

# Santa Rosa Junior College

## Program Resource Planning Process

### *Veterans Affairs 2022*

#### 1.1a Mission

The mission of the Veterans Affairs Office is to assist Veterans, their dependents and survivors in obtaining the benefits and services they are entitled to under the laws of the United States and the State of California, while attending SRJC.

#### 1.1b Mission Alignment

**The Veterans Affairs Office is strongly aligned with the District's Strategic Plan goals and objectives.**

<b>Strategic Plan: Goals and Objectives</b>	<b>VAO Alignment with Strategic Plan</b>
<b>A. Support Student Success:</b> <i>Support development of the whole student from early college awareness through successful completion of educational and career goals</i>	
Expand and sustain access by eliminating barriers, expanding strategic outreach efforts, and delivering services effectively through current technologies	Providing VA applications and forms online to students. Providing phone-in counseling appointments as requested. Coordinating referrals to local VA medical providers when students need additional support. Embedding DRD services in the Veterans Affairs office. Beginning a counseling presence at the Petaluma Campus three days per month.
Increase retention and academic progress through student engagement with academic and student services, faculty and staff, and campus and community activities	GI Bill certifications require a comprehensive educational plan with a single, discreet goal. Only required courses for that goal can be certified for benefit eligibility. This supports goal identification and efficient enrollment and progress toward a student's goal. Often, GI Bill recipients enroll full-time in <i>required</i> coursework to receive the full-

	time Basic Housing Allowance of \$2223 per month (prorated for less than full-time).
Increase the number of students who complete their educational plans and goals	<p>VA academic progress standards require a 2.0 gpa each term, and GI Bill benefits are pro-rated for less than full-time required coursework. Both requirements support the academic planning, enrollment and success of student Veterans and dependents, often at a full-time enrollment level.</p> <p>The Director, SFS served or serves on key Student Success committees: Student Success Task Force, Priority Registration Task Force, Student Success/Equity Committee and the MIS Task Force. This involvement helps ensure more accurate and complete tracking of data on student Veterans, dependents and survivors.</p>
<b><i>B. Foster Learning and Academic Excellence Foster learning and academic excellence by providing effective programs and services</i></b>	
Integrate academic and student support services across the college	December 2013 SPS sponsored a panel/workgroup for faculty and students about the Veteran experience and challenges in the college setting. Fall 2014 a Veterans club was established and the Veterans Counselor is the club advisor. Spring 2015 a Veterans Orientation was held, co-sponsored by the Veterans Office and Veterans Club.
<b><i>C. Serve our Diverse Communities Serve our diverse communities and strengthen our connections through engagement, collaboration, partnerships, innovation, and leadership</i></b>	
Provide relevant career and technical education that meets the needs of the region and sustains economic vitality	The VRAP benefit program required enrollment in certain high need areas as identified by the federal government, for retraining of unemployed, older Veterans. All GI Bill certifications require a state of California and VA approved Program of Study, Comprehensive Educational Plan, and enrollment in required units only.
<b><i>D. Improve Facilities and Technology Provide, enhance, integrate, and continuously improve facilities and technology to support learning and innovation</i></b>	
Incorporate best practices and innovations for facilities and technologies in order to enhance learning and working environments	A module within SIS for enhanced tracking of data related to student Veterans was piloted in Spring 2014 and is lessening the manual workload and enhancing data tracking of, and communication with, student Veterans and dependents.
Increase District-wide coordination and collaboration to improve facilities and technology access, efficiency, and effectiveness	To provide wrap-around support services to returning Veterans, additional space is needed. Included in the Measure H bond campaign, a comprehensive Veterans Resource Center is planned for and will be incorporated into the Facilities Master Plan. The interim 3 years requires additional space to meet student needs for

coordination of community support, more DRD support, and more staff work space. This interim space enlargement is planned for Fall 2015, adding 900 square feet of office space.

***E. Establish a Strong Culture of Sustainability*** *Establish a culture of sustainability that promotes environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and social equity*

Expand, support, and monitor district-wide sustainability practices and initiatives

VA forms are available online from the Veterans Office website, to assist students in applying to the College, and to the VA for benefits.

