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EVALUATION OF THE CAREER TRANSITION PROGRAM

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Audit and Evaluation Division

Canada 

Acknowledgement

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Program Overview.....	1
1.2 Program Delivery.....	2
1.3 Program Eligibility.....	2
2.0 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	3
2.1 Scope	3
2.2 Multiple Lines of Evidence.....	4
2.3 Considerations, Strengths and Limitations.....	4
3.0 RELEVANCE.....	5
3.1 Alignment with Government Priorities	5
3.2 Alignment with Federal Roles and Responsibilities	6
3.3 Continued Need for the Program	7
4.0 PERFORMANCE (EFFECTIVENESS / EFFICIENCY AND ECONOMY).....	13
4.1 Performance Tools and Measures	13
4.2 Achievement of Expected Outcomes	14
4.3 Demonstration of Efficiency and Economy	15
4.3.1 Efficiency	15
4.3.2 Economy	16
4.3.3 Alternative Approaches	18
5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	20
APPENDIX A – CAREER TRANSITION SERVICES PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY	22
APPENDIX B – CAREER TRANSITION SERVICES PROGRAM COMPARED TO SIMILAR PROGRAMS IN ALLIED COUNTRIES.....	23
APPENDIX C – EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR CANADIAN VETERANS.....	26
APPENDIX D – CAREER TRANSITION SERVICES PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL	27

Executive Summary

The Career Transition Services (CTS) Program evaluation was conducted in accordance with Veterans Affairs Canada's (VAC) approved Multi-Year Risk-Based Evaluation Plan 2012-17. The Terms and Conditions of CTS were valid until March 31, 2016.

The Career Transition Services Program was established in 2006 under the authority of the *Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act*. Policies and practices have been modified over the years but its essential mission has remained unchanged; i.e., to provide eligible Veterans and survivors with practical help finding a job as they transition from military to civilian life.

CTS reimburses costs for services such as career counselling, job-search training and job-finding assistance for eligible Veterans and survivors to a lifetime maximum of \$1,000 (including tax). The current program design differs from that originally established in 2006 with respect to eligibility, dollar limits and service providers.

The evaluation examined the relevance and performance of the Program, and was conducted in accordance with Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) policy requirements and related TBS guidance. The evaluation findings and conclusions are based on the analysis of multiple lines of qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Overall Results

Relevance

The Program is aligned with the priorities of the Government of Canada as well as with the Department's strategic plan. There is a need for employment supports and transition services for releasing Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members. Employment is a key determinant to the continued health and well-being of releasing CAF members. Military releases number approximately 5,000 annually and research indicates that 16% of those require transition/employment-like services. VAC's Career Transition Services Program has not evolved in an appropriate manner to address those needs.

Performance

The effectiveness and success of a program are generally measured through the use of Performance Measurement Strategies (PMS) that include performance indicators and intended program outcomes. A PMS is in place for the CTS Program; however, neither the intermediate nor the ultimate outcome has been achieved. Understandably, given the small CTS uptake numbers, there has been no reporting and, therefore, no resultant program adjustments based on performance measurement.

The Program has been efficiently managed and no improvements are required in that regard. However, it has not matured to attain projected participation rates or

expenditures. Ample funding has been provided by the TBS, but from April 1, 2013 to September 30, 2015, a total of 59 Veterans have been reimbursed for CTS.

While aspects of the evaluation suggest that needs are not being fulfilled, there is evidence of duplicate services already available from other government, private sector and not-for-profit providers. Greater effort must be made toward meeting needs but also toward removing duplication.

The evaluation findings resulted in the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Commemoration, seek to redesign the Career Transition Services program to meet the employment transition needs of releasing CAF members and Veterans.

Recommendation #2

It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery, explore and implement interim initiatives to increase the usage of the CTS program.

1.0 Introduction

The Career Transition Services (CTS) Program (hereafter referred to as “the Program”), established in 2006, is provided by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) under the authority of the *Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act*, commonly known as the New Veterans Charter (NVC).

The NVC was created in response to the March 2000 Review of Veterans’ Care Needs (Phase III) which found that most Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members/Veterans who received services from VAC reported multiple physical health problems and more instances of pain, major depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder than the general population. The review also found that CAF members/Veterans accessing services from VAC had lower levels of wellness and formal education and experienced more difficulty obtaining employment than the average Canadian.

The intent of the Career Transition Services (CTS) Program, originally introduced as the Job Placement Program, is to provide eligible Veterans and survivors with practical help finding a job as they transition from military to civilian life.

1.1 Program Overview

The Program provides funds to eligible Veterans/survivors so they may access career transition services to help them obtain civilian employment. It does not place participants in a job.

Until December 2012, Job Search and Transition Workshops, Individual Career Counselling and Job Finding Assistance were provided by a third-party contractor, with the workshop component available to both members and Veterans. Changes at that time amended eligibility to provide only post-release coverage, removed the contractor service in favour of Veterans engaging a provider of their choice with subsequent reimbursement, and set a lifetime maximum of \$1,000, taxes included. The current CTS program funds career counselling, job-search training and job-finding assistance services.

1.2 Program Delivery

VAC's National Manager, Rehabilitation, Career Transition Services and Income Support, located at Head Office, is responsible for managing the Program.

Veterans complete an application form for the Program at an Area Office (AO), at an Integrated Personnel Support Centre¹ (IPSC), or on-line via My VAC Account². The Centralized Processing Centre³ (CPC) adjudicates on eligibility and sends a decision letter to the Veteran.

The Veteran engages a transition employment service provider of their choice. Upon completion of the service, the Veteran submits a request for reimbursement. CPC verifies eligibility and claimed costs, and if all is in order the Veteran receives payment via VAC Finance Division within two weeks.

The two main methods CAF members learn about the availability of CTS are through Second Career Assistance Network (SCAN)⁴ seminars delivered by the CAF, and Transition Interviews (TIs) conducted by VAC staff. Both SCANS and TIs are mandatory elements of the release process. Base/Wing Personnel Selection Officers (PSOs) also provide information on the Program.

1.3 Program Eligibility

In general, individuals may qualify for the Career Transition Program if they are:

- Regular Force Veterans and members who have completed basic training.
- Reserve Force Veterans and members who have completed at least 21 months of full-time service during 24 consecutive months, or with Special Duty Service or emergency service.
- Survivors in certain circumstances.

Veterans must apply for the CTS Program no later than two years from release. If eligibility is determined, the effective date for the benefit is the day following the date of release from the CAF. Although members can apply, they are not eligible to receive benefits until after release. A full description of Program eligibility is included in Appendix A.

