



**Department of Veterans
& Military Affairs**

STRATEGIC PLAN

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

We are honored to be serving the men and women who currently serve and have served our country! It is the fundamental reason that our Department exists, and I am proud that you are part of this effort.

Governor Cox and Lieutenant Governor Henderson have laid out their strategic document for the State of Utah, Built Here, the 2027 Strategic Plan, which has three core focus areas of People, Places and Prosperity. We, in the department, have strategic goals and objectives aligned with this document, and they resonate with what we do. The Built Here strategic document recognizes the strengths of the Governor's two previous ones and moves us forward further. We are excited about our direction.

We accomplish our mission in a variety of ways performing functions across our entire great State, in serving veterans, military members, their family members and supporting the military installations in Utah. At the same time, we need to ensure that we are good stewards of the funds and responsibilities that have been entrusted to us, and that we carry out our duties in a forthright, compassionate, responsible and efficient way.

We perform our mission through a number of guiding values that we coined as RESPECT, and with these values and the goals that we are focused on achieving, we will continue to be a high-performing team for those we serve. I challenge each one of us to be bold, innovative and responsible in all that we do and to foster a culture which is respectful, efficient and inclusive.

Again, thanks for being part of this Department and the service you render.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs enriches the lives of Veterans, service members, and their families and grows the military workload in Utah, by offering innovative programs and services, promoting military and veteran friendly communities and collaborating with partners.

VISION

Utah is the best state in the nation to perform military missions and the premier location for veterans, service members and their families to live, work, and play.

VALUES

In the performance of our duties, we follow enduring values that are the watchwords for all we do. They are our beacons. They are organized around the word **RESPECT**.

Respect and honor for those we serve

We have the distinct privilege of serving veterans, service members, their families and working with military members, civilians and contractors who work on military installations. We know freedom is not free. We treat all who engage in maintaining that freedom with respect and honor.

Effectiveness of services

We owe it to those we serve and those we work with to ensure our programs and efforts are effective, both in terms of outcomes and cost. We strive to maintain them and improve them.

Solidarity and teamwork

What we do is a “team sport.” We are stronger as we work together, ensuring the team is performing at an extremely high level. We focus on the mission, vision and goals to guide us forward.

Proactive and innovative

We ensure we have the right effort, for the right challenge, at the right time. We are innovative and anticipate what needs to be in place, seemingly before it is needed.

Excellence in everything

Whether it is a one-on-one contact or a large group, whether it is an internal or external, whether it is a claims submission or a meeting or a recognition event, whether it is engagement with a veteran, a resident in one of our homes, a member of the Congressional delegation, legislature or senior military leadership, whether it is a budget submission or committee hearing, whatever it is we want it to be excellent. And in the times when it is less than our standard, we take responsibility, learn from it and move forward.

Collaboration with partners, stakeholders and champions

We are proud to collaborate with partners, stakeholders and champions across the state and nation in the accomplishment of our duties. We grow and foster these relationships and eagerly welcome new opportunities.

Trust and transparency

Trust is earned by respect and truthfulness. We strive to be respected as a trusted organization both by those within the department and by those we serve. Transparency fosters that trust and enables us to be more effective.

GOALS

What we want to achieve throughout the department is captured by our overall goals, both internal to the department and external for those we interact with and serve. They are a guide for what we do. Our main question is, does the activity support one of our goals? Our goals are:

1. Maintain Utah’s reputation as a state that fully supports veterans, service members and families.
2. Connect with veterans, military members and their families across the state
3. Have benefits, programs and initiatives that are responsive, timely and effective
4. Honor and recognize those we serve
5. Continue to position the state as a preferred location for military missions and operations.
6. Foster ongoing engagement with partners, stakeholders, and champions
7. Seek out new opportunities
8. Operate the department efficiently and effectively
9. Support a culture where department members are valued and respected

STRATEGIES

The following strategies are overall actions for the department at an operational level. Deputy commissioners and functional managers are encouraged to develop additional ones for their areas.

- Utilize the synergy between veterans and military affairs to leverage resources and develop innovative solutions to benefit both communities.
- Continue to engage with military personnel and their families to support their needs and recognize their contributions.
- Adopt best practices, optimize resources, and improve processes.
- Foster additional partnerships and deeper relationships to leverage the strengths of all as we identify gaps, implement initiatives and seek new opportunities
- Work continually with military leaders across the state and at supporting organizations
- Have members of the department serving on appropriate boards, committees and associations both locally and nationally
- Ensure the department continues to be viewed as a great place to work
- Conduct regular reviews of the efforts outlined in this document both with the senior department team and all members of the department

OBJECTIVES

Knowing where we are going, how we are getting there, and how we are doing are vital to us. The following elements combine objectives and performance measures together and they are presented in the same order as our goals. We do recognize that several of the objectives and measures could and do cross over into other goals, which supports the idea that we have a joint mission of veterans and military and one effort that supports one area could support another.

