



VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

Evaluation of the Veterans Emergency Fund

Final Report

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Veterans Affairs
Canada

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Executive Summary

Program Profile

The Veterans Emergency Fund (VEF) was established on April 1, 2018 to provide financial support to Veterans, their families, or their survivors whose well-being is at risk due to an urgent and unexpected situation. The VEF provides eligible recipients with up to \$2,500 per year in tax-free social assistance payments for necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care/expenses (not otherwise covered by other programs or insurance), or expenses required to maintain safety and shelter. The VEF was implemented with approved funding for three fiscal years (2018-19 to 2020-21).

Evaluation Purpose and Background

To access ongoing funding for the VEF beyond 2020-21, the Minister of Veterans Affairs was required to return to Central Agencies with information on: the need for the program and its level of ongoing funding; the performance, usage, and results of the program over the first three years; and strengthened governance based on the experience over the first three years of the program. In consideration of risk and need, it was determined that the VEF would benefit from an evaluation.

The Evaluation of the Veterans Emergency Fund was conducted between February 2020 and October 2020 and primarily focussed on the time period of April 1, 2018 to August 30, 2020. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with Treasury Board of Canada's *Policy on Results*.

Findings

There is a continued need for the VEF and the program aligns with Government of Canada goals and priorities. Demand for the VEF has exceeded the funding level of \$1,000,000 in each of its first two years of operation and is on pace to exceed the limit in year three. The program is generally meeting Veteran's immediate needs, but longer term needs can require additional supports. The VEF can act as a bridge until additional supports are put in place, as evidenced by the program's performance during the Covid-19 pandemic (demand for the program spiked in April 2020, approximately one month into federal and provincial restrictions implemented to curb the threat of Covid-19).

The program area has demonstrated a commitment to program governance. An ongoing quality assurance function has been implemented for the program, weekly performance and monthly performance reports are being generated, and efforts are being made to address questions that arise from field staff. During the current Covid-19 pandemic, an interim business process was implemented to allow decision makers more flexibility when approving requests for funding. The evaluation finds staff are generally exercising

their new authority where appropriate and are requesting supporting documentation when necessary. Staff are also referring Veterans to additional supports where appropriate.

Though the standard turnaround time for making payment on a VEF application is generally being met, the VEF program is administratively burdensome for frontline staff due to the use of CSDN decision dockets to process applications. Of particular concern, 43% of frontline staff surveyed indicated it takes four or more hours to process a VEF decision. Many decision makers (especially newer staff members) have little experience with developing decisions dockets in CSDN and must follow the written instructions each time (system limitations have required the development of a 23 page business process containing dozens of steps). As VEF applications are comparatively rare, it is difficult to build expertise in the system. The evaluation finds that the administrative burden caused by the VEF can detract from staff's ability to assist other clients.

In addition, the use of CSDN decision dockets to document VEF decisions limits the ability to easily obtain accurate information about VEF clients. All family members are linked to a Veteran's file through the decision docket, meaning demographic information retrieved from the system is for the Veteran, not necessarily whomever applied for the fund. The system does not allow for easy retrieval of the data required to support program management, nor does it collect the information necessary for complete GBA+ analysis.

Given the administrative steps required to process a VEF claim in its current system and difficulties retrieving data from CSDN, the evaluation makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that the Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management implement measures to reduce the administrative burden on decision makers by exploring system changes to simplify the VEF process.

Recommendation #2

It is recommended that the Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management implement system changes to improve the capture of program performance data and to better capture GBA+ data/program recipient demographic data.

1.0 Introduction

The Veterans Emergency Fund (VEF) was established on April 1, 2018 to provide financial support to Veterans, their families, or their survivors whose well-being is at risk due to an urgent and unexpected situation. The intent of the fund is to resolve the recipient's immediate emergency need and, where appropriate, the applicant will be referred to alternate and/or additional resources for longer-term support.

1.1 Program Overview

Prior to the implementation of the VEF, VAC did not have a mechanism through which it could immediately respond to every Veterans' urgent financial needs in a timely manner. Existing trust funds administered by VAC under the authority of the *Guardianship of Veterans Property Regulations* were designed to assist eligible Veterans and/or their dependents to address unmet needs. However, these trusts were established through the donations and bequests of private individuals and often have limited funds and/or narrow eligibility criteria (e.g., they may only be available to Veterans in a certain geographic region or a certain branch of the military). Though the Department's range of benefits and services is broad, situations were arising where the needs of Veterans' in financial crisis could not be met. It was recognized that a new, flexible emergency fund was required to provide eligible Veterans with the immediate help needed in order to preserve their health and well-being.

An Order in Council provided authority for the Minister of Veterans Affairs to create the VEF. As part of Budget 2017, the Government announced the fund at \$1 million per year over 4 years. Funding was ultimately secured for three years with future funding dependent upon the VEF meeting the needs of Veterans and their families.

1.2 Program Eligibility

The VEF provides eligible recipients with up to \$2,500 per year in tax-free social assistance payments for necessities such as:

- food;
- clothing;
- shelter;
- medical care/expenses (not otherwise covered by other programs or insurance); or
- expenses required to maintain safety and shelter.¹

¹ A new interim business process has been created which has raised decision maker authority levels during the Covid-19 pandemic. See section 4.1.2 for more details.

Veterans do not need a service-related disability to apply for assistance. Any of the approximately 640,000 Canadian Veterans, their families, or their survivors who are facing a financial crisis/emergency that threatens their health and well-being are eligible to apply to the VEF².

In the context of the VEF, an emergency is an unforeseen situation requiring immediate financial support that, if not addressed, may negatively impact the health and safety of a Veteran and/or their family members. The fund is intended to provide financial resources to those that do not have the financial means to address the emergency at hand. An emergency may be caused by a defined, temporary, or point-in-time event such as, but not limited to, fire, natural disaster (e.g., flood, hurricane), theft or destruction of essential property, or serious illness/injury.

Likewise, life circumstances may signal that an emergency is imminent and lead to a need for urgent funding. For example, a job loss with a resulting reduction of income could lead to the threat of eviction, termination of essential services (e.g. electricity, heat), and/or lack of food which, regardless of the predictability, could place the health and safety of a Veteran and/or their family members at risk.

The VEF was intentionally established with broad eligibility criteria, however, payments cannot be made for:

- requests of an ongoing nature (e.g. a series of payments such as rent, mortgage, vehicle payments, etc.);
- requests of a commercial nature;
- requests to purchase non-essential goods, services or travel; or
- any other expense that is otherwise covered by a provincial, federal, or other eligible insurance program or benefit.

Though funding of the VEF is capped at \$1,000,000 per fiscal year, additional funds were re-profiled internally within VAC in year one (2018-19) to meet higher than expected program uptake (program expenditures were approximately \$1,200,000). Demand continued to grow through year two, with expenditures reaching \$1,500,000. Once again, money to sustain the fund was drawn from internal sources. Year three expenditures are forecasted to exceed \$1M by mid-November 2020, with more than four months remaining in the fiscal year.

1.3 Program Delivery

Applicants for the VEF are encouraged to submit their application through My VAC Account (MVA), VAC's secure online business portal. However, in instances where the

² Family members include: current spouses/common law partners; survivors of Veterans or deceased Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members; orphans of Veterans or CAF members (or the legal guardian if the orphan is under age 18); and dependents of a Veteran or current spouse/common law partner.

Veteran cannot access MVA, upon contacting the Department, a VAC Veterans Service Agent (VSA) or Case Manager (CM) will complete an application in VAC's Client Service Delivery Network (CSDN) while speaking to the Veteran, either in person at an Area Office or over the telephone. VSAs, CMs, and Veteran Service Team Managers (VSTMs) have the authority to approve payments up to a maximum of \$2,500 per year. In exceptional circumstances, approval for funding up to \$10,000 may be given by the Area Director.³

VEF funds are issued in a number of ways depending on the recipient's circumstances. The most common method of payment is a direct deposit to the recipient's bank account directly from the departmental pay centre. The departmental pay centre can also make direct deposits to a third party, issue cheques directly to a recipient, or issue cheques to a third party. VSTMs in each area office may also use an acquisition card to pay third parties for goods or services related to the recipient's emergency (e.g., hotel lodging). There is no formal appeal process in place for those whose application to the fund has been disallowed. However, an applicant who is dissatisfied with a VEF decision may request a review by a senior adjudicator at VAC head office.

2.0 Scope and Methodology

The VEF was implemented with approved funding for three fiscal years (2018-19 to 2020-21). To access ongoing funding for the VEF, the Minister of Veterans Affairs was required to return to Central Agencies in 2020/21 with information on need for the program and its level of ongoing funding, information on the performance, usage, and results of the program over the first three years, and strengthened governance based on the experience over the first three years of the program.

In consideration of risk and need, it was determined that the VEF would benefit from an evaluation. First appearing on Veterans Affairs Canada Risk-Based Audit and Evaluation Plan 2018-23, the evaluation was conducted in accordance with Treasury Board of Canada's *Policy on Results*.

2.1 Evaluation Scope and Questions

The evaluation was conducted between February 2020 and October 2020 and primarily focussed on the time period of April 1, 2018 to August 30, 2020.

The objective of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, performance, effectiveness, economy and efficiency of the VEF. Findings from the evaluation will be used to support

³ A new interim business process has been implemented for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic which expands authorities for front line staff. See Section 4.1.2 for more details.

decision making, planning, and implementation of future departmental initiatives for the program. Evaluation findings will also be used to determine the need for ongoing program funding.

Preliminary discussions, document review, and data analysis identified potential program risk areas and determined the areas of priority and focus for this evaluation. Upon completion of an initial review, evaluation questions were developed to help assess program relevance, performance, efficiency and economy, and effectiveness in order to achieve the evaluation objective. A list of evaluation questions, highlighting the key lines of inquiry, can be found in Table 1 below. For further details and methodologies, see Appendix A - Evaluation Matrix.

Table 1: Evaluation Questions

➤ To what extent does the program continue to address a demonstrable need, now and in the future? (Relevance)
➤ To what extent does the program align with Government of Canada priorities and with federal roles and responsibilities? (Relevance)
➤ To what extent is the Program responsive to the needs of recipients and target audiences? (Relevance)
➤ Are processes currently in place to ensure the program is being administered as indicated in departmental guidance? (Performance)
➤ To what extent is the program achieving its outcomes? (Performance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate • Intermediate • Ultimate
➤ Are there opportunities to improve the efficiency and economy of the program or ways to improve the effectiveness of the program? (Efficiency/economy/effectiveness)
➤ Are there any unintended impacts resulting from the program (positive or negative)? (Efficiency/economy/effectiveness)

2.2 Multiple Lines of Evidence

Multiple lines of evidence have been used to support the evaluation findings. The methods undertaken to support these lines of evidence are identified in Table 2.

