

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

**For
Paperwork Reduction Act Submission
Veterans Burial Benefits Program Evaluation Survey**

Submitted by:

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Policy and Planning
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Washington, DC 20420**

*Prepared by:
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June 29, 2007

Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Policy, Planning and Preparedness

This document constitutes a statement in support of the submission of SF-83i for the review and approval of the collection of information. It follows the format detailed in form SF-83i.

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

On July 17, 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation that authorized the creation of national cemeteries "...for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country." During the course of that first year, fourteen national cemeteries were established. Most of those earliest national cemeteries were established near training or transportation hubs – some were near hospitals.

Public Law 80-526, enacted May 14, 1948, embodied all precedent customs and statutes affecting eligibility for burial in national cemeteries. Pursuant to this law, four general classifications of persons were accorded the privilege of burial in a national cemetery:

- Those who died while honorably serving on active duty in the Armed Forces;
- All veterans who were discharged honorably;
- Citizens of the United States who served honorably in the Armed Forces of an allied nation during war; and
- The spouse, widow, widower, and minor or dependent children of those eligible.

Public Law 80-260, September 14, 1959, amended the legislation of 1948 to permit national cemetery burial for any member of a reserve component (including service in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC)) whose death occurred under honorable conditions while serving on active or authorized duty.

During the 1960s, it became evident that burial space was severely limited and that most national cemeteries would exhaust available space in the near future. Several operational changes were made to conserve space; this included the implementation of a policy allowing one gravesite per family rather than multiple, adjacent sites for eligible family members.

Public Law 93-43, (The National Cemeteries Act of 1973), transferred responsibility for 82 national cemeteries from the Department of the Army to the Veterans Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs). Pursuant to this legislation, 21 soldiers' lots, seven Confederate cemeteries, three monument sites, and one special installation were also transferred to VA from the Department of the Army. The law directed VA to establish uniform eligibility criteria and develop plans for meeting the burial needs of veterans. This law also directed VA to incorporate 21 VA national cemeteries, established and operated in conjunction with VA hospitals and domiciliaries, into the system.

In 1973 the VA National Cemetery System contained 103 national cemeteries – a total of 4,136 acres and 1,293,481 interments. Since 1973, VA has added 22 new cemeteries and transferred

one monument site (“Perryville National Cemetery”) to the state of Kentucky. Today, NCA comprises 125 national cemeteries with more than 17,000 acres of land and nearly 2.8 million gravesites. These cemeteries are located in 39 states and Puerto Rico.

Veterans of every war and conflict in America’s history, from the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terrorism, are buried in VA’s national cemeteries.

As of April 30, 2006, there are 141 national cemeteries administered by four different agencies. Fourteen are managed by the National Park Service due to their importance as historic sites, such as the Gettysburg National Military Park. Two are the responsibility of the Department of the Army – one of which includes Arlington National Cemetery.

Over the years, additional benefits (including more burial benefits) were legislated in recognition of the service given by veterans to their country. Currently, Title 38, Part 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations (38 CFR 38, all sections)¹ describes the burial benefits for which veterans may be eligible. Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1, section 15 (38 CFR 1.15) states that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shall conduct evaluations all of its programs, and provides several guidelines for the characteristics of those evaluations.

During the past five years, the VA’s Burial Benefits Program has undergone Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) reviews as part of the federal government’s increasing attention to program performance. Recent legislation (Public Law 107-103) has mandated that VA conduct effective outreach to veterans to make them aware of all benefits, including those associated with burial.

The most recent full evaluation of burial benefits was completed in 1978, and the number, type, and extent of these benefits have changed significantly in the last 30 years.

It is within this context that the Office of Policy and Planning has initiated an evaluation of the Burial Benefits Program. The first main goal of the evaluation is to assess whether the VA Burial Program is meeting its stated objectives. The three main objectives of the program are to:

1. Ensure that the burial needs of veterans and eligible family members are met;
2. Provide veterans and their families with timely and accurate symbolic expressions of remembrance; and,
3. Ensure that national cemeteries are maintained as shrines dedicated to preserving our Nation’s history, nurturing patriotism, and honoring the service and sacrifice of veterans.

The second main goal of the evaluation is to measure the impact of the program on veterans and their family members. For both goals, the evaluation needs to assess the intended as well as the unintended outcomes of the operation of the Burial Program.

The evaluation will support VA’s fulfillment of the requirements of P.L. 103-62, the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 and Title 38 USC, §527, Evaluation and Data Collection.

