA
					BVA
5.2	Customer Service (Outreach) - Placeholder for overall CM Strategy				BVA
5.2.1	Appeals Modernization Surveys				BVA
5.2.6	Update BVA Customer Service Website				BVA
5.2.7	Develop new language for status response correspondence (for letter, email and phone contact)				BVA

5.2.8	Communicate changes to the appeals process to the White House Veterans Hotline & the VA's Office of Client Relations Network Senior Leadership				BVA
5.2.0	Customer Service (VHA Outreach)				VHA
5.2.1	Appeals Modernization Surveys				VHA
5.2.2	Survey development plan				VHA
5.2.3	Phase 1 - Research				VHA
5.2.4	Phase 2 - Testing				VHA
5.2.5	Phase 3 - Fielding (Go-Live)				VHA
5.2.6	Update Customer Service Website				VHA
5.2.7	Develop new language for status response correspondence (for letter, email and phone contact)				VHA
5.2.8	Communicate changes to the appeals process to the White House Veterans Hotline & the VA's Office of Client Relations Network Senior Leadership				VHA
5.3	Knowledge Management (Training)	2/1/2018	2/14/2019		BVA
5.3.1	Q2 2018 - (Feb. 1 - Mar. 31, 2018)	2/1/2018	3/31/2018		BVA
	Initial Change Management Meeting	3/7/2018	3/7/2018	Complete	BVA
	Collect	2/1/2018	3/31/2018		BVA

	information regarding legacy process and new system process from Board & DS				
	Develop uniform structure for training materials, SOPs and other documents	2/1/2018	3/31/2018		BVA
	Develop framework for large scale VAIMA training	2/1/2018	3/30/2018	Complete	BVA
	Develop materials for large scale VAIMA training	2/1/2018	3/29/2018	Complete	BVA
	Prepare materials for large scale VAIMA training	2/1/2018	3/30/2018	Complete	BVA
	Complete training on RAMP with brief overview for administrative and support staff	2/1/2018	3/30/2018	Complete	BVA
	Complete training on RAMP with brief overview of VAIMA for attorneys and VLJs	2/1/2018	3/14/2018	Complete	BVA
	Complete training on RAMP with brief overview of VAIMA for VSOs	2/1/2018	3/15/2018	Complete	BVA
	Initial process modeling for BVA Appeals process	2/1/2018	3/13/2018	Complete	BVA
	LRP meeting with Chiefs in Charge and Admin Branch Chiefs to discuss RAMP	3/15/2018	3/15/2018	Complete	BVA
	BWT - RAMP	3/15/2018	3/15/2018	Complete	BVA
	BWT - RAMP	3/27/2018	3/27/2018	Complete	BVA
<b>5.3.2</b>	<b>Q3 - (Apr. 1 - May 31, 2018)</b>	4/1/2018	5/31/2018		BVA
	Present large-scale	4/4/2018	4/4/2018		BVA

	VAIMA training to Board staff				
	Upload training documents and SOPs to SharePoint site		3/27/2018	Complete	BVA
	Review discuss, and edits contents of training modules and SOPs with each SME	4/1/2018	5/31/2018		BVA
	Present staff members of each BVA branch with survey to ensure procedures memorialized in training modules accurately reflect the legacy appeals process	4/1/2018	5/31/2018		BVA
	BWT - The AMA and its impact on the Board (subject to CLM approval) (session 1)	4/3/2018	4/3/2018		BVA
	Brown Bag Session on RAMP and all things AMA	4/9/2018	4/9/2018		BVA
	BWT - The AMA and its impact on the Board (session 2 - repeat)	4/11/2018	4/11/2018		BVA
<b>5.3.3</b>	<b>Q3 &amp; Q4 - (Jun 1 - Aug 31, 2018)</b>	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started	
	Develop joint training with VSOs on VAIMA	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started	BVA
	Prepare in-depth training materials on proposed regulations implementing VAIMA	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started	BVA
	Present staff members of each BVA Branch with a	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started	BVA

	survey to ensure procedures memorialized in modules accurately reflects the legacy process and proposed new system process.				
<b>5.3.4</b>	<b>Q4 - (Sept. 1-30, 2018)</b>	9/1/2018	10/1/2018	Not Started	
	After notice and comment period concludes and regulations are promulgated, review in-depth training materials and implement any changes	9/1/2018	10/1/2018	Not Started	BVA
	Present large-scale in-depth training to Board staff on VAIMA procedures under the new regulations.	9/1/2018	10/1/2018	Not Started	BVA
	Create any additional training materials needed for BVA RAMP pilot	9/1/2018	10/1/2018	Not Started	BVA
	Present staff members of each BVA Branch with a survey to ensure procedures memorialized in modules accurately reflect the legacy process and proposed new system process	9/1/2018	10/1/2018	Not Started	BVA
<b>5.3.5</b>	<b>Q1 - Q2 FY 2019 (Oct. 1, 2018 - Feb. 14, 2019)</b>	10/1/2018	2/14/2019	Not Started	
	Begin pilot RAMP program at BVA	10/1/2018	2/14/2019	Not Started	BVA