Table 2: List of Methodologies

Methodology	Source
Departmental Documentation and Secondary Research Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental documentation/information has been reviewed to understand the program objectives/intent, authorities and requirements, complexity, context and any key issue areas. Documents included departmental planning documents, foundational documents (Order in Council, Terms and Conditions, etc.) policies, mandate letters, business processes, guidelines, strategic documents, performance reports, research papers, survey results, and correspondence.
Non-Departmental Document Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various non-departmental documents were reviewed, including, Parliamentary reports, Budget Speeches/Plans, and Speeches from the Throne.
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews were conducted with VAC staff in the following areas: program policy, strategic policy, field operations, program management (service delivery), as well as other subject matter experts within the Department including Senior Management.
Statistical Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statistical analysis included a review of VAC Facts and Figures, a review of client data stored in VAC's Client Service Delivery Network (CSDN), and analysis of financial and operational data collected by VAC Finance Division and the program area.
File Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A file review was completed to assist in evaluating the performance and efficiency of the VEF. All VEF applications for April, May, and June 2020 (405 applications) were reviewed to determine how effective the program was at providing assistance during the first three months of the Covid-19 pandemic (declared a public health emergency in all provinces). The evaluation team also reviewed additional files to identify whether the VEF is being used by family members and whether the VEF is encouraging Veterans to contact the department for the first time.
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A survey was disseminated to all frontline decision makers (Veterans Service Agents, Case Managers, and Veteran Service Team Managers). Recipient feedback has been used as a data source. The survey was completed by 286 frontline staff of 715 contacted (40% response rate), providing a confidence level of 95% +/- 5%. See Appendix B for survey questions.

2.3 Considerations and Limitations

- The VEF is a relatively new benefit implemented in April 2018. Baseline data has been collected, however, it is still early in the program life cycle, limiting year-over-year trend analysis.

- VAC's Client Service Delivery Network (CSDN) limited the evaluation team's ability to access historical data. While CSDN can provide a point-in-time picture of the program's client population on the date the data is requested, the data does not depict the benefit amounts each Veteran was receiving on the date of VEF application. Also, the data does not show which indicators on the system might have been active on the date of application, but may have since been removed (e.g., a homeless indicator may be active on the date of VEF application, but will not show up in CSDN data if it has since been removed due to the Veteran finding permanent accommodations).
- CSDN payment data is not completely accurate as it often does not reflect changes in the amount disbursed where the amount required was more/less than that identified at the time of decision, or when a VEF payment is returned to VAC. To mitigate, the evaluation team reviewed financial data collected by the program area, with supplemental figures provided by VAC's Financial Division.
- Decision Dockets are only available on the Veteran's Notebook on CSDN and family members who apply for the VEF are tied to the Veterans decision docket. Data queries return information for the Veteran only, regardless of who received the VEF. Therefore, the ability to accurately determine whether it is a Veteran, spouse, child, or survivor who initiated a VEF application cannot be determined.
- The use of decision dockets tied solely to the Veteran also makes determining the number of applications per Veteran difficult. In some cases where the data shows a Veteran made multiple applications, the Veteran made may have made one application while another application was made by a spouse, child or survivor.
- In the initial field work stage of the evaluation, the evaluation team consulted with various areas across the organization to gain an in-depth understanding of the VEF and how the program is administered. Restrictions imposed mid-fieldwork due to the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the evaluation team's ability to complete interviews and conduct on-site observation of VEF claim processing/payment. As a mitigation strategy, a survey of frontline employees was conducted to build on information gathered through early interviews.
- VEF recipients were not contacted as part of the evaluation. However, results of interviews conducted with VEF recipients by VAC's Business Intelligence Unit (BIU) and subsequent analysis were reviewed as part of the evaluation.
- The evaluation team did not fully assess other interventions that may be available for Veterans in crisis. A survey conducted of frontline staff identified many federal, provincial, and community resources that can assist Veterans in crisis, depending on their needs. See Appendix C for a list of resources VAC frontline staff identified in the decision maker survey.

3.0 Need/Relevance/Reach

3.1 Continued Need

There is a continued need for the VEF, now and in the future, as Veterans are looking to VAC for assistance during times of financial crisis. The fund meets Veteran's immediate needs, including during the Covid-19 pandemic, but longer term needs can require additional supports.

The evaluation finds that there is a continued need for the VEF as uptake has been strong with minimal promotion of the program. Demand for the VEF has exceeded the funding level of \$1,000,000 in each of its first two years of operation and is on pace to exceed the limit in year three. In support of assessing the ongoing need for the VEF, the evaluation team analysed operational and published program data, reviewed recipient files, and obtained direct feedback via interviews and a survey of frontline staff who work directly with Veterans.

3.1.1 Program Uptake

To further assess the ongoing need for the VEF, the evaluation team analysed operational data and obtained direct feedback from frontline staff who work directly with Veterans. Due to the nature of the program, forecasting the future demand is extremely challenging because emergencies cannot be predicted. In addition, as the program is only in its third year of operation, a consistent pattern of growth cannot yet be established. However, year-over-year analyses of VEF applications does indicate that uptake has increased by approximately 23.4% from year one to year two. Month-by-month program utilization is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: VEF Applications April 2018 – August 2020

Year	Decision	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
2018-19	Approved	39	64	57	55	71	72	87	89	78	84	75	73	844
	Declined	25	31	25	25	31	21	32	31	20	21	20	27	309
	Total	64	95	82	80	102	93	119	120	98	105	95	100	1153
2019-20	Approved	81	101	83	110	77	72	86	86	99	98	77	88	1058
	Declined	49	42	27	33	29	25	28	32	30	22	24	24	365
	Total	130	143	110	143	106	97	114	118	129	120	101	112	1423
2020-21	Approved	119	60	53	59	33								324
	Declined	43	21	26	27	13								130
	Total	162	81	79	86	46⁴								454

Source: VAC Client Service Delivery Network

⁴ Data for August 2020 is as of August 19.

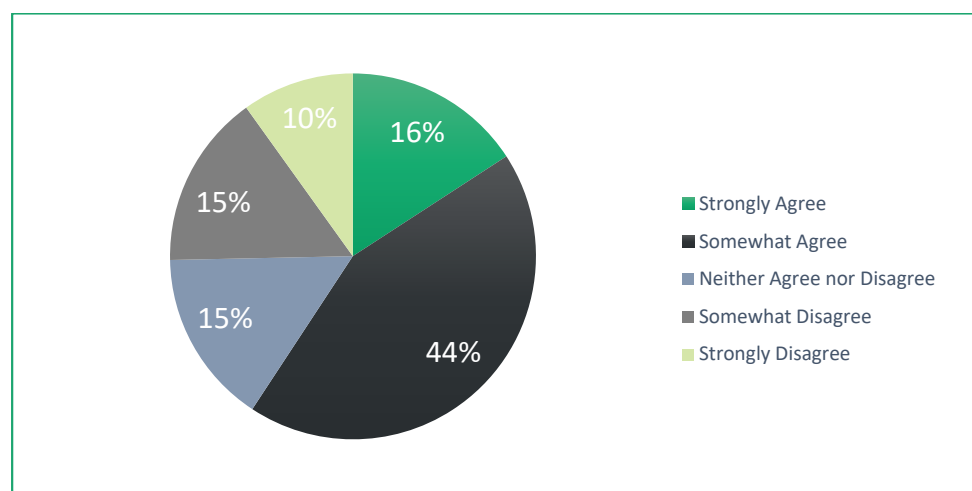
Analysis shows that approval rates remained consistent over the first two full years of the program at 73.2% for fiscal year 2018-19 and 74.3% in 2019-20. Approval rates are trending slightly lower to date in 2020-21 at 71.4% (as of August 19, 2020).

A survey of frontline decision makers who work directly with Veterans and interviews with field staff revealed that Veterans generally know about the VEF, though they may not know the eligibility criteria. Thus, Veterans sometimes apply to the fund with needs that are not considered an emergency (and are subsequently declined or voluntarily withdraw their application). Staff indicated that other federal, provincial, and municipal aid agencies are aware of the program and often refer Veterans in need to VAC. The review team observed instances during a file review where Veterans were referred to VAC by other agencies. Likewise, VAC staff referred Veterans to other community supports when applicable (see Appendix C for a list of referral supports identified in the survey of frontline decision makers).

3.1.2 Immediate Needs vs. Long Term Needs

During field work, the evaluation team heard from many decision makers that the VEF was indeed helping Veterans in crisis. The follow-up survey of decision makers shows a majority of decision makers (60%) agree that the VEF is helping to address Veteran's immediate needs (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Response to Survey Question: “The VEF is effective at addressing the immediate needs of Veterans and their families in crisis”

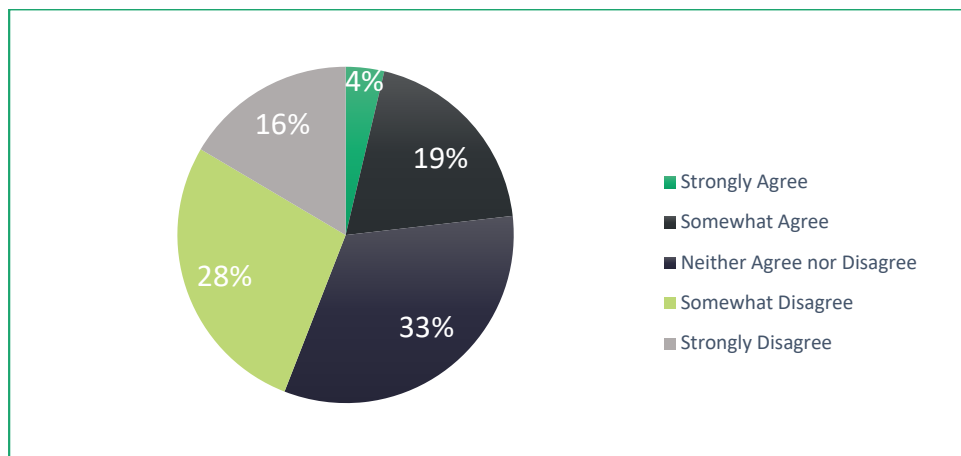


Source: AED analysis of Survey of VEF Decision Makers.

Survey respondents pointed to the VEF's ability to issue payments to Veterans quickly through the use of direct deposits and acquisition cards to fill Veteran's immediate needs like food and shelter.

The file review revealed that VEF is often accessed by Veterans with complex needs including chronic low income, homelessness, underlying addictions and/or mental health issues (762 of approximately 1283 VEF recipients for which data is available [59%] are currently receiving VAC disability benefits for mental health conditions)⁵. For this segment of the Veteran population, long term results may be more difficult to determine. Survey results show that many decision makers feel the VEF is not orientated to produce long term results (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Response to Survey Question: “The VEF is leading to positive long term outcomes for applicants/recipients.”



Source: AED analysis of Survey of VEF Decision Makers.

Drilling down further into the comments associated with the responses to this question, many staff indicated that the VEF is not designed to solve the root cause of most recipient’s problems; it can only provide funds to address the immediate emergency. Other supports are required to address ongoing needs, such as counselling, treatment, or permanent housing that will lead to successful longer term outcomes. To paraphrase one frontline staff member:

“I can use the VEF to provide a Veteran a hotel room on a night where it is -40 and all the shelters are full...I could literally save their life. But the next day, the shelters are still full and there are no affordable housing options in my area.”

Since program inception, 1601⁶ unique clients have been approved for VEF funding. Of these 1601 clients, approximately 350 have returned to VAC seeking additional emergency support and have been approved for VEF benefits on multiple occasions (see distribution in Table 4).

⁵ Data as of August 19, 2020 and is not an indication of the applicant’s status at the time of VEF application.

⁶ As of August 19, 2020.

