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2024-2027 JVSG State Plan

a. Describe how the state intends to provide employment, training, and job placement services to veterans and eligible persons under the JVSG program (i.e., virtually and in person).

Arizona is proud to present its Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) State Plan for Program Years (PY) 2024-2027. The Division of Employment and Rehabilitation Services (DERS), under the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), is focused on being a leader in providing employment and reemployment services to military veterans and other eligible persons throughout Arizona. The JVSG program helps DERS support veterans and other eligible persons in finding long-term and sustainable careers. This is done by providing employment services at ARIZONA@WORK offices and other locations, as well as through extensive outreach to Arizona businesses about the benefits of hiring veterans and other eligible persons. U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) funding is used for Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists, Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs), and Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff.

DERS' mission is to strengthen Arizona communities by bridging and minimizing gaps to employment and independence. This is accomplished, in part, through the efforts of the JVSG program, serving Arizona's veterans and other eligible persons with significant barriers to employment (SBE).

DERS works with the business community to ensure veterans and other eligible persons are provided with the resources needed to successfully enhance their employability skills and become employed or reemployed. The DERS JVSG team, which includes LVER, DVOP, and Consolidated staff, works in collaboration with the local workforce development area's support teams to engage Veteran job seekers and provide connections to employers.

LVERs are an integral part of the statewide ARIZONA@WORK Employer Outreach team. This cohesive business service model allows Arizona to fully leverage engagement with employers across the State, to advocate for and connect businesses to a diversified candidate pipeline.

LVERs conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring personnel to increase employment opportunities, encouraging the hiring of veterans and other eligible persons. This outreach includes the promotion of the Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers (AVSE) Program and the Honoring Investments in Recruiting and Employing (HIRE) Veterans Medallion Program. These programs recognize employers who have employed and retained veterans.

The ARIZONA@WORK Employer Outreach team has adopted a demand-driven approach to all workforce and employment programs, to ensure that services and training are directed toward in-demand occupations. LVERs support this effort by strategically engaging employers and employer associations throughout the 12 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) to identify the skills and training necessary for veterans and other eligible persons to obtain

employment and succeed within in-demand industries. LVERs also collaborate with educational institutions to promote veterans' and other eligible persons' access to and completion of relevant training and education. Each LVER works collaboratively within the ARIZONA@WORK workforce system to promote program efficiency.

DVOP Specialists provide individualized career services to meet the employment needs of eligible veterans and other eligible persons, including homeless and disabled veterans, with maximum emphasis on serving those who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. Through case management, DVOP Specialists facilitate employment placement through workforce preparation activities.

Non-JVSG-funded staff also provide individualized career services and case management to eligible veterans and other eligible persons.

Arizona promotes robust, coordinated efforts to identify and connect veterans' programs and services at the local, regional, and State levels. This is facilitated through the utilization of resources available from other service providers such as:

- Arizona Commerce Authority
- Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity
- Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF)
- Hilton Honors
- Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)
- Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program
- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves
- County and City regional economic development boards
- Arizona Department of Veteran Affairs
- Veterans' Upward Bound Programs
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Other Local profit and nonprofit organizations

Arizona will be recruiting for consolidated DVOP/LVER staff in accordance with VPL 01-20. The consolidated DVOP/LVER staff promotes a more efficient administration of services to veterans and other eligible persons, with an emphasis on services to disabled veterans in rural communities. Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff are planned for the following ARIZONA@WORK LWDAs: Northeastern AZ, Southeastern AZ, Santa Cruz, Coconino, Mohave/LaPaz, Pinal, Yavapai, and Yuma Counties.

b. List the populations to be served by DVOP specialists and consolidated DVOP/LVER staff, including the eligibility criteria for referral to DVOP services.

In accordance with VPL 03-14, Changes 1 & 2, DVOP Specialists provide individualized career services to eligible veterans and other eligible persons. Veterans and other eligible persons are determined to have SBE if they attest to belonging to at least one of the six criteria below:

- A special disabled or disabled veteran, as defined by 38 U.S.C. 4211(1) and (3);
- Homeless, as defined by 42 U.S.C. 11302(a) and (b);
- A recently-separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C. 4211(6), who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months;
- An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3(38), who is currently incarcerated or who has been released from incarceration;
- Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
- A low-income veteran or other eligible person.

In accordance with VPL 07-14 and 03-19, DVOP Specialists also provide individualized career services to the following:

- Veterans aged 18-24 years;
- Veterans of the Vietnam era;
- Eligible transitioning service members, spouses, and caregivers.

Arizona prioritizes services to veterans and other eligible persons who are also members of Indian and Native American tribes. These individuals are encouraged to receive services through ARIZONA@WORK sites and other organizations that provide employment services to all veterans and other eligible persons.

c. Describe the roles and responsibilities assigned to DVOP specialists, LVER staff, and consolidated DVOP/LVER positions by the state. These must be consistent with 38 U.S.C. §§ 4103A and 4104.

