

## BRIEFLY...

September 2, 2015

### DOL COULD HAVE DONE MORE TO IMPROVE CONTROLS OVER ITS VRAP RESPONSIBILITIES

#### WHY OIG CONDUCTED THE AUDIT

In October 2011, the average unemployment rate among all veterans was 7.7 percent and 12.1 percent for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Veterans between the ages of 35 and 64, the group with the highest financial obligations and the fewest available Veterans Affairs education and training options, continued to make up nearly two-thirds of all unemployed veterans. The Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act (VOW) was enacted in November 2011 to assist unemployed veterans. The Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) was included in VOW and offered unemployed veterans, aged 35-60, up to 12 months of training assistance in identified high-demand occupations leading to associate degrees or certificates of training. The program began on July 1, 2012, and was limited to 99,000 participants. Applications were accepted through September 30, 2013.

#### WHAT OIG DID

We conducted a performance audit to determine the following:

*Did DOL manage its VRAP role in accordance with the Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act?*

#### READ THE FULL REPORT

To view the report, including the scope, methodology, and full agency response, go to: <http://www.oig.dol.gov/public/reports/oa/2015/06-15-001-02-001.pdf>

#### WHAT OIG FOUND

While DOL met many of its obligations under the VOW, such as accepting applications by the mandated timeframe and providing VA a listing of high-demand occupations, DOL did not determine if: 1) only eligible applicants participated in VRAP; 2) states contacted all participants within 30 days of exiting the program; or 3) states accurately reported outreach numbers to DOL. Additionally, DOL reported incomplete VRAP employment data and reported the data nearly 4 months after the mandated July 1, 2014, deadline. As a result, DOL lacked assurance that VRAP funding was used only for eligible veterans and may have reported inaccurate outreach data to Congress. Further, because DOL only reported employment data for a subset of program participants served by the program, it could not provide Congress with meaningful and sufficient information needed to determine if VRAP succeeded in training veterans for employment in high-demand occupations.

#### WHAT OIG RECOMMENDED

We made three recommendations to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training and to the Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training to: 1) implement a control verifying attestations for any future training grants that rely on self-attestations; 2) disclose, when reporting to Congress, that DOL did not verify the accuracy of remaining VRAP participant outreach data; and 3) require states to confirm the type of job the VRAP participants obtained and if the job was related to their training.

Agency officials generally agreed with our recommendations.