

## **Response to Request for Information for Use of Additional Funding to Provide Employment and Supportive Services to Oregon's Veterans**

May 11, 2017

### **I. Background**

The Oregon Employment Department provided information on veterans and supportive services to the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness on March 23, 2017. During this informational hearing the Committee Chair, Rep. Evans requested that the department assess how additional revenues at two specific funding levels could be used to support outreach and direct service programs for veterans.

The following information is in response to Chair Evans' request for additional information.

### **II. Summary of Program Service Options**

The Employment Department's Veterans Program could use additional revenue to fund two to four Veterans Representative positions. The primary function of the Veterans Representative would be to provide one-on-one employment services and outreach to disadvantaged veterans with barriers to employment, provide one-on-one services to National Guard and Reservists, and to promote veterans as a resource to employers. Ideally, the Veterans Representative positions would be a veteran or a person that is highly knowledgeable in veterans services. Additional funding could be used in rural areas of Oregon in support of the Governor's initiative to help disadvantaged rural veterans, who may not have access to the same level of employment and support services as veterans that reside in Portland and the Willamette Valley metro areas.

### **III. Funding for the Veterans Representative Positions**

This response is based on the understanding that additional revenue would be allocated to the Employment Department for enhanced services to Oregon's veterans. The proposed Veterans Representative roles would continue as long as this additional revenue source was available to the Employment Department. The department's current Veterans Services programs are supported by federal funding. These estimates are intended to provide an idea of how additional funding may best be used at this time. This information is subject to change, depending on the funding levels and identified greatest need to best serve veterans.

#### **\$800,000:**

- Provides funding for four Veterans Representative positions: Pendleton to provide veterans services to Umatilla County, Hood River and The Dalles areas; Canyon City to provide veterans services to Grant and Harney Counties; Coos Bay to provide veterans services in Coos and Curry Counties; and Beaverton to provide services in Washington County.
- Networking events, guest speakers and workshop presenters in rural areas.
- Supportive and training services specifically targeted towards rural and homeless veterans.

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**\$400,000:**

- Provides funding for two Veterans Representative positions: Pendleton to provide veterans services to Umatilla County, Hood River, and The Dalles areas; and Canyon City to provide veterans services to Grant and Harney counties.
- Networking events, guest speakers and workshop presenters in rural areas.
- Supportive and training services specifically targeted towards rural and homeless veterans.

#### **IV. Veterans Representative Role**

Veterans Representatives perform these key functions:

- **Hybrid Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) duties**— The Veterans Representative will fulfill the role of a DVOP by providing one-on-one intensive employment services to veterans with barriers to employment and disabilities. The Veterans Representative will also fulfill the role of a LVER by promoting veterans to employers within their communities.
- **National Guard and Reservist**— Veterans Representatives will provide one-on-one intensive employment services to National Guard and Reservist.
- **Increased partnerships with the National Guard and Reserves**— Part of the Veterans Representative's outstation and outreach will involve the National Guard and Reservist units in their regions. There are National Guard units in Pendleton and The Dalles, and Coast Guard Units in Coos Bay.  
**Note:** There have been significant cuts to the employment services offered by the National Guard through the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, and these Veterans Representatives can help fill this gap in services.
- **Apprenticeship and On the Job training programs**— Increased flexibility to partner more effectively with employers, apprenticeship programs and On the Job training programs.
- **Veterans Networking Event Facilitator**— Able to coordinate and facilitate veterans employment and networking events in rural areas.

#### **V. Need for Additional Veterans Representatives**

- Traditionally, the Employment Department receives funding through the U.S. Department of Labor–Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) to fund the agency's Veterans Program. However, the agency does not receive enough funding to provide adequate coverage for the entire state.
- DOL-VETS typically provides funding for Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) to provide intensive employment services and case management and outreach to veterans with disabilities and barriers to employment. Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) foster relationships with and promote the hiring of veterans to employers. By utilizing state funds to supplement this program, the Employment Department has more flexibility with the role of the Veterans Representatives and in turn may be able to serve a larger number of veterans and National Guard and Reservist in these communities.
- Additional funding will allow Veterans Representative staff to utilize their connections and referral capabilities, increase outreach efforts, and leverage existing technology to provide intensive employment services and case management to 59,758 veterans that currently reside in these communities.

