

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN

2025-2027



OREGON DEPARTMENT
of VETERANS' AFFAIRS



May 20, 2025

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) values each person's contributions, invests in our team's success, and values diversity among our staff and the veterans and families we serve.

At ODVA we are committed to achieving a diverse and equitable workforce through Affirmative Action (AA) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) measures. Establishing and retaining a workforce that reflects the rich diversity of the veterans we serve allows us to more effectively accomplish our mission through a veteran-centric approach. A diverse workforce promotes a variety of perspectives on important issues and is essential to provide the awareness and compassion needed to respectfully deliver services to Oregon veterans. Diversity in our workforce makes us stronger partners and helps us sustain impactful relationships with our community partners.

The Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs has a zero-tolerance policy on discrimination, harassment and retaliation. It is my requirement that managers promptly review concerns raised by employees regarding any allegations of discrimination or harassment. Our team's collective commitment to diversity directly aligns with our goal of an inclusive team, who will continue to efficiently address emerging needs of veterans and their families.

I encourage staff to actively use all available resources to improve learning and understanding of DEI and to celebrate our differences. To ensure ODVA has a diverse workforce, we pursue affirmative action efforts that support the entry and growth of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse people. To support our staff, ODVA continues to provide training in areas such as cultural humility and implicit bias, as well as frequently introducing new resources to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all employees and customers of ODVA.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs *Affirmative Action Plan*. This plan details the efforts the agency has made and future strategies to promote Oregon as a leader for intentional diversification within our workforce, operations and benefits delivered to our veteran community. Sincerely,

Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels, Director
Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

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SECTION I: DESCRIPTION OF THE AGENCY

A. Agency Mission

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) will honor and serve all Oregon veterans and their families by aligning and delivering earned benefits and services that enhance and improve their lives in recognition of their service to our nation

B. Agency Overview

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs has been serving Oregon's military veterans since 1945. The legislature created the Department in response to a citizen mandate to provide for Oregon soldiers, sailors and airmen returning from duty in World War II. Since then, benefits managed by the Department have been extended to include veterans of later eras.

The employees of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs are advocates for veterans, their dependents and survivors, dedicated to providing quality programs and services to meet their current and future needs.

The Department provides services to veterans, their dependents and survivors, and partners with organizations to improve outcomes for the veteran's community including:

- Training and certification to County Veteran Service Officers, benefits counseling, claims preparation and appeals representation to obtain service-connected and non-service-related disability and survivor benefits for Oregon veterans, their dependents and survivors.
- Pass-through and grant funding to counties and veteran organizations that provide direct services to veterans in the areas of homelessness, education, veteran services, health and behavioral health care, and suicide prevention and awareness efforts.
- Special advocacy and outreach for historically underserved veterans including women, LGBTQ, incarcerated, aging and tribal veterans.
- State veterans' home loans with favorable interest rates to assist veterans with becoming homeowners.
- Skilled nursing, rehabilitative, and Alzheimer's care at the Oregon Veterans' Home for veterans, spouses and surviving spouses of veterans, and parents all whose children died while in the Armed Forces of the United States.
- Conservatorship and Representative Payee services, including total estate management for certain veterans, their dependents, and survivors who are legally determined to be "protected persons" under Oregon law.

C. Agency Goals

The Department has developed four strategic goals:

Goal: **Targeted Veteran Services**

Objective: To serve more veterans and serve them better.

Goal: **Mobilize Partnerships**

Objective: To leverage all resources available to veterans.

Goal: **Drive Veteran Engagement**

Objective: To amplify awareness of resources and build the Oregon veteran brand.

Goal: **Invigorate Core Operations**

Objective: To build a better, stronger and more durable department for future generations through our responsible, resourceful and creative management.

D. AGENCY CONTACT

Director/Administrator

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GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADVISOR

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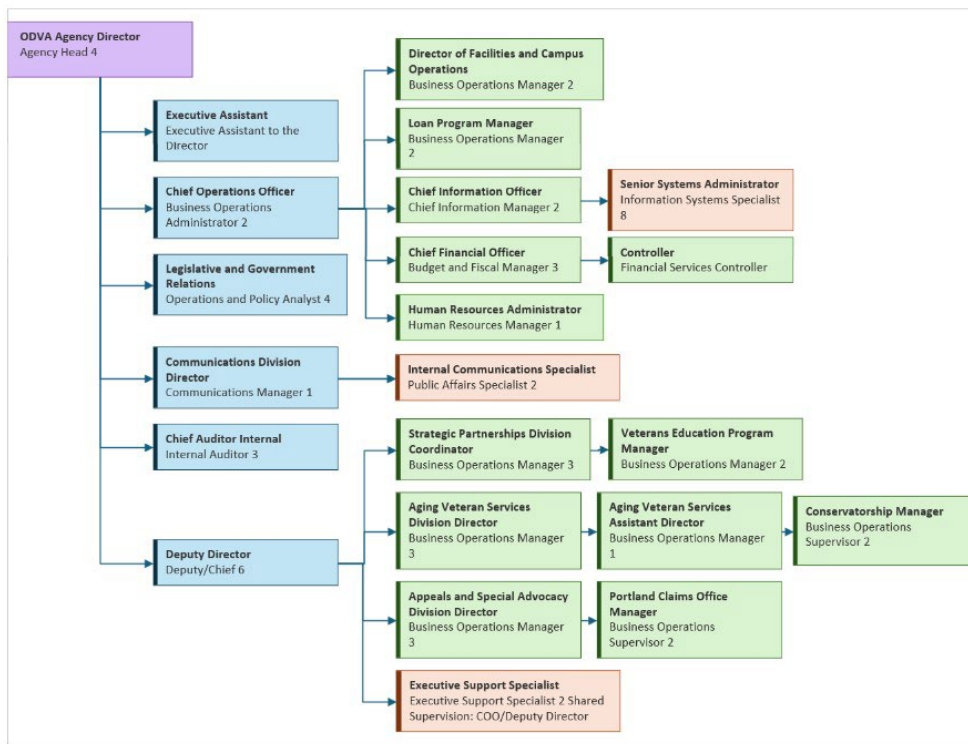
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION REPRESENTATIVE

Jerrika Self, MBA, PHR, Human Resources Administrator

Human Resources Office

Voice (503) 385-5549 FAX (503) 373-2285

E. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



SECTION II: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN

A. Agency Affirmative Action Policy

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) is committed to diversity and has a goal to recruit qualified Affirmative Action (AA) applicants and will promote Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) for all employees and job applicants, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, age, or disability. The Agency will continue its efforts to reflect the diversity of Oregon and to provide fair and equal employment opportunities and practices. It is also the policy of the ODVA to provide an environment for each applicant and employee that is free from sexual harassment, as well as harassment and intimidation based on an individual's race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or disability.

