



The Federal Voting Assistance Program and the Road Ahead

Achieving Institutional Change Through Analysis and Collaboration

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Preface

In early 2013, the leadership of the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) commissioned the RAND National Defense Research Institute (NDRI) to undertake a collaborative, multiyear work program known formally as FVAP and the Road Ahead. The project was established to assist FVAP in aligning its strategy and operations to better serve its mission and stakeholders and to strengthen FVAP's capacity to set its own course, greet change, and communicate its role in the voting community.

This report, which documents the RAND project team's objective analysis, its work with FVAP, and the results of both, describes an iterative process of engagement with a very small federal agency seeking to elevate its performance and prepared to implement change. The project enabled a significant realignment of the agency's strategy and operations. Thus, it demonstrates the potential for substantial, timely change through a highly collaborative working relationship, rooted in a systematic and analytically grounded research design.

The RAND project team worked with FVAP to compare, reconcile, and align what was in the agency's strategy and typical of its operations and what should be, through an evidence-based approach that included logic modeling, stakeholder outreach, and a requirements assessment. The team delivered recommendations and implementing guidance over the course of the project, and FVAP enacted change throughout. As a consequence, this report offers final recommendations and guidance largely proposed to lock in and build on gains.

This report should be of interest to agencies seeking to improve their strategic and operational alignment and develop a better understanding of the methods and processes available to do so, to those involved in those agencies' oversight, and to stakeholders seeking to understand changes occurring within FVAP.

In addition to the findings, recommendations, and guidance from our analysis, this report describes in detail the collaborative process that the RAND team and FVAP used to develop the analysis and implement recommendations, respectively. We have structured the document to meet the needs of members of FVAP's leadership as they convey the process that they used to implement major organizational change and to aid the agency in further implementation of recommendations. For readers with

greater interest in the underlying method, we offer a shorter, derivative report that focuses on the iterative application of the logic model.

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Summary

Broadly speaking, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) is charged with administering the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) of 1986 (Pub. L. 99-410), as amended, and assisting so-called UOCAVA voters in voting successfully. These voters include uniformed-service members and their families residing outside their voting jurisdictions and other U.S. citizens residing outside the United States. FVAP leadership was concerned that the agency's mission had become blurred over time, that its operations might have fallen out of step with its mission, and that the organization would benefit from a more strategic approach to setting goals, organizing for action, and allocating resources.

To address these concerns, FVAP leadership commissioned the RAND National Defense Research Institute (NDRI) to undertake a collaborative, multiyear work program known formally as FVAP and the Road Ahead or informally as the strategic focus project. FVAP wanted help aligning its strategy and operations to better serve its mission and stakeholders and to strengthen its capacity to set its own course, greet change, and communicate its role in the voting community.

This report documents our (the RAND project team's) objective analysis, our work with FVAP, and the results of both. It describes an iterative process of engagement with a very small federal agency seeking to elevate its performance and prepared to implement change. In so doing, it also demonstrates the potential for substantial, timely gains through a highly collaborative working relationship, rooted in a systematic and analytically grounded research design. The report does not offer readers a cookbook for change, but it suggests a generalizable, replicable approach.

The report describes the project in terms of the analytical approach, a set of outcomes, and the process that connected them throughout the engagement. First, it provides an overview of the two analytical phases of the project. Second, it describes changes unfolding within FVAP—some in direct response to the project and some emerging contemporaneously and indicative of the agency's desire to progress rapidly. The intent of the report is to convey the experience of the project as much as the outcomes and, thus, to provide readers with insight into the process and an indication of the possible.

In addition to the findings, recommendations, and guidance from our analysis, this report describes in detail the collaborative process that FVAP and we used to develop the analysis and implement recommendations, respectively. We have structured the document to meet the needs of members of FVAP's leadership as they convey the process that they used to implement major organizational change and to aid the agency in further implementation of recommendations.

Organizational and Policy Contexts

FVAP is a federal agency of fewer than 20 permanent full-time-equivalent (FTE) positions within the Defense Human Resources Activity (DHRA), which is a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) field activity of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. FVAP has existed in some form since 1955 and now serves voters covered under UOCAVA and, in large part, administers UOCAVA provisions and develops related policy.

FVAP's charter presents complexities, challenges, and opportunities, some stemming from the size and breadth of its customer base and others from its institutional position. UOCAVA voters include both members of the defense community (in this case, uniformed absentee voters and their families) and overseas citizens (largely without connection to the military). These disparate and geographically dispersed populations extend over seven continents and 55 states and territories and include thousands of voting jurisdictions. FVAP works with a range of military and civilian organizations that mirrors the diversity and dispersion of those voters. In the United States and around the world, it works with Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs), Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) offices, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). It also works with state and local election officials to provide a bridge between these entities and UOCAVA voters when needed. FVAP's charter and its DoD placement also require that it straddle the domains of policy and operations, which itself represents both a challenge and an opportunity. Although FVAP is one provider of voting assistance in a much larger system, it has unique leadership qualifications deriving from its charter, its insight to policy and operations, its accumulated knowledge and tools, and its dedicated resources.

In this context, FVAP has had difficulty stating what exactly its mission is. This difficulty might also be attributable, in part, to turnover in FVAP's leadership. The agency saw four directors in a five-year period, from 2008 to 2013, and, at the launch of this project, was operating under an acting director.

Study Purpose and Approach

RAND and FVAP began deliberating on the terms of the engagement well in advance of the start of the project. An intense period of preliminary discussion yielded agreement on both the nature of the working relationship and the method of analysis. The participants in the discussions agreed that the project must be collaborative and iterative to ensure its relevance and timeliness and built language into the project description (PD) to support that position (RAND Corporation, 2013); specifically, RAND and FVAP would “work closely, cooperatively, and iteratively” from start to finish. The participants also agreed that a method known as logic modeling would serve as the project’s analytical foundation. The discussions provided the participants with an opportunity to pattern collaboration, set expectations around results and resources, and, ultimately, decide whether the project was viable.

Thus, the collaborative process took shape before the project started. Over the life of the project, we (the RAND project team) would work with FVAP in frequent face-to-face meetings to share, vet, and clarify ideas and to discuss and refine the details of our approach. The collaboration would enable us to develop a full and mutual understanding of FVAP’s needs, to better gauge and adjust our tactics to meet those needs, and to rapidly transfer recommendations to FVAP leadership so that FVAP could apply them and implement change.

At the same time, the project required objectivity. The language of the PD provided guidance on the interplay between our collaboration with FVAP on the one hand and the need for analytical independence on the other:

In the course of undertaking this analysis, RAND NDRI will . . . [o]ffer “independent” recommendations and guidance. Cognizant of the diversity of views—both internal and external—as to FVAP’s role and responsibilities, RAND NDRI will not seek to arbitrate among them; rather, it will offer its own independent view as to how FVAP can best fulfill its mission in a manner that is consistent with legislative mandates. These recommendations will be “independent” in that they may differ with internally and/or externally held views; nevertheless, they will emerge from a process of extensive internal and external engagement.

On that basis, we worked with FVAP to compare, reconcile, and align what was in the agency’s strategy and typical of its operations and what should be. FVAP did not commission us to conduct a program evaluation but to catalyze change.

It became clear early on that we would need to help the agency address the ambiguity of its mission and, in particular, to achieve a common, shared understanding of the meaning of the word *assistance*.

We planned the project for four phases, including two analytical phases. We front-loaded the analysis in phases 1 and 2 to enable and support early action by the agency.

In phase 1, we conducted a preliminary assessment of FVAP's role in the voting community, the activities it undertakes, the means by which it undertakes them, and the reasons it undertakes them. In close coordination with FVAP, we

- developed a logic model to benchmark the agency's strategy and operations
- engaged with some of FVAP's stakeholders to elicit their views of the agency's role in the voting community
- analyzed the agency's core requirements, as manifested in U.S. law and policy on uniformed- and overseas-citizen absentee-voting assistance.

The benchmark model served as a diagnostic tool that led us down the paths of outreach and analysis that followed, by surfacing issues that merited closer consideration. The modeling process or exercise included a two-day all-hands workshop, weekly office hours, and several small-group sessions, each of which contributed information necessary to understanding FVAP and constructing the model. The exercise yielded an FVAP-centric picture of the agency. We augmented it with stakeholder perspectives and a closer look at requirements to fill holes in our understanding of the agency and to test and validate the model.

This assessment produced preliminary recommendations for improving the agency's strategic focus and strengthening its operations and organizational structure and initial guidance for implementing change. FVAP was able to act on the findings immediately because we shared them as they emerged, to generate debate and discussion.

In phase 2 of the project, we took a step back to consider FVAP's role in the context of a larger voting assistance system; examine its engagement through partnerships, research, and other activities; and identify opportunities for it to do so more effectively. We also worked with FVAP on the development and refinement of the final, robust logic model. The model served as a blueprint for the agency's reorganization, which we address in our discussion of the evidence of change. Phase 2 of the project likewise involved close collaboration with FVAP. While we were undertaking our analysis, the agency was changing in response to that analysis, to internally recognized needs, and to other forces. Our approach to the analysis evolved as a consequence.

In phase 3, we synthesized the results of the engagement and delivered our final recommendations and guidance. Given the extent of the change that had already occurred, we directed our attention to locking in and building on gains.

In phase 4, we are disseminating findings.

During the course of our engagement, another RAND project team was working with FVAP to develop measures, metrics, and a dashboard to support situational awareness and the continuous assessment of the effectiveness of FVAP activities.

Key Findings from Phase 1

The logic-modeling exercise, stakeholder outreach, and requirements assessment yielded findings on FVAP's mission, operations, and organization and the alignment among them from each of the three different perspectives.

Mission Ambiguity and Organizational Challenges

The development of the benchmark logic model enabled us to conceptualize FVAP's view of itself as consisting of distinct streams of activities, each reaching out to the UOCAVA voter, but largely dependent on the actions of intermediaries, including VAOs, election officials, and NGOs. A set of focal points emerged from the modeling exercise, relating to mission ambiguity and other organizational challenges:

- **Mission ambiguity.** The logic model drew attention to the lack of a clearly articulated, shared mission among FVAP personnel, which, in turn, appeared to reflect a lack of consensus within FVAP as to the agency's purpose and its role in the voting community. If the FVAP staff did not share an understanding of the agency's mission or priorities, it could not share a consistent view of what it should be doing or how it should go about doing it.
- **Stovepiping and fragmentation.** The picture, both literal and figurative, embodied in the logic model suggested that FVAP was functioning as loosely connected, separately managed streams of activities—namely, voter assistance, election-official assistance, and institutional support, including technology services and communication services.
- **Inadequate capacities and capabilities in some areas.** Our conversations with FVAP and an initial review of strategic and other documents suggested that FVAP lacked capacity and capabilities in some organizationally important areas, including those relating to data collection, research, and analysis.
- **Suboptimal staffing decisions and organizational configuration.** The final set of issues pertained to FVAP's conceptualization of labor and its internal organization, both in general and in the face of less than 20 permanent FTEs. FVAP did not appear to recognize that the decision to use staff in one line of operations or activity stream was also a decision to not use staff in another—thus, establishing or acting on the agency's priorities. It also appeared as if FVAP might be top heavy, with a large share of staff in leadership and advisory positions.

Lack of Clarity Among Stakeholders About the Federal Voting Assistance Program's Role

Next, we reached out to FVAP's stakeholders, including congressional staff, election officials, overseas-citizen NGOs, other representatives of DoD from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the services, academics and technologists, and election advocates.

Our analysis of the stakeholders' comments yielded two overarching observations. First, the comments converged around a handful of themes, albeit sometimes reflecting very different perspectives on the underlying concern and its remedy. Although the stakeholders recognized that FVAP faces institutional constraints, e.g., as a very small agency within a much larger national-security agency, they suggested that FVAP should do the following:

- Stick to a single, limited set of activities and do them well.
- Recognize UOCAVA voters as customers.
- Set a high bar for itself and others.
- Avoid any appearance of partisanship or advocacy.
- Devote more effort to communicating with stakeholders, by reaching out to them more regularly, soliciting and listening to their views about what they need and how FVAP can help to meet these needs, and being more responsive to their input.
- Conduct its business more transparently.
- Act more deliberately with its and others' resources.
- Recognize that it is part of a larger system and that its actions have implications not just for itself but also for others in the system.
- Manage institutional constraints more effectively.

Some also suggested that FVAP's engagement with stakeholders had been driven too much by the agendas of individuals within the agency and not enough by the mission of the agency.

Although nearly everyone suggested that FVAP stick to a single, limited set of activities, many disagreed on the content of that set. For example, some stakeholders asserted that FVAP should be working to ensure that voters *do* register, while others said that FVAP should be working to ensure that they *can* register. Nevertheless, most stakeholders endorsed direct, hands-on assistance as appropriate and constructive.

Second, a notable number of stakeholders lacked interest in or awareness of FVAP and its services and how the agency or its services might relate to them.

Room for Realignment and Latitude to Chart a Path

Lastly, we sought to identify the minimum set of activities that FVAP must undertake to meet specific, direct requirements, to which we refer as the *core*, and to improve our understanding of how FVAP's activities related to that core. To identify the core, we turned first to the laws governing the agency. We looked for both gaps in coverage and opportunities to redirect resources. An activity outside the core might contribute importantly to the assistance of UOCAVA voters, either directly or indirectly, by supporting core activities, meeting more-general requirements, or filling other institutional needs, but FVAP might have latitude to consider alternative courses of action.

We found room for realignment within and among FVAP's activities but did not identify immediate candidates for dissolution or chasms in coverage. In comparing FVAP activities with the law, we found, for example, that FVAP might have substantial flexibility with VAO training, the website, the Voting Assistance Guide, information dissemination and outreach, and data collection but might need to do more to consult with state and local election officials and ensure their awareness of the requirements of UOCAVA and to report to Congress on effectiveness.

Preliminary Recommendations and Initial Guidance

At the close of phase 1, we summarized our findings and introduced a set of preliminary recommendations and initial guidance. Our analysis strongly suggested that FVAP, its stakeholders, and the law were each seeing the world differently. We summarize their perspectives as follows:

- FVAP saw itself, in large part, as benefiting UOCAVA voters through intermediaries, such as VAOs, election officials, and NGOs.
- Stakeholders did not see a clear path from FVAP to voting success (i.e., casting a counted ballot) and were uncertain about what FVAP was doing or why.
- The law saw FVAP doing more than it “must” in some areas and possibly less than it “must” in others.

We concluded that the differences among the three perspectives signaled substantive disconnects. If, for example, FVAP saw itself as operating through intermediaries, but those same intermediaries did not see the path from FVAP to them or to UOCAVA voters, it seemed likely that something was amiss.

We recast the key findings from phase 1 as actionable recommendations and guidance for FVAP leadership. Although the agency began acting on our suggestions before we formally delivered them, we recount them here to provide a record of the project and a means of gauging the changes that we report in the next section. A clearer understanding of where FVAP was at the start of the project should help shed light on where it is now.

Become “One FVAP”

To become one FVAP—a coherent whole with the capability to function as such—the agency would need to do three things:

- **Come to terms with its mission.** This would go beyond crafting a mission statement, to developing a common, shared understanding of the agency's purpose and priorities. It would entail establishing a set of primary functions, consisting of core, supporting, and institutional activities, which, in turn, should derive

from an evidence-based analysis of requirements, needs, and potential or actual effectiveness.

- **Integrate and shore up operations to support that mission.** Operational integration could occur through consolidating resources into fewer divisions or through taking actions to strengthen the connective tissues of the organization, e.g., by improving internal communications or promoting cross-training within and across activity streams. Cross-training could serve two purposes, by increasing staff members' understanding of the interrelatedness of FVAP activities and addressing staffing constraints. To address remaining capacity and capability deficits, FVAP would need to assess its functional needs (e.g., skills and tools), identify gaps, and take actions to fill them. We recommended that FVAP consider professional development as a means to fill some of the gaps. Professional development appeared to be available to FVAP staff on an ad hoc basis, but FVAP could address it more comprehensively and systematically.
- **Communicate more effectively about the mission and organizational priorities.** Once FVAP defined its mission and organized around it, it would need to communicate its direction more clearly and consistently, both internally and externally. Beyond a common, shared understanding of the agency's mission and priorities, FVAP staff, including leadership, would need a common, shared vocabulary for describing them.

Build Trust and Strengthen Relationships

FVAP would also need to strengthen relationships with stakeholders. Stronger relationships could enable FVAP to use its own resources more effectively, e.g., by spending less time fighting fires, better leveraging the resources of its partners, and, ultimately, better serving its customers, especially UOCAVA voters. Accomplishing this might involve a fundamental transformation in FVAP's relationships, one requiring a re-envisioning of the agency's approach to its partners and customers as active participants, not as passive operatives or actors. More concretely, FVAP would need to communicate with its stakeholders more regularly, listen more carefully, and respond more actively to their input. We suggested that FVAP would need to do more than just broadcast; it would need to receive and respond. Although it faces constraints because it operates in a national security institution (DoD), FVAP should also operate as openly as possible by, for example, posting data when they become available, making public its criteria for decisionmaking, and alerting stakeholders to plans for future changes so that they can prepare for the changes and, if possible, participate in the changes.

Embrace a Culture and Principles of Effectiveness

Lastly, we recommended that FVAP adopt, internalize, and apply a culture and principles of effectiveness throughout its operations, beginning with its work on mission, priorities, and activities. We suggested that FVAP interpret the congressional mandate

to report on effectiveness as a way of doing business more generally. For example, we suggested routine use of benefit–cost assessment, be it quantitative or qualitative, in developing and implementing projects, assessing the merits of proposed activities, and thinking about daily tasks. Taking on this mind-set could lead to a more rigorous and thorough consideration of the implications of policy and actions for FVAP and the voting community—particularly if FVAP were to take a broad, systemic view of voting assistance and consider the benefits and costs of activities throughout the community. However, the approach might also require a better understanding of the voting assistance system and additional analytical means.

Phase 2: The Federal Voting Assistance Program’s Engagement with Its Operating Environment

In this phase of the project, we took a step back and considered voting assistance from the perspective of a larger voting assistance system, to identify opportunities for FVAP to improve its engagement with its operating environment, defined as including its customers, partners, and other stakeholders; related organizations; and supporting infrastructure and technology. We paid further attention to FVAP’s research-related activities, which resulted in the development of project-management tools, and looked more closely at FVAP’s work with people and entities serving UOCAVA voters, particularly in the military.

To do this, we mapped the system writ large and then examined

- how FVAP, VAOs, and IVA offices serve their customers, including UOCAVA voters, as part of a larger system of voting assistance
- the informational and instructional needs of the VAOs and IVA offices that serve UOCAVA voters in different institutional settings in that system.

To scope the system, we met with VAOs and IVA office staff, conducted site visits, and observed VAO training sessions at nine installations in the Washington, D.C., area; Colorado; and California. We also observed a remote session conducted with a consular office in Athens, Greece. We approached site selection strategically inasmuch as we attempted to cover each of the services and a variety of operational and administrative settings, with offices led by active-duty military personnel and civilians, mindful of possible cultural differences across services and between military and civilian settings.

In the course of phase 2, we also neared completion of the final, robust logic model. That model depicts a more-unified FVAP, consisting of a consolidated voter assistance activity stream and a set of mission support–like activities, informed by a

deeper understanding of the voting assistance system and a consistent interpretation of the agency’s mission.

Key Findings from Phase 2

In exploring the system and FVAP’s role in it, we found that it consists of many potential providers of voting assistance and points of service (physical or virtual) to which UOCAVA voters can turn for help in the voting process (Figure S.1). For example, an absentee active-duty military voter might approach a VAO with questions about his or her voting jurisdiction; alternatively, the voter might reach out directly to a state or local election official or go to an NGO’s website. In this context, FVAP is one provider among many.

In addition, we found the following:

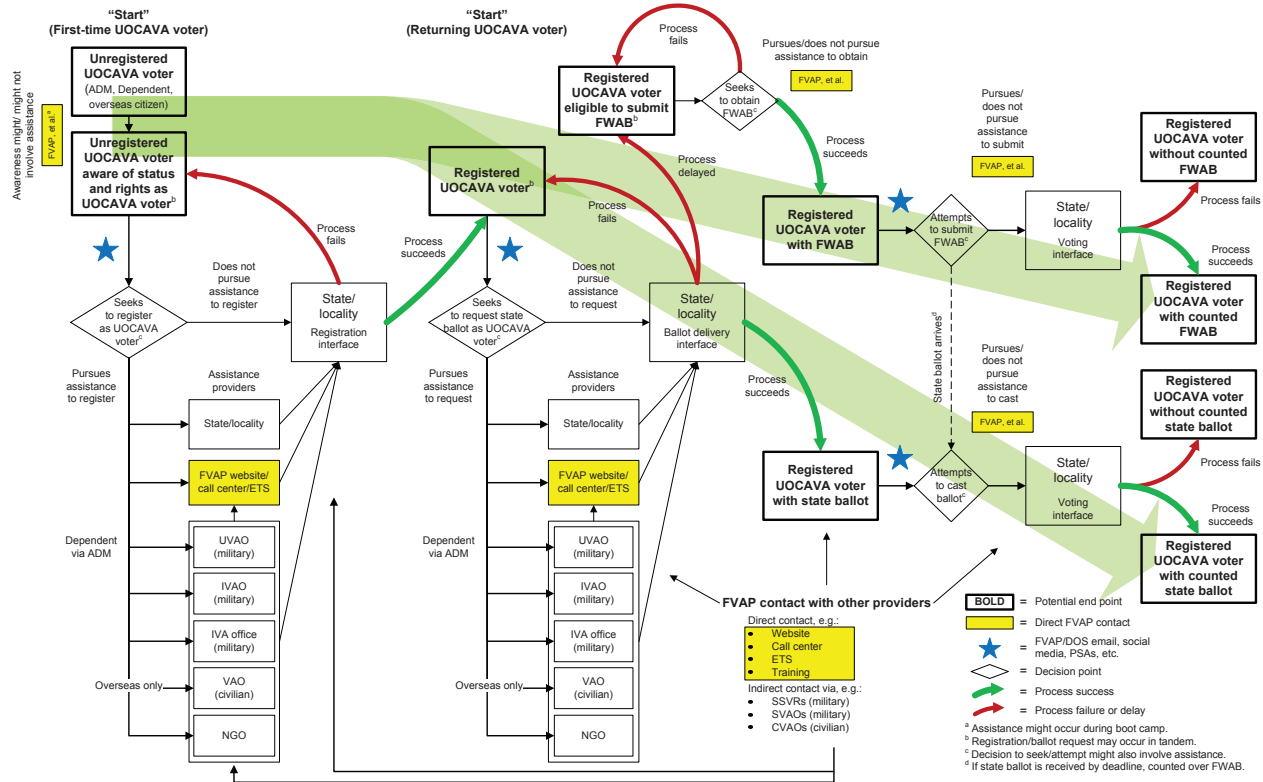
- Law, policy, and the market shape the system.
- Connectivity and coordination vary across the system.
- The system and its parts need knowledge, capability, and capacity to function.
- FVAP faces substantial functional limitations in the system. FVAP has a substantial role in policymaking, but it operates largely through intermediaries over which it exerts little direct control—it is not responsible for compliance, and it lacks enforcement authority. Moreover, it has surprisingly few opportunities to reach proactively into the voting assistance system on a regular basis.
- FVAP occupies a unique position in the system, given its place at the nexus of policy and operations and its knowledge, tools, and dedicated resources.
- FVAP can use training to leverage its position in the system. Training stands out as a promising means to engage intermediaries, particularly VAOs and IVA office staff, more directly and get closer to voters. Training can hold value not just as an educational tool but also as a potential source of ancillary benefits.
- These ancillary benefits could include promoting the system’s functionality by helping to build networks, raising FVAP’s profile as a resource, signaling the importance of voting assistance, enabling collection of information about operating conditions, and encouraging connectivity and coordination across the system.

However, whether training can produce ancillary benefits depends partly on the training modality—that is, whether it is in person or online—and partly on steps that FVAP takes to actively seek them. To understand the state of play, we assessed FVAP’s options in terms of benefits, costs, and risks of alternative modalities. We found the following:

- The benefits of in-person training, much more so than of online training, can extend beyond those of the initial learning experience and spread across the

Figure S.1

Voting Assistance Opportunities and Paths to Success for Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act Voters



SOURCE: RAND staff analysis with input from FVAP staff.

NOTE: ADM = active-duty military. ETS = Electronic Transmission Service. UVAO = unit VAO. IVAO = installation VAO. FWAB = Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot. SSVR = Senior Service Voting Representative. SVAO = Service Voting Action Officer. CVAO = chief VAO. DOS = U.S. Department of State. PSA = public service announcement.

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system through networking, signaling, and other methods, but online training can be accessed globally, 24/7.

- The costs of in-person training are likely to be greater for everyone than those of online training, especially if information technology (IT) is already in place and available on installations.
- Each mode presents risks to the individual learning experience inasmuch as it might fail to meet the learning needs of those who prefer the other mode, present challenges of availability, or entail environmental distractions, but some institutional and systemic risks pertaining to coordination and turnout are specific to in-person training.

The analysis also supported continuance of a mixed strategy, including both in-person and online training, and implementation of programmatic improvements, including substantial streamlining of in-person training and the adoption of best practices in adult learning and training evaluation. This, in turn, would require investments in professional development for FVAP.

Evidence of Change Within the Federal Voting Assistance Program

During the study period—both in response to our analysis and through the organization’s own initiatives—FVAP began to change. In the final step of our analysis, we explored the extent of this change as manifest in tangible evidence. We assessed changes in relation to our earlier recommendations about FVAP’s mission and organization, stakeholder relationships, and effectiveness. As shown in Table S.1, in some

Table S.1
Evidence of Change in Relation to Preliminary Recommendations and Guidance

General Recommendation	Areas of Emphasis	Evidence of Change
Become one FVAP	Come to terms with the mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorientation of the mission and purpose • Redesign of the FVAP website and its content and outreach and training materials • Reorganization of the agency • Reconfiguration of the call center as an in-house voting assistance center • New forms of engagement with states, potentially including ongoing work with CSG • Reassessment of DoDI 1000.04
	Integrate and shore up operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorganization of the agency • Reconfiguration of the call center as an in-house voting assistance center and related cross-training of FVAP staff • Enrollment in professional development programs, including training in human resources and organizational management

Table S.1—Continued

General Recommendation	Areas of Emphasis	Evidence of Change
Become one FVAP, continued	Sharpen and clarify the message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorientation of the mission and purpose • Redesign of the FVAP website and its content and outreach and training materials
Build trust and strengthen relationships	Work with partners and serve customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign of the FVAP website and its content and outreach and training materials • Reconfiguration of the call center as an in-house voting assistance center • New forms of engagement with states, potentially including ongoing work with CSG • Outreach to Department of Defense Education Activity schools • National Association of Secretaries of State resolution on voting information • Continuation of OMB process for form (FPCA and FWAB) revisions
	Communicate better and more regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign of the FVAP website and its content and outreach and training materials • Customer feedback on voting assistance center operations • New forms of engagement with states, potentially including ongoing work with CSG • Enrollment in professional development programs, including training in customer service skills and techniques
	Operate as openly as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New forms of engagement with states, potentially including ongoing work with CSG • Continuation of OMB process for form (FPCA and FWAB) revisions • Development of research briefs
Embrace a culture and principles of effectiveness	Engage routinely in benefit–cost assessment or employ other analytical methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of findings from the 2012 postelection report to Congress (FVAP, 2013b) • Development of a dashboard^a • Enrollment in professional development programs, including training in organizational and project management, strategic planning and tactical execution, performance measurement, and problem-solving and data analysis • Staff interest in use of project-management tools

SOURCE: RAND staff analysis; see Chapter Five of this report for a complete discussion of the general recommendations and areas of emphasis.

NOTE: OMB = Office of Management and Budget. FPCA = Federal Post Card Application. CSG = Council of State Governments.

^a The availability of metrics—and other information—from the voting assistance center suggests another potential avenue of change.

cases, we found evidence of outright change, such as the agency’s redesign of its website. In other instances, we found evidence of progress, as in the example of professional development that could facilitate change. And in yet other cases, we found evi-

dence of unevenness, suggesting that, although the agency has moved forward in many respects, work remains to be done. Highlights of the evidence included the following:

- **the reorientation of the agency’s mission and purpose.** FVAP’s newly revised statement of purpose reflects—and announces—the agency’s intent to focus on service to UOCAVA voters. Moreover, it does so succinctly and clearly.
- **the reorganization of the agency.** FVAP reorganized its operations on the basis of stakeholder outreach, statistical evidence of efficacy, the analysis that the RAND team provided to the agency in phase 1 of this project, and the final, robust logic model. FVAP has consolidated assistance to voters and election officials and supporting technology and research in a single activity stream. A heavy reliance on evidence was a major change in FVAP’s approach to setting course and taking action.
- **a redesign of the FVAP website and of outreach and training materials.** The redesign of the website and related materials supports the reorientation of the agency’s mission and better aligns with core requirements. For example, the agency has made it easier for stakeholders to identify their domains, added a page devoted to outreach materials, and made it possible to search reports and other resources. We also found some glitches, suggesting the need for either relabeling or more-active upkeep.
- **the reconfiguration of the call center as an in-house voting assistance center.** FVAP has received near-universal positive feedback from customers on the reconfigured call center, which has brought staff closer to the agency’s mission, is increasing staff awareness of ground conditions, and was enabled by cross-training.
- **new forms of engagement with states, potentially including work with CSG.** The agency is exploring new, more-targeted modes of engaging directly with the states and localities, including in-depth conversations and troubleshooting sessions, and is working with CSG.
- **the reassessment of DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1000.04.** FVAP is using the reassessment to craft revised guidance that aligns more closely with core legal requirements and more clearly sets out the responsibilities of each participant in the system.
- **enrollment in professional development programs.** FVAP is adopting a routinized approach to working with staff to identify and fill training needs and has extended training to a large share of the agency. That training has included courses that address institutional leadership and project management, financial management, problem-solving and data analysis, website development, and customer service.

As Table S.1 suggests, much of the evidence cuts across our preliminary recommendations, suggesting the implementation of mutually reinforcing measures.

We also note that some of the evidence shows FVAP taking steps on its own initiative to improve its operations, including its relations with stakeholders. For example, efforts to reconfigure the call center predated our involvement with FVAP. A comparison of FVAP's 2011 and 2013 efforts to revise two required forms—the FPCA and the FWAB—suggests a second example, not addressed above. Stakeholders depicted the 2011 effort as one in which FVAP did not solicit or encourage stakeholder feedback and, as a result, incurred some animosity. The 2013 effort, in which FVAP chose to invoke a well-established OMB-led process, was more proactive, involved systematic engagement far exceeding that of earlier processes, and led to stakeholder buy-in and product improvements. This instance, like that of the call center, shows FVAP taking steps on its own to identify better ways of working with stakeholders and conducting business more generally.

Building on and Locking in Progress: Final Recommendations

Although there is evidence of positive change at FVAP, we see the potential for both additional gains and fatigue. For this reason, our final recommendations and guidance speak to locking in and building on recent progress.

FVAP needs to adhere to its mission, notwithstanding the near certainty of some leadership turnover, the push and pull of divergent stakeholder interests, and the ebbs and flows of election cycles, but we are not advocating rigidity. FVAP must be able to respond to emerging needs, some foreseeable and some not; it is through those responses that it will demonstrate whether it knows what it is and where it is going.

What follows are suggestions for consolidating and advancing recent progress. Some of these suggestions are within FVAP's power to implement, and others must be taken up elsewhere in DoD, at higher organizational levels, or outside DoD. Turning first to the suggestions largely within FVAP's control, we urge FVAP to continue to do the following:

- **Internalize—and outwardly project—the mission.** Operate in accordance with the newly redefined mission, and present it consistently as part of the agency's public face through the website, written materials, presentations, and actions. Throughout this report, we have presented *mission* as a center from which change could and did flow, but the agency's ability to stay on track will also depend on that mission as an anchor. An FVAP that has a strong sense of self is an FVAP that is less likely to be buffeted by turnover, competing demands, and the stresses and strains of an election cycle.
- **Invest in leadership and staff with professional development.** Provide leadership and staff with the training necessary to forward the mission, and give them the opportunity to absorb it. Simply put, if leadership or staff lacks essential

knowledge and skills, the agency cannot carry out its mission. As noted, FVAP has made great strides in this arena, but it will need to continue the effort and must do so systematically.

- **Promote organizational cohesion.** Embrace the integrative process that began with the reorganization of divisions and activity streams by improving communication across the agency, resisting the temptation to create new stovepipes, accounting for the interrelatedness of actions among activity streams, and recognizing and validating individuals' accomplishments. Staff must be pulled into the process as coparticipants and, in an organization with fewer than 20 permanent FTEs, should be able—with cross-training—to reach across the agency to both backfill and surge.
- **Engage with stakeholders as stakeholders.** Work diligently to remember that stakeholders have interests of their own that merit close consideration and are not a passive audience or extension of the agency's operations. This requires that FVAP more fully embrace two-way communication and reach out to the civilian public.
- **Take calls for effectiveness to heart.** This requires that FVAP consider the benefits, costs, and risks of its actions in relation to its mission, requirements, and operations on a day-to-day basis and not just from its internal perspective but also from the perspectives of its customers, partners, and other stakeholders.
- **Develop stronger discernment skills.** Become more adept at distinguishing between good and bad ideas for new projects or activities, whether internally or externally generated. To the extent that FVAP takes on projects or activities that look attractive but do not square with its mission, requirements, and organizational means, it allows itself to become less focused and more susceptible to setbacks and surprises.
- **Work with the logic model as a living document.** Keep the final, robust logic model at hand, as both a reminder of institutional identity and a tool for communicating with staff and stakeholders with a shared vocabulary, but encourage FVAP to revisit the specification and details of the model over time. If FVAP uncovers a better way of advancing its purpose, it can update the model to reflect the change.
- **Undertake periodic health checks.** Institute an ongoing series of preprogrammed health checks, preferably with external input, to better ensure continued progress and to circumvent the potential for fatigue and backsliding.

For more-specific suggestions, framed as opportunities and largely deriving from the phase 2 analysis, we direct the reader to the final chapter of this report.

Throughout this discussion, we have assumed the interest and participation of FVAP's stakeholders, both within DoD and beyond its confines, but, as we learned through our early outreach to stakeholders, they are not always present. Although

FVAP cannot force constructive engagement, it can take steps to promote it by creating an environment in which stakeholders deem their participation worthwhile. FVAP must convince its stakeholders that it is taking their views into account and that participation is in their interest.

Our final thoughts on locking in and building on gains concern the appointment of FVAP's leadership—specifically, its director—and speak to the issue of organizational resilience. The director of FVAP should come to the table with strong administrative skills, as a trained leader. If not already well-versed in voting assistance, he or she can learn from staff with deep subject-matter expertise. FVAP is an agency that will continue to benefit from agnostic civilian leadership, e.g., in the form of a professional administrator. Voting is an inherently political construct, subject to sharply divergent views on the means of conduct, be they printed or electronic, and a plethora of other hot-button issues. To minimize the potentially destabilizing effects of leadership change and to reduce stakeholders' concerns that FVAP's engagement is driven too much by the agendas of individuals and not enough by the mission of the agency, we suggest prioritizing managerial expertise in the hiring decision.

Concluding Remarks

The project was intended to help FVAP in aligning its strategy and operations to better serve its mission and stakeholders and to strengthen FVAP's capacity to set its own course, greet change, and communicate its role in the voting community.

Looking back over the life of this project, we believe that FVAP has made considerable progress. FVAP has reoriented its focus and reorganized its operations; has redesigned its website and outreach materials to enable and communicate change; has substantially altered its approach to stakeholders; and is investing in its staff to build capabilities and capacity to support the reorientation and reorganization.

We cannot, as yet, connect FVAP's reorientation or reorganization to improvements in outcomes for UOCAVA voters—the changes in FVAP are too recent and largely untested—but the steps that FVAP has taken to realign its mission and operations should cut a clearer path from the program's activities to outcomes and, thus, better support those outcomes.

We also see the results as demonstrating to FVAP, to other DoD agencies, and to other governmental and nongovernmental agencies that they can take concrete action to overcome obstacles to change and place themselves among the minority of organizations that implement change successfully. As both experience and the large literature on change management suggest, organizational change is difficult but still attainable. The collaboration between RAND and FVAP began before the start of the project with an intense period of discussion around the terms of the engagement. The project launched with an inclusive and expansive attempt to better understand the organiza-

tion from its perspective, from the perspective of its stakeholders, and from the perspective of the laws and policies governing it. We employed a standard, time-tested, and readily available method—namely, logic modeling—which we supplemented with stakeholder outreach, a requirements assessment, and consideration of the larger voting assistance system. And, the collaborative relationship made it possible for FVAP to make changes expeditiously. We can claim robustness, relevance, and timeliness but not uniqueness. Two human factors also stood out as essential to progress: the agency’s commitment to implementing change from the outset and the mutual trust that an ongoing, collaborative relationship can engender.

Acknowledgments

We thank the leadership and staff of the Federal Voting Assistance Program. They gave us their time, energy, and trust over a period of many months as we sought to deepen our understanding of their organization and its role in voting assistance and, in so doing, to learn about the unique circumstances of absentee voting for uniformed-service members and their families and for U.S. citizens residing overseas. We are also grateful to Leonard William Braverman and Frank Camm, both of the RAND Corporation, and to Harry P. Hatry for their formal reviews of an earlier draft of this report. Frank Camm challenged us to think carefully about the purpose and structure of the report and offered constructive suggestions for a better-targeted and more-accessible reformulation. We also thank the many individuals, including congressional staff, voting assistance officers and office managers, state and local election officials, representatives of overseas-citizen groups, academics and technologists, and election advocates who shared their perspectives on voting assistance. Lastly, we thank Francisco Walter for his patient and careful support in preparing this document for publication and Lisa Bernard for a thoughtful and thorough edit.

Abbreviations

ADM	active-duty military
BAA	Broad Agency Announcement
BCA	benefit–cost assessment
CSG	Council of State Governments
CVAO	chief Voting Assistance Officer
DHRA	Defense Human Resources Activity
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DoDD	Department of Defense directive
DoDEA	Department of Defense Education Activity
DoDI	Department of Defense instruction
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
DOS	U.S. Department of State
DTIC	Defense Technical Information Center
EAC	U.S. Election Assistance Commission
EO	executive order
ETS	Electronic Transmission Service
FPCA	Federal Post Card Application
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTE	full-time equivalent

FVAP	Federal Voting Assistance Program
FWAB	Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot
GAO	U.S. Government Accountability Office
GSA	General Services Administration
HR	human resources
IG	inspector general
IT	information technology
IVA office	Installation Voter Assistance office
IVAO	installation Voting Assistance Officer
LA	legislative affairs
LMS	learning management system
L _x	level, where <i>x</i> represents 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the Kirkpatrick model
MOVE Act	Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment
MPSA	Military Postal Service Agency
n/a	not applicable
NASED	National Association of State Election Directors
NASS	National Association of Secretaries of States
NDRI	RAND National Defense Research Institute
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
NVRA	National Voter Registration Act of 1993
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PA	public affairs
PAM	pamphlet
PD	project description

ProfDev	professional development
PSA	public service announcement
SME	subject-matter expert
SSVR	Senior Service Voting Representative
SVAO	Service Voting Action Officer
TRADOC	U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command
UOCAVA	Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act
URL	uniform resource locator
U.S.C.	U.S. Code
USD(P&R)	Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
USPS	U.S. Postal Service
UVAO	unit Voting Assistance Officer
VAG	Voting Assistance Guide
VAO	Voting Assistance Officer
VARK	visual, aural, read and write, and kinesthetic
WHS	Washington Headquarters Services

Introduction

Broadly speaking, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) is charged with administering the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) of 1986 (Pub. L. 99-410), as amended, and assisting so-called UOCAVA voters in voting successfully. These voters include uniformed-service members and their families residing outside their voting jurisdictions¹ and other U.S. citizens residing outside the United States. FVAP leadership was concerned that the agency's mission had become blurred over time, that its operations might have fallen out of step with its mission, and that the organization would benefit from a more strategic approach to setting goals, organizing for action, and allocating resources.

To address these concerns, FVAP leadership commissioned the RAND National Defense Research Institute (NDRI) to undertake a collaborative, multiyear work program known formally as FVAP and the Road Ahead and informally as the strategic focus project. FVAP wanted help aligning its strategy and operations to better serve its mission and stakeholders and to strengthen its capacity to set its own course, greet change, and communicate its role in the voting community.

This report documents our (the RAND project team's) objective analysis, our work with FVAP, and the results of both. It describes an iterative process of engagement with a very small federal agency seeking to elevate its performance and prepared to implement change. In so doing, the report also demonstrates the potential for substantial, timely gains through a highly collaborative working relationship, rooted in a systematic and analytically grounded research design. The report does not offer readers a cookbook for change, but it suggests a generalizable, replicable approach.

¹ As defined in UOCAVA, the phrase "absent uniformed services voters" includes spouses and dependents who, by reason of the active duty or service of the member, are absent from the place of residence where the spouse or dependent is otherwise qualified to vote. Such a voter could be located in the United States or overseas.

The sections that follow describe some of the challenges, complexities, and opportunities² that we encountered and discuss the terms of the engagement, including the nature of the collaboration.

Challenges, Complexities, and Opportunities

FVAP is a federal agency³ of fewer than 20 permanent full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff members, housed in the Defense Human Resources Activity (DHRA), which is a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) field activity of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD[P&R]) in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). FVAP has existed in some form since 1955 and now serves voters covered under UOCAVA and, in large part, administers the provisions of UOCAVA and develops related policy.

A combination of executive order (EO), DoD directive (DoDD), and DoD instruction (DoDI) has delegated administrative responsibility to FVAP, through a channel that starts with the Secretary of Defense as the presidential designee for UOCAVA voting (see EO 12642 [Reagan, 1988]) and continues through USD(P&R) to DHRA before reaching FVAP. Because of FVAP's placement in an OSD field activity, the agency engages in policy development and deals with operations. For this and other reasons, it faces complex logistical, organizational, and institutional challenges, which we describe below.

Disparate and Diffuse Populations

FVAP serves disparate and geographically diffuse populations, extending over seven continents, 55 states and territories, and thousands of voting jurisdictions. FVAP's responsibilities extend not just to the defense community but also to overseas citizens without any connection to the military. Whereas other DoD agencies, such as those dealing with issues of base realignment and closure, infrastructure planning and development, or education and health affairs, might routinely reach out to civilians with either a tight or loose connection to the military, e.g., as contractors or neighbors, FVAP serves overseas citizens simply by virtue of their overseas residence and voting eligibility.

² We did not fully appreciate the challenges, complexities, and opportunities facing FVAP until we had completed much of our analysis of FVAP's strategy, operations, and operating environment. We address most of the underlying issues in greater depth in later chapters, but we introduce them here to orient our readers.

³ Here, we use the word *agency* colloquially to denote the FVAP office and its staff, as distinct from the term *federal voting assistance program*, which can be used to describe all federal voting assistance.

Reliance on Partners and Dynamism of System

As a very small agency tasked with administering a law that serves millions of voters, FVAP does not and cannot go it alone. FVAP works with a range of military and civilian organizations that mirror the disparate and diffuse populations that constitute UOCAVA voters. In the United States and around the world, it works with Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs), Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) offices, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). It also works with state and local election officials to provide a bridge between these entities and UOCAVA voters when needed.

- VAOs are expected to ensure that citizens covered by UOCAVA understand their voting rights and how to register and vote absentee and to provide accurate non-partisan voting information and assistance.⁴ They can be members of the uniformed services, civilians, or members of overseas U.S. citizen organizations.
- The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act of 2009 (Pub. L. 111-84) specifies that IVA offices be established on installations to assist absent uniformed-service members and their families with voting-related matters.⁵ The offices, as voter-registration agencies under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (Pub. L. 103-31) (NVRA), are also responsible for providing voter-registration assistance to uniformed-service members and their families, overseas citizens, and all other civilian voters who can visit the offices.⁶

Changes in the composition of the voting assistance system and in the relationships among the players add to the challenges. For example, the MOVE Act added the IVA offices to the system and, in so doing, altered the architecture of the system.

Competing Priorities

Moreover, as many of FVAP's stakeholders are quick to note, the act of voting is not a front-burner issue for DoD, at least not in the years between general elections. FVAP supports absent uniformed-service voters and their families, hence its placement in USD(P&R), but the role is not central to DoD's mission, which is "to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country."⁷

Implications for the Mission

In the context of these complexities and challenges, FVAP has had difficulty stating exactly what its mission is. This difficulty might also be attributable, in part, to

⁴ Information on VAOs is available at FVAP, undated (d).

⁵ For a more-complete discussion of the MOVE Act and IVA offices, see FVAP, undated (a), pp. 5, 8.

⁶ This report focuses on VAOs who are affiliated with the military or the U.S. Department of State and on the services provided by IVA offices to uniformed-service members and their families.

⁷ This statement was posted at DoD, undated, as of July 24, 2014.

turnover in FVAP's leadership. The agency saw four directors in a five-year period, from 2008 to 2013, and at the launch of this project was operating under an acting director—who was the first of two in that same period. The second acting director became the permanent director several months into the project and has remained in that position throughout our engagement, suggesting the potential to impart longer-term institutional stability.

Table 1.1 presents some of the different mission statements that FVAP posted or considered during the 2008–2013 period.

Since this project began, FVAP has adopted a statement of purpose that is consistent with a focus on more-direct, hands-on assistance, which we present in Chapter Seven; however, we argue that the issue is less about words per se than about interpretation. Any one of the earlier statements could have led FVAP to the same place, but none did.⁸

Looking forward, we emphasize that FVAP is one provider of UOCAVA voting assistance among many and that often it depends on others to reach its customers, but it also has unique qualifications that separate it from other providers in the federal gov-

Table 1.1
Recent Federal Voting Assistance Program Mission Statements

Source of Statement	Excerpt of Statement
Strategic plan, 2005–2010 (FVAP, 2005a)	The mission of the Federal Voting Assistance Program is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and educate U.S. citizens worldwide of their right to vote; • Foster voting participation; • Protect the integrity of, and enhance, the electoral process at the Federal, state and local levels; and • Promote effectiveness and efficiency in the administration of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.
Strategic plan, 2010–2017 (FVAP, 2011e); also posted on the FVAP website in 2013	The Federal Voting Assistance Programs exists to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist uniformed services and overseas voters exercise their right to vote so that they have an equal opportunity with the general population to have their vote counted. • Assist the States in complying with relevant federal laws, and advise them on ways to best comply. • Advocate on behalf of the uniformed services and overseas voters, identifying impediments to their ability to exercise their right to vote, and proposing methods to overcome those impediments.
Draft language under consideration in the early spring of 2013 ^a	The Federal Voting Assistance Program is the lead Federal agency providing voter assistance to uniformed and overseas citizens. FVAP provides information and tools to assist voters to cast their ballot and advises and assists States in complying with relevant Federal laws.

SOURCES: FVAP, 2005a; FVAP, 2011e; and an unpublished draft, from early spring of 2013.

^a The draft mission statement was under consideration in the early spring of 2013 but had not been fully discussed within the agency or formally adopted at that time.

⁸ As evidence of this point, the new formulation draws on some of the same vocabulary as the old.

ernment and elsewhere. It is the only public agency chartered through law, directives, and instructions with the primary purpose of assisting UOCAVA voters, and, over time, it has become a comprehensive repository of information on the processes, tools, and resources for UOCAVA voting. It is also responsible for developing and maintaining those processes, tools, and resources. One might contend that it is the only public agency with the credentials, internal motivation, and dedicated resources to be a leader on UOCAVA voting in the voting assistance system. Moreover, in sitting at the nexus of policy and operations, FVAP has, on the one hand, a substantial role in policymaking and, on the other hand, a sweeping view of the system. The latter suggests potential for a high degree of environmental awareness.

Terms of Engagement

RAND and FVAP began deliberating on the terms of this engagement well in advance of the start of the project. An intense period of preliminary discussion, which lasted several weeks, yielded agreement on both the nature of the working relationship and the method of analysis. The participants in that discussion agreed that the project must be collaborative and iterative to ensure its relevance and timeliness and worked together to develop a project description (PD) to support that position; specifically, RAND and FVAP would “work closely, cooperatively, and iteratively” (RAND Corporation, 2013) from start to finish. The participants also agreed that logic modeling, which is the focus of Chapter Two and Appendix A,⁹ would provide the analytical foundation for the engagement.

Beyond generating the PD, the discussions provided the participants with an opportunity to pattern collaboration and to learn more about each other’s expectations, weigh associated resource requirements, determine whether they would be able to work together constructively, and, ultimately, decide whether the project was viable.

Thus, the collaborative process took shape before the project started. Over the life of the project, we—the RAND project team—would work with FVAP in frequent face-to-face meetings to share, vet, and clarify ideas and to discuss and refine the details of our approach. The collaboration would enable us to develop a full, mutual understanding of FVAP’s needs, better gauge and adjust our tactics to meet those needs, and rapidly transfer recommendations to FVAP leadership so that they could apply them and implement change.

⁹ As addressed in Chapter Two and Appendix A, logic models, which often look like flow charts, can be used to articulate the critical path by which a program seeks to achieve outcomes and attain its mission, construct a well-aligned strategy that supports its mission, communicate internally and externally, and conduct program evaluations.

At the same time, the project required objectivity. The language of the PD provided guidance on the interplay between our collaboration with FVAP on the one hand and the need for analytical independence on the other:

In the course of undertaking this analysis, RAND NDRI will . . . [o]ffer “independent” recommendations and guidance. Cognizant of the diversity of views—both internal and external—as to FVAP’s role and responsibilities, RAND NDRI will not seek to arbitrate among them; rather, it will offer its own independent view as to how FVAP can best fulfill its mission in a manner that is consistent with legislative mandates. These recommendations will be “independent” in that they may differ with internally and/or externally held views; nevertheless, they will emerge from a process of extensive internal and external engagement.

On that basis, in March 2013, we began working with FVAP to compare, reconcile, and align what was in the agency’s strategy and typical of its operations and what should be. We were not commissioned to conduct a program evaluation but to catalyze change.

Our tasking, as per the PD, was to do the following:

- Assist FVAP in aligning its strategy and operations to better serve its mission.
- Strengthen FVAP’s capacity to set its own course, adapt to change, and communicate its role in the voting community, both internally and externally.