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- Additionally, Oregon does not have active duty military installations (with the exception of two small U.S. Coast Guard installations). Active duty installations provide amenities to veterans such as transition, employment and training services. In Oregon, when active duty veterans and mobilized Oregon National Guard and Reserve members return to the state, they are released to communities that have little to no transition services. Veterans Representatives help to fill that void.

## **VI. Veterans Employment Networking Events**

The Employment Department has outlined below how we could use \$10,000 - \$20,000 to be used over the biennium to support veterans networking events in rural areas throughout Oregon.

## **VII. Facilitating Veterans Networking Events**

*Veterans Representatives in rural areas could do the following:*

- Assess the employment and training needs for veterans and employers in rural areas to ensure that each networking event is meeting the specific needs of each area.
- Ensure that all aspects of the event are planned and coordinated in a timely and organized manner.
- Track the success of the event through satisfaction surveys, employment statistics, and other positive outcomes as a result of each event.
- Maintain relationships with event planning committee members in order to better plan future events.
- Assist with the advertising for each event.
- Work with community partners to help pay for incidentals such as food, parking, or transportation to the event.

## **VIII. Location of Events**

This would fund three networking events per area, for a total of 12 events per calendar year, in the following workforce areas:

- Southwestern Oregon— Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties
- Rogue Valley—Jackson and Josephine counties
- East Cascades—Deschutes, Klamath, and Lake counties
- Eastern Oregon— Harney, Malheur, Umatilla, Union, and Wallowa counties

Employment Networking Events;

- Employment Department Veterans Representatives would involve Local Workforce Development Boards, WorkSource Oregon Centers, employers, Society of Human Resource Management chapters, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), and local veterans service organizations in the planning and implementation of networking events. These events could lead to an increased number of veterans entering into long-term, living wage employment and will build stronger partnerships with employers committed to hiring veterans.
- Prior to the event, Veterans Representatives would foster relationships with employers in order to learn as much as possible about each organization, including company culture, job openings, and what they are looking for in an ideal candidate.
- Veterans Representatives would also work with community partners and WorkSource staff to help prepare veteran job seekers for the event.
- During the event, employers would get the opportunity to talk about the benefits of working for their organization, answer questions on how best to apply to their organization, and interview veterans on the spot.

- Human Resources professionals would assist veteran job seekers by providing them with advice on how best to navigate Human Resources applicant tracking systems, interview techniques, and provide value added referrals to Human Resources colleagues that are currently hiring. Veterans Representatives may also incorporate onsite interviewing and job search workshops as part of the networking event.

**IX. Need for Networking Events in Rural Communities**

1) Veterans unemployment rates are traditionally higher in rural Oregon.

<b>Veterans Unemployment Rates in Rural Oregon 2016</b>			
<b>Southwestern Oregon</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Statewide Veterans Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>Veteran Unemployment Rate</b>	
Douglas County	6.3%	8.70%	
Coos County		9.50%	
Curry County		5.50%	
<b>Rogue Valley Region</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Statewide Veterans Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>Veteran Unemployment Rate</b>	
Jackson County	6.3%	11.90%	
Josephine County		15.20%	
<b>Central Oregon</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Statewide Veterans Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>Veteran Unemployment Rate</b>	
Deschutes	6.3%	9.60%	
<b>East Cascades</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Statewide Veterans Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>Veteran Unemployment Rate</b>	
Klamath County	6.3%	13.10%	
Lake County		4.50%	
<b>Eastern Oregon</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Statewide Veterans Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>Veteran Unemployment Rate</b>	
Union County	6.3%	11.10%	
Wallowa County		27.30%	
Malheur County		9.40%	
Harney		19.30%	

Source: Oregon Employment Department - Workforce Analysts, US Census Bureau data 2016.

2) Rural areas have smaller WorkSource Oregon Centers, with limited staff to assist with the planning and coordination of workshops, hiring, and networking events.

