



National Cemetery Administration

2011-2015

FY 2012 – FY 2016 NCA Strategic Plan Refresh

Mission

NCA honors Veterans and their families with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our Nation.

Vision

NCA will be the model of excellence for burial and memorials for our Nation's Veterans and their families.

National Cemetery Administration

Strategic Plan for FY 2012 – FY 2016 (Refresh)

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Executive Summary

The FY 2012 – FY 2016 NCA Strategic Plan (Refresh) renews and revalidates the National Cemetery Administration’s strategic vision for improving the ways in which we honor Veterans and their families with final resting places in national shrines and by commemorating their service to our Nation as detailed in the FY 2011 - 2015 Strategic Plan published in January 2011. This plan also supports the FY 2011 - 2015 VA Strategic Plan Refresh and VA’s mission to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan – by serving and honoring the men and women who are America’s Veterans.

The NCA Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015 was developed from input provided by senior leadership from every office and service within NCA. Goals, objectives, and strategies from the FY 2008 – FY 2012 NCA Strategic Plan were revalidated. New strategies and performance measures were developed to reflect both the current status and future direction of NCA. The resulting document provided a strategic roadmap for guiding NCA as an organization and for improving the manner in which NCA serves Veterans and their families. The NCA Strategic Plan 2012 – 2016 (Refresh) is the result of comprehensive review and consultation in the Spring of 2012 between the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs and his senior leadership team who serve as the Executive Sponsors of the NCA Strategic Plan. These reviews and consultations provided an opportunity for senior leaders to evaluate progress; consider challenges and solutions; identify and address emerging strategic issues; and reconfirm that our plan is a relevant and valid roadmap for the future. NCA’s strategic plan also provides critical guidance to NCA’s 5 Memorial Service Network Offices and 131 national cemeteries in the development of their strategic and operational business plans.

The NCA Strategic Plan is a comprehensive effort that sets strategic initiatives for improving the performance of NCA’s main missions in the areas of burials, memorials, and maintaining national shrines. The plan also identifies other important initiatives in areas such as human resources, training, workforce development, financial management, and contracting that are necessary to supporting the direct delivery of benefits to Veterans and to ensuring that NCA maintains its position as one of the most highly regarded organizations, in both the public and private sectors, in terms of customer satisfaction.

Ways We Serve Veterans

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) interrs eligible Veterans and their eligible family members in national cemeteries and maintains those graves and their environs as national shrines in perpetuity; assists States and tribal organizations in providing burial benefits to Veterans through the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program; furnishes headstones and markers for graves of Veterans in national, State, tribal, and private cemeteries; furnishes medallions for privately purchased headstones and markers that signify the Veterans' service; and provides Presidential Memorial Certificates to the next of kin and other loved ones in recognition of deceased Veterans' honorable military service.

When a Veteran dies, it is important that this information is properly captured within the VA system. To ensure this, NCA has developed a First Notice of Death (FNOD) Division dedicated to properly capturing Veteran death notification within VA's computer systems. By processing these FNODs in a timely manner, VA is able to notify the next of kin of important benefits as well as reduce the improper payment of benefits. In the future, this process will expand to eliminate prescription orders and patient appointments for those Veterans who are no longer living.

VA's Core Values and Characteristics

On June 20, 2011 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approved and announced a set of Core Values and Characteristics that apply universally across all of VA. Developed through senior leadership consultation and collaboration across the entire VA the Core Values define the basic elements of how we go about our work – they describe “who we are” and form the underlying principles we will use every day in our service to Veterans. The Core Characteristics define “what we stand for” and what we strive to be as an organization. NCA accepts these core values and characteristics and will strive to meet them in all we do every day.

VA Core Values

Because I CARE, I will:

Integrity Act with high moral principal. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.

Commitment Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.

Advocacy Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.

Respect Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.

Excellence Strive for the highest and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.

VA Core Characteristics

- Trustworthy** VA earns the trust of those it serves – every day – through the actions of all employees. They provide care, benefits, and services with compassion, dependability, effectiveness, and transparency.
- Accessible** VA engages and welcomes Veterans and other beneficiaries, facilitating their use of the entire array of its services. Each interaction will be positive and productive.
- Quality** VA provides the highest standard of care and services to Veterans and beneficiaries while managing the cost of its programs and being efficient stewards of all resources entrusted to it by the American people. VA is a model of unrivalled excellence due to employees who are empowered, trusted by their leaders, and respected for their competence and dedication.
- Innovative** VA prizes curiosity and initiative, encourages creative contributions from all employees, seeks continuous improvement, and adapts to remain at the forefront in knowledge, proficiency, and capability to deliver the highest standard of care and services to all of the people it serves.
- Agile** VA anticipates and adapts quickly to current challenges and new requirements by continuously assessing the environment in which it operates and devising solutions to better serve Veterans, other beneficiaries, and Service members.
- Integrated** VA links care and services across the Department; other federal, state and local agencies; partners; and Veterans Service Organizations to provide useful and understandable programs to Veterans and other beneficiaries. VA's relationship with the Department of Defense is unique, and VA will nurture it for the benefit of Veterans and Service members.

Strategic Planning in NCA

Although strategic planning is required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 and the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, NCA has recognized its value since 1990, when the first NCA strategic plan was published. The purpose of strategic planning in NCA is to improve management and efficiency by focusing on the primary goals and objectives necessary to accomplish our mission. Strategic planning strengthens NCA's credibility within the Department, and with Congressional decision-makers, by identifying not only the processes by which NCA goals and objectives will be attained, but by including objective measures of performance. NCA has developed an evolving strategic management process that includes leadership from top management and participation by employees at all levels of the organization. This Strategic Plan was developed with input from all levels of NCA, including representatives from Central Office, the Memorial Service Networks, and the national cemeteries. It takes into account information acquired from customer and stakeholders; the Departmental Environmental Scan, a periodic review of the environmental factors, including events, trends, directions and outside issues that impact on strategic issues; and initiatives inspired by GPRA.