¹ Joint VAC-Department of National Defence IPSCs provide access to available benefits, programs, and family services, allowing ill and injured CAF members and their families to focus on recovery and reintegration.

² My VAC Account, a secure way to do business online with Veterans Affairs Canada, is available to any Veteran, CAF member or member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

³ The Central Processing Centre is the VAC unit responsible for verifying eligibility and arranging payment on behalf of programs.

⁴ Recognizing the commitment of CAF members and the extraordinary demands and challenges of the military lifestyle, the CAF makes services available in the Second Career Assistance Network Program (SCAN) to assist in the transition to civilian life.

2.0 Scope and Methodology

The CTS Program, a grant program, was evaluated in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act* (Section 42.1) which requires a relevance and effectiveness review of any Grants and Contributions program every five years. The Program was last reviewed in February 2011, with the Terms and Conditions expiring on March 31, 2016.

2.1 Scope

The evaluation covered the period from April 2010 to September 2015 and was conducted between October 2015 and March 2016.

The following elements were scoped out of the evaluation:

- An investigation into the specific transition employment needs of medically-releasing CAF members,
- Opportunities for additional training and education for releasing CAF members.

As per the TBS *Directive on the Evaluation Function*, five core issues were examined with the results intended to assist VAC senior management in making decisions regarding the design and delivery of career transition services to CAF releasing members or Veterans. Table 1 matches the TBS five core issues with the specific CTS evaluation objectives.

Table 1 – Core Issues and Evaluation Objectives

Core Objectives (as per TB requirements)	Evaluation Objectives
Relevance	
1. Alignment with Government Priorities	Assess the linkages between the objectives of the Program and federal government priorities.
2. Alignment with Federal Roles and Responsibilities	Assess VAC's roles and responsibilities and strategic initiatives with respect to delivering the Program.
3. Continued Need for the Program	Assess the extent to which the Program continues to address a need.
Performance	
4. Achievement of Expected Outcomes	Assess progress toward expected Program outcomes.
5. Demonstration of Efficiency and Economy	Assess the Program resource utilization in relation to the production of outputs and progress toward expected outcomes.

2.2 Multiple Lines of Evidence

Multiple lines of evidence were employed to assess the Program’s relevance and performance, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 - List of Methodologies

Methodology	Source
Documentation Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Previous VAC evaluations * Evaluations from other government departments * Program documents and data from other countries (United Kingdom and United States) * Recipient survey results * Departmental Acts, Regulations, program and planning documents * TB Submissions
Research Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * VAC Research Directorate studies * Studies conducted by other federal government departments * Studies conducted by other countries * Evidence-based non-VAC literature
Key Informant Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combination of 34 in-person or telephone interviews with VAC staff and government department subject matter experts
Statistical/Program Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * VAC Finance Division * Program Performance Measurement * VAC Statistics Directorate * VAC Research Directorate
Site Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * CAF bases/wings * VAC Area Offices * Other federal government offices * Provincial agency * Private entities

2.3 Considerations, Strengths and Limitations

A number of considerations, strengths and limitations were factored into this evaluation, with varying degrees of impact.

Considerations:

- Program design and eligibility changes resulting from the 2012 Deficit Reduction Action Plan (DRAP) effectively reset the Program such that the review period actually covered two significantly different career transition programs, the latter with a smaller target population and an alternate delivery method. This evaluation focused primarily on the current version of the Program.
- All three phases of the New Veterans Charter Evaluation provided baseline information for this evaluation.

Strengths:

- VAC’s Research Directorate has been leading several initiatives which have resulted in a collection of evidence and data pertaining to the Veteran population.

This information afforded the evaluation team a better understanding of Veteran needs.

Limitations:

- Evaluation time constraints did not allow for direct participant outcome research (e.g., focus groups). To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team reviewed previous Public Opinion Research (focus group testing) results, interviewed VAC and CAF personnel directly involved with those Veterans who have employment challenges as well as public and private agencies involved in assisting Veterans find employment.
- Similarly, the evaluation team was not able to contact Veterans. The team partially mitigated this limitation by conducting interviews with VAC employees who deal directly with Program recipients with the intent to obtain the perspectives of Veterans.
- There were challenges accessing some of the data required from the Statistics Directorate due to a change in data query tools. Because the team's data needs were not extensive, a combination of Statistics-produced data and existing information was adequate.

Overall, the evaluation team is confident these limitations do not impact the ultimate findings or conclusions.

3.0 Relevance

3.1 Alignment with Government Priorities

The Career Transition Services Program objective is aligned with Government priorities.

The objective of the Career Transition Services Program is to provide funds to eligible CAF Veterans (Regular and Reserve Force) and survivors to secure career transition services to help them obtain civilian employment. Essentially, the Program reimburses Veterans for the provision of career transition services up to a lifetime maximum of \$1,000 (taxes included). Through this funding, the Program aims to assist participants in obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare for and obtain employment post release.

This objective aligns with the mandate letter from the Prime Minister to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence⁵, issued in November 2015, which states: "I expect you to ensure that Veterans receive the respect, support, care, and economic opportunities they deserve. You will ensure that we honour the service of our Veterans and provide new career opportunities."

⁵ Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence Mandate Letter, November 2015.

Subsequently the December 2015 Speech from the Throne⁶ stated: “In gratitude for the service of Canada’s veterans, the Government will do more to support them and their families.”

3.2 Alignment with Federal Roles and Responsibilities

The Career Transition Services Program objective is aligned with federal roles and responsibilities.

As further evidence of alignment, the evaluation team considered the VAC mandate, which stems from laws and regulations. In particular, the *Department of Veterans Affairs Act* charges the Minister of Veterans Affairs with the following responsibilities: "... 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 ... and the care of the dependents or survivors of any person referred to..."

VAC fulfils its mandate through programs, benefits and services authorized under the *Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act* (New Veterans Charter), the *Pension Act* and the *Department of Veterans Affairs Act*. The Department’s responsibility for re-establishment in civilian life begins after release from the CAF, although planning to support the transition is meant to begin prior to release (discussed further in Section 3.3).

One of the priorities identified in VAC’s 2015-16 Report on Plans and Priorities⁷ is to provide caring and responsive service to Veterans and CAF members and their families, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The report discusses the Department’s strategic objectives, one of which is the “Financial, physical and mental well-being of eligible Veterans,” to which the CTS Program contributes.

VAC’s Five-Year Strategic Plan – Care, Compassion and Respect – lays out a new direction that will significantly change and improve how the Department serves and cares for Veterans.⁸ The plan has three core objectives: being Veteran Centric, providing a Seamless Transition, and demonstrating Service Excellence. These objectives informed the evaluation.⁹

⁶ Speech from the Throne to Open the First Session of the Forty-second Parliament of Canada, December 2015.

