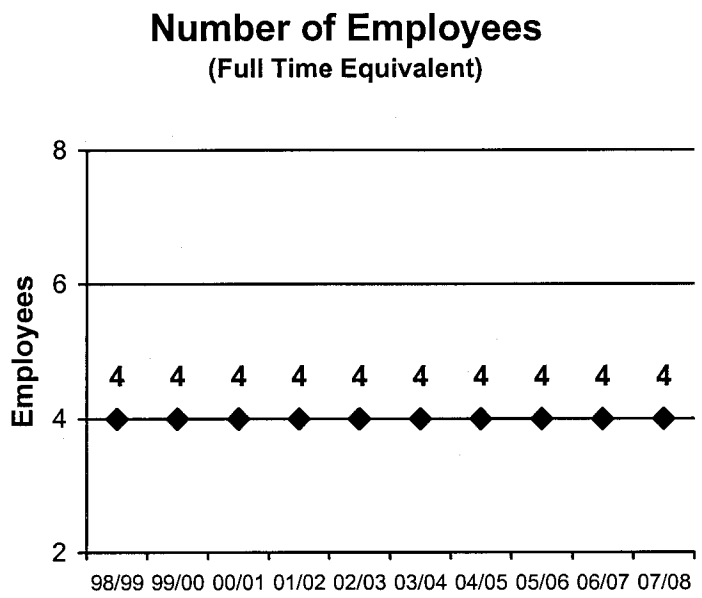
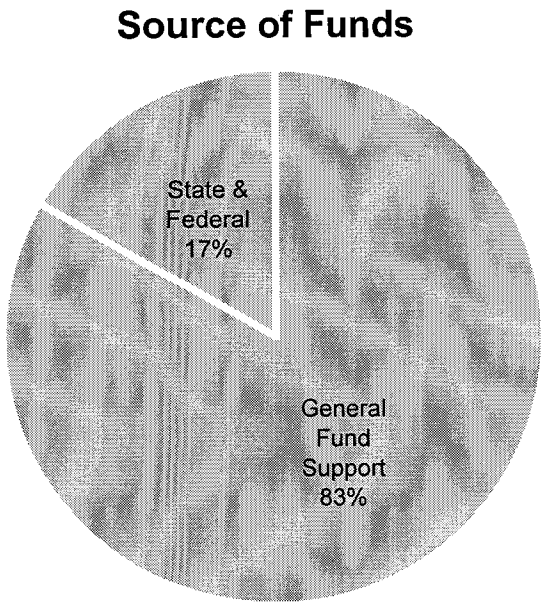
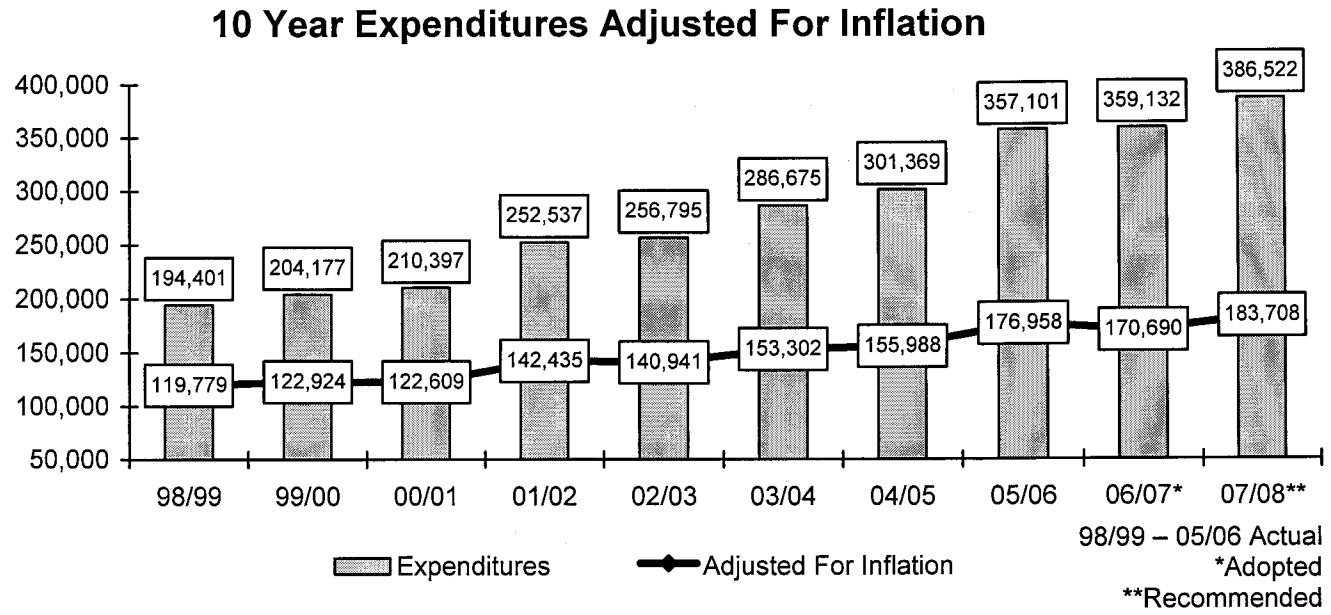
MISSION STATEMENT

To advocate for veterans, their dependents, and survivors by providing the latest information and services for them to receive monetary and medical entitlements.