This request for approval focuses on the data that are needed to conduct the evaluation as described in the above referenced regulations.

¹ Copies of all regulations and laws cited are provided as appendices of the justification statement.

We are seeking approval for the following information collections:

- Survey of veterans
- Two focus groups conducted with the following :
 - Veterans' next of kin (NOK)
 - Funeral directors

We are also administering a conjoint analysis task to no more than nine volunteers (total) from the focus group. Because this task does not involve 10 or more respondents, it is not subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. A more complete explanation of the conjoint analysis task is provided in Appendix F.

These data collections are necessary for the Office of Policy and Planning to:

- Examine the adequacy and reasonableness of considering the veteran population served in a specific geographic area where there is a national cemetery within a 75-mile radius.
- Identify and evaluate challenges in meeting the national shrine mandate, including examination of increasing interment rates, aging infrastructure, shifting operational requirements, and resource requirements
- Determine whether cremated remains only, either in ground or in columbaria, is an acceptable burial option
- Assess current burial allowance in terms of comparison to legislative intent and average cost of burial in the private sector
- Examine factors influencing burial choice, including religious affiliation, culture, familial practices, generational differences, and geographic location
- Assess the impact of financial means test on eligibility for burial allowance
- Analyze methods by which veteran community members and their families access information on VA burial benefits and suggest modifications and additions to outreach methods to increase the awareness of VA burial benefits
- Determine the impact of Presidential Memorial Certificate and examine additional symbolic expressions of remembrance and gratitude.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from current collection.

The VA's Office of Policy and Planning, the National Cemetery Administration, and Veterans Benefits Administration will use the information to:

1. Assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the current policies and procedures that comprise the Burial Benefits Program.
2. Estimate the type and extent of burial needs for the next 25 years.
3. If warranted by the data, identify new symbolic expressions of remembrance and/or modify the current symbolic expressions available.

4. Identify additional performance measures that can be used to comply with benchmarks put in place by VA.
5. Address the three objectives and the nine research questions of the evaluation.

This is a request for a new, one-time only, information collection. No prior collection has been obtained.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

Two modes for survey administration will be available to questionnaire respondents. All participants will be mailed a notification letter followed shortly by a paper survey which they may fill out and return via a pre-paid postage Business Reply Envelope (BRE). Respondents will also be given the option to complete the survey via Web administration. The survey cover letter will contain information to respondents for completing the survey using either mode. Respondents have a free choice for completing the survey either way, without penalty.

The basis for providing the option for survey completion via the World Wide Web stems from the experience of Caliber/ICF whereby dozens of large-scale surveys using Web technology have been successfully completed with military and veteran populations.

This reduction of respondent burden for the survey through reliance on technology is also compliant with the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA). This act states:

GPEA requires Federal agencies, by October 21, 2003, to allow individuals or entities that deal with the agencies the option to submit information or transact with the agency electronically, when practicable, and to maintain records electronically, when practicable. The Act specifically states that electronic records and their related electronic signatures are not to be denied legal effect, validity, or enforceability merely because they are in electronic form, and encourages Federal government use of a range of electronic signature alternatives

The nature of data collection with focus groups at this time relies on face to face in-person verbal communication and is not yet amenable to electronic efficiencies.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

The last comprehensive evaluation of the Burial Benefits Program was completed in 1978. The data can no longer inform policy or planning because it is no longer relevant due to the programmatic changes since that year. More recently, OPP has looked at the following data sources:

- NCA's annual survey of customer satisfaction.
- The National Survey of Veterans (NSV) completed in 2001.
- Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries, also completed in 2001.

None of these sources contains information that can be used by OPP to conduct the required program evaluation. The NCA survey of customer satisfaction targets next of kin as respondents. The NSV asked veterans only about their awareness of burial benefits and burial type intent. The third study focuses on maintenance, care, and logistics of national cemeteries, and does not address the veterans' perspective in any way. Moreover, these separate data sources lack a unifying program evaluation framework necessary for a cohesive and systematic outcome analysis.

In addition to these studies, OPP has conducted an extensive review of other potential, non-research sources. While not useable for evaluation purposes, OPP does intend to use some of the following sources in order to identify and create randomized samples of veterans or records for analysis:

- Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) data maintained by VA
- Applications for headstone markers, maintained by VA
- VBA records of benefits claims
- Bureau of the Census data for tract and/or zip code areas.

5. *If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.*

No small businesses or other small entities are impacted by this information collection.