***F. Cultivate a Healthy Organization*** *Cultivate an inclusive and diverse organizational culture that promotes employee engagement, growth, and collegiality*

Recruit and hire outstanding faculty and staff and implement an exemplary Professional Development Program for all employees

Fall 2013 a new Generalist Counselor, with a 50% assignment to the Veterans Office, was hired. Each year this counselor, a DRD Specialist, and an adjunct counselor all attend the Chancellor's Office Veterans summit.

Increase safety planning, awareness and overall emergency preparedness

The Veterans Benefits Specialist is an Area Safety Leader.

***G. Develop Financial Resources*** *Pursue resource development and diversification while maintaining responsible fiscal practices and financial stability*

Pursue alternative funding sources including grants, partnerships, and scholarships to support our diverse communities and students

Grant funding to support additional resources for Veterans has been pursued but not yet secured. This effort remains on the list of funding needs for the Hanover Group.

***H. Improve Institutional Effectiveness*** *Continuously improve institutional effectiveness in support of our students, staff, and communities*

Fully implement continuous quality improvement strategies to achieve greater transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, and participation

The addition of the Administrative Assistant I position enabled the department to return to meeting enrollment reporting deadlines as required by the VA.

## 1.1c Description

Veterans Affairs assists eligible students to receive cash aid and services under seven federal and state programs. In addition, tutorial assistance referrals are available through the office. The program serves Veterans, active duty service members, Guard and Reserve members, and dependents of Veterans. A counseling office is located in the Veterans Affairs Office, and 50% of one full-time counselor, supplemented by one 50% adjunct counselor, have received specialized training to develop the accurate,

comprehensive educational plans required to support the certifications for GI Bill benefits under the array of benefit programs.

The availability of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation and Education programs, which cover the cost of the Veterans tuition and fees, provide funds for books, as well as provide a large monthly housing stipend are thought to be a major factor in the steady number of Veterans enrolled at SRJC. The number of Veterans enrolling has created a need for additional specialized services and results in more staff time dedicated to the detailed GI Bill certification and reporting processes. Acute growth over several previous years seems to have leveled off, and program size is anticipated to remain stable barring any major world events.

## **1.1d Hours of Office Operation and Service by Location**

Hours are M-F 8 am to 5 pm  
Summer hours are M-Th 8 am to 5 pm

During the 2018/2019 academic year, the number of Veterans accessing services strictly through Petaluma and Windsor campuses did not justify the designation of physical services at either location. Enrollment numbers will continue to be reviewed each year, and until there is substantial growth realized, most Veterans receiving GI Bill benefits will be served at the Santa Rosa campus in the Veterans Affairs Office.

The Veterans Affairs program has participated in campus events such as the Financial Aid Fun Fair, Day Under the Oaks, and the One Love event. During the Financial Aid Fun Fair, the North Bay Vets Center co-tabled with the Veterans program to provide information about counseling services available. As in-person events return, Veterans Affairs is committed to participate.

## **1.2 Program/Unit Context and Environmental Scan**

The Veterans Affairs program is staffed by one fulltime Coordinator who also acts as the School Certifying Official. Upon the retirement of the Admin Assistant I, it was decided the position would not be filled *at that time*. The remaining staff of 4-5 Veterans Work Study students were fully funded by the Veterans Administration at no cost to the District. Additionally, a Disability Specialist was assigned two days per week in the Veterans office to strengthen a connection between the Veterans and DRD departments.

The Veterans program is assigned a fulltime counselor with 50% of his work time being designated to the Veterans office. Additionally, an adjunct counselor provides academic counseling for the Veterans office three days each week.

The Veterans program experienced no significant change in number of students served. It is anticipated that the program size will now remain at its current level for the next few years. With the implementation of the Colmery Act, Veterans separated from service on or after January 1, 2013, no longer have a delimiting date for their Post-9/11 GI Bill which has the potential to act as a stabilizing factor in the number of Veterans enrolled at SRJC. Although the continued draw down of service members overseas has the potential to cause an eventual reduction in the number of Veterans enrolling at SRJC, it is important to keep in mind that military engagements and conflicts are impossible to predict which places a high importance on maintaining a well operated Veterans program.

