

New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services



Legislative Finance Committee

FY26 Budget Briefing

October 22, 2024

Jamison A. Herrera

Cabinet Secretary

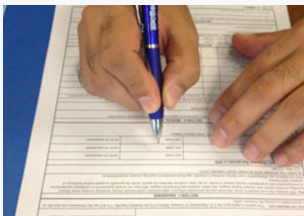




“Every day is Veterans’ Day”

Mission: Build healthier communities by connecting all veterans and their families to the highest quality care, services, and eligible benefits through advocacy and collaboration.

Vision: All Veterans and their families in this state will be educated about and the have an opportunity to attain all earned benefits through collaborative and synchronized efforts of all community service organizations.



NMDVS Division Services



Administrative Services: Provides essential support to the agency to encompass required functions designed to ensure efficient and effective support. Support includes financial administration, contract and procurement processes, official record keeping, policy implementation, resource management, Human Resources, IT support, compliance and risk management, and facilities management.

Field Services: Veteran advocates, assisting veterans and eligible family members with filing federal claims and applying for state benefits.

State Benefits: Manages state veterans' benefits, memorials, and state cemeteries.

Healthcare Coordination: Educates veterans about available health benefits and connects veterans to community resources; manages transportation and homeless and suicide prevention initiatives.

State Approving Agency (SAA): Reviews, evaluates, and approves eligible programs at educational institutions and training establishments in New Mexico for those individuals wishing to enroll and utilize their GI Bill® education benefits.*

Veteran Business Outreach Center (VBOC): Assists veterans, reserve component members, and their eligible spouses with business planning, funding, marketing, and all other assistance needed to start or grow a business.

Veteran Tribal Liaison: works to promote government-to-government relationships by strengthening agency collaborations with tribal government, the Dept of Veterans Affairs and other key agencies to enhance access to services and benefits for veterans in rural areas and tribal lands.

Women's Veteran Coordinator: advocates for women veterans throughout New Mexico to ensure women veterans and their eligible dependents are knowledgeable of available state and federal benefits and that women veterans have equitable access to veteran programs and specialized services.

**GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill>.*

NMDVS PROGRAMS FISCAL YEAR 2024



NMDVS Programs have contributed to the agency's continued success in outreach efforts to New Mexico Veterans and their families.

Community Engagement helps connect the agency with diverse communities, ensuring that services are accessible and tailored to meet specific needs.

Awareness/ Educational initiatives raise awareness about the agency's services, leading to increased participation and support from the community.

Partnership Collaboration with local communities expand the agency's reach and resources, fostering a network of support for shared goals.

Feedback Outreach programs often incorporate feedback loops, allowing the agency to understand community concerns, needs and adapt services accordingly.

Constituent Services assisted 84 New Mexico constituents with specific concerns.

Capacity Building Training and workshops empower community members, enhancing their ability to utilize available resources and participate in agency initiatives.

State Approving Agency (SAA)

Became a bureau within NMDVS, July 1, 2017, and is under annual cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide approval, oversight, training, outreach, and liaison activities to ensure the quality and integrity of programs of education and proper administration of GI Bill® benefits. In addition, the SAA evaluates and approves specific eligible educational for use of Veterans' education and training benefits.

- 90.24% increase in complete application packages processed in a timely and accurate manner, with zero returns from VA compared to FY23
- 3.65% increase in programs approved compared to FY23

Veteran Business Outreach Center (VBOC)

Offers business training workshops on military bases, National Guard facilities, and community settings. A significant initiative is the introduction of a third program within VBOC, specifically designed for military spouses, called "Military Spouse Pathway to Business." The current Boots to Business (B2B) training and Boots to Business Reboot workshops have shown a steady increase in FY24. All programs are planning to expand initiatives to reach more participants with step-by-step guidance on how to start or grow their own businesses. In FY24, VBOC trained 497 transitioning service members and National Guardsmen.