6. *Describe the consequences to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.*

VA will not be able to fulfill its statutory mandate. More importantly, VA will not be able to serve veterans and their families in ways that are desired by the veterans. Ultimately, this will result in a serious disservice to the men and women who have sacrificed so much for this country.

7. *Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted more often than quarterly or require respondents to prepare written responses to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it; submit more than an original and two copies of any document; retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years; in connection with a statistical survey that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study and require the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB.*

There are no such special circumstances. This is a one-time data collection.

8. Part A: If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the sponsor's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the sponsor in responses to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

The 60-day Federal Register (FR) notice was published on May 14, 2007, Volume 72, Number 92. At the close of the comment period, VA will compile a list of all comments received and will address all comments related to response burden and to cost.

8. Part B: Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, clarity of instructions and record keeping, disclosure or reporting format, and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed or reported. Explain any circumstances which preclude consultation every three years with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained.

The Office of Policy and Planning held a series of meetings with various evaluation stakeholders and with various potential data source providers. The points discussed included:

- The types of data (e.g., secondary data sets, primary data collection, quantitative or qualitative measures) optimal for addressing each of the evaluation program objectives and the nine research questions
- The availability of data sources
- The proportion of veterans represented in various data sources
- The representativeness of veterans among the data sources
- Costs and timelines associated with obtaining veteran contact data
- Questions for the survey of veterans, and question protocols for the focus groups.

These discussions were held with senior representatives from NCA and VBA within VA, with state NCA directors and with representatives from outside organizations to include four veteran service organizations, and the International Cemetery and Cremation Funeral Association.

Additional outside consultation will be conducted with the public by means of the 60- and 30-day Federal Register notices.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No payment or gift is provided to respondents. Refreshments will be provided to focus group participants.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

An assurance of strict confidentiality is made in the introductory letter respondents receive with the survey as well as written prologue appearing at the beginning of each survey. Respondents are assured that answers given will be kept confidential and be used for research and statistical

purposes only. The information that respondents supply is protected by law (the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 522a and section 5701 of Title 38 of the United States Code).

An assurance of strict confidentiality is verbally emphasized to participants in focus groups.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private; include specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

None of the focus group protocols contain any questions of a sensitive nature.

The survey instrument contains only one direct question and several indirect questions (see survey instrument in Appendix B) that some veterans may perceive as personal and thus sensitive in nature: religious affiliation. We provide justification for the inclusion of this question and the manner in which the data will be used in Appendix B.

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The survey cover letter and the introduction to the survey (on the survey form itself) stresses that responding to the survey and responding to any individual question is voluntary; that the individual responses will be kept confidential and anonymous; and that the responses will not affect the eligibility of the veteran or his or her family members for any benefits. Reading the letter and the survey will inform the respondent of the purpose of the survey, the use to which the information will be put, and the manner in which the information will be reported.

The study report will not include any information that can be used to identify respondents. The report will include statistical data and other aggregated data for evaluating VA’s Burial Benefit Program. The OPP, the NCA, and the VBA will use the report primarily for planning, projections, and to improve the burial benefit program.

12. Estimate of the hour burden of the collection of information.

The total response burden for focus groups is provided in Exhibit 1 below.

Exhibit 1: Estimated Respondent Burden for Focus Group Participants				
Focus Group Type	Number of Focus Groups	Hours Per Focus Group	Number of Participants Per Group	Respondent Burden Hours
Veterans’ next of kin	5	2	10	100
Funeral directors	5	2	10	100
Totals	10			200

The burden hour total for all of the focus group participants is 200. This does not include travel time that respondents incur in getting to the location where the focus group session will take place. The total cost to the respondents is calculated in Exhibit 2 below:

Exhibit 2: Estimated Total Cost for Focus Group Participants				
Focus Group Type	Average Annual Salary	Hourly Rate	Total Hours	Total Cost
Veterans' next of kin	\$9,000	4.33	100	\$433
Funeral directors	\$50,573	24.31	100	\$2,431
Total Cost				\$2,864

The average annual salaries for the types of focus groups are derived from estimates of pertaining to those job categories. Taking the family income reported in the National Survey of Veterans, applying an inflation/escalation factor of 3% per year, and subtracting the veteran income from the result provides the next-of-kin salary. The Funeral Directors' average annual salary was estimated by averaging the average salaries of owner/funeral directors, branch manager funeral directors, and staff funeral directors as shown on the Web site of the National Funeral Directors Association (<http://www.nfda.org>).

