

2022-2023 Annual Report

of the Washington State

Veterans Employee Resource Group (VERG)



**Veterans Employee
Resource Group**

Background

In May 2013, Governor Inslee issued his first Executive Order, [13-01 VETERANS TRANSITION SUPPORT](#), which states: “...effective immediately, hereby order and direct. Veterans Employee Resource Group... The Office of Financial Management, State Human Resources Division will convene a cross-agency group of veterans in state service to provide advice and assistance on veteran recruitment, retention, and development strategies. Executive cabinet agencies shall provide assistance by providing volunteers and supporting approved initiatives.”

In July of 2019, Governor Inslee issued Executive Order, [19-01 VETERAN AND MILITARY FAMILY TRANSITION AND READINESS SUPPORT](#). This updated Executive Order now covers all State Employee Resource Groups to “convene and support a cross-agency employee-led resource groups or groups to promote recruitment, retention, and development of veterans and military spouses in state government. DVA will provide executive sponsorship for the group or groups. Executive cabinet agencies will support employee participation in the group or groups and approved initiatives. Agencies are encouraged to sponsor agency-level resource groups, and either include military spouses in their veteran groups or create separate military spouse groups.”

The statewide VERG exists to help integrate the experience, values, and knowledge of both veterans and service members in state employment. This Employee Resource Group supports existing state employees who have served as members of the armed forces through recognition, resource identification, and mentorship. As well as focus on the following goals:

- Recruit veterans and their spouses to state service through outreach and educational activities
- Retain veterans and their spouses by providing a support structure, education, and career progression assistance
- Recognize veterans and their families by planning annual activities that honor their military and state service

As the state has continued to adjust to a post pandemic new normal, the VERG has played an integral role in bringing people together. Veterans, their spouses, and families, know how to do hard things. They know how to focus on the mission and overcome obstacles in the way. Most importantly, they know how to care for and take care of each other. Members of the groups were able to come together around the shared mission of “Recruit, Retain, Recognize”.

2022-2023 Leadership as elected August 2022

Executive Board consisted of:

Chair: Larry Delgado (DFW)

1st Co-Chair: John Pestinger (OIC)

2nd Co-Chair: Julie Laney (HCA)

Secretary: Angela Petty (DSHS)

Executive Sponsor: Mary Forbes (WDVA)

OFM SHR Advisor: Indira Melgarejo (OFM)

Past Chair: Daniel Eckroth (DOL)

Treasurer: OFM did accounting of finances

2022-2023 Committees

- Recruitment – Angela Petty (DSHS)
- Retention – Rathapol “Jay” Chullanandana (DDS)
- Recognition – Debra Trickler (DSHS) / Thomas DiGiorgio (ESD)
- Marketing and Communication – Cory McLaughlin (DOC) / Jasmine Remick (EQUITY) / Joan Mebane (WDVA)
- Community Outreach – VACANT
- Veteran Integration – Amanda Torres (DOL)
- Military Spouse – Sarah MacLeod (DSHS)

2022-2023 Membership

- General Meeting attendees: 20-50
- Email list at GovDelivery: ~2,000
- [LinkedIn Group](#) Membership: 1047
- [LinkedIn Organization Page](#) Followers: 180

2022-2023 Significant Accomplishments

The VERG significantly advanced the intent of Executive Order 13-01 and Executive Order 19-01 through achievements and collaborations with its members and partners. The VERG has sponsored, hosted, and/or participated in multiple activities promoting veteran and spouse statewide workgroup partnerships, employment, development, and retention. The year started with:

- Electing new VERG leadership and revising the Charter and By-Laws to include a second Co-Chair.
- Based on our work over the years, we really started to see and incorporate into our meetings the experiences of those Veterans (and Spouses) that have gotten into State government through their networking with the VERG.
- Continued collaboration with other BRG leadership boards to talk about how to support one another, share ideas, and put together a list of needs regarding resources.

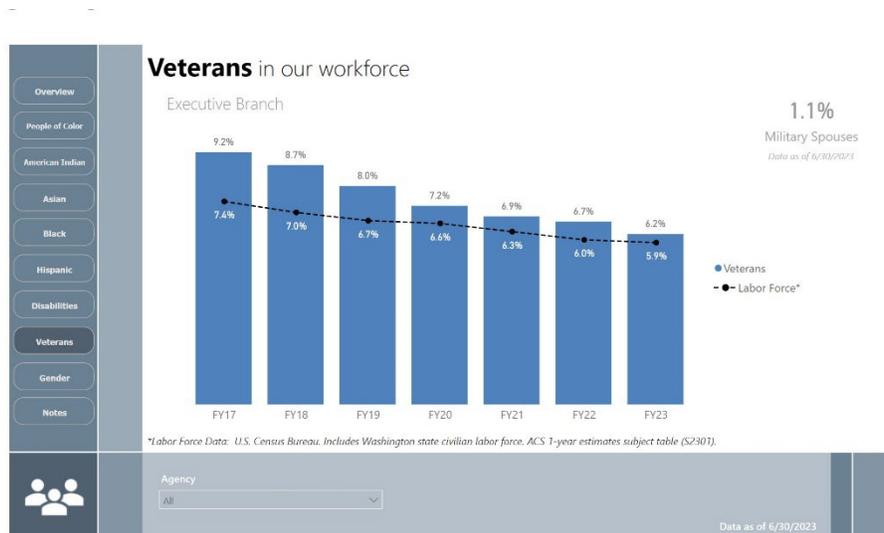
The following is a breakdown of events that we participated in for the year:

Veterans Day Event 11/10/2022: The VERG hosted an event in the Columbia Room of the Legislative Building, that featured the reading of the Governor’s proclamation and held a ceremonial wreath laying at the winged monument, which was highlighted by remarks from Alfie Alvarado- Ramos, the director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and by the 225th Air Defense Squadron Commander, Colonel Antony Braun.