But, it became clear early on that we would need to help the agency address the ambiguity of its mission and, in particular, to achieve a common, shared understanding of the meaning of the word *assistance*.

We planned the project for four phases, including two analytical phases (see phases 1 and 2, Table 1.2). We front-loaded the analysis to enable and support early action by the agency, but the distinctions among phases became less consequential over time. As the two organizations began to work more closely, the “understanding, documentation, and assessment” of phase 1 begot insight, dialogue, and change that continued in phase 2 and beyond.

The process was not always easy or satisfying—at times, it was genuinely frustrating for everyone, especially when people from the two organizations were using words differently or at cross purposes—but the relationship evolved, and with that evolution came a shared vocabulary. In phase 1, we developed a deeper understanding of FVAP, but FVAP was also getting to know us—and itself.

Sequentially, we

- developed a logic model to benchmark the agency’s strategy and operations
- engaged with FVAP’s stakeholders, consisting of congressional staff, election officials, overseas-citizen NGOs, other DoD entities, academics and technologists,

Table 1.2
Project Phases

Phase	Description	Output	Timeline
Pre	Preliminary discussion of terms of engagement and PD	PD	March 2013
1	Understand, document, and assess FVAP's strategy and operations, including its organizational structure	Preliminary assessment, recommendations, and guidance (benchmark logic model) Interim briefings	November 2013 ^a
2	Examine how FVAP engages with and responds to its operating environment through partnerships, research, and other activities	Interim briefings (forward-looking logic models) ^b	March 2014 ^c
3	Encapsulate lessons from each of the foregoing phases to provide FVAP with a clear set of final recommendations and implementing guidance for making the changes necessary to align its strategy, operations, and organization and to identify means to better communicate its role in the voting community, both internally and externally	Final assessment, recommendations, and guidance (robust logic model) ^b Final briefings	June 2014 ^d
4	Disseminate findings	Reports and stakeholder meetings	March 2015 ^e

SOURCES: RAND Corporation, 2013, and additional RAND staff analysis.

^a For phase 1, the timeline specifies the delivery of the preliminary recommendations and initial guidance.

^b The forward-looking and robust models eventually converged.

^c For phase 2, the timeline specifies the approximate date of the completion of the analysis.

^d For phase 3, the timeline specifies the approximate dates of the final briefings to FVAP.

^e For phase 4, the timeline specifies the completion of the draft final report.

and various election advocates to elicit their views of the agency's role in the voting community

- analyzed the agency's core requirements as manifested in U.S. law and policy on uniformed- and overseas-citizen absentee-voting assistance.

The benchmark model served as a diagnostic tool that led us down the paths of outreach and analysis that followed, by surfacing issues that merited closer consideration. The modeling effort, which included a two-day all-hands workshop, weekly office hours, and several small-group sessions, enabled us to synthesize FVAP's understanding of itself and to chart its operations. However, it also confirmed the blurriness of FVAP's mission and suggested holes in our understanding of the agency and its role in the voting community, which we set out to fill with stakeholder outreach and the core requirements assessment. Whereas the benchmark logic model flowed from our discussions with FVAP and so depicted FVAP as FVAP saw itself, the stakeholder engagement and requirements assessment allowed us to see FVAP as others saw it. When we compared these perspectives, we found additional evidence of gaps and

disconnects, which we discussed with FVAP, but we also began to identify potential solutions.

We concluded phase 1 with the formal delivery of our findings and preliminary recommendations, but, by this time, FVAP had already begun working with our suggestions, including those relating to mission clarification. This was possible because we shared our findings as they emerged and worked with FVAP, in close communication throughout the process. We were learning what we needed to learn with each task, reporting what we found as we found it, and exploring the implications with FVAP. We did not present our findings as fiat but as fodder to generate debate and discussion.

In phase 2, we took a closer look at FVAP's engagement with its operating environment, including its customers, partners, and other stakeholders; related organizations; and supporting infrastructure and technology, from the perspective of a larger voting assistance system. We paid special consideration to FVAP's work with military installations, including the IVA offices, and the selection and management of research-related activities. During this phase, the practical significance and implications of the collaborative relationship—and the dynamism of the agency's operating environment—became apparent. The agency was changing in response to our analysis, to internally recognized needs, and to exogenous forces, and our approach to the analysis was also changing.

Two developments stand out as having shaped both FVAP and the project in phase 2. The first was the development and refinement of the robust logic model, which set the stage for organizational change, and the second was the promulgation of draft legislation, known as the Safeguarding Elections for Our Nation's Troops Through Reforms and Improvements Act (S. 1728, 2013). If enacted, the proposed legislation would have affected FVAP's responsibilities with respect to research and the delivery of voting assistance to uniformed absentee voters. For research, the act would have eliminated the requirement for an electronic voting demonstration project, which had been a focus of the agency's research efforts.¹⁰ Given the potential for change, FVAP and we agreed to concentrate less on particular research-related activities, including the demonstration project, and the configuration of installation infrastructure, which might be in flux, and more on the persistent issues that surrounded them. We looked at the effectiveness of the agency's work with the military and the methods the agency was using to formulate, conduct, and use research.

During this period, we observed substantial change within FVAP. Some of the change stemmed from our collaborative efforts, including those on the logic model, and some originated with FVAP, reflective of the agency's interest in improvement.

¹⁰ Subsequent to this analysis, Section 593 of the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Pub. L. 113-291, 2014), titled "Repeal of Electronic Voting Demonstration Project," eliminated the requirement.

In broad terms, the collaboration went as planned. We delivered recommendations and implementing guidance to provide FVAP with the means to more effectively focus its strategy, organize and execute its operations, and interact proactively and productively with stakeholders. FVAP, for its part, worked with us to inform the process and suggest tactical changes and used interim findings to formulate and expedite change. The extent of the collaboration implied a substantial investment of time and focus on FVAP's part (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3
Project Events and Approximate Federal Voting Assistance Program Staff Commitments

Description	Participants	Duration
Preliminary discussions	FVAP leadership with input from DHRA	Multiple one- and two-hour exchanges, spread over several weeks
Kickoff meeting	All hands	Half-day event
Logic-modeling workshop	All hands	Two-day event
Discussions of benchmark logic model, small-group format	One to eight FVAP staff members, including leadership	Multiple one- and two-hour exchanges, spread over several weeks
Office hours	One to three FVAP staff members, including leadership	One to two hours per week, as needed
Discussions of preliminary recommendations and guidance, small-group format	One to three FVAP staff members, including leadership	Unable to estimate
Discussion of preliminary recommendations and guidance, large-group format	All hands	Two-hour event
IVA office visits and training observations at nine installations ^a	One or two FVAP staff members, including leadership	One- to three-day events ^b
Discussions of final, robust logic model, small-group format	One to three FVAP staff members, including leadership	Unable to estimate
Discussions of findings on FVAP's role in voting assistance system, small-group format	One or two FVAP staff members, including leadership	Unable to estimate
Discussion of findings on FVAP's role in voting assistance system, large-group format	All hands	Two-hour event
VAO training workshop, large-group format	All hands	Half-day event
VAO training workshop, small-group format	Six to eight FVAP staff members, including leadership	Two-hour event
VAO training workshop, feedback	One or two FVAP staff members, including leadership	Two-hour event

Table 1.3—Continued

Description	Participants	Duration
Discussions of research-related and other project activities, various formats	Unable to estimate	Multiple one- and two-hour exchanges, spread over several weeks
Discussion of methods of project management	Eight to ten FVAP staff members, including leadership	Two-hour event
Project-management tool workshop	All hands	Half-day event
Discussions of evidence of change	One or two FVAP staff members, including leadership	Multiple one-hour exchanges, spread over several weeks
Ongoing discussions of approach, findings, and implications throughout process	One or two FVAP staff members, including leadership	Unable to estimate

SOURCE: RAND staff analysis.

NOTE: Participant and duration estimates are rough approximations.

^a See Table 6.1 and the discussion in Chapter Six.

^b FVAP staff would have conducted VAO training, regardless of our presence.

In phase 3, we synthesized the results of the engagement and delivered our final recommendations and guidance. Given the extent of the change that had already occurred, we directed our attention to locking in and building on gains.

In this project, we employed a standard, time-tested, and readily available method—namely, logic modeling—which we supplemented with stakeholder outreach, a requirements assessment, and consideration of the larger voting assistance system. And the collaborative relationship made it possible for FVAP to make changes expeditiously. We can claim robustness, relevance, and timeliness, but not uniqueness. Two human factors also stood out as essential to progress: the agency’s commitment to implementing change from the outset and the mutual trust that an ongoing, collaborative relationship can engender.

Throughout the course of our engagement, another RAND project team was working with FVAP to develop measures, metrics, and a dashboard to support situational awareness and the continuous assessment of the effectiveness of FVAP activities. The two projects took complementary approaches to strengthening the agency. Whereas our project was primarily qualitative, theirs was primarily quantitative; whereas ours developed the logic model, theirs used the model to identify metrics and measures with which to assess progress.

Organization of This Report

In the remainder of the report, we describe the project in terms of our approach to the engagement, a set of outcomes, and the process that connected them. First, we provide an overview of the two analytical phases of the project, i.e., “understanding, documenting, and assessing” and “examining FVAP’s engagement,” even if the phases were not neatly separable. Second, we describe changes unfolding within FVAP, some in direct response to our ongoing analysis and engagement and some emerging contemporaneously and indicative of the agency’s desire to progress rapidly.

The discussion of our approach unfolds chronologically in narrative form over several chapters. It is our intent to convey the experience of the project as much as its outcomes and, thus, to provide readers with insight to the process and an indication of the possible.

In addition to the findings, recommendations, and guidance from our analysis, this report describes in detail the collaborative process that FVAP and we used to develop the analysis and implement recommendations, respectively. We have structured the document to meet the needs of FVAP’s leaders as they convey the process that they used to implement major organizational change and to aid the agency in further implementation of recommendations.

The report proceeds as follows. In Chapters Two, Three, and Four, we discuss the logic modeling exercise and its implications, our engagement with FVAP’s stakeholders, and FVAP’s activities in relation to requirements, respectively. In Chapter Five, we present our preliminary recommendations and initial guidance, which summarize our findings from phase 1 and provide a means of gauging the change that we report in Chapter Seven. In Chapter Six, which reports on phase 2 of the project, we take a closer look at FVAP’s engagement with its operating environment, identify additional opportunities to improve its engagement, and present the final, robust logic model. In Chapter Seven, we discuss the evidence of change within FVAP, both over the course of the project and in its final phases. In Chapter Eight, we present recommendations to lock in and build on recent gains and concluding remarks on goals and results.

In Appendixes A through F, we provide a detailed description of the logic-modeling methodology; the laws that govern FVAP; survey response rates and factors that affect them; the project-management tools that we developed for FVAP; our analysis of FVAP’s VAO training program, which applies those tools; and adult learning principles and training evaluation.

Logic-Model Development

As the starting point for understanding and describing FVAP's organizational priorities and activities, we developed a benchmark logic model—an exercise that we view as being as much about process as about product. For the purposes of phase 1 of this project, we emphasized the role of the modeling process and its contributions to improving our understanding of FVAP, the activities it undertakes, and its reasons for undertaking them.

Because the benchmark model emerged largely from a series of conversations with FVAP, it shed light on how FVAP viewed itself at the start of the project and provided us with a starting point for assessing what FVAP was doing and why it was doing it. The model helped us to identify discontinuities, misalignments, and possible inefficiencies in the agency's activities in relation to intended outcomes and, thus, served as an important diagnostic tool.

Logic-Model Basics

Logic models, which often look like flow charts, can be used to articulate the critical path by which a program¹ seeks to achieve outcomes and attain its mission, construct a well-aligned strategy that supports its mission, communicate internally and externally, and conduct program evaluations. Although not all such roles were relevant to phase 1 of this project, most would be relevant to FVAP in other contexts, including later phases of the project.²

¹ This discussion draws heavily from Greenfield, Williams, and Eiseman, 2006; Williams et al., 2009; and material presented during a two-day logic-modeling workshop, held at FVAP. For more on the use of logic models, see McLaughlin and Jordan, 1999, and Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer, 2010. Appendix A provides a set of notes on logic modeling that we left with workshop participants. The notes offer a fuller discussion of logic modeling and suggest additional references on logic modeling and applications. The concepts of logic modeling apply broadly to programs, agencies, and other institutional configurations, including operational lines and initiatives; here, we follow the literature and refer to programs.

² For example, in Chapter Eight, we discuss the model's applicability to communications.

A logic model can provide a simplified visual representation of a program's operations, starting with inputs and progressing to activities, outputs, customers, and outcomes; it can also map a program's operations to its strategy, consisting of the goals, objectives, and performance measures that support the program's mission.³ In addition, a logic model can be used to draw distinctions between partners that work with a program to create outputs and customers that use those outputs, either immediately or eventually. In some instances, the same entity might serve as a partner in one context and as a customer in another.

In brief, we can summarize the terminology usage as follows:

- Inputs are resources that go into and guide program activities.
- Activities are the actions that the program undertakes to produce outputs.
- Outputs are the products (goods or services) that activities generate.
- Partners are those that work with programs to conduct activities or enable outputs.
- Customers (intermediate and final) are the users or target of the outputs.
- Outcomes (intermediate or end) are the changes that occur and the benefits that result from the program activities and outputs. They involve changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Intermediate outcomes reflect the customers' response to the program's outputs; end outcomes are the desired results of the program.
- Impact is a program's contribution to a societal outcome.

The path from inputs to outcomes might not be strictly linear or uninterrupted. Feedback and external factors (e.g., the enactment of a new legislative requirement, emergence of a new technology or security concern, or change within a partner agency) can affect the program's orientation and the extent to which it can achieve outcomes.

Figure 2.1 shows the logic-model template that RAND researchers have developed through their work with other agencies across and outside the federal government.⁴ The red dotted line, positioned beneath customer activities, intermediate goals, and intermediate measures, signifies a point along the path at which a program's control greatly diminishes.⁵

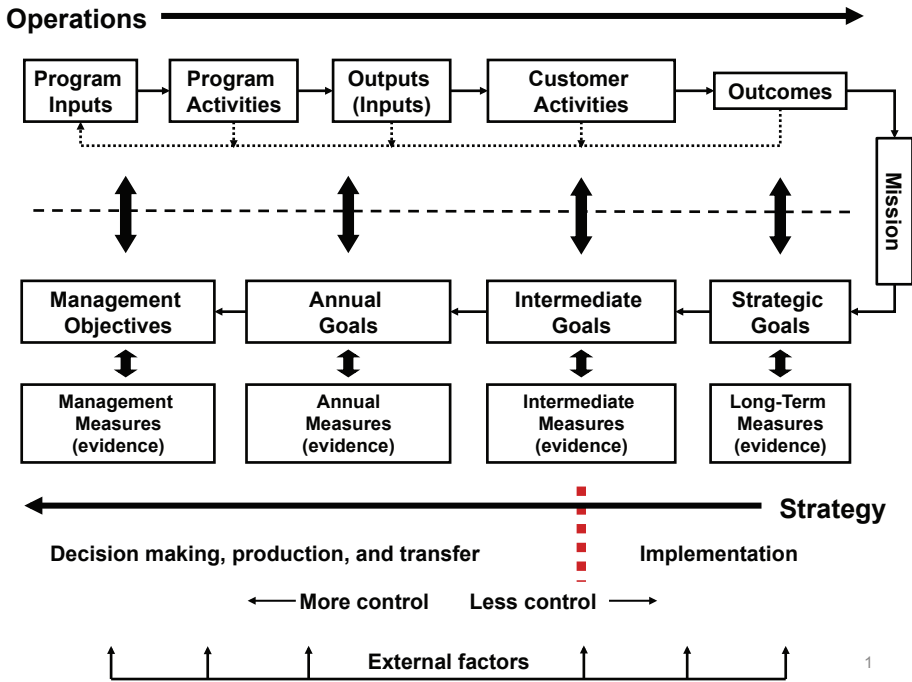
Notwithstanding the broad applicability of logic modeling—and the template in Figure 2.1—the work of phase 1 focused initially on FVAP's mission and operations.

³ Operations involve resources, actors, and events, whereas strategy speaks of intentions.

⁴ RAND teams have used this template to assist other federal agencies (e.g., the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection) and address similar issues. For documented examples of each type of use, see Greenfield, Williams, and Eiseman, 2006; Greenfield, Willis, and LaTourrette, 2012; and Williams et al., 2009.

⁵ For additional information about this template and its structure, see Appendix A.

Figure 2.1
Logic-Model Template



SOURCE: Greenfield, Williams, and Eiseman, 2006.

NOTE: For additional information about this template and its structure, see Appendix A.

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The Modeling Process Used with the Federal Voting Assistance Program

To begin developing FVAP’s benchmark logic model, we held a two-day all-hands workshop with FVAP staff and leadership to explore the agency’s mission, its operations, and, to a lesser extent, its strategy. To spur the process, we provided FVAP with a set of discussion points before the workshop. The discussion points addressed three basic logic-modeling concepts—specifically, who are you as a program or program area, what are you doing, and why are you doing it? In the workshop, we introduced the logic model, framing it as a tool for better aligning program strategy and operations and, eventually, for strengthening program communication—and FVAP and we put the tool to use.⁶

⁶ Appendix A includes the logic-modeling primer, the agenda, and other workshop materials.

The workshop's success depended not on whether it yielded a pretty picture but on whether the staff—and our RAND project team—walked away with a clearer, common understanding of the relationships among the things FVAP was doing as an institution and why it was doing them. By the end of the workshop, we did not expect to have a fully formed logic model—or a well-articulated “road ahead”—but to be on the way to having both.

Typically, an agency's mission statement would serve as a foundation for this type of logic model; however, in this case, a day 1 workshop session titled, “Why Does FVAP Exist?” confirmed that FVAP staff members lacked a common, shared understanding of the organization's purpose. We consider the implications of that finding below, but, to fill the immediate need for a foundation, we proposed, discussed, and adopted a rough proxy: to assist UOCAVA voters in voting successfully.

With that proxy in hand, we were able to work with FVAP—during the workshop and in subsequent meetings—to chart the agency's operations and develop an initial logic model that constituted a programmatic benchmark. It was reflective of then-current practice, including some recent changes in practice, and anticipated future needs.

For example, in a day 2 workshop session, we asked FVAP staff to identify inputs, activities, outputs, customers, and outcomes and consider how the proposed elements would support the proxy mission. Staff wrote down their inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, partners, and customers on sheets of paper and taped them to a room-length white board, under the appropriate category headings. The snapshot shown in Figure 2.2, which we cropped to fit this document, shows only inputs, activities, and outputs, but the board continued several feet to the right and included information on customers and outcomes, with voters and successful voting featured prominently.

The development of the benchmark logic model, which occurred over a period of about four months, exemplified the collaborative and iterative approach of the larger project. We took our gleanings from the workshop and used them to create a rough mock-up of the benchmark model. Then, we met with members of the FVAP staff, primarily in small groups, to obtain feedback on elements of the model and, eventually, on the model in its totality. We met with FVAP to discuss the model, then revised the model, met with FVAP again, and so forth. The model was complete when participants reached agreement on the content and structure.

In large part, the development of the benchmark logic model was an act of synthesis. FVAP staff members could see themselves within the organization and could describe daily tasks and projects in terms of activities and outputs but could not readily see themselves as part of a larger organization. The modeling exercise helped us and them to see how the parts might—or might not—fit together as a whole.

To provide context for our discussions with FVAP and enhance our understanding of the organization, we also embarked on a complementary process of reviewing

Figure 2.2
Constructing the Logic Model



SOURCE: RAND staff photograph taken May 2013.

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strategic documents, congressional testimony, training materials and guidance, surveys and reports, organizational charts, and governing legislation and policy.⁷

The Federal Voting Assistance Program Benchmark Logic Model

Figure 2.3, “The Federal Voting Assistance Program Benchmark Logic Model,” depicts the results of the modeling workshop, meetings with FVAP staff, and the document review.

The model depicts three distinct streams of activity: voter assistance; election-official assistance; and institutional support, including communication and technical services. The streams face inward (in that they provide service to the agency itself, as in the case of program oversight) and outward (in that they provide service to others, as in the case of outreach). The content of the voter and election-official assistance activity boxes is quite similar—for example, both streams develop and modify training materials, guidance, and other online materials and build and maintain relationships—even if oriented toward different audiences. Separately and in sum, the three activity streams yield outputs, which are then transferred to groups of intermediate customers, such as the military services, the Department of State, states, localities, DOJ, and NGOs, for their use and to the ultimate benefit of UOCAVA voters, framed in terms of votes cast, received, and counted.

The logic model includes a category of activities that we designated as special projects, consisting of one-off or periodic events outside the realm of routine day-to-day activities. In this category, we included research undertaken in accordance with law, policy, and emerging needs and revisions to forms, instructions, and directives. For example, FVAP, on behalf of the presidential designee and serving as the administrator of UOCAVA for USD(P&R), holds the pen in the process of revising and reissuing DoDI 1000.04, which is the primary (DoD) policy document concerning UOCAVA voting, roughly every two years.⁸ On that basis, one might view the DoDI as dual-hatted—upon issuance, it is an external factor, but, in the course of revisions, its coordination and authorship are activities.

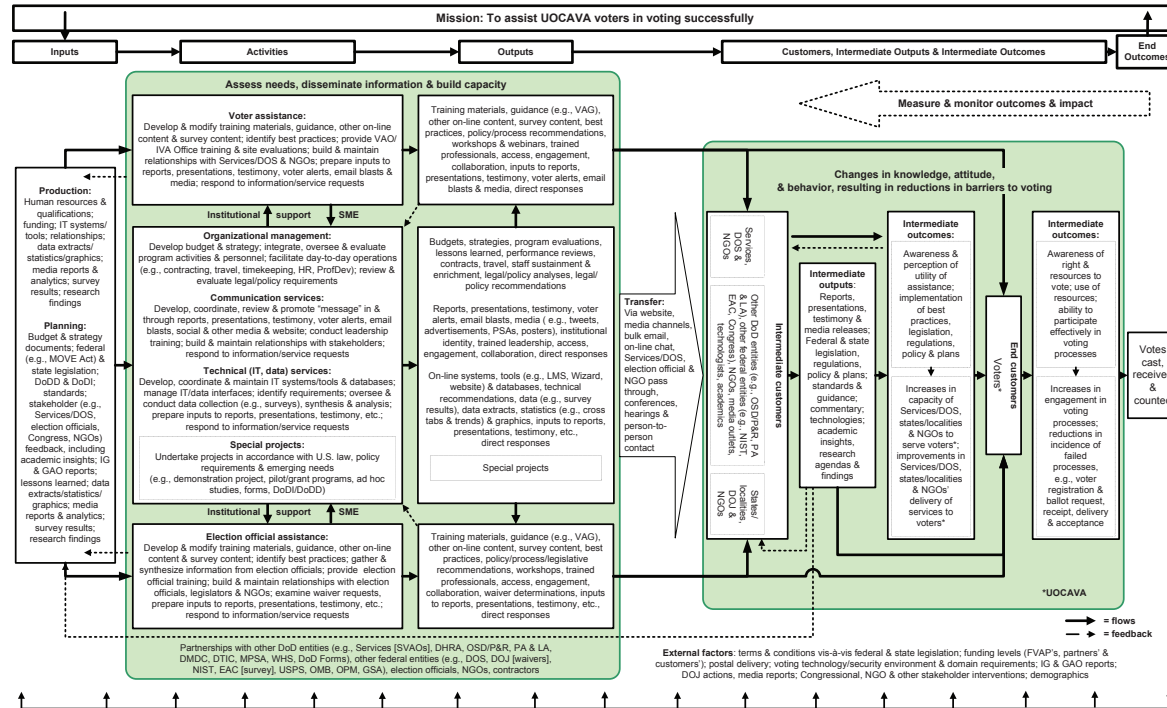
In some instances, such as the provision of online assistants,⁹ call responses, email blasts or bulk email, and other media, the activity streams also reach directly to voters. For example, a UOCAVA voter can use the online assistants to obtain information

⁷ For this purpose, we did not closely examine the law or policy, as we do in the later discussion of core requirements; rather, we read it as a backdrop to our conversations with FVAP and the model-development process.

⁸ FVAP acts on behalf of USD(P&R), who issues the guidance. See Chapters Four and Seven of this report for a discussion of the process and DoDD 5124.02 (Director of Administration and Management, 2008) for an explanation of the delegation of responsibilities.

⁹ *Online assistant* refers to specific tools that FVAP directly provides and supports through its website.

Figure 2.3
Benchmark Logic Model



SOURCE: RAND staff analysis with input from FVAP leadership and staff.

NOTE: DOS = U.S. Department of State. IG = inspector general. GAO = U.S. Government Accountability Office. SME = subject-matter expert. HR = human resources. ProfDev = professional development. IT = information technology. VAG = Voting Assistance Guide. PSA = public service announcement. LMS = learning management system. Wizard = web-based tool that voters can use to obtain information and walk through the process of completing the FPCA and FWAB, which are now referred to as "online assistants." SVAO = Service Voting Action Officer. OSD/P&R = USD(P&R). PA = public affairs. LA = legislative affairs. DMDC = Defense Manpower Data Center. DTIC = Defense Technical Information Center. MP&A = Military Postal Service Agency. WHS = Washington Headquarters Services. DOJ = U.S. Department of Justice. NIST = National Institute of Standards and Technology. EAC = U.S. Election Assistance Commission. USPS = U.S. Postal Service. OMB = Office of Management and Budget. OPM = Office of Personnel Management. GSA = General Services Administration.

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about voting in his or her jurisdiction and to walk through the process of completing the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). The first form, the FPCA, allows an eligible U.S. citizen, as a UOCAVA voter, to apply to register to vote, request an absentee ballot, or update his or her contact information with his or her local election office. The FWAB can be used as a backup for a UOCAVA voter who has applied for a regular state ballot through the FPCA and has not received that ballot in time to vote by the election deadline.

The large, central “transfer” arrow reaches the entire box of customers (on the right of the figure), including UOCAVA voters. As a practical matter, FVAP has more difficulty reaching out directly to overseas-citizen absentee voters than to uniformed absentee voters.¹⁰

Each of the activity and corresponding output boxes also includes the words, “respond to information and service requests” and “direct responses,” respectively. The boxes depict not just flows of requests for information about voting assistance but also flows of requests for other types of information, largely involving congressional letters, press reports, and other media activity, which appeared to be substantial.

The depiction in Figure 2.3 weaves the agency’s activity streams and its organizational structure (see Figure 2.4) and, on that basis, could be considered part logic model and part organizational chart. At the time of the phase 1 analysis, FVAP housed 17 permanent FTE¹¹ and six term employees, including the director among the FTEs. The staff was spread across five organizational groups, consisting of voter assistance, election-official assistance, technology, communications, and mission support—the last three, in combination, providing various types of institutional support. Three separate deputies each led voter assistance, election-official assistance, and technology, respectively, and a chief of staff led mission support; the chief of staff and front office jointly led the communication group. The hybridization of the logic model offered two benefits. First, it made it easier to track activities that are similar, such as relationship-building and maintenance, but directed at different audiences with potentially different needs. Second, it enabled us to draw out potential organizational concerns, relating to the positioning of the boxes and the connections among them.

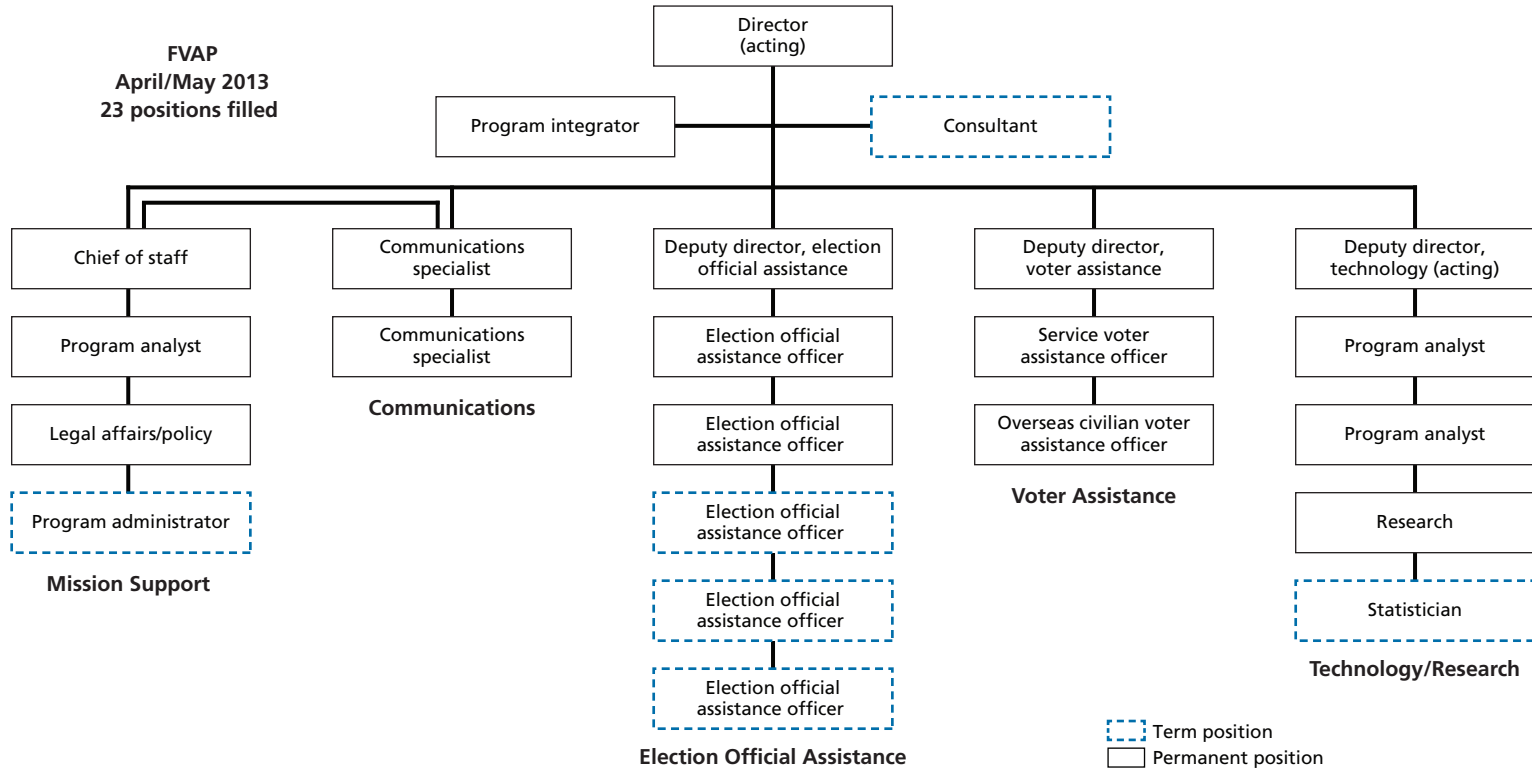
We next offer a final comment on the interpretation of the model.

The benchmark logic model was based largely on FVAP’s sense of itself, as conveyed both verbally, through the workshop and later discussions with staff, and in writing, through strategic documents. Thus, it represents the agency’s theory of its operations, absent testing and validation. Although much of the subsequent work of phase 1, including stakeholder outreach, spoke at least notionally to testing and valida-

¹⁰ Although many online resources are available to all UOCAVA voters, regardless of their affiliation, FVAP has less visibility for overseas voters who are not members of the uniformed services, less direct access to them, and fewer mechanisms with which to reach out to them.

¹¹ For tallying purposes, we treated one full-time DHRA detailee as a permanent FTE.

Figure 2.4
Federal Voting Assistance Program Organization Chart as of April–May 2013



SOURCE: RAND staff, adapted from chart provided by FVAP leadership.

NOTE: The line between Mission Support and Communications indicates that Communications, which had a direct line to the director, was also run as part of Mission Support. For some purposes, it was its own group; for others, it was part of Mission Support.

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tion, the model does not reflect it. For that reason, the arrows connecting the various boxes might be thick or thin, and the reported activities, outputs, and outcomes in those boxes might be real or aspirational.¹²

Focal Points of the Logic-Model Analysis

In this section, we present a set of focal points that emerged from the logic-modeling process. Figure 2.5 shows that the model, in stylized terms, breaks down into three distinct activity streams, each ultimately reaching out to the UOCAVA voter as the end customer, but largely dependent on the actions of partners, various intermediate customers, and other stakeholders. Strictly on the basis of that image, one might ask whether the activity streams are well-integrated and reinforcing, whether FVAP interfaces effectively with its stakeholders, and, if so, to what ultimate effect. These questions provide a backdrop for the focal points that emerged from the analysis:

- mission ambiguity
- stovepiping and fragmentation
- inadequate capacities and capabilities in some areas
- organizing and allocating staff resources.

We discuss each of these, in turn, below.

Although we offer comments on VAO training and research-related activities in this section, we note that we intended to delve more deeply into both arenas in phase 2 of this project. On that basis, our comments on these issues were in progress during phase 1.

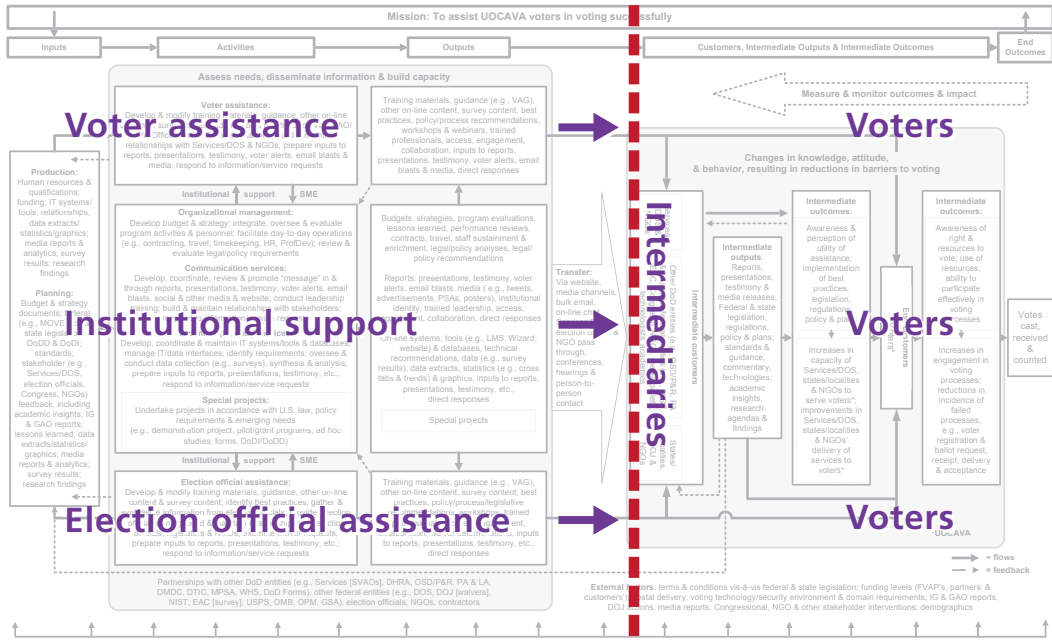
Mission Ambiguity

Our engagement with FVAP and exploration of strategy documents did not provide evidence of a clearly articulated, commonly understood, or shared mission, which, in turn, suggested an organizational challenge. Given the aforementioned turnover in leadership, this was not surprising but, nevertheless, merited comment. If FVAP staff members did not share a consistent understanding of the agency's mission—and underlying priorities—they could not be expected to share a consistent view of what the agency—or they—should be doing.

The draft mission statement, shown in Table 1.1 in Chapter One, and the workshop-generated proxy suggested agency-wide convergence on a common end point but belied disagreement on four points: first, the meaning of *assist*; second, the meaning of *successfully*; third, the position of the voter relative to other stakeholders;

¹² In our discussions with FVAP, we acknowledged that the agency was already undergoing a certain amount of change and attempted to distinguish between what is and what is to be.

Figure 2.5
Stylized Activity Streams



SOURCE: RAND staff analysis with input from FVAP staff.

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and, fourth, FVAP’s stake either in promoting awareness of the right to vote—and the means to do so—or in motivating voting.¹³ Differences of opinion about assistance, success, and the positioning of stakeholders surfaced during the workshop and became more apparent as the modeling process unfolded; differences in views regarding FVAP’s stake in awareness and motivation manifested in FVAP documents, including the IVA office handbook (FVAP, undated [a]) and Voting Assistance Guide (FVAP, 2013f).

We use the fourth point—on promoting awareness or motivation—to draw out a few of the consequences of mission ambiguity for strategy and operations.

Throughout our meetings with FVAP, staff signaled that the agency was not seeking to motivate voters but to inform them. Nevertheless, training materials and guidance conveyed the impression, if only to the layperson, that FVAP might have been positioning itself as a motivating agency, e.g., in citing the mission of FVAP as to

¹³ To distinguish the two concepts, we treat *awareness* as referring to UOCAVA voters’ knowledge of basic facts about their circumstances and opportunities and *motivation* as concerning UOCAVA voters’ levels of interest in participating in the voting process. Voter motivation is sometimes associated with the phrase “get out the vote,” but we have curbed our use of that phrase because, for some readers, it might conjure images of partisan canvassing efforts.

“foster voting participation” (FVAP, undated [a], p. 4)¹⁴ and, more explicitly, in sponsoring and distributing “motivational” posters.¹⁵

FVAP might have thought itself clear on its position regarding awareness and motivation, but, in practice, the line separating them was blurry, and FVAP’s public face—e.g., its documents and other resources—appeared to be addressing both. The appearance of serving to raise awareness and motivate, even absent the reality, could bear on the agency’s accountability and, eventually, the allocation of resources to and across the agency. If, for example, FVAP were seen as a motivator and not an information provider, its stake in voter participation could be treated as substantially greater, and it might be held more accountable for that participation.¹⁶

In summary, FVAP would have difficulty plotting a course to an end point or intended outcome and communicating its role, lacking a shared understanding of purpose—hence the need for institutional clarity among staff members and across product lines. However, it would not be enough to reach agreement on words alone. It would be necessary to reach agreement on the meaning of the words and the priorities they embody.

The modeling process also revealed concerns within FVAP about mission creep. We raise that issue here, in relation to mission ambiguity, but defer further consideration of scope to the later assessment of core legal requirements in Chapter Four.

Stovepiping and Fragmentation

The picture—both literal and figurative—of FVAP that emerged from the modeling process strongly suggested that FVAP was not functioning as a program, per se, but as loosely connected, separately managed streams of activities. That stovepiping might have been intentional at some point in the agency’s history, but it had resulted in fragmentation.

The benchmark logic model reflects this disconnectedness in its depiction of the voter and election-official assistance activity streams. The two streams are positioned at a distance, but absent any direct ties.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the activities of the streams were strikingly similar, even if directed at different intermediate customers or audiences, thus inviting the question of whether more could be done to leverage FVAP resources across streams.

¹⁴ This publication, which is the IVA office handbook, appeared to have been updated after September 2012, because it contained references to material published in that month.

¹⁵ At that time, the posters had their own tab on the FVAP website, labeled as “Motivational Posters” under the “Voting Assistance Officers” heading.

¹⁶ The law requires FVAP to report on voter participation (see the later discussion of statutory requirements), but FVAP is not responsible for participation. If FVAP were to take on motivation explicitly, the public could reasonably hold the agency responsible for participation.

¹⁷ Had we drawn the streams in parallel, stacked one atop the other, the ties would still have been missing because they were acting more or less independently of each other.

The following highlight two examples of repetition:

- The words “build and maintain relationships” appeared in three different activity streams, i.e., voter and election-official assistance and communications. In all three instances, FVAP staff described the intent of relationship-building and maintenance as engendering access, engagement, and cooperation. Having established this similarity of purpose, it seemed reasonable to ask whether FVAP employed a common strategy or shared methods for approaching this activity.¹⁸
- The words “develop,” “modify,” and “identify,” tied to training materials, guidance, other online content, and best practices, also appeared across activity streams. As above, the repetition raised conceptual and technical questions regarding purpose and means. Among the questions were whether the underlying methods of development, modification, and identification were empirically or analytically based. Arrows coming from other boxes, e.g., “inputs” and “institutional support,” allowed the possibility, but our conversations with FVAP staff did not confirm the reality.

Although depicted as being more connected to the whole, the communication and technical service groups—positioned between and interacting with the voter and election-official assistance streams in the logic model—still seemed to function on their own in many regards. To illustrate, we explore issues involving research-related activities.

- FVAP’s research-related activities, led primarily through the technical service group, did not appear to provide feedback consistently to the rest of the agency. The results of these activities were intended to drive up to leadership and then back down through the organization, but the process was ineffective. The results of surveys, studies, and other data collection might have filtered through the agency eventually, but we found no evidence that they systematically provided feedback or were incorporated regularly into the voter and election-official assistance groups’ planning and operations. A lack of analytical capacity and capability might be an explanatory factor (see below); in short, it might be difficult to create feedback loops absent the analytical foundation to harvest new information or assess the underlying informational needs. Moreover, it appeared that much of the agency’s research had been undertaken without explicit regard for its implications for FVAP’s other operationally oriented activity streams.

¹⁸ More concretely, if FVAP were to track stakeholder engagement across activity streams and construct an accumulated, consistent history, it might aid the identification of crosscutting issues, tracking of patterns of emergence, and development of unified agency-wide responses. And, it might better enable staff based in one activity stream to assist staff based in another.

- Although the communication service group carried responsibility for messaging, the group appeared to have been less actively involved in developing voting and election-official assistance guidance and training materials, including the IVA office handbook, the Voting Assistance Guide, and workshops, all of which contribute to the public face of FVAP. If the agency's activities were more fully integrated, materials speaking to mission or policy—regardless of their origin or purpose—could be honed for consistency before dissemination.

Because our consideration of FVAP's research-related efforts were to continue in the next phase of the project, we deemed these immediate observations to be in progress.

Inadequate Capacities and Capabilities in Some Areas

Our conversations with FVAP and review of strategic and other documents suggested that FVAP was lacking capacity and capabilities in some organizationally important areas. These areas might or might not remain organizationally important in the future, but they appeared to be important to FVAP in its then-current form.

One of FVAP's challenges, as noted above, was an apparent inability to effectively harvest new information or ascertain the necessity of such information. To illustrate, we considered the postelection surveys that FVAP undertakes and through which it has reached out separately to active-duty military (ADM) personnel, ADM spouses, overseas citizens, unit VAOs (UVAOs), State Department VAOs, and local election officials.¹⁹ Our analysis of the citations to these surveys in the most recent postelection report to Congress available in our period of analysis (FVAP, 2013b), suggested that only a small fraction of the information obtained from the surveys was put to use in reporting.²⁰ (See Table 2.1.) Regarding the necessity of the surveys, the law, as we discuss in a later chapter, requires that FVAP report on a limited set of concerns, for example, regarding the effectiveness of activities and utilization of certain procedures and a statistical analysis of voter participation, but does not specify a method of data collection. Although the surveys have provided a basis for the statistical analysis and might have added value to management, the extent of their use merited further investigation.

Moreover, in some cases, it was unclear whether other research-related activities, such as some of the discrete special projects featured in the benchmark logic model, were structured to help FVAP achieve end outcomes. We suggested two possible impediments. First, FVAP might have difficulty framing clear, mission-directed research questions, which is, in itself, an analytical undertaking that requires a not-insubstantial capacity and capability. Second, research-related activities had not been routinely conceptualized as activities undertaken to support other FVAP activity streams.

¹⁹ FVAP and EAC were in the process of merging their respective quantitative surveys.

²⁰ FVAP notes that this was an active decision by FVAP, based on two key factors: precedent through previous reports and overall readability.

Table 2.1
Questions Cited in the 2012 Postelection Report to Congress

Survey	Number of Questions Cited in Report	Total Number of Questions Asked in Survey	Percentage of Total Questions Cited in Report
ADM	21	79	27
Local election officials (quantitative)	27	102	26
Local election officials (qualitative)	5	26	19
ADM spouses	9	53	17
Department of State VAOs	5	34	15
DoD UVAOs	6	42	14

SOURCES: RAND staff analysis based on FVAP, 2013b.

NOTE: We list the surveys in descending order by percentage of total questions cited in the report.

Although the discussion in this section focused on research capacities and capabilities, deficits might have been at play elsewhere, including in the voter and election-official assistance streams. Although professional development is present in the logic model, we heard little in our conversations to suggest that it was a high priority within the agency or well-targeted. Training for staff had been available to some upon request, but we were unaware of systematic processes for discerning or meeting needs. Moreover, we heard no mention of cross-training across activity streams. It did not appear that FVAP staff in one activity stream received explicit training to gap-fill or troubleshoot in other streams.²¹

Staffing and Organization in Relation to Mission

The final set of issues emerged partly from the drafting of the logic model, but more directly from our conversations with staff about the model. These issues pertain to the ways in which FVAP was conceptualizing labor and organizing itself, both in general and in the face of a labor constraint of fewer than 20 permanent FTE positions.

FVAP's staff members—like any other agency's—are not free resources, nor, in an FTE-constrained workplace, would the costs of their compensation packages necessarily reflect their true value to the organization. Whereas FVAP had filled some of its needs through term appointments²² and outside contracts, it was not obvious that

²¹ We later learned that that election-official assistance staff had begun to attend voting assistance training sessions and viewed this as a step in the direction of cross-training.

²² Some of these arrangements might merit further consideration. For example, if a role is or becomes lasting, it might require a permanent assignment.

the agency had always recognized the implications of a labor constraint. If staffing at FVAP were zero-sum, then a decision to use staff in one activity stream would constitute a decision to not use staff in another, and the allocation decision would either establish or act on the agency's priorities.

Moreover, FVAP's organizational structure appeared to be top heavy and, perhaps, support heavy. At the time of the phase 1 analysis, about one-third of FVAP staff—the director, five other permanent FTEs, and one term position—served in leadership or advisory capacities. An also-large fraction of the agency appeared to be dedicated to support-like functions, possibly reflecting the characterization of their roles more than their functions. Including leadership and advisory positions other than the director, FVAP allocated six permanent FTEs and three term employees to voter and election-official assistance and ten permanent FTEs and three term employees to positions that might have been categorized as support, depending especially on the underlying nature of communication and technology services.

Concluding Remarks on Logic-Model Development and Findings

In this chapter, we demonstrated ways in which the logic model can be used to better understand an organization, diagnose problems within an organization, and begin to identify potential solutions. Although the specifics of the modeling exercise and the resulting diagram will differ from organization to organization, the method itself can be applied across settings and agencies for similar purposes.

At the outset of the discussion of focal points, we noted that the benchmark logic model raised questions about whether FVAP's activity streams were well-integrated and reinforcing, whether FVAP interfaced effectively with its stakeholders, and, if so, to what end. Additional analysis of the model suggested that FVAP activities were not well-integrated or reinforcing, but it left open the questions of the effectiveness and outcomes.

Through the development of the logic model, we became aware of holes in our understanding of the agency and its role in the voting community. FVAP was undertaking various activities from which it was creating outputs, but then what happened to them? Where did the outputs go, how were they used, and to what ultimate effect? To begin to complete the picture, our next step was to approach FVAP's stakeholders, particularly its partners and intermediate customers, for insight. In so doing, we would also be able to test and validate what we believed we already understood about the agency—as depicted in the benchmark logic model—and explore the effectiveness and value of the stakeholder interface.

Stakeholder Outreach

In this chapter, we discuss our approach to stakeholder outreach and the key insights that we drew from it. It was our intent to learn more about the successes and failures of the relationships between FVAP and its stakeholders. In part, we were seeking to improve our understanding of the customer side of the logic model, including the ways in which those relationships might lead to intended outcomes and support successful UOCAVA voting.

Our Approach to Stakeholder Outreach

The logic model provided us with a point of departure for identifying particular stakeholders of interest, consisting of institutions and individuals. In addition, we asked FVAP staff, including leadership, for their input on important contacts. We reached out to—but did not always make contact with—a considerable share of those who regularly interfaced with FVAP as partners and intermediate customers.¹

The stakeholders included members of five distinct stakeholder groups and one catch-all category of advocates:²

- congressional staff
- election officials and representative NGOs
- overseas-citizen NGOs
- DoD entities, e.g., IG, general counsel, DHRA, and representatives of the uniformed services (SVAOs)³
- academics and technologists with an interest in UOCAVA voting
- various election advocates.

¹ We reached out to local election officials through a representative NGO.

² We held our conversations over a period spanning about three months, beginning in July 2013.

³ We conducted site visits and reached out to other DoD entities in phase 2 of the project.

The stakeholders represented wide-ranging interests and, in many instances, have had ongoing contact with FVAP over a period of many years. Not surprisingly, interests differed—and sometimes conflicted—both across and within stakeholder groups, such as those consisting of congressional staff and election officials.

Illustrative of that diversity, we did the following:

- engaged with congressional staff at relevant committees—namely, the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, and U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Administration—and other staff who routinely engage on UOCAVA voting issues
- reached out to election officials, consisting of those in attendance at the National Association of State Election Directors (NASED) and National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) summer conferences held in Anchorage, Alaska, and to NGOs (namely, NASED, NASS, and the Election Center) that represent election officials
- reached out to overseas-citizen NGOs, including the Overseas Vote Foundation, Union of Overseas Voters, Association of Americans Resident Overseas, and the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas.

In each case, we sought to learn more about the stakeholder's view of FVAP, but we did not undertake formal interviews; rather, we engaged discussants in unstructured, open-ended conversations. To introduce ourselves and the project, we expressed an interest in learning more about how stakeholders see FVAP, how they see their relationships with FVAP, what they need from FVAP, and what they get and do not get from FVAP. We wanted to learn more about the successes and failures of the relationships and the ways in which they might lead to intended outcomes and support successful UOCAVA voting, but we left it to each discussant to determine the direction of the conversation. In so doing, we were able to benefit from the spontaneity of each encounter, which reflected the priorities of each stakeholder.

Insights from Stakeholder Outreach

Perhaps most striking among the insights that we drew from these conversations was the extent to which the apparent divergence of interest among stakeholders yielded a broad convergence around common themes.

