



WDVA WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of VETERANS AFFAIRS
BIENNIAL REPORT 2023-2025



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This 2023-25 biennial report of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is submitted pursuant to §15.04(1)(d), Wis. Stats., which requires each agency to prepare a report on the performance and operations of the department or independent agency during the preceding biennium, and projecting the goals and objectives of the department or independent agency as developed for the program budget report. Additional information about the WDVA is available on the department's website at WisVets.com.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Wisconsinites can be proud of the programs and services that the state provides to residents who served in the U.S. armed forces and their families. Our history of supporting veterans dates back to shortly after the Civil War and continues to this day. The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs was created in 1945 to consolidate separate veterans' programs under one agency and was reorganized in 2011 as a cabinet-level agency.



WDVA's mission is to work on behalf of Wisconsin's veteran community in recognition of their service and sacrifice to our state and nation.

The programs administered by WDVA are designed to assist and improve the lives of veterans of the United States armed forces and their families. These programs include:

- *Skilled nursing care.*
- *Memorial cemeteries and military funeral honors.*
- *Federal veterans claims assistance.*
- *Transitional housing, mental health and substance use treatment, financial assistance, and individual case management for veterans in need.*
- *Grants to individuals and organizations.*
- *Historical and educational promotion.*

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WDVA is headed by a Secretary appointed by the Governor. In 2023, Governor Tony Evers appointed James Bond as WDVA Secretary. The Secretary administers the department through the Deputy Secretary, Assistant Deputy Secretary, and Division Administrators. Working with external stakeholders, the Secretary provides the vision to enable the department to establish long-range strategies, plan for the future, and achieve its mission.



Upon appointment, Secretary Bond established the following priorities:

- **STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAKEHOLDERS:** Strengthening partnerships with Veteran Service Organizations, County and Tribal Veteran Service Officers, nonprofits, community organizations, and businesses remains the department's foremost goal. WDVA recognizes that its network is most effective when these partners work together.
- **RAISE AWARENESS OF WISCONSIN'S GENEROUS VETERANS PROGRAMS:** Wisconsin offers one of the nation's most comprehensive veteran benefits and services programs. However, many former service members remain unaware of the benefits available to them. In partnership with other organizations, WDVA is committed to educating veterans and their families about these opportunities.
- **MENTAL HEALTH, SUICIDE PREVENTION, AND HOUSING:** WDVA is dedicated to supporting veterans in times of crisis. The department oversees several mental health initiatives and collaborates with partners to expand access to mental health care, housing, and other essential quality-of-life resources.
- **RETENTION AND ATTRACTION OF VETERANS TO LIVE AND WORK IN WISCONSIN:** WDVA works to promote Wisconsin as a premier destination for veterans seeking employment, community, and opportunity. The department highlights Wisconsin's strong workforce, family-friendly communities, and commitment to veterans as key factors in attracting and retaining this valued population.

To advance these priorities, Secretary Bond has traveled extensively across Wisconsin, meeting directly with veterans, community leaders, and partner organizations. These visits have been instrumental in building relationships, addressing concerns, and ensuring that every veteran is aware of the resources available to them.



Secretary Bond has visited each of Wisconsin's 72 counties at least three times, meeting with every County Veteran Service Officer, and has also met with all 11 Tribal Nations and their respective Tribal Veteran Service Officers. His visits with CVSOs, TVSOs, and veteran partners across the state have been integral to advancing the department's goals. [See a full list of visits here.](#)

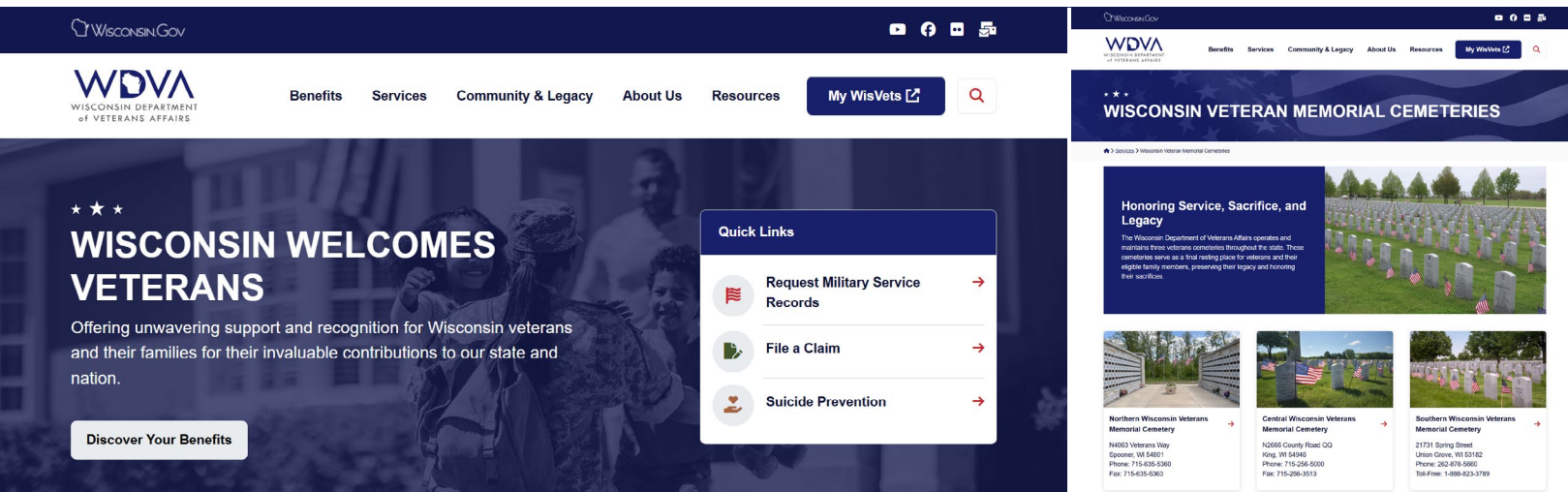
Through strong leadership, strategic partnerships, and consistent community engagement, WDVA continues to strengthen its support for Wisconsin's veterans. The department's initiatives in collaboration, awareness, mental health, and veteran retention reflect a unified commitment to making Wisconsin the best state for veterans to live, work, and thrive.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) manages all communications, media inquiries, imagery, publications, departmental events, social media, and community outreach.

