Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

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CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Dept of Veterans' Affairs

12 JUL 2016

CCS No: 2016/2102.

ACTION BRIEF FOR SECRETARY

Brief to be provided through COO to Secretary

CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY 2016

Critical Date: Nil

Purpose/Reason: To advise you of a suggested approach for conducting the next Client Satisfaction Survey.

Key Issues:

- Since 2006, DVA has undertaken a comprehensive client satisfaction survey every four years. The last survey was undertaken in July/August 2014 and the results were released to the public in early 2015.
- The 2014 survey was conducted by Orima Research. It involved a combination of core Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and a supplementary on-line self-completion survey. A total of 2820 clients were surveyed under the CATI process and 253 clients were surveyed on-line.
- The CATI survey results were weighted by age, gender and state residence to increase the accuracy and validity of the survey results. However, since the core sample of younger veterans in the age group of 18-45 was low (4 per cent) it was decided to increase the number interviewed to around 375 clients in this age group (12 per cent).

[redacted]

- As you will recall, in September 2015, some younger clients conducted a public survey to highlight their issues with DVA and condemn what they saw as the low number of respondents in the 18-45 age group identified in our client survey. Minister Robert at the time noted in briefings that DVA's next client survey should comprise an increased sample of this age group.
- You indicated recently that you would like to conduct a survey every year if possible. Your initial views were that the survey should continue to be representative of DVA's entire client base with a larger sample of young veterans incorporated into the process.

Intersection with Veterans Centric Reform Program

- The next client survey will run in parallel with the client engagement strategy under the Veterans Centric Reform Program (VCR) and the development of a 2nd Pass Business Case. An important part of this work will involve co-design of new services with key clients and their representative organisations.
- As the uptake in stakeholder engagement is expected to accelerate over the next six months there will be potential for crossover with a new survey. Risks associated with over consultation, engagement and survey fatigue from both a client and internal stakeholder perspective can be managed but will need to be considered given that VCR client engagement and co-design will be undertaken concurrently.

[redacted] As part of VCR and design of future client feedback mechanisms, consideration will be given to obtaining feedback as soon as possible after the point of engagement with the Department. In the case of a compensation claim for example, obtaining insights from the client at the point of the Department's decision.

Discussions with Orima

- We have been in discussion with ORIMA, who delivered the 2014 survey. An initial proposal from Orima is attached. Orima proposes to build upon some of the themes that emerged in 2014. This includes
  - Boost the sample of clients aged less than 45 years;
  - Develop a quantitative questionnaire;
  - Take a more streamlined approach to internal consultation and questionnaire development; and
  - Provide an option for qualitative research to provide more meaningful results at the end of the activity.
- Given the importance of monitoring the level of veteran's satisfaction with the services and service delivery experience, the proposed survey methodology will remain largely consistent with the 2014 survey methodology.
- The notable differences in the survey design lies in broadening the topics covered in the questionnaire and changing the sample design strategy to account for the need for a more robust analysis of the contemporary veteran cohort.

Projected costs

- [redacted]. The cost of the survey would vary subject to any expansion or change of scope.
- N [redacted]

Way forward

- It is proposed that the client survey be discussed by EMB on 13 July.

Regulation Impact: No
Recommendation(s): That you note that the 2016 survey will be discussed at EMB.

[redacted]
Mark Harrigan
A/g FAS VCR Taskforce
Ph: [redacted]
12 July 2016

Contact: Alex Gerrick, AS
Business Reform and Defence Relations Branch
Ph: [redacted]

Comments:	COO Decision if required: **NOTED / PLEASE DISCUSS** COO cleared electronically. **Liz Cosson / /** **To be provided to Secretary Y / N** **For Info / Discussion / Action**	Secretary Decision if required: **NOTED / PLEASE DISCUSS** [redacted] **Simon Lewis** 12/7/16

ATTACHMENTS
A - ORIMA PROPOSAL

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23 June 2016

Alex Gerrick
Assistant Secretary
Business Reform & Defence Relations Branch
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Dear Alex,

Re: Revised 2016 DVA Client Experience Survey

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide you with our input and ideas in relation to undertaking the next cycle of the DVA client satisfaction survey.