⁷ Veterans Affairs Canada Report on Plans and Priorities 2015-2016.

⁸ Veterans Affairs Canada: Agenda for Action 2015-2016, January 2016.

⁹ “Veteran Centric” means responding quickly and compassionately to the emerging needs of Veterans, ensuring they have all the benefits and services for which they are eligible. “Seamless Transition” means barriers to success are addressed before the Veteran releases from the military, and VAC services are more closely aligned with those provided by the CAF. “Service Excellence” means the needs of eligible Veterans, especially those with service-related needs are anticipated and fully met in a timely manner, Veterans are always treated with care, compassion, and respect, and their outcomes are maximized through policies, practices and processes.

3.3 Continued Need for the Program

There is a need for employment supports and transition services for releasing CAF members, but the Career Transition Services Program does not effectively respond to this need.

To evaluate relevance, the team assessed whether there is a demonstrable need for the Program; the extent to which the Program is meeting needs of eligible Veterans; and whether there is duplication or overlap with other career assistance/transition programs/providers and/or services.

Demonstrable Need

There is a need for employment supports and transition services for releasing CAF members.

Releasing CAF members have a variety of needs related to employment and transition, impacted by a number of factors including release type, years of service, branch of the Forces and occupation, physical and mental health, family situation, province of resettlement and economic climate at the time of release. The interplay of these factors and individual goals suggests the need for flexible employment supports and transition services.

The evaluation team found ample evidence of the need for employment supports and transition services. For example, the Program's PMS indicates that during 2013-14, 2,151 non-medically releasing CAF personnel identified through their transition interview that they would not be retiring. More than half of them (1,123) had not yet found civilian employment, although 782 (70%) were actively seeking employment. Recent Life After Service Studies (LASS) findings, as presented in Labour-market Outcomes of Veterans¹⁰, show that "unemployed Veterans had double the rate reporting difficulty adjusting to civilian life than employed Veterans."

According to a May 2010 consultant report¹¹ resulting from New Veterans Charter focus groups, when participants thought of their transition from the military to the civilian labour force, the most common employment or career-related goal was job stability. Other identified goals included flexibility in work hours, the ability to develop new skills/do something different, salary, a good balance between work and family life, and the ability to use/transfer existing skills.

VAC's LASS has produced important insights relating to the Career Transition Services Program. In particular, a study entitled Effectiveness of Career Transition Services (2011)¹², based on an in-depth analysis of 2010 Survey on Transition to Civilian Life (STCL) data, was informative for this evaluation. Of the 3,154 Regular Force Veterans

¹⁰ MacLean MB, Keough J, Poirier A, McKinnon K and Sweet J. Labour-Market Outcomes of Veterans, Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada, Charlottetown. 15 February 2016: p.24

¹¹ New Veterans Charter (NVC) Focus Groups, Final Report, Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc., May 2010, p. viii.

¹² MacLean MB, Sweet J, Poirier A (2011). Effectiveness of Career Transition Services (Life After Service Studies Secondary Analysis, 2011 series – Release 6). Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada, Charlottetown. p. 6.

surveyed, 11% identified as having a high need for transition-employment services. These respondents were either unemployed at the time of the survey or experiencing low income (in 2009). A smaller proportion (5%) had a moderate need (i.e., employed at the time of the survey but dissatisfied with their job or main activity). The remaining 84% identified as having low to no need for CTS.

The study¹³ identified the following subgroups as more likely than the overall survey population to have a high need for transition-employment services: those released at younger age groups; those with fewer years of service; those released at lower ranks (recruits, privates and junior non-commissioned members [NCMs]); those released involuntarily or medically and those released from the Army. Males were slightly more likely than females to have a high need for transition-employment services. The greatest need for such assistance was among those involuntarily released (27%), compared to 11% for the overall survey population. The next greatest need was among those released at the youngest age group and those released as recruits, both at 21%, followed by Veterans with less than two years of service and Veterans released as privates at 20%.

Data relating to attendees at CAF Second Career Assistance Network (SCAN) seminars was also analyzed in the Effectiveness of Career Transition Services¹⁴ study, with the following results: The 383 SCAN seminar attendees surveyed in 2010 were older, on average, than the overall releasing population, were more likely to have served for longer periods of time and were more likely to be medically releasing. In other words, the subpopulations identified above as most needing transition-employment services are not attending SCAN seminars, although these seminars are one of the main ways releasing members find out about CTS. Therefore, targeting assistance to those at higher risk may be necessary.

In its June 2014 report *The Transition to Civilian Life of Veterans*¹⁵, the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs indicated that contrary to career management in civilian life, in which individuals regularly change jobs or seek new employment opportunities or even career paths, the military manages the careers of its members. Most recruits join the CAF at a relatively young age and they and their families are taken care of by the military while they are in uniform. Most members pursue long military careers, some of which span over several decades. Therefore, for many, military service has been the only job they have ever had. They have little or no experience with civilian job application processes, résumé development, job interview preparation, or how to market the numerous skills and trades acquired in the military to civilian employers. At the same time, many civilian employers lack an understanding of the military and do not fully grasp the potential value that Veterans can bring to their organizations.

As part of its field work, the evaluation team conducted interviews with 34 individuals, including CAF personnel, DND civilian employees, VAC staff, employment subject

¹³ MacLean MB, Sweet J, Poirier A (2011). Effectiveness of Career Transition Services (Life After Service Studies Secondary Analysis (2011 series – Release 6). Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada, Charlottetown. p. 6.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁵ *The Transition to Civilian Life of Veterans*, Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, June 2014.

matter experts, and Employment and Social Development Canada officials. This research clearly demonstrated that some CAF members need employment supports and transition services; however, it was made equally clear that members need access to these services prior to release, especially since those who were not retiring reported their number one need was getting a job.

The CAF clearly recognizes the benefit of early engagement as the members' first introduction to CTS is during a SCAN seminar which members are encouraged to attend five years prior to their release. Members are further encouraged to seek long-term planning services, offered by CAF, within their first term of service.

The existence of transition-employment programs in Allied countries also points to a need for such services among releasing military members, as discussed further in Subsection 4.3.3. Appendix B compares CTS with similar programs in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Program Responsiveness

The Career Transition Services Program has not met the needs of releasing Veterans.