The National Cemetery Administration Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2012 through 2016 (Refresh), presented herein, reconfirms our clear focus on NCA's mission, the primary goals and objectives associated with the accomplishment of this mission, the strategies that will be used, and measures of performance to demonstrate progress toward the achievement of the goals and objectives as documented in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan. The National Cemetery Administration supports the goals of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and is committed to honor and serve Veterans in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifices on behalf of the Nation; contribute to the public health, socioeconomic well-being and history of the Nation; and, create an environment that fosters the delivery of One VA world-class service to Veterans and their families through effective communication and management of people, technology, business processes, and financial resources.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders of VA's burial programs are varied and diverse. The list begins with those who are the direct beneficiaries of VA burial and memorial benefits: Veterans and their families. Veterans service organizations and professionals in the funeral and mortuary industry are also noteworthy stakeholders. Various components of the Department of Defense (DOD) and members of active duty and reserve forces comprise yet another significant stakeholder group. In addition, members of a number of environmental groups, historical and genealogical organizations, as well as the general public must be included.

The inclusion of Veterans and their families as primary stakeholders is obvious. The inclusion of families takes into account the significance of next of kin, since not only eligible Veterans but also their eligible family members may receive burial benefits. It is important that these Veterans, widows, widowers, and other family members are treated with compassion and dignity at the time of their bereavement and when they return to visit the gravesite, and that the cemetery's entire appearance is maintained in a manner befitting a national shrine.

Veterans Service Organizations must be recognized in their role of stakeholders and partners in the VA mission. These organizations act as a voice for Veterans and their families and as advocates for their needs and expectations. At many national cemeteries, they are important partners in providing support for military funeral honors.

State governments and tribal organizations, usually operating through their individual Veterans affairs departments, play an increasingly important role in providing service to Veterans and their families. By establishing and operating state and tribal organization Veterans cemeteries as a complement to VA national cemeteries, they provide additional burial options for Veterans and their families.

Funeral directors are another significant stakeholder group. These professionals are often the spokespersons or agents for the Veteran or next of kin and are also directly involved in the delivery of VA services through the coordination of committal services and interments. Funeral directors may also assist families in applying for headstones and markers.

Private cemeteries must also be included as stakeholders. Each year, VA furnishes more than 200,000 headstones and markers for Veterans' gravesites in private cemeteries.

Veterans' families expect that appropriate military funeral honors will be provided at national cemeteries in recognition of the Veteran's service to our Nation. The provision of military funeral honors is part of the mission of DOD, but it requires a close and collaborative partnership between NCA and DOD. DOD and the uniformed forces of

each branch of service must be incorporated into any list of NCA stakeholders in recognition of the important role they play in honoring those who have served.

NCA must also consider other groups of interested and concerned citizens, as well as members of the general public as stakeholders. Many of our national cemeteries date from the Nation's Civil War and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As such, they are of interest to historical societies and individuals interested in history and genealogical research. As national shrines, national cemeteries are also visited by individuals, families, and groups who may not have family members interred in a national cemetery. NCA is responsible to all Americans for the prudent management of tax dollars and the sound environmental management of the land and our facilities.

Finally, it is also appropriate to recognize stakeholders within the Department: the Veterans Health Administration (VHA); the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA); and headquarters staff offices such as the Office of Information Technology, the Office of Acquisition, Logistics and Construction, and others. All VA organizational elements are important partners with NCA in providing seamless service to Veterans and their families.

Assumptions, Opportunities, and Constraints

Annual Veteran deaths peaked at 665,000 in 2006 and are now slowly declining. 642,000 Veterans deaths are projected in 2012. However, with the opening of new national cemeteries, annual interments will increase from 118,160 in 2012 to approximately 130,000 in 20167, an increase of 9 percent from 2012 before they begin a gradual decline. During this time, the total number of graves maintained is also expected to increase from 3.2 million in 2012 to nearly 3.4 million in 2014 and 3.7 million in 2018.

In 2012, NCA encompasses 131 national cemeteries and 33 other cemeterial installations. As annual interments and total gravesites used increase, cemeteries deplete their inventory of space and are no longer able to accept casketed or cremated remains of first family members for interment. This reduces the national cemetery burial options available to Veterans. At the end of 2012, 72 national cemeteries contained available, unassigned gravesites for the burial of both casketed and cremated remains; 18 could accept only cremated remains and remains of family members for interment in the same gravesite as a previously deceased family member; and 41 could perform only interments of family members in the same gravesite as a previously deceased family member.

By 2015, NCA expects that five new national cemeteries will begin to serve Veterans in the areas of Central East Florida, Tallahassee, Florida; Omaha, Nebraska; Southern Colorado; and, Western New York where at least 80,000 currently unserved Veterans reside. In addition, new policies will increase access to a national cemetery burial option for Veterans who live in both large metropolitan areas as well as those who reside in

sparsely populated rural communities. NCA will open 5 new columbaria-only cemeterial installations under an Urban Initiative designed to provide enhanced service to Veterans in densely populated urban areas of the country in which an existing national cemetery is underutilized due to time and distance travel factors. These facilities will serve Veterans in the areas of Los Angeles, California; the San Francisco Bay Area, California; New York, New York; Chicago, Illinois; and Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition, under a Rural Veterans Burial Initiative NCA expects to open 8 new NCA-managed National Veterans Burial Grounds in existing public or private cemeteries in states where there is no open national cemetery and where Veterans reside in rural areas with no access to a national or state Veterans cemetery. These facilities will serve Veterans in Maine, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, and Idaho.