Table 4 - Approval of Additional VEF Applications

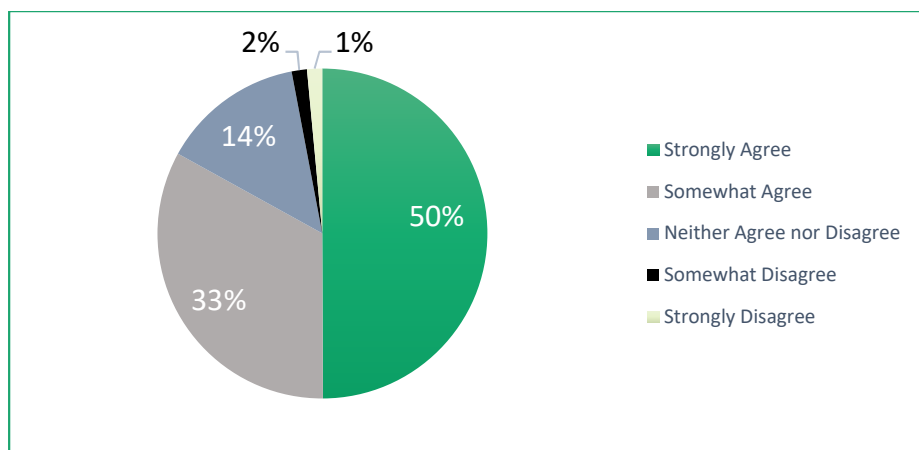
Number of Approved Applications	Recipients
2	247
3	65
4	30
5	7
6	2
Total	351

Source: AED analysis of CSDN data.

Frontline staff indicated during interviews and through the survey of decision makers that VEF support has the potential to lead Veterans to look repeatedly to VAC as their first line of support rather than dealing with the issues leading to their emergency situation. The decision maker survey confirmed that 84% of respondents had worked through a VEF application where a Veteran had not attempted to solve the issue on their own nor explored other options.

The evaluation team heard from frontline staff through interviews that financial literacy is often the root cause of Veteran’s financial emergencies. The survey of decision makers revealed that 83% of respondents feel financial literacy/financial management contributes to Veterans’ financial crisis (see Figure 3).

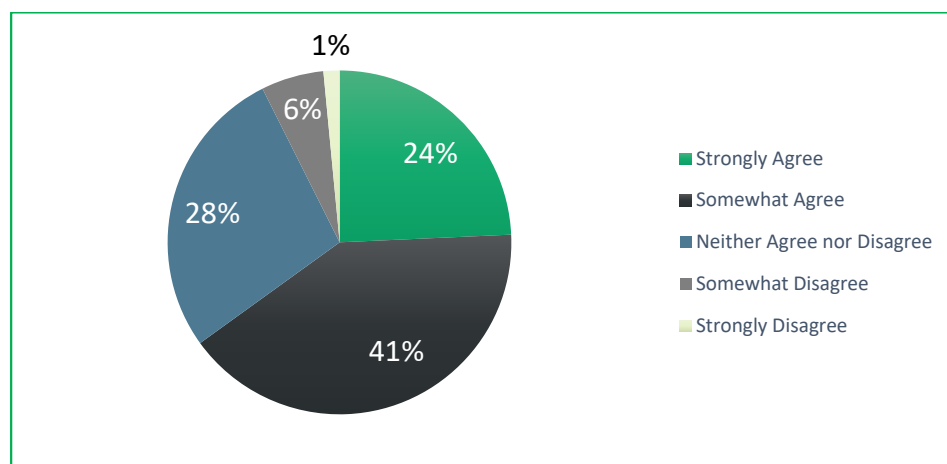
Figure 3 – Survey Response: “Financial literacy or financial management/finance related decision making is often a contributing factor to a client’s financial crisis”



Source: AED analysis of Survey of VEF Decision Makers.

Though financial literacy is undoubtedly a factor leading to a need for VEF, as stated earlier, Veterans often experience additional factors, such as addictions, homelessness, and mental health conditions that can lead to emergency situations and poor outcomes. When asked during the survey of decision makers, respondents indicated that mental health conditions are a contributing factor to Veterans’ financial crisis (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Survey Response: “An underlying mental health condition is often a contributing factor to a client’s financial crisis”



Source: AED analysis of Survey of VEF Decision Makers.

As previously mentioned, 59% of VEF recipients for which there is data are currently in receipt of disability benefits for a mental health condition (46% of applicants with multiple approvals for VEF are currently receiving benefits for a mental health condition).

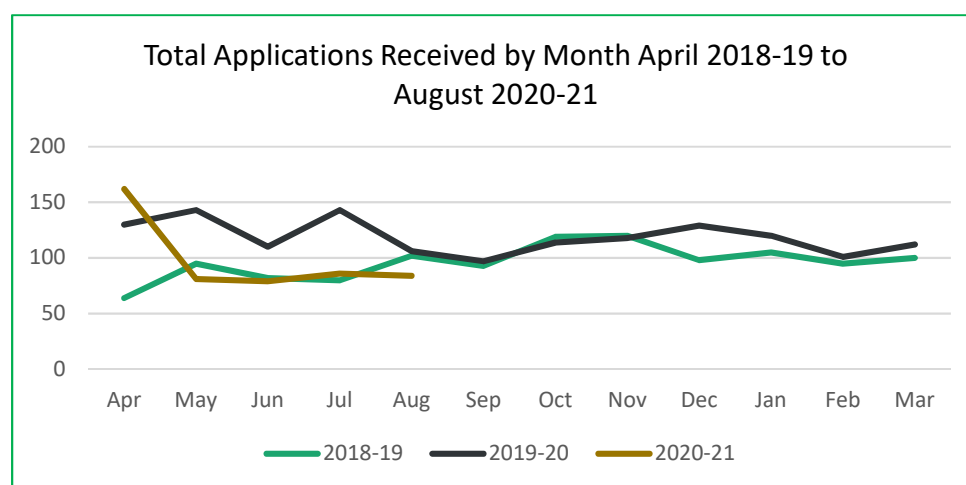
The evaluation finds that many VEF recipients exhibit risks for well-being that add to the complexity of their situation (see Section 3.2.1 for more information on well-being risk factors).

The evaluation team observed evidence in client notes that indicates VAC staff are attempting to connect Veterans to additional VAC and/or community supports when necessary to address long term needs, help achieve positive long-term outcomes, and reduce dependence on the VEF. The relative immaturity of the VEF program limits the ability to evaluate long-term outcomes further. However, research is currently being conducted by VAC’s Business Intelligence Unit to explore the types of, and factors underlying, the financial emergencies of VEF recipients which will help determine if long-term needs are being met.

3.1.3 Need During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The evaluation explored the need for VEF funding during the current Covid-19 pandemic. The evaluation identified a spike in demand for the program in April 2020, approximately one month into federal and provincial restrictions implemented to curb the threat of Covid-19 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 – Total VEF Applications received per month



Source: AED analysis of CSDN data and program area data.

A file review revealed that 47% of *approved applications* during the month of April (55 applications out of 118) were related to the pandemic and subsequent lockdown of businesses and services. Sudden job loss due to the pandemic and loss/closure of community services, including food banks, precipitated most VEF applications.

VAC received more VEF applications in April 2020 than any other month since program inception. While assistance with housing is traditionally the most requested need, access to food in April was the most prevalent request for the 55 applicants whose emergency resulted from the pandemic (owing to the closure of some foodbanks, smaller community stores, and in some instances travel restrictions/quarantine). A breakdown of approved assistance requests follows in Table 5.

Table 5 – Type of Requests Approved Relating to the Pandemic (April 2020)

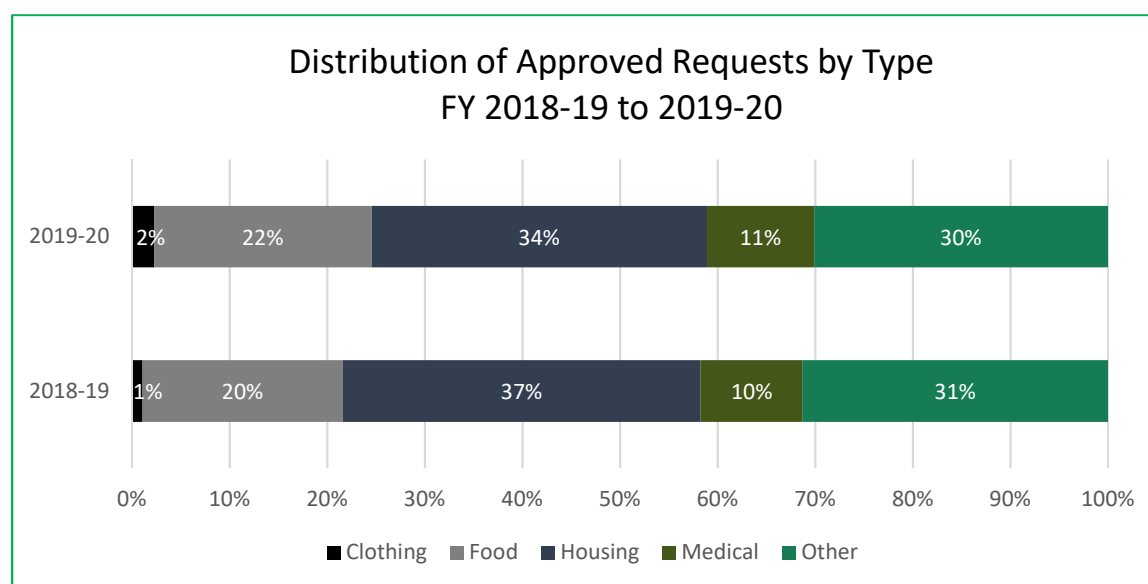
Type of Assistance	# Requests	Percentage*
Food	34	34%
Housing	31	31%
Other (includes bill for essential goods/services, repairs, etc.)	27	27%
Medical	8	8%
Total	100	100%

* Many of the 55 clients who requested funds due to Covid-19 related emergencies requested more than one type of assistance.

Source: AED file review of claims submitted April to June, 2020.

For comparison, the distribution of request types approved over the first two fiscal years is provided in Figure 6.

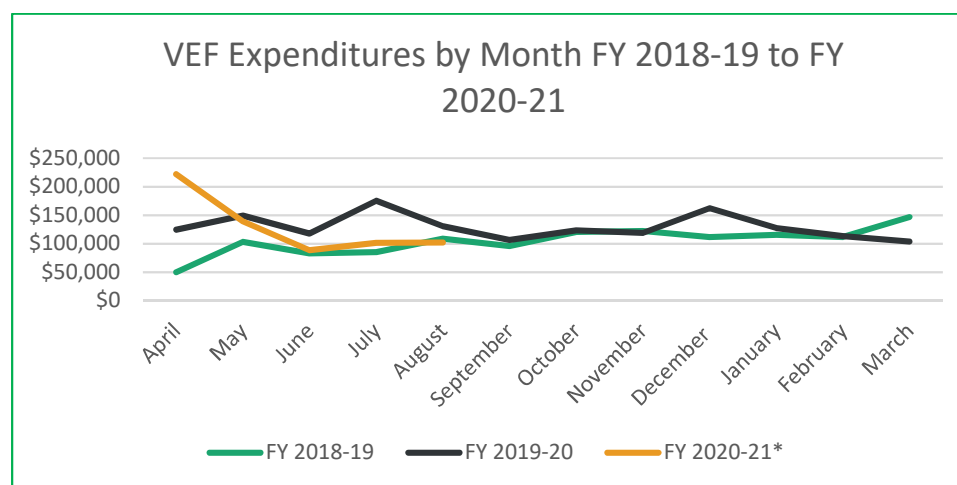
Figure 6 – Approved Requests by Type (Fiscal Years 2018-19 to 2019-20⁷)



Source: AED analysis of CSDN data.

