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## Comprehensive Plan for Processing Legacy Appeals and Implementing the Modernized Appeals System

Public Law 115-55, Section 3

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### VA's Mission

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."

**August 2018 Update**

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## Executive Summary

This is the fourth periodic report in a series of reports that satisfy the requirements of Section 3 of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (Appeals Modernization Act), *Comprehensive Plan for Processing of Legacy Appeals and Implementing the New Appeals System*.

In addition to overhauling VA's current appeals process and providing Veterans, their families, and their survivors with increased choice in handling disagreements with VA's decisions, the Appeals Modernization Act sets forth specific elements that must be addressed in VA's comprehensive plan. The main topic elements required for this report include the processing of appeals of decisions on legacy claims that the Secretary considers pending; implementing the new appeals system; timely processing under the new appeals system; and monitoring the implementation of the new appeals system, including metrics and goals.

Reducing legacy appeals continues to be a priority for VA. As will be explained in this report, the remaining appeals in that system are being addressed both by increasing efficiencies in established practices and by providing Veterans with opportunities to opt into the new system.

Additionally, VA has made significant strides towards implementing the new appeals system. The proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on August 10, 2018, and the public comment period is underway. The public comment period will provide the opportunity for broader participation in this important undertaking for Veterans and will enable VA to determine whether any language in the proposed rule should be modified or clarified.

With assistance from stakeholders, VA is conducting the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP), a test program to evaluate assumptions in the implementation of the new claims and appeals system; the Board's Early Applicability of Appeals Modernization (BEAAM), a small-scale research program conducted by the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) to assess preliminary data about Veterans' choices and experiences in that system; and implementation of RAMP at the Board. As detailed in Section 4 of this report, Veterans are opting in to RAMP at the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) in increased numbers, providing VA with additional information that may be used to update and change Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as necessary. At the Board, adjudication of BEAAM research program cases is underway, and the Board is gaining valuable feedback and insight from the small-scale qualitative program that will inform future implementation plans. Additionally, the Board's implementation of RAMP, which will begin in October 2018, will allow the Board to identify and address potential issues and risks relating to implementation of the new framework through a phased test of processes and technology.

VA's Office of Information and Technology (OI&T) has taken on enterprise-wide efforts to modernize the appeals process through improvements in technology. These activities are on track and already improving internal processes at VA.

VA is continuing to communicate with Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) and other stakeholders to ensure that a logical and transparent approach to implementing the Appeals Modernization Act is maintained. In addition to this external outreach with stakeholders, VA has developed a robust training plan to ensure that VA employees receive extensive appeals modernization training prior to implementation.

VA looks forward to receiving additional formal feedback from Congress and the General Accounting Office (GAO) regarding its progress on each element included in these reports. In the meantime, VA is continuing to take steps to address and build upon the recommendations that have already been provided regarding both the progress that has been made on those elements and the best practices for conveying that progress in the report. Moving forward, VA will continue to document any potential impediments to successful implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act and will determine, in collaboration with stakeholders, the solutions that will result in the best possible outcomes for Veterans and their families.

## Comprehensive Plan

### Implementation Plan Requirements

#### **Section 3(a)(1) – Processing of Legacy Appeals**

(a) PLAN REQUIRED.—*Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress and the Comptroller General of the United States a comprehensive plan for—*

*(1) the processing of appeals of decisions on legacy claims that the Secretary considers pending;*

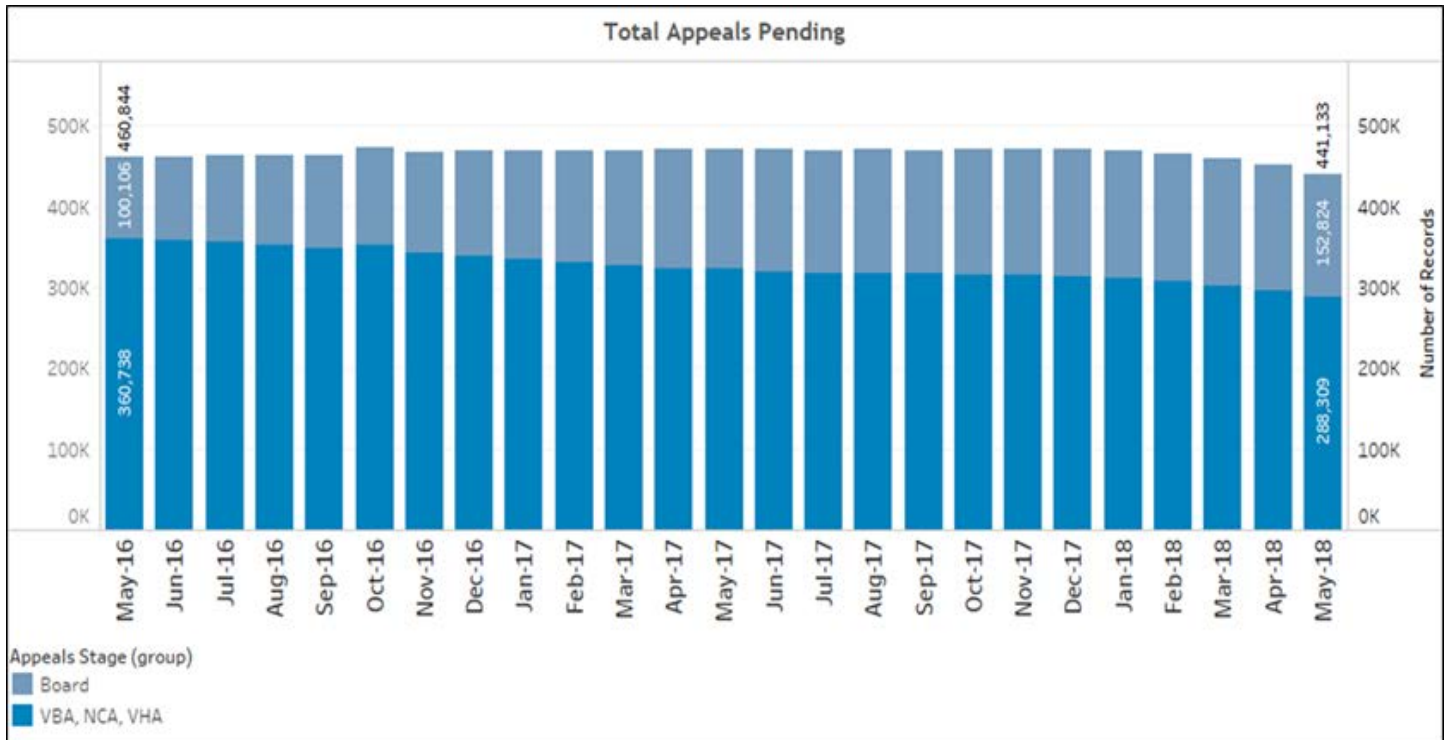
In fiscal year (FY) 2017, VBA increased its appeals production by approximately 24 percent and reduced its appeals inventory by approximately 10 percent, despite receiving more than 160,000 new appeals. Since the beginning of FY 2018, VBA has continued to make significant progress reducing its legacy appeals inventory further by approximately 7 percent through the end of May 2018. Moreover, by the end of this period, appeals production was approximately 8.5 percent above the national FY 2018 target and 3 percent above production during the same period in FY 2017.

VBA is employing several strategies to reduce its pending legacy appeals inventory. These include workload redistribution across regional offices (RO), increased oversight and accountability, dedicated resources, increased efficiencies by leveraging technology, and through the opt-in opportunities made available by the Appeals Modernization Act.

As participation in RAMP increases, with monthly opt-in rates varying between approximately 13 and 16 percent, VA will continue to see an overall reduction in its pending legacy appeals inventory. Since November 2017, VBA mailed approximately 245,000 RAMP notification letters to eligible Veterans to inviting them to take advantage of the process. As of the end of June 2018, the overall RAMP election rate was approximately 13 percent, which has resulted in the conversion of 36,729 legacy appeals to RAMP. Please see Section 4 for detailed information on RAMP.

Furthermore, the Appeals Management Office (AMO) is leveraging the National Work Queue workload distribution functionality to broker pending legacy appeals from the seven RAMP stations across other ROs according to capacity levels. By redistributing the workload, VBA can ensure timely processing of RAMP cases, while also focusing on legacy appeals inventory reduction. VBA began redistributing the workload in May 2018 and will continue throughout the duration of RAMP.

Increased oversight, redistribution of pending workload to stations with greater capacity, increased production, and Veterans electing to participate in RAMP account for the demonstrated 20-percent reduction in VBA’s legacy appeals inventory over the 2-year period from May 2016 through May 2018, as shown in the graph below.



Nevertheless, AMO’s modeling—which is based upon historical trends, VBA’s current appeals production, and RAMP election rates—suggests that VBA will continue to have a legacy appeals inventory for several years after the February 2019 applicability date of the Appeals Modernization Act. This means that VBA must oversee legacy appeals production and decision reviews under the new framework, while also monitoring allocation of resources between the two systems as the legacy appeals inventory decreases. To assist in this reduction of the legacy appeals inventory and transition to decision reviews under the new system, VBA requested 605 additional appeals Full Time Equivalents (FTE) in the FY 2019 President’s Budget. VBA intends to allocate its resources to meet the stated processing timeliness goals in the new framework and dedicate the remaining FTE to the reduction of its legacy appeals inventory. For more details on the Forecast Model, please refer to the Comprehensive Plan May 2018 Update, Section 3(b)(17).

As of July 30, 2018, 68,386 Board decisions had been dispatched to Veterans in FY 2018, as compared to 38,851 in FY 2017—an increase of 29,535 decisions. The Board is on track to meet the historic goal of dispatching 81,033 decisions by the end of FY 2018, providing answers to Veterans at an unprecedented rate. The Board continues to prioritize resources to address the pending legacy appeals inventory. The Board is required under the current law to work cases in docket order (with a few exceptions, see 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 7107) and the Board prioritizes cases by docket as they are activated at the Board.

The Board has taken additional steps toward more efficient adjudication of legacy appeals through various initiatives. The interactive decision template (IDT) discussed in the last report has been rolled out to all Chief Veterans Law Judge groups. In May 2018, the Chairman signed a memorandum making use of the IDT mandatory for all Board decisions that had previously been drafted using the generic decision and remand template. IDT increases efficiencies for decision-drafting attorneys and assists Veterans Law Judges in their review by automatically pulling specific data points from the Board's case management software and allowing attorneys to prepopulate important law specific to the issues on appeal into the decision. It also simplifies administrative elements and focuses attorney time on legal elements. More importantly, IDT presents the bottom line of a decision up front, making it easier for Veterans to understand the decisions they receive from the Board. Currently, approximately 99 percent of all Board decisions dispatched use the IDT.

The Board is also continuing the specialized case program that funnels cases dealing with certain areas of law to a dedicated group of attorneys for adjudication. The program allows the highly trained attorneys who participate in the group to more efficiently adjudicate unusual or difficult cases. It also enables more consistent treatment of those specialized or difficult issues. The specialized case program attorneys also continue to handle cases dealing with more common areas of law. The group of attorneys in the specialized case program currently totals 48.

As of the 11th week of production for the specialty case team, attorneys number approximately 7.6 percent of Board attorneys, but produce approximately 9 percent of the Board's signed cases. Generally, a specialty case team attorney produces one more signed case per pay period than the Board average. Also, these attorneys collaborated within their specialty groups and have drafted IDT language in their specialty areas. Their next step will be to create training materials in their specialty areas; this is expected to be completed at the beginning of September 2018. The Board is awaiting more information about this project before determining whether it warrants expansion.

The Board's legacy process mapping efforts have been further refined since the May 2018 report. The legacy mapping is completed as well as the process currently envisioned under the Appeals Modernization Act. See Appendix A, Integrated Master Schedule (IMS) ID 2. The Board has secured continuous contract support for updates and improvements as new policies and procedures are created.

The "One Touch" program that was rolled out in April to expedite the processing of legacy hearing cases with clear dispositions is ongoing at the Board. Under that program, when a Veterans Law Judge holds a hearing on a case that is within the Board's current docket range and the outcome of the appeal is immediately clear, the judge can activate the case and have it transferred directly to him or her. The program enables Veterans Law Judges to touch a case once and more efficiently get a decision to the waiting Veteran.

The Board is planning to use contract support to aid its legal staff in reviewing case files. As was discussed in the last report, the efficacy of this option is initially being explored through use of law student interns. Since the last report, the Board has selected 13 summer law student interns who began their internships at the end of May and beginning of June. The interns are screening case files prior to adjudication of appeals by Board legal staff. Through this small group of time-limited interns, the Board is testing whether non-attorney screening gains efficiencies for the Board. Initial anecdotal results have shown some gained efficiencies, in that attorneys who have written cases previously reviewed report that it was helpful and sped

processing time. Additionally, the interns have assisted with spotting administrative issues that delay adjudication. The Board expects to see more results as the project continues.

Having received valued input from the Request for Information (RFI) mentioned in the last report, the Board is now in the process of soliciting bids on contracts that would provide the Board with surge support for Appeals Modernization. See “Contract Surge Support,” Appendix A, IMS ID 4.3. It is anticipated that all contracts will be in place prior to the end of FY 2018.

The Board continues to work closely with U.S. Digital Service at VA (Digital Service) to ensure the Board’s legacy appeals are a priority in case distribution. VA’s goal is to eliminate the inventory of legacy appeals as quickly as possible while also maintaining timely processing in the new system. Opt-in features, whereby Veterans with a pending legacy appeal can elect to participate in the new system, will assist VA in accomplishing that goal. As detailed further in Sections 3(a)(2) and 4, below, the Board will participate in RAMP starting in October 2018, while continuing to focus resources on reducing the legacy inventory.

VA is aware that Congress included the planning and reporting requirements contained in sections 3 and 5 of the Appeals Modernization Act in response to stakeholder concerns regarding fair treatment of legacy appeals. VA will comply with the statutory requirements and take additional steps to ensure fairness. There are five dockets with a finite number of attorneys and judges to work these dockets. The Board with Digital Service is developing an algorithm to distribute cases across the workforce, as discussed in more detail in section 3(a)(3) below, that will continuously adjust the case distribution ratio between all Board dockets based on actual data. Adjusting the case distribution ratio will allow the Board to meet its commitment to process direct review cases in an average of 365 days while continuing to work down the legacy appeals as well as process the new system’s hearing and evidence docket appeals by distributing these cases proportionate to the scale of each docket’s inventory.

The Board’s goal is to provide resolutions for all Veterans with pending legacy appeals. Given the complex, non-linear legacy process, it is difficult for VA to project when all legacy appeals will be resolved, or provide timeliness goals for legacy appeals. The Board is working with program management staff and our Digital Service partners to develop milestones for the reduction of the legacy inventory, considering such dependencies as the opt-in rate from RAMP and statutory mechanisms, current resource levels, trends in adjudication of legacy appeals at the agencies of original jurisdiction, and any increases in productivity resulting from the strategies discussed above.

In addition to the above-described strategies VBA is employing to reduce its pending inventory of compensation and pension legacy appeals—which comprise over 90 percent of its total inventory of legacy appeals—VBA’s other business lines are contributing to the effort of reducing the legacy appeals inventory for their respective programs as specified below.

Pension and Fiduciary Service (P&F) still anticipates its inventory of 298 legacy fiduciary appeals will be processed by December 31, 2018.

VA Insurance Service has approximately 75 pending legacy appeals in its jurisdiction. It has established a work team to focus on resolving these appeals prior to the Appeals Modernization implementation in 2019, and anticipates resolving the vast majority of them by September 2018. As part of the work team’s efforts, Insurance Service has centralized control of its legacy appeals inventory with a single responsible management official and support staff. This centralized control entails creating and distributing monthly legacy appeal workload reports to

Insurance employees responsible for processing appeals, a practice that was implemented in June 2018.

Education Service began issuing monthly legacy appeal workload reports to the regional processing offices, which in turn provide Education Service with monthly status updates on their pending legacy appeals. As of May 31, 2018, there were a total of 1,752 education legacy appeals pending in various stages of the appeals process. Of these, only 239 were actionable, as the remainder were either pending in a Statement of the Case (SOC) stage where the Department is awaiting a response from the appellants to determine if they intend to continue their appeal to the Board, or were pending in the Board's jurisdiction. These actionable appeals are distributed among the three regional processing offices based on original jurisdiction and capacity. By providing this level of oversight, Education Service has reduced the pending inventory of its actionable legacy appeals from 643 as of October 1, 2017, to 239 as of May 31, 2018. Education Service anticipates finalizing the review of its remaining actionable pending legacy appeals no later than 60 days after implementation of the new process. If the number of legacy appeals grows, Education Service will allocate additional resources to ensure this timeline is met.

On February 28, 2018, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service contacted each RO with a pending legacy appeal and requested an update and/or resolution of the legacy appeals identified in the Veterans Appeals Control and Locator System (VACOLS) as of January 9, 2018. VR&E Service requested that each RO review the information for accuracy; update VACOLS as needed; and attempt to resolve the legacy appeals that could be resolved at the RO level; or certify the appeal to the Board. VR&E Service requested and received responses from each identified RO in March 2018. There were a total of 272 pending legacy appeals from all VR&E offices. VR&E Service reviewed those responses and on May 29, 2018, provided follow-up instructions to ROs as needed to ensure all appropriate action is taken on these legacy appeals, to include giving priority to the oldest legacy appeals. The May 2018 guidance included instructions to certify all appeals in which VR&E has received a substantive appeal to the Board, as appropriate. VR&E Service received feedback on this process from each RO in mid-June 2018, which puts the total number of pending legacy appeals at 263. VR&E Service is evaluating the data and determining the appropriate next steps. VR&E Service anticipates that providing this level of oversight will further contribute to the reduction of VR&E's pending legacy appeals inventory.

As of May 31, 2018, Loan Guaranty Service (LGY) had 279 legacy appeals pending in various stages of the appeals process. Of these, only 60 were actionable appeals under its jurisdiction. The Atlanta Regional Loan Center currently processes all LGY legacy appeals. By centralizing the processing in one office, LGY can ensure proper attention is given to processing its legacy appeals. This has resulted in the reduction of the pending inventory of actionable appeals in its jurisdiction by half from 127 as of October 1, 2017, to 60 as of May 31, 2018. LGY expects to complete processing most of its actionable pending legacy appeals in August 2018. If necessary, overtime will be utilized to assist with the completion of the reviews.

VA's agencies of original jurisdiction continue to prioritize their processing of legacy appeals outside of RAMP. The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) continue to participate in the enterprise-wide appeals reform implementation and collaborate with the Board in addressing legacy appeals.



## **Section 3(a)(2) – Implementing the New Appeals System**

*(2) implementing the new appeals system;*

VA continues to take a collaborative approach to implementing the new claims and appeals system. Representatives from VBA, the Board, VHA, and NCA meet regularly to coordinate efforts and resolve issues. The meetings enable ongoing coordination of and updates to IMS at the enterprise level. See Appendix A.

Since his swearing in, Undersecretary for Benefits (USB) Dr. Paul R. Lawrence conducts regularly scheduled update meetings on the progress toward appeals modernization implementation to provide guidance and direction. He and the Chairman of the Board are closely collaborating to foster cooperation and ensure timely implementation of the statute. In addition to holding monthly meetings with each line of business in VBA, as described in the May 2018 report, AMO also conducts weekly meetings with the project management leads for appeals modernization in each VBA line of business. These meetings provide members of the project team with regular updates, a forum for exchanging of ideas and best practices, identification of risks, and dissemination of guidance.

As the IT development process moves from the discovery phase to building and releasing system updates to deliver required functionality, VA's senior leadership is monitoring progress closely through monthly Benefits Systems Executive Board meetings. Digital Service is providing enhancements to its Caseflow Intake tool and other suite of applications in support of the Board and the administrations. VBA and O&IT have agreed to a schedule of functionality releases that will enable timely implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act. As of the date of this report, VA expects all IT functionality to be delivered on schedule. However, as discussed in Section 3(b)(18) of this report, VA has prioritized requirements and is developing contingencies in the event of any delay in delivering system updates.

The Board is executing a comprehensive change management plan to facilitate successful implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act. See Appendix A, IMS ID 5. Change management experts from the Office of Enterprise Integration are supporting the Board's change management program with contract support and are coordinating their efforts with those of VBA, VHA, and NCA to ensure consistency among the Appeals Modernization Act change management efforts occurring across VA.

As described in Section 3(b)(13) below, VA has shifted the focus of its outreach efforts from RAMP to informing Veterans and other stakeholders about the new claims and appeals system. VBA's outreach efforts for RAMP have demonstrated the importance of making sure Veterans, VSOs, VBA employees, and other influencers have a thorough and accurate understanding of the program.

As described in Section 4 of this report, RAMP reduces the legacy appeals inventory, validates forecasts and planning assumptions, and allows VA to collect empirical data on the efficiency and effectiveness of elements of the new framework. In May 2018, the Board initiated a small-scale test program, BEAAM, which is also discussed in more detail in Section 4 of this report.

As noted in the last report, the Board will begin adjudicating appeals of RAMP decisions in October 2018. Currently, Veterans who receive a RAMP decision have the option of appealing to the Board by filing a notice of disagreement (NOD). In October 2018, the Board will begin adjudicating those appeals in a phased implementation to test processes and technology. That

process will allow the Board to identify and address potential issues and risks relating to implementation of the new framework. The focus of the Board Implementation of RAMP is to allow the Board to identify and address potential issues and risks relating to implementation of the new framework. Meanwhile, the current BEAAM project will lead to informed decisions regarding preparation for the Board's Implementation of RAMP in October 2018 in the form of testing processes, procedures, and trainings. Plans and milestones for both the Board's BEAAM research program and its implementation of the RAMP test program are addressed in the IMS. See Appendix A, IMS ID 7.

The Board's phased testing of the new appeals process via RAMP and BEAAM, described in Section 4 below, allow it to continue delivering decisions to legacy appellants at historic levels while collecting valuable data about implementation of the new framework.

The Board contracted with Medallia to conduct surveys of Veterans who have an active appeal before the Board. These surveys will provide valuable insight regarding the Veteran experience at various stages of the appeals process, both in the legacy system and under the Appeals Modernization Act. Medallia is currently conducting surveys of legacy appellants after a hearing and after a Board decision. The second phase of surveys will include interviews of both Appeals Modernization Act and legacy appellants. This sensitivity analysis will provide the Board important comparative data regarding the Veteran experience as these surveys will identify whether an appellant is under the legacy system or the modernized system. These data can then be viewed in the aggregate to assist with program improvement and implementation of the new system by informing the Board's policies and procedures. For example, the survey results may identify areas in which the Board can provide Veterans with more clear information regarding their appeals through VA forms and letters.

As mentioned above, the Board's comprehensive change management strategy and plan includes associated activities, durations, and milestones for completion. See Appendix A, IMS ID 5. The change management plan involves many parallel efforts focused on the following overarching major activities:

- Developing and executing a sound (internal) strategic communications plan, e.g., employee newsletters, town halls, fact sheets, websites;
- Developing and communicating the use of internal SharePoint sites to provide Board management change management tools and resources;
- Coaching middle managers to assist with job changes and manage resistance, and applying feedback gained;
- Building and helping the Chairman execute her sponsorship plan to visibly participate with Board staff throughout implementation, to communicate her support, and to promote the change;
- Building a change management network and coaching Board managers and supervisors on how to manage the changes;
- Conducting Change Management Readiness Surveys throughout implementation and using the feedback obtained to refine the change management strategy;
- Developing and implementing a Board Brand to better communicate the changes with Veterans and stakeholders;
- Training Board employees in the legal, regulatory, policy, and process changes needed to successfully implement the Appeals Modernization Act; and

- Integrating the Board's change management strategy with VA Administrations to ensure appropriate alignment, synchronization, and integration of appeals management change management efforts across VA.

Beyond the work that VA has already done to integrate and synchronize all appeals modernization implementation plan efforts across the Department, it is also taking the following steps to implement the new process for VBA's individual lines of business:

In late May 2018, Compensation Service, in collaboration with AMO, provided VA's IT partners with revised business systems requirements to update the existing business system, Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), as it relates to notification/correspondence capabilities and claims adjudication processes in the new structure. In addition, Compensation Service is coordinating with IT on the release of the proposed new claims forms in VBMS pursuant to the publication of the rulemaking. In addition, in early June 2018, Compensation Service initiated review of the current, existing procedural guidance as outlined in the M21-1, Adjudication Procedures Manual, in order to assess all of the appeals and claims processing and adjudication procedures affected by the Appeals Modernization Act. Currently, all Manual Editors are reviewing the M21-1 for possible revisions and will coordinate with Compensation Service Training staff on proposed changes in guidance and will also coordinate publication of updated procedures with the publication of the rulemaking.

P&F relies on its team of subject matter experts, from both P&F Programs to develop and execute its implementation plan for the new process. P&F has begun revising its pension procedures manual to incorporate procedures for processing higher-level reviews and supplemental claims, and hopes to complete revisions in August 2018. Once the draft procedures are completed, P&F will start creating pension training materials, which will incorporate guidance from the draft procedures. P&F anticipates completing the materials and delivering the training by end of November 2018. In addition, P&F has already provided recommended updates for non-rating issue and burial decision notification letters to VBMS programmers. P&F has also begun developing a quality assurance framework to ensure that feedback related to overturned decisions and errors discovered during the higher-level review process are disseminated to the initial decision-maker. This quality assurance framework will also be included in the pension claims processing manual with an expected completion date of October 2018.

On March 1, 2018, P&F captured the requirements for higher-level review processing functionality to its fiduciary IT processing system, Beneficiary Fiduciary Field System (BFFS). P&F anticipates adding this functionality in BFFS by the end of the third quarter of 2018. P&F has also completed a program guide article with step-by-step instructions for processing higher-level reviews in BFFS. Regarding any regulation publication, the Fiduciary Program will ensure compliance through internal procedures that supplement existing regulations until the Fiduciary Program's regulations are updated to reflect appeals modernization. The Fiduciary Program recently completed a regulatory amendment, which is separate from the regulations associated with the Appeals Modernization Act. P&F will make any necessary amendments after the Appeals Modernization Act regulations have been finalized. Meanwhile, the Fiduciary Program will issue procedural guidance as needed to resolve appeals. P&F anticipates finalization of procedural guidance by December 31, 2018.

Insurance Service relies on an integrated work team of subject matter experts from its operations division, policy and procedures staff, and systems support and modernization staff to develop and execute its work plan to implement the new appeals and claims processes. As part

of its efforts, the work team has already established a process by which the most experienced employees, Senior Veterans Claims Examiners (SVCEs) and Unit Chiefs (UCs), will be the primary staff members who will process higher-level reviews as well as supplemental claims. The work team completed a review of relevant performance standards and position descriptions in April 2018. Draft changes to the same were completed in May 2018, and engagement with labor partners on this issue began in June 2018. Insurance Service anticipates finalizing any changes to position descriptions or performance standards in August 2018. Insurance Service also completed draft revisions to the Insurance Manual in May 2018, and expects to finalize said revisions during the fourth quarter of FY 2018. In addition, approximately 13 insurance notification letters that are impacted by the statute are being revised and consolidated. Furthermore, Insurance Service completed an introductory session reviewing the new claims and appeals processes with all employees in May 2018, and will conduct a series of trainings addressing the new process flows, relevant regulations, the new decision notification requirements, and the new workload management tools. These trainings will build upon one another and will be deployed via sessions conducted in November and December of 2018, with additional targeted training session for higher-level reviewers and those employees processing supplemental claims in January 2019.

Education Service has a project plan specific to implementing the new claims and appeals process for education benefit claims. The plan details major milestones and deliverables that must be completed before the new process can be fully implemented. Education Service has completed draft operating procedures for the higher-level review and supplemental claims processes; has reviewed all procedural manual guidance and current training materials to determine which sections will require revisions; and has revised all applicable Veteran facing letters, which will be deployed upon full implementation. Education Service is also currently finalizing requirements to capture the business line specific metrics; will commence drafting the training requirements in the fourth quarter of FY 2018; and will implement a standardized quality assurance plan during the first quarter of FY 2019. Education Service is currently on track to meet the timeline requirements for implementing the new claims and appeals modernization process.

VR&E Service established a team of subject matter experts to develop and administer a plan to ensure effective and timely implementation. This team has completed several major milestones of the implementation plan, to include the publication of proposed regulation changes and new notification letters. The team is actively working on the revision of VR&E policy and procedural guidance. The team also developed a detailed training plan, which will be delivered to all VR&E field managers during VR&E's national training in August 2018. This training will be recorded and used to train all VR&E field staff by the end of August 2018. VR&E Service has reviewed position descriptions and performance standards to determine what, if any, changes will occur, and is working with its human resource partners to resolve this issue in a timely manner. In addition, VR&E Service is working cooperatively across several divisions of VA to verify that its IT systems are updated to ensure that metrics can be captured and reported accurately. VR&E Service completed a review of its quality assurance standards and determined how to incorporate the new process standards into its quality feedback loop. Lastly, VR&E Service is actively participating in the development of communication and outreach plans. To date, VR&E Service has included links to appeals modernization processes on its internal and external internet sites, and is planning further outreach activities.

LGY has completed drafting the revised policy for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims, which will be a new chapter within the M26-1, Guaranteed Loan Processing Manual. The M26-1 revised policy is in the final stages of concurrence and will be approved by management and

published by the end of August 2018. Activities to support program operations nationwide will include system testing, instructional systems design, and training of all Loan Specialists and Loan Production management in all Regional Loan Centers and Program Analysts in Central Office (approximately 160 employees).

VHA is partnering with the Office of General Counsel and the Board to identify and fix policy and regulation gaps and inconsistencies that would hamper implementation of the new system, and will resolve those issues prior to Appeals Modernization Act implementation. In addition, VHA is working with VBA and OI&T to secure access to VA's benefits efolder and integrate VHA higher-level review and supplemental claim tracking data into Caseflow, the appeals management system that will replace VACOLS.

NCA continues to work with the Board, Office of Enterprise Integration, and other VA agencies of original jurisdiction in developing processes to comply with the Appeals Modernization Act.

### **Section 3(a)(3) – Timely Processing Under New Appeals System**

- (3) timely processing, under the new appeals system, of—*
  - (A) supplemental claims under section 5108 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 2(i);*
  - (B) requests for higher-level review under section 5104B of such title, as added by section 2(g); and*
  - (C) appeals on any docket maintained under section 7107 of such title, as amended by section 2(t).*

As indicated in the prior reports, VBA has established timeliness goals for both the supplemental claims and higher-level reviews of an average of 125 processing days. VBA is establishing two Decision Review Operations Centers (DROC) under the direct control and oversight of AMO. Personnel located at these DROCs will have primary responsibility of processing requests for reviews of VA's decisions on compensation benefit claims under the new framework. One DROC will be located in SeaTac, Washington, and the other in St. Petersburg, Florida. VBA will initially staff DROCs with up to 60 FTE funded by the FY 2018 budget and then fully staff them with additional hires in FY 2019.

The current Appeals Resource Center (ARC) in Washington, DC, will become a third DROC. The Washington, DC, DROC will have primary responsibility of processing Board legacy remands. The current FTE allotted to work at these sites are 183 for the DROC in Washington, DC, 485 for the DROC in St. Petersburg, and 227 FTE for the DROC in SeaTac. The current appeals FTE at the St. Petersburg and Seattle ROs will fall under the operational control of the DROCs and the remainder of FTE will be hired under available hiring authorities. See Section 3(b)(3).

The personnel dedicated to the processing of compensation legacy appeals at ROs will continue to process legacy appeals until such time that the all legacy appeals are resolved.

In March 2016, VA, VSOs, advocates, and other stakeholders came together in unprecedented meetings and collaborations which laid the groundwork for appeals reform. This collaboration continued throughout the process of supporting the legislation through passage. Legacy appeals and appeals in the new system's direct docket will be prioritized. Therefore, appeals in the new system's hearing and evidence dockets will be subject to longer wait times as a result of prioritization of the other dockets. The Board has a finite pool of attorney and judges to work

the cases. The Board will not allocate resources dedicated solely to the legacy or new appeals processes. Initially, the Board anticipates that a minimum of 10 percent of its workforce capacity will be applied to the Appeals Modernization Act framework, subject to the availability of cases that are ready to be adjudicated. This ratio is then adjusted as new system inventory grows so as to apply to the direct docket sufficient capacity to realize timeliness goals, working other dockets at a rate proportionate to the number of cases on each docket. This methodology preserves the equitable processing of the associated dockets, while employing the workload across the fixed Judge/Attorney workforce efficiently.