WDVA's biggest communications project was the overhaul of the department website. The redesigned site features a modern, streamlined layout with simplified navigation, an improved search function, and full mobile responsiveness to ensure ease of use across all devices. It also meets WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility standards, incorporating higher-contrast visuals for readability, enhanced keyboard navigation, and full compatibility with screen readers.

These improvements create a more intuitive and inclusive digital experience, enabling veterans and their families to easily access and understand the wide range of benefits and services available to them. The project underscores WDVA's continued commitment to modernization and to ensuring every veteran in Wisconsin can connect with the support they have earned.



As a department, outreach remains essential to promoting benefits and services throughout the state. This team connects veterans to state benefits, partners, and other government benefits by attending veteran expos, athletic events, fairs, speaking engagements, presentations, meetings, and more.

The outreach team also tracks the outreach efforts across all department divisions, where staff interact with veterans, community partners, and the public. Outreach efforts by the numbers:

- 1,780 events total from 2023-2025
- 111 Women veterans events
- 70 Tribal veteran events
- 1,250 Veteran Outreach and Recovery Program events
- 445 events attend by the Office of Public Affairs team
- 98 Veteran Housing and Recovery Program events
- 130 events connecting with CTVSOs
- 240 events for mental health

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM WDVA'S OUTREACH TEAM



VALENTINES FOR VETERANS

Beginning in 2023, the WDVA outreach team asked the community to send us valentines to distribute to our veterans at the three Wisconsin Veterans Homes and later expanded to include the three Veterans Housing and Recovery Programs. Community groups, schools, and individuals have sent in close to 80,000 valentines in three years coming from across the nation and from across the globe. This event helps spread a little bit of love to our members, veterans, and their family members during the peak of winter and reminds them that they are appreciated. Bags full of more than 50 valentines each are delivered to each member and veteran by the WDVA outreach team and the Office of the Secretary.

- *Total number of valentines collected: 79,458*

BADGER FOOTBALL TAILGATE

Annually, WDVA partners with UW Athletics to give out tickets to the University of Wisconsin Salute to Veterans game through a lottery system. Veterans are given a week to register for the chance to receive tickets. Recipients of tickets are invited to attend a tailgate hosted by the WDVA and the UW Veterans Service Office by Camp Randall on the day of the game to get their tickets and mingle with their fellow veterans.

- *Total lottery registrants: 14,230*
- *Total people attended in 23-24: 612*

BROWNIE STATUE

In May 2025, WDVA and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum worked with Kelly Nelson, author of Brownie the War Dog, to install and unveil a statue honoring Brownie on the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. Brownie was a beloved companion, serving alongside troops in WWII until an injury sent him home. Seeming restless, Brownie's family began bringing him to the Veterans Home at King. There, he found a new purpose serving alongside veterans as a devoted support companion. This statue is to honor Brownie's service and help the community, especially children, understand stories of service.

BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The [Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs](#) is a nine-member, part-time citizen board that advises the department. Board members serve staggered four-year terms and are appointed by the Governor with confirmation by the Senate. Board members represent each of Wisconsin's eight congressional districts.

Board members as of October 2025:

- *Patrick Beggs – District 1, Janesville*
- *Robert Hesselbein, Vice Chair – District 2, Middleton*
- *Christopher Hanson, Chair – District 3, Sparta*
- *Tonnetta D. Carter – District 4, Milwaukee*
- *Yolanda Medina – District 5, Waukesha*
- *John Morgen – District 6, Oshkosh*
- *Vacant – District 7*
- *Chris J. Cornelius, Secretary – District 8, Seymour*
- *Laura Colbert – Member At Large, Waupaca*

COUNCIL ON VETERANS PROGRAMS

The [Council on Veterans Programs](#) is composed of representatives from 22 active organizations that affiliate with and advocate for veterans' issues. The Council advises the Board of Veterans Affairs and the department on solutions and policy alternatives relating to veterans issues. 2023 Wisconsin Act 70 removed seven inactive organizations and added three veteran services coordinators, one for a WI Technical College, one from a University of Wisconsin System (UWS) institution and one from a college or university that is a member of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. The act also changed the length of council members' terms from one year to three years and provided that the three-year terms must be staggered.

Council members as of October 2025:

- *American Legion Dept. of WI – Paul Fisk, Chair*
- *American Red Cross – Michelle Matuszak*
- *AMVETS – Dale Wiegand*
- *County and Tribal Veterans Service Officer Association of Wisconsin – Colin Moten*
- *Disabled American Veterans (DAV) – Larry Hill*
- *Jewish War Veterans of America, Dept. of Wisconsin – Kim Queen*
- *Marine Corps League – Phillip Landgraf*
- *Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) – Don Korte, Jr.*
- *Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) – William Lobeck*
- *National Association for Black Veterans, Inc. (NABV) – William Sims*
- *Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) – Scott Griffith*
- *Polish Legion of American Veterans (PLAV) – Nellie DeBaker, Secretary*
- *The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) – Michael Ayers*
- *United Women Veterans, Inc. (UWV) – Vacant*
- *VFW Department of Wisconsin – Michael Furgal, Vice Chair*
- *Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. – Thomas Banner*
- *Wisconsin American GI Forum – George Banda*
- *Wisconsin Association of Concerned Veterans Organizations (WACVO) – David Zien*
- *Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities – Matthew Schroeder*
- *Wisconsin Technical Colleges – Jackie Leon*
- *Wisconsin University System – Michael Panaro, III*
- *Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans, Inc. – William Hustad*