	Continue presenting large-scale trainings to Board staff on VAIMA procedures under the new regulations	10/1/2018	2/14/2019	Not Started	BVA
	Biweekly surveys to identify any missing training guidance or update existing training guidance	10/1/2018	2/14/2019	Not Started	BVA
	Present staff members of each BVA Branch with a survey to ensure procedures memorialized in modules accurately reflect the legacy process and proposed new system process	10/1/2018	2/14/2019	Not Started	BVA
5.3.6.0	<b>VBA Training</b>				VBA
5.3.6.1	COMP Training		30-Dec-18	Not Started	VBA
5.3.6.2	Insurance Service Training	5/31/2018	25-Jan-19	Not Started	VBA
5.3.6.3	Benefits Assistance Service Training	11/1/2018	1/1/2019	Not Started	VBA
5.3.6.4	Education Services Training	10/1/2018	1-Dec-18	Not Started	VBA
5.3.6.5	Pension Service Training	4/2/2018	11/30/2018	In Progress	VBA
5.3.6.6	Fiduciary Service Training	4/2/2018	11/30/2018	In Progress	VBA
5.3.6.7	Loan Guaranty Training	11/1/2018	1/1/2019	Not Started	VBA
5.3.6.8	Vocational Rehabilitation & Education Training	1/31/2018	10/31/2018	In Progress	VBA
5.3.7	NCA Training	4/2/2018	12/14/2018	In Progress	NCA
5.3.8	<b>Change Management Strategy (Strategic Communications, Outreach,</b>	2/26/2018	6/30/2018		VHA

	<b>Workforce Realign*)</b>				
5.3.8.1.0	<b>Create Change Management Strategy</b>				VHA
5.3.8.1.1	Convene workgroup to create change management strategy				VHA
5.3.8.1.1	Prepare draft of change management strategy				VHA
5.3.8.1.1	Gain concurrence on approach to change management strategy				VHA
5.3.8.1.1	Publish change management Strategy				VHA
5.3.8.1.1	Execute Change Management Plan				VHA
5.3.9.0	<b>Knowledge Management (Training)</b>	2/26/2018	7/31/2018	5.3.9	VHA
5.3.9.1	<b>Q3 2018 - ()</b>				VHA
5.3.9.2	Initial Change Management Meeting				VHA
5.3.9.3	Collect information regarding legacy process and new system process from Board & DS				VHA
5.3.9.4	Develop uniform structure for training materials, SOPs and other documents				VHA
5.3.9.5	Develop framework for large scale training				VHA
5.3.9.6	Develop materials for large scale				VHA



	training				
5.3.9.7	Prepare materials for large scale training				VHA
5.3.9.8	Upload training documents and SOPs to SharePoint site				VHA
5.3.9.9	Review discuss, and edits contents of training modules and SOPs with each SME				VHA
6.0	Reports	8/24/2017	11/15/2018		VA
6.1	Congressional Quarterly Update Report (90 day Report)	8/24/2017	11/22/2018	Complete	VA
6.1.1	Q1 - February 19th Congressional Update	1/20/2018	2/20/2018	Complete	VA
6.1.2	Q2 May 23rd Congressional Update	2/21/2018	5/20/2018		VA
6.1.3	Q3 August 23rd Congressional Update	5/21/2018	8/23/2018		VA
6.1.4	Q4 November 21st Congressional Update	8/24/2018	11/21/2018		VA
6.2	Quarterly APG Update to OMB	1/31/2018	11/9/2018		BVA
6.2.1	Q1 - February 7th APG Update	1/31/2018	2/7/2018		BVA
	Draft update QTR Report	1/31/2018	2/7/2018		BVA
6.2.2	Q2 - May 4th APG Update	4/27/2018	5/4/2018		BVA
	Draft update QTR Report	4/27/2018	5/4/2018		BVA
6.2.3	Q3 - August 10th APG Update	8/3/2018	8/10/2018		BVA
	Draft update QTR Report	8/3/2018	8/10/2018		BVA
6.2.4	Q4 - November 9th APG Update	11/2/2018	11/9/2018		BVA

