

Tuesday, August 22, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Present Mr. Shawn Hanley, Chair
Ms. Takosha Swan, Vice Chair
Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Secretary
Mr. Steve Mendez, Member
Mr. Pete Peterson, Member
Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner

Visitors: Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations & Appeals, GDVS
Present Mr. Mark Bannister, Executive Dir., Health, Memorials, Finance & Development, GDVS
Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS
Ms. Jehae Kim, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office
Mr. Lou Zayas, Jr. Vice Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Ms. Raven Holstick, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer
Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director, Veterans Benefits South Region, GDVS
Mr. Ken Childre, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS
Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information and External Affairs, GDVS
Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS
Ms. Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS
Mr. Edwin Berry, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator, GDVS
Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS
Ms. Shareka Monday-Robinson, Director, Human Resources, GDVS
Ms. Calandra Ferguson, Coordinator, Suicide Prevention & Outreach, GDVS
Mr. Mark Demers, Grant Program Implementation Manager, GDVS
Mr. Steven Fay, Assistant Director, Veterans Training Division
Ms. Kirsten Dennis, Purchasing/Procurement, GDVS
Ms. Rita Barnhart, Canton Field Office, GDVS
Mr. Curtis Barnhart, Visitor
Ms. Nakezia Whitehead, Warner Robins Field Office, GDVS
Ms. Amber Haire, LaGrange Field Office, GDVS
Ms. Debra O'Neal, Lyons Field Office, GDVS
Ms. Yakicia Green, Columbus Field Office, GDVS
Mr. Steven Hungarter, Cartersville Field Office, GDVS
Ms. Lily Snyder, Senior Coordinator, State Approving Agency, GDVS
Mr. DeMario Rucker, Assistant Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
Ms. Ava Redd, Appeals Division, GDVS
Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Tuesday, August 22, 2023, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held in person and by video/tele-conference.

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Mr. Hanley called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. Ms. Swan gave the invocation. Mr. Kopsie led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Ms. Swan made a motion to approve the August Agenda. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Ms. Swan made a motion to approve the July minutes, which were previously distributed for members to review. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. There were no objections. The motion passed.

The following reports were submitted for the Board meeting:

Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW

- The Department Service Officer attended the Veteran of Foreign Wars (VFW) 124th National Convention held on July 22-27, 2023, at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.
 - I was appointed as a delegate for the Veterans Service Resolution Committee. We reviewed, discussed, and then voted on resolutions to present to Congress regarding VA benefits.
 - The VFW National Office installed the new Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento of Gibbstown, New Jersey, and Staff for 2023 – 2024.
- The Department Service Officer attended the VFW Department of Georgia annual Georgia Leadership Training (GLT) held on August 05, 2023. The training was held at Post 658, located at 4864 Harrison Road, Macon, GA 31206. The Department will be hosting five (5) training sessions this year at different Posts.
 - The training session provided information on the duties and responsibilities of the various leadership positions in the Post.
 - The session provided the latest updates to policies, procedures, and programs.
 - It allowed time to interact with one another and to share experiences.
- The Department Service Officer attended a VBA/VSO meeting hosted by Bibbian Kipp. The virtual meeting was held on August 09, 2023, at 10AM – 11AM.
 - The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how we can collaborate with an outreach event to GA rural areas.

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- The outreach event will allow both VBA and GDVS to go into rural communities to provide information to veterans and their families about VA healthcare, benefits, and resources.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Monthly VSO/CMA meeting hosted by Brian Morgan, Change Management Analyst (CMA), on August 10, 2023, at 10AM – 11AM.
 - We met with the Atlanta Regional Officer Director Tony Milons, and we had a platform to discuss our concerns with him.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Monthly VSO/Community Partner PACT Information and Listening meeting hosted by Lauren Ruchin, Atlanta VHA. The virtual meeting was held on August 10, 2023, at 12PM – 1PM.
 - The purpose of the meeting was to share information about the PACT Act and to discuss how our Veterans are being impacted by the PACT Act.
 - Also, we discussed ways to ensure that our Veterans gain access to healthcare, benefits, and resources they earned and deserve!

Ms. Raven Holstick, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer

- The Assistant Department Service Officer (Ed Kent) assisted 42 veterans with VA benefits related inquiries this month.
- Service officers (Raven Holstick, Tonjala Williams-Moton, Ed Kent) met to discuss upcoming hospital visits.
- The Department Service Officer (Raven Holstick) met with Mr. Debro (Department Adjutant) to discuss plans for future service officer training.
- Department Service Officer (Raven Holstick) met with Bibbian Kipp for a future collaboration between VBA and American Legion. The VBA is interested in planning events in rural areas where events don't often happen.

Upcoming events:

- Monthly Virtual Post service officer training will be held for new service officers. Training topics will be on the roles and responsibilities of a post service officer. This training will continue to be held monthly as new service officers arrive.
- September 22-23, Post 127 hosted a claims clinic. The VA joined GDVS on site to file claims.

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Commissioner Patricia Ross

On Monday, July 31, 2023, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. She then attended the July Veterans Service Board meeting. Her afternoon was spent in contract negotiations for the Georgia War Veterans Home.

On Tuesday, August 1, 2023, Commissioner Ross discussed a Wellness/Health Education Class for the Central Office with Calandra Fergerson and Shareka Monday-Robinson. She also had a budget meeting with Kerry Dyer and Camala Ball.

On Wednesday, August 2, 2023, Commissioner Ross had a COBS Submission meeting with Russell Feagin, Mark Demers and Kerry Dyer. She then had a meeting in her office with Kevin Miller, President of the Georgia Veterans Day Association, Inc., to discuss the 2023 Veterans Day Events on November 11th in Midtown Atlanta. Afterwards, she attended a Roundtable Lunch with U.S. Representative Rich McCormick in Alpharetta for a discussion on America's global leadership in today's challenging times and how our investments in development and diplomacy strengthen our position abroad and advance U.S. interest worldwide. She ended the day with a meeting, along with Mark Demers and Charlotte May, to discuss agency legislation.

On Thursday, August 3, 2023, Commissioner Ross met with attendees of the upcoming Leadership Institute to discuss accommodations and parking options at the Central Office location. She later met with Unite Us to discuss their payments portal. She ended the day at the Cobb County Civic Center setting up for the We Care Fair and taking part in an interview regarding the state of veterans in Georgia, the need for the Fairs, and the benefit of the Fairs.

On Friday, August 4, 2023 through Saturday, August 4, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended the We Care Veterans Fair in Marietta. She also took part in Contract Negotiations for the Georgia War Veterans Home.