Not surprisingly, VEF expenditures in April 2020 during the first full month of pandemic containment measures were considerably higher than any previous month at approximately \$222,000 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 – Monthly VEF Expenditures April 2018 to August 2020



Source: AED analysis of CSDN data and program area daily disbursement.

The expenditure spike in April 2020 coincides with the higher demand for the program. Additionally, changes implemented through an interim VEF business process in response to the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in larger payment amounts. These changes included:

⁷ Data for fiscal year 2021 is as of August 19.

- higher approval limits for frontline decision makers;
- higher yearly limits for Veterans; and
- payments for up to three months of requested expenses.

See Section 4.1.2 for further discussion on the interim business process.

While only 47% of approved applications for April were related to emergencies attributed to the pandemic, these approved applications represented 84% of funding for the month.

Covid-19 related requests leveled out in May and June 2020, but still made up 31% and 30% of VEF requests respectively (with sudden loss of income the main cause of financial emergency). Expenditures for pandemic related issues during May accounted for 36% of monthly fund expenditures, decreasing to 25% in June (expenditures were roughly proportionate to the percentage of claims for the month related to the pandemic, unlike April). Housing was a more prevalent request in May and June for those requesting assistance due to the pandemic, typical of the pre-pandemic pattern (see Table 6).

Table 6 – Type of Assistance Approved Relating to the Pandemic (May/June 2020)

Approved Requests Related to Pandemic - May			Approved Requests Related to Pandemic - June	
Type	# Requests	Percentage*	# Requests	Percentage*
Housing	15	44%	7	33%
Food	9	26%	7	33%
Other	6	18%	5	24%
Medical	4	12%	2	10%
Total	34	100%	21	100%

* Many clients requested funds for more than one type of assistance.

Source: AED file review of claims submitted April to June, 2020.

The decrease in applications in May and June related to the pandemic and return to proportionate expenditures may be attributed to proactive interventions in April (provision of three months requested expenses), but also to increased federal and provincial social supports coming online such as the Canadian Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB) which began accepting applications on April 6, 2020. Client notes reviewed for applicants applying for the VEF in April 2020 revealed that many recipients were in the process of applying for the CERB and/or for Employment Insurance, however they needed funds to bridge the gap until these supports were in place. The evaluation finds that the VEF was responsive to Veterans needs and provided support for Veterans in a time of national crisis before funding from other emergency assistance programs became available.

3.1.4 Family Member Need

Limitations in the way data is collected in CSDN prevented the evaluation team from analysing data related to family use of the VEF. The evaluation team was able to identify the files of 105 survivors that have benefited from the program. In addition, client notes revealed that the program has been accessed by spouses and children of Veterans, but to what extent is not known without conducting a full file review of each VEF decision. More analysis is required to determine to what extent family members needs are being met by the program.

3.2 Demographic Information, GBA+ Analysis, and Factors of Well-being

The use of CSDN “decision dockets” limited the evaluation team’s ability to obtain accurate information about VEF clients. However, the program appears to be utilized by a segment of the Veteran population who are at greatest risk for well-being.

The VEF program is currently administered using VAC’s Client Services Delivery Network (CSDN), which limits the ability to collect and analyze data. Indicators on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, indigenous status, and gender have not been built into this older system. This limits the program’s capacity to evaluate the well-being of these sub populations in comparison to the broader population of VAC clients.

The use of CSDN “decision dockets” limited the evaluation team’s ability to obtain accurate information about VEF clients. All family members are linked to a Veteran’s file through the decision docket, meaning demographic information retrieved from the system is for the Veteran, not necessarily whomever applied for the fund. Where identified, the evaluation team removed data from analysis that was inaccurate (displaying Veteran data rather than actual applicant data), or data that was incomplete.

To the extent possible, full demographic data (subject to the limitations above) is known for 1283 out of 1601 unique VEF recipients. The data includes information on 170 female Veterans⁸ who received assistance through the VEF.

3.2.1 Well-being Risk Factors

Research conducted by VAC’s Research Directorate through the Life After Service Survey (LASS) indicates that several groups of Veterans are more susceptible or at risk of low income. These groups include Veterans that:

- are aged less than 49 years;

⁸ This number does not include 105 survivors identified by the evaluation team whose complete demographic data was not readily available. However, all survivors identified were female. Therefore, a minimum of 275 females accessed the VEF.

- have less than 20 years of military service;
- are single; and
- are non VAC clients.⁹

The LASS studies found that these factors are predictors of low-income, persistent low-income, and other poor well-being outcomes. The evaluation team reviewed the data on 1283 VEF recipients to determine demographic characteristics and to determine if there is a correlation between VEF recipients and these risk factors for well-being.

Analysis of VEF recipient age and marital data shows that single males access the VEF more than any other demographic, representing approximately 55% of *all* recipients for which there is data. Single males account for 63% of all male recipients while single females make up 78% of all female recipients. See Table 7 and Table 8 for marital status and age breakdown of VEF recipients.

Table 7 – Marital Status of VEF Recipients

Status	Male	Female	Total
Common-Law	78	7	85
Common-Law Partner	21	1	22
Divorced	17	6	23
Married	220	15	235
Married/Common-Law (Living Apart)	4		4
Separated	51	4	55
Separated - Voluntary	7		7
Single	704	133	837
Widowed	8	3	11
Unknown	3	1	4
Total	1113	170	1283

Source: AED analysis of CSDN data.

Table 8 – Age of VEF Recipients by Sex

Age Band	Male Recipients	Female Recipients	Total
20-29	50	7	57
30-39	298	48	346
40-49	268	54	322
50-59	275	47	322
60-69	110	7	117
70-79	74	4	78

⁹ MacLean MB, Van Til L, Poirier A and McKinnon K. Pre- and Post-Release Income of Regular Force Veterans: Life After Service Studies 2016. Charlottetown (PE): Veterans Affairs Canada, Research Directorate Technical Report; May 1, 2018. (p. 17, 19-22)

80-89	28	1	29
90-100	10	2	12
Total	1113	170	1283

Source: AED analysis of CSDN data.

The majority of VEF clients (77%) are between the ages of 30-59 years old. However, more than 56% (725) are between the ages of 20 and 49 years old, the age group most associated with being at risk for low income and well-being according to VAC research.

Age data and marital status by sex are overlaid in Tables 9 and 10. The data reveals that 509 VEF recipients (421 male and 88 female) are single and in the age range of 20-49 years old.

Table 9 – Age and Marital Status Male VEF Recipients

Marital Status	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-100	Total
Common-Law	2	18	22	25	7	4			78
Common-Law Partner		2	11	3	2	3			21
Divorced		1	6	6	1	3			17
Married	2	43	58	63	18	21	9	6	220
Married/Common-Law (Living Apart)		1				1	1	1	4
Separated		9	15	22	3	1	1		51
Separated - Voluntary			2	3	1		1		7
Single	46	221	154	150	77	41	12	3	704
Survivor									0
Widowed				3	1		4		8
Unknown		3							3
Total	50	298	268	275	110	74	28	10	1113

Source: AED Analysis of CSDN data.

Table 10 – Age and Marital Status Female VEF Recipients

Marital Status	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-100	Total
Common-Law	1	2	2	2					7
Common-Law Partner			1						1
Divorced		2		3	1				6
Married		2	7	6					15
Married/Common-Law (Living Apart)									0
Separated		2		2					4

Separated - Voluntary									0
Single	6	40	42	34	5	4	1	1	133
Survivor								1	1
Widowed			1		1				2
Unknown			1						1
Total	7	48	54	47	7	4	1	2	170

Source: AED Analysis of CSDN data.

Due to data limitations and time constraints, the evaluation team was unable to determine VEF recipients' length of service or how many had previous contact with the department prior to accessing the VEF. However, research by VAC's Business Intelligence Unit using data collected during the first year of the program (2018-19) indicates that approximately 17% of VEF applicants were not VAC clients at the time of application. It should also be noted that BIU analysis of year one data revealed that approximately 20% of all VEF applicants had one or more period of homelessness.¹⁰

The VEF is the *only* VAC program where field office staff contact the applicant before a decision is rendered. The evaluation found evidence that this interaction provides a benefit to Veterans as it allows staff the opportunity to conduct a client screening to identify Veteran's needs and, when applicable, start the process to put other community and VAC supports in place.

The evaluation team looked at 59¹¹ instances where a Veteran's first contact with the Department was when they were in an emergency situation and a VEF application was submitted. The evaluation team confirmed that, per the VEF Business Process, each applicant received a client screening prior to a decision being made. The screening helps determine a Veteran's emergency need and their needs for referral to other VAC and/or community programs and services. Approximately 42% of the 59 Veterans reviewed (25) went on to apply for other VAC benefits such as rehab or disability benefits, or they received VAC services such as case management. This indicates that the VEF is providing an opportunity for VAC, in some instances, to connect with Veterans who were previously unknown to the Department. Further review is required to determine what percentage of the entire VEF population is being referred to additional VAC and/or community supports.

¹⁰ McComber, Teri, Kelly, Monica, Hyndman, Nicole, Garland Baird, Lisa *Identifying the Demographics of Applicants and Exploring their Experiences with the Veterans Affairs Canada Emergency Fund Program*. Poster presentation at Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research 2019 Research Forum

¹¹ Not an exhaustive file review of all recipients.

3.3 Alignment with Government priorities and federal roles and responsibilities

The VEF aligns with Government of Canada priorities as well as federal roles and responsibilities.

VAC's mandate to deliver the VEF is derived from s. 4 (a) (1) of the Department of Veterans Affairs Act which assigns the Minister of Veterans Affairs the powers, duties, and functions to provide for:

“...the care, treatment or re-establishment in civil life of any person who served in the Canadian Forces or merchant navy or in the naval, army or air forces or merchant navies of Her Majesty, of any person who has otherwise engaged in pursuits relating to war, and of any other person designated by the Governor in Council...”

An Order in Council provided authority for the Minister of Veterans Affairs to create the VEF and to enter into funding agreements and make transfer payments for the purposes of this program.

The VEF was announced as part of Budget 2017 and implemented on April 1, 2018. As part of Budget 2018, the Government of Canada reaffirmed it is, “...committed to supporting Canada's veterans and their families. Canada owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the women and men who have served in uniform and it is our responsibility to make sure that they are taken care of.” In addition, Budget 2019, states that, “It is our responsibility [Government of Canada] to ensure that all veterans and their families receive the support and services they need, when they need it.” Eligibility for the VEF includes families, thereby supporting this priority.

The December 2019 mandate letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence stated that the Minister must, “...continue to ensure that the Government lives up to its sacred obligation to our Veterans and their families. You will continue to ensure that Veterans receive the respect, support, care and economic opportunities that they deserve.” The evaluation finds that economic support benefits like the VEF support Veteran well-being and help fulfill the Minister's mandate.

The 2019 Speech from the Throne commits the government to “...improving mental health care supports, and helping ensure that every homeless veteran has a place to call home.” The VEF helps address this priority by providing assistance to homeless Veterans.

The 2020 Speech From the Throne focused primarily on the Federal Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The speech states that:

“the second foundation of the Government’s approach [to fight the Covid-19 pandemic] is supporting Canadians through this crisis...Canadians should not have to choose between health and their job, just like Canadians should not have to take on debt that their government can better shoulder ... No one should be without a place to stay during a pandemic, or for that matter, a Canadian winter.”