In Table 3.1, we present a summary of those convergences along with comments, caveats, and examples. In the spirit of convergence, the table includes only those themes

Table 3.1
Broad Convergences Across Stakeholder Groups

Convergence	Comment, Caveat, or Example
Stick to the knitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples: “stick to the core,” “do one thing well”
Recognize voters as customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is FVAP’s role to ensure that voters can register or do register? • Is FVAP’s role to inform voters or to motivate voting? • Do some UOCAVA voters count more than others?
Be a trusted source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FVAP cannot be or appear to be political. • FVAP must set a high bar for itself and for others.
Be a trusted partner	
Communicate more, more regularly, and better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out, listen to others, and respond. • Target and tailor the message. • Send the right messengers. • Strike an appropriate balance between modes of assistance (IT, paper, and humans).
Improve transparency of processes, practices, and organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as openly as possible. • Specify points of contact. • Post data and research results promptly and visibly. • Post criteria for decisionmaking.
Do no harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible, make things better. • Act deliberately, thoughtfully, and efficiently with FVAP’s own and others’ resources.
Understand the operating environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting is part of a system, but where is FVAP in that system (e.g., is it in operations, policy, or both)?
Manage institutional constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FVAP cannot change constraints but must navigate them effectively or more effectively.

SOURCE: RAND staff analysis based on conversations with FVAP stakeholders.

that cut across stakeholder groups.⁴ Although we emphasize that we are reporting on the stakeholders’ views and not our own, we also acknowledge that we have synthesized and bundled their views into categories, sometimes with new or different vocabulary. For example, we use the phrase “stick to the knitting”⁵ (meaning “stay on point,” “devote yourself to your responsibilities,” and “do what you know how to do well”) to encapsulate the groups’ observations and concerns about FVAP’s focus—or lack thereof—and overall approach to service provision.

⁴ Except inasmuch as the “comments, caveats, and examples” reference specific points raised by particular stakeholders or groups of stakeholders, the entries in Table 3.1 do not speak to particular issues that were relevant to only one or two groups. For example, we do not include the SVAOs’ comments on VAO training or IVA offices in Table 3.1 but took them into consideration in our analysis of FVAP’s work with the military in Chapter Six.

⁵ Peters and Waterman, 1982, have been credited with popularizing the term in their management text, *In Search of Excellence*. They defined the term as “staying within the business you know best,” but others impart broader meaning. Although the book has been subject to criticism, the term serves our purposes in this chapter.

Notwithstanding the convergences around the themes represented in Table 3.1, discussants across and within stakeholder groups sometimes offered very different insight to the underlying concerns and their remedies. Here, we highlight some of the subtleties beneath the table entries, but we save consideration of “knitting” for the close of this chapter.

Recognize Voters as Customers

Discussants in nearly all stakeholder groups addressed the centrality of voters as customers, but they differed in their views about how FVAP should be serving them:

- Some discussants indicated that FVAP should be ensuring that voters can register to vote; others suggested that it should be ensuring that they do register.
- Differences also emerged in their views of FVAP’s position on awareness and motivation; that is, should the agency be raising individuals’ awareness of the right and resources to vote, or should it be motivating them to vote?
- Discussants, both within and across communities, also voiced divergent opinions about the relative importance of uniformed-service and overseas voters and the balance of effort that should be allocated to them.

The issue of trust came up explicitly and implicitly across all groups, with observations falling into two related categories: one pertained to trust in FVAP as a source of information and the other to trust in FVAP as a voting assistance partner. But discussants differed in their opinions of FVAP’s trustworthiness. Whereas some lauded FVAP as a trusted source to which they would and do readily steer voters (e.g., to use the Voting Assistance Guide or online assistants), others framed trust as an aspiration.

Be a Trusted Source and Partner

In conceptualizing a trusted source, discussants focused on the importance of avoiding the appearance of partisanship, politicization, or salesmanship and on the quality and reliability of services and products. If FVAP appeared to be pushing something, the agency did not seem to fare well in a stakeholder group’s characterization. Among those discussants focusing on quality and reliability, some suggested that FVAP should model the ideal or be best in class for the voting community. More concretely, one discussant suggested that FVAP develop training standards for use within the U.S. government and across NGOs.

The need for a trusted partner was evident, if not always articulated, in discussants’ observations on communication and transparency.

Discussants, almost uniformly, spoke to a need for FVAP to reach out to stakeholders more often and more regularly, listen to what they have to say, and respond. They noted repeatedly that communication needed to be ongoing and routinized and that listening—by itself, absent processing and responding, whether positively or

negatively—was not enough. In effect, FVAP should treat its partners as active collaborators, not as passive operatives or, in some instances, competitors. The tenor of these conversations suggested that the creation of open, two-way channels might require time and effort but that FVAP could benefit from them. FVAP might garner increased support from stakeholders, eliminate misperceptions about its intentions and actions, and, perhaps, decrease the incidence of rapid responses to perceived crises or firefighting. FVAP might also find opportunities to leverage stakeholders' resources. Overseas NGOs, for example, might be able to offer access to their regional and global customer bases—a reach that FVAP could not reproduce cost-effectively, if at all.

Discussants across groups also signaled the importance of targeting⁶ and tailoring messages to the needs of particular stakeholders and, in the case of direct, person-to-person engagement, sending appropriate messengers (for example, by ensuring that people with appropriate expertise, not just bureaucratic standing, attend meetings).⁷

Although less clearly linked to trust, the issue of the balance between the use of IT, paper, and human interaction in providing assistance also emerged. We can recall no discussant saying that one method alone would be adequate. Most indicated the desirability of diverse approaches and a mixed portfolio, and some suggested the need for a deeper consideration of the appropriate balance among them. Some stakeholders also noted that the FVAP website had come a long way in providing service to voters (e.g., praising the utility of online tools) but suggested that it still had some distance to travel in serving others, in terms of both navigability and content.

The issue of transparency—with respect to processes, practices, and organizational structure—also featured prominently in our conversations, sometimes closely related to the issues of listening and responding in communication:

- Discussants across all groups emphasized the importance of FVAP acting as openly as possible. To illustrate, they compared two recent efforts to revise the FPCA and FWAB forms. They depicted the first effort as one in which FVAP staff did not solicit or respond uniformly to external input, resulting in considerable dissatisfaction, if not outright hostility, among some stakeholders. They depicted the second effort, run through OMB, as open, constructive, and yielding some buy-in from stakeholders.⁸ Discussants held up the latter process as a positive example of transparency—and of listening and responding.⁹

⁶ In this regard, some suggested that too much information can be as problematic as too little.

⁷ Along similar lines, a representative of an overseas citizens' group asked that those conducting offshore workshops and trainings be well-acquainted with on-the-ground conditions.

⁸ We discuss this process in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

⁹ They acknowledged that not everyone could or would get what they wanted in the new FPCA and FWAB, but they would know they were heard and, if their views were not taken on board, they would know why.

- Discussants across most, if not all, groups suggested that data and research results should be posted promptly and visibly and noted that failing to do so can and probably has created the impression of purposeful obfuscation.
- Similarly, they suggested that FVAP post criteria for making decisions, e.g., in altering policy directions and defining terms, such as *installation*.
- Discussants also spoke to the importance of organizational transparency, citing a need to know who does what in the agency and how to reach them. Some, for example, recounted challenges reaching the right person in the right moment and asked for a readily accessible list of points of contact and contact information.

Do No Harm

The point that FVAP should do no harm surfaced in several conversations. Of primary concern were the integrity of the voting system¹⁰ and the use of resources throughout the system. In the case of resourcing, the discussants appeared to be concerned with how FVAP's actions were affecting the use of its and others' resources and to be asking FVAP to act more deliberately, thoughtfully, and efficiently with those resources. Discussants spoke to incidents of firefighting and to ordinary features of their relationships with FVAP. Regarding firefighting, discussants across groups—and invariant to the specifics of any particular observation—described a pattern of rapid responses to perceived crises, leading FVAP to change course and place new and mostly additional demands on the voting community absent a clear benefit. Regarding the ordinary, including requests from FVAP for election data, discussants also questioned whether the benefits justified the costs.

Understand the Operating Environment and Manage Institutional Constraints

Some discussants observed or implied that FVAP would benefit from thinking about its operating environment and the voting community as a system—one in which functioning depends partly on policy decisions made by FVAP and actions taken by FVAP. In so doing, the agency might be better able to anticipate the repercussions of policy decisions and actions for its stakeholders. A few discussants also raised questions about FVAP's role in the system—e.g., whether it is to make policy, to implement policy, or both—and its necessity.

¹⁰ Here, we are referring not just to the technology components of the system but to the relational components, e.g., among those who routinely provide hands-on assistance to voters.

Related to the issue of environment, discussants acknowledged that FVAP must contend with a nontrivial set of institutional constraints, some of which might make it difficult for the agency to accomplish its mission, however defined:

- the absence of leadership and leadership continuity within FVAP
- the agency’s position in DoD and the implications of that position for the agency’s authority and the accountability of its partners
- the relative importance—or lack thereof—of voting issues among all DoD issues
- the cyclical nature of DoD’s interest in voting
- a potential lack of concern for overseas civilian voters within DoD, if not FVAP
- DoD’s workplace culture with regard to transparency
- the autonomy of the states.

Discussants suggested that the act of voting is not at the center of DoD’s mission nor is it a front-burner issue most of the time, which could both impede FVAP’s efforts and make it possible for the agency to drift. They also noted that past FVAP leadership had either tended to pull the agency in different directions or, sometimes, lacked clear direction. Some also suggested that engagement with stakeholders had been driven too much by the agendas of people within the agency and not enough by the mission of the agency.

None of the discussants suggested giving FVAP leeway because of the constraints; rather, they indicated that the agency should learn to navigate the constraints more effectively.

The second—most striking finding from our outreach was the lack of interest or awareness among some stakeholders. Whereas many of the stakeholders that we contacted spoke about FVAP with passion, more than a handful were not interested in discussing FVAP¹¹ or lacked awareness of the agency; the activities it undertakes; what it produces; and how the agency, activities, and outputs relate to them. Given the extent of our efforts to target institutions and people who seemed likely to have an interest in and awareness of FVAP, this might have been surprising; however, noting that “FVAP and the Road Ahead” was not the first strategically oriented study that FVAP had commissioned in recent history, some amount of outreach fatigue could explain the lack of interest, if not the lack of awareness.

Concluding Remarks on Stakeholder Outreach

We conducted stakeholder outreach, in part, because we needed to know more about the use and ultimate effects of the agency’s outputs and the strength of its relationships

¹¹ For example, they did not reply to our emails.

with partners and intermediate customers. Our open-ended conversations yielded a multifaceted picture of stakeholders' perceptions of FVAP's mission, priorities, and activities and its role in the voting community. With those perceptions in hand, we were able to begin testing and validating our understanding of the agency and exploring the effectiveness and value of FVAP's work with stakeholders. As we address in greater depth in Chapter Five, we uncovered substantive differences between FVAP's perception of itself, to the extent that those perceptions were embedded in the benchmark logic model, and the stakeholders' perceptions of FVAP.

We close this chapter with a discussion of the phrase “stick to the knitting,” because the underlying issues were central to so many of our conversations and because it provides a natural bridge to—and a reason for—the assessment of requirements that follows in the next chapter. Discussants suggested that FVAP “stick to its core,” “do one thing well,” or “do what it does best” and, at times, described FVAP as scattered, spread too thin, and overextended in too many arenas. They lacked agreement on what that knitting should look like but leaned toward assigning prominence to hands-on or direct assistance and looking to the law for guidance. As evidence, we note that stakeholders seemed to speak most positively of FVAP when they recounted stories of troubleshooting to meet immediate needs.¹²

The next chapter demarcates a set of core activities, primarily from a legal perspective. However, even if the law provides mandates or suggests certain activities, e.g., with “shall” or “may” language, it was not written as a mission statement, an organizational chart, or a manual and cannot answer all questions about FVAP's operations.

¹² For example, an election official described a time-sensitive circumstance in which an FVAP staff member went to great lengths to help the state understand and meet its UOCAVA responsibilities.

Federal Voting Assistance Program Activities in Relation to Requirements

In this chapter, we discuss the findings from our assessment of the relationships among FVAP activities,¹ U.S. law on UOCAVA voting, and DoD policy as of November 2013. The relevant laws are codified primarily in U.S. Code (U.S.C.), Title 10, § 1566 and § 1566a; 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973ff et seq.; 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973gg et seq.; and 42 U.S.C. § 15344.² The discussion of policy draws from DoDI 1000.04, 2012, the subject of which is *Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)*.

This purpose of this assessment was to identify the minimum set of activities that FVAP must undertake to meet specific, direct requirements, to which we refer as the core, and to improve our understanding of how FVAP's activities relate to that core. We were looking both for gaps in coverage and for potential opportunities for redirection. A noncore activity might contribute importantly to the assistance of UOCAVA voters, either directly or indirectly, by supporting core activities, meeting more-general requirements, or filling other institutional needs. Nevertheless, FVAP might have latitude to consider alternative courses of action, depending on institutional priorities and resource availability.

Because DoD, including FVAP, can elicit changes in policy through revisions of DoDDs and DoDIs more readily than it can elicit changes in law, we treated policy statements as less constraining than legal mandates and looked to the law first in our development of the must-do list; that is, we singled out a set of specific, direct legal requirements, which we used as the foundation for identifying the core. FVAP, under current practice, holds the pen in the process of revising and reissuing DoDI 1000.04,

¹ We use the present tense to describe FVAP's activities in this chapter, but note that our period of analysis ended in November 2013 and that, since that time, FVAP has made changes to specific practices in a variety of areas. When we are aware of such a change, we note the change in our discussion.

² Following the completion of the analysis for this report, the U.S.C. designations for voting-related provisions, including those in the totality of §§ 1973ff and §§ 1973gg, were recast under their own title, specific to voting, i.e., Title 52, Voting and Elections. For the new code and a crosswalk, see, respectively, U.S.C. Title 52 and Office of the Law Revision Counsel, undated.

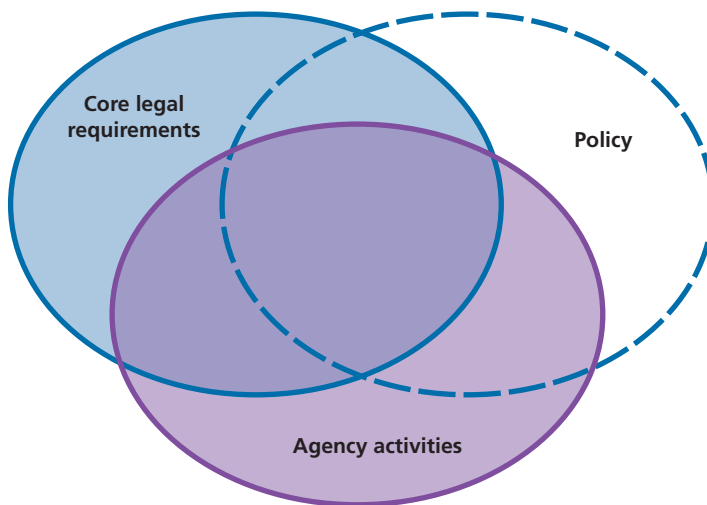
which is the primary (DoD) policy document concerning UOCAVA voting.³ It cannot, however, dictate the content of that document because it must, like all agencies, run the process in accordance with standard practices and procedures that involve inter-agency and external feedback, input, and approval. Moreover, once the instruction is issued, FVAP, like all other participants in the system, must uphold the terms of the instruction.

We approached the analysis from two directions. First, we applied the lens of the law, asking, “What does the law require of FVAP, specifically and directly, and what is FVAP doing to meet those requirements?” Second, we looked through the lens of FVAP activities and asked, “What activities does FVAP undertake to serve UOCAVA voters, and in what ways does the law require them?” To address the first question, we created a checklist of direct, specific legal requirements and then considered whether FVAP activities—as depicted in the logic model, apparent on the FVAP website, or discussed with FVAP staff and stakeholders—addressed them. Then, we created a list of activities, which we mapped to the requirements.

In comparing the law to FVAP activities and FVAP activities to the law, our analysis addressed what FVAP was doing and not whether it was doing it well.

Figure 4.1 depicts a generic, untested relationship between an unnamed agency’s activities, core legal requirements, and policy and frames these questions as a Venn dia-

Figure 4.1
Generic Depiction of Activities, Law, and Policy



SOURCE: RAND staff analysis.

RAND RR882-4.1

³ FVAP acts on behalf of USD(P&R), who issues the guidance. See DoDD 5124.02, 2008, for an explanation of the delegation of responsibilities to USD(P&R).

gram. The goal of the analysis in this chapter was to define the content of the law oval, i.e., the core requirements, and to determine the relative positions of the ovals. Are they partially overlapping, roughly equivalent, or grossly divergent? The policy oval is dashed and colorless both because we view policy as less binding than law and because it played a lesser role in our analysis.

Through the Lens of the Law

In this section, we discuss our approach to identifying the set of core legal requirements and our findings on FVAP's satisfaction of those requirements.

To identify those requirements, we drew from the provisions in 10 U.S.C. § 1566 and § 1566a and in 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973ff et seq. and 42 U.S.C. § 15344 that could assign responsibilities to FVAP as the “federal voting assistance program” or the delegate of the “presidential designee.” In general, we did not consider legal provisions that named the “Secretary of Defense,” “Secretary,” or “Department of Defense” without specific reference to the presidential designee or federal voting assistance program.⁴ However, as an exception, we included the Electronic Voting Demonstration Project. The provision that established the project did not assign responsibility to either the presidential designee or a federal voting assistance program, but the project has been associated closely with FVAP through appropriations, policy, and practice.⁵ We also included one broadly worded provision found in 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973gg et seq. that calls on federal, state, and local governments to promote the exercise of the right to vote.⁶

It is important to note that even the provisions that specifically assign responsibility to the presidential designee or a federal voting assistance program do not necessarily create a requirement for FVAP. For example, the Secretary of Defense could choose to delegate responsibility elsewhere and appears to have done so in the cases of some provisions concerning ballot collection and delivery. In those cases, responsibility, as set out in DoDI 1000.04, 2012, rests with MPSA. Moreover, it is sometimes the case that the phrase *federal voting assistance program* is used to encompass all federal voting assistance, whether or not it is tied to FVAP, the agency. Nevertheless, in the discussions that follow, we refer to the law as implying requirements for FVAP—and treat them

⁴ We do not, for example, reference certain provisions that address regulatory or decisionmaking authority (see 10 U.S.C. § 1566[a] and § 1566a[a], [c], [e], and [f]) or delivery of mail from overseas (see 10 U.S.C. § 1566[g]). Similarly, we do not include provisions found in 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5, Voter Registration Agencies. However, we note that DoDI 1000.04, 2012, provided a role for FVAP in the implementation of 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5.

⁵ Subsequent to this analysis, Section 593 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, titled “Repeal of Electronic Voting Demonstration Project,” eliminated the requirement.

⁶ One could argue that this provision applies to the federal government and, hence, would apply to FVAP because it is a part of the federal government.

as core requirements—when it specifies the presidential designee or the federal voting assistance program, unless we have evidence that it means otherwise.

Table 4.1 summarizes the statutory requirements. In the third column of the table, we address corresponding activities and cite evidence, sometimes in the form of a web page that was active at the time of our analysis; however, we note that, in the time that has elapsed since the completion of the analysis, FVAP has undertaken a substantial redesign of its website, and many or most of those web addresses (uniform resource locators, or URLs) are no longer active.

For the text of the relevant provisions, see Appendix B.

The law, at least implicitly, also mandates that FVAP form relationships with a variety of entities, including the states and localities; EAC; NIST; USPS; GSA; DOJ; Congress; other U.S. government departments, agencies, and entities; and other DoD entities, including the uniformed services, MPSA, and the IG. These institutions are represented in the benchmark logic model as stakeholders.

Through the Lens of Federal Voting Assistance Program Activities

In this section, we discuss our attempt to map FVAP activities to the particular provisions of law, listed in Table 4.1. Taking this perspective allowed us to account for the possibility that FVAP activities could be addressing specific, direct requirements of law; supporting such requirements or addressing other less specific requirements; or addressing other institutional (FVAP, DoD, or broader U.S. government) needs,

Table 4.1
Statutory Requirements Pertaining to the Federal Voting Assistance Program

Title and Section or Subsection	Summary of Requirement	Corresponding Activity or Location of Information About the Activity, as of November 2013
FVAP and presidential-designee requirements		
State-oriented provisions		
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(1)	Consult state and local election officials in carrying out UOCAVA, ^a and ensure their awareness of the requirements of UOCAVA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference participation, email alerts, and other outreach; online training and guidance^b
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-1(g)	Approve or deny state waiver requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See FVAP website—in particular, the link to “Move Act Waivers” (www.fvap.gov/reference/laws/waivers), found under “Reference/Reports” and “Laws”
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2(e)	Approve or deny state absentee ballot in place of FWAB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of recent need, but FVAP appears to have means to address

Table 4.1—Continued

Title and Section or Subsection	Summary of Requirement	Corresponding Activity or Location of Information About the Activity, as of November 2013
State- and voter-oriented provisions		
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(5)	Compile and distribute descriptive material on state procedures and, to the extent possible, election facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online and print (2012–2013) versions of the Voting Assistance Guide (www.fvap.gov/vao/guide; FVAP, 2013f) • FVAP website—for example, the link to “Select Your State” (www.fvap.gov/map), found under “State Voting Information”
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-1(e)(4)	Maintain and make publicly available online repository of state contact information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FVAP website—in particular, the link to “Find Out Where to Send Election Materials” (www.fvap.gov/shortcuts/wheresendfpca), found under “Where to Send Election Materials” • Online version of the Voting Assistance Guide (www.fvap.gov/vao/guide)
Voter-oriented provisions		
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(2), (4), and (7); 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2	Prescribe forms (FPCA, FWAB, including instructions), envelope design, and standard oath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FVAP website—in particular, the link to “Forms Available to Download” (www.fvap.gov/reference/forms), found under “Reference/Reports”
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(3), (8), and (10)	Carry out sections § 1973ff-2 (for FWAB); § 1973ff-2a (for ballot collection and delivery); and § 1973ff-2b (for Federal Voting Assistance Program improvements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See respective entries for relevant sections (i.e., § 1973ff-2, § 1973ff-2a, and § 1973ff-2b) elsewhere in this table
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(9)	Ensure privacy and independence of uniformed-service voters at locations under designee’s jurisdiction, and protect privacy of ballots under designee’s control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is our understanding that FVAP takes steps to ensure privacy and provides notices in relevant forms (e.g., FWAB and FPCA) when it cannot
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2(a)(2)(A)	Develop procedures to promote and expand use of FWAB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absentee-voter weeks, email alerts, and other outreach; revising and updating forms and providing tools^b
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2(a)(2)(B)	Use technology to implement a system to obtain list of candidates and submit printed ballots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FVAP website—for example, the link to “Get Started” (www.fvap.gov/registration/reg-ballot-request-pa), found under “State Information,” “PA,” then “Register to Vote and/or Request Ballot”

Table 4.1—Continued

Title and Section or Subsection	Summary of Requirement	Corresponding Activity or Location of Information About the Activity, as of November 2013
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2a(a), (b)	Establish procedures for collecting and delivering marked absentee ballots of absent overseas uniformed-service voters, implement procedures to facilitate delivery, and provide expedited delivery, in cooperation with USPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delegated in part or whole to MPSA
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2a(b)(3)	<i>May</i> establish alternative deadlines for certain locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delegated in part or whole to MPSA
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2a(c)	Conduct outreach to inform people of procedures, as covered under 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2a(a), (b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared with MPSA Broadcasts through email blasts and other dissemination channels
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2b	Develop online portals (to access procedural information) and notification program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work ongoing (FVAP, 2011a) Broadcasts through email blasts and other dissemination channels
10 U.S.C. § 1566a(d)	Conduct outreach to inform absent uniformed-service voters of assistance (§ 1566a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared with uniformed services Broadcasts through email blasts and other dissemination channels
Data, reporting, and other research- and technology-oriented provisions		
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(6); 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-4a(b)	Report on effectiveness of assistance and activities (§ 1973ff-2b), voter participation, state–federal cooperation, use of registration assistance (§ 1566a), use of ballot-collection and ballot-delivery procedures (§ 1973ff-2a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of implications of contact with FVAP resources in 2012 postelection report to Congress (FVAP, 2013b)^b FVAP website—in particular, the link to “Reports to Congress” (www.fvap.gov/reference/annualreports), found under “Reference/Reports” then “Reports”
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(11)	Develop standards for data collection and storage (with EAC and election officials), which also implies data storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work ongoing FVAP website—in particular, the link to “Surveys” (www.fvap.gov/reference/surveys), found under “Reference/Reports”
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-7	<i>May</i> establish one or more pilot programs to test feasibility of new technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FVAP website—for example, the link to “Grants” (www.fvap.gov/leo/grants), found under “Election Officials”
42 U.S.C. § 15344(a)(14)	Serve on EAC board of advisors (applies to the director of FVAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is our understanding that the FVAP director would serve on this board if the board were convened and the director were called to do so

Table 4.1—Continued

Title and Section or Subsection	Summary of Requirement	Corresponding Activity or Location of Information About the Activity, as of November 2013
Other requirements		
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff note	<i>Shall</i> carry out electronic voting demonstration project but <i>may</i> delay implementation of project under certain circumstances (applies to Secretary of Defense) ^c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and analysis to support potential implementation • The project would become mandatory pending EAC notification of guidelines and certification of assistance^d
42 U.S.C. § 1973gg	Promote exercise of right to vote (applies to federal, state, and local governments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried out through information dissemination and voter outreach programs, including motivational posters

NOTE: All the FVAP URLs listed in this table were active as of November 13, 2013, but most or all are now inactive (stale) because of a substantial redesign of the FVAP website. We present the URLs as historical data points to substantiate our analysis of FVAP activities. Many of the pages historically present at those URLs can be viewed using the Internet Archive Wayback Machine.

^a Technically, the provision refers to “this subchapter,” which tracks to “this Title” in UOCAVA and is a reference to Title I of UOCAVA, i.e., “Registration and Voting by Absent Uniformed Services Voters and Overseas Voters in Elections for Federal Office,” as codified in 42 U.S.C. §§1973ff et seq.

^b See the discussion of sufficiency under “Through the Lens of Federal Voting Assistance Program Activities.”

^c Implementation would have triggered an additional reporting requirement under 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff note ¶ (c).

^d Section 593 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, titled “Repeal of Electronic Voting Demonstration Project,” eliminated this requirement.

e.g., relating to personnel management or budgeting.⁷ For this analysis, we considered activities that stood out because they appeared to occupy a large share of the agency’s portfolio, they emerged as focal points in the logic-modeling process, or stakeholders expressed interest in them, but we did not consider all FVAP activities.⁸

We grouped FVAP activities into the following categories:

- Provide VAO training.
- Develop, distribute, collect, and deliver ballot materials.
- Engage state and local election officials.
- Develop, coordinate, and maintain IT systems and tools.
- Disseminate information and conduct outreach to voters.

⁷ Recall that we are focusing on law as the foundation for the core, given the potential to redraft policy, over time, but we reference policy in our discussions for comparative purposes.

⁸ As in Chapter Two, we touch on issues of VAO training and research-related activities in this chapter, but we do not delve deeply into either because we explored both more rigorously in phase 2 of the project.

- Oversee and conduct data collection.
- Prepare reports.

Most of the categories draw from the activity streams and vocabulary of the benchmark logic model, but, in some cases, such as election-official engagement and information dissemination and outreach, we bundled related activities within or across activity streams. Moreover, in the case of developing, distributing, collecting, and delivering ballot materials, we discuss some activities that drew stakeholders' attention but that do not appear in the logic model. For example, collection and delivery do not feature prominently in the model because DoD has delegated part, if not all, of the responsibility to MPSA. Table 4.2 summarizes our findings.

In the sections that follow, we explain the reasoning behind our assignments of *more than core coverage*, *less than core coverage*, and *unknown* in Table 4.2.⁹

Beyond Core Activities

In comparing FVAP activities to the law, we identified six areas in which FVAP activities appeared to reach beyond the core: VAO training, the website and portal, legislative initiatives,¹⁰ the Voting Assistance Guide, information dissemination and outreach, and data collection. However, in many instances, the agency's activities track to paragraphs in DoDI 1000.04, 2012.

Voting Assistance Officer Training

In the case of VAO training, which FVAP develops and offers in person and online, the law specifies, "Commanders at all levels are responsible for ensuring that unit voting officers are trained and equipped to provide information and assistance to members of the armed forces on voting matters,"¹¹ but does not specify the developer, provider, or modes of assistance. In that sense, there are no specific, direct statutory requirements—in UOCAVA or elsewhere—for FVAP or the presidential designee's involvement.

To operationalize the legislative mandate for VAO training, DoDI 1000.04, 2012, calls on FVAP to "develop and deliver multiple types of training materials for use by IVA offices, IVAOs [installation VAOs], UVAOs, and recruiters" and conduct voting assistance training during even-numbered years worldwide, and it requires that

⁹ See Table 4.1 for corresponding evidence of consistency.

¹⁰ We did not probe this issue at the time of our analysis because it was our understanding that FVAP's "legislative initiative" activities would be terminated, which they were. However, we note that the law, although once referring to legislative recommendations (see 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff note, now expired, "Governors' Reports on Implementation of Recommendations for Changes in State Law Made under the Federal Voting Assistance Program"), does not, at present, call for FVAP or the presidential designee to engage with states on legislative matters, except insofar as it is making the states aware of their responsibilities under UOCAVA. Yet, FVAP continued to play a part in states' legislative discussions, e.g., through the provision of testimony at hearings, and was described by stakeholders as a legislative advocate.

¹¹ Commanders are responsible for ensuring training under 10 U.S.C. § 1566(f)(1).

Table 4.2
Selected Federal Voting Assistance Program Activities in Relation to Law

Activity Stream	More Than Core Coverage	Less Than Core Coverage	Consistent with Core	Unknown
Provide VAO training	x			
Develop, distribute, collect, and deliver balloting materials, including cooperation with USPS				x
Engage state and local election officials ^a , with specific reference to				
Legislative initiatives	x			
Consulting and ensuring awareness		x		
Develop, coordinate, and maintain IT systems, tools, and databases, with specific reference to				
Website and portal	x			
Online assistants			x	
Online repository			x	
Disseminate information and conduct outreach to voters, with specific reference to				
Notification			x	
Information and procedural outreach			x	
Voting Assistance Guide	x			
Other outreach, including marketing	x			
Oversee and conduct data collection, with specific reference to postelection and other surveys	x			x
Prepare reports (annual, quadrennial, and other, e.g., grant programs)				x

SOURCES: RAND staff analysis based on logic model–development process, conversations with FVAP stakeholders, and review of 42 U.S.C. §§1973ff et seq. and other relevant statutes.

NOTE: *More than core coverage* indicates activities that appeared to reach beyond the core. *Less than core coverage* indicates an apparent gap in the coverage of core legal requirements. *Consistent with core* indicates rough consistency with core requirements. *Unknown* indicates indeterminate or lacking sufficient information to draw a firm conclusion with respect to one or more dimensions of the activity or requirements at time of the phase 1 analysis.

^a Except data collection, reporting, and grants.

IVAOs and UVAOs complete FVAP training prior to assuming duties. Moreover, the instruction indirectly calls for the availability of both in-person and online training and prefers in-person training. It requires that all major command VAOs, IVAOs, and

UVAOs attend FVAP voting assistance workshops; asks unit commanders to provide funding to enable UVAOs to attend in-person training to the extent practicable; and references online training as an alternative for VAOs in remote locations.

Responsive to DoDI 1000.04, FVAP develops and delivers multiple types of training materials, for use in-person and online, and it conducts training sessions during even-numbered years worldwide. In the 2014 training cycle, FVAP trainers held sessions at about 100 installations, embassies, and consulates and delivered training to more than 4,500 attendees.¹² More than 4,700 VAOs took the online training in a roughly similar period. At least some of the 4,500 and 4,700 in-person and online trainees might have taken both types of training.¹³

Website and Portal

Many FVAP activities, including VAO training, information dissemination, and voter outreach, make use of the website and portal. FVAP redesigned its website in 2008¹⁴ and, in 2010, made its website a “portal,”¹⁵ with the intention to link the voter directly to online state and local jurisdiction voting assistance services (FVAP, 2011f, p. 39). In the past five years, FVAP’s efforts have focused on the deployment and enhancement of direct voting assistance tools, such as the online assistants, which a UOCAVA voter can use to obtain information about voting in his or her jurisdiction and walk through the process of completing the FPCA and FWAB. In addition, FVAP has made the information published in the Voting Assistance Guide available electronically and provides links to training materials, reports, and reference materials.

Title 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff contains several provisions that speak directly to requirements for IT systems, tools, and databases, including the website, the portal, and online assistants. The law also calls for the creation of portals of information on voter-registration and absentee-ballot procedures; the establishment of a system of voter notification, using the military Global Network; the availability and maintenance of an online repository of state contact information; and the storage of data on the number of absentee ballots transmitted and received.

¹² FVAP provided the data on training sessions and trainees.

¹³ During the training sessions that we observed (Chapter Six), a nontrivial number of trainees raised their hands when the trainer asked who had taken the online training, and some appeared to have taken it recently.

¹⁴ FVAP undertook another major redesign of its website in 2014, subsequent to the completion of the analysis for this chapter. For that reason, many of the links and URLs for FVAP resources and information that we say were available at the time of this analysis are no longer available.

¹⁵ Since 2010, FVAP has initiated development of a comprehensive informational portal and content-management system to serve as a resource for external stakeholders and voters.

DoDI 1000.04, 2012—and current practice—appeared to take these provisions, especially those relating to portals, further:

- The law specifies portals of information on voter-registration and absentee-ballot procedures, but the instruction specifies a portal that would host service-specific information regarding voting assistance programs; contact information for VAOs (installation, major command, and commissioned units) within the DoD component; procedures to order voting materials; and links to other federal and state voting websites.
- The law targets the portals “to inform absent uniformed services voters” in particular, but the instruction only implies this audience.
- The instruction also calls for an online portal to collect and consolidate voting-program metrics, but neither their collection nor consolidation is required in law.

To the extent that FVAP activities tended to track the provisions of the instruction (DoDI 1000.04, 2012), and in large part they appeared to do so, the agency’s activities were also reaching beyond the core.

Voting Assistance Guide

The Voting Assistance Guide for 2012–2013, which was current at the time of this analysis, described the procedures for registering to vote, requesting a ballot, and voting in 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories, with contact information. It also included copies of the FWAB, FPCA, and electronic transmission cover sheet.

One could argue that the 2012–2013 Voting Assistance Guide contributed to the fulfillment of a range of statutory requirements, including the compilation and distribution of descriptive material on state absentee registration and voting procedures and other relevant facts (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff[b][5])¹⁶ and the use of the FWAB (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2[a][2]). The latter provides voters with another channel of access to that form and to a means of transmission.

However, in serving all these roles, both online and in print, the Voting Assistance Guide might go further than necessary. Whereas the law calls for FVAP to compile and distribute descriptive procedural material and other facts, the law does not require that FVAP provide this information in a bound volume. Nevertheless, FVAP prepared—and continues to prepare, albeit at reduced volume¹⁷—a printed edition, which, in turn, requires updates and errata sheets.

¹⁶ Under 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(5), the presidential designee shall “compile and distribute (A) descriptive material on State absentee registration and voting procedures, and (B) to the extent practicable, facts relating to specific elections, including dates, offices involved, and the text of ballot questions. . . .”

¹⁷ It is our understanding that FVAP has reduced the size of its printing runs of this guide and is prioritizing the maintenance and upkeep of its online version.

Other Outreach, Including Marketing

FVAP conducts outreach to voters through many channels, including its website, bulk email, media, partner pass-through, and person-to-person contact.¹⁸ FVAP uses bulk email and social networking to share absentee-voting deadlines and procedures and to offer resources to UOCAVA voters to inform and educate them about the UOCAVA absentee-voting process (FVAP, 2011f, p. 46). In addition, FVAP runs PSAs on absentee voting using television and radio (e.g., the American Forces Radio and Television Service and the American Forces Network) and places notices in private and military-focused print publications, such as *Stars and Stripes*; the *Army Times*, *Navy Times*, and *Air Force Times*; the *International Herald Tribune*; and other overseas publications. FVAP also provides downloadable posters on its website, for use by VAOs and IVA offices, on military installations.¹⁹

The law requires that the presidential designee provide UOCAVA voters, especially uniformed-service voters, with information on voting procedures, the availability of voting assistance and resources, state-level contacts, and, to the extent possible, specific elections, including dates, offices involved, and the text of ballot questions. In some instances, the law prescribes the development or use of a particular technology, e.g., the military Global Network for notification; in other instances, it does not. Requirements pertaining to “descriptive material on State absentee registration and voting procedures” and “facts relating to specific elections” (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff[b][5]) and the “online repository of State contact information” (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-1[e][4]) and the general call for federal, state, and local governments to promote the exercise of the right of citizens to vote (42 U.S.C. § 1973gg) apply broadly to absent uniformed-service voters and to overseas-citizen voters.²⁰ The rest apply only to absent uniformed-service voters or, for outreach on collection and delivery procedures (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2a[c]), even more narrowly to absent “overseas” uniformed-service voters.

FVAP appears to be meeting the basic informational requirements in that it undertakes activities relevant to each, such as these:

- With regard to voter notification (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2b[a][2]), FVAP notifies military members of voter-registration information and resources by sending

¹⁸ In 2010, FVAP engaged a contractor to develop a voting assistance communications and marketing plan (FVAP, 2011f, p. 46). According to FVAP, 2011f, p. 46, the goal of the marketing plan was to expand outreach to voters, improve brand recognition of FVAP.gov, drive users to online tools, and raise overall awareness of key milestones and dates for voters to meet in order to successfully cast a ballot.

¹⁹ The posters were located on FVAP’s website at the “Motivational Posters” tab (formerly www.fvap.gov/vao/posters), under the “Voting Assistance Officers” heading. We note that the URL is no longer valid, though a snapshot of the content formerly there was available through the Internet Archive Wayback Machine as of August 13, 2015. FVAP now refers to the posters as informational posters.

²⁰ The requirement for a technology-based system, under 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2(a)(2), also applies broadly.

email blasts using the military Global Network 90, 60, and 30 days prior to the general election.

- With regard to outreach (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2a[c]; 10 U.S.C. § 1566a[d]), FVAP uses social media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter, to push out information on how to register to vote and request absentee ballots (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2a[c]).²¹
- With regard to compiling and distributing descriptive materials on state absentee registration and voting procedures, FVAP provides relevant information and materials in the online and print versions of the Voting Assistance Guide. Voters can also obtain state-specific information through the online assistants on the FVAP website.

The law on UOCAVA voting says very little about outreach as a means to motivate voting; rather, it speaks to “outreach” in terms of information about procedures (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2a[c]) and the availability of assistance through voter assistance offices (10 U.S.C. § 1566a[d]), targeting uniformed-service voters. Title 10 U.S.C. § 1566(i)(3), although not directed at FVAP, takes a slightly broader approach in requiring that, “[w]here practicable, a special day or days shall be designated at each military installation for the purpose of informing members of the armed forces and their dependents of election timing, registration requirements, and voting procedures.”²² Only in 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg, which speaks of an imperative to promote the exercise of the right of citizens to vote, does the law edge nearer to a call for motivational outreach.

By contrast, DoDI 1000.04, 2012, refers to notification “[a]s a component of a comprehensive marketing and voter education initiative” (enclosure 3, ¶ j, p. 10); it also calls on the services to develop a component-wide communication plan to “encourage voting participation” (enclosure 4, ¶ 2k, p. 15), among other things.

Data Collection, Including Surveys

FVAP undertakes data collection through regularly scheduled surveys and other means. In addition to conducting surveys, FVAP tracks website and tool usage; works with external providers, such as Google Analytics; records indicators of IVA offices’ compliance with DoD policy; and obtains quarterly reports from IVAOs. In the dis-

²¹ In the case of outreach regarding ballot delivery and collection, DoDI 1000.04, 2012, assigns responsibility to MPSA. Enclosure 4, ¶ 2ad(2), p. 18, calls on MPSA to “[d]evelop an outreach plan to inform overseas uniformed services voters regarding the ballot collection and delivery service to be implemented prior to each general election for Federal office.”

²² As noted in Table 4.1, “absentee-voter weeks” (designated weeks with installation-based activities that create awareness of absentee voting and provide information about and resources for absentee voting)—and email alerts and other voter-oriented outreach—might also be contributing to the fulfillment of the core requirement for procedures to promote and expand the use of the FWAB. Similarly, FVAP’s conference attendance and other outreach directed toward state and local election officials might be serving to improve the officials’ awareness of their requirements, which is also a core requirement.

cussion that follows, we focus on the set of routine postelection surveys, which FVAP conducts in coordination with DMDC.

According to FVAP,²³ these surveys were intended to do the following:

- Determine UOCAVA citizens' participation in the electoral process.
- Assess the impact of FVAP's efforts to simplify and ease the process of voting absentee.
- Evaluate other progress made to facilitate absentee voting participation.
- Identify any remaining obstacles to voting by these citizens.
- Meet legislative requirements for reporting on the effectiveness of assistance, including statistical analyses of UOCAVA voter participation.

Separately, FVAP has surveyed ADM personnel, ADM spouses, overseas citizens,²⁴ UVAOs, State Department VAOs, and local election officials.²⁵

In Appendix C, we present data on survey response rates, some of which have been quite low, and discuss possible reasons, including the length and frequency of the surveys.

We categorized the activity as “more than core coverage” in Table 4.2, in part, because the law does not call for FVAP to conduct surveys. Although it requires a variety of activities that would explicitly or implicitly involve data collection, it might not necessitate surveys that cover all the aforementioned recipient categories in such depth, breadth, or frequency. FVAP must report on effectiveness, voter registration and participation, state–federal cooperation, utilization of voting assistance, and ballot collection and delivery; develop and implement online tools, consisting of the portals, repository, and online assistants; compile and distribute descriptive material on state absentee registration and voting procedures and facts relating to specific elections; and store state data collected by EAC with input from FVAP. In the case of voter participation (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff[b][6]), the quadrennial analysis must be “statistical.”

Title 10 U.S.C. § 1566(g) contains the only explicit legislative reference to the conduct of surveys.²⁶ It calls on the Secretary of Defense to conduct periodic surveys of all overseas locations and vessels at sea with military units responsible for collecting mail for return shipment to the United States and all port facilities in the United States and overseas where military-related mail is collected for shipment to overseas locations

²³ The first four items are based on information that was and still is provided on the FVAP website (FVAP, undated [b]); the last one is based on 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(6) and communication with FVAP.

²⁴ According to FVAP, the overseas-citizen surveys have been discontinued for methodological reasons and until such time as FVAP can reasonably identify the overseas-citizen voter population.

²⁵ FVAP and EAC were merging their respective quantitative surveys at the time of this analysis.

²⁶ MPSA conducted an online end-of-year survey for the Military Postal System's absentee ballot–handling procedures and performance during the 2010 general election. See MPSA, undated.

or to the United States. The surveys are to be conducted for the purpose of determining whether voting materials are awaiting shipment at those locations and, if so, for how long.

It remains to be determined whether surveying is the right approach to fulfilling the various statutory requirements set out above, but, as a step toward making that determination, one can ask whether the postelection survey questions relate—at least conceptually—to those requirements and, if so, whether they are necessary or appropriate to meeting the requirements. On that basis, we note that the surveys are long and, depending on how one interprets the requirement for reporting on effectiveness,²⁷ some questions might lack a direct statutory connection.²⁸ The data in Table 2.1 in Chapter Two suggest that relatively few survey questions directly support FVAP’s statutory reporting requirements; nevertheless, they might serve other institutional purposes, e.g., for internal planning and strategy development. As addressed in the related RAND project on metrics and measures, surveys can provide insight to what is or is not working, on which the program can build.

In addition, we found that FVAP might be collecting similar information from more than one source. In some instances, e.g., relating to voter participation, topical coverage appears to be duplicative across surveys and other data-collection mechanisms, such as IVAO quarterly reports.²⁹ This type of duplication might be intentional for purposes of cross-referencing, triangulation, and validation, but we do not know whether such processes have occurred or proven insightful for reporting or managerial purposes.

As in each of the prior discussions, FVAP’s activities appeared to be at least roughly in line with the text of DoDI 1000.04, 2012; for example, the instruction mandates surveys and identifies a set of survey populations that includes ADM personnel and dependents, overseas U.S. civilians, VAOs, and election officials.

Finally, we note that, although we categorized this activity as reaching beyond the core, it is still possible that some elements of the data collection did not fully cover the core. Thus, lacking sufficient information to make a final determination, we have also placed a mark in the “Unknown” column. The surveys might be excessive in some

²⁷ The wording of the effectiveness requirement in 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-4a(b)(1) could support at least two different approaches to reporting, one much narrower than the other, which we note later in this chapter.

²⁸ FVAP cites satisfaction results in the discussion of federal voting assistance activities in the 2012 postelection report to Congress (see, for example, FVAP, 2013b, pp. 27–28). By all appearances, the citations to the satisfaction results seem to equate satisfaction with effectiveness.

²⁹ Similar data are also collected from state and local election officials, and their response rate is higher. For example, weighted response rates of local election officials in the 2010 postelection survey was 53 percent, whereas weighted response rates for active-duty military service members and active-duty military spouses were 15 percent and 14 percent, respectively (FVAP, 2011f). Response rates were not provided in FVAP’s 2012 postelection report to Congress (FVAP, 2013b). Data on voter registration and participation by absent uniformed-service voters are also collected through the quarterly reports submitted by IVAOs and the EAC local election-official survey, which is merging with the FVAP survey.

regards but still insufficient or inappropriately focused to meet reporting requirements, including those on effectiveness. We return to this issue in the context of reporting but suggest it as a topic for FVAP's further exploration.

Candidates for Augmentation

In comparing FVAP activities to the law, we identified three areas in which FVAP might need to augment its efforts to align its activities with statutory requirements: developing, distributing, collecting, and delivering balloting materials; engaging state and local election officials; and preparing reports. With regard to the first area, we learned that some of the elements in question, e.g., ballot collection and delivery, had been delegated, in part, to MPSA,³⁰ but we could not account fully for other elements related to the use of the FWAB.

Procedures to Promote and Expand the Use of the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot

FVAP plays many parts in developing, facilitating, and encouraging the use of the FWAB. For example, it shepherds the process of revising and updating the form; provides tools, such as the online assistants and Electronic Transmission Service (ETS); conducts awareness campaigns and other outreach; and helps to distribute hard copies, if needed.

The law requires FVAP to adopt procedures to promote and expand the use of the FWAB as a backup measure to vote in elections for federal office (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2[a][2][A]), but the meaning of *procedure* is open to interpretation. The requirement for such procedures appeared to be separate and distinct from the requirement for the utilization of technology to implement a system for voters to obtain populated ballots and print and mail them. FVAP appeared to be meeting the technology requirement with the online assistants, but whether its other efforts constituted procedures was unclear.³¹ On that basis, we marked “Unknown” in Table 4.2 but would suggest that FVAP clarify its interpretation of the requirement in future guidance.

Consulting State and Local Election Officials and Ensuring Their Awareness

FVAP engages with state and local election officials in at least two distinct modes: one involving the provision of assistance and the other involving the collection and use of information. FVAP has assisted election officials by providing online training and guidance, sending email alerts, funding research grants, participating in conferences, conducting other local outreach, and making direct (person-to-person) contact. In

³⁰ FVAP notes that it plays a part in collection and delivery and that its role with MPSA is more than advisory; for example, in 2010, it funded MPSA to purchase the express-mail scanners to expedite mail. FVAP also coordinated with USPS the delivery days and times for express-mail package times. According to FVAP, it also plays a part in conducting outreach to absent overseas uniformed-service voters on procedures for the collection and delivery of marked absentee ballots (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2a[c]).

³¹ More recently, FVAP has also begun work with the Council of State Governments (CSG) to discuss the use of forms as UOCAVA voter-registration applications.

addition, FVAP, in consultation with DOJ, considers and responds to states' requests for waivers of certain legal requirements under the MOVE Act. As an informational conduit, FVAP also engages with election officials through data collection, compilation, storage, reporting, and distribution. For purposes of this discussion, we focused on engagement as assistance and not on data collection.

The law (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff[b][1]) includes a requirement for FVAP to consult state and local election officials in carrying out UOCAVA³² and ensure their awareness of the requirements of UOCAVA. We considered FVAP's activities in two parts: first, with respect to consulting and, second, with respect to ensuring awareness.

The evidence on consulting was mixed. FVAP was surveying local election officials on their use of and satisfaction with FVAP products³³ and engaging with officials at conferences, such as those of the Election Center and NASED, but was not reaching out regularly to understand their perspectives on UOCAVA more generally.³⁴

FVAP's efforts to ensure awareness merited closer consideration. The law set a high bar for attainment when it required FVAP to ensure—rather than promote or encourage—awareness. Much of FVAP's state- and local-oriented activity might have promoted or encouraged awareness, but it was unclear whether it ensured awareness. FVAP was providing election officials with online training and guidance,³⁵ but we found mixed evidence of the use of these resources. FVAP's conference participation and other local outreach might have been raising officials' awareness of the legal requirements but was not uniformly geared toward that purpose.³⁶ Email alerts were targeted more explicitly, e.g., as reminders of deadlines, but did not cover the full spectrum of requirements. In June 2013, FVAP began publishing a newsletter for election officials (FVAP, 2013d). The newsletter, if continued, could provide an opportunity for FVAP to contribute to awareness on a more deliberate and regular basis.

³² The U.S. Code refers to “this subchapter,” which tracks to “this Title” in Pub. L. 99-410 and is a reference to Title I of UOCAVA, i.e., “Registration and Voting by Absent Uniformed Services Voters and Overseas Voters in Elections for Federal Office,” as codified across 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973ff et seq.

³³ See, for example, the 2012 Post-Election Qualitative Voting Survey of Local Election Officials (DMDC, 2013a, 2013b).

³⁴ Subsequent to the phase 1 analysis, FVAP embarked on a relationship with CSG, potentially reflective of a more-systematic approach to engaging with the states. We address this development in the presentation of evidence of change in Chapter Seven.

³⁵ This training and guidance was available on the FVAP website under the “Election Official” tab (formerly www.fvap.gov/leo/index) during our period of analysis. This URL is no longer valid, but the image that was once there was viewable using the Internet Archive Wayback Machine as of August 13, 2015.

³⁶ It is our understanding that, subsequent to the phase 1 analysis, FVAP began developing a checklist of requirements for election officials but had not yet completed the task at the time of this writing.

Congressional Reports on Effectiveness and Other Matters

Table 4.3 lists the laws related to FVAP reporting requirements and the reports that FVAP has submitted in response to each requirement according to the FVAP website. Appendix C provides background on the different reports.

