

Schedule 13

Funding Request for the FY 2015-16 Budget Cycle

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

PB Request Number R-02

Request Titles

R-02 County Veteran Service Officer Reimbursement Increase

Dept. Approval By: 

**Supplemental
Change Request FY 2015-16**

OSPB Approval By: 

**Base Reduction FY 2015-16
Budget Amendment FY 2015-16**

Line Item Information	Fund	FY 2014-15		FY 2015-16		Continuation
		FY 2014-15	Request	Base Request	FY 2015-16	Governor Budget Request
Total		\$190,654	\$0	\$190,654	\$466,626	\$466,626
FTE		-	-	-	-	-
Total of All Line Items	GF	\$190,654	\$0	\$190,654	\$466,626	\$466,626
	CF	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	RF	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	FF	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Line Item Information	Fund	FY 2014-15		FY 2015-16		Year 2 Continuation
		FY 2014-15	Request	Base Request	FY 2015-16	Governor Budget Request
Total		\$190,654	\$0	\$190,654	\$466,626	\$466,626
02. Division of Veterans Affairs - County Veterans Service Officer Payments	GF	\$190,654	\$0	\$190,654	\$466,626	\$466,626

Letternote Text Revision Required?	Yes	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If Yes, describe the Letternote Text Revision:
Cash or Federal Fund Name and CORE Fund Number:				
Reappropriated Funds Source, by Department and Line Item Name				
Approval by OIT?	Yes	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not Required
Schedule 13s from Affected Departments:				
Other Information:				



COLORADO

Department of Military and
Veterans Affairs

Priority: R-02
County Veteran Service Officer
Reimbursement Increase
FY 2015-16 Change Request

Cost and FTE

- The Department is requesting \$466,626 General Fund in FY 2015-16 and ongoing to increase reimbursements to counties in support of their County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) program.

Current Program

- Section 28-5-801, C.R.S. requires that each county in Colorado establish a CVSO to assist Colorado veterans and their families with securing benefits from the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The State Division of Veterans Affairs is authorized to reimburse counties for the officers' salaries.
- The current reimbursement rate to counties in support of their CVSO is equal to \$1.06 per hour and counties are responsible for paying the remainder of the officer's salary.
- For FY 2014-15 the Division was budgeted \$190,654 General Fund total, which includes \$87,600 for CVSO reimbursement and \$103,054 for a pilot program related to veteran outreach.

Problem or Opportunity

- Many counties, particularly in rural areas, are unable to supplement the funding for their CVSO at a level that provides a reasonable salary or allows the CVSO to operate full time. As a result, 49 out of 64 county offices are manned part-time and several counties do not pay the CVSO at all but instead rely on volunteers. Two counties are supported from nearby county offices because they do not have funds available to hire even a part-time officer, and are unable to find volunteers.
- The Department has heard directly from County Commissioners in rural areas that the funding currently provided is not sufficient to meet the needs of their veterans.
- The return of veterans from recent wars in Southwest Asia and the aging veteran population has increased the pressure/workload of offices throughout the State of Colorado. This trend has been demonstrated in the State's Division of Veterans Affairs office which has seen a doubling of its customer base every year for the past four years.

Consequences of Problem

- Without adequate support from their local CVSO, veterans may become frustrated with the VA's bureaucratic process and give up trying to get answers to questions and/or file claims.
- If a veteran does not receive prompt access to benefits and services during their transition from the military, they may become significant users of more costly services down the road.

Proposed Solution

- The request is to increase the reimbursement rate to counties in support of their CVSO's from \$1.06 per hour to a rate of \$8.00 per hour, and to reprogram the pilot program moneys for CVSO reimbursement. The combined total annual funding for reimbursements would be \$657,280 General Fund.
- The additional funding will help veterans and their families receive more timely assistance in applying for and obtaining benefits provided by federal, state, and local legislation. It would also demonstrate a commitment to helping veterans rise out of poverty, starting with those on the frontlines of helping other veterans onto a path of prosperity and stability.



COLORADO

Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs

FY 2015-16 Funding Request | November 1, 2014

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

H. Michael Edwards,
Major General.
Executive Director

Department Priority: R-02

Request Detail: County Veteran Service Officer Reimbursement Increase

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY 2015-16	Total Funds	General Fund
County Veteran's Service Officer Reimbursement Increase	\$466,626	\$466,626

Problem or Opportunity:

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is requesting an increase of \$466,626 General Fund to increase reimbursements to counties in support of their county veteran service officers. Pursuant to Section 28-5-801, C.R.S., the board of county commissioners for each county is required to establish a county veteran service office (CVSO) to assist Colorado veterans with securing benefits from the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

CVSO's provide assistance to Colorado veterans and their families on a myriad of issues to include: 1) recently discharged veterans assistance in recording DD- 214's, VA medical and dental care applications, life insurance conversions; 2) disabled veterans with compensation claims, appeals, and vocational rehabilitation; 3) home buying and improvements and certificates of eligibility; 4) education benefits to include GI Bills (all types), re-training grants, loans, etc.; 5) health benefits through the VA medical care and other agencies; 6) financial assistance via VA guaranteed loans; 7) survivor benefits to include burial allowances, flags, assistance with state and national cemetery information, death pensions; and 8) other services to include assistance in obtaining military awards, records, etc.