DIVISION OF VETERANS BENEFITS

The Division of Veterans Benefits (DVB) administers various grants, benefits, programs, and services to all eligible state veterans, their families, survivors, and organizations that serve veterans. Assistance to veterans includes education grants to expand employment opportunities, transportation assistance to ensure veterans can access VA medical services, additional medical support and services not provided by the USDVA, and intervention services for veterans experiencing hardship. DVB is also responsible for the department's Military Funeral Honors Program and the three state veterans cemeteries in Spooner, King, and Union Grove.

BUREAU OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Bureau of Programs and Services is comprised of the Veterans Assistance Section, the Veterans Claims Section, and the State Approving Agency (SAA).

VETERANS ASSISTANCE SECTION

The Veterans Assistance Section consists of the Grants Unit and the Veterans Benefits Resource Center (VBRC).

GRANTS UNIT

The Grants Unit administers grants to individuals and organizations: grants that provide direct financial assistance to veterans, and grants to organizations that provide programs and services to Wisconsin veterans.

- **Veterans Retraining Grant** – Provides funding up to \$3,000 to recently unemployed or underemployed veterans who demonstrate financial need while enrolled in a training program expected to lead to employment.
- **Grants to Employers** – Provides funding of up to \$100,000 to employers who hire veterans with a federal service-connected disability rating of at least 50 percent.
- **Veterans Education Reimbursement Grant (VetEd)** – Provides tuition and fee reimbursement to eligible veterans enrolled at most Wisconsin academic institutions. The VetEd grant provides up to eight semesters or 120 credits toward a bachelor's degree, depending on the length of active service.
- **Veterans Assistance Grants (VAG)** – Formerly known as the Assistance to Needy Veterans Grant (ANVG), the VAG assists veterans who need vision, dental, or hearing care, three areas not usually covered by the federal VA. This program also provides temporary emergency financial aid to veterans and their household when the veteran experiences a loss of income due to an injury, illness, or natural disaster, and their dependents in the event of financial loss due to a deployment or death of a veteran while serving on active duty. The combined grant awards for health care and subsistence aid cannot exceed a \$7,500 lifetime limit.
- **County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) Grant** – Supplements the operations of county veterans services offices. The grants to counties with a full-time CVSO are based on the total county population [Wis. Stat. s.45.82(2)].
- **Tribal Veterans Service Officer (TVSO) | American Indian Veterans Service Officer (AIVS) Grant** – Supplements the operations of Tribal Veterans Service Offices. The department provided annual grants of up to \$20,625 to eligible, federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands.

- **Veterans Service Organization (VSO) Grants** – Provides financial assistance of up to \$175,000 to organizations that assist veterans with claims for benefits from the USDVA.
- **Transportation Grants** – Provides grants to the Disabled American Veterans - Wisconsin (DAV) and counties with veterans not served by the DAV to provide transportation services to veterans traveling to USDVA-approved medical appointments.
- **Grants to Local Governments** – Provides grants up to \$300,000 biennially to local governments, cities, villages, and towns for providing fire and emergency medical services to Wisconsin Veterans Homes.
- **Grants to Nonprofit Organizations** – Provides funding of up to \$250,000 for grants to nonprofit organizations that provide financial assistance or other services to Wisconsin veterans and their families.
- **Entrepreneurship Grant** – Provides up to \$300,000 for grants to nonprofit organizations that provide entrepreneurship training, technical or business assistance, or other assistance to veteran entrepreneurs to improve employment outcomes.
- **Camp American Legion Grant** – Provides funding of up to \$75,000 for the operation of Camp American.

GRANT PROGRAM	NUMBER AWARDED	AMOUNT
VETERANS RETRAINING GRANT	22	\$58,500
VETERANS ASSISTANCE GRANTS	126	\$113,948
VETERANS EDUCATION GRANT	7	\$16,650
CVSO GRANT	143	\$2,073,666
TVSO GRANT	20	\$371,250
VSO GRANT	6	\$779,846
TRANSPORTATION GRANTS	56	\$200,000
CAMP AMERICAN LEGION	2	\$139,171
GRANTS TO EMPLOYERS	48	\$160,758
NONPROFIT GRANT	22	\$500,000
ENTREPRENEURSHIP GRANT	5	\$400,000
MUNICIPALITIES GRANT	10	\$300,000
TOTALS	405	\$5,113,789

VETERANS BENEFITS RESOURCE CENTER (VBRC)

The VBRC provides veterans access to information about the department's programs, benefits, and services via phone, chat (through WDVA's website), walk-in, and email communications. The goal of the VBRC is to ensure that veterans who contact WDVA during business hours can immediately speak to center support staff trained to provide information about the department's programs, benefits, and services.