Employees are encouraged to share any AA or EEO concerns with their immediate supervisor, manager, the ODVA's AA Officer, and the Director or Deputy Director to promote confidential resolution of any possible affirmative action problem. As set out in the ODVA Policy 7.5.9 *Harassment-Free Workplace*, and ODVA Policy 7.5.26 *An ODVA Employee Filing an ADA Complaint*, AA/EEO complaints will not be subject to reprisal for use of the Agency's grievance review policy and are guaranteed by law that they will suffer no retaliation for filing an EEO complaint.

ODVA Policy 7.5.9 *Harassment-Free Workplace* addresses the policy of the Agency to prohibit discrimination and all forms of workplace harassment. The policy provides guidelines for a work site that enjoys a positive, respectful and professional work environment, free from behavior, actions or language, which constitutes workplace harassment.

The policy provides information on the complaint procedure for any employee who is subject to or is aware of workplace harassment or believes that a member or representative of Agency management directed employment-related discrimination toward him/her. The policy states that the complaint is

promptly forwarded to the designated Human Resources Personnel for investigation. The complaint will be given prompt and thorough attention. The affected parties will be informed when the investigation has concluded, and that immediate appropriate corrective action was taken.

ODVA Reasonable Accommodation Policy addresses the policy of the Agency to make every reasonable, good faith effort to provide reasonable accommodation in employment and to our clients, applicants for services and members of the public who have disabilities, as defined by statute.

The Agency will make modifications or adjustments to the job application process that will enable qualified applicants with disabilities to be considered for the desired position. The Agency will make modifications or adjustments to the work environment, or to the manner or circumstances under which the position held or desired is customarily performed, that enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of that position.

The ODVA will not discriminate or tolerate discrimination against any employee because they are a member of, apply to be a member of, perform, has performed, applied to perform or have an obligation to perform service in a uniformed service.

Policy

Agency AA Policy/DI Statement/State and Federal Employment Law Documents

It is the policy of the Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs that all agency services and personnel actions be administered such that no person is discriminated against by reason of race or color, religion, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), age, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, or genetic information.

The Director requires that fair and equal opportunities in employment, assignments, training, and promotion be afforded consistently with this policy. Contractors and vendors dealing with this agency are also expected to maintain a commitment to diversity and/or equal opportunity.

Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity (AA/EEO) Commitment

All management employees share the responsibility to uphold the principles of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity (AA/EEO) in all aspects of the agency's operations. Each manager will be evaluated annually on their effectiveness in supporting and advancing AA/EEO objectives.

Management responsibilities include ensuring:

1. That all individuals are treated equitably and provided equal opportunity in all employment practices, including recruitment, selection, training, promotion, performance evaluation, work assignments, classification, compensation, overtime distribution, and other terms and conditions of employment.
2. That the agency's grievance procedures are followed consistently and without retaliation or reprisal against any individual.
3. That all operational policies, procedures, and practices are free from discrimination against individuals from protected classes.

All agency employees are expected to contribute to a workplace environment free from discrimination and harassment based on any protected characteristic, including but not limited to: race, color, religion,

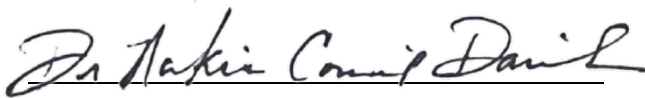
sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity), national origin, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, genetic information, veteran status, and any other status protected by federal or Oregon law.

Agency management has additional responsibilities, including:

- Leading by example through professional, respectful conduct.
- Actively promoting and reinforcing the principles of this policy.
- Ensuring that all employees are aware of the policy and the Director's commitment to its enforcement.
- Remaining alert to potential incidents of discrimination or harassment.
- Fostering a respectful, inclusive, and diverse workplace culture.
- Responding promptly and appropriately to any violations of this policy.

This commitment to AA/EEO is both a legal requirement and a fundamental value of this agency. All employees, especially those in leadership, are expected to uphold this policy in daily practice and decision-making.

IT IS THE OBLIGATION OF EACH EMPLOYEE TO ADHERE TO THIS POLICY.



Date: 5/29/2025

Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels, Director

A copy of the Agency's Affirmative Action Plan is available on the ODVA shared common R drive and is also available for managers and employees to review on request to the ODVA Affirmative Action Representative. The Agency Affirmative Action Policy Statement/Diversity & Inclusion Statement is posted on the Internet below the Agency's mission statement under the "About Us" tab and will also be posted on bulletin boards in the agency. Additional affirmative action policies and statements can be found in appendix A, on the DAS website, and on our own website.

Plan or other related documents, please contact:

ODVA Affirmative Action Representative

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Human Resources Administrator
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B. Roles for Implementation

Specific, active engagement, and/or innovative activity

The organization currently consists of a Director and 98 staff including 7 limited duration employees and 1 fixed term employee. The organization is also expanding its workforce through specific and timely hiring actions. A Controller and two Accounting Technicians are scheduled to begin employment prior to June 10, 2025. In addition, eight new employees have been hired this year, two of whom were promoted from within the organization.