By the year 2016, four national cemeteries, Baltimore, Maryland; Nashville, Tennessee; Danville, Virginia and Alexandria, Virginia will exhaust their supply of available, unassigned gravesites. However, overlapping service areas will reduce the potential number of Veterans losing reasonable access to a burial option. Closed cemeteries will continue to accept the remains of family members for interment in the same gravesite as a previously deceased family member. As cemetery service capabilities decrease, Veterans served by those cemeteries may lose access to burial options located within a reasonable distance of their homes. In order to ensure that burial options are provided for eligible Veterans and their family members, NCA needs to continue to develop additional national cemeteries; expand existing national cemeteries where appropriate; develop more effective use of available burial space; and encourage individual states to develop state Veterans cemeteries through the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program.

All VA national cemeteries are valuable historic assets of our Nation and important sites for patriotic and commemorative events. NCA needs to continue to emphasize the use of VA's national cemeteries and 19th- century soldiers' lots to teach American history to students and communities, with a special emphasis on Veterans and their role in the history of our Nation. NCA also needs to continue to focus on hosting ceremonies and memorial services at national cemeteries to honor those who made the supreme sacrifice.

NCA's Memorial Programs Service (MPS) is responsible for administering the Headstone and Marker and the Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) programs. In 2011, NCA processed nearly 373,000 applications for headstones and markers for placement in national, state, other public or private cemeteries. The number of headstone and marker applications processed is expected to be about 330,000 in 2017. NCA issued nearly 780,000 Presidential Memorial Certificates in 2011, and expects to issue more than 870,000 in the year 2017.

External Factors

The following external factors could impact NCA's ability to achieve its goals.

- VA has established partnerships with states and tribal organizations to provide Veterans and their eligible family members with burial options. It is difficult to project future activity for this program because requests for grants are generated from individual states and tribal organizations. States and tribal organizations must acquire land for new cemeteries and must take the appropriate actions that will commit funding to a project that will serve a clearly defined population and ensure funds for maintenance and operations in perpetuity.
- Veterans and their families may feel that their expectations concerning the committal service, including military funeral honors, were not met. Dissatisfaction with services such as military funeral honors (which are not provided by NCA) or those provided by the funeral home can adversely affect the public's perceptions regarding the quality of NCA service.
- Maintaining national cemeteries as national shrines is influenced by many different factors. As time passes, the grounds, graves, and grave markers of cemeteries experience a variety of environmental changes that may require extensive maintenance. Extremes in weather, such as excessive rain or drought, can result in or exacerbate sunken graves, sunken markers, soiled markers, inferior turf cover, weathering of columbaria; age and disease may cause the loss of mature vegetation and trees, and the construction of incompatible development adjacent to a cemetery may necessitate the installation of mitigative natural screening.

As the number of interments in national cemeteries increases, resources must be available to honor our Nation's obligation to its Veterans. These resources must include adequate funds to ensure perpetual maintenance and avoid the deterioration of the infrastructure of these national shrines. A sufficient and highly trained workforce, well-designed and fully functional information technology capabilities, and a commitment to consistently improving business processes while encouraging innovation, will be required to maintain and support high quality customer service.

STRATEGIC PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS – 2011-2012

1. **Increase the percentage of applications for headstones, markers and medallions processed within 20 days to 90 percent for the graves of Veterans who are buried in other than national cemeteries. (2011)** As a result of process analysis and improvement initiatives in the Memorial Programs Service, performance on this measure improved to 93.2% in 2011. The Strategic Plan now includes a measure to sustain target performance or better annually.
2. **Develop options, draft policy and brief the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on NCA recommendations for a new Rural Veterans Burial policy. (2011)**
and
3. **Incorporate a new Rural Veterans Burial Policy into NCA budget requests. (Target 2014, completed in 2011)**
During FY 2011 NCA developed a set of options focused on improving access to a VA burial option for Veterans who live in sparsely populated rural areas of the United States. Following a review of several options the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approved a new Rural Veterans Burial Policy in September 2011. The new policy will establish National Veterans Burial Grounds within existing public or private cemeteries. The National Veterans Burial Grounds will be operated and maintained by the National Cemetery Administration. Locations have been identified in eight states where no more than 25,000 Veterans reside who do not have access to a national or state Veterans cemetery within 75 miles of their residence. Funding for the new Rural Veterans Burial policy was included in the 2013 Congressional Budget request ahead of the 2014 Strategic Plan target.
4. **Research and develop an action plan for NCA's role in addressing homelessness in the Veteran population. (2011)**
and
5. **Implement the action plan for NCA's role in addressing homelessness in the Veteran population. (2012)** In 2011 NCA submitted a plan to develop and implement a Homeless Veterans Apprenticeship Program as part of the Secretary's major initiative, Eliminate Veteran Homelessness. Under this plan Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless will have an opportunity for one year of paid employment at a national cemetery where they will receive both classroom and on-the-job training in a key national cemetery position. At the end of the 12 month training period successful participants will be offered full time permanent positions in a national cemetery or a certificate of competency that can be used to support an application for a position in the private sector. In 2012 NCA is worked closely with VALU to develop a competency based Cemetery Caretaker training curriculum and plan for Apprentices. NCA also worked with the Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Office (part of VHA's Homeless Veterans Initiative Office) to identify potential candidates for the program and national cemeteries where apprentices could train and continue to receive ongoing support and counseling. At the end of

2012 24 Cemetery Caretaker Apprentices were on board at 5 national cemeteries in Florida, Texas, Tennessee, South Dakota and Puerto Rico.

