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Public Law Charter and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Between

VBA, Education Service

And

VA Digital Service

By

Education Service Business Process Development

Updated Draft v5: November 17, 2017

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# Authorization

VBA Product Business Owner:

Robert M. Worley, II

Director, Education Service

Director Signature Date

VBA Deputy Director: Charmain Bogue

VBA Product Coordinator: Rodney Alexander

VBA Chief, Business Process Development: Hope Coleman

VBA Project Coordinator: John T. McNeal

Claire

VA Digital Service, Product Manager

Product Manager Signature Date

# Document Purpose

The purpose of this Charter is to define the scope for the next Public Law112-249 Enhancement Phase, Phase 3, The Charter requires VA Digital Service to develop a comprehensive and transparent plan to improve the GI Bill Comparison Tool school ratings and institutional profile updates. The enhancement plan will be based on these guiding design elements: Simplicity for user, low maintenance – automatically updated, universally accessible – mobile, accurate information, prioritizes information, and clear next steps for user.

# Roles and Responsibilities

| **Role** | **Names** | | **Responsibilities** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| VA Business Product Owner | Robert M. Worley, II | | * Commit VA resources to the project * Provide guidance and decision-making * Approve feature enhancements / accept the final product |
| VA Coordinator | Rodney Alexander | | * Serve as the primary point of contact (POC) for the vets.gov team * Work with the vets.gov team to define detailed business, technical, and data requirements * Coordinate team meetings (conference rooms, team communications, etc.) * Manage communications and change management activities * Coordinate content changes with VBA lead, Jennifer Rudisill. * Coordinate external communications or media relations regarding vets.gov with the Office of the Secretary (Martin Taylor) |
| VA Project Coordinators and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) | Hope Coleman  Stephanie Price  John McNeal  Shana Barrett  Donald Noble  Patrick Campbell (CFPB) | | * Work collaboratively with vets.gov team throughout the project * Provide business, technical, and data requirements |
| VA Data Management | John McNeal  Shana Barrett  Donald Noble | | * Manage current data source * Provide required data that is accurate, cleansed and production-ready * Ensure data quality |
| VA Web Content Writers / Approvers | Tammy Hurley  Randall Lazaro | | * Participate in the vets.gov content concurrent process as required * Review content for factual errors |
| VBA Web Communications Lead | Jennifer Rudisill | | * Coordinate all content concurrence activities for VBA |
| **VA Digital Service** | | | |
| Product Manager  Project Lead | | Elizabeth Lewis  Kerry Lenahan  Leanna Miller Sharkey | Product management   * Clearly define project goals, scope, roles, and milestones at project kickoff. * Manage product activities * Ensure compliance with vets.gov Playbook standards, product development methodology, and requirements * Manage stakeholder communications |
| Lead Developer | | Marc Harbatkin | Content Concurrence   * Provide content writing, editorial, and plain language expertise and guidance * Manage the content concurrence process   Design, develop, test, and deploy   * Design and develop new pages and features * Conduct user testing to inform design * Review data structure and make recommendations * Manage deployment in coordination with VA GI Bill Tool Comparison Team and VA Office of Information Technology (OIT) |

# Phase Three Scope of Work Priorities

The Phase Three priorities for the next level of enhancement for the Public Law 112-249, GI Bill® Comparison Tool (CT), and Complaint System are as following:

* Principle of Excellence – Executive Order 13607
* Public Law 112-249 Requirements
* The Forever GI Bill®, Public Law 115-48
* VBA and Education Service Requirements

See Appendixes for the EO 13607, Public Laws, and VBA/EDU Requirements’ Summaries.