Changes to the Program, implemented in 2012, clearly established that the CAF handles the members' needs up to the day of release and then VAC takes over. However, this change resulted in a fundamental program design flaw. Each interviewee stressed that the most appropriate time to render assistance relating to the pursuit of employment is before the member becomes unemployed – timing which is not authorized under the amended legislation. Therefore, the Program is not currently meeting needs and uptake has decreased as a result. Table 3 below shows the drop in eligible Veterans between 2011-12 (581) and 2012-13 (27). This decrease could be attributable to the eligibility change (discussed above) as well as the termination of the third-party contract.

Table 3 – CTS Participation Rates and Expenditures by Year, 2010-11 to 2014-15, as of March 31

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Veterans Eligible	548	581	27	92	233
Veterans Receiving Reimbursement				17	23
Expenditures (000s)	*\$1,613	*\$1,096	*\$1,003	\$12	\$13

* As of January 1, 2013 the CTS program was redesigned from provision of services by a national external provider to provision of a maximum \$1,000 grant payable directly to participants to assist in paying for career transition functions. This has contributed to the decrease in expenditures, starting in 2013-2014.

One of the core objectives of VAC's Five-Year Strategic Plan¹⁶ relates to a seamless transition from military to civilian life. Unfortunately, the 2012 changes to the Program, eliminating the possibility of releasing members to access CTS when it is most needed (i.e., prior to release), have actually created a seam where one did not originally exist for this Program. A subsequent change, effective July 2015, allows a releasing member to apply for the Program prior to release, but he or she still cannot access the benefit while still in uniform.

Results from the LASS study Effectiveness of Career Transition Services (2011)¹⁷ showed that while those releasing at a younger age and with fewer years of service have a higher need for CTS, they are not participating in the Program. As Table 4 shows, there were 335 unique applications to the Program in the two-year period from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2015, with application volumes being higher for older releasing members than those under 30 years of age. Those 335 applications resulted in a mere 40 Veterans¹⁸ receiving reimbursement from the Program, perhaps because a large portion of them were filed in case the applicant wanted to use the services at a later date (application must be made within two years of release).

Table 4 - CTS Applications and Reimbursements by Age, April 1 2013 to March 31 2015

Age	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	Total
# of Applications from Veterans	0	8	32	34	25	50	51	64	52	18	1	335
# of Veterans Reimbursed	0	1	6	4	2	7	1	8	8	3	0	40

According to the study on Program effectiveness¹⁹, 16% of the releasing CAF population have a high to moderate need for career employment assistance. Applying that percentage to the 10,334²⁰ Regular Force releases (10,004 of whom had VAC Transition Interviews) during the two-year period, reflected in Table 4 above, would

¹⁶ Veterans Affairs Canada: Agenda for Action 2015-16, January 2016

¹⁷ MacLean MB, Sweet J, Poirier A (2011). Effectiveness of Career Transition Services (Life After Service Studies Secondary Analysis (2011 series – Release 6). Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada, Charlottetown. p. 6.

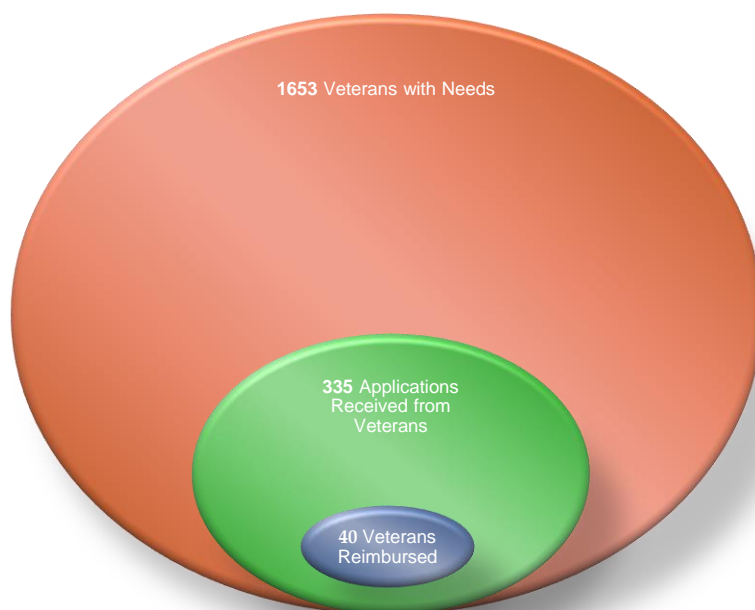
¹⁸ 42 Veterans were reimbursed from April 1 2013 to March 31 2015 but two of the 42 didn't receive payment until after March 31 2015.

¹⁹ MacLean MB, Sweet J, Poirier A (2011). Effectiveness of Career Transition Services (Life After Service Studies Secondary Analysis (2011 series – Release 6). Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada, Charlottetown. p. 11.

²⁰ This number reflects all releases during 2013-15, including medical releases. Some of the 10,334 would have accessed employment-type services via Vocational Rehabilitation.

suggest that 1,653 would require the Program's services, well above the 335 who applied. In other words, only 20% of those who would appear to have a need for CTS applied, and of those, only 40 received reimbursement for services. These uptake numbers, as shown in Chart 1, reflect a Program that is not responsive to needs.

Chart 1 - CTS Applications and Reimbursements as a Proportion of Those with Potential High to Moderate Need



Duplication and Overlap

There is duplication and overlap between the Career Transition Services Program and other career assistance/transition programs, services and providers.

As indicated in VAC's Labour Market Outcomes for Veterans²¹ report, the Veterans Transition Advisory Committee identified 18 employment assistance programs provided by government and non-government organizations (see Appendix C). One program focuses on fundraising with no employment services. Five programs are for disabled Veterans. Four programs were found to be province specific. Two programs work with employers to encourage the hiring of Veterans. Six programs were found to provide employment services, on a national basis, to Veterans with or without disabilities. Table 5 illustrates the number of programs by various providers and sectors.

²¹ MacLean MB, Keough J, Poirier A, McKinnon K and Sweet J. Labour-Market Outcomes of Veterans, Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada, Charlottetown. 18 November 2015: p.81.

Table 5 – Transition Employment Programs for Veterans

Provider/Sector	Number of Programs
Canadian Armed Forces/Department of National Defence	2
Veterans Affairs Canada	3
Private Sector	13

The Canadian Armed Forces Transition Services²² program offers individual transition assistance as well as individual counselling to each still-serving member. It includes seminars, workshops and access to a network of information to aid in long-term planning and seamless career transitions. Career Transition Workshops, typically offered by Base/Wing Personnel Selection Officers, cover but are not limited to interest and skill self-assessment, resume writing, job search strategies and interview techniques. While aspects of this program are available to eligible CAF members throughout their careers, some services may only be offered to those transitioning to civilian life.