## **2.1a Budget Needs**

The service provided is highly personal and personalized, necessitating little in printing and office supplies. This office runs effectively and efficiently with the Coordinator, Veterans Programs and a Student Support Specialist. The program benefits from a dedicated Academic Counselor (twice a week), a Disability Resource Specialist (twice a week) and partnership organizations. The program is supported with BFAP/SFAA funding and additional support from Prop 63 MHSA Grant. The program continues to build on providing comprehensive services. If the number of Veterans and eligible dependents and survivors increases, additional funding will be needed in the future to provide sufficient veterans services, support, and programming, as well as ensuring that staff continues to receive adequate training.

## 2.1b Budget Requests

Rank	Location	SP	M	Amount	Brief Rationale
0001	ALL	08	02	\$5,000.00	Conference registration and travel to annual attend the Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists (WAVES) training for Veterans Program staff. Highly recommended by VA in letter accompanying the annual Administrative Cost Allowance payment.

## 2.2a Current Classified Positions

Position	Hr/Wk	Mo/Yr	Job Duties
Student Success Specialist	40.00	12.00	Provides referral services to student veterans and family members. Tracks referrals for mental health services, DRD, Nation's Finest, Legal Aid of Sonoma County, Sonoma County VSO.
Coordinator, Veterans Affairs	40.00	12.00	For eligible Veterans, dependents and survivors, maintains compliance with federal, state and VA policies regarding benefit payments; tracks enrollment and academic progress of Veterans, dependents and survivors; coordinates with United Veterans Council for other support services such as mental and physical health services; certifies GI Bill payments in the VAOnce software; advises student Veterans, dependents and survivors on benefit eligibility, rights and responsibilities; refers Veterans, dependents and survivors to specially trained SRJC Counselors for comprehensive educational planning. Coordinates events and services for students participating in SRJC VA program.

## 2.2b Current Management/Confidential Positions

Position	Hr/Wk	Mo/Yr	Job Duties
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## 2.2c Current STNC/Student Worker Positions

Position	Hr/Wk	Mo/Yr	Job Duties
VA WorkStudy Student Workers - up to 5	25.00	12.00	No cost to the District-VA funded. Greet and welcome Veterans, dependents and survivors to SRJC. Provide information on steps to matriculate and on accessing SRJC VA program.

## 2.2d Adequacy and Effectiveness of Staffing

The Veterans Affairs program is staffed by one fulltime Coordinator who also acted as the School Certifying Official. In the past, the staff of 3-4 Veterans Work Study students were fully funded by the Veterans Administration at no cost to the District. Additionally, a Disability Specialist is assigned two days per week in the Veterans office to strengthen a connection between the Veterans and DRD departments.

The Veterans program is assigned a fulltime counselor with 50% of his work time being designated to the Veterans office. Additionally, an adjunct counselor provides academic counseling for the Veterans office three days each week.

The Veterans program experienced no significant change in number of students served. It is anticipated that the program size will roughly remain at its current level for the next few years. With the implementation of the Colmery Act, Veterans separated from service on or after January 1, 2013, no longer have a delimiting date for their Post-9/11 GI Bill which has the potential to act as a stabilizing factor in the number of Veterans enrolled at SRJC. Although the continued draw down of service members overseas has the potential to cause an eventual reduction in the number of Veterans enrolling at SRJC, it is important to keep in mind that military engagements and conflicts are impossible to predict which places a high importance on maintaining a well operated Veterans program.

## 2.2e Classified, STNC, Management Staffing Requests

0001	Santa Rosa	01	02	Administrative Assistant I 75% - VACANT	Administrative Assistant I 100%	Classified

## 2.3a Current Contract Faculty Positions

Position	Description
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### 2.3b Full-Time and Part-Time Ratios

Discipline	FTEF Reg	% Reg Load	FTEF Adj	% Adj Load	Description
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### 2.3c Faculty Within Retirement Range

### 2.3d Analysis of Faculty Staffing Needs and Rationale to Support Requests

Regulations and constraints guide the educational planning needed to support a GI Bill benefit certification and necessitate limiting this service to be provided by Counselors with specialized training. A full-time Counseling generalist, with a 50% assignment to Veterans, was hired beginning fall 2013. This person, along with a 50% adjunct Counselor in the Veterans Office addresses this demand. General Counseling is provided year-round on a drop-in only basis; Veterans comprehensive educational planning is still provided, by necessity, through 45 minute to one hour scheduled appointments.