The evaluation finds that the VEF program aligns with Government of Canada goals as it is assisting Veterans who are struggling to pay for necessities (both before and during the pandemic), including those that are homeless/temporarily homeless.

4.0 Performance and Efficiency/Economy

The VEF Performance Information Profile (PIP) and logic model, which displays the outcomes for the VEF can be viewed in Appendix D.

4.1 Program Governance

The program area has demonstrated a commitment to program governance, in particular during its response to the unique needs that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic. The program’s quality assurance function is a best practice that should be continued.

The evaluation finds that the program area has demonstrated a commitment to program governance. Weekly reporting and daily tracking of program dollars is ongoing, as is work by VAC’s Business Intelligence Unit to conduct and publish analysis of public opinion research that will provide a clearer picture of VEF recipients and their complex needs.

4.1.1 Quality Assurance

To further strengthen program governance, a quality assurance function was implemented by the program area. The evaluation finds that this function provides oversight and allows program management to identify and respond to issues in the field as they arise. As a result of issues/concerns identified during the course of the quality assurance function, the following actions have been taken by the program area:

- Weekly in-depth reports to Service Delivery Program Management, Finance, and Field Operations were developed (e.g., number of clients accessing the program per week, dollars disbursed etc.).
- A learning and sharing event was held in 2019 with field staff to discuss the program, share best practices, and provide further guidance. The event brought

together Area Directors (ADs), Veteran Service Team Managers (VSTMs), Business Support Training Officers (BSTOs), Standard Training and Evaluation Officers (STEOs), Veteran Service Agents (VSAs) and Case Managers (CMs).

- The VEF application was modified to add space for the applicant to provide additional information about the emergency. Staff indicated they wanted to know more details prior to calling the applicant so they might provide referrals during the first contact (as mentioned previously, the VEF is the *only* VAC program where direct contact is made with the applicant prior to rendering a decision).
- The development of additional tools and reports to assist decision makers is ongoing based on observed need during the quality assurance process.

The VEF quality assurance function is a best practice that should be continued by the program area.

4.1.2 Covid-19 Interim Business Processes

The evaluation notes that program management quickly adopted new business processes at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that the VEF program was maintained in the face of closed Area Offices and staff working from home.

Approximately one week after the unexpected closure of VAC offices, an interim business process was adopted to ensure all VSTMs received acquisition cards to provide payments to recipients where appropriate. In addition, by March 30, 2020, VSAs and CMs were granted expanded authority to approve VEF funding up to \$10,000 per year per recipient under an interim business process. The interim process also gave VSAs and CMs the ability to provide Veterans and their families support for up to three months of requested expenses (subject to the \$10,000 per year maximum).

The evaluation team reviewed VEF decisions made during the first three months of the new interim business process and observed that VSAs and CMs are exercising their new authority where appropriate and requesting supporting documentation when necessary (especially when requests exceed the standard threshold of \$2,500). The evaluation finds that field staff are generally exercising due diligence in their decision making. Bank statements, invoices, and other supporting documentation are being requested to help determine need and to determine if the Veteran is in an emergency or potential emergency situation.

It should also be noted that the evaluation team was provided evidence to show that 50% of all approved applications and 100% of disallowed applications during the first three months of the Covid-19 pandemic were reviewed as part of the quality assurance function to ensure applications were being assessed correctly against the new procedures.

At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, a working group consisting of STEOs and head office program experts was established to discuss VEF decisions and questions posed by

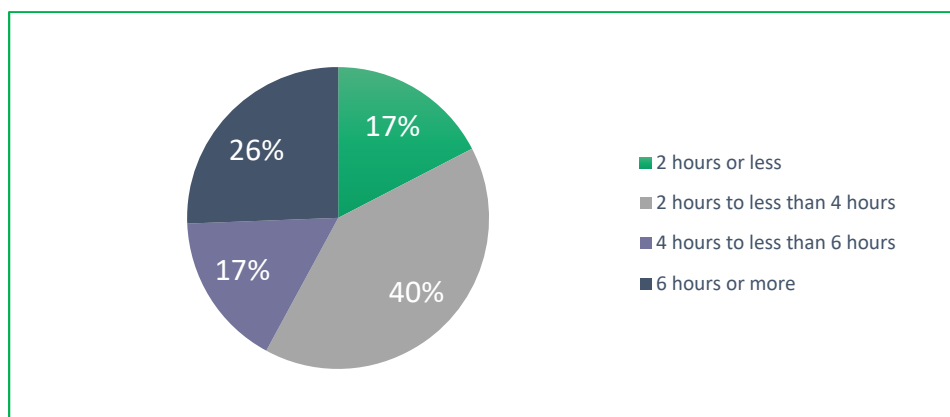
field staff about the interim business process. The evaluation finds that this forum provided an opportunity for an exchange of information and a means to bring information back to decision makers. It should also be noted that due to the short turnaround time for processing a VEF application, the program area has also made itself available to answer questions directly from field staff (when a STEO is not available) to ensure correct decisions are being made.

4.2 Program Efficiency

VEF requests are administratively burdensome for decision makers. However, VEF payments are generally being made within the 48 hour service standard.

Interviews with frontline staff and head office staff indicated that the VEF creates a large administrative burden (both for those directly serving Veterans and those managing the program). Of particular concern, 43% of frontline staff surveyed indicated it takes four or more hours to process a VEF decision. It was commented that decisions for other VAC programs with larger financial impacts are much easier to action and document. See Figure 8 for a breakdown of estimated time to process a VEF decision.

Figure 8 – Response to Survey Question “Estimate the Length of Time to Complete a VEF Decision”



Source: AED analysis of VEF Decision Maker Survey.

The use of CSDN to process decisions quickly in an emergency situation poses significant challenges. CSDN does not have clear workflows for VEF decision makers to follow and information has to be manually entered into several screens. The survey of decision makers revealed that 80.5% of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the process for documentation a VEF decision in CSDN is complex. The structure and nature of the current system has required program management to develop a lengthy business process to support decision makers in completing the steps required to render an eligibility decision.¹²

¹² The current business process is 23 pages long and contains dozens of steps.

Frontline staff currently document VEF decisions in “decision dockets” with accompanying client notes within VAC’s CSDN. A review of client files revealed that VEF decisions are generally well documented. However, CSDN is an older system that has significant limitations in data collection. Decision makers are required to manually enter information from the application into multiple screens of the decision docket. This same information then has to be manually added to a letter to the client and followed by a paper form to be signed, scanned, and then emailed to the departmental pay centre to issue payment.¹³ A lack of integration with other VAC systems increases the administrative burden on decision makers. In addition, the system does not allow for easy data retrieval required to support program management.

Many decision makers (especially newer staff members) have little experience with developing decisions dockets in CSDN and must follow step-by-step instructions each time.¹⁴ The CSDN system is unforgiving in that input errors often result in starting the process over again or require an intervention by IT staff to correct the situation. As VEF applications are comparatively rare (77% of survey respondents report dealing with VEF applications “infrequently”) it is difficult to build expertise in the system.

The administrative steps required to process a VEF claim in its current system infrastructure consume a significant amount of time for front line staff which impacts their ability to complete other duties. Additionally, accurate data retrieval from CSDN is impacting the program area’s (and the evaluator’s) ability to apply a fulsome GBA+ lens to the program. As a result, the evaluation makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that the Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management implement measures to reduce the administrative burden on decision makers by exploring system changes to simplify the VEF process.

Management Response: Management agrees to this recommendation.		
Action and Rationale	Expected Completion/ Implementation Date	ADM Accountable for Action
With respect to Recommendation 1, the Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management will: a) Work in collaboration with Policy, Centralized Operations Division, Field Operations, and Finance to:	31-MAR-2022	Assistant Deputy Minister Service Delivery

¹³ The requirement for a signed form has been relaxed in some instances due to difficulties collecting a signature during the current pandemic.

¹⁴ VSAs and CMs typically work within the confines of VACs GC Case system, first rolled out in April 2018. CSDN decision dockets are typically used for the processing of disability and financial benefits by VAC adjudicators (non-frontline staff).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review current practices to identify steps in the VEF application process that can be eliminated or enhanced to reduce the administrative burden for the decision makers; ii. Analyze the gathered information and implement changes to streamline the administrative process for decision makers in the existing system as an interim measure; <p>b) As a result of the information collected above, work with Policy, Field Operations, OSD, IT, Communications, ATIP and NLU to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Define system specifications to implement VEF decision making into GC Case; ii. Commence the implementation of the VEF decision making process into GC Case; iii. Design and implement a training plan to provide continued guidance and updates to staff regarding VEF program information and GC Case implementation. 		
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Recommendation #2

It is recommended that the Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management implement system changes to improve the capture of program performance data and to better capture GBA+ data/program recipient demographic data.

Management Response: Management agrees to this recommendation.		
Action and Rationale	Expected Completion/ Implementation Date	ADM Accountable for Action
<p>With respect to Recommendation 2, the Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work in collaboration with BIU, Policy, Research, Enterprise Data, and Field Operations to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. conduct research and analysis of VEF client population to gain a greater understanding of the current VEF data being captured from a GBA+ and demographic lens; and ii. determine what information already exists and modifications required to enhance program performance data and client characteristics. b) Work in collaboration with BIU, OSD, IT and ATIP to: 	30-SEP-2022	Assistant Deputy Minister Service Delivery

i.	commence the process of adding a VEF guided form to MVA that would allow the easy retrieval of application/client data and aid the program implementation in GC Case.		
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4.2.1 Turn Around Times

Though it does take a considerable amount of time to document VEF decisions, the evaluation team's review of client files and interviews with staff revealed that payments are generally being made in a timely manner by the departmental pay centre once a decision has been made. Figures compiled by VAC's Finance Division show that, on average, payments are being made within two days from the date of decision 79.5% of the time (the program service standard is 80%). See Table 11 for more details.

Table 11 - VEF Payment Disbursement by Turn Around Time Band¹⁵

	0-2 Days		3-5 Days		6+ Days		Total
Year	# Apps	% Paid	# Apps	% Paid	# Apps	% Paid	
2018-19	679	80.1%	139	16.4%	30	3.5%	848
2019-20	846	79.3%	201	18.8%	20	1.9%	1,067
2020-21	320	78.8%	79	19.5%	7	1.7%	406
Total	1,845	79.5%	419	18.1%	57	2.5%	2,321

*Applications with invalid dates, or with outlier data (greater than 30 days) removed. Source: VAC Finance Division

It should be noted that the current operating environment (e.g., staff working from home, office closures etc.) has had little impact on VAC's ability to deliver VEF funds in a timely manner.

The departmental pay centre issues direct deposit payments when possible, either to the client or to a third party. However, as Table 12 shows priority cheques continue to make up a large portion of VEF payments (41% in 2018-19 and 40% in 2019-20). Cheques are often necessary when applicants do not have access to a bank account or when third parties cannot accept direct payment.

¹⁵ As of October 1, 2020.

Table 12 – Payment Types and Volume FY 2018-19 to 2019-20

Payments Fiscal Year 2018-19		Payments Fiscal Year 2019-20	
Payment Type	Number of Payments	Payment Type	Number of Payments
Petty Cash	6	Petty Cash	7
Priority Cheque	418	Priority Cheque	504
Priority Direct Deposit	479	Priority Direct Deposit	653
VEF Acquisition Card	115	VEF Acquisition Card	94
Total	1018	Total	1258

Source: AED analysis of VEF financial data provided by VAC's Finance Division.