Agency Director

The Agency Director sets the Agency's policies concerning equal employment opportunity processes and affirmative action and has overall responsibility for compliance with policy and achievement of the Affirmative Action goals to which the agency is committed. The Director provides leadership to agency managers, evaluates the performance of managers to ensure their work performance reviews include affirmative action efforts and accomplishments, and initiates action, directly or through an authorized designee, on reported activities contrary to the Agency's policy.

Agency Supervisors and Managers

Agency Supervisors and Managers play a critical role in the successful implementation of the Agency's Affirmative Action Plan and are directly accountable to the Agency Director for ensuring full compliance with its objectives.

In support of the Agency's commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and workforce diversity, supervisors and managers are expected to:

1. Thoroughly understand and consistently apply the Agency's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies and the goals outlined in the Affirmative Action Plan (AAP). Ensure policies are integrated into daily supervisory practices.
2. Proactively maintain a workplace that is free from harassment, hostility, and discrimination throughout the entire employee lifecycle with the Agency. This includes reinforcing standards of respectful conduct during all stages of employment—from recruitment and onboarding (including New Employee Orientation) to ongoing training, performance management, promotion, and separation. Supervisors must actively uphold a culture of dignity, fairness, and inclusion at every point of the employee experience.
3. Discuss the principles and requirements of the Agency's affirmative action and EEO policies to all employees. Ensure that staff understand and adhere to these policies and create an environment that supports open dialogue and accountability.
4. Establish and execute actionable plans within each supervisory unit to achieve the goals of the Affirmative Action Plan. These strategies should be measurable, time-bound, and tailored to address underrepresentation or identified barriers to equal opportunity.
5. Identify and provide equitable access to skill building, career development, and training opportunities. Support professional growth initiatives that prepare all employees, especially those from underrepresented groups, for advancement whenever feasible.
6. Ensure that all staff model and practice mutual respect, cultural awareness, and tolerance in the workplace. Promote diversity and inclusion as core organizational values through both behavior and policy.
7. Maintain a supportive and inclusive environment that values and respects the contributions of all employees. Strive to make the workplace inviting and affirming for individuals of all backgrounds and identities.

Human Resources Manager

The Human Resources Administrator is assigned the duties of Affirmative Action Representative for the Agency and is accountable to the Agency Director for carrying out the Affirmative Action Plan. The Human Resources Administrator is responsible for the following:

1. Disseminates affirmative action information through orientation, training and management consultation;
2. Reviews personnel practices to identify barriers to equal employment and upward mobility opportunities, and recommends management of any changes in programs and procedures designed to eliminate discriminatory practices;
3. Advises the Director of the preparation of equal employment opportunity programs, procedures, regulations, reports, and the Agency's affirmative action plan;
4. Develop the biennial Affirmative Action Plan;
5. Monitors progress toward affirmative action goals;
6. Assures that agency recruitments are carried out in compliance with AA and EEO goals, and provides assistance to managers with efforts to meet affirmative action recruitment goals and outreach efforts;
7. Monitors recruitment processes and evaluate employment policies and practices to ensure there is equal opportunity for protected class individuals;
8. Ensure that managers' evaluations contain criteria to meet affirmative action goals and that training on performance appraisal processes is provided;
9. Develops or contracts for training for staff on AA/EEO issues, workplace harassment and cultural competency;
10. Communicates internal complaint procedure regarding discrimination against all employees and proceeds promptly with fair and unbiased investigations. Conducts investigations into discrimination complaints received, provides a timely response to the complainant, and makes recommendations to the Agency Director for action;
11. Maintains a welcoming environment for employees by modeling and promoting an environment of respect and sensitivity to individuals.

Agency employees

Agency employees are accountable to the supervisor or manager for carrying out the Affirmative Action Plan. Employees are responsible for the following:

1. Promote a respected workplace which honors diversity and promotes understanding and success of all employees;
2. Follow procedures for reporting harassment concerns or complaints;
3. Attend training on the Agency Affirmative Action Plan and become familiar with the Agency goals and objections.

SECTION III: CURRENT BIENNIUM AFFIRMITIVE ACTION PROGRESS REPORT

A. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Racial Equity are at the core of ODVA's vision of ensuring that every veteran and their families thrive in Oregon. As we work to honor and improve every veteran's journey, we need to understand their individual stories, challenges, and need to know how we can align and deliver earned benefits and services to meet them where they are. They need to know that ODVA exists to provide services and advocacy for every phase of their life.

ODVA'S mission is to support veterans by providing access to services that fit each veteran's unique individual needs. Centering DEI allows us to address barriers to accessing veteran services in Oregon. Our goal is to ensure that agency programs and systems are designed to reach and align with every veteran's evolving needs across their lifespan. This includes the veterans and members of their families who serve veterans as employees of ODVA.

In the third year of ODVA's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, we continue our work with a DEI consultant, [TsaiComms LLC](#), to develop foundational DEI priorities. These priorities will help us meet agency goals of embedding DEI into every facet of our operations and address evolving barriers to ODVA services for Oregon's veterans. The priorities we will be working on this year include:

- Organizational Equity Scan: (ongoing, as of this writing) The goals of this qualitative and quantitative assessment are to help us understand the strengths, challenges, and barriers within the agency in providing impactful and effective service to every veteran.
- Position Descriptions: Ensure that all current and newly developed position descriptions explicitly reflect the Agency's commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). This includes systematically reviewing and updating existing job descriptions to align with organizational values and incorporating DEIA language as a standard component in the development of all new position descriptions.
- Strategic DEI Action Plan: Based on the findings and recommendations of the Organizational Equity Scan, we will develop a data-informed Strategic DEI Action Plan that includes SMART goals, strategies, and tactics with key metrics to measure our progress and success.
- Veteran-focused Agency Equity Lens: Develop an agency-specific, veteran-focused equity lens that will be applied to decision-making, policies, processes, and procedures to ensure that we continuously consider and address the unique and complex situations veterans face.
- Equity Lens Policy Review: Begin an update and overhaul of agency policies, applying our equity lens as we work, and creating a plan for regular and ongoing review to address ongoing and systemic changes.
- Training: Leadership and all-staff foundational DEI training will allow us to continue the agency's efforts toward achieving a shared understanding and language of what diversity, equity, and inclusion are and are not within the agency and for the veterans we serve. This training will also allow us to apply new tools to our work, which will enhance our ability to serve every veteran and their family. We understand that DEI is a journey, an evolution and not a revolution, that takes a very thoughtful, deliberate, and concerted effort and commitment from all levels at ODVA.