| Public Law 112-249, GI Bill® Comparison Tool Priorities | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scope of Work** | **Key Activities** | **Time Frame** |
| Forever GI Bill  PL 115-48 | **Eligibility Information**   * Sec 102 – Changes eligibility percentage tiers benefit level. Consolidating the current amount of qualifying active duty service required after September 10, 2001, for payment of educational assistance at the 50% and 60% benefit levels under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program * Sec 103 - Expand Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility to individuals who are awarded the Purple Heart for service on active duty and allow such Purple Heart recipients to participate in the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program. * Sec 104 – Active Duty eligible for YR * Sec 108 - Allow recipients of the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship to be eligible for the Yellow Ribbon program under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. * Sec 203 - Increase the amounts of educational assistance payable for pursuit of institutional courses and institutional courses under the Survivors' and DEA Program. * Sec 501 - Modified the computation of basic allowance for housing (BAH) inside the United States and based on where student taking classes (not just facility code)   **Comparison Tool impact:**   * The ‘Cumulative Post-9/11 active duty service’ drop down will have to be updated to add Purple Heart Service and remove the 40% and 50% benefit level * The ‘Yellow Ribbon’ feature on the ‘Estimator’ will have to be modified to appear for Active Duty and FRY recipients * Tool Tips will have to be updated with language explaining the new BAH rates. * Dependents Education Assistance (DEA) rated will need to be increased. |  |
| **School Profile Information**   * Sec 107 - Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) at the program level * Sec 111 - STEM Program; * Sec 116 - Technology program (program categorization); * Sec 109 – School closures/restoration of entitlement; way to identify schools that are closing * Sec 302 - Authorize the use of Post-9/11 educational assistance to pursue accredited Independent Study Programs; * Sec 303 - Colmery Act requires VA providing information on whether Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) administer a priority enrollment system to Veterans   Comparison Tool Impact:   * The School Profile Page will have to be updated with the program information and displayed in Categories STEM/Technology/Independent Study * Benefit Estimator will have to be updated to manually enter a zip code in the event classes will not be taken on campus * The Data Service will need to be expanded to allow historical information * Additional Information or school heading will have to include Priority Enrollment identifiers |  |
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| --- | --- | --- |
| WEAMS Public Sunset | * WEAMS Public Profile Information * School Certifying Officer (SCO) Contact info * Programs Offered * Type of school (e.g., IHL or NCD) * Advanced search – Search by programs offered – Needs to generate a list of programs are offered by each facility code * See PL 112-48, Sec 111 (see above) |  |
|  | * Display Yellow Ribbon Rates, not pass-through other websites |  |
| User Rating System  PL 112-249 | * GI Bill students can evaluate schools on a five-point rating system (include half-points) that is displayed on the CT |  |
| * Collect student ratings [BLOCKED: EDU – Needs to collect the rating feedback from GI Bill students via a survey * Survey to collect the student feedback- annual survey or build data collect interact storage |  |
| * Who can provide feedback? * GI Bill students * One rating per GI Bill Student/School |  |
| * Display school ratings on the following questions * Institution overall * Quality of classes * Veteran Friendliness * Employment Preparation * Recruiting / Marketing Practices |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Enhanced School Profile and Onboarding Questionnaire  PL 112-249 | * Advanced search – Search by zip code |  |
| * Advanced search – School alias, OPE 6 |  |
| * Users’ experience improvements – Design * GI Bill Calculator * Search and Sort * Announcement on home page * Reposition of sections to create unity of information |  |
|  | * Display Yellow Ribbon Rates, |  |
| EDU - Upgrades to the GI Bill® Data Service | * Convert the GI Bill constants into a data file that can uploaded by EDU (e.g., GI Bill tuition/fees cap) |  |
| * Notifications to data service users when the CT has been updated |  |
| * New data points in the data dashboards (e.g., “OPE 6”, “School Alias”) |  |
| * Closed schools in the data dashboards (e.g., ITT campuses) - not to the tool, but should be able to add to GIDS |  |
| * GIDS will do heuristic (testing) validation of new data before pushing to production (in progress) * Test to ensure data |  |
|  |  |
| * Automate the updating of ED data by using the Scorecard API – nice to have function |  |