The following document outlines our proposed approach to undertaking the quantitative and qualitative research components of the project, an indicative timeline for the undertaking the various tasks and the cost for the project.

We look forward to supporting you and your team to conduct this important research project. In doing so, we will draw on the practical lessons learned through our experience in conducting research with this client group over the years. We have also conducted numerous client surveys for other APS agencies and will gladly share the insights gained from those projects to benefit this client experience research.

More information about our proposed approach and costings are contained in Attachment A.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you wish to discuss any aspect of our proposed methodology and costing. I look forward to the opportunity of working with you on this project.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Attachment A

This project at-a-glance

The proposed 2016 Client Research project is based on a mixed methodology, using a large scale quantitative survey as the backbone to the research project with the option of using qualitative research techniques to further explore issues that arise out of the survey and/or to test reactions to possible initiatives to address areas of concern.

At its core, the research project aims to monitor client experiences and overall impressions of DVA. The quantitative survey sample design and questionnaire will enable key measures to be compared against the comprehensive survey of clients conducted in 2014.

Whilst the 2016 survey will allow for historical comparisons, the survey will also continue to evolve and be adaptable to DVA's changing service delivery environment and decision-making needs. To support this adaptable survey model, we propose to take a 'long view' by developing a questionnaire bank that will act as a blueprint in shaping what we monitor on a regular basis, determining issues that we need to keep an eye on but on a less frequent basis, and allowing scope in each survey cycle to measure one-off issues of importance at that point in time – i.e. core questions, seasonal questions and topical questions.

In addition to taking a fresh look at what we monitor and how it can help with decision-making, the survey will also cater for the need to undertake 'deep dive' analysis of specific DVA cohorts (e.g. younger clients). This functionality starts at the sample design phase and carries through to the analysis and reporting stages of the project. This means that the sample size can be boosted for specific cohorts of interest to allow for more vigorous analysis of issues affecting a particular client cohort. Our team will ensure that despite boosting the sample for a specific cohort, the results that are intended to report on DVA's client base as a whole will not be skewed by any over-sampling. We will do this by correcting skews in the data-set using conventional re-weighting techniques to ensure that the final data-set represents the underlying DVA client population profile.

As with all research, the act of conducting a study not only helps to answer questions but inevitably reveals additional gaps in knowledge and understanding and thus the emergence of further questions. We propose to support DVA in addressing these emerging questions by using qualitative research approaches to gain a deeper understanding of issues that may arise out of the quantitative study. This feature is an option in our proposal and can be activated on an as-needed-basis.

The Proposed 2016 Client Survey

The following section provides some additional detail about the proposed 2016 survey approach.

The **2016 Client Survey** will:

1. Establish a 'blue print' for planning future surveys and build a coherent long term strategy for monitoring client experiences.
2. Continue to measure client' satisfaction with service delivery and seek to identify key drivers of satisfaction – building on the core baseline measures established in the comprehensive 2014 Client Service Survey.
3. Seek to broaden the scope of the research to gather intelligence on clients' overall experience when engaging with the Department.

   This is particularly important when considering the growing diversity and complexity of the client base – e.g. varied needs and expectations of long-standing clients and more contemporary clients.

   The initial stages of the 2016 research will involve a review of the 2014 Client Service Survey questionnaire and the conduct of an **issue identification exercise** to establish a 'blue print' of the breadth of issues (beyond conventional service delivery KPIs) that should be gathered through the 2016 survey and future surveys.