On Monday, August 7, 2023, Commissioner Ross addressed the players to open the Annual Purple Heart Golf Tournament. She then held a weekly Director's Meeting. Afterwards, she (along with her team) met with SAO to kick off the upcoming fiscal year. She also met with all the attendees of the upcoming Leadership Institute for an overview and to answer questions. She then met with Unite Us for the bi-weekly meeting and also had a contract negotiation meeting regarding the Georgia War Veterans Home. She ended the day with a Fox Grant Update Meeting.

On Tuesday, August 8, 2023, Commissioner Ross met with Bobby Davis, Director of SAA, to discuss future plans for VETD. She then attended the Transition Advisory Meeting. She ended the day at Clay National Guard Center in Marietta.

On Wednesday, August 9, 2023, Commissioner Ross had a meeting regarding salaries for cemetery workers. Also in attendance were Russell Feagin, Mark Bannister, Mark Demers, Camala Ball and

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Robert Orange from SAO. She then attended the Returning Veterans Task Force Meeting. Afterwards, she had a lunch meeting with Scott Morrison of 1st Care Management, along with Victor Vaysman and Julia Korabelnikova, to discuss questions regarding the VA. At the end of the day, Commissioner Ross had a phone appointment with Sherri New from Vets Bridges to Hope, a non-profit organization “formed to aid in the empowerment and recovery of homeless U.S. veterans by providing safe emergency and transitional housing and long term counseling and transitional services needed to help our veterans to productively transition back into their communities.”

On Thursday, August 10, 2023, Commissioner Ross spoke virtually to a Kiwanis Golden K meeting about GDVS. She then attended the Monthly VSO/Community Partner PACT Act Information & Listening Session. She ended the day meeting with Joseph Snowden of Veteran Homestead.

On Friday, August 11, 2023, Commissioner Ross held an open forum for the department.

On Friday, August 11, 2023 through Wednesday, August 16, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended the NASDVA Conference in Buffalo, New York. She was appointed the Women Veterans Committee chair.

On Thursday, August 17, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended the State Workforce Development Board meeting.

On Friday, August 18, 2023, Commissioner Ross was a guest speaker at the Fort Stewart Retiree Appreciation Day .

On Saturday, August 19, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended the American Legion Ceremony for Commander Alton Head, where she presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation from GDVS.

On Monday, August 21, 2023, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director’s Meeting, which was attended by the inaugural Leadership Institute attendees. This was the first day of their professional development training. She also attended the Unite Us Bi-weekly meeting and the Fox Grant Update meeting.

Highlights:

We Care Veterans Fair, Cobb County
GWVH – Milledgeville, GA

Upcoming Events:

7 Sept – PACT Act event, Georgia International Convention Center

Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals

GENERAL

- The We Care Veterans Resources Fair was held on August 4-5 at the Cobb Civic Center in Marietta. The Department assisted veterans with the filing of claims and appeals particularly with the PACT Act, as well as provided information on suicide prevention, services provided through UNITE GA and information about our homes and cemeteries. Over a 2-day span, of the 3,742 veterans in attendance, we saw 300+ veterans and filed 75 claims.
- We continue to work with our partners to staff outreach events across the state.
- **DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters:** 823 Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in July, 2023.

PROJECTED POSITIONS

- Current opening in Augusta VAMC.

Ms. Ramona Roper, Director of Training Division:

- July 24-27, 2023, Mr. Glenn Massey did in-person training in the Zebulon Veterans Field Service Office. He assisted the current VSO with managing time, proper interviewing skills, claims procedures and following up on claims.
- August 3 & 10, 2023, Ms. Sherri Whitfield and Mr. Charles Isaac conducted Hybrid training via MS Teams. The subjects for these training courses were Standards of Conduct and Basic Eligibility.
- August 1-7, Mr. Charles Isaac trained 2 new employees for St. Mary's, Glennville and Brunswick. Mr. Isaac discussed TRIP Training, compensation, pension, and many more accredited subjects.
- August 4-18, 2023, Ms. Ramona Roper provided in-person training for the new Athens VSO, Mr. Jeffrey Coots. We discussed TRIP Training, compensation, pension, and many more accredited subjects. Mr. Coots observed interviewing techniques, interacted with clients, answered questions, and filed several claims under supervision.
- August 16, 2023, Ms. Sandra Bennett joins the Training Division. Sandra was the previous Office Manager for the Columbus VFSO. She has served as a guest trainer for past Annual Training conferences.

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- August 17, 2023, Glenn Massey conducted Hybrid training for 5 North Georgia VFSOs on Basic Eligibility.
- August 22, 2023, Hybrid training for Basic Eligibility took place with 6 South Georgia VFSOs.
- August 23, 2023, Ms. Ramona Roper will assist the North Region Director, Mr. Ken Childre with interviews for Augusta VAMC interviews.

Upcoming Events:

- Daily continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices
- Continuation of performing duties as VSO's
- Continuation of Quality Review checks of VSO's work

Mr. Edwin Berry, Director of Appeals Division

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for July 2023 was **41**.
- The total number of pre-hearing actions for July 2023 was **67**.
- The total number of post-hearing actions for July 2023 was **46**.
- The Appeals Division reviewed **26 favorable** decisions in July that yielded the veterans \$993,398.00 in a retro-active compensation payments.
- As of **August 1, 2023**, the Atlanta VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS.

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid out
Compensation	103,964	\$218,099,112
DIC	3,748	\$6,249,350
Survivor Pension	772	\$706,892
Veteran Pension	1,508	\$1,773,594
Grand Total	109,992	\$226,828,948

Mr. Kenneth Childre, Director Veterans Benefits North Region

Retro Awards: June 2023-\$1,481,705.89

Included in that amount are single awards reported by:

Barry Hunter (Rome)-\$151,379.48-McClure

Rita Barnhart (Canton)-\$184,734.53-Ruiz (DIC)

Rita Barnhart (Canton)-\$115,519.66-Antantis

Director Site Visits/Inspections: 3

Community Involvement:

Cobb County We CARE Event-4/5 Aug-Saw 300 Veterans/Family members that required assistance with VA/State Benefits/PACT Act. Filed 75 Claims. VSOs participating in We CARE Event:

Friday 4 Aug

ChanDreas Barkley (Rome)

Christina Williams (Lawrenceville)

Roderica Stewart (Decatur CBOC)

Kyle Hungarter (Marietta)

Melissa Pritchett (Cobb County Clinic)

Bill Smith (Lafayette)

Nicholas Treadway (Oakwood Clinic)

Mark Churning (Greensboro)

Christine Collins (Blairsville)

Rita Barnhart (Canton)

Barry Hunter (Rome)

Ken Childre (North Area Director)

