

STATE-TRIBAL COLLABORATION ACT 2016 AGENCY REPORT



New Mexico Department of Veterans Services
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I. SUMMARY

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (the Department) participated in relevant aspects pertaining to the State Tribal Collaboration Act (NMSA 11-18-3 NMSA 2009) during the New Mexico State Government's fiscal year 2016. The Department participated in both formal and informal interaction with several Pueblos, Tribes and Indigenous Nations throughout the state and region.

The Department participated in:

- Outreach and Education Programs
- Continued to participate in data sharing and information exchanges with Tribes and Pueblos
- Outreach events in tribal lands and near tribal lands
- Participated in the Signing of the Veterans Act for The Navajo Nation
- Participated in the State Tribal Summit, assisted with Native American VSO Training, 1st Annual Veterans Transport Summit and Native American Economic Summit
- Participated in Congressional Medal of Honor presentation to John Day and the Laguna Pueblo
- "VBOC in the Rez" outreach conducted at Pueblo and Navajo Nation
- Joseph Long was Honored the 2016 NM Veterans Champion of the Year award by the American Indian Chamber of Commerce for NM. Joseph Long also spoke at Laguna Pueblo's Ceremony

II. AGENCY OVERVIEW/BACKGROUND

A. Mission Statement

The mission of The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services is to assist veterans, their widows, and their children in establishing the privileges which they are legally entitled.

B. Agency Overview

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services is the state government agency statutorily created in 2003 to provide veterans with a cabinet-level agency to address their needs. Department services are partitioned into four (4) divisions and four (4) programs, aggregated by common statutory purpose and outcome:

Field Operations Program Division

There are 18 field offices of the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services located throughout the state. Each is staffed by an accredited Veterans' Service Officer (VSO) to assist veterans and their dependents with filing for their federal and state benefits. Most VSO's also have regularly-scheduled outreach visits to smaller surrounding communities.

Administrative Services Division

Provide Administrative and Financial Services to the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services. Serves as Chief financial officer (CFO) for the agency. Responsible for establishing, monitoring and executing the Agency's budget.

Veterans State Benefits Division

Benefits Division ensure that veterans who have risked their lives and made other sacrifices to protect and serve our country receive their state and federal benefits along with their dependents.

State Approving Agency Division

The SAA ensures that standards are set and maintained among applicable schools, training facilities and testing organizations prior to allowing veterans or other eligible persons to enroll and use their GI Bill® benefits.

Veterans Business Outreach Program

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services created the Veteran's Business Outreach Center (VBOC) to "assist veterans in achieving their entrepreneurial goals".

Health Care Program

The Healthcare Program supervises VA, state, and local healthcare alliances with the NMDVS. In this role, the division performs an advocacy role to ensure New Mexico's veterans are aware of their health benefits and how they can more easily navigate the New Mexico VA Healthcare system—as well as the El Paso VA Medical Center for veterans in the Las Cruces area, and the Big Spring (TX) VA Medical Center for veterans in the eastern/south east part of New Mexico. The division is also responsible for fostering partnerships with local healthcare entities that serve veterans and their families in our state.

Rural Veterans Coordination Pilot Program (RVCP)

Program will serve New Mexico Veterans in overwhelmingly rural areas. Five regional offices will be established to provide assistance to the returning veterans and their families. RVCP will establish a Veteran and Family Transition Center in four different areas of the state.

Veterans State Cemeteries Program

The Veterans Cemetery Grants Program is to construct state veterans' cemeteries whenever the veteran burial needs are not being met by existing VA cemeteries. The New Mexico Veterans' Cemeteries are hallowed grounds that provide a final resting place which honors and memorializes veterans and their families for their service and sacrifices made while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Women Veterans Program

The Women Veterans Program assess the needs of New Mexico women veterans and make recommendations regarding existing benefits and services for women veterans. Conducts statewide outreach strategies to enhance awareness to agencies that provide services to female veterans. Enhance relations, ensuring all available services are relayed to female veterans. Provide guidance, technical assistance, and recommendations to the governmental agencies, legislators, veteran organizations, community organizations, and the general public on women veteran issues. Works with local veteran groups to advocate and education on the unique issues facing women.