The VBRC uses an information system that enables customer service history and physical mailing of information to the veteran when needed. The VBRC records metrics that capture trends in veterans' requests and enable quality improvement efforts based on the collected data.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Processed 41,574 applications for benefits (excluding grants).*
- *Responded to state veterans' benefits inquiries through approximately 20,945 emails, 2,565 virtual chats, 1,239 voice mail responses, 18,245 phone calls, and 2,015 requests for DD-214s.*
- *Issued 264 Veteran-Owned Business Certifications to increase the opportunity for veteran firms to sell their products and services to the state of Wisconsin.*

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- *Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with other state agencies, county and tribal veterans service offices, and other organizations that serve veterans.*

VETERANS CLAIMS UNIT

The Veterans Claims Section assists Wisconsin veterans and their dependents with federal claims for compensation, pension, education, medical care, and death benefits provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). The Veterans Claims Section is located at the USDVA Regional Office in Milwaukee and provides accreditation and continuing education training to Wisconsin's Tribal and County Veterans Service Officers (TVSOs and CVSOs).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Assisted 1135 Veterans and eligible dependents with 3,726 federal benefits claims, filing over 7,674 documents for Wisconsin veterans.*
- *Conducted 374 hearings regarding veterans' benefits and 1206 appeals applications. Hearings consist of reviewing the veteran's file, interviewing, pulling documents, researching laws and articles, representing, and providing support at the hearing. The time per hearing averages between 8 and 32 hours.*
- *Provided monthly continuing education training to Wisconsin's Veteran Service Officers, Tribal and County Veterans Service Officers (TVSOs and CVSOs), averaging 60 participants per session.*
- *Provided accreditation training for 189 Wisconsin Veteran Service Officers, Tribal and County Veterans Service Officers (TVSOs and CVSOs), and their office staff.*

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- *Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with USDVA, Tribal and County Veterans Service Officers, and other organizations that serve veterans.*
- *Expand training opportunities for Tribal and County Veterans Service Officers.*

STATE APPROVING AGENCY (SAA)

The SAA is federally funded and provides institutional oversight for Wisconsin colleges, universities, and vocational training facilities under US Code Titles 38 and 10 for federal GI Bill education benefit eligibility. The SAA conducts compliance survey visits at these institutions to determine compliance with state and federal law requirements. The SAA is responsible for evaluating programs at all facilities and testing organizations and determining whether to approve or deny programs and facilities for GI Bill eligibility. In addition, the SAA has jurisdiction for any program approval in private, for-profit, non-college degree, and non-accredited institutions. The SAA also provides consultation and technical assistance to school officials, veterans, and other eligible individuals and organizations regarding federal GI Bill benefits and approval criteria.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Earned a “Satisfactory” rating from the Joint Peer Review Group for FY 2023 and 2024. Satisfactory is the highest rating available.*
- *Assessed 16,012 educational programs to ensure program approval for federal education benefits funding.*
- *Completed a 100% review of all state public and private not-for-profit colleges and universities.*
- *Provided new on-the-job training curricula that enable Wisconsin veterans to take advantage of training and employment in law enforcement positions, state employment, and tattoo artists.*

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- *Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with other state agencies, County & Tribal Veterans Service Offices, employers, and other organizations that serve veterans.*
- *Expand access to the USDVA GI Bill® Apprenticeship/OJT programs for veterans.*

BUREAU OF HEALTH SERVICES

The Bureau of Health Services operates the Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP) and the Veterans Housing and Recovery Program (VHRP).

VETERANS OUTREACH AND RECOVERY PROGRAM

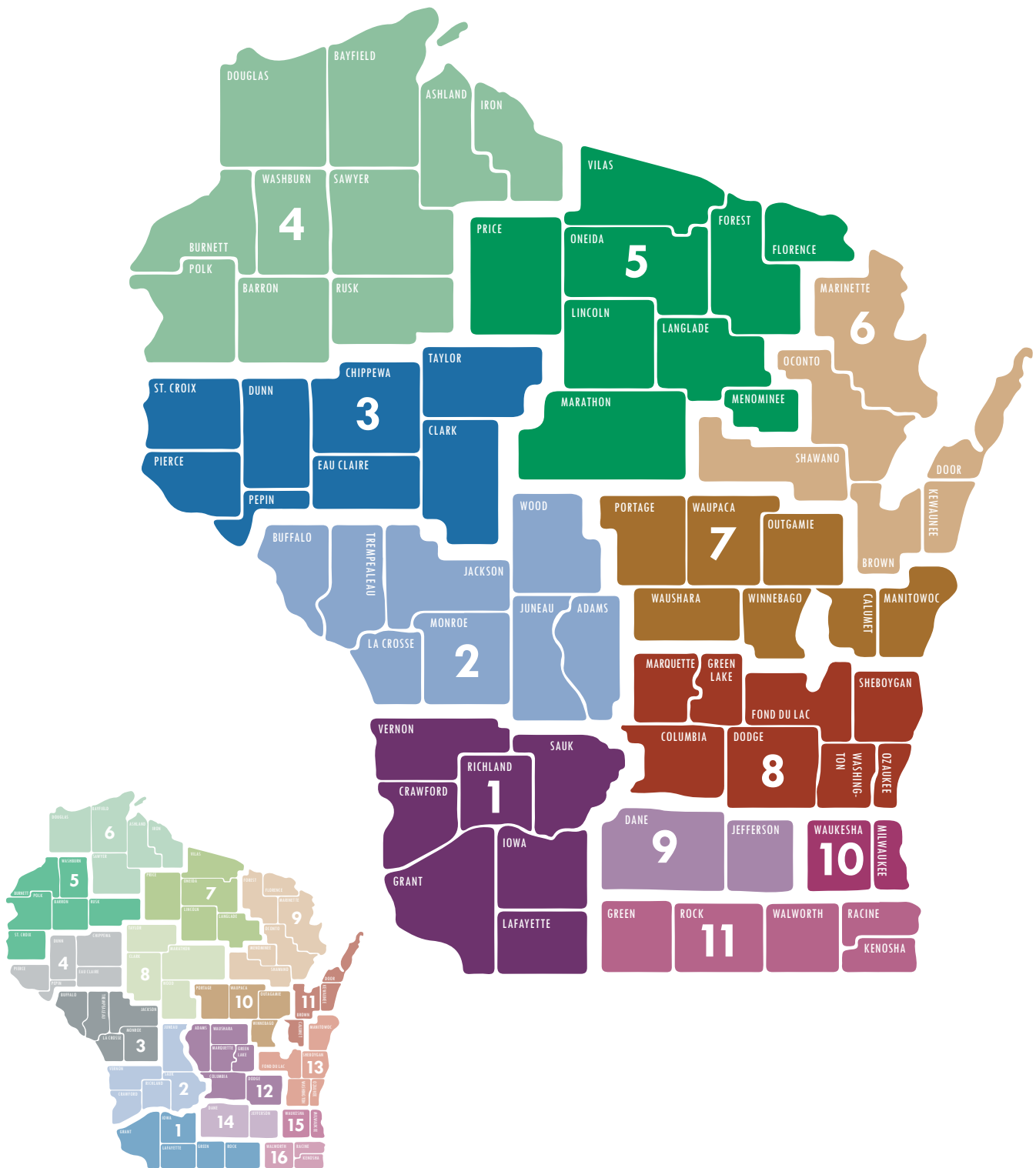
The Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP) connects Wisconsin veterans to community services and provides case management and clinical support with a special focus on treatment and recovery. During the 2023-25 biennium, the VORP team was comprised of 16 Outreach and Recovery Regional Coordinators (ORRCs) located within their regions, two supervisors, and clinical coordinators. The VORP Outreach and Recovery Coordinators work with participants to identify issues and barriers that may prevent them from living the life they want and uncover solutions to achieve their goals.