6. **Implement the business office concept for finance, contracting, and logistics. (2011)** In 2011 the NCA Operations Support Center was fully operational. Located in Stafford, VA the center consists of the Contracting Service and the Finance Service. The Finance Service provides accounting and financial services to national cemeteries, Memorial Service Networks, NCA Central Office components and the Contracting Service. The Contracting Service provides contract negotiation, administration and other procurement support needed by NCA programs, including the entire headstone and marker program, important segments of construction and National Shrine Commitment projects and critical and other select procurements for national cemeteries, such as grounds maintenance. The co location of these two services facilitates timely and efficient support to NCA cemeteries and offices.
7. **Research, develop and implement an action plan for increasing the percentage of Veterans employed by NCA, including OEF/OIF. (2011)** and
8. **Implement the action plan for increasing the percentage of Veterans, including OEF/OIF by NCA. (2012)** A plan has been prepared and addresses how the Human Resources Center (HRC) in Indianapolis promotes this hiring goal. The HRC has widely broadcast this initiative to NCA hiring managers at NCA meetings and conferences and has participated in multiple outreach events where there are OEF/OIF recruitment opportunities. NCA has hired more than 250 OEF/OIF Veterans since January 2009.
9. **Develop and implement a management internal controls audit program to ensure compliance with OMB Circular A-123. (2012)** In 2012 NCA established a position and program in the Policy and Planning Service to enhance risk assessment and risk management throughout NCA and to strengthen the Under Secretary's ability to report and mitigate deficiencies through the annual Statement of Assurance. At the end of 2012 a new Internal Controls/Risk Management program was established. Senior Leaders, Central Office Directors and Managers and Cemetery Directors received training on the new program and its requirements. Risk assessments and new Internal Control Checklists were developed for seven major organizations within NCA. Implementation will continue in 2013 to conduct additional risk assessments for assessable units in NCA Central Office and to initiate an audit program to assess compliance with identified internal controls.

10. **Develop and distribute a pre-need planning package to be used by funeral homes and national cemetery staff. (2012)**
and
11. **Develop and distribute a tool kit and DVD designed to inform directors, clergy, and families about NCA’s committal service protocol. (2012)** A new on line resource for families, cemetery staff and funeral directors is available on VA’s website, www.cem.va.gov. The resource site includes links about burial eligibility, benefits and services as well as videos and information regarding committal services with and without military honors.
12. **Lead a cross-cutting NCA team to develop functional and business requirements for designing new and replacement systems for NCA’s mission critical systems such as automated tracking of remains, electronic interface for scheduling, scheduling via Internet, and handheld devices to improve operational functions. (2012)** Functional and business requirements for major system modernization was completed in 2012. Proof of concept, and demonstration expected in 2013; pilot 3rd quarter 13 – 1st qtr 14. This initiative is part of the VLER Major Initiative and development and deployment is being funded by VA OI&T through the Major Initiative.
13. **Establish teams (made up of SME’s and education professionals) to review, develop and validate competencies for identified positions. (2012)** NCA mission critical occupational competencies have been mapped for cemetery caretaker, cemetery representative and cemetery technician positions and these are now available on the MyCareer@VA portal.
14. **Establish a workforce diversity committee. (2012)** In 2012 a new Program manager was added to the EEO Team with responsibility for diversity and special programs. The committee charter was completed and approved, membership identified and plans have been made to hold the initial committee meeting early in 2013.
15. **Systematically track progress to address recommendations to OAI site assessment reports. (2012)** The Director of Field Programs developed guidance which clarified the purpose of the Organizational Assessment and Improvement (OAI) Program, including national cemetery self assessments, the OAI Site Visit as well as expectations and procedures to follow once the OAI Site Visit Report is received. National Cemetery and MSN Director responsibilities to review results, create action plans addressing opportunities for improvement, and to monitor and report results, well as related timeframes have been established.
16. **Increase by 100 percent the “friends and followers” of NCA sponsored social media sources over the 2010 baseline (2013).** The 2010 baseline for NCA Facebook Fans and Twitter Followers was 1,737 as of 9/30/2010. This initiative was successfully achieved in FY 2011 (September 2011) when the number of Fans and Followers reached 3,643.

17. **Develop a plan to share First Notice of Death information with other VA entities to effectively and efficiently deliver and/or terminate services and benefits where appropriate. (2013)**
and
18. **Implement the plan that will share First Notice of Death with other VA entities (2014)** NCA has continued to work closely with VBA to facilitate the timely sharing of accurate FNOD data through the SHARE system. NCA and VBA meet monthly to discuss and resolve issues. NCA is also sharing a BOSS/AMAS extract monthly with VHA as part of the Master Veteran Index. Although this is still in development and testing VHA is using the NCA data. The MVI is expected to be complete in the latter half of FY 2014. NCA has also worked with Arlington National Cemetery to transfer NCA FNOD to their system for processing.

DRAFT

Integrated Objective 1: Make it easier for Veterans and their families to receive the right benefits, meeting their expectations for quality, timeliness, and responsiveness

Goal 1. Ensure that the burial needs of Veterans and eligible family members are met.

Objective 1.A. Increase the percentage of Veterans served by a burial option within a reasonable distance of their residence.

Strategy 1. Build new national cemeteries and expand the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program.

Sponsor	Partner(s)	Measure	Completion Date	Status
43 DUS for Mgmt	42 Office of Finance & Planning 43B Design & Construction Service; 41F Cemetery Development & Improvement Service; OCFM	1. Establish burial operations at five new national cemeteries in currently identified areas of need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Southern Colorado - Central East Florida - Tallahassee, Florida - Omaha, Nebraska - Western New York 	FY 2015	Land acquisition on target; Construction dependant on funding
40A3 VCGP		2. Award grants to establish 23 new State and Tribal organization Veterans cemeteries.	FY 2016	On Target
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	40A3 VCGP 43B Design & Construction; OCFM	3. Increase the percentage of Veterans served by a burial option in a national, State, or Tribal organization Veterans cemetery to 95 percent.	FY 2016	New NC's -Land acquisition on target; Construction dependant on funding State/Tribal Cemeteries – On target Rural Initiative – On target

Objective 1.B. Ensure that there are no service delivery interruptions and improve access in areas served by existing national, State, or Tribal Government Veterans cemeteries.