The Board remains committed to an average processing time goal of 365 days for direct docket appeals—appeals received under the new framework that do not include a request for a hearing or an opportunity to submit additional evidence. To accomplish this goal, Digital Service is using a technique called Discrete Event Simulation (DES) to model the Board's dockets and to test and optimize the automatic case distribution algorithm prior to implementation. The outputs of this simulation measure its performance according to identified business objectives. The Board's 365-day average processing time goal for cases on the direct docket is a "constraint" on the algorithm, meaning that direct docket cases must be distributed at a rate that allows the Board to meet its goal. Each case on the direct docket will have a "target distribution date," which will take into account both the date on which the case must be decided in order to meet the timeliness goal (365 days from the date of the NOD), and the average amount of time it takes to issue a decision from the date that the case is assigned to a Veterans Law Judge. The distribution rate of cases on the direct docket will be determined in part by the total number of direct docket cases with a target distribution date close to the current date.

Cases on the legacy, evidence, and hearing dockets are distributed in a manner that prioritizes legacy appeals in docket order and ensures distribution of cases from the evidence and hearing dockets at a rate proportionate to the number of cases on each of those dockets. The case distribution algorithm will take into account remands and historical receipt rates of substantive appeals in calculating the legacy inventory to ensure those appeals are not undercounted. Initially, the Board's inventory of legacy appeals will be larger than its inventory of new system appeals. Therefore, the Board will work a higher percentage of legacy appeals in the first year following the effective date, but will continue to prioritize legacy appeals even as the inventory draws down.

The case distribution algorithm must also take into account certain statutory requirements that affect the order in which the Board may decide appeals. Legacy appeals must be decided in order according to docket date, which is based on the date of receipt of a substantive appeal. Legacy appeals retain their original docket date upon return from the agency of original jurisdiction after a remand by the Board. In contrast, appeals under the new framework must be decided in the order they are received on each docket. Under both the legacy and new framework, cases may be advanced on their docket due to the Veteran's age, illness, financial hardship, or other reasons. Cases that have been remanded to the Board by the Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims must be expedited. Moreover, legacy appeals in which the Veteran testified before a Veterans Law Judge must be decided by the same Veterans Law Judge who presided over the hearing, while no such requirement exists for appeals in the new system.

As a policy matter, the Board may apply additional constraints to the case distribution algorithm. For example, distribution of direct docket cases may be accelerated during the first few months following the effective date. Otherwise, these cases would not be distributed until their target distribution date, which would be nearly a year after the effective date. Placing timeliness

constraints on the evidence and hearing dockets would restrict the algorithm's ability to distribute cases proportionate to inventory, prioritize cases based on statutory requirements, and ensure that the direct docket goal is met. If the Board imposed timeliness constraints on all three dockets, there is significant risk that it would be unable to satisfy all of those constraints simultaneously. The Board anticipates that cases in the evidence and hearing dockets will take longer than those in the direct docket, as a result of the prioritization of legacy and direct docket appeals.

The Board is working to set goals for evidence and hearing docket timeliness prior to implementation, if possible. The Board will publish projected wait times for each docket after implementation, based on early results, with regular updates. By providing transparent, realistic timeliness estimates for the other two Board dockets, VA empowers Veterans to make informed choices as to which Board option best suits their individual needs. User research conducted during BEAAM, discussed in more detail in section 4, supports this approach. In particular, Veterans who were interviewed reported that they have limited confidence in timeliness estimates that do not reflect their experiences. Veterans expressed a preference for dynamic time estimates for each option which show a range of durations, rather than an average. Moreover, Veteran representatives expressed that they would cease to recommend an option if it proved unreliable, for example, if a stated timeliness goal was not realistic. Transparency not only assists Veterans in making informed choices, it also allows Veteran representatives to more effectively inform and advocate for their clients, for example, by providing a Veteran facing homelessness with an accurate comparison between wait times on the Board's hearing and direct dockets.

Additionally, the Board has refined and improved its process mapping to capture additional changes aimed at improving the timeliness of appeals under the new system. See Appendix A, IMS ID 2. The maps have been widely communicated across the Board. Staff has been trained on how to access and use these maps to identify improvements.

Concerning pension higher-level reviews and supplemental claims, P&F projects an average processing time of 125 days to complete both higher-level reviews and supplemental claims, which is consistent with the preliminary timeliness findings using RAMP.

P&F is reviewing the productivity and timeliness data of the fiduciary hubs as they process legacy fiduciary appeals from April to December 2018, as noted in Section 3(a)(1). P&F will also review the initial productivity data to determine whether the 125-day timeliness goal is appropriate for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims.

As to insurance applications and claims processing under the new framework, Insurance Service does not anticipate a significant impact on current, overall processing times for either insurance applications or disbursements, which in FY 2018 to date have been processed in less than 12 days for applications and less than 5 days for disbursements. Regardless, Insurance Service's anticipated performance under the new framework is expected to remain timely, with a focus on achieving high customer satisfaction, as has been long-standing practice under the legacy claims and appeals systems. Upon completion of training, all employees will have the knowledge and ability to process insurance applications and claims under the new claims and appeals process. The proposal noted above to amend both performance requirements and position descriptions for employees working on the appeals will address timeliness goals. When the training and employee performance requirements are in place, Insurance Service will implement specific timeliness goals for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. Insurance Service projects it will be able to meet an average 30-day processing timeliness goal

for the higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. However, it will capture actual data after implementation to establish or adjust timeliness goals as necessary.

Education Service has identified metrics and procedures for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. Education Service will use the electronic Caseflow system to assist in tracking timeliness. Education Service has developed reports to manage these claims and identify possible outliers while adhering to processing goals. Regional processing offices will incorporate new procedures into the daily workload plan. Education Service expects to have control systems and metrics in place by the end of the fourth quarter of FY 2018. Quality Training Specialists at each regional processing office will process higher-level reviews. The claims will be distributed among the three regional processing offices based on original office of jurisdiction, the alternate higher-level review stations, and the capacity of each office. Veterans Claims Examiners at each regional processing office will process the supplemental claims. The claims will be distributed among the three regional processing offices based on original office of jurisdiction and the capacity of each office.

Education Service is developing a workload plan to ensure that standards for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims are met and will have an overall process in place to analyze the workload. It anticipates the following number of claims based on historical numbers during the first year after enactment of the Appeals Modernization Act:

Higher-Level Reviews: 2,500  
Supplemental Claims: 5,000  
Appeals to the Board: 250  
Remands: 75

VA's timeliness goal for processing higher-level reviews and supplemental claims is within an average of 125 days. Education Service expects to meet the following processing times:

Target average timeframe for processing higher-level reviews: 45 days  
Target average timeframe for processing supplemental submissions: 60 days

VR&E Service's current system to address requests for a review is similar to the higher-level review procedure noted in the new claims and appeals process. VR&E Service refers to these higher-level reviews as administrative reviews. The reviews are completed by VR&E supervisory personnel at VBA ROs, and in a few specific circumstances (e.g. entitlement reviews), by the Director of VR&E Service. VR&E plans to maintain as much of its current system as possible, to include estimated average timelines of 90 days to complete higher-level reviews. Concerning supplemental claims, VR&E Service will implement a new policy for completion of reviews within 125 days at the RO level, which includes the period for receiving new and relevant evidence. VR&E Service believes this practice of seeking to resolve disagreements at the lowest possible level in a timely manner is most beneficial to VR&E program participants

Integration of VHA appeals tracking data into Caseflow will facilitate analysis of supplemental claim and higher-level review volume, inventory, and timeliness. VHA managers will have the data necessary to adjust staffing and priorities as needed to maintain timely processing of post-decision reviews in the modernized system.

NCA continues toward developing solutions and other processes to focus efforts on timely full implementation.



### **Section 3(a)(4) – Monitoring Metrics and Goals of New Appeals System**

- (4) monitoring the implementation of the new appeals system, including metrics and goals—*
- (A) to track the progress of the implementation;*
  - (B) to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation; and*
  - (C) to identify potential issues relating to the implementation.*

Implementation of the new appeals system is on track for February 2019. As before, VA does not foresee any insurmountable risks to schedule, scope, achievement of performance standards, or resources. The public comment period for the regulations and forms will close on October 9, 2018; however, VA has been completing some actions relating to the rulemaking in parallel instead of in series so that it will be able to expedite drafting of the final rule. For example, review of the rulemaking by VA's Office of the General Counsel and OMB helped VA identify some discretionary changes to the regulations which may elicit public comments. VA is prepared to quickly address potential comments. Additionally, VA is logging comments and drafting responses as they are submitted, rather than waiting to begin until the conclusion of the public comment period. See also Section 3(b)(15), below, for more information.

VA continues to implement the recommendations of GAO to ensure full and timely implementation of the statute while being good stewards of public resources. In keeping with those efforts, VA notes that GAO recently expressed a desire for more information on quality goals. VA currently has quality systems in place for the legacy system. VA anticipates using those systems and their associated standards to evaluate the quality of both legacy and Appeals Modernization Act cases. The quality of all cases will be tracked and the option to isolate the metrics of cases on each docket will be available. However, new quality systems will not be created for the purpose of separately assessing the quality of Appeals Modernization Act cases.

The Board's Office of Quality Review (QR) has a case review system with the purpose of identifying objective errors that fall outside the bounds of judicial discretion in a uniform and consistent manner. Judicial discretion applies to numerous aspects of the decision process, including, but not limited to, the outcome, depth and approach of the analysis, and handling of numerous procedural and jurisdictional questions. Legitimate differences of opinion as to the outcome in an appeal, the interpretation of the law, the application of the law to the facts, or assessment of the weight and credibility of the evidence are matters related to the exercise of adjudicative judgment and generally do not fall within the definition of "error." QR's standard of review is familiar to Veterans' benefits law: the legal standard of clear and unmistakable error. As the Appeals Modernization Act did not change the substantive law regarding entitlement to Veterans benefits, the Board does not anticipate this process being altered as a result of the change in law.

To date in FY 2018, the Board's average accuracy rate is approximately 95 percent, which is consistent with the Board's historical average over the last 20 years. The accuracy rate is reported in the Board's Annual Report to Congress and historically was reported internally monthly. In FY 2017, the Board determined that its accuracy rate measurement system was not operating efficiently and temporarily suspended random sampling of cases; instead targeted case review was completed to evaluate specific quality concerns. Starting in FY 2018, the Board resumed case review by random sampling and adjusted its sampling technique to review a statistically significant number of cases rather than the former technique of automatic review of a fixed proportion of cases.

The Board will apply the same standards of quality review to both Appeals Modernization Act and legacy cases, and Appeals Modernization Act cases will be part of the total pool from which a statistically significant number of Board cases are randomly selected for quality review. Furthermore, cases from BEAAM and the Board's implementation of RAMP will also be included in the pool of cases selected for quality review.

The Board also reviews all outcomes for Notices of Appeal filed at the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. The outcomes include precedential and non-precedential decisions, Joint Motions for Remand, dismissals, and settlements. These outcomes are categorized into a database so that trends and other data may be reviewed. QR also distributes summaries of precedential cases and completes other training as necessary, sometimes in collaboration with the Board's Office of Knowledge Management (KM). As noted in section 3(b)(1) & (2) below, KM develops and presents training on changes in substantive law as part of its regular curriculum.

VBA lines of business have assessed their workforces, identifying the requisite experience for specific positions and determining whether modifications to job descriptions are required to support the new process. VBA has the depth and breadth of experience to meet performance and quality goals for the new system. Therefore, only minor changes to job descriptions are required. Additional information is in Sections 3(b)(2) – 3(b)(7) of this report.

Similarly, each line of business has reviewed existing training materials, determined what changes and new training will need to be delivered, and developed plans to deliver training prior to the Secretary's certification. Given the scope of the new training required, VBA has determined that training can be accomplished using existing resources. Generally, lines of business are developing training products as of this report, or will begin in early fall of 2018, with most training to be conducted in the November – December timeframe of 2018. This will allow for any adjustments required by the final rulemaking process or IT updates and will ensure that employees are freshly trained prior to implementation. Additional information is in sections 3(b)(8) – 3(b)(9) of this report.

Each VBA line of business has also assessed its ability to report the metrics required in the Act and has developed plans to accomplish reporting. Data collection for reporting on the vast majority of compensation claims will be automated through VBMS and Caseflow. VBA's implementation of the new claims and appeals process IT functionality is fully resourced through OI&T and Digital Service, as described in detail in section 3(b)(10). VBA anticipates that all required functionality for the new process will be delivered by the end of calendar year 2018 with additional enhancements scheduled for March 2019.

VBA plans to largely continue both its current quality goals and its quality assurance programs for the new appeals system. VBA's current target for national accuracy for disability compensation rating claims is approximately 96 percent. Due to the similarities between the current disability compensation claims process and the new higher-level review and supplemental claim process, VBA will continue the 96 percent target. For the Statistical Technical Accuracy Review (STAR), the Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity (PA&I) currently generates random, bi-monthly samples of rating and authorization cases based on specific EPs. VBA determines sample sizes for each processing office based on accuracy and production, adjusting them annually as needed. PA&I assigns cases to each Quality Assurance (QA) Consultant based on availability and allowable review types. Each internal Quality Review

Team, which is comprised of senior Quality Review Specialists (QRS), reviews the completed cases for quality, accuracy, and consistency before returning them to the processing offices.

VBA posts the quality results to the STAR Reports Webpage and includes individual office accuracy and the number of errors in each category. This information allows each office to address any deficiencies found through training.

In addition, VBA hosts a monthly national Quality Call, which provides training, information on error trends, new manual updates, and policy and procedural guidance. These calls impact quality and consistency and can reach almost 5,000 employees each month.

About 900 QRSs in field processing offices conduct random samples of Individual Quality Reviews (IQR) and In-Process Reviews (IPR). During FY 2017, VBA conducted almost 94,000 IPRs, allowing immediate feedback and training to field employees. Second reviews on all error calls help ensure their accuracy. VBA reports all IQR metrics to local management and employees for action and training.

VBA is conducting an aggressive outreach campaign, which is described in section 3(b)(13). VA is shifting messaging from RAMP to the new process to ensure that Veterans and other stakeholders are fully informed.

Each line of business in VBA has assessed internal policies that require changes to support the new process and are in various stages of drafting updates. VBA anticipates that these updates will be conducted in time to allow for training materials to be developed and delivered. More information is available in section 3(b)(14).

VA is working diligently to maintain an updated and comprehensive enterprise-wide IMS. See Appendix A. IMS itself has scheduled dates laid alongside tasks for goal monitoring. In addition, as described in section 4 of this report, VA is conducting RAMP. In addition to reducing the number of legacy appeals and validating forecasts and planning assumptions, RAMP allows VA to collect empirical data on the efficiency and effectiveness of elements of the new framework. Early lessons learned from the Board's test program (BEAAM) are also provided in Section 4, below.

VHA has created and is following a master project plan, and individual program offices inside VHA who are responsible for processing claims, supplemental claims, and higher-level reviews are actively developing subordinate plans to resolve their legacy inventory and timely implement Appeals Modernization Act processes. Legacy inventory plans will be completed within the next 6 weeks. VHA will revise the master and subordinate plans as needed to account for unexpected difficulties and efficiencies.

NCA continues toward achieving the project plan and contributions in the VA enterprise-wide IMS.

## Plan Elements

The following sections provide information on each element of the comprehensive plan as required in Sections 3(b) through 4(a)(2) of the Act.

## **Sections 3(b)(1) & (2) – Resource and Personnel Requirements**

*(1) Delineation of the total resource requirements of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Board of Veterans' Appeals, disaggregated by resources required to implement and administer the new appeals system and resources required to address the appeals of decisions on legacy claims.*

*(2) Delineation of the personnel requirements of the Administration and the Board, including staffing levels during the—*

*(A) period in which the Administration and the Board are concurrently processing—*

*(i) appeals of decisions on legacy claims; and*

*(ii) appeals of decisions on non-legacy claims under the new appeals system;*

*(B) Period during which VBA and the Board are no longer processing any appeals on legacy claims.*

While GAO has suggested that this report should explicitly quantify how resources are delineated across all lines of business, VA believes the intent of Section (3)(b)(1) is to determine whether VA can actually work legacy and Appeals Modernization Act appeals simultaneously. VA has explained that only certain entities within VA can delineate personnel and other resources due to the nature of processing two different workloads. In providing those explanations, VA believes it has honored the intent of the law.

As of the end of June, the Board reported 77 percent of its staff dedicated to its primary mission of writing decisions. With a goal of 1,050 FTE on board by September, there should also be approximately 91 Veterans Law Judges (excluding Chief Veterans Law Judges), 749 decision writing attorneys, and 210 support staff. The Board anticipates that a minimum of 10 percent of resources associated with attorney and Veterans Law Judge workflow will be required to implement and administer the new appeals system. The remainder of the Board's resources will be dedicated to processing legacy appeals. This delineation of resources may change as additional data is obtained during RAMP and following implementation of the Act. Notably, Board attorneys and Veterans Law Judges are subject matter experts in Veterans' benefits law and only the appeals process, rather than the substantive law, is changing. Individual personnel will not be solely dedicated to the legacy or new system dockets. After gathering further information from the test programs and implementing the Act, however, the Board will be able to report on decision output per FTE delineated by the Board's total decision output in each of the legacy and new system dockets. In this way, the Board will be able to report on delineation of total resources required for the legacy versus the new system. If, for example, 80 percent of decisions issued by the Board in 2019 were for legacy appeals, the Board would report that 840 FTE (out of 1,050 total FTE) were allocated to processing and adjudication of legacy appeals. In practice, however, all personnel at the Board would likely spend approximately 80 percent of their time working legacy appeals, while simultaneously working appeals in the new system.

Regarding delineation of IT resources, specifically, IT modernization was already proceeding prior to passage of the Appeals Modernization Act and would have proceeded even in the absence of the Act. Digital Service VA engagement began at VA in 2015, long before the passage of the Act in 2017. See THE U.S. DIGITAL SERVICE, REPORT TO CONGRESS 21 (December 2016), available at <https://www.usds.gov/resources/USDS-2016-Report-to-Congress.pdf>. Also, by modernizing, VA was not "simply replicating VACOLS with modern technology." Instead, "the DSVA team partnered with VA to rethink each aspect of the appeals process, including identifying inefficiencies and opportunities for automation, with the goal of improving timeliness and the Veteran experience. This agile approach to IT delivery, instead of

a waterfall approach, allowed DSVa to quickly adapt to the passage of the Act and better prepare VA for the Act's February 2019 implementation." See THE U.S. DIGITAL SERVICE, REPORT TO CONGRESS 8 (Fall 2017), available at <https://www.usds.gov/resources/USDS-Fall-2017-Report-to-Congress.pdf>; see also Appendix A, IMS ID 3.0. Passage of the Act was not the impetus for the agile IT modernization that is currently ongoing at VA.

Moreover, the Board does not delineate resources for training attorneys and administrative staff between the new and legacy systems. The Board has a robust training program, which includes a 6-month training period for newly hired attorneys. Additionally, KM develops and presents regular trainings for all Board attorneys, including refresher courses aimed at improving quality and consistency, specialized training for complex areas of law, and new training based on changes in law. Changes in law are frequently driven by decisions of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, as well as the Federal Circuit, and require the Board to immediately update policies, decision-drafting guidance, and provide new trainings. The Appeals Modernization Act is an example of a change in law requiring new training. Therefore, resources required to implement the training schedule described in section 3(b)(8) below are already contemplated as part of the total training resources required for the Board. Additionally, training on new technology and administrative procedures is required as a result of IT modernization, not the Appeals Modernization Act. Differences in administrative procedures required under the Appeals Modernization Act will be addressed in existing IT training programs.

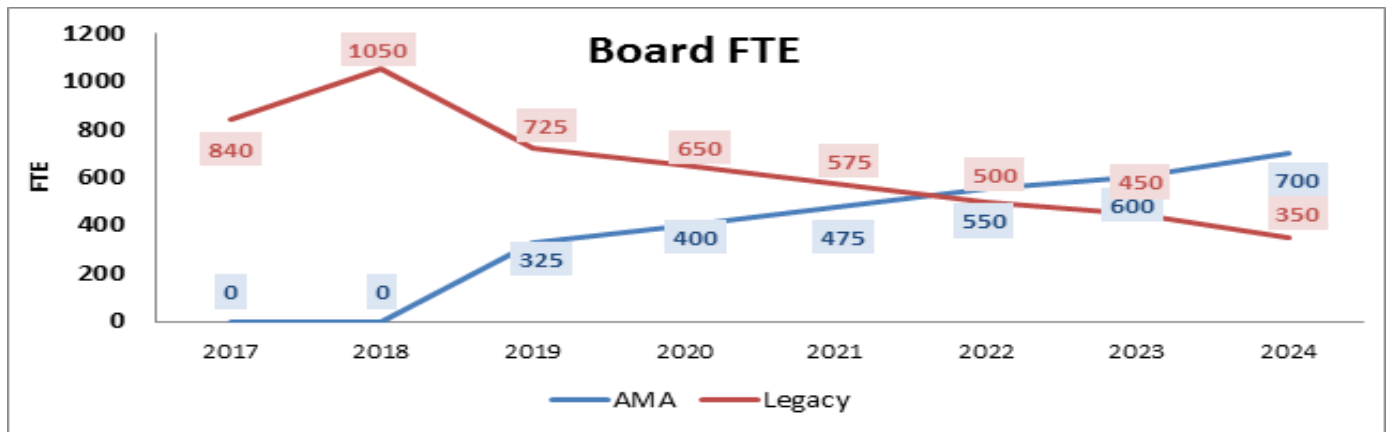
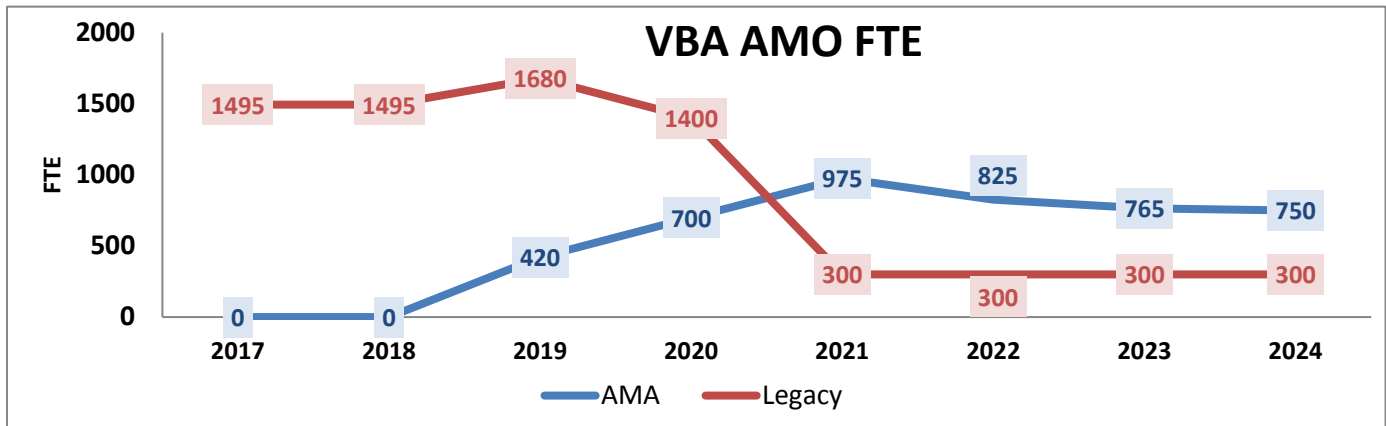
VA has provided a model to assist in projection of the resources required to address the legacy appeals inventories and simultaneously implement and process appeals in the new system (detailed in Section 3(b)(17) of the Comprehensive Plan May 2018 Update). VA is continuing to improve the model through RAMP and BEAAM programs, changing the model's underlying assumptions following analysis of the results.

BEAAM research program identified risks that are not accounted for in the model, and which may have substantial effects, particularly on the timeliness of the evidence and hearing dockets. First, the claims disagreement rate, modeled at 11 percent, may increase under the Appeals Modernization Act. Currently, a claimant may request a sub-regulatory procedure known as "reconsideration." As this procedure is essentially replaced by the supplemental claim option, Veterans who would have requested reconsideration in the legacy system may instead choose to file a supplemental claim or appeal to the Board. A second risk is that the average number of actions taken on a claim may exceed 1.5 as modeled. Currently, Veterans have limited options to request review after an AOJ or Board decision. However, the new system provides multiple review and appeal options after every VA decision. The rate at which Veterans request additional reviews and appeals is difficult to predict, as this depends on Veteran behavior in response to these new options.

AMO has oversight and operational control of 1,495 FTE dedicated to processing compensation and pension legacy appeals. Of those, approximately 1,250 have direct claim processing responsibilities. Pending Congress' appropriation of funding, AMO will receive an additional 605 FTE for a total of 2,100 FTE to support processing of legacy appeals and implementation of the new decision review process with the FY 2019 budget allocation. VBA intends to allocate these field resources efficiently between the legacy and new process workloads to accomplish timely processing in the new process with the remainder of resources allocated to the legacy appeals.

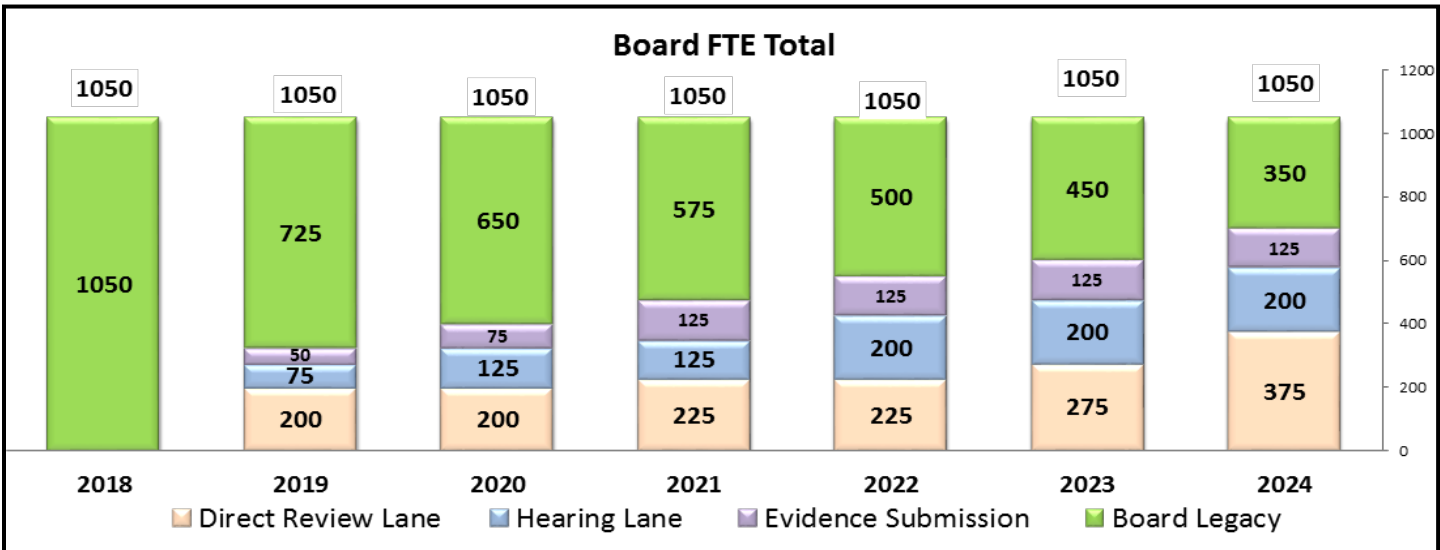
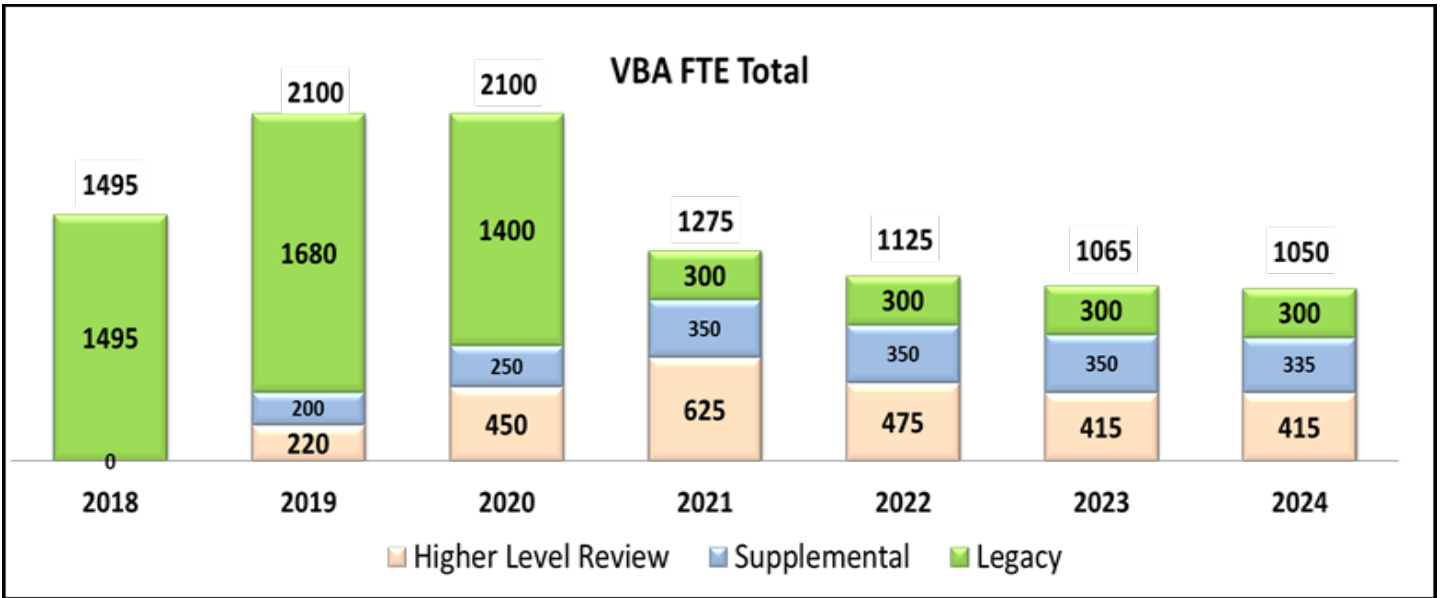
The charts below represent the Board's and AMO's current baseline modeling of allocation of resources as described in this section. It should be noted that modeling includes a variety of factors that could affect the current forecast. The variable assumptions involved in forecasting

include the RAMP opt-in rate, refile rate, Board remand rate, and production. Any trends identified in these assumptions that lead to changes in the model can affect what is currently being forecast and FTE allocated to each type of workload.