### 2.3e Faculty Staffing Requests

Rank	Location	SP	M	Discipline	SLO Assessment Rationale
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### 2.4b Rationale for Instructional and Non-Instructional Equipment, Technology, and Software

Equipment needs for the Veterans Affairs Office can be met through an Allowable Use Exception request for BFAP/SFAA funds. Two staff computers must remain VA-Once software compliant for GI Bill certifications. Staff computers and student kiosks are kept current as a result.

### 2.4c Instructional Equipment Requests

Rank	Location	SP	M	Item Description	Qty	Cost Each	Total Cost	Requestor	Room/Space	Contact
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### 2.4d Non-Instructional Equipment and Technology Requests

Rank	Location	SP	M	Item Description	Qty	Cost Each	Total Cost	Requestor	Room/Space	Contact
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## 2.4f Instructional/Non-Instructional Software Requests

Rank	Location	SP	M	Item Description	Qty	Cost Each	Total Cost	Requestor	Room/Space	Contact
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## 2.5a Minor Facilities Requests

Rank	Location	SP	M	Time Frame	Building	Room Number	Est. Cost	Description
0001	Santa Rosa	04	02	Urgent	Plover Hall	513	\$100,000.00	Expansion of Veterans Office to accommodate 1 additional private office.
0001	Santa Rosa	04	02	Urgent	Plover Hall	513	\$4,000.00	Electric entry door to allow for wheelchair accessible entrance.
0001	Santa Rosa	04	02	Urgent	Plover Hall	513	\$0.00	Expansion of Veterans Office to accommodate a small study room, separate from the student lounge area.
0001	Santa Rosa	04	02	Urgent	Plover Hall	513	\$0.00	Expansion of Veterans Office to accommodate a small computer lab space, separate from the student lounge area.

## **2.5b Analysis of Existing Facilities**

The space in Plover Hall is welcoming and functional for Veterans, their dependents and survivors, with a private office for the Coordinator/School Certifying Official, Counselors, a shared office for the Disability Resource Specialist and VA LCSW, and a small lobby space for students to relax comfortably. However, the program is short one office space for the services currently provided which presents significant scheduling challenges.

Additionally, our program offerings have outgrown the current office space and cannot accommodate the growing need for wrap-around services for our student Veterans. The Chancellor's Office has provided principles of excellence for all CCC Veterans Resource Centers (VRC) to abide by.

These principles of excellence ask CCCs to create a study room, computer lab, and student lounge area, within their VRC. At this point in time, the SRJC Veterans Office student area is comprised of one small common room that holds computers, study table, and lounge furniture. The multi-use area does not provide any quiet or confidential space.

**This environment is not conducive to studying and does not meet the principles of excellence. Section 2.5a addresses the needs for our program to meet these requirements.**

## **3.1 Develop Financial Resources**

Grant or private donation funding is needed to expand the Veterans Affairs Office to be a full-service Veterans Resource Center, with 6-7 offices alongside or surrounding a comfortable, open lobby space. Staffing is in place for this between the current Veterans Affairs staff, Counseling, DRD and community agencies. The cost for the facility and space is needed and has been secured through the Measure H campaign. In the interim 3 years, more space is needed to house current staff and a 900 square foot office expansion is planned for Fall 2015.

Community donations for furniture and equipment in both the interim enlarged space and the final VRC can be secured to some degree.

A 1918 campaign donation provided a set of parade military flags during Summer 2015 for the office.

## **3.2 Serve our Diverse Communities**

The Veterans Benefits Specialist is a Veteran, The Administrative Assistant is the daughter of a Veteran, and the VA student workers are Veterans, (as required by the VA for their WorkStudy funding). Having Veterans employed in the Veterans Affairs Office is highly desirable to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment for the student population being served.

The Veterans Affairs program is committed to supporting our diverse communities and in actively engaging in anti-racist policies and procedures.