Strategy 1. Ensure that a viable burial option continues at existing national cemeteries.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
43 DUS for Mgmt	43B Design & Construction Service; 42A Policy & Planning Service; 41F Cemetery Development & Improvement Service; OCFM	1. There will be no interruption of service because of failure to acquire land appropriate for use as a national shrine or complete a construction project at existing national cemeteries.	Ongoing	

Strategy 2. Ensure that a viable burial option continues at existing State and Tribal Government Veterans cemeteries.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
40A3 VCGP		1. There will be no interruption of service at existing State or Tribal Veterans Cemeteries because of failure of NCA to proactively manage the grants application process for cemeteries depleting gravesites	Ongoing	

Strategy 3: Improve access in urban areas currently served by existing national cemeteries.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
43 DUS for Mgmt	43B Design & Construction Service 41F Cemetery Development & Improvement Service; Real Property Service (OCFM)	1. Establish five new urban satellite facilities at the following locations; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Los Angeles, CA - San Francisco, CA - New York, NY - Chicago, IL - Indianapolis, IN 	2015	

Objective 1.C. Expand access to burial benefits to Veterans currently unserved by a burial option.

Strategy 1: Develop a rural Veterans burial benefit policy

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
42 DUS for Finance & Planning		1. Develop options, draft policy and brief SECVA on NCA recommendations.	2011	Complete
42 DUS for Finance & Planning		2. Incorporate a new rural Veterans policy into NCA budget requests	2014	Complete 2011

Strategy 2: Establish National Veterans Burial Grounds in unserved rural areas.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	43B Design & Construction Service; 41F Cemetery Development & Improvement Service; Real Property Service (OCFM)	1. Establish eight National Veterans Burial Grounds in the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maine - Wisconsin - Montana - Wyoming - North Dakota - Utah - Idaho - Nevada 	2016	

Objective 1.D. Continually strive to meet or exceed the expectations of Veterans and their families by delivering accurate, timely, and courteous service.

Strategy 1. Ensure high levels of satisfaction with the quality of NCA customer service at national cemeteries.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	42D Business Process Improvement Service	1. The quality of service at national cemeteries will be rated as excellent by 100 percent of survey respondents.	2015	
41 DUS for Field Programs	42D Business Process Improvement Service	2. Increase the percent of respondents who strongly agree that the quality of service is excellent to 75%	2015	

Strategy 2. Confirm eligibility and schedule the committal service within a reasonable amount of time.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	41D Scheduling Office/Eligibility	1. Determine eligibility within 48 hours 75 percent of the time when documentation of eligible service is not provided.	2015	
41 DUS for Field Programs	41D Scheduling Office/Eligibility	2. Establish a centralized staff/location to review and recommend action on all sensitive cases (burial and headstones & markers) and to administer NCA's Appeals Process	2013	Delayed
43 DUS for Mgmt	40A3 VCGP 43D IT Business Requirements & Admin Service	3. Establish a system for tracking and reporting the timeliness of scheduling committal services for State and Tribal Veterans Cemeteries	2015	

Strategy 3. Assess the adequacy of existing policies for providing burial and memorial benefits.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	42A Policy & Planning Service	1. Analyze the findings from the Emerging Burial Needs Study	2013	On Target
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	42A Policy & Planning Service	2. Use findings from the Emerging Burial Needs Study to develop recommendations for program and policy changes	2015	
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	42A Policy & Planning Service	3. Work with the VA Office of Policy and Planning to evaluate the need for and conduct a program evaluation of NCA burial programs. (OPP notes there is no schedule for program evaluations.	2015	

Strategy 4. Support grieving families whose loved ones are buried in a national cemetery with bereavement and counseling programs.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs		1. Partner with VHA to increase access to bereavement/grief counseling programs to provide assistance and support for families	2013	On Target

Integrated Objective 1: Make it easier for Veterans and their families to receive the right benefits, meeting their expectations for quality, timeliness, and responsiveness

Goal 2. Provide Veterans and their families with symbolic expressions of remembrance.

Objective 2.A. Furnish quality memorialization products efficiently, accurately, and in a timely manner.

Strategy 1. Ensure that graves at national cemeteries are marked in a reasonable amount of time.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B2 Program Support Service; 43C CCD; 42A Policy & Planning Service	1. Mark 95 percent of graves at national cemeteries within 60 days of interment	2015	
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B2 Program Support Service; 43C CCD; 42A Policy & Planning Service	2. Mark graves at national cemeteries within 27 days of interment on average.	2015	

Strategy 2. Monitor and report levels of customer satisfaction with headstones and markers by conducting an annual survey of applicants using VA Form 1330 for headstones, markers, and medallions to be placed in other than national cemeteries.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B Memorial Programs Service 42D Business Process Improvement Service	1. The quality of headstones, markers and medallions provided by VA will be rated as excellent by 100 percent of survey respondents	2015	

Strategy 3: Monitor and report levels of customer satisfaction with Presidential Memorial Certificates (PMCs) by conducting an annual survey of applicants.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B Memorial Programs Service; 42D Business Process Improvement Service	1. The quality of PMCs provided by VA will be rated as excellent by 100 percent of survey respondents	2015	

Strategy 4. Improve customer service and operations by expanding the use of information technology

