

D.6.1 – Management Response and Action Plan

<p><b>Processing Disability Benefits for Veterans</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation #1 (RCMP Formal Costing and Funding) Veterans Affairs Canada and the RCMP should work together to establish a formal costing process and determine the right level of funding needed for processing applications from RCMP veterans in a timely manner.</b></p>		
<p><b>Management Response:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Department agrees with this recommendation.</i></li> </ul>		
<p><b>Action and Rationale (to be posted on the Department’s internal and external websites and shared with Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat):</b></p>	<p><b>Expected Completion / Implementation Date</b></p>	<p><b>ADM Accountable for Action</b></p>
<p><i>Over the last two years, the RCMP and VAC have been working closely together to improve governance and put more robust processes in place to support the forecasting of financial requirements related to disability benefits. These processes will be expanded to include a specific costing framework related to the processing of applications.</i></p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of Service Delivery in collaboration with the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) Chief Financial Officer and Corporate Services</p>
<p><b>Deliverables: demonstrable evidence of actions above (to be used in the follow-up process to track progress and provide evidence of completed actions)</b></p>	<p><b>Expected Completion / Implementation Date</b></p>	<p><b>Contact for Deliverable</b></p>
<p>The Centralized Operations Division will work with the Finance Division, the RCMP, and central agencies to establish a formal costing process for the RCMP to fund VAC to administer their disability benefits. We will do this before the VAC/RCMP Memorandum of Understanding is renewed in 2023.</p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>Director General, Centralized Operations Division in collaboration with the Director General, Finance Division</p>
<p>The formal costing process will be provided as evidence that this action has been completed.</p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>Director General, Finance Division</p>

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<p><b>Processing Disability Benefits for Veterans</b>  <b>Recommendation #2 (Service Standards) To provide useful waiting-time information for veterans, Veterans Affairs Canada should review the end date it uses to calculate the period under its service standard so that it can report consistently and accurately on its performance against this standard.</b></p>		
<p><b>Management Response:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Department agrees with this recommendation.</i></li> </ul>		
<p><b>Action and Rationale (to be posted on the Department’s internal and external websites and shared with Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat):</b></p>	<p><b>Expected Completion / Implementation Date</b></p>	<p><b>ADM Accountable for Action</b></p>
<p><i>The Department will clarify how it calculates the service standard for Disability Pension/Pain and Suffering Compensation. This update will take effect in the 2022-23 fiscal year.</i></p> <p><i>We are updating our Service Inventory and reviewing our service standards to focus on the client service experience and ensure that our operations are improved through digital approaches.</i></p>	<p>April 2024</p>	<p>Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of Service Delivery and the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance</p>
<p><b>Deliverables: demonstrable evidence of actions above (to be used in the follow-up process to track progress and provide evidence of completed actions)</b></p>	<p><b>Expected Completion / Implementation Date</b></p>	<p><b>Contact for Deliverable</b></p>
<p>a) For the 2022-23 fiscal year, Centralized Operations Division (COD) will clarify the definition of “processing time” for the purposes of calculating the service standard for Disability Pension/Pain and Suffering Compensation applications. The processing time will start when an application and all necessary documents have been received, and end when the final decision is made (if favourable, this includes the payment being computed and verified). COD will provide the updated methodology and a report of our service standard results as evidence that this action has been completed.</p>	<p>May 31, 2022</p>	<p>Director General, Centralized Operations Division</p>
<p>b) Per Treasury Board’s April 2020 Policy on Service &amp; Digital, Integrated Planning and Performance are reviewing our service standards. Service standards will be revised to ensure they include a mix of quality dimensions (timeliness, accessibility, accuracy) as well as standards for each delivery channel (online, phone, in person, mail). Recommendations from the previous review will be considered as part of this exercise. Once approved, the revised suite of service standards will be published on VAC’s external website.</p>	<p>April 2024</p>	<p>Director General, Strategic Planning, Results and Cabinet Business</p>

<b>Processing Disability Benefits for Veterans</b> <b>Recommendation #3 (Data Weakness) Veterans Affairs Canada should address weaknesses in the quality and organization of its data. This would allow the department to better monitor the Disability Benefits program and use the data to inform decision making about efficiency improvements.</b>		
<b>Management Response:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Department agrees with this recommendation.</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Action and Rationale (to be posted on the Department’s internal and external websites and shared with Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat):</b>	<b>Expected Completion / Implementation Date</b>	<b>ADM Accountable for Action</b>
<p><i>Currently, we collect Disability Benefits data from two systems, one of which is still being built. This makes it challenging to collect and align data, which in turn makes it more difficult to effectively forecast productivity and resourcing requirements.</i></p> <p><i>While VAC has improved its data identification/collection over the last year—resulting in better monitoring of applications through the decision-making process—further improvements are needed.</i></p> <p><i>In 2019, VAC created an Information and Data Strategy. During implementation, an assessment found our data governance (including disability benefits) to be in the early stages of maturity. To improve data governance, we have established an Executive Data Stewards Committee, developed a data dictionary, and improved data quality.</i></p> <p><i>VAC has identified the outstanding data requirements and going forward will create an action plan to resolve the remaining items. VAC also continues to work on transitioning program functionality from our electronic systems – Client Service Delivery Network (CSDN) to GCCase - and is working on plans to decommission CSDN in five years.</i></p>	<p>March 31, 2022</p>	<p>Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM)  Chief Financial Officer and  Corporate Services</p>
<b>Deliverables: demonstrable evidence of actions above (to be used in the follow-up process to track progress and provide evidence of completed actions)</b>	<b>Expected Completion / Implementation Date</b>	<b>Contact for Deliverable</b>
<p>The Department issued a final report for the 2019-2022 data strategy for March 31<sup>st</sup> 2022 (see attached deck which was presented to SMC on June 16, 2022) As part of the past strategy, VAC has made significant progress in the data field tackling many aspects of the data challenge. VAC was able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create clear roles and responsibilities and supporting governance to tackle data issues within the department. (Chief Data Officer, Executive Data Stewards Committee) (see attached draft roles and responsibilities document and EDSC Terms of Reference)</li> </ol>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>Director General, Information Technology and Information Management</p>