Multiple payment types are sometimes used when an applicant is approved for more than one type of assistance. For example, an applicant may be approved for emergency assistance with food costs and rent. The food portion of the payment may be made by direct deposit to the applicant's account, while the rent portion may be paid directly to a landlord via a priority cheque. Flexibility with payment methods allows VAC to respond quickly in the most effective manner to the applicant's needs. It also allows VAC staff to exercise discretion when distributing large sums of money to ensure the needs of vulnerable Veterans will be addressed.

4.2.2 Observation – VEF Eligibility Criteria on VAC Website

As indicated in Section 3.1.1, Veterans generally know about the VEF, though they may not know the eligibility criteria. Thus, Veterans sometimes apply to the fund with needs that are not considered an emergency (and are subsequently declined or voluntarily withdraw their application). More than 70% of survey respondents reported that they had encountered situations where there was confusion/misinterpretation of the program benefits or eligibility criteria. The evaluation team reviewed the VEF homepage on the VAC website and discovered it does not list the entire eligibility criteria for the fund; it lists what may be considered an emergency, but does not identify the types of issues that the policy deems ineligible. Given the administrative burden to render a VEF decision, the evaluation makes an observation that listing the full eligibility criteria on the VEF page may reduce the number of applicants applying with issues that are not deemed an emergency for the purposes of the program.

4.3 Operating Costs and Level of Administrative Effort

Operating funds were not allocated for the VEF program during initial program funding; since 2018, the program has been operating within existing reference levels. Operational impacts and costs have been absorbed by VAC's Service Delivery Branch.

There are currently four staff partially assigned to the program at head office at the levels and intensity indicated in Table 13.

Table 13 – Head Office Staff Assigned to the VEF Program

Employee Level	Employee Intensity
WP-03 Program Analyst	.5 full time employee
WP-04 National Program Specialist	.5 full time employee
WP-05 Team Lead	.25 full time employee
WP-06 Manager	.25 full time employee

In total, there are only 1.5 full time equivalent employees assigned to the VEF at head office responsible for all program management duties such as quality assurance, program planning, reporting, training development, and continuous response to field requests (amongst other duties). In addition to head office staff, responsibility for program decision making is spread amongst the 700+ frontline decision makers. The level of effort, expense, and operational impacts caused by the additional VEF workload have been absorbed by Service Delivery Branch.

Due to the pandemic, the evaluation team was not able to directly observe the decision making and documentation process. However, given the number of steps in the business process, comments gathered through the survey of decision makers, and interviews with staff, evidence points to a decision making and documentation process that is excessively lengthy. Using a conservative 4 hrs as the time it takes a decision maker to administer a VEF application, it is estimated that the VEF has accounted for 12,000 hours of front line staff time since program inception (given the 3000+ decisions that have been made). This does not take into account training time (including the time STEOs spend on the program) or the time spent on the program by the departmental pay centre. The level of effort is particularly noteworthy given the scope of the program and respective funds disbursed.

4.4 Training and Guidance

Though VEF training has been developed and implemented, a requirement for continued and enhanced guidance from the program area was indicated by staff interviewed and surveyed as part of the evaluation. As stated previously, VEF eligibility is intentionally broad, meaning decision makers often encounter unique situations that their training has not necessarily covered. The survey of decision makers identified that staff find determining whether a situation meets the definition of an emergency and determining an applicant's liquid assets as the top two most challenging aspects of making a VEF decision. These are potential areas for training focus.

4.5 Unintended impacts

Community aid organizations are referring Veterans to the VEF for assistance when they would normally provide the assistance.

Interviews with field staff indicated that community services may be referring Veterans to the VEF rather than addressing the Veteran's needs. A survey of VAC decision makers confirmed that 35% of staff have encountered situations where Veterans were told to contact VAC/apply for the VEF by another organization that would normally provide the type of aid being sought. This has the potential to place strain on the VEF over the long term if more organizations take a "hands off" approach to providing services to Veterans.

5.0 Conclusion

The evaluation finds that there is a continued need for the VEF, now and in the future, as Veterans are looking to VAC for assistance during times of financial crisis. Program uptake has been strong with minimal promotion of the program. Demand for the VEF has exceeded the funding level of \$1,000,000 in each of its first two years of operation and is on pace to exceed the limit in year three.

Though the program is meeting the immediate needs of Veterans, longer term needs must be met through other supports. The VEF can act as a bridge until additional supports can be put in place, as evidenced by the program's performance during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The VEF program aligns with Government of Canada goals as it is assisting Veterans who are struggling to pay for necessities (both before and during the pandemic), including those that are homeless/temporarily homeless.

The program area has demonstrated a commitment to program governance. Weekly reporting and daily tracking of program dollars is in place. A quality assurance function provides oversight and allows program management to identify and respond to issues in the field as they arise. The quality assurance function is a best practice that should be continued by the program area.

The VEF program is administratively burdensome for frontline staff due to the use of CSDN decision dockets to process applications. The lack of integration with other VAC systems increases the administrative burden on decision makers. In addition, the system does not allow for easy data retrieval required to support program management.

The current turnaround time for making payment on a VEF application within 48 hours of receiving all documentation is generally being accomplished. The current delivery standard is being met, even during office closures during the pandemic.

Community aid organizations are referring Veterans to the VEF for assistance when they would normally provide the assistance. This may put pressure on the program in the future.

Appendix A – Evaluation Matrix

Issues / Questions	Indicators	Collection Methods	Data Sources
Relevance			
1. To what extent does the program continue to address a demonstrable need, now and in the future?	<p>Number of applicants, favorable and unfavorable decisions.</p> <p>Key informant interviews and documentation review indicate ongoing need for program.</p> <p>Forecast of population indicates future demand for the program.</p>	<p>Interviews/ Observations</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>GBA+ data analysis</p> <p>Document review</p>	<p>VAC staff</p> <p>Staff survey</p> <p>Statistical and program data</p> <p>Legislation, departmental priorities/mandate letter, policies, processes, OVO reports</p> <p>Program documents</p>
2. To what extent does the program align with Government of Canada priorities and with federal roles and responsibilities?	<p>Evidence of a Government of Canada commitment to Veterans in emergency situations (e.g. homelessness).</p> <p>Evidence of the program commitment included in departmental plans and priorities documentation.</p>	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>Document review</p>	<p>VAC staff</p> <p>Staff survey</p> <p>Legislation, policies, processes, VAC National Survey, OVO reports, budget documents, mandate letter</p> <p>Program documents</p>
3. To what extent is the Program responsive to the needs of recipients and target audiences?	<p>Program eligibility enables Veterans who require the program to get access to it.</p> <p>Program funding is sufficient to respond to the needs of Veterans</p> <p>Prevalence of clients accessing the program on multiple occasions.</p>	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>GBA+ data analysis</p> <p>File review</p>	<p>VAC staff</p> <p>Staff survey</p> <p>Program recipient feedback (program survey)</p> <p>Statistical and program data</p> <p>Veteran files</p>

Issues / Questions	Indicators	Collection Methods	Data Sources
	<p>Requests exceeding yearly maximums (requests for exceptions)</p> <p>Types of emergencies for which Veterans are requesting assistance</p> <p>Demographics of clients accessing program.</p>	<p>Document review</p>	<p>Legislation, departmental priorities/mandate letter, policies, processes, OVO reports, financial reports</p> <p>Program documents</p>
Performance			
4. Are processes currently in place to ensure the program is being administered as indicated in departmental guidance?	<p>Presence of quality management activities.</p> <p>Program policy provides direction and definitions which build upon the legislation/regulations.</p> <p>Alignment of business processes with program policy.</p> <p>Appropriate governance structures in place to ensure accurate and consistent decision making</p> <p>Alignment of application/tools/assessments with program decision-making requirements.</p> <p>Adequate and appropriate training for decision makers.</p>	<p>Interviews/ feedback from decision makers</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>File review</p> <p>Document review</p>	<p>VAC staff</p> <p>Staff survey</p> <p>Veteran files</p> <p>Legislation, departmental priorities/mandate letter, policies, processes, guidelines</p> <p>Program documents</p>

Issues / Questions	Indicators	Collection Methods	Data Sources
	Alignment of payments to policy		
<p>5. To what extent is the program achieving its outcomes?</p> <p>Immediate – Veterans payments are made in a timely manner</p> <p>Immediate – Veterans have equitable access to VAC programs and services</p> <p>Immediate – Veterans and their families utilize the VEF</p>	Program Information Profile in place and performance data is being collected, reviewed and assessed.	Interviews Document review File review	VAC Staff Program recipient feedback Veterans files Statistical and program data
	Percentage of payments issued within 2 business days of approval	Data analysis	Statistical and program data Veteran files
	Percentage breakdown of program clients by sex (M/F) compared to estimated Veteran population	GBA+ data analysis	Statistical and program data Veteran files
	Percentage breakdown of program clients by sex (M/F) and age compared to estimated Veteran population	GBA+ data analysis	Statistical and program data Veteran files
	Percentage breakdown of program clients by sex (M/F) and marital status	GBA+ data analysis	Statistical and program data Veteran files
	Percentage breakdown of program clients by sex (M/F) and community (rural/urban)	GBA+ data analysis GBA+ data analysis	Statistical and program data Veteran files Statistical and program data Veteran files
	Number of Veterans and families who receive a VEF payment	GBA+ data analysis	Statistical and program data Program recipient feedback

Issues / Questions	Indicators	Collection Methods	Data Sources
<p>Intermediate – Veterans are referred to resources that assist them to manage their finances</p> <p>Ultimate – Veterans are able to adapt, manage and cope within civilian life</p> <p>Ultimate –Veterans and their families are financially secure</p> <p>Ultimate – Veterans are satisfied with the services they receive</p>			
	Percent of Veterans who received referrals to other services	GBA+ data analysis Interviews Survey Document review File review	Statistical and program data VAC staff Program recipient feedback (program survey), staff survey Program documents Veteran files
	Percentage of Veterans who report an easy adjustment to civilian life	GBA+ data analysis Interviews Document review Survey	Statistical and Program Data VAC Staff Program Documents Program recipient feedback (program survey) LASS Survey
	Percentage of Veterans who are satisfied with their financial situation	GBA+ data analysis Interviews Document review Survey	Statistical and program data VAC staff Program documents Program recipient feedback (program survey) LASS Survey
	Percentage of clients who are satisfied with the quality of service delivery they receive from Veterans Affairs Canada	GBA+ Data Analysis Interviews Document review	Statistical and program data VAC Staff Program documents

Issues / Questions	Indicators	Collection Methods	Data Sources
		Survey	Program recipient feedback (program survey) VAC National Survey
Efficiency/Economy			
6. Are there opportunities to improve the efficiency and economy of the program?	Administrative costs ratio Processes allow for timely decision-making. Application process is timely and accessible. Opportunities for aligning with other departmental programs are identified and considered. Authority is delegated appropriately	GBA+ Data Analysis Interviews Survey Document Review File Review Survey	Statistical and Program data VAC staff Staff survey Program documents Veteran files Program recipient feedback (program survey)
7. Are there any unintended impacts (positive or negative) that have occurred?	Positive and/or negative impacts realized from the program	Interviews Survey File Review GBA+ Data Analysis Survey	VAC staff Staff survey Veteran files Statistical and program data Program recipient feedback (program survey)

Appendix B – Evaluation of the Veterans Emergency Fund (VEF) Decision Maker Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey conducted by the Audit and Evaluation Division at Veterans Affairs Canada in support of the Evaluation of the Veterans Emergency Fund (VEF).