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
43 DUS for Mgmt	43D IT Business Requirements & Admin Service 41B Memorial Programs Service	1. Develop and implement a process so that headstone, marker and medallion applications can be submitted over the Internet.	2013	On Target
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B Memorial Programs Service	2. Increase the number of electronic applications for headstones, markers and medallions from private cemeteries to 75 percent of the total received.	2015	

Strategy 5. Improve the process to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of PMCs.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B Memorial Programs Service	1. Increase the percentage of applications for PMC's processed within 20 days of receipt to 90 percent.	2013	On Target

Strategy 6. Enhance timeliness and quality assurance for the Memorial Programs Service.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B Memorial Programs Service	1. Increase the percentage of headstones, markers, and medallions that are delivered undamaged and correctly inscribed to 98 percent.	2013	On Target
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B Memorial Programs Service	2. Increase the percentage of Applicant Assistance telephone calls answered in 60 seconds or less to 85 percent.	2013	On Target
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B Memorial Programs Service; 42D Business Process Improvement Service	3. Increase client satisfaction with the quality of service received from the 1-800 Applicant Assistance staff to 100 percent	2015	
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B Memorial Programs Service 42A Policy & Planning Service	4. Sustain the percent of applications for headstones, markers, and medallions processed within 20 days at 90 percent for the graves of Veterans who are not buried in national cemeteries.	2016	

Integrated Objective 1: Make it easier for Veterans and their families to receive the right benefits, meeting their expectations for quality, timeliness, and responsiveness

Goal 3. Ensure that VA’s national cemeteries and State and Tribal Government Veterans cemeteries are maintained as national shrines dedicated to preserving our Nation’s history, nurturing patriotism, and honoring the service and sacrifice Veterans have made.

Objective 3.A. National, State and Tribal Government Veterans cemeteries will be maintained as national shrines consistently across the system in a manner that exceeds customer expectations.

Strategy 1. Ensure high levels of customer satisfaction with national cemetery maintenance and appearance.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	42D Business Process Improvement Service	1. The appearance of national cemeteries will be rated as excellent by 100 percent of survey respondents.	2015	
41 DUS for Field Programs	42D Business Process Improvement Service	2. Increase to 80% the percent of survey respondents who strongly agree that the appearance of national cemeteries is excellent.	2015	

Strategy 2. Ensure that grounds at national cemeteries are maintained in a manner befitting national shrines.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	42D Business Process Improvement Service	1. Increase the percent of headstones and markers in national cemeteries that are at the proper height and alignment to 90%	2015	
41 DUS for Field Programs	42D Business Process Improvement Service	2. Increase the percent of headstones, markers and niche covers that are clean and free of debris or objectionable accumulations to 95%.	2015	
Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status

41 DUS for Field Programs	42D Business Process Improvement Service	3. Increase the percent of gravesites that have grades that are level and blend with adjacent grade levels to 95%	2015	
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Strategy 3. Educate State and Tribal Government Veterans cemeteries to meet NCA’s National Shrine Commitment Operational Standards and Measures for appearance.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
40A3 VCGP	42 Office of Finance & Planning	1. Develop a strategy, methodology, and criteria for a new Triennial Review process linked to National Shrine standards	2013	On Target
40A3 VCGP		2. Implement Phase I of the new Triennial Review at two selected pilot sites	2013	On Target Goal revised
40A3 VCGP		3. Implement new Triennial Review process at 10 additional State Veterans Cemeteries	2015	

Strategy 4. Develop and implement ways to raise participation levels of volunteer and alternative workforces to maintain our national cemeteries as national shrines and improve administrative operations.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs		1. Develop and distribute standardized guidance to the national cemeteries to facilitate and increase the implementation of work release and community service programs.	2013	On Target
41 DUS for Field Programs		2. Partner with VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) to enable local cemeteries to act as an agent for VAVS to recruit, register, and orient volunteers for national cemeteries.	2013	On Target
41 DUS for Field Programs		3. Develop and distribute standardized guidance that enables cemeteries to promote the quality and consistency of military funeral honors	2013	On Target
41 DUS for Field Programs		4. Increase the number of volunteers at national cemeteries. (FY 2010 baseline)	2015	
41 DUS for Field Programs		5. Establish dedicated rifle squads at the 20 busiest cemeteries (as defined by 2011 interments.)	2015	On Target (part of measure 3 plan)

Objective 3.B. Ensure that a comprehensive and professional historical record of NCA exists for future generations.

Strategy 1. Manage a comprehensive NCA history program.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A4 History	1. Write a comprehensive historical analysis of NCA or its predecessor agencies from its inception. (Vol. 1)	2014	
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A4 History	2. Locate, design, fund and establish a long term archival storage facility with standard environmental controls.	2015	

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Integrated Objective 2: Educate and empower Veterans and their families through proactive outreach and advocacy.

Goal 4. Educate and empower Veterans and their families through proactive outreach and advocacy.

Objective 4.A. Increase awareness of and access to information about NCA benefits and services for Veterans and their families.