The law sets out reporting requirements for FVAP in 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(6) and § 1973ff-4a, the latter of which also references 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2b. In 1986, § 102(b) of Pub. L. 99-410, i.e., UOCAVA, introduced 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(6); in 2009, § 586 and § 583 of Pub. L. 111-84, which included the MOVE Act, added

Table 4.3
Reporting Requirements and Related Reports

Statutory Requirement for FVAP Reporting	Report Submitted or Created by FVAP in Apparent Response to Statutory Requirement
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-4a(a) Report on status of implementation and assessment of programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Report on the Status and Implementation of Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act Programs</i> (FVAP, 2011c)
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-4a(b) Annual report on effectiveness of activities and utilization of certain procedures ^a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>2012 Post-Election Report to Congress</i> (FVAP, 2013b) • <i>2011 Annual Report on the Effectiveness of Activities and Utilization of Certain Procedures</i> (FVAP, 2012) • <i>2010 Post Election Survey Report to Congress</i> (FVAP, 2011f) • <i>2009 Annual Report on the Effectiveness of Activities and Utilization of Certain Procedures</i> (FVAP, 2011b)
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(6) Duties of presidential designee pertaining to quadrennial report ^b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>2012 Post-Election Report to Congress</i> (FVAP, 2013b) • <i>Eighteenth Report: 2008 Post Election Survey Report</i> (FVAP, 2011d) • <i>The Federal Voting Assistance Program: Seventeenth Report</i> (FVAP, 2005b) • <i>The Federal Voting Assistance Program: The 16th Report</i> (FVAP, 2001) • <i>The Federal Voting Assistance Program: Fifteenth Report</i> (FVAP, 1997)
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-7 Technology pilot program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>2010 Electronic Voting Support Wizard (EVSW) Technology Pilot Program Report to Congress</i> (FVAP, 2013e)^c
42 U.S.C. § 1973ff note ¶ (c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the demonstration project would have triggered an additional reporting requirement.

SOURCES: RAND staff analysis based on content of 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973ff et seq. and the above-referenced FVAP reports to Congress.

^a The MOVE Act introduced this reporting requirement in October 2009. The corresponding reports listed in the table postdate that legislation.

^b This reporting requirement has been in place in a similar but not identical form since 1986.

^c FVAP now refers to the specific tools that are directly available and supported by FVAP through FVAP.gov, including wizard-like tools, as online assistants.

42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-4a and § 1973ff-2b. Some elements of both sets of provisions—the provisions that date back to 1986 and the newer provisions—are open to interpretation, but we focus on the newer ones.

The scope of the reporting requirement for an assessment of the effectiveness of assistance activities (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-4a[b][1]) can be read narrowly or broadly,³⁷ but one can still ask whether FVAP’s reports speak to the effectiveness of such activities—be they few or many—or to any other statutory reporting requirements.

We found that the annual and postelection reports featured sections that related topically to most, if not all, of the requirements but that the material contained in each section did not uniformly meet the requirements. In the report section titled “FVAP Activities,” which appeared to be intended to address the effectiveness requirement, most of the indicators spoke to outputs, usage, and satisfaction, none of which gets at effectiveness. In the parlance of the logic model, the information on usage and satisfaction has the advantage of venturing into the domain of intermediate effects but does not get as far as outcomes or mission attainment. Although it appears as if FVAP—or the survey developer—was equating customer satisfaction and program effectiveness, these are not equivalent concepts.³⁸

Coming closer to singling out effectiveness, FVAP (FVAP, 2013b, p. 19) reported a statistical relationship between contact with DoD voting assistance resources and the likelihood of an active-duty member voting and returning his or her ballot:

The most significant finding indicates that of the active duty members who interacted with one of these resources and received an absentee ballot, 86% voted and returned their absentee ballots; whereas for those active duty members who received an absentee ballot, but never interacted with one of the resources, only 80% voted and returned their ballots.

Although it is unclear whether the analysis uncovered a causal link between interaction with FVAP resources and successful voting outcomes—voters might interact with those resources because they are more interested in or intent on voting and, hence,

³⁷ In 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-4a(b)(1), the phrase “including the activities and actions of the Federal Voting Assistance Program” appears to be tied to the opening line, “An assessment of the effectiveness of activities carried out under 42 USC §1973ff-2b of this title.” On that basis, the contents of 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2b might establish the bounds of the reporting requirement, but those bounds might still allow the possibility of different approaches to annual reporting. One approach could focus on duties that are set out in 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2b(a), involving the development of online portals and the establishment of a voter-notification program. Another approach could be more expansive and take into consideration everything covered under 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2b(a) and § 1973ff-2b(b), which confirms the presidential designee’s duties and responsibilities under directive or regulation. It is also possible that the term *Federal Voting Assistance Program* refers in this context not just to FVAP, the agency, but to all federal voting assistance offered under DoD or other federal auspices.

³⁸ See Greenfield and Camm, 2005, for a discussion of the relationship between customer satisfaction, as embodied in quality ratings, and contract spending on service provision.

more likely to succeed in voting (FVAP, 2014a)—it suggests the potential value of increasing voters’ awareness of FVAP’s resources.³⁹

Concluding Remarks on Activities, Requirements, and Findings

Our approach in this chapter consisted of a crosswalk among law, policy, and FVAP activities. We examined the relationship between FVAP activities and core requirements found mostly in UOCAVA. To a lesser extent, we also considered FVAP activities and law in relation to provisions of policy found in DoDI 1000.04, 2012. Our analysis did not reveal chasms in FVAP’s coverage of the core; nevertheless, it suggested that FVAP might need to do more to ensure state and local officials’ awareness of requirements; to assess, in its reports, the effectiveness of voting assistance; and, possibly, to develop procedures to promote and expand the use of the FWAB.⁴⁰

With regard to our assessments of some activities, such as VAO training,⁴¹ as reaching beyond the core, we note again that these are areas in which FVAP might have some flexibility in its approach, yet still serve the voting community constructively. In the case of the printed and bound Voting Assistance Guide, stakeholders across communities, including those serving overseas-citizen voters, spoke out for its benefits. Similarly, we recall that stakeholders supported the augmentation of the FVAP website and suggested new and additional features for voters and other users. Finally, we note that outreach might be supporting core requirements other than those specifically referring to outreach, including those pertaining to the use of the FWAB and to engagement with election officials, and serve an important role in promoting voter awareness.⁴²

Having completed our look at requirements and determined that FVAP might have some latitude to chart its path in the activities that it undertakes to support the core, meet more-general requirements, and meet other institutional needs, we were able to address what it might mean to do so. Returning to the Venn diagram, we considered the relative positions of the ovals. In Figure 4.2, we suggest that FVAP would need to institute enough change to cover the law oval fully but, upon meeting the core requirements found in UOCAVA and elsewhere, it could then consider alterations to the positions—and size and contents—of the other ovals.

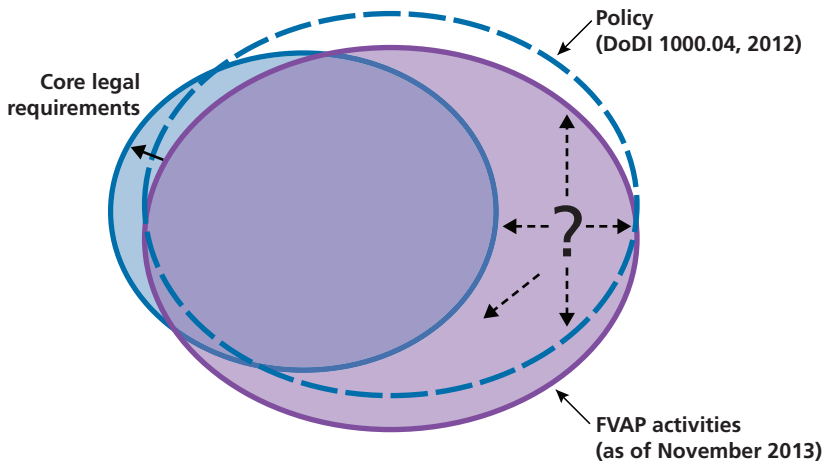
³⁹ FVAP recognizes that the positive relationship does not establish causality and that individual characteristics, such as interest and intent, might play a part in the result. It has written about these issues in a recent research note. See FVAP, 2014a, p. 6.

⁴⁰ We address more-recent gains in these areas in Chapter Seven.

⁴¹ We address this issue at length in Chapter Six.

⁴² We discuss FVAP’s more-recent evidence-based targeting of outreach in Chapter Seven.

Figure 4.2
What Does It Mean to Chart a Path?



SOURCE: RAND staff analysis.
 RAND RR882-4.2

In addition, our analysis revealed two organizational challenges. First, the provisions of law and the activities that pertain to them do not occupy discrete, harmonized organizational “buckets.” For example, two core activities—ensuring awareness and conducting outreach—involve combinations of assistance, communications, and IT, which, in turn, are organizationally separate and interdependent. The difficulty of bucketing suggested the importance of organizational coherence, something that we called out in Chapter Two as potentially lacking. Second, a shortfall in reporting on effectiveness might reflect an underlying lack of awareness of effectiveness. Along such lines, our initial review of FVAP’s reporting on effectiveness and our conversations with stakeholders suggested that FVAP and the larger voting community would benefit from a better understanding of the relationship between the costs and benefits of its activities, both in setting and in implementing policy.

In Chapter Five, we discuss the recommendations that flowed from each of the foregoing chapters, including those speaking to mission ambiguity and to the size, position, and content of the activity oval.

Preliminary Recommendations and Initial Guidance

At the close of phase 1 of the project, we introduced a set of recommendations and guidance as preliminary and initial because the project was not yet complete. In later phases, we continued to explore FVAP's relationships with its partners and customers, including VAOs and IVA offices, and its approach to research.

Nevertheless, the focal points, themes, and other findings that emerged from each step, i.e., logic-model development, stakeholder outreach, and the assessment of the relationship between FVAP activities and requirements, strongly suggested that FVAP, its stakeholders, and the law were each seeing the world differently.

We can summarize their perspectives as follows:

- FVAP saw itself, in large part, as benefiting UOCAVA voters through intermediaries, such as VAOs, election officials, and NGOs.
- Stakeholders did not see a clear path from FVAP to voting success and were uncertain about what FVAP was doing or why.
- The law saw FVAP doing more than it must in some regards and possibly less than it must in others.

We interpreted the differences among the three perspectives as signaling substantive disconnects. If, for example, FVAP saw itself as operating through intermediaries, but those same intermediaries could not see the path from FVAP to them or to UOCAVA voters, it seemed likely that something was amiss.

This chapter recasts the findings from each of the preceding chapters as actionable recommendations and guidance for FVAP leadership.

However, we note that, by the time we formally delivered these recommendations to FVAP, the agency had already begun to act on them. This was possible because we shared our findings as they emerged, to generate debate and discussion. Nevertheless, we recount them here to provide a record of this phase of the project and a means of gauging the changes that we report in Chapter Seven. Absent a clear understanding of where FVAP started, it might be difficult to appreciate how much and how quickly it has changed.

Become “One FVAP”

To become one FVAP, the agency would need to come to terms with its mission, integrate and shore up its operations to support that mission, and clarify and sharpen its message.

Come to Terms with Its Mission

To start, we suggested that FVAP hone its mission in a manner that is consistent with law and policy and establish a common, internally shared understanding of the agency’s purpose and priorities. Merely agreeing to a mission statement, potentially subject to myriad interpretations, would not be enough. Coming to terms would entail establishing a set of primary functions, consisting of core, supporting, and institutional activities, which, in turn, should derive from an evidence-based analysis of requirements, needs, and potential or actual effectiveness.

Our engagement with stakeholders strongly suggested that FVAP is doing what it does best when it offers direct assistance and responds to the expressed needs of its partners and customers. In recognition of the latter, FVAP might consider engaging directly with its stakeholders in coming to terms with its mission. Although it cannot satisfy everyone’s interests—some stakeholder interests are inherently conflicting—FVAP can draw its partners and customers into the process and perhaps build stronger relationships with them.

As general guidance, we suggested simplicity. We recommended a handful of initial steps to better ensure that state and local election officials are aware of UOCAVA requirements, such as the following:

- Develop a checklist of state and local requirements with links to relevant guidance documents—and produce relevant guidance if none exists.
- Reach out to election officials on a routine, scheduled basis.
- Take a vendor perspective at state and local conferences, and maintain a table or booth with necessary supplies, including the checklist and corresponding guidance.

Lastly, we noted that some of FVAP’s challenges with mission and priorities might be a consequence of leadership churn and attendant policy changes. To the extent that FVAP is entering an era of institutional stability, it might be better able to address these issues.

Integrate and Shore Up Operations

Operational integration could occur through the reorganization and pooling of resources into fewer divisions or through actions taken to strengthen the connective tissues of the organization. In terms of the logic model, the former would imply having

fewer boxes and activity streams, and the latter would mean drawing firmer arrows between them.

The choice of approach would depend on decisions about the agency's mission and priorities, including the prominence of motivation and FVAP's role in training and research, but some integrative steps could be taken regardless. For example, the agency could begin a staff-wide conversation about the research needs of each activity stream and start to identify means to channel the results of research to those streams.

Regardless of the agency's choice of organizational structure, we recommended that FVAP establish clear lines of accountability to legislative mandates; that is, it should be able to trace each provision of law to a person with primary responsibility for related activities. The activities might cut across organizational lines—as we noted earlier, the law does not lend itself to organizational bucketing—but it should be possible to identify a lead for each provision.

As a related matter, we suggested that FVAP address apparent top-heaviness. To start, the director might consider what role each leader is serving; how that role tracks to the mission, priorities, and institutional needs of the agency; and whether the role is duplicative of a role filled elsewhere in the organization. Similarly, FVAP might benefit from considering the distribution of staff members across activity streams.

Both to promote integration, by increasing staff understanding of the interrelatedness of FVAP activities, and to better address staffing constraints, we recommended that FVAP consider cross-training personnel.¹ FVAP might also explore opportunities to adopt common strategies and shared methods across activity streams, as in the cases of building and maintaining relationships, developing and modifying training materials and guidance, and identifying best practices. This is not to say that personnel or tools can or should be viewed as strictly interchangeable, but to recognize opportunities to leverage resources.

To address remaining capacity and capability deficits, FVAP would need to assess its functional needs (e.g., skills and tools) in relation to its priorities, identify gaps, and take actions to fill them. For example, FVAP might find that it needs just enough analytical ability to establish its research priorities, frame research questions, make use of findings, and oversee external contracts. We recommended that FVAP consider professional development as a means to fill some of the gaps.² Professional development appeared to be available to FVAP staff on an ad hoc basis, but FVAP could identify

¹ We knew that election-official assistance staff had begun to accompany voter assistance staff during VAO training sessions and viewed this as a step in the direction of cross-training.

² If seeking to become a standard bearer, as some stakeholders suggested, FVAP might encourage professional development as a step toward staff members becoming best in class in their respective fields.

needs, both institutional and individual, and opportunities more comprehensively and systematically.³

We also suggested that FVAP consider converting term appointments that appeared to support primary functions to permanent appointments. This staffing decision would require consideration of what constitutes a primary function, which would, in turn, require that FVAP address issues of mission and priorities.

Sharpen and Clarify the Message

In whatever way FVAP chose to orient its mission and priorities, the agency would also need to harmonize its messaging—across leadership and staff at all levels of the organization and across outputs, including online guidance and training materials, public presentations, congressional reports, PSAs, and other communications. Beyond a common, shared understanding of the agency’s mission and priorities, FVAP leadership and staff would benefit from a common, shared vocabulary for describing them. We recommended that FVAP’s communication group take responsibility for the consistency of language across divisions and outputs and, perhaps, create communication materials for staff use to support consistent messaging. We address the issue of messaging again in Chapter Eight but note that logic models can provide a foundation for internal and external communication and that the final, robust logic model that emerged from this project could serve in that role.

Build Trust and Strengthen Relationships

We also suggested that FVAP attend to its relationships with stakeholders. Stronger, two-way relationships could enable FVAP to use its own resources more effectively, e.g., by spending less time fighting fires, better leveraging the resources of its partners, and, ultimately, better serving its customers. We suggested a fundamental transformation in FVAP’s relationships, requiring a reconceptualization of the agency’s approach to its stakeholders and, more concretely, behavioral changes around communication and transparency. Our views on these issues largely echoed the sentiments of FVAP’s stakeholders.

Work with Partners and Serve Customers

Here, we emphasized the importance of valuing—and treating—partners and customers as active participants in the voting system, not as passive actors. To do so, FVAP would need to recognize the different circumstances of its stakeholders and the implications of those differences. We illustrate by categorizing UOCAVA voters as either

³ These recommendations are consistent with OPM guidelines on employee development and training and the use of an individual development plan. For more information on OPM guidelines, see OPM, 2005; for more information on the use of an individual development plan, see OPM, undated.

uniformed or overseas citizens. In our discussion of the benchmark logic model, we observed that FVAP is not especially well-positioned to reach out directly to overseas voters who are not members of the uniformed services, and, in our conversations with stakeholders, we heard concerns about the effort directed toward them and the extent to which DoD, if not FVAP, held interest in them. On that basis, FVAP might seek to reach overseas civilians indirectly, through alternative channels—that is, to cultivate its relationships with potential intermediaries. Overseas NGOs, for example, have established a combination of grassroots, person-to-person, and online connections with overseas-citizen voters; if working collaboratively with those NGOs, FVAP might be able to draw on their connections to provide better service to voters whom it cannot reach otherwise.⁴

Communicate Better and More Regularly

Stakeholders were nearly unanimous in asking for both more and better communication from FVAP and in their portrayals of what that would mean. From their perspectives, FVAP would need to reach out more often and more regularly, listen to what its stakeholders have to say when it engages with them, and respond to them, even if only to say “we cannot do what you asked us to do . . . and here is why.” Moreover, even in broadcast mode, stakeholders indicated opportunities that we believed merited consideration—for example, bolstering the VAO, election-official, and reporting components of the website to be more user-friendly and routinizing outreach so that it is more predictable, even as a touch-base mechanism, e.g., “we are sending this newsletter to keep you up to date on recent improvements to . . .” or “we are contacting you to find out whether you have any concerns or questions about. . . .”⁵

As a related matter, we also took the part of FVAP’s stakeholders in suggesting that FVAP continue to work diligently to avoid the appearance of partisanship, politicization, or salesmanship. Recalling the stakeholders’ observation that FVAP’s outreach sometimes appeared to be driven too much by personal agenda and not enough by the agency’s mission, we recommended close adherence to the mission, once decided and articulated.

Operate as Openly as Possible

Recognizing that FVAP is serving a community that extends well beyond the military but operates within a national security institution (DoD) and must abide by its rules, we recommended that FVAP operate as openly as possible and do what it can to share what it can, when it can. FVAP faces an inevitable tension around information dissemination: In the security community, caution is a priority; in the voting community, openness is more the norm. FVAP cannot eliminate this tension, but it can do more to

⁴ Some stakeholders offered specific suggestions that we forwarded to FVAP separately.

⁵ See the earlier comments on state and local engagement.

bridge the divide. For example, it can post data sooner, post criteria for making decisions, and let stakeholders know when change is in the works, so that they can prepare for it and, if possible, play a part in it.

FVAP might not be able to satisfy all of its stakeholders, given their sometimes-differing views, but it can, through increased openness, do more to make its case for why it does what it does, when it does it. If the agency can say clearly “our purpose is A”; “our priorities are X, Y, and Z”; and “our activities are based on the following evidence-based analysis . . . ,” it might be able to argue more persuasively for its approaches to assistance.

Embrace a Culture and Principles of Effectiveness

We finished with an overarching recommendation for FVAP to adopt, internalize, and apply a culture and principles of effectiveness throughout its operations, beginning with its work on its mission, priorities, and activities. We suggested that FVAP take up the call for effectiveness found in the congressional reporting requirements as a way of doing business—that is, as the underlying premise of policy and actions on a day-to-day basis. More concretely, we suggested that FVAP engage routinely in benefit–cost assessment (BCA), be it quantitative or qualitative, in developing and implementing projects, assessing the merits of proposed activities, and as a way of thinking about daily tasks.⁶ We were not asking FVAP to conduct BCA simply to meet basic administrative requirements, common to all federal agencies, but to think of BCA as a lens through which to view its entire operation. Adopting a BCA-like mind-set could lead to a more-rigorous and more-thorough consideration of the implications of policy and actions for FVAP and for the voting community—particularly if FVAP were to take a broad, systemic view of voting assistance and consider the benefits and costs of activities throughout the community. However, taking a broader and more analytically oriented approach might also require a better understanding of the voting assistance system and additional analytical means.

Concluding Remarks on Recommendations and Guidance

We started the discussion of phase 1 of this project by describing our analytical approach, consisting of logic modeling, stakeholder outreach, and a requirements assessment. At the outset, we noted that the process of developing the benchmark logic model would enable us to see the agency through the agency’s eyes and that the next

⁶ BCA is just one approach to understanding effectiveness, but it offers the advantages of well-accepted and well-documented methods and tools. See OMB, 2003. If FVAP needs to identify measures or cannot readily quantify benefits, a logic model, as described in Chapter Two and Appendix A, can provide insight.

two approaches would supplement the model by enabling us to see FVAP through the eyes of its stakeholders and in terms of core requirements, respectively. In effect, the second and third views would provide us with information that would help us to fill out, test, and validate the model.

We found that the three perspectives did not line up. FVAP saw itself as operating through intermediaries to the ultimate benefit of UOCAVA voters, specifically to “votes cast, received, and counted,” but its stakeholders did not share that view. The differences among perspectives appeared to be a problem of substance. We were hopeful that the preliminary recommendations and initial guidance could help FVAP to both strengthen the agency and reconcile the differences in perspectives. In a series of meetings with FVAP leadership and staff and an all-hands presentation, we suggested that FVAP begin by solidifying its mission and resolving issues of purpose and priorities and expand its efforts, from there.⁷

⁷ In taking this approach, FVAP would be charting a path that would build on previous efforts to strengthen the organization and on the core values once posted at the FVAP website. According to those values, FVAP should be customer-focused, proactive, data-driven, transparent, and efficient.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program's Engagement with Its Operating Environment

In phase 2, we examined how FVAP engages with its operating environment¹ through partnerships, research, and other activities and identified opportunities for it to do so more effectively in the future.² We continued to probe the points of connectivity in the logic model, but we adopted a broader analytical lens than previously, i.e., one of a larger voting assistance system.³ In effect, FVAP shifted from center stage and became one of many service providers. On that basis, we considered the agency's engagement within the system in two ways.

First, we considered FVAP's approach to managing and disseminating findings from research. FVAP lacked analytical capabilities and capacities (Chapter Two), some of which could be filled through professional development (Chapter Five). It also lacked a method for selecting projects, leading them, and channeling their results to advance its mission. To address the gap in methods, we began adapting a set of tools—a checklist and worksheet, based largely on principles of BCA and risk assessment—from existing frameworks. As our work progressed, the general applicability of the tools became apparent, and, together with FVAP, we concluded that they merited reframing as tools for managing projects and operations more generally. We present the tools in Appendix D.

Second, we considered FVAP's engagement with VAOs (military and civilian) and IVA offices as conduits of voting assistance to UOCAVA voters. We took a deep dive into FVAP's assistance to military installations, including the IVA offices, and applied the newly developed tools to the VAO training program. Although concentrating on FVAP's work with the military, which occupies much of the law on UOCAVA

¹ In Chapter One, we defined *operating environment* as including customers, partners, and other stakeholders; related organizations; and supporting infrastructure and technology.

² See Chapter One for an overview of analytical challenges, including concurrent, interdependent institutional change and proposed legislative changes, in the form of the Safeguarding Elections for Our Nation's Troops Through Reforms and Improvements Act.

³ As we discuss below, we use this term to refer to the various providers of voting assistance to UOCAVA voters and the ways in which they relate to each other, e.g., as a loosely formed network, not to a formal system.

voting (Chapter Four) and the agency's resources, we also considered FVAP's work with State Department officials.

To identify opportunities to streamline and strengthen FVAP's engagement activities, including VAO training, we set the following goals:

- Examine training and support needs, from the different perspectives of FVAP, VAOs, IVA offices, and the broader voting and election community.
- Consider the benefits, costs, and risks of different modes of product and service delivery.
- Identify means to improve connections between training and other support activities and customer and partner needs, legislative mandates, and other institutional needs, in a manner that is consistent with the assessment of costs, benefits, and risk.⁴

Providing a bridge between phases 1 and 2, we also began work with FVAP on the development and refinement of the robust logic model. That work drew heavily from the recommendations and guidance outlined in Chapter Five, e.g., by incorporating ideas for agency-wide integration.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. To start, it describes our approach to scoping the voting assistance system and identifying the needs of its participants; then, it characterizes the system and its needs and considers the implications for FVAP's engagement. Next, it summarizes our findings on the VAO training program; lastly, it discusses the key elements of the rearticulated logic model.

Our Approach to Scoping the System

In phase 2, we considered how FVAP might contribute most effectively to the voting assistance system as a whole and by parts. We focused on the parts pertaining to military installations, given their importance to UOCAVA, the MOVE Act, and FVAP's resourcing, but, in our consideration of VAO training, we also included State Department officials. We did not focus on FVAP's engagement with election officials, but they featured prominently in our characterization of the voting assistance system because of their centrality to voting. Similarly, we did not focus on NGOs but include them in our depiction of the system.⁵

⁴ We did not conduct a full-scale evaluation of FVAP's training activities.

⁵ To do so, we relied heavily on information gleaned from our conversations with NGOs and explorations of their websites and product offerings.

The broader lens of phase 2 required a more expansive evidentiary base, hence, a need to reexplore legal requirements relating to VAOs and IVA offices and to examine survey and training evaluation results, others' research findings, and ground truth.

To obtain that ground truth, we met with VAOs and IVA office staff; conducted site visits; and observed VAO training sessions in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, California, and Colorado at Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Army, and joint installations. In addition, we sat in on a remote training session conducted with a consular office in Athens, Greece. Our site selections were strategic inasmuch as we attempted to cover each of the services and a variety of operational and administrative settings, with offices led by ADM personnel and civilians, mindful of the possibility of cultural differences across services and between military and civilian settings. We observed training events for each service with a single trainer to hold trainer effects constant but visited additional sites with different trainers. Table 6.1 chronicles our site visits and training observations.

Table 6.1
Site Visits and On-Site Training Observations

Installation	Service Branch	Training Date	Number of Trainees	IVAO Status
Joint Base Myer–Henderson Hall	Joint	n/a	n/a	Civilian
Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton	Marine Corps	January 14, 2014	84	Civilian
Marine Corps Air Station Miramar	Marine Corps	n/a	n/a	Civilian
Naval Base Coronado	Navy	January 15, 2014	13	ADM
Naval Base San Diego	Navy	January 16, 2014	4	ADM
Marine Corps Base Quantico	Marine Corps	March 18, 2014	9	ADM
Fort Belvoir	Army	March 18, 2014	8	Civilian
Fort Carson	Army	March 25, 2014	206	ADM
Peterson Air Force Base ^a	Air Force	March 26, 2014	78	Civilian

SOURCES: RAND staff analysis and FVAP attendance data.

NOTE: We also sat in on a remote training event conducted with a consular office in Athens, Greece, on January 24, 2014. n/a = not applicable.

^a The training was held at Peterson Air Force Base, but it was also attended by Schriever Air Force Base personnel, including the IVAO.

In our travels, we focused on activities and operating conditions in and around the IVA offices and training venues, be they classrooms or auditoriums, reflecting on the following:

- the layouts and locations of IVA offices, the use of the offices, and a range of installation parameters, including the chain of command for voting assistance, the status of VAO assignments—be they short- or long-term, primary or ancillary—and the rate of turnover among VAOs. Other topics of interest included the VAO or IVA office manager’s location in the system and the relationships among them, the level and form of their interactions with FVAP, and their training needs.
- the physical setup of the training venue; the level of participant engagement; the method, e.g., structure and style, of training; and the duration, content, and emphasis of training. While seeking to understand the system, we were also seeking to learn whether one mode of delivery (in person, online, or hybrid)⁶ would be most efficacious and whether the content of the training might lend itself to a particular mode.

The reality of our exploration was not as neatly compartmentalized as these paragraphs suggest. In visiting the IVA offices, we learned about more than just the IVA offices; in observing training, we learned about more than just training. Taken together, our consideration of the IVA offices and the training program contributed greatly to our understanding of the configuration and functioning of the voting assistance system, to the needs of the system, and to FVAP’s roles and responsibilities in relation to that system.

As part of the scoping exercise, we charted a UOCAVA voter’s access to assistance in the voting process and derived a map of the system.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program’s Place in the Voting Assistance System

In phase 1, we found that FVAP’s business model was largely indirect, was not always effective in its engagement with stakeholders, and allowed room for realignment of activities. The approach was indirect in that FVAP was enabling others, military and civilian, to better serve voters and often operating through others, such as VAOs, to reach voters, create awareness among voters, and disseminate information to voters. FVAP had means of direct engagement, including the website and call center, but, as a very small agency tasked with administering a law that serves millions of voters, it did not and could not go it alone.

⁶ Hybrid training makes use of combination of online and in-person training.

The work of phase 2 validated that description, but the additional evidence, particularly the appeal to ground truth, enabled a fuller depiction, both literal and figurative, of the voting assistance system.

Figure 6.1 charts a UOCAVA voter's opportunities to obtain assistance as he or she moves through the voting process. The resulting map implies the contours of a system of voting assistance that includes federal, state, local, and private-sector (NGO) service providers and suggests possible paths to a successful voting outcome. The map calls out the voter's decision to obtain assistance and the options available at each juncture, but it also references passive assistance, in the form of social media, PSAs, emails, and other notifications. (The latter forms of assistance are marked in the figure with blue stars.) The map also distinguishes among different types of UOCAVA voters. It indicates whether a service provider or particular form of assistance is available primarily to military or overseas-citizen absentee voters. Moreover, it designates one starting point for first-time UOCAVA voters, who might not be aware of their status and rights as UOCAVA voters, and another starting point for returning UOCAVA voters, who have made it over the initial hurdle of awareness.

The map is not intended to provide a complete picture of either the voting process (even though it tracks steps in that process)⁷ or the service-level programs that house the installation-based assistance.⁸ However, in pegging assistance to a voter's experience of the voting process, which is itself a reasonably well-defined system, it might give voting assistance the appearance of more form and structure than it merits.

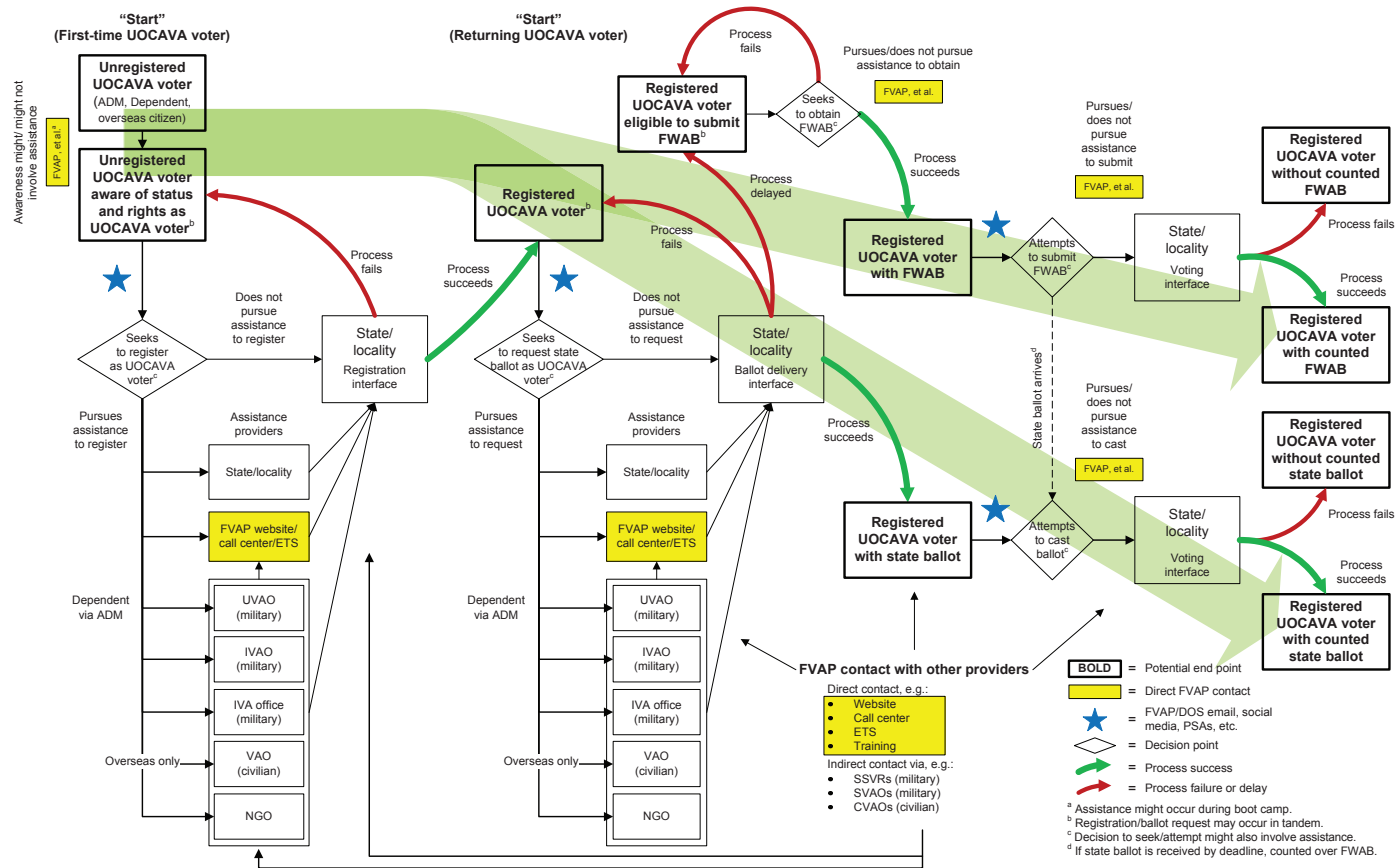
Through this lens, we found that the system consists of many potential providers of voting assistance and points of service (physical or virtual) to which UOCAVA voters can turn for help in the voting process. For example, an absentee ADM voter might approach a VAO with questions about his or her voting jurisdiction; alternatively, the voter might reach out directly to a state or local election official or go to an NGO's website. In this context, FVAP is one provider of assistance among many.

In Figure 6.2, we parse the system to consider it both as a whole and in terms of the institutions, such as FVAP, that function within that system and the people, such as VAOs, who act on behalf of those institutions—or themselves. We found this parsing to be helpful both as a reminder of the sometimes-disparate voices within the system and as a mechanism for better understanding the needs of the system and FVAP's role in relation to those needs. Figure 6.2 also incorporates the overarching legal-policy environment and, by extension, the requirements or needs of law and policy.

⁷ For example, it does not separately depict the process by which a voter would determine his or her residency—this is implicit in “seeks to register”—or all the means by which a voter can transmit his or her forms or ballot. On that basis, it omits some leading actors in the voting process, such as MPSA and USPS, that feature prominently in transmission but do not serve as assistance providers in this context.

⁸ Similarly, it is not intended to chart the voting assistance programs of the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Department of State, or the U.S. Public Health Service.

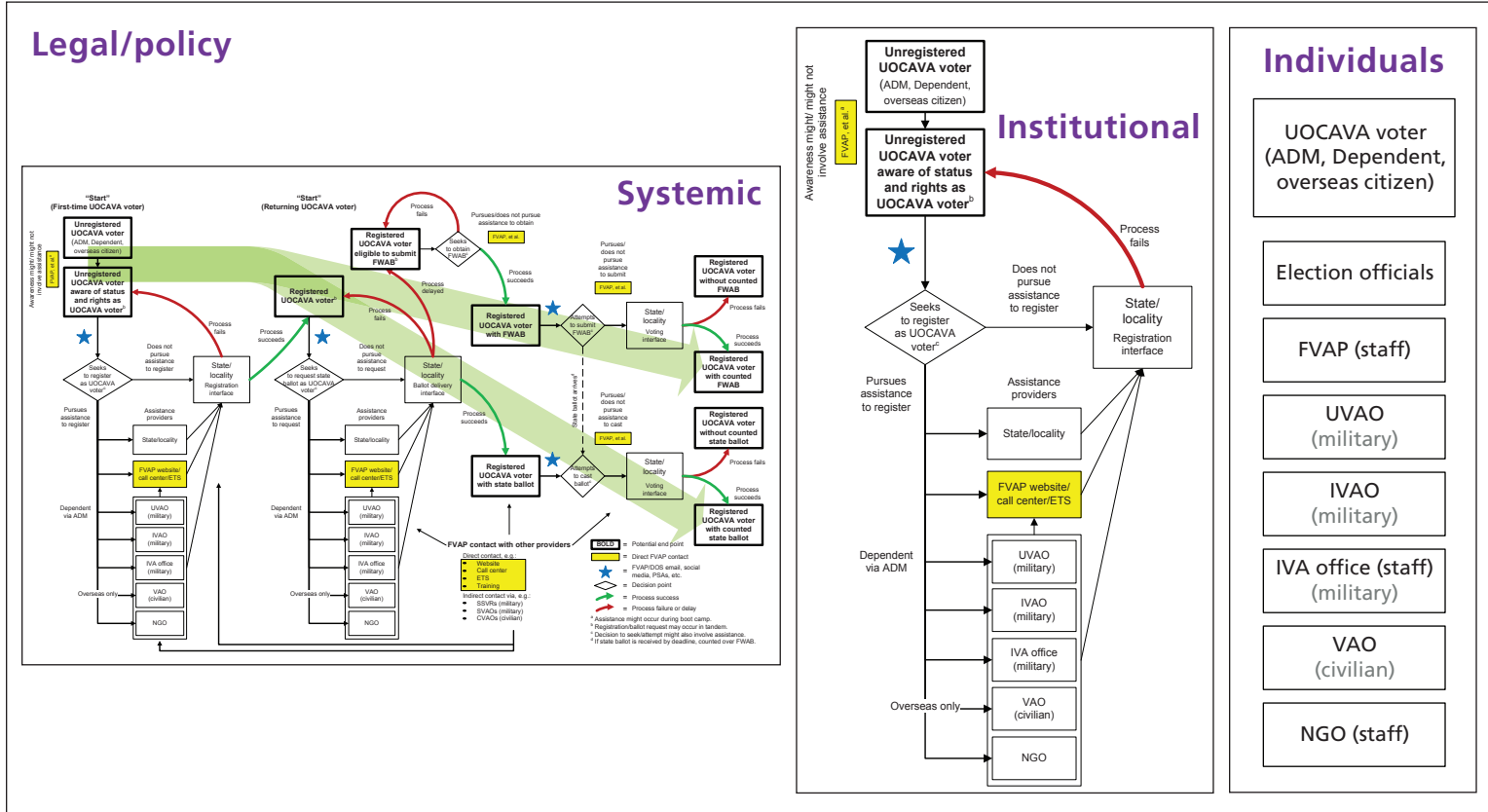
Figure 6.1
Voting Assistance Opportunities and Paths to Success for Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act Voters



SOURCE: RAND staff analysis with input from FVAP staff.

RAND RR882-6.1

Figure 6.2
The Voting Assistance System as a Whole and in Parts



SOURCE: RAND staff analysis with input from FVAP staff.
 RAND RR882-6.2

Above all, we observed that UOCAVA voters have access to many different providers, through many different points of service. In addition, we found the following:

- Law, policy, and the market shape the system.
- Connectivity and coordination vary across the system.
- The system and its parts need knowledge, capability, and capacity.
- FVAP, in particular, faces substantial functional limitations in the system, occupies a unique position in the system, and can use training to leverage its position in the system.

We address each point in the following sections.

Law, Policy, and the Market Shape the System

Law, policy, and the market each play a part in establishing the elements of the voting assistance system, which cross the boundaries of the public (federal, state, or local) sector and private sector (e.g., NGOs). The law (e.g., 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff, 10 U.S.C. § 1566, and 10 U.S.C. § 1566a) provides for a presidential designee, VAOs, IVA offices, and state and local points of contact. Policy (DoDI 1000.04 [2012], DoDD 5124.02 [2008], and service-level guidance), elaborates on the form and substance of the interfaces. For example, each of the services maintains its own voting assistance program, consistent with both the DoD-level guidance and its own, service-specific guidance. And, the private sector, largely in the form of NGOs, offers a range of services, consisting of complements to and substitutes for publicly provided services, such as web-based voting tools.

Connectivity and Coordination Vary Across the System

Not surprisingly, in a system that was not developed explicitly as a system, the parts do not mesh together seamlessly. To the extent that there is a system, it reflects an ad hoc buildup of legal and policy requirements in the context of

- competing priorities
- limited capital and human resources
- turnover, especially among ADM service members
- cultural and environmental differences across services and venues.

The law forces some amount of connectivity in its implicit call for relationships between FVAP and the states and localities and between FVAP and a host of federal entities, including the services, but it speaks more to the responsibilities of each entity than to the nature of the relationships among them. Notably absent from the MOVE Act is any indication of how the IVA offices would operate in the context of existing service providers. Rather, the law appears to have taken a gap in service—pertaining largely to voter registration—as given and fillable, independently of other actors or

actions in the system.⁹ Similarly, DoDI 1000.04, 2012, spells out responsibilities and procedures for a set of federal providers but says less about how they should work together. To the extent that either DoDI 1000.04 or DoDD 5124.02, 2008, speaks to relationships, it does so largely in the context of the chain of command in which a provider resides. DoDI 1000.04 offers sparing insight to the intended relationships between SVAOs, IVAO, and UVAOs. It leaves the details of those relationships to each of the services and to their respective service-specific guidance.¹⁰

The System and Its Parts Need Knowledge, Capability, and Capacity

The system, consisting of the institutions that function within it, the people that populate the institutions, and the laws and policies that govern each, has components that differ in their priorities, but the system and its parts all need a combination of capabilities and capacities, rooted in knowledge and skills, to function either together or separately.¹¹ People, institutions, and the system require an understanding of their rights, roles, and responsibilities and of voting processes, tools, and resources. On that basis, the system and its parts can be said to share an interest in developing and maintaining the capability and capacity to serve voters, which, in turn, requires the accumulation of knowledge and skills. Admittedly, they share the interest subject to resource constraints, such as those relating to funding, staffing, and turnover, and to other environmental considerations, but they still share the interest.¹²

One might also argue that, as a dimension of capacity, the system and its parts require connectivity and coordination. Lesser amounts of both could imply greater amounts of inefficiency (e.g., in the form of duplication) and higher rates of voting failure. For example, if one part of the system fails to dovetail with another, as in the case of timely receipt or delivery of balloting materials, votes might not be counted.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program Faces Substantial Functional Limitations

Two factors contribute to FVAP's functional limitations: First, as a very small agency, tasked with administering a law that serves many voters, it operates through and depends largely on intermediaries; second, it has little direct control over intermediaries.

⁹ This observation draws from stakeholder outreach, including conversations with congressional staff held during phase 1, and from Senator Chuck Schumer's statement to accompany the MOVE Act (Schumer, 2010).

¹⁰ It also leaves such details to the U.S. Coast Guard, the Department of State, and the Public Health Service.

¹¹ Perhaps in recognition of these needs, law mandates training, and policy specifies the terms of training.

¹² The system and its parts express or reveal their needs through actions and, in some instances, through surveys and evaluations, but that evidence is mixed. For example, we found that attendance at training sessions varied greatly but that many of those in attendance strongly preferred in-person training to other options. Given the challenges of scheduling across units and differences in how the installations issue invitations to prospective trainees—ranging from minimally distributed suggestion to comprehensive edict—weak attendance at some locations might be more reflective of poor coordination than of need; alternatively, the expressed preferences for in-person training might reflect the self-selection biases of those present.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program Operates Through and Depends Largely on Intermediaries

Much, but not all, of FVAP's role in voting assistance is realized and experienced through intermediaries who serve UOCAVA voters more directly. Through the FVAP website, the customer call center,¹³ the ETS, and training, FVAP staff stands adjacent to or only one degree removed from the voter, but FVAP often operates at a greater distance as an enabler. In the military context, FVAP works largely through the SVAOs who, in turn, reach out to IVAOs, who then make contact with UVAOs, who then interact more directly with voters. Moreover, we found that IVAOs and IVA office staff typically reach out to their SVAOs when need arises, in accordance with the structure of their programs, and less characteristically make contact with FVAP, except in relation to training and to request FPCAs, FWABs, and other materials. This pattern of engagement is not inconsistent with law or policy, but its manifestation—and, especially, its implications—became more apparent with site visits and training observations. In terms of the logic model, FVAP has limited control over transfer and little means to affect the use of outputs, the actions of customers, or eventual outcomes.

In its direct service to UOCAVA voters, FVAP extends its reach through electronic means, such as the web-based voting assistance tools, email blasts, and social media.¹⁴ However, even as a direct provider, FVAP depends partly on others, especially VAOs, to raise awareness and disseminate information about its offerings. Much of what FVAP asks VAOs and others to do is to direct voters to FVAP's website and its resources.

Table 6.2 provides further insight into the roles of intermediaries in the services, consisting of the SVAOs, VAOs (both IVAOs and UVAOs), and IVA offices or office managers. In highly stylized terms, it presents and compares the theory of their roles, according to law and policy, and the practice, according to our site visits and training observations.

By and large, theory and practice lined up. For example, our conversations with VAOs and IVA office managers and information gleaned from the training sessions pointed to a substantial amount of direct contact between UVAOs and ADM voters, especially in the run-up to presidential elections. But we found three areas in which theory and practice did not line up.

First, we found little evidence of an active interface between the IVA offices, per se, and ADM or other UOCAVA voters; rather, the offices were functionally indistinguishable from the IVAOs, who often serve as IVA office managers.¹⁵ The quality

¹³ At the time of phase 2 of the project, FVAP was in the process of bringing its customer call center in house, as a voting assistance center, thereby providing another channel for serving voters—and others—directly.

¹⁴ FVAP also serves voters directly through the call center, but in much smaller volume.

¹⁵ On at least one installation, in- and out-processing, which are functions associated with IVA offices under 10 U.S.C. § 1566a, were handled at the unit level primarily and reported through the IVA office manager.

Table 6.2
Roles of Intermediaries in the Services

Intermediary	Primary Function		Primary Audience	
	Theory	Practice	Theory	Practice
SVAO	Service-level program managers, conduits, and resources (policy implementation)	Service-level program managers, conduits, and resources (policy implementation)	IVAOs, IVA offices, or office staff ^a	IVAOs, IVA offices, or office staff
IVAO	Installation-level coordinators, conduits, and resources ^b	Installation-level coordinators, conduits, and resources	UVAOs (resident, tenant)	UVAOs (resident, tenant)
UVAO	Unit-level rubber-meets-the-road assistance ^c	Unit-level rubber-meets-the-road assistance	ADM and dependents	ADM
IVA office or office staff, including managers	Installation-level rubber-meets-the-road assistance (fixed location) with NVRA function	See IVAO, with less emphasis on coordination	ADM, dependents, and others	See IVAO

SOURCE: RAND staff analysis, based on combination of policy documents and direct observation.

^a SVAOs also have direct contact with UVAOs, but we did not view UVAOs as their primary audience.

^b IVAOs are available to assist voters (hence their inclusion in Figure 6.1), but it is our understanding that they are intended to play a more coordinative primary role, and they appear to do so.

^c Assistance includes direction to FVAP.gov.

of the installation-based program appeared to depend on the level of commitment, knowledge, and skills of the IVAOs, subject to the amount of time they had available to perform the IVAO function, be it a primary, secondary, or *n*th-order duty, and their access to the installation-level chain of command.¹⁶ It appeared to be less dependent on the quality of the physical office space or its location. Admittedly, we visited a small number of installations, but the picture was consistent across sites and appeared to be unrelated to the placement, layout, or marketing of the offices. Even those IVA offices located in high-traffic areas (for example, near a TRICARE office) with good signage saw few voters, according to those who staff the offices.

Second, relating to the fixity of IVA offices, we found that the location of an ADM-managed office tended to be tied to the location of the appointee’s primary responsibilities. The office could move with each new appointee, depending on where that appointee had been assigned an office or cubicle to execute his or her primary duties.

¹⁶ On that basis, we would expect to see high-functioning programs on Army installations with dedicated IVAOs. Early reports from within the Army and from FVAP provided anecdotal confirmation.

Third, UVAOs appeared to reach dependents largely through military service members. Inasmuch as they described direct contact with dependents, it was usually through special events, such as those held during voter emphasis weeks. For example, some UVAOs mentioned engagement with spouses at post-exchange registration booths.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program Has Little Direct Control over Intermediaries

Neither law nor policy gives FVAP much direct control over its intermediaries, be they within or outside DoD. The law (e.g., 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff, 10 U.S.C. § 1566, and 10 U.S.C. § 1566a) holds FVAP responsible for developing, maintaining, and providing processes, tools, and resources for conducting certain types of outreach and for reporting on effectiveness (see Chapter Four). The last responsibility, reporting on effectiveness, might be viewed as a sunshine tool—that is, a means to shed light on emerging issues not just within FVAP but also across the system. In those ways, FVAP can influence the behavior of at least some intermediaries, but the law holds others, such as the services, IG, DOJ, and states, responsible for most, if not all of implementation, oversight, compliance, and enforcement.

The relationship between policy and control merits consideration, in part, because FVAP actively engages in policymaking. Policy, if treated as an external factor, e.g., postdating its issuance and prior to its revision, provides FVAP with little authority over the actions of others. It gives FVAP an administrative role in relation to its intermediaries, but it does not—and cannot—place FVAP in their chains of command. As such, FVAP can serve those in other chains as customers and work with them in partnerships, but it is not their supervisor. However, policy is not a fully external factor. FVAP plays a substantial part in the development of policy, particularly through the DoD instruction on UOCAVA voting. Thus, FVAP can be said to establish certain behavioral parameters and ground rules.¹⁷

The Federal Voting Assistance Program Occupies a Unique Position in the System

FVAP is one provider among many, as is evident in Figure 6.1, but it also has unique qualifications as a provider that might be less readily—or visually—apparent. In addition to being the only agency chartered through law, directives, and instructions with the primary purpose of assisting UOCAVA voters and coordinating and establishing policy on UOCAVA voting, it has, over time, become a comprehensive repository of information on the processes, tools, and resources that it develops and maintains. As a consequence, FVAP might be the only public agency with the credentials, internal motivation, and dedicated resources to play a leadership role in UOCAVA voting assistance. Moreover, in sitting at the nexus of policy and operations (see Chapters One and

¹⁷ It does not develop policy alone—it must obtain input from others, including the services—but it coordinates the process. In turn, the services develop their own policies, plans, and procedures, consistent with the DoD instruction.

