



Diversity and Inclusion in Veterans Affairs Council (DIVAC) Charter

January 2016



1 Purpose of the Charter

This charter supersedes the previous charter signed on March 23, 2010, establishing the Veterans Affairs (VA) Diversity Council. This charter sets forth the authority, membership, responsibilities, and updates the decision-making process for governance of this newly titled Diversity and Inclusion in VA Council (DIVAC or Council). This charter will become effective upon ratification of the Council by simple majority vote by voting members and upon signature by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

2 Background and Authorization

On October 5, 2007, then Acting Secretary for Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield announced the establishment of the "VA Diversity Advisory Council" in accordance with the Department of Veterans Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2006-2011. The initiative gained momentum in 2009 when VA leadership created the current Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) and published VA's first Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan to support the Department's transformation into a 21st century Cabinet-level agency.

On March 23, 2010, Secretary Eric K. Shinseki adopted the original charter and issued a memorandum officially launching the Council. Since that time, the Federal Government and the Department have undergone numerous changes impacting the governance structure and strategic objectives of the original charter. Significantly, in 2011 President Obama signed Executive Order 13583 on Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce. Additionally, many of the Department's internal governing bodies were disbanded or replaced by other processes. Accordingly, the charter is being updated to reflect the aims of the new Executive Order and comport with VA's current organizational structure and strategic priorities in the area of workforce diversity and workplace inclusion.

The DIVAC is established under the direction of VA leadership in alignment with Executive Order 13583 on Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce.

3 Purpose and Scope

DIVAC serves as an internal forum to address diversity and inclusion (D&I) issues impacting VA's workforce. The Council does not operate as a public forum. The Council provides independent recommendations to VA leadership on policies, programs, and initiatives relating to workforce diversity and organizational inclusion within VA. It also serves as a communication link between the VA workforce, subcomponent VA organizations, and VA leadership and serves as a clearinghouse on D&I training, resources, and best practices within the Department.

The DIVAC operates with a common understanding of the following terms:

- Diversity: All of the ways in which people differ, including innate characteristics (such as age, race, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, cognitive or physical abilities) and acquired characteristics (such as education,

socioeconomic status, religion, work experience, language skills, cultural values, geographic location, family status, organizational level, work style, philosophical and intellectual perspectives, etc.).

- Inclusion: The act of enabling and empowering the full participation and contribution of all human resources in support of the mission of the organization by eliminating implicit and explicit barriers. The intentional leveraging of the diverse talents and attributes of the entire workforce by configuring work opportunities, business processes, functional operations, rewards systems, work-life options, professional interactions, communications, information-sharing, and decision-making to empower and engage all employees.

To achieve measurable results in D&I in the VA workforce, DIVAC may be used to review and assess existing and proposed internal VA workforce and inclusion strategies initiatives, share agency best practices, leverage internal VA organizational resources, and facilitate collaboration with external stakeholders. DIVAC will focus on VA implementation of the following:

- Workforce Strategies
 - Overcoming barriers and challenges to recruitment, retention, and advancement of employees in groups with less than expected representation; and developing programs and initiatives to address the challenges and to change paradigms.
 - Developing frameworks for integrating human resources programs into strategic planning, annual planning, and management accountability for achieving D&I results Department-wide.
- Measurement and Evaluation Strategies
 - Processing, measuring, evaluating, and reporting VA's progress, quality, and adequacy in planning, developing, and implementing D&I workforce policies, strategies, projects, programs, and other risk management activities.
- Communication Strategies
 - Improving how VA participates, collaborates, and communicates within the Department and with other Federal agencies on D&I issues.
- Training and Education Strategies
 - Moving the VA workforce beyond awareness and toward applied learning and self-regulation and inclusion management.

4 Council Administration

4.1 Co-Chairs

The Assistant Secretary (AS) for Human Resources and Administration (HR&A) and the Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Diversity and Inclusion serve as Process Owners and Co-Chairs of the DIVAC and may exercise a single combined vote as a tie breaker.

4.2 Supporting Functions

ODI will provide executive secretary support to the DIVAC. It will be the entry point to refer issues to the DIVAC or sub working groups/councils/committees.

The Office of Human Resources and Administration may pay travel and per diem expenses, for VA employees, when determined necessary and appropriate by DIVAC Co-Chairs. When approved by their organizations' sponsors, DIVAC members, who are VA employees, will receive travel expenses and per diem allowances from their home organizations' operating budgets in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations for any travel made in connection with their duties as DIVAC members. As needed, financial and staff support for specific initiatives will be the responsibility of VA components that sponsor the effort and designate representatives for the associated subcommittees or workgroups.

5 Composition

DIVAC consists of two Co-Chairs (the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion) and 23 appointed representatives from each Administration and major Staff Offices who serve at the Senior Executive Service or equivalent under Title 38 or similar statutory authority.