Strategy 1. Enhance NCA’s partnerships with funeral director associations and individual funeral homes.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
41 DUS for Field Programs	42D Business Process Improvement Service	1. Increase to 85% the percent of funeral directors surveyed who respond that they are well informed on policies and procedures by national cemeteries.	2015	
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A2 Communication & Outreach Support	2. Develop and distribute a tool kit and DVD designed to inform funeral directors, clergy and families about NCA’s committal service protocol..	2012	Complete
41 DUS for Field Programs	41B Memorial Programs Service; 42D Business Process Improvement Service	3. Increase to 100% the percent of funeral directors surveyed who rate the information provided about MPS products on the va.gov website as excellent.	2015	

Strategy 2. Expand the use of innovative methods for outreach to Veterans, their families, and the public.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A2 Communication & Outreach Support 42A Policy & Planning Service	1. Acquire additional information from the Veteran population in order to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach programs	2013	On Target
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A2 Communication & Outreach Support	2. Increase by 100 percent the “friends and followers” of NCA-sponsored social media sources over the FY 2010 baseline (1737 as of 9/30/20210)	2013	Complete 9/30/11

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion	Status
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			Date	
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	VHA Homeless Veterans Initiative Office VA Learning University 43A3 Training 41 DUS for Field Programs 43A Human Resources	3. Research and develop an action plan for NCA's role in addressing homelessness in the Veteran population	2011	Complete
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	VHA Homeless Veterans Initiative Office VA Learning University 43A3 Training 41 DUS for Field Programs	4. Implement the action plan for NCA's role in addressing homelessness in the Veteran population	2012	Complete
43 DUS for Management	43A Human Resources DUS for Field Programs	5. Research and develop an action plan for increasing the percentage of Veterans, including OEF and OIF, employed by NCA.	2011	Complete
43 DUS for Management	43A Human Resources DUS for Field Programs	6. Implement the action plan for increasing the percentage of Veterans, including OEF/OIF, employed by NCA	2012	Complete (2011)

Strategy 3: Improve Veterans’ awareness of burial and memorial benefits.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Communications & Outreach Support 41A Field Programs	1. Increase the percentage of Veterans who have heard about burial in a national, State or Tribal Veterans cemetery to 75 percent. (from 41.5 percent baseline of 2010 Survey of Veterans)	2015	
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Communications & Outreach Support 41B Memorial Programs Service	2. Increase the percentage of Veterans who have heard about VA’s headstones and burial markers for Veterans buried in other than national, State or Tribal Veterans cemeteries to 60 percent. (from 27.7 percent baseline of 2010 Survey of Veterans)	2015	
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Communications & Outreach Support 41B Memorial Programs Service	3. Increase the percentage of Veterans who have heard about Presidential Memorial Certificates for next of kin of deceased Veterans to 30 percent. (from 9.3 percent baseline of 2010 Survey of Veterans.	2015	
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	41 DUS for Field Programs 43 DUS for Mgmt	4. Increase percentage of Veterans buried in national cemeteries to 13 percent. (FY11 12%)	2015	(
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	40A3 VCGP	5. Increase percentage of Veterans buried in State and Tribal cemeteries to 4 percent. (FY11 3.4%)	2015	

Strategy 4. Develop and implement an automated, pre-need eligibility certification system.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
DUS for Mgmt	43D IT Business Requirements & Administrative Service; VRM (major initiative)	1. Work with Ebenefits initiative to implement an automated pre-need eligibility certification system	2013	On Target
DUS for Mgmt		2. Develop and distribute a pre need planning package to be used by funeral home and national cemetery staff	2012	Complete

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Integrated Objective 3: Build our internal capacity to serve Veterans, their families, our employees, and other stakeholders efficiently and effectively.

Goal 5. Build our internal capacity to serve Veterans, their families, our employees, and other stakeholders efficiently and effectively.

Objective 5.A. Recruit, hire, develop, and retain a competent, committed, and diverse workforce that is recognized for providing high quality care and service to Veterans, their families, and the community.

Strategy 1. Implement an overarching human capital investment architecture

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
DUS for Mgmt	43A6 Human Resources 43A7 HRC Indianapolis	1. Develop and implement a comprehensive human capital investment plan for NCA.	2013	Delayed
40A2 ADR & Diversity		2. Develop a proactive plan to decrease and prevent EEO complaints upon 2011 statistical data benchmark.	2013	On Target
40A2 ADR & Diversity		3. Develop a special emphasis program for NCA to address diversity issues including underrepresentation in the workforce	2013	On Target
40A2 ADR & Diversity		4. Redesign the NCA Minority Veterans Program to ensure that at least 90% of the reporting cemetery sites comply with critical elements as defined in VA Handbook 0801	2013	On Target
DUS for Mgmt		5. Develop and implement an NCA-specific new employee orientation program that meets regulatory requirements.	2012	Delayed
DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Training	6. Develop and implement a workforce analysis program to position NCA to respond to evolving work requirements	2013	Delayed
DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Training VA Learning University	7. Develop and implement an NCA-specific on-boarding program that provided for cultural immersion into the agency.	2014	

Strategy 2: Align employee performance with organizational performance to ensure Veterans and their families receive exceptional service.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
DUS for Mgmt	43A Human Resources DUS for Field Programs; MSN II; 42A Policy & Planning	1. Develop and implement a plan to participate as the VA pilot for OPM's Goals*Engagement*Accountability* Results Program.	2013	On Target
DUS for Mgmt	43A Human Resources DUS for Field Programs; MSN II; 42A Policy & Planning	2. Export GEAR principles, practices and philosophy throughout NCA.	2016	

Strategy 3: Implement a competency-based approach to workforce development and succession planning.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Training	1. Establish teams made up of SMEs and education professions to review, develop and validate competencies for identified positions.	2012	Complete
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Training	2. Populate VA TMS talent management suite with competency model data to support workforce development/succession planning activities, including trend analysis and reporting, competency gap analysis, and individual development planning, across the entire NCA workforce.	2014	
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Training	3. Establish pilot program for Individual Learning Accounts to assess implementation potential within NCA.	2013	Delayed
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Training	4. Partner with other VA/Federal entities to leverage existing programs (AdVance, OPM programs, etc) and share best practices.	2012	Delayed
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A3 Training	5. Establish a formal NCA coach/mentor program	2013	Delayed
43 DUS for Mgmt	43A3	6. Establish a succession planning approach for NCA based on previous cemetery director trainee class projects	2015	