Saturday 5 Aug

ChanDreas Barkley (Rome)

Christina Williams (Lawrenceville)

Roderica Stewart (Decatur CBOC)

Kyle Hungarter (Marietta)

Cedric Brant (Atlanta Balcony)

Marlin Brown (Atlanta VAMC)

John Wagenknecht (Gainesville)

Ken Childre (North Area Director)

North Georgia Gains/Losses:

Michael Partlow (Hartwell)-Retired Effective 1 Aug

ChanDreas Barkley-Transferred from VECTR North to Rome Effective 1 Aug

Tomeika Johnson-Transferred from Rome to Cedartown (Now Full-Time Office) Effective 1 Aug

Kareem Reddick-Transferred from Atlanta VAMC to VECTR North Effective 1 Aug

Cedric Brant-Transferred from Atlanta VAMC to Atlanta Balcony Effective 1 Aug

Jeffrey Coots (Athens)-New Hire Effective 1 Aug

Patrick O'Reilly (Augusta VAMC)-Terminated Effective 10 Aug

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Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		July-23					
A	B	C	D / E			G / E	
			D	E	F	G	H
					Average	Total	Average
			Total	Work	Office	Claims	Claims
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Visits	Submitted	Submitted
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Per	To	By VFSOS
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	VA	To VA
						Monthly	Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	50	9,749	20	487.45	1,660	83.00
Number of Offices:	30	Average Visits/Office:			324.97	Average Claims/Office: 55.3333333	

*Total monthly office visits include: 2,779 In-Person and 6,970 phone calls/emails

Mr. Vincent M. Pritchett, Director Veterans Benefits South Region

- On August 5, 2023, our Waycross, Valdosta, Thomasville, and Moultrie offices supported a claims clinic held at the C.C. Stephens AMVETS Post 621 in Waycross. The Department of Veterans Affairs also had representatives available to answer questions for attendees. GDVS gave a short PACT Act briefing, then took Powers of Attorney, filed claims, checked the status of claims, and provided claim advice. We saw 32 veterans during the three-hour event. Commander Guylee Washington was so pleased with the results that he wants to make it an annual event.
- On August 16, 2023, Chris Parrish (Waycross) supported the Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program held at the Waycross Community Based Outpatient Clinic.
- On August 19, 2023, Vince Pritchett was guest speaker at a men's breakfast held at Carlyle Place, a retirement community in Macon, GA. The host for the event was Marine Captain (Retired) Theron Simpson.
- South region offices reported lump sum payments since the last board meeting of \$62,552.00 with the highest single amount reported by Americus of \$40,916.00.
- South Region Gains/Losses: Effective August 1, 2023, Bobby Hogan joined our Glennville field office and Scott Weaver joined our St. Marys field office.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 237,759.

Ms. Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)

- August 4- 5, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in the Cobb County We Care Veteran Event.
- August 9, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in the Women Veteran Health Committee Monthly Meeting.
- August 15, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in the Governor's Task Force Meeting.
- August 22, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in the Small Business Symposium, Albany Ga.

Current committees:

- Women's Veterans Health Committee (monthly meetings and joint outreach events)
- Georgia State VFW Homeless Committee
- VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Georgia Team
- An Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
- The Birdwell Foundation Board Member
- Coweta County Race, Equity, and Justice Committee Unite Georgia Community Advisory Committee
- Farmer Street Cemetery Commission

Ms. Calandra Ferguson, Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator (SPOC)

- Ms. Ferguson submits monthly reports on the events and referral data for the Fox Grant.
- July 22, 2023, Ms. Ferguson participated in the Clayton County Housing Summit, where she taught 2 sessions of Suicide Prevention Training.
- July 26, 2023, Ms. Ferguson taught Suicide Prevention to the staff of Gateway Center for Homeless Veterans.
- August 4-5, 2023, Ms. Ferguson participated in the "We Care Event" at the Cobb Convention Center. 26 Veterans completed the GAP Suicide Prevention Screening, and those that were high risk were provided resources to reduce those risks.

Ms. Charlotte May, Director, External Affairs & Communications

INFORMATION OUTREACH

Division Updates

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1. GDVS Newsletter – PID published a monthly newsletter in July. The e-newsletter features top stories from the month and encourages readers to get the full issue at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>. The July edition featured an update on the department's Leadership Institute, the We CARE Fair in Cobb County, the upcoming Fox Forum in October, and commendations for several GDVS field officers from thankful veterans.
2. We CARE Marietta – assisted with the two-day We CARE fair in Marietta on August 4-5. Offered information, assistance, and referrals to additional resources to veterans, their families, caretakers, and survivors. New print materials informing veterans about the benefits in Georgia and tailored for the baseball theme of the event were effective and eye-catching to help veterans remember how to get help in the future.
3. Website updates –
 - a. PACT Deadline for Backpay – created a reminder for veterans and families to submit at least an Intent to File by August 9 (and later the extension to August 14) to be considered for retroactive pay to August 10, 2022. The GDVS website was updated to include a sitewide alert and links to field office locations to boost visibility of assistance.
 - b. Upcoming Events – Reconciled the GDVS Events Outlook based calendar with department's website calendar. Upcoming events, like the Warrior Alliance PACT outreach event to be held in September, will now be easier for veterans to find information on events where GDVS will have representatives.
4. Veterans Benefits Outreach
 - a. PACT Act Deadline – consistent reminders for veterans to submit their intent to files via the GDVS throughout the closing period for the one-year backpay deadline. Shared an alert from VA regarding technical issues and how to proceed due to high site demand.
 - b. Boots to Business – shared information from SBA/VBOC for an upcoming in-person training program for veterans and spouses in the Atlanta area.
 - c. SAMHSA Post-Academy Visit – shared an update on the Governor's Challenge continuing work to prevent suicide and a visit from federal partners.