Financial Summary	2006-07 Budget	2006-07 Projected	2007-08 Requested	2007-08 Recommended	Change From 2006-07
Revenues	$ 60,000	$ 62,000	$ 64,500	$ 64,500	$ 4,500
Salary and Benefits	324,823	324,823	343,612	348,593	23,770
Services and Supplies	34,309	34,322	37,008	37,929	3,620
**Gross Expenditures	$ 359,132	$ 359,145	$ 380,620	$ 386,522	$ 27,390
General Fund Support (G.F.S.)	$ 299,132	$ 297,145	$ 316,120	$ 322,022	$ 22,890







SERVICE PROGRAMS

Claims Filing and Pension Income Maintenance

Screen applicants for potential benefits, complete forms, and collect documentation for potential claim filing, assist pension recipients in maintenance of income, and assist widows and children with entitlement claims.

Total Expenditures: $258,970 Total Staffing (FTE): 2.68

College Fee Waiver Certificate

Process tuition fee waivers for children of disabled veterans so they may enroll in California Community Colleges, California State Universities, or University of California facilities at no charge.

Total Expenditures: $11,596 Total Staffing (FTE): .12

Information and Referral

Provide information to veterans and their families on changing rules and conditions at governmental agencies including the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs and Social Security Administration, local Department of Social Services, Public Guardian, Department of Health Services and others.

Total Expenditures: $115,956 Total Staffing (FTE): 1.20

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

The Department provides advocacy and assistance to the County's approximate 26,000 men and women who served in the nation's armed forces, as well as their dependents and survivors. This type of assistance, claim filing, documentation and claim maintenance for monetary and health benefits is essential in local, state or federal governments claims. The Department advocates for these benefits by filling out and submitting the actual forms for benefits, and filing notices of disagreements and appeals if the benefits are not granted.

Examples of results achieved in the past year FY 2006-07

Customer Service

a. The Veterans Administration has a requirement that all claims be processed within 10 working days of receipt; we currently are accomplishing this within 6 working days.
b. Established outreach efforts to over 350 returning and recently discharged veterans via mailers and briefings for these units. Also, we have attended various informational health and benefits fairs, briefed numerous local veterans groups, and sent out veteran educational benefit information to local high schools in an effort to increase awareness of program availability/benefits for dependents.

Internal Business Process Improvements

a. Obtained web access to the Veterans Administration data base to review claims/awards information on local veterans vs. using the toll free phone number, this saves making numerous phone calls each day with long waiting periods.

Financial improvements

a. The Department is very small (4 employees) and was not able to make any internal financial improvements this year but claims filed by our office were successful in obtaining new benefits to local veterans totaling $2,200,000 last year.

Learning and Growth

a. Attended training sessions throughout the year to remain current on the ever-changing laws that effect veterans and their claims; used this information to provide training for staff that resulted in consistency of claims filed by our office.
b. Employees are notified of training/educational opportunities that are available to them and are encouraged to take full advantage of these opportunities.

Major Focus for FY 2007-08

The Department will continue assisting the County's veterans in processing their claims with the Veterans Administration. We will be continuously exploring new options to make this the most efficient process possible. Major efforts for 07/08 include:

Customer Service Improvements

Continuous improvement will be focused on the following:

a. Continue veteran outreach services to returning veterans and local veterans groups to inform them of veterans benefits that are available.
b. Continually update our web page that will assist veterans in obtaining information on benefits and services that are available.

Internal Business Process Improvements

The Department will be continuing to focus on developing additional software procedures and exploring new products in an effort to reduce the time required to process veterans claims.

Finance

Small staff size and operating budget limit any financial changes for the department. The operating budget will increase due to increases in COLAs and benefits. Increases in travel, training and outreach programs which will be offset by State revenue. The Department has a trust fund with a balance of $33,461 currently there are no plans to use any of those funds during 2007/2008 budget year.

Learning and Growth

a. Continue to attend annual veterans training conferences and have training sessions to provide staff with up-to-date information on veterans issues.
b. Provide staff training on new software technology in an effort to improve overall departmental performance.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommended General Fund support for Veterans Services' FY 2007-08 budget is $22,890, or 7%, over adopted levels for FY 2006-07 primarily due to prevailing wage and pension increases. Salaries and benefits are recommended to increase by 7% or $23,770 over FY 2006-07. The 3.25% increase in pension related expenses increases the department's salaries and benefits accounts by approximately $8,000. There is a 10%, or $3,620, increase in the department's services and supplies which is offset by the 7% increase or $4,500 in revenue from the State. Along with support from the General Fund, Veterans Services receives revenue from three other (3) sources: 1) Subvention fund; 2) Medical Cost Avoidance funds; and 3) Specialized license plate revenue.