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WorkSource Oregon services in non-rural areas:

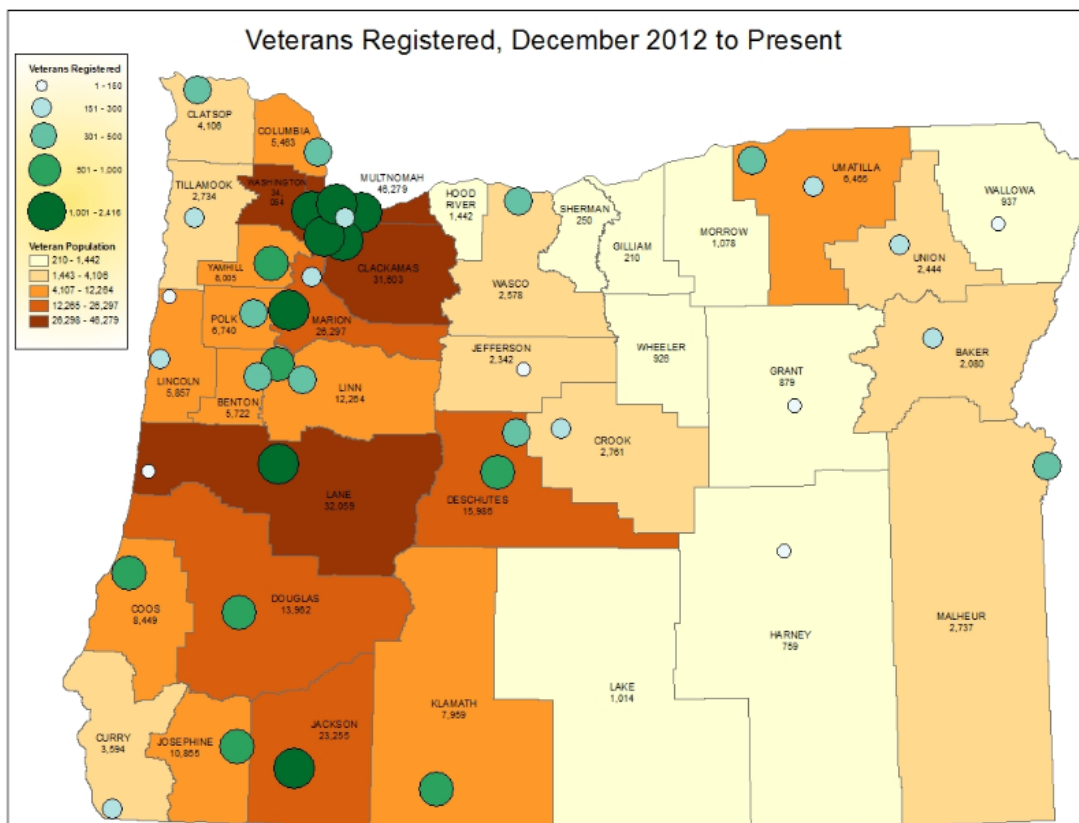
- There are 37 WorkSource Oregon locations throughout Oregon.
- A typical WorkSource Oregon location in the Portland Metro region has between 30-50 staff and partners to provide quality employment services and training and education opportunities to job seekers.
- Portland Metro WorkSource locations are usually closer in distance to each other and are located along well established bus and light rail (Max) routes.
- WorkSource Oregon locations in the Willamette Valley (Albany and Salem), and in the Eugene and Corvallis areas also have larger WorkSource Oregon locations with higher staffing levels and increased access to employment, educational and vocational and supportive services.