CAF Learning and Career Centres (LCCs), located on 14 Bases/Wings and staffed by civilian learning advisors, provide career services which appear to duplicate those being offered by VAC through its CTS Program. The learning advisors interviewed as part of the evaluation's field work indicated a willingness to provide services to CAF members. As an illustration of duplication, while it was in place, the third-party contractor would be providing information in one part of the building at the same time as the LCC was providing the same information in another. Subsequent to the field work, VAC learned that the CAF is reviewing the LCCs and their various programs.

In fall 2014, the Government of Canada announced that it would invest up to \$15.8 million to fund a partnership between VAC and DND to provide medically-releasing Veterans and their families access to Military Family Resource Centres (MFRCs)²³ for two years following release to support their transition to civilian life. To assist in that transition, the MFRCs are providing enhanced information and referral services. This partnership is currently operating as a pilot project at seven sites. Data will be collected at the pilot sites to determine if access for medically-releasing Veterans and their families should be extended to all MFRC sites, if it should be extended to all releasing/released Veterans, or if access should be discontinued. Extending it to all releasing members (i.e., medical releases and voluntary releases) would create considerable duplication with the CTS Program.

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) renewed its Labour Market Agreements (LMAs) with the provinces and territories on April 1, 2014; they are now due to expire on March 31, 2020. As part of the new LMAs, the federal government reaffirmed its Economic Action Plan commitment to transform skills training in Canada through the introduction of the Canada Job Grant which would directly involve employers. Other agreements between the provinces and territories are the Canada Job

²² DAOD 5031-4 – Canadian Armed Forces Transition Services.

²³ MFRCs are arm's length, independent organizations that provide a range of support services to CAF members and their families. These services include welcome and community orientation sessions, parenting workshops, child care, outreach, information and referral, personal growth and development programming, as well as employment and educational assistance.

Fund Agreement, LMAs for Persons with Disabilities, training for older workers (ages 54-65) and the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA)²⁴. Through these various agreements, Canada downloads to provinces and territories responsibility for the design and delivery of labour market programs to support the creation of a skilled, productive, mobile and adaptable labour force.

Some CAF members leaving at a young age might qualify for services under the Job Fund Agreement or under the LMDA, after the expiry of the Employment Insurance waiting period and completion of any severance package time limits.

In addition to the Career Transition Services Program, the subject of this evaluation, VAC also offers Vocational Rehabilitation services as part of its Rehabilitation Program under the New Veterans Charter. Although eligibility requirements differ, each program offers some career assistance services²⁵.

In its 2014 report²⁶, the Senate Subcommittee summarizes "... a growing number of resources are now available to assist releasing members of the CAF with their transition to the civilian workforce, and the situation is constantly improving." While this abundance of resources does provide more options to releasing members, it also points to considerable overlap and duplication.

4.0 Performance (effectiveness / efficiency and economy)

4.1 Performance Tools and Measures

There is a Performance Measurement Strategy in place for the Career Transition Services Program and performance targets are defined. Limited reporting information has been made available.

A Performance Measurement Strategy (PMS), including performance measures and program outcomes, is created upon program introduction and updated annually. These measures and outcomes are used to gauge program effectiveness and success.

The Program's PMS, establishing a framework for monitoring activities and outcomes, was last updated in July 2015. Some data have been reported and made available to Program Management on a monthly basis; i.e., number of Veterans in the program, number of applicants, and summary expenditures. However, while more detailed information relating to factors such as age, release status, and release type is available, there is no evidence it has been used for decision making.

The 2015-2016 Report on Plans and Priorities planning highlights for the CTS Program indicate "The Department will amend the Program's Performance Measurement

²⁴ Training agreements with provinces and territories, Economic and Social Development Canada.

²⁵VAC policy on Rehabilitation, Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Assistance.

²⁶The Transition to Civilian Life of Veterans, Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, June 2014.

Strategy to ensure that measures are put in place to monitor achievement of outcomes and that published service standards are communicated accurately.”

4.2 Achievement of Expected Outcomes

The outcomes are partially met. Veterans and survivors have access to funds. Program participation is low. The Ultimate Outcome is not measureable.

Program theory surmises that eligible Veterans and survivors with access to funding to support career transition will use available services to fulfill their career needs, thus contributing to the Program’s ultimate outcome, namely, “Eligible Veterans and survivors actively participate in the civilian workforce.” The following sections address the progress realized towards achieving the Program’s immediate, intermediate and ultimate outcomes, as laid out in the Program’s logic model (see Appendix D).

Immediate Outcome: Eligible Veterans and their survivors have access to funds for career transition services.

Funds are available for Veterans and their survivors to access; therefore, the immediate outcome is achieved.

Funds are available for eligible Veterans and their survivors. Via a September 2012 TB Submission, funding was allotted to the Program for fiscal years 2012-13 to 2016-17, as shown in Table 6.²⁷

Table 6 – Dollar amounts allocated by fiscal year, 2012-13 to 2016-17

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Total
Allocation (000s)	\$139	\$285	\$296	\$37	\$50	\$807

At the lifetime maximum reimbursement level of \$1,000, allocated funding for fiscal years 2013-14 to 2014-15 was sufficient to support 580 Veterans. Based on the average reimbursement for that period (\$585.23), the program capacity for the funds allotted would have been 992 Veterans.

Intermediate Outcome: Eligible Veterans and survivors utilize available funds to obtain career transition services.

While some Veterans accessed funds to obtain career transition services, the low program uptake would indicate the intermediate outcome has not been met.

²⁷ The reference levels (amount allocated) shown in Table 6 are the updated reference levels, and therefore not what was included in the original TB submission.

Table 7 shows Program participation and funding use over the past five years. Note that the number of eligible participants dropped from 581 in 2011-12 to 27 in 2012-13, corresponding with Program changes which eliminated access for those still in uniform. Such low participation rates are evidence that the Program’s intermediate objective is not being met.

Table 7 – CTS Participation Rates, Reimbursements and Expenditures by Year (as of March 31)

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Veterans Eligible	548	581	27	92	233
Veterans Receiving Reimbursements				17	23
Expenditures (000s)	\$1,613	\$1,096	\$1,003	\$12	\$13

Ultimate Outcome: Eligible Veterans and survivors actively participate in the civilian workforce.

There is currently no program measure assessing the degree of success in achieving this outcome.

4.3 Demonstration of Efficiency and Economy

4.3.1 Efficiency

The Program is administered in an efficient manner.