B. Balanced Scorecards

We used the lens of the Balanced Scorecard to set the direction for ODVA over the five-year plan horizon and beyond, building on our mission statement, vision, and core values. The Balanced Scorecard is a strategic planning framework useful in ensuring all aspects of an organization are considered against all other aspects of the organization and allows us to blend our affirmative action plan with our DEI vision and values. (More about the policies we abide by to make this a reality can be found in appendix B and the DAS website.) The concept was first introduced by David Norton and Robert Kaplan in 1992. The Balanced Scorecard lens helps us ensure we consider the four primary aspects of our duties: customers and stakeholders, process/technology/internal operations, learning/growth, financial accountability.

C. Strategies

All agency strategies align to one of the Balanced Scorecard perspectives as described in the narratives that follow. As part of the process, all candidate strategies were evaluated for urgency, importance, risk/difficulty of implementation, and resources required for implementation.

ODVA's Plan reflect the areas of focus for ODVA to lead and grow over the next five years. In turn, this will allow us to address pressing veteran and organizational needs by tapping into opportunities in ways that are consistent with the guiding principles so that we can achieve our vision.

For each Balanced Scorecard perspective, the Plan outlines the current and future states for each strategy. The strategies reflect ODVA's commitments over the next five years. The strategies inform actions and next steps, and they guide resource deployment. The strategies are change oriented to express something ODVA is going to approach differently in the future to lead and grow in the priority areas.

Each strategy is supported by one or more initiatives we will strive to accomplish in the next year. In some cases, we will be able to fully realize the strategy. In most cases, we will only make prioritized progress due to limited resources or the difficulties involved.

D. Performance Evaluations of Management Personnel

In accordance with ORS 659A.012, effectiveness in achieving Affirmative Action objectives is a required component in the evaluation of performance by managers and supervisors, and specific examples of a manager's or supervisor's Affirmative Action and diversity successes and achievements should be clearly described. During the previous biennium, ODVA incorporated Affirmative Action responsibilities as a standard performance measurement into performance evaluations of management staff and plans to keep these in place.

Management personnel are evaluated annually on their effectiveness in achieving the Agency affirmative action goals and objectives. Affirmative action responsibilities are included in all management and executive job descriptions and managers receive training and guidance in affirmative action practices including hiring, retention, promotion and career development for themselves and their employees.

SECTION IV: WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA AND ANALYSIS

A. Accomplishments

The Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs is an agency of one hundred (100) employees, composed of professional and managerial staff specializing in the field of veteran's benefits and mortgage loans.

The Agency's employees are divided into the following Equal Employment Opportunity job categories:

- Official/Administrator
- Professionals
- Administrative Support
- Skilled/Technician

Goals for women and people of color: The Agency exceeds state goals in the Administrative Support and in the Officials & Administrators categories.

Goals for people with disabilities: The Agency exceeds the state goals in all categories except Professionals.

The Agency's employee diversity compares favorably to the statewide Affirmative Action goals:

- 59.8% of the employees are women
- Five (5) out of twelve (12) management staff are women
- 26.1% of employees are veterans
- 28.3% of employees are from racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds
- Employees with disabilities, who choose to disclose this voluntary information, currently comprise 4.3% of the agency workforce

1. Develop applicant pools of qualified protected class applicants to improve the hiring and developmental opportunities for underrepresented persons.

The Agency places emphasis on developing job applicant pools that include an expanded number of protected-class applicants for vacancies. The Agency has and will continue to identify resources for improving the hiring and developmental opportunities of underrepresented persons using varied media communication and in-person outreach at community events across our state.

Strategies for Improvement:

- Continue recruitment outreach efforts at colleges and universities and utilization of a broad range of local and national organizations of that target persons of color and persons with disabilities. *(As of 2023, we have had 20 applicants through career fairs and 18 applicants through college career boards.)*
- Meeting regularly with the Governor's Affirmative Action workgroups and other Affirmative Action professionals to identify ways to promote the State of Oregon as an employer of choice for women, persons of color and persons with disabilities.
- Provide continued training to hire managers and supervisors on inclusive recruitment techniques and practices and tools for increasing the retention of employees.
- Continue to review recruitments to identify barriers that exclude or discourage a diverse candidate pool.

2. The Agency continues to promote a work environment that recognizes, respects, and is responsive to a diverse workforce by:

- Providing periodic diversity presentations and discussions for agency staff.

- Promoting awareness and respect for diverse cultures through communications regarding Women's History Month, Gay and Lesbian Pride Month, Asian Pacific Heritage Month, Black History Month, Hispanic History Month, National American Indian Heritage Month, and Disability Awareness Month, and others.
- Promoting staff attendance at training and workshops on diverse subjects such as disability awareness, respectful communication, racial tolerance, mediation, gender and sexual orientation and diversity and generational issues in the workplace. Continue the agency participation in development of and attendance at the annual Statewide Diversity Conferences.
- Providing training to management on policies regarding Discrimination and Harassment Free Workplace; Maintaining a Respectful Workplace; and Workplace Effects of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking.
- Training managers in leadership through formal training programs.