Role of DVOP Specialists

DVOP Specialists are an integral part of Arizona's labor exchange system. DVOP Specialists provide individualized career services and facilitate employment placements of eligible veterans and other eligible persons by:

- Conducting comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs;
- Helping develop an individual employment plan, case assignments, job referrals, and conducting case conferences with LVERs;
- Providing individual and group employment counseling;
- Facilitating career planning and workforce preparation activities, such as providing communication, interview, punctuality, personal maintenance, and professional conduct skills;
- Conducting follow-up after placement into employment.

DVOP Specialists enhance their capacity to serve eligible veterans and other eligible persons with SBE by utilizing Be Connected, a statewide program that strengthens access to support and resources for service members, veterans, and their families. Be Connected operates a support line that anyone may call and a website that serves as a centralized source

of information and resource-matching tool. Be Connected is also utilized by Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA)-funded staff serving veterans and other eligible persons.

DVOP Specialists provide targeted services to special disabled and disabled veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. To promote these services, DVOP Specialists conduct outreach activities, virtually and on-site at locations such as:

- Disabled Veterans Medical Centers and Vet Centers;
- VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Education locations;
- Community Stand Downs (various locations statewide);
- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantee locations;
- Locations serving Veterans' Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) grantees;
- Locations serving Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program (IVTP) grantees;
- Homeless shelters;
- Civic and service organizations' facilities;
- Civil and Criminal Courts;
- Military installations;
- Community centers on tribal lands that serve Indian and Native American veterans; and
- Partner agency locations under WIOA, to include vocational rehabilitation and employment services.

Role of LVERs

LVERs serve an important role in Arizona's Business Services delivery model. In coordination with other members of the Employer Outreach team, LVERs advocate for veterans' and other eligible persons' employment and training opportunities by:

Conducting outreach to employers, training facilities, unions, apprenticeship programs, private businesses, and governmental agencies;

- Conducting job search workshops and establishing job search groups, in conjunction with employers;
- Creating and carrying out presentations to employers, to inform them of services, resources, and the means to connect with veteran job-seekers;
- Consulting with employers to develop tailored plans and comprehensive job announcements, managing the logistics of customized recruitment events, and matching applicants with jobs;
- Promoting programs that offer licensing and credentialing opportunities;
- Informing federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans and other eligible persons;
- Providing current and tailored labor market information, based on industry trends; and
- Educating employers on workforce solutions, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Federal Bonding, and Rapid Response activities.

LVERs also play a central role in facilitating the provision of services to veterans and other eligible persons. This is accomplished through building partnerships, especially with ARIZONA@WORK job centers in their assigned regions, providing subject matter expertise, and promoting the efficient and effective integration of all employment services provided to veterans and other eligible persons.

Within ARIZONA@WORK, LVERs coordinate closely with local business and community partners to provide training and technical assistance on Veterans' Priority of Service (VPOS), best practices for providing services to veterans, other eligible persons, and relevant external partners, and best practices for conducting outreach to employers.

LVERs coordinate with state and local business services partners to conduct outreach to employer associations at the State and regional levels. This approach expands the number of employers engaged and maximizes promoting the hiring of veterans and other eligible persons. LVERs educate employers on the advantages of hiring veterans and other eligible persons and provide employers with information on how to find qualified veteran applicants by leveraging the State workforce system and the local ARIZONA@WORK offices.

Role of Consolidated DVOP and LVER Staff

The consolidated position will have the same roles and responsibilities as the DVOP and LVER positions listed above, except that the time spent in each position will differ, as appropriate for the current conditions.

Arizona utilizes a model that includes a State Coordinator position to enhance the coordination of services, community engagement, and support to the JVSG program.

The State Coordinator's responsibilities include:

- Executing, ensuring compliance with, and providing oversight of the JVSG grant;
- Preparing grant proposals, State Plans, and quarterly reports for JVSG;
- Facilitating VPOS and other relevant training to JVSG program and WIOA partner program staff, through the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) and the DES Office of Professional Development;
- Providing technical assistance to stakeholders and community partners; and
- Coordination with the Wagner-Peyser management team to ensure the integration of services and building capacity with partners.

d. Demonstrate the manner in which DVOP, LVER, and consolidated DVOP/LVER staff are integrated into the state's employment service delivery system, i.e., AJCs. This demonstration should show active engagement between JVSG and other AJC staff, such as participation in staff meetings and cross-training opportunities.

In Arizona, the State's workforce system is known as ARIZONA@WORK. Twelve local

workforce delivery areas (LWDA) drive all workforce activities and associated training in Arizona. The integration of DVOP Specialists and LVERs into ARIZONA@WORK job centers reduces or eliminates duplication, closes gaps in service, and identifies the program or service best suited to the individual veteran or other eligible person being served. ARIZONA@WORK provides employment, training, and placement services, to all veterans and other eligible persons, through a network of strategically located centers throughout Arizona. All programs, including JVSG, are coordinated through a joint referral process described in each local area's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between partners. Each partner performs the services allowed by its authorizing legislation or policy. Inter-staff collaboration and information sharing are facilitated through regular center meetings, program updates, and training. These efforts, intensive services, and activities are captured in Arizona's system of record also known as, Arizona Job Connection.

e. Describe the state's performance incentive award program to encourage individuals and employment service offices to improve and/or achieve excellence in the provision of services to veterans, including:

Per Title 38 U.S.C. Section 4102A(c)(7), one percent of Arizona's Federal Fiscal Year JVSG allocation is used to fund JVSG performance incentive awards.