The evaluation team reviewed the entire data history of CTS and found no areas requiring improvement with respect to efficiency; however, the analysis is limited in what it can say or project due to the low participation rate. For Veterans who used the Program, it was administered efficiently throughout its various stages, from a timely response with respect to rendering eligibility decisions through to eventual adjudication and reimbursement of claims for services attained as well as appropriate adjustments made to claims exceeding the \$1,000 limit.

Despite demonstrated Program efficiency, it does little to contribute toward achievement of the ultimate outcome. The Program has lived up to neither projected participation rates nor expenditure forecasts. Although a January 2013 change allowed for a lifetime maximum reimbursement of \$1,000 for transition employment services from any qualified provider, participation remains extremely low.

4.3.2 Economy

The Program has not matured to achieve projected participation or expenditures; therefore, it has not proven to be economical.

Between 2013-14 and September 30, 2015, Program expenditures have increased by a small amount and the number of Program participants has also increased. Table 8 below reflects the VAC Client and Expenditure Forecast 2015-16 (as per the Statistics Directorate) which shows increases for both eligible CTS recipients and expenditures from now until fiscal year 2018-19.

Table 8 –CTS Expenditures and Eligible Veterans – Actual (2011-12 to 2014-15) and Forecast (2015-16 to 2018-19)

	Actual				Forecast			
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Expenditures (000s)	\$1,096	\$1,003	\$12	\$13	\$32	\$49	\$61	\$73
Veterans Eligible	581	27	92	233	360	470	560	650

Source: VAC Finance Division

To evaluate economy, it is useful to compare forecasted with actual uptake and expenditures, as shown in Table 9 below. The forecast information is based on the in-year²⁸ forecasts prepared by VAC Statistics. Differences between forecast and actual amounts can be attributed to the absence of historical trend information (program delivery method changed in January 2013) and limited participation to-date. Even a small change to the number of Veterans or average costs can have a significant effect on the final expenditures.

²⁸ The in-year forecast is the fiscal year in which the forecast is completed and expenditures occur. For example, for fiscal year 2014-15, the forecast used was prepared one year prior, in March 2014.

Table 9 – CTS Forecast and Actual Participation and Expenditures (2013-14 to 2015-16)

	Year End 2013-14	Year End 2014-15	YTD Sept 2015	Year End 2015-16
Eligible Veterans at March 31				
Forecasted	86	150	N/A	360
Actual	92	233	307	N/A
Veterans Reimbursed at March 31				
Forecasted	57	35	N/A	54
Actual	17	23	19	N/A
Expenditures at March 31 (000s)				
Forecasted	\$57	\$25	N/A	\$32
Actual	\$12	\$13	\$14	N/A

Notes:

VAC does not complete half year forecasts, therefore forecasted participation and expenditures are not available for YTD Sept 2015. Project scope ends at September 2015 so actuals for 2015-16 not reported. Source: VAC Finance Division

Resource utilization relates to the costs associated with delivering a program, including salaries, operating and maintenance, employee benefits, and contract administration costs. One measure of economy is how much it costs for the outcomes achieved.

Table 10 depicts the number of applicants who were reimbursed through the CTS Program from April 1, 2013 – September 30, 2015, the program expenditures, and how much was spent in delivery. During this time, only 59 people received reimbursements via the Program; therefore, program expenditures were relatively low. With respect to salary, the number of FTEs required to administer the program has been reduced from 7.1 to .4²⁹. Further analysis of administrative costs was not undertaken due to the low risk and low materiality of the Program.

²⁹ VAC 2015-16 Report on Plans and Priorities

Table 10 – CTS reimbursements, program expenditures and administration costs, from April 1 2013 to September 30 2015

	2013-14	2014-15	Y-T-D Sept 2015	Total
Veterans Receiving Reimbursements	17	23	19	59
Program Expenditures (000s)	\$12	\$13	\$14	\$39
Administration (000s)	\$883	\$1,127	\$20*	\$2,030
Total Costs (000s)	\$895	\$1,140	\$34	\$2,069

*In 2015-16, the Department adjusted its model of allocating Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff and administrative costs across programs and services to more accurately reflect where resources are located to serve Veterans. As a result, expenses allocated to some programs, such as CTS, vary significantly from previous year. Annual administration costs are allocated at fiscal year-end; to cover the period of this evaluation (April 2015 to September 2015), the 2015-16 planned amount of \$39,666 was divided by two. Also, in 2014-15, administration costs include a one-time advertising expense.

4.3.3 Alternative Approaches

As described in Section 3.3, releasing CAF members have a variety of needs related to employment and transition, impacted by factors such as release type, years of service, branch of the Forces and occupation, physical and mental health, family situation, province of resettlement and economic climate at the time of release. The interplay of these factors and individual goals suggests the need for flexible employment supports and transition services.

Evidence points to some likely overlap in needs between medically-releasing and voluntarily-releasing CAF members. Thirty-six percent (36%) of Veterans who applied for CTS had also applied, and were deemed eligible for, Vocational Rehabilitation. As interviews with CAF and VAC personnel revealed, employment is the driving need and Veterans eagerly embrace whatever means would enable them to achieve that end. Interviewees report that releasing members and Veterans exhibit a sense of “I don’t need rehab; I need a job.” These findings suggest an employment strategy to address the needs of all releasing CAF members is required.

As described in the Senate Subcommittee’s 2014 report³⁰, the military fully manages a member’s career. Therefore, since many releasing personnel have been in the military their entire careers, they have not acquired the career development skills common to most civilians which could put them at a disadvantage in the civilian job market.

VAC research has revealed a certain segment of Veterans meet with serious barriers to transferring and translating their military skills and general service experience into terms understandable to civilians. There is some evidence to back the concept that support offered over a longer period of time, pre- and post-employment, achieves greater success in employment transition than the traditional "train then place" programs most common today. The United Kingdom (UK) Career Transition Partnership, for example, which provides on-going support up to two years post civilian employment, yields a high

³⁰ The Transition to Civilian Life of Veterans, Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, June 2014.

degree of success. There are also some domestic models which have adopted variations of this continued support model and are experiencing similar results.

United States Veterans Affairs (USVA) offers Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success), developed jointly with the Department of Defence and other agencies, which provides comprehensive services to service members to assist in the transition to work, life, and home after the military. The Veterans Employment Center connects Veterans and their families with meaningful employment and career development opportunities. Personnel are eligible for all programs prior to release.

These international examples of transition-employment assistance for Veterans suggest that early intervention (pre-release) and a longer length of support contribute to successful outcomes. A full comparison of Canadian, American and United Kingdom career transition services programs can be found in Appendix B.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Relevance

The Career Transition Services Program aligns with federal government priorities as well as VAC's mandate and strategic outcomes.