	Draft update QTR Report	11/2/2018	11/9/2018		BVA
6.3.0	Lean Assessment Site Visits				VHA
6.3.1	Develop Visit plan				VHA
6.3.2	Standard Questions				VHA
6.3.3	Local Attendance				VHA
6.3.4	Current State				VHA
6.3.5	Future State				VHA
6.3.6	Root Cause Analysis				VHA
6.3.7	Notify Sites				VHA
6.3.8	Arrange Visits				VHA
6.3.9	Location A				VHA
6.3.10	Site Visit				VHA
6.3.11	Visit Summary				VHA
6.3.12	Location B				VHA
6.3.13	Site Visit				VHA
6.3.14	Visit Summary				VHA
6.3.15	Location C				VHA
6.3.16	Site Visit				VHA
6.3.17	Visit Summary				VHA
6.3.18	Establish Metrics for Measuring and Monitoring Performance	2/27/2018	2/28/2018		VHA
6.3.19	Backlog Metric	2/27/2018	2/28/2018		VHA
6.3.20	NOD Decision Metric				VHA
6.3.21	SOC Metric				VHA
6.3.22	Reduce Backlog	2/27/2018	12/31/2018		VHA
6.3.23	Track Inventory	2/27/2018	12/31/2018		VHA
6.3.24	Implement Inventory Reductions plan	2/26/2018	2/28/2018		VHA
6.3.25	Improve Veteran - VHA Communication				VHA
6.3.26	"Reduce incomplete" and "require additional information" delays				VHA

6.3.27	<b>Complete Project</b>	11/22/2017	2/14/2019		VHA
7.0.0	<b>RAMP</b>				VBA
7.1.0	Start Up	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.1	Performance Metrics and Reporting	9/5/2017	10/26/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.2	Performance metrics for RAMP process	9/5/2017	9/28/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.3	Reports, EDW Data, and statutory reporting requirements	9/5/2017	9/19/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.4	RAMP Intake Processing (Letter Creator Development)	9/5/2017	10/26/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.5	End Products (EP)/Claim Labels	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.6	Stakeholder Notification	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.7	RAMP Test Site/Tracking Requirements	9/5/2017	9/27/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.8	Communications	9/5/2017	2/14/2019	In Progress	VBA
7.1.9	Training	9/5/2017	10/30/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.10	Opt-in/Election Notice to Appellants	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.11	Document Labels	9/5/2017	9/27/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.12	Policy Letter/SOP	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.13	Higher-Level Review Decision Template	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete	VBA
7.1.14	"Review Rights" form for RAMP decisions	9/5/2017	10/27/2017	Complete	VBA
7.2.0	<b>Roll Out</b>	2/1/2018	8/31/2018	In Progress	VBA
7.2.1	Kick Off Call with RAMP Expansion Sites	2/1/2018	2/1/2018	Complete	VBA
7.2.2	RAMP Expansion Sites Kickoff Visits	2/5/2018	2/9/2018	Complete	VBA
7.2.3	Denver and Phoenix	6/4/2018	7/3/2018	Not Started	VBA

	<b>Implement RAMP</b>				
7.2.4	San Diego and Seattle Implement RAMP	3/1/2018	3/28/2018	Complete	VBA
7.2.5	Stations 5,6,7,8,9, and 10 Implement RAMP	4/2/2018	4/27/2018	In Progress	VBA
7.2.6	Stations 11,12,13,14, and 15 Implement RAMP	8/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started	VBA
7.3.0	<b>Mailings</b>	11/1/2017	12/1/2018	In Progress	VBA
7.3.1	1st Mailing	11/1/2017	11/1/2017	Complete	VBA
7.3.2	2nd Mailing	12/1/2017	12/1/2017	Complete	VBA
7.3.3	3rd Mailing	1/1/2018	1/1/2018	Complete	VBA
7.3.4	4th Mailing	2/1/2018	2/1/2018	Complete	VBA
7.3.5	5th Mailing	3/1/2018	3/1/2018	Complete	VBA
7.3.6	6th Mailing	4/1/2018	4/1/2018	Complete	VBA
7.3.7	7th Mailing	5/1/2018	5/1/2018	Not Started	VBA
7.3.8	8th Mailing	6/1/2018	6/1/2018	Not Started	VBA
7.3.9	9th Mailing	7/1/2018	7/1/2018	Not Started	VBA
7.3.10	10th Mailing	8/1/2018	8/1/2018	Not Started	VBA
7.3.11	11th Mailing	9/1/2018	9/1/2018	Not Started	VBA
7.3.12	12th Mailing	10/1/2018	10/1/2018	Not Started	VBA
7.3.13	13th Mailing	11/1/2018	11/1/2018	Not Started	VBA
7.3.14	14th Mailing	12/1/2018	12/1/2018	Not Started	VBA
7.4.0	Close Out	2/15/2019	5/10/2019	Not Started	VBA

## Appendix B –Training Requirements

### RAMP Training

RAMP is a test program that is open to eligible Veterans with active compensation benefit appeals only. RAMP allows eligible Veterans to participate in VBA's higher-level review and supplemental claim lanes. VBA developed the following list of courses to train employees at RAMP processing sites on the new lanes and processing guidelines. As RAMP is a test program, materials are updated on a regular basis as best practices or process improvements are identified.