Strategies for Improvement:

- Managers are directed to formulate development plans with their non-management employees to enhance the current skills of the employee, to prepare the employee for future advancement, to promote Agency succession plan efforts and build the Agency leadership team, and to contribute to the development of the unit, section, division and the Agency.
 - Utilize the knowledge and expertise of the new LGBTQ Veterans Coordinator and Women Veterans Coordinator positions to develop and deliver training to agency employees to foster a culture of inclusion and support of these communities.
3. The Agency will continue participation in events such as the Women Veterans Conference, Tribal events, Veterans' Day celebrations, and various events and functions honoring and memorializing our diverse veteran population. The Agency will continue its role as an advocate for disabled individuals, which will be stressed by our agency programs and services.
 4. The Agency continues as a training site for the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs work-study program. ODVA will also continue its support of school-to-work programs by encouraging employees to develop mentoring relationships with local schools.

Results:

- Support and development of these programs is ongoing.

Strategies for Improvement:

- Monitor demographic information of the student veterans who participate in the program to promote underserved populations through the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs.
5. New Positions – the Agency considered new positions to enhance the agency mission of providing service to veterans and to honor them through our leadership, advocacy and strong partnerships.

Results:

LGBTQ Veterans Coordinator

States Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense. The position functions as a point of contact between LGBTQ veterans and the Oregon Legislature, service as the department spokesperson and resource for media requests for information relating to LGBTQ veteran issues and provide expert assistance to LGBTQ veterans for upgrading discharge character of service and applying for veteran benefits. The position was successfully filled in May 2016 and the incumbent has been actively working on LGBTQ veteran issues.

Women Veterans Coordinator

The position serves as the department point person on all matters relating to women veterans; acts as liaison and advocate for women veterans in matters pertaining to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense. The position communicates issues and updates information to women veteran constituents, establishes and maintains relationships with various veteran service organizations throughout the state, and is a point of contact between women veterans and the Oregon Legislature. The position was successfully filled in January 2016 and the incumbent has been actively working on women veterans' issues.

Incarcerated Veteran Coordinator

The ODVA Incarcerated Veteran Coordinators, in coordination with the Oregon Department of Corrections, met with over 1,100 individuals entering the state prison system to verify veteran status, advocate for veterans' benefits and assist veteran families with benefits that were transferable to them. The program assists justice involved veterans to successfully transition to the community and to reduce recidivism rate. The program facilitates collaboration with the US Department of Veteran's Affairs re-entry social worker to meet with veterans to ensure all possible benefit claims are filed and the veteran is enrolled in Federal VA healthcare.

Veteran Volunteer Coordinator

The Veteran Volunteer Program was established in 2018 to create a statewide network of volunteers trained to locate veterans, assist them in recognizing potential earned benefits and services, and connect the veteran to individuals and organizations for additional assistance.

Aging Veteran Outreach Coordinator

The Aging Veteran Outreach Program, also established in 2018, works collaboratively with agency partners statewide on behalf of aging veterans to coordinate benefits and services specific to the aging population. The position provides outreach presentations to educate other agencies and the public regarding all benefits and assistance programs available to aging veterans and assists to file claims for benefits on behalf of veterans who are residing in one of ODVA's veterans' homes, or veterans being served through the conservatorship or representative-payee programs.

PROGRESS MADE/LOST

During this reporting period the Agency has continued to work toward meeting long-term affirmative action/diversity workforce goals. The Agency has adopted several pertinent practices and procedures:

- When the Agency has an open competitive recruitment, a variety of resources are considered in reaching a diverse audience. Resources include diverse publications, the Oregon Employment

Department Work Source Centers and the Oregon Employment Department Local Veteran Employment Representatives, other veteran supported employment programs (Hero 2 Hired, Joint Transition Assistance Program), and Internet employment sites such as Monster.com and Careerbuilder.com. The Agency also conducts outreach to business partners such as local governments, county veteran service organizations, national veteran service organizations, and mortgage lenders.

- The Agency makes every effort to provide reasonable accommodations for its clients, applicants for services and members of the general public. For example, the building is accessible to the disabled, and arrangements are made for exam applicants with special needs related to disability, religious preference, etc. The Agency has provided special test environments for applicants with disabilities, has used large type exams for the sight impaired, and arranged for special proctors as needed. (More about our demographics and data can be found in appendix C.)
- The Agency continues to promote training for all employees in AA/EEO and cultural diversity and to develop a work environment that is attractive to employees and respectful of individual differences. Employees are encouraged to attend the Annual State Diversity Conference and the YWCA Diversity Conference.

SECTION V: NEXT BIENNIUM AFFIRMITIVE ACTION PLAN

A. Goals

During the 2025-2027 biennium the Agency expects few retirements, due in part to the long tenure of agency employees. The Agency will utilize these opportunities to continue the search for diverse applicants to improve the hiring and developmental opportunities for underrepresented persons.

Strategies and Timelines for Implementation

1. Develop applicant pools of qualified protected class applicants to improve the hiring and development opportunities for underrepresented persons.
The Affirmative Action Officer will conduct ongoing reviews of recruitment to identify any barriers that exclude or discourage a diverse applicant pool. Emphasis will be placed on developing an expanded number of protected class applicants. The Agency will continue to identify resources for improving the hiring and developmental opportunities of underrepresented persons and will utilize the following strategies:
 - Continue recruitment outreach efforts at colleges and universities and other local and national organizations that reach persons of color and persons with disabilities.
 - Meet regularly with the Governor's Affirmative Action workgroups.
 - Provide training to managers and supervisors on inclusive recruitment techniques and practices for increasing the retention of employees.
2. The Agency promotes a work environment that recognizes, respects, and is responsive to a diverse workforce.
The Affirmative Action Officer will provide diversity presentation, including communications regarding the monthly awareness campaigns promoting diversity and inclusion for women, LGBTQ communities, differently abled individuals, and communities of color.

The Agency will promote staff attendance at training and workshops on diverse subjects. This will include the continued planning, development and attendance at the annual Statewide Diversity and Inclusion Conference and conduct training in areas such as cultural competency and implicit bias to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all employees and customers of ODVA.

The Agency will provide training management on subjects that foster good working relationships with all persons. Managers work with their employees to formulate a development plan to enhance the current skills of the employee, to prepare the employee for future advancement, to promote Agency succession plan efforts and build the Agency leadership team, and to contribute to the development of the unit, section, division and the Agency.