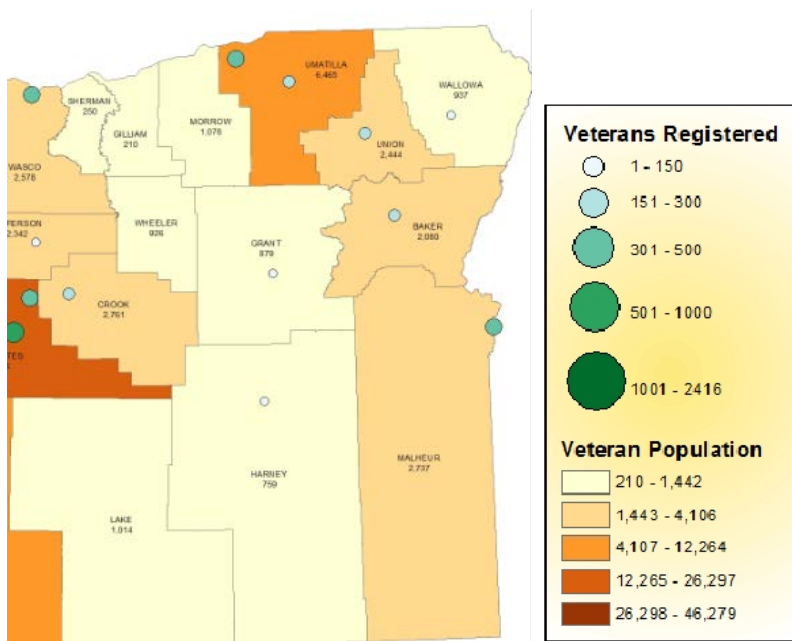
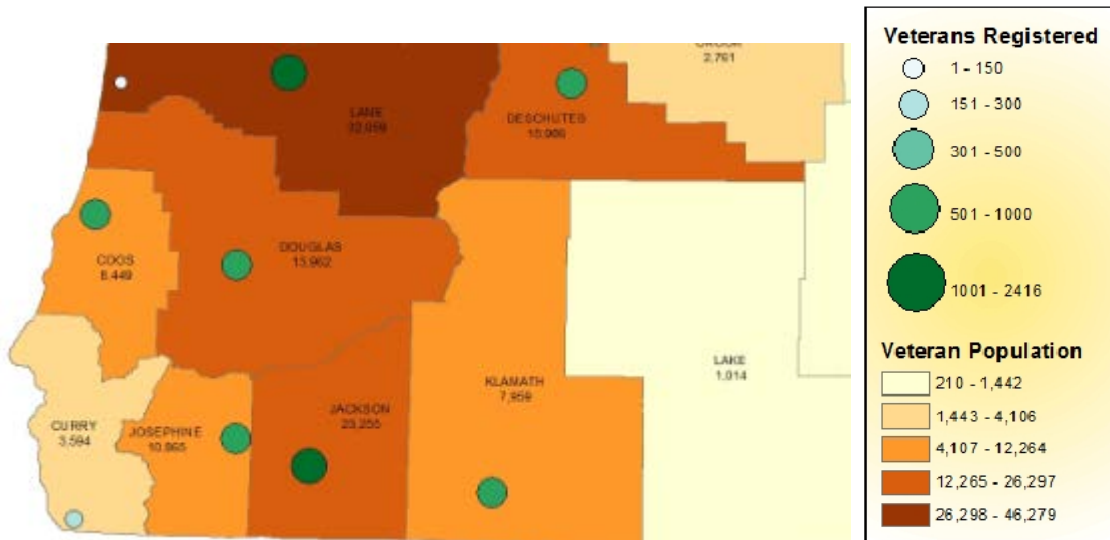
WorkSource Oregon services in rural areas:

- There are only six Disabled Veterans Outreach Program staff available to provide intensive veterans services in these regions.
- There are currently 98,426 Veterans that reside in the Eastern Oregon, East Cascades, and Southwest Oregon local workforce development board areas.
- 18 of the 37 WorkSource Oregon locations are located in rural areas.
- Many of the rural WorkSource locations have small numbers of staff. For example, the Burns office has just three staff total to provide employment services to the entire county.
- Some locations, such as Milton-Freewater, are open only on certain days or with reduced hours. This further limits the services that we can provide to veterans.

**The maps below highlight the rural areas in Oregon that would benefit the most from veterans networking events and supportive employment services.**

Note: Veterans Registered refers to the veterans that have utilized WorkSource Oregon services.