The burden estimate for survey respondents is based on a total final sample of veterans. The estimate of time needed to complete the survey is based on a pilot test of nine veterans. The actual time needed varied from eight minutes to twenty-two minutes with an average of fifteen minutes. The calculation of the total response burden and the cost to the respondent is provided in the Exhibit 3 below.

Exhibit 3: Estimated Response Burden for Veteran Survey Respondents	
Estimated number of survey respondents	9,626
Hours per respondent	0.25
Respondent burden hours	2,407.50
Hourly rate	\$16.33
Total cost to veteran survey respondents	\$39,298.15

The hourly salary figure is derived from data published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in October of 2006.¹

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14).

- a. There are no capital, start-up, operation, or maintenance costs.

¹ http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/007611.html

- b. Cost estimates are not expected to vary widely. The only cost is that for the time of the respondent (average of 15 minutes per respondent).
- c. There are no anticipated capital start-up cost components or requests to provide information.

14. Provide estimates of annual cost to the Federal Government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operation expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information. Agencies also may aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.

The total cost to the Federal Government is estimated at \$1,290,936. Exhibit 4 below presents the labor and contracting costs for conducting the surveys. Operational costs have been outsourced to the contractor, Caliber/ICF, and are included in the contractor’s total cost.

Exhibit 4: Estimated Cost to the Federal Government		
Cost Item	Hours	Cost
VA-Labor	600	\$34,584
Contractor		1,256,352
Total		\$1,290,936

The VA Labor cost was estimated using a composite average salary and benefits figure of \$57.64 per hour. The amount paid to the contractor, Caliber/ICF for the program evaluation, includes as its major components the survey of veterans and the focus groups for a cost of \$1,256,352. These costs include development of the instruments, development of the sampling plan, review of the instrument, locating of respondents, programming of the questionnaire for Web administration, questionnaire pretest, interviewing stakeholders, validation, facilitating focus groups, data processing, providing a clean data file, project management and analysis, and results reporting.

15. Explain the reason for any changes reported in Items 13 or 14 above.

The survey and each focus group protocol discussed in this supporting statement is a new one-time data collection.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

The major activities and project timeline are provided in Exhibits below. Exhibit 5 tabularizes the activities, deliverables, and the timeline.

Supporting Statement For Paperwork Reduction Act Submission
 Veterans Burial Benefits Program Evaluation Survey
 Department Of Veterans Affairs Office Of Policy And Planning

Exhibit 5: VA Burial Benefit Evaluation Work Plan and Timeline		
Tasks / Activities	Final Deliverables	Due Dates
Task 1: Initialize study		
Meet with CO, COTR, and VA staff		30-Nov-06
Sign task order contract		21-Dec-06
	Deliverable 1: Summary of agreements of contacting VA and non-VA entities, protocol for submission of deliverables, quality assurance, and risk management	3-Jan-07
Task 2: Detailed work plan and Gantt chart		
Develop work plan		3-Jan-07
	Deliverable 2: Work plan and Gantt chart	3-Jan-07
Brief CO, COTR, and study team		3-Jan-07
Task 3: Develop payment schedule		
Caliber, CO, and COTR develop payment schedule		3-Jan-07
	Deliverable 3: Payment schedule	3-Jan-07
Project meeting 1		3-Jan-07
Task 4: Develop analysis plan		
Develop preliminary program logic model		15-Jan-07
Identify subject and comparison groups		15-Jan-07
Identify sources for administrative data		15-Jan-07
Develop analysis plan		17-Jan-07
Submit draft analysis plan		17-Jan-07
Project meeting 2		17-Jan-07
	Deliverable 4: Final analysis plan	31-Jan-07
Project meeting 4		31-Jan-07
Task 5: Consult with stakeholders		
Identify all stakeholders to be interviewed		24-Jan-07
Develop draft interview and questions		24-Jan-07
Submit draft interview guidelines and protocols		24-Jan-07
Project meeting 3		24-Jan-07
Submit final interview guidelines and protocol		31-Jan-07
Conduct stakeholder interviews		12-Mar-07
	Deliverable 5: Summary of stakeholder interviews	25-Apr-07
Update program logic model		28-Feb-07