Public Information Division Contacts (Since December 9, 2022)

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 450
- Replies to General Questions = approximately 605
- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 125

GOVERNOR'S (VIETNAM VETERAN) CERTIFICATE of HONOR PROGRAM-

- The latest and most accurate totals (since March 2015) –

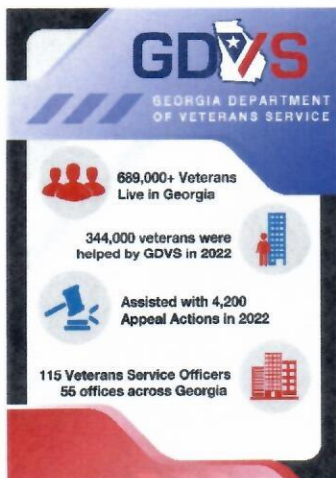
State Certificates of Honor issued via GDVS – An estimated 29,960
(Honors Ceremonies and Central Office Mail Outs)

DoD Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins presented via GDVS – An estimated 23,960

Honors Ceremonies supported/coordinated by GDVS – 358

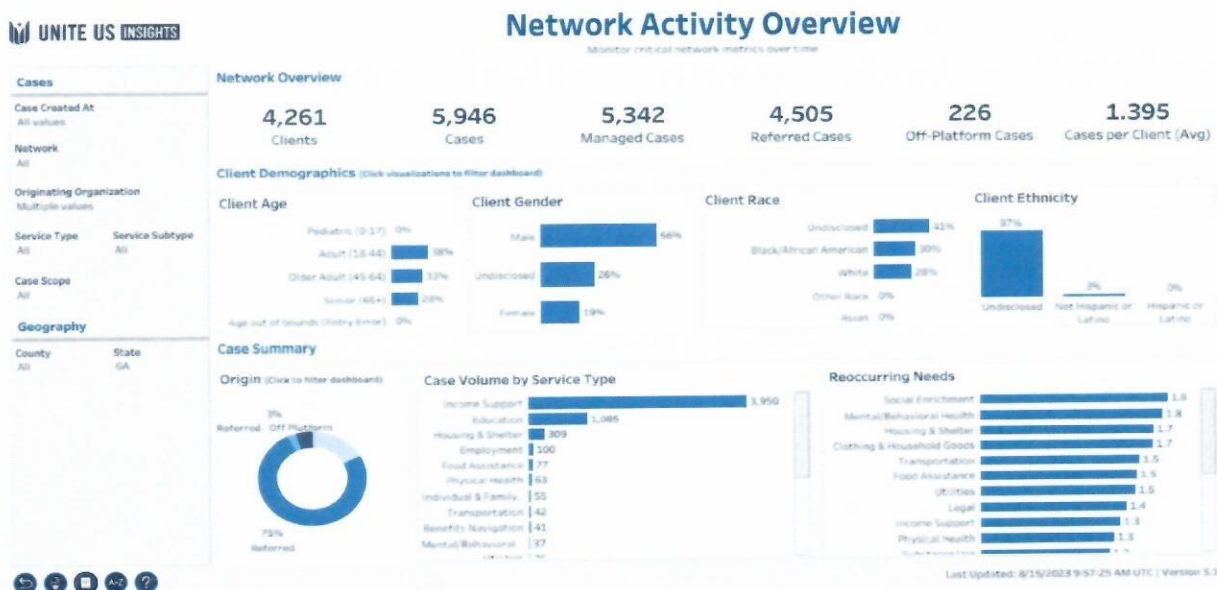
Defense Department's Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse CoH – 291

EVENT PHOTOS:



Mr. Mark Demers, Grant Program Implementation Manager

- **Unite-Us Grant-** (American Rescue Plan-Negative Impact Grant)- \$6.1m per year (\$18.3m) over the course of 3 years starting July 1, 2022:
 - Data ingestion and secure data transfer for the platform and social connector is moving forward. As of August 14, 2023, we have **264,450** veterans in the system. We have submitted **956** community partners and **313** healthcare partners for inclusion to the platform since August 2022.
 - Our Warner Robins GDVS office is ranked #6 with 3826 Unite Us referrals received in the entire national network.
 - Grant financial management- we have closed out year 1 of the grant and are working on year 2. An advance on the grant totaling \$5.8m has been received so we can pay invoices on time. There was a delay due to the fiscal year close out so we could not access grant funds during that time period.
 - Below is an activity snapshot from Unite Us Insights:



- **SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program-** (\$747,464 for one year with the possibility to extend two more years).
 - We are in partnership with Kennesaw State University AMES Center to implement the grant. KSU is analyzing data collection from the Fort Stewart Army Guard event. The latest submission to the VA on August 4, 2023.

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- Calandra Ferguson provided the outreach and training data reports, and we transmitted them to the VA on August 4, 2023.
- Fox Grant renewal was completed and sent via UDPaaS on May 19, 2023. We will find out if we receive the grant renewal in September 2023.
- Calandra Ferguson or Veda Brooks will report all the outreach and training events regarding Suicide Prevention under the Fox Grant.
- **Veterans Mental Health Services Program Grant (HB 414)**- Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signed HB 414 on April 25, 2023, with the support of state legislators and the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS). The bill creates the Veterans Mental Health Services Program, which is a grant program to improve access to mental health services for military service members, veterans, and their families in the state of Georgia. The grant program is funded through state appropriations in Fiscal Year 2023. The total grant funding is \$750,000 for FY2023 (executed by no later than 30 June 2023). The grant was awarded to two vendors:
 - Aspire (Cohen Veterans Network) for \$650,000.
 - Emory Healthcare for \$100,000.
- The money was allocated to both awardees, and they have received the funds.
- The first quarterly report will be received in October 2023.
- We have a new member of the team that started on August 16, 2023, her name is Irene Mackson. She is our new Business Analyst and will be helping us with the grants. We are excited to have her on board!

Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education and Training Division (State Approving Agency)

- The approval and compliance surveys of educational institutions, training establishments and training programs approved for veterans training is continuing with no significant problems in any area being noted.
- Approval of new veteran's On-The-Job training sites (OJT) continues to increase. As of this date the State Approving Agency (SAA) has granted approval to 1,821 educational institutions and training establishments where Georgia veterans may attend school or job training and utilize their GI Bill® educational benefits.
- NASAA Summer Training and Business Meeting, Vermont 26-31 August 2023.

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Item *	Number
Approved Educational Institutions	392
Approved Training Establishments	1,429
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	10,359

* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, July 2023.

Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS

Mr. Feagin answered the question from Mr. Kopsie regarding the bed count at the GWVH. There were originally 375 when the home was fully operational. There will be 240 after all the renovations have taken place. Renovations are underway for ADA Compliance.

There are currently 5 in the facility who have tested positive for Covid.

A \$1.5 million grant has been awarded to Milledgeville Cemetery to expand the columbarium and cremations.

Ms. Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, Health & Memorials Division

The 4th floor of the building has been isolated due to the Covid positive patients. Everyone is being tested.

Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer

On Tuesday, August 1, 2023, Kerry Dyer met with the GDVS Leadership Institute candidates to discuss travel and hotel reservations. Later that day he posted the Atlanta VAMC vacancies internally and externally. He also spoke to Mark Meeks (DOAS Procurement Manager) and Rebecca Krystopa (Training and Compliance Analyst) regarding the process for an Emergency Procurement Justification for the GWVH.