Based on each participant's needs, strengths, and values, and in collaboration with community service providers, VORP connects participants to various programs and services designed to meet their unique needs until they reach their goals. VORP staff work to provide many support services to veterans, including mental health services, substance use treatment, financial assistance, housing, and utilities assistance, claims and benefits assistance, and employment and education opportunities.

The Republican-controlled legislature failed to provide funding to keep the program at 16 regions. After the budget passed, WDVA was forced to reduce the program to 11 regions, where it currently stands.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Served over 5,500 veterans.*
- *Provided over 9,000 services to Wisconsin veterans seeking assistance and made 7,300 referrals to community partners. During these outreach efforts, staff make referrals and provide short-term intervention assistance to veterans based on needs, even if program enrollment and further interventions may not be required.*
- *Provided \$56,823.44 in treatment funding and \$203,453.61 in emergency services for veterans experiencing hardship. VORP expanded emergency services for veterans by increasing the number of case managers to five, allowing VORP staff to engage in more outreach and meet veterans in their own space. VORP continued to refer veterans to partner community agencies and utilized their funds as applicable.*
- *Outreach Coordinators conducted 8,738 hours of case management services to participants enrolled in the program. Case management services include referrals, assistance, and interventions to address needs identified in enrollment and ongoing assessments.*
- *Secured federal grant funding to increase the number of outreach and clinical staff, which allows staff to promptly respond to veterans in need. The additional positions ended on August 1, 2025.*
- *Utilized a federal Suicide Prevention Grant, which allowed for increased suicide prevention outreach to gun shops, facilitation of community trainings, and distribution of firearm safety kits.*



VETERANS OUTREACH AND RECOVERY PROGRAM'S 11 REGIONS

The VORP team includes 11 Regional Veterans Outreach and Recovery Regional Coordinators (ORRCs) located within each of the 11 VORP regions, two supervisors based in Madison, and two clinical coordinators.

The VORP regions were reduced from 16 to 11 this year (see above).

VETERANS HOUSING AND RECOVERY PROGRAM

The Veterans Housing and Recovery Program (VHRP) is designed to help homeless veterans receive the job training, education, counseling, and rehabilitative services they need to obtain steady employment, affordable housing, and the skills to sustain a productive lifestyle. The goal of VHRP is to break the cycle of homelessness and help veterans transition back into the mainstream of society. The VHRP partners with federal, state, and local governments, county veterans service offices, and representatives from local communities to operate a statewide coalition providing outreach and an extensive referral network that enables the program to provide housing to over 100 homeless veterans.

During the 2023-25 biennium, WDVA operated three sites located in Chippewa Falls, Green Bay, and Union Grove. The Republican-controlled legislature failed to provide funding necessary to operate all three sites. WDVA was forced to consolidate the VHRP to one site in Union Grove.



VHRP ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Provided housing to 410 veterans.*
- *Average length of stay for an individual veteran in the program was 202 nights, which is well below the program maximum threshold of 730 nights, but an increase from the previous biennium average, due to serving veterans with a greater need for physical and mental health resources.*
- *Successfully transitioned 148 veterans to permanent housing.*

BUREAU OF CEMETERIES AND MEMORIAL SERVICES

The Bureau of Cemeteries and Memorial Services operates and maintains the three veterans cemeteries throughout Wisconsin and operates the Military Funeral Honors Program.



WISCONSIN VETERANS CEMETERIES

The Bureau of Cemeteries and Memorial Services manages three state veterans cemeteries: Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery (NWVMC) in Spooner, Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery (CWVMC) in King, and Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery (SWVMC) in Union Grove. These cemeteries provide a final resting place for veterans and create a lasting monument to their achievements and sacrifices on behalf of our grateful nation.

To date, the three cemeteries combined have interred 39,397 veterans, spouses, and dependents and pre-registered 25,957 requests for interment.

MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS PROGRAM

The mission of the Military Funeral Honors Program is to provide and coordinate the appropriate final tribute to eligible Wisconsin veterans, acknowledging their faithful and honorable service to the State of Wisconsin. The program coordinates and conducts military funeral honors at the three state veterans cemeteries and processes stipends to reimburse veterans organizations that provide military honors.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Interments across all Wisconsin state veterans cemeteries totaled 3,271.*
- *The Military Funeral Honors Program coordinated 12,492 military funeral honors in the state and processed 11,591 stipends, reimbursing \$574,375 to veterans organizations.*

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- *The Phase 2 expansion project at CWVMC will provide an additional 1,100 in-ground urn burial spaces, which can support up to ten years of operation.*
- *Phase 7 expansion project at SWVMC redesigns the upper parking lot with cortege lands, updated signage, and a new outdoor committal shelter near the burial spaces.*
- *Phase 5 expansion project will provide an additional 650 casket burial spaces, construct a roadway, extend a storm sewer, complete grading, drainage, and earthwork, and install irrigation for a new developed area.*
- *These projects will enable facilities to keep up with the increasing demand for burial at state veterans cemeteries.*

DIVISION OF VETERANS HOMES

The Division of Veterans Homes (DVH) provides long-term and short-term rehabilitative care to veterans, eligible spouses, and Gold Star parents at the [Wisconsin Veterans Homes](#) (Homes), which are located at King, Union Grove, and Chippewa Falls.



WISCONSIN VETERANS HOME AT KING

The [Veterans Home at King](#) is located one mile southwest of the town of Waupaca and is the largest skilled nursing facility in the state.

There are two Medicare-certified and individually licensed skilled nursing facilities at King. Moses Hall has 192 licensed beds, and Ainsworth Hall has 198 licensed beds. MacArthur Hall was closed to members in the last biennium.

King provides various ancillary services in addition to skilled nursing, dietary, maintenance, and housekeeping services. King offers many amenities, including a bar and game room with pool tables, a bowling alley, a café, a library, a computer center, a fitness room, a King Exchange (KX), a museum, and a theater. King is uniquely nestled on the shore of Rainbow Lake, which allows members to enjoy pontoon rides and fishing, as well as many other activities, such as bingo, ceramics, mini golf, music therapy, and many outings and sponsored events.

WISCONSIN VETERANS HOME AT UNION GROVE

The [Veterans Home at Union Grove](#) is located on the campus of the Southern Wisconsin Center, and consists of a 158-bed skilled nursing facility. Boland Hall and Gates Hall offer 148 spacious private rooms with private half baths and 10 semi-private rooms. Maurer Hall offers a centralized Member Center. The facility offers a variety of ancillary services and has an active volunteer program, which includes many veteran service organizations. The Union Grove campus includes a chapel, library, woodshop, ceramics studio, and a pub/café. Union Grove members enjoy many activities including weekly happy hour, special meals, parties, and recognition events, music, gardening, fishing trips, and many other outings and activities.

WISCONSIN VETERANS HOME AT CHIPPEWA FALLS

The [Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls](#) is located in the city of Chippewa Falls and is licensed as a skilled nursing facility with 72 beds. This facility is managed via a contract with Health Dimensions Group.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Implemented “How’s Mom”, a new communication tool designed to enhance connections between members and their families as part of the VA Nurse Hire and Retention Grant.*
- *Upgraded or installed security monitoring systems in all three Homes to enhance safety.*
- *Completed renovations of the central kitchen at Union Grove, which will allow members to have freshly made food – a significant and welcome change after 20+ years of cook-chill. In addition, dining areas were renovated to install meal serving rooms.*
- *Achieved the “Smoke-Free by 2025” initiative in all three Homes, in alignment with USDVA Directive 10-85, which requires federal VA facilities to be smoke-free.*
- *Participated in the 2025 Berry Dunn Study, collecting essential data to inform future planning and address the aging infrastructure of the Homes.*
- *Implemented a fully online application process at all three Homes.*
- *Submitted catastrophic disability applications for all eligible veterans, potentially providing additional resources for copays, medications, and care-related services.*
- *Successfully applied for and was awarded the Federal VA Nurse Hire and Retention Grant for FY2023, FY2024, and FY2025. The FY2026 application was submitted and is currently pending.*
- *Implemented Web Clock timekeeping, improving accuracy in tracking paid work hours and benefit time usage.*
- *Upgraded UKG scheduling software (with timekeeping add-on capability), replacing the former labor-intensive agency scheduling system and providing staff with improved access to scheduling data, shift availability, and other tools.*
- *Secured approval and funding in the 2025–2027 biennial budget for kitchen floor repairs and construction of a new kitchen facility at King.*
- *Adjusted bed capacity at King’s Ainsworth Hall to align with current member needs and staffing levels.*
- *Renovated King’s Ainsworth Hall, creating private member rooms and additional storage space, and included new flooring and paint to spruce up hallways.*
- *Brought back dental services at King after outsourcing services due to the retirement of a longtime dentist, keeping members’ dental needs met on-site and reducing expenditures.*

- *Completed renovations to nursing and reception stations at Union Grove.*
- *Established sharing agreements with the Federal VA to expand mental health services at Union Grove and Chippewa Falls.*
- *Added pharmacy consulting services from King pharmacy at Chippewa Falls in 2025.*
- *Maintained a 97% occupancy level at Chippewa Falls.*

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- *Transition to a long-term care-focused food vendor, bringing improved quality and options in food services at King and Union Grove.*
- *Transition from the Cook-Chill model of food service.*
- *Build new memory care gardens at King and Union Grove.*
- *Transfer the King water station to the city of Waupaca.*
- *Prepare for the new kitchen opening at Union Grove, anticipated in late 2025.*

WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

The WDVA operates two museums accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The main facility, the [Wisconsin Veterans Museum](#) (WVM), is located on Capitol Square and contains 10,000 square feet of displays. A satellite location, named the Megellas Gallery, is located in the F. A. Marden Memorial building on the grounds of the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.