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Exhibit 5: VA Burial Benefit Evaluation Work Plan and Timeline		
Tasks / Activities	Final Deliverables	Due Dates
Task 6: Develop survey		
Develop questionnaire		20-Feb-07
Submit draft survey instruments		21-Feb-07
Project meeting 5		21-Feb-07
Submit revised draft 1		7-Mar-07
Project meeting 6		7-Mar-07
Conduct survey pre-test and cognitive laboratory with small number of target survey group		21-Mar-07
Submit pretest results and resolution of any pretest issues		21-Mar-07
Submit revised draft 2 of survey		21-Mar-07
Project meeting 7		21-Mar-07
	Deliverable 6: Final survey instruments	4-Apr-07
Project meeting 8		4-Apr-07
Submit final revised survey materials		15-Jun-07
Draw survey samples		6-Aug-07
Develop mailing materials		15-Jun-07
Convert survey questionnaire to Optical Mark Readable and Web-based formats		18-Sep-07
Develop draft focus group protocols		6-Mar-07
Develop rest of necessary protocols		20-Mar-07
Revise Protocols		3-Apr-07
Submit focus group protocols for review		17-Apr-07
Ad-hoc meeting on focus groups		6-Jun-07
Submit revised focus group protocols		15-Jun-07
Ad-hoc meeting on focus groups		19-Jun-07
Finalize focus group protocols		22-Jun-07
Task 7: Develop information Collection Package for OMB review		
Develop draft OMB package		18-Apr-07
Meeting on OIRA Submittal		18-Apr-07
Do internal review (OPP)		1-May-07
Conduct internal review (VBA)		11-May-07
60 day Federal Register notice		14-May-07
Resubmit revised OMB package to OIRA		25-Jun-07
VAOIT prepares OIRA submittal		14-Jul-07
	Deliverable 7: Submit final package	14-Jul-07
30 day Federal Register notice		14-Aug-07
Project meeting 9		15-Aug-07
OMB PRA review		12-Sep-07

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Exhibit 5: VA Burial Benefit Evaluation Work Plan and Timeline		
Tasks / Activities	Final Deliverables	Due Dates
Task 8: Administer survey		
	Deliverable 8: Contact information and survey administration methodology	18-Sep-07
Project meeting 11		19-Sep-07
Send initial communiqués		19-Sep-07
Begin collecting survey data		21-Sep-07
Send interim communiqués		8-Nov-07
Submit final communiqués		16-Nov-07
Recruit focus group participants		26-Sep-07
Conduct focus groups		7-Nov-07
Project meeting 12		7-Nov-07
	Deliverable 9: Survey response rate report	27-Nov-07
End collecting survey data		25-Nov-07
Pre-brief AS		30-Nov-07
⇒Project meeting 13		5-Dec-07
Task 9: Conduct research and analysis		
⇒Project meeting 10		13-Aug-07
Submit draft report and pre-briefing: Group I research tasks		14-Aug-07
Submit updated analysis methodology		23-Oct-07
Convert survey data to electronic form		12-Dec-07
Clean data		12-Dec-07
Prepare data for analysis		12-Dec-07
Project meeting 14		12-Dec-07
Conduct preliminary analysis		16-Nov-07
	Deliverable 10: Tables, graphs and charts of results	18-Dec-07
⇒Project meeting 15		19-Dec-07
Submit data analysis syntax, tables, instructions		19-Dec-07
	Deliverable 11: Conduct pre-briefings of findings	120-Dec-07
Submit draft report: Group II research tasks		27-Dec-07
	Deliverable 12: Briefing slides and presentation materials	28-Dec-07
Task 10: Develop draft report		
Project meeting 16		19-Dec-07
Submit detailed report outline		21-Dec-07
Project meeting 17		26-Dec-07
	Deliverable 13: Draft report	7-Jan-08
Project meeting 18		9-Jan-08