3. The Agency will continue its participation in events such as the Women Veterans' Conference, Tribal events, Veterans' Day celebrations, and various events and functions honoring and memorializing the diverse veteran communities. The Agency will continue its role as advocates for disabled and aging individuals, which will be stressed by our agency programs and services.
4. The Agency will continue as a training site for the U.S. Department of Veteran's affairs work-study program and support of school-to-work programs by encouraging employees to develop mentoring relationships with local schools. The Agency will monitor demographic information of student veterans who participate in the work-study program to promote underserved populations through partnership with the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs.
5. The Agency will build on the work performed by the new LGBTQ Veterans Coordinator, Women Veterans Coordinator, Incarcerated Veteran Coordinator, Veteran Volunteer Coordinator and Aging Veteran Outreach Coordinator positions to reach underserved persons in those communities. The skills and experience of the new positions will be helpful in constructing respectful workplace training for ODVA staff and business partners.

B. Employment Tactics to Achieve Affirmative Action Goals

Hiring

The ODVA is an equal opportunity employer. The Agency strives to provide equal opportunities to everyone. This biennium, the Agency hired 8 new employees of which 6 were women and 1 is a person with a disability. The Agency has a process in place to conduct a pay analysis for employees new to the State of Oregon to ensure new employees are hired fairly and equitably regarding pay. Additionally, the ODVA recruiting staff includes DEI-related questions in each interview stage to provide an opportunity for candidates to showcase the steps they have taken to reduce their own bias and learn about different cultures, beliefs, etc. This reduces the risk of future complications or conflicts with onboarding new employees into the workplace. Though this was not a formal rollout, it has quickly become standard, and we are taking steps to make this a formal requirement.

C. Recruitment Programs

Internship Programs

Formal: The Agency serves as an on-site training program for the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs Work/Study Program, serving veterans while they attend training programs through their local college or university. During the last biennium the Agency had no participants offered through this program. The

Agency will continue to monitor the demographic information of the veteran students who participate in this program, to advocate for underserved populations through the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs.

Informal: The Agency continues to participate in special employment programs: Preferred Worker Program; Qualified Rehabilitation Facilities; School-To-Work events and programs through local schools. The Agency did not find interns through these programs during the last biennium.

Mentorship Programs

The Agency does not currently have a formal mentorship program but provides informal mentorship to our clients through referrals to community resources which include educational resources, employment, housing, and health and safety. We envision an ODVA mentoring program that assists employees in preparing for promotional opportunities within the Oregon State Government. Initiatives: As a path to achieving our goal, we have taken the initiative to establish an HR lead and conduct a Deputy-sponsored workgroup to a) survey staff expectations and b) research what other agencies might have regarding mentorship programs and c) provide recommendations to the Director. We plan to implement the mentorship program with quarterly check-ins to evaluate progress at the 6- and 12-month marks and will periodically reconvene the workgroup to renew survey results and make change recommendations.

Diversity Awareness Programs

Agency-Wide Diversity Council

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs has established a Diversity Equity Inclusion and Accessibility Committee. The Agency Director as well as the Deputy Director serves as the DEIA leaders of this committee.

Employee Resource Group (ERGs)/Affinity Groups

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs does not currently have an Employee Resource Group/Affinity Group.

Diversity Presentations, Activities or Programs

Employees of the agency are notified of diversity events held across the state and participation is encouraged. The Agency routinely provides information to staff on historical events and Governor proclamations affecting the peoples of our state.

During this reporting period staff within the Aging Veteran Services Division attended training on elder issues including:

- Mental/Behavioral Health and Medicaid Eligibility
- Overview of Oregon's Long-Term Care Facilities
- Guardianship Conservatorship Association of Oregon, Annual Conference
- Disability Etiquette training
- Veteran Benefits for Aging Oregonians
- Pacific NW Brain Injury Conference
- Attorney General Elder Abuse Conference

This year's next reporting period ODVA will conduct training in areas such as cultural humanity, diversity and belonging, and implicit bias to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all employees and customers of ODVA.

Community Outreach Programs

Agency outreach programs are key to the agency's mission to serve and honor veterans through our leadership, advocacy and strong partnerships.

Our agency goals have been structured to target veteran services, mobilize partnerships, and drive veteran engagement. The Department has developed specific strategies to achieve the goals and objectives:

- Collaborating to create, connect and support statewide networks for veterans and family resources;
- Partnering across federal, tribal, state and local governments to leverage resources for veterans;
- Engaging private, non-profit and philanthropic sectors in the service to veterans;
- Ensuring Veterans Service Offices across Oregon are well-staffed and resourced;
- Deepening the connection with the veteran community;
- Improving the connection of veterans to community resources.

The agency leads or participates in initiatives to support and advocate for, and honor Oregon's veteran population. Below is a summary of the type of outreach ODVA typically engages.

- Recognition and memory of events and proclamation
- Veteran benefit expo and stand downs
- Partnerships and data sharing with state agencies
- Publications and digital content to share benefit information, feature articles and current veteran news
- Special awareness initiatives for women veterans, LGBTQ veterans, justice involved veterans, tribal veterans, scam and fraud awareness for aging veterans, suicide prevention, behavioral health and housing resources
- Grant programs to expand services to veterans in the areas of transportation, housing and homelessness, health and behavioral health care, and education
- ODVA veteran program specific events including training and certification of county veteran service offices and tribal veteran representatives

Respectful Leadership Training (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion), and Sexual Harassment (Executive Order 17-11 Updates)

All ODVA employees are required to complete annual training related to maintaining a professional workplace as well as discrimination and harassment free workplace provided by the Department of Administrative Services. The latest training will be completed by December 31, 2023, the two required trainings are "Maintaining a Harassment Free and Professional Workplace" and "Preventing Sexual Harassment." This training supports the agency's commitment to creating and maintaining a respectable workplace free of harassment and discrimination.