Currently, the Division of Veterans Affairs has \$86,700 General Fund available to reimburse counties in support of their CVSO's; program funding has remained constant since FY 2009-10. The current reimbursement rate to counties in support of their CVSO is equal to \$1.06 per hour and counties are responsible for paying the remainder of the officer's salary, the amount of which is set by the Board of County Commissioners. Many counties, particularly in rural areas, are unable to supplement the funding for their CVSO at a level that provides a reasonable salary or allows the CVSO to operate full time. As a result, 49 out of 64 county offices are manned part-time throughout the state. Several counties do not pay their CVSO at all but instead rely on volunteers. In addition, there are two counties that are supported from nearby county offices because they do not have funds available to hire even a part-time officer, and they're unable to find volunteers.

Additionally, the Department would like to increase reimbursement for CVSO's in rural counties which serve 43 percent of Colorado's veterans. The Department has heard directly from County Commissioners in rural areas that the funding currently provided is not sufficient to meet the needs of their veterans. The Department participates in Colorado SERVES, a state-wide effort to understand and share best practices across the varied communities of Colorado. Through discussions with this group, the Department has confirmed that rural veterans do not have access to the same resources and support as their urban and suburban counterparts.

Finally, the return of veterans from recent wars in Southwest Asia and the aging veteran population has increased the pressure/workload of offices throughout the State of Colorado. This trend has been demonstrated in the State's Division of Veterans Affairs office which has seen a doubling of its customer base every year for the past four years. The increased number of veterans returning from current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and veterans from Vietnam, Korea, and WWII means the State must ensure that veterans have the ability to access help and support that the CVSO provides.

Proposed Solution:

The Department is requesting to increase the reimbursement rate to counties in support of their CVSO's from \$1.06 per hour to a rate of \$8.00 per hour, which is an annual increase of \$466,626 General Fund beginning in FY 2015-16. The additional funding will help veterans and their families receive more timely assistance in applying for and obtaining benefits provided by federal, state, and local legislation. It would also demonstrate a commitment to helping veterans rise out of poverty, starting with those on the frontlines of helping other veterans onto a path of prosperity and stability.

CVSO's play a critical role in helping veterans secure the benefits for which they are entitled as a result of their service. A veteran who receives prompt access to services and benefits has a significantly higher chance of success in transition. The cost savings that is generated by supporting veterans at this point of transition and preventing them from being significant users of more costly services is difficult to measure, but significant. Veterans who would otherwise become frustrated and give up trying to get answers to questions and/or file claims are instead helped through the VA's bureaucratic process by the CVSO. CVSO's provide valuable service to veterans and their families, the counties, and the State of Colorado as a whole. Currently Colorado's 395,613 veterans receive approximately \$2,111,996,000 in benefits annually (including medical costs). This equates to \$5,338.54 per veteran. Increasing veterans' access to these services will increase these payments across the state.

The CVSO program requires support from the State of Colorado and works hand in hand with the Division of Veterans Affairs resulting in the support of veterans and their families across the state. The consequences if the proposed solution is not approved would be stagnation in the level of service provided to Veterans by their state-mandated County Veterans Service Officers. The Department considered a smaller increase but determined that an increase to the state minimum wage is the correct amount (at a minimum) to reimburse counties in support of veterans as it helps to lessen the incidence of underemployed veterans. This supports the goal of improving veteran's employment status as well, since CVSO's are veterans themselves.

Anticipated Outcomes:

The anticipated outcome would be that the number of veterans being serviced throughout the state would increase. The amount of money spent on providing emergency services to veterans would concurrently decrease. The increase in veterans being seen and helped is directly linked to the Division of Veterans Affairs Performance Plan, specifically strategic policy initiative number 2 which is to increase service to underserved veterans. The increases could be measured both as a whole and as a regional metric (e.g. urban, rural, etc.).

Assumptions and Calculations:

This request is an increase in reimbursement to the counties in support of their Veterans Service Offices across the state. Current funding in this Long Bill line has \$86,700 available for reimbursement to counties for CVSO's and \$103,954 for a five county (Larimer, El Paso, Douglas, Park, and Arapahoe) pilot program for veteran outreach. Total funding for the line is \$190,654. The Department's request is to increase the total funding annually by \$466,626 and reprogram the pilot program moneys for CVSO reimbursement. The total funding for the Long Bill line used for reimbursements to counties for CVSOs would be \$657,280 annually.