**X. Need for Veterans Supportive Employment Services**

Note: The Oregon Employment Department has conducted a formal assessment of the needs of veterans in rural areas. The following list of veteran’s supportive employment services is based on direct input from Employment Department Veterans Representatives, WorkSource Oregon management, and partners.

The following personal care and survival items and supportive employment services that can be supported by a portion of the proposed additional funding are based on the needs of the rural communities they serve:

- **Personal care and survival items**— Hygiene kits, shaving accessories, access to flu shots and Tuberculosis vaccinations, boots, clothing, sleeping bags, tents and access to food pantries.
- **Computer and Information Technology certifications**— Microsoft certifications, A++, C+ certifications.
- **Medical training and certifications**— Emergency Medical Technician training and certifications, Certified Nursing Aid training and certifications.

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- **Incarcerated veterans**— Assistance with obtaining Identification cards and Driver’s licenses needed for employment.
- **GED and High School equivalency**— Assistance with obtaining a GED or High School diploma needed for employment.
- **Service industry certifications**— Food Handlers’ Card, Tuberculosis testing, Mixology certifications.
- **Increased transportation options**— Bus tickets for work related activities and VA appointments, bike assistance and bike repair programs, ride share and caravan programs.
- **Work equipment:** Boots, welders’ hoods, nursing shoes, back braces, cell phone minutes or disposable cell phones.
- **Specialized job training workshops**— National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) or National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) training.
- **Training courses**— Includes tuition fees for schools that provide job related training such as truck driving schools, cell tower technician training programs, and wind turbine technician training programs.

**XI. Measuring Success of Increased Veterans Program Funding**

Performance Outcomes		
	Current Performance (2015)	Goals (2017-2019 Biennium)
<b>Goal 1:</b> Provide veterans employment and supportive services throughout Oregon.	24 Veterans Representative staff (as of Q2 FY 2017)	Additional funding would enable the Employment Department to increase Veterans Representatives to allow for better state coverage.
<b>Goal 2:</b> Partner more effectively with local National Guard and Reserve units.	Under the current veterans program grant parameters – DVOPs and LVERS cannot provide employment services to National Guard and Reservist that are not military veterans.	Additional funding would enable the Employment Department to provide more comprehensive employment services to National Guard and Reservist in rural areas.
<b>Goal 3:</b> Lower the average rural veteran unemployment rate by two percentage points.	12.09% (Average rural veteran unemployment rate)	10.09% (Average rural veteran unemployment rate)
<b>Goal 4:</b> Increase the number of rural veterans working at the local living wage. Living wage is defined here as the average wage for all jobs in an area. Increase the average earnings for rural veterans from \$31,000 annually/\$14.90 per hour to \$33,280 annually/\$16.00 per hour.	\$31,000 (Average annual earnings for rural veterans)	\$33,280 (Average annual earnings for rural job seekers)
<b>Goal 5:</b> Increase rural veterans employment retention rates by two percentage points.	81% (Current statewide veterans employment retention rate)	83%

Source: WorkSource economic data from [www.qualityinfo.org](http://www.qualityinfo.org), Oregon Employment Department Workforce Analysts, Department of Labor Employment Training Administration Reports, and US Census Bureau 2016 data.

Note: Goals will be revisited and revised as needed each biennium funding is available.

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## **XII: What We Hope to Accomplish Over Time**

1. The overall goal is to ensure that Oregon's veterans find long-term, living wage employment.
2. An increase in higher quality job leads for Oregon's veterans.
3. Increased awareness of the services that WorkSource Oregon and WorkSource Oregon's veterans programs and partners provide.
4. A higher percentage of highly qualified veteran candidates being referred to employers.
5. "Free" advertising in the form of local community service providers, veterans-based organizations, local radio and newspaper advertisements.
6. The ability to foster long lasting relationships with employers that will continue to hire veterans through the services that WorkSource Oregon provides.
7. An increased understanding of the employers' needs in rural communities.
8. An increase in the access to veterans supportive employment services in rural Oregon that will assist veterans with overcoming barriers to employment such as transportation, lack of work equipment, lack of employment certifications, licensure, and training opportunities.

### **Contact Information:**

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