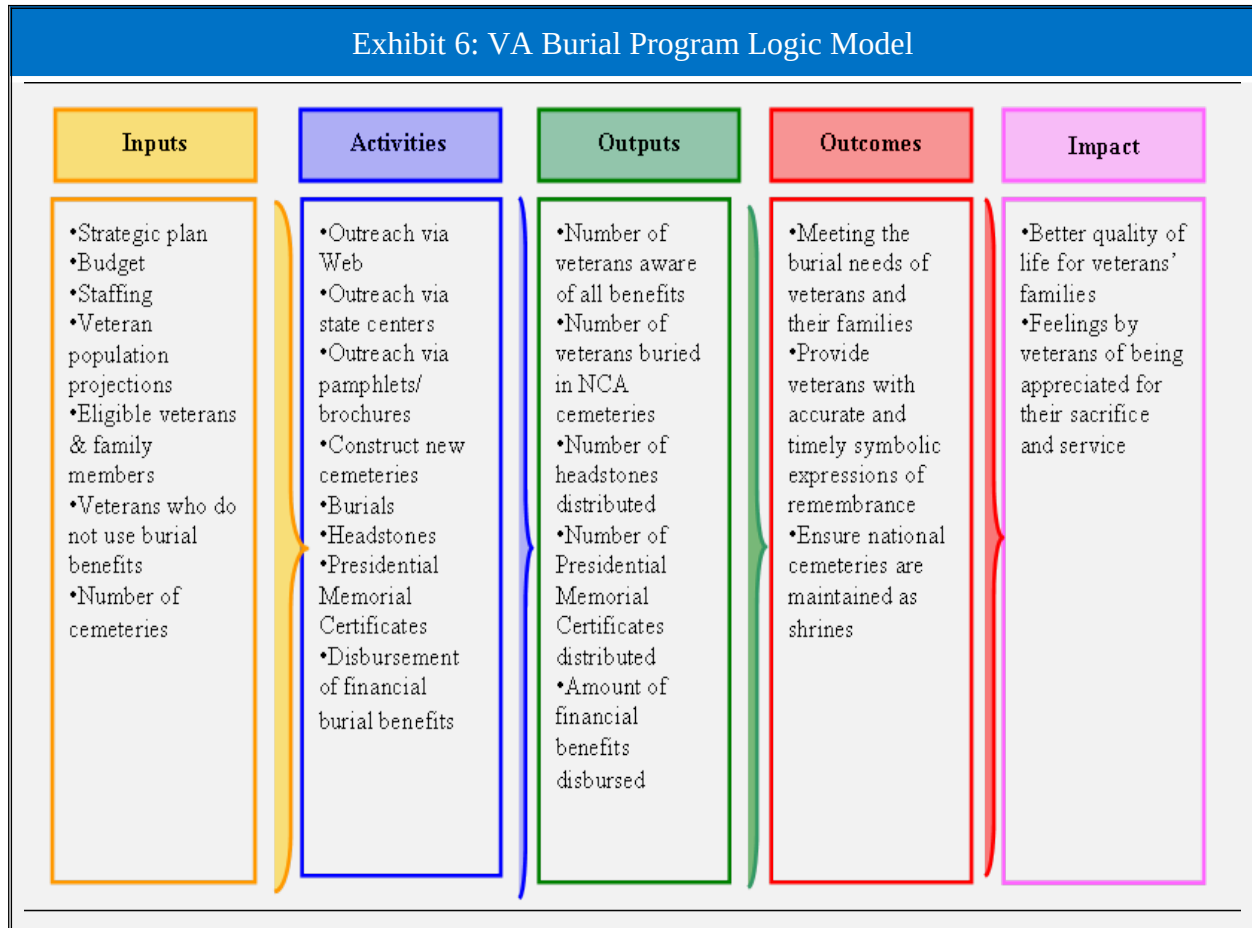
⇒ This meeting will include management

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Exhibit 5: VA Burial Benefit Evaluation Work Plan and Timeline		
Tasks / Activities	Final Deliverables	Due Dates
Incorporate changes to draft report		15-Jan-08
Submit revised draft report		15-Jan-08
Task 11: Submit final report		
Project meeting 19		30-Jan-08
	Deliverable 14: Final report	8-Feb-08
Task 12: Conduct management briefings		
Project meeting 20		12-Feb-08
Submit draft slides, notes, and other presentation materials		14-Feb-08
Project meeting 21		19-Feb-08
Submit final draft slides, notes, etc		21-Feb-08
Conduct pre-briefing for Assistant Secretary for Policy, Planning, and Preparedness		22-Feb-08
Submit final slides, notes, etc		25-Feb-08
⇒Project meeting 22		27-Feb-08
	Deliverable 15: SMC briefing presentation	28-Feb-08
Task 13: Complete and close-out project		
	Deliverable 16: Electronic copies of final report	3-Mar-08
	Deliverable 16: Perfect bound color copies of final report	3-Mar-08
	Deliverable 16: CD ROMs with electronic copies	3-Mar-08
Return all VA supplied reference materials, original data media, final data and papers.		3-Mar-08
Submit Monthly progress reports (fifth workday of each calendar month)		

A description of the main types of analysis planned is provided in the paragraphs below. A more detailed description is provided in the Analysis Plan, Appendix C.

The logic model of the VA Burial Program is provided in Exhibit 6.