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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Make significant improvements to our data warehousing to support disability processing reporting. This includes merging data from the two processing systems GCCase and CSDN and the needed relationships to provide holistic reporting.</li> <li>3. Create common definitions of disability processing steps and components to standardize reporting, and enable detailed reporting with respect to processing.</li> <li>4. Create a standardized data set for disability processing, allowing detailed reporting on processing and statistics surrounding the program.</li> </ol>		
<p>The development of a data dictionary for data stored in the data warehouse is in progress.</p> <p>Phase 1 (Completed)</p> <p>Development of an application (ETL Application) that collects and stores the extract transform and load processes which would include the source tables/fields, transformation logic as well as the warehouse target tables and fields. This would provide data lineage from source systems to target warehouse.</p> <p>Phase 2</p> <p>Pull attribute data from source systems and store in data warehouse (English and French plain English names for all columns/fields). Develop a Data Dictionary user interface that is sourced from ETL application above as well as attribute data in Phase 1 above.</p>	<p>December 31, 2022</p>	<p>Director General, Information Technology and Information Management</p>
<p>Enterprise Data will expand the Disability Benefits dataset to include the ability to report on application stage history to allow for analysis on processing bottlenecks. The work involved to deliver this functionality will include the addition of GC Case and CSDN medical codes to the dataset by application stage.</p>	<p>December 31 2022</p>	<p>Director General, Information Technology and Information Management</p>

<b>Processing Disability Benefits for Veterans</b> <b>Recommendation #4 (Long-term Resourcing Plan) Veterans Affairs Canada should work with central government agencies to establish a sustainable long-term resourcing plan for processing disability benefit applications in a timely manner. This plan should consider the number of applications the department expects to receive and the efficiency it expects to gain from its process improvement initiatives.</b>		
<b>Management Response:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Department agrees with this recommendation.</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Action and Rationale (to be posted on the Department’s internal and external websites and shared with Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat):</b>	<b>Expected Completion / Implementation Date</b>	<b>ADM Accountable for Action</b>
<p><i>Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, VAC experienced a significant increase in disability benefits applications (40% overall, including 75% more first applications). We also began to see the number of applications over our service standard grow (that is, the backlog).</i></p> <p><i>During this time, we have received temporary funding on a number of occasions to hire staff to address the growing number of pending applications, however, the Department was not able to fully assess the impact that would result from the introduction of new programs and other commitments. As a result, even with the additional staff, the Department was not able to keep up with the increase in applications.</i></p> <p><i>The additional resources hired in summer/fall of 2020 have made a big impact. These new team members began making decisions in January 2021. To maintain this momentum, on February 23, 2022, the Government announced funding of \$139.6 million over two years to extend the temporary positions as part of action to reduce processing times for disability benefit applications at Veterans Affairs Canada. The Department is also developing more efficient application and decision-making processes using digital technologies.</i></p> <p><i>By the end of March 2022, the Department expects to have cut the number of applications waiting longer than our service standard in half (from about 23,000 to 11,500) and to about 4,000 by January 2023.</i></p> <p><i>Our efforts remain focused on maintaining the resourcing we have in place to make timely decisions and continue our progress to permanently solve this issue.</i></p>	<p>March 31, 2023</p>	<p>Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of Service Delivery</p>

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<p>While we have approval to extend the temporary resources for an additional two years (2022-2024) and to further develop automated process improvements, we are committed to continue working with Central Agencies to explore options to obtain long-term resources in the future. Stabilizing our workforce is critical to making timely decisions, continuing our progress and permanently solving the issue. We will provide our business case as evidence that we continue to work towards a sustainable long term resourcing plan.</p>	<p>March 31, 2023</p>	<p>Director General, Centralized Operations Division</p>
<p>VAC will update its June 2020 <a href="#">strategic wait time plan</a> in 2022-23, which will further capture and illustrate our efforts to reduce processing times.</p>	<p>September 30, 2022</p>	<p>Director General, Centralized Operations Division</p>