Post-military employment is a key determinant of health and is related to the degree to which transition from military to civilian life is successful. Although 10,334 Veterans have released in the last two years, only 59 Veterans have been reimbursed for career transition services. So, while research has shown a need for transition-employment services, the Program has not responded to that need. Modifications made in 2012 did not succeed in making the Program more responsive, rather they created a seam between CAF and VAC and delayed access to services.

Performance

The CTS Program achieved neither targeted uptake nor expenditure projections for any year of the evaluation period. A Performance Measurement Strategy is in place and has been kept up to date; however, it was not extensively reported against and there was no evidence of any Program adjustments made as a result of performance data.

Evidence shows that the program operates efficiently. Because of the low participation rates and Program expenditures though, it has not proven to be economical. Because the evaluation showed evidence of need, alternate methods to deliver career transition services to releasing CAF members should be examined. To ensure a positive result, such services should be engaged prior to the member releasing and continued for a time after employment is attained.

The evaluation findings resulted in the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Commemoration seek to redesign the Career Transition Services program to meet the employment transition needs of releasing Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans.

Management Response:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Policy and Research Division will develop policy options for the redesign of Career Transition Services to better provide supports for employment transition from a military to a civilian career.

Management Action Plan:

Corrective action to be taken	OPI (Office of Primary Interest)	Target date
Policy options developed; presented to senior management; and preferred option determined	ADM, Strategic Policy and Commemoration	August 2016
Program design and implementation plan developed		September 2016
Proposal to government		November 2016
Implementation of a new program design		TBD

Recommendation #2

It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery, explore and implement interim initiatives to increase the usage of the CTS program.

Management Response:

Management agrees with this recommendation. There may be operational strategies, not requiring policy or legislative change, to effect greater uptake of the funds available under the Career Transition Services Program. Service Delivery is committed to develop and explore options, implement those which may be effective, and to monitor the success of the implemented approaches.

Management Action Plan:

Corrective action to be taken	OPI (Office of Primary Interest)	Target date
Program Management staff will consult with other areas of the Department, including Case Management and Support Services, Strategic Communications, Transition Coordination and Integrated Services, and the Client Relations Directorate, and develop an options paper that proposes operational strategies to increase the uptake of the Career Transition Services Program. The options paper will be presented to senior management for a decision.	Health Care, Rehabilitation and Income Support Programs Directorate	July 29 2016
Program management staff will lead and/or coordinate the implementation of the approved strategies.		December 30 2016
Program management staff will work with the Statistics Directorate to develop regular reports to monitor the success of the implemented strategies.		April 30 2017

Appendix A – Career Transition Services Program Eligibility³¹

Regular Force

- Veterans or members who have completed basic training.

Reserve Force

- Veterans or members of the Reserve Force with completion of at least 21 months of full-time service during 24 consecutive months.

OR

- Veterans of the Reserve Force with Special Duty Service, or emergency service.

NOTES:

- If a member is found eligible for the Program, the effective day will be the day after date of release from the Canadian Armed Forces.
- In most cases, Veterans must apply no later than two years after the date of their release from the Canadian Armed Forces.

Survivor

- Surviving spouses or common-law partners of Regular Force or Reserve Force Veterans who, at the time of death, would otherwise have been entitled to receive Career Transition Services and who apply no later than two years after the death of the Veteran;
- Surviving spouses or common-law partners of Regular Force members who apply no later than two years after the death of the member;
- Surviving spouses or common-law partners of Reserve Force members who, had committed in writing to at least 21 months of full-time service during 24 consecutive months, or served in a Special Duty Area/Operation or emergency service, and who apply no later than two years after the death of the member.

Canadian Forces Income Support (CFIS) Recipients

- CAF Veterans who are eligible for the CFIS benefit; in this case, there is no prescribed time limit in which to apply;
- Survivors who are eligible for the CFIS benefit; in this case, there is no prescribed time limit in which to apply.

Exception: Irrespective of the above, Veterans who are discharged for misconduct or unsatisfactory service (Items 1 or 2 of The Queen’s Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Forces – 15.01) and those who do not complete basic training are not eligible for VAC’s CTS.

³¹ Career Transition Services Business Process

Appendix B – Career Transition Services Program Compared to Similar Programs in Allied Countries³²

Program(s)	Canada	United States		United Kingdom
	Career Transition Services	Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success)	Veterans Employment Centre™	Career Transition Partnership
Objective	Assist eligible CAF Veterans and survivors in obtaining civilian employment by paying or reimbursing for the provision of career transition services up to a life-time maximum of \$1,000, including taxes.	<p>Provide comprehensive services to Service members to transition to work, life, and home after the military.</p> <p>Partnership between Department of Defence, Department of Veterans Affairs and other agencies.</p>	Connect Veterans and their families with meaningful employment and career development opportunities.	<p>Provide support and assistance to service leavers to prepare for entering the civilian job market and to make a successful transition to employment, or achieve the wider vocational outcome they seek.</p> <p>The resettlement provision also available to those who are planning to retire or going into full time education.</p>
Components	Career transition services are career counselling, job-search training and job-finding assistance, delivered by a career transition services provider	<p>Individual transition planning: a customized roadmap outlining career goals and how to reach them.</p> <p>Employment workshops: help in translating military skills to civilian employment, job searching, writing an effective résumé, and interviewing successfully.</p> <p>Tailored tracks: delivered through optional workshops (Career Technical Training Track, Education Track, and Entrepreneurship Track)</p>	Resources and tools for both job seekers (map military skills, build civilian résumé, post profile, career opportunity search) and employers (searchable database of Veteran and spouse profiles, posting of positions).	<p>Career Transition Workshop (CTW) and subsequent access to interactive CTP website (myPlan), job-finding website (RightJob), a career consultant to advise, guide and chart resettlement progress, and access to additional workshops and training courses.</p> <p>Employment Support Program: interview with a career consultant, attendance on a one day Job Finding workshop, access to RightJob and the support of an employment consultant for up to two years post discharge.</p> <p>Future Horizons Program, a collective of charities and private and public sector organizations.</p>

³² MacLean MB, Keough J, Poirier A, McKinnon K and Sweet J. Labour-Market Outcomes of Veterans, Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada, Charlottetown. 18 November 2015: p.81.