# Scope of Work Priorities & Key Activities

1. **Data Service** 
   1. Users of the GIBCT Data Service (GIDS) will be able to update annual rates
   2. Users of GIDS will use two-factor authentication with VA PIV to log into the tool
   3. GIDS will do heuristic (testing) validation of new data before pushing to production
   4. All users of GIDS will be notified when others push updates to the tool to production
   5. Historical GI Bill beneficiary data (OJT/Apprenticeship Initiative)
   6. New data points in the data dashboards (e.g., “OPE 6”, “School Alias”)
   7. Closed schools in the data dashboards (e.g., ITT campuses)
2. **Advanced Search**
   1. Users can search institutions by alias
   2. Users can search institutions by zip code
3. **Search Engine Optimization (SEO) -** 
   1. Institution pages will be “crawlable” by search engines to improve visibility *(done)*
   2. Improving the CT results in a google search (nearer to the top of the page)
4. **Forever GI Bill –**  Implement the above provisions outlined in the priorities section
5. **Design User research**
   1. User research of redesigns to Caution Flag section
      1. The caution flags should be easy to understand and clear why a student veteran should care about the flag. For example, why should a student veteran care that a school has been sued by the FTC for deceptive advertising.
   2. User research of redesigns to Feedback/Complaint Section
      1. The cautionary information (e.g., complaints) section is a little hard to read. We should make it easier to understand for users.
   3. User research of redesigns to GIBCT Calculator
      1. The cautionary information (e.g., complaints) section is a little hard to read. We should make it easier to understand for users.

**APPENDIX 1**

**APPENDIX 2**

## Public Law 112-249 Requirements

Comprehensible Caution Flags - Requires an upgrade to the current Caution Flag indicators to properly inform consumers of cautionary indicators. The current flag do not allow users to weigh the severity of the various cautionary indicators. The following enhancements are required:

* Improve beneficiaries’ awareness based on the severity of the flag
* Schools will be able to validate the cause of the caution flag
* Each caution flag will be establish for each individual event
* Incorporate new requirements for caution flag triggers

Expanded Outcome Measures - Requires that the outcome measures be expanded to include graduation rates of school and universities with school years longer than two years. The expanded rates and outcome measures will expand the current outcome measures’ data on the GI Bill Comparison Tool and in the data dashboards. These expanded outcome measures will include:

* Graduation rates for 4 year schools
* Repayment rates for Veterans
* Average Salaries
* Historical outcome data
* Outcome data for different populations (e.g., full-time versus part-time)

User Rating System – Requires a new development of the GI Bill® Comparison Tool and Complaint System, which will include a new Rating System. The new rating system functionality is required to permit validated GI Bill Users’ the ability to rate an institution based on established rating criteria. The criteria include:

* Institution overall
* Quality of classes
* Veteran Friendliness
* Employment Preparation
* Recruiting / Marketing Practices
* Leverage existing VA surveys to GI Bill students to collect the user rating data.

Enhanced School Profile and Onboarding Questionnaire - Requires an enhanced look and feel design to the user interface for the onboarding questionnaire and school profile page. These enhances will incorporate the user’s feedback from stakeholders’ input (e.g., VSOs).

## Yellow Ribbon Rates – Required to integrate the Yellow Ribbon scholarship information for each school into the GI Bill Comparison Tool. This integration would eliminate the need for the Comparison Tool to manage over 50 separate pages and eliminate the users’ from searching statewide Yellow Ribbon webpages. The following webpage are for Yellow Ribbon yearly listing: (<http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/yellow_ribbon/yrp_list_2016.asp>).

**APPENDIX 3**

**Public Law 115-48 “Forever GI Bill®”**

To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The following “Forever GI Bill®“ Sections are required modifications to the Public Law 112-249, GI Bill® Comparison Tool and Complaint System.

**TITLE I – POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**Section 102**

Section 102 would amend 38 U.S.C. § 3311(b) by consolidating the current amount of qualifying active duty service required after September 10, 2001, for payment of educational assistance at the 50 percent and 60 percent benefit levels under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program. As a result, the current benefit level requiring at least 6 months but less than 12 months of active duty service would be eliminated. This means that an individual with aggregate service of at least 6 months but less than 18 months of active duty service (excluding entry and skill training) would qualify at the 60 percent benefit level.

Under this bill, an individual whose aggregate service is at least 6 months but less than 18 months (excluding entry and skill training) would qualify for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at the 60 percent level and an individual with aggregate service of at least 90 days but less than 6 months (excluding entry and skill training) would qualify at the 50 percent benefit level. This bill would remove the 40 percent benefit level from the amounts payable under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

This section would be effective on August 1, 2018.

