

1 **Texas Veterans Network: Supporting Veterans through a Community-Based Network of**
2 **Services and Supports**
3 **Discussion Paper**

4 **Background**

5 Texas is home to approximately 1.5 million veterans, and that number grows each year with as
6 many as 25,000 transitioning service members remaining in or returning to Texas. Veterans
7 provide a pipeline of talent to the state and need our support transitioning to civilian life and
8 employment.

9 The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), various other state agencies, several community-
10 based and veterans service organizations (VSO) provide support to veterans. These providers
11 need the ability to work collaboratively to ensure that veterans and their families have access to
12 financial, employment, legal, medical, housing, training, education, vocational rehabilitation,
13 mental health, and counseling services.

14 **Issue**

15 The service offerings to Texas veterans are numerous and broad but are currently not centralized.
16 Additionally, as veterans seek assistance, VSO and community-based organizations are not
17 aware of the services that a veteran has received and referrals that have been made. As a result,
18 efforts to identify opportunities and address barriers can be impeded, particularly when a veteran
19 moves to a nearby community or to another region of the state.

20 A network of organizations that records services received, referrals made, and services available
21 in a single shared referral system, regardless of the veteran's location, will ensure that veterans
22 are offered access to applicable services and can fully integrate into their communities. This
23 collaboration would be more seamless with a coordinated support services network.

24 In 2019, TWC facilitated the establishment of the Texas Veterans Network (TVN) through a
25 Request For Applications (RFA) process. Two grantees were awarded \$2 million each for a
26 three-year contract to establish a statewide referral network. These grants will expire on April 1,
27 2023. Going forward, additional resources will be made available to a single grantee to establish
28 a more robust statewide referral network.

29 **Recommendation**

30 Staff recommends awarding a multi-year grant to a single grantee for the creation of a statewide
31 veterans' referral network.

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33 Up to \$2 million in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act statewide funds will be used to
34 secure a single grantee, through the RFA process, to establish a statewide referral network of
35 Veterans Coordinators who will:

- 36 • establish strong working partnerships across the state in communities with VSO and
37 community-based organizations that provide services to veterans;
- 38 • establish strong working partnerships with the 28 Local Workforce Development Boards
39 (Boards);
- 40 • convene and facilitate meetings among these veteran service organizations, community-
41 based organizations, and Boards to ensure collaboration and coordination;

- 1 • leverage existing partner coalitions and advisory committees and expand existing veteran
2 networks;
- 3 • develop and maintain a process to track direct referrals among local community partners
4 in the TVN;
- 5 • develop policies and procedures to gather, track, and securely store veterans' data across
6 multiple organizations using a shared system;
- 7 • identify and implement enhancements to the shared system as challenges and
8 opportunities for growth arise; and
- 9 • develop a sustainability plan to ensure the continuation of a statewide veterans' referral
10 network after the grant expires.