The WVM employs exhibits, displays, and presentations to tell the stories of men and women from Wisconsin who served in America's conflicts from the Civil War to today's Global War on Terrorism. WVM is also a Smithsonian Affiliate and has been accredited since 1974.

Though WVM was closed from March 2020 until July 2021 due to the pandemic, the museum has operated normally since July 2021 and is nearly at 2019 visitation levels as schools and visitors return to the museum. The WVM also coordinates several traveling exhibits throughout the state.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *The Wisconsin Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial Commission (Wisconsin A250 Commission) was created by 2021 Wisconsin Act 95 and is chaired by WVM Director Chris Kolakowski. WVM provides leadership for commission initiatives alongside other partners in Wisconsin, the region, and the country. Under the A250 umbrella, WVM coordinated a Two Lights For Tomorrow ceremony in April 2025, the U.S. Army 250th birthday in June 2025, and the U.S. Navy 250th birthday in October 2025, all held at the State Capitol.*
- *Expanded the reach and engagement of partners and audiences across the state and the nation through digital and virtual programs, burnishing the WVM as an important resource and authority about Wisconsin military history. This included expanded partnerships with the Wisconsin National Guard, Wisconsin VFW, Wisconsin American Legion, and others.*

- *Completed a successful reaccreditation process with the American Alliance of Museums.*
- *Answered more than 2,000 reference questions about Wisconsin veterans from patrons in all 50 states as well as Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Uruguay, and Wales.*
- *Launched an initiative to digitize pre-1917 images and improve access to them for staff, researchers, and the public. This has been funded in significant part by a Federal IMLS grant.*
- *Initiated the next significant step in the museum redevelopment process by activating the option to acquire the property at 30 West Mifflin Street in Madison. This action received an appropriation from the Legislature and authorization from the State Building Commission.*
- *Sold the most goods in the museum store on record, recovering store profitability post-pandemic, added 14 new veteran-owned product lines for purchase, and increased Wisconsin-related product offerings.*

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- *Start design and engineering, to include exhibit concept development, for the future museum.*
- *Develop a 3-5-year plan for additional upcoming exhibits.*
- *Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to complete commission initiatives and the America 250th commemoration in July 2026.*
- *Expand engagement with Indigenous nations to improve the sharing and documentation of Native veterans' stories and voices at the museum and throughout Wisconsin.*
- *Develop operation options and a plan for increasing usage of the museum at the King location.*
- *Develop programs and exhibits to mark the museum's 125th anniversary on April 5, 2026.*
- *Rehouse the Veterans Memorial Database in a format that allows online accessibility to all state constituents.*

DIVISION OF ENTERPRISE SERVICES

The Division of Enterprise Services (DES) provides management and program support to all of the department's operating units and works collaboratively to achieve a streamlined administrative process.

BUREAU OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Bureau of Information Systems (BOIS) provides information technology resources that include customer support (Help Desk), technical support (network and desktop), application development, support for network hardware and software, desktop/laptop hardware and software, security, and telecommunication equipment. BOIS develops and maintains the agency's automated systems and processes to support its business programs.

BOIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Migrated Milwaukee Claims (Milwaukee) from the Federal VA regional office network to the WDVA network, replaced computer hardware, migrated Centrex phones to Mitel Voice over IP (VoIP) system, and implemented a call center for that site.*
- *Migrated the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Union Grove Veterans Home, Northern and Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries, and the Military Funeral Honors Program Centrex phones to the Mitel Voice over IP (VoIP) system.*
- *Renovated space in Shemanske Hall at Union Grove Veterans Home for a server room, IT equipment storage, and setup room.*
- *Developed and implemented the Veterans Benefits Application Tracking System (VBATS), modernizing the system, benefit processing, documentation management, and reporting, while combining multiple databases and interfaces into one system.*
- *Developed and implemented a department-wide upgrade of applications coordinated with the VBATS project, which includes MyWisVets, Military Funeral Honors, School Veteran Official (SVO) App, CemNet, License Fee Waiver, DNR, and GlobalSearch Enterprise Content Management System (ECM).*
- *Updated cemetery maps and functionality for the addition of new sections for the three Veterans Memorial Cemeteries at Northern (Spooner), Central (King), and Southern (Union Grove), as part of the cemetery expansion.*
- *Developed and implemented Veteran Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP) Integration into VBATS - Phase 1, which added VORP users to VBATS to access and edit client data and documentation. This included functionality for VORP documents and notes to be uploaded and secured, viewable only by VORP staff.*
- *Worked with the contractor to develop three grants for non-profits and local governments in the new Grants Management System.*
- *Installed three additional Teams conference room systems at Chippewa Falls and King Veterans Homes.*
- *Replaced security cameras at all three Veterans Homes.*
- *Migrated all application databases from a legacy server to a new server, which included extensive systemwide testing of all corresponding applications and processes.*
- *Replaced all network switches and wireless access points at Chippewa Falls and King Veterans Homes.*

- *Central Office Space Consolidation: Moved computer equipment and prepared work areas to hoteling (shared) workspaces.*