Veteran Tribal Liaison

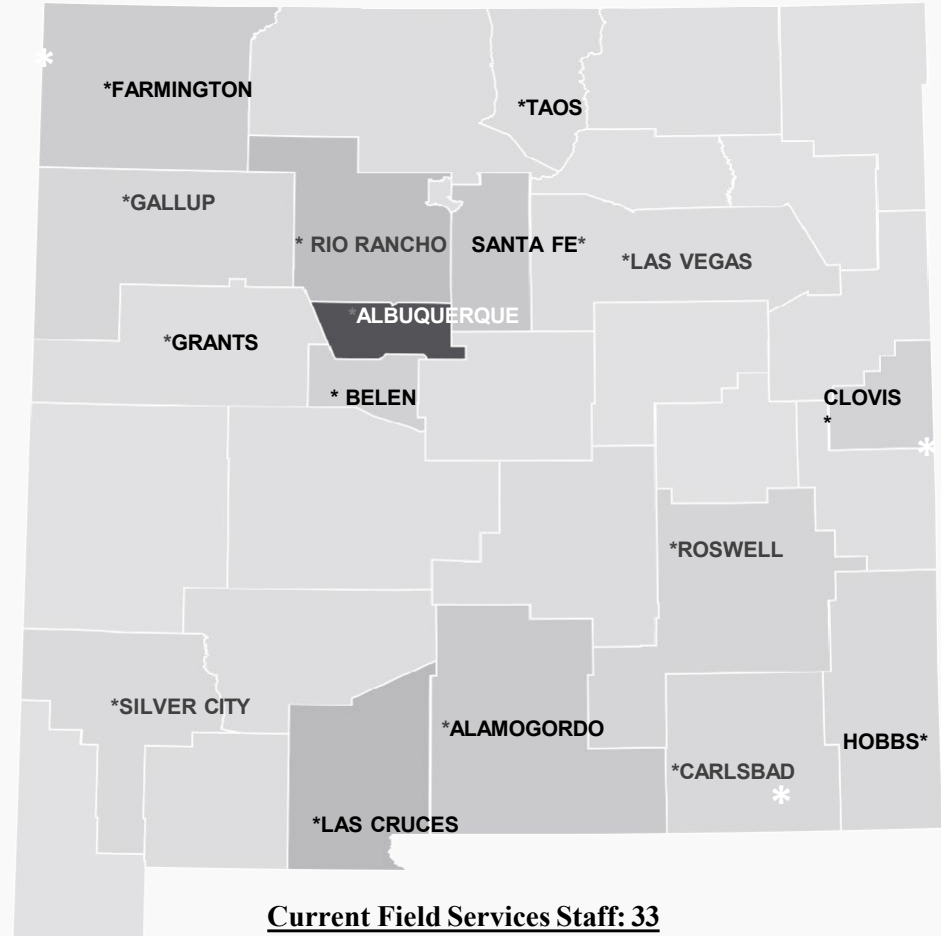
Our Tribal Liaison is dedicated to collaborating with and addressing any shared Veterans' issues and concerns for the State's Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes. Recognizing the unique challenges and sacrifices made by our Native American Veterans, the NM Department of Veterans' Services remains committed to fostering a strong partnership with the State's Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes. Current NM Native American Veterans Population: 40,000+ (19) Pueblos (4) Nations / Tribes (2) Borderline Pueblo / Tribe

Outreach:	43
IAD / Tribal Leader Meeting:	30
Veteran Intakes:	103
VA Healthcare Outreach:	4
Quarterly Meeting:	4



NMDVS Field Offices

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (NMDVS) Field Services Division assists veterans in navigating the federal claims process, as outlined in 38 CFR, to secure benefits they are entitled to. Through personalized guidance, the division ensures that veterans understand their benefits and receive the support necessary to successfully submit and manage claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the State of New Mexico.