III. AGENCY SPECIFIC EFFORTS AND PROGRAMS USED TO IMPLEMENT POLICY

In coordination with tribal authorities, the Department often assists tribal veterans with veterans' court issues.

Department staff members who regularly work with Pueblos, Tribes and Nations have been identified to attend the Cultural Competency training by the State Personnel Office (SPO). Other staff members are encouraged.

IV. CURRENT AND PLANNED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR NATIVE AMERICAN AND/OR ALASKA NATIVES

A. Programs and Services provided to or affecting Native Americans, or Alaska Natives.

The Department is committed to promoting fixable exchange between Department personnel, Department administration, and Pueblos, Native Nations and Tribes. However, the Department routinely collaborates with Native Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos in mutually beneficial projects for implementation of our respective veterans' programs. The Department's programs in which Native Americans participate and/or might have interests are shown below:

Programs and Services Potentially Affecting American Indians or Alaska Natives		
Programs	Description of Services	Funding
Cabinet Secretary's Office	Collaborating with the Navajo Nation Office of Veterans Affairs to provide guidance and best practices in the establishment of the NNOVA.	General Fund
Healthcare	Provide Veterans easier and faster health care	General Fund
Rural Veterans Coordination Pilot Program (RVCP)	Provide transportation for veterans in rural areas of New Mexico. Coordinate outreach efforts to identify Native American Veterans who have not registered with the VA.	2M VA Funds for 2yrs
Veterans State Cemeteries	Create and administer four VA standards, State operated veterans cemeteries	VA Funds/General Funds
Women Veterans' Coordinator	Provide guidance, technical assistance, and recommendations to the governmental agencies, legislators, veteran organizations, community organizations, and the general public on women veteran issues.	General Fund

B. Agency accomplishments and challenges regarding Tribes, Pueblos, Native Nations and/or Native organizations in fiscal year 2016

The Department continues to work with the Tribes, Native Nations and Pueblos using a variety of outreach opportunities and will continue to develop ways to improve communications and provide medical treatment to veterans.

C. Goals for Fiscal Year 2017a relating to Tribes, Pueblos, Native Nations and/or Native organizations.

1. The Department is committed to working with and responding to all joint State Veterans' related concerns for the State, Tribes, Pueblos and Native Nations.
2. The Department will continue to seek out community and veterans outreach outlets to promote New Mexico Veterans within Native communities.

V. TRAINING AND EMPLOYEE NOTIFICATION

A. State Tribal Collaboration Act Training Certification

Department field and supervisory employees from multiple Divisions received the STCA cultural awareness training and certification from SPO.

- B. Employee Notification about the STCA Department managers, project leaders, and field employees are knowledgeable of the STCA policy that the Department abides by. Department employees also have access to the Tribal Liaison for consultations regarding the Act.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Position/Program	Key Names
Cabinet Secretary	Jack R Fox 407 Galisteo Street/PO Box 2342 Santa Fe NM 87504-2324 (505) 827-6315 jackr.fox@state.nm.us
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Rural Veterans Coordination Pilot Program (RVCP)	Edward Mendez 5201 Eagle Rock Ave NE Albuquerque NM 87113 (505) 383-2417 Edwardl.mendez@state.nm.us
Veterans State Cemeteries Program Coordinator	Tom Wagner 5201 Eagle Rock Ave NE Albuquerque NM 87113 wagstx@q.com
Women Veterans' Program	Melanie Suazo PO Box 2324 Santa Fe NM 87504-2324 (505) 827-6323 melaniea.suazo@state.nm.us
Tribal Liaison	Beverly A. Charley 101 W. Animas St. Rm 104 Farmington, NM 87401 (505) 327-2861 Beverly.charley@state.nm.us

Appendix A

- Relevant Agency Regulations, State or Federal Statutes;
- Chapter 17 NMSA 1978;
- State-Tribal Consultation Act - (STCA) 11-18-3 NMSA 2009; and
- Governmental Dispute Prevention and Resolution Act (12-8A-1 NMSA) as amended 2007

Appendix B

Glossary or Definitions of Special Agency Terms and Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
NMDVS	New Mexico Department of Veterans Services
STCA	State Tribal Collaborative Act
NMSA	New Mexico Statute Administrative Code
CFR	Code of Federal Regulation
SPO	State Personnel Office