Two), FVAP has, on the one hand, a substantial role in policymaking and, on the other hand, a sweeping view of the system, with the potential for a high degree of environmental awareness.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program Can Use Training to Leverage Its Position in the System

In scoping the voting assistance system, we found that FVAP has surprisingly few opportunities to reach proactively into the system on a regular basis¹⁸ and that training stands out as an exceptional touch point. Through training, FVAP can engage its intermediaries, particularly VAOs and IVA office staff, more directly and get closer to UOCAVA voters. Thus, training appears to hold value not just as an educational tool but also as a potential source of ancillary benefits or gains for FVAP and the system. Our conversations, site visits, and training observations strongly suggested that FVAP can use training to promote the system's functionality by helping to build networks, raising FVAP's profile as a resource, signaling the importance of voting assistance, providing FVAP with access to information about operating conditions and feedback from VAOs and IVA office staff, and encouraging connectivity and coordination across the system. Training also represents an opportunity for FVAP to deliver its message.

However, whether training can produce these ancillary benefits depends partly on the modality of training—that is, whether it is in person or online—and partly on steps that FVAP takes to elicit them. In the next section, we summarize our analysis of and findings on the VAO training program and address these issues.

Summary of Training Analysis and Findings

The law does not specify a role for FVAP in VAO—or IVA office—training (Chapter Four), but that lack of specificity need not imply a lack of necessity or efficacy. FVAP serves as a repository of knowledge of voting assistance and tools and, on that basis alone, might be well-positioned to play a significant role in training. The potential for ancillary benefits, noted above, suggests another reason for FVAP's involvement. However, whether that involvement means developing training materials, providing in-person training, offering online training, or undertaking some of each remains to be determined.

This section summarizes our analysis of and findings on FVAP's options for the VAO training program. For a more detailed discussion of the analysis and findings, we direct the reader to Appendix E, which presents the analysis more fully, and Appendix F, which focuses on principles of adult learning and training evaluation.

¹⁸ The call center enables direct contact with intermediaries and voters, but it does so reactively.

Framing the Options

To start, we turned to law and policy to set out the range of options.¹⁹ Given the lack of specificity in the law and the potential to revise the DoD instruction (Chapter Four), FVAP's options, at least in the medium to long term, appeared to range from doing nothing—as in, leaving the training to others, such as the services—to doing it all. And, *doing it* could involve in-person, online, and hybrid delivery modes.

We treated *doing it well* as a necessary condition, one that is consistent with the stakeholders' view that FVAP should model the ideal or be best in class and with the call for greater consideration of effectiveness.²⁰ To assess the agency's potential for excellence and as a basis for developing recommendations on program improvements, we defined *doing it well* in terms of established principles of adult learning and training evaluation. We used the principles to identify a set of best practices, which we mapped to detailed recommendations.²¹ In considering whether FVAP is or could be doing it well, we found that FVAP was doing some things better than others but, with some investment in the training program (see below and Appendixes E and F), could excel more uniformly.

We delivered—or transferred—the principles, practices, and recommendations to FVAP in a daylong workshop that we led, consisting of a general presentation, a small-group discussion with FVAP trainers, and a series of one-on-one meetings with trainers.

Weighing the Evidence

We approached the analysis of options for the VAO training program in two steps: First, we assessed the benefits, costs, and risk of adopting the implied best practices; second, assuming the adoption of best practices, we compared the notional benefits, costs, and risks of each option, consisting of in-person and online training modes. Figure E.1 in Appendix E describes the two steps as elements of a systematic decision-making process.

To conduct the analysis, we drew on the project-management tools (Appendix D); on our site visits and direct observations of training; on our conversations with VAOs

¹⁹ Although we use the term *options* in this discussion, we note that FVAP cannot choose a course in isolation—that is, without reference to or consultation with other parties in the system.

²⁰ In this way, we also departed from our approach to the requirements analysis in phase 1, in which we considered whether FVAP was covering a requirement but not whether it was covering it adeptly.

²¹ To illustrate, we found that adult learners need to know why they are learning, which, in turn, implied that trainers must spell out the purpose and objectives at the start of each training event. We present the complete set of principles, practices, and detailed recommendations in Appendix F. The recommendations are consistent with the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (PAM) 525-8-2, *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2015* (U.S. Department of the Army, 2011). The pamphlet describes a learner-centered learning model, focused on context-based, collaborative, problem-centered instruction.

In Appendix F, we also present a sample evaluation form that is consistent with the learner-centered approach to participant feedback (D. Kirkpatrick, 1978).

and IVA office staff; and on additional conversations with FVAP staff during the day-long workshop. In the course of the workshop, we sought feedback from FVAP staff and—a testament to the value of the interaction—worked with their comments in the analysis of options.

On balance, the best practices looked promising. The benefits of adopting them could be substantial and recurring, e.g., in terms of learning and retention and, hence, capability and capacity, and the costs appeared to be modest and mostly one-time, consisting of

- professional development
- modifications to course materials
- redeployment of materials.

We saw few downside risks to adopting best practices. A trainer might leave FVAP and take his or her human capital along, but, if acting as a mentor to other staff or a replacement, at least some capital would be transferred before departure.

Taking the adoption of best practices as given, we then asked, “How do the benefits, costs, and risks of in-person and online training modes compare?” Tables E.2, E.3, and E.4 in Appendix E set out the results of our analysis of the options.

We found the following:

- The benefits of in-person training, much more so than of online training, can extend beyond those of the initial learning experience and spread across the system through networking, signaling, and other methods, but online training can be accessed globally, 24/7.
- The costs of in-person training are likely to be greater than those of online training, especially if IT is already in place and available on installations.
- Each mode presents risks to the individual learning experience inasmuch as it might fail to meet the learning needs of people who prefer the other mode, present challenges of availability, or entail environmental distractions, but some institutional and systemic risks pertaining to coordination and turnout are specific to in-person training.

The analysis also supported continuance of a mixed strategy of in-person and online training and implementation of programmatic improvements.²² The combination of benefits, costs, and risks pointed to the continuance of both modes of training,

²² In a manner that is consistent with our recommendation for a mixed strategy, Army training doctrine describes the need for blended learning. Blended learning is the combination of online or technology-delivered instruction and face-to-face instruction: “It blends the efficiencies and effectiveness of self-paced, technology-delivered instruction with the expert guidance of a facilitator, and can include the added social benefit of peer-to-peer interactions” (U.S. Department of the Army, 2011, p. 19). See U.S. Department of the Army, 2011, for more information.

responsive to differences in learning styles, differences in service cultures and settings, the potential for ancillary gains, and the risks of competing demands on personnel and of staff turnover, especially among ADM staff. Moreover, it suggested several avenues of improvement, including the possibilities of rebalancing through streamlining, targeting, and tailoring and working with local power brokers to mitigate the risks of coordination failures. We also identified opportunities to build ancillary gains into the training program. Lastly, the call to “do it well” and the initial analysis of the costs, benefits, and risks of adopting best practices suggested both the adoption of best practices and a need for professional development.

We concluded our analysis with a set of specific suggestions for strengthening the VAO training program. In broad terms, we suggested that FVAP “maintain [its] training profile, but do it better and smarter” by

- adopting best practices
- streamlining in-person engagement
- reducing risks of coordination failures with training venues
- building the attainment of ancillary gains into the training program.²³

Adopt Best Practices

We offered detailed recommendations on learning objectives, interactivity, knowledge transfer, and evaluations (Appendix F) and suggested professional development to fill gaps in capability and capacity.²⁴ We recognized that making in-person training more interactive would require a paradigm shift and that, to succeed, trainers would need to be able to conduct training responsively but stay on track. Our suggestions tied back to the overarching themes of phase 1 regarding two-way communication, e.g., do not just broadcast to stakeholders but also receive, process, and respond to the information and feedback they provide.

Streamline In-Person Training

We recommended that FVAP offer regional and targeted training sessions, develop audience-specific training modules, and cultivate relationships with alternative providers. With more regional and better-targeted training sessions, FVAP could visit fewer installations overall. For example, it might identify domestic and overseas hot spots, large markets, and other high-impact markets and use training as an opportunity both to improve faltering relationships and to maintain healthy and productive relationships. In visiting fewer installations, but with greater purpose, FVAP might reduce its operating costs—and those of the services—and still increase the benefits of

²³ For additional details on each of these points, see the discussion in Appendix E.

²⁴ We also pointed FVAP to professional associations and websites that offer relevant training programs and provide downloadable instructional materials.

the program. We also suggested developing train-the-trainer and IVAO-specific training modules for online and in-person delivery. Lastly, we recommended cultivating relationships with installation-based spousal and dependent organizations and other NGOs, including those overseas, to lessen the burden on FVAP trainers and training.

Reduce Risks of Coordination Failures with Training Venues

To address coordination failures, such as inadequate site preparation and weak turnout, we suggested that FVAP ramp up its efforts to identify and work with power brokers on and off installations. Across venues, we observed the positive effects of issuing training invitations from appropriate authority figures, using institutionally appropriate vocabulary. In these cases, attendance was high; in other cases, it was not. Our site visits were few, but the observation was striking. As a related matter, we also emphasized the importance of working within institutional norms and at appropriate institutional levels. In some instances, it might be necessary for the director to reach out to his or her counterpart or bureaucratic-hierarchical equivalent; in others, it should be sufficient to operate at the staff level.

Build the Attainment of Ancillary Gains into the Training Program

In formulating this recommendation, we took as a given that ancillary benefits would not accrue automatically and would require some additional thought, planning, and action on the part of FVAP. We addressed four areas—namely, networking, signaling, resource exposure, and information collection:

- Use training events to build stronger networks by encouraging interaction among trainees, both during and after training, encouraging repeat performers at all levels (IVAOs, VAO office staff, and IVAOs), and emphasizing the value of using continuity folders to pass down lessons learned.
- Use physical presence to signal the importance of voting assistance through systematic implementation of meet-and-greets and site visits, both on and off base.
- Use training events—in person and online—to increase trainees' direct exposure to FVAP resources. This could be accomplished through simulated links in in-person training and through direct links embedded in exercises in online training.
- Gather and obtain information intentionally, and develop mechanisms to capture and use new knowledge productively. For example, FVAP could collaborate with the services to develop mechanisms to capture lessons from continuity folders and share them intergenerationally, across installations, and even across services.

Lastly, we suggested that FVAP view training as an opportunity to spread its message consistently across venues. To do so, it would need to reevaluate its in-person and online training materials as outreach and take steps to ensure that the training materials convey the same message as other outreach materials.

Further Development of the Logic Model

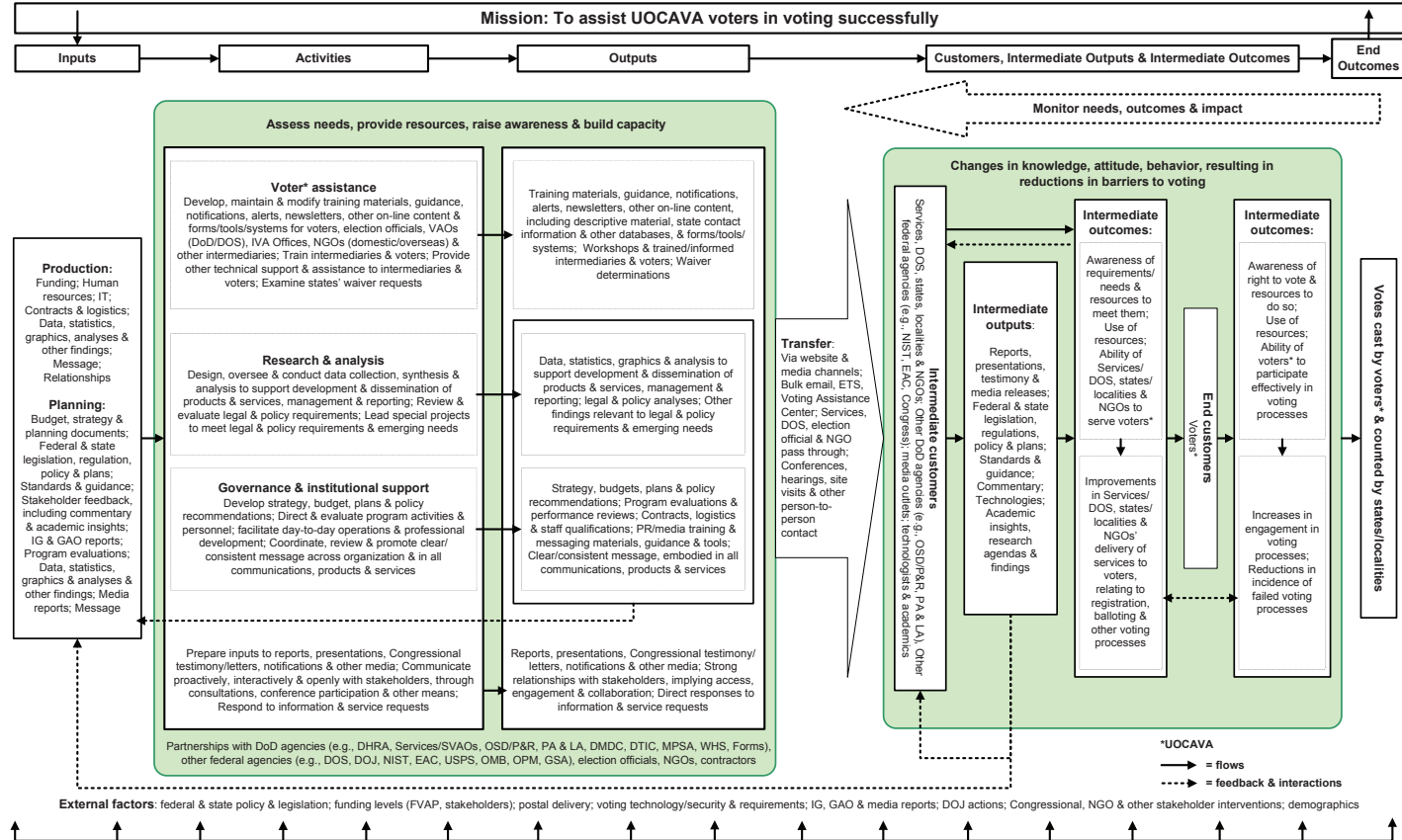
In phase 2, we also worked with FVAP on the development and refinement of the robust logic model. That work drew heavily from the recommendations and guidance outlined in Chapter Five, e.g., by incorporating ideas for agency-wide integration. We introduced a draft version at the close of our discussions with FVAP staff on the findings of phase 1. We made only a few changes to the model in the months that followed, so we present the final, robust version here (Figure 6.3), as groundwork for the discussion of change in Chapter Seven.

Perhaps the most-noteworthy features of the robust logic model are the reformulation of voter assistance to include all forms of assistance, be they direct to voters or through the states, and the inclusion of the technology that undergirds that assistance. Those features made it possible to eliminate much of the repetition that we observed in the benchmark model, to streamline the agency's activities and outputs, and to streamline our presentation of intermediate customers. In specifying FVAP as "one FVAP" with regard to voter assistance, it was no longer necessary to assign customers to particular activity streams; rather, the model recognizes the agency's customers as relating to the agency, as a whole.

Another difference in the robust model is its comparative generality. Whereas the benchmark model was full of specific examples of guidance, media, tools, data, statistics, and special projects, this version has few or none. It was necessary to include those details in the benchmark model so that FVAP and we could see the agency in its entirety and substitute for a shared vocabulary for describing its operations. FVAP leadership and staff needed to be able to locate themselves in the model; without the examples, we could not be certain that everyone was using words, such as *guidance*, *media*, or *tools*, in the same way. With a fuller understanding of the agency and a shared vocabulary, it was not necessary to include as many details in this version. Nevertheless, the rearticulated model covers all the core requirements set out in Table 4.1 in Chapter Four. If FVAP were to follow this model, it would have some assurance that it was undertaking the activities necessary to meet those requirements.

In summary, we claim robustness for the model in at least three regards: First, it draws together all forms of voter assistance in a single, coherent activity stream; second, with fewer specifics, it should be less susceptible to the ordinary—and even extraordinary—ebb and flow of activities; third, it covers FVAP's core requirements. However, its robustness will depend partly on FVAP's commitment to a common understanding of its mission.

Figure 6.3
Robust Logic Model



SOURCE: RAND staff analysis with input from FVAP leadership and staff.

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Concluding Remarks on the Federal Voting Assistance Program's Engagement with Its Operating Environment

In phase 2 of the project, we fleshed out our understanding of the voting assistance system and FVAP's roles, responsibilities, and relationships in that system. Our analysis of FVAP's strategy and operations in phase 1 established the need for—and laid the groundwork for—a better understanding of FVAP's engagement with its operating environment.

The phase 2 analysis largely confirmed the gaps and disconnects that we uncovered in phase 1 and enabled us to better understand both the rules at play and the ground truth and their implications for the contours and conduct of voting assistance. Perhaps unexpectedly, we identified training as an opportunity for FVAP to engage more effectively with the system and its parts. We found that training can be used to meet basic needs for capability and capacity, both by imparting knowledge and by improving coordination and connectivity with the system, and we offered FVAP detailed recommendations for making the most of the opportunity.

Evidence of Change

In this chapter, we shift focus and recount the change that has occurred in FVAP, both in response to our analysis and independent of that analysis. Although some change began before our issuance of the preliminary recommendations and guidance in Chapter Five, we use the content of Chapter Five to gauge progress and to organize our discussion.¹

We explore evidence of change in relation to our recommendations on mission and organization, stakeholder relationships, and effectiveness (Table 7.1). In documenting change—and steps toward change—we have not taken the agency’s word that it has changed or is changing, nor have we relied on our own professional judgment or conjecture; instead, we have sought explicit examples of differences in methods and practice. In some instances, we have found evidence of outright change, e.g., in the 2014 redesign of the website² or through customer feedback; in other instances, we have found evidence of progress, e.g., in the form of professional development that can enable or facilitate change. Occasionally, we have also found evidence of either weak or inconsistent execution, suggesting that, although the agency is making progress, it still has work to do in charting the road ahead.

As is apparent in Table 7.1, much of the evidence of change maps to more than one issue area, suggesting the potential to address some issues through mutually reinforcing measures.

All told, we found evidence of change in the following:

- the reorientation of FVAP’s mission and purpose
- the redesign of the website and its content, including outreach and training materials
- the reorganization of the agency

¹ We do not readdress the recommendations presented in Chapter Six for the VAO training program in this chapter but return to them in the next chapter, in which we present our final recommendations and guidance. At the time of this writing, FVAP had not yet had time to implement most of the suggested changes—some or many of which cannot be addressed until the commencement of planning for the next (2016) training cycle.

² FVAP also redesigned its website in 2008.

Table 7.1
Evidence of Change in Relation to Preliminary Recommendations and Guidance

General Recommendation	Area of Emphasis	Evidence of Change
Become one FVAP	Come to terms with the mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorientation of the mission and purpose • Redesign of the FVAP website and its content and outreach and training materials • Reorganization of the agency • Reconfiguration of the call center as an in-house voting assistance center • New forms of engagement with states, potentially including ongoing work with CSG • Reassessment of DoDI 1000.04
	Integrate and shore up operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorganization of the agency • Reconfiguration of the call center as an in-house voting assistance center and related cross-training of FVAP staff • Enrollment in professional development programs, including training in HR and organizational management
	Sharpen and clarify the message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorientation of the mission and purpose • Redesign of the FVAP website and its content and outreach and training materials
Build trust and strengthen relationships	Work with partners and serve customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign of the FVAP website and its content and outreach and training materials • Reconfiguration of the call center as an in-house voting assistance center • New forms of engagement with states, potentially including ongoing work with CSG • Outreach to DoDEA schools • NASS resolution on voting information • Continuation of OMB process for form (FPCA and FWAB) revisions
	Communicate better and more regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign of the FVAP website and its content and outreach and training materials • Customer feedback on voting assistance center operations • New forms of engagement with states, potentially including ongoing work with CSG • Enrollment in professional development programs, including training in customer service skills and techniques
	Operate as openly as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New forms of engagement with states, potentially including ongoing work with CSG • Continuation of OMB process for form (FPCA and FWAB) revisions • Development of research briefs

Table 7.1—Continued

General Recommendation	Area of Emphasis	Evidence of Change
Embrace a culture and principles of effectiveness	Engage routinely in BCA or employ other analytical methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of findings from the 2012 postelection report to Congress (FVAP, 2013b) • Development of a dashboard^a • Enrollment in professional development programs, including training in organizational and project management, strategic planning and tactical execution, performance measurement, and problem-solving and data analysis • Staff interest in use of project-management tools

SOURCES: RAND staff analysis; see Chapter Five of this report for a complete discussion of the general recommendations and areas of emphasis.

NOTE: DoDEA = DoD Education Activity.

^a The availability of metrics—and other information—from the voting assistance center suggests another potential avenue of change.

- the reconfiguration of the call center as an in-house voting assistance center
- customer feedback on voting assistance center operations
- new forms of engagement with states, potentially including work with CSG
- the reassessment of DoDI 1000.04
- enrollment in professional development programs
- outreach through DoDEA schools, in coordination with DoDEA
- NASS resolution on voting information
- the continuation of the OMB process for form (FPCA and FWAB) revisions
- the development of research briefs
- the use of findings from FVAP's 2012 postelection report to Congress (FVAP, 2013b)
- the development of a dashboard in a related RAND project
- staff interest in the use of project-management tools.

To enable the reader to gauge FVAP's progress implementing the preliminary recommendations set out in Chapter Five, we discuss the evidence in the context of the issues raised in that chapter—namely, becoming one FVAP, building trust and strengthening relationships, and embracing a culture and principles of effectiveness.

Become One FVAP

First, FVAP appears to be coming to terms with its mission. The agency is focusing on more-direct, hands-on assistance and has reformulated its statement of purpose, reoriented its organization and operations, redesigned its website, and revised its outreach and training materials around such assistance.

In Chapter Five, we asserted that merely agreeing to a mission statement would not be enough. For FVAP, coming to terms with its mission would entail establishing a set of primary functions, consisting of core, supporting, and institutional activities, which, in turn, should derive from an evidence-based analysis of requirements, needs, and actual or potential effectiveness. In this section, we present evidence of progress in each arena. FVAP has not done all that it needs to do in any one arena, but it is moving in the right direction as a coherent whole.

FVAP's newly revised statement of purpose reflects—and announces—the agency's intent to focus on service to UOCAVA voters. A comparison of the old and new statements speaks to the distance FVAP has traveled in honing its mission, identifying means to support it, and carrying it out. Figures 7.1 and 7.2, which present screenshots of the relevant before and after web pages, enable a direct comparison. The old statement is not as much a statement as an amalgam of perspectives on the meaning of assistance.

The reasons for FVAP's existence are stated similarly in both screenshots, but, in the more recent image, those reasons are not offered as a mission statement but as further elaboration of a tighter statement of purpose. FVAP has framed its purpose succinctly in terms of awareness, tools, and resources. We also note that the statement is no longer buried in an "About FVAP" tab, accessible only via a link located in small type at the bottom-right corner of the home page, but is now posted under "General Information" on the main banner of the home page (see Figure 7.3).

And, in a manner that is more consistent with its core outreach requirements, FVAP has developed an "Outreach Materials" page (Figure 7.4), on which it posts the full range of its outreach materials. Previously, those materials were reachable through VAO-oriented and other tabs, but not at a consolidated one-stop-shopping location, labeled "Outreach Materials." On this page, the agency refers to its posters as "informational" not "motivational," possibly reducing some confusion about FVAP's role in awareness and motivation. However, FVAP still refers to them as "motivational" posters on the VAO "Materials" page.³ In addition, FVAP offers widgets for bloggers and information on tool kits.

Indicative of a sharper and clearer message, the new statement of purpose features prominently on most, if not all, of FVAP's outreach—and training—materials.⁴

FVAP now has a clearly articulated mission. In a manner that is consistent with our recommendation to appeal to evidence in decisionmaking, FVAP considered findings from phase 1 of this project and from its own analyses in the articulation of the mission. For example, it considered the findings from our engagement with stakeholders, which strongly suggested that FVAP is doing what it does best when it offers

³ This depiction was accurate as of September 2014, but, at the time of publication of this report, FVAP had amended the text of the web page to replace the word *motivational* with *informational*.

⁴ FVAP has not yet built this statement into all of its training modules.

Figure 7.1
Federal Voting Assistance Program Mission, Vision, and Core Values, Circa 2012–2013

INTERNET ARCHIVE Wayback Machine <http://www.fvap.gov/global/mission.html> 24 captures 13 Aug 09 - 23 Jul 15 JUN 15 SEP 2011 DEC 2013

FVAP.gov FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
 Voting Help For Uniformed Service Members, Their Families, & Citizens Living Outside The U.S.

[For Voting Assistance Officers](#) | [For Election Officials](#)

HOME STATE VOTING INFORMATION REFERENCE/REPORTS FAQ CONTACT/CHAT

[Home](#) > [Mission, Vision, Core Values](#)

Mission, Vision and Core Values

Vision

Military and overseas voters are able to cast a valid ballot, which is counted in the election, from anywhere in the world, as easily as if they were at a polling place.

Mission

The Federal Voting Assistance Program exists to:

- Assist uniformed services and overseas voters exercise their right to vote so that they have an equal opportunity with the general population to have their vote counted.
- Assist the States in complying with relevant federal laws, and advise them on ways to best comply.
- Advocate on behalf of the uniformed services and overseas voters, identifying impediments to their ability to exercise their right to vote, and proposing methods to overcome those impediments.

Core Values

The Federal Voting Assistance Program operates under the following core values:

- **Customer-focused:** Successfully engage and satisfy FVAP's primary customers: military and overseas voters as well as election officials.
- **Proactive:** Individual staff members anticipate future problems, needs or changes within the Department, the Program, the Services, or the election community, and quickly take effective action to prevent, or, if necessary, resolve those issues.
- **Data-driven:** Manage programs through the rigorous, detailed statistical analysis of the voting population and through results-based metrics and assessments of voting assistance programs.
- **Transparent:** Make all data, methodologies, and performance evaluations readily available to the public.
- **Efficient:** Pursue programs that stimulate the greatest improvements in voter success rates in the most expeditious manner and with the least expense.

Email Updates | RSS Feed | Twitter | Facebook | LinkedIn
www.usa.gov | www.defenseinklink.mil Mobile Site | Site Map | About FVAP | Privacy and Accessibility Policies

SOURCE: Archival snapshot of the FVAP website (www.fvap.gov/global/mission), retrieved from the Internet Archive Wayback Machine and available as of August 13, 2015.

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direct assistance and responds to the expressed needs of its partners and customers. It also considered the statistical analysis of services and outcomes in the 2012 postelection report to Congress (FVAP, 2013b). In that report (FVAP, 2013b, p. 19), FVAP found a significant relationship between interactions with FVAP's voting assistance resources and voting success, defined in terms of the likelihood of voting and returning an absentee ballot.

Beyond our direct experience with the agency and its staff, we are less able to provide concrete evidence that the mission is shared and commonly understood within FVAP; however, in the context of that experience, we have heard staff describing the

Figure 7.2
Federal Voting Assistance Program Statement of Purpose, Circa 2014

FVAP Purpose

FVAP works to ensure Service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so - from anywhere in the world.

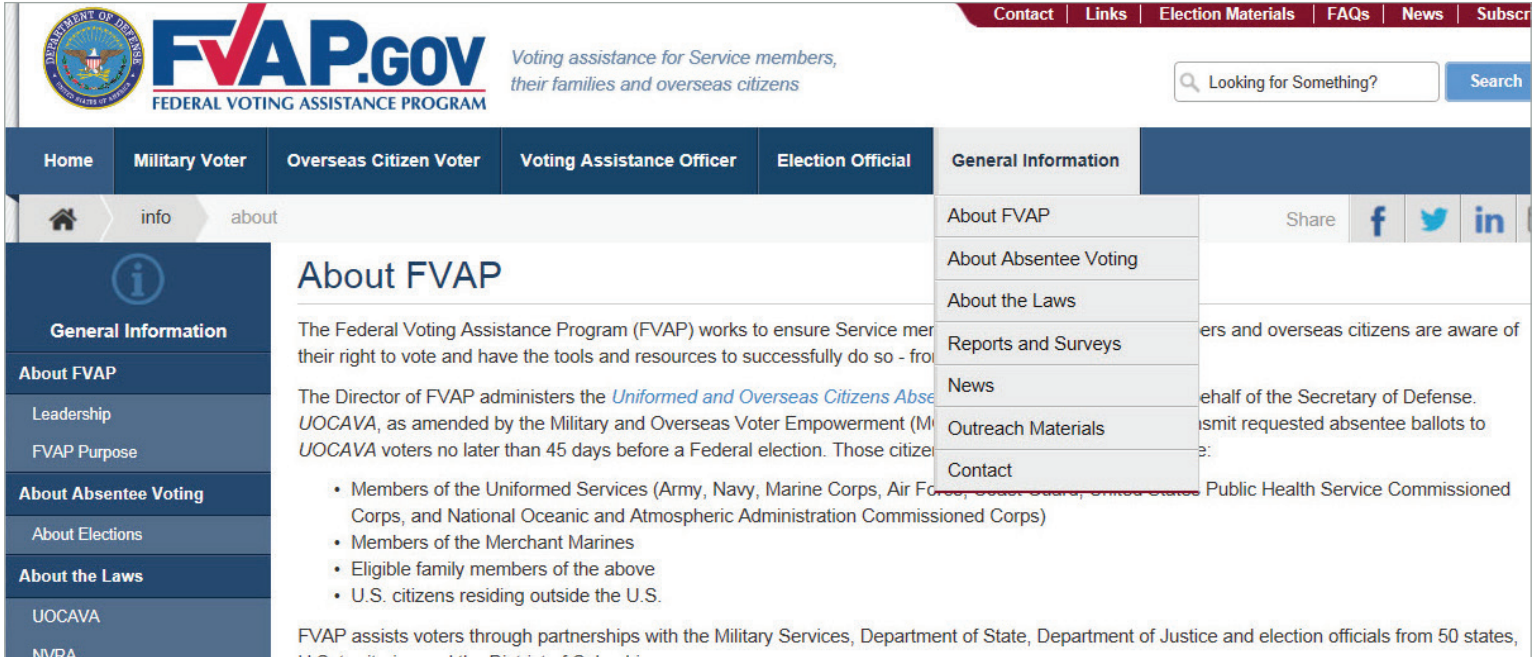
The Federal Voting Assistance Program exists to

- Assist uniformed services and overseas voters exercise their right to vote so that they have an equal opportunity with the general population to have their vote counted.
- Assist the States in complying with relevant Federal laws by providing current information.
- Advocate on behalf of the uniformed services and overseas voters, identifying impediments to their ability to exercise their right to vote, and proposing methods to overcome those impediments.

SOURCE: FVAP website image captured from the FVAP website on August 27, 2014.

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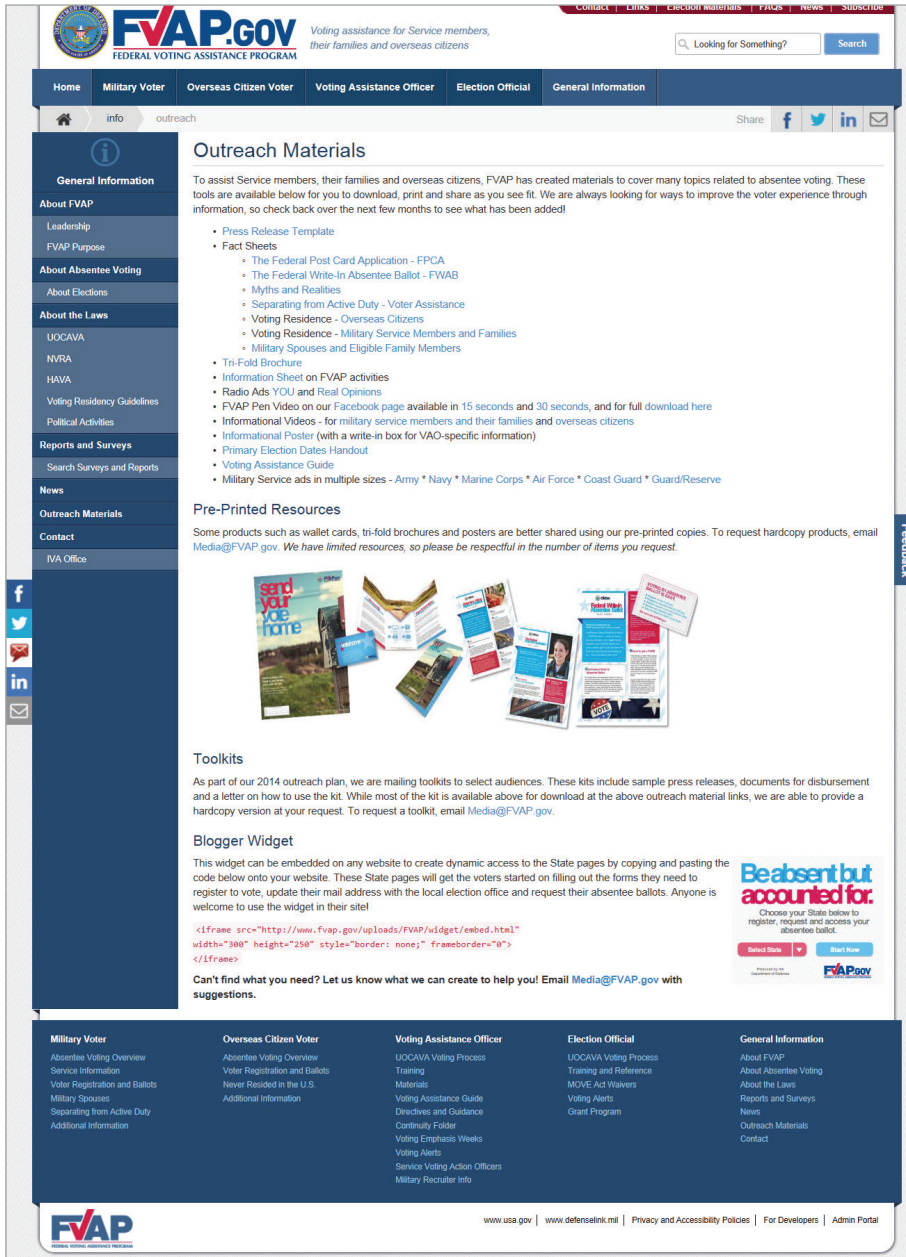
Figure 7.3
Federal Voting Assistance Program Website Navigation to Statement of Purpose, Circa 2014



SOURCE: FVAP website image captured from the FVAP website on August 27, 2014.

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Figure 7.4
Federal Voting Assistance Program Website Access to Outreach Materials, Circa 2014



SOURCE: FVAP website image captured from the FVAP website on August 27, 2014.

RAND RR882-7.4

agency and their roles in ways that are consistent with the revised mission statement, and we have observed staff demonstrating new enthusiasm for their efforts.

Indicative of efforts to come to terms with the mission and integrate and shore up its operations, FVAP has both reorganized its operations (see Figure 7.5) and altered the composition of those operations.

The final, robust logic model, presented in Figure 6.3, provided a blueprint for FVAP's reorganization. FVAP has consolidated assistance to voters, states, and localities and the technology and research that support it, in a single line of operations or activity stream, referred to as the Voting Assistance Division, with a single supervisor, a set of three SME teams, and other SMEs with responsibilities for particular, crosscutting products and services. A Communication and Outreach Division, which includes a supervisor and two public-affairs specialists, is managing interactions with the Congress and overseas NGOs and revisions to DoDI 1000.04. (The Communication and Outreach Division does not appear to be managing direct communications with the services or election officials, which appear to be covered under the Voting Assistance Division. This division of labor implies an ongoing need for substantial—and better—coordination across activity streams.⁵) A Mission Support Division, which the director supervises from the front office, will oversee HR, including contracting and professional development, which we discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

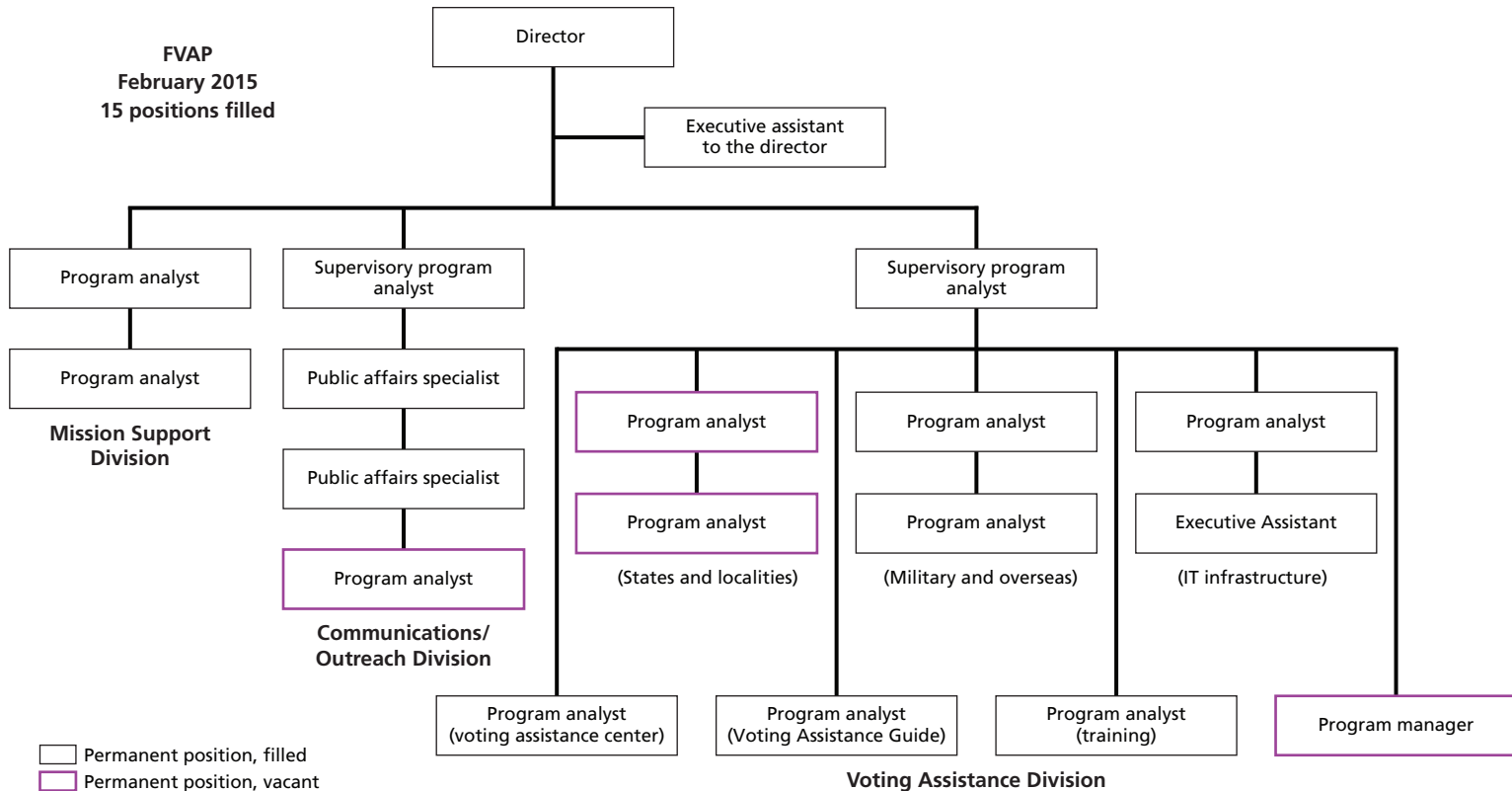
In the new chart, there are three leadership positions, consisting of the director and two supervisory program analysts. Thus, FVAP has shed two leadership positions, two advisory positions, and all of its term positions. Regarding the term positions, it has converted some, such as the executive assistant's position, to permanent FTEs and eliminated others. Moreover, a majority of the agency's staff now serves in the Voting Assistance Division.

In addition, FVAP has brought its call center in house as a voting assistance center, which handles calls, emails, live chats, and faxes from VAOs, voters, election officials, and other FVAP stakeholders.⁶ Previously, a third-party contractor staffed the center; now, FVAP is staffing the center with a combination of core team members and other voter assistance and communication staff, on a rotational basis. In bringing the center in house and providing the professional development—and cross-training—to make it possible, FVAP has reduced the distance between it and its customers, both intermediaries and voters—a central focus of Chapter Six—and, by engaging nearly all staff in the operation of the center, it has brought everyone in FVAP closer to the

⁵ In Chapter Two, we noted that the communication service group carried responsibility for messaging across the agency but that it did not appear to be as actively involved in developing voting and election-official assistance guidance and training materials, all of which contribute to the public face of FVAP. We argued that, if the agency's activities were more fully integrated, materials speaking to mission or policy—regardless of their origin or purpose—could be honed for consistency before dissemination.

⁶ The rebranding from call center to voting assistance center reflected an intentional, ongoing migration to fuller service and occurred in the summer of 2013, before the center was brought in house.

Figure 7.5
Federal Voting Assistance Program Organization Chart as of February 2015



SOURCE: RAND staff, adapted from chart provided by FVAP leadership.
 NOTE: FVAP provided updated information in February 2015, which we included in this figure.

agency's mission.⁷ Moreover, by creating a readily accessible database on customer contact that includes information on the substance of each contact and customer feedback, FVAP has begun to address concerns about common strategies and shared methods of engagement. In conjunction with staff training on problem-solving and data analysis, which we discuss later in this chapter, the agency might be better able to identify cross-cutting issues, look for and track patterns among emerging issues, and develop unified, agency-wide responses.

Admittedly, the voting assistance center does not handle a large volume of inquiries—it received almost 1,000 inquiries from June 2014 to August 2014⁸—but the reconfiguration holds potential as a signal that FVAP is focusing on assistance, as a means to unite the agency around a common purpose, and as an opportunity to gain a better understanding of stakeholders' needs. In addition, the center might be bringing FVAP closer to a relatively inaccessible segment of the UOCAVA voting population—namely, overseas-citizen voters. In August 2014, roughly one-fifth of all inquiries were from overseas-citizen voters, which was a slightly larger share than the share from military voters. One might expect that overseas citizens would account for a larger share of the center's clients than service members because there might be more of them and they might lack immediate access to VAOs and other installation-based voting assistance; however, as depicted in Figure 6.1, they also benefit from the assistance of overseas NGOs.

Further reflecting FVAP's intent to assist, the agency is exploring new, more-targeted modes of engaging directly with states and localities, including through in-depth conversations and troubleshooting sessions and work with CSG.⁹ Regarding direct engagement, FVAP recently met with election officials in Austin, Texas, at a round-table event held on the margins of the Texas Election Law Seminar. It used the opportunity to brainstorm with the officials on Texas-specific issues and to engage on other matters of interest around the table, including ballot rejection rates. CSG and FVAP have embarked on a cooperative agreement, through which FVAP hopes to leverage CSG's links to the states to address issues at the intersection of their concerns about meeting UOCAVA requirements.¹⁰ To that end, CSG has, with input from

⁷ VAOs and voters, the latter consisting of a combination of overseas-citizen voters, military voters, and a small number of non-UOCAVA voters, accounted for roughly similar shares of the center's clients in August 2014, with election officials accounting for the next-largest share. On that basis, the center might be said to serve intermediaries somewhat more often than voters. Such an observation would be consistent with the analysis in Chapter Six of FVAP's role in the voting system, which characterized FVAP as often depending on or operating through intermediaries.

⁸ FVAP reported 997 calls from June 2, 2014 to August 26, 2014, of which more than one-third occurred in August, but FVAP anticipated a higher rate of inquiries in October, in the run-up to the November elections.

⁹ In the next section, we discuss some of the implications of the approach for stakeholder engagement.

¹⁰ As a related matter, it is our understanding that FVAP is working with a contractor to develop a checklist of requirements for election officials, suggesting another step toward meeting the mandate to ensure their awareness

FVAP, established two working groups, one looking at technology-related issues and the other at policy-related issues. Initial topics of discussion in those working groups have included data standardization and the use of forms as UOCAVA voter-registration applications.

FVAP is also reassessing DoDI 1000.04 with the intent to craft revised guidance that is in closer alignment with core legal requirements and more clearly sets out the responsibilities of each participant in the system as part of a system. The agency is mapping each provision of DoDI 1000.04 to UOCAVA and vice versa to promote both consistency and completeness in the new version. It is also drawing together each institution and individual's (e.g., IVAO's, UVAO's) responsibilities under a single, readily locatable heading.¹¹

Lastly, we note a substantial change in FVAP's management of professional development and of management itself. FVAP is adopting a routinized approach to working with staff to identify and fill training needs, to replace what had been described as an ad hoc arrangement. FVAP leadership has assigned this responsibility to a member of the mission-support team and, in a manner that is consistent with our recommendations on capability and capacity, it is also providing that team member with training, e.g., an initial course titled "Supporting Professional Growth in Organizations," to do the job. At the same time, FVAP is investing in its managers and management with courses in organizational and project management, ranging from "Leadership and Management Skills for Non-Managers" to "Administration in Public and Non-Profit Organizations." FVAP also had one GS-14-level staff member scheduled to attend a defense senior leadership development program (the Key Executive Leadership Certificate Program), starting early in the 2015 fiscal year.¹²

Table 7.2 presents FVAP's training commitments from spring of 2014 to the present, exclusive of the senior leadership commitment, noted above.

Build Trust and Strengthen Relationships

Building trust and strengthening relationships will take time, but FVAP appears to be progressing in its approach to working with partners and serving customers, communicating with stakeholders, and promoting transparency.

of their requirements under UOCAVA. As addressed in Chapter Four, the law (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff[b](1)) includes a general requirement for FVAP to consult state and local election officials in carrying out UOCAVA and ensure their awareness of UOCAVA requirements.

¹¹ The September 2012 version of DoDI 1000.04 delineates responsibilities by institution, but the responsibilities of people within those institutions are scattered across subsections.

¹² One staff member participated in a defense senior leadership program in the fall of 2013.

Table 7.2
Federal Voting Assistance Program Professional Development Commitments

Date (2014)	Employee Grade	Course Name	Course Hours
March 1	GS-12	Election and Voter Registration Administration	16
March 1	GS-12	Election Center Voter Registration	16
March 17	GS-15	Strategic Workforce Planning	16
April 26	GS-12	Information Management and Technology	12
May 17	GS-15	Administration in Public and Nonprofit Organizations	40
May 20	GS-12	Developing Website/[Cascading Style Sheet]	32
May 30	GS-14	Financial Management Professional Development	32
June 9	GS-12	Project Management Principles	21
July 21	GS-12	Leadership and Communication Skills for Project Managers	21
July 31	GS-14	Monitoring Grants	16
August 13	GS-12	Microsoft Project 2010 Introduction Course	16
August 19	GS-12	Comparing Election Performance by Measuring Processes and Results	24
August 20	GS-12	Leadership and Management Skills for Non-Managers	24
August 25	GS-15	Problem Solving and Data Analysis	40
September 2	GS-13	Introduction to Geographic Information Systems	16
September 5	GS-14	Supporting Professional Growth in Organizations	8
September 11	GS-12	Customer Service Skills and Techniques ^a	16
September 16	GS-12	Management Scope, Schedule, and Cost	21
September 18	GS-12	Appropriations Law Refresher	16
September 19	GS-14	4 Steps to Standout Legal Writing	6
September 22	GS-14	Strategic Plans to Tactical Execution	18
September 23	GS-12	Six Sigma White Belt Training	5
September 24	GS-13	Leadership and Management Skills for Non-Managers	24
September 30	GS-14	Effective Writing for Lawyers Workshop	6.5
October 6	GS-14	Six Sigma Green Belt Training	80
October 7	GS-12	Six Sigma Yellow Belt Training	5

SOURCE: Based on FVAP staff communication, September 9, 2014.

NOTE: All of the sessions included in this table were fully funded and approved.

^a Train-the-trainer event, with agency-wide training scheduled for September 15, 2014.

In this section, we draw further evidence from the redesign of the FVAP website, the reconfiguration of the call center, new forms of engagement with states, and commitments to professional development, and we point to a recent NASS resolution on voting information, the continuation of the OMB process for form revisions, feedback from the voting assistance center, and the development of a new product line, i.e., the research note.

First, turning to the FVAP website, we see signs—in the before and after screenshots presented above and in our own exploration of the tabs—of substantial improvement in the usability of the agency’s website for non-UOCAVA voter stakeholders. In prior conversations, stakeholders had credited FVAP with developing a well-appointed product for voters but suggested the need for enhancements for other stakeholders. The new home page displays tabs for military voters, overseas-citizen voters, VAOs, and election officials in a single banner that also contains a general information tab with access to information about FVAP, reports and surveys, and outreach materials.¹³ The home page also includes upcoming election dates, quick links, latest FVAP news, a “contact FVAP” feature, and rotating images, with clickable links to a statement from the Secretary of Defense, information on the use of online voting tools, information specific to overseas-citizen voters and VAOs, and information for voters who have moved recently.¹⁴

As noted above, FVAP has a new page devoted to outreach materials that were previously scattered across the website. We view the page as having implications for how FVAP can and might do business with its stakeholders. For example, the materials include a “blogger widget,” ready to cut and paste. The intent is to make it easier for partners to link voters to FVAP resources and, thus, to leverage their reach. Similarly, FVAP has attempted to extend its reach through distribution of outreach kits to DoDEA schools.¹⁵

But not all of the new or revised features are reaching their potential, with some shortcomings suggesting need for either relabeling or more-active upkeep, for technical corrections, and for additional links.¹⁶

- On September 15, 2014, both the “upcoming election events” and the “latest FVAP news” sections of the home page appeared to be lacking up-to-date information relevant to the November election. Upon discussion with FVAP, we learned that the calendar and the news listings update automatically on a set

¹³ This banner appears on all the FVAP web pages.

¹⁴ Current on the home page as of September 15, 2014.

¹⁵ FVAP is also discussing the provision of a curriculum for high school seniors.