This survey is being distributed to all Case Managers, Veterans Services Agents, and Veterans Service Team Managers throughout the country in order to gain in-depth feedback relating to the VEF and associated tools and practices. Participation in this survey and the provision of any information is voluntary.

Please be advised that all information provided will remain confidential. Any analysis completed will be summarized at a grouping level as to ensure no individuals can be identified. The information you provide in open text fields should not contain any names or other identifiable personal or client information.

This survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

1. Please indicate your current role with VAC.

- ☐ VSA
- ☐ CM
- ☐ VSTM

2. How long have you been in your current role?

- ☐ <1 yr.
- ☐ 1-5 yrs.
- ☐ 6-10 yrs.
- ☐ More than 10 yrs.

3. Which areas fall under your area of responsibility for VEF decisions? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ NFLD, NB, and PEI Area
- ☐ Nova Scotia Area
- ☐ Quebec Area
- ☐ National Capital Area
- ☐ Central Ontario Area
- ☐ Southwest Ontario Area
- ☐ Prairie Area
- ☐ BC and Northern Area

4.A How often do you make decisions on the VEF?

- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Infrequently

- Never

4.B For anyone who reported “c. Never” on question 4.A: I have no experience with VEF because (check all that apply):

- During initial screening with the applicant I learned that they were not eligible for VEF
- Another VSA/CM in our office is assigned to complete VEF applications
- I’ve never received a VEF application
- I asked a colleague to complete the VEF application process
- Other

Text box for “other”

Survey ends here for anyone who reported c. “Never” on question 4.A.

5. Thinking about the VEF decision making process, which stages are the most challenging to complete (check all that apply):

- Determining the applicant’s eligibility for the program
- Determining the applicant’s liquid assets
- Determining if the situation meets the definition of an emergency
- Determining if the items the applicant wants assistance with are essential items
- Determining sources of other financial assistance
- Determining referrals for long term needs
- Other

Text box for “other”

6. Please estimate the length of time (hours/minutes) it takes to complete a VEF decision

7. Have you experienced any of the following situations when dealing with Veterans and their families applying for the VEF? Please check all that apply.

- Applicant has ongoing or episodic mental health conditions
- Applicant has ongoing or episodic substance misuse conditions
- Applicant has exhausted all personal assets and credits (e.g. savings, RRSP, credit cards)
- There is a gap in coverage between financial support programs/services (e.g. VAC/SISIP and ELB)
- There was confusion/misinterpretation over available program benefits or eligibility criteria
- There were financial difficulties resulting from a single income family and/or supporting dependents
- Difficulty communicating with Veteran (e.g., no phone, no fixed address)
- Lack of bank statements/supporting documents (e.g., invoices)

- Veteran lacks ID/no proof of service
- Difficulty determining if emergency meets VEF criteria
- Repeat Veteran/yearly amount exhausted
- Veteran has not attempted to solve the issue (e.g., has not explored other options)
- Veteran refuses to use personal assets
- Community services referring Veteran to VEF rather than providing assistance
- No issues
- Other – please describe below

Text box for “other”

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (A text box will open when an answer is selected to provide an area for further information.)

8. The process for documenting a VEF decision in CSDN is complex. Please explain/provide examples in the text box provided.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Somewhat Agree
- c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- d. Somewhat Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

9. Veterans and their families are not aware of the VEF. Please explain/provide examples in the text box provided.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. The VEF is effective at addressing the immediate needs of Veterans and their families in crisis who are facing emergency financial situations that threaten their health and well-being. Please explain/provide examples in the text box provided.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. The VEF is leading to positive long term outcomes for program applicants/recipients. Please explain/provide examples in the text box provided.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

12. An underlying mental health condition is often a contributing factor to a client's financial crisis? Please explain/provide examples in the text box provided.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

13. A family/relationship breakdown is often a contributing factor to a client's financial crisis. Please explain/provide examples in the text box provided.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. Financial literacy or financial management/finance related decision making is often a contributing factor to a client's financial crisis. Please explain/provide examples in the text box provided.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

15. If applicable, please identify any groups of Veterans or family members in crisis you feel the VEF may not be reaching/addressing.

16.A Have you volunteered for the 24 hr. VAC Assistance Line for administering the VEF?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16.B If “No” in 16A, end survey. If “Yes” in question 16A: What, if any, challenges have you encountered while providing after-hour service?

16.C If “Yes” in question 16A. In your opinion, is the 24 hr. line improving program access for Veterans?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16.D If “Yes” in question 16A. Please elaborate on how after-hours service is improving or not improving access for Veterans.

17. Please share your experiences finding other sources of support for the Veteran/family member (financial assistance, referrals, long term support).

18. Please list other Veteran support organizations that you have used in addressing Veterans’ emergencies.

19. If applicable, what changes would you recommend to improve the VEF?

20. Please provide any further comments about the VEF that you feel may help inform our evaluation.

Thank you for your participation.

Privacy Notice Statement

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) takes your privacy seriously. We are committed to protecting your personal information. This survey information is collected under the authority of the Section 42.1(1) of the *Financial Administration Act*. This information will be used in support of the Evaluation of the Veterans Emergency Fund. Your participation in the survey is voluntary.

Your personal information is managed based on the *Privacy Act*. The *Privacy Act* provides you with a right of access to your personal information, and to request changes to that personal information if it contains errors. If you are unhappy with how we handle your personal information, you can file a complaint with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada at 30 Victoria Street, Gatineau, QC, K1A 1H3. Further information on the collection, use and disclosure of this information can be found in the standard personal information bank for Evaluation PSU 942 at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/access-information-privacy/access-information/information-about-programs-information-holdings/standard-personal-information-banks.html#psu942>.

Appendix C – Examples of Emergency Support Referrals Identified in Decision Maker Survey

Local Supports	Provincial Supports	National Supports
Addictions resources	Addictions Treatment Centres	Canadian Cancer Society
Adult Day Programs	Adult Protection	Canadian Emergency Response Benefit
Alcoholics Anonymous	Alberta Veterans Service Centre	Canadian Forces Personal Assistance Fund
Church Groups	Alberta Works Income Support	Canadian Mental Health Association
Community Mental Health Services	Alzheimer/Dementia Care	Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Credit/financial counselling	BC Housing	Department of National Defence Emergency Programs
Debt Counselling Society	Family Court	Easter Seals
Food banks	Island Health Community Care	Employment and Social Development Canada
Grief Support groups	Low-Cost Dental Clinics	Manual Life (Public Service Health Care)
Hope Mission	MB Rent Assistance	March of Dimes
Hospitals	NB Housing	Military Family Resource Centre
Immigrant Services	Ontario 211	Operational Stress Injury Clinic
Legal Referral	Ontario Disability Support Program	Operational Stress Injury Social Support
Local Rental Subsidy wait list	Ontario Family School Supply	Red Cross
Meals on Wheels	Ontario Works	Royal Canadian Legion (Poppy Fund, Leave the Streets Behind Program, etc.)
Police Agencies	Pain Management Clinic	Salvation Army
Realtors	Provincial Child Day Care Subsidy	SISIP Financial
Senior Resource Centres	Provincial Housing Resources	Soldier On
Seniors for Seniors	Provincial Income Support	Soldier's Aid Commission
Shelters (homeless, women and children's abuse etc.)	Provincial Seniors Support	Soldier's Helping Soldiers
Transitional Housing programs	Provincial Social Services	VAC Assistance Line
Valour Place	Psychiatrist/Psychologist referrals	VAC Programs and Assistance Funds
Veterans Food Bank	Social Assistance Grants	VETS Canada
Veterans Villa	Social Work Services	Wounded Warriors

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION PROFILE

VETERANS EMERGENCY FUND

Basic Program Information

Program 16	Veterans Emergency Fund
Program Official	Director, Rehabilitation, Financial Well-Being and Business Intelligence

Program Profile

Program Description	The Veterans Emergency Fund provides funding to assist Veterans and their families during times of crisis and when facing emergency financial situations that threaten their health and well-being. Financial emergencies could include (but are not limited to) food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and expenses required to maintain safety and shelter.
Supporting Program Design Tool	See Annex for logic model.
Program Tags (Metadata)	<p>Whole-of-Government Framework: Economic Affairs – Income security and employment for Canadians</p> <p>Canadian Classification of the Functions of Government (CCOFOG): Division 710 Social protection; Group 7109 Social protection n.e.c.; Class 71099 Social protection n.e.c</p> <p>Method of Intervention: Tag 1 Grant</p> <p>Target Groups: Tag 4 Families; Tag 13 Veterans; Tag 18 Low-income individuals and/or families</p> <p>Mandate Letter Commitment: MLC 12 The new Veterans Emergency Fund and Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund [Complete].</p> <p>Core Responsibility: Benefits, Services and Support</p> <p>Departmental Results: Result 4 Veterans are able to adapt, manage, and cope within civilian life; Result 5 Veterans are satisfied with the services they receive.</p>

List of Transfer Payment Programs under the Program (as applicable)

Name of Transfer Payment	End Date	Type of transfer payment
Veterans Emergency Fund	2021	Grant

Performance Indicators

Program outputs and/or outcomes (as appropriate)	Indicator (The measure used to assess the performance of an output and/or outcome)	Data Type (Is the indicator a number, a range, a percentage, a percentage increase, qualitative, etc.?)	Data source (The primary source of information for the indicator, e.g. survey, database, etc.)	Frequency (The frequency of data collection against the indicator, e.g. quarterly, annually, etc.)	Target (The level of performance the Program plans to achieve within a specified time, e.g. 100% of Canadians. Target must be reflective of the indicator)	Date to achieve target (The date the target is expected to be achieved by)	Thresholds (Ranges of values, often tied to a colour coding system, used to provide a visual assessment of performance – e.g. 100% - 75% [Green], 74%-60% [Yellow], etc.)	Data owner (The organization and position responsible for data collection)	Methodology (Describe how the indicator will be measured, including calculations, baselines the definitions of variables and key terms used)
Effectiveness Indicators									
Outcome 1 (Ultimate): Veterans are able to adapt, manage and cope within civilian life. [DRF]	Indicator 1: % of Veterans who report an easy adjustment to civilian life	%	LASS Survey	Every 3 years	55%	March 31, 2020	Green ≥55%, Yellow 54% - 50%, Red <50%	Research Directorate	Explanation/rationale: Adjustment to Civilian Life is a single-item ordinal measure with five levels. A similar question was used in a study of retired US Navy officers (Spiegel 2003). Based on pre-testing conducted prior to Life after Service Study (LASS) 2010, it was adapted to use wording compatible with the other single item measures in the general module. It was used in LASS 2010, 2013 and 2016. Formula/calculation: The indicator includes those who responded Moderately easy or Very easy divided by the total responses. Measurement Strategy: This indicator will be collected through the Life After Service Survey (LASS) that includes Regular Forces Veteran clients and non-clients who released from 1998 to 2015. The indicator is based on the following question: <i>In general, how has the adjustment to civilian life been since you were released from the Canadian Forces? Very difficult, Moderately difficult, Neither, Moderately easy, Very easy.</i> Baseline: 52% of Regular Force Veterans (LASS 2016)