Arizona's JVSG incentive award program is known as the Lanny Branch Veterans Incentive Award, in honor of a late State Veteran Manager. The Lanny Branch Veterans Incentive Award objectives are to:

- Improve and modernize the provision of services for veterans and other eligible persons;
- Improve the execution of VPOS and the integration of services to veterans and other eligible persons provided through any of the ARIZONA@WORK one-stop centers and affiliate sites;
- Establish partnerships with other organizations that elevate the provision of services for eligible veterans and other eligible persons;
- Improve outreach to eligible veterans and other eligible persons who have barriers to employment, especially to homeless, incarcerated, disabled, and recently separated veterans; and
- Improve performance outcomes for eligible veterans and other eligible persons.

1. The nomination and selection process for all performance incentive awards to individuals and employment service offices;

The Lanny Branch Veteran Incentive Award may be earned by eligible recipients as defined by VPL 01-24, Attachment 5, when they are carrying out the positions of a(an):

- DVOP Specialist;

- LVER;
- Consolidated LVER/DVOP staff;
- State employee providing employment, training, and placement services to veterans and other eligible persons under the WIOA, including State employees within labor exchanges funded by the Wagner-Peyser Act, are eligible for the JVSG Support Award tier; and
- Employment Service team or office. Awards to offices are reserved for instances where most, if not all State employees in an office contribute to improving employment or training services offered and provided to veterans and other JVSG-eligible persons.

Information on the award process is distributed annually to all staff who serve veterans and other eligible persons through the US DOL employment and training programs.

The incentive rating period is July 1 through June 30.

Nominations are submitted, through an automated process using Google Forms or other similar mechanisms, and must include:

- A narrative that indicates how an eligible recipient met at least one of the criteria during the rating period; and
- Data (i.e., measurements and statistics) to support the narrative.

Nominations must be submitted by the fifth (5th) working day of the month following the close of the rating period.

An evaluation committee is designated by the DERS Deputy Assistant Director or designee to evaluate and score each nomination for the incentive award. Self-nominations are not permitted and shall not be considered by the evaluation committee.

The evaluation committee has five working days to:

- Review and rate nominations using an established point system based on, but not limited to:
 - Narrative and data;
 - The completion of required training;
 - A minimum 3.25 overall score in the most recently finalized Arizona Performance period, where applicable;
 - Must be an employee in good standing (not under any formal corrective or disciplinary action within the previous six months);
 - Must have no audit or quality assurance findings during the rating period; and
 - Individuals must be in a designated role for at least one quarter in the evaluation period.

- The final ratings and recommendations will then be forwarded to the DERS Deputy Assistant Director, who will review and approve the evaluation committee results and forward them to the DERS Assistant Director for final approval.

Awardees are notified through Division communications.

Incentive awards are presented at an annual fall gathering.

2. The approximate number and value of cash awards using the one-percent incentive award allocation;

In Arizona, the current approximate total incentive amount available is \$43,803. This amount varies annually, commensurate with the JVSG funding allocations. For State merit awardees, the incentive is paid through the State payroll system to individual award recipients no later than Quarter 5 of the grant year. Non-State awardees are not included in the cash incentive award plan.

DES DERS has established a four-tier award system that allows for multiple cash-based awardees at each level:

- Gold award = \$1,500-\$2,500, 1-5 recipients.
- Silver award = \$1,000-\$1,500, 10-15 recipients.
- Bronze award = \$500-\$750, 15-30 recipients.
- JVSG Support award = \$500-\$750, 5-10 recipients.

Note: Employees may receive no more than five percent in incentives per fiscal year in accordance with State Personnel System Compensation Guidelines.

3. The general nature and approximate value of non-cash performance incentive awards to be charged to the base allocation;

DES DERS plans to allocate \$5,000-\$10,000 of base funding for non-financial incentive awards for up to five offices.

The final allocation for the non-financial awards is contingent on:

- The availability of funds; and
- The number of awardees.

4. Any challenges the state may anticipate in carrying out a performance incentive award program as mandated by 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c). This should include any state laws or policies that prohibit such awards, if applicable. Describe the state's efforts in overcoming those challenges.

Arizona does not anticipate any challenges in implementing a JVSG Performance Incentive Award program as mandated by 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c) et seq.

f. List the performance targets for direct services to veterans provided by JVSG staff, as measured by participants:

In accordance with VPL 01-24, Arizona has identified and set performance targets for direct services to veterans and other eligible persons provided by JVSG staff. The established JVSG targets cover veterans and other eligible persons served by JVSG staff only.

- Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit: 60.8 percent.
- Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit: 50.7 percent.
- Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit: \$5,450.

The established targets will cover veterans served by JVSG staff only. The State will follow the process outlined in Attachment #4, JVSG Performance Targets TAG.