The issues identification exercise will lead to:

- A clear set of issues that need to be investigated through the Client Survey (now and into the foreseeable future). These may include but are not limited to the following:
  - Nature of contact with DVA – lifestage of relationship with DVA (i.e. new, maturing, long established); contact experience in the last 12 months; what about (benefit/service type); typical method of contact; frequency of contact on the same issue;
  - Experience with key DVA services/benefits (regardless of level of contact) in terms of the extent to which needs have been met (and possibly measuring performance against commitments made in the Department's Service Charter);
  - Gauging the end-to-end client experience for clients with varying levels of history with DVA (e.g. experience of new clients (under 3 years) – with transition support, induction, claims experience);
  - Gauging clients' current level of maturity in using online services in general (e.g. banking, shopping, bill-paying etc.) – to assist in the effective management of the Department's own online channels and ensure alignment with the directions of the Digital Transformation Agenda;
  - Identifying effective levers to encourage clients to adopt greater use of online information and transaction methods, and gauging levels of willingness to transition to these methods of interaction; and
  - Monitoring satisfaction with service delivery channels.

Internal Stakeholder Input

As part of this initial scoping exercise, there is benefit in inviting input from key DVA stakeholders. The types of questions that are worth exploring include:

- Gauging the awareness, usage and reference (citings) of the 2014 survey findings in their business decisions to date.
- Identifying the specific information from the 2014 survey that they found most useful.
- Inviting them to identify one or two key client-related insights that would be helpful to them immediately and in the next 12 months.

This can be done simply through a short online feedback form that is sent to relevant teams within the Department.

- a better understanding of how each piece of client insight can be used in a policy, programme and service delivery context – correspondingly, who within DVA would benefit most from the information gathered.
- the establishment of a practical and long term plan to show what specific known issues will be measured/captured and how frequently the information will be made available for internal stakeholders' use in decision-making.

The outcome of the issues identification task will be:

i. a **master question bank** (the 'blue print') grouping the questions into broader themes and categories which show the intervals in which the questions will be asked, and sorted by:
   a. *core questions* which are critical to DVA and need to be carefully monitored in each research cycle;
   b. *seasonal questions* which are important but are much less dynamic and therefore should be monitored at regular intervals but not in every research cycle; and,
   c. *topical questions* are those typically one-off issues that arise from time to time.

ii. **Final questionnaire for the 2016 survey** consisting of the core questions (estimated to take up around 50% of the survey, seasonal questions (30%) and topical (20%).

4. (Optionally) As with all research, the act of conducting a study not only helps to answer questions but inevitably reveals additional gaps in knowledge and understanding and thus the emergence of further questions. We propose to support DVA in addressing these emerging questions by using qualitative research approaches to gain a deeper understanding of issues that may arise out of the quantitative study.

Respondents to the quantitative survey will be asked if they are willing to participate in follow-up qualitative research. This means that such research can be undertaken in a targetted way. We will be able to recruit respondents not only on the basis of their demographic profiles but also on their attitudinal dispositions to specific issues. In doing so, the insights that can be drawn from the research will be more clear. Furthermore, incorporating the option of the follow-up qualitative research to the main survey contract means that we can respond swiftly to issues that arise and launch the in-depth exploration within a matter of weeks from the data being reported.