Location	# of VSOs Assigned	Vacancies
Farmington	2	1
Gallup	1	0
Grants	1	0
Las Vegas	3	1
Santa Fe	1	0
Rio Rancho	1	0
Taos	1	0
Albuquerque- VARO	1	1
Albuquerque- Pine Tree	4	1 (newly created position)
Albuquerque- VAH	1	1 (newly created position)
Mobile Unit	2	2 (newly created position)
Belen	1	0
Clovis	2	0
Roswell	1	0
Carlsbad	1	0
Hobbs	1	0
Las Cruces	3	0
Alamogordo	2	0
Silver City	1	0
Appeals Position	1	1 (newly created position)

Current Field Services Staff: 33
28 VSO (5 Supervisors, 1 pending certification,)
3 VSO Operational
1 Business Operations Specialist
1 Division Director
Field Services vacancy rate: 7



FIELD SERVICES OPERATIONS FISCAL YEAR 2024

Veteran Encounters

	FY 23	FY 24	% Change
Office Visits	10,682	13,508	↑ 26% Increase
Emails	9,830	10,496	↑ 7% increase
Claims	5,494	6617	↑ 20% increase
Phone Calls	10,610	13,580	↑ 28% Increase
Appeals	720	987	↑ 37% Increase
General Information	9,173	1179 **	Changed database
Survivor Benefits	144	312	↑ 117% increase

The CVSO: The Certified Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) plays a crucial role in achieving the agency's mission, vision, and goals. In addition to receiving specialized training and accreditation from Veterans Administration, National Association of County Veteran Service Officers and the Division, each CVSO is dedicated to improving customer service, streamlining the benefits process, and advocating for Veterans and their families. Our CVSO team exemplifies passion, unity, selfless service, and an unwavering respect for those who have served, ensuring that we connect with our veteran community with the highest standard of excellence.

Field Services Total Interactions:

NW Region	2,955
NE Region	10,628
Central Region	5,215
SE Region	8,765
SW Region	12,164
Division Total	38,547

STATE BENEFITS FISCAL YEAR 2024



State Benefits Applications	FY23 Total	FY24 Total	FY25 /QTR1
Tax Exemptions	3262	2880	434
Disability Tax Exemptions	1588	1738	380
License Plates	904	494	275
Park Passes	734	1094	326
Game & Fish	612	683	126
State Scholarships	80	44	69
Total	6480	6933	1535
Percent increase	12.8%	7%	15% projected increase



HONOR GUARD FISCAL YEAR 2024



About Honor Guard Services

- Augment the military branches' burial services
- Currently there are 40 Honor Guard Teams in the state; 29 are active
- DVS conducts (2) trainings and competitions/year

Fiscal Year	FY23	FY24	Fy25 - through 09/30	FY25 anticipated
# of services rendered	1069	1101 3% Increase FY23	167	1200 (anticipated)
Expended amount	\$ 145,350.00	\$186,700.00	\$37,800.00	\$200,000
Percent increase from previous fiscal year	1.79%	28.45%		8% projected increase





STATE BENEFITS FISCAL YEAR 2024

NMDVS Honor Guard Program

- The Honor guard program has grown over the past 2 years and now encompasses 29 teams. NMDVS Honor Guard Training conference and competition continues to be held twice a year to accommodate initial and validation training in both northern and southern parts of the state.

General Election Amendment 1, 2

- The possibility exists that these two amendments, if passed, will increase state benefits workload significantly (any veteran with a percentage of disability will be allowed to refile for tax exemption equal to their disability rating).

Construction of the Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery in 2025

- The Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery construction project is awaiting the National Cemetery Administration Cemetery Grants Program to fund this build out. NMDVS is currently 4th on the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program list. This project is anticipated to be funded in Federal Fiscal year 26' or 27'.

HEALTHCARE COORDINATION FISCAL YEAR 2024



OUTREACH EVENTS- 60

COMMUNITY EVENTS- 143

REFERRALS- 205

VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

- Support for veteran service organizations and non-profits that specifically address veteran homelessness.
- Participate in outreach events, homeless stand-down event, and Point-in-Time counts of the unhoused.
- FY25 contracts address the statewide veteran homelessness challenge with programs in the 4-quadrants of the state and metropolitan Albuquerque

GOVERNOR'S CHALLENGE TO PREVENT SUICIDE

- DVS is the lead for the NM Governor's Challenge Team which researches and implements best practices of veteran suicide prevention
- FY24 and FY25 contracts for suicide prevention and awareness programs throughout the state; providers also address Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Military Sexual Trauma
- Implemented 988 in conjunction with the VA and state organizations.