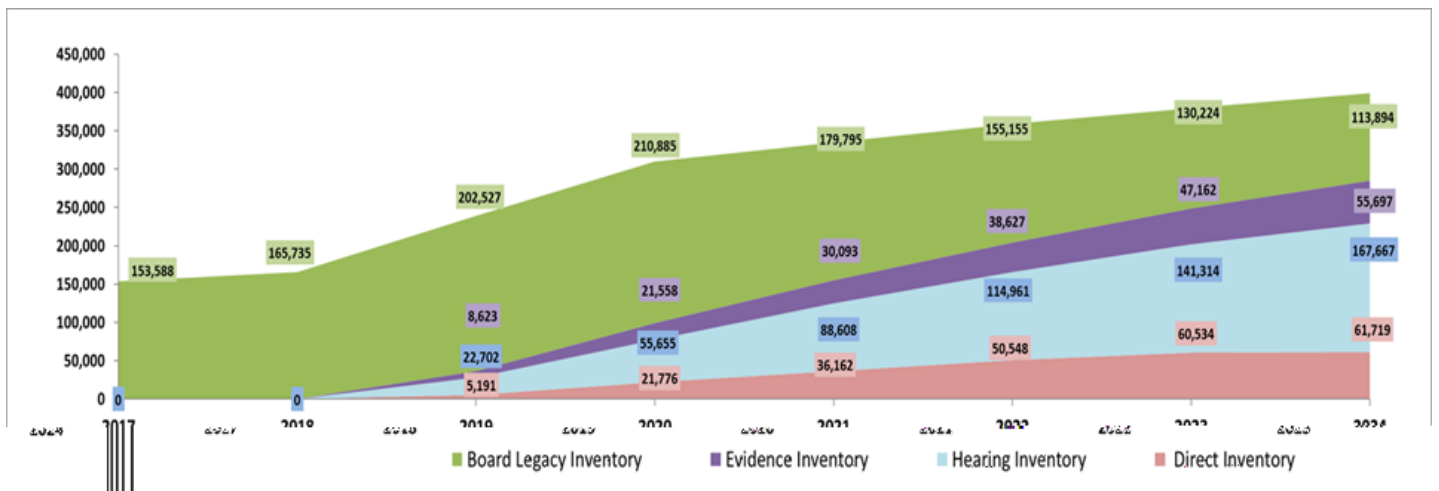
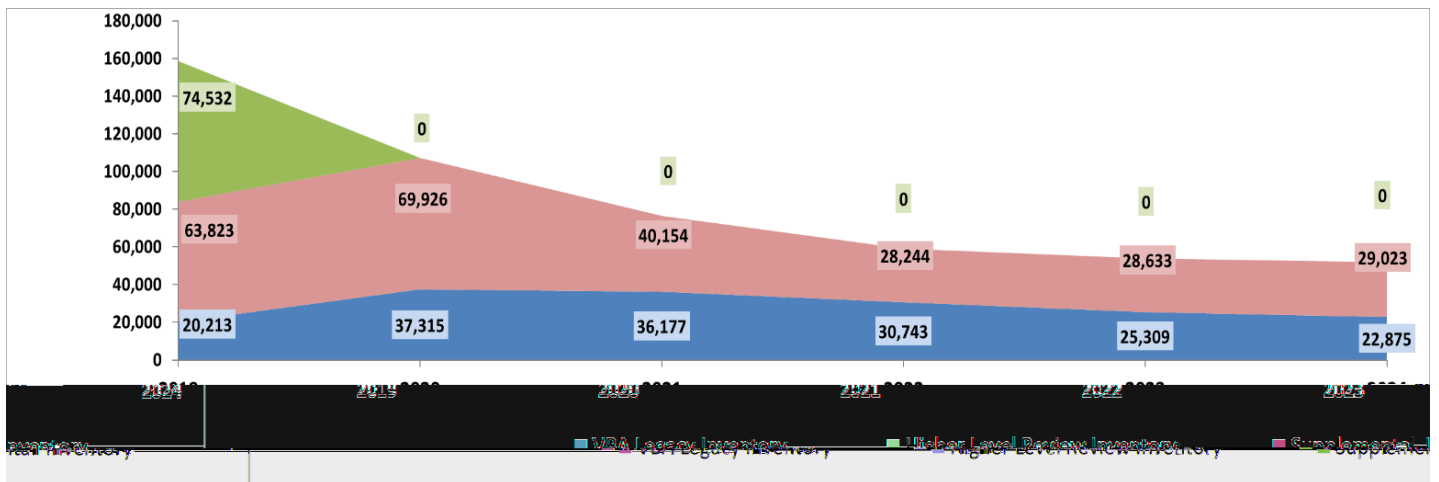


VBA is establishing two DROCs in St. Petersburg, Florida, and SeaTac, Washington, and converting the ARC in Washington, DC, to a third DROC. Employees assigned to the DROCs will process compensation reviews under the new framework. Each DROC will be staffed with decision review officers (DRO), journey-level and non-journey-level rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSR), Veterans Service Representatives (VSR), and claims assistants (CA). The maximum FTE for the St. Petersburg, Florida, and SeaTac, Washington, DROCs are 485 and 227, respectively. In the event VBA is able to hire the additional FTE according to plan pending approval of funding, resources dedicated to the new review process at these facilities will be adjusted based on the reduction of the legacy appeals inventory and the increase in new framework inventory.

The charts below provide the most recent distribution of FTE across the inventory lanes. It should be noted that modeling includes a variety of factors that could affect the current forecast. The variable assumptions involved in forecasting include the RAMP opt-in rate, refile rate, Board remand rate, and production. Any trends identified in these assumptions that lead to changes in the model can affect the current forecast and the VA's FTE allocated to each workload.



Based on current modeling estimates, VBA projects that VBA’s non-remand legacy appeals inventory will be eliminated in FY 2020, while the Board’s inventory of all legacy appeals is forecasted to be eliminated by FY 2026. VBA will continue to receive approximately 30,000 remands from the Board each year; however, it projects that it will have enough resources to work that inventory the same year as it is received, which is demonstrated in the chart below. The charts below provide the current forecasting based on current staffing with the additional FTE requested in the FY 2019 President’s Budget, and productivity assessments. It should be noted that modeling includes a variety of factors that could affect AMO’s current forecast. The variable assumptions involved in forecasting include the RAMP opt-in rate, refile rate, Board remand rate, production, and allocation of staffing. Any trends identified in these assumptions that lead to changes in the model can affect the current forecast.



Historically, attrition rates are approximately 7 percent for VBA and 9.3 percent for the Board, and VA continues to anticipate that normal attrition will address any necessary staffing changes that result from elimination of the legacy appeals inventory. Any remaining resources dedicated to legacy claims and appeals processing will be reallocated, as needed, to processing under the new system after the final legacy appeals are adjudicated.

Compensation Service is currently utilizing approximately 19 FTE to implement the new claims and appeals system. These employees consist of analysts from the Policy, Procedures Maintenance, and Business Management staff. These analysts and chiefs are responsible for reviewing and drafting regulations and forms; drafting updated procedural guidance; and coordinating with OBPI on any changes in business systems and programs. Additional FTE from the Compensation Service Quality staff will most likely be enlisted to administer the new process. Compensation Service is not able to quantify FTE at this time.

P&F is utilizing 16 full-time employees to implement higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. These employees consist of seven analysts from the Pension Program and seven analysts from the Fiduciary Program, a human resource liaison, and a supervisor. Concerning resource requirements to administer the new system and address legacy appeals, P&F anticipates utilizing all the current appeals resources in the Pension Management Centers



(PMC) and Fiduciary Hubs to process higher-level reviews and legacy appeals until all legacy appeals are processed. As of May 31, 2018, P&F has allocated 19 Pension Management Center (PMC) DROs and 69 GS-11 Fiduciary Service Representatives (FSR). Specifically, these resources are DROs in the PMCs and GS-11 Fiduciary Service Representatives (FSR) in the Fiduciary Hubs. P&F will train these DROs and FSRs to process higher-level reviews prior to February 2019. All PMC DROs and the GS-11 FSRs will then process higher-level reviews as they are received while concurrently working legacy appeals. DROs and GS-11 FSRs will continue to process higher-level reviews after the inventory of all legacy claims is depleted. As of May 31, 2018, there were 87 PMC RVSRs and 645 PMC VSRs. P&F will provide training to all, to include training the GS-11 FSRs to process supplemental claims. PMC Veteran Service Representatives (VSR), PMC Rating VSRs, and FSRs will also process supplemental claims.

Insurance Service does not generally have a designated section that solely processes appeals. Currently, however, there are 20 employees processing legacy appeals. Overall, Insurance Service plans to repurpose existing resources, as needed, to administer the new claims and appeals framework, with current SVCEs and UCs who handled appeals prior to the new statute being responsible for higher-level reviews and supplemental claims under the new paradigm. Upon implementation, Insurance Service anticipates that 41 employees will be charged with adjudicating higher-level reviews and supplemental claims as part of their general claims processing duties. Insurance Service anticipates resolving the majority of its legacy appeals prior to February 2019. However, any remaining legacy appeals will be processed by the same employees charged with administering the new claims and appeals process. Insurance Service currently has a very low inventory of legacy appeals, which it anticipates resolving prior to February 2019. As such, the staffing for Insurance employees responsible for current appellate work will be repurposed to process supplemental claims and higher-level reviews, with the overall number of employees remaining the same following completion of all legacy appeals.

To implement the Appeals Modernization Act, Education Service is using 10 of its existing Central Office employees to work on: drafting the regulations, procedures, and forms; implementing personnel changes, such as revising position description and performance standards; establishing workload management techniques; and creating performance metrics, IT solutions, training materials, and quality assurance and communications plans. Furthermore, existing regional processing office resources will manage the higher-level reviews and supplemental claims workload, as well as address appeals of decisions on legacy education claims. Existing regional processing office Veterans Claims Examiners will manage supplemental claims. Education Service established the Quality Training Specialist (QTS), GS-12 position to replace the existing Training Coordinator position. Approximately 50 employees will hold this position and will process both legacy appeals and higher-level reviews under the new process. They will focus solely on higher-level reviews once VBA and the Board are no longer processing legacy appeals. Veterans Claims Examiners will process supplemental claims. Education Service believes its employees will be able to handle the new workload based on historical appeal rates and current procedures, which include a process similar to higher-level reviews and supplemental claims.

As of June 2018, there are 263 pending VR&E legacy appeals, which include 67 administrative reviews received in FY 2017. Administrative reviews and appeals management cases are processed as part of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) and VR&E management workload and are received intermittently. VR&E currently has 1,048 FTE for this type of work. In addition, there are seven FTE for VR&E Central Office that address administrative reviews. Expected workload under the new process will not require the use of additional resources. Regarding legacy appeals, VR&E Service staff, in collaboration with the Office of Field

Operations, is assisting VR&E field staff in identifying and resolving legacy appeals. VR&E will use existing field staff to process legacy appeals.

LGY anticipates that at least one Team Lead at each Regional Loan Center (RLC) will process higher-level reviews with management providing oversight and distribution of work. In February 2019, existing staff within the Atlanta RLC will shift their responsibilities to include the processing of legacy and non-legacy claims. As a result, LGY will have at least 8 Team Leads at the GS-12 level performing the higher-level reviews. Due to the small number of LGY appeals, LGY Service does not anticipate any additional staffing will be needed to perform legacy and non-legacy claims concurrently. There will be a learning curve for the current staffing that will perform higher-level reviews and supplemental claims. RLCs that have more than one Team Lead will be assigned the higher-level reviews on a rotational basis. Central Office Program Analysts will process supplemental claims with the Chief of Loan Policy, providing oversight and assigning on a rotational basis. Four Program Analysts at the GS-13 level will adjudicate the supplemental claims. Program Analysts have in-depth knowledge of Loan Production procedures and receive additional policy training. Upon implementation in February 2019, LGY will review the processing flow and workload after the initial 60-calendar days to determine if additional resources may be temporarily necessary to complete the reviews in a timely manner. LGY legacy claims will remain with the Atlanta RLC for processing through February 2020. No additional resources are anticipated to process the legacy claims, higher-level reviews, and supplemental claims.

VHA completed a comprehensive assessment of the resources currently processing appeals and continues to assess resources needed to manage and process legacy claims and transition to the new system. As of Quarter 3 of FY 2018, there are more than 150 FTEs (some dedicated appeals staff) processing appeals associated with non-VA care. This includes care under: 38 U.S.C. §§ 1703, 1728, and 1725; authorized care; unauthorized emergency care for service-connected Veterans; and unauthorized emergency care for nonservice-connected Veterans. Other VHA lines of business that currently process appeals do not have dedicated appeals staff.

The first review of VHA's comprehensive assessment is complete. VHA's Office of Community Care/Claims Adjudication and Reimbursement (OCC/CAR), which is responsible for more than 90 percent of VHA's appeals, is developing a plan to ensure dedicated appeals staff (as opposed to staff for whom appeals are a collateral duty). As part of this plan to ensure adequate appeals processing staffing, newly hired OCC/CAR staff will now be dedicated to appeals processing only with no collateral duties. OCC/CAR is taking other actions as well. They are developing an appeals SOP that will ensure that designated staff are focused solely on appeals. They will be performing ongoing reviews to remove collateral duties from current appeals staff whenever possible. Lastly, OCC/CAR will be utilizing current and future appeals data and conducting time studies to better determine the volume of FTE needed to manage OCC/CAR's inventory of appeals.

As phase two of VHA's comprehensive assessment, VHA will be developing a plan to address staffing requirements in other areas such as Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service, Clothing Allowance, Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA), and Automobile Adaptive Equipment. This also includes Member Services who are responsible for Enrollment and Eligibility, Income Verification and Beneficiary Travel. These programs have a smaller number of appeals; therefore, their staff process appeals as a collateral duty. Phase two of this assessment will determine if these offices require dedicated staffing to support the Appeals Modernization Act. VHA will realign personnel if necessary to manage the new processes required by the law and reassign those staff members once legacy appeals have been resolved.

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For NCA, both new appeals and legacy appeals will be handled by the existing NCA appeals office personnel. NCA future personnel needs would be assessed dependent on national response to the new system (from Veterans, their families, VSOs, and attorneys).

**Section 3(b)(3) – Legal Authorities for Hiring and Removing Employees**

- (3) *Identification of the legal authorities under which the Administration or the Board may—*
  - (A) *hire additional employees to conduct the concurrent processing described in paragraph (2)(A); and*
  - (B) *remove employees who are no longer required by the Administration or the Board once the Administration and the Board are no longer processing any appeals of decisions on legacy claims.*

There is no substantive update to provide since the prior reports were completed. VA will continue to monitor resource requirements and adjust plans as necessary pursuant to applicable legal authorities as originally provided. Additionally, in the March 2018 report, GAO did not disagree with VA’s assessment of the relevant legal authorities for hiring and removing employees.

**Section 3(b)(4) – Estimated Time For Hiring Employees**

- (4) *An estimate of the amount of time the Administration and the Board will require to hire additional employees as described in paragraph (3)(A) once funding has been made available for such purpose, including a comparison of such estimate and the historical average time required by the Administration and the Board to hire additional employees.*

Through collaboration with VBA’s Office of Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO), AMO has developed a phased hiring strategy to assist with attaining the goals of resolving legacy appeals and timely processing decision reviews under the Appeals Modernization Act.

VBA initiated the first phase of hiring advance management and support staff for DROC locations established in the St. Petersburg and SeaTac locations. The advance management and support staff will consist of 37 personnel in St. Petersburg and 23 personnel in SeaTac. The Illustration below displays the priority hiring strategy for 60 staff members.

Cadre/Supervisors – Update

SF-52/PD Review (30 Apr to 25 May)	Job Analysis (1-5 May)	JOA Open (14 May to 8 Jun)	Qualifications Review (1 Jun to 13 Jul)	Issue Certificate (16 Jul)	Certificate Review (17 Jul)	Tentative Offers (14 Aug)	Offers Accepted (24 Aug)	EOD NLT (16 Sep) 35/23 (Phase I)
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New Hires - Update

SF-52/PD Review (25-29 Jun)	Job Analysis (6 Jul)	JOA Open (9 Jul)	Qualifications Review (30 Jul)	Issue Certificate (16 Aug)	Certificate Review (17 Aug)	Tentative Offers (11 Sep)	Offers Accepted (28 Sep)	EOD NLT (14 Oct) 140/75 (Phases II & III)	EOD NLT (25 Nov) 130/65 (Phases IV & V)	EOD NLT (22 Jan) 90/32 (Phase VI)	EOD NLT (31 Mar) 90/32 (Phase VII)
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To bring qualified employees on as quickly as possible, VBA intends on leveraging several programs such as the Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC). WARTAC is designed to assist Servicemembers transitioning from active duty to Veteran status find potential employment as VSRs or RVSRs. The current VA hiring plan includes an out-of-cycle FY 2018 WARTAC training session of 58 new VSR hires. This FY 2018 training session began on July 11, 2018 and runs for 10 weeks, at Ft. Stewart, Georgia. At the completion of the sessions, WARTAC graduates will be placed in a DROC location of their choice. WARTAC program is committed to providing four additional training sessions exclusively for VBA's hiring strategy in FY 2019. Beyond WARTAC program, in support of the VII Phase Hiring Strategy, VBA would utilize the Pathways Programs to target students and recent graduates of all ages and backgrounds. Pathways consists of three distinct programs: the Internship Program, the Recent Graduates Program, and the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. VBA will primarily utilize the recent graduate program and intends to advertise through college and university job fairs. VBA's goal is to hire as many as 100 employees via the Pathways programs. The tables below provide a detailed overview of the hiring strategy.

*\* The information listed below details the VII Phase Hiring Strategy*

**\*DROC St Pete staff from FY 2019 Budget = 405 FTE**

Phase	Type of Hire	Proposed Date	Remarks
I	Advance Party	NLT <b>SEPT 16</b>	Hiring of <b>36 FTE</b> (Manager, Assistant Manager, Supervisors, HR, ER/LR, Quality/Training, Support Services, etc.)
II	First group of claims processors (various/other VSRs, RVSRs etc.) Pathways (college job fairs).	NLT <b>OCT 14</b> NLT <b>NOV 25</b>	Hire <b>59 FTE</b> via USA jobs, 7 WARTAC – Germany/Ft. Stewart/Ft. Carson, etc. jobs. Pathways goal is to hire <b>100</b> employees.
III	St. Petersburg Appeals Team	Director discretion	St Petersburg <b>80</b> Appeals Team FTE moved to DROC
IV	Second group of claims processors	NLT <b>NOV 25</b>	<b>60 FTE</b> hired via USA jobs
V	First group of hires from WARTAC (Ft. Stewart, GA),	NLT <b>JAN 22</b>	Hire and onboard <b>50</b> WARTAC graduates from September 20, 2018, class
VI	Second group of hires from WARTAC (Ft. Stewart, GA)	NLT <b>MAR 2019</b>	Hire and onboard <b>50</b> WARTAC graduates from December 2018 class
VII	Third group of hires from WARTAC (military Ft. Stewart, GA)	NLT <b>APR 2019</b>	Hire and onboard <b>50</b> WARTAC graduates from January 2019 class

**Total DROC St Pete footprint = 485 FTE**

**\*DROC SEATAC staff from FY 2019 Budget = 200 FTE**

Phase	Type of Hire	Proposed Date	Remarks
I	Advance Party	NLT <b>SEPT 16</b>	Hiring of <b>24 FTE</b> (Manager, Supervisors, HR, ER/LR, Quality/Training, SSD, etc.)

II	First group of claims processors (various/other VSRs, RVSRs etc.) Pathways (college job fairs).	NLT <b>OCT 14</b> NLT <b>NOV 25</b>	Hire <b>46</b> FTE via USAJOBS, Germany/Ft. Stewart/Ft Carson, etc. jobs Pathways goal is to hire <b>55</b> employees for SeaTac
III	SeaTac Appeals Team	Director discretion	SeaTac <b>27</b> Appeals Team FTE moved to DROC
IV	Second group of claims processors	NLT <b>NOV 25</b>	<b>35</b> FTE hired via USAJOBS
V	First group of hires from WARTAC (military Ft. Stewart, GA)	NLT <b>JAN 22</b>	Hire and onboard <b>20</b> WARTAC graduates from September 20, 2018 class
VI	Second group of hires from WARTAC (military Ft. Stewart, GA)	NLT <b>MAR 2019</b>	Hire and onboard <b>20</b> WARTAC graduates from December 2018 class

**Total DROC SEATAC footprint = 227 FTE**

The Board is continuing its aggressive hiring strategy to meet its hiring target of 1,050 FTE by the end of FY 2018. As of July 31, 2018, the Board has confirmed offers of employment with 86 new Attorney Advisors and 36 Law Clerks. The Board has a total of 122 inbound personnel projected in the fourth quarter of FY 2018. In addition, the Board is actively recruiting for administrative support staff. As of July 31, 2018, the Board has posted advertisements for 13 administrative support staff. Additionally, the Chairman recently recommended eight Veterans Law Judge candidates to fill open vacancies. Chiefs of Litigation Support and the Office of Quality Review were recently hired. The Board expects it will require an average of 90 days to hire attorneys, and the average time to hire VLJs is approximately 6 months.

On average, it takes VHA roughly 90 days to hire a key position once approved. As a recruitment strategy that is used in OCC/CAR to hire Appeals Representatives, VHA will be looking to host Direct Hiring Events that can decrease the average time to hire by half (when effective).

**Section 3(b)(5) – Higher-Level Adjudicator Training and Experience Requirements**

*(5) A description of the amount of training and experience that will be required of individuals conducting higher-level reviews under section 5104B of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 2(g).*

While VBA has no update on the experience required by individuals who will conduct higher-level reviews of compensation and pension disability rating decisions, VBA is using “lessons

learned” from RAMP to assess and develop VBA’s training programs for full implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act.

During the startup phase of RAMP, all higher-level adjudicator processing was completed at ARC in Washington, DC. During this phase, AMO developed a series of in-person classes on appeals modernization and RAMP. Thanks, in part, to low instructor to student ratios and the proximity of ARC higher-level adjudicators to the training staff, VBA was able to quickly receive feedback on training and make any necessary improvements to training materials.

Following feedback received from training by ARC higher-level adjudicators, AMO further refined its RAMP training program and materials. Currently, prior to any higher-level adjudicator processing claims under RAMP, they must complete several mandatory training courses. The mandatory RAMP training curriculum includes RAMP prerequisite courses, overview courses, and refresher training. During refresher training, the instruction mode is virtual instructor-led training (VILT) through live demonstration, and live casework is assigned to all participating employees. AMO personnel review completed casework and provide employees with feedback prior to finalization of actions.

Based on analysis of case reviews conducted during refresher training, VA determined that the largest training error category, approximately 10 percent of the RAMP training errors, was related to not properly identifying or documenting favorable findings. To address this issue, VA now provides additional guidance during refresher training and has provided specific examples of favorable findings to RAMP processing stations during weekly status calls. However, VA continues to monitor this training issue and is using this “lesson learned” as long-term training products are developed.

For Insurance Service, SVCEs and UCs, who are the most experienced employees, currently are the primary staff members who handle legacy appeals. Under the new appeal procedures, the same employees who currently adjudicate legacy appeals will also handle the higher-level reviews. Insurance Service has determined that experienced employees, who currently manage the legacy appeals inventory, are best suited to transition into the role of higher-level reviewers. Insurance Service completed an introductory session reviewing the new claims and appeals processes with all employees in May 2018 and will conduct a series of trainings addressing process flows, relevant regulations, adjustments to notification letters, Insurance Manual changes, and the use of updated workload tracking tools. These trainings will build upon one another and will be deployed via sessions conducted in November and December of 2018, with additional targeted trainings for higher-level reviewers in January 2019.

Education Service has established a Quality Training Specialist position. Employees in this position will process higher-level reviews. They will be required to have journey-level experience processing all types of VA education benefits. They will have knowledge of various resources to confirm and validate procedures and will be familiar with education claims processing systems. Education Service expects that Quality Training Specialists will require minimal training on the higher-level review process since Education Service has a current review process in place that is similar to the higher-level review framework. Employees will attend training sessions covering the new process; changes to the current process; and the tracking and quality feedback loops. Education Service expects to complete the training plan by September 30, 2018. Employee training will begin once the training plan is complete.

As the VR&E program has a higher-level review process currently in place, it expects minimal training on the new higher-level review process. VR&E Service has created a 2-hour training.

This training was recorded and added to the Talent Management System (TMS) as a required training element for each VR&E field staff member with a required completion date of August 31, 2018. In addition, VR&E Service has a process in place in which subject matter experts can respond to questions received from the field in a timely manner. The changes to VR&E's current higher-level review process will ensure compliance with the new process, accurate tracking, and quality feedback loops. Higher-level reviews will be completed by VR&E supervisory staff. There is no specific experience requirement to attain a supervisory position in VR&E; however, there is a statutory educational requirement provided in 38 U.S.C. § 3118. In addition, VA requires all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to obtain a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, including an internship; or a master's degree in counseling psychology or a related field, including 30 semester hours of course work in such areas as foundations of rehabilitation counseling, human growth and development, vocational assessment, career development, job placement, case management, and medical/psycho-social aspects of disability.

Once LGY has finalized drafting its new framework policy and procedures guidance, the LGY training group will provide a training plan that addresses training delivery, audience, and course pre-requisites. LGY Training will perform a high-level review of the policy to ensure compliance is maintained throughout the proposed training plan. The Team Leads are expert level Loan Specialists with experience performing reviews of Certificate of Eligibility applications for team members. The Team Leads will require training regarding the higher-level review process.

Further details regarding VBA's business lines training plans can be found in Appendix B.

NCA will undertake training for NCA specific matters and will continue to work with the Board and VBA to identify shared functional training resources for effective training management.

VHA will utilize existing leads and supervisors to serve as higher-level adjudicators. Stratification will be at the facility level and then at the higher Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) headquarters level when needed. VHA is working with the Board to develop a training program that will be deployed to claim and appeal adjudicators VHA-wide.

### **Section 3(b)(6) – Estimated Percentage of Higher-Level Adjudicators Who Were Decision Review Officers**

*(6) An estimate of the percentage of higher-level adjudicators who will be employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs who were Decision Review Officers on the day before the new appeals system takes effect or had experience, as of such date, comparable to that of one who was a Decision Review Officer.*

The current DROC structure assigns 53 DROs and 101 journey-level RVSRs to work higher-level reviews. These employees will be centralized at DROC locations in St. Petersburg, Florida, and SeaTac, Washington. Utilizing this breakout, approximately 35 percent of the higher-level reviewers assigned to DROCs will have been DROs on the day before the new system takes effect.

All other DROs will be utilized in reducing the legacy appeals inventory. As VBA further reduces the legacy inventory, it will consolidate this workload at fewer stations allowing for the reallocation of FTE to other VBA workload priorities.



The current NCA personnel handling appeals has experience comparable to that of DROs, including: completing de novo reviews; holding informal telephonic conferences; making a decision (including reversals of prior denials); making direct contact with appellants and their representatives; employee training and development; jurisdiction over appellant issues; and certification and transfer of appeals.

VHA continues to assess the feasibility of using leads and supervisors with experience equivalent to that of a DRO to work higher-level reviews. It will adjust that plan as needed based on the information received moving forward.

### **Section 3(b)(7) – Decision Review Officer Functions in New System**

*(7) A description of the functions that will be performed after the date on which the new appeals system takes effect by Decision Review Officers who were Decision Review Officers on the day before the date the new appeals system takes effect.*

VA currently has no updates to provide regarding DRO functions in the new system.

### **Section 3(b)(8) – Training Identification and Timeline**

*(8) Identification of and a timeline for—*

*(A) any training that may be required as a result of hiring new employees to carry out the new appeals system or to process appeals of decisions on legacy claims; and*

*(B) any retraining of existing employees that may be required to carry out such system or to process such claims.*

VBA has continuously provided updated training on Appeals Modernization for employees directly involved in the Public Contact Teams (PCT) and Intake Processing Centers (IPC) at every RO. Furthermore, AMO deployed Appeals Modernization 101 training to all employees in the Veterans Service Centers, which provides a comprehensive overview of full implementation and a greater awareness of RAMP. The Appeals Modernization 101 training was mandated to all Compensation-related employees and had a 99 percent completion rate as of June 2018.

VBA will use its existing Challenge training course and training academies in Baltimore and Denver to train VSRs and RVSRs. Once the employees have returned to their primary station, they will attend specialized training, provided by current and experienced employees both in person and through TMS.

Additionally, trained VSRs and RVSRs hired internally will attend specialized Appeals Modernization Act training. This training of procedures and protocols will consist of both instructor-led online training and live casework, reviewed by qualified trainers.

Since the May 2018 update, the Board's KM and Legislation, Regulations, and Policy (LRP) teams updated and finalized a list of Frequently Asked Questions for the Board's legal and administrative staff, which covers the processing of RAMP appeals. Board staff have been trained in dealing with RAMP administrative procedures as well as how to handle legacy appeals when a claimant has issues in both the RAMP and legacy appeal lanes. Additionally, Board staff have been trained on the best practices for NODs arising from RAMP decisions. The Board continues to communicate closely with VBA/AMO to ensure that all development and changes to the new statutory framework are addressed jointly.

KM and LRP refined and provided large-scale trainings on the new appeals system for all Board staff, including attorneys hired at the Board since January 2017. These trainings include new updates since the last round of large-scale trainings, incorporating further details regarding implementing the Appeals Modernization Act. Primarily, these trainings highlight differences in the appellate process between the legacy system and the new system with a focus on how claims are processed within VBA when additional evidence may be submitted, how claims arrive at the Board, how remands will be handled, how and when medical opinions may be developed, and how docketing of appeals will be handled. Additionally, KM has developed new “Bootcamp” training materials outlining the new appeals system designed specifically for new attorneys who are learning the basics of Veterans’ law. KM and LRP have continued to hold brown bag question-and-answer sessions that are open to all Board staff with a focus on the proposed regulations implementing the Appeals Modernization Act.

KM continues to develop training for all Board staff that addresses the concurrent processing of appeals under the legacy system and the new system. With respect to the legacy appeals, the KM team has worked with previously identified subject matter experts (SME) embedded in each stage of the appeals process at the Board to memorialize procedures in SOPs that accurately reflect the legacy appeals process. The Board is developing new internal processes to handle appeals in the new system. These new procedures will be memorialized in SOPs and made available to all necessary personnel who will be assisting in appeals processing. SOPs will be stored digitally and centrally in an easily accessible location.

The Board has implemented focused training on the Appeals Modernization Act. In August 2018, KM introduced supplemental training in light of publication of the proposed rule. The Board will continue to conduct surveys and utilize the SMEs—both operational/administrative and legal—to ensure that training content and materials are kept up-to-date and remain accurate.

The Board is collaborating with VSOs to develop a joint training on the Appeals Modernization Act to assist service representatives and other external stakeholders in guiding Veterans through the new claims and appeals process. See Appendix A, IMS ID 5.3 for additional details regarding Board training plans and status.

VBA’s additional lines of business are also creating and mandating Appeals Modernization 101 overview for all their employees, to broaden awareness of the new law and future implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act as it applies to them.

P&F has not identified a need to hire new employees to carry out appeals modernization or to process appeals of decisions on legacy claims; therefore, P&F will not create any training for that purpose. However, P&F will re-train existing employees to carry out appeals modernization, which will become a part of the standardized training for future employees. The PMCs and Fiduciary Hubs have adequate staffing to resolve the remaining legacy appeals inventory. Concerning pension appeals, P&F anticipates completing its creation of training materials by October 2018 and delivering training to the PMCs by November 30, 2018. Concerning fiduciary appeals, P&F anticipates completing its creation of training materials by October 2018 and delivering training to the Fiduciary Hubs by December 31, 2018. P&F will provide Appeals Modernization 101 training to all PMC and Fiduciary Hub employees by August 31, 2018.

Insurance Service completed an introductory session reviewing the new claims and appeals process with all employees in May 2018. A series of training sessions will be conducted

addressing process flow, responding to Veterans and beneficiary inquiries, relevant regulations, adjustments to notification letters, Insurance Manual changes, use of updated appeals tracking tools and casework (working higher-level reviews and supplemental claims). These training sessions will build upon one another and will be deployed via sessions conducted in November and December of 2018, with additional targeted training for higher-level reviewers and those employees processing supplemental claims in January 2019. The training will be instructor-led and provided to approximately 41 employees. The training will consist of four 1-hour training sessions (and make-up sessions as needed) for employees who will be processing appeals under the new and legacy systems.

Education Service projects it will complete its training plan by September 30, 2018. Employees will attend training sessions covering the new process; changes to the current process; and the tracking and quality feedback loops. Employee training will begin once the training plan is complete. Reference Appendix B for details on training requirements for the Quality Training Specialist, Veterans Claims Examiners, and other Education Service employees.

As the VR&E program has a higher-level review process currently in place, it expects minimal training on the new higher-level review process. VR&E Service provided an overview training to our Field Advisory Change Committee (FACC) on April 26, 2018. Feedback from FACC was used to develop the in-person two-hour training session to all VR&E field officers. This training was recorded and added to TMS as a required training element for each VR&E field staff member with a required completion date of August 31, 2018. In addition to this training, VR&E has identified several other trainings, which will be assigned to VR&E field staff's training plan during the first weeks of September 2018.

LGY will administer training to RLC employees on the new process in advance of implementation. LGY will conduct supplemental training after implementation. The Training staff within LGY Service will begin working to identify training needs based on policy, procedures, and system changes. In early August 2018, LGY Training staff began working with LGY Policy staff to determine training needs and create a course outline. Following that analysis, LGY Training staff will begin the process of designing and developing training materials to be delivered virtually to the field. By the end of October, upon final approval of the training curriculum, LGY will establish TMS course item numbers for tracking purposes. By mid-January 2019, LGY Training staff will begin delivering the training to the field.

Further details relating to VBA's business lines training plans and timelines may be found in Appendix A, as well as in Appendix B.

VHA is presently working with OGC and the Board to create an appeals training package for new and existing employees to be delivered before modernized processes go into effect.

NCA has new training planned, and will also remain in contact with the Board and VBA to assess for cross-functional training material.

### **Section 3(b)(9) – Costs of Training**

*(9) Identification of the costs to the Department of Veterans Affairs of the training identified under paragraph (8) and any additional training staff and any additional training facilities that will be required to provide such training.*

VBA has no further updates to provide relating to the costs of retraining its existing employees. However, VBA is currently assessing the costs that may be related to the training of the additional 605 FTE, such as travel costs, and will provide further information with the next report. Nevertheless, VBA will not require additional training staff or any additional training facilities to provide such training.

As provided in previous reports and as explained above in 3(b)(1) regarding delineation of resources, the Board does not anticipate any additional costs related to training. VHA also does not anticipate significant training costs.