Program outputs and/or outcomes	Indicator	Data Type	Data source	Frequency	Target	Date to achieve target	Thresholds	Data owner	Methodology
Outcome 2: Veterans and their families are financially secure [DRF] and [TB sub]	Indicator 2: % of Veterans who are satisfied with their financial situation	%	LASS Survey	Every 3 years	70%	March 31, 2020	Green 100% - 70%, Yellow 69% - 65%, Red <65%	Research Directorate	<p>Explanation/rationale: Satisfaction with finances is a single-item ordinal measure with five levels. It is an important measure of financial security and includes reductions in income that do not result in low income, future prospects, savings and debt.</p> <p>Formula/calculation: The indicator includes those who responded Very satisfied or Satisfied divided by the total responses.</p> <p>Measurement Strategy: This indicator will be collected through the Life After Service Survey (LASS) that includes Regular Forces Veteran clients and non-clients who released from 1998 to 2015. The indicator is derived from one question: How satisfied are you with your financial situation? Very dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Satisfied, Very satisfied.</p> <p>Baseline: 69% of Regular Force Veterans (LASS 2016); 78% of Veteran clients (2017 VAC National Survey)</p> <p>Notes/definitions: While the main data source will be the LASS, this indicator will also be monitored through the VAC National Survey which is every two years and includes war service (WWII and Korean War) and Canadian Armed Forces (Veterans and members) in receipt of benefits and services from VAC (last survey completed in 2017). LASS 2016 included Regular Force Veterans only.</p>
Outcome 3: Veterans are satisfied with the services they receive [DRF]	Indicator 3: % of clients who are satisfied with the quality of service delivery they receive from Veterans Affairs Canada	%	VAC National Survey	Every 2 years	80%	March 31, 2020	Green 100% - 80%; Yellow 79% - 75%; Red <75%	Rehabilitation, Financial Well-Being and Business Intelligence	<p>Explanation/rationale: Satisfaction with the quality of service delivery is a single-item ordinal measure with five levels. Quality is one of the three types of service standards (Timeliness, Quality and Accessibility), and through the October 2017 mandate letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, VAC has been mandated to "Deliver a higher standard of service and care". Client satisfaction with service quality is an important predictor of satisfaction with service.</p> <p>Formula/calculation: The indicator includes those who responded Very satisfied or Satisfied divided by the total responses.</p> <p>Measurement Strategy: This indicator will be collected through the VAC National Survey which includes VAC Clients (Veterans, still serving members, RCMP and survivors) who had contact with VAC over the previous 12 months. The</p>

Program outputs and/or outcomes	Indicator	Data Type	Data source	Frequency	Target	Date to achieve target	Thresholds	Data owner	Methodology
									indicator is derived from one question: <i>How satisfied are you with the quality of service delivery?</i> Very dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Satisfied, Very satisfied. Baseline: 81% of clients (VAC National Survey 2017)
Outcome 4: (Intermediate): Veterans are referred to resources that assist them to manage their finances [GC InfoBase] [TB Sub]	Indicator 4: % of Veterans who received referrals to other services	%	CSDN Database	Annually	75%	March 31, 2020	≥75% [Green], 74% - 70% [Yellow], <70% [Red]	Statistics Directorate	Rationale: Measuring the percentage of Veterans, Spouses/Common-law Partners, Survivors and Orphans who received a referral to other services will help VAC to understand the other services that Veterans and their families may benefit from in addition to the emergency funds. Formula/calculation: Referrals provided for VEF applicants, both to VAC programs and services and to programs and services provided outside of VAC, are tracked in CSDN as check boxes. Measurement strategy: Using VAC's Reporting Database (RDB), VAC will measure this indicator through the collection of the number of applications and the percentage of these applicants with one or both referral boxes checked. Baseline: A baseline indicator/measure will be set, based on uptake of the VEF between April 1, 2018 and April 1, 2020.
Outcome 5: (Immediate): Veterans payments are made in a timely manner [GC InfoBase] [TB Sub]	Indicator 5: % of payments issued within 2 business days of approval	%	CSDN Database	Quarterly	80% of payments are issued within 2 business days of approval	March 31, 2019	Green ≥80%, yellow 79% - 75%, Red <75%	Statistics Directorate	Explanation/rationale: Measuring the % of payments issued within 2 business days of approval will help VAC ensure it is addressing the urgent issues facing Veterans and their families in a prompt and timely manner. Given that emergencies are by their very nature time sensitive, VAC's ability to respond quickly will be a key factor in ensuring the VEF meets its goals of helping Veterans and their families when dealing with unexpected emergencies. Formula/calculation: The calculation to determine % of payments issued within 2 days will be done by comparing all the approval date with the payment date made, and determining what % of them were made within 2 business days of being approved. Measurement strategy: All VEF approvals will be noted in CSDN. Those dates contained will be cross-referenced by Program Management against the data on the payment dates by VAC Finance to calculate what % were made within 2 business days of an approval.

Program outputs and/or outcomes	Indicator	Data Type	Data source	Frequency	Target	Date to achieve target	Thresholds	Data owner	Methodology
									Baseline: The intention is for 80% of payments to be made within 2 business days of approval. Notes/definitions: First survey will begin in in first quarter of 2018
Outcome 6 Veterans and their families utilize the VEF [TB Sub] and [GC InfoBase]	Indicator 6: # of Veterans and families who receive a VEF payment	#	CSDN database	Annually	TBD based upon uptake	March 31, 2021	TBD March 31, 2020	Statistics Directorate	Explanation/rationale: Measuring the # of Veterans and their families who utilize the Veterans Emergency Fund will help VAC to understand the volume and frequency of urgent financial issues facing our clients. This information will inform VAC and government with important information on the ability of the VEF to address the needs of VAC's clients who are facing unforeseen financial emergencies. Formula/calculation: The calculation to determine how many Veterans and their families utilized the fund will be based on the total # of Veterans Emergency Fund applications approved in a fiscal year. Measurement strategy: Using VAC's Reporting Database (RDB), VAC will measure this indicator through the collection of the number of applications approved for the Veterans Emergency Fund within a fiscal year. Baseline: A baseline indicator/measure will be set, based on uptake of the VEF between April 1, 2018 and April 1, 2020.
Efficiency Indicators									
Output 1: Decisions	Indicator 7: # of VEF Decisions Rendered (excluding withdrawal of application)	#	CSDN Database (RDB)	Quarterly	TBD based upon uptake	TBD based upon uptake	TBD March 31, 2020	Statistics Directorate	Explanation/rationale: Measuring the volume of work in a business area provides VAC with an understanding of the resources required to deliver the program. Formula/calculation: The indicator includes decision dockets in CSDN for approved, partially approved, declined and withdrawn VEF applications. Measurement strategy: Decision outcomes regarding VEF applications are recorded in CSDN. Baseline: Will be established March 31, 2020
GBA+ Indicators									
Outcome 7: Veterans have equitable access to VAC	Indicator 8: % breakdown of program clients by sex (male/female)	%	Client Services Delivery Network (CSDN)	Annually	N/A	N/A	N/A	Statistics Directorate	Explanation/ Rationale: Self-reporting of an individual's establishes female/ male uptake of programs and services compared to the estimated Veteran population. Formula/ Calculation: The indicator includes those who self-reported as being female/ male divided by the total responses.

Program outputs and/or outcomes	Indicator	Data Type	Data source	Frequency	Target	Date to achieve target	Thresholds	Data owner	Methodology
programs and services	compared to estimated Veteran population								Measurement Strategy: This indicator will be collected through Client Services Delivery Network (CSDN) data. Baseline: TBD
	Indicator 9: % breakdown of program clients by sex (male/female) and age compared to estimated Veteran population	%	Client Services Delivery Network (CSDN)	Annually	N/A	N/A	N/A	Statistics Directorate	Explanation/ Rationale: Self-reporting of an individual's sex establishes female/ male uptake of programs and services compared to the estimated Veteran population; further broken down by age. Formula/ Calculation: The indicator includes those who self-reported as being female/ male and their age divided by the total responses. Measurement Strategy: This indicator will be collected through Client Services Delivery Network (CSDN) data. Baseline: TBD
	Indicator 10: % breakdown of program clients by sex (male/female) and marital status	%	Client Services Delivery Network (CSDN)	Annually	N/A	N/A	N/A	Statistics Directorate	Explanation/ Rationale: Self-reporting of an individual's sex establishes female/ male uptake of programs and services compared to the estimated Veteran population; further broken down by marital status. Formula/ Calculation: The indicator includes those who self-reported as being female/ male and their marital status divided by the total responses. Measurement Strategy: This indicator will be collected through Client Services Delivery Network (CSDN) data. Baseline: TBD
	Indicator 11: % breakdown of program clients by sex (male/female) and community (rural/urban)	%	Client Services Delivery Network (CSDN)	Annually	N/A	N/A	N/A	Statistics Directorate	Explanation/ Rationale: Self-reporting of an individual's sex establishes female/ male uptake of programs and services compared to the estimated Veteran population; further broken down by community. Formula/ Calculation: The indicator includes those who self-reported as being female/ male and their community divided by the total responses. Measurement Strategy: This indicator will be collected through Client Services Delivery Network (CSDN) data. Baseline: TBD
Transfer Payment Program Indicators (Where the Program includes one or more transfer payment programs. If the entire Program is one transfer payment program and the information is presented in the above rows, this section may not be required.)									
N/A – Entire program is one transfer payment program.									

Risks

Description	Mitigation
There is a risk that...	

Evaluation Needs

Program and Administration Expenditures

Expenditure Type	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	% Variance
Program Expenditures						
Administration Expenditures						
Total Expenditures						
Administrative Costs as % of Total Costs						

Planned Evaluations

The drivers and rationale for evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Veterans Emergency Fund must be evaluated after three years to assess the success of the program. This was a TB requirement when funding was approved.VAC will conduct a combined impact and delivery evaluation that will assess relevance and performance.
Resources for Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Estimate 1 AED Manager and 1 AED Officer
Date of planned evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2020-21

Additional Information

List of Relevant Approved Evaluations Related to the Program

Completed Evaluations - Title of the evaluation(s)	Date evaluation(s) was/were completed
N/A	

List of Relevant External Studies Related to the Program

External Studies Related to the Program: Title of the Study	Citation Information
N/A	

List of Relevant Major Projects Related to the Program (as appropriate)

Project name	Description
N/A	

List of Services Related to the Program (as appropriate)

Service name	Description
N/A	

List of Horizontal Initiatives Related to the Program (as appropriate)

Government-Wide Policy Considerations	Name of horizontal initiative	Lead department(s)	Federal partner organization(s)	Start date of the horizontal initiative	End date of the horizontal initiative
	N/A				

Considerations
<p>A GBA+ assessment was undertaken during the developmental phases of the VEF to anticipate and better understand the impact the Veterans Emergency Fund (VEF) will have on different groups within the Veteran population.</p> <p>The foremost consideration was with respect to the characteristics of the population who will most likely require the benefit. Although the VEF is a new benefit within VAC’s suite of benefits and services, VAC currently administers a number of trust funds created through public donations and bequests to the Department on Veterans’ behalf. However, these funds frequently have narrow eligibility criteria and are not available to all those in need—for example, the recipient must reside in a specific city or have fought in a specific military conflict. This is due to the fact that those making the bequest to create the funds determine the associated criteria that VAC must respect and apply.</p> <p>As a result, the eligibility for the VEF has been designed to be broad and address needs within the whole Veteran population, regardless of sex, age, race, orientation, family status or disability. These factors were considered when designing the program to ensure the best outcomes for the largest number of Veterans and their family members.</p>