HIGHLY RURAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FISCAL YEAR 2024

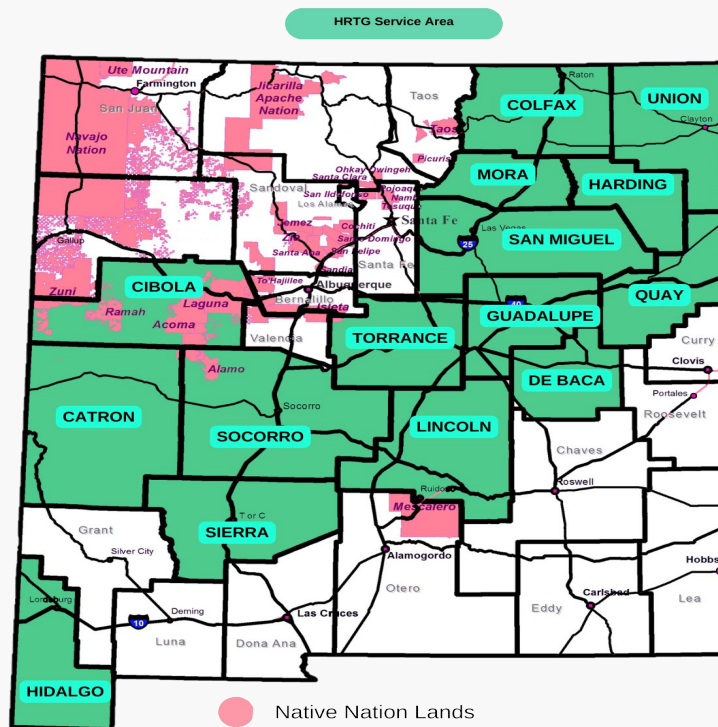


- 15 Counties and 5 Native American Nations funded for FY25 by VA Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG).
- 5 Transportation contractors serve the 15 Highly Rural Counties.
- 4 additional contractors added in FY25 for expansion.

HRTG –AREAS OF COVERAGE:

CIBOLA, GUADALUPE, MORA, QUAY, SAN MIGUEL, SOCORRO, HARDING, UNION, COLFAX, CATRON, HIDALGO, SIERRA, TORRENCE LINCOLN, DE BACA.

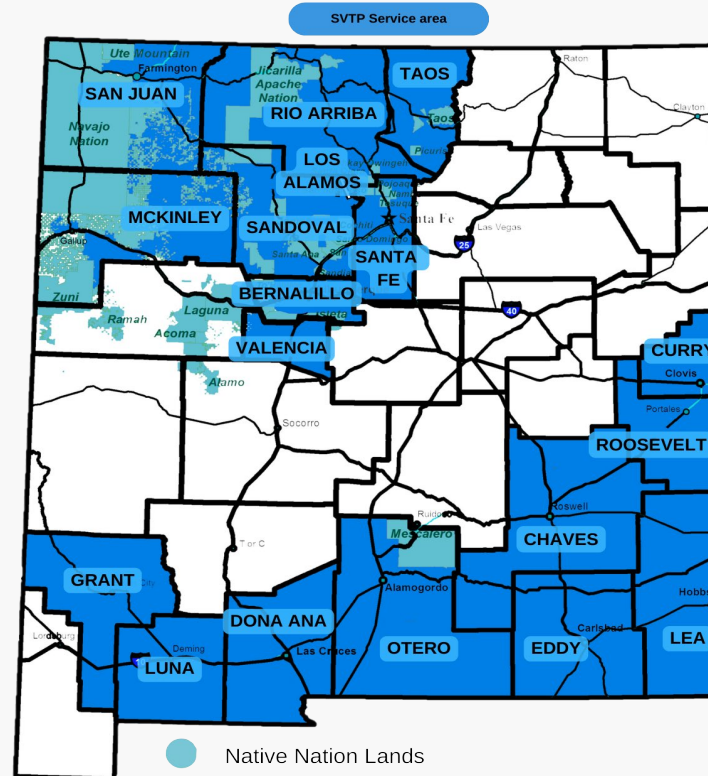
AREAS INCLUDE **NATIVE AMERICAN LANDS**: ACOMA, ALAMO, LAGUNA, RAMAH, AND ZUNI



NEW MEXICO TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FISCAL YEAR 2024



General funds received for FY25 Statewide Transportation expands services to additional 18 counties throughout the state.