DIVAC members are classified as either "voting" or "nonvoting." All voting members must be VA employees.

Voting DIVAC members and their designees must be designated by the leadership of their organizations, must be spokespersons for their organizations, and must have access to the heads of their organizations (see section 7). When these members or their designees are called to vote on DIVAC matters, each organization will have one vote.

For each primary voting member, an alternate representative should be appointed who may attend meetings and vote on behalf of the designated primary voting member.

The organizations are as follows:

- Executive Secretariat
- Office of the General Counsel
- Board of Veterans' Appeals
- Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction
- Veterans Health Administration
- Veterans Benefits Administration
- National Cemetery Administration
- Office of Management
- Office of Information and Technology
- Office of Policy and Planning
- Office of Operations, Security and Preparedness
- Office of Human Resources and Administration
- Office of Public Affairs

- Office of Government Relations
- Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships
- Center for Minority Veterans
- Center for Women Veterans
- Office of Interagency Care and Benefits Coordination
- Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
- Office of Survivors' Assistance
- Veterans Service Organization Liaison
- White House Liaison

DIVAC comprises voting members who officially represent VA employees and who are members in the following National Unions:

- American Federation of Government Employees
- National Association of Government Employees
- National Federation of Federal Employees
- Service Employees International Union
- National Nurses United

When these members are called to vote on DIVAC matters, each National Union will have one vote. National Union representatives, who are VA employees, shall be on official time for work, travel and attendance at DIVAC meetings.

The DIVAC also comprises nonvoting members representing the following VA offices:

- Office of Inspector General
- Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication
- Corporate Senior Executive Management Office
- Office of Human Resources Management
- Office of Administration
- Office of Resolution Management
- Office of Labor Management Relations
- Veteran Employment Services Office
- VA Learning University

Additionally, DIVAC comprises nonvoting members representing VA employee groups that are structured or chartered to address VA business or employee matters.

Any VA employee may attend DIVAC meetings, on a non-voting basis, and may participate in DIVAC activities during duty hours with the approval of their VA supervisors.

Individuals who are not full-time or permanent part-time Federal employees are nonvoting members and participate only to provide factual information or individual opinions without being involved in the Council's deliberative process.

6 Roles and Responsibilities

All DIVAC Members

Representatives are officially designated by their respective Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or other key officials, as appropriate, to participate in all Council activities on behalf of their Administration or office. DIVAC members are responsible for contributing to DIVAC outputs.

DIVAC members shall also provide subject matter expertise to any work group established in support of the DIVAC efforts. These work group responsibilities include:

- Reviewing and shaping issues, agenda items and key topics for presentation to DIVAC
- Coordinating with standing and ad hoc committees, working groups and subject matter experts as needed
- Providing recommendations to DIVAC for decision and/or approval
- Providing responses to DIVAC questions and/or taskers
- Distributing communications to executives and stakeholders on recommendations, implementing guidance, and results

7 Governance Structure

DIVAC will operate under general parliamentary principles. Members may recommend discussion on issues, and may make motions for votes on proposed actions. Proposed recommendations that will be presented to the Secretary require a simple majority vote of DIVAC members or their designated alternate representatives in attendance at the meeting as recorded in the DIVAC minutes. The Council may submit recommendations directly to the Secretary using designated communication channel and procedures, as appropriate.

DIVAC may form subcommittees or workgroups as standing entities or ad hoc groups for any purpose consistent with this charter. These subcommittees or workgroups may meet separately from the DIVAC's regularly scheduled quarterly meetings. These subcommittees or workgroups have no authority to make decisions on behalf of DIVAC, nor will they report directly to VA leadership. Such subcommittees or workgroups may not work independently of the chartered DIVAC and must report their recommendations and advice to DIVAC for full deliberation and discussion. Although DIVAC will have no oversight role over subcommittees or workgroups established by other authorities, strong collaborations and communications will be supported.

8 Meetings

DIVAC will meet quarterly or as determined by the Co-Chairs.

A quorum (more than one half of the members) is required to vote on any matter at a meeting. If a quorum is not present at the beginning of a meeting, voting will be postponed to a following meeting or will be obtained electronically.

ODI will distribute an agenda and any additional preparation materials to DIVAC members at least two working days prior to each meeting. All agenda items will have an assigned time limit and all meetings will be constrained within the planned timeframe.

9 Charter Ratification

This charter and subsequent amendments of the Charter must be ratified by DIVAC membership and approved by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Upon signature below, this charter shall remain in effect until and unless superseded by a subsequent charter in accordance with the aforementioned ratification process.

Charter Approval:



Robert A. McDonald
Secretary of Veterans Affairs



Date