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- *Plan and implement member safety upgrades at Union Grove Veterans Home, including structured cabling, a wireless infrastructure upgrade, additional security cameras, a new nurse call system, and a new member freedom system.*
- *Implement the UKG Pro Workforce Management staff scheduling system and annual vacation planning for King and Union Grove.*
- *Install structural cabling and wireless access points in the Union Grove main kitchen and office spaces for the kitchen remodeling project.*
- *Remodel and install telecommunications rooms in Ainsworth Hall at King to support the current and future technological needs.*
- *Install and implement building access control, new network closet, gravesite locator system, and security cameras as part of the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery Administration Building Expansion and Fire Protection Project.*
- *Develop the VORP Integration into VBATS - Phase 2, which adds functionality for VORP staff to collect, submit, and edit intakes of new cases, while maintaining data privacy and security by restricting this information to only VORP staff. This system will incorporate the data of the SharePoint Contact Tracker and the federal Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), allowing all VORP case management in one system.*
- *Develop a Management Financial Information Tool reporting from STAR (PeopleSoft) data to enable program areas to better manage their budgets.*
- *Upgrade or replace, where necessary, all desktops and laptops to the Windows 11 operating system since support for Windows 10 is ending.*
- *Upgrade the Member Freedom system at Ainsworth Hall at King, upgrade server software, replace door controllers, and eliminate at least one server.*
- *Replace the HVAC and UPS systems in the two server rooms at King.*
- *Develop a new Resident Information system for the Veterans Homes to replace the legacy system.*
- *Upgrade the GlobalSearch Enterprise Content Management system to include adjustments to all connected applications.*

BUREAU OF FISCAL SERVICES

The Bureau of Fiscal Services (BFS) provides financial services for accounts payable, expense reports, purchasing cards, accounts receivable, member finance, purchasing, and loan program accounting. BFS maintains strict internal controls, compliance, and review procedures for all WDVA financial and purchasing operations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Received a clean report from the auditor of the federal grant per diem program.*
- *Ensured the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) from DOA were spent on eligible expenses by the established deadlines and that the required reporting of these funds was completed promptly.*
- *Offered support and assumed additional tasks and duties due to vacant or eliminated positions at the Veterans Homes.*
- *Identified efficiencies and adjusted staff workload within the Bureau of Fiscal Services to streamline processes and better achieve goals.*
- *Received high praise on Materials Management ordering and inventory processes in the recent internal P-Card audit.*
- *Updated BFS policies and procedures.*
- *Worked with DOA to set up new WDVA bank accounts to align with new treasury guidance.*
- *Worked with vendors and provided guidance to staff on alternate processes when WISBuy was eliminated.*
- *Moved to a standard naming convention for grant transactions for ease of reporting.*
- *Completed agency-wide training covering Procurement, Purchasing, Pcards, Accounts Payable, Asset Management, Travel Expenses, and Gifts and Bequests.*
- *Minimized the number of financial records stored at Central Office to assist with downsizing our footprint.*
- *Realigned pharmacy expenses within the Veterans Homes to more accurately allocate costs to each Home with the new addition of consulting services.*
- *Reviewed all agency assets and insurance values to ensure accuracy.*

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- *Complete agency-wide training in Procurement, Asset Management, Purchasing Cards, WISBuy, Accounts Payable, ChartFields, Query, and Reporting.*
- *Ensure the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) from DOA are spent on eligible expenses by the established deadlines and that the required reporting of these funds is completed in a timely manner.*
- *Finish cleaning up all remaining loans in the loan portfolio.*
- *Continue to improve internal controls on IT assets.*

BUREAU OF BUDGET, POLICY, AND FACILITIES

The Bureau of Budget, Policy, and Facilities (BBPF) develops, monitors, and manages the department's annual and biennial capital and operating budgets and provides financial, policy, and statistical analysis of department programs. BBPF staff monitors and manages all department construction and building projects. The bureau coordinates operational risk assessments, risk management, and internal audit services. BBPF also coordinates the collection and analysis of demographic data concerning Wisconsin veterans.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- *Oversaw the completion of expansion projects at all three Veterans Memorial Cemeteries.*
- *Submitted applications for \$16 million in federal funding.*
- *Managed \$180 million in capital improvement and construction projects at DVA facilities.*
- *Annually reviewed approximately 125 audits of subrecipients and conducted internal audits of department operations as requested.*
- *Retroactively ensured compliance with the Build America, Buy America Act guidance for six in-progress veterans homes construction projects.*
- *Oversaw the department's biennial budget request and submitted it to the Governor.*
- *Oversaw the department's capital budget request and submitted it to the Governor.*

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- *Complete the kitchen renovation projects at the Union Grove and King Veterans Homes and the planning and approval processes for a new Central Services building at King.*
- *Complete upgrades to information technology infrastructure at all three Veterans Homes.*
- *Complete cemetery expansion and improvement construction projects at the three Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries.*
- *Complete design and planning for a new Wisconsin Veterans Museum.*
- *Oversee and submit the department's biennial budget requests.*
- *Oversee and submit the department's capital budget requests.*
- *Continue to support department grant applications.*

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT AND FLEXIBLE-TIME SCHEDULES

WDVA, like most other cabinet agencies, transitioned to a fully remote work environment at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic for agency employees not working in one of the State Veterans Homes. Our information technology bureau worked around the clock to ensure staff had the appropriate equipment and software to continue working and providing services to veterans and their spouses in the State of Wisconsin. WDVA implemented a return-to-work plan that incorporated those employees back into the workplace in a hybrid model. The hybrid model includes a mixture of remote work and office work.

Current policy allows supervisors not located in our Veterans Homes to work directly with their employees, to create flexible work schedules while ensuring that employees are available to assist the public during state office hours of 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Due to the nature of the work performed at the Veterans Homes and the need to be staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, there is less flexibility in work schedules with Homes staff to ensure appropriate coverage to care for the needs of veterans who reside in the Homes.

WDVA has worked to create more part-time opportunities at the King and Union Grove Veterans Homes to attract and retain employees. WDVA also implemented a weekend work program to allow more flexibility to those who preferred to be home on weekdays to care for family members, eliminate the need for daycare, or pursue further education.

In 2024, due to the prevalence of hybrid work, we were able to consolidate space at the Central Office at Rimrock Road. This will save WDVA more than \$200,000 in annual rent costs.