Counties Served:

NW = SAN JUAN, RIO ARRIBA, MCKINLEY, TAOS

SW = GRANT, LUNA, DONA ANA, OTERO

SE = EDDY, LEA, ROOSEVELT, CHAVEZ, CURRY

CENTRAL = BERNALILLO, SANDOVAL, VALENCIA, SANTA FE



STATE VETERANS TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FISCAL YEAR 2024

	FY23	FY24	FY25 Projected
Federal grant award per federal fiscal year	\$391,600.00 (with supplement)	\$250,000.00 (required state funds supplement)	\$425,000.00
Avg. Cost Per Mile (not including additional wait charge)	\$1.97	\$2.43	2.43
Total Miles Driven	64,762	170,690	174,897
Total Veterans Served	268	356	736
Total Round Trips	500	669	1472



FY 26 Budget Request



The NM Department of Veterans Services has requested a total budget of **\$12,259.0** for the fiscal year 2026.

- General Fund increase **\$2,249.9** (25.1%) increase from the FY25 Operating Budget.
 - Personnel reclassifications and realignments in FY24
 - 3 FTE for program support: 2 VSO, 1 social worker
 - 86.7% increase in the agency’s Civil Rights and Liability rates from FY25.

200 Personnel services and Employee Benefits: \$ 1,350.4 increase for FTE- 3 position expansion

The agency is seeking an additional 3-FTE, to support the agencies expansion initiatives to our NM Veteran Population in FY26. The agency experienced growth in a Suicide Prevention Act through FY24 Legislation which requires personnel to oversee and manage workloads in this area. The additional FTE would contribute to expansion of services to better serve rural NM communities and continue to support the PACT Act Law. We are seeking personnel assistance to meet the requirements of the Suicide Prevention Act as well as to promote career longevity within our agency.

- Over the last 12 months the agency reflects a 13% vacancy rate due to retirements and loss of state personnel to federal entities offering higher salaries for same scope of VSO work. We have since reclassified positions to mitigate future turnover.
- The agency currently holds 2 vacant exempt high-level positions, of which \$370k is the projected requirement to fill these appointments.
- *The FY24 General Fund reversion amount of \$529,960 encompasses a portion of this vacancy savings that weren’t filled in FY24.

300 Contractual Services: \$279.5k increase request

- 200K Suicide Prevention Behavioral Health
- 25K Veteran Homelessness Initiatives 3.5% inflation rate for services

***FY26 Deficiency Request \$881.4k**

The agency requests a **Deficiency Appropriation** To cover a revenue shortfall created by the transfer of the Truth or Consequence Veterans Home from the Veterans Services Department to the Department of Health.

400 Other /Operational: \$620k

Increase of funding would include the impact of operational costs:

- 100K Travel/Outreach/Conference/Events
- 110K Vehicle Leases for field offices /Fuel
- 35K DoIT/ GSD/Communications
- 10K New VSO Certifications and Training
- 275K Office Leases and Operational cost: expansion of offices to extend DVS footprint throughout the state
- 45K Field Office Furnishings and Supplies
- 45K Governors Veteran Advisory Council funding

FY 26 Budget Request



Key Initiatives for FY26 - Capital Funding Request

1. Veteran Resource Center – 15M Proposal is to establish the “New Mexico Veteran Resource Center” built on a One-Stop- Shop veteran-centric service delivery model. The concept is to enable veterans and their families a single access point to information and service transactions. The single access point would be provided by “Veteran Service Officers” and other service representatives to navigate, and directly assist veterans and dependents with their respective needs for VA and State claims;

- 1) Service-Connected Disability Compensation
- 2) Pension eligibility, Dependent Indemnity Claims
- 3) VA Healthcare access, proximity to the nearest military Base Exchange (BX) and Commissary privileges
- 4) State Veteran benefits (tax exemption & waiver, hunting/fishing license, special military license plates, state park & museum passes).