**Section 103**

Section 103 would amend section 3311(b) of title 38, United States Code, to expand Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility to individuals who are awarded the Purple Heart for service in the Armed Forces occurring on or after September 11, 2001. To be eligible, the Purple Heart recipient must continue on active duty or receive an honorable discharge upon release from active duty. This section would also allow such Purple Heart recipients to participate in the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program.

The amendments made by this section would take effect on August 1, 2018.

**Section 104**

Section 104 would amend 38 U.S.C. § 3317(a) to expand the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program to include certain active duty Servicemembers. This bill would make additional benefits available to these qualifying individuals without an additional charge to their GI Bill entitlement.

The Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program is currently available to Veterans and most dependents using transferred Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at the 100% benefit level and attending programs at institutions of higher learning at more than half-time. The program provides payment for up to half of the tuition and fee charges that are not covered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, such as charges that exceed an academic year cap or out-of-state charges, if the institution enters into an agreement with VA to pay or waive an equal amount of the charges that exceed Post-9/11 GI Bill coverage.

The amendments made by this section would take effect on August 1, 2022.

**Section 107**

Section 107 would amend § 3313(c)(1)(B)(i)(I) of title 38 to require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to calculate the monthly housing allowance (MHA) under the Post-9/11 GI Bill based on the location of the campus where the individual physically attends a majority of classes, rather than the location of the institution of higher learning at which the individual is enrolled.

This section would apply to the initial enrollment in a program of education on or after August 1, 2018.

**Section 108**

The proposed legislation would allow recipients of the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship to be eligible for the Yellow Ribbon program under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The Yellow Ribbon program is currently available to Veterans and most transfer of entitlement recipients receiving Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at the 100% benefit level attending institutions of higher learning. The program provides payment for up to half of the tuition and fee charges that are not covered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, such as charges that exceed an academic year cap or out-of-state charges, if the institution enters into an agreement with VA to pay or waive an equal amount of the charges that exceed Post-9/11 GI Bill coverage.

**TITLE II – OTHER EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

**Section 203**

Section 203 would increase the amounts of educational assistance payable for pursuit of institutional courses and institutional courses under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program. An eligible person would be entitled to a monthly allowance of $1,224 for full-time coursework, $967 for three-quarter time, and $710 for half-time coursework. The increases would be effective August 1, 2018.

**TITLE III – ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

**Section 302**

Section 302 of this bill would amend 38 U.S.C. § 3680A(a)(4) to authorize the use of Post-9/11 educational assistance to pursue accredited independent study programs at the following educational institutions that are not institutions of higher learning (IHLs): area career and technical education schools as defined in 20 U.S.C. § 2302(3) that provide postsecondary level education and postsecondary vocational institutions as defined in 20 U.S.C. § 1002(c). Currently, under section 3680A(a)(4), the Secretary may only approve enrollment in an "accredited independent study program (including open circuit television) leading (A) to a standard college degree, or (B) to a certificate that reflects educational attainment offered by an institution of higher learning." As such, VA is not authorized to pay educational assistance for independent study courses at an institution that is not considered to be an IHL.

**Section 303**

This proposed legislation would amend section 3698(c)(1)(C) to require VA to improve outreach and transparency to Veterans and Service Members by providing information on whether institutions of higher learning administer a priority enrollment system that allows certain student Veterans to enroll in courses earlier than other students.

**TITLE V – OTHER MATTERS**

**Section 501**

Section 501 of the proposed legislation would repeal subsection (b) of section 604 of Public Law 113-291, the Carl Levin and Howard P. ‘Buck’ McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015. This public law modified the computation of basic allowance for housing (BAH) inside the United States. Currently, under section 604, BAH shall be the amount equal to the difference between the amount of the monthly cost of adequate housing and the amount equal to a specified percentage of the national average, not to exceed one percent. Presently, this modification does not apply to benefits paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under laws administered by the Secretary, including sections 3108 and 3313 of title 38. Under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, BAH payments are based on the military’s BAH for an E-5 with dependents and the zip code for the school. This amendment would take effect on January 1, 2018, and apply to individuals who first use their entitlement on or after that date.