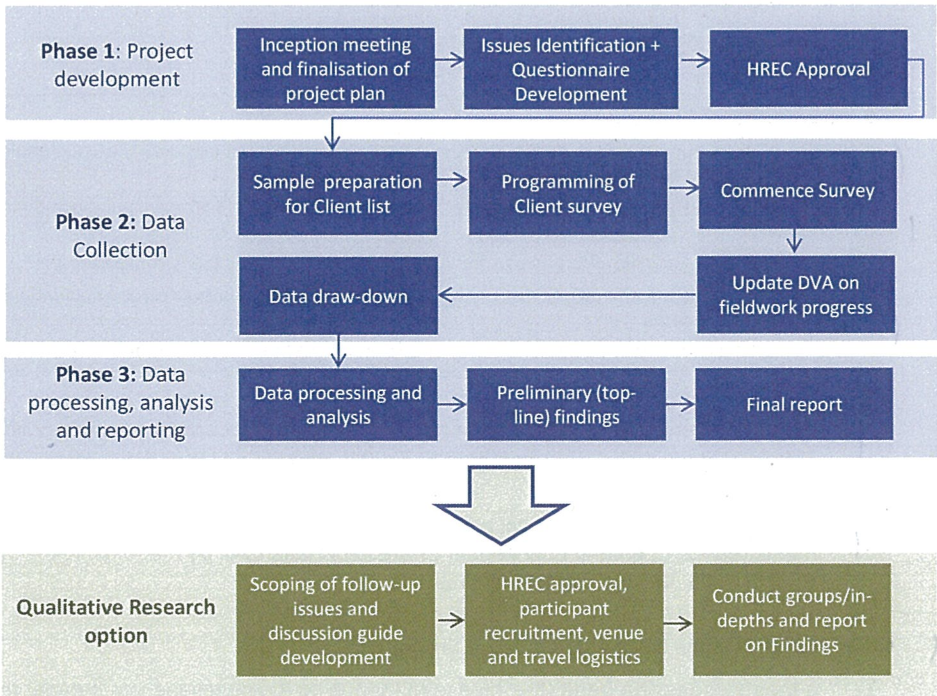
Survey Design

Given the importance of monitoring the level of client satisfaction with the services and service delivery experience, the proposed survey methodology will remain largely consistent with the 2014 survey methodology.

The notable differences in the survey design lies in broadening the topics covered in the questionnaire and changing the sample design strategy to account for the need for a more robust analysis of the contemporary veteran cohort.

The diagram below provides a snapshot of the various tasks involved in conducting this project.

Figure 1: Research Phases and associated tasks



[redacted]

The following is a high level description of our rationale for maintaining the CATI approach, some risk elements associated with the project, and our proposed approach to addressing these risks.

Table 1: Considerations related to the methodology

Approach/Risks	Benefits/Mitigation
Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI)	Remains the most cost-effective way to reach the broad spectrum of clients. The 2014 survey generated a *raw response rate* of 43% (number of interviews divided by number of sample records used) and an *adjusted response rate* of 88% (number of completed interviews divided by the number of completed interviews plus refusals and terminations). As a supplementary approach to the CATI survey, we hosted a link to a parallel online survey on the MyAccount homepage. The survey generated only 253 responses after almost 5 weeks, compared to the 2800+ completed surveys within the same period via CATI. An online survey typically generates a much lower response rate than a CATI survey. The effectiveness of an online survey can be improved if there is access to individual email addresses to enable personalised invitations.
Benefit of taking a broader client experiences approach	Traditionally, the Client Service Survey has focused mostly on service delivery KPIs. Creating an annual survey that is more flexible in its brief will allow DVA to capture deeper insights into client experiences whilst still monitoring key service delivery KPIs.
Client telephone contacts	The 2014 Client Service Survey contact list was provided by DVA. We observed that there were several databases which had to be combined and concorded in order to provide the appropriate sample frame for the project. This was quite a time-consuming task from DVA's perspective and required further QA work by ORIMA to remove any duplications in the listings and check for completeness of the contact details. This is a task that should be commenced early in the project development phase for the next survey.
Client email contacts	We were not able to gain access to a high quality list of email addresses for clients. On that basis, the survey that was hosted on the MyAccount homepage consisted of an open-link URL addresses for members to self-select.
HREC time allowance	Given the long intervals between HREC committee meetings, clearance for the 2014 Client Service Survey had to be obtained via out-of-session arrangements.

[redacted]

Approach/Risks	Benefits/Mitigation
Boosting sample for younger vets	The total sample of clients surveyed via CATI in 2014 was n=2,800. The sample size of clients under the age of 45 years was n=351 (see table below). We propose to boost the representation of the younger cohort (under 45s) to n=550 to allow for deeper exploration of their results. Apart from this adjustment, the proposed sample design will remain largely in line with the 2014 survey sample design to enable accurate comparative analysis. The overall results on satisfaction with DVA will be normalized to ensure the estimates are reflective of the underlying DVA population age profile.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]