¹⁶ We did not attempt a comprehensive assessment of the website; rather, we comment on issues that caught our attention for better or worse in our search for evidence of change.

schedule and that the latter draws items from FVAP’s email alerts but not necessarily from broader news sources.

- The reports and surveys are now intended to be searchable, both in bulk and under the subcategories “Reports to Congress,” “Surveys,” and “General Research Reports,”¹⁷ but our attempts at subcategory searches did not proceed smoothly.¹⁸ FVAP staff was aware of the problem at the time of our analysis and was seeking a remedy.
- FVAP provides links to reports from other U.S. government agencies, consisting of GAO, EAC, and the DoD IG, but it does not include links to other federal partners’ reports, such as those of NIST,¹⁹ DOJ, or MPSA.

FVAP has also introduced a new product, the research note, to its product slate. According to FVAP, this product line is intended to bring technical information and research findings to the general public in a more focused and readable form than in larger, full-blown research reports. And, it appears to do so. The first such note (FVAP, 2014b), “Registration and Voting Participation Differences between the Active Duty Military and Citizen Voting Age Population,” also represents progress toward methodological transparency.²⁰

In the prior section, we discussed the reconfiguration of the call center as a matter of mission; here, we consider it—and the feedback that it has generated—as evidence of an ongoing effort to build trust and strengthen relationships with stakeholders and as a concrete manifestation of service to customers. FVAP’s emphasis, thus far, has been on firming up its standing both as a trusted source of information about UOCAVA voting and as a responsive, customer service–oriented entity. In support of this effort, FVAP is also investing in professional development, consisting of an introductory brown-bag session on the operation of the center, staff enrollment in a train-the-trainer session on customer service skills and techniques, and a subsequent agency-wide training session. FVAP has also produced a “standards and procedures” volume for use by those staffing the center.

In June 2014, FVAP began surveying its call-center customers and, on the basis of the results of those surveys and a small amount of free-form feedback, this practice appears to be a positive development. Over a roughly three-month period, beginning in June 2014, FVAP assisted almost 1,000 customers, consisting of VAOs, overseas-cit-

¹⁷ Prior to the redesign, a “reference and reports” tab was located on the home page, not via “General Information,” but the material was not searchable, and finding specific items was more cumbersome.

¹⁸ Clicking on “General Reports” took us to a mixed list of all categories of reports, which reduced the visibility of the general reports and could make it difficult to find the general material.

¹⁹ As of September 17, 2014, NIST offered a wide range of materials potentially relevant to those with an interest in UOCAVA voting (NIST, 2015).

²⁰ FVAP has since released a second note in this series; see FVAP, 2014a.

izen voters, military voters, election officials, and others. Of the total, FVAP surveyed 214 customers and obtained 29 responses.²¹ Customers were asked to rate FVAP along four lines—specifically, efficiency in resolving the request, courtesy and professionalism, skill level of the analyst, and overall satisfaction with FVAP. On a scale of 1 to 5, its average ratings along each line ranged from 4.7 to 4.8. Admittedly, there were few respondents, but the results are encouraging. FVAP also received open-ended feedback from ten customers during the same period. That feedback was almost entirely positive, e.g., citing quick turnarounds, relevant responses, and personalized service.

Here, we also draw from the prior discussion of FVAP's engagement with states and localities, both through targeted, direct contact, as in the case of the Texas round table, and through the CSG cooperative agreement. In the Texas example, we detected a subtle but important change of tone and a less subtle, more readily verifiable change in methods. Our discussions with FVAP—and the content of an FVAP-drafted meeting synopsis—strongly suggest that FVAP entered the event seeking not just to broadcast but also to receive and respond. FVAP annotated the synopsis with action items for FVAP, and, in a break from past behavior, the agency set about taking action and following up with participants to alert them to that action. In particular, the FVAP director used a DoD news event to offer absentee-voting tips to service members, including two that emerged from the round table, i.e., using state forms when voting locally and remembering to check inboxes for ballots when requesting to receive them by email.²² Through CSG, FVAP also appears to be addressing its relationships differently. Notes from recent meetings suggest that FVAP is giving the states—or CSG, serving as the coordinator of two working groups—considerable latitude in selecting topics and guiding discussions. This is not to say that FVAP is not participating but that it does not appear to be attempting to control the dynamic.

Suggesting an increase in trust in FVAP as a partner—and increased confidence in the FVAP website—NASS issued an amended “NASS Resolution on Voting Information for Military and Overseas Citizens on the Web,” in July 2014. That resolution included the following language:

Now therefore be it resolved, that NASS requests that each state's elections Web site provide specific information for UOCAVA voters, and that each Web site provide a link to the U.S. Department of Defense Federal Voting Assistance Program Web site.

²¹ The overall response rate for the three-month period was about 14 percent but appears to have been increasing during that period. FVAP noted that the initial response rate was only 7 percent and that it had taken remedial action, drawing on reported best practices, to improve the rate, e.g., by delaying the survey request.

²² Quoting the director, “Don't use the federal postcard application if you plan on voting in-person at the polls. Instead, use your state form. Also, don't forget to check your inbox for your ballot if you've requested to receive it by e-mail” (Marshall, 2014).

We conclude this section with a brief discussion of FVAP’s use of the OMB process for revising the FPCA and FWAB. In Chapter Three, “Stakeholder Outreach,” we summarized a comparison of two recent efforts (2011 and 2013) to revise the FPCA and FWAB forms. Discussants depicted the first effort, led by DoD, as one in which FVAP staff did not solicit or respond uniformly to external input, resulting in animosity among some stakeholders. They depicted the second effort, run through OMB, as open, constructive, and yielding buy-in. They did not suggest that everyone’s needs had been met through the OMB process—or that they would stop advocating for their concerns—but that they had been heard and understood the reasons for the outcome of the process. Discussants held up the OMB process as a positive example of transparency, listening, and responding.

Since conducting that outreach, we have gathered more evidence on the OMB process and FVAP’s use of it and have verified that the process did yield systematic engagement, far beyond what occurred in the prior revision of the FPCA and FWAB.²³ Over two cycles, involving opportunities to comment and reply, FVAP fielded questions, comments, and concerns on usability, layout, additional blocks and space for signatures, instructions, and specific block changes, from stakeholders associated with at least 61 comment identification numbers;²⁴ posted a revised draft; and finalized the forms.²⁵ To supplement the process, FVAP reached out separately to stakeholders to alert them to the process and posted news releases, similarly announcing the process (see FVAP, 2013a, 2013c). The process took five months from start (April 1, 2013) to finish and, by all accounts, yielded an improved product.²⁶

We offer this as an example of FVAP taking steps, on its own, to identify better ways of working with stakeholders—and doing business more generally. FVAP chose to make use of the OMB process prior to our arrival and, recognizing the value of that process, plans to make use of it in the future.

Embrace a Culture and Principles of Effectiveness

The evidence suggests progress in several areas. First, as noted above, FVAP has implemented change on the basis of evidence; that is, it established its new statement of purpose, undertook a substantial reorganization, and reoriented its operations on the basis

²³ In 2011, FVAP posted the forms in the *Federal Register* and commissioned a usability study but did not issue an open call for comment or actively seek widespread, if any, stakeholder input.

²⁴ We tallied 40 comment identifiers associated with comments on the FPCA and 21 comment identifiers associated with comments on the FWAB, but there might have been overlap across the two sets.

²⁵ These comments were associated with the first 60-day cycle.

²⁶ Notices for the proposed forms (FWAB and FPCA) and requests for comment were posted on April 1, 2013 (Office of USD[P&R], 2013a, 2013b).

of stakeholder outreach, statistical evidence of efficacy, the analysis that we provided to the agency in phase 1 of this project, and the final, robust logic model. For example, FVAP drew directly from the statistical analysis presented in the 2012 postelection report to Congress (FVAP, 2013b) in its decision to focus attention on communications and outreach as means to build voters' awareness of FVAP resources. That analysis suggested the importance of interaction with FVAP resources, which, in turn, suggested the necessity of voters' awareness of those resources. A heavy reliance on analysis was, in itself, a major change in FVAP's approach to setting course and taking action.

Second, FVAP commissioned the development of the dashboard—in a related RAND project—to provide indicators of needs throughout the voting assistance system and track progress toward meeting those needs. Moreover, with input from that project, FVAP has recently redesigned its VAO and IVA office metric-reporting requirements. The new requirements include an updated list of metrics and the justification for each metric. Examples of justifications include accurately representing the use of particular resources and characterizing preferred methods of distribution of particular resources. FVAP has also expressed its intent to use the dashboard to identify hot spots and better target its 2016 VAO training program.

Third, FVAP is encouraging and supporting enrollment in relevant professional development, including courses in organizational and project management, strategic planning and tactical execution, performance measurement, and problem-solving and data analysis.

Fourth, a small number of FVAP employees has expressed interest in using the project-management tools that the RAND project team provided in phase 2 of this project to explore the need for initiatives relating to state engagement and HR management and to evaluate their potential benefits, costs, and risks.

Fifth, implicit in the shift to certain priorities is a shift away from others, both in substance and in the allocation of resources. FVAP appears to be letting go of activities that are not consistent with its reinvention and, given plausible capabilities and capacities, unlikely to serve voters' interests effectively. For example, in shifting toward troubleshooting with the states, as it did in Texas, it has shifted away from legislative initiatives. Lastly, we point to the right-sizing that has accompanied FVAP's reorganization; for example, since the inception of this project, FVAP has relinquished all of its term positions, some through conversion to permanent FTE positions and others through elimination.

Concluding Remarks on Evidence of Change

The foregoing evidence suggests both real change and progress toward change. FVAP has instituted organizational and operational change to bring the agency in closer alignment with core requirements and with a mission oriented toward more-direct,

hands-on assistance to intermediaries and voters. We cannot, as yet, connect those changes to changes in outcomes for UOCAVA voters—the changes in FVAP are too recent—but we see potential to do so, eventually with the assistance of the metrics and measures from the dashboard.

The evidence of shortcoming—such as those found on the website—also suggests the need to keep moving forward, primarily to lock in and build on gains, but also to correct occasional missteps. In the next chapter, we offer suggestions for doing so.

Final Recommendations, Guidance, and Remarks

In this chapter, we offer our final recommendations and guidance to FVAP. We reported evidence of positive change in Chapter Seven, but we also see the potential for both additional gains and fatigue in the future. For those reasons, our final recommendations and guidance speak to locking in and building on recent progress. We also consider FVAP's absorptive capacity—that is, its ability to preserve momentum without burning out. We conclude the chapter with remarks that include a look back to the project's goals and comments on progress in meeting them.

Lock in and Build on Gains

FVAP needs to adhere to its mission, notwithstanding the near certainty of some leadership turnover, the push and pull of divergent stakeholder interests, and the ebbs and flows of election cycles, but we are not advocating rigidity. FVAP must be able to respond to emerging needs, some foreseeable and some not; it is through those responses that it will demonstrate whether it knows what it is and where it is going.

What follows are suggestions for consolidating and advancing recent progress. We have drawn these suggestions from our observations of FVAP and its stakeholders and, informally, from the literature on change management (see Camm et al., 2013, for a synthesis) and organizational resilience (e.g., Bhamra, Dani, and Burnard, 2011; Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2007).¹ Some of these suggestions are within FVAP's power to

¹ Here, we draw loosely from two research streams: the first on change management (for a succinct overview, see Camm et al., 2013, pp. 87–95) and the second on organizational resilience. In referring to the literature on change management, we draw heavily from Camm et al.'s synthesis but also from Kotter, 2007. To the extent that we address resilience, we recognize the existence of a vast literature, offering myriad definitions. For purposes of this report, we adopt the conceptualization of Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 3418, which defines resilience as “the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions such that the organization emerges from those conditions strengthened and more resourceful.” Among the “challenging conditions,” they include “discrete errors, scandals, crises, and shocks, as well as ongoing risks (e.g., competition), stresses, and strain.” The potential for strengthening and the inclusion of ongoing stresses and strains sets this definition apart from some others. On September 23, 2014, a search for *organizational resilience* in Google Scholar yielded about 141,000 results in 0.05 seconds—a search on Google, in its entirety, yielded about 3,340,000 results in 0.17 seconds.

implement, and others must be taken up elsewhere in DoD, at higher organizational levels, or outside DoD. Turning first to the suggestions largely within FVAP's control, we urge FVAP to continue to do the following:

- Internalize—and outwardly project—the mission.
- Invest in leadership and staff with professional development.
- Promote organizational cohesion.
- Engage with stakeholders as stakeholders.
- Take calls for effectiveness to heart.
- Develop stronger discernment skills.
- Work with the logic model as a living document.
- Undertake periodic health checks.

In the rest of this section, we elaborate on each point. In bulleted text, we use recommendations on VAO training—and other matters—to highlight specific opportunities.

Internalize—and Outwardly Project—the Mission

FVAP, consisting of its leadership and staff, must operate in accordance with the agency's mission and present it consistently as part of the agency's public face through the website, written materials, presentations, and actions. Throughout this report, we have presented the agency's mission as a center from which change could flow (Chapters Two and Five) and did flow (Chapter Seven), but it should also serve as an anchor in the future. An FVAP that has a strong sense of self is an FVAP that is less likely to be buffeted by turnover, competing demands, and the more-predictable stresses and strains of an election cycle.

- FVAP has reoriented its mission and is working toward fully absorbing it, but the agency has not yet built that mission—and the corresponding message—into the VAO training program (Chapter Six), nor has it consistently embedded its principles in the pages of its website (Chapter Seven). In particular, FVAP's in-person training modules—in use in the now-complete 2014 training cycle—were born of the old FVAP, not the new, and will need to be updated, as will the VAO-targeted web pages.
- To further promote the agency's adherence to its mission and in recognition of the essential bond between the agency's mission and the core requirements set out in Chapter Four, we suggest again (Chapter Five) that FVAP establish clear lines of accountability to legislative mandates. The agency should be able to trace each provision of law to a person with primary control over related activities.

Invest in Leadership and Staff with Professional Development

FVAP should continue to provide its leadership and staff with the professional development necessary to forward the mission. Simply put, if leadership or staff members lack the knowledge and skills to do their jobs, the agency as a whole cannot carry out its mission. FVAP has made substantial advances (Table 7.2 in Chapter Seven), but it will need to continue the effort and should do so systematically. At the same time, it must give people the opportunity to absorb, digest, and reflect on new material and to identify paths to incorporating it into their work lives.

- FVAP should, as planned, undertake routine assessments of staff members' professional development needs, but it should also conduct need assessments from an institutional perspective—that is, with consideration to FVAP-wide gaps in capabilities and capacities. On that basis, we would urge FVAP to put the same amount of effort into developing its VAO trainers—and to those managing the VAO training program—as it has into building other capabilities, e.g., around management and analysis.

Promote Organizational Cohesion

FVAP must continue to give meaning to the integrative process that began with the reorganization of divisions and activity streams. To be more than a relabeling, desk-shuffling exercise, leadership must manage its divisions and teams as parts of a larger organization, and staff must perceive that they are part of that organization. For leadership, this means resisting the temptation to create new stovepipes, accounting for the interrelatedness of actions among activity streams, and recognizing and validating people who excel in this environment—whether through staff awards, promotions, or a simple “thank you.” And, for the entire agency, it means better communication up and down and within and across activity streams.

- In an organization as small as FVAP, it would be counterproductive to rely on the leaders of each activity stream as sole nodes of communication across streams. FVAP staff should be encouraged, through a combination of formal and informal mechanisms, to share their experiences, including routine and exceptional challenges, success stories, and nascent ideas to better meet customer needs across streams. The mechanisms, some of which are already in use, could range from retreats to elevator chats.
- We observed (Chapter Seven) that FVAP's Communication and Outreach Division is coordinating interactions with Congress and with overseas NGOs, but not with the uniformed services or state and local election officials. For that reason, the agency will need to be especially attentive to the quality of collaboration between the Communication and Outreach Division and the Voting Assistance Division.

As a related matter, the agency cannot be dependent on a single person to carry the agency or an activity without support from others. The responsibilities of individual staff members must be delineated clearly, but staff must be pulled into and join the effort as coparticipants and, in an organization with fewer than 20 permanent FTEs, should be able to reach across the agency to both backfill and surge. Requirements for backfill and surges also imply, as addressed in Chapter Five, a need for cross-training.

Engage with Stakeholders as Stakeholders

FVAP must continue to remember that its stakeholders have interests of their own that merit close consideration and are not a passive audience or extension of the agency's operations. In some regards, this might be FVAP's most challenging duty. Doing so requires that FVAP more fully embrace two-way communication—it is making progress (Chapter Seven)—and reach out to the civilian public. But, it must do so in a national security institution, DoD, that values caution and, in some instances, might discourage openness.

- FVAP will have ample opportunity in the coming year to strengthen its engagement skills, through its operation of the voting assistance center, its work with CSG, and revisions and updates to the FPCA, FWAB, and DoDI 1000.04. Whereas two-way communication is all but hard wired into the OMB-led process for the FPCA and FWAB, it is not as unmistakably embedded in the process governing the redo of the DoD instruction. The latter requires some prespecified coordination across stakeholders but could more readily take on a unilateral flavor. As such, the DoDI update will afford FVAP an opportunity to demonstrate that it is not intent simply on broadcasting to its stakeholders but also on receiving information from them and responding to them. Looking further into the future, to the 2016 VAO training cycle, we envision the training program—specifically, the in-person program—as an opportunity to engage constructively with stakeholders and reap some of the ancillary benefits addressed in Chapter Six.

Take Calls for Effectiveness to Heart

To fully embrace effectiveness, FVAP will need to consider the benefits, costs, and risks of its actions in relation to its mission, requirements, and operations on a daily basis—not just from its perspective but from the perspectives of its customers, partners, and other stakeholders. Taking this step implies a change in mind-set and behavior. Because it requires access to alternative, external perspectives, its success depends at least partly on the agency's progress on two-way communication.

- Much of Chapter Six and Appendixes D and E concern themselves with the application of effectiveness tools (benefit, cost, and risk) to the VAO training pro-

gram; thus, we suggest applying those tools to the redesign of that program for the 2016 training cycle and to efforts to streamline in-person delivery.²

Develop Stronger Discernment Skills

FVAP must become more adept at distinguishing between good and bad ideas for new projects or activities, whether internally or externally generated. To the extent that FVAP takes on projects or activities that look attractive but do not make sense in relation to its mission, its requirements, and its organizational capabilities and capacity, it is allowing itself to become less focused and more susceptible to setbacks and surprises. We also suggest strict adherence to the “do it well” principle; that is, if FVAP lacks the ability or cannot acquire the ability to do something well, it should not do it unless it must (Chapter Four). FVAP will also need to find ways to say “no” to new ideas without dampening staff and stakeholder interest or creativity. Those who propose ideas that do not advance to trial or implementation should not be made to feel judged or reluctant to float new ideas—nor should their peers.³

Work with the Logic Model as a Living Document

We suggest keeping the final, robust logic model at hand as both a reminder of institutional identity and a tool for communicating with staff and stakeholders with a shared vocabulary, but we also encourage FVAP to revisit the specification and details of the model over time.⁴ The model, which, in various forms, provided the foundation for our analysis of FVAP’s operations, a blueprint for the agency’s reorientation and reorganization, and, in the context of the dashboard project, a means to identify metrics and measures, can do more in the future. For example, FVAP can use its model to walk staff and stakeholders through the agency’s approach to voter assistance, including the nature of its relationships with stakeholders, to explore alternative approaches, and to obtain feedback. If FVAP uncovers a better way of advancing its purpose, it can update the model to reflect the change. In that way, the model, albeit a final version for the purposes of this analysis and structurally robust, should be thought of as a living document. Many federal agencies post their logic models on their websites, accompanying a statement of purpose on an “about” page, and use them to build their strategic plans and budget requests.

² Training will not stop between then and now, but, apart from the training that IVAOs provide to UVAOs, on installations, it will occur largely online.

³ In a workplace that values staff participation and creativity, we envision a proliferation of ideas more than a diminution and would expect to see FVAP facing this issue more regularly.

⁴ As addressed in Appendix A, the logic model can be used to provide internal and external audiences, including program partners, legislators, and other stakeholders, with a clear representation of the program’s operations and intent. It can also be used to delineate a program’s boundaries and responsibilities, thereby clarifying the meaning of *impact* and *results* as they relate to the program.

Undertake Periodic Health Checks

We also suggest that FVAP institute an ongoing series of preprogrammed health checks, preferably with external input, potentially to include DHRA or other USD(P&R) management. Such checks can be used to promote progress and circumvent the potential for fatigue and backsliding. FVAP should put these checks on the calendar now, as a visible reminder of the need for persistence and to prepare for them as forcing events. The logic model and any metrics and measures that flow from it in the dashboard project can provide a basis for the check.⁵ A combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence, including metrics and measures from the dashboard project, can be used to track progress toward solidifying change within FVAP and, eventually, toward improving voting outcomes.

Crosscutting Recommendations and Observations

Throughout this discussion, we have assumed the interest and participation of FVAP's stakeholders, both within DoD and beyond its confines.⁶ For example, SVAOs will need to play an active part in streamlining training, by providing well-considered lists of candidate training sites, and DHRA might need to engage in health checks. And, as stressed in Chapter Six, other agencies—ones not under FVAP's control—can have major effects on outcomes. Although FVAP cannot forcibly elicit constructive engagement, it can take steps to promote it by creating an environment in which stakeholders deem their participation worthwhile. To that end, we turn back to the fundamental issues of relationship-building and communication. FVAP must convince its stakeholders that it is taking their views into account and that their participation is important not only for FVAP but in their own interest. If, for example, an SVAO understands that FVAP cannot better target in-person training and, thus, reduce costs to the services without his or her input in the selection of installations, the SVAO might be more likely to participate.

Higher-level interventions might be necessary under some circumstances. Not every issue will need the director's or DHRA's involvement—and pulling them in too often could be counterproductive—but some issues might require policy support and merit elevation.

Our last words on locking in and building on gains concern the appointment of FVAP's leadership—specifically, its director—and speak to the issue of organizational resilience. The director of FVAP should come to the table with strong administrative skills, as a trained leader. If not already well-versed in voting assistance, he or she can learn from staff with deep subject-matter expertise. FVAP is an agency that will con-

⁵ For an example of the use of the logic model for these types of purposes, see Greenfield, Williams, and Eiseman, 2006, and Williams et al., 2009.

⁶ As we learned through our early outreach to stakeholders, this is not always the case.

tinue to benefit from agnostic civilian leadership,⁷ e.g., in the form of a professional administrator. Voting is an inherently political construct, subject to sharply divergent views on the means of conduct, be they printed or electronic, and a plethora of other hot-button issues. To minimize the potentially destabilizing effects of leadership change (Chapter One) and to reduce stakeholders' concerns that FVAP's engagement is driven too much by the agendas of individuals and not enough by the mission of the agency (Chapter Three), we suggest prioritizing managerial expertise in the hiring decision.

Without intending to end pessimistically, we point out that the vast majority of all organizational change fails. Studies of change in the private sector report an ill-defined failure rate of about 70 percent. The sources of data for that estimate and the meaning of *failure* are poorly documented (Breese, 2014), but the evidence is indicative of the difficulty of change. To the extent that we are aware of reliable predictors of successful change, the literature suggests the importance of drawing staff into the process of change; creating an environment that makes it possible to implement, sustain, and reward change; and, as change unfolds and is institutionalized, maintaining good communication throughout the organization. Staff members need to know why they are doing what they are doing, how their efforts relate to those of others in the organization, and whether their efforts are paying off. Kotter, 2007, p. 100, which identifies eight reasons for failure, cites “undercommunicating the vision by a factor of ten” as one reason and offers a generalizable warning, “without reliable and credible communication and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured.”

Concluding Remarks on Project Goals and Results

This project was established to assist FVAP in aligning its strategy and operations to better serve its mission and to strengthen FVAP's capacity to set its own course, greet change, and communicate its role in the voting community.

Looking back over the past two years, we believe that FVAP has made considerable progress. FVAP has reoriented its focus and operations; has redesigned its website and outreach materials to enable and communicate the change; has substantially altered its approach to stakeholders; and is investing in its staff—through professional development—to build the capabilities and capacity to support the reorientation.

This project might have helped to catalyze change in FVAP, but most of that change occurred outside the engagement, suggesting that FVAP has the ability and intent to continue implementing and institutionalizing change. FVAP appears to be consolidating and advancing recent progress and has provided us with updates on some of its latest initiatives (e.g., relating to the renovation of its training program

⁷ Civilian leadership is mandatory under DoDI 1000.04, 2012. According to that instruction, the USD(P&R) shall “Ensure that the Director, Department of Defense Human Resources Activity (DoDHRA) designates a civilian Director of the FVAP. . . .” See enclosure 2, ¶ 1(f), p. 7 of the DoD instruction.

for state election officials) that postdate our involvement. As noted in Chapter Seven, we cannot, as yet, connect FVAP's reorientation to improvements in outcomes for UOCAVA voters—the changes in FVAP are too recent and largely untested—but the steps that FVAP has taken to realign its mission and operations should cut a clearer path from the program's activities to outcomes and, thus, better support those outcomes.

We also see the results of this engagement as demonstrating to FVAP and other agencies that they can take concrete action to overcome obstacles to change and place themselves among the minority of organizations that implements change successfully. Organizational change is difficult, as both the large literature on change management and experience suggest, but still attainable. The collaboration began with an intense period of discussion with FVAP around the terms of engagement, and it required substantial involvement on the part of FVAP staff, including meetings at all levels of the organization and in groups ranging in size from few to many. Inclusivity and expansiveness were necessary to understanding and meeting the organization's needs, but staff involvement implied time and focus. The daily challenges of implementation, to which we are less able to speak directly, were at least as great as those of identifying gaps and disconnects and the means to fill them. The agency's commitment to change and the mutual trust that an ongoing, collaborative relationship can engender were also essential to progress. The project description envisioned the centrality of trust in noting the necessity of "special familiarity with the sponsor's mission and a close working relationship with that sponsor" (RAND Corporation, 2013).

Logic-Modeling Workshop and Materials

In this appendix, we present the set of information, consisting of the logic-modeling workshop notes, agenda, and discussion points, that we (the RAND project team) prepared for FVAP for the workshop that we led held on May 1–2, 2013.¹

Logic-Modeling Workshop Notes

We provided the following notes to FVAP as leave-behind material to accompany the presentation on logic modeling, Logic Modeling 101, that was the first full session of the logic-modeling workshop, held on May 1–2, 2013. They have been modified slightly, e.g., by adding headings and eliminating bold type, to better match the style of this report.

Introduction

Logic modeling is at least as much about “process” as it is about “product.” Logic models can serve many purposes. Among them, they can be used to articulate the critical path by which a program² seeks to achieve outcomes and attain its mission; construct a well-aligned strategy in support of its mission; communicate internally and externally; and conduct program evaluations.³ In the course of building a model, a program can also develop a new way of thinking about itself—especially, the relationship between its activities and its purpose—and create a shared vocabulary with which to chart its future. In effect, the modeling process can evoke a fundamental change

¹ We have added a small number of additional citations, references, and resources.

² The concepts of logic modeling apply broadly to programs, agencies, and other institutional configurations, including operational lines and initiatives and program areas; here, we follow the literature and refer to “programs.”

³ The discussion in these notes draws largely from Greenfield, Williams, and Eiseman, 2006, and Williams et al., 2009. For more on the use of logic models, see McLaughlin and Jordan, 1999, and Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer, 2010.

in workplace culture. Arguably, whether the model lives on is less important than whether the change in thinking lives on.

As a practical matter, the notes that follow focus mostly on the “product.”

Logic Modeling 101

The logic model presents the program’s “narrative” or “story.”⁴ It typically offers a simplified visual representation of a program’s operations, starting with inputs and progressing to activities, outputs, customers, and outcomes. A logic model may also link a program’s operations (i.e., what the program does alone or with others to fulfill its mission) to its strategy, which we define as the goals, objectives, and performance measures that derive from and support the program’s mission. Operations involve resources, actors, and events; *strategy* speaks of intentions.

The underlying premise of the model is one of postulated “if, then” relationships that connect actions to outcomes. “If the program does this, then this should or could happen.” Ultimately, the activities undertaken as part of the “if, then” chain of events can help to fill a societal need or solve a societal problem. Consider a notional chain pertaining to FVAP:⁵

- If FVAP staff provides training to a VAO, then the VAO will gain knowledge of voting rules, procedures, or resources that can be used to assist a UOCAVA voter.
- If the VAO applies that knowledge in his/her interactions with a UOCAVA voter, the transfer of knowledge might, ultimately, facilitate a successful vote.
- It might be difficult to tease out FVAP’s contribution to the successful vote, e.g., in a statistical analysis, but it is still the case that FVAP contributed and, thus, had an “impact.”⁶

The logic model can be used to draw distinctions between the “partners” who work with FVAP to create products and services and the “customers” who use those products and services. A program, such as FVAP, might undertake many of its activities cooperatively, with other programs or agencies, which might affect FVAP’s operations through direct and indirect channels. Some or all of those channels might be represented in the logic model, depending on their importance. FVAP’s “customers” might, for example, include UOCAVA voters, VAOs, SVAOs, and election officials. In some instances, however, the same entity, such as an SVAO or election official, might serve as a partner in one context and as a customer in another. The preceding example,

⁴ The word “story” is a terms of art in this context. See McLaughlin and Jordan, 1999.

⁵ Taylor-Powell and Henert, 2008, illustrates the premise with a series of very simple “if, then” chains of events that address personal needs and problems (for example: find food → eat food → feel better).

⁶ We follow Williams et al., 2009, p. xi, in its use of “impact.” That study defines impact as the contribution of activities to desired societal outcomes, such as improved health, environment, economic, and social conditions.

involving VAOs, also serves to highlight the distinction between “intermediate customers,” such as the VAO who is in training, and “final customers,” such as the newly enabled UOCAVA voter, and between intermediate and end outcomes.

In brief, the following are features of a logic model:

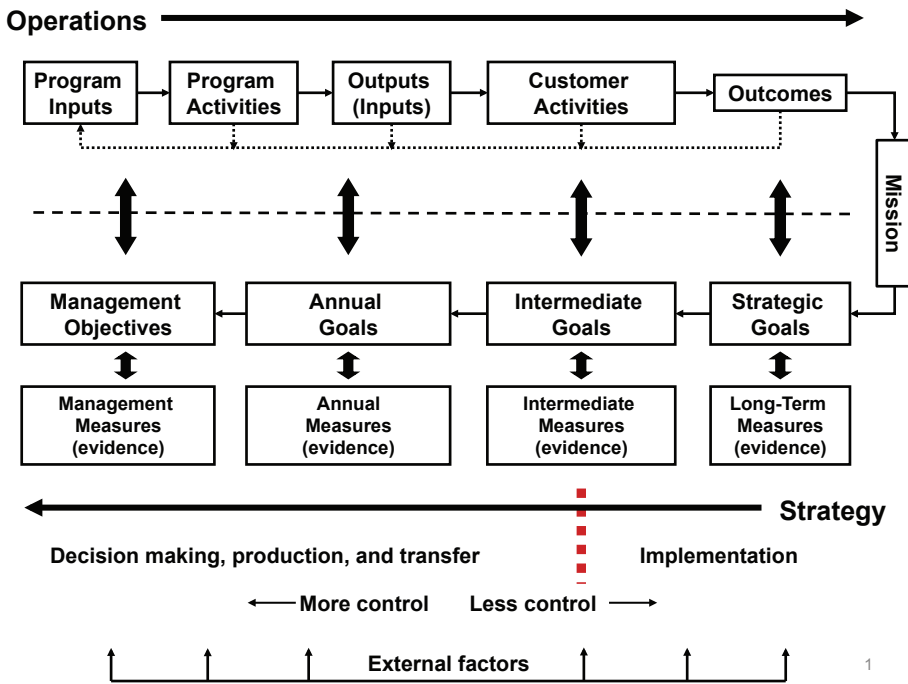
- Inputs are resources that go into and guide program activities.
- Activities are the actions that the program undertakes to produce outputs.
- Outputs are the tangible products that activities generate.
- Partners are those who work with programs to conduct activities or enable outputs.
- Customers (intermediate and final) are defined as the users or target of the outputs.
- Outcomes (intermediate or end) are the changes that occur and the benefits that result from the program activities and outputs. They involve changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Intermediate outcomes reflect the customers’ response to the program’s outputs; end outcomes are the desired results of the program.
- Impact is a program’s contribution to a societal outcome.

The path from inputs to outcomes may not be strictly linear. Feedback can occur en route, and various “external factors” (i.e., forces, including uncertainties, outside the program, such as the enactment of a new legislative requirement, development of a new technology, emergence of a new security consideration, or reconfiguration of a partner agency) may influence, positively or negatively, the extent to which a program can achieve outcomes.

The logic model can also be used to identify program boundaries and responsibilities; in particular, it can be used to show the range of a program’s sphere of influence. Typically, as the model flows from left to right (see Figure A.1), the extent of the program’s control over resources, actors, and events diminishes. A program might exert direct control at the outset and indirect influence at the conclusion. Because multiple actors—and forces—may contribute to any outcome, the logic model can help establish those outcomes for which the program can reasonably take credit and be held responsible. In particular, it can be used to shed light on the unique contributions of the program to the outcome.

The stylized logic model—or “template”—shown in Figure A.1 can serve as a starting point in the development of FVAP’s logic model(s), but it will need to be modified to meet FVAP’s needs. Examples of potential modifications include explicit identification of stakeholders, specification of transfer activities, delineation of customers and outcomes (intermediate and final), and incorporation of evaluation processes. RAND teams have used this template to assist other Federal agencies in addressing a

Figure A.1
Logic-Model Template



SOURCE: Greenfield, Williams, and Eiseman, 2006.

RAND RR882-A.1

wide range of institutional and policy concerns.⁷ In each case, the modelers identified important divergences from the template and incorporated them into the development of a program-specific framework, but striking a healthy balance between institutional detail and functionality can present challenges.

This template requires strict vertical alignment. What does that mean in plain English? A program’s strategy and operations should make sense as a package. They should “line up.” As indicated by the double arrows in Figure A.1, strategic goals should relate to the program’s contribution to outcomes; intermediate goals should relate to customer activities, which might involve changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behavior; and so forth. Similarly, performance measures that are posited for each stage should enable programs to gauge progress in meeting the corresponding goals and objectives. Different institutions may adopt different vocabularies to describe these features, but the principle of vertical alignment should hold regardless of nomenclature. In any case,

⁷ For examples, see Greenfield, Williams, and Eiseman, 2006; Williams et al., 2009; and Greenfield, Willis, and LaTourrette, 2012.

relationships between operations, goals, and measures should be direct, transparent, and supportable with evidence.

A primary strength of the template is the close integration of the operational and strategic domains, thus, its capacity to serve multiple roles with a high degree of internal consistency.

- As a tool for fleshing out the connections and relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, customers, and outcomes, the model can be used to better focus a program's operations—and direct its resources—to help fill a societal need.
- As a foundation for establishing a program's strategy, the model can be used to “walk back” from a program's overarching mission—its reason for existing—to formulate goals and objectives that speak to its operations.
- As a communication device, the model can be used to provide internal and external audiences, including program partners, legislators, and other stakeholders, with a clear representation of the program's operations and intent. The model can also be used to delineate a program's boundaries and responsibilities, thereby clarifying the meaning of “impact” and “results” as they relate to the program.
- As a tool for performance evaluation, it can also be used to select well-aligned measures, i.e., measures that closely line up with or correspond to a program's stated goals and objectives, and, thus, provide an appropriate gauge of impact or results.

Notwithstanding the broad applicability of logic modeling in general and the RAND template in particular, the focus of this project, i.e., “FVAP and the Road Ahead,” is expected to be more on operations, goals, and objectives and less on performance measurement.

References and Resources

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<http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG809.html>

W. K. Kellogg Foundation, *Logic Model Development Guide*, Battle Creek, Mich., 2004.

Agenda

The following agenda was prepared for the logic-modeling workshop, held at FVAP, with FVAP staff, including leadership, on May 1–2, 2013. Although not reflected in the agenda, the second day concluded with a conversation about stakeholder perceptions.

May 1, 2013

Full Group Participation

1:30–1:35 Welcome (FVAP)

1:35–1:45 Objectives and expectations (RAND)

1:45–2:30 **Logic Modeling 101 (RAND-led)**

2:30–2:45 Q&A

2:45–3:00 Break

3:00–4:00 **Why Does FVAP Exist? (RAND-led)**

4:00–4:30 Day 2 Preview, including breakout group assignments

May 2, 2013

Consecutive Breakout Groups

8:30–9:25 Breakout group I Voting Assistance

9:30–10:25 Breakout group II Election Official Assistance

10:30–11:25 Breakout group III Technology

11:30–12:25 Breakout group IV Mission Support^a

^a This group included the communication service group.

“Who,” “What,” and “Why” (RAND-Led)

- What inputs, activities, and outputs are associated with your program area?
- How do your outputs get used and by whom?
- What are the intended outcomes?
- What are the program area’s boundaries?

- What types of external factors come into play?

12:30–1:00 Lunch

Full Group Participation

1:00–2:00 **Reconvene, reflect, and discuss (RAND-led)**

2:00–2:15 Break

2:15–3:45 **Laying the foundation for FVAP's logic model together (RAND-led)**

3:45–4:00 Recap and next steps (RAND and FVAP)

Discussion Points

The following discussion points (verbatim) were sent to FVAP as read-ahead material for the logic-modeling workshop, held on May 1–2, 2013.

Introduction

For the purposes of these discussion points, please think of FVAP as a “program,” as the acronym implies, and your work as occurring in a “program area” within that program. That area, however you choose to define it, could correspond to an FVAP division, such as “election official assistance”; cut across divisions, as might be true in the case of legal affairs and policy; or constitute a subset of a division. These points, which are intended to foster discussion today and in the future, address three basic logic-modeling concepts: (1) who are “you,” as a program or program area; (2) what are “you” doing; and (3) why are “you” doing it? You might find that some of the points seem to repeat or overlap, but, sometimes, asking a question in different ways or from different perspectives can help generate a better discussion.

Program Area Definition

- How are you defining your program area?
- Where does it stand in relation to other FVAP program areas; that is, in what division or divisions does your program area reside and with which other divisions and/or program areas does it interact? How do your actions affect them; how do their actions affect you? Do you provide support to others within FVAP and do others provide support to you? If so, in what ways do you/they provide support?

Program/Program Area Mission and Goals

- What is your program/program area trying to achieve and why?
- Who are its primary customers, partners, and other stakeholders?
- How do you define them?

Program/Program Area Inputs

- What types of physical and institutional infrastructure support activities in your program area, e.g., IT systems, planning and funding processes . . . ?
- What other resources do you use to undertake or plan for activities, e.g., funding, staff, customer/partner/stakeholder feedback, survey data, legal authority, planning documents, DoD instructions . . . ?

Program/Program Area Activities

- What does your program/program area do, e.g., analyzes survey findings, develops training tools, awards grants, builds capacity, develops and/or validates new methods and technologies, assesses threats, responds to Congressional inquiries . . . ?
- Do you work with partners inside FVAP, inside DoD, outside DoD? If so, how, how often, and to what end? Are they central to your activities?

Program/Program Area Outputs

- What does your program/program area “produce,” e.g., reports, data bases, methods, tools, technologies, training/education materials, workshops, pilot programs, demonstration projects, best practices, marketing/outreach materials, Congressional replies, other?

Dissemination and Transfer of Outputs

- How are the outputs of your program/program area disseminated or transferred to their intended audiences, e.g., do you post materials on website, provide email alerts, and/or convene meetings . . . ? Are strategies in place to ensure effective dissemination and transfer of your outputs? If so, what are they?
- What individuals, agencies, NGOs, businesses and/or other entities receive or request the outputs, both within and outside of FVAP, and what are their respective roles in the voting community? (Some outputs might be intended to meet the needs of intermediaries, who might, in turn, pass the outputs on to other stakeholders; other outputs might flow directly to ultimate beneficiaries, e.g., UOCAVA voters.) How significant are these individuals/entities in the voting community?

Outcomes and Program/Program Area Contribution

- How do these individuals, agencies, businesses, etc. use—or respond to—the outputs that flow from program/program area activities? Do they use the outputs in their current form, as produced, or do they modify them?
- In what ways might their use of program/program area outputs result in changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior? At what level are these changes expected to occur, e.g., individual, agency, NGO, business, etc.?

- What is the intended outcome of those changes?
- How will this chain of events—and your program/program area's contribution, in particular—help to fill a societal need or solve a societal problem?
- Who will benefit, ultimately?

Program/Program Area Responsibilities

- What are the program/program area's boundaries? How do its activities relate to those of your customers, partners, and other stakeholders?
- What is the program/program area's niche in the voting community?

External Factors

- What outside forces affect your use of inputs, your activities, the outputs of your activities, and the effects of your activities, e.g., legislative actions, changes in technology, changes in structures of other agencies . . . ?

Statutory Requirements Pertaining to the Federal Voting Assistance Program

This appendix lists the provisions in 10 U.S.C. § 1566 and § 1566a and 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973ff et seq.¹ and § 15344 that could assign responsibilities to FVAP as the “federal voting assistance program” or the delegate of the “presidential designee.”² In general, the appendix does not list provisions that name the “Secretary of Defense,” “Secretary,” or “Department of Defense” without specific reference to the presidential designee or federal voting assistance program.³ However, it includes the Electronic Voting Demonstration Project. The provision that established the project did not assign responsibility to either the presidential designee or a federal voting assistance program, but the project has been associated closely with FVAP through appropriations, policy, and practice.⁴ The appendix also includes one broadly worded provision found in 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973gg et seq. that calls on federal, state, and local governments to promote the exercise of the right to vote.

It is important to note that even the provisions that specifically assign responsibility to the presidential designee or a federal voting assistance program need not create a requirement for FVAP. For example, the Secretary of Defense could choose to delegate responsibility elsewhere and appears to have done so in the cases of some provisions concerning ballot collection and delivery. In those cases, responsibility, as set out in DoDI 1000.04, 2012, rests with MPSA. Moreover, it is sometimes the case that the term *federal voting assistance program* is used to encompass all federal voting assistance, whether or not it is tied to FVAP, the agency.

¹ Following the completion of the analysis for this report, the U.S.C. designations for voting-related provisions, including those in the totality of § 1973ff and § 1973gg, were recast under their own title, specific to voting, i.e., Title 52, Voting and Elections. For the new code and a crosswalk, see 52 U.S.C. and Office of the Law Revision Counsel, undated, respectively.

² See 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(a) and EO 12642 (Reagan, 1988), both excerpted below.

³ We do not, for example, reference certain provisions that address regulatory or decisionmaking authority (see 10 U.S.C. § 1566[a] and § 1566a[a], [c], [e], and [f]) or delivery of mail from overseas (see 10 U.S.C. § 1566[g]). Similarly, we do not include provisions found in 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5, Voter Registration Agencies. However, we note that DoDI 1000.04, 2012, provided a role for FVAP in the implementation of 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5.

⁴ Subsequent to this analysis, Section 593 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, titled “Repeal of Electronic Voting Demonstration Project” eliminated the requirement.

Provisions from U.S. Code, Title 10, Armed Forces

§ 1566a. Voting Assistance: Voter Assistance Offices

(d) Outreach. The Secretary of each military department, or the **Presidential designee**,⁵ shall take appropriate actions to inform absent uniformed services voters of the assistance available under subsection (a), including

- (1) the availability of information and voter registration assistance at offices designated under subsection (a); and
- (2) the time, location, and manner in which an absent uniformed services voter may utilize such assistance.

Provisions from U.S. Code, Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare

§ 1973ff. Federal Responsibilities

(a) **Presidential designee.** The President shall designate the head of an executive department to have primary responsibility for Federal functions under this subchapter.

(b) Duties of **Presidential designee.** The **Presidential designee** shall—

- (1) consult State and local election officials in carrying out this subchapter, and ensure that such officials are aware of the requirements of this Act;
- (2) prescribe an official post card form, containing both an absentee voter registration application and an absentee ballot application, for use by the States as required under section 1973ff-1(a)(4) of this title;
- (3) carry out section 1973ff-2 of this title with respect to the Federal write-in absentee ballot for absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters in general elections for Federal office;
- (4) prescribe a suggested design for absentee ballot mailing envelopes;
- (5) compile and distribute
 - (A) descriptive material on State absentee registration and voting procedures, and
 - (B) to the extent practicable, facts relating to specific elections, including dates, offices involved, and the text of ballot questions;
- (6) not later than the end of each year after a Presidential election year, transmit to the President and the Congress a report on the effectiveness of assistance under this subchapter, including a statistical analysis of uniformed services voter participation, a separate statistical analysis of overseas nonmilitary participation, and a description of State–Federal cooperation;

⁵ Here and throughout this appendix, we have bolded all instances of the phrases *presidential designee* and *federal voting assistance program* to highlight the roles of these actors in each provision.

(7) prescribe a standard oath for use with any document under this subchapter affirming that a material misstatement of fact in the completion of such a document may constitute grounds for a conviction for perjury;

(8) carry out section 1973ff-2a of this title with respect to the collection and delivery of marked absentee ballots of absent overseas uniformed services voters in elections for Federal office;

(9) to the greatest extent practicable, take such actions as may be necessary

(A) to ensure that absent uniformed services voters who cast absentee ballots at locations or facilities under the jurisdiction of the **Presidential designee** are able to do so in a private and independent manner; and

(B) to protect the privacy of the contents of absentee ballots cast by absentee uniformed services voters and overseas voters while such ballots are in the possession or control of the **Presidential designee**;

(10) carry out section 1973ff-2b of this title with respect to **Federal Voting Assistance Program** Improvements; and

(11) working with the Election Assistance Commission and the chief State election official of each State, develop standards

(A) for States to report data on the number of absentee ballots transmitted and received under section 1973ff-1(c) of this title and such other data as the **Presidential designee** determines appropriate; and

(B) for the **Presidential designee** to store the data reported.

(c) Duties of other Federal officials

(1) In general. The head of each Government department, agency, or other entity shall, upon request of the **Presidential designee**, distribute balloting materials and otherwise cooperate in carrying out this subchapter.

(2) Administrator of General Services. As directed by the **Presidential designee**, the Administrator of General Services shall furnish official post card forms (prescribed under subsection (b) of this section) and Federal write-in absentee ballots (prescribed under section 1973ff-2 of this title).

(d) Authorization of appropriations for carrying out **Federal Voting Assistance Program** Improvements. There are authorized to be appropriated to the **Presidential designee** such sums as are necessary for purposes of carrying out subsection (b)(10).

§ 1973ff. Note

Electronic Voting Demonstration Project. Pub. L. 107–107, div. A, title XVI, § 1604, Dec. 28, 2001, 115 Stat. 1277, as amended by Pub. L. 108–375, div. A, title V, § 567, Oct. 28, 2004, 118 Stat. 1919, provided that:

(a) Establishment of Demonstration Project.

(1) In general. Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary of Defense shall carry out a demonstration project under which absent uniformed services voters are permitted to cast ballots in the regularly scheduled general election for Federal

office for November 2002 through an electronic voting system. The project shall be carried out with participation of sufficient numbers of absent uniformed services voters so that the results are statistically relevant.

(2) Authority to delay implementation. If the Secretary of Defense determines that the implementation of the demonstration project under paragraph (1) with respect to the regularly scheduled general election for Federal office for November 2002 may adversely affect the national security of the United States, the Secretary may delay the implementation of such demonstration project until the first regularly scheduled general election for Federal office which occurs after the Election Assistance Commission notifies the Secretary that the Commission has established electronic absentee voting guidelines and certifies that it will assist the Secretary in carrying out the project. The Secretary shall notify the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate and the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives of any decision to delay implementation of the demonstration project.

(b) Coordination with State Election Officials. The Secretary shall carry out the demonstration project under this section through cooperative agreements with State election officials of States that agree to participate in the project.

(c) Report to Congress. Not later than June 1 of the year following the year in which the demonstration project is conducted under this section, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report analyzing the demonstration project. The Secretary shall include in the report any recommendations the Secretary considers appropriate for continuing the project on an expanded basis for absent uniformed services voters during the next regularly scheduled general election for Federal office.

(d) Definitions. In this section:

(1) Absent uniformed services voter. The term ‘absent uniformed services voter’ has the meaning given that term in section 107(1) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-6(1)).

(2) State. The term ‘State’ includes the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.”

[The notes accompanying 42 USC § 1973ff also include a now-expired requirement for “Governors’ Reports on Implementation of Recommendations for Changes in State Law Made under the **Federal Voting Assistance Program.**”]

Executive Order Number 12642. Designation of Secretary of Defense as Presidential Designee

Ex. Ord. No. 12642, June 8, 1988, 53 F.R. 21975, provided:

By virtue of the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, including section 101(a) of the Uniformed and

Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (Public Law 99-410) (“the Act”) [42 U.S.C. 1973ff(a)], it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. The Secretary of Defense is hereby designated as the “**Presidential designee**” under Title I of the Act [42 U.S.C. 1973ff et seq.].

Sec. 2. In order to effectuate the purposes of the Act [see Short Title note above], the Secretary of Defense is hereby authorized to delegate any or all of the functions, responsibilities, powers, authority, or discretion devolving upon him in consequence of this Order to any person or persons within the Department of Defense.

§ 1973ff-1. State Responsibilities

(a) In general. Each State shall

(5) if the State requires an oath or affirmation to accompany any document under this subchapter, use the standard oath prescribed by the **Presidential designee** under section 1973ff(b)(7) of this title;

(11) report data on the number of absentee ballots transmitted and received under subsection (c) and such other data as the **Presidential designee** determines appropriate in accordance with the standards developed by the **Presidential designee** under section 1973ff(b)(11) of this title.

(e)(4) Availability and maintenance of online repository of State contact information. The **Federal Voting Assistance Program** of the Department of Defense shall maintain and make available to the public an online repository of State contact information with respect to elections for Federal office, including the single State office designated under subsection (b) and the means of electronic communication designated under paragraph (1),⁶ to be used by absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters as a resource to send voter registration applications and absentee ballot applications to the appropriate jurisdiction in the State.

(g) Hardship exemption

(1) In general. If the chief State election official determines that the State is unable to meet the requirement under subsection (a)(8)(A) with respect to an election for Federal office due to an undue hardship described in paragraph (2)(B), the chief State election official shall request that the **Presidential designee** grant a waiver to the State of the application of such subsection.