## **3.3 Cultivate a Healthy Organization**

Remaining current on VA regulations, and maintaining strong contacts in our county, state and in Muskougee is important to providing good information and service to our Veterans and dependents. The Veterans Benefits Specialist serves on the United Veterans Council of Sonoma County. The Administrative Assistant attends the monthly Vet Connect meetings during non-peak seasons. The Administrative Assistant will attend the next WAVES training, since her knowledge base has grown and she is now able to find this training useful. The VA sends a letter with the annual Administrative Cost Allowance payment indicating a strong suggestion to use the funds for appropriate staff to attend the annual WAVES training.

The Veterans Benefits Specialist also serves on the ad hoc Veterans Services Task Force that meets to determine, discuss and hopefully enhance the service and support provided to Veterans attending SRJC.

In addition, returning Veterans increased in number and are returning with service-related disabilities including ABIs and PTSDs. Training in understanding these disabilities and their affects on students continues to be needed. The DRD Specialist, Generalist Counselor and the dedicated adjunct counselor attended the Chancellor's Office sponsored training-Veterans Summit- offered during Spring 2013, December 2013 and October 2014.

An important feature of the Veterans Office that has been somewhat compromised (when the workspace for the Administrative Assistant was placed in the lobby) is the availability of a large, wide-open, comfortable and welcoming space for our returning Veterans to visit, relax and receive service in. This type of comfortable space is important to their success in school and supports them having a successful transition back to non-combat society. This need drives the interim, enlarged space project, and will also be fully in place in the new, complete Veterans Resource Center to be constructed in 3 years.

### **3.4 Safety and Emergency Preparedness**

Student Financial Services has three area safety leaders, Rachael Cutcher (Scholarship), Craig Rowland (Veterans Affairs), and Brian Wilson (Financial Aid). These employees participate in District-wide safety trainings. The Financial Aid Manager and Scholarship Manager attended a District Police training regarding Plover Hall safety concerns and relayed the information to staff. Financial Aid Manager, Scholarship Manager and Director all viewed the Active Shooter Video.

### **3.5 Establish a Culture of Sustainability**

Unfortunately, the required backup documentation material for VA audits is necessary to be held in hard copy form in each student's file. Much other assistance to Veterans (CCCApply, FAFSA, SIS Registration, etc.) is all available on-line at the student kiosk and in the Plover lobby.

Forms that student Veterans and their dependents use regularly are prominently posted on the SRJC Veterans Affairs website for student access.

Beginning with Fall 2013, the Financial Aid Long-Term Student Educational Plan form is no longer being printed and no longer being used for the educational planning of student Veterans and dependents; all comprehensive educational plans are being done through SIS. This has resulted in 2500+ 3NCR forms not being printed each year.

Piloted in Spring 2014, there is now a module within SIS for tracking of Veterans, dependents and survivors receiving GI Bill benefits. This module will allow for automated tracking of course drops, W and F grade monitoring, SAP measurement, etc. It requires duplicate data entry to the VA-Once software, but should ultimately save the manual workload and review of 600+ student files each month.

### **4.1a Course Student Learning Outcomes Assessment**

n/a

### **4.1b Program Student Learning Outcomes Assessment**

**Original Program Level SLOs identified in 2007:**

- 1. As a result of a counseling session, student Veterans and eligible dependents will be able to state their educational goal, and identify the requirements necessary to reach that goal. (SLO assessed Spring 2010 then changed Fall 2010.)**
- 2. As a result of meeting with Veterans Affairs staff, students will gain understanding of the Veterans assistance programs available as well as his/her rights and responsibilities as a participant. This understanding will be demonstrated by a student's reported acknowledgement. (SLO changed Fall 2010)**

**Program Level SLOs identified beginning Fall 2010:**

**As a result of interactions with Student Financial Services, including Financial Aid, Scholarship Programs and Veterans Affairs, students will:**

- 3. Apply for and receive financial assistance to assist with the costs of attending college;**
- 4. Learn to manage finances, plan a budget and understand the costs associated with attending SRJC and/or four-year institutions;**
- 5. Identify conditions that are likely to contribute to, or interfere with, their academic performance.**

SLO #5 was assessed in the Financial Aid department Spring/Summer 2015 and will be assessed in the Veterans department Spring/Summer 2016.