Title/Topic	TMS Number	Intended Audience/ Category of Employees by Position	Training Development Date(s)	Training Deployment Date(s)	Delivery Method	Training Duration
Introduction to P.L. 115-55 & RAMP	4411580	RO Appeals Team personnel & Intake personnel	Oct. 2018 – ongoing	November 2018	Live Instructor Led	1 hour
RAMP Intake Procedures	4411581	RO Intake personnel	Oct. 2018 – ongoing	November 2018	Live Instructor Led	1 hour
RAMP Higher-Level Review Procedures	4411583	RO Appeals Team DROs	Oct. 2018 – ongoing	November 2018	Live Instructor Led	1 hour
RAMP Development Actions	4411582	RO Appeals Team VSRs	Oct. 2018 – ongoing	November 2018	Live Instructor Led	1 hour
RAMP Decisions	4411584	RO Appeals Team VSRs, RVSRs, DROs	Oct. 2018 – ongoing	November 2018	Live Instructor Led	1 hour
RAMP Improved Decision Notices	4411594	RO Appeals Team VSRs	Oct. 2018 – ongoing	November 2018	Live Instructor Led	1 hour
RAMP Refresher Training	4439835	RO Appeals Team personnel	Jan. 2018 – ongoing	March 2018	Virtual Instructor Led	8 hours
RAMP Resource Materials	4448010	RO Appeals Team personnel	Oct. 2018 – ongoing	April 2018	Online Self-Study	2 hours

## VBA Full Implementation Training Requirements

Business Line	Title/Topic	TMS Number	Intended Audience/ Category of Employees by Position	Training Development Date(s)	Training Deployment Date(s)	Delivery Method	Training Duration
Benefits Assistance Service	RAMP Training	4405105	National Call Center and Public Contact Team Employees	October 2017	October 31, 2017- November 9, 2017	Instructor -Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC PCR New Hire Appeals Process	1339474	New Hire National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor -Led	3 hours
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC PCR New Hire Status of Appeal	3838412	New Hire National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor -Led	5 hours
Benefits Assistance Service	NIRC PCR New Hire Status of Appeal	881528	New Hire National IRIS Response Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor -Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC PCR New Hire Understanding Rating Decisions & Notification Letters	3729193	New Hire National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor -Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC/N IRC PCR Refresher Appeals Process	3881571	National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor -Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC/N IRC PCR Refresher Status of Appeal	4406819 4406820	National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor -Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	PCT PCR New Hire Appeals Process	TBD	New Hire Public Contact Team PCRs	TBD	PCT New Hire Curriculum is new and rollout date is TBD	Instructor -Led	TBD
Benefits Assistance Service	PCT PCR New Hire Status of Appeal	TBD	New Hire Public Contact Team PCRs	TBD	PCT New Hire Curriculum is new and rollout date is TBD	Instructor -Led	TBD
Benefits Assistance Service	PCT PCR New Hire Understanding Rating Decisions & Notification	TBD	New Hire Public Contact Team PCRs 86	TBD	PCT New Hire Curriculum is new and rollout date is TBD	Instructor -Led	TBD

	Letters						
Benefits Assistance Service	PCT PCR Refresher Appeals Process	3881571	Public Contact Team PCR's	November 2018-December 2018	January 2019	Instructor-Led	1 hour
Education Service	How to Use Caseload Tool	4179627	QTS	TBD	TBD	TMS	.25hrs
Education Service	Education Service Processing Higher-Level of Reviews	TBD	QTS, C&L Staff	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Education Service	Education Service Processing Supplemental Claims	TBD	QTS, C&L Staff	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Education Service	Education Service Appeals Modernization Overview	TBD	QTS, VCEs, NCC, C&L Staff, SCOs	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Education Service	Education Service Appeals Modernization Notification Requirements	TBD	QTS, NCC, C&L Staff	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Education Service	Education Service Appeals Modernization Review Types and Forms	TBD	QTS, VCEs, NCC, C&L Staff, SCOs	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Education Service	Education Service Appeals Modernization Tracking Procedures	TBD	QTS, VCEs, C&L Staff	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Education Service	Addressing BVA Remands Due to Appeals Modernization	TBD	QTS, C&L Staff	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Insurance Service	SOP for the new model feature three lanes Higher-Level Review Supplemental Claim Lane Appeal Lane for Appeals to the Board	VA 4444111	Senior Veterans Claims Examiner (VCE) GS11 (8) Unit Chief GS12 (4) Section Chief (1) Division Chief (1) VCE GS7 (1) VCE GS9	12/03/18	01/22/19 - 1/25/19 Make-up class 01/28/19	Instructor-led	2 hours

			(20) Senior VCE GS11 (6) Unit Chief GS12 (3) Section Chief (1)				
Insurance Service	New Appeal letters	VA 4444111	TBD	08/31/18	TBD	TBD	TBD
Insurance Service	Manual Updates (M29-1, Part V) Appellate Procedures	VA 4444111	TBD	05/31/18	TBD	TBD	TBD
Insurance Service	Appeal Tracking Tool	VA 4444111	TBD	12/31/18	TBD	TBD	TBD
Loan Guaranty Service	Surviving Spouse COE Issuance and Denials and Appeals on COEs Training	VA 4158931	Loan Specialist	10/2015	11/2015	Classroom	24 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Duty to Assist (Intermediate)	1197931	Pension management center (PMC) employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Standardized VA Forms Part I	3914056	PMC employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	0.75 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Standardized VA Forms Part II	3914064	PMC employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	0.75 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Orientation	4179826	PMC employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	7 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Processing	4180046	PMC employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	6.25 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals DRO Review Process	4180677	PMC employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	3 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Introduction to Appeals	4193050	PMC employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	1.5 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals: SOC and SSOC	4179841	PMC employees	Aug 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	2 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Overview	4194306	PMC employees	Aug 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Modernization Overview	TBD	PMC employees	Aug 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Addressing Board Remands due to Appeals	TBD	PMC employees	Aug 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	2 hours