(2) Approval of waiver request. After consulting with the Attorney General, the **Presidential designee** shall approve a waiver request under paragraph (1)

⁶ Section 1973ff-1(e)(1) pertains to states’ designation of not less than one means of electronic communication for various purposes, including information transmission.

if the **Presidential designee** determines each of the following requirements are met:

(A) The comprehensive plan under subparagraph (D) of such paragraph provides absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters sufficient time to receive absentee ballots they have requested and submit marked absentee ballots to the appropriate State election official in time to have that ballot counted in the election for Federal office.

(B) One or more of the following issues creates an undue hardship for the State:

(i) The State's primary election date prohibits the State from complying with subsection (a)(8)(A).

(ii) The State has suffered a delay in generating ballots due to a legal contest.

(iii) The State Constitution prohibits the State from complying with such subsection.

(3) Timing of waiver

(A) In general. Except as provided under subparagraph (B), a State that requests a waiver under paragraph (1) shall submit to the **Presidential designee** the written waiver request not later than 90 days before the election for Federal office with respect to which the request is submitted. The **Presidential designee** shall approve or deny the waiver request not later than 65 days before such election.

(B) Exception. If a State requests a waiver under paragraph (1) as the result of an undue hardship described in paragraph (2)(B)(ii), the State shall submit to the **Presidential designee** the written waiver request as soon as practicable. The **Presidential designee** shall approve or deny the waiver request not later than 5 business days after the date on which the request is received.

(4) Application of waiver. A waiver approved under paragraph (2) shall only apply with respect to the election for Federal office for which the request was submitted. For each subsequent election for Federal office, the **Presidential designee** shall only approve a waiver if the State has submitted a request under paragraph (1) with respect to such election.

§ 1973ff-1. Note

Development of Standardized Format for Reports. Pub. L. 107–252, title VII, § 703(b), Oct. 29, 2002, 116 Stat. 1724, provided that:

The Election Assistance Commission, working with the Election Assistance Commission Board of Advisors⁷ and the Election Assistance Commission Standards Board, shall develop a standardized format for the reports submitted by States and units of local government under section 102(c) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act [42 U.S.C. 1973ff-1(c)] (as added by subsection (a)), and shall make the format available to the States and units of local government submitting such reports.

§ 1973ff-2. Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot in General Elections for Federal Office for Absent Uniformed Services Voters and Overseas Voters

(a) In general

(1) Federal write-in absentee ballot. The **Presidential designee** shall prescribe a Federal write-in absentee ballot (including a secrecy envelope and mailing envelope for such ballot) for use in general, special, primary, and runoff elections for Federal office by absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters who make timely application for, and do not receive, States⁸ absentee ballots.

(2) Promotion and expansion of use of Federal write-in absentee ballots

(A) In general. Not later than December 31, 2011, the **Presidential designee** shall adopt procedures to promote and expand the use of the Federal write-in absentee ballot as a back-up measure to vote in elections for Federal office.

(B) Use of technology. Under such procedures, the **Presidential designee** shall utilize technology to implement a system under which the absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter may

(i) enter the address of the voter or other information relevant in the appropriate jurisdiction of the State, and the system will generate a list of all candidates in the election for Federal office in that jurisdiction; and

(ii) submit the marked Federal write-in absentee ballot by printing the ballot (including complete instructions for submitting the marked Federal write-in absentee ballot to the appropriate State election official and the mailing address of the single State office designated under section 1973ff-1(b) of this title).

⁷ The director of FVAP serves as a member of this board under 42 U.S.C. § 15344.

⁸ The U.S. Code contains the following endnote: “So in original. Probably should be ‘States.’”

(C) Authorization of appropriations. There are authorized to be appropriated to the **Presidential designee** such sums as may be necessary to carry out this paragraph.

(d) Second ballot submission; instruction to absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter. An absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter who submits a Federal write-in absentee ballot and later receives a State absentee ballot, may submit the State absentee ballot. The **Presidential designee** shall assure that the instructions for each Federal write-in absentee ballot clearly state that an absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter who submits a Federal write-in absentee ballot and later receives and submits a State absentee ballot should make every reasonable effort to inform the appropriate State election official that the voter has submitted more than one ballot.

(e) Use of approved State absentee ballot in place of Federal write-in absentee ballot. The Federal write-in absentee ballot shall not be valid for use in a general, special, primary, or runoff election for Federal office if the State involved provides a State absentee ballot that

(1) at the request of the State, is approved by the **Presidential designee** for use in place of the Federal write-in absentee ballot; and

(2) is made available to absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters at least 60 days before the deadline for receipt of the State ballot under State law.

§ 1973ff-2a. Procedures for Collection and Delivery of Marked Absentee Ballots of Absent Overseas Uniformed Services Voters

(a) Establishment of procedures. The **Presidential designee** shall establish procedures for collecting marked absentee ballots of absent overseas uniformed services voters in regularly scheduled general elections for Federal office, including absentee ballots prepared by States and the Federal write-in absentee ballot prescribed under section 1973ff-2 of this title, and for delivering such marked absentee ballots to the appropriate election officials.

(b) Delivery to appropriate election officials

(1) In general. Under the procedures established under this section, the **Presidential designee** shall implement procedures that facilitate the delivery of marked absentee ballots of absent overseas uniformed services voters for regularly scheduled general elections for Federal office to the appropriate election officials, in accordance with this section, not later than the date by which an absentee ballot must be received in order to be counted in the election.

(2) Cooperation and coordination with the United States Postal Service. The **Presidential designee** shall carry out this section in cooperation and coordination with the United States Postal Service, and shall provide expedited mail delivery service for all such marked absentee ballots of absent uniformed services voters that are collected on or before the deadline described in paragraph (3) and then transferred to the United States Postal Service.

(3) Deadline described

(A) In general. Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the deadline described in this paragraph is noon (in the location in which the ballot is collected) on the seventh day preceding the date of the regularly scheduled general election for Federal office.

(B) Authority to establish alternative deadline for certain locations. If the **Presidential designee** determines that the deadline described in subparagraph (A) is not sufficient to ensure timely delivery of the ballot under paragraph (1) with respect to a particular location because of remoteness or other factors, the **Presidential designee** may establish as an alternative deadline for that location the latest date occurring prior to the deadline described in subparagraph (A) which is sufficient to provide timely delivery of the ballot under paragraph (1).

(4) No postage requirement. In accordance with section 3406 of title 39, such marked absentee ballots and other balloting materials shall be carried free of postage.

(5) Date of mailing. Such marked absentee ballots shall be postmarked with a record of the date on which the ballot is mailed.

(c) Outreach for absent overseas uniformed services voters on procedures. The **Presidential designee** shall take appropriate actions to inform individuals who are anticipated to be absent overseas uniformed services voters in a regularly scheduled general election for Federal office to which this section applies of the procedures for the collection and delivery of marked absentee ballots established pursuant to this section, including the manner in which such voters may utilize such procedures for the submission of marked absentee ballots pursuant to this section.

(e) Authorization of appropriations. There are authorized to be appropriated to the **Presidential designee** such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section.

§ 1973ff-2b. Federal Voting Assistance Program Improvements

(a) Duties. The **Presidential designee** shall carry out the following duties:

(1) Develop online portals of information to inform absent uniformed services voters regarding voter registration procedures and absentee ballot procedures to be used by such voters with respect to elections for Federal office.

(2) Establish a program to notify absent uniformed services voters of voter registration information and resources, the availability of the Federal postcard application, and the availability of the Federal write-in absentee ballot on the military Global Network, and shall use the military Global Network to notify absent uniformed services voters of the foregoing 90, 60, and 30 days prior to each election for Federal office.

(b) Clarification regarding other duties and obligations. Nothing in this section shall relieve the **Presidential designee** of their duties and obligations under any direc-

tives or regulations issued by the Department of Defense, including the Department of Defense Directive 1000.04 (or any successor directive or regulation) that is not inconsistent or contradictory to the provisions of this section.

(c) Authorization of appropriations. There are authorized to be appropriated to the **Federal Voting Assistance Program** of the Department of Defense (or a successor program) such sums as are necessary for purposes of carrying out this section.

§ 1973ff-4a. Reporting Requirements

(b) Annual report on effectiveness of activities and utilization of certain procedures.⁹ Not later than March 31 of each year, the **Presidential designee** shall transmit to the President and to the relevant committees of Congress a report containing the following information:

(1) An assessment of the effectiveness of activities carried out under section 1973ff-2b of this title, including the activities and actions of the **Federal Voting Assistance Program** of the Department of Defense, a separate assessment of voter registration and participation by absent uniformed services voters, a separate assessment of voter registration and participation by overseas voters who are not members of the uniformed services, and a description of the cooperation between States and the Federal Government in carrying out such section.

(2) A description of the utilization of voter registration assistance under section 1566a of title 10, which shall include the following:

(A) A description of the specific programs implemented by each military department of the Armed Forces pursuant to such section.

(B) The number of absent uniformed services voters who utilized voter registration assistance provided under such section.

(3) In the case of a report submitted under this subsection in the year following a year in which a regularly scheduled general election for Federal office is held, a description of the utilization of the procedures for the collection and delivery of marked absentee ballots established pursuant to section 1973ff-2a of this title, which shall include the number of marked absentee ballots collected and delivered under such procedures and the number of such ballots which were not delivered by the time of the closing of the polls on the date of the election (and the reasons such ballots were not so delivered).

§ 1973ff-6. Definitions

As used in this subchapter, the term

(2) “balloting materials” means official post card forms (prescribed under section 1973ff of this title), Federal write-in absentee ballots (prescribed under

⁹ Section § 1973ff-4a(a), which we have omitted, called for a report on status of implementation and assessment of programs. This was a one-time reporting requirement, expiring 180 days after October 28, 2009.

section 1973ff-2 of this title), and any State balloting materials that, as determined by the **Presidential designee**, are essential to the carrying out of this subchapter;

§ 1973ff-7. Technology Pilot Program

(a) Definitions. In this section:

(1) Absent uniformed services voter. The term “absent uniformed services voter” has the meaning given such term in section 107(1) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-6(1)).

(2) Overseas voter. The term “overseas voter” has the meaning given such term in section 107(5) of such Act [42 U.S.C. 1973ff-6(5)].

(3) Presidential designee. The term “**Presidential designee**” means the individual designated under section 101(a) of such Act [42 U.S.C. 1973ff(a)].

(b) Establishment

(1) In general. The **Presidential designee** may establish 1 or more pilot programs under which the feasibility of new election technology is tested for the benefit of absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters claiming rights under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff et seq.).

(2) Design and conduct. The design and conduct of a pilot program established under this subsection

(A) shall be at the discretion of the **Presidential designee**; and

(B) shall not conflict with or substitute for existing laws, regulations, or procedures with respect to the participation of absent uniformed services voters and military voters in elections for Federal office.

(c) Considerations. In conducting a pilot program established under subsection (b), the **Presidential designee** may consider the following issues:

(1) The transmission of electronic voting material across military networks.

(2) Virtual private networks, cryptographic voting systems, centrally controlled voting stations, and other information security techniques.

(3) The transmission of ballot representations and scanned pictures in a secure manner.

(4) Capturing, retaining, and comparing electronic and physical ballot representations.

(5) Utilization of voting stations at military bases.

(6) Document delivery and upload systems.

(7) The functional effectiveness of the application or adoption of the pilot program to operational environments, taking into account environmental and logistical obstacles and State procedures.

(d) Reports. The **Presidential designee** shall submit to Congress reports on the progress and outcomes of any pilot program conducted under this subsection, together with recommendations

- (1) for the conduct of additional pilot programs under this section; and
- (2) for such legislation and administrative action as the **Presidential designee** determines appropriate.

(e) Technical assistance

(1) In general. The Election Assistance Commission and the National Institute of Standards and Technology shall provide the **Presidential designee** with best practices or standards in accordance with electronic absentee voting guidelines established under the first sentence of section 1604(a)(2) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002 (Public Law 107-107; 115 Stat. 1277; 42 U.S.C. 1973ff note), as amended by section 567 of the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108-375; 118 Stat. 1919) to support the pilot program or programs.

(2) Report. In the case in which the Election Assistance Commission has not established electronic absentee voting guidelines under such section 1604(a)(2), as so amended, by not later than 180 days after October 28, 2009, the Election Assistance Commission shall submit to the relevant committees of Congress a report containing the following information:

- (A) The reasons such guidelines have not been established as of such date.
- (B) A detailed timeline for the establishment of such guidelines.
- (C) A detailed explanation of the Commission's actions in establishing such guidelines since October 28, 2004.

§ 1973gg. Findings and Purposes

(a) Findings. The Congress finds that

- (1) the right of citizens of the United States to vote is a fundamental right;
- (2) it is the duty of the Federal, State, and local governments to promote the exercise of that right; and
- (3) discriminatory and unfair registration laws and procedures can have a direct and damaging effect on voter participation in elections for Federal office and disproportionately harm voter participation by various groups, including racial minorities.

§ 15344. Membership of Board of Advisors

(a) In general. The Board of Advisors shall be composed of 37 members appointed as follows:

- (14) The director of the **Federal Voting Assistance Program** of the Department of Defense.

Survey Response Rates and Regularly Scheduled Reports to Congress

Response rates for each of the 2010 postelection surveys are shown in Table C.1. Response rates for ADM personnel, ADM spouses, overseas citizens,¹ and UVAOs were low in that year and have been subject to criticism previously (see, for example, GAO, 2006). ADM spouses were surveyed for the first time in 2010 and again in 2012.

The apparent burdensomeness of the surveys—in terms of both length and frequency—might help to explain the low response rates. In 1996, the response rate to the ADM personnel survey, which asked 45 questions, was almost three times higher in than that in 2010,² when it asked 89 questions. (Figure C.1 shows the number of questions for each survey year, starting in 1996.) Moreover, in recent years, the survey

Table C.1
Survey Mode, Sample Size, and Response Rates for 2010 Postelection Surveys

Population	Mode of Administration	Approximate Sample Size	Weighted Response Rate (%)
ADM	Web only	73,244	15
ADM spouses	Web and paper	50,132	14
Overseas citizens	Web only paper [sic] ^a	47,879	5
DoD UVAOs	Web only	9,907	20
Department of State VAOs	Web only	238	90
Local election officials	Web and paper	7,296	53

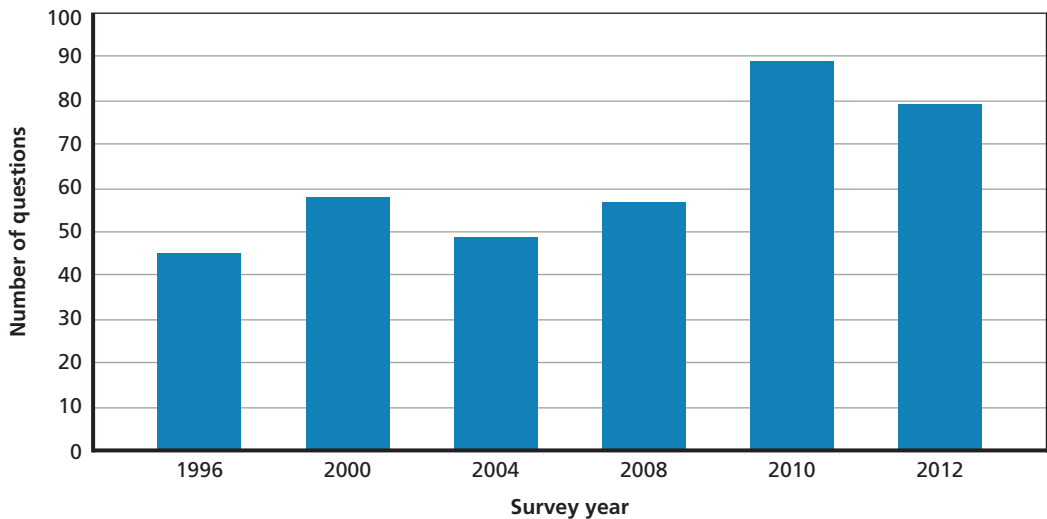
SOURCE: FVAP, 2011f.

^a As described in the report to Congress.

¹ According to FVAP, the overseas-citizen surveys have been discontinued for methodological reasons and until such time as FVAP can reasonably identify the overseas-citizen voter population.

² The number of questions declined from 89 in 2010 to 79 in 2012; both surveys covered a wide range of topics, including attitudes toward voting, interest in elections, the absentee ballot–request process, satisfaction with the absentee voting process, satisfaction with UVAOs and IVAOs, and satisfaction with the Voting Assistance Guide.

Figure C.1
Numbers of Questions in Active-Duty Military Personnel Surveys



SOURCE: RAND staff analysis based on FVAP, 2013b, 2011f, 2011d, 2005b, 2001, 1997.

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has been administered biennially; prior to 2010—and the enactment of the MOVE Act—the survey was administered quadrennially.

FVAP’s website contains reports to Congress, including the postelection survey reports to Congress, the Annual Report on the Effectiveness of Activities and Utilization of Certain Procedures, and various thematic reports on such topics as barriers to voting and the feasibility of technology solutions. Here, we summarize the content of the postelection and annual reports and direct the reader to the FVAP website for additional information about the others (see FVAP, undated [c]):

- **the postelection survey reports to Congress, consisting of the reports for the years 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2010, and 2012 (FVAP, 1997, 2001, 2005b, 2011d, 2011f, 2013b).** The report for 2012 describes survey results, including registration and participation rates for uniformed-service voters, collection and delivery of ballots for overseas uniformed-service voters, FVAP activities, federal and state cooperation, and military and Department of State voting assistance.
- **the Annual Report on the Effectiveness of Activities and Utilization of Certain Procedures, consisting of reports for the years 2011 (FVAP, 2012) and 2009 (FVAP, 2011b).** These reports describe FVAP activities and federal and state cooperation. In years with regularly scheduled federal elections, the post-

election survey reports include the descriptions. In other years, the annual reports stand alone and include information on special and general elections.³

³ The 2011 report does not appear to address the utilization of voter assistance under 10 U.S.C. § 1566a.

Project-Management Tools

As we discussed in Chapter Six, FVAP engages with its operating environment,¹ in part, by building partnerships and conducting research and other activities. We also identified opportunities for improving how FVAP goes about this engagement. In particular, we examined FVAP’s approach to developing and conducting research projects and to using the information that that research yields, then identified lessons for FVAP to enhance the use of its analytic capabilities.

To codify these lessons, we worked with FVAP to develop a set of tools to help guide FVAP’s research-related activities—and other projects, more generally—and to improve the link between these and FVAP’s mission, priorities, and operations. Specifically, we developed a checklist and worksheet, derived from research and program-management best practices, and tailored to FVAP’s particular needs. Our intent was to help FVAP and its staff do the following:

- Identify promising projects.
- Strengthen the rationale for undertaking projects.
- Engage with stakeholders more transparently.

The checklist, a sequential “yes–no” tool for systematic decisionmaking, and the worksheet, an analytical tool to support that decisionmaking, can be used to decide whether to proceed with a new project, revise existing projects, or revise ongoing FVAP activities, such as training. (This appendix refers to those endeavors, collectively, as projects.) The checklist and worksheet should be understood as a framework for approaching and thinking about projects, not as a prescribed formula, consisting of mandatory, rote tasks.

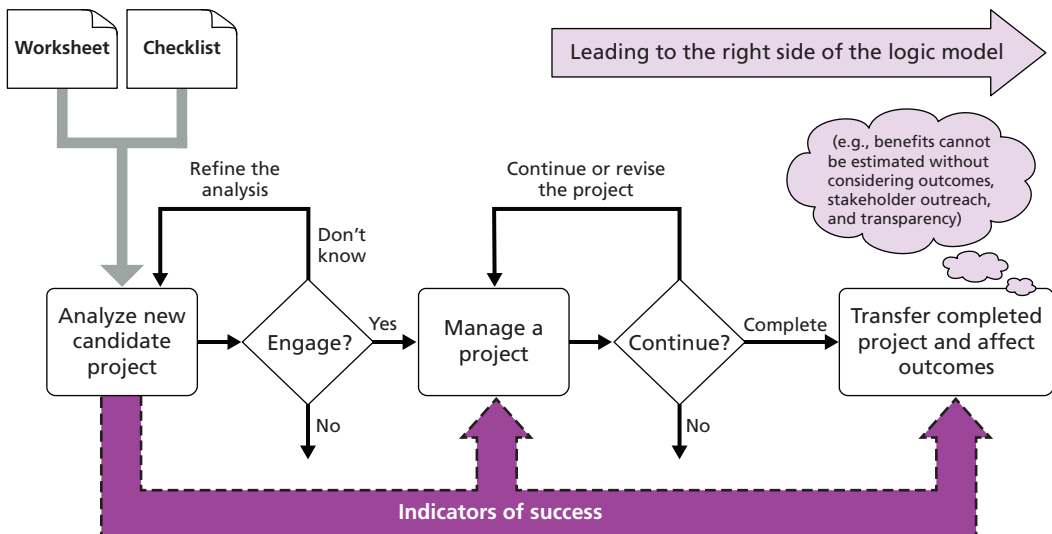
¹ In Chapter One, we defined *operating environment* as including customers, partners, and other stakeholders; related organizations; and supporting infrastructure and technology.

In applying the tools, FVAP would need to consider whether the following conditions are met:

- The project will meet a need.
- The approach to meeting the need is appropriate.
- Stakeholders will value the project.
- The benefits of the project justify the costs and risks.
- FVAP is the best agency to perform the work.
- FVAP will know whether the project is succeeding.
- The project is sustainable.
- FVAP has a plan for managing the project to completion and beyond.

Figure D.1 illustrates the relationship between the tools and decisionmaking about projects, both before and after they start, with three generic project phases: (1) analysis of candidate projects, (2) project implantation and management, and (3) transfer, i.e., distribution and use, of the results of the completed project to affect outcomes. The checklist and worksheet are most relevant to the first phase, involving analysis of the candidate project, but they might have additional downstream uses. For example, elements of the worksheet speak to the development of indicators and criteria to monitor and gauge the project’s success and to the development of a narrative, describing the relationship between the project, its outputs, and desired outcomes, which can be used to guide the dissemination and use of project results.

Figure D.1
Relationship Between Tools, Engagement Decisions, and Project Life



Methodology

We developed the checklist and worksheet by reviewing related work in other forums, including project-management tools that other U.S. government agencies have adopted. We identified aspects of other tools that, in our judgment, are most relevant to FVAP's needs and adapted them to create a customized tool. At the end of this appendix, we describe the related work and how it informed our efforts.

We tested our tools by retrospectively applying them to three types of prior FVAP projects, consisting of specific (basic) research (e.g., the Overseas Citizen Count); data collection (e.g., surveys); and grants (e.g., the Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections 1 and 2 grant programs). In addition, we applied elements of the tools outside those domains (i.e., to training activities), both to establish their merit in relation to other types of projects and to draw out lessons for training.

Use of the Checklist and Worksheet

The checklist and worksheet have different target audiences and purposes. The checklist is a tool for management (i.e., the director or a designee) and decisionmaking; the worksheet is a tool for staff analysis. The checklist consists of a set of yes–no questions that support three overarching, sequential decisions pertaining to potential viability, readiness, and eventual engagement: the decisions to seriously consider a project, to deem FVAP equipped to engage in a project, and to embark on the project (Figure D.2).² The last decision (that of actual engagement) requires consideration of the fit of the project in the context of the larger portfolio of FVAP activities and of FVAP's ability to do the project well.


If the director cannot say “yes” to potential viability, he or she need not proceed to readiness; similarly, if he or she cannot say “yes” to readiness, the process can end at that point, without further contemplation of actual engagement.

Regarding fit, a given project might not be as well-aligned with the agency's priorities as another, and other, equally well-aligned projects might yield greater benefits and, thus, represent a better use of limited resources. Or, other projects could require taking less risk. A project might, for example, draw too heavily on FVAP's core capabilities, such that undertaking it would draw down FVAP capacity and jeopardize other FVAP activities.

Presumably, in addressing the first two decisions, regarding potential viability and readiness, FVAP staff would have presented some evidence of ability; however, we

² Figure D.1 calls out the decision to engage. The other two decisions are precursors that aim to identify promising projects quickly and filter out problematic ones.

Figure D.2
The Checklist

Decision	Questions
Should FVAP consider the project?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will the project meet a need? 2. Is the approach fit for its purpose? 3. Will the right stakeholders care for the right reasons? 4. Do the benefits merit the costs and risks to FVAP and the voting assistance system? 5. Is FVAP the best agency to engage in the project in this way?
Is FVAP ready to engage in the project?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Will FVAP know whether the project is succeeding? 7. Is the project sustainable? 8. Does FVAP have a plan for managing the project through and beyond completion?
<p>Yes on all = promising project</p> 	
Should FVAP engage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the project stack up against others (i.e., could FVAP be doing something better with its and others' resources)? • Is it something FVAP can do well?

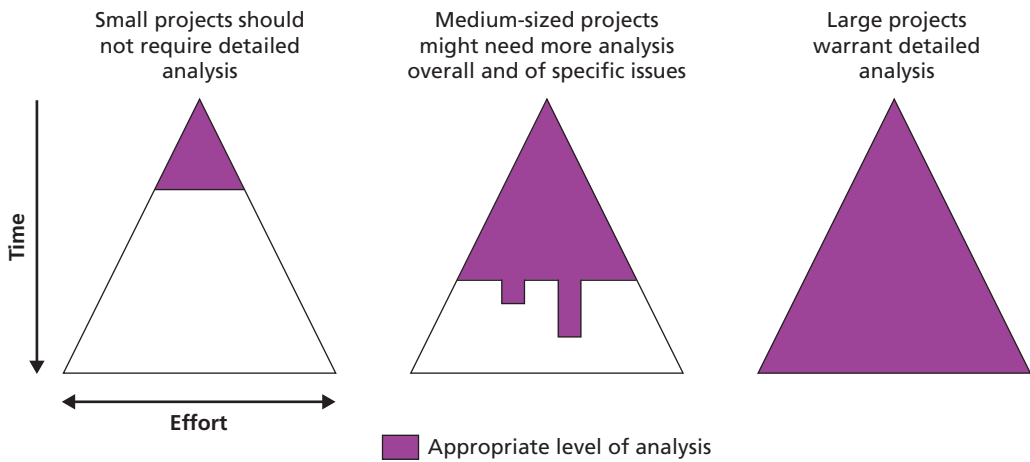
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suggest a second, explicit examination.³ When a project uses FVAP’s core capabilities, that project might have a better chance of success because it draws on FVAP’s accumulated knowledge and skills. However, the intent of some projects might be to build FVAP capabilities or increase existing capacities around certain capabilities. Thus, not every project need demonstrate that it is using FVAP’s core capabilities. In such cases, FVAP should understand clearly and plan for how a new capability or increased capacity will support other projects. Without such an understanding and plan, FVAP would risk stranding the investment it makes in capability or capacity by never using it to achieve outcomes related to mission.

The worksheet sets out the different types of analysis that could be necessary to inform the director’s decisions, but the level of effort invested in the analysis should be commensurate with the nature of the project under consideration (Figure D.3). Analytic effort takes time and uses FVAP’s—and potentially others’—resources. Here we use size as a proxy for all of a project’s characteristics, including the resources required to undertake the project and the importance of the project to FVAP, stakeholders, and the voting assistance system. On that basis, large projects might demand more attention than medium-sized projects, which, in turn, might demand more attention than

³ We differentiate between capability and capacity. Capability is the ability needed to do something, and *capacity* refers to bandwidth. It is possible to have the capability but not the capacity to do something.

Figure D.3
Level of Effort Commensurate with Project Size



small projects would. If size is a proxy for all characteristics of interest, the level of effort might not be correlated strictly to anticipated outlays. For example, a project that is particularly high profile (e.g., of concern to customers, partners, or other stakeholders) might warrant a larger analytic effort and more deliberation than one that speaks primarily to an FVAP-internal audience, even if less or equally costly. As noted at the outset, the checklist and worksheet should foster a way of approaching and thinking about projects but should not be construed as formulaic, lock-step project-management tools.

We envision the process of posing and answering the first eight questions to be iterative. The director might ask staff to focus more attention on some elements of the worksheet than on others and, when presented with the analysis, ask staff to dig more deeply into certain issues or to address perceived gaps. In effect, the analysis might prompt additional analysis. The first attempt to inform an answer need not be the last. An iterative process can also strengthen the formulation of a project and its implementation plan.

We now turn to the elements of the worksheet, each of which supports a checklist question, and conclude with a discussion of the ultimate decision to engage.

Elements of the Worksheet

In this section, we discuss and present the elements of the worksheet, which contain analytical guidance to support the first eight questions in the checklist (the last two questions are intended for the director, not the staff).

The analytical guidance is tiered, in that it starts with a high-level instruction to identify a concept (e.g., characterize the needs a project will meet) and, in most instances, drills down to flesh out the content of a complete analysis. In large part, the drill-downs define the higher-level concepts, either directly or through examples, and serve as documentation.

Here, we offer some supplementary notes for potential users.

As noted above, not all projects require complete analyses for all elements of the worksheet. In some instances, a rough sketch might suffice, at least initially; in others, not. In all cases, we would expect staff to articulate a need, consisting of an unanswered question, an undeveloped capability, or an insufficient capacity—with supporting evidence—and to draw out a plausible path from project completion to the attainment of an outcome in support of FVAP’s mission, its legal requirements, or an improvement of its operations.⁴

FVAP staff should also be able to articulate the approach—that is, the means by which the project will meet the need and achieve the intended outcomes. In developing the approach, we would expect FVAP staff to identify related work, undertaken previously or currently under way elsewhere, and to discuss its implications for the proposed project. If similar projects have failed, why did they fail, and what will be different about this project?

The worksheet emphasizes stakeholders, both as customers and partners with wide-ranging and potentially conflicting interests and as potential sources of expert opinion.⁵ In considering and weighing stakeholders’ interests from the outset, FVAP might be better positioned to meet their needs and to forestall conflict. To anticipate possible responses, FVAP staff might consider how a stakeholder might use or share information about the project and its outputs, how the project outcomes will affect the stakeholder, and the stakeholder’s expectations about why, how, and when FVAP will undertake the project. Moreover, in turning to stakeholders as experts, with an explicit role in the expression of needs, the development of the approach, and the specification of indicators (metrics and measures) and criteria (thresholds or ranges), FVAP might be able to leverage their capability and capacity. If FVAP does not choose to engage stakeholders, it should be able to explain why.

The worksheet also calls for a notional analysis of anticipated benefits and costs to FVAP, its stakeholders, and the voting assistance system writ large.⁶ We use the term *notional* to acknowledge the challenges and limitations of strict reliance on quan-

⁴ In effect, it should be possible to construct a rough logic model for the project that depicts the relationship between the proposed project and an intended outcome.

⁵ Stakeholders with an interest in a project might reside within FVAP or be external to FVAP. External stakeholders include other DoD and federal agencies, such as DOJ, EAC, and NIST; state and local election officials; NGOs; voters; technologists; and academics.

⁶ Some benefits and costs might be intentional (i.e., tied to intended outcomes and actions), and others might be unintentional (i.e., a by-product of the project).

tification. FVAP might lack access to the data or tools to develop a fully quantitative assessment; moreover, some anticipated benefits (e.g., goodwill) might be less amenable to quantification than others, such as increased voting success. To ignore the former might be to produce a partial—and possibly misleading—analysis of the project. In those instances, FVAP staff can set out the benefits or costs qualitatively, with some explanation.⁷

Similarly, it might be difficult to quantify risk. Table D.1 presents a DoD-originating method for gauging risk (Greenfield and Camm, 2005, citing U.S. military doctrine) that frames risk in terms of the severity (e.g., negligible to catastrophic) and probability (e.g., unlikely to frequent) of a hazard that entails negative or bad consequences. In this setting, the bad consequences might include project failure (itself, potentially costly)⁸ or adverse outcomes for FVAP or DoD operations and for stakeholders and the voting assistance system writ large. The sources of risk in FVAP projects could include untried methodologies, suggesting the importance of awareness of similar projects and their results; insufficient resources or stakeholder involvement; and delays. FVAP staff might be expected to consider whether it is possible to mitigate intolerable risks and at what cost.

Risk, thus conceived, can be framed broadly, as high, medium, or low. In deciding whether a project is potentially viable, FVAP staff might be expected to estimate or set out the parameters of the anticipated net payoff (i.e., benefits minus costs) with some adjustment for risk. If the balance is positive, the project can remain in play; if not, it cannot. Finally, recognizing that projects entail opportunity costs, the risk-adjusted net payoff of the project should look at least as good as those of the alternatives.⁹

Table D.1
Assessing Severity and Probability

Severity	Probability				
	Frequent	Likely	Occasionally	Seldom	Unlikely
Catastrophic	Extremely high risk	Extremely high risk	High risk	High risk	Moderate risk
Critical	Extremely high risk	High risk	High risk	Moderate risk	Low risk
Marginal	High risk	Moderate risk	Moderate risk	Low risk	Low risk
Negligible	Moderate risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk

SOURCE: Greenfield and Camm, 2005.

⁷ We provide an example of this approach in Chapter Six, in our assessment of the VAO training program.

⁸ Failures—and midcourse corrections—can change project costs, e.g., by introducing termination or redirection costs.

⁹ We return to the issue of comparative net payoffs in the discussion of the decision to engage and in Figure D.4.

Lastly, the needs that motivate a project can potentially be met by another agency or by a private-sector entity (e.g., an NGO) in some other way. Another organization might offer a better way to meet the need, or the project might be better aligned with another agency's mission. Under these circumstances, FVAP staff should consider whether encouraging and supporting the other agency to meet the need is the better decision.

If better alternatives appear to exist, FVAP should also consider the implications of not engaging in the project. It should be possible to describe and consider the differences that deferring to another agency or entity rather than engaging in the project would make to FVAP's mission, requirements, or operation and to the voting system.

In supporting the director's decision on readiness, the worksheet provides guidance on goals, indicators, and criteria; it explores sustainability, and it addresses planning.

Absent a clear statement of specific and observable goals, with corresponding indicators and criteria, FVAP will lack the ability to determine whether the project is on or off course and potentially requires a midcourse adjustment or, in the extreme, termination. Indicators and criteria can be all or nothing, by degree, quantitative or qualitative, and time-dependent. Because individual goals can be tied to potential hazards and risks, indicators can serve to identify the emergence of a risk. Indicators can also be formulated to monitor relationships with stakeholders and to reflect stakeholders' interests.¹⁰

Resources are needed to see a project through to completion and to the point of meeting needs (e.g., transferring project results to customers and partners). Resources can include funding, staff, data,¹¹ infrastructure, management focus, DoD policy support, stakeholder support, and stakeholder goodwill. By identifying all needed resources in advance, the analysis can build confidence that the project is sustainable. However, identifying needed resources does not guarantee their availability. If a resource's availability cannot be fully determined, the availability of the needed resource constitutes a risk. For example, if DoD policy support is required to succeed with a project and developing that policy support is part of the project, then DoD policy support should be identified as a potential source of risk. Obtaining DoD policy support might also be an interim goal of the project and, if not obtained, used to decide to abandon further work on the project. Similarly, if the project requires stakeholder support but that support has not yet been secured, it should be identified as a risk.¹²

¹⁰ As above, FVAP can assess similar work for insight to the construction of indicators and criteria.

¹¹ Data might be necessary to gauge a project's progress. For example, data might be needed to define the baseline for an indicator. By considering whether such data are available or can be collected, the analysis might conclude that the project cannot be sustained (e.g., it might not be possible to establish a baseline for a success indicator of the project). Uncertainties about the sources or methods for collecting data also represent risks. As with other resources, the risks associated with data requirements might also suggest reexploration of the risk assessment.

¹² If the analysis surfaces significant new risks, then the risk analysis (see above) should be revisited.

Finally, FVAP must have a plan for managing the project through and beyond completion. Plans identify who will be responsible for the project, including determinations about the transfer (distribution and use) of results, midcourse corrections, and project termination. They also identify how and when such determinations will be made. The project's goals, indicators, and criteria can be used to help make these determinations. Plans can also consider establish procedures for appropriate transparency, including the content and timing of reporting and dissemination, and for integrating outputs into FVAP operations.

Projects might produce results that need to be integrated into FVAP operations and other activities upon completion. For example, answering a question might suggest refinements to an ongoing activity. Building a new capability or increasing an existing capacity for FVAP will, almost by definition, require a plan for its incorporation into FVAP's operations. A complete plan would describe what will be integrated or transferred, to whom, and under what circumstances upon completion of the project. Note that such a transfer might need to make assumptions about the resources available in the receiving entity, and such an assumption might surface as resource constraint that requires reconsideration.

Boxes D.1 through D.8 present the elements of the worksheets that correspond to questions 1 through 8 in the director's checklist.

The Decision to Engage

The checklist and worksheet provide tools in the form of a series of questions and supporting analyses to determine whether FVAP should engage in a project and whether it is ready to do so. If the director can, on the basis of the analyses, answer "yes" to the first eight questions, he or she should have confidence that the project holds promise; otherwise, not. Thus, these tools can also be used to filter projects.

A project might pass through the initial filter, but the director must still determine whether, in the larger context of other agency activities and resource constraints, the agency should engage in the project. We approach this issue with two additional questions:

- How does this project stack up against others?
- Is it a project that FVAP can do well?

The first question takes into account FVAP's priorities and the relative merits of the proposed and other projects. FVAP's director sets its priorities. Judging the merit of a viable project involves considering whether FVAP could be doing something better with its—and others'—resources. When resources are limited, alignment with the agency's priorities becomes especially important. This consideration also applies

Box D.1**Will the Project Meet a Need?**

1. Characterize the need that the project will meet.
 - a. State the need succinctly and nontechnically.
 - b. Specify the questions the project will answer, capabilities it will create, or capacities it will increase.
 - i. Discuss the difference between the current and intended state of knowledge, capability, or capacity.
 - ii. Discuss whether and how answering questions, creating capabilities, or increasing capacities will depend on stakeholder actions.
 - c. Explain how answering these questions, creating these capabilities, or increasing these capacities will lead to attaining an outcome in support of FVAP's mission, meeting its requirements, or better managing its operations.
 - i. Describe the plausible path (involving outputs, transfer, and stakeholders' use) by which the project will attain an outcome, meet a requirement, or assist with managing operations.
 - ii. Discuss whether and how attaining outcomes, meeting a requirement, or assisting with managing operations will depend on stakeholder actions.
2. Provide evidence of the need.
3. Characterize the role that appropriate experts have played in conceptualizing the project.
 - a. Identify the experts who have been consulted for advice or other feedback both within and external to FVAP.
 - b. Describe their credentials and interests in the project.
 - c. Summarize their advice and feedback.
 - d. Explain how their input has been used, thus far, to
 - i. state the need
 - ii. refine questions, capabilities, or capacities
 - iii. refine the plausible path to attaining an outcome, meeting a requirement, or helping manage operations
 - iv. identify dependencies on stakeholders.
 - e. If their input has not been elicited or used, explain why not.

to stakeholders. A project might depend on the commitments and resources of other organizations. Thus, the project needs to be well aligned with the priorities of such stakeholders. Moreover, a viable project that aligns with priorities might be one of several well-aligned, viable projects under consideration. Such a project will also take place in the context of ongoing operations of FVAP and its stakeholders. Thus, FVAP should consider how a project stacks up against other candidate projects.

A simple two-by-two matrix can be used to conceptualize the use of project risk and net payoff to compare projects (Figure D.4). Risk and net payoff can be gauged as high or low. A high-net payoff project is one whose benefits considerably outweigh its costs. A low-net payoff project is one whose benefits are more closely matched to its costs. The risks associated with either type of project can be high or low.

Given our understanding of FVAP, its mission, and its risk tolerance, we suggest that it first consider low-risk, high-net payoff projects (upper-right quadrant) and rule out high-risk, low-net payoff projects (lower-left quadrant). Choices among multiple low-risk and high-net payoff projects (such as A, B, and C) will require a more careful examination of risks and net payoffs to identify salient differences that can be used to rank the projects.

Box D.2**Is the Approach Fit for Its Purpose?**

1. Characterize the approach the project will take to answer questions, create capabilities, or increase capacities and bring results to bear on outcomes, requirements, and operations.
 - a. Describe succinctly and nontechnically the approach that the project will take.
 - i. Identify the project outputs, such as data, analysis tools, training materials, or reports.
 - ii. Explain how the project will produce those outputs.
 - iii. Explain how the project or others will use the outputs to fill the need and attain outcomes, meet requirements, or help manage operations.
 - b. Describe any additional steps (e.g., involving transfer or use) that must be taken to ensure that answers, capabilities, or capacities and outputs lead to desired outcomes, meet requirements, or help manage operations.
 - c. Determine (e.g., through consideration of law and policy) whether FVAP has the authority to see the project through to completion and to the point of meeting needs.
 - d. If FVAP lacks authority, determine whether it can create the incentives necessary for others to do so.
2. Identify similar work that is under way or has been undertaken previously, either at FVAP or elsewhere, and discuss the implications for this project.
 - a. Describe succinctly and in nontechnical terms the approach that the work took or is taking.
 - b. Explain why the work is relevant, considering the
 - i. needs addressed
 - ii. approach taken
 - iii. outputs and outcomes
 - iv. causes of success or failure.
 - c. Discuss any lessons that can be drawn from that work for the completion and success of this project.
 - d. If similar prior projects did not succeed, explain why not and what will be different about this project.
 - e. Explain how lessons have informed this project's approach.
3. Characterize the role that appropriate experts have played in developing the approach.
 - a. Identify the experts who have been consulted for advice or other feedback both within and external to FVAP.
 - b. Describe their credentials and interests in the project.
 - c. Summarize their advice and feedback.
 - d. Explain how their input has been used, thus far, to
 - i. refine the approach
 - ii. identify relevant prior work
 - iii. interpret relevant prior work.
 - e. If their input has not been elicited or used, explain why not.

The state of FVAP's core capabilities and attendant capacity might also be considered in making the decision to engage in projects that are well aligned with FVAP and stakeholder priorities and have the potential for high net payoffs at low risk. The director might need to assess the maturity of such capabilities, their sufficiency (i.e., the amount of headway in the agency that would be needed to absorb the new project), and the agency's track record of execution in this arena or project area.

Sources of Ideas

We drew on prior work in other venues to formulate the tools. Here we describe the most-relevant lessons from that work and how we applied them.

Box D.3**Will the Right Stakeholders Care About the Project for the Right Reasons?**

1. Characterize the stakeholders and their interests, and discuss the implications for this project.
 - a. Identify the stakeholders with an interest in this project considering those
 - i. within FVAP
 - ii. external to FVAP (e.g., other DoD and federal agencies, election officials, NGOs, academics, voters).
 - b. Describe their interests.
2. Describe how stakeholders will be expected to respond to the project, considering
 - a. how they might use or share information about the project and its outputs
 - b. how the outcomes will affect them
 - c. their expectations about why, how, and when FVAP will undertake the project.
3. Characterize which stakeholders are important and why, considering
 - a. why their interests matter
 - b. whether the project will advance or obstruct their interests
 - c. whether FVAP will need to manage their expectations.

Selection, Management, and Completion of Projects

Given the initial emphasis on research-related projects, we began our review with methods and tools used to select and evaluate research projects. Perhaps the best-known and most popularized framework is George Heilmeier's "Catechism" (Shapiro, 1994). Heilmeier developed nine questions that he and others successfully used to screen proposed research projects. Heilmeier was a former director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and a researcher (he was the cocreator of liquid-crystal display technology). His nine questions are sequential and require little interpretive context:

1. What are you trying to do? Articulate your objectives using absolutely no jargon.
2. How is it done today, and what are the limits of the current practice?
3. What is new in your approach, and why do you think it will succeed?
4. Who cares?
5. If you are successful, what difference will it make?
6. What are the risks and the payoffs?
7. How much will it cost?
8. How long will it take?
9. What are the midterm and final exams to check for success?

Heilmeier's questions provided inspiration for the first eight questions in our checklist. Heilmeier's emphasis on simple articulation, prior work, stakeholders, risks and payoffs, plans, and monitoring execution are all incorporated into the checklist questions. Our approach reorders and combines some of Heilmeier's questions. In several of our questions, we included his emphasis on understanding the relationship to prior work (what is new). Heilmeier's questions are intended to screen the projects to identify promising options. Like our checklist and worksheet, they also require looking downstream to understand how a project should be monitored and success judged

Box D.4**Do the Benefits of the Project Justify the Costs and Risks to the Federal Voting Assistance Program and the Voting Assistance System?**

1. Assess the anticipated benefits of the project.
 - a. List, describe, and, to the extent possible, account for the benefits of the project, including attaining outcomes, meeting requirements, improving operations, satisfying stakeholder objectives, improving relationships with stakeholders, and garnering goodwill. Not all benefits are quantifiable.
 - b. Identify the beneficiaries, both within FVAP and external to FVAP (i.e., in the larger voting assistance system).
 - c. Identify which benefits are intentional (meeting stated needs) and unintentional (by-products of the project).
2. Assess the anticipated costs of the project.
 - a. List, describe, and, to the extent possible, account for the resource needs of the project, including funding, staff, infrastructure, management focus, DoD policy support, and stakeholder support and goodwill. Not all costs are quantifiable.
 - b. Identify which costs are borne by FVAP or by other participants in the voting assistance system.
 - c. Identify which costs are intentional and unintentional.
 - d. Explain how failure of the project would change the costs.
 - e. Describe any costs that must be borne to make midcourse corrections or take an off-ramp and terminate the project.
3. Determine whether the anticipated net payoff (i.e., benefits minus costs) is positive, either quantitatively or conceptually.
4. Determine whether this is a high- or low-risk project.
 - a. Characterize risk in terms of potential hazards or bad consequences, probability, and severity.
 - i. Identify potential bad consequences, including the possibilities of failure and damage to FVAP, leadership, and the voting assistance system.
 - ii. Assess the probability of realizing those consequences, ranging from unlikely to frequent.
 - iii. Assess the severity of those consequences, ranging from negligible to catastrophic.
 - b. Identify key sources of risk (e.g., untried methodology, insufficient resources or stakeholder involvement, and delays).
 - c. Describe whether it is possible to mitigate intolerable risk (e.g., risks that would cause the project to fail, severely affect FVAP or other DoD operations, or severely affect the voting assistance system) and at what cost.
5. Determine whether the risk-adjusted net payoff is positive, considering
 - a. costs of failure, including loss of goodwill
 - b. costs of risk mitigation
 - c. benefits in light of the likelihood of achieving them.
6. Compare the net payoffs with those of alternative uses of resources.

Box D.5**Is the Federal Voting Assistance Program the Best Agency to Engage in the Project in This Way?**

1. Identify other agencies or entities that could meet the needs, considering whether
 - a. the project would be better aligned with the mission of one of these agencies or entities
 - b. such an agency or entity could meet the need at lower cost or risk and how engaging another agency or entity might alter the amount or distribution of benefits
 - c. that agency or entity would be willing or could be induced to undertake the project.
2. Explain, in view of the alternatives, why FVAP is the best agency to meet the need.
3. Describe the difference it will make to FVAP's mission, requirements, or operation and the voting assistance system if FVAP does not engage in this project.

Box D.6**Will the Federal Voting Assistance Program Know Whether It Is Succeeding?**

1. Characterize the goals of the project.
 - a. List and describe the goals, and evaluate whether they are specific and observable.
 - b. Explain how meeting the goals will contribute to
 - i. answering the question, creating the capability, or increasing the capacity
 - ii. attaining the intended outcome, meeting the intended requirement, or helping manage operations of the project.
2. Identify the indicators (metrics and measures) and criteria (thresholds or ranges) that will be used to monitor and assess progress, considering whether an indicator is all or nothing or by degree, quantitative or qualitative, or time-dependent.
3. Explain how the indicators and criteria will address the stated goals, considering whether they can be used to
 - a. trace progress toward answering questions, creating capabilities, increasing capacities, attaining outcomes, or otherwise furthering the FVAP mission
 - b. monitor risks
 - c. decide whether and when to make midcourse corrections or take an off-ramp and terminate the project
 - d. assess outputs and outcomes
 - e. monitor relationships with affected stakeholders
 - f. reflect stakeholders' interests.
4. Identify and compare uses of the indicators and criteria in similar circumstances by FVAP or others.
 - a. Describe the purpose of the indicators in the other environment.
 - b. Discuss any lessons that can be drawn from other current or prior uses of the indicators and criteria.
 - c. If current or prior uses have not been fruitful, explain why not and what will be different about this project.
5. Characterize the role that appropriate experts have played in developing the indicators and criteria for this project.
 - a. Identify the experts who have been consulted for advice or other feedback both within FVAP and external to FVAP.
 - b. Describe their credentials and interests in the project.
 - c. Summarize their advice and feedback.
 - d. Explain how their input has been used thus far to
 - i. formulate indicators and criteria for this project
 - ii. identify relevant prior work
 - iii. interpret relevant prior work.
 - e. If their input has not been elicited or used, explain why not.

Box D.7**Is the Project Sustainable?**

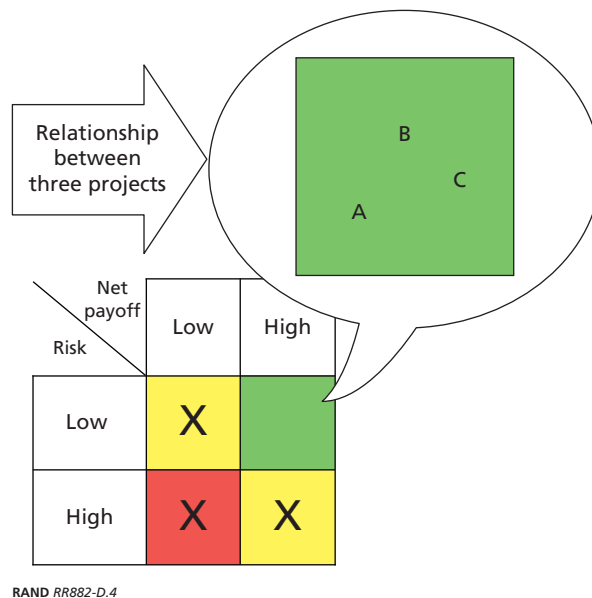
1. Determine whether FVAP has access to resources needed to see the project through to completion and to the point of meeting needs, including funding, staff, infrastructure, management focus, DoD policy support, and stakeholder support and goodwill.
 - a. If DoD policy support is required but not yet secured, identify policy support as a risk.
 - b. If stakeholder support is required but not yet secured, identify stakeholder support as a risk.
 - c. If other resources have not yet been secured, identify the needs for those resources as risks.
2. Determine whether FVAP has the data it will need to gauge progress, considering
 - a. data to define the baseline of an indicator
 - b. the sources and methods of data collection that are needed to observe the indicators.