### **Section 3(b)(10) – Modifications to Information Technology Systems**

*(10) A description of the modifications to the information technology systems of the Administration and the Board that the Administration and the Board require to carry out the new appeals system, including cost estimates and a timeline for making the modifications.*

The IT implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act is a joint effort between VA O&IT's Enterprise Program Management Office (EPMO) and Digital Service. EPMO manages and maintains VA's core claims processing system, VBMS. Digital Service is leading the effort to develop and maintain Caseflow, which is replacing VACOLS, and is the primary IT system supporting the Board. These two systems engineering and development teams have been working very closely together, in conjunction with business teams from VBA and the Board, to develop a fully integrated solution to meet the needs of the Act.

Regarding VBMS, VA previously outlined a series of system enhancements that were needed to implement the Appeals Modernization Act, along with a high-level timeline for implementation. OI&T refined this timeline to ensure proper sequencing of activities and, importantly, scheduled work to maintain an even level of effort throughout the development in conformance with VA's agile development process to ensure proper cadence and predictability in delivery timelines. Twenty-one specific core functions were identified to be delivered in three development cycles—May, August, December. They were as follows:

#### May Release (4 core functions)

- Capability to support the processing of 3 million claims through the National Work Queue (NWQ)
- Capability to prevent users from modifying a contention generated by Caseflow
- Capability to route Appeals Modernization Act review claims through NWQ to the appropriate station (BSD290)
- Capability to define which claims belonging to a Veteran should route together to a single RO

#### August Release (6 core functions)

- Capability to capture the disposition of non-rating decisions for Appeals Modernization Act reviews
- Capability to add a contention classification to an Appeals Modernization Act contention generated by Caseflow
- Capability to set the status for an EP040 when the last tracked item is closed

- Capability to capture the disposition of a rating decision for an Appeals Modernization Act review
- Capability to set the capacity to route Appeals Modernization Act review claims through NWQ (BSD290)
- Capability to view that an informal conference request has been requested for an Appeals Modernization Act review

#### December Release (11 core functions)

- Capability to inform a claimant that a duty to assist error decision has been made on an Appeals Modernization Act claim
- Capability to capture favorable findings for all rating decisions
- Capability to associate more than one power of attorney for a Veteran
- Capability to capture and communicate a non-rating dependency decision under the new rules created by the Appeals Modernization Act
- Capability to create a non-rating deferral (CO UC502 06012017)
- Capability to prevent users from manually establishing an Appeals Modernization Act claim
- Capability to support claim recall and transfer for the processing of 3 million claims through the NWQ
- Capability to populate enclosures for Redesigned Automated Decision Letters
- Capability to select “consolidated with another contention” for rating and non-rating claims
- Capability to capture the disposition of a supplemental claim for an Appeals Modernization Act review
- Capability to deny a rated issue due to a lack of new and relevant evidence

Currently, VA is fully on track to meet all milestones and deliverables. All May deliverables were delivered on time, and all August deliverables are going through final testing now, with on-time delivery anticipated. It should be noted that these are final delivery projections—not projections of work-in-progress. Thus, while there are many functions for which December final delivery is projected, much of the work to deliver those functions has already taken place.

The August delivery is particularly important, as it enables VA to track and report on claims at the contention level for the first time. Claims may have many contentions, each of which can follow a different adjudication path under the Appeals Modernization Act. With the August enhancements, VA can now accommodate this requirement—a very significant augmentation of VBMS functionality that was identified early on as the most important technical challenge of the effort. VA’s delivery of this capability on time in August significantly bolsters OI&T’s confidence in on-time delivery of all necessary functions needed for Appeals Modernization Act implementation.

Our current plan is for all primary development of Appeals Modernization Act requirements within VBMS to be completed by the end of October so that November and December can be devoted entirely to user acceptance and performance testing prior to deployment. This provides OI&T with approximately a 6-week window to adjust if needed prior to the effective date of the statute.

The Board’s required IT modifications are being accomplished via work with Digital Service. Digital Service has directed its focus for calendar year 2018 towards building necessary functionality to ensure that Caseflow will be minimally ready for the Appeals Modernization Act. Digital Service recognizes that, in order to implement the law, Caseflow must provide

functionality that permits the Board and VA to accomplish necessary processing tasks. To achieve this, Digital Service has focused its development of Caseflow on three primary pieces of processing functionality: Caseflow Intake; Caseflow Queue; and Caseflow Hearing Schedule. Additionally, Digital Service has developed a Veteran-facing tool to provide Veterans with insight into the new process.

Caseflow Queue has been in the hands of attorneys at the Board since February and in the hands of Veterans Law Judges since May. In August, Caseflow will be testing VSO access to Caseflow Queue. Testing with Board administrative support staff will take place in September, enabling the Board to process post-RAMP appeals in October. By the end of the year, all users who need access to Caseflow to complete Appeals Modernization Act appeals will have that access.

Caseflow Intake, in addition to continuing to support RAMP, is validating integrations with VBMS and Benefits Gateway Services using cases from BEAAM research program. Work is being completed to allow users to connect VBMS contentions with appeal issues and to edit contentions post-Intake without severing the tracking connections required by the law. By December, Intake will expand to include non-compensation lines of business.

At the beginning of August, Caseflow released Phase 1 of Caseflow Hearing Schedule, which will assign hearing slots to ROs, and assign Veterans Law Judges to those hearing slots. Digital Service is developing additional functionality to schedule Veterans in hearing slots and hearing locations, which will be released in January 2019.

## Caseflow Product



y indicated; all dates and work subject to change based on evolving VA policies and processes.

### **Section 3(b)(11) – Estimate of Office Space by Phase**

*(11) An estimate of the office space the Administration and the Board will require during each of the periods described in paragraph (2), including—*

- (A) an estimate of the amount of time the Administration and the Board will require to acquire any additional office space to carry out processing of appeals of decisions on legacy claims and processing of appeals under the new appeals system;*
- (B) a comparison of the estimate under subparagraph (A) and the historical average time required by the Administration and the Board to acquire new office space; and*
- (C) a plan for using telework to accommodate staff exceeding available office space, including how the Administration and the Board will provide training and oversight with respect to such teleworking.*

In order to meet the space demand anticipated as a result of hiring 605 additional FTE in FY 2019, VBA identified adequate space available at the St. Petersburg RO and Seattle (SeaTac) office location to accommodate training and workspace for new employees. VBA determined these office spaces are sufficient to accommodate the initial hiring of supervisors beginning in FY 2019, as noted in the May 2018 update. VBA anticipates that these office spaces will be available and ready to accommodate onboarding employees no later than September 2018.

As of June 2018, VBA has not identified any risk factors with either the SeaTac facility, as this location is currently being used to conduct VBA business, or the St Petersburg location, as the unoccupied building space is enough to accommodate all employees. VBA notes that the current space options are adequate to accommodate an early onboarding of the supervisory cadre as outlined in the hiring plan. In identifying available space, VBA worked to maximize desk sharing for teleworking employees in VBA-owned and leased locations.

## SeaTac Space Comparison (1:1 and 2:1 DRAS Telework Ratios)

Overall Available Space						
	Cubicles	Offices	Total	Conference Room	Training Room	Other Offices
2nd Floor	88	9	97		3	1
3rd Floor	120	11	131			2
4th Floor	121	9	130			
5th Floor	6	6	12	1		6
<b>Total Seats Available</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>

SeaTac 2:1 Ratio			
	Cubicles	Offices	Total
Seats Available	335	35	370
+ 2:1 Ratio for DRAS Teleworkers	107	9	116
<b>Total Seats Available</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>486</b>

SeaTac 1:1 Ratio			
	Cubicles	Offices	Total
DRAS Employees	235	22	257
Directors Office	2	3	5
SSD		2	2
HR		2	2
IT	4	1	5
Education	2		2
VHA	2		2
<b>Total Seats Needed</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>275</b>

	Cubicles	Offices	Total
<b>Seats Available</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>95</b>

	Cubicles	Offices	Total
<b>Seats Available</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>211</b>

Individual RO management and AMO currently provide and manage a robust telework program and will continue established procedures and oversight with current and newly-hired employees when telework eligibility criteria are met.

The Board does not plan to acquire additional office space to process legacy and non-legacy claims (i.e., to accommodate 1,050 FTE). The Board's robust telework program has resulted in the Board maintaining its physical footprint despite almost doubling in FTE over the last 5 years. The use of shared office space for Board personnel who work remotely 50 percent or more of the time, the conversion of underutilized space to workspace, the use of Memoranda of Understanding to secure additional space within the building, and a flexible telework program all work to ensure that the Board does not require additional office space to carry out the processing of legacy and non-legacy appeals. See Appendix A, IMS ID 4.1.

VHA is working with internal stakeholders to determine additional space requirements and cost estimates. VHA does not anticipate a space shortage, but has a robust telework and virtual work program that could meet any additional demand, if needed.

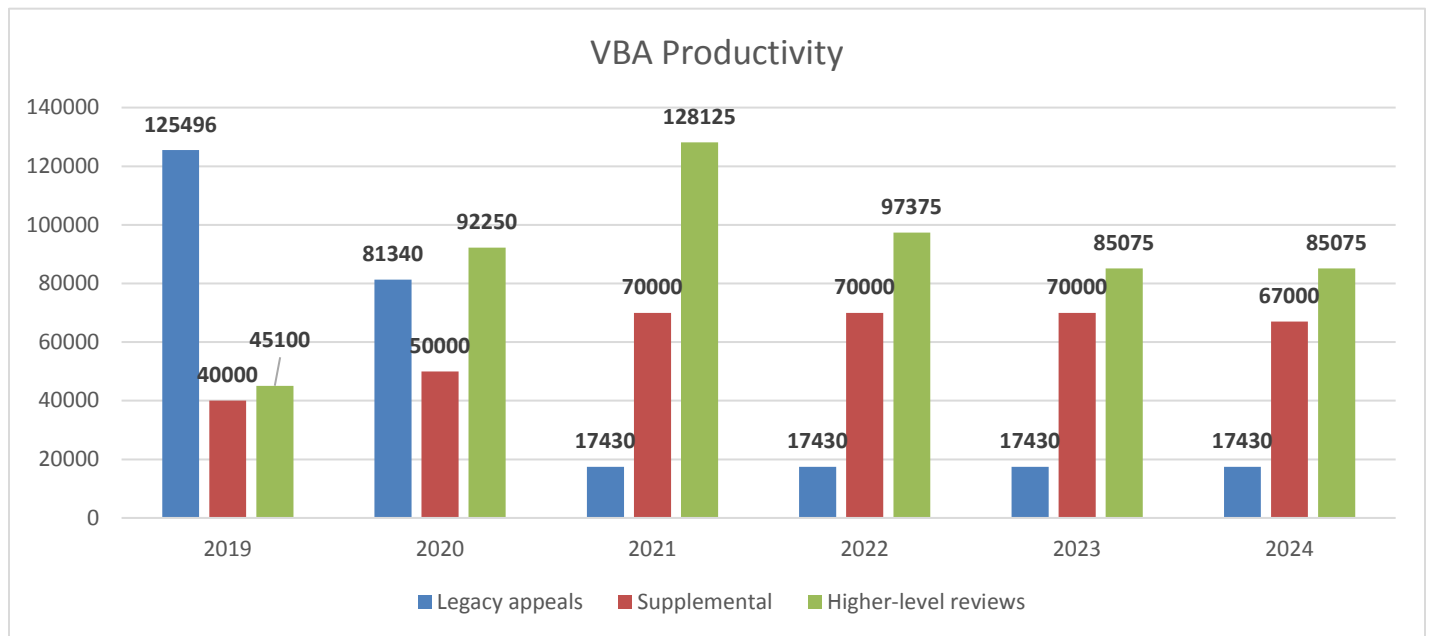


### **Section 3(b)(12) – Projections for the Productivity of Individual Employees**

*(12) Projections for the productivity of individual employees at the Administration and the Board in carrying out tasks relating to the processing of appeals of decisions on legacy claims and appeals under the new appeals system, taking into account the experience level of new employees and the enhanced notice requirements under section 5104(b) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 2(e).*

For VBA, the compensation and pension legacy appeals production projections are measured by completions per FTE/FY rate. Based on 271,081 completed actions in FY 2017, the estimated legacy productivity per FTE is 181 completions, which includes 83 resolutions. The estimated productivity per FTE under the new process is 224 decisions in the Higher-Level Review Lane and 182 decisions in the Supplemental Claim Lane. VBA continues to review RAMP data to identify trends that suggest changes would be appropriate to the productivity measures.

The below chart provides an estimated number of completions from FY 2019 through FY 2024 based on current baseline modeling.



It should be noted that modeling includes a variety of factors that could affect the current forecast. The variable assumptions involved in forecasting include opt-in rate, refile rate, Board remand rate, and allocation of staffing. Any trends identified in these assumptions that lead to changes in the model can affect the current forecast.

Through the end of the third quarter of FY 2018, the Board dispatched 61,662 decisions to Veterans and claimants with a staffing level of 909 cumulative (average) FTE, which represents approximately 90.5 decisions per FTE on an annual basis. In terms of decisions signed by VLJs through the end of the third quarter, the Board signed 61,989 decisions, which is equivalent to

91 decisions per FTE annually. The current performance standard is 79 decisions per FTE. This projection took into consideration additional staff as well as the Board's demonstrated decision output trends. This production projection assumed an annual average of 144 decisions per decision writing attorney with consideration of leave and holidays.

Board productivity has remained robust and steady. As of July 30, 2018, 68,386 Board decisions had been dispatched to Veterans in FY 2018, as compared to 38,851 in FY 2017—an increase of 29,535 decisions. The Board's annual production goal for FY 2018 is set at 81,033 decisions, an increase of approximately 28,000 decisions above FY 2017, and represents a historic high in decision output.

P&F has begun to review the productivity of the fiduciary hubs as they process legacy fiduciary appeals, starting in April, as noted in Section 3(a)(1), and will use that data to project employee productivity when they begin processing higher-level reviews and supplemental claims in February 2019.

Insurance Service does not anticipate an impact to overall employee productivity due to the low volume of appellate work and the plan to have the same employees who process appeals currently transition to the new appeals process. Insurance Service has performance standards in place to review appeals for quality and timeliness. VA Insurance Service uses daily production reports to track the work products that Insurance employees generate and performance review is conducted using these reports. This current resource will be utilized when tracking quality and timeliness under the new appeals process. Based on the small number of appeals that Insurance Service receives and the fact that there is currently an adequate number of staff members who work on appeals, the impact on productivity under the new appeals and claims framework is expected to be minimal. Accounting for the improved notice requirements, Insurance Service is in the process of establishing a new letter database to streamline the letter modification process, but it will not be in place prior to February 2019. Due to the small number of insurance letters affected by the new statutory notice requirements, Insurance Service has put an alternate plan in place to process the impacted notification letters using a template to incorporate in its existing letter generation process. This interim solution may have a short-term, negative impact on employee productivity until that time as Insurance Service deploys its new letter creation system. However, as noted, the low volume of appellate work suggests that overall employee production will not be adversely impacted. To ensure this is the case, the Insurance Service integrated project team will continue to monitor for impacts to productivity following deployment of the new appeals legislation, and adjust resources accordingly.

Education Service has identified the use of end products for each step of the higher-level review and supplemental claims process. Regional processing offices will use employee productivity reports to calculate individual employee production. Education Service expects to have this completed by the end of the third quarter FY 2018. Education Service will manage higher-level review and supplemental claim workload and metrics using The Imagining Management System (TIMS) and Caseflow. Education Service is creating a national performance standard to improve employee production. Education Service expects the new standard to go into effect at the beginning of FY 2019. Additional individual performance measurements will need to be evaluated when the Benefits Delivery Network is decommissioned.

As noted, administrative reviews are conducted by VR&E supervisory personnel at VBA ROs, and in a few specific circumstances (e.g. entitlement reviews), by the Director of VR&E Service. VR&E Service plans to maintain as much of its current system as possible, to include estimated

timelines of 90 days to complete higher-level reviews. Concerning supplemental claims, VR&E policy will be to complete reviews at the RO level within 125 days when new and relevant evidence is submitted. Currently, there are 263 pending legacy appeals for VR&E, which include 86 administrative reviews in FY 2017. Thus, it is anticipated that there would be no substantial impact for VR&E production estimates in the new process.

LGY's pending legacy appeals will be reviewed by current and experienced LGY staff, in the Atlanta RLC. The Atlanta RLC is currently working legacy appeals. Productivity will be measured in accordance with existing performance standards and monitored using WebLGY. WebLGY is LGY's system of record used to capture data and work-products. To ensure timely and responsive decisions within LGY's loan processing framework, higher-level reviews and supplemental claims will be processed by RLC Team Leads and VACO Program Analysts. Employee productivity will be measured and monitored using WebLGY and documented at mid-year and on an annual basis as outlined by accepted performance standards.

VHA is working with OGC, the Board, and VBA to determine new system requirements and metrics, as well as processes to continue to address the legacy inventory. Once the revised processes and corresponding metrics have been developed, VHA can more accurately project productivity.

NCA will use data from the new system to develop productivity projections for processing appeals, and endeavor to attain VA enterprise-wide goals.

### **Section 3(b)(13) – Outreach Plan**

*(13) An outline of the outreach the Secretary expects to conduct to inform veterans, families of veterans, survivors of veterans, veterans service organizations, military service organizations, congressional caseworkers, advocates for veterans, and such other stakeholders as the Secretary considers appropriate about the new appeals system, including—*

- (A) a description of the resources required to conduct such outreach; and*
- (B) timelines for conducting such outreach.*

VA has increased the frequency and breadth in which it engages with Veterans, stakeholders and Veteran advocates. Since the last report, VA has hosted a Facebook Live event, streaming live video with the AMO Director to address frequently asked questions about Appeals Modernization and to encourage Veterans to participate in RAMP. Additionally, VA has maintained its regular engagement cadence with VSOs and congressional members to provide the latest developments related to the implementation of appeals modernization and metrics related to RAMP case processing.

In August 2018, VA initiated a robust communications effort to mark one year since enactment of the Appeals Modernization Act. To celebrate this historic legislation, senior VA officials will interview with several television and radio stations nationwide as part of a Satellite Media Tour and Media Roundtable to discuss Appeals Modernization with the potential to reach over one million American citizens. VA will also use the GovDelivery platform to send e-mail messages to Veterans highlighting the major milestones of this initiative and to encourage further participation in current and upcoming programs related to the new claims appeals process as VA prepares for full implementation of the law in February 2019.

Throughout this reporting phase, communication and outreach initiatives across VA continue to focus on providing Veterans, Veteran advocates, and VA employees with a better understanding of appeals modernization and RAMP.

Throughout the third quarter of FY 2018, VA continued to expand its direct outreach at local ROs. Throughout late May and early June, VA staff provided information to VA outreach personnel, VSOs, and local congressional staff at the Little Rock and Winston-Salem ROs. VA provided similar information in July and August to other ROs including the Philadelphia, Nashville, Montgomery, Cleveland, and Detroit ROs.

In addition to direct local outreach, VA continues to search for opportunities to provide information to Veterans groups and advocates at diverse events at the state and national level, such as the Arkansas County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) RAMP VSO Training and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Training Conference and Business Meeting in Reno, Nevada. VA anticipates further coordinated outreach events with the Georgia State Department of Veterans Affairs (SDVA); Las Vegas CVSO Conference; Evansville, Indiana, Veteran Advocacy Meeting with congressional stakeholders; and the National American Legion Convention in Minneapolis.

VA also sustains scheduled monthly meetings and briefings at the national level to ensure that VSOs, congressional stakeholders, and other Veteran advocates are fully informed on how VA is implementing RAMP and appeals modernization. These meetings include attendance at congressional roundtable events and VA's regularly scheduled VSO meetings.

Since the last report, VA has expanded the content of online platforms to provide information on appeals modernization and RAMP. This information, available through the VA.gov website, now includes new content to assist Veterans who desire to opt-in to RAMP. Statistics gathered from November 2, 2017, to May 31, 2018, indicate that this page has been viewed a total of 155,461 times. RAMP opt-in letters have been available for review on the page since April 5, 2018.

As part of its web presence, VA expanded its use of social media platforms by creating Appeals Modernization Act and RAMP-specific content on Facebook and Twitter. Among the activities conducted on social media, VA used the internet to live broadcast, through Facebook, an event on RAMP. Referred to as a "Facebook Live" event, this live streaming broadcast took place on May 18, 2018. During the 15-minute live broadcast, VA leadership addressed current issues with the appeals process and highlighted the benefits of the Appeals Modernization Act. In addition, a portion of the interview focused on answering general questions that Veterans had about RAMP or appeals modernization. This question and answer period addressed confusion surrounding decision wait times, opt-in eligibility, improvement on decision notices, and the effect of the February 2019 effective date on appeals currently processed under RAMP. Following the "Facebook Live" event, VA staff were available to answer questions from viewers, resulting in over 1,000 comments. By June 27, 2018, the RAMP "Facebook Live" had been viewed over 33,000 times.

VA's efforts to reach Veterans also encompassed mailing related correspondence and RAMP invitations via e-mails and through traditional paper mail. Through these media, VA sent approximately 165,000 letters and 210,000 e-mails to Veterans from November 2017 through May 2018.

In addition to direct communication and web presence, VA has developed a suite of outreach products designed to assist and inform Veterans. The products include posters, brochures, fact

sheets, and an informational video on RAMP and appeals modernization. These products were distributed to VAROs for display in public contact areas and to the National Call Center employees, who may provide information on RAMP to interested callers. Additionally, the materials and corresponding information video have been uploaded to VA's external website at: <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp>.

As addressed in the previous report and in Section 3(a)(2), above, the Board solicited and obtained comprehensive change management support to identify and mitigate the risk associated with moving from the legacy appeals system to the appeals system defined by the Appeals Modernization Act. The Board has aligned, synchronized, and integrated the change management strategy with all activities defined in the Board's Appeals Modernization Act implementation project plan, and is synchronizing its change management efforts with all VA administrations. This will ensure the Board's change management needs are consistent and coordinated across the enterprise. Details regarding the change management activities being undertaken and timelines and milestones required to implement this plan are included in Section 5 of the IMS in Appendix A.

In addition to VBA's outreach events and communication activities described above, VBA business lines have taken the following actions related specifically to their programs.

P&F plans to ensure the scripts used by the Pension Call Centers appropriately address the new claims and appeals system. P&F will also update its Fiduciary Program's guidebook for fiduciaries, its external website, and its Knowledge Management System before January 2019.

VA Insurance Service has joined VA enterprise-wide communication efforts regarding outreach. In addition, during the period of May 29, 2018, to May 31, 2018, initial overview training about the Appeals Modernization Act was provided in half hour modules during mandatory Employee Engagement sessions conducted for all Insurance Center employees. Insurance Service will continue to update employees as to implementation plans for the Appeals Modernization Act at quarterly engagement sessions to provide more in-depth information to staff. In addition, Insurance will conduct targeted training with its call center employees and provide a script for them to answer questions pertaining to the new appeals and claims processes. Insurance Service expects to deliver the script and training for these employees in November 2018.

Education Service is building a communication and outreach plan to ensure Veterans and beneficiaries who apply for VA Education Benefits are aware of their rights in the event they disagree with a VA decision. Education Service is updating call center scripts so beneficiaries who contact the call center will get the most current and accurate information. Information will be posted to the [Post 9/11 GI Bill Facebook page](#). All Education Service decision letters will also include the required information about the new process. No additional outreach and communication efforts are planned at this time.

VR&E Service is actively coordinating messaging and outreach activities across VA. VR&E Service has provided links to information VA has released on the new appeals process on VR&E-specific intranet and Internet sites to increase awareness. In addition, VR&E Service is developing a fact sheet on the new appeals process and scheduling additional outreach activities. This enterprise-wide approach provides Veterans and other external stakeholders with a consistent message and understanding of how the new system works.

Internally, LGY will collaborate with its communications group to create an outreach plan that will permit Veterans/Claimants and other program participants the opportunity to communicate

directly with LGY for clarification regarding the new claims process. The anticipated timeline for completion of the final communications and outreach plan is October 1, 2018. To further increase awareness, LGY will post information on LGY's intranet and internet sites. Also, LGY will mail letters to all Veterans/Claimants with a pending appeal beginning in October 2018, to inform them of the upcoming changes. In February 2019, LGY will mail the Veterans the updated SOC and Supplemental Statement of the Case (SSOC) letters, which include the options for higher-level review, supplemental claim, or direct appeal.

NCA will utilize VA enterprise-wide resource materials for review for NCA outreach activities.

Appendix C provides a more detailed timeline of outreach/communication activities occurring throughout the implementation period.

### **Section 3(b)(14) – Timeline for Policy Updates**

*(14) Timelines for updating any policy guidance, Internet websites, and official forms that may be necessary to carry out the new appeals system, including—*

- (A) identification of which offices and entities will be involved in efforts relating to such updating; and*
- (B) historical information about how long similar update efforts have taken.*

#### **Policy Guidance**

As previously noted in the May 2018 report, VBA is conducting a test program, known as RAMP, to gather data and test certain facets of the new law with regard to compensation benefit claims. Since the start of the program, VBA has received and reviewed feedback from external stakeholders and Veterans. VBA continues to use that feedback to adjust policy guidance for RAMP and for full implementation of the new law in February 2019.

In May 2018, AMO, along with Compensation Service, initiated review of the current, existing procedural guidance as outlined in the M21-1, Adjudication Procedures Manual, in order to assess all of the appeals and claims processing and adjudication procedures affected by the new appeals statute. Subject matter experts have been assigned to and are actively drafting required manual updates with a completion goal of October 2018. AMO, through review of recent procedural changes within RAMP, was able to identify and address some additional gaps in procedures for full implementation centered around the higher-level review process, such as:

- Scheduling and coordination of informal conferences
- Procedures for switching between different lanes within the 1-year review period
- Intake of lane selections and procedures for notifying the claimant of VA's receipt

As of mid-June 2018, all Manual Editors are reviewing the M21-1 for possible revisions and will coordinate with Compensation Service Training staff on proposed changes in guidance. As drafting continues, AMO and Compensation Service will continue to work with VA IT partners to ensure developed system requirements align with the procedures for full implementation. In addition, continued coordination with the Compensation Service Training staff is taking place to support training efforts for new hires and existing employees at all 56 ROs and future DROCs. An overall timeline for updating the guidance in M21-1, the Adjudication Procedures Manual, is provided below and is addressed within the IMS in greater detail.

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Manual Guidance Tasks</b>
May 2018 to October 2018	Development of updates for manual procedures
November 2018	Internal VA Concurrence
December 2018 to January 2019	Publication of manual updates on internal and external platforms (i.e. websites)
February 2019	Official Release

As the Board is modernizing its systems at the same time that it is implementing Appeals Modernization, policy changes will occur in sync with technology updates. See Appendix A, IMS ID 1.2. New technology, as well as the Board's research program, BEAAM, has assisted in identifying areas that will need to have revised SOPs. For example, administrative staff trainings on the Caseflow Intake application have included an explanation of the legal requirement that NODs under the Appeals Modernization Act must include the Veteran's choice of review option. SOPs created under the BEAAM research program and in preparation for the Board's implementation of RAMP inform permanent SOP updates required for full implementation.

In July 2018, a final rule amending the VA Fiduciary Program regulations was published by the Federal Register. See Fiduciary Activities, 83 Fed. Reg. 32,716 (July 13, 2018) (to be codified at 38 C.F.R. Parts 3 and 13). After publication of the Appeals Modernization Act regulations, P&F will make necessary amendments to Fiduciary Program regulations to ensure compliance. P&F is also working on a rulemaking (possibly an interim final rule) to customize the appeals reform regulations for fiduciary appeals, so it can be published in the Federal Register as soon the regulations for the Appeals Modernization Act are finalized. Meanwhile, P&F will issue procedural guidance as needed to resolve legacy appeals, higher-level review, and supplemental claim issues. P&F anticipates finalizing this procedural guidance by December 31, 2018.

VA Insurance Service Manual Updates were completed in May of 2018 in draft form and were finalized in July 2018. The revised notification letters are projected to be completed by August 31, 2018. SOPs are expected to be completed by December 3, 2018.

Based on historical timelines, Education Service projects that all policy and procedure updates should be ready for publication no later than September 30, 2018. The new procedures will not be officially published until the law goes into effect.

VR&E Service has completed process flow charts for both the higher-level and supplemental claim reviews (both are attached for review). These flowcharts provide a high-level overview of the process and provide the outline for the greater detail required for publication in the VR&E procedural manual, M28R.

LGY's new appeals policy is in concurrence with management. LGY policy staff will collaborate with LGY Training and Program Management and Data Integration staff to identify next steps on how to best implement the new process. Upon final approval of the policy, the websites and forms will be updated accordingly. The website and form updates will occur no later than January 2019. Historically, updates to the websites for changes in policy occur within 1 week of the policy approval. For appeals modernization, website updates will be held until the end of January 2019 to coincide with the implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act.

The VHA Office of Regulatory and Administrative Affairs (ORAA) is working with affected VHA program offices, the Board, and the Office of General Counsel to revise internal policies and directives as needed. VHA anticipates having Appeals Modernization Act-compliant policies and processes in place by February 2019.

### Forms

As noted in VA's May 2018 update to this report, VA created enterprise-wide standard forms for the three new decision review lanes and submitted a request for these new information collections under the Paperwork Reduction Act along with the proposed rule to implement the Appeals Modernization Act. The three new forms associated with the information collections have been completed and are available for public viewing at regulations.gov.

VA is coordinating updates to IT systems to support dissemination and use of all new forms, including those that do not contain information collections under the Paperwork Reduction Act. The BEAAM research program included user testing of several VA forms, including those that inform Veterans of their review or appeal rights following a VA decision. VA will revise draft forms based on user research findings. VA anticipates that the new forms will be available for use by claimants in line with the effective date of the new law in February 2019. VA will coordinate the timing of official publication of the final forms with the publication date of the final regulations.

The Board has consolidated its forms and regulations schedule in the IMS to more accurately reflect that the rulemaking and forms package were submitted together to OMB. See IMS Section 1.1. These regulations and forms have been published together in the Federal Register.

P&F is currently working on updating its pension claim form for use as a supplemental claim form as well, but does not anticipate finalizing those updates prior to February 2019. Therefore, P&F will utilize the standardized supplemental claim form on February 14, 2019, for pension supplemental claims and switch to its own form once it is finalized.

### Internet Sites

As previously noted, VA has developed a robust internet presence, that includes an appeals modernization web page that is available on its outward facing website, at <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp>. VA uses this site to inform Veterans about VA's implementation progress and to provide information about appeals modernization. VA regularly updates this site as new information and content becomes available. Recent updates include publishing the following products:

- RAMP motion graphic video
- RAMP fact sheet
- RAMP infographic
- RAMP poster
- RAMP brochure
- Combined RAMP opt-in letter and form into a single PDF for convenience
- Comprehensive Plan for Processing Legacy Appeals Implementing the Modernized Appeals System report for May 2018



As of May 31, 2018, this site has been viewed over 155,000 times.

Additionally, the appeals status tracker on Vets.gov is being provided as an integral tool for Veterans to use in the new system. This tracker will assist Veterans and their representatives in making important decisions about benefits claims. Metrics for the Vets.gov Appeals Status tool include:

- Since launch, 33,167 unique Veterans have accessed information about their appeals on Vets.gov.
- In June 2018, 5 percent of Veterans with pending appeals used Vets.gov.
- The number of monthly active users (Veterans who have accessed information in a given month) has grown each month the tool has been live.
  - 7,321 in March (partial month)
  - 13,192 in April
  - 14,978 in May
  - 18,466 in June
- Monthly active users as a share of the total number of Veterans with pending appeals has similarly grown each month.
  - 1.9 percent in March
  - 3.4 percent in April
  - 4.0 percent in May
  - 5.1 percent in June

The Board is updating its external website, [www.bva.va.gov](http://www.bva.va.gov), which will contain weekly metrics, the current docket date, information about RAMP, and link to the appeals status tracker on Vets.gov.

Education Service expects to have updates to policies, procedures, and websites on the new process published to the Education Service inter/intranet sites when the law is fully implemented. These functions are completed by existing Education Service staff.

VR&E Service has updated its inter/intranet sites by adding links on the new appeals process. VR&E Service expects to have all policy and procedural updates; updates to any forms or letters; and information on the new process published to the VR&E inter/intranet sites completed and published by December 2018. These functions are completed by existing VR&E Service staff and can be completed in a matter of weeks.

### **Section 3(b)(15) – Timeline for Promulgating Regulations**

*(15) A timeline, including interim milestones, for promulgating such regulations as may be necessary to carry out the new appeals system and a comparison with historical averages for time required to promulgate regulations of similar complexity and scope.*

VA has revised its timeline in the IMS for the promulgation of regulations and forms. The regulations were published in the Federal Register on August 10, 2018 (see Appendix A, IMS ID 1.1).