The logic model portrays the various inputs and activities leading to hypothesized outcomes. The components of the model are:

- **Inputs.** The inputs are the resources, entities, and elements in which the program activities are targeted. Inputs enable the program to operate. Among the inputs for the Burial Benefits Program are: the budget, the program staff, and the veteran population (including projections).
- **Activities.** These are the processes, techniques, events, and actions of the planned program. In a sense, activities are the observables of an operating program. The Burial Benefits Program has many activities including: the planning for and construction of new cemeteries, outreach efforts, the burial of veterans, etc.
- **Outputs.** The outputs are the direct results of program activities and are usually described in terms of the size and scope of services provided and, in this case, the number of persons affected. Among the outputs are the number of veterans who are buried in national or state veteran cemeteries, the number of Presidential Memorial Certificates issued, the number of headstones or markers provided, and the amount of monetary burial benefits distributed.
- **Outcomes.** The outcomes are specific changes in attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and skills expected to result from program activities. The outcomes of this program include: meeting the burial needs of veterans and their families, providing veterans and their

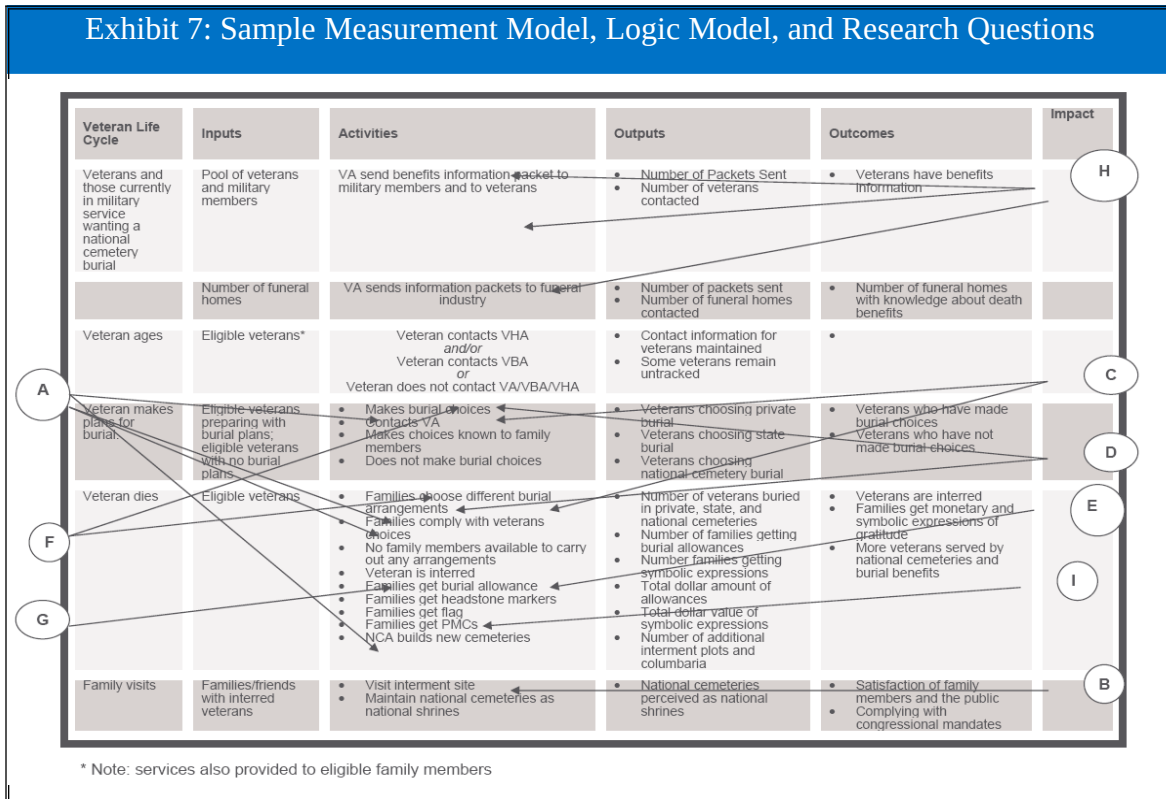
families with appropriate symbolic expressions of remembrance, and maintaining the national cemeteries as national shrines.

- **Impacts.** The impacts are long-term organizational and community changes that are expected. The Burial Benefits Program is hypothesized to result in an improved quality of life for veterans and their families, and positive feelings of being appreciated for their sacrifice and service.

For the evaluation of the VA Burial Program, the outcomes correspond to the program’s three overall objectives. These outcomes, in turn, lead to the hypothesized impacts. The two main impacts, improved quality of life and feeling appreciated for service and sacrifice, are affected by a variety of factors, many of which are not directly related to the Burial Benefits Program. For example, veterans may feel appreciated in several ways such as recognition of their service by their community, support from their extended family members, and support from fellow employees. This evaluation will examine the impacts that are directly related to the burial benefits provided by VA.

