



MEMORANDUM

TO: Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
FROM: Erika Lautenbach, Director
RE: Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs – Veterans Service Officer Interlocal Agreement
DATE: March 14, 2022

Attached is a contract between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs for your review and signature.

▪ **Background and Purpose**

Based on local census data, there are an estimated 14,300 veterans in Whatcom County, many of which do not have the knowledge of how to access VA support services that they may be eligible for. About 9% of veterans in Whatcom County are without health insurance, and 11% of veterans live in poverty. Veterans who are able to access health care or apply for disability with the VA, are able to improve their quality of life with increased income. Connecting veterans to the benefits they are eligible for with the VA is done through a Veteran Service Officer (VSO). The Health Department employs one federally accredited VSO and last year she submitted over 600 claims to the VA.

This agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) for collaboratively providing Veteran Service Officer (VSO) Services to indigent Whatcom County veterans and their families. WDVA will advertise a request for proposals to federally accredited nonprofit veteran services organizations for providing a full-time VSO at the Bellingham Vet Center. WDVA will administer the awarded contract and invoice Whatcom County quarterly to fund the VSO position and pass the funds on to the contractor.

▪ **Funding Amount and Source**

Funding for this contract, in an amount not to exceed \$48,825, is provided by the Veterans Assistance Fund. These funds are included in the 2022 budget. Council approval is required per RCW 39.34.030(2) for agreements between public agencies.

Please contact Ann Beck, Human Services Manager at 360-778-6055 (ABeck@co.whatcom.wa.us) or Kathleen Roy, Assistant Director at 360-778-6007 (KRoy@co.whatcom.wa.us), if you have any questions or concerns regarding this request.