Strategy 4. Improve workplace climate across NCA

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
40A2 ADR & Diversity		1. Establish a workforce diversity committee.	2012	Complete
40A2 ADR & Diversity		2. Develop a cultural competency program for NCA	2014	
40A2 ADR & Diversity		3. Conduct 12 OCAPs (Organizational Climate Assessment Program). (Conducting at least three per year)	2016	
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	41 DUS for Field Programs 43 DUS for Mgmt 42D Business Process Improvement Service 40A2 ADR & Diversity	4. Increase the NCA Civility Index measured by the annual All Employee Survey to 4.0	2015	
DUS for Mgmt	43 Management & Communications Service 43A3 Training	5. Increase access and availability of employee assistance programs to all NCA employees	2015	

Objective 5.B. Improve NCA’s operational and management processes to enhance the efficiency, cost effectiveness, and quality of services and benefits delivered in order to meet the requirements of Veterans and stakeholders.

Strategy 1. Improve the efficiency, cost effectiveness, and quality of service delivered by NCA.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
DUS for Field Programs	41F Cemetery Development & Improvement	1. Identify and implement five field-driven innovation to improve operational efficiency and/or effectiveness	2015	
DUS for Field Programs	41B8 FNOD	2. Develop a plan to share First Notice of Death information with other VA entities to effectively and efficiently deliver and/or terminate services and benefits where appropriate	2013	Complete
DUS for Field Programs	41B8 FNOD	3. Implement the plan that will share First Notice of Death information with other VA entities.	2014	Complete
DUS for Field Programs	41B8 FNOD	4. Develop and implement a process to share First Notice of Death information with other Federal agencies where appropriate to assist them in properly administering their programs.	2015	
DUS for Mgmt	43D IT Business Requirements & Administrative Service; OI&T VLER (major initiative)	5. Lead a cross-cutting NCA team to develop business and functional requirements for designing new and replacement systems for NCA’s mission critical information systems to include automated gravesite tracking, automated tracking of remains, electronic interface fir scheduling, scheduling via Internet, and handheld devices to improve operational functions.	2012	Complete
DUS for Finance & Planning	42B Budget Service, STDP (major initiative)	6. Develop and implement a cost accounting system.	2012	Complete
DUS for Finance & Planning	42B Budget Service, STDP (major initiative)	7. Utilize information from the cost accounting system to promote cost efficiencies	2015	
DUS for Field Programs		8. Increase the number of Compensated Work Therapy hours worked at national cemeteries by 10% from the FY 2010 baseline.	2015	
DUS for Mgmt	DUS for Field Programs 43B Design & Construction Service	9. Reduce potable water usage by 18% at all national cemeteries	2015	

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
DUS for Mgmt	DUS for Field Programs 43B Design & Construction Service	10. Reduce non-potable water usage by 10% at all national cemeteries	2015	
DUS for Mgmt	DUS for Field Programs 41G Cemetery Development & Improvement 43B Design & Construction Service; OCFM	11. Implement strategy for water-wise landscaping at five new national cemeteries and five existing national cemeteries.	2015	
DUS for Mgmt	DUS for Field Programs 41G Cemetery Development & Improvement 43B Design & Construction Service Office of Construction & Facilities Management	12. Implement renewable energy alternatives at five new national cemeteries and five existing national cemeteries	2014	
DUS for Mgmt	DUS for Field Programs 41B Memorial Programs Service 43D IT Business Requirements & Administrative Service	13. Implement a process to notify families when headstones and markers are set at national cemeteries	2013	On Target

Strategy 2. Ensure an optimal operational support structure for NCA.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
DUS for Mgmt	43A6 Human Resources	1. Establish and implement a robust telework program across NCA for eligible positions.	2013	On Target
DUS for Mgmt	41 DUS for Field Programs 43A Management & Communication Service 43D IT Business Requirements & Administrative Service	2. Enhance emergency preparedness and security by mitigating findings from vulnerability, security, ITOC, records management, or other assessments conducted at NCA facilities. * need a baseline	2014	

Strategy 3. Improve accountability for NCA operational and management processes.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	41 DUS for Field Programs 43 DUS for Mgmt 40A2 ADR & Diversity 40A3 VCGP	1. Establish operational standards and measures for 2 pilot NCA organizational elements	2013	On Target Goal revised
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	41 DUS for Field Programs	2. Complete OAI Site Visits to all national cemeteries.	2014	
41 DUS for Field Programs		3. Systematically track progress to address recommendations in OAI Site Visit Assessment Reports.	2012	Complete
42 DUS for Finance & Planning	42A Policy & Planning Service	4. Develop and implement a management internal controls audit program to ensure compliance with OMB's Circular A-123	2012	Complete

Strategy 4: Ensure national cemeteries, MSN offices, and central office components are safe work places.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
DUS for Field Programs	41G Safety	1. Take corrective action on all items with percentile scores of 35% or below the 2012 Employee Safety Perception Survey baseline.	2013	On target
DUS for Field Programs	41G Safety	2. Implement standard safety training (OSHA) across NCA to include prevention of workplace violence training.	2013	On Target
DUS for Field Programs	41G Safety	3. Reduce the number of injuries by enhancing awareness of and compliance with safety guidelines (OWCP measure)	2015	
DUS for Field Programs	41G Safety	4. Reduce the average number of lost production days by four percent (4%) per year based on 2009 baseline.	2015.	

Strategy 5. Explore opportunities to enhance revenue streams.

Sponsor	Partners	Measure	Completion Date	Status
DUS for Finance and Planning		1. Develop and implement recommendations to enhance NCA revenue streams such as the franchise fund, reimbursement agreements, fee-for-service enterprises, and NCA exporting expertise to external partners and stakeholders.	2015	