VBA and the Board have already created a work plan for logging and responding to public comments and have drafted responses to some anticipated public comments. Therefore, VA may not require the total 60 days allotted to draft a final rule following the public comment period.

VHA has initiated an Appeals Modernization Act-related rulemaking project that will make changes needed to resolve inconsistencies between existing VHA regulations and Appeals Modernization Act requirements and processes. VHA intends to publish this rulemaking in time to execute in February 2019. However, additional time may be required to update guidance following publication of final regulations.

### **Section 3(b)(16) – Outline of “Opt-In” Circumstances**

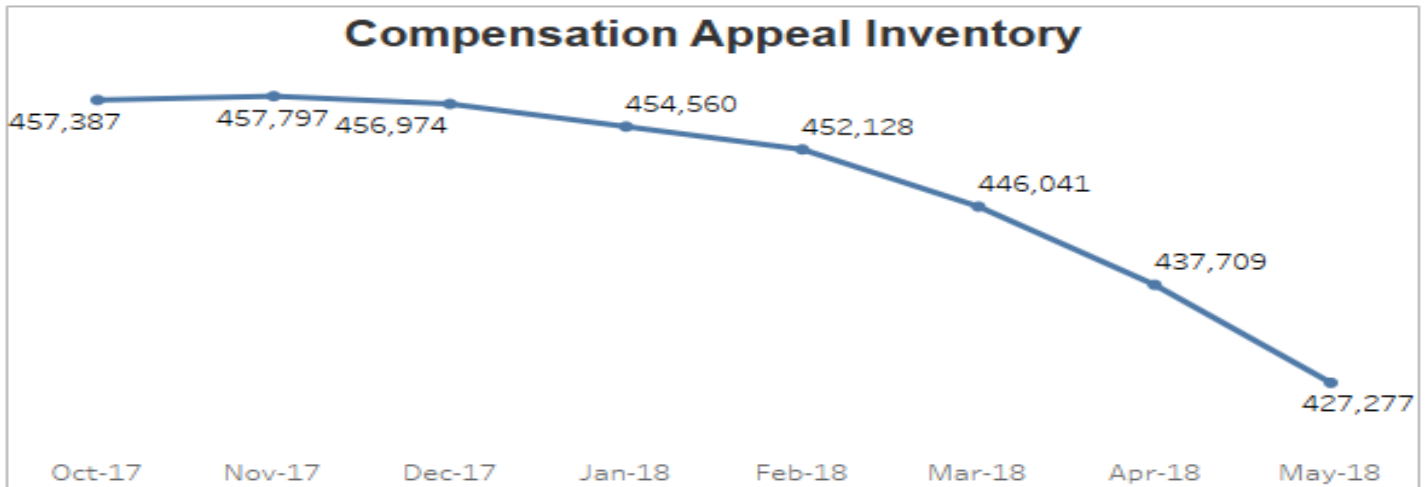
*(16) An outline of the circumstances under which claimants with pending appeals of decisions on legacy claims would be authorized to have their appeals reviewed under the new appeals system.*

Section 2 of the Appeals Modernization Act provides two opportunities for Veterans who would otherwise have an appeal in the legacy process to choose to participate in the new system instead. Additionally, section 4 of the Appeals Modernization Act establishes the authority for RAMP and BEAAM, which are discussed in Section 4 of this report. The February 2018 Update described the circumstances under which claimants with pending appeals of decisions on legacy claims would be authorized to have their appeals reviewed under the new appeals system. The May 2018 Update briefly described BEAAM, for which further information is provided in Section 4 of this report. VA has no further substantive update to provide since May 2018.

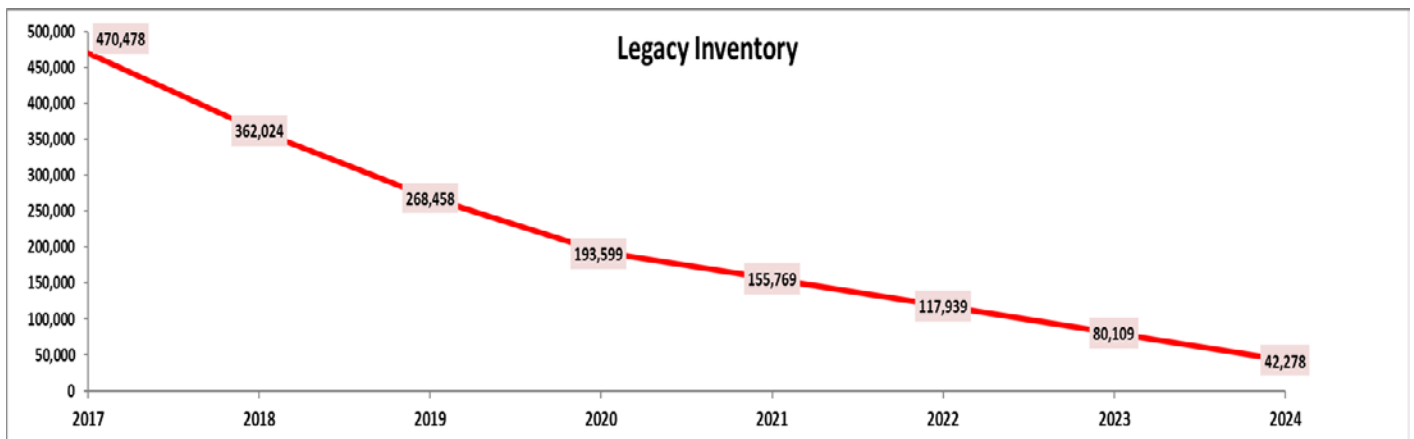
### **Section 3(b)(17) – Key Goals & Milestones for Reducing Legacy Appeals**

*(17) A delineation of the key goals and milestones for reducing the number of pending appeals that are not processed under the new appeals system, including the expected number of appeals, remands, and hearing requests at the Administration and the Board each year, beginning with the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, until there are no longer any appeals pending before the Administration or the Board for a decision on a legacy claim.*

RAMP provides VBA the opportunity to test and validate assumptions and processes for implementation. RAMP also provides the opportunity to reduce the legacy inventory quicker than production alone. The opt-in rate for RAMP supports the reduction of the legacy appeals inventory by at least one appeal per claimant and in some cases multiple appeals through one RAMP opt-in. Legacy appeals processing and the transition of 24,140 legacy appeals to RAMP through May 31, 2018, accounts for the demonstrated reduction in FY 2018 pending legacy compensation appeals as noted in the graphs below.



Utilizing RAMP, VA will be able to reduce legacy inventory significantly over the next 5 years. Much of the pending legacy workload in VBA beyond FYs 2020-2021 is limited to the receipt of remands from the Board. The chart below represents the take-down goals for the legacy inventory based on current baseline modeling and includes VBA and Board inventories combined.



After February 2019, there is the statutory opt-in offering a chance for claimants with a legacy appeal to elect the new claims process when they receive a decision in the form of an SOC or SSOC. For modeling purposes, VA is forecasting an additional 17,000 opt-in receipts for the years 2019 through 2021. As actual data are available after February 2019, these projections will be adjusted as necessary.

The May 2018 update described the historical data regarding the legacy appeals process. It also included a description of the forecast model. The Board will continue to verify and validate its model to ensure the accuracy of its outputs and its utility in VA's appeals modernization forecasting.

As stated above, in order to provide realistic goals and milestones for reducing legacy appeals, data must be gathered regarding Veterans' preferences in the new system. This is occurring via the Section 4 test programs. Once the data are available from these test programs, VA can

make any necessary adjustments to processes, procedures, or training to adequately account for observations and trends. Additionally, this research will assist in allowing VA to construct trend models and tests that account for uncertainty.

Implementation of RAMP at the Board will assist the Board in identifying and addressing potential issues relating to implementation of the new framework, to include the testing of Caseflow. Overall, the Board's Implementation of RAMP is intended to reduce risk by incrementally rolling out processes and technology in the months leading up to February 14, 2019, the effective date of the new law.

On April 30, 2018, there were 317 legacy fiduciary appeals and by May 31, 2018, that number was reduced to 298 legacy fiduciary appeals pending. P&F anticipates reducing its legacy appeals inventory by at least 150 appeals each quarter, starting June 1, 2018. P&F expects to complete all of the legacy fiduciary appeals that are currently pending prior to February 14, 2019. Thereafter, legacy fiduciary appeals will be prioritized for processing until they are all resolved.

Insurance Service will complete processing of legacy appeals in its jurisdiction by the third quarter of 2018. In the interim, VA Insurance Service will process the current 75 legacy appeals under the current procedures and will use VACOLS for monitoring. If an appellant returns a Form 9 or the Board remands an appeal to Insurance Service, the legacy appeals will not be resolved until a final decision is reached or the appellant withdraws the appeal. As part of the work team's efforts, Insurance Service has centralized control of its legacy appeals inventory with a single responsible management official and support staff. This centralized control entails creating and distributing monthly legacy appeal workload reports to Insurance employees responsible for processing appeals, a practice that was implemented in June 2018. Further, in June 2018, Insurance Service finished a complete review of each existing legacy appeal to ensure that all appeals are properly controlled and distributed to the appropriate employee for completion. The Insurance appeals work team is continuing to prioritize and control the legacy appeal inventory to ensure resolution of these cases to the extent possible prior to implementing the new appeals statute. With this additional control of the legacy appeals inventory, Insurance Service expects to be able to report significant reduction in outstanding legacy appeals in the coming months. Importantly, included on this work team are six experienced Senior Veterans Claims Examiners who are focusing on resolving outstanding legacy appeals.

As of May 31, 2018, Education Service had 1,062 legacy appeals pending in various stages of the appeals process under its jurisdiction. Of these 1,062 appeals, only 239 were actionable. These actionable appeals are distributed among the three regional processing offices based on original jurisdiction and capacity. Education Service began issuing monthly legacy appeal workload reports to the regional processing offices, which in turn provide Education Service with monthly status updates on their pending legacy appeals. By providing this level of oversight, Education Service has reduced the pending inventory of its actionable legacy appeals from 643 as of October 1, 2017 to 239 as of May 31, 2018. Education Service anticipates finalizing the review of its remaining pending actionable legacy appeals no later than 60 days after implementation of the new process. If the number of legacy appeals grows, Education Service will allocate additional resources to ensure this timeline is met.

On February 28, 2018, VR&E Service contacted each RO with a pending legacy appeal and requested an update and/or resolution of the legacy appeals identified in VACOLS as of January 9, 2018. VR&E Service requested that each RO review the information for accuracy; update VACOLS as needed; and attempt to resolve the legacy appeals that could be resolved

at the RO level so these appeals would not, if possible, have to advance to the Board. VR&E Service requested, and received, responses from each identified RO in March 2018. There were 272 pending legacy appeals at the time. VR&E Service reviewed those responses, and on May 29, 2018, provided follow-up instructions as needed to ensure all appropriate action is taken on these legacy appeals, to include priority be given to the oldest legacy appeals. The May 2018 guidance included instructions to certify all appeals in which VR&E has received a VA Form 9, as appropriate. VR&E Service received feedback on this process from each RO in mid-June 2018, which showed a decrease in the legacy appeals to 263. VR&E requested an updated list of legacy appeals currently in VACOLS for review and development of appropriate next steps. It is anticipated that this will further reduce VR&E's legacy appeals and ensure timely processing of requests.

As of May 31, 2018, LGY had 279 legacy appeals pending in various stages of the appeals process. Of these, only 60 were actionable appeals under its jurisdiction. The Atlanta RLC currently processes all LGY legacy appeals. By centralizing the processing in one office, LGY can ensure proper attention is given to processing its legacy appeals. This has resulted in the reduction of the pending inventory of actionable appeals in its jurisdiction by half from 127 as of October 1, 2017, to 60 as of May 31, 2018. The remaining legacy appeals have been categorized. Any legacy appeal that requires a more extensive review will automatically be processed through a "fast lane" track for a second level decision. LGY will contact the Veteran/Claimant and provide available options, if the legacy appeal that cannot be resolved at the local level. LGY expects to complete processing most of its actionable pending legacy appeals in August 2018. If necessary, overtime will be utilized to assist with the completion of the reviews.

### **Section 3(b)(18) – Risk Factors**

*(18) A description of each risk factor associated with each element of the plan and a contingency plan to minimize each such risk.*

The Department has identified the following risks and mitigation strategies:

#### **1. Resource Requirements (Section 3(b)(1))**

Risk: The new process is designed to provide Veterans choice with multiple options instead of one under the legacy process. Therefore, without the aid of historical and empirical data to validate VA's forecast assumptions regarding Veterans' behavior in the new process, there is a risk that VA has either understated or overstated future workloads and its resources requirements in its forecasting model.

Mitigation: Since the beginning of FY 2018, VA has vastly improved its forecasting model. Furthermore, VBA is continuing to monitor and assess any changes in RAMP data, to include assessments on RAMP refile rates as they apply to resource needs. In addition, as VBA actively encourages RAMP participation, the larger number of RAMP participants provides greater data on actual resource and processing needs. NCA can rely in part on actual VBA RAMP data and Board test programs for projections. Should actual results be impactful beyond expectations, a process performance methodology would be utilized to refine process and/or resource allocation.

Risk: VA OI&T may not have sufficient resources to provide VHA with a more modernized IT solution for claims processing prior to February 2019.

Mitigation: VHA will use the most efficient claim processing resources available at that time. This may include reliance on the existing processes until necessary modifications are complete.

## **2. Personnel (Section 3(b)(2)-(3))**

Risk: VA may not have sufficient personnel to administer the new and legacy processes.

Mitigation: As VBA lowers its pending legacy appeals inventory through initiatives such as RAMP, it will repurpose its most experienced personnel, such as DROs, to conduct higher-level reviews. VBA will continue to reassess its personnel and resource allocation between the legacy process and the new process and make any necessary adjustments.

The Board continues to implement its strategic hiring plan for increasing appeals staffing levels. In FY 2018, the Board commenced hiring legal interns, law clerks, and additional administrative staff. The hiring of legal interns and law clerks enables the Board to train and convert qualified personnel into entry level attorney positions, while fulfilling future FTE needs for decision writers. See also Appendix A, IMS ID 4.3.

Risk: Current statutes may constrain VBA's ability to scale its workforce to address reduced workload once the inventory of legacy appeals has been exhausted.

Mitigation: VBA will use any appropriate applicable legal authority to remove employees, if required as a last resort. However, because exhausting the inventory of legacy appeals will be a long-term effort, VA anticipates use of more routine workforce management methods, such as normal attrition of permanent employees, to address any necessary staffing changes as a result of elimination of the legacy appeals inventory. Furthermore, VBA may also reassign employees to address other workload inventories. Residual risk is low.

Risk: The number of NCA-specific cases received in the new system may surpass the workload capability of the current NCA trained and experienced personnel.

Mitigation: NCA has endeavored to continually address appeal matters with its unique case types as part of a learning organization with a symbiotic relationship with other VA offices including the Board, VBA, and VHA. NCA future personnel needs would be assessed dependent on national response to the new system from Veterans, their families, VSOs, and attorneys.

Risk: The number of dedicated personnel working appeals in VHA outside of the Claims Adjudication and Reimbursement team has not yet been identified. This poses a risk if no staff has been identified and facilities have not planned for this additional workload.

Mitigation: VHA will continue to monitor incoming appeals and communicate the need to host stand-downs, offer overtime, and utilize other methods of increasing productivity when hiring staff can not immediately be addressed.

## **4. Estimated Time for Hiring Employees (Section 3(b)(4))**

Risk: VBA's compensation and pension appeals program is presently supported by 1,495 FTEs. VBA has requested an additional 605 FTEs in the FY 2019 President's Budget to process legacy compensation and pension appeals and decision reviews under the modernized

process. If these additional FTE are not hired early enough in FY 2019, VBA will not be able to provide the anticipated impact to the projected workload. This would risk extending the reduction of the legacy appeals inventory beyond FY 2024 as currently forecasted with the added FTE. It is essential to VA's plan for reducing the legacy inventory that the 605 FTE are on-boarded expeditiously to avoid negatively impacting performance in the new process or delaying the reduction of the legacy appeals inventory beyond the forecasted timeline.

Mitigation: VBA's operating budget should include sufficient funding in FY 2019 to continue hiring the FTE. If additional funds are required, VBA leadership would determine what programs to prioritize internally until it receives FY 2019 appropriations.

Risk: Unintended delays may occur in onboarding additional FTEs to achieve the goal of 1,050 FTE.

Mitigation: The Board continues to be aggressive in advertising additional attorney vacancy announcements in USAJOBS. The Board's compelling mission and robust telework program ensures it continues to attract quality applicants. The Board's hiring practices have recently been refined, and an additional 150 FTE are expected to be onboarded through September 2018. Current hiring trends project that the Board will meet its goal of hiring 1,050 FTE by the end of the fiscal year.

#### **5. Training and Experience Required of Higher-Level Adjudicators (Section 3(b)(5))**

Risk: Under the new process, higher-level reviewers might have difficulty adjusting to the new changes in claims processing as mandated by the Appeals Modernization Act, such as adapting to the new notice requirements or conducting reviews on a closed record without the duty to assist.

Mitigation: To ease adjustment for VBA employees, VBA is testing many facets of the new process through RAMP. In RAMP, VBA is capturing detailed training needs of the higher-level reviewers, implementing sprints of refresher training with stations processing RAMP, conducting weekly calls to quickly address any issues that may arise. VBA is also developing a change management plan and will continue to publish resources such as FAQs, to aid in the adjustment.

Risk: Higher-level review caseload may exceed VHA anticipation.

Mitigation: VHA may have to expand the universe of higher-level adjudicators beyond team leads and first level supervisors.

#### **6. Estimated percentage of higher-level adjudicators who were Decision Review Officers (Section 3(b)(6))**

VA has not identified any risks with this element of the plan.

#### **7. Decision Review Officer functions in new system (Section 3(b)(7))**

VA has not identified any risks with this element of the plan.

#### **8. Training Timeline (Section 3(b)(8))**

Risk: VBA may not be able to complete required training on schedule based on current IT systems resulting in risk to performance objectives.

Mitigation: VBA's strategy of leveraging existing systems and processes to the extent practicable in the new process avoids the requirement to conduct extensive training on an entirely new system. VBA instructors will be able to capture screen shots and develop training without the IT updates being fully implemented. Through screen shots, VBA employees will be able to adequately identify updates to the IT systems to adjust for necessary changes upon full implementation. By conducting virtual live training, VBA instructors anticipate having user testing account access, which should allow for basic demonstrations in advance of the features fully being deployed. This will allow employees to see the changes prior to practical application. VBA anticipates developing adequate training for VBA employees in advance of full implementation in February 2019.

Furthermore, training will be largely decentralized to meet the unique requirements of each line of business. This flexible, adaptive approach avoids risks associated with large-scale, top-down training development. Risk is spread to the lines of business, which allows leadership to prioritize resources to the lines of business with the greatest number of appeals, and allows senior leaders in each line of business to manage internal risks associated with training for the new process.

Risk: VA may not be able to complete required training on schedule resulting in risk to performance objectives.

Mitigation: VA's strategy of leveraging existing systems and processes to the extent practicable in the new appeals system avoids the requirement to conduct extensive training on an entirely new system. Training will focus on the differences in processing legacy versus new appeals, but the substance of how higher-level reviews, as well as supplemental claims and appeals to the Board, are adjudicated remains unchanged.

Risk: Because the Board will not be participating in RAMP until October 2018, insufficient awareness of Board employees regarding the RAMP program may result in RAMP opt-in letters being improperly interpreted by the Board.

Mitigation: The Board has developed an internal system to handle misfiled opt-in documents and has been in close contact with VBA's AMO. The Board's KM and LRP have also provided continuous training activities both internally and between the Board and VBA to ensure proper handling of all RAMP communications.

Risk: VHA may not have training ready for delivery to all personnel prior to February 2019.

Mitigation: VHA will prioritize training delivery to those employees most likely to use processes created or changed by the Appeals Modernization Act.

## **9. Costs of Training (Section 3(b)(9))**

Risk: Insufficient personnel resources for developing and delivering necessary training to support the new process may result in incomplete training, which risks timely or incomplete implementation of the new appeals system.



Mitigation: VA enterprise-wide appeals modernization workgroup focused on training meets routinely to ensure all offices are proactively developing training during implementation period to ensure all offices are able to have fully developed materials well before February 2019.

At this point, VA's assessment is that sufficient resources exist for the timely accomplishment of required training.

## **10. Information Technology (Section 3(b)(10))**

Risk: Delays in the development of information technology required to implement appeals modernization may prevent VBA from certifying readiness in January 2019. Additionally, lack of effective coordination across all VA offices may have an adverse impact on development.

Mitigation: Continued coordination with VBA's VBMS and OBPI and Digital Service. Digital Service has a record of delivering throughout FY 2017 and continues to do so in FY 2018. All offices of VA continue to communicate and coordinate with IT personnel.

Risk: The lack of an existing, integrated IT system may prevent VA from timely or fully implementing the new process, or from achieving timeliness and reporting requirements.

Mitigation: VA has worked with Digital Service to create a single, integrated point of entry for receiving and processing review requests under the Appeals Modernization Act. This tool, Caseflow Intake, serves to integrate claims and appeals data such that a Veteran's lane selections can be tracked linearly. Further, with this functionality, all necessary data will be captured at the front end of the process, enabling VA to properly prioritize review requests to address questions of timeliness and to capture necessary data to enable VA to meet reporting requirements.

In addition to building new functionality to support intake of review requests, VBA will enhance existing infrastructure to support end-to-end processing of review requests, issuance of improved decision notices, and other claims functionality required under the Appeals Modernization Act. VBA processes approximately 98 percent of its legacy appeals inventory in the VBMS digital environment. VBMS and other existing systems will be modified to support the new processes, procedures, and reporting requirements mandated by the law. Some of the VBA lines of business not currently using these systems will be brought into this framework. In the event all required IT updates are not available, VA can still implement the new law through manual processes in lines of business with low numbers of appeals until such time where VA IT can support the creation of functionality that will allow all Appeals Modernization reviews to be performed electronically.

## **11. Estimate of office space by phase (Section 3(b)(11))**

Risk: The Board's telework program is a volunteer program. If not all Board employees continue to select telework, the Board would be short workstations.

Mitigation: The Board's telework program is a strong incentive for all staff. In February and March 2018, 53 additional Board employees signed up for telework. The Board is currently expanding the telework program as needed to accommodate potential space issues. Recent space requirement projections assume telework commitments remain constant at 533 employees. As the Board grows staff size to 1,050 FTE, the Board will have 930 total seats including, 167 overflow seats. The Board will assign telework attorneys who are out of the office

more than 50 percent to one of the 167 overflow seats. The Board has identified underused space and is creating work stations. This project is scheduled to be completed in the 4th quarter of FY 2018.

Risk: VHA may require more office space than can be made available.

Mitigation: VHA will rely on telework and virtual workspace before extra office space can be brought online.

## **12. Projections for the productivity of individual employees (Section 3(b)(12))**

Risk: There could be an unanticipated decrease in VBA employee productivity, leading to a risk of not meeting performance objectives.

Mitigation: RAMP will yield actual data that will assist VBA in refining its forecasting model, identifying best practices, and making changes to its procedures, processes, and systems to gain efficiencies and faster adjudications. Should RAMP and subsequent full implementation of the new claims and appeals system not yield the expected increase in productivity, VBA may consider reallocating internal resources to meet performance objectives. VBA is currently analyzing data from RAMP to identify efficiencies and best practices that can be applied to full implementation of the new system.

Risk: Negotiations with Union partners over Board productivity levels may impact decision output.

Mitigation: The Board continues to be committed both to delivering historic numbers of decisions and to evaluating and establishing optimal productivity levels with employee input.

Risk: VHA may underestimate or overestimate the productivity of employees processing benefits in the Appeals Modernization Act system.

Mitigation: VHA will adjust post-Appeals Modernization Act implementation staffing as needed.

## **13. Outreach Plan (Section 3(b)(13))**

Risk: RAMP may continue to experience a lower-than-expected opt-in rate if Veterans do not receive adequate information about RAMP, if they remain confused about RAMP, or if they receive erroneous information from third-party sources.

Mitigation: VBA has expanded outreach activities in support of RAMP with VBA and Board collaboration on these efforts. VBA is conducting additional outreach through e-mail listings and follow-up letters to Veterans inviting them to participate in the new process. Additionally, the Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the Director of AMO have engaged in site visits to speak with agents, attorneys and, service organization representatives to gain support of the new process. The goal of the site visits is to provide information and clarity of the new appeals process so that representatives may request, on behalf of whom they represent, participation in the new appeals process. The results of this outreach are encouraging and have resulted in higher opt-in rates and increased support for RAMP. The communication channels, messaging, and lessons learned during RAMP will significantly facilitate VBA's outreach efforts in support of full implementation. Additionally, the Board is supporting RAMP and working with an expert in change management to develop an overarching outreach plan.

#### **14. Timeline for Policy Updates (Section 3(b)(14))**

Risk: VA will not be able to develop and publish policy to support the new appeals system in a timely manner, thus putting the implementation schedule at risk.

Mitigation: As noted above, VA is taking a decentralized approach to revising internal policy to support the new appeals system, which allows for each line of business to work in parallel. As some internal procedures will be put into effect during RAMP and BEAAM, the overall risk of failing to update policy in a timely manner is commensurately reduced. Although VA anticipates that policy revisions will take approximately 15 months to complete (see Appendix A, IMS ID 1), this risk is low for the reasons specified. Additionally, information gathered during RAMP and BEAAM will allow VA to test interim policy and procedures to address any issues prior to full implementation.

#### **15. Timeline for Promulgating Regulations (Section 3(b)(15))**

Risk: VA will not complete regulations in time for full implementation.

Mitigation: In the November 2017 report and subsequent reports, VA laid out a projected schedule for completing the regulations for the Appeals Modernization Act. The timeline was a rough estimate of how long it would take to complete the process, to include OMB review. Since then, VA has revised its timeline and completed some activities (such as preparing for public comment) in parallel to other activities. See Appendix A, IMS ID 1. VA is still on track to have final regulations in place by February 2019.

#### **16. Outline of “Opt-In” Circumstances (Section 3(b)(16))**

Risk: There may be a low opt-in rate to the new system.

Mitigation: VBA, in partnership with the Board, conducts monthly meetings with VSOs to help educate them about the benefits of the new system, answer questions, and listen to feedback. The Board will also provide structured trainings to explain the new system. In cooperation with Digital Service, the Board is also using design thinking to help minimize misunderstandings with its NOD form. The Board will work with VBA to accurately communicate all aspects of the new system to all stakeholders. As a result of early RAMP results, VBA has recognized the need for increased communications with Veterans and other stakeholders and, as described in Section 4 of this report, has taken actions to improve the opt-in rate for RAMP. See also the Risks and Mitigations for the Outreach Plan, Section 3(b)(13) above.

#### **17. Key goals and milestones for reducing legacy inventory (Section 3(b)(17))**

Risk: Veterans who chose not to participate in VA’s RAMP program may continue to experience long delays in the legacy appeals process.

Mitigation: VBA continues to prioritize its legacy appeals processing. In addition to achieving a 24 percent increase in appeals production in FY 2017, its FY 2018 production is approximately 8 percent above its end of May target. When combined with Veterans’ increased participation in RAMP and VBA’s request for appropriations to support 605 additional appeals FTE beginning in FY 2019, this increased production supports VBA’s end of FY 2020 goal for processing most of its legacy appeals, with the exception being a running inventory of legacy remands from the

Board for several years beyond 2020. As of July 30, 2018, 68,386 Board decisions had been dispatched to Veterans in FY 2018, as compared to 38,851 in FY 2017—an increase of 29,535 decisions. In FY17, case receipts outpaced decisions by approximately 38,000. The Board’s increased decision output is enabling it to draw down its case inventory and decrease Veterans’ wait times in the legacy appeals system.

Risk: VHA is unable to resolve legacy inventory in a timely manner.

Mitigation: Existing and Appeals Modernization Act processes dictate that VHA will continue to receive and resolve legacy claims for several years following Appeals Modernization Act implementation. VHA will actively monitor legacy appeal inventory and inventory reduction effectiveness during that time period.

## Section 4 – Pilot Programs to Test Assumptions

(a) *AUTHORIZATION.*—

(1) *IN GENERAL.*—*The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out such programs as the Secretary considers appropriate to test any assumptions relied upon in developing the comprehensive plan required by section 3(a) and to test the feasibility and advisability of any facet of the new appeals system.*

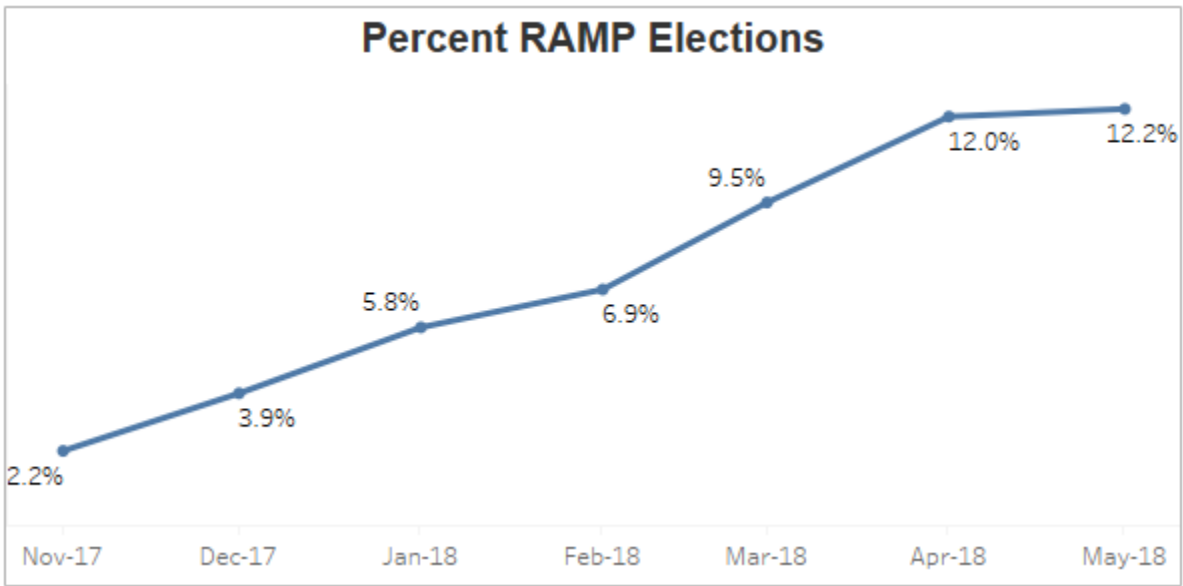
(2) *REPORTING REQUIRED.*—*Whenever the Secretary determines, based on the conduct of a program under paragraph (1), that legislative changes to the new appeals system are necessary, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives notice of such determination.*

### **VBA’s Test Program: RAMP**

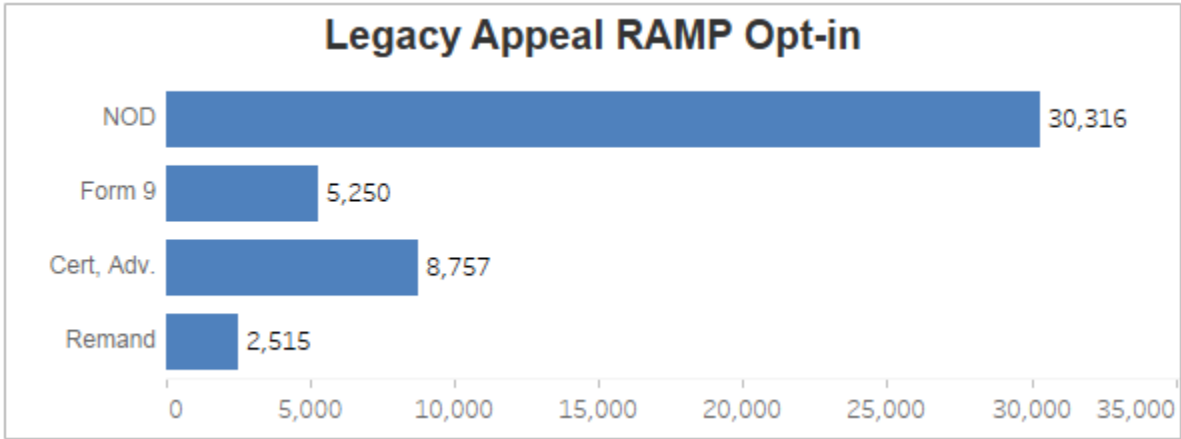
In February 2018, VA expanded RAMP batch mailed invitations to include a portion of Veterans with newer appeals pending to test whether Veterans with newer appeals would be more likely to opt-in to the new program. Initial data, through May 2018, suggest that Veterans with younger legacy appeals may be more likely to opt into RAMP to have their claim processed under the new framework. The table below provides data of VA’s distribution of RAMP opt-in election letters mailed to Veterans with the oldest legacy appeals pending in each of the appeals stage of NOD, form 9, remand, certified not activated at the Board and newest NOD appeals pending.

