



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN**

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE**

AND

**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
OFFICE OF GROUND WATER AND DRINKING WATER
OFFICE OF WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT**

Promoting a Veteran Workforce for the Water Sector

A well-trained and knowledgeable workforce is vital to protecting public health and the environment, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of water and wastewater systems. For this reason, predicted losses to the water and wastewater workforce due to baby boomer retirements raise concern. The report, *Succession Planning for a Vital Workforce in the Information Age (2005)*, published by the American Water Works Association (AWWA) and the Awwa Research Foundation, projected that 37% of water utility workers and 32% of wastewater utility workers will be eligible to retire in the next 10 years. In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that the need for water and wastewater operators will increase by 20% from 2008-2018. Veterans represent a major recruiting opportunity for water and wastewater utilities. Prior military experience gives Veterans an understanding of teamwork, discipline, and personal accountability that can make them excellent employees for these fields. In addition, many Veterans already possess technical skills and training that are directly transferable to careers in the Water Sector.

A. Purpose

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) agree to work jointly on promotional activities that will help advance and improve employment opportunities for Veterans with disabilities while supporting the development of a trained and competent workforce for the Water Sector. Both VR&E Service and EPA believe that working closely together can improve employment outcomes for Veterans with disabilities while helping to address predicted losses to the Water Sector workforce.

This memorandum of understanding (MOU) establishes the framework for VR&E Service and EPA to encourage their respective Departments, offices and stakeholders to work cooperatively to promote Water Sector careers, educate stakeholders about VR&E programs and provide improved services to their mutual partners. This agreement does not compel EPA or its partner organizations in the Water Sector to hire Veterans. However, this document encourages the development of connections between employers in the Water Sector, EPA, and VR&E Service to facilitate the placement of Veterans with disabilities into this essential employment sector.

B. Terms

VR&E Service will assign a point of contact (POC) liaison that will share information and coordinate activities to carry out and support the objectives of this MOU. Specifically the VR&E Service POC will:

- Serve as the contact person for state and local Water Sector employers interested in hiring Veterans to provide information and guidance regarding joint VR&E and EPA activities.
- Work with EPA POC to create greater awareness of opportunities to employ Veterans with service-connected disabilities within the Water Sector;
- Work with EPA POC to construct new lines of communication to inform Veterans with service-connected disabilities about training and employment opportunities offered in the Water Sector;
- Identify and encourage partnership opportunities between Water Sector partners and VA Regional Offices, including connecting VR&E Employment Coordinators (points of contact) with Water Sector stakeholders at the state and local level; and
- Create a learning opportunity to share information crucial to these joint promotional activities. This includes information about VR&E programs, as well as workforce-related information such as position types, education, and skill sets required.

EPA will assign a POC liaison that will share information and coordinate activities to carry out and support the objectives of this MOU. Specifically, the EPA POC will:

- Serve as a contact person to provide information and guidance regarding joint VR&E and EPA activities.
- Work with VR&E POC to create greater awareness of opportunities to employ Veterans with service-connected disabilities within the Water Sector;
- Work with VR&E POC to construct new lines of communication to inform Veterans with service-connected disabilities about training and employment opportunities offered in the Water Sector;
- Identify and encourage partnership opportunities between Water Sector partners and VA regional offices, including connecting VR&E Employment Coordinators (points of contact) with Water Sector stakeholders at the state and local level; and

- Create a learning opportunity to share information crucial to these joint promotional activities. This includes information about VR&E programs, as well as workforce-related information such as position types, education, and skill sets required.

This agreement does not in and of itself authorize the expenditure or reimbursement of any funds, and nothing in this agreement obligates either party to expend appropriations or other funds, or to enter into any contract or other obligation. This agreement does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, by persons who are not party to this agreement. This agreement does not apply to any person outside of VRE and EPA.


Further, this agreement will not be interpreted to limit, supersede, or otherwise affect either party's normal operations or decisions in carrying out its mission or statutory or regulatory duties. This agreement does not restrict the parties from participating in similar activities or arrangements with other entities.

This agreement will become effective upon the date of signature of the underlined parties and will remain in effect until terminated by either or both parties, but will be jointly reviewed at five year intervals from the date of signature.



Ruth A. Fanning, Director
Vocational Rehabilitation and
Employment Service
Department of Veterans Affairs

4/2/12
Date



Cynthia Dougherty, Director
Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

3/27/12
Date



James Hanlon, Director
Office of Wastewater Management
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

3/27/12
Date