Table 1 shows the current FY 2013-14 FTE and three year reimbursement by county, and Tables 2 and 3 show the calculations for the requested amount. For FY 2013-14, actual reimbursements to counties totaled \$87,600. This equates to an average reimbursement of \$1.04 per hour for full-time positions, and \$1.08 for part-time, assuming 2,080 and 1,040 hours per year, respectively. The Department based its calculations for this request on the assumption that \$8.00 per hour is a more appropriate hourly reimbursement rate to properly fund CVSOs and improve service to veterans. At \$8.00, which is the current minimum wage for Colorado, the State would ensure that counties receive adequate funding to properly compensate CVSOs for their work in assisting Colorado's veterans and / or keep offices open for longer hours to improve access for veterans.

Table 1: CVSO FTE and Reimbursements by County

County	FY14 CVSO FTE	Act FY12 Reimb	Act FY13 Reimb	Act FY14 Reimb	Proj FY15 Reimb
ADAMS	1	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
ALAMOSA	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
ARAPAHOE	2	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
ARCHULETA	1	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
BACA	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
BENT	1	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
BOULDER	2	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
BROOMFIELD	1	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
CHAFFEE	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
CHEYENNE	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
CLEAR CREEK	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200

Table 1: CVSO FTE and Reimbursements by County

CONEJOS	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
COSTILLA	0.5	\$100	\$900	\$0	\$1,200
CROWLEY	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
CUSTER	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
DELTA	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
DENVER	1	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
DOLORES	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
DOUGLAS	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
EAGLE	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
ELBERT	0.5	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
EL PASO	5	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
FREMONT	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
GARFIELD	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
GILPIN	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
GRAND	1	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
GUNNISON	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
HINSDALE	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
HUERFANO	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
JACKSON	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
JEFFERSON	1	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
KIOWA	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
KIT CARSON	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
LAKE	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
LA PLATA	1	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
LARIMER	2	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
LAS ANIMAS	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
LINCOLN	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
LOGAN	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
MESA	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
MINERAL	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
MOFFAT	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
MONTEZUMA	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$2,400
MONTROSE	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
MORGAN	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
OTERO	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
OURAY	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
PARK	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
PHILLIPS	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
PITKIN	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
PROWERS	1	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
PUEBLO	2	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
RIO BLANCO	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
RIO GRANDE	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200

Table 1: CVSO FTE and Reimbursements by County					
ROUTT	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
SAGUACHE	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
SAN JUAN	0.5	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SAN MIGUEL	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
SEDGWICK	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
SUMMIT	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
TELLER	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
WASHINGTON	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
WELD	1	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
YUMA	0.5	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
Counties F/T	15	\$32,400	\$32,400	\$32,400	\$32,400
Counties P/T	49	\$55,300	\$56,100	\$55,200	\$57,600
Total	64	\$87,700.00	\$88,500.00	\$87,600.00	\$90,000.00

Table 2: Reimbursement Per Hour Calculations					
FY 2013-14 Reimbursement Per Hour					
	Hourly Rate	Hours/year	Annual Reimb per CSVO	Number of CVSOs	Annual Reimb.
Full Time	\$1.04	2,080	\$2,160	15	\$32,400
Part time	\$1.08	1,040	\$1,127	49	\$55,200
					Total Annual Reimbursements
					\$87,600
FY 2015-16 Requested Reimbursement Per Hour					
	Hourly Rate	Hours/year	Annual Reimb per CSVO	Number of CVSOs	Annual Reimb.
Full Time	\$8.00	2,080	\$16,640	15	\$249,600
Part time	\$8.00	1,040	\$8,320	49	\$407,680
					Total Annual Reimbursements
					\$657,280

Table 3: Calculation of Request Amount

FY 2013-14 Reimbursements to Counties for CVSOs

	Number of CVSOs	Annual Reimb per CSVO	Annual Reimbursements
Full Time	15	\$2,160	\$32,400
Part time	49	\$1,127	\$55,200
Total Current Reimbursements			\$87,600

FY 2015-16 Requested Reimbursements to Counties for CVSOs

	Number of CVSOs	Annual Reimb per CSVO	Annual Reimbursements
Full Time	15	\$16,640	\$249,600
Part time	49	\$8,320	\$407,680
Total Requested Reimbursements			\$657,280

Current Funding in CVSO Payments Line Item

Funding to Reimburse Counties for CVSOs	\$87,600
Outreach funding (5 County Pilot Program)	\$103,054
Total Funding Available for Reimbursements	\$190,654

FY 2015-16 General Fund Request

Total Requested Reimbursements (Table 2)	\$657,280
<i>Less Total Funding Available (above)</i>	<i>(\$190,654)</i>
Total Funding Requested	\$466,626