On Wednesday, August 2, 2023, Kerry Dyer along with Will Wilson met virtually with Alonso Renee (Department of Driving Services IT technician) regarding the Data Exchange. Later that day he spoke with Shareka Monday-Robinson about initiating a Wellness/Health Education Class for the Department. He also sent the Milledgeville Cemetery a potential candidate for the Grounds Maintenance Tech 1 vacancy.

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On Thursday, August 3, 2023, Kerry Dyer along with Commissioner Ross, Mark Demers and Charlotte May met virtually with UniteUs to discuss the GDVS Status Update and Single Sign on. He also spoke to Roger Moore (Wade Ford Fleet Manager) regarding the pick-up date and time for the 2023 Transit Van.

On Friday, August 4, 2023, Kerry Dyer coordinated with Marlon Benjamin (GBA Project Manager) to pick-up the DD214's filing cabinets and storage files. He also coordinated the delivery of a GBA filing cabinet to the Canton Field Office. Later that day he posted the Augusta GWVNH vacancy externally and internally.

On Saturday, August 5, 2023, Kerry Dyer along with Commissioner Ross, ShellyAnn Simpson, Ken Childre, Shareka Monday-Robinson and several employees participated in the We Care Event at the Cobb County Civic Center in Marietta, GA.

On Monday, August 7, 2023, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Directors Meeting. Later that day he attended the Fox Grant meeting along with Commissioner Ross, Mark Demers, Charlotte May, Calandra Ferguson, Veda Brooks and the Research Team from Kennesaw State University to discuss the way ahead for a future Fox Grant. He also attended the FY24 Kick-Off meeting with SAO along with Commissioner Ross, Mark Bannister, Mark Demers, Kirsten Dennis and Julie Hammond.

On Tuesday, August 8, 2023, Kerry Dyer spoke with Latatia West (DOAS Policy Manager) regarding the State Positive Improvement Plan for employees. Later that day, along with Cedric Brant, he picked up the 2023 Transit Van from Wade Ford in Smyrna GA. He also, along with Commissioner Ross and Russell Feagin, reviewed and submitted the Emergency Contract Justification to State Purchasing Division Policy Managers for approval.

On Wednesday, August 9, 2023, Kerry Dyer along with Commissioner Ross attended a luncheon with Scott Morrison (1st Care Management) and Dr. Victor Vaysman (MedSide Healthcare) to discuss Transitional Care Management and building a stronger relationship with the VA. Later that day he posted the Compliance Specialist 1 vacancy internally.

On Thursday, August 10, 2023, Kerry Dyer attended the monthly VSO Community Meeting along with Commissioner Ross. Later that day along with Commissioner Ross, Mark Meeks, Carrie Steele, Russell Feagan and Matthew Carter, he met virtually with Jeff Bell (COO STGI) to discuss a patient fees.

On Friday, August 11, 2023, Kerry Dyer attended the Commissioner's Open Forum along with employees from the Department. He also sent Bobby Davis 50 resumes to review for his Compliance Specialist 1 vacancy. Later that day he processed Patrick O'Reilly's termination packet.

On Monday, August 14, 2023, Kerry Dyer submitted the STGI W-9 to the Department of Revenue for an Employment Verification. Later that day he spoke to Natasha Simones (Access Solution) to coordinate bi-weekly meetings to discuss the DD214 digitalization process.

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On Tuesday, August 15, 2023, Kerry Dyer met virtually with Bobby Arrington regarding the "How's My Driving" sticker and Insurance Card for the 2023 Transit Van. Later that day he walked to Fulton County DMV to register the 2023 Transit Van. He also attended a DOAS Talent Acquisition Forum.

Below are the Personnel Actions Kerry Dyer and Shareka Monday-Robinson processed from July 16, 2023- August 16, 2023.

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
St Mary's	Office Mgr (VFSO2)	New Hire	Scott Weaver	08/01/23
Glennville	Office Mgr (VFSO2)	New Hire	Bobby Weaver	08/01/23
Athens	Office Mgr (VFSO2)	New Hire	Jeffery Coots	08/01/23
Hartlow	Senior Office Mgr	Retired	Michael Partlow	08/01/23
Augusta-VAMC	VFSO 1	Terminated	Patrick O'Reilly	08/10/23
Decatur	VFSO 1	New Hire	Herman Hammonds	08/16/23
Decatur	VFSO 1	New Hire	Vanessa Wilson	08/16/23
Central Office	Business Analyst 1	New Hire	Irene Mackson	08/16/23
Appeals	VCAO 1	New Hire	Elaine Swords	08/16/23

Mr. Mark Bannister, Executive Director, Health, Memorials, Finance & Development

Accounting

The FY 2023 closeout has been completed and all fiscal programs were closed within budget. Operations, HR, procurement and other selected GDVS staff worked closely together as a team with Accounting Shared Services, a division of the State Accounting Office, to successfully complete the FY 2023 fiscal closeout.

Through SAO's guidance, we now have established proper procedures going into the new fiscal year and beyond through the correct processes of vendor management and proper coding of state and federal funds.

The fiscal year officially closed on June 30, 2023; however, the accounting systems took an additional two weeks to completely close out the fiscal year documentation. All four of the fiscal programs in the GDVS (Administration, Cemeteries, Veterans Benefits and Nursing Homes) closed within the scope of the budget. The FY 2024 budget cycle officially opened doors for business on Monday, July 17, 2023.

Budget and General

The GDVS closed out FY 2023 within budget in accordance with state law. As is the case with all departments of state government, the GDVS was able to make some needed year-end purchases of supplies and equipment items for the benefit of departmental operations using *regular operating moneys* that had not been expensed prior to the closeout process.

Capital Outlay requests for projects at both War Veterans Nursing Homes are currently being discussed, planned, and prioritized with 2KM and will be presented in this year's budget request.

GDVS FY2024 --Annual Operating Budget (AOB) as of July 1, 2023

Total State General Funds	\$25,934,624
Total Federal Funds	\$24,210,246
Total Other Agency Funds: GSFIC and Fees	\$3,215,491
Total Funds	\$53,360,361

Budget Instructions: Amended FY 2024 and FY 2025

We have received the AFY 2024, and FY 2025 budget instructions and preparations are now underway to develop the department's FY 2025 Budget Request, which will be officially submitted to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) prior to the submission deadline on Friday, September 8, 2023.

Georgia has continued to exceed expectations as businesses seek to invest in the number one state in which to do business. Georgia's solid economic growth has meant stronger than anticipated revenues for state government and an increasingly stabilized economic environment following the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. Our leadership and employees have looked internally at our existing resources to find opportunities to leverage technology and to streamline processes to provide better service to our veteran citizens and their families.