GOALS/PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Department Goal: Provides veterans, their dependents, and survivors with advice on monetary, healthcare, insurance, and other government benefits.

Community wide Result Link: A healthy community.

1. Performance Measure: Percentage of customer satisfaction surveys which rated the services performed by the Veterans Services Department as "satisfied" or "very satisfied".

02-03 Actual Results	03-04 Actual Results	04-05 Actual Results	05-06 Actual Results	06-07 Adopted	06-07 Projected Results	07-08 Target
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

What: A satisfaction survey of randomly selected clients, designed to be comparable to other counties, is conducted throughout the year to evaluate client satisfaction level.

Why: Ensure high quality service and continually assess client needs.

How are we doing? The surveys the department receives back have consistently maintained a rating from clients of "satisfied" or "very satisfied". The department provides over 1,800 office interviews and has over 10,000 phones calls per year assisting veterans.

Department Goal: Determine eligibility and file claims for monetary benefits (monthly disability, disability pension, death benefits) and healthcare benefits (medical, dental, vision, prosthetic devices) to ensure that eligible individuals receive the maximum benefit from entitled services.

Community wide Result Link: A healthy community. A well governed community.

2. Performance Measure: Dollar amount in cash benefits secured for new monetary claims filed (monthly disability, disability pension, death benefits).

02-03 Actual Results	03-04 Actual Results	04-05 Actual Results	05-06 Actual Results	06-07 Adopted	06-07 Projected Results	07-08 Target
$2,993,822	$3,001,420	$2,809,874	$1,811,500	$2,800,000	$1,500,000	$1,500,000

What: The total cash received by clients as a result of the efforts of the department.

Why: This illustrates the desired outcome of ensuring that clients receive maximum entitled benefit.

How are we doing? The total number of awards granted to veterans remains stable but the amount of awards granted to veterans decreased for the year. New veteran (Iraqi freedom) claims are being given priory and are processed very rapidly resulting in smaller retroactive payments. Older veterans' claims/appeals are taking far longer to process with many pending for up to 2 years. This delay could result in some large retroactive payments in the future if the claims are granted. Currently, the Los Angeles Veterans Administration has a back log of over 13,000 claims. We expect this back log to continue and possibly increase due to the number of claims that the VA is getting from the returning war veterans (up to 400,000). We see approximately 8-10 recently discharged veterans per month. San Luis Obispo veterans have approximately 600 new claims/appeals pending with the VA at any given time.

3. Performance Measure: Net cost per local veteran for Veterans Services assistance.

02-03 Actual Results	03-04 Actual Results	04-05 Actual Results	05-06 Actual Results	06-07 Adopted	06-07 Projected Results	07-08 Target
$10.05/per veteran	$11.16	$11.98	$11.52	$11.94	$11.94	$12.73

What: Veterans Administration's figures indicate that the Counties veteran population is 26,053 this year. This measure shows the net cost per local veteran for County Veterans Services assistance.

Why: This measure will establish data to compare ourselves to other counties.

How are we doing? The Veterans Administration reports that our County's veteran population has increased over the previous year, due to the large number of recently discharged veterans from the Iraqi war. SLO County changed benchmark counties this year (substituting Marin for Kern) which resulted in a change in cost per veterans, from $12.79 in 05/06 to $10.81 in 06/07 for our benchmark counties. Marin County has a very low cost per veterans ($2.84) vs. Kern County ($13.84). Due to this change, our cost per local veteran will increase by $1.92 over the average of our benchmark counties in FY 07/08. To help offset net County cost the State of California provides revenue from 3 programs: Subvention Funds, Medical Cost Avoidance and License Plate Fees, these reimbursements are distributed via auditable workload units per County. Our projected revenue is expected to remain constant over the next year.

Department Goal: Obtain free college tuition for eligible dependents of veterans (with service-related disabilities) by authorizing and processing College Fee Waivers with California Community Colleges, California State Universities, or University of California campuses.

Community wide Result Link: A prosperous community.

4. Performance Measure: Dollar amount of college tuition saved by eligible dependents due to the College Fee Waiver Program (based upon state negotiated fees with colleges).

02-03 Actual Results	03-04 Actual Results	04-05 Actual Results	05-06 Actual Results	06-07 Adopted	06-07 Projected Results	07-08 Target
$185,890	$242,516	$407,280	$333,592	$320,000	$360,000	$360,000

What: Money saved on tuition by eligible dependents.

Why: To maximize use of entitled benefits.

How are we doing? The State waives fees (California Universities/State Colleges/Colleges) for children of veterans who have a service connected disability or whose parent were killed while on active duty. We have approximately 140 students applying for this benefit each year. The amount of fees waived is dependent upon the type of higher learning institution that the student is attending. We are continuing our awareness outreach program with local high schools to ensure all eligible dependents are informed of this program.