Program(s)	Canada	United States		United Kingdom
	Career Transition Services	Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success)	Veterans Employment Centre™	Career Transition Partnership
Services Start	No eligibility until release	While transitioning	While transitioning	From two years pre-release to two years post-release.
Groups Eligible	<p>Veterans of the Regular Force who have completed basic training and who apply no later than two years after the day on which they were released;</p> <p>Veterans of the Reserve Force who have completed at least 21 months of full-time service during 24 consecutive months and who apply no later than two years after the day on which they were released;</p> <p>Veterans of the Reserve Force who have completed special duty service or service on which they were called out in respect to an emergency and who apply no later than two years after the day on which they were released; and</p> <p>Veterans to whom a Canadian Forces Income Support (CFIS) benefit is payable under section 27 of the <i>Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act</i></p>	<p>Transitioning Service members, including Guard and Reserve members, demobilizing after 180 days or more of active service. All transitioning Service members are required to attend Transition GPS.</p>		<p>Future Horizons: Early Service Leavers (less than four years service); or those who leave for disciplinary reasons or are deemed unsuitable, regardless of service length.</p> <p>Employment Support Program: four or five years of service.</p> <p>Full Resettlement Program: those with six or more years service, medical discharges, regardless of service length, redundancies, regardless of service length.</p>
Program Goals	<p>Immediate: Eligible Veterans and survivors have access to funds for career transition services.</p> <p>Intermediate: Eligible Veterans and</p>	<p>Participants will be prepared to develop a customized plan for a successful transition to a technical career.</p>		<p>Help ex-service people to find a new civilian career or job and help employers to recruit the best.</p>

Program(s)	Canada	United States		United Kingdom
	Career Transition Services	Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success)	Veterans Employment Centre™	Career Transition Partnership
	<p>survivors utilize available funds to obtain career transition services.</p> <p>Ultimate: Eligible Veterans and survivors actively participate in the civilian workforce.</p>			

Appendix C – Employment Assistance Programs for Canadian Veterans³³

Administered by Canadian Armed Forces/Department of National Defence
Second Career Assistance Network (SCAN)
SISIP Long-term Disability Insurance and Vocational Rehabilitation Program

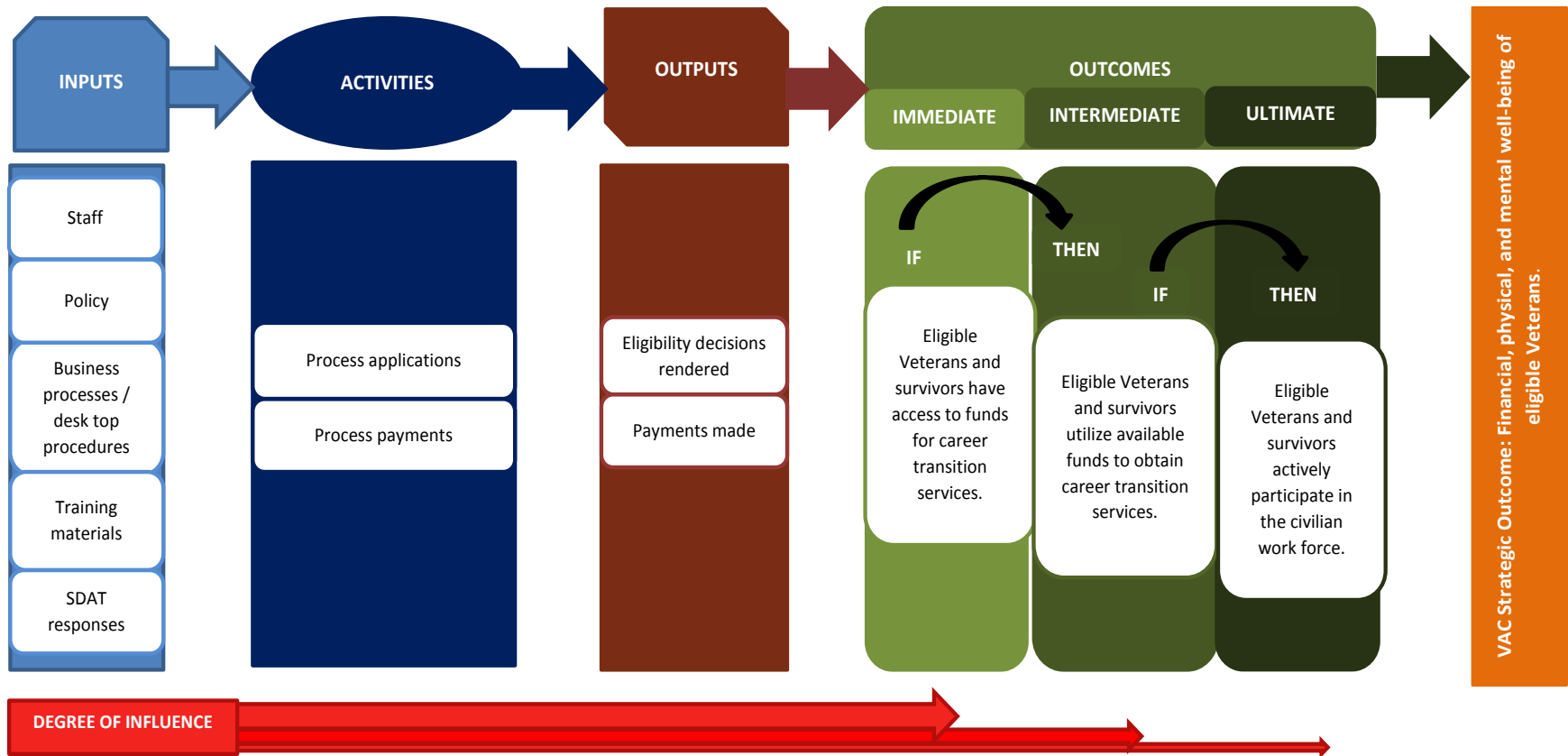
Administered by Veterans Affairs Canada
Career Transition Services
Hire a Veteran
Rehabilitation Program (Vocational Assistance)

Administered by Private Sector
Algonquin College Education Bursary
British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)
Canada Company
Canadian Forces Liaison Council (CFLC)
Forces@Work (Prospect Human Services)
Helmets to Hardhats
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)
PTSD Coach Canada
Prince's Operational Entrepreneur
Treble Victor Group
True Patriot Love (fundraising with no employment services)
Veteran's Transition Program, University of British Columbia
Wounded Warriors

³³ MacLean MB, Keough J, Poirier A, McKinnon K and Sweet J. Labour-Market Outcomes of Veterans, Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada, Charlottetown. 18 November 2015: p.81.

Appendix D – Career Transition Services Program Logic Model³⁴

Program Objective: To provide funds to eligible Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans and survivors so that they may access career transition services to help them obtain civilian employment.



³⁴ Career Transition Services Program Measurement Strategy.