Finding better and more efficient ways to maximize taxpayer dollars remains a cornerstone for GDVS and we are encouraged by the increasing economic activity, solid growth and consumer demand in our state that will not require budget reductions in the Amended FY2024 and FY2025 budgets.

Therefore, Governor Kemp has granted the opportunity to allow agencies the flexibility to consider strategic enhancements for the first time since FY 2020. To meet this requirement, we plan to submit "off-line" requests for items where we feel we need to operate our department in providing greater incentives for our employees and to provide better services for Georgia's veterans.

Tuesday, August 22, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Some of the highlights as mentioned in the budget instructions memo to agency heads includes:

- Grants agencies the flexibility to request strategic enhancements.
- Agencies are asked to think critically about potential areas of need or investment within their departments.
- Agencies may request budget enhancements up to 3 per cent for the current and next fiscal years.
- OPB invites agencies to share other ideas for one-time investment opportunities for consideration in the AFY 2024 budget.
- Targeted enhancements and investment initiatives that “move the needle” on program outcomes, customer service or significant improvements on how we do business.
- Implementation of technological efficiencies.
- The FY 2025 budget plan should demonstrate opportunities to reduce agency spending by one percent.

GDVS will provide a detailed briefing about our budget requests submitted to the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) during the September 2023 Veterans Service Board meeting.

HEALTH AND MEMORIALS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (Through August 11, 2023) +

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	102	111	213
Service Connected *	27	36	63
Total Patients	129	147	276
Last Month			
Regular Patients	97	105	202
Service Connected *	28	35	63
Total Patients	125	140	265

* One hundred percent of the cost of these services is paid by the VA. No state funds are involved.

+ The report to the VSB is the total numbers from July 14, 2023, through August 11, 2023.

State Veterans Cemeteries

Burial Statistics (through August 11, 2023)+

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	3,324	2,335	11
Milledgeville	5,181	5,190	9
Total	7,505	7,525	20

+ The report to the VSB is the total numbers from July 14, 2023, through August 11, 2023.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business to discuss.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Hanley announced the Staff Sergeant Fox Forum, which is taking place on October 5 at the Georgia State Capitol, Room 341. Panelists include Commissioner Ross, Aaron Eagan (Director, Community-Based Suicide Prevention, VHA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention) and Liz Clark (Director, Department of Defense Suicide Prevention Office). The parents of SSG Parker Gordon Fox will be present.

Mark Bannister, Executive Director of Health, Memorials, Finance and Development will be retiring and his last day in the office will be September 15.

NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioner Ross talked about the inaugural GDVS Leadership Institute members, who were present for the meeting. They each introduced themselves and let everyone know where they serve within the Department and how many years they have been working for GDVS.

Tuesday, August 22, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Commissioner Ross introduced Rita Barnhard, who has been with GDVS for 40 years. Rita and her husband Curtis were in attendance so that she could receive her 40 year Certificate of Service from the Governor's Office. The certificate was awarded by Commissioner Ross and Ms. Swan. A reception in Rita's honor was held after the meeting.

Commissioner Ross discussed the emergency contract for the Georgia War Veterans Home with STG International, who is replacing PruittHealth. STGi will take over on September 1, 2023. A seamless transition is the goal.

The Board asked if there were any insights on PACT Act applications. Commissioner Ross stated that more than 800,000 applications have been filed, with Georgia being #4 on the list. The date has passed for veterans to receive retroactive pay, but claims can still be filed for benefits.

The September 27 Board meeting was scheduled. It will be a combination virtual and in-person meeting, set up at the GDVS.

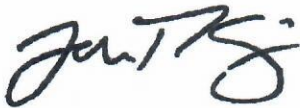
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:15 p.m.

SIGNED:



Shawn Hanley, Chair

ATTEST:



Joshua Kopsie, Secretary

Attachments:

AFY 2024 and FY 2025 Budget Instructions
FY 2025 Budget Instructions Memo to Agency Heads



GENERAL BUDGET
PREPARATION PROCEDURES
FOR
PRIORITIZED PROGRAM BUDGET
AMENDED FISCAL YEAR 2024 AND
FISCAL YEAR 2025

Brian P. Kemp
Governor, State of Georgia

Richard Dunn, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

2 Capitol Square, SW
Atlanta, Georgia, 30334
404-656-3820

opb.georgia.gov

August 2, 2023

I. Introduction

Approach to Budgeting

Georgia has continued to exceed expectations as businesses seek to invest in the number one state in which to do business. Georgia's solid economic growth has meant stronger than anticipated revenues for state government and an increasingly stabilized economic environment following the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. This continued growth will enable the state to meet our mandatory spending obligations while providing the opportunity to allow agencies the flexibility to consider strategic enhancements for the first time since FY 2020. Therefore, Governor Kemp is instructing agencies to think critically about potential areas of need or investment within their departments and submit budget enhancements of up to three percent for both the AFY 2024 and FY 2025. Additionally, agencies may discuss with the Office of Planning and Budget other ideas for one-time investment opportunities for consideration in the AFY 2024 budget. These enhancement requests should be targeted at initiatives that can "move the needle" on program outcomes, improve customer service, or provide significant future improvement on how we do business or deliver services as a state.

Additionally, Governor Kemp challenges state agencies to continuously look for opportunities for streamlining and increasing efficiency in how we manage government. Even in positive fiscal climates, agencies should strive to find ways to do business better, whether implementing technological efficiencies, reducing unnecessary regulations, or curtailing low performing or low priority initiatives. Therefore, along with any agency enhancement requests, agencies should also submit FY 2025 budget plans demonstrating opportunities to reduce agency spend through efficiencies by one percent.

Budget Laws

Title 45-12-78 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated provides that the head of each budget unit, with the exception of the General Assembly and the Judiciary, shall submit to the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) estimates of the financial requirements of the budget unit for the next fiscal year, on the forms and in the manner prescribed by OPB, with such explanatory data as is required by OPB by a date determined by the Director of OPB. The submission shall utilize programs and object classes and be within expenditure parameters as established by the Governor. The head of a budget unit also may submit additional supporting data as necessary. The estimates submitted must bear the approval of the board or commission of each budget unit for which a board or commission is constituted.

The budget estimate for the Legislative and Judicial branches shall be prepared and shall be submitted to the director of the budget at the same time as the other budget estimates and in the format and manner designated by OPB. All data relative to the Legislative and Judicial branches of the government shall be for the information and guidance of the Office of Planning and Budget in estimating the total financial needs of the state for the ensuing period, but none of these estimates shall be subject to revision or review by OPB and must be included in the budget report as prepared by them.

Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
Amended FY 2024 and FY 2025 Budget Instructions

This document contains instructions designed to assist managers in meeting submission requirements of the Budget Laws and the Prioritized Program Budgeting process. Agency budget submissions are due to OPB using the Planning and Budget Cloud Services (PBCS) system by **Friday, September 8.**

II. Guidelines for Budget Development

Amended FY 2024 (AFY) and FY 2025 Budgets

Budget submissions for AFY 2024 and FY 2025 allow agencies to submit requests for budget enhancements of up to three percent, noting that some formula or enrollment driven programs will be exempt from both enhancement and reduction calculations. Any requests for additional funds in either year will be allowed only for workload or enrollment driven programs as communicated to you by OPB.

Agencies will select their cutoff amendment in PBCS as part of the development process. Detailed training and instructions for selecting a cutoff amendment and entering budget requests are posted to the OPB website.

The budget submission process in PBCS will consist of the steps below:

1. Base Budget (Cutoff amendment selected by the agency through PBCS)
2. One-Time Deletes (to be communicated by OPB)
3. Redistributions
4. Workload Adjustments (to be communicated by OPB)
5. Enhancements
6. Reductions
7. Other Adjustments

Base Budget

The base budget should be either the AOB or an approved cut-off amendment which will include Statutory, Fiscal Affairs, or Executive Order amendments to date in PBCS. The same base is used for AFY 2024 and FY 2025 budget requests. Agencies should ensure that the base budget accurately reflects the known or planned expense of federal and other funds for the year; however, one-time federal funding associated with the federal COVID-19 relief funding should not be included in the base budget. Agencies may submit amendments to recognize federal COVID-19 relief funds after they have completed any necessary base budget adjustments for the cutoff amendment.

One-Time Deletes

One-time deletes are non-recurring items of expenditure that are considered one-time purchases in FY 2024 and are deleted from the base in subsequent fiscal years. These will be provided by OPB if appropriate for your agency. These items reduce the budget request submitted to OPB. Agencies must select One-time Delete as the change type for these items.

Redistributions

Agencies are encouraged to identify savings within their organization that may be shifted among programs to meet additional needs, provide further improvements to your service delivery model, or more accurately reflect anticipated resource needs for ongoing activities. Types of changes would include a shift of funds between programs or a realignment of fund sources between programs in order to properly meet projected expenditures.

Agencies are expected to manage their expenditures needs through the flexibility provided in program budgeting. The total of all redistributions and increased funding needs must net to zero. Positions and motor vehicles redistributed from one program to another should be reflected in the position and motor vehicle counts for the programs affected.

Redistribution among object classes and among sub-programs *within a program* should be requested as an amendment to the current budget and should **NOT** be included as part of the agency's budget request. However, requests for redistribution of funds *between programs* must be submitted in PBCS as part of the budget request.

Workload Adjustments

Funding to be included as Workload Adjustments are limited to formula or enrollment driven increases that will be communicated to agencies by OPB prior to budget submission.

Enhancements

For both AFY 2024 and FY 2025, agencies may request up to a 3% increase over their current FY 2024 to support innovative initiatives or process improvements. For each requested enhancement, agencies should also submit a budget enhancement request form supporting the need for the increase. Agencies must prioritize their enhancement requests by ranking each request in order of priority with 1 equaling the highest funding priority for the agency. The Budget Enhancement Request Form is available on the OPB website at opb.georgia.gov and is due with the agency's budget submission on September 8, 2023. Formula or enrollment driven programs may be exempt from the 3% enhancement calculation. OPB will provide you the 3% enhancement calculation for your agency.

Additionally, agencies may request to submit targeted, one-time enhancements for AFY 2024 that may be in excess of their 3% enhancement calculation. These strategic enhancements should represent opportunities to make significant investments in an area of high need that will have substantial outyear impact on state business or services. Agencies who wish to submit such requests should discuss these initiatives with their budget analyst prior to submission. **Budget requests that exceed the 3% enhancement calculation that have not been discussed with OPB will not be accepted in PBCS and returned to the agency.**

Reductions

For FY 2025, agencies must submit a budget reduction of 1% of the FY 2024 adjusted base budget. The adjusted base budget for each agency is calculated as shown below:

FY 2024 Base Budget (AOB or Cutoff Amendment)

– Exemptions

– One-time Deletes

FY 2024 Adjusted Base Budget

Formula or enrollment driven programs may be exempt from the reduction calculation. OPB will provide the 1% reduction calculation for your agency. Requests that do not comply with the full reduction amount will not be accepted and will be returned to the agency.

Other Adjustments

Funding to be included as Other Adjustments are limited to select items that do not fall within formula or enrollment driven increases. Any items falling within this category will be communicated to agencies by OPB prior to budget submission.

Technical guidelines with detailed instructions regarding data entry and submission requirements for PBCS will be available through the OPB website at opb.georgia.gov.

Performance Management

OPB will continue monitoring ongoing program performance for all budgetary programs and require agencies to provide updates to their program performance measures. Performance information provides crucial information for state decision-makers and establishes the context for the state's annual budget. Measuring results contributes to the analysis of the effectiveness of programs and helps identify where improvements can be made. Quality performance measures should provide decision-makers with data on how the program is operated, how well its customers are being served, and whether the program is achieving its intended outcomes. Agencies should use performance data in developing their budget requests to focus funding on programs with higher returns on state investment.

Agencies will enter performance measures in the Planning and Budget Cloud Services system for FY 2025 budget development. Performance measures and data will be carried forward from last year's data entry and agencies need only add the most recent year's data along with any new performance measures and associated data previously agreed to with your budget division. Measures should be entered and submitted no later than September 8.

Ideally, all programs will have at least three measures, including one for each of the following types and actual results for FY 2020 through FY 2023:

- **Input/Output/Workload:** These basic count type measures can be used to develop efficiency measures and to analyze the impact of different scenarios. *This type of measure answers the question – How much did we do?*
- **Efficiency:** These are measures of productivity. Usually, they involve dividing an output or activity by the cost or staff involved. Efficiency measures may also include measures of quality and backlogs/waiting lists. *This type of measure answers the question – How well did we do?*
- **Effectiveness:** These are outcome measures that indicate the program accomplishments or results that occur as a result of the services provided. *This type of measure answers the question – Is anyone better off?*

It is important that measures are based on reliable data, that agencies document the data sources used, and provide information on any limitations on the measures.

Strategic Priorities

The Governor has provided his vision, direction, and priorities of the state through the state goals. These priorities steer the development of the agency's strategic plan, which should identify and communicate the specific action plan the agency will implement to meet its core objectives.