<b>February through May Totals by Stage</b>	<b>Letters Sent</b>	<b>Opt-ins</b>	<b>Opt-in Rate</b>
NOD	61,728	6,739	10.9%
Form 9	13,660	1,560	11.4%
Cert/Not Activated	27,130	2,657	9.8%
Remand	11,180	722	6.5%
New NOD	35,172	4,518	12.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>148,870</b>	<b>16,196</b>	<b>10.9%</b>

The chart below shows the RAMP election rate at the end of each month. It is clear that extensive outreach efforts over the past several months has led to a greater election rate.



The greater participation in RAMP directly reduced the inventory of legacy appeals. As of the end of May 2018, 24,140 appeals were transitioned to RAMP. The breakdown of the legacy appeal stage from which Veterans have opted into RAMP is shown in the chart below.



As of the end of July 2018, RAMP elections have resulted in a combined 32,088 higher-level review and supplemental claims, resulting in \$40,131,077 retroactive benefits paid to Veterans on 8,184 completed claims.

Higher-Level Review vs Supplemental Lane Selection (Pending & Completed)				
Lane	Pending	% of Total	Total Completed	Average Days to Complete
Higher-Level Review	20,504	63.9%	5,560	86.3
Supplemental Lane	11,584	36.1%	2,624	94.2
<b>Total RAMP</b>	<b>32,088</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,184</b>	<b>88.9</b>

Amount Paid To Date	
Higher-Level Review	\$29,300,755.61
Supplemental Lane	\$10,830,321.62
Total	\$40,131,077.23

The below charts represent the grant/denial rate by claim and issue. Claim grants are a claim where at least one contention was granted.

Claim and Issue Decision Outcomes				
Lane	Claims Granted	Claims Denied	Issues Granted	Issues Denied
Higher-Level Review	1,379	3,243	2,736	10,932
Supplemental Lane	682	1,874	1,341	6,966
Total	2,061	5,117	4,077	17,898

Grant and Denied Rates				
Lane	Claims Granted	Claims Denied	Issues Granted	Issues Denied
Higher-Level Review	29.8%	70.2%	20.0%	80.0%
Supplemental Lane	26.7%	73.3%	16.1%	83.9%
Total	28.7%	71.3%	18.6%	81.4%

#### RAMP Roll-Out Schedule

VBA's AMO initiated RAMP processing with the ARC in Washington, D.C. With the increase of RAMP opt-in elections, AMO has expanded RAMP processing to eight stations, as well as five special mission processing teams for any RAMP claims related to radiation, Camp Lejeune water contamination, and mustard gas exposure. VBA is utilizing experienced personnel from appeals teams at these VA ROs to process RAMP elections. These designated RO appeals teams have received both instructor-led and refresher training. AMO has utilized the feedback received during these trainings to improve the training materials as VA continues to expand the RAMP pilot. VBA will incorporate the training materials developed for RAMP into the development of training materials for full implementation.

RAMP Site	Go Live Date	Training Dates	
		Overview (In-person)	Refresher (VILT)
Denver	April 2, 2018	February 22-23, 2018	March 15-19, 2018
Phoenix	April 16, 2018	February 5-6, 2018	April 4-6, 2018
Waco	April 16, 2018	March 21-22, 2018	April 11-13, 2018
Seattle	April 30, 2018	February 20-21, 2018	April 18-20, 2018
St. Petersburg	May 14, 2018	April 26-27, 2018	May 1-11, 2018
St. Paul	June 25, 2018	June 4-5, 2018	June 12-15, 2018
Winston Salem	July 9, 2018	June 7-8, 2018	June 25-29, 2018

<b>Atlanta</b>	<b>July 23, 2018*</b>	April 23-25, 2018	July 16-20, 2018
<b>San Diego</b>	<b>TBD*</b>	February 22-23, 2018	TBD
<b>Cleveland</b>	<b>TBD*</b>	TBD	TBD

### Training Requirements

All RAMP processing site personnel must complete mandatory training courses before processing claims under RAMP. The mandatory RAMP training curriculum includes RAMP prerequisites, overview courses, and refresher trainings with variations in the subjects taught and duration of training based on employee positions. Training is conducted through both in-person and virtual learning environments with feedback provided by employees. A list of the courses is provided below.

TMS Item #	Course Title	Description
4411580	Introduction to PL 115-55 & RAMP	This course will provide an overview of the Appeals Modernization Act. It will provide students with an understanding of RAMP and the Supplemental Claim and Higher-Level Review lanes.
4411581	RAMP Intake Procedures	This course will provide an overview of the intake procedures for receiving opt-in elections and lane selections and how to route misdirected mail. This training will explain the required actions and systems used to track and control RAMP elections.
4411583	RAMP Higher-Level Review Procedures	This course will provide an overview of the higher-level review process to include how to conduct informal conferences. This course will provide students with an understanding of the term "maximum benefit" and when a claim must be deferred for further development.
4411582	RAMP Development Actions	This course will outline the development actions required under RAMP. This course will cover Withdrawal Letters, deferrals, and other development actions completed under RAMP. By the end of the course, students will be able to make a RAMP end product ready for decision.
4411584	RAMP Decisions	This course will provide an overview of the new 8-point notice requirements in Public Law 115-55 and how VA will implement those requirements through RAMP decisions.
4411594	RAMP Improved Decision Notices	This course will explain the notification letter requirements for RAMP decisions. The course will discuss the "RAMP Review Rights" and "RAMP Selection" documents.
4439835	RAMP Refresher Training	This course will provide additional in-depth training on RAMP processing, discuss best practices and issue an end-of course assessment. This course uses virtual instructor led demonstrations with live casework assigned to all participation employees.

As of July 2018, VBA AMO has provided training to personnel at ARC and the following ROs: Denver, Phoenix, Waco, Seattle, Atlanta, St. Petersburg, St. Paul and Winston-Salem. As the election rate increases and the need for additional offices to process RAMP elections arises, VBA will continue to provide training to the remaining ROs prior to their participation in RAMP.

AMO has also provided training to a group of employees assigned to special mission processing teams at the Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Jackson, Muskogee and Louisville ROs.

In addition to the formal training curriculum, as VBA identifies additional training needs or best practices through its RAMP quality assurance efforts, VBA provides additional guidance to stations processing under RAMP through weekly calls, written guidance, and additional refresher training.

### Lessons Learned

As part of the test program, AMO conducts quality assurance checks of completed RAMP cases to ensure accuracy and consistency in processing of RAMP claims. AMO conducts in-process reviews (IPR) as part of the RAMP Refresher Training curriculum and additional special focused reviews of completed work at different points in the process. AMO is using quality data and questions received from training to make updates and changes to the RAMP SOP where necessary. Examples of SOP changes include:

- SOP updates on May 4, 2018, to clarify that the authority to conduct higher-level reviews is granted to Decision Review Officers (DRO) for rating issues and Senior Veterans Service Representatives (SVSR) or Authorization Quality Review Specialists (AQRS\)) for non-rating issues and that this authority cannot be delegated to any other personnel.
- SOP updates on May 4, 2018, to clarify that an informal conference may be conducted with only the authorized representative. The Veteran is not required to be present on the call when he or she has an authorized representative.
- SOP Updates on June 21, 2018, to inform the field of a RAMP End Product code 930 claim label that can be used when a case needs correction, or when a case needs to be re-established because it has been cleared in error.

### **Boards' Test Programs: BEAAM and Implementation of RAMP (see Appendix A, IMS ID 7)**

On May 1, 2018, the Board implemented a small-scale research program, BEAAM. A core goal of the research effort is to allow Veterans to speak for themselves in describing their experience. Given that BEAAM is a small-scale research program, this program provides qualitative information rather than quantitative data. The research team conducted more than 50 hours of interviews in the first 2 months of BEAAM, providing valuable insight into how Veterans and representatives would make choices under the new framework, and allowing VA to refine and update implementation activities to improve Veteran experiences.

The Board and Digital Service partnered with Veterans' representatives (Paralyzed Veterans of America, CalVet, and NOVA) to identify 35 Veterans and dependents who are dissatisfied with a recent claim decision. Participants opted in by requesting review under RAMP within VBA or choosing any of the three dockets at the Board under the Appeals Modernization Act. From May to June 2018, representatives identified Veterans and submitted materials for participation in the program. In July, the Board began adjudicating cases in which Veterans selected the Board's direct docket. The Board has dispatched all direct docket cases. Hearings have been scheduled and will be held for the Veterans who have selected the Board hearing docket. The



Board will begin adjudicating the BEAAM cases on the evidence docket once the 90-day period for evidence submission has expired.

BEAAM has provided preliminary information about Veterans' choices and experiences. The results from this research program will inform the Board's decisions regarding implementation, to include modifying processes, procedures, policies, and training.

In preparation for BEAAM, as well as implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act, the Board modified existing forms to both comply with the Act and explain the appeals process in more Veteran-friendly language. BEAAM research revealed that Veterans found aspects of the draft forms difficult to understand, particularly because they were confronted with new, unfamiliar choices under the Appeals Modernization Act. Another valuable suggestion from this user-research is that VA forms should include examples of how to properly complete the form so that the Veteran can imitate the example and ensure that he or she properly completes the form. Representatives also expressed the desire for clear instructions regarding if and when a representative can sign on behalf of the Veteran. This is especially important for representatives who represent Veterans in rural areas. VA will use this feedback to create materials, including notice letters, forms, and websites, that create a consistent and user-friendly experience.

Veterans also expressed a desire for accurate information on wait times. For example, an interviewed Veteran stated that it is important to understand that hearings will add a delay in the adjudication of the appeal. VA will include this type of information in Veteran communications, including notice letters and forms.

Moreover, BEAAM Board decisions utilize the IDT, which provides Veterans decisions that are easier to understand. These Board BEAAM decisions also include new Veteran-friendly language that explains their participation in an Appeals Modernization Act test program. BEAAM provided the Board the opportunity to draft and use Appeals Modernization Act-consistent, as well as legally accurate, sample language for Board decisions and remands.

Preparations for BEAAM also included training for select Board attorneys, Veterans Law Judges, and administrative staff. These BEAAM training sessions provided valuable insight and feedback on how to further improve and modify existing Board Appeals Modernization Act trainings. Issues identified during adjudication of BEAAM decisions will assist the Board in preparing targeted training to address common areas of confusion, or areas in which adjudication of new and legacy appeals may diverge. For example, the Appeals Modernization Act lowered the standard for readjudication of a final decision based on new evidence. In the legacy system, "new and material" evidence is required to "reopen" a claim, while the Appeals Modernization Act provides that "new and relevant" evidence will trigger readjudication. Adjudication of BEAAM appeals highlighted the need to provide specific guidance for adjudication of a claim in which "reopening" was denied under the legacy system, but readjudication is warranted pursuant to the lower standard under the Appeals Modernization Act.

BEAAM has also provided Digital Service the opportunity to test new technologies and processes. In July, Digital Service introduced new functionality which pulls data from rating decisions to allow issue matching between the most recent agency of original jurisdiction decision and the NOD. Caseflow has assigned Appeals Modernization Act-specific docket numbers for all BEAAM direct docket cases and will assign Appeals Modernization Act-specific docket numbers for evidence and hearing cases when these cases are ready for distribution.

Digital Service will gain valuable insight in testing Caseflow functionality for intake of BEAAM decisions. Feedback regarding Caseflow functionality, as well as insight from Board attorneys and Veterans Law Judges, will inform the modification of Board SOPs to better streamline processes.

Although the BEAAM research program has not concluded, the Board has gained early insight and feedback from representatives and Veterans. The preparations, drafting of decisions, holding of hearings, and early interviews with Veterans, have provided the Board with valuable feedback and insight that will greatly inform VA's plans for implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act.

Board's Implementation of RAMP: Currently, Veterans who receive a RAMP decision have the option of appealing to the Board. In October 2018, the Board will begin adjudicating the first of these appeals in a phased-in test of processes and technology. The Board will prioritize legacy appeals and RAMP appeals in which the Veteran did not submit additional evidence or request a hearing. Implementing RAMP will allow the Board to identify and address potential issues and risks relating to implementation of the new framework.

The Board has already provided RAMP-related training to Board attorneys, Veterans Law Judges, and administrative staff. Additional RAMP, as well as Appeals Modernization Act trainings, are scheduled prior to the October 2018 implementation of RAMP at the Board. Administrative staff have already begun using additional Caseflow functionality to intake RAMP NODs. Feedback from these training sessions have provided valuable information and will inform the creation and development of future training sessions.

The phased implementation approach to RAMP and the BEAAM program will allow the Board to continue delivering decisions to legacy appellants at historic levels, while collecting valuable data about implementation of the new framework. The Board has and will engage all stakeholders before rolling out these test programs.

The Board will begin to participate in RAMP with a gradual phase-in starting in October 2018. The Board does not anticipate allocating any FTEs exclusively to this test program. Instead, all FTEs involved in the program will incorporate decisions on RAMP appeals into their current workflow. All attorneys and VLJs at the Board will be well-equipped to adjudicate appeals in both systems, as the Board has already begun training regarding RAMP and full implementation. Therefore, it will not be necessary to allocate dedicated personnel to the Board's RAMP participation.

Together, the Board's two test programs will assist in determining how best to monitor and assess the new appeals process compared to the legacy process. As noted above, the primary objective of BEAAM is to collect qualitative information on Veterans' preferences, with the goal of improving VA's services to Veterans. The implementation of RAMP at the Board will test processes and technology. Therefore, the primary objective of RAMP implementation at the Board is to confirm that processes and technology are minimally operational to implement the Appeals Modernization Act in February 2019, and that any problems are identified and addressed prior to implementation. The information learned from these programs will shape and inform how the Board sets a targeted and balanced set of goals and measures, to include timeliness goals and measures of accuracy, satisfaction, cost, and related baseline data.

## Appendix A – Integrated Master Schedule

ID	Name	Owner	Duration (days)	Start	Finish	Status
<b>1</b>	<b>Policy Infrastructure</b>		<b>540 days</b>	<b>08/23/2017</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	In Progress
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Regulations and Forms</b>		<b>540 days</b>	<b>08/23/2017</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	In Progress
1.1.1	Draft Proposed Rule (PR) and Forms and Submit to 00REG	BVA	148 days	08/23/2017	1/18/2018	Complete
1.1.2	OGC clears PR, 00REG submits PR and forms to OMB	BVA	96 days	1/19/2018	4/25/2018	Complete
1.1.3	OMB clears PR and forms, PR and forms published in Federal Register	BVA	106 days	4/26/2018	8/10/2018	Complete
1.1.4	Public comment period	BVA	60 days	8/10/2018	10/09/2018	In Progress
1.1.5	Edit based on public comment & send draft final rules (FR) and forms to 00REG	BVA	63 days	8/11/2018	10/13/2018	In Progress
1.1.6	Concurrence, 00REG sends FRs and forms to OMB	BVA	30 days	10/14/2018	11/13/2018	Not Started
1.1.7	OMB approves FR and forms, completes final Federal Register notice	BVA	60 days	11/14/2018	1/13/2019	Not Started
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Board Policy</b>		<b>343 days</b>	<b>11/22/2017</b>	<b>10/31/2018</b>	In Progress
1.2.1	Gather SOPs for current Board policy	BVA	29 days	3/1/2018	3/30/2018	Complete
1.2.2	Identify revisions needed to SOPs to implement the Appeals Modernization Act (AMA)	BVA	61 days	4/1/2018	5/31/2018	Complete
1.2.3	Work with Board leadership to generate AMA SOPs	BVA	91 days	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	In Progress
1.2.4	Draft update to Purplebook (Board policy guide) to include AMA SOPs	BVA	91 days	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	In Progress
1.2.5	Internal Board concurrence on Purplebook changes	BVA	30 days	9/1/2018	9/30/2018	Not Started
1.2.6	Share drafted Purplebook updated with VSOs	BVA	14 days	10/1/2018	10/14/2018	Not Started
1.2.7	Publish updates to Purplebook	BVA	15 days	10/15/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started
<b>1.3</b>	<b>VBA Policy</b>					
1.3.1.1	Compensation Service Higher-Level Review Procedures Complete	VBA	109 days	8/28/2017	12/15/2017	Complete
1.3.1.2	Compensation Service Improved Decision Notices Complete	VBA	87 days	5/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress
1.3.1.3	Compensation Service Manual Updates Complete	VBA	36 days	8/1/2018	9/6/2018	Not Started
1.3.1.4	Compensation Service Opt-In Letters Complete	VBA	53 days	8/28/2017	10/20/2017	Complete
1.3.1.5	Compensation Service Quality Assurance Plan Complete	VBA	171 days	7/13/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress

1.3.1.6	Compensation Service Supplemental Claims Procedures Complete	VBA	109 days	8/28/2017	12/15/2017	Complete
1.3.2.1	Education Service Higher-Level Review Procedures Complete	VBA	375 days	8/24/2018	9/3/2019	Not Started
1.3.2.2	Education Service Improved Decision Notices Complete	VBA	51 days	8/1/2018	9/21/2018	Not Started
1.3.2.3	Education Service Manual Updates Complete	VBA	375 days	8/24/2017	9/3/2018	In Progress
1.3.2.4	Education Service Opt-In Letters Complete	VBA	466 days	8/24/2017	12/3/2018	In Progress
1.3.2.5	Education Service Quality Assurance Plan Complete	VBA	31 days	10/1/18	10/31/18	Not Started
1.3.2.6	Education Service Supplemental Claims Procedures Complete	VBA	38 days	8/1/18	9/21/18	Not Started
1.3.3.1	Fiduciary Service Higher-Level Review Procedures Complete	VBA	140 days	4/10/2018	8/28/2018	In Progress
1.3.3.2	Fiduciary Service Improved Decision Notices Complete	VBA	140 days	4/10/2018	8/28/2018	In Progress
1.3.3.3	Fiduciary Service Manual Updates Complete	VBA	140 days	4/10/2018	8/28/2018	In Progress
1.3.3.4	Fiduciary Service Opt-In Letters Complete	VBA	140 days	4/10/2018	8/28/2018	In Progress
1.3.3.5	Fiduciary Service Quality Assurance Plan Complete	VBA	4 days	8/6/2018	8/10/2018	Not Started
1.3.3.6	Fiduciary Service Supplemental Claims Procedures Complete	VBA	140 days	4/10/2018	8/28/2018	In Progress
1.3.5.1	Insurance Service Higher-Level Review Procedures Complete	VBA	368 days	8/28/2017	8/31/2018	In Progress
1.3.5.2	Insurance Service Improved Decision Notices Complete	VBA	91 days	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	In Progress
1.3.5.3	Insurance Service Manual Updates Complete	VBA	341 days	8/24/2017	7/31/2018	In Progress
1.3.5.4	Insurance Service Opt-In Letters Complete	VBA	91 days	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	In Progress
1.3.5.5	Insurance Service Quality Assurance Plan Complete	VBA	79 days	7/13/2018	9/30/2018	In Progress
1.3.5.6	Insurance Service Supplemental Claims Procedures Complete	VBA	91 days	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	In Progress
1.3.6.1	Loan Guarantee Service Higher-Level Review Procedures Complete	VBA	196 days	1/26/2018	8/10/2018	In Progress
1.3.6.2	Loan Guarantee Service Improved Decision Notices Complete	VBA	137 days	3/26/2018	8/10/2018	In Progress
1.3.6.3	Loan Guarantee Service Manual Updates Complete	VBA	196 days	1/26/2018	8/10/2018	In Progress
1.3.6.4	Loan Guarantee Service Opt-In Letters Complete	VBA	79 days	8/13/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started
1.3.6.5	Loan Guarantee Service Quality Assurance Plan Complete	VBA	223 days	6/22/2018	1/31/2019	In Progress
1.3.6.6	Loan Guarantee Service Supplemental Claims Procedures Complete	VBA	196 days	1/26/2018	8/10/2018	In Progress
1.3.7.1	Pension Service Higher-Level Review Procedures Complete	VBA	140 days	4/10/2018	8/28/2018	In Progress
1.3.7.2	Pension Service Improved Decision Notices Complete	VBA	140 days	4/10/2018	8/28/2018	In Progress
1.3.7.3	Pension Service Manual Updates Complete	VBA	4 days	7/16/2018	7/20/2018	Complete
1.3.7.4	Pension Service Opt-In Letters Complete	VBA	4 days	7/16/2018	7/20/2018	Complete

1.3.7.5	Pension Service Quality Assurance Plan Complete	VBA	4 days	8/6/2018	8/10/2018	Complete
1.3.7.6	Pension Service Supplemental Claims Procedures Complete	VBA	140 days	4/10/2018	8/28/2018	In Progress
1.3.8.1	Vocational Rehabilitation Service Higher-Level Review Procedures Complete	VBA	342 days	8/24/2017	8/1/2018	In Progress
1.3.8.2	Vocational Rehabilitation Service Improved Decision Notices Complete	VBA	338 days	8/28/2017	8/1/2018	In Progress
1.3.8.3	Vocational Rehabilitation Service Manual Updates Complete	VBA	375 days	8/24/2017	9/3/2018	In Progress
1.3.8.4	Vocational Rehabilitation Service Opt-In Letters Complete	VBA	338 days	8/28/2017	8/1/2018	In Progress
1.3.8.5	Vocational Rehabilitation Service Quality Assurance Plan Complete	VBA	464 days	8/24/2017	12/1/2018	In Progress
1.3.8.6	Vocational Rehabilitation Service Supplemental Claims Procedures Complete	VBA	342 days	8/24/2017	8/1/2018	In Progress
<b>1.4</b>	<b>NCA Policy</b>					
1.4.1	Supplemental Lane - National Cemetery Administration	NCA	360 days	8/24/2017	8/28/2018	In Progress
1.4.2	HLR Process - National Cemetery Administration	NCA	375 days	8/24/2017	9/3/2018	In Progress
1.4.3	Notice Letters - National Cemetery Administration	NCA	280 days	11/28/2017	9/3/2018	In Progress
1.4.5	Opt-In Notices - National Cemetery Administration	NCA	335 days	3/1/2018	1/31/2019	In Progress
1.4.6	Opt-In Procedures - National Cemetery Administration	NCA	480 days	8/28/2017	12/29/2018	Not Started
1.4.7	Manual updates - National Cemetery Administration	NCA	515 days	8/24/2017	1/31/2019	Not Started
<b>2</b>	<b>Process Modeling (Revised Legacy and New)</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>73 days</b>	<b>1/12/2018</b>	<b>5/31/2018</b>	Complete
2.1	Preliminary Design Review (Legacy)	BVA	16 days	1/12/2018	1/28/2018	Complete
2.2	Final Design Review (Legacy)	BVA	16 days	1/29/2018	2/14/2018	Complete
2.3	Redirection - combine legacy and new process efforts and accelerate	BVA	12 days	2/15/2018	2/26/2018	Complete
2.4	Conduct site visit	BVA	3 days	2/27/2018	3/1/2018	Complete
2.5	Provide draft 80 percent solution (Legacy and New process models) to Board	BVA	7 days	3/2/2018	3/8/2018	Complete
2.6	Board review and feedback	BVA	7 days	3/8/2018	3/12/2018	Complete
2.7	Provide Final 80 percent solution (Legacy and New Process Models) to Board	BVA	7 days	3/12/2018	3/13/2018	Complete
2.8	Finalize Final Process mapping and focus on continuous improvement – 90 percent solution	BVA	3 days	3/13/2018	5/8/2018	Complete
2.9	Finalize Final Process mapping and focus on continuous improvement – 95 percent solution	BVA	days	5/8/2018	5/31/2018	Complete
2.10	Monitor Implementation and Make Adjustments as needed	BVA	326 days	3/24/2018	2/14/2019	In Progress
<b>3</b>	<b>Information Technology Modernization</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>365 days</b>	<b>1/1/2018</b>	<b>12/31/2018</b>	In Progress
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Caseflow Intake</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>181 days</b>	<b>1/1/2018</b>	<b>6/30/2018</b>	Complete
3.1.1	Discovery and development	OIT	365 days	1/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress

3.1.2	Implement functionality to receive RAMP NODS	OIT	89 days	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
3.1.3	Release reporting functionality and integrate with national work queue	OIT	90 days	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
3.1.4	Support processing of official forms	OIT	91 days	7/1/2018	9/30/2018	Complete
3.1.5	Release initial reporting capability	OIT	90 days	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
3.1.6	Develop functionality to track dispositions for SCs and HLRs	OIT	91 days	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Caseflow Queue</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>365 days</b>	<b>1/1/2018</b>	<b>12/31/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
3.2.1	Discovery and development	OIT	365 days	1/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress
3.2.2	Release mocks to attorney staff	OIT	89 days	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
3.2.3	Release functionality to initial user base, test with admin staff	OIT	90 days	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
3.2.4	Release new functionality to additional users	OIT	182 days	7/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress
3.2.5	Support Board pilot of RAMPed appeals	OIT	92 days	10/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Caseflow Status</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>273 days</b>	<b>1/1/2018</b>	<b>9/30/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
3.3.1	Finalize language, develop backend, and release v.2	OIT	89 days	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
3.3.2	Discovery on changes required for modernized appeals	OIT	90 days	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
3.3.3	Ongoing discovery and development on changes required for modernized appeals	OIT	182 days	7/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Caseflow Reader</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>90 days</b>	<b>1/1/2018</b>	<b>3/31/2018</b>	<b>Complete</b>
3.4.1	Add features based on user feedback	OIT	90 days	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Caseflow Hearing Prep</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>91 days</b>	<b>4/1/2018</b>	<b>6/30/2018</b>	<b>Complete</b>
3.5.1	Complete pilot with judges	OIT	89 days	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
3.5.2	Release to all judges	OIT	91 days	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Caseflow Hearing Scheduling</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>90 days</b>	<b>1/1/2018</b>	<b>3/30/2018</b>	<b>Complete</b>
3.6.1	Onboard product owner for hearing scheduling	OIT	90 days	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
3.6.2	Present development plan and obtain FY 2019 scheduling policy from Board	OIT	89 days	1/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
3.6.3	Discovery and development	OIT	90 days	4/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
3.6.4	Release schedule allocation for FY 2019	OIT	91 days	7/1/2018	9/30/2018	In Progress
3.6.5	Discovery and development focused on placing Veterans into hearing slots	OIT	92 days	10/1/2018	12/31/2018	In Progress
<b>3.7</b>	<b>eFolder Express</b>	<b>OIT</b>				Complete
<b>3.8</b>	<b>Caseflow Certification</b>	<b>OIT</b>				Complete

<b>3.9</b>	<b>Caseflow Dispatch</b>	<b>OIT</b>				Complete
<b>3.10</b>	<b>Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS)</b>	<b>OIT</b>	317 days	4/2/2018	2/13/2019	In Progress
<b>3.10.0.1</b>	<b>VBMS Release 15.0</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>25 days</b>	<b>4/2/2018</b>	<b>4/27/2018</b>	<b>Complete</b>
3.10.1.0	(61698) Capability to prevent users from modifying an AMA contention generated by Caseflow	OIT	25 days	4/2/2018	4/27/2018	Complete
3.10.2.0	(61262) Capability to support the processing of 3 million claims through the NWQ	OIT	25 days	4/2/2018	4/27/2018	Complete
3.10.3.0	(61261) Capability to define which claims belonging to a Veteran should route together to a single RO	OIT	25 days	4/2/2018	4/27/2018	Complete
<b>3.11.0.0</b>	<b>VBMS Release 15.1</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>104 days</b>	<b>5/1/2018</b>	<b>8/13/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
3.11.1.0	(58189) Capability to route AMA Review Claims through NWQ to the appropriate station (BSD290).docx	OIT	104 days	5/1/2018	8/13/2018	In Progress
3.11.2.0	(61697) Capability to set the capacity to route AMA Review Claims through NWQ (BSD290).docx	OIT	104 days	5/1/2018	8/13/2018	In Progress
3.11.3.0	(58201) Capability to set the status of an AMA Claim (ACR788)	OIT	104 days	5/1/2018	8/13/2018	In Progress
3.11.4.0	(61541) Capability to capture the disposition of a Rating decision for an AMA Review	OIT	104 days	5/1/2018	8/13/2018	In Progress
3.11.5.0	(61534) Capability to capture the disposition of Non-Rating decisions for AMA Reviews	OIT	104 days	5/1/2018	8/13/2018	In Progress
3.11.6.0	(61536) Capability to view that an informal conference request has been requested for an AMA Review	OIT	104 days	5/1/2018	8/13/2018	In Progress
3.11.7.0	(6+B124:H4132051) Capability to set the status for an EP040 when the last tracked item is closed	OIT	104 days	5/1/2018	8/13/2018	In Progress
<b>3.12.0.0</b>	<b>VBMS Release 16.0</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>150 days</b>	<b>7/13/2018</b>	<b>12/10/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
3.12.1.0	(61539) Capability to populate enclosures in the RADL	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.2.0	(61544) Capability to support claim recall and transfer for the processing of 3 million claims through the NWQ	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.3.0	(62027) Capability to Enter Favorable Findings for AMA Rating claims	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.4.0	(62334) Capability to Deny a Rated Issue due to Lack of New and Relevant Evidence	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.5.0	(61670) Capability to inform a claimant that a DTA Error decision has been made on an AMA Rating Claim	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.6.0	(61688) Capability to create a non-rating deferral (CO UC502 06012017)	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.7.0	(61538) Capability to capture and communicate a Non-Rating dependency decision under the new rules created by the AMA	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.8.0	(61535) Capability to prevent users from manually establishing an AMA Claim	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.9.0	(61542) Capability to associate more than one POA for a Veteran	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.10.0	(62337) Capability to select consolidated with another contention for Rating and Non-Rating EP030 claims	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
3.12.11.0	(62483) Capability to Capture the Disposition of a Supplemental Claim for an AMA review	OIT	150 days	7/13/2018	12/10/2018	In Progress
<b>3.13.0.0</b>	<b>VBMS Release 16.1 Note: Enhancements, not required prior to implementation</b>	<b>OIT</b>	<b>257 days</b>	<b>6/1/2018</b>	<b>2/13/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>

3.13.1.0	(62053) Capability to notify a Veteran of a DTA error in a non-rating claim	OIT	257 days	6/1/2018	2/13/2019	In Progress
3.13.2.0	P&F Burial Letter	OIT	257 days	6/1/2018	2/13/2019	In Progress
3.13.3.0	P&F ADL Attachment for Favorable Findings	OIT	257 days	6/1/2018	2/13/2019	In Progress
<b>3.14</b>	<b>IT Plan - VHA</b>	<b>VHA</b>	<b>280 days</b>	<b>3/26/2018</b>	<b>12/31/2018</b>	
<b>3.14.1</b>	<b>VBMS Enhancements To Support VHA</b>	<b>VHA</b>				
<b>3.15</b>	<b>Internal Tracking Tool</b>	<b>VHA</b>	<b>63 days</b>	<b>4/27/2018</b>	<b>6/30/2018</b>	
<b>3.16</b>	<b>Caseflow Software</b>	<b>VHA</b>				
<b>3.17</b>	<b>VACOLS</b>	<b>VHA</b>				
<b>3.18</b>	<b>Epics</b>	<b>VHA</b>	<b>65 days</b>	<b>3/26/2018</b>	<b>5/30/2018</b>	
3.18.1	Cross Reference VHA/VBA Congressional requirement in Public Law for VHA compliance differences	VHA				
3.18.2	Establish Independent VHA requirements (NON-VBA requirements)	VHA				
3.18.3	Establish SME for each VHA organization	VHA	1 day	3/26/2018	3/26/2018	
3.18.4	Receive updated current denial letter from SME's (with 8pt requirement from Veterans Appeals Improvement Modernization Act of 2017)	VHA	1 day	3/26/2018	3/26/2018	
3.18.5	Capture the business rule decision points from SME's and updated letters	VHA	5 days	4/2/2018	4/6/2018	
3.18.6	Populate Decision Point Library with all information provided from SME's	VHA	1 day	4/9/2018	4/9/2018	
3.18.7	Request Approval to send updated letters to OGC and Regulatory Affairs for Approval	VHA	1 day	4/9/2018	4/9/2018	
3.18.8	Meet Core Leadership team on Decision Point Library - Edit or disseminate to EPIC team	VHA	1 day	4/9/2018	4/9/2018	
3.18.9	Work with EPIC team to compile Decision Point Library into OIT EPIC template	VHA	5 days	4/9/2018	4/13/2018	
3.18.10	Work with EPIC team to compile Decision Point Library into OIT EPIC requirements document	VHA	5 days	4/9/2018	4/13/2018	
<b>4</b>	<b>Enabling Infrastructure</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>470 days</b>	<b>10/1/2017</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Office Space / Logistics</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>470 days</b>	<b>10/1/2017</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
4.1.1	Provide 931 work stations for Attorney Advisors and VLJs (920 current)	BVA	260 days	10/1/2017	6/15/2018	Complete
4.1.1.1	Refurbish the Research Center Space to provide 24 attorney work stations	BVA	365 days	10/1/2017	9/30/2018	In Progress
4.1.1.2	Refurbish the OIT space on the second floor (2E.515) to provide 14 attorney work stations	BVA	365 days	10/1/2017	9/30/2018	In Progress
4.1.1.3	Refurbish OIT space on the third floor (3E.402) to provide 21 attorney workstations	BVA	365 days	10/1/2017	9/30/2018	In Progress
4.1.1.4	Provide IT equipment to support 1050 work stations (monitors, docking stations, laptop computers, etc.)	BVA	365 days	10/1/2017	9/30/2018	In Progress
<b>4.1.2</b>	<b>Maintain telework (remote and <math>\geq</math>50 percent OUT workers) at 10 percent of workforce</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>470 days</b>	<b>10/1/2017</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>