All ODVA employees have the opportunity to attend the annual Statewide Diversity and Inclusion Conference.

Affirmative action, equity and inclusion responsibilities have been incorporated into executive and management service descriptions.

The Agency Affirmative Action Policy/Diversity and Inclusion Statement will be posted on the internet and bulletin boards in the agency.

The Agency Affirmative Action Representative or designee is participating in bi-monthly Governor's Office Diversity, Equity and Inclusion/Affirmative Action meetings.

Selection

The ODVA regularly posts recruitment opportunities for candidates. All candidates who meet minimum job qualifications, determined by DAS, progress through a combination of video, virtual, and in-person interview rounds. Interview panels consist of the hiring manager, two staff with general knowledge of the job and topic, and one external panelist to reduce bias and uniform thinking. Scores are not shared between panelists. Additionally, each panelist watches a series of videos discussing how to reduce bias before scoring.

Promotion

The Agency provides employees with equal opportunities for promotion. At times, there are limited opportunities for advancement; however, in 2023, there were opportunities for 11 employees to be promoted within the Agency.

Retention

It is the Agency's goal for all employees to feel welcome in the workplace. By providing an environment free of any type of discrimination and harassment and providing training to employees on preventing sexual harassment and maintaining a harassment free and professional workplace. We will continue to promote inclusion and respect in the workplace, all will help to achieve this goal.

Employee Engagement

Currently ODVA does not have a formal engagement group, but we envision staff-lead engagement groups who plan and implement opportunities that engage with staff designed to provide a platform for staff to interact, participate, and learn about activities across the agency and state. Our plan to accomplish this goal is to create a workgroup consisting of interested employees to gather feedback and develop potential ideas to engage better with staff, including activities geared toward agency learning and growing in the understanding of DEI.

Additionally, ODVA is working to provide regular employee performance feedback for all employees to meet with management and discuss feedback, define potential growth opportunities, relay goals, and make plans that the managers and employee can participate in. This system is new, and not currently being used to its full capacity, but will greatly impact the success and fulfillment in our employees. Currently, ODVA HR conducts periodic management training on expectations for annual performance reviews for staff. Quarterly check-ins are utilized to start the process of providing feedback and goal setting every 3 months. Agency standards are set for quarterly check-ins and management goals are aligned with the strategic plan. Agency standards are set for annual performance appraisals and staff goals are aligned with the strategic plan. Standards are adjusted and expectations are maintained.

Surveys

Statewide Exit Interview Survey

The statewide exit interview survey is available to all employees who separate from the Agency. The Agency plans to review the results of any exit interview surveys completed by separating employees and any results will be discussed at Agency Manager's meetings to assist in identifying ways in which improvements can be made. Employees who exited the agency during this reporting period declined to complete the survey tool, but did speak with their managers individually and shared their thoughts and concerns. The Agency will continue to encourage employees to complete this survey tool.

SECTION VI: SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession Planning

The ODVA is a small Agency that recognizes the importance of succession planning and is committed to investing equitably in our employees. Though we do not have a formal succession plan at this time, we have implemented training plans that allow most positions to observe and experience different pathways and job rotation opportunities; this allows the ODVA to continuously expand the agency's ability to maintain and promote agency staff within the state's workforce. We plan to increase our efforts and make this more accessible to employees by (a) analyzing positions, classifications, and career paths by subject matter experts, (b) introducing available tools within HRIS (Workday) for continuity with enterprise, (c) conducting external analysis for career pathing outside of the agency, and (d) creating training and career development plans that are both individualized and equitable.

At least eight employees were provided with the opportunity to work out of class at a higher level this biennium to help them prepare for higher level roles.

Training Overview

Managers work with their employees to formulate a development plan to enhance the current skills of the employee, to prepare the employee for future advancement, to promote Agency succession plan efforts and build the Agency leadership team, and to contribute to the development of the unit, section, division and the Agency. Plans may include but not be limited to on-the-job training, rotational assignments, educational classes and participation in professional conferences, institutes and workshops.

Employees have access to statewide training available. New employees meet with the Human Resources analyst for the Agency and review Agency policies, including the Affirmative Action (AA) Policy.

Leadership Development/Training Programs

ODVA does not have a formal Leadership Development Program but looks for ways to develop current staff. During this reporting period, the Agency provided training opportunities to managers and staff which supported respectful leadership principals. The training options included:

- Leadership Oregon – through the Department of Administrative Services
- Certificate of Public Management – through the Atkinson Graduate School of Management
- DiSC Training – focusing on teamwork, communication, conflict resolution, and overall leadership skills
- Emerging Manager Training – through the Department of Administrative Services
- Foundational Training Program – through the Department of Administrative Services

- ASCENT Promise of Leadership – developing creative leadership competencies
- Management Education Forum – bringing managers together from across the state for leadership development
- Communicating with Tact and Skill – development of communication techniques that can be used in all scenarios

- Statewide Diversity and Inclusion Conference – a two-day event with training sessions focusing on equity issues, honoring diversity through understanding, growing diversity and inclusion in the workplace, inclusive hiring practices, LGBTQ issues, and many others.

Managers also receive domestic violence training – annual training on Statewide Policy 50.010.04 *Workplace Effects of Domestic Violence, Harassment, Sexual Assault and Stalking*.

SECTION VII: COMPLAINT OPTIONS

A. Complaint Process

It is imperative that the Agency is responsive to employee concerns of discrimination. Employees who feel they have been harassed or discriminated against are encouraged to bring their concerns to Agency management. A supervisor or manager receiving a complaint should promptly notify the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Human Resources Office. Any individual who believes s/he has been discriminated against on the basis of a protected class may file a complaint as outlined in the [Department of Administrative Services Policy, DAS 50-010-01, Discrimination and Harassment Free Workplace](#).

Individuals also have the right to file grievances or complaints of discrimination instead, or concurrently, with the Governor's Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, the Bureau of Labor and Industries, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement.