	Modernization						
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing Higher-Level Reviews	TBD	PMC DROs	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	3 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing Supplemental Claims	TBD	PMC employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	How to use Caseload	TBD	PMC Claims Assistants and Veteran Service Reps	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	1 hour
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Modernization Overview	TBD	Fiduciary hub employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Beneficiary Fiduciary Field System (BFFS) Appeals Workflow	TBD	Fiduciary hub employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	3 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing Higher-Level Reviews	TBD	GS-11 FSRs, Fiduciary hub coaches and assistant coaches	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	3 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing Supplemental Claims	TBD	Fiduciary hub employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	3 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing BVA Remands	TBD	Fiduciary hub employees	Aug. 1, 2018 – Sep. 30 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	2 hours
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	How to Use Caseload Tool	4179627	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), VRCs, and Program Support Personnel	Already developed	Already Deployed	On-line via TMS	1 hour
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals Modernization Overview	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory VRCs, and VRCs	Already developed	May – June 2018	Instructor led, web-based training	1 hour
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals Modernization Notification Requirements	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory VRCs, and VRCs	Start development in April 2018	July – August 2018	Instructor led, web-based training	1 hour

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals Modernization Review Types and Forms	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory VRCs, and VRCs	Start development in April 2018	July – August 2018	Instructor led, web-based training	1 hour
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals Modernization Tracking Procedures	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory VRCs, and VRCs	Start development in May 2018	September – October 2018	Instructor led, web-based training	1 hour
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals EPSS	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory VRCs, and VRCs	Start development in May 2018	November – December 2018	Self-paced on-line training	Self-paced
Compensation Service	Duty to Assist (Intermediate)	1197931	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	4 hours
Compensation Service	Standardized VA Forms Part I	3914056	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	0.75 hours
Compensation Service	Standardized VA Forms Part II	3914064	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	0.75 hours
Compensation Service	Appeals Orientation	4179826	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	7 hours
Compensation Service	Appeals Processing	4180046	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	6.25 hours

Compensation Service	Appeals DRO Review Process	4180677	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	3 hours
Compensation Service	Introduction to Appeals	4193050	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5 hours
Compensation Service	Appeals: SOC and SSOC	4179841	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2 hours
Compensation Service	Appeals Overview	4194306	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	4 hours
Compensation Service	Appeals Modernization Overview (Introduction to PL 115-55)	4411580	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual training	4 hours
Compensation Service	Addressing BVA Remands due to Appeals Modernization	TBD	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual training	2 hours
Compensation Service	Processing Higher-Level Reviews	TBD	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual training	3 hours
Compensation Service	Processing Supplemental Claims	TBD	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual training	4 hours

Compensation Service	How to use Caseload	TBD	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual training	1 hour
Compensation Service	Processing BVA Remands	TBD	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual and Live training	2 hours
Compensation Service	Rating Vision and Eye Conditions (Journey)	1209927	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	4 hours
Compensation Service	Accrued Ratings	1318128	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2 hours
Compensation Service	Rating Vision/Eye Conditions Wed-based Training	3724076	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	4 hours
Compensation Service	Automated Decision Letter Process for VBMS-R	3875635	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	Automated Decision Letter Process for VBMS	3875717	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	Rating Decisions for the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES)	3729146	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	3 hours
Compensation Service	PTSD due to MST Lesson 4: Rating	3884453	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1

Compensation Service	RVSR Compensation 5-Rating Decisions	3884970	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2
Compensation Service	RVSR PTSD 2-Rate Claims for PTSD	3885019	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2
Compensation Service	In-process Reviews (IPR) - Pre and Post	3893321	AQRS	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	In-process Reviews (IPR) - Rating	3893326	RQRS	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	ADL Demonstration for RVSRs (Descriptive Narrative Version)	3893455	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	ADL Demonstration for RVSRs	3897204	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	Introduction to Processing Rating Decisions	3903013	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2
Compensation Service	Rater Disability Evaluations and Pyramiding	3946990	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	Claim Attributes: Flash, Claim Label and Special Issues	3951418	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1