<b>4.1.3</b>	<b>VHA Office Space/Logistics</b>	<b>VHA</b>	<b>277 days</b>	<b>2/26/2018</b>	<b>11/30/2018</b>	
4.1.3.1	Ongoing planning and collaboration with OA to meet the Standup's space needs	VHA	277 days	2/26/2018	11/30/2018	
4.1.3.2	Acquire Space		277 days	2/26/2018	11/30/2018	
4.1.3.3	Obtain furniture		277 days	2/26/2018	11/30/2018	
4.1.3.4.	FTE move into new finished space		277 days	2/26/2018	11/30/2018	
4.1.3.5	Obtain IT equipment for new Standup FTE and add telework bandwidth as needed (ongoing)		277 days	2/26/2018	11/30/2018	
4.1.3.6	Acquire facilities and equipment (OALC)		277 days	2/26/2018	11/30/2018	
4.1.3.7	EMS training		277 days	2/26/2018	11/30/2018	
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Hiring &amp; HR</b>		<b>277 days</b>	<b>1/18/2018</b>	<b>9/1/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>4.2.1</b>	<b>Board</b>	<b>BVA</b>				
4.2.1.1	Hire up to 1050 FTE by 09/01/2018 and sustain that level	BVA	255 days	1/18/2018	9/1/2018	In Progress
4.2.1.2	Hire up to 160 Attorney Advisors (~40/mo) FTE by 09/01/2018 and sustain	BVA	255 days	1/18/2018	9/1/2018	In Progress
<b>4.2.2</b>	<b>NCA</b>					
4.2.2.1	HLR Position - National Cemetery Administration	NCA		8/23/2017	4/6/2018	Complete
<b>4.2.3</b>	<b>VHA</b>					
4.2.3.1	Monitor and adjust appeal staffing	VHA	353 days	2/26/2018	02/14/2019	In Progress
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Contract Surge Support</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>133 days</b>	<b>4/1/2018</b>	<b>8/31/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
4.3.1	Board provides OAO with Actionable Acquisition Package	BVA	38 days	4/1/2018	5/7/2018	Complete
4.3.2	OAO Issues RFQ	BVA	28 days	6/1/2018	6/29/2018	Complete
4.3.3	Technical Evaluation Board - Phase 1	BVA	21 days	6/30/2018	7/20/2018	In Progress
4.3.4	Technical Evaluation Board - Phase 2	BVA	TBD			
4.3.5	Contract Award	BVA	41 days	7/21/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started
<b>5</b>	<b>Change Management Strategy</b>	<b>BVA</b>				
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Create Change Management Strategy and Plan</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>70 days</b>	<b>5/24/2018</b>	<b>7/31/2018</b>	<b>Complete</b>
5.1.1	Kick-Off / Interview list to create change management strategy and plan	BVA	1 day	5/24/2018	5/24/2018	Complete
5.1.2	Prepare draft of change management strategy and plan	BVA	35 days	5/28/2018	6/22/2018	Complete
5.1.3	Perform stakeholder analysis	BVA	57 days	6/4/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.4	Determine workstream activities	BVA	57 days	6/4/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress

5.1.5	Develop schedule of activities	BVA	57 days	6/4/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.6	Discuss change management strategy and plan with other groups and identify integration points	BVA	50 days	6/11/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.7	Gain Chairman approval on approach to change management strategy and plan	BVA	36 days	6/25/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.8	Finalize Change Management Strategy and Plan	BVA	36 days	6/25/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
<b>5.1.9</b>	<b>Execute Change Management Plan</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>291 days</b>	<b>6/11/2018</b>	<b>3/29/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>5.1.9.1</b>	<b>Strategic Communications Planning (Strat Comms_Change Plan tab for details)</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>25days</b>	<b>6/11/2018</b>	<b>7/6/2018</b>	<b>complete</b>
5.1.9.1.1	Assess appropriate communications products and venues	BVA	50 days	6/11/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.1.2	Assess appropriate sequencing and messaging for communications	BVA	50 days	6/11/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.1.3	Conduct Messaging Session to confirm messaging strategy for stakeholders	BVA	53 days	7/9/2018	8/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.1.4	Share approach with Board to discuss messaging consistency for overlap stakeholders	BVA	53 days	7/9/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.1.5	Finalize communication plan	BVA	33 days	6/28/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.1.7	Newsletters	BVA	211 days	8/1/2018	2/28/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.1.8	Town Halls	BVA	211 days	8/1/2018	2/28/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.1.9	Fact Sheets/Infographics	BVA	91 days	10/1/2018	12/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.1.10	Board External Website Updates	BVA	91 days	10/1/2018	12/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.1.11	Board Internal Website Updates	BVA	242 days	7/1/2018	2/28/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.1.12	Press Releases	BVA	242 days	7/1/2018	2/28/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.1.13	HeyVA Posts	BVA	242 days	7/1/2018	2/28/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.1.14	Social Media	BVA	242 days	7/1/2018	2/28/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.1.15	Hire/detail full time FTE for social media site posting and maintenance (dependency item)	BVA	83 days	7/9/2018	9/30/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.1.16	Create Board LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter Accounts	BVA	30 days	10/1/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.1.17	Pre-develop milestone-related social media posts (October 2018 - February 2019)	BVA	30 days	10/1/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.1.18	Monitor and respond to comments/tags/mentions on social media (work with Board social media FTE)	BVA	172 days	10/8/2018	3/29/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.1.19	<i>Training Communications: Support comms for 5.3.3 KM/Training - Q3 &amp; Q4 - (June 1 – August 31, 2018)</i>	BVA	61 days	7/1/2018	8/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.1.20	<i>Training Communications: Support comms for 5.3.4 KM/Training - Q4 - (September 1 – September 30, 2018)</i>	BVA	29 days	9/1/2018	9/30/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.1.21	<i>Training Communications: Support comms for 5.3.5 KM/Training - Q1 &amp; Q2 - (October 1, 2018 – February 14, 2019)</i>	BVA	150 days	10/1/2018	2/28/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.1.6	<b>Execute Strategic Communications (Strat Comms_Change Plan tab for details)</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>242 days</b>	<b>7/1/2018</b>	<b>2/28/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>

5.1.9.2.1	Review existing SharePoint site layout and content	BVA	26 days	7/5/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.2.2	Confirm with owners of areas that all material is still valid	BVA	30 days	8/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.2.3	Remove duplicate information	BVA	44 days	8/15/2018	9/28/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.2.4	Reformat SharePoint site	BVA	51 days	8/23/2018	10/13/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.2.5	Restructure content within each Group Heading	BVA	76 days	8/13/2018	10/28/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.2.6	Realign SharePoint to better meet Board staff needs	BVA	76 days	8/13/2018	10/28/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.2.7	Develop strategy for maintenance and upkeep	BVA	32 days	10/29/2018	11/30/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.2.8	Develop SOP associated with maintenance, and transition to the Board	BVA	32 days	10/29/2018	11/30/2018	Not Started
<b>5.1.9.2</b>	<b>SharePoint Maintenance - Change Management materials and access</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>234 days</b>	<b>7/9/2018</b>	<b>2/28/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>5.1.9.3</b>	<b>Sponsorship</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>291 days</b>	<b>6/11/2018</b>	<b>3/29/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
5.1.9.3.1	Assess needs and build sponsorship plan for Chairman Mason	BVA	50 days	6/11/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.3.2	Hold meetings with Appeals Modernization Project Team	BVA	256 days	7/16/2018	3/29/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.3.3	Attend Appeals Modernization Working Group meetings	BVA	256 days	7/16/2018	3/29/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.3.4	Hold office hours for all Board staff	BVA	256 days	7/16/2018	3/29/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.3.5	Conduct Board Town Halls	BVA	240 days	8/1/2018	3/29/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.3.6	Conduct routine frontline supervisor meetings	BVA	256 days	7/16/2018	3/29/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.3.7	Determine leadership/governance meetings for Key Leaders/Influencers	BVA	50 days	6/11/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.3.8	Share updates during leadership/governance meetings	BVA	256 days	7/16/2018	3/29/2019	In Progress
<b>5.1.9.4</b>	<b>Change Network and Coaching</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>269 days</b>	<b>6/4/2018</b>	<b>2/28/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
5.1.9.4.1	Review stakeholder analysis to identify key influencers, impacted stakeholders	BVA	57 days	6/4/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.4.2	Establish and gain necessary agreement on Change Network operating procedures and cadence	BVA	30 days	7/1/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.4.3	Meet with Board Mgmt. to determine Change Network (front line supervisor) members	BVA	30 days	7/1/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.4.4	Notify individuals of selection to change network	BVA	30 days	7/1/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.4.5	Prepare Change Network (front line supervisor) Kick-Off, Actions and Roles Deck	BVA	30 days	7/1/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.4.6	Prepare Change Network Sessions (front line supervisor) supporting materials (collaboration site, etc.)	BVA	242 days	7/1/2018	2/28/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.4.7	<i>KM/T: Set up collaboration site to maintain all CM/KM Training materials</i>	BVA	211 days	8/1/2018	2/28/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.4.8	Provide support to change network session #1	BVA	30 days	8/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.4.9	Provide support to future change network sessions	BVA	185 days	9/1/2018	2/28/2019	Not Started

5.1.9.4.10	Collect data on upcoming leadership development activities	BVA	30 days	7/1/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.4.11	Develop schedule of leadership development/coaching activities	BVA	30 days	8/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.4.12	Develop face-to-face group coaching workshop materials	BVA	30 days	8/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.4.13	Hold face-to-face group coaching workshop(s)	BVA	152 days	9/1/2018	1/31/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.4.14	Develop coaching tools	BVA	180 days	8/1/2018	1/31/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.4.15	Perform ad-hoc coaching activities	BVA	150 days	10/1/2018	2/28/2019	Not Started
<b>5.1.9.5</b>	<b>Change Readiness and Surveys</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>202 days</b>	<b>7/13/2018</b>	<b>1/31/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
5.1.9.5.1	Understand Board survey tools and cadences	BVA	18 days	7/13/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.5.2	Determine survey distribution timing based on milestone delivery	BVA	18 days	7/13/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.5.3	Define stakeholder sample groups	BVA	18 days	7/13/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.5.4	<i>Develop survey questions based on ADKAR (include KM/Training questions)</i>	BVA	18 days	7/13/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.5.5	Baseline Readiness Survey #1: Set Up, Execute and Monitor survey	BVA	5 days	8/13/2018	8/17/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.5.6	<i>KM/T: Collect, analyze, and distribute survey results</i>	BVA	11 days	8/20/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.5.7	Adjust CM and stakeholder focus based on survey results	BVA	11 days	8/20/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.5.8	Readiness Survey #2: Execute and Monitor survey	BVA	5 days	10/13/2018	10/17/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.5.9	<i>KM/T: Collect, analyze, and distribute survey results (include KM/Training questions)</i>	BVA	11 days	10/20/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.5.10	Adjust CM and stakeholder focus based on survey results	BVA	11 days	10/20/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.5.11	Readiness Survey #3: Execute and Monitor survey	BVA	30 days	1/1/2019	1/31/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.5.12	<i>KM/T: Collect, analyze, and distribute survey results (include KM/Training questions)</i>	BVA	30 days	1/1/2019	1/31/2019	Not Started
5.1.9.5.13	Adjust CM and stakeholder focus based on survey results	BVA	30 days	1/1/2019	1/31/2019	Not Started
<b>5.1.9.6</b>	<b>Branding</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>144 days</b>	<b>7/9/2018</b>	<b>11/30/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
5.1.9.6.1	Meet with Board staff to kick off brand development	BVA	5 days	7/9/2018	7/13/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.6.2	Develop Board logo and slogan (hashtag)	BVA	107 days	7/16/2018	10/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.6.3	Secure VA approval for logo and slogan (hashtag)	BVA	29 days	9/1/2018	9/30/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.6.4	Conduct Board staff voting on new logo and slogan (hashtag)	BVA	30 days	10/1/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.6.5	Finalize Board logo and style sheet	BVA	29 days	11/1/2018	11/30/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.6.6	Develop internal logo use guidance	BVA	29 days	11/1/2018	11/30/2018	Not Started
5.1.9.6.7	Finalize Veteran-facing documents/fact sheets/infographics to include new logo	BVA	29 days	11/1/2018	11/30/2018	Not Started

5.1.9.6.8	Update Board websites, social media sites, and documents to include new logo	BVA	29 days	11/1/2018	11/30/2018	Not Started
<b>5.1.9.7</b>	<b>Change Management Integration</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>304 days</b>	<b>5/29/2018</b>	<b>3/29/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
5.1.9.7.1	Meet with Project teams to gain sense on operational cadences	BVA	63 days	5/29/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.7.2	Determine weekly/monthly meeting cadences with KM/Training and Outreach teams	BVA	36 days	6/25/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.7.3	Determine weekly/monthly meeting cadences with other project teams	BVA	36 days	6/25/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.1.9.7.4	Execute meeting cadences with KM/T and Outreach teams	BVA	259 days	7/13/2018	3/29/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.7.5	Determine 30-day actions plans and support for Change Execution support (monthly basis)	BVA	259 days	7/13/2018	3/29/2019	In Progress
5.1.9.7.6	Meet with VHA to assess Board/VHA Change Management integration points	BVA	1 day	6/21/2018	6/21/2018	Complete
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Customer Service (Outreach)</b>	<b>VBA</b>				
5.2.0.1	Fiduciary Service Metrics Reporting System Complete	VBA	days	8/1/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started
5.2.0.2	Insurance Service Metrics Reporting System Complete	VBA	400 days	8/24/2017	9/28/2018	In Progress
5.2.0.3	Loan Guarantee Service Metrics Reporting System Complete	VBA	140 days	7/13/2018	11/30/2018	In Progress
5.2.0.4	Pension Service Metrics Reporting System Complete	VBA	91 days	8/1/2018	10/31/2018	Not Started
5.2.0.5	Compensation Service Metrics Reporting System Complete	VBA	days	8/28/2017	12/31/2018	In Progress
5.2.0.5	Vocational Rehabilitation Service Metrics Reporting System Complete	VBA	140 days	7/13/2018	11/30/2018	In Progress
5.2.0.6	Education Service Metrics Reporting System Complete	VBA	403 days	8/24/2018	10/1/2019	Not Started
<b>5.2.1</b>	<b>Board of Veterans' Appeals Insights &amp; Modernization Surveys</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>153 days</b>	<b>5/1/2018</b>	<b>9/30/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
5.2.2	Project Kickoff Meeting	BVA	1 day	5/1/2018	5/1/2018	Complete
5.2.3	Background Research (Understanding policies/procedures/changes)	BVA	60 days	5/2/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
5.2.4.	Program Existing Surveys into Medallia	BVA	30 days	6/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
5.2.5.	Statistical sampling methodology & access to sample data for existing surveys	BVA	30 days	6/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
5.2.6	Comm's, change mgmt. and training on use of Medallia system	BVA	31 days	7/1/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.2.7.	Board and VEO collaboration to determine final changes to survey questions	BVA	31 days	7/1/2018	7/31/2018	In Progress
5.2.8.	OMB approved Surveys	BVA	60 days	6/15/2018	8/15/2018	In Progress
5.2.9.	IT design & config., user acceptance testing of survey and Medallia dashboard	BVA	122 days	6/1/2018	9/30/2018	In Progress
5.2.10	User-tested surveys with AMA implementation consideration provided to Board	BVA	76 days	7/15/2018	9/30/2018	In Progress
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Knowledge Management (Training)</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>378 days</b>	<b>2/1/2018</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>5.3.1</b>	<b>Q2 2018 - (February 1 - March 31, 2018)</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>58 days</b>	<b>2/1/2018</b>	<b>3/31/2018</b>	<b>Complete</b>

5.3.1.1	Initial Change Management Meeting	BVA	1 day	3/7/2018	3/7/2018	Complete
5.3.1.2	Collect information regarding legacy process and new system process from Board & DS	BVA	58 days	2/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
5.3.1.3	Develop uniform structure for training materials, SOPs and other documents	BVA	58 days	2/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
5.3.1.4	Develop framework for large scale AMA training	BVA	37 days	2/1/2018	3/30/2018	Complete
5.3.1.5	Develop materials for large scale AMA training	BVA	58 days	2/1/2018	3/29/2018	Complete
5.3.1.6	Prepare materials for large scale AMA training	BVA	39 days	2/1/2018	3/30/2018	Complete
5.3.1.7	Complete training on RAMP with brief overview for administrative and support staff	BVA	58 days	2/1/2018	3/30/2018	Complete
5.3.1.8	Complete training on RAMP with brief overview of AMA for attorneys and VLJs	BVA	42 days	2/1/2018	3/14/2018	Complete
5.3.1.9	Complete training on RAMP with brief overview of AMA for VSOs	BVA	43 days	2/1/2018	3/15/2018	Complete
5.3.1.10	Initial process modeling for Board Appeals process	BVA	41 days	2/1/2018	3/13/2018	Complete
5.3.1.11	LRP meeting with Chiefs in Charge and Admin Branch Chiefs to discuss RAMP	BVA	1 day	3/15/2018	3/15/2018	Complete
5.3.1.12	Board-wide Training (BWT) - RAMP	BVA	1 day	3/15/2018	3/15/2018	Complete
5.3.1.13	BWT - RAMP	BVA	1 day	3/27/2018	3/27/2018	Complete
<b>5.3.2</b>	<b>Q3 - (April 1 - May 31, 2018)</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>60 days</b>	<b>3/27/2018</b>	<b>6/22/2018</b>	<b>Complete</b>
5.3.2.1	Distribute RAMP FAQ with answers to questions received from attorneys, judges, and administrative staff	BVA	1 day	4/3/2018	4/3/2018	Complete
5.3.2.2	Present large-scale AMA training to Board staff	BVA	1 day	4/4/2018	4/4/2018	Complete
5.3.2.3	Upload training documents and SOPs to SharePoint site	BVA	1 day	3/27/2018	3/27/2018	Complete
5.3.2.4	Review discuss, and edits contents of SOPs with each SME to ensure procedures memorialized in SOPs accurately reflect legacy appeals process	BVA	82 days	4/1/2018	6/22/2018	Complete
5.3.2.5	BWT - AMA and its impact on the Board (subject to CLM approval) (session 2)	BVA	1 day	4/3/2018	4/3/2018	Complete
5.3.2.6	Brown Bag Q & A Session on RAMP and AMA	BVA	1 day	4/9/2018	4/9/2018	Complete
5.3.2.7	BWT - The AMA and its impact on the Board (session 3 - repeat)	BVA	1 day	4/11/2018	4/11/2018	Complete
5.3.2.8	Create and update training materials for RAMP NOD identification and processing	BVA	7 days	5/8/2018	5/15/2018	Complete
5.3.2.9	RAMP NOD / AMA training for administrative staff	BVA	1 day	5/15/2018	5/15/2018	Complete
5.3.2.10	Update and release redline version of Title 38 of the U.S.C.	BVA	44 days	4/1/2018	5/15/2018	Complete
5.3.2.11	BWT - AMA and its impact on the Board (session 4 - repeat)	BVA	1 day	5/17/2018	5/17/2018	Complete
5.3.2.12	RAMP NOD / AMA training for administrative staff (session 2 - repeat)	BVA	1 day	5/17/2018	5/17/2018	Complete
5.3.2.13	Brown Bag Q & A Session on RAMP and AMA	BVA	1 day	5/30/2018	5/30/2018	Complete

5.3.2.14	Develop and update FAQ for AMA	BVA	51 days	4/30/2018	6/20/2018	Complete
<b>5.3.3</b>	<b>Q3 &amp; Q4 - (June 1 - August 31, 2018)</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>91 days</b>	<b>6/1/2018</b>	<b>8/31/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
5.3.3.1	Develop joint training with VSOs on AMA	BVA	91 days	6/1/2018	8/31/2018	In Progress
5.3.3.2	Develop Bootcamp materials for AMA	BVA	35 days	6/1/2018	7/6/2018	In Progress
5.3.3.3	Begin teaching newly hired attorneys AMA	BVA	1 day	7/10/2018	7/10/2018	In Progress
5.3.3.4	Brown Bag Q & A Session on RAMP and AMA	BVA	1 day	7/26/2018	7/26/2018	In Progress
5.3.3.5	Prepare redline versions of affected regulations	BVA	61 days	6/1/2018	8/1/2018	In Progress
5.3.3.6	Large-scale introductory training and exercise for all attorneys hired since January 2017 (mandatory)	BVA	1 day	8/7/2018	8/7/2018	Not Started
5.3.3.7	Large-scale introductory training and exercise for all attorneys hired since January 2017 (mandatory)	BVA	1 day	8/9/2018	8/9/2018	Not Started
5.3.3.8	Prepare in-depth training materials on proposed regulations implementing AMA for large-scale presentation	BVA	75 days	6/1/2018	8/15/2018	In Progress
5.3.3.9	Training for Senior Counsel in OAO	BVA	1 day	8/23/2018	8/23/2018	Not Started
5.3.3.10	Release BWT materials - FAQ, Hypotheticals	BVA	1 day	8/28/2018	8/28/2018	Not Started
5.3.3.11	BWT - AMA and its impact on the Board (session 5 - mandatory)	BVA	1 day	8/28/2018	8/28/2018	Not Started
5.3.3.12	BWT - AMA and its impact on the Board (session 6 - mandatory)	BVA	1 day	8/30/2018	8/30/2018	Not Started
<b>5.3.4</b>	<b>Q4 - (September 1-30, 2018)</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>176 days</b>	<b>9/1/2018</b>	<b>2/24/2019</b>	<b>Not Started</b>
5.3.4.1	Brown Bag Q & A Session on RAMP and AMA	BVA	1 day	9/6/2018	9/6/2018	Not Started
5.3.4.2	Release updated version of process map via SharePoint	BVA	1 day	9/30/2018	9/30/2018	Not Started
5.3.4.3	After notice and comment period concludes and regulations are promulgated, review in-depth training materials and implement any changes	BVA	30 days	9/1/2018	10/1/2018	Not Started
5.3.4.4	Train administrative staff on new Board processes as needed	BVA	176 days	9/1/2018	2/24/2019	Not Started
5.3.4.5	Create any additional training materials needed for Board RAMP	BVA	30 days	9/1/2018	10/1/2018	Not Started
5.3.4.6	BWT - AMA and its impact on the Board (session 7) - in-depth training on AMA procedures under the new regulations	BVA	1 day	10/18/2018	10/18/2018	Not Started
5.3.4.7	Brown Bag Q & A Session on RAMP and AMA	BVA	1 day	10/25/2018	10/25/2018	Not Started
<b>5.3.5</b>	<b>Q1 - Q2 FY 2019 (October 1, 2018 - February 14, 2019)</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>136 days</b>	<b>10/1/2018</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	<b>Not Started</b>
5.3.5.1	Begin RAMP program at Board	BVA	136 days	10/1/2018	2/14/2019	Not Started
5.3.5.2	Present SMEs with a survey to ensure procedures memorialized in SOPs and process map modules accurately reflect the legacy process and new system process	BVA	106 days	10/1/2018	1/15/2019	Not Started

5.3.5.3	Biweekly surveys to identify any missing training guidance or update existing training guidance	BVA	136 days	10/1/2018	2/14/2019	Not Started
5.3.5.4	Training for Senior Counsel in OAO	BVA	1 day	11/15/2018	11/15/2018	Not Started
5.3.5.5	BWT - AMA and its impact on the Board (session 7) - in-depth training on AMA procedures under the new regulations	BVA	1 day	12/6/2018	12/6/2018	Not Started
5.3.5.6	BWT - AMA and its impact on the Board (session 7) - in-depth training on AMA procedures under the new regulations	BVA	1 day	1/10/2019	1/10/2019	Not Started
5.3.5.7	Brown Bag Q & A Session on RAMP and AMA	BVA	1 day	1/24/2019	1/24/2019	Not Started
5.3.5.8	Brown Bag Q & A Session on RAMP and AMA	BVA	1 day	1/31/2019	1/31/2019	Not Started
5.3.5.9	Brown Bag Q & A Session on RAMP and AMA	BVA	1 day	2/7/2019	2/7/2019	Not Started
5.3.5.10	Brown Bag Q & A Session on RAMP and AMA	BVA	1 day	2/14/2019	2/14/2019	Not Started
<b>5.3.6</b>	<b>NCA Training</b>	<b>NCA</b>	<b>256 days</b>	<b>4/2/2018</b>	<b>12/14/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Reports</b>		<b>306 days</b>	<b>1/20/2018</b>	<b>11/15/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Congressional Quarterly Update Report (90-day Report)</b>		<b>306 days</b>	<b>1/20/2018</b>	<b>11/15/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
6.1.1	Q1 - February 19th Congressional Update	BVA	30 days	1/20/2018	2/20/2018	Complete
6.1.2	Q2 - May 23rd Congressional Update	BVA	65 days	3/19/2018	5/23/2018	Complete
6.1.3	Q3 - August 23rd Congressional Update	BVA	64 days	6/20/2018	8/23/2018	In Progress
6.1.4	Q4 - November 21st Congressional Update	BVA	67 days	9/13/2018	11/19/2018	Not Started
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Quarterly APG Update to OMB</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>294 days</b>	<b>1/31/2018</b>	<b>11/9/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
6.2.1	Q1 - February 7th APG Update	BVA	7 days	1/31/2018	2/7/2018	Complete
6.2.2	Q2 - May 4th APG Update	BVA	7 days	4/27/2018	5/4/2018	Complete
6.2.3	Q3 - August 10th APG Update	BVA	7 days	8/3/2018	8/10/2018	Not Started
6.2.4	Q4 - November 9th APG Update	BVA	7 days	11/2/2018	11/9/2018	Not Started
<b>7</b>	<b>RAMP &amp; Board AMA Test Programs</b>	<b>VBA/BVA</b>	<b>409 days</b>	<b>1/1/2018</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>RAMP Start Up</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>56 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/31/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.1	<b>RAMP Test Site/Tracking Requirements</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>22 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>9/27/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.1.1	Identify RAMP test sites (ARC and ROs)	VBA	22 days	9/5/2017	9/27/2017	Complete
7.2.1.2	Create protocol for employee credit/downtime (Phase II)	VBA	22 days	9/5/2017	9/27/2017	Complete
7.1.2.	<b>Document Labels</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>22 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>9/27/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>



7.1.2.1	Identify existing labels for tracking opt-in forms in eFolder	VBA	22 days	9/5/2017	9/27/2017	Complete
7.1.2.2	Define subject line for consistency (Update SOP)	VBA	22 days	9/5/2017	9/27/2017	Complete
7.1.3.	<b>Performance Metrics and Reporting</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>51 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/26/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.3.1.	Performance metrics for RAMP process	VBA	23 days	9/5/2017	9/28/2017	Complete
7.1.3.2.	RAMP Intake Processing (Letter Creator Development)	VBA	51 days	9/5/2017	10/26/2017	Complete
7.1.4.	<b>“Review Rights” form for RAMP decisions</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>52 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/27/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.4.1.	Letter explaining options after Veteran receives a decision under RAMP (Not required by 10/1)	VBA	17 days	9/5/2017	9/22/2017	Complete
7.1.4.2.	Opt-in form for an appeal to the Board	VBA	52 days	9/5/2017	10/27/2017	Complete
7.1.5.	<b>Training</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>55 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/30/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.5.1.	Public Contact Employees	VBA	17 days	9/5/2017	9/22/2017	Complete
7.1.5.2.	Provide RAMP training materials to VSOs and include periodic follow-ups	VBA	17 days	9/5/2017	9/22/2017	Complete
7.1.5.3.	Develop ARC Training Timeline	VBA	31 days	9/5/2017	10/6/2017	Complete
7.1.5.4.	In Person Training	VBA	48 days	9/5/2017	10/23/2017	Complete
7.1.5.6.	Develop Training Timeline for all claims processors	VBA	55 days	9/5/2017	10/30/2017	Complete
7.1.6.	<b>End Products (EP)/Claim Labels</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>56 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/31/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.6.1.	Identify Existing Eps - Using 682/683	VBA	14 days	9/5/2017	9/19/2017	Complete
7.1.6.2.	New claim labels to control HLR and supplemental claim elections.	VBA	52 days	9/5/2017	10/27/2017	Complete
7.1.6.3.	Delivery of 020/030 EPs	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.7.	<b>Stakeholder Notification</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>56 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/31/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.7.1.	VSO Notice (Emails) - Stakeholder kick-off call	VBA	55 days	9/5/2017	10/30/2017	Complete
7.1.7.2.	Attorney/Advocate Notice	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.7.3.	Union Notice (21 Days)	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.8.	<b>Communications</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>56 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/31/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.8.1.	NCC Call Scripts/FAQs on RAMP	VBA	22 days	9/5/2017	9/27/2017	Complete
7.1.8.2.	Communication for external/internal stakeholders	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.8.3.	Fact Sheets	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.9.	<b>Opt-in/Election Notice to Appellants</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>56 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/31/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>

7.1.9.1.	Letter explaining HLR and Supplemental Claim lanes and legal ramifications of participation in RAMP (1st Draft Complete)	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.9.2.	Determine the 500 appeals that will receive the Opt-In/Election Notice	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.9.3.	GC Feedback	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.9.4.	VSO Review	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.9.5.	HINES batch processing	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.9.6.	Mass mailing	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.9.7.	Add 1-800 number and 60-Day response to the Opt-In/Election Notice	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.9.8.	Caseflow Intake Development – MVP	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.9.9.	Tracking required for election responses	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.10.	<b>Policy Letter/SOP</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>56 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/31/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.10.1.	SOP/TIP Sheet with interim procedural guidance on processing elections	VBA	22 days	9/5/2017	9/27/2017	Complete
7.1.10.2.	Draft Policy Letter explaining RAMP	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
7.1.11.	<b>Higher-Level Review Decision Template</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>56 days</b>	<b>9/5/2017</b>	<b>10/31/2017</b>	<b>Complete</b>
7.1.11.1.	Draft Standard text for notification letters for DTA errors	VBA	13 days	9/5/2017	9/18/2017	Complete
7.1.11.2.	Draft Standard text for a higher-level review decision (rating and notification letter)	VBA	23 days	9/5/2017	9/28/2017	Complete
7.1.11.3.	Designate a decision label in VBMS-R for use by HLR	VBA	56 days	9/5/2017	10/31/2017	Complete
<b>7.2.</b>	<b>14.2 Roll Out</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>211 days</b>	<b>2/1/2018</b>	<b>8/31/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
7.2.1.	Kick Off Call with RAMP Expansion Sites	VBA	1 day	2/1/2018	2/1/2018	Complete
7.2.2.	RAMP Expansion Sites Kickoff Visits	VBA	4 days	2/5/2018	2/9/2018	Complete
7.2.3.	San Diego and Seattle Implement RAMP	VBA	27 days	3/1/2018	3/28/2018	Complete
7.2.4.	Stations 5,6,7,8,9, and 10 Implement RAMP	VBA	25 days	4/2/2018	4/27/2018	Complete
7.2.5.	Denver and Phoenix Implement RAMP	VBA	29 days	6/4/2018	7/3/2018	Complete
7.2.6.	Stations 11,12,13,14, and 15 Implement RAMP	VBA	30 days	8/1/2018	8/31/2018	Not Started
<b>7.3.</b>	<b>14.3 Mailings</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>395 days</b>	<b>11/1/2017</b>	<b>12/1/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
7.3.1.	1st Mailing (500 letters)	VBA	1 day	11/1/2017	11/1/2017	Complete
7.3.2.	2nd Mailing (5000 letters)	VBA	1 day	12/1/2017	12/1/2017	Complete
7.3.3.	3rd Mailing (10000 letters)	VBA	1 day	1/1/2018	1/1/2018	Complete

7.3.4.	4th Mailing (25000 letters)	VBA	1 day	2/1/2018	2/1/2018	Complete
7.3.5.	5th Mailing (25000 letters)	VBA	1 day	3/1/2018	3/1/2018	Complete
7.3.6.	6th Mailing (30000 letters)	VBA	1 day	4/1/2018	4/1/2018	Complete
7.3.7.	7th Mailing (30000 letters)	VBA	1 day	5/1/2018	5/1/2018	Complete
7.3.8.	8th Mailing (30000 letters)	VBA	1 day	6/1/2018	6/1/2018	Complete
7.3.9.	9th Mailing (30000 letters)	VBA	1 day	7/1/2018	7/1/2018	Complete
7.3.10.	10th Mailing (30000 letters)	VBA	1 day	8/1/2018	8/1/2018	Not Started
7.3.11.	11th Mailing (30000 letters)	VBA	1 day	9/1/2018	9/1/2018	Not Started
7.3.12.	12th Mailing (30000 letters)	VBA	1 day	10/1/2018	10/1/2018	Not Started
7.3.13.	13th Mailing (30000 letters)	VBA	1 day	11/1/2018	11/1/2018	Not Started
7.3.14.	14th Mailing (30000 letters)	VBA	1 day	12/1/2018	12/1/2018	Not Started
<b>7.4</b>	<b>14.4 Close Out</b>	<b>VBA</b>	<b>84 days</b>	<b>2/15/2019</b>	<b>5/10/2019</b>	<b>Not Started</b>
7.4.1.	Assess RAMP Results	VBA	56 days	2/15/2019	4/12/2019	Not Started
7.4.2.	Update Forecasts and Modeling	VBA	25 days	4/15/2019	5/10/2019	Not Started
<b>7.5</b>	<b>BEAAM</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>302 days</b>	<b>2/1/2018</b>	<b>11/30/2018</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
7.5.1.	Board coordinates with other VA offices, VSOs, and Congress to explore the option of establishing Board test programs	BVA	58 days	2/1/2018	3/31/2018	Complete
7.5.2.	BEAAM approved and communicated to other VA offices, VSOs, and Congress	BVA	29 days	4/1/2018	4/30/2018	Complete
7.5.3.	Up to 50 BEAAM participants identified by selected VSOs and asked to complete relevant review forms	BVA	60 days	5/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
7.5.4.	Board coordinate with ROs at Providence, Waco, and LA to set aside hearing dates for BEAAM participants as needed	BVA	60 days	5/1/2018	6/30/2018	Complete
7.5.5.	BEAAM NODs processed through Caseflow Intake at the Board	BVA	6 days	7/1/2018	7/7/2018	Complete
7.5.6.	BEAAM participants requesting hearings matched to reserved hearing dates	BVA	6 days	7/1/2018	7/7/2018	Complete
7.5.7.	Board begins to adjudicate BEAAM appeals on the direct review lane	BVA	84 days	7/8/2018	9/30/2018	In Progress
7.5.8.	Board holds hearings for BEAAM participants in hearing lane	BVA	84 days	7/8/2018	9/30/2018	In Progress
7.5.9.	Board begins to adjudicate BEAAM appeals on the evidence and hearing lanes	BVA	60 days	10/1/2018	11/30/2018	Not Started
7.5.10.	Board completes adjudication of all BEAAM appeals by late November	BVA	60 days	10/1/2018	11/30/2018	Not Started
<b>7.6</b>	<b>Board Implementation of RAMP</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>409 days</b>	<b>1/1/2018</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>

7.6.1.	Board receives post RAMP NODs, places these appeals in Caseflow queue, and sends notification letters to the appellants	BVA	273 days	1/1/2018	10/1/2018	In Progress
7.6.2.	Board begins to adjudicate RAMP appeals	BVA	136 days	10/1/2018	2/14/2019	Not Started
<b>8</b>	<b>Certification of Readiness</b>	<b>BVA</b>	<b>13 days</b>	<b>1/1/2019</b>	<b>1/14/2019</b>	<b>Not Started</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Complete Project</b>		<b>449 days</b>	<b>11/22/2017</b>	<b>2/14/2019</b>	<b>In Progress</b>

## Appendix B – Training Information

### VHA, NCA, and Board Training Information

The following table identifies the employees by position that will require additional training to administer the new claims and appeals system.