Box D.8

Does the Federal Voting Assistance Program Have a Plan for Managing the Project?

1. Identify who (in FVAP) is or will be responsible for project formulation, implementation, oversight, and transfer, including making determinations about the distribution and use of results, midcourse corrections, or project termination.
2. Identify the points in the life of the project when FVAP will apply the indicators and criteria to decide whether to make midcourse corrections or take an off-ramp and terminate the project.
3. Describe how FVAP will ensure appropriate transparency over the life of the project, beginning with formulation.
4. Describe how the results will be reported on and disseminated to stakeholders upon completion of the project.
5. Describe how the results will be integrated into FVAP operations and other activities.

Figure D.4
Risk Versus Net Payoff as a Basis for Project Comparisons



(i.e., Heilmeier’s question 9). His questions suppress details of supporting analyses but imply the need for analysis.

We referred to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Office of Research and Development Evaluation Implementation Plan (Federal Railroad Administration [FRA], 2013) as a detailed example of how another federal agency (FRA) evaluates the research that it sponsors. This work provided us with a concrete example of a research checklist and the process for applying it. The FRA plan distinguishes two uses of research and development evaluations: guiding and planning research and development implementation to improve a program of research (formative) and seeking to

prove or demonstrate a research program's success (summative). We formulated our approach with formative research projects in mind, but some FVAP projects might be undertaken to demonstrate the success of an FVAP program (summative).

These two applications of FRA's research and development evaluation implementation plan identify four types of evaluation: context, input, implementation, and impact. Context evaluation assesses a program's external factors (such as need, assets, problem, and opportunities) that assist in formulating goals of a project. This view helped to shape several of the questions used in our checklist (e.g., needs, resources, and goals). Input evaluation assesses alternative approaches that serve as inputs to a program (such as staffing plans and budgets). This emphasizes the formulation of the research approach and the resources it needs to be successfully implemented. Implementation evaluation assesses a program's plan and execution to determine how well that program is progressing. This is related to our question dealing with indicators and criteria. Impact evaluation assesses outcomes. This is related to emphasis on outcomes in the first several questions of our checklist. Together, the cross-product of uses and types of evaluation creates a matrix of questions FRA uses to select and evaluate projects. The Department of Transportation's approach is more structured than, but conceptually consistent with, Heilmeier's approach.

We also referred to the Measure Evaluation PRH 14-point checklist for screening the performance-management plans for proposed projects (Measure Evaluation PRH, 2012). The intent of this checklist and its supporting analyses is to surface and make decisions about characteristics the organization believes lead to successful projects or programs. The intent is similar to that of our checklist and worksheet. The checklist enables an organization to think about and plan projects involving data collection primarily related to health care and the impact of related policies. The health care domain has limited overlap with FVAP's range of research activities, but its emphasis on projects with data collection is clearly relevant to those FVAP projects that need to collect and analyze data to report on or improve FVAP activities and its impact on the voting assistance system.

The Measure Evaluation PRH checklist considers costs, indicators, key outputs and their relationships to desired outcomes, and alignment, as do Heilmeier and FRA. There is considerable consistency among these approaches, which gave us confidence that we were not overlooking relevant dimensions in formulating our checklist and worksheet.

Roles and Responsibilities

Staff and management play different roles in formulating, executing, and evaluating research projects. König et al., 2013, provides us with insights about how contradictory values, such as adaptability and stability, can be supported in effective research programs. In order to manage such tensions, König et al. extended Quinn and Rohrbaugh's Competing Values Framework (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983). The result is a two-

dimensional, four-quadrant framework, with decentralization and centralization juxtaposing internal and external focus. By locating its activities in one of these quadrants, an organization can focus the roles needed to improve its effectiveness. Each quadrant identifies several appropriate roles and responsibilities, such as mentor, facilitator, innovator, broker, monitor, coordinator, producer, and director. These ideas helped us to differentiate the roles of FVAP's director and staff in the checklist and worksheet.

Evaluation

Most of our references emphasize the importance of early consideration of project evaluation (e.g., Heilmeier's exams). We consulted Weiss, 1972, on survey evaluation research methods, primarily focused on experimental research programs, to identify ideas that might be applicable to FVAP, given its work on surveys. Weiss discusses the notions of formative and summative research, which FRA's research and development evaluation implementation plan uses. Weiss also emphasizes that program goals need to be articulated and indicators need to be defined to assess whether the program achieves its goals.

Weiss discusses three standard models for designing evaluations of experimental research: experimental, quasi-experimental, and nonexperimental. The first two approaches assume randomized or existing groups that establish control and treatment groups. The last approach is useful when control and treatment groups cannot be defined. Nonexperimental evaluations can be applied before and after, only after, or after only with a comparison group. Weiss also describes the ways in which evaluations can fail. A program can fail to establish confidence in its demonstration of a causal relationship between the program variables and a given outcome (internal validity). A program can fail to establish confidence that the program's external variables did not affect the program's outcomes (external validity). External validity enables an experiment's results to be generalized to other programs.

These ideas support the emphasis in our checklist of the need to articulate indicators and criteria and to use them in midterm assessments and decisions to take off-ramps. Weiss describes the standard framework that the scientific community uses to evaluate experimental research. The different facets of validity might provide a helpful framework for understanding how to interpret and communicate data that FVAP collects and analyzes.

Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey, 2010, discusses how a single manager or management team responsible for a program can use program-evaluation tools to systematically address questions about program operations and results.¹³ The report also refers to formative and summative evaluations and to factors that should be considered in

¹³ Programs can be thought of as a set of resources and activities directed toward one or more common goals. This definition emphasizes the alignment and management of a set of projects in pursuit of a mission, such as providing voter assistance.

choosing indicators. In those authors' view, program evaluation consists of several key steps:

- scoping
- formulating the evaluation objectives
- framing evaluation questions
- matching methodologies to questions
- identifying constraints on implementing methodologies
- identifying means to ensure quality of work
- anticipating problems and developing contingency plans.

The steps are aimed at understanding whether a proposed approach meets a stated need and the plan for demonstrating whether that need is met. These ideas help us to refine our notion of fitness for purpose. The need for the project must be clear and relevant, and the approach must be appropriate to meeting that need. The steps also highlight the importance of a management plan that anticipates potential problems and provides off-ramps that can be taken based on interim evaluation results. This work provided yet one more check on the relevance of the questions we included in our proposed tools.

Evaluation methods have pitfalls. Hatry and Newcomer, 2010, discusses the components of methodological integrity (measurement validity and internal and external validity). It makes the point that the failure to establish credibility (the findings are believable to the intended audience) can undermine other aspects of methodological integrity. It describes specific pitfalls that a researcher might encounter. The authors group these pitfalls according to when they occur: before data collection, during data collection, or after data collection. These ideas are closely related to the experimental research standards that Weiss, 1972, discusses and might also be useful to FVAP.

The pitfalls before data collection that Hatry and Newcomer, 2010, identifies include the following:

- failure to assess whether the program is evaluable
- use of inadequate indicators of program outcomes
- failure to secure input from stakeholders on appropriate evaluation criteria
- failure to clarify program managers' expectations on what can be learned from the evaluation
- failure to pretest data-collection instruments appropriately
- inadequately training data collectors.

We used these ideas to formulate our checklist and worksheet. We can draw several lessons from these pitfalls. The first and second emphasize the need to think through, before engaging in a project, how the team will evaluate the project—one of the reasons we emphasize indicators and criteria in our checklist and worksheet. Hatry

and Newcomer, 2010, also notes the importance of consulting with SMEs and stakeholders when formulating indicators and criteria to be used in evaluation. The last two pitfalls are most relevant to FVAP projects that collect and analyze data. Pretesting and training pertain to any project that involves surveying.

Several of our references emphasize the need for stakeholder acceptance of the need for a project, the means of execution, and interpretation. Transparency can play a part in establishing a project's credibility with stakeholders. Hahnel, 2013, describes methods for publicizing intermediate research results. Although Hahnel, 2013, is focused primarily on data-management plans for data collected by research projects, the intent of doing so is relevant to less empirical projects. This supports our view that systematic attention to transparency, across the spectrum of stakeholder positions, might help to manage criticism and build credibility.

Soliciting and Funding Research

FVAP and others use Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs) to solicit and fund research proposals. We examined the guidance for several agency processes. The U.S. Department of Commerce's procedural description of the use of BAAs provided insight to contracting details (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014). Of particular note is its discussion of required BAA content and evaluation requirements. Although the Department of Commerce does not describe how to do evaluations, its best practices give prominence to the need to think about and define, before a project is selected, how the project will be evaluated—again, reinforcing the need for indicators and criteria. It also stresses the use of peer reviews of submitted proposals. Such reviews are procedural but also highlight the role outside experts can play in formulating and evaluating research. DHRA also has a template for creating BAAs (USD[P&R], 2011). It is largely silent on how to identify and evaluate high-quality research proposals, but it does outline a review process and the role that nongovernment SMEs play in that process. These references are relevant to any BAA that FVAP might issue in the future.

Concluding Remarks

In this appendix, we proposed a checklist for the director and a worksheet for staff analysis as tools to help FVAP make decisions about project viability, readiness, and ultimate engagement—including project modifications, continuance, and curtailment.

We envision the decisionmaking process as entailing a dialogue between FVAP's director and staff. Sequencing might enable FVAP to stage and stop efforts as the exercise proceeds. The effort can end with the first "no." Nevertheless, the analysis will consume resources, possibly both FVAP's and its stakeholders', depending on their participation. In addition, the time and effort could be spent on something else. Thus,

our aim was a process that could be dialed up or down, commensurate with the size of the project under consideration.

The tools also highlight the role that stakeholders and SMEs can play in helping FVAP make decisions about starting, changing, or stopping projects. In some instances, their time, attention, and other resources will be offered freely (within reason) to FVAP because of their interest as stakeholders or in the name of collegiality, but, in other instances, their engagement might require a contract, thus implying additional cost.

Training Options and Recommendations

FVAP provides training in person and online to VAOs, IVA office staff, and others in a manner that is consistent with law and as set out in policy, but it has some latitude to set its own course in the future in terms of the content of training, the modes of training, and the nature of its involvement (Chapter Four).

The law does not specify a role for FVAP in VAO or IVA office training, but that lack of specificity need not imply a lack of necessity or efficacy. FVAP serves as a repository of knowledge of voting assistance and tools and on that basis alone might be well positioned, in absolute and relative terms, to play a significant role in training. The potential for ancillary benefits, addressed in Chapter Six, suggests another reason for FVAP's involvement. However, whether that involvement means developing training materials, providing in-person training, offering online training, or undertaking some of each remains to be determined.

This appendix discusses our analysis of and findings on FVAP's options for the VAO training program, including the trade-offs and complementarities among training modes (in person, online, and hybrid). In our analysis, we apply the project-management tools, presented in Appendix D, and draw heavily from our site visits and training observations, from the literature on adult learning and training evaluation, and from additional conversations with FVAP staff during a workshop that we led.

Framing the Options

To start, we turned to law and policy to set out the range of options.¹ In summary, we found that FVAP faces a more or less open playing field. The law affords considerable flexibility; in particular, it does not designate a provider or training modes and methods. The 2012 DoD instruction assigns FVAP responsibility for conducting training, appears to prefer in-person training, and establishes the frequency and timing of train-

¹ Although we frame this discussion in terms of *options*, we note that FVAP cannot choose a course in isolation without reference to or consultation with other parties in the system.

ing but allows a combination of approaches, depending, for example, on the circumstances of the trainee.

From Chapter Four:

DoDI 1000.04, 2012, calls on FVAP to “develop and deliver multiple types of training materials for use by IVA offices, IVAOs, UVAOs, and recruiters” and conduct voting assistance training during even-numbered years worldwide, and it requires that IVAOs and UVAOs complete FVAP training prior to assuming duties. Moreover, the instruction indirectly calls for the availability of both in-person and online training and prefers in-person training. It requires that all major command VAOs, IVAOs, and UVAOs attend FVAP voting assistance workshops; asks unit commanders to provide funding to enable UVAOs to attend in-person training to the extent practicable; and references online training as an alternative for VAOs in remote locations.

Given the lack of specificity in the law and the potential to revise the DoD instruction (Chapter Four), FVAP’s options, at least in the medium to long term, appeared to range from doing nothing (as in, leaving the training to others, such as the services) to doing it all. And *doing it* could involve in-person, online, and hybrid delivery modes.

We treated *doing it well* as a necessary condition,² which was consistent with both the stakeholders’ view that FVAP should model the ideal or be best in class and with the call for greater consideration of effectiveness.³ To assess the agency’s potential for excellence and as a basis for developing recommendations on program improvements, we defined *doing it well* in terms of established principles of adult learning and training evaluation.

We summarize the principles and best implied practices in Table E.1 and discuss them in more detail in Appendix F.

In our exploration of the literature, we found that the methods to address these principles are often mutually reinforcing, such as in the following:

- Well-crafted periods of active learning can serve to reaffirm learning objectives, motivate learning, tap experience, speak to diversity, hold attention, and promote retention.
- Evaluation that speaks to behavior and results forces early consideration of learning objectives in relation to program design and training methods.

² In effect, we were arguing that, if FVAP does not have (or have a means to obtain) the capabilities and capacities to do something well, it should consider walking away.

³ In this way, we also departed from our approach to the requirements analysis in phase 1, in which we considered whether FVAP was covering a requirement but not whether it was covering it adeptly.

Table E.1
Learning and Evaluation Principles

Principle	Implied Best Practice ^a
Adult learners need	Suggesting the importance of
To know why they are learning	Spelling out purpose and objectives
To see applicability to problem-solving for motivation	Stressing applicability
Instructional approaches that	
Respect and build on their experience	Drawing on trainees' experience
Match their diverse backgrounds and learning styles	Appealing to multiple learning styles (e.g., VARK)
Active involvement in the learning process	Giving trainees some control over their learning experience
In general, most or all learners need	
Instructional approaches that address varied and limited attention spans	Keeping it lively and mixing it up
Engagement in and with learning materials	Engaging trainees in and with materials
Evaluation should be embedded in program training design from the outset	Using "four stages" (reaction, learning, behavior, and results) to guide evaluations

SOURCES: Principles adapted primarily from Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009; Teaching Center, 2013; and D. Kirkpatrick, 1978; best practices based on RAND staff analysis of those documents.

NOTE: VARK = visual, aural, read and write, and kinesthetic.

^a The set of principles and practices, taken in its entirety, also suggests the importance of creating opportunities for trainee participation and giving trainees opportunities to participate.

In Appendix F, we derive and present a set of detailed recommendations⁴ for implementation, tailored to FVAP's circumstances, and describe our method of transferring them to FVAP in a daylong workshop that we led.

In that appendix, we also present a sample evaluation form, consistent with the learner-centered approach to participant feedback (D. Kirkpatrick, 1978).

In considering whether FVAP is or could be doing it well, we found, through our observations of training across services and venues, that FVAP was doing some things (such as stressing applicability) better than others but, with some investment in the program (see below and Appendix F), could excel more uniformly. We suggested professional development (e.g., in the form of a trainer-training program) as a means to fill the gaps in capability and capacity, and we pointed FVAP to a set of professional asso-

⁴ These recommendations are also consistent with TRADOC PAM 525-8-2. The pamphlet describes a learner-centric learning model, focused on context-based, collaborative, problem-centered instruction.

ciations and websites that focus on such programs and provide downloadable instructional materials.

Weighing the Evidence

We approached the analysis of options for the VAO training program in two steps: First, we assessed the benefits, costs, and risks of adopting the implied best practices; second, assuming the adoption of best practices, we compared the notional benefits, costs, and risks of each training option, framed in terms of in-person and online training modes.

To conduct the analysis, we drew on the project-management tools (Appendix D); on our site visits and direct observations of training; on our conversations with VAOs and IVA office staff; and on additional conversations with FVAP staff during the day-long workshop. In the course of the workshop, we sought feedback from FVAP staff and, a testament to the value of the interaction, worked with their comments in the analysis of options.

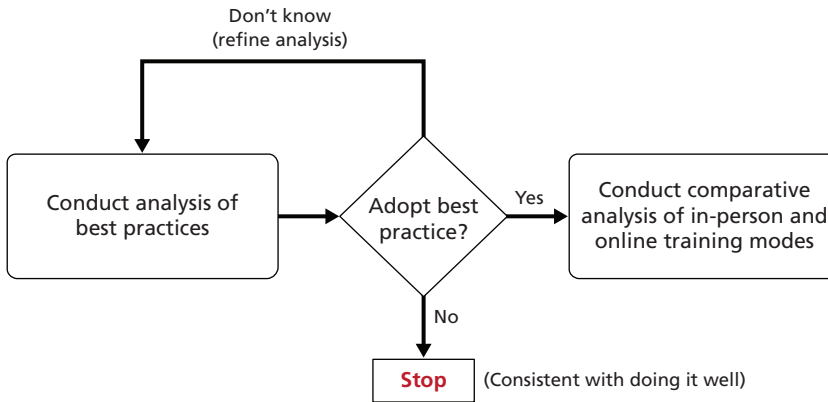
Figure E.1 describes the two steps as elements of a systematic decisionmaking process. (See Appendix D for a full articulation of the process.)

On balance, the best practices looked promising. The benefits of adopting them could be substantial and recurring (e.g., in terms of learning and retention and, hence, capability and capacity), and the costs appeared to be modest and mostly one-time, consisting of

- professional development
- modifications to course materials
- redeployment of materials.

Historically, FVAP has maintained a primary group of about four trainers and sent one member of that group to each training event; more recently, FVAP has sent two-person teams, consisting of one primary trainer and one other staff person. If extending professional development to the primary group (and to whoever manages the program), the costs might amount to four or five tuitions in a two- or three-day training program and the associated staff time. (Members of the primary group could act as mentors to other training staff.) Additionally, FVAP might sponsor course work in training evaluation and presentation-making. Given that FVAP retools its instructional materials for each general-election cycle, it would be dedicating resources to modifications and redeployment, regardless. Admittedly, this round of modifications might require more effort than prior rounds, but, once implemented, the shift would be complete and future rounds should require no more effort than usual.

Figure E.1
Elements of a Systematic Decisionmaking Process



RAND RR882-E.1

We saw few downside risks to adopting best practices. A member of the primary group might leave FVAP and take his or her human capital along, but, if he or she were acting as a mentor to other staff or a replacement, at least some capital would be transferred before his or her departure.

Taking the adoption of best practices as given, we then asked, “How do the benefits, costs, and risks of in-person and online training modes compare?”

Tables E.2, E.3, and E.4 set out the results of our analysis of the options, based on evidence drawn from our site visits and from our own encounters with FVAP’s training.

We found the following:

- The benefits of in-person training, much more so than of online training, can extend beyond those of the initial learning experience and spread across the system through networking, signaling, and other methods, but online training can be accessed globally, 24/7.
- The costs of in-person training are likely to be greater than those of online training, especially if IT is already in place and available on installations.
- Each mode presents risks to the individual learning experience inasmuch as it might fail to meet the learning needs of people who prefer the other mode, present challenges of availability, or entail environmental distractions, but some institutional and systemic risks pertaining to coordination and turnout are specific to in-person training.

Table E.2
Benefits of In-Person and Online Training

Benefit Type	In-Person Training	Online Training
Individual learning experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates real-time interaction among participants, e.g., question-and-answer sessions Meets the needs of those who prefer in-person training and others less so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be self-paced Can be offered 24/7 Can be available as a refresher Meets the needs of those who prefer online training and others less so
Institutional or systemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes networking with and among VAOs via direct contact and interaction Raises FVAP's profile as a voting assistance resource Signals importance of assistance and VAOs' role as provider Presents (unbounded) opportunity to gather information, obtain feedback, and deliver message on voting assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds potential for substantial domestic and international reach Implies exposure to a web-based voting assistance resource Presents (bounded) opportunity to gather information, obtain feedback, and deliver message on voting assistance

SOURCE: RAND staff analysis.

NOTE: The analysis assumes adoption of best practices.

Table E.3
Costs of In-Person and Online Training

Cost Type	In-Person Training	Online Training
Coordination and preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training materials Shipping fees Interactions with services and installations and related goodwill Facility preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training materials IT acquisition, if not already available; development; and support
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FVAP trainers In some instances, IVAOs and trainees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable
Time allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FVAP and FVAP trainers SVAOs, installations (e.g., facility maintenance and audio-visual crews), IVAOs, and trainees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainees Staff charged with supporting IT (installations, DoD, FVAP) and the training program more generally (FVAP)
Opportunity costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net benefits of alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net benefits of alternatives

SOURCE: RAND staff analysis.

NOTE: The analysis assumes adoption of best practices.

The analysis also supported continuance of a mixed strategy of in-person and online training and implementation of programmatic improvements.⁵ The combina-

⁵ In a manner that is consistent with our recommendation for a mixed strategy, Army training doctrine describes the need for blended learning. Blended learning is the combination of online or technology-delivered instruction and face-to-face instruction: "It blends the efficiencies and effectiveness of self-paced, technology-delivered

Table E.4
Risks of In-Person and Online Training

Risk Type	In-Person Training	Online Training
Individual learning experience (see below, also)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to meet learning needs of those who prefer online training • Unavailability of trainees • Distractions in training site • Inappropriately configured site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to meet learning needs of those who prefer in-person training • Inaccessibility of IT • Distractions in training site (e.g., shared equipment and IT bullpen)
Institutional or systemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination or preparation failure, potentially affecting institutional relationships, accrual of ancillary benefits, and learning experience • Weak or wrong turnout^a potentially affecting institutional relationships, accrual of ancillary benefits, and learning experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT failures, potentially affecting institutional relationships, accrual of ancillary benefits, and learning experience

SOURCE: RAND staff analysis.

NOTE: The analysis assumes adoption of best practices.

^a In this context, *wrong* would involve the attendance of a VAO who is soon rotated out to a new position.

tion of benefits, costs, and risks pointed to the continuance of both modes of training, responsive to differences in learning styles, differences in service cultures and settings, the potential for ancillary gains, and the risks of competing demands on personnel and of staff turnover, especially among ADM staff. Moreover, it suggested several avenues of improvement, including the possibilities of rebalancing through streamlining, targeting, and tailoring and working with local power brokers to mitigate the risks of coordination failures. We also identified opportunities to build ancillary gains into the training program. Lastly, the call to do it well and the initial analysis of the costs, benefits, and risks of adopting best practices suggested both the adoption of best practices and a need for related professional development. In the next section, we discuss these recommendations in greater detail.

Recommendations and Guidance for Voting Assistance Officer Training

We concluded our analysis of the VAO training program in phase 2 with a set of specific suggestions for strengthening the VAO training program. In broad terms, we suggested that FVAP “maintain [its] training profile, but do it better and smarter,” by

instruction with the expert guidance of a facilitator, and can include the added social benefit of peer-to-peer interactions” (U.S. Department of the Army, 2011, p. 19). See U.S. Department of the Army, 2011, for more information.

- adopting best practices
- streamlining in-person engagement
- reducing risks of coordination failures with training venues
- building the attainment of ancillary gains into the training program.

Adopt Best Practices

Our recommendations on best practices, which we describe in more detail in Appendix F, largely relate to learning objectives, interactivity, knowledge transfer, and the reconceptualization of training evaluations. We recognized that making in-person training more interactive (e.g., with discussions, simulations, case studies, and group activities) would require a paradigm shift. Trainers would need to know more about their trainees; allow them opportunities (with appropriate tonal cues) to participate; and learn to watch, gauge, and adapt to their reactions. Appropriate tonal cues could include repeating back and making use of trainees' questions and comments. For example, if the trainer asked trainees whether they had encountered a particular problem as either VAOs or UOCAVA voters, the trainer could explicitly acknowledge the responses and then try to weave them into the training session. To succeed, trainers would need to be able to train responsively but stay on track.

Our suggestions tied back to the overarching themes of phase 1, regarding two-way communication (e.g., do not just broadcast to stakeholders but also receive, process, and respond to the information and feedback they provide). Also harking back to a theme of phase 1, we recommended that FVAP invest in professional development for staff members most likely to direct the program or engage in training repeatedly.

Streamline In-Person Engagement

We recommended that FVAP offer regional and targeted training sessions, develop audience-specific training modules, and cultivate relationships with alternative providers.

With more regional and better-targeted training sessions, FVAP could visit fewer installations overall and get more from them. For example, it might identify domestic and overseas hot spots,⁶ large markets, and other high-impact markets and use training as an opportunity both to improve faltering relationships and to maintain healthy and productive relationships. In visiting fewer installations, but with greater purpose, FVAP might reduce its operating costs (and those of the services) and still increase the benefits of the program.

We also suggested developing train-the-trainer and IVAO-specific training modules for online and in-person delivery. In our discussions with IVAOs, we found that some IVAOs were offering impromptu training sessions to newly appointed UVAOs

⁶ The dashboard under development in a related RAND–FVAP project could provide some of the data for this analysis and has been considered by FVAP for this purpose.

and that an FVAP-provided package to guide them and ensure consistency would be valuable. Moreover, we noted that the FVAP training sessions both in-person and online were geared to UVAOs and that IVAOs, who fill a somewhat different role, would benefit from training oriented to meet their particular needs as installation-level coordinators, conduits, and resources.

Lastly, we recommended cultivating relationships with installation-based spousal and dependent organizations and other NGOs, including those overseas, to lessen the burden on FVAP trainers and training. In working through intermediaries, such as NGOs, FVAP might forgo some of the ancillary benefits of direct engagement, but it might also be able to extend its reach to meet underlying knowledge requirements.

Reduce Risks of Coordination Failures with Training Venues

To address coordination failures, such as inadequate site preparation and weak turnout, we suggested that FVAP ramp up its efforts to identify and work with power brokers on and off installations. Across venues, we observed the positive effects of issuing training invitations from appropriate authority figures, using institutionally appropriate vocabulary. In these cases, attendance was high; in other cases, it was not. Our sample was small, but the observation was striking. As a related matter, we also emphasized the importance of working within institutional norms and at appropriate institutional levels. In some instances, it might be necessary for the director to reach out to his or her counterpart or bureaucratic-hierarchical equivalent; in others, it should be sufficient to operate at the staff level.

Build the Attainment of Ancillary Gains into the Training Program

In formulating this recommendation, we took as a given that ancillary benefits would not accrue automatically and would require some additional thought, planning, and action on the part of FVAP. We addressed four areas—namely, networking, signaling, resource exposure, and information collection:

- Use training to build stronger networks by encouraging interaction among trainees, both during and after training; encouraging repeat performers at all levels (IVAOs, VAO office staff, and IVAOs); and emphasizing the value of maintaining and passing down continuity folders, which, under current policy, should include lessons learned and are required of all VAOs. Through interaction, during training sessions, and, perhaps, through online communities of learning, trainees would know the identities of others facing similar issues who could, in turn, serve as resources through shared experience. Regarding repeat performers, we suggested the potential benefits of encouraging trainees to take on similar roles in the future, in other venues. Thus, training would not be a one-shot deal with little or no carry over, and FVAP might be able to develop a cadre of well-informed, seasoned, and able service providers.

- Use physical presence to signal the importance of voting assistance through meet-and-greets and site visits, both on and off base. Although we recognize the logistical challenges of coordinating training sessions across multiple venues, it did not appear as if FVAP was reaching out systematically to IVAOs and IVA office staff or local election officials to make the most of face-to-face contact with installations and communities.
- Use training events—in person and online—to increase trainees’ direct exposure to FVAP resources. This could be accomplished through simulated links in in-person training and through direct links embedded in exercises in online training.
- Intentionally gather and obtain information, including direct feedback from intermediaries, and develop mechanisms to capture and use new knowledge productively. For example, FVAP could, in collaboration with the services, develop mechanisms to capture lessons from continuity folders and share them intergenerationally, across installations, and even across services. It could also maintain a shared database of insights, comments, and other notes drawn from the field.

In addition, we noted that, if FVAP were to streamline its engagement, it might need fewer resources to use the training sessions more productively. For example, FVAP would need to arrange meet-and-greets at fewer installations—in general, the streamlining would reduce the requirement for advance preparation and pretraining reconnaissance-like activities. At the same time, streamlining might imply less work for the services.

Lastly, and speaking to the broader themes of phase 1, we suggested that FVAP view training as an opportunity to spread its message consistently across venues. To do so, it would need to reevaluate its in-person and online training materials as outreach and take steps to ensure that the training materials convey the same message as other outreach materials.

Adult Learning Principles and Training Evaluation

The law affords FVAP considerable flexibility regarding training modes and methods. Currently, FVAP offers both online and in-person training for VAOs. To inform recommendations on the modality of FVAP's training program, we began by reviewing literature on the effectiveness of online training, in both absolute terms and relative to the effectiveness of in-person training. The literature speaks to potential benefits (largely relating to costs, convenience, and reach) and to efficacy, in terms of knowledge acquisition.

Benefits and Efficacy of Online Training

Numerous studies (e.g., Gu et al., 2012; Means et al., 2010; Strother, 2002) cite advantages, including economic benefits, convenience, flexibility, self-paced learning, standardized delivery, and the potential for greater reach, and some suggest limitations.¹ Among the economic benefits are that online training can reduce travel expenses for trainers and trainees, reduce the amount of time that trainees must be off the job, and reduce the shipping fees associated with sending training materials to training events. Trainees can take online courses at their convenience and learn at their own pace rather than wait for a scheduled in-person training session. Online courses are also not subject to differences in trainers' teaching styles. However, Straus et al., 2014, reports less satisfaction with opportunities for performance feedback and a desire for more peer interaction.

The evidence as to the efficacy of online training, specifically in comparison to in-person instruction, is suggestive. Means et al. conducted a systematic review of empirical studies of online learning from 1996 through July 2008 for the U.S. Department of Education and found that, with the possible exception of hybrid classes (although their sample included only three hybrid classes), there are generally no significant differences in student attainment of learning outcomes associated with the different deliv-

¹ We address the potential benefits and costs of online and in-person training in more detail, drawing evidence from field observations, in Chapter Six.

ery methods (i.e., online learning and face-to-face instruction), even when controlling for course and instructor (Means et al., 2010). Their findings are consistent with the general conclusions of prior research that indicate that student performance in online and traditional classroom versions of the same courses is similar (Means et al., 2010). According to Merrill and Galbraith, 2010, p. 20, “Prior empirical research appears to indicate that, in general, student performance in on-line and traditional classroom versions of the same course is similar. This conclusion appears consistent across many professional disciplines. . . .”²

Some students might prefer one method over the other, given differences in their learning styles (see below), but, on balance, one might infer that the methods are roughly equivalent in efficacy in terms of learning for an average mix of students.

Moreover, in-person training might also offer ancillary benefits that were not a focus of the literature (e.g., with respect to networking and signaling).³

Taken together, the flexibility of the law regarding training modes and methods and the plausible claim of no significant difference in efficacy present FVAP with options. The options for its training program range from doing nothing to doing it all, with *doing it* being training in person, online, or a combination of the two (i.e., a hybrid approach). This decision depends on several factors, including the balance of benefits, costs, and risks to FVAP and others, along with whether FVAP can do it well.

But what does it mean to do it well?

“Doing It Well”

To determine what it means to do it well, we examined principles of adult learning that focus on how adults learn and how, as a consequence, to train them effectively. These principles rest on a variety of theories, models, and explanations of how adults learn, which, although differing in emphasis, yield a general consensus on central tenets (see Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, p. 558, for an overview). The field of adult learning originated in the mid–20th century, when researchers and adult educators began to consider the differences in learning in adulthood and in childhood. In 1968, Malcolm Knowles proposed the adoption of the theory of andragogy (Merriam, 2001). Andragogy, which is “the art and science of helping adults learn,” is premised on four assumptions (Knowles, 1980, pp. 44–45):

These assumptions are that as individuals mature: 1) their self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being; 2) they accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly

² Straus et al.’s findings on student self-assessments and grades are also suggestive but less conclusive, owing to fundamental differences in and confounds among in-person and online venues (Straus et al., 2014).

³ These potential benefits are a focus of discussion in Chapter Six.

rich resource for learning; 3) their readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of their social roles; and 4) their time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly, their orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of performance-centeredness.

With these assumptions, Knowles suggested several implications for educational practice. For example, building on the concept that adults are self-directed, Knowles emphasized the need for adult learners to be actively involved in the learning process. He suggested engaging adult learners in a process of self-diagnosis, in which they can assess their present levels of competencies, measure the gaps between their present competencies and those required by the job, and identify specific directions of desirable growth (Knowles, 1980). To build on adults' experiences, Knowles recommended illustrating new concepts or broad generalizations with life experiences drawn from the trainees (Knowles, 1980).

Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, reviewed existing theories and models of andragogy and self-directed learning (Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, citing Knowles, 1975, and Tough, 1967, 1971) and synthesized recurring themes into the following list of principles of adult learning, drawing on these sources and many, many others:⁴

- Adults need to know why they are learning.
- Adults are motivated to learn by the need to solve problems.
- Adults' previous experience must be respected and built on.
- Adults need learning approaches that match their backgrounds and identities.
- Adults need to be actively involved in the learning process.

Using these principles as a framework, we then further synthesized the literature on adult learning into general recommendations for implementation. The first two columns of Table F.1 show the adult learning principles, with a few modest adjustments (e.g., to account for other perspectives in the literature) and general recommendations for implementation. Many of our general recommendations are drawn from Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, and Knowles, 1980, as well as from Bjornberg, DellCioppia, and Tanzer, 2002, and Gu et al., 2012.

Our recommendations are also consistent with TRADOC PAM 525-8-2. The pamphlet describes a learner-centric learning model, focused on context-based, collaborative, problem-centered instruction:

Classroom learning will shift from instructor-centered, lecture-based methods to a learner-centered, experiential methodology. Engaging the learners in collaborative

⁴ These principles are invariant to the mode (online or in person) of delivery.

Table F.1
Adult Learning Principles and Recommendations for Implementation

Adult Learning Principle ^a	General Recommendation for Implementation	Illustration ^b
Adults need to know why they are learning. ^c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly state the learning objectives^d for the training session as distinct from topical coverage or table of contents. • Elicit trainees' reasons for attending the training session (Knowles, 1980). • Identify necessary competencies (knowledge, skills, and behaviors) to achieve a given level of performance on the job (Knowles, 1980; Bjornberg, DellCioppia, and Tanzer, 2002). • Explicitly relate objectives to trainees' reasons for attending and necessary competencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use learning objectives to launch and anchor the training session, from start to finish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ State the learning objectives at the beginning of the training session, in relation to the necessary competencies. ◦ Explicitly connect instructional material to the objectives throughout the session. ◦ Recap the objectives, in totality, at the end of the session. • Begin with a short conversation about objectives and competencies (e.g., ask trainees to identify what they would like to get from the training and then relate their objectives to the stated learning objectives and necessary competencies).

Table F.1—Continued

Adult Learning Principle ^a	General Recommendation for Implementation	Illustration ^b
Adults are motivated to learn by the need to solve problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide examples of real-life problems or challenges that trainees are likely to encounter on the job, and demonstrate how training will help them address those problems or challenges. • Build learning experience on those real-life problems and challenges so that trainees are more likely to be engaged in training, participate in discussions, and share insights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask VAOs what problems or challenges they have encountered in providing assistance to UOCAVA voters and what problems or challenges they or their dependents have encountered as UOCAVA voters.^e • Generate a discussion around those issues (e.g., by asking the VAOs how they addressed the issues and by considering those and other concrete ways of troubleshooting). • Conduct skill-practicing exercises by giving trainees tricky scenarios that require them to find information in the Voting Assistance Guide and answer questions about addresses and other information.^f • Create plausible scenarios to introduce and illustrate key issues, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Track a person who marries, has children, buys and sells a residence, and serves overseas, from the point of his or her enlistment to eventual retirement. ◦ Develop “what ifs” around political activities to (1) clarify the meaning of the terms <i>partisan</i> and <i>nonpartisan</i> and (2) address rules for particular behaviors among VAOs and ADM voters more generally. • Provide specific examples of issues that VAOs typically encounter, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Determining UOCAVA eligibility ◦ Determining voting residence address ◦ Reporting metrics, including “what counts as providing assistance”?

Table F.1—Continued

Adult Learning Principle ^a	General Recommendation for Implementation	Illustration ^b
Adults' previous experience must be respected and built on.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relate new material to trainees' experiences. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Take an inventory of trainees' experiences as they relate to the learning objectives and topical coverage. ◦ Illustrate new concepts or broad generalizations with trainees' life experiences (Knowles, 1980). • Emphasize techniques that can tap into trainees' experiences—and, at the same time, address problems or challenges—such as group discussions, case studies, simulation, role-playing, skill-practicing exercises, and demonstrations (Knowles, 1980). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask trainees how long they have been VAOs and, as above, what issues they have encountered in providing assistance to UOCAVA voters or, for those who are new to the VAO position, as UOCAVA voters or as spouses or parents of UOCAVA voters. • Use the issues that VAOs raise as prompts for a group discussion (e.g., by asking whether others have encountered similar problems and how they have handled them). • Have trainees fill out the FPCA or FWAB form (using their own information) before reviewing procedures to encourage discussion of relevant life experiences (e.g., "has anything changed since the last time you filled in this form" or "has the form gotten easier to fill out with time and experience") and to identify and discuss stumbling blocks.

Table F.1—Continued

Adult Learning Principle ^a	General Recommendation for Implementation	Illustration ^b
<p>Adults need instructional approaches that match their diverse backgrounds and learning styles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present information and place it in context, using multiple approaches to appeal to diverse learning styles.⁹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Learning-style research suggests that students learn differently and experience higher levels of satisfaction and better learning outcomes when there is a fit between their learning styles and the teaching style (Gu et al., 2012, citing Zuckweiler and Cao, 2009) and when an educational tool is developed with learning styles in mind (Gu et al., 2012, citing Canfield and Lafferty, 1974; Kolb, 1976; Fleming and Mills, 1992; Grasha and Yangarber-Hicks, 2000). ◦ One model of learning, VARK, incorporates four learning modes (visual, aural, reading and writing, and kinesthetic) (Fleming and Mills, 1992). • Align online training with various learning styles to increase perceived ease of use and usefulness (Gu et al., 2012). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss trainees’ learning styles at the outset of a training session by asking trainees questions about their preferences and relating their answers to the types of approaches that the session will include (e.g., if someone says he or she likes “hands-on” learning,” let that person know that he or she will have an opportunity to work with forms). • Present information using a combination of approaches, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Visual, involving graphical or symbolic representations (e.g., diagrams, charts, maps, and flow charts) ◦ Aural, involving heard or spoken information (e.g., lectures and discussions) ◦ Reading and writing, involving text-based media (e.g., briefing slides, articles, and discussion boards) ◦ Kinesthetic, learning by doing (e.g., simulations and role-playing exercises). • Try using simulation, role-playing, and other skill-practicing exercises with forms (FPCA and FWAB) and various envelopes or labels to emphasize reading, writing, and kinesthetic learning at the same time and work on problem-solving. • Consider developing modular approaches that speak to different styles and can be applied, depending on preference of trainees in a particular session (Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009).

Table F.1—Continued

Adult Learning Principle ^a	General Recommendation for Implementation	Illustration ^b
Adults need to be actively involved in the learning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide trainees with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Choices over what they learn and how they learn it, including presentational methods ◦ Diagnostic experiences in which they can assess their present levels of competencies; measure the gaps between their present competencies and those required by the job; and identify specific directions of desirable growth (Knowles, 1980) ◦ Opportunities to discuss whether training has met learning objectives (Knowles, 1980). • Emphasize transfer of learning and ownership of knowledge and skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Have trainees complete action plans before leaving a training session (Bjornberg, DellCioppia, and Tanzer, 2002).^h ◦ Offer refresher sessions as an opportunity for trainees to reconvene and discuss what is going well and where they are having problems; sessions can also provide a review of course content (Bjornberg, DellCioppia, and Tanzer, 2002). ◦ Encourage trainees to form networks in which they discuss strategies for implementing the training (Bjornberg, DellCioppia, and Tanzer, 2002) and any problems or challenges that they face during implementation. ◦ Provide job aids that serve as a quick reference for how to use the knowledge and skills obtained in the training session (Bjornberg, DellCioppia, and Tanzer, 2002). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide trainees with opportunities to learn more about topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ In in-person training, with options to reexamine difficult or complex material and with leave-behinds^l ◦ In online training, by clicking on links to additional information.^j • Conduct a pretest prior to the training session, either in writing or by posing a series of questions to the group. • Pose questions as minute tests at major transition points in the training session to determine whether trainees have taken in or processed new information.^k • Recap the learning objectives at the end of the session, and elicit input from trainees (through discussion or feedback form) about whether they have been met.

Table F.1—Continued

Adult Learning Principle ^a	General Recommendation for Implementation	Illustration ^b
^a Adapted from Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009.		
^b Adapted from Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, unless otherwise stated.		
^c “Adults will spend more time and energy learning when they see a reason” (Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, p. 559, citing Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 1998, and Tough, 1967).		
^d Some learners are goal oriented (Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, citing Houle, 1961).		
^e It might be interesting to probe whether these were one-time problems (e.g., associated with start-up or unusual circumstance) or repeated problems.		
^f Depending on the number of trainees and the configuration of the room, this can be done as a paired or small- to medium-group exercise to encourage interaction.		
^g Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, p. 561: “[M]ost important, know when each variant is appropriate for a given group of learners, or even a particular subgroup or individual within a group.”		
^h Action plans focus trainees’ attention on the trainees’ application of information and skills (Bjornberg, DellCioppia, and Tanzer, 2002).		
ⁱ This can be done by presenting trainees with the option to take a second look at one of a handful of objectives or subject areas and polling their preferences.		
^j This feature has been built into some of the online training packages.		
^k This feature has been built into some of the online training packages.		

practical and problem solving exercises that are relevant to their work environment provides an opportunity to develop critical 21st century Soldier competencies. . . .

Students master knowledge and comprehension level learning objectives outside the classroom through individual learning activities such as reading, self-paced technology-driven instruction, or research. Collaborative learning activities, discussion, identification of problems, and solving these problems is done in the small group classroom environment. This learner-centered instructional approach encourages student participation and puts the instructor in the role of a facilitator. Facilitators are responsible for enabling group discovery. Students and facilitators construct knowledge by sharing prior knowledge and experiences, and by examining what works and what does not work.

Drawing further from Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, and others, we also derived a set of implied best practices from the adult learning principles:

- Adults need to know why they are learning: Be explicit about learning objectives and the connection between learning objectives and trainees' reasons for attendance (see Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, citing Lieb, 1991). **Spell out the purpose and reinforce.**
- Adults are motivated to learn by the need to solve problems: Build learning experiences around real-world problems that learners might encounter so that they are more likely to be engaged, participate in discussions, and share insights (see Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, citing Lawler, 2003, and Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 1998). **Stress applicability.**
- Adults' previous experience must be respected and built on: Relating new material to existing knowledge and experience can aid the learning process (see Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, citing Merriam and Caffarella, 1999). **Draw on trainees' experience.**
- Adults need instructional approaches that match their diverse backgrounds and learning styles: Use multiple methods of presenting information, and contextualize it in different ways (see Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009).⁵ **Appeal to multiple learning styles.**
- Adults need to be actively involved in the learning process: Adults are often self-directing and probably want some control over what they are learning (see Bryan, Kreuter, and Brownson, 2009, citing Knowles, 1984). **Give trainees some control over their learning experiences.**

⁵ Some people are more visual, some learn better by reading and writing, and so on.

On the basis of the adult learning principles, general recommendations, and implied best practices, we offered FVAP a set of VAO training–tailored recommendations, which we show in the third column of Table F.1.

In a manner that was consistent with our overall approach to this project, as one of ongoing, collaborative engagement, we delivered (or transferred) the principles, practices, and recommendations in Table F.1 to FVAP in a daylong event, consisting of a general presentation, a small-group discussion, and a series of one-on-one meetings with FVAP trainers. To augment the small-group discussion, we also prepared commentary, questions, and exercises, to which we referred as Food for Thought. The intent was to make the concepts less abstract and to help trainers see how the concepts might relate to their circumstances.

For example, under the first principle, “adults need to know why they are learning,” we included the following questions:

- Can you identify an overarching learning objective or goal for the training session?
- What is the difference between a statement of learning objectives and a statement of topical coverage or a table of contents?

And we asked FVAP participants to compare and categorize the following statements, as objectives or topics:⁶

- Today, we will talk about continuity folders.
- By the end of this session, you will understand the purpose of the continuity folder.
- By the end of this session, you will know how to construct a continuity folder.
- This presentation will provide an overview of the forms that UOCAVA voters use.
- Today, you will learn how to address five common UOCAVA voting mistakes.
- Today, you will learn the purpose of each block of the FPCA and FWAB.

In addition, we drew from the more-general literature on effective teaching (e.g., Indiana University, 2012; Single, 1991; Teaching Center, 2013) to incorporate two additional learning principles; that is, most, if not all, learners need instructional approaches that address varied and limited attention spans and engagement with material for retention.

In our conversations with FVAP and in our presentation of the recommendations and illustrations in Box D.1 in Appendix D, we emphasized that the methods to address the adult and general learning principles are often mutually reinforcing. For example, well-crafted periods of active learning can serve to reaffirm objectives, motivate learning, tap experience, speak to diversity, hold attention, and promote retention.

⁶ We have edited the statements slightly, for brevity.

Training Evaluation

Lastly, we looked at the literature on training evaluation.

A well-known and widely used methodology for evaluating training and learning processes is the Kirkpatrick model. This model describes four stages or steps to consider in evaluating a training program: reaction, learning, behavior, and results, or levels 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively (also denoted L1, L2, L3, and L4, respectively) (D. Kirkpatrick, 1978).

Table F.2 describes each stage and measurement methods. By contrast, current FVAP training evaluations have focused mostly on L1, with some consideration of L2. In our conversations with FVAP, we noted that reaching out to L3 and L4 can encourage early consideration of learning objectives in relation to program design and training methods.

L1 evaluation forms, including those used previously by FVAP, are often trainer-centered or program-centered rather than learner-centered. For example, a participant might be asked to rate such statements as these:

- The program objectives were clearly defined.
- The program objectives were covered by the instructor.
- The material was the right level of complexity for my background.

Following in his father's footsteps, Jim Kirkpatrick introduced the concept of a new learner-centered L1 evaluation form (J. Kirkpatrick, undated). Using this as a

Table F.2
Kirkpatrick Levels of Evaluation

Level	Criterion	Basis	Measurement Method
L1	Reaction	Extent to which participants react favorably to training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do participants feel about the program? • How satisfied are they with the training? 	Participant feedback or reaction form (learner centered)
L2	Learning	Extent to which participants acquire intended knowledge, skills, attitudes, confidence, and commitment from training	Measure knowledge, skills, and attitudes in pretest and posttest
L3	Behavior	Extent to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are on the job and change their behavior on the job	Measure changes in on-the-job behavior (e.g., with interviews)
L4	Results	Extent to which targeted outcomes result from the training program and subsequent reinforcement	Measure conditions before the training program and compare with conditions after the program

SOURCE: D. Kirkpatrick, 1978.

model, we drafted a new evaluation form for FVAP to use to elicit participant feedback for its in-person training sessions. This evaluation form is shown in Figures F.1 and F.2.

Figure F.1
Proposed Training Evaluation Form, Page 1

DRAFT		VAO Training Evaluation Form			June 25, 2014	
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
I. Learning objectives						
(a)	I understood the learning objectives					
(b)	I obtained knowledge and skills that are consistent with the learning objectives					
(c)	I am clear about what is expected of me as a VAO as result of taking this training course					
II. Course materials						
(a)	I found the course materials (e.g., slides, handouts, and other VAO resources) easy to follow or navigate					
(b)	I found the complexity and level of detail of the material appropriate to my background and experience					
(c)	I believe that the course materials, including resources, will be essential to my success as a VAO					
III. Content relevance						
(a)	I believe that I will be able to apply what I learned today in my role as a VAO					
(b)	I believe that I have obtained the necessary knowledge and skills to be a successful VAO					
(c)	I am clear about where to find answers to the questions that will arise in my role as a VAO					
IV. Facilitator knowledge						
(a)	My learning was enriched by the facilitator’s knowledge					
(b)	My learning was enriched by the experiences and examples that the facilitator shared					
V. Facilitator delivery and style						
(a)	I was well engaged during the training session					
(b)	I found it easy to be actively involved during the session					
(c)	I had ample opportunity to ask questions and receive answers to my questions during the session					
(d)	I had ample opportunity to practice or demonstrate the skills that I was asked to learn during the session					
(e)	I was comfortable with the pace of the session					
(f)	I was comfortable with the length of the session					
VI. Facility and environment						
	I found the room and set up to be comfortable, free of distractions, and conducive to learning					
Using the space on the back of this form, please:						
(1)	Explain any items rated as “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree.”					
(2)	List the three most important things you learned from this training course.					
(3)	Tell us how we can strengthen or improve the training course.					

SOURCE: Developed by RAND staff, based on J. Kirkpatrick, undated.

RAND RR882-F.1

Figure F.2
Proposed Training Evaluation Form, Page 2

DRAFT	VAO Training Evaluation Form	June 25, 2014
(1)	Explain any items rated as “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree.” (Please include the item number, e.g., “1.(a).”)	
(2)	List the three most important things you learned from this training course.	
(3)	Tell us how we can strengthen or improve the training course.	
<hr/>		
SOURCE: Developed by RAND staff, based on J. Kirkpatrick, undated.		
RAND RR882-F.2		

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In early 2013, the leadership of the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) commissioned the RAND National Defense Research Institute to undertake a collaborative, multiyear work program known as “FVAP and the Road Ahead.” The project was established to assist FVAP in aligning its strategy and operations to better serve its mission and stakeholders, and to strengthen FVAP’s capacity to set its own course, greet change, and communicate its role in the voting community. The RAND project team worked with FVAP to compare, reconcile, and align what was in the agency’s strategy and typical of its operations and what should be, through an evidence-based approach that included logic modeling, stakeholder outreach, and a requirements assessment. This report documents the project and resulting changes within FVAP, which enabled a significant realignment of the agency’s strategy and operations. The report concludes with final recommendations and guidance largely proposed to lock in and build on gains.



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