Compensation Service	Attorney Agent Fee Coordinator Training	4115519	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5
Compensation Service	Processing Rating Decisions	4175973	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	4
Compensation Service	Quality Reviews: Post-Determination	4176415	AQRS	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2
Compensation Service	Duty to Assist	4176475	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	3
Compensation Service	Rating Considerations within Hemic and Lymphatic System	4176485	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.25
Compensation Service	Systems Compliance (VSR)	4176789	VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	Rating Analysis (Post Challenge)	4178055	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	3.25
Compensation Service	Duty to Assist for RVSRs (RVSR IWT)	4178713	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5
Compensation Service	Claims Folder Maintenance and Claims Jurisdiction	4178996	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5

Compensation Service	VACOLS	4179486	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	4.75
Compensation Service	How to Use Caseload Certification	4179627	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	0.25
Compensation Service	Appeals: Hearings	4179813	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5
Compensation Service	Rating Psychiatric Conditions (Post Challenge)	4180048	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	3.5
Compensation Service	Contention Classification Name	4180198	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	0.5
Compensation Service	Rating Gulf War Claims (Post Challenge RVSR)	4180230	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2
Compensation Service	Rating Automobile and Adaptive Equipment Allowance, SAH/SHA, and Veterans Civil Service Preference	4180566	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2
Compensation Service	Rating Digestive Conditions (Post Challenge)	4180580	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2.5

Compensation Service	Ratings Paragraphs 4.28, 4.29 and 4.30 (RVSR IWT)	4180641	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5
Compensation Service	Rating References	4181785	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5
Compensation Service	Rating Analysis (Challenge)	4192207	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2
Compensation Service	Identifying Issue-Based Errors (RQRS)	4192543	RQRS	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	General Policy	4192851	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5
Compensation Service	Rating Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)	4192854	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5
Compensation Service	Introduction to Quality Reviews	4194459	AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5
Compensation Service	Rating Visual Impairment	4194537	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	3
Compensation Service	Rating Muscle Injuries	4194809	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.25



Compensation Service	VSR IQR Checklist Training	4212414	AQRS	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1
Compensation Service	Rating Individual Unemployability	4219216	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	4
Compensation Service	Updated Rating Task-Based Quality Checklist	4274838	RQRS	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2
Compensation Service	Rating Decision Requirements	4279300	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.75 hours
Compensation Service	Pre-Discharge Redesign - In-Service Rating	4318901	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5 hours
Compensation Service	Rating Reductions (RVSR Challenge/IWT)	4404881	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.75 hours
Compensation Service	System Updates and Compliance	4411257	CA, AQRS, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.5 hours
Compensation Service	Appeals Process Overview and Special Handling of Claims Folders	4411702	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	1.75 hours
Compensation Service	Establishing an Appellate Record	4411879	CA, AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Virtual Training	2 hours

Compensation Service	Identifying Contentions and Classifications	4415885	CA, AQRS, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	TBD	1.5 hours
Compensation Service	Introduction to End Product Controls and Claims Establishment (CA)	4415893	CA, AQRS, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	TBD	2.5 hour
Compensation Service	Claim Attributes	4420798	CA, AQRS, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	TBD	1.75 hours
Compensation Service	Prestabilization Ratings	61920	DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	TBD	1 hours
Compensation Service	Introduction to Ratings	61922	AQRS, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	TBD	2 hours
Compensation Service	Introduction to Personal Computer Generated Letter (PCGL)	4175837	AQRS, DRO, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	TBD	3 hours
Compensation Service	Appeals Modernization 101	4444189	AQRS, CA, DRO, PCT VSR, Pre-Discharge MSC, RQRS, RVSR, Special Ops RVSR, Special Ops VSR, VSR	Aug. 1, 2018 – Dec. 31, 2018	January 2019	Online	1 hour

The following table identifies the employees by position that will require additional training to administer the new claims and appeals system.

<b>Administration</b>	<b>Employee Position</b>
Veterans Health Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBD</li> </ul>
National Cemetery Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Specialists</li> <li>• Program Support Assistants</li> <li>• Program Analysts</li> <li>• Supervisory and Administrative Personnel</li> </ul>
Board of Veterans' Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterans Law Judges</li> <li>• Attorneys</li> <li>• Administrative Staff</li> </ul>

The following table identifies training by business line that VA will either create or update as part of implementing the new system.

<b>Administration</b>	<b>Training Items</b>
Veterans Health Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBD</li> </ul>
National Cemetery Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for Public-facing employees (including mandatory scripts)</li> <li>• Overview of PL 115-55</li> <li>• Handling of Claims and Appeals in New System Overview</li> <li>• Telephonic Conferences</li> <li>• Caseflow</li> <li>• Supplemental Claims</li> <li>• Higher-Level Reviews</li> <li>• Quality Assurance</li> <li>• Developing training for each stream</li> </ul>
Board of Veterans' Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and present internal processes to handle the receipt and tracking of notices of disagreement and withdrawals of appeals under the VBA RAMP pilot program</li> <li>• Developing training for broad overview of new appeals process for administrative and legal staff</li> <li>• Developing training for each appeal stream, to include legacy appeals for new hires</li> </ul>