The logic model is helpful in identifying the measurement points in evaluating a program and suggests the type of metrics that can be used at the measurement points. For example, the first outcome listed in the model above, “meeting the burial needs of veterans and their families,” can be measured in terms of the perceptions of veterans and their families by the survey.

Along with the logic model, a measurement model is beneficial in operationalizing the elements of the logic model in ways that directly translate to the data collection methods, including survey questionnaires and focus group protocols. This measurement model posits a veteran’s life cycle and various metrics available at different points in the life cycle (Exhibit 7).



The full measurement model, not shown here, is much more detailed and operationalizes every element of the logic model.

In addition to the main evaluation objectives, OPP/VA will address the nine specific research questions provided in Exhibit 8 below. Note that some of these research questions will inform the assessment of the stated program objectives, while others are of importance to VA but are secondary to the main program objectives.

Exhibit 8: Research Questions/Subtasks	
Group	Research Questions
I (a)	Examine 75-mile service area standard
I (b)	Identify and evaluate challenges in meeting national shrine mandate
II (c)	Identify whether cremated remains only is an acceptable burial option
II (d)	Examine feasibility of cash payment in lieu of a state or burial option
II (e)	Assess current burial allowance in terms of comparison to legislative intent and average cost of burial in the private sector
II (f)	Examine factors influencing burial choice
II (g)	Assess impact of financial means test on eligibility for burial allowance
II (h)	Analyze methods by which veteran community members and their families access information on VA burial benefits
II (i)	Examine impact of Presidential Memorial Certificate

This evaluation will use a multi-method approach in conducting this evaluation. Using multiple methods increases the richness and the utility of the data with no decrease in efficiency and cost-effectiveness of data gathering. The main methods planned are:

- Survey of approximately 24,065 veterans in order to yield a total respondent sample size of 9,625
- Focus groups of family members, and funeral directors
- Conjoint analysis (a technique that combines elements of data collection and analysis)
- Gathering of geo-spatial data for analysis
- Secondary analysis of various data sources.

Most of the evaluation assessments and research questions will be addressed using two or three of these methodologies. Each of these methods, by the same token, will be used once to collect data on a number of the evaluation assessments and research questions. For example, focus groups will be used to investigate the perceptions of next of kin on such questions as the impact of the Presidential Memorial Certificate program.

Geospatial data will be analyzed by a geographic information system (GIS) to determine whether the VA's current 75 mile standard is adequate. The data will permit analysis of geographic distances and driving times.

A number of secondary data sources will be used as well:

- Current NCA budget levels for cemetery operations

- Current NCA capital budget
- High-level cost data for initial development of recent and planned national cemeteries
- Relevant legislation, regulations, operating procedures, strategic plans, and reports
- Burial, funeral, and related costs in the private sector

Exhibit 9 provides a cross-walk of the various evaluation methodologies, program objectives to be assessed, and the research questions to be investigated. The crosswalk is helpful in linking the evaluation activities with their intended results. It shows, for example, that the survey will be used to provide information relevant to research questions c, d, f, g, h, and i.

Exhibit 9: Crosswalk of Methods and Research Questions	
Evaluation Methodology	Research Questions / Evaluation Objectives
Survey	a, c, f, h, i
Focus groups/Interviews	a, f, h, i (1), (2), (3)
Conjoint Analysis	(2), i
Veteran and cemetery address information	(1), a
Secondary data (various sources)	(3), a, b, d, e, f, g, h
<p><i>Program Objectives Key: (1) – Ensure burial needs are met; (2) Provide symbolic expressions of remembrance; (3) cemeteries as national shrines</i></p>	
<p><i>Research Question Key: a – 75 mile standard; b – national shrine mandate; c – cremation as a burial option; d – cash payment in lieu of burial; e – current burial allowance amount; f – factors influencing burial choice; g – potential impact of financial means test; h – Outreach methods; i – impact of the Presidential Memorial Certificate Program.</i></p>	

A detailed crosswalk of the survey questionnaire with the nine research questions is provided in Appendix D6. The crosswalk illustrates the fact all the research questions are addressed by the survey as well as by the additional data collection methods cited in the Exhibit above.

17. If seeking approval to omit the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

We are not seeking such approval.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions,” of OMB 83-I.

There are no exceptions.