VSOs in this Veterans Resource Center will coordinate necessary assistance to apply for, SNAP benefits, unemployment compensation, MEDICARE & MEDICAID benefits, access to assisted living care facilities, higher education opportunities (GI Bill, NM Free tuition Assistance Program), Section 8 Housing, Low Income Home Energy Assistance, Emergency Food Assistance, Counseling & Childcare for Children, Domestic Violence Program, Substance Abuse Program. This resource center would be a statewide agency collaborative effort .



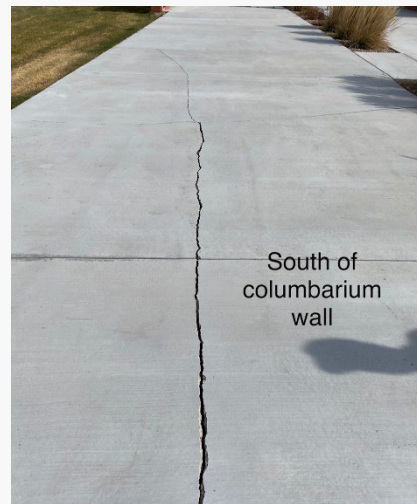
FY 26 Budget Request



Key Initiatives for FY26 - Capital Funding Request

2. To plan, design, repair, mitigate, and make other improvements to site and grounds– 5,522,100

The Department of Veterans Services is requesting priority one (1) funding due to emergency mitigation construction costs (4.1M) at the State Veterans Cemeteries. The cemeteries are in dire need of mitigation work that is required to correct matters caused by inadequate and defective construction during the initial build. This project includes the completion of the Gallup Cemetery Sound Wall Project, the Angel Fire Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall Fence and connecting walkway, and phase II irrigation for the Center Flag Plaza walkway. Lastly, it involves the replacement of the Ft. Stanton cemetery kiosk for burial information (1.4M).



FY 26 Budget Request



Veterans' Services Department

State of New Mexico

S-8 Financial Summary

(Dollars in Thousands)

BU PCode Department
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		2023-24 Opbud	2023-24 Actuals	2024-25 Opbud	2025-26 PCF Proj	----- FY 2026 Agency Request -----		Total
						Base	Expansion	
REVENUE								
111	General Fund Transfers	7,178.0	6,893.4	8,391.1	0.0	10,351.6	289.4	10,641.0
112	Other Transfers	0.0	284.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
120	Federal Revenues	808.4	731.6	936.6	0.0	1,243.0	0.0	1,243.0
130	Other Revenues	250.0	254.9	275.0	0.0	375.0	0.0	375.0
150	Fund Balance	100.0	0.0	200.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
REVENUE, TRANSFERS		8,336.4	8,164.5	9,802.7	0	11,969.6	289.4	12,259.0
REVENUE		8,336.4	8,164.5	9,802.7	0	11,969.6	289.4	12,259.0
EXPENSE								
200	Personal Services and Employee Benefits	6,009.0	5,598.6	6,638.8	5,306.9	7,781.6	277.8	8,059.4
300	Contractual services	1,185.1	1,301.1	1,975.6	0.0	2,308.1	0.0	2,308.1
400	Other	1,142.3	1,033.8	1,188.3	0.0	1,879.9	11.6	1,891.5
600		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EXPENDITURES		8,336.4	7,933.6	9,802.7	5,306.9	11,969.6	289.4	12,259.0
EXPENSE		8,336.4	7,933.6	9,802.7	5,306.9	11,969.6	289.4	12,259.0
FTE POSITIONS								
810	Permanent	69.00	50.00	75.00	50.00	74.00	3.00	77.00
820	Term	5.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	5.00	0.00	5.00
FTEs		74.00	53.00	79.00	53.00	79.00	3.00	82.00
FTE POSITIONS		74.00	53.00	79.00	53.00	79.00	3.00	82.00



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Questions/Comments?



Our Veterans Thank You!