## Appendix C –Outreach/Communications Activities

FY- Quarter	Completed Outreach Task Date	Outreach/Communication Activities
FY 2018- Quarter 1	October 23, 2017: <i>NACVSO presentation</i>	Presentation to the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) on RAMP and Appeals modernization. NACVSO represents approximately 1,800 service officers from 36 states as well as Native American Tribes.
FY 2018- Quarter 1	November 1, 2017: <i>Deployed call scripts to NCC</i>	Phase one of RAMP began with an initial mailing to 500 Veterans.  National Call Center (NCC) scripts and frequently asked questions were released to call center agents on RAMP and Appeals Modernization.
FY 2018- Quarter 1	November 2, 2017: <i>VA's Appeals Website Launched</i>	On November 2 <sup>nd</sup> VA released an appeals modernization website. Located at <a href="https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp">https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp</a> , the website, easily assessable from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) homepage, provides Veterans with information on various aspects of appeals modernization. Moreover, through additional links, the website provides information on the Act, VA's implementation plan, and RAMP.  To improve visibility of the site and provide better content to Veterans and other stakeholders, VA worked to make the page accessible through web based search engines (e.g. google) through various search optimization features.
FY 2018- Quarter 1	November 2, 2017: <i>Social Medial Posts about RAMP and Appeals Modernization</i>	VA released a blog article, as well as Facebook and Twitter Posts on RAMP and appeals modernization  <i>VAn tage Point</i> is the official blog of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. On November 2 <sup>nd</sup> , VA posted an article on RAMP and appeals modernization "VA launches program aimed at providing Veterans more options in claims disagreements" <a href="https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAn tage/42745/va-launches-program-aimed-providing-veterans-options-claims-disagreements/">https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAn tage/42745/va-launches-program-aimed-providing-veterans-options-claims-disagreements/</a> .  With a community of over 540,000 total followers, VBA's Facebook, page is excellent platform to inform Veterans and other stakeholders of RAMP and Appeals Modernization. On November 2 <sup>nd</sup> , VA posted a message through this platform on RAMP and appeals modernization <a href="https://www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits/">https://www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits/</a> .

		<p>With a community of over 629,000 total followers, VA's Twitter feed is excellent platform to inform Veterans and other stakeholders of RAMP and Appeals Modernization. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, VA posted a message through this platform on RAMP and appeals modernization <a href="https://twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs/status/926162296811945984">https://twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs/status/926162296811945984</a>.</p>
FY 2018-Quarter 1	November 3, 2017: <i>Internal communication products released to VA employees</i>	<p>VA released internal communication products tailored to inform employees about RAMP and appeals modernization. "VA Insider," is an internal informational website that is used Department wide to inform employees about important agency information. VA Insider is available to all 377,000 VA employees. On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, VA released a post designed to inform employees on RAMP and appeals modernization. "<i>VA Launches Program Aimed at Resolving Appeals Earlier</i>" <a href="https://myva.va.gov/va-launches-program-aimed-at-resolving-appeals-earlier/">https://myva.va.gov/va-launches-program-aimed-at-resolving-appeals-earlier/</a>.</p> <p>HeyVBA is an internal informational website that is used within VBA to inform employees about important administration information. HeyVBA is available to all 27,000 VBA employees. VBA released a post designed to inform employees on RAMP and appeals modernization. "<i>VA Launches Program Aimed at Resolving Appeals Earlier</i>" <a href="http://vaww.blog.va.gov/heyvba/?p=9461">http://vaww.blog.va.gov/heyvba/?p=9461</a>.</p>
FY 2018-Quarter 1	November 5, 2017: <i>VFW Presentation</i>	<p>Presentation to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Service Offices, during their National Advanced Skills Training on RAMP and appeals modernization. VFW is one of the nation's largest organizations of combat veterans.</p>
FY 2018-Quarter 1	November 23, 2017: <i>Internal communication products released to VA employees</i>	<p>VA released additional internal communication products tailored to inform employees about RAMP and appeals modernization. "VA Insider," is an internal informational website that is used Department wide to inform employees about important agency information. VA Insider is available to all 377,000 VA employees. On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, VA released a post designed to inform employees on RAMP and appeals modernization. "<i>VA Works to Modernize Appeals Process to Meet Secretary Shulkin's Priority of Improving Timeliness</i>" <a href="https://myva.va.gov/va-works-to-modernize-appeals-process-to-meet-secretary-shulkins-">https://myva.va.gov/va-works-to-modernize-appeals-process-to-meet-secretary-shulkins-</a></p>