Hiring Event 3/28/2023: The VERG hosted the Inaugural Washingtons State Agency Hiring Event on Joint Base Lewis-McChord. This hiring event was geared specifically towards Washington State Agencies for the sole purpose of providing transitioning service members, their spouses, and Washington National Guard an opportunity to meet with Washington State Recruiters and Hiring Managers. The event provided four panel discussions which included: Hiring Our Heroes and Work Ex Program Leads, a Law Enforcement Panel, a Service-to-Service Panel, and a Mock Promotion Board/Interview Panel. David Puente, Jr. the WDVA Director provided opening remarks with VERG Executive Sponsor Mary Forbes. Fox 13 Good Day Seattle interviewed the VERG Chair alongside WDVA Director David Puente, Jr. There were over 30 state agencies present at the event.

Memorial Day: No event held to avoid conflicts with Community events and WDVA event. Also, we want to let our members mourn our loss in our own way.

State Level Veteran Demographics



The Veterans population is in decline generally. From 2017 to 2023 the percentage of Veterans in our workforce has shrunk from 7.4% to 5.9% for a loss of 1.5%. Washington state had higher than average Veteran representation with 9.2% in 2017, but it has shrunk at twice the rate, down to 6.2% in 2023. The VERG is working to address this issue through our mission of “Recruit, Retain and Recognize”. Military Spouses are another area of focus because while Military Spouses are not a designated protected class, the make up of the group is mostly women and people of color. Thus, positive improvements for Military Spouses also lead to improved outcomes for women and people of color.

Communications and Marketing

Social Media

- [LinkedIn](#) became the primary focus of social media as it is integral in the transition process for service members with several veteran influencers. It became very easy for job posting and networking, which is the primary push for our BRG. From July of 2022 to July of 2023, we have had 233 posts and 68,944 post views Newsletter – Did not provide one for 2022-2023
- [YouTube](#) – WDVA provides hosting – working with OFM to set up our own channel.
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Webpage](#) – In addition to hosting the foundational information for the VERG, our website continues to be a work in progress.

2022-2023 Financials

The VERG has operated with a shoestring budget. We had \$1,000.00 from WDVA, plus \$1,666.67 from WSECU plus \$500.00 from CTS to make a total budget of \$3,166.67. Of that budget, we only spent \$1,267.94 to accomplish everything we accomplished. That left \$1,898.73 as carry over budget.

Business Resource Groups do not currently have a stable source of funding and are not included in the budget. This means that Business Resource Groups currently need to rely on funding that is sponsored by the generosity of agencies that can assist. To improve this situation, we recommend that a stable source of funding be identified and implemented so that the important work of Business Resource Groups can continue.

The budgetary constraints are reduced by Governor Inslee’s Executive Order 21-01 AFFIRMING WASHINGTON STATE BUSINESS RESOURCE GROUPS which instructs executive cabinet and small cabinet agencies to “...provide appropriate and reasonable resources to BRGs so that the groups may carry out the purposes of this Order. This includes reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities to attend meetings and events during work time, and as necessary and available, office supplies, distribution capabilities, meeting spaces and facilities, reasonable storage space for promotional materials, and teleconferencing technologies for the BRGs’ work.” This significantly reduces costs to Business Resource Groups to accomplish our stated missions.

OFM has done a great job of managing donations and sponsorships along with track all expenditures.

During the Fiscal Year expenditures were made for:

- Veterans Day Event Wreath and Food
- Tablecloth and VERG logo runner for events
- Hiring Event
- Memorial Day

2023-2024 Next steps

In the next season of the VERG, we recognize that there is always room to grow and improve:

- Improvement on networking
 - More efficient
 - Continues to give value
 - Has more direction
 - More inclusive (not just for job seekers)
- Opportunity for including the whole state (not just local)
 - Call in option
 - Zoom
- Develop metrics for our VERG Accomplishments/Membership/Partners
- Continue and get better at supporting our internal Veteran and Spouse employees
 - Increase engagement
 - Provide better resources
 - Provide better communication
 - Value added, they are not just coming to bring in more visitors; how can we provide resources that they really need?
 - Active membership program?
- We start off strong, but participation starts to dwindle throughout the year
 - Do we set expectations?
 - Take a look at other BRGs to see what they do
- Overwhelming for first time attendees
 - How do we bridge the gap?
 - Welcome letter/email/survey after their first attendance to show we recognize they came?
 - Opportunity to engage more with visitors
- A need to get back to basics
 - More focus on our mission and vision
 - Power in simplicity
 - Bring back speakers
- More partnership with agency ERGs
 - Give them a platform
 - Opportunity to provide support
- Give our members more of a voice without the pressure/stress
- Highlight the needs of the Spouse Community
- Do a better job with Agendas
 - Put them out in a timely manner (two weeks prior)
 - Follow up with meeting minutes and more opportunities for feedback
- Focus on Veteran and Spouse Retention
 - Spouse sessions and Outreach
 - Information sessions
 - What are we doing to find out what they want?
- Reach out and create more partnerships and highlight our resources
 - Provide more information via our website

- Highlight resources on social media
- Reach out to populations such as Stone Education Center
- Better use of our time
 - Recognizing these are volunteer efforts and it takes work to put together continuous streams of content
 - Utilize the membership's strengths, not put it all on one person, or all on the leads.
 - Not work in the silos of our subcommittees and roles outside of our work