1. Maintain Utah's reputation as a state that fully supports veterans, service members and their families (Goal)

- a. Landing Zone Utah marketing campaign updated and active (Objective)
- b. Seamless transition from military to veteran status effort is responsive and effective
- c. Support employment efforts for veterans, military and their families
- d. Support military installation programs that make arrival to Utah more effective

2. Connect with veterans, military members and their families across the state (Goal)

- a. Grow the military and veteran family support program during FY2027
- b. Ensure connection and stationing of Veterans Service Officers across the state
- c. Expand reach of digital communication platforms (e.g department website, social media, email campaigns).
- d. Grow the number of veterans in Utah that are connected
- f. Grow VA compensation and pension to support the well-being of veterans

3. Have benefits, programs and initiatives that are responsive, timely and effective (Goal)

- a. Efforts to support mental wellness and suicide prevention are identified and in-place (Governor's Challenge).
- b. Reduce the wait time for veterans to engage with VSOs (GRIT Initiative)
- c. Support and implement the Governors Challenge for Veterans Suicide Prevention effort
- d. Support veterans in business efforts
- e. State Approving Agency effectively coordinates with Utah institutions that receive GI Bill educational funding.
- f. Veterans nursing homes are operating efficiently and positioned for the future.
- g. Oversee Construction of Salt Lake Veterans Home Replacement
- h. Support Utah State Parks in the administration of Utah State Parks Honor Passes
- i. Administer and promote the veterans First Time Home-Buyer program in conjunction with Utah Housing Corporation
- j. Continue partnership with Attorney General's Office for Utah@Ease Pro-bono Legal Service
- k. Work with state agencies and legislature to implement appropriate programs

4. Honor and recognize those we serve

- a. The Bluffdale Veterans Cemetery continues to be a place of honor for those who have served in the military and their spouses
- b. The state is operating a Northern Utah Veterans Cemetery by 2028
- c. Support the Utah committee's efforts for the commissioning of the Navy's USS Utah submarine
- d. Host and support events related to veteran and military holidays and recognitions (e.g Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Armed Forces Day, Service Member of the Year, Fallen Warrior, etc.)...

5. Utah remains a preferred location for military missions and operations.

- a. Awareness and Implementation of Department of Defense priority efforts in Utah
- b. Strategies developed for state support of growth at Hill AFB working with state, federal, business, local and academic partners
- c. Partner with military leaders to implement efforts focused on military families
- d. Ensure areas around installations are free of encroachment on military missions
- e. Implement the Great Salt Lake Sentinel Landscape Program
- f. Continue to engage with MIDA for support of military land development
- g. Support efforts for Reserves to relocate into new operational space and the transfer of Fort Douglas to University of Utah
- h. Civilian workforce supporting military missions meets demand and is stable
- i. Continued support for organizations that support military missions in Utah

6. Foster ongoing engagement with partners, stakeholders, and champions

- a. Continue robust outreach to Legislative and Congressional partners
- b. Engage with Associations and Organizations that foster completion of our missions
- c. Ensure Department members serve on appropriate national and local association boards and committees that complement our mission
- d. Provide financial support as appropriate to veterans and military organizations

7. Seek out new opportunities

- a. Transition Excellence Center operational
- b. Explore MIDA involvement at additional military installations
- c. Expand success of Military Children Education Specialist efforts
- d. Partner with federal, state and local organizations to engage in rural Utah
- e. Develop a new veterans cemetery in Northern Utah to better serve veterans in that geographic region
- f. Foster new partnerships and relationships where we haven't engaged before

8. Operate the Department efficiently and effectively

- a. Publish updated department policy letters each April
- b. Performance on audits and survey meet established standards
- c. Leverage technology
- d. Department relocates to new space to maximize effectiveness
- e. Meet budget submission deadlines as established by GOPB and LFA
- f. Develop robust privacy policies for the department during FY2027
- g. Conduct Quarterly financial, operational, risk and safety reviews
- h. Effectively implement new statutes each year
- i. Review strategic plan regularly with senior team and annually with entire department

9. Ensure department members are valued and respected

- a. A positive and respectful office environment is maintained
- b. Maintain an open-door policy
- c. Optimize pay for performance
- d. Provide regular feedback and communications to team members
- e. Design and implement employee survey