### 4.1c Student Learning Outcomes Reporting

Type	Name	Student Assessment Implemented	Assessment Results Analyzed	Change Implemented
Service/Program	Counseling appt	Spring 2010	Summer 2010	Fall 2010
Service/Program	Staff interaction	N/A	N/A	Fall 2010
Service/Program	Apply for financial assistance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Service/Program	manage finances and budget	N/A	N/A	N/A
Service/Program	Identify conditions for academ	Spring 2016	Summer 2016	Summer 2016

### 4.2a Key Courses or Services that address Institutional Outcomes

Course/Service	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	2d	3a	3b	4a	4b	5	6a	6b	6c	7
Development of Comp. Ed Plan/Couns				X	X			X	X	X	X					
Maintenance of claiming benefits	X				X			X		X	X					X
Process for claiming GI Bill benefits	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X					X
Referrals to community support services				X	X	X		X	X	X	X					X

### 4.2b Narrative (Optional)

Veterans have served their country and are entitled to educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill as a result. However, these rights of the Veterans (and eligible dependents and survivors) to benefits are balanced with responsibilities that include matriculating efficiently toward a single stated goal (only required coursework is payable) and meeting academic progress standards each term. This process requires thoughtful and careful planning, as well as budgeting 36 months of GI Bill benefits. As a result, the services and guidance provided by the Veterans Affairs Office results in students learning and developing skills in several institutional areas.



Returning Veterans often struggle with adjusting to non-combat society as a result of anxiety disorders, brain injuries and/or PTSD. Struggles in the classroom and discussions with Veterans Affairs Office staff often result in Veterans deciding to pursue additional counseling or tutorial services through SRJC or the VA Medical Centers.

**Departmental Learning Outcomes:**

**1. As a result of a counseling session, student Veterans and eligible dependents will be able to state their educational goal, and identify the requirements necessary to reach that goal.**

Assessments were made during Spring 10 and Summer 10 terms (April and June).

Significant resources are put toward providing this counseling and educational planning for student Veterans; the data indicated that significant learning in these areas is taking place and that the anticipated outcomes of the counseling session are being met in high percentages.

During Spring 2016 and Summer 2016 a similar assessment will be performed, to measure goal identification, understanding of coursework, the value of a comprehensive educational plan and the timeline required to complete the goal. A student's understanding of factors that contribute toward, and detract from, their academic performance and progress toward their goal will also be measured.

**5.0 Performance Measures**

## 6.1 Progress and Accomplishments Since Last Program/Unit Review

Rank	Location	SP	M	Goal	Objective	Time Frame	Progress to Date
0001	ALL	01	02	Develop a comprehensive facility layout for a Veterans Resource Center	Identify priority, and secondary, space needs to support enhanced service to Veterans; incorporate reporting, academic counseling, DSPS support, space for community agency visiting professionals, and a large lobby/recreation area.	1 year	A new facility, large enough to house 6-7 offices, reception and lobby space. This was part of the Measure H campaign and should be listed in the Facilities Master Plan.
0002	ALL	04	02	Provide larger service space for the Veterans office.	Provide an adequately sized service lobby for the Veterans Office, and provide adequate, secure workspace for the Admin. Asst.	1 year	Additional square footage. 900 square foot expansion planned for Fall 2015.

**6.2b PRPP Editor Feedback - Optional**

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## 6.3a Annual Unit Plan

Rank	Location	SP	M	Goal	Objective	Time Frame	Resources Required
0001	ALL	01	02	Develop a comprehensive facility layout for a Veterans Resource Center	Identify priority, and secondary, space needs to support enhanced service to Veterans; incorporate reporting, academic counseling, DSPS support, space for community agency visiting professionals, and a large lobby/recreation area.	1 year	A new facility, large enough to house 6-7 offices, reception and lobby space. This was part of the Measure H campaign and should be listed in the Facilities Master Plan.
0002	ALL	04	02	Provide larger service space for the Veterans office.	Provide an adequately sized service lobby for the Veterans Office, and provide adequate, secure workspace for the Admin. Asst.	1 year	Additional square footage. 900 square foot expansion planned for Fall 2015.