B. Contact Information (External)

Governor's Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion/Affirmative Action

900 Court Street NE, Suite 254, Salem, Oregon 97301 Phone
Number: 503-378-6833

Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries – Civil Rights Division Portland

State Office Building
800 NE Oregon St. Suite 1070, Portland, OR 97232
Phone Number: English 971-673-0764 / Spanish 971-673-2818 Fax:
971-673-0765
E-mail: crdemail@boli.state.or.us

Eugene

1400 Executive Parkway, Suite 200, Eugene, OR 97401 Phone
Number: 541-686-7623

Salem

3865 Wolverine Street NE, Bldg. E-1, Salem, Oregon 97305-1268 Phone
Number: 503-378-3292

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries – Civil Rights Division is the Oregon state equivalent of the federal EEOC. As a designated Fair Employment Practices Agency (FEPA), the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries – Civil Rights Division may coordinate operations with the EEOC under a work-share agreement. Furthermore, the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries – Civil Rights Division investigates state claims that are not covered by federal law or exceed the basic protections of federal law. Individuals filing a charge of discrimination with the EEOC should also file a copy of the charge with the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries – Civil Rights Division.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Seattle

Field Office - Federal Office Building
909 First Avenue, Suite 400, Seattle, WA 98104-1061

Phone: 1-800-669-4000

The EEOC does not maintain an office in Oregon. The Seattle Field Office is open Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

SECTION VIII: CONTRACTING

Contractors/Vendors

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs contracts for operation of two skilled nursing facilities in The Dalles and Lebanon through a non-profit organization and third-party service provider. The Agency Affirmative Action plan is shared with both entities. ODVA staffs each home with Program Director positions who act as liaisons with the ODVA and operational contractors on the effective operation of the facilities, monitoring all facets of the operations including effective and lawful hiring practices, training of contracted staff, and development of internal and external complaint procedures.

Status of Contracts to Minority Businesses (ORS 659A.015)

In accordance with ORS 659A.015, each state agency shall include information concerning the award of construction, service and personal service contracts awarded to minority businesses.

The State of Oregon manages programs for business inclusion and diversity that promote opportunities for disadvantaged business enterprises, minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, businesses owned by service-disabled veterans and emerging small businesses.

The Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) certifies businesses that apply and meet the state's criteria for these programs.

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs does not have a budget specifically for contracts. However, during the contracting period of 2023-2025 the Agency has awarded numerous personal services contracts. Contracts included specialty areas such as Wicked Bionic for Media Services supporting Veteran Suicide Prevention and Awareness efforts paid for by Oregon's Charitable Checkoff, and Olympic Performance for Diversity Equity, and Inclusion.

- Total number of contracts with COBID firms for 2020-2025- **29**
- Total contract dollars spent on COBID contracts for 2023-2025 – **\$ 850,000**

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs posts all competitive contracts on the state's ORPIN system to ensure that the pool of responders is as varied as possible. Women, minority owned businesses, and businesses owned by service-connected disabled veterans and emerging small businesses are selected when available.

SECTION IX: APPENDIX

Appendix A – Reasonable Accommodation Policy

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

DIRECTOR'S REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION POLICY STATEMENT

2025-2027 BIENNIUM

It is the policy of the Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs that reasonable accommodation should be made to ensure that qualified ODVA employees with disabilities can perform assigned tasks and are not discriminated against during the employment and hiring process because of these disabilities.

It is also the policy of the Director that no qualified person with a disability shall be kept from participating in, or be denied benefit of, the services, programs, or activities of ODVA because of that disability.

This policy shall cover activities related to recruiting, hiring, current employees, promotion, transfer, retention of employees with acquired disabilities, agency training, information exchange, or social activities. This policy shall also cover all qualified individuals accessing our services and programs.

In this agency, the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator is responsible for providing information to all interested persons advising them of the rights and protection afforded by the ADA, and to investigate and attempt to resolve complaints per ODVA policy and procedures 3.6.11 (ADA Policy), 3.6.12 (Public Complaint Procedure), and 7.5.26 (Employee Complaint Procedure).

Employees will be advised of their rights to request reasonable accommodation and managers and employees with regular public contact shall receive training regarding their responsibilities for compliance with the ADA.

An applicant/employee seeking accommodation must inform the Department of a need for reasonable accommodation and submit medical information, if necessary, to the agency ADA Coordinator. An individual with the disability must initiate the request for accommodation and must cooperate in discussions and evaluations. All medical information will be kept in a confidential file separate from the personnel file.

A request for modification from the public, or from an employee or applicant for employment shall be reviewed by management of the affected division in consultation with the ADA Coordinator.


The Oregon Disabilities Commission provides technical assistance regarding work site analysis and modification.

A determination shall be made whether the reasonable accommodation would pose an undue hardship considering the nature and cost of the accommodation and the total financial resource of the State of Oregon and the effect of such expenses on the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs. Assistance is available from the U.S. Office of Civil Rights relative to application of the term "reasonable" and other aspects of the provision of accommodations

If the request for accommodation is from an employee or applicant for employment, management of the affected division, in consultation with the ADA Coordinator, shall ensure that the applicant/employee is qualified to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodation.

In response to a request from any source, ODVA shall determine if a reasonable accommodation can be made so the individual can perform the job or access agency services by exploring job or service-provision modification alternatives and determining the most effective modification for the individual.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall provide interpreters, reader services, Braille transcriptions, TTYs, and/or other auxiliary equipment as needed to allow a person with a disability to fully participate in agency activities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels", written over a horizontal line.

Date: 5/29/2025

Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels, Director

Appendix B – Related Policies and Procedures

Discrimination and Harassment free workplace [policy](#)

Statewide Employee Training [policy](#)

Veterans Preference In employment [policy](#)

Maintaining a Professional Workplace [policy](#)

Unlawful Discrimination [policy](#)

Appendix C –Demographic Data

Compiled Demographic Data for ODVA, 2024

[ODVA Demographic Data 7-24.pdf](#)