Administration	Employee Position
Veterans Health Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• File clerks</li> <li>• Program clerks</li> <li>• Claim adjudicators</li> <li>• Appeal adjudicators</li> <li>• First-level supervisors</li> </ul>
National Cemetery Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Specialists</li> <li>• Program Support Assistants</li> <li>• Program Analysts</li> <li>• Supervisory and Administrative Personnel</li> </ul>
Board of Veterans' Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterans Law Judges</li> <li>• Attorneys</li> <li>• Administrative Staff</li> </ul>

The following table identifies training by administration that VA will either create or update as part of implementing the new system.

Administration	Training Items
Veterans Health Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supplemental claim training</li> <li>• Higher-level review training</li> <li>• Remand training</li> <li>• Caseflow training</li> <li>• </li> </ul>
National Cemetery Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for Public-facing employees (including mandatory scripts)</li> <li>• Overview of Public Law 115-55</li> <li>• Handling of Claims and Appeals in New System Overview</li> <li>• Telephonic Conferences</li> <li>• Caseflow</li> <li>• Supplemental Claims</li> <li>• Higher-Level Reviews</li> <li>• Quality Assurance</li> <li>• Developing training for each stream</li> </ul>
Board of Veterans' Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and present internal processes to handle the receipt and tracking of NODs and withdrawals of appeals under the VBA RAMP pilot program</li> <li>• Developing training for broad overview of new appeals process for administrative and legal staff</li> </ul>

See Appendix A, IMS ID 5.3 for Board training schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="574 197 1321 264">• Developing training for each appeal stream, to include legacy appeals for new hires</li></ul>
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## VBA Full Implementation Training Information

Business Line	Title/Topic	TMS Number	Intended Audience/Category of Employees by Position	Training Development Date(s)	Training Deployment Date(s)	Delivery Method	Training Duration
Benefits Assistance Service	RAMP Training	4405105	National Call Center and Public Contact Team Employees	October 2017	October 31, 2017- November 9, 2017	Instructor-Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC PCR New Hire Appeals Process	1339474	New Hire National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor-Led	3 hours
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC PCR New Hire Status of Appeal	3838412	New Hire National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor-Led	5 hours
Benefits Assistance Service	NIRC PCR New Hire Status of Appeal	881528	New Hire National IRIS Response Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor-Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC PCR New Hire Understanding Rating Decisions & Notification Letters	3729193	New Hire National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor-Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC/NIRC PCR Refresher Appeals Process	3881571	National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor-Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	NCC/NPCC/NIRC PCR Refresher Status of Appeal	4406819 4406820	National Call Center PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor-Led	1 hour
Benefits Assistance Service	PCT PCR New Hire Appeals Process	TBD	New Hire Public Contact Team PCRs	TBD	PCT New Hire Curriculum is new and rollout date is TBD	Instructor-Led	TBD
Benefits Assistance Service	PCT PCR New Hire Status of Appeal	TBD	New Hire Public Contact Team PCRs	TBD	PCT New Hire Curriculum is new and rollout date is TBD	Instructor-Led	TBD
Benefits Assistance Service	PCT PCR New Hire Understanding Rating Decisions & Notification Letters	TBD	New Hire Public Contact Team PCRs	TBD	PCT New Hire Curriculum is new and rollout date is TBD	Instructor-Led	TBD
Benefits Assistance Service	PCT PCR Refresher Appeals Process	3881571	Public Contact Team PCRs	November 2018- December 2018	January 2019	Instructor-Led	1 hour
Education Service	How to Use Caseflow Tool	4179627	QTS, VCEs	August – September 2018	October – December 2018	TMS	.25 hour

Education Service	Education Service Processing Higher-Level of Reviews	TBD	QTS, C&L Staff	August – September 2018	October – December 2018	Virtual Training - TMS	.25 hour
Education Service	Education Service Processing Supplemental Claims	TBD	QTS, VCEs, C&L Staff	August – September 2018	October – December 2018	Virtual Training - TMS	.25 hour
Education Service	Education Service Appeals Modernization Overview	TBD	QTS, VCEs, NCC, C&L Staff, SCOs	June 2018	July 2018	Virtual Training - TMS	.5 hour
Education Service	Education Service Appeals Modernization Notification Requirements	TBD	QTS, VCEs, NCC, C&L Staff	August – September 2018	October – December 2018	Virtual Training - TMS	.25 hour
Education Service	Education Service Appeals Modernization Review Types and Forms	TBD	QTS, VCEs, NCC, C&L Staff, SCOs	August – September 2018	October – December 2018	Virtual Training - TMS	.5 hour
Education Service	Education Service Appeals Modernization Tracking Procedures	TBD	QTS, VCEs, C&L Staff	August – September 2018	October – December 2018	Virtual Training - TMS	.5 hour
Education Service	Addressing Board Remands Due to Appeals Modernization	TBD	QTS, C&L Staff	August – September 2018	October – December 2018	Virtual Training - TMS	.25 hour
Loan Guaranty Service	Surviving Spouse COE Issuance and Denials and Appeals on COEs Training	VA 4158931	Loan Specialist	October 2015	November 2015	Classroom	24 hours
Insurance Service	Overview	TBD	All Insurance Employees	May 2018	May 2018	Instructor-led	.5 hour
Insurance Service	Appeals Modernization Process – Flowchart	VA 4444111	Senior Veterans Claims Examiner (VCE) GS11 (8) Unit Chief GS12 (4) Section Chief (1) Division Chief (1) VCE GS7 (1) VCE GS9 (20) Senior VCE GS11 (6) Unit Chief GS12 (3) Section Chief (1)	May 10, 2018	November 5, 2018	Instructor-led	1 hour
Insurance Service	Appeals Modernization Regulations- Manual Updates	TBD	Senior Veterans Claims Examiner (VCE) GS11 (8) Unit Chief GS12 (4) Section Chief (1) Division Chief (1) VCE GS7 (1)	July 31, 2018	November 12, 2018	Instructor-led	1 hour



			VCE GS9 (20) Senior VCE GS11 (6)				
Insurance Service	Script for Frequently Asked Questions	TBD	VIPS-Call Center Employees	July 31, 2018	November 12, 2018	Instructor-led	.75 hour
Insurance Service	Appeal letters	TBD	Senior Veterans Claims Examiner (VCE) GS11 (8) Unit Chief GS12 (4) Section Chief (1) Division Chief (1) VCE GS7 (1) VCE GS9 (20) Senior VCE GS11 (6)	August 31, 2018	December 3, 2018	Instructor-led	1 hour
Insurance Service	Appeals Tracking Tools: VACOLS, Caseflow & VBMS Light	TDB	Senior Veterans Claims Examiner (VCE) GS11 (8) Unit Chief GS12 (4) Section Chief (1) Division Chief (1) VCE GS7 (1) VCE GS9 (20) Senior VCE GS11 (6)	November 30, 2018	December 17, 2018	Instructor-led	1 hour
Insurance Service	Casework	TBD	Senior Veterans Claims Examiner (VCE) GS11 (8) Unit Chief GS12 (4) Section Chief (1) Division Chief (1) VCE GS7 (1) VCE GS9 (20) Senior VCE GS11 (6)	December 31, 2018	January 14, 2019	Instructor-led	2 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Duty to Assist (Intermediate)	1197931	Pension management center (PMC) employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Standardized VA Forms Part I	3914056	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	.75 hour
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Standardized VA Forms Part II	3914064	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	.75 hour
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Orientation	4179826	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	7 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Processing	4180046	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	6.25 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals DRO Review Process	4180677	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	3 hours

Pension & Fiduciary Service	Introduction to Appeals	4193050	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	1.5 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals: SOC and SSOC	4179841	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	2 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Overview	4194306	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual Training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Modernization Overview	TBD	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Addressing Board Remands due to Appeals Modernization	TBD	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	2 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing Higher-Level Reviews	TBD	PMC DROs	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	3 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing Supplemental Claims	TBD	PMC employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	How to use Caseload	TBD	PMC Claims Assistants and Veteran Service Reps	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Nov 2018	Virtual training	1 hour
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Appeals Modernization Overview	TBD	Fiduciary hub employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	4 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Beneficiary Fiduciary Field System (BFFS) Appeals Workflow	TBD	Fiduciary hub employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	3 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing Higher-Level Reviews	TBD	GS-11 FSRs, Fiduciary hub coaches and assistant coaches	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	3 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing Supplemental Claims	TBD	Fiduciary hub employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	3 hours
Pension & Fiduciary Service	Processing Board Remands	TBD	Fiduciary hub employees	August 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018	Dec 2018	Virtual and Live training	2 hours
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	How to Use Caseload Tool	4179627	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), VRCs, and Program Support Personnel	Already developed	Already Deployed	On-line via TMS	1 hour
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals Modernization Overview	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation	Already developed	May – June 2018	Instructor led, web-based training	1 hour

			Counselors (VRC), and VRCs				
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals Modernization Notification Requirements	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), and VRCs	Start development in April 2018	July – August 2018	Instructor led, web-based training	1 hour
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals Modernization Review Types and Forms	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), and VRCs	Start development in April 2018	July – August 2018	Instructor led, web-based training	1 hour
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals Modernization Tracking Procedures	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), and VRCs	Start development in May 2018	September – October 2018	Instructor led, web-based training	1 hour
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service	VR&E Appeals EPSS	TBD	VR&E Officers, Assistant Officers, Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), and VRCs	Start development in May 2018	November – December 2018	Self-paced on-line training	Self-paced

## Appendix C – Outreach

FY-Quarter	Completed Outreach Task Date	Outreach/Communication Activities
FY 2018-Quarter 1	October 23, 2017: <i>NACVSO presentation</i>	Presentation to the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) on RAMP and Appeals modernization. NACVSO represents approximately 1,800 service officers from 36 states as well as Native American Tribes.
FY 2018-Quarter 1	November 1, 2017: <i>Deployed call scripts to NCC</i>	<p>Phase one of RAMP began with an initial mailing to 500 Veterans.</p> <p>National Call Center (NCC) scripts and frequently asked questions were released to call center agents on RAMP and Appeals Modernization.</p>
FY 2018-Quarter 1	November 2, 2017: <i>VA's Appeals Website Launched</i>	<p>On November 2<sup>nd</sup> VA released an appeals modernization website. Located at <a href="https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp">https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp</a>, the website, easily assessable from VA's homepage, provides Veterans with information on various aspects of appeals modernization. Moreover, through additional links, the website provides information on the Act, VA's implementation plan, and RAMP.</p> <p>To improve visibility of the site and provide better content to Veterans and other stakeholders, VA worked to make the page accessible through web based search engines (e.g. google) through various search optimization features.</p>
FY 2018-Quarter 1	November 2, 2017: <i>Social Medial Posts about RAMP and Appeals Modernization</i>	<p>VA released a blog article, as well as Facebook and Twitter Posts on RAMP and appeals modernization</p> <p><i>VAntage Point</i> is the official blog of VA. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, VA posted an article on RAMP and appeals modernization "<i>VA launches program aimed at providing Veterans more options in claims disagreements</i>" <a href="https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/42745/va-launches-program-aimed-providing-veterans-options-claims-disagreements/">https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/42745/va-launches-program-aimed-providing-veterans-options-claims-disagreements/</a>.</p> <p>With a community of over 540,000 total followers, VBA's Facebook, page is excellent platform to inform Veterans and other stakeholders of RAMP and Appeals Modernization. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, VA posted a message through this platform on RAMP and appeals modernization</p>

		<p><a href="https://www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits/">https://www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits/</a>.</p> <p>With a community of over 629,000 total followers, VA’s Twitter feed is excellent platform to inform Veterans and other stakeholders of RAMP and Appeals Modernization. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, VA posted a message through this platform on RAMP and appeals modernization <a href="https://twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs/status/926162296811945984">https://twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs/status/926162296811945984</a>.</p>
FY 2018-Quarter 1	November 3, 2017: <i>Internal communication products released to VA employees</i>	<p>VA released internal communication products tailored to inform employees about RAMP and appeals modernization.</p> <p>“VA Insider,” is an internal informational website that is used Department-wide to inform employees about important agency information. VA Insider is available to all 377,000 VA employees. On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, VA released a post designed to inform employees on RAMP and appeals modernization. “VA Launches Program Aimed at Resolving Appeals Earlier” <a href="https://myva.va.gov/va-launches-program-aimed-at-resolving-appeals-earlier/">https://myva.va.gov/va-launches-program-aimed-at-resolving-appeals-earlier/</a>.</p> <p>HeyVBA is an internal informational website that is used within VBA to inform employees about important administration information. HeyVBA is available to all 27,000 VBA employees. VBA released a post designed to inform employees on RAMP and appeals modernization. “VA Launches Program Aimed at Resolving Appeals Earlier” <a href="http://vaww.blog.va.gov/heyvba/?p=9461">http://vaww.blog.va.gov/heyvba/?p=9461</a>.</p>
FY 2018-Quarter 1	November 5, 2017: <i>VFW Presentation</i>	<p>Presentation to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Service Offices, during their National Advanced Skills Training on RAMP and appeals modernization. VFW is one of the Nation’s largest organizations of combat Veterans.</p>
FY 2018-Quarter 1	November 23, 2017: <i>Internal communication products released to VA employees</i>	<p>VA released additional internal communication products tailored to inform employees about RAMP and appeals modernization.</p> <p>“VA Insider,” is an internal informational website that is used Department wide to inform employees about important agency information. VA Insider is available to all 377,000 VA employees. On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, VA released a post designed to inform employees on RAMP and appeals modernization. “VA Works to Modernize Appeals Process to Meet Secretary Shulkin’s Priority of</p>

		<i>Improving Timeliness</i> ” <a href="https://myva.va.gov/va-works-to-modernize-appeals-process-to-meet-secretary-shulkins-priority-of-improving-timeliness/">https://myva.va.gov/va-works-to-modernize-appeals-process-to-meet-secretary-shulkins-priority-of-improving-timeliness/</a> .
FY 2018-Quarter 1	December 9, 2017: Speaking event	Chairman of the Board gave remarks to the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) 6th District National Executive Committee, Roanoke, VA.
FY 2018-Quarter 1	December 14, 2017: <i>Social Media Blogs added</i>	VA released additional blog content tailored to inform Veterans and other stakeholders about RAMP and appeals modernization.  <i>VAntage Point</i> is the official blog of VA. On December 14 <sup>th</sup> , VA posted an article on RAMP and appeals modernization “ <i>VA launches program to resolve compensation appeals sooner</i> ” <a href="https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/43798/va-launches-program-resolve-compensation-appeals-sooner/">https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/43798/va-launches-program-resolve-compensation-appeals-sooner/</a> .
FY 2018-Quarter 2	January 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up mailings</i>	VA mailed follow-up letters to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The letters were mailed to approximately 5,500 Veterans from the November and December mailing cohorts.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	January 22, 2018: <i>Information e-mail</i>	Informational e-mail on appeals modernization and RAMP. This e-mail was sent to RAMP over 150,000 eligible Veterans.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	January 22, 2018: <i>Follow-up e-mail</i>	A follow-up e-mail to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The e-mails were sent to Veterans in the November and December mailing cohorts.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	January 23, 2018: <i>Updated training provided</i>	Training on RAMP and appeals modernization provided to VBA outreach specialists at the National Outreach Training Call.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	January 25, 2018: <i>Communication packages</i>	Communications packages were e-mailed to every VBA RO director. The packages contained updated information regarding appeals modernization and RAMP which are suitable for briefing VA stakeholders, employees, and Veterans.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	January 25, 2018: <i>VSO presentations</i>	Presentation at the bi-annual VSO/Military Service Organization Summit on RAMP and appeals modernization.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	January 30, 2018: <i>Conference Call on Town Halls</i>	A conference call was conducted with all VBA RO directors. They were asked to conduct town halls to communicate appeals modernization and RAMP to both

		VBA employees, Veteran Service Officers, and other necessary stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	January 31, 2018: <i>Social media</i>	VA released an additional Facebook communication product on RAMP and Appeals modernization  With a community of over 540,000 total followers, VBA's Facebook, page is excellent platform to inform Veterans and other stakeholders of RAMP and Appeals Modernization. On January 31 <sup>st</sup> , VA posted a message through this platform on RAMP and appeals modernization <a href="https://www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits/">https://www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits/</a> .
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 5-9, 2018: <i>Expansion of RAMP communications</i>	RAMP start-up phase is expanded to other ROs (closing out start-up phase, beginning of phase II "expansion phase").  Town halls were conducted with outreach personnel, Veterans Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders at Phoenix, Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego (see attached outreach schedule).
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up letters</i>	VA mailed follow-up letters to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The letters were mailed to approximately 10,000 Veterans from the January mailing cohort.
FY2018-Quarter 2	January 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up e-mails</i>	VA sent follow-up e-mails to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The e-mails were sent to Veterans from the January mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 15,2018: <i>Informational Presentations</i>	Presentation on AMA and RAMP to Federal Depository Librarians (U.S. Government Printing Office).
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 20-23, 2018: <i>Expansion of RAMP Communications</i>	RAMP training and outreach visits to Denver and Seattle ROs. Town halls were conducted with outreach personnel, Veterans Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.  Walk-in RAMP elections now possible at the Phoenix, San Diego, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Seattle ROs.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 24, 2018	Winston-Salem RO Director participates in a panel on UNC-TV's <i>Situation Report</i> in which he discusses several VA initiatives, including Appeals Modernization.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 26, 2018	Chairman of the Board attended National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs "Advocate of the Year" Luncheon.

FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 26, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	Chairman of the Board gave remarks at The American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Training.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	February 26-28, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	Outreach conducted at the following events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DAV Mid-winter Conference</li> <li>• American Legion National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meeting</li> <li>• National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), Winter Conference</li> <li>• RAMP Congressional Caseworker Briefing</li> <li>• Joint AMO/Board Engagement Meeting</li> </ul>
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 1, 2018: <i>VSO Communications</i>	Sacramento CVSO Conference. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veterans Service Officers.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 8, 2018: <i>VSO Communications</i>	Presentation at the VBA/VSO biweekly meeting on RAMP and appeals modernization. VBA/VSO biweekly meeting is a regularly scheduled meeting where there are numerous national VSO representatives.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 15, 2018: <i>VSO Communications</i>	Presentation at DAV's Mid-Winter Conference on RAMP and appeals modernization. The 2018 Mid-Winter conference in Crystal City gathers DAV leadership from across the country and is organized by the DAV Commanders and Adjutants Association.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 15, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	Presentation to Senate Staff and Congressional Caseworkers on RAMP and appeals modernization.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up letters</i>	VA mailed follow-up letters to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The letters were mailed to Veterans from the February mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up e-mails</i>	VA sent follow-up e-mails to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The e-mails were sent to Veterans from the February mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 16, 2018	Direct Outreach with VA DVS. Resulted in approximately 100 RAMP elections.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 16-18, 2018	Chairman of the Board attended National Organization of Veterans Advocates conference.
FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 21, 2018	Direct Outreach with San Bernardino County Veterans Services. Persuaded VSO to consider RAMP for newer NODs.



FY 2018-Quarter 2	March 21-23, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	VA leadership visits to Waco, San Antonio, and Houston, Texas. Briefings and training was conducted with outreach personnel, Veterans Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders, to include Texas Veterans Commission.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	March 23, 2018	VA issued a press release to announce the launch of the appeals status tracker on Vets.gov: <i>VA and U.S. Digital Service Launch New Web Tool to Help Veterans Track their Benefits Appeals</i> , available at: <a href="https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=4030">https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=4030</a> .
FY 2018-Quarter 3	March 26, 2018	VR&E Service update inter/intranet sites with links to new appeals system.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 5, 2018: <i>Improved Web communications</i>	VA.gov updated with addition information on RAMP (Opt-In Form added to the site).
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 10, 2018: VSO <i>Communications</i>	VA leadership briefing at MN CVSO Conference on RAMP and appeals modernization.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 11, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	AMO Director visits St. Paul VARO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veterans Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 12, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	Chairman of the Board appeared on a panel at the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Bar Association conference.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 13, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	Chairman of the Board gave remarks to the Vietnam Veterans of America National Veterans Benefits Committee
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up letters</i>	VA mailed follow-up letters to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The letters were mailed to Veterans from the March mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up e-mails</i>	VA sent follow-up e-mails to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The e-mails were sent to Veterans from the March mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 16, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	VBA Directors Symposium. Information was given to RO leadership on communicating appeals modernization with local VSOs, and employees.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 17, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	Presentation at HVAC Roundtable to House Staffers and Congressional Caseworkers on RAMP and appeals modernization. VSOs were in attendance for feedback and collaboration.

FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 23, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	VA leadership visits Atlanta RO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veterans Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 25, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	VA leadership visits St. Petersburg VARO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Services Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	April 26, 2018	VR&E Service provided overview of new appeals system to their Field Advisory Change Committee.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 5, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	VA leadership visits San Juan VARO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veterans Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 7-11, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	Chairman of the Board attended a training for the Florida Department of Veterans Services and County Veterans Service Officers.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 9, 2018: <i>VSO Communications</i>	VA leadership visits Florida DVA Annual Conference. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veteran Service Officers.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 9, 2018	Vantage Point blog published, "VA's Rapid Appeals Modernization Program now open to all appeals," which was posted to VBA's Facebook and Twitter pages. <a href="https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/48141/vas-rapid-appeals-modernization-program-ramp-now-open-appeals/">https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/48141/vas-rapid-appeals-modernization-program-ramp-now-open-appeals/</a> .
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 14-18, 2018	Chairman of the Board visited Jackson VARO and attended Gold Star Family events.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up letters</i>	VA mailed follow-up letters to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The letters were mailed to Veterans from the April mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up e-mails</i>	VA sent follow-up e-mails to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The e-mails were sent to Veterans from the April mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 15, 2018: <i>VSO Communications</i>	VA leadership attends Arkansas County Veterans Service Officers conference to provide RAMP VSO Training.

FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 16, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	VA leadership visits Little Rock VARO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veterans Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 16, 2018	VBA began promoting a RAMP Facebook Live event via VBA's Facebook community of 540,000 total followers.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 18, 2018: <i>Social Media</i>	Live streaming "Facebook Live Event" on RAMP and appeals modernization.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 29-31, 2018	VA Insurance Center hosted several Employee Engagement Sessions that included a module on an introduction to the Appeals Modernization Act and the related changes that will impact Insurance processing of appeals.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	May 31, 2018	VBA featured the 5/16 Facebook Live event again as a new post on the VBA Facebook page, to those who may have missed it previously.
FY2018-Quarter 3	June 6, 2018	Published the "Comprehensive Plan for Processing Legacy Appeals and Implementing the Modernized Appeals System" quarterly report on the appeals modernization website.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	June 6-8, 2018: <i>VSO Communications</i>	Chairman of the Board attended National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) convention in Reno, NV.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	June 7, 2018: <i>VSO Communications</i>	VA leadership presents at the NACVSO 28 <sup>th</sup> Annual Training Conference and Business Meeting in Reno, NV.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	June 7, 2018: <i>Stakeholder Communications</i>	VA leadership visits Winston-Salem VARO. Briefings were conducted with outreach personnel, Veterans Service Officers, local congressional staff, and other stakeholders.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	June 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up letters</i>	VA mailed follow-up letters to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The letters were mailed to Veterans from the May mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	June 15, 2018: <i>Follow-up e-mails</i>	VA sent follow-up e-mails to Veterans who have received a RAMP opt-in letter. The e-mails were sent to Veterans from the May mailing cohort.
FY 2018-Quarter 3	June 18, 2018	VBA's Benefits Bulletin was sent to 5,609,920 recipients. It featured a blurb and link to the 5/18 RAMP Facebook Live event.

FY 2018 Quarter 3	June 20-22, 2018	Chairman of the Board attended the Federal Circuit Bench and Bar conference in San Diego, CA.
FY 2018 Quarter 3	June 21, 2018	Published the RAMP fact sheet, infographic, brochure, and poster on the VBA appeals modernization website.
FY 2018 Quarter 3	June 22, 2018: <i>Improved Communication Materials distributed</i>	VA distributed a suite of Veteran centric engagement and communication materials to inform Veterans, their families, VSOs, and other stakeholders, of the benefits of RAMP. These materials were sent to VBA ROs and public contact teams.
FY 2018 Quarter 3	June 25, 2018: <i>Social Media</i>	RAMP Informational video link distributed through social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter). The informational video is available on YouTube ( <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1gpMf6QyPE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1gpMf6QyPE</a> ).
FY 2018- Quarter 4	July 12, 2018	VA issued press release, <i>VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals Using Innovative Tools to Make a Record Number of Decisions</i> , available at: <a href="https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5083">https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5083</a> .
FY 2018- Quarter 4	July 18, 2018	VSO Communicators meeting. VBA briefs on latest metrics concerning RAMP.
FY 2018- Quarter 4	July 19, 2018	Chairman of the Board participated in the Federal Circuit Bar Association webinar: <i>A Conversation with the Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals</i> .
FY 2018- Quarter 4	August 6-8, 2018	VR&E Service provided training and outreach to all VR&E field Officers.
FY 2018- Quarter 4	August 7-8, 2018	Chairman of the Board gave remarks at congressional event in Evansville, Indiana.
FY 2018- Quarter 4	August 20-21, 2018	Chairman of the Board gave remarks at Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs.
FY 2018- Quarter 4	August 20-24, 2018	E-mail message to Veterans commemorating one year since enactment of the Appeals Modernization Act. Media Roundtable with reporters who cover Veteran issues.
FY 2018- Quarter 4	August 22, 2018 <i>VSO Communications</i>	Chairman of the Board gave remarks at DAV National Area Supervisors Training.
FY 2018- Quarter 4	August 23, 2018	Satellite Media Tour with AMO Director to discuss VBA's progress one year since enactment of the Appeals Modernization Act.

FY 2018-Quarter 4	August 24-27, 2018	Chairman of the Board gives remarks at The American Legion National Convention and visited St. Paul VARO.
FY 2018-Quarter 3-4	July - September	VA leadership will continue outreach with stakeholder groups. This outreach will include visits and briefings at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philadelphia, Nashville, Montgomery, Cleveland, and Detroit VAROs;</li> <li>• Georgia State Department of Veterans Affairs (SDVA), Las Vegas County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) Conference; National American Legion Conference in Minneapolis; and</li> <li>• Veteran Advocacy Meeting with congressional stakeholders.</li> </ul>
FY 2018-Quarter 4	September 10-12, 2018	Chairman of the Board gives remarks at Wyoming Veterans Commission State Training.
FY 2018-Quarter 4	September 12-14, 2018	Chairman of the Board gives remarks at Ohio Department of Veterans Affairs Conference.
FY 2018-Quarter 4	September 16-18, 2018	Chairman of the Board visits Nashville VARO.
FY 2018-Quarter 4	September 24-25, 2018	Chairman of the Board visits Portland VARO.
FY 2018-Quarter 4	September 26-28, 2018	Chairman of the Board visits and gives remarks at Seattle VARO.
FY 2019-Quarter 1	October 1, 2018	Closing phase of RAMP. Outreach includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media releases;</li> <li>• Updates to National Call Center scripts as necessary (internal); and</li> <li>• Updates as necessary to VA.gov webpage on Appeals Modernization.</li> </ul>
FY 2019-Quarter 1	October 4-6, 2018	Chairman of the Board gives remarks to Paralyzed Veterans of America chapter in Orlando, FL.
FY 2019-Quarter 1	October 10-12, 2018	Chairman of the Board gives remarks at County Veterans Service Officer training in Columbus, MS.
FY 2019-Quarter 1	October 15-17, 2018	Chairman of the Board gives remarks at County Veterans Service Officer training in Fargo, ND.
FY 2019-Quarter 2	January 14, 2019	<i>Secretary Certifies that he is ready to implement.</i>
FY 2019-Quarter 2	February 14, 2019	<i>Full implementation of the new law.</i> Outreach and communication includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web communication on internet sites such as VA.gov, and other VAs social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.);</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communications through regular mail, e-mail, print, and traditional media outlets;</li><li>• FAQs for National VA Call Center and Public Contact representatives (internal)</li><li>• Town halls with VA employees; and</li><li>• Presentations at community-based events such as state fairs, VA stand-downs and other outreach activities.</li></ul>
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