In developing budget requests, agencies should prioritize goals and consider how they support not only the statutory responsibilities of the agency but also statewide initiatives and initiatives within the agency. Existing programs and initiatives, as well as any proposed strategic reductions and redistributions, will be evaluated against state and agency strategic plans during the budget process.

Capital Outlay Requests

FY 2025 Bond Planning Amounts

Bond planning amounts have been established for many (but not all) agencies with ongoing capital programs that request capital projects each year. The FY 2025 planning amounts will be communicated directly via correspondence from OPB to those agencies receiving planning amounts. The amounts are established so agencies can prepare funding requests that align with the state's strong debt management plan and the continued receipt of the highest possible bond ratings, thereby realizing the lowest possible debt payments for the state.

The planning amounts are established after careful review of recent appropriations, agency plans, programs and projects underway and proposed, and the current expected overall financial resources of the state. ***The planning amounts for a given agency are not guaranteed, nor are they to be considered absolute maximum amounts.*** A comprehensive evaluation of all funding requests will be conducted. ***Agencies are strongly encouraged to identify and address all critical capital needs and prioritize accordingly within their planning amounts.*** Agencies may also identify needs above the planning

amounts, however, these will only be considered on a priority basis with other requests within the overall state's financial resources.

Planning amounts were not established for agencies that have smaller and/or infrequent capital project requests. These agencies have been notified that planning amounts were not established and that specific capital requests from the agency will be evaluated on a project-by-project basis.

Requirements for Submission

Agencies must submit their Capital Outlay requests and out-year projections to OPB using PBCS.

Due to their relatively high cost and long service lives, the vast majority of Capital Outlay requests are funded by the authorization of general obligation bonds with the debt service funded through state appropriations. The state may also choose to directly fund smaller capital requests using state general funds (Cash) appropriated in the operating budget.

Agencies should follow this general guidance in preparing and submitting capital funding requests:

- Submit project requests for lower cost items ($\leq \$100,000$) with useful service lives of less than five years through **PBCS** either as budget redistributions from other funding within an agency's budget or as part of the agency's 3% enhancement request.
- Submit project requests for higher cost capital projects ($\geq \$100,000$) having useful service lives of five years or more through **PBCS** as a capital request item. This includes requests for annual funding allocations for repairs, improvements, and renovations at facilities, and vehicle fleet replacements of 10 or more vehicles.

A funding request should only be submitted once either as an operating budget or capital budget item. If necessary, OPB will make modifications to handle a project if the recommended funding differs from that submitted; do not submit duplicate requests for the same item.

All projects must have a priority ranking in PBCS prior to submitting their request to OPB. It is the state's priority to fund construction for existing projects for which we have already authorized funding for the design. Agency funding requests should explicitly prioritize previous partially funded major projects within their established planning amount per the above guidance before requesting funds to initiate new major capital projects. Agencies should also weigh any additional project funding considerations (urgency, operational importance, expected impact/benefit, and leveraging of state funds) in establishing their priority ranking.

Once project information is entered and confirmed in PBCS for all requested and future projected funding, the agency "submits" the projects to OPB. Agencies should contact their OPB budget analyst if there are questions regarding capital outlay requests and projections or the PBCS web-based submittal process. Agencies must submit their completed capital project information to OPB by September 8.



OFFICE OF PLANNING AND BUDGET

Brian P. Kemp
Governor

Richard Dunn
Director

August 2, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: Agency Heads
Fiscal Officers

FROM: Richard Dunn

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "RD", written over the name "Richard Dunn".

RE: **Budget Instructions: Amended Fiscal Year (AFY) 2024 and Fiscal Year (FY) 2025**

Georgia's economy has continued to exceed expectations as businesses flock to the Peach State to take advantage of our strategic location, robust transportation infrastructure, world class workforce, and business friendly environment. As the number one state in which to do business, economic opportunity has continued to grow for our citizens, with low unemployment and high wage growth, despite expectations from multiple economists and the Federal Reserve last year that the country would enter a recession. For state government, this has meant stronger than anticipated revenues, enabling the state to make strategic economic and infrastructure investments to support future growth over the last two years while still providing more than \$3 billion in tax relief to hardworking Georgians to help battle the impact of ongoing, historically high inflation, and enact the largest state income tax cut in Peach State history.

Looking ahead to 2024 and 2025, the underlying strength of the state economy will enable us to continue to meet projected spending obligations required to support our growing population, even with the impact of current and upcoming tax cuts as a result of HB 1437 and other revenue adjustments. We also have the opportunity to allow agencies the flexibility to consider strategic enhancements for the first time since FY 2020. I applaud each of you and your staff for your effective management throughout the pandemic and uncertain economic times over the last three years. Agencies quickly pivoted their service delivery model to ensure citizens still received critical state services while simultaneously being asked to reduce budgets due to the severe economic downturn caused by COVID-19. As our economic environment has increasingly stabilized post-pandemic, agencies are asked to think critically about potential areas of need or investment within their departments. To support those initiatives, agencies may request budget enhancements of up to three percent for both the current and next fiscal years. Additionally, OPB invites agencies to share other ideas for one-time investment opportunities for consideration in the AFY 2024 budget. Both ongoing enhancements and one-time investment opportunities should be targeted at initiatives that can "move the needle" on program outcomes, improve customer service, or provide significant future improvement on how we do business or deliver services as a state.

Additionally, Governor Kemp challenges state agencies to continuously look for opportunities for streamlining and increasing efficiency in how we manage government. Even in positive fiscal climates, agencies should strive to find

An Equal Opportunity Employer

FY 2025 Budget Instructions, cont.

ways to do business better, whether implementing technological efficiencies, reducing unnecessary regulations, or curtailing low performing or low priority initiatives. We must also recognize the expected millions of dollars in growth for entitlement beneficiary programs and their impacts on the budget in the coming fiscal years, factoring that considerable expansion into our expenditure estimates. Therefore, along with any agency enhancement requests, agencies should also submit FY 2025 budget plans demonstrating opportunities to reduce agency spend through efficiencies by one percent.

The General Budget Preparation Procedures are available on the OPB website at opb.georgia.gov for use in preparing your agency's Amended FY 2024 and FY 2025 budget request. Planning and Budget Cloud Services (PBCS) instructions are also accessible on the OPB website. Each agency, department, and authority must submit a budget request that is in accordance with the Governor's budget instructions. There may be some enrollment or formula driven programs that will be exempted from both the three percent enhancement and one percent reduction requests. OPB will notify you as to those exclusions. Please use the attached templates as support for your enhancement requests to submit to your budget analyst along with your PBCS budget submission. Budget submissions are due on Friday, September 8.

RD:sb