		<a href="#">priority-of-improving-timeliness/</a> .
FY 2018- Quarter 1	December 14, 2017: <i>Social Media Blogs added</i>	VA released additional blog content tailored to inform Veterans and other stakeholders about RAMP and appeals modernization.  <i>VAntage Point</i> is the official blog of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. On December 14 <sup>th</sup> , VA posted an article on RAMP and appeals modernization "VA launches program to resolve compensation appeals sooner" <a href="https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/43798/va-launches-program-resolve-compensation-appeals-sooner/">https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/43798/va-launches-program-resolve-compensation-appeals-sooner/</a> .
FY 2018- Quarter 2	January 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up mailings</i>	VA mailed follow-up letters to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The letters were mailed to approximately 5,500 Veterans from the November and December mailing cohorts.
FY 2018- Quarter 2	January 23, 2018: <i>Updated training provided</i>	Training on RAMP and appeals modernization provided to VBA outreach specialists at the National Outreach Training Call
FY 2018- Quarter 2	January 25, 2018: <i>Communication packages</i>	Communications packages were emailed to every VBA regional office director. The packages contained updated information regarding appeals modernization and RAMP which are suitable for briefing VA stakeholders, employees and Veterans.
FY 2018- Quarter 2	January 25, 2018: <i>VSO presentations</i>	Presentation at the bi-annual Veterans Service Organization/Military Service Organization Summit on RAMP and appeals modernization
FY 2018- Quarter 2	January 30, 2018: <i>Conference Call on Town Halls</i>	A conference call was conducted with all VBA regional office directors. They were asked to conduct town halls to communicate appeals modernization and RAMP to both VBA employees, Veteran Service Officers, and other necessary stakeholders.
FY 2018- Quarter 2	January 31, 2018: <i>Social media</i>	VA released an additional Facebook communication product on RAMP and Appeals modernization  With a community of over 540,000 total followers, VBA's Facebook, page is excellent platform to inform Veterans and other stakeholders of RAMP and Appeals Modernization. On January 31 <sup>st</sup> , VA posted a message through this platform on RAMP and appeals modernization <a href="https://www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits/">https://www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits/</a> .
FY 2018- Quarter 2	February 5-9, 2018: <i>Expansion of RAMP</i>	RAMP start-up phase is expanded to other ROs (closing out start-up phase, beginning of phase II "expansion

	<i>communications</i>	phase").  Town halls were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders at Phoenix, Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego (see attached outreach schedule).
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up letters</i>	VA mailed follow-up letters to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The letters were mailed to approximately 10,000 Veterans from the January mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 15, 2018	Presentation on AMA and RAMP to Federal Depository Librarians (U.S. Government Printing Office).
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 20-23, 2018: <i>Expansion of RAMP Communications</i>	RAMP training and outreach visits to Denver and Seattle ROs. Town halls were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.  Walk-in RAMP elections now possible at the Phoenix, San Diego, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Seattle ROs.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 26-28, 2018	Outreach conducted at the following events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Mid-winter Conference</li> <li>• American Legion National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meeting</li> <li>• National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), Winter Conference</li> <li>• RAMP Congressional Caseworker Briefing</li> <li>• Joint AMO/Board Engagement Meeting</li> </ul> Solicitation for RAMP outbound call center announced on Fbo.gov.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 1, 2018	Sacramento CVSO Conference. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 8, 2018	VBA/VSO biweekly meeting.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 15, 2018	DAV's Supervisor's Conference.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 15, 2018	Senate Staff RAMP training.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 16, 2018	Direct Outreach with VA DVS. Resulted in approximately 100 RAMP elections.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 21, 2018	Direct Outreach with San Bernardino County Veterans Services. Persuaded VSO to consider RAMP for newer NODs.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 21-23, 2018	RAMP outreach visits to Waco, San Antonio, and Houston, Texas. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers, local congressional

		staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 5, 2018	VA.gov updated with Opt-In Form, more information on RAMP will eventually be published. Awaiting web editors review prior to publishing. Awaiting publication of social media content and YouTube video on VBA outlets.  AMOs intranet page updated with RAMP information and procedural guidance.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 10, 2018	AMO Director visits MN CVSO Conference. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 11, 2018	AMO Director visits St. Paul VARO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 16, 2018	VBA Directors Symposium.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 17, 2018	HVAC Roundtable.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 23, 2018	AMO Director visits Atlanta RO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 24, 2018	AMA and RAMP presentation to Office of Client Relations.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 25, 2018	AMO Director visits St. Petersburg VARO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 5, 2018	AMO Director visits San Juan VARO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 9, 2018	AMO Director visits Florida DVA Annual Conference. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers.



# Estimate of Cost to Prepare Congressionally-Mandated Report

## ATTACHMENT

**Short Title of Report:** VA Comprehensive Plan for Processing of Legacy Appeals  
**Report Required By:** Public Law 115-55, Section 3

In accordance with Title 38, Chapter 1, Section 116, the statement of cost for preparing this report and a brief explanation of the methodology used in preparing the cost statement are shown below.

<b>Manpower Cost:</b>	<u>\$13,284</u>
<b>Contract(s) Cost:</b>	<u>\$0</u>
<b>Other Cost:</b>	<u>\$0</u>
<b><u>Total Estimated Cost to Prepare Report:</u></b>	<b><u><u>\$13,284</u></u></b>

Brief Explanation of the methodology used in preparing this cost statement: