

VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

Evaluation of the Career Transition Services Program and the Education and Training Benefit

FINAL REPORT

May 2022

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
1.0 Introduction	7
1.1 Background	7
1.1.1 Career Transition Services.....	7
1.1.2 Education and Training Benefit	9
1.2 Evaluation purpose, scope and questions	12
1.2.1 Purpose.....	12
1.2.2 Scope	12
1.2.3 Objectives.....	12
1.2.4 Evaluation Questions.....	13
1.3 Methodology.....	14
1.3.1 Review of documents, program and performance data and files.....	14
1.3.2 Key informant interviews	14
1.3.3 Focus groups with front line staff	15
1.3.4 Survey of participants.....	15
1.4 Analytical approach.....	17
1.5 Strengths and limitations	17
1.5.1 Strengths	17
1.5.2 Limitations	18
2.0 Summary of findings	20
2.1 Relevance	20
2.1.1 What is the relationship between CTS and ETB and between these programs and other VAC programs in the continuum of supports for Veterans? Are these relationships appropriate/ working effectively to meet Veterans’ needs?.....	20
2.1.2 To what extent are the eligibility criteria for CTS and ETB meeting Veterans’ needs?	23
2.1.3 To what extent do Veterans have unmet needs for career transition and/or accessing education or training?	27
2.2 Performance/effectiveness.....	29
2.2.1 Are the programs achieving the expected/ desired reach?.....	29
2.2.2 Are there alternative program delivery approaches that could be considered that would increase outcomes for Veterans?.....	40
2.2.3 How effectively have the programs supported Veterans to meet their personal and professional goals?	44

2.2.4	Were there unexpected outcomes (positive or negative) as a result of receiving services/benefits, including unintended GBA+ related impacts that should be resolved?	50
2.3	Performance/efficiency	51
2.3.1	Are the available program data for CTS and ETB adequate to measure outcomes/impact? .	51
2.3.2	Have the activities of the CTS and ETB been delivered in an efficient and economical manner?	52
2.3.3	ETB recipients and expenditures.....	52
3.0	Conclusions and recommendations.....	54
3.1	Conclusions	54
3.1.1	Relevance	54
3.1.2	Effectiveness.....	54
3.1.3	Efficiency	55
3.2	Recommendations	55
Appendix A – Evaluation matrix.....		59

Executive summary

Program profiles

Career Transition Services Program

The Career Transition Services Program (CTS) works to ensure that eligible Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Members, Reservists, Veterans, spouses, and survivors have access to services that will help develop the skills and tools they need to effectively search, apply for, and obtain employment. The current version of the program was implemented by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) in April 2018. Services are delivered by a contracted service provider and focus on three broad categories: 1) labour market information; 2) career counseling; 3) and job-finding assistance.

Education and Training Benefit

The Education and Training Benefit (ETB) is designed to help Veterans successfully transition from military to post-service life, achieve their education and post-military employment goals, and better position them to be more competitive in the civilian workforce. The benefit was implemented in April 2018.

The ETB provides a taxable benefit of up to \$86,671.95 (while a Veteran is participating in a formal program) to cover tuition, fees, supplies, and some incidental and living expenses. In addition, participants may access funding to contribute to the fees and costs associated with one-time courses aimed at self-fulfillment and personal interest and development. Veterans may be funded for most types of formalized educational programs, depending on whether they meet the eligibility criteria.

Evaluation purpose and background

The evaluation of CTS and ETB was conducted on VAC's behalf by Goss Gilroy Inc. between February 2021 and October 2021 and primarily focussed on the time period of April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2021. The evaluation was conducted to fulfil VAC's requirements under the *Financial Administration Act* to conduct "Evaluations of ongoing programs of grants and contributions with five-year average actual expenditures of \$5 million or greater per year." The evaluation also fulfills the department's responsibility to provide evaluation coverage of organizational spending and programs in the Department's Program Inventory as per Treasury Board's Policy on Results.

Findings

Relevance

ETB is largely meeting Veterans' expectations, while Veterans identified some unmet needs associated with the CTS program. Eligibility is appropriate for both programs, although there are some areas of confusion amongst potential clients. The ETB short course funding model and the eligibility of certain one-time education-related costs and fees (e.g., licensing and exam fees) should be reviewed.

CTS and ETB generally work well together, particularly for Veterans who access education planning services through CTS. The complementary nature of the programs is reinforced in program policies and other documentation.

Effectiveness

VAC front-line staff have a general knowledge of the CTS and ETB programs. There is an opportunity to improve communications with front-line staff around the programs.

Veterans surveyed indicated that their awareness of the CTS and ETB programs while they were serving was limited. The evaluation found that being able to access ETB does not impact Veterans' decision to leave the Canadian Armed Forces.

The evaluation finds the ETB program is being delivered effectively. Eighty percent of Veterans surveyed indicated the training funded by the program met their needs, with 59% reporting that ETB provided them with the skills and knowledge they needed to engage in activities important to them. Approximately 85% of survey respondents who participated in the ETB program indicated that they had completed their course of study or were still enrolled. Most indicated a satisfactory outcome from the program.

Client satisfaction with CTS suggests that delivery is not meeting needs or expectations. Overall, 56% of CTS clients surveyed (including clients who received both CTS and ETB) indicated satisfaction with the services received from the third-party service provider (55% indicated satisfaction with VAC services).

Most clients surveyed report their overall health and well-being, their adjustment to life after service and satisfaction with their life as good to excellent. Clients who only

accessed ETB are more likely to report better outcomes in all these areas than clients who only accessed CTS.

Efficiency

Program expenditures for both CTS and ETB are on the rise historically and are forecast to increase in the coming years. Increased client uptake and expenditures are more pronounced for ETB in the forecast data.

Program data does not allow for easy measurement of program outcomes; the evaluation relied on the survey of clients to assess outcome achievement. There is an opportunity to improve data capture and integration the next time system changes are made.

Recommendations

The evaluation makes the following recommendations.

1. It is recommended that the DG-SDPM improve communications about the programs among Members and Veterans, including:
 - a. Information about eligibility for the ETB and the two-stage application process.
 - b. Information to improve program awareness for Members planning for their release, including additional training and tools to support VAC front-line staff who support the transition.
2. It is recommended that the DG-Policy undertake efforts to review the maximum amount available for ETB short courses and consider whether costs of licensing exams and fees should be included.
3. It is recommended that the DG SDPM explore client satisfaction results and associated performance data to identify areas for further improvement, and gaps where further data collection is required.

1.0 Introduction

The Evaluation of the Career Transition Service Program (CTS) and the Education and Training Benefit (ETB) was conducted by Goss Gilroy Inc. (GGI) on behalf of Veterans Affairs Canada's (VAC's) Audit and Evaluation Division. GGI conducted the planning and fieldwork stage of this evaluation between June and October 2021. A draft report, findings, and recommendations produced by GGI formed the basis of this final report prepared by VAC's Audit and Evaluation Division.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Career Transition Services Program

Overview

The Career Transition Services Program works to ensure that eligible Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Members, Members of the Reserves, Veterans, spouses, common-law partners and survivors have access to services that will help them develop the skills and tools they need to effectively search, apply for, and obtain civilian employment. With increased knowledge and skills, program participants are better prepared to navigate the civilian labour market not only on their initial transition out of the CAF, but also at any point where they may be faced with the transition from one type of employment to another.

Delivery

The CTS program is delivered by a contracted third-party service provider with policy guidance from the Department¹. The program delivers services in three broad categories: 1) labour market information; 2) career counseling; 3) and job-finding assistance. Applicants can apply for this program in three ways. The fastest and easiest way is to apply on-line through My VAC Account. For those who prefer hard copy or are unable to apply online, they can apply by mailing a completed paper form or dropping it off at a VAC Area Office or CAF Transition Centre. Upon receiving the form, VAC will send a decision letter (approval or decline) to applicants within four weeks. If the client

¹ CTS - Application and General Information Business Process

is eligible, the third-party service provider will work with the client to develop a plan to meet the client's employment needs.

With the purpose of improving employment prospects for participants, the program was re-designed by Veterans Affairs Canada in 2018. Currently, eligible individuals have access to career counselling, job-search assistance, and labour market information. Prior to the 2018 redesign, Veterans were required to find and pay for these services within the community and submit a request for reimbursement after the completion of the service². As of April 1, 2018, services are provided by a third-party under contract who are then reimbursed by VAC³.

Eligibility criteria

The statutory framework for CTS is contained within the *Veterans Well-being Act* (VWA). Before 2018, only Veterans, Members, and survivors were eligible for the program. Currently, CTS is available for⁴:

- Members who have completed basic training
- Veterans (including Supplementary Reservists) who completed basic training and who were released from the CAF on or after April 1, 2006.
- Spouse/common-law partners whose spouse completed basic training and released from the CAF on or after April 1, 2006
- Survivors whose spouse completed basic training and died on or after April 1, 2006
- Canadian Forces Income Support (CFIS) recipients (Veterans/survivors) who are currently entitled to Canadian Forces Income Support benefits.

To be eligible for CTS, all applicants must reside in Canada. Additionally, Veterans must demonstrate they have a need, and Veterans, spouses, common-law partners and survivors must not be in receipt of VAC rehabilitation services.

Resources

Veterans Affairs Canada allots \$1.6 million in funding for CTS each year. A total of 3,813 CTS applications were approved by VAC between 2018-19 and 2020-21 (1,559 in 2018-19, 1,236 in 2019-20, and 1,018 in 2020-21). The forecast for program expenditures

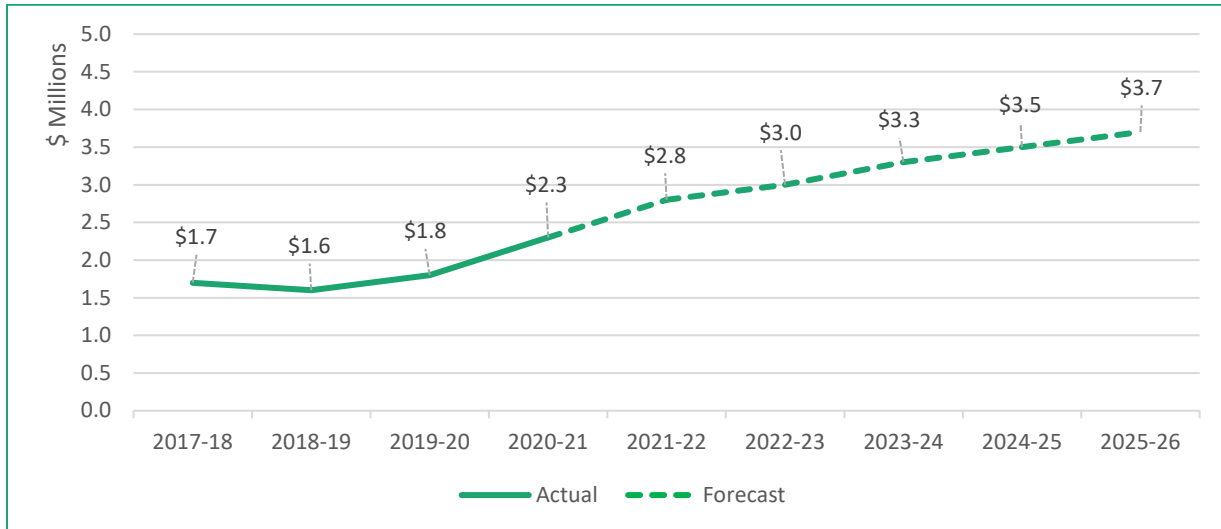
² 2016 Evaluation of the Career Transition Program

³ Application and general information

⁴ [Career Transition Services - General Policy](#)

indicates increases over the next few years. Figure 1 details CTS program expenditures (actual and forecast) from 2017-18 to 2025-26⁵. It should be noted that 2017 expenditures were implementation dollars to develop and launch the contract prior to implementation of the re-designed CTS in April 2018.

Figure 1 – Career Transition Services expenditures actuals and forecast



Source: VAC Facts and Figures Book March 2021 Edition

1.1.2 Education and Training Benefit

Overview

Announced in Budget 2017⁶, the Education and Training Benefit (ETB) is designed to help Veterans successfully transition from military to civilian life, achieve their education and post-military employment goals, and better position them to be more competitive in the civilian workforce. It also permits Veterans to pursue activities that provide purpose and result in satisfaction with their main job or activity. In contrast with some other VAC programs and benefits, the ETB is not a needs-based program.

Complementing the CTS program, the ETB is a taxable benefit that provides up to \$86,671.95⁷ in funding (while a Veteran is participating in a formal program) to cover tuition, fees, supplies, and some incidental and living expenses. In addition, participants

⁵ [Veterans Affairs Canada: Facts and Figures Summary](#)

⁶ Veterans Affairs Canada. [Budget 2017](#)

⁷ Maximum rate as of January 1, 2022

may access funding to contribute to the fees and costs associated with one-time courses aimed at self-fulfillment and personal interest and development. Veterans may be funded for most types of formalized educational programs, depending on whether they meet the eligibility criteria.

Delivery

Starting in 2018, VAC has provided ETB funding to eligible Veterans for short-term courses as well as formal education programs. Veterans can apply for ETB in different methods: online via a guided form on My VAC Account, dropping off the completed application form at a VAC Office or Canadian Forces Transition Center, or sending the form to Veterans Affairs Canada through the mail. VAC is expected to send a decision letter to the applicant within four weeks of receiving the completed application⁸.

The applicant wishing to pursue formal education programs must apply for the ETB and submit an ETB plan for approval before the start date of the educational program. The education institution must be listed on the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) [Master List of designated educational institutions](#), or if the institution is not listed on the ESDC Master List, applicants must submit documentation proving that it is a government recognized post-secondary education institution.

After an application and plan are approved by VAC, funding is released directly to the student for the first term of study⁹. A maximum of \$21,077.81 is available per year to eligible individuals pursuing formal education programs. In order to continue to receive funding for the future periods of study, applicants must submit a completed monitoring form, provide proof of completion and proof of enrollment for the following term to VAC. In contrast, for Veterans who wish to apply for funding for short courses, a completed Short Course application must be received by VAC prior to the first day of classes. Veterans who take short-term courses can receive funding for the actual costs charged directly by the institution or provider up to a maximum of \$5,269.45.

⁸ Education and Training Benefit – Application and General Information

⁹ [Veterans Affairs Canada. Education and Training Benefits – Questions and Answers](#)

Eligibility criteria

The administration of the ETB falls under the [Veterans Well-being Act](#). Veterans are eligible to apply for the ETB if:¹⁰

- They were honourably released from the CAF (Regular or Reserve Force) on or after April 1, 2006, or are a member of the Supplementary Reserve; and
- They meet the “length of service” requirement as follows:
 - At least 12 years of authorized days of CAF Service (4382 days) to receive up to \$86,671.95 (2022) or
 - At least 6 years of authorized days of CAF service (2191 days) to receive up to \$43,335.98 (2022).

Veterans have up to 10 years following their release date to receive ETB funding:

- Veterans released from the CAF between April 1, 2006, and March 31, 2018, will have until April 1, 2028, to receive funding.
- Members of the Supplementary Reserve who are honourably released between 1 April 2018 and 4 July 2019 have 10 years from date of release to receive funding.
- Members of the Supplementary Reserve who are honourably released on July 5, 2019, have until July 5, 2029, to receive funding.
- Those who transferred to the Supplementary Reserve after 5 July 2019 have 10 years from the date of transfer.

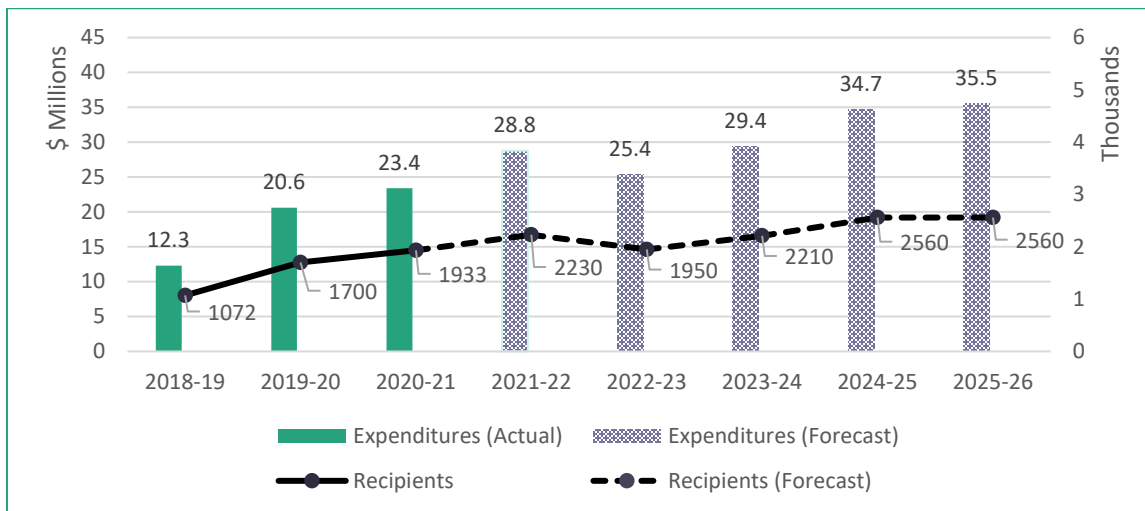
Resources

With total expenditures in the first fiscal year 2018-2019 being \$12.3 million, ETB helped 1,072 Veterans pursue education and personal development goals.¹¹ Expenditures for ETB increased to \$20.6 million in the fiscal year 2019-2020, supporting a total of 1,700 students. As Figure 2 shows, forecasted expenditures and recipients are expected to grow over the next five years.

¹⁰ [Education and Training Benefit Policy](#)

¹¹ [Veterans Affairs Canada: Facts and Figures Summary](#)

Figure 2 – Education and Training Benefit recipients and expenditures actual and forecast



Source: VAC Facts and Figures Book March 2021 Edition

1.2 Evaluation purpose, scope and questions

1.2.1 Purpose

The evaluation of CTS and ETB is required to meet the *Financial Administration Act* (section 42.1) and *Policy on Results* requirements to conduct “Evaluations of ongoing programs of grants and contributions with five-year average actual expenditures of \$5 million or greater per year.” The evaluation also fulfills the department’s responsibility to provide evaluation coverage of organizational spending and the programs in the Program Inventory as per section 4.3.15.2 of the *Policy on Results*. The evaluation is being conducted as part of the 2020-25 Departmental Evaluation Plan that was approved by the Deputy Minister on August 10, 2020.

1.2.2 Scope

The scope of the evaluation includes all the activities of the CTS and ETB programs conducted during the years 2018-19 to 2020-21. Where available and appropriate, updated data may be referenced in this report.

1.2.3 Objectives

The objective of this evaluation is to assess the programs’ relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, the evaluation also considered:

- Alignment between the CTS and ETB programs;
- Application of a Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens to the evaluative process to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people served by VAC experienced the programs; and
- Understanding the extent to which the programs are producing outcomes that contribute to the well-being of eligible Veterans.

1.2.4 Evaluation questions

The evaluation of the CTS program and ETB examines issues of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. The following questions are addressed:

Relevance

1. What is the relationship between CTS and ETB and between these programs and other VAC programs in the continuum of supports for Veterans? Are these relationships appropriate/working effectively to meet Veterans' needs?
2. To what extent are the eligibility criteria for CTS and ETB meeting Veterans' needs?
3. To what extent do Veterans have unmet needs for career transition and/or accessing education or training?

Effectiveness

4. Are the programs achieving the expected/desired reach?
5. Are there alternative program delivery approaches that could be considered that would increase outcomes for Veterans?
6. How effectively have the programs supported Veterans to meet their personal and professional goals and advance their well-being as per VAC's domains of well-being?
7. Were there unexpected outcomes (positive or negative) as a result of receiving services/benefits, including unintended GBA+ related impacts that should be resolved?

Efficiency

8. Are the available program data for CTS and ETB adequate to measure its outcomes/impact?

9. Have the activities of the CTS and ETB been delivered in an efficient and economical manner?

The evaluation questions along with the associated indicators and data sources are presented in Appendix A.

1.3 Methodology

Consistent with TBS guidelines and recognized best practice in evaluation, a range of methods and sources were used to triangulate evaluation findings. This section provides a description of the methodological approach for the evaluation. The data collection and analysis were guided by the evaluation questions and indicators outlined in Appendix A.

1.3.1 Review of documents, program and performance data and files

The GGI team reviewed relevant program documents and data related to the CTS and ETB programs. These documents include:

- Annual reports and other sample reports from the CTS third-party service provider
- ETB applicant guide, FAQ, policies, business process, etc.
- CTS policies, processes, FAQ, previous evaluation report, etc.
- Transition Services Performance Information Profile (PIP)

1.3.2 Key informant interviews

To help scope the evaluation, GGI held 7 meetings with 11 individuals to better understand the program context and explore areas of interest for the evaluation. GGI also held two meetings to prepare for subsequent interviews. One was held with internal VAC contracting officers and one was held with the third-party service provider (and also attended by a VAC contracting officer). These meetings were held to better understand the third-party contract requirements, gather descriptive information about the third-party service provider processes and data collection, and to discuss the best approach for the interview with the third-party service provider.

During the evaluation fieldwork stage, VAC Audit and Evaluation Division worked with the program areas to identify individuals who were familiar with the two programs and

who could comment on the evaluation questions. A total of nine interviews were conducted with 12 participants as follows:

- VAC program managers and senior advisors (6 interview sessions were held with 8 participants);
- VAC appeals officers (2 individual interviews);
- Representatives of third-party service provider (1 interview/group session were held with 2 participants).

Key informant interviews were conducted by telephone or online meeting software and lasted approximately 1 hour. In one instance, a written response to questions was provided.

1.3.3 Focus groups with front line staff

The Audit and Evaluation Division of Veterans Affairs Canada contacted front line and adjudication staff who were identified by their managers as individuals that would add value and insight from a hands-on perspective. A total of four virtual focus group sessions were conducted with the following number and types of participants:

- One group with 5 Benefits Program Officers;
- One group with 2 Veteran Service Agents and 1 Case Manager;
- One group with 1 Veteran Service Agent and 1 Case Manager;
- One group with 2 Case Managers.

Focus group sessions lasted approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. The purpose of the focus group sessions was to understand front line staff members' current awareness of each of the programs, obtain their feedback on information available for each of the programs, and their suggestions for improvements to the programs. Focus groups were also used to gain insight into the adjudication process and the efficiency/performance of the program from the adjudicator's perspective.

1.3.4 Survey of participants

An online survey was conducted of Veterans in receipt of CTS and ETB services, or both services.

Sample

The sample was selected by the Veterans' Affairs evaluation team and included Veterans in receipt of services within the scope of the evaluation. This included Veterans who participated in CTS activities during the years 2018-19 to 2020-21, and Veterans in receipt of ETB since its launch on April 1, 2018. The survey was administered via My VAC Account.

The population was comprised of a total of 7,259 Veterans with unique IDs who participated in the CTS, ETB, or both programs since 2018-19. Of the 7,259, the survey was administered to 3,932 Veterans comprised of those that had their My VAC Account notifications enabled. Of the 3,932 Veterans, the online survey was administered to three separate groups of Veterans with the following program involvement:

- CTS Only = 848
- ETB Only = 1,941
- CTS and ETB = 1,143

Response rates

A total of 672 Veterans completed the survey overall, of which 129 reported they received CTS services only, 377 received ETB services only, and 166 received both CTS and ETB services.

The response rates¹² are as follows:

- Overall response rate: 17.1% (672/3,932)
- CTS only response rate: 15.2% (129/848)
- ETB only response rate: 19.4% (377/1,941)
- Both CTS and ETB response rate: 14.5% (166/1,143)

¹²A realistic response rate for online surveys is generally in the 5% to 30% range, which has been met for this research).

Sampling and margin of error

A representative sample is a subset of a population that seeks to accurately reflect the characteristics of the larger group. In total, the sampling error is calculated based on Veterans in scope for this research, including those with notifications enabled and disabled. In total, 7,259 Veterans were eligible to receive the survey, with 672 completing the survey (8.9%). At the overall level, the survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent¹³ at a 95 percent level of confidence.

1.4 Analytical approach

The collection of evaluation data from all lines of evidence formed the input for the analysis. The data/evidence gathered was compiled into matrices to enable triangulation. This report includes findings from all lines of evidence.

1.5 Strengths and limitations

The evaluation addresses the evaluation questions to the extent that accurate and complete information was available. Where there is not sufficient information, this is noted in the report, and the findings are interpreted accordingly. The following is an overview of the strengths and limitations of this evaluation.

1.5.1 Strengths

Overall, this evaluation presents a strong methodology. The use of multiple lines of inquiry enhances confidence in the findings and compensates, to an extent, for any non-response bias. In addition, by using both surveys and interviews/focus groups to collect information from clients and internal VAC employees, the evaluation provides an opportunity to make statements on the extent to which a theme is common (survey) and explain reasons why it is the case (interviews). Additionally, the analysis of the program data allowed for a greater understanding of the administrative processes associated with ETB and CTS, as well as the demographic characteristics of applicants.

Other strengths of the evaluation design include:

¹³ The actual margin of error is .036 or 3.6%, but as is customary in statistical reporting, this is rounded up to .05, or 5%.

- **Accessibility** – The evaluation team is trained on strategies for improving accessibility and making data collection easy for respondents. This included the use of multiple modes for each line of inquiry (e.g., virtual meetings, online survey). Bilingual options were offered to all respondents.
- **Confidentiality** – The evaluation made every effort to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants. This included using the My VAC Account for clients, and a range of strategies for recruiting VAC employees.
- **Reach** – The survey used a census approach in which all eligible respondents who enabled the My VAC Account correspondence feature were invited to complete an online survey. With respect to internal VAC employees, invitations for interviews and focus groups offered multiple dates and times to accommodate their schedules and availabilities. Interviewees and focus group members had the option of participating in the official language of their choice.

1.5.2 Limitations

Survey of Participants

While every effort was made to minimize limitations, there were challenges with regards to accessing potential respondents:

- In order to protect client confidentiality, it was not possible to access a complete list of clients. Instead, only Veterans that opted-in to be contacted on their My VAC Account were included in the sampling frame.
- Data collection occurred over the summer months at a time when potential respondents may have been less available or inclined to participate.
- It is possible that there are differences between stakeholders who participated in data collection and those who did not. For example, clients who had either very positive or very negative experiences may have been more enthusiastic about participation. This means that findings from individual lines of inquiry are not generalizable to the whole population. To mitigate, alternative lines of evidence were used to support survey findings.

Program data

The program data was used mainly to address evaluation questions associated with program effectiveness and the degree to which the programs achieved the expected and desired reach, including delineating the demographic characteristics of clients. The data files did not contain information related to eligibility decisions, or program utilization over time, other than application processing data. To mitigate this challenge, data from the third-party service provider's Three-Year Annual Report was summarized for this purpose. It is felt that while the data from the third-party service provider may not be encompassing of all program data, it does provide an acceptable level of representation of outcomes and trends over time.

2.0 Summary of findings

2.1 Relevance

2.1.1 What is the relationship between CTS and ETB and between these programs and other VAC programs in the continuum of supports for Veterans? Are these relationships appropriate/working effectively to meet Veterans' needs?

FINDING: There is an obvious, documented relationship between CTS and ETB. Not only do VAC policies and other documents support that CTS and ETB are complementary and designed to work together, but those consulted for the evaluation also recognized this relationship. Possible improvements in the integration include having more regular contact between staff within the program areas, offering CTS to those Veterans applying for ETB, and combining marketing efforts between the ETB and CTS program areas.

The linkages between CTS/ETB and other VAC programs were less pronounced. Key informants and focus group participants described these sets of programs as largely independent from each other. Participants agreed that the Rehabilitation Services and Vocational Assistance is another VAC program with which CTS/ETB might have a relationship. The relationship, when discussed, was seen to be largely complementary since Veterans can apply to CTS/ETB before or after they have completed the rehabilitation program. No overlap was noted with respect to services offered between the rehabilitation and CTS/ETB programs by those consulted for the evaluation since participation in CTS and payment of the ETB cannot be made while participating in the rehabilitation program.

Relationship between CTS and ETB

While there are separate policies for each of the programs, the two programs (CTS and ETB) are complementary and well-integrated. In terms of eligibility, Veterans may apply for CTS at the same time they apply for ETB, and they are encouraged to do so. This allows clients to take advantage of the education and training planning services offered through CTS. CTS clients can also receive guidance and assistance in completing their ETB-related forms.¹⁴ In the ETB Business Process, the application process states “Applicants who are eligible for VAC’s Career Transition Services (CTS) program should be encouraged to contact the CTS national third-party service provider for personalized

¹⁴ VAC. CTS – Application and General Information Business Process. Effective date April 1, 2018. Page 2.

ETB assistance. They will work with the Veteran to help them complete the ETB application and Plan.”¹⁵

In practice, the Career Transition Plan identifies the services needed, including the identification of education and training needs.¹⁶ Releasing CAF Members, Veterans, survivors and spouses/common-law partners are eligible to receive a formal individualized Educational Plan (in addition to a Career Transition Plan). These client types can also receive educational counselling, such as education requirements to achieve career goals, skills employers are looking for, what education and training is needed for specific jobs, etc.¹⁷, Departmental internal documents indicated¹⁸ that “CTS should bookend the Veteran’s educational experience” meaning that CTS services can be accessed before and after their formal program (before in terms of planning and after in terms of helping clients find a job in a field related to their education, if employment is a goal).

This connection between the programs is reinforced in documentation aimed at the National Contact Centre as well as ETB applicants. Documentation available to the National Contact Centre Network (NCCN) indicates that “CTS complements the new Education and Training Benefit to help Veterans make informed choices about their career path.”¹⁹ The Application Guide for ETB specifically mentions that help and advice about ETB is available through CTS including providing “personalized help in:

- Deciding which field of study is right for you
- planning your studies to suit your circumstances
- completing the ETB forms so you can access your funds when you need them
- finding a suitable job when your education and training is complete.”²⁰

The Application Guide provides information on how to apply for CTS and ETB, but notes that it is not necessary to access CTS in order to qualify for ETB.

¹⁵ VAC. Education and Training Benefit – Application and General Information. Effective date: January 1, 2021. Page 3.

¹⁶ VAC. Career Transition Services – Plan Policy (CTS). Effective date July 5, 2019. Page 1.

¹⁷ VAC. Career Transition Services – Plan Policy (CTS). Effective date July 5, 2019. Page 3.

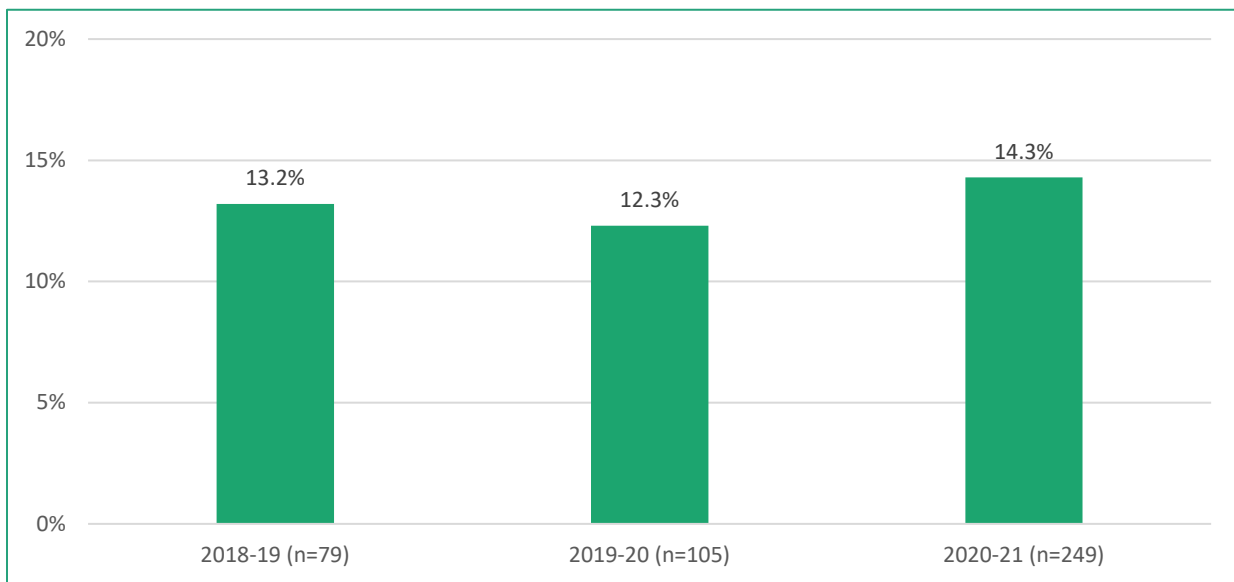
¹⁸ VAC. ETB Presentation Deck November 2020. Slide 7.

¹⁹ VAC. Career Transition Services NCCN FAQ 2018. Page 1. Also, in VAC Education and Training Benefit – NCCN FAQ 2018. Page 4.

²⁰ VAC. Education and Training Benefit – Application Guide. Page 3.

According to interviewees, it is expected that, based on the education and training needs identified in the Plan, CTS clients will apply to ETB. According to data from the third-party service provider, between 12% and 14% of file closures are due to clients moving on to ETB.

Figure 3: Percent of CTS files closed due to participation in ETB



Source: Third-party service provider’s 3-Year Report

Interviewees noted that CTS and ETB services are well integrated, and that education planning is available while receiving CTS services. Moreover, Veterans are referred to ETB by the CTS third-party service provider, as well as through the various VAC systems. VAC frontline staff indicated that they have to help Veterans to apply for ETB more often than expected (e.g., to fill out forms). Likewise, some Veterans noted challenges in navigating the application process.

Suggestions to improve the integration of the two programs include:

- Having periodic (quarterly) calls between the CTS and ETB program areas to discuss ways in which the programs can coordinate services;
- Offering CTS to Veterans applying for ETB to ensure that planned education will fully meet their needs, for example, through a joint application process;
- Combining marketing efforts between the CTS and ETB programs;

- Encourage ETB applicants to apply for CTS services, especially for those whose ETB applications were declined.

Relationship between CTS, ETB and other VAC programs

In terms of interactions with other VAC programs, there was little documentation that indicating a relationship with other programs. According to those interviewed for the evaluation, CTS and ETB are seen to be largely independent since they are available to all Veterans. Interviewees noted that Veterans can get similar transition supports through the CAF and the VAC Rehabilitation Program, but these programs are viewed to operate independently.

The relationship between the Rehabilitation Program and ETB was seen by many interviewees to be complementary since ETB can be accessed once the Veteran has met the goal in their Rehabilitation Plan. No overlap was perceived by interviewees. The ETB can be accessed prior to participation in Rehabilitation, although one cannot access both concurrently. Depending on the scenario, it may be beneficial for a Veteran to participate in the Rehabilitation program and achieve their rehabilitation plan goals prior to accessing the ETB.

According to focus group participants, the Rehabilitation Program offers more and better services than CTS or ETB (such as case management), however eligibility is very different for the three programs. It was noted by focus group participants that the ETB is important for Veterans who have overcome, or do not have health issues or barriers to re-establishment.

2.1.2 To what extent are the eligibility criteria for CTS and ETB meeting Veterans' needs?

FINDING: The evaluation found that the eligibility criteria for both CTS and ETB are appropriate. Where gaps have been identified, VAC has taken steps to address them. There are areas where additional communication regarding eligibility for the two programs is warranted. For CTS, it is suggested that there should be more clarity on criteria such as Canadian residency and eligibility expiry period for spouses/common-law partners. For ETB, more information should be provided regarding how years of service are calculated/what the years of service are and changes to eligibility. The evidence from the evaluation suggests that both programs are accessible. Additional data collection of certain GBA+ factors would enable the programs to determine if improvements are required relating to accessibility.

Eligibility criteria for CTS

The evidence suggests that eligibility criteria is appropriate. Veterans are described as coming to CTS with a variety of needs and skill levels. The program is viewed as flexible and customizable to each client. Additionally, Veterans can come back to the program as many times as they wish, as long as they still meet the eligibility criteria, and this is considered beneficial since “transition to employment is a journey.”

Two areas that were identified as requiring additional communication for CTS included:

- The Canadian residency requirement that a Veteran, spouse, common-law partner, or survivor may only be absent from Canada for a total of 183 days or less in a calendar year may be problematic for Veterans and their spouses/common-law partners applying for CTS. Moreover, Veterans that have been outside of Canada for this period of time or longer are no longer eligible for CTS, but continue to be eligible for ETB. Thus, while they can access ETB, they cannot get help planning their education/ training.
- There is a lack of awareness among spouses/common-law partners regarding the fact that their eligibility will expire (since theirs is the only category that expires). It was suggested that the end-date for CTS eligibility should be better communicated and made available to the third-party service provider so clients will be aware of the end-date of services.

Interview respondents noted that there is a need to improve data collected to better understand who is accessing the program, particularly GBA+ factors such as whether the client is a visible minority, Indigenous, and the client’s gender identity, etc.

Eligibility criteria for ETB

The evidence from key informant interviews and focus group findings indicates that, overall, ETB is meeting the expectations of Veterans. The survey evidence indicates that eight-in-ten (80.5%) ETB clients report that the educational program/courses they accessed were beneficial, and over one-half agreed that ETB provided them with the knowledge and skills they needed to engage in activities that are important to them (57.5%). Likewise, the same proportion of clients also reported that ETB provided them with knowledge and skills they needed to engage in employment activities (57.5%), and to provide them with the training certification they needed to find a job (56%). The

evaluation evidence also shows that ETB aids in the transition between CAF and civilian life for CAF members with over six years of service.

According to interview respondents familiar with program appeals, few cases are reviewed and only five (5) eligibility decisions have been overturned in the last three years. Reportedly, in most of those cases where a decision was overturned, it was because new information came to light. Review levels do not indicate that the eligibility criteria should be changed.

In close alignment with this finding, survey respondents indicate that the outcomes of most decisions brought forward for review are generally not resolved in their favour (i.e., the review upholds the first decision). Reasons for the review include requests for additional funding for expenses/books, courses that exceed the specified hours for formal program funding, and approval for professional programs that do not fit the criteria under short courses. In only two instances did Veterans report that a decision was overturned, for reasons related to additional expenses, and for being covered for a professional program.

Many of the internal VAC stakeholders that were consulted for this evaluation discussed their perception of the confusion, among Veterans, around eligibility for Reservists who have 6 “calendar years” of service, but not 6 “paid years” of service (since a reservist may not work 365 days/year). It was suggested that while the eligibility criteria are deemed reasonable, that Veterans (Reservists) should be better educated about how this eligibility is calculated.

Suggestions were provided about where additional communication would be useful, including:

- Providing clear explanations of how years of service are calculated, including calculations for reservists. It was suggested that eligibility be automated based on employment records and that eligibility status (whether someone has achieved the 6 years of service for ETB, for example) be made clear to Members, perhaps within the My VAC portal or via Transition Centres.
- Providing information about any changes to eligibility and ETB-related processes.

Accessibility

Generally speaking, the evidence suggests that both CTS and ETB are considered accessible by Veterans. CTS is available online (via the portal and virtual meetings) and via phone and this meets the needs of the vast majority of clients who come to the third-party service provider seeking services. According to program data from the third-party service provider, 90% of referrals to CTS set up a profile in the portal, while 10% have never accessed the portal, suggesting that the virtual nature of CTS services meet the needs of most clients. Moreover, while survey findings do not uncover significant challenges with access to CTS services, some Veterans suggest that VAC and the third-party service provider should better explain how the system works and increase awareness and access to services prior to discharge; offer more personalized services and more resources for job/education options; make the process more efficient; and provide an online gateway where applicants can view available jobs.

With respect to ETB, most Veterans did not encounter difficulties accessing the program. For example, it was found that only 22.5% believed the application to be confusing; 30.2% thought the information provided was not clear, 15.1% stated the education program was not offered by an institution on the ESDC designated list, and 21% indicated the response to inquiries were poor. Only a small proportion of Veterans offered open-ended comments about some of the challenges experienced, including issues with the system being difficult to navigate, processing time being too long, money coming in slowly after approval, ETB funding not being sufficient to cover expenses, and suggestions that more courses should be covered by the formal program.

In terms of GBA+ factors, the biggest area where ETB accessibility may vary is the rural/urban split. This type of access, whether rural or urban, was noted as particularly relevant for ETB clients since access to education was noted to be particularly challenging in rural locations. It should be noted that the location of education is outside the control of VAC and is subject to where educational institutions deliver their programs and veteran choices. Having to move to attend school is an added expense that is not covered by the program.

The mix of GBA+ factors among the clients is considered by most interview respondents to be positive. However, some GBA+ factors are not tracked and therefore not known (e.g., racialized minority, Indigenous, rural/urban). Section 2.2 discusses more findings pertaining to reach.

2.1.3 To what extent do Veterans have unmet needs for career transition and/or accessing education or training?

FINDING: For CTS, several unmet needs were reported by Veterans. For ETB, the program was determined to be satisfactory, but consultations and the survey indicated that the \$5,000 maximum limit for short courses was insufficient. Qualitative feedback received also suggested there are challenges with the type of training and type of education institutions that are eligible under the program, leading to some Veterans not having the opportunity to access their preferred courses or programs. Some of these eligibility challenges are the result of differences among provinces/territories whereby some programs are deemed eligible in one province, but not in another. Updates were made to the ETB policy in summer 2021 to expand the funding available for technical programs that may not meet the course duration criteria to qualify for formal program funding. However, some gaps have still been identified with respect to certain technical training/skills upgrades where the cost of training/certification is beyond the \$5,000 limit but the course duration is too short to qualify as a formal program.

Unmet needs for career transition

Between about one-quarter and less than one-half of Veterans responding to the survey indicated that CTS helped them find a job (21.8%), increase their civilian skills (28%), receive the employment supports they needed (36.8%), gain a better understanding of their qualifications (44.8%), and helped them gain a better understanding of their post-service professional opportunities. This may indicate the client group has unmet needs.

Unmet expectations for accessing education and training

In terms of unmet expectations related to education and training, the \$5,000 limit for short courses was noted by almost all interviewees and many in the focus groups to be insufficient, particularly for many professional development courses and certifications. This finding was substantiated in the Survey of Veterans. However, it should be noted that quantitative data or analysis was not reviewed with respect to the short course funding limit. In particular, the following observations were noted by Veterans:

- The \$5,000 maximum limit for short courses provides limited options;
- Veterans who have degrees and wish to complete short courses should be able to have multiple courses pre-approved in one application;
- The short course limit should be increased to the \$8,000 - \$10,000 range;

- Some courses that do not qualify under the formal stream (e.g., Masters Certificate in Project Management, PROSCI, DEVOPS) should be covered under the short course stream through increased funds;
- The full amount (\$80,000) should be available for anyone wishing to use the ETB program regardless of whether they are applying to a short-course or formal education program; and
- The requirement to receive prior authorization to take a course is unwieldy (e.g., having to wait to apply, shortened timeframes for course preparation, uncertainty).

It should be noted that some of these observations are based on misunderstandings of the benefit's intent and reflect the need for increased communication with Veterans respecting what programs and courses qualify for the ETB. Despite these observations, more than 4 in 5 Veterans indicated in the survey that the ETB had met their expectations or needs. Unlike some VAC benefits, there is no needs-based assessment for the ETB. It is available to virtually all Veterans that meet the duration of service requirement.

With respect to formal programs, interview respondents observed that the list of designated institutions can also be problematic where many associations are not considered eligible, largely due to variations in educational/licensing across provincial/territorial jurisdictions in Canada. Real estate was one area where eligibility varies by province depending on whether training is offered by an association or by an institute (where the training and outcome are the same, but only one is eligible). Pilot licensing has been raised as another example lacking consistency. Apprenticeship training that qualified for Red Seal was also mentioned whereby some trades programs that are offered in colleges in most provinces are offered by high schools in Quebec but are not eligible under the program as provincial funding is available. Moreover, some Veterans (15.1%) did state challenges accessing education programs that are not offered by an institution on the ESDC list used by VAC (as noted previously, VAC may approve a program at an institution not on the list if the applicant submits documentation showing it is recognized by the relevant government authority as a post-secondary education institution).

In line with the survey findings, VAC employees also pointed out that courses that are more technical or skills-based did not meet the eligibility for a formal course (which must be at least 12 weeks long)., This was addressed in June 2021 (midway through data

collection) when technical education became exempt from the minimum duration requirement. Participants in the focus groups noted that exceptions have been made, providing the example of well over \$10K of training for heavy equipment operator being funded.

2.2 Performance/effectiveness

2.2.1 Are the programs achieving the expected/desired reach?

FINDING: The demographic reach of the ETB and CTS programs is very similar to the overall population of Veterans released during the period of the evaluation (i.e., between 2018/19 and 2021/22). While the demographics of recent Veterans and CTS/ETB client Veterans are nearly analogous by gender, by age, it was found that those in receipt of ETB and CTS services are slightly older than recent Veterans.

Referrals to CTS have been steadily decreasing since 2018-2019, mostly for Veterans, Still Serving Members and Members with Intent to Release (MITR). This may indicate further outreach to target groups is required.

Awareness and knowledge of CTS and ETB among front-line staff is quite general. Specific inquiries are directed to other divisions or managers. Clients are also not highly aware of the programs while in service and suggest that they should be more widely promoted prior to release.

Veteran population demographics

In order to contextualize and better understand the reach of CTS and ETB based on participation figures, data regarding recently released Veterans²¹ was attained. Table 1 outlines releases by age and gender, cumulative from 2018/2019 to 2021/2022.²²

²¹ CAF releases include releases from the CAF (Reg F, P Res, COATS, Canadian Rangers) and transfers to Supplemental Reserves. Transfers between Reg F, P Res, COATS, and Rangers are excluded.

²² Data from 2021-2022 only includes releases up to 31 Oct 2021, therefore the analysis is based up to the current period (October) in 2021.

Table 1: Releases by gender and age group (2018 to 2021)

Age	Female Total	Female Percent*	Male Total	Male Percent*
<20	413	8.0%	2,117	8.4%
20-24	685	13.3%	4,502	17.8%
25-29	722	14.0%	3,980	15.7%
30-34	613	11.9%	3,058	12.1%
35-39	567	11.0%	2,266	8.9%
40-44	515	10.0%	1,990	7.9%
45-49	497	9.6%	1,942	7.7%
50-54	527	10.2%	2,159	8.5%
55-59	393	7.6%	2,108	8.3%
60+	234	4.5%	1,222	4.8%
Total	5,166	100%	25,344	100%

*Rounded to nearest tenth of a percent.

- A total of 30,510 releases occurred between 2018/2019 and 2021. Of these 16.9% were women and 83.1% were men.
- The mean (average age) of women released from service is 37.3, while the mean age for men is 36.0. Combined, the mean average age, for both genders, is 36.2.
- There are greater proportions of women and men released between the ages of less than 20 and 39 years of age (58.1% and 62.8%, respectively), than in the older age cohorts of 40 and greater than 60 years of age (41.9% women and 37.2% men).
- In analyzing both gender categories combined, it was found that there are higher proportions of released Veterans in the younger age cohorts (age <20 to 39) than in the older categories (age 40 to 60+): 62% in younger groups and 38% in older groups.

Veterans receiving CTS and ETB

The achievement of expected and desired reach is measured through several indicators including:

- Number of applications received for each program (CTS and ETB);
- The number of formal program plans and short courses developed;

- The number of favourable eligibility decisions for CTS for Veterans, spouses and survivors;
- Program utilization over time;
- Awareness of programs among front-line staff; and
- The process for which participants are made aware of the programs.

The following sections summarize the evaluation findings for many of the listed indicators.²³

Number of applications received

A total of 8,661 individuals have applied to CTS, ETB (short courses and formal programs), or both as of March 31, 2021.

Of the 8,661 Veterans with applications, 7,749 individuals applied for ETB funding, and 4,189 applied for CTS.²⁴ Table 2 provides a further breakdown by program type (ETB short courses, formal courses, CTS, etc.).

The demographic characteristics of the applicants are further summarized below.²⁵

Program and client types

The program data indicates that there is more interest in the ETB program than CTS. Over one-half (51.6%) of clients have either applied for an ETB formal plan only (14.1%), ETB short course only (5.5%), an ETB formal and ETB short course (4.2%), and ETB unknown²⁶ (27.8%). An additional 13.6% have applied for both ETB and CTS support. In comparison, only about one-third (34.8%) of clients have applied for CTS supports only.

²³ Due to data limitations, some of the indicators could not be measured.

²⁴ It should be noted that the numbers are overlapping as some individuals applied for both the CTS and ETB programs.

²⁵ For the demographic analysis, ETB program types are reported at the overall ETB program level for ease of presentation.

²⁶ The data did not include an indicator type of ETB course (short or formal).

Table 2 – Program Type

Type of Program	Count	Percentage
ETB Formal Plan Only	1,221	14.1%
ETB Short Course Only	477	5.5%
ETB (Formal Plan and Short Course)	366	4.2%
ETB Unknown ²⁷	2,408	27.8%
CTS Service Only	3,014	34.8%
ETB and CTS	1,175	13.6%
Total	8,661	100%

The remainder of this section summarizes applicant demographics by program type, where ETB is defined as Veteran applying for ETB formal plan only, ETB short course only, ETB formal and short course, and ETB unknown. CTS and ETB and CTS are also included in the findings below. Table 3 summarizes the findings for grouped ETB categories and will be used to guide the subsequent findings.

Table 3 – Program type (ETB combined, CTS, and ETB and CTS)

Program Type	Count	Percentage
All ETB	4,472	51.6%
CTS	3,014	34.8%
ETB and CTS	1,175	13.6%
Total	8,661	100%

The vast majority of total applicants are Veterans (98.6%), with very few spouses, survivors, or were coded in the data as other/unknown accessing either the ETB, CTS or both programs. Note that survivors and spouses are not eligible for ETB.

Moreover, all (100%) clients in receipt of both CTS and ETB services are Veterans, and nearly all ETB applicants are Veterans (99.3%), while about one percent of CTS

²⁷ Indicates that a Veteran has been deemed eligible by VAC for the ETB program, but the Veteran has not yet indicated whether they wish to enter a long-term program or take a short course.

applicants are spouses (1.1%), survivors (0.3%); and a little over one percent are designated as other/unknown (1.5%).

Table 4 – Program Type by Applicant Type

Client Type	Total	Percent*	ETB	Percent ETB*	CTS	Percent CTS*	CTS and ETB	Percent CTS and ETB*
Veteran	8,542	98.6%	4440	99.3%	2,927	97.1%	1175	100%
Spouse	32	0.4%	NA	0.0%	32	1.1%	0	0.0%
Survivor	10	0.1%	NA	0.0%	10	0.3%	0	0.0%
Unknown	77	0.9%	32	0.7%	45	1.5%	0	0.0%
Total	8,661	100%	4472	100%	3,014	100%	1,175	100%

*Rounded to nearest tenth of a percent.

Demographic characteristics

Gender

Analysis shows 82.9% of applicants are male, 16.9% are female, and 0.2% are unknown. Females have a slightly higher likelihood of applying for CTS benefits than ETB.

In comparison to VAC data on released Veterans (from 2018 to 2021), the proportions are very similar: there are 83.1% males and 16.9% females in that population, indicating that VAC is reaching very similar proportions of males and the exact proportions of females through ETB and CTS.

Table 5 – Program type by sex

Sex	Total	Percent*	ETB	Percent ETB*	CTS	Percent CTS*	CTS and ETB	Percent CTS and ETB*
Male	7,181	82.9%	3,728	83.4%	2,473	82.1%	980	83.4%
Female	1,466	16.9%	738	16.5%	535	17.8%	193	16.4%
Unknown	14	0.2%	6	0.1%	6	0.2%	2	0.2%
Total	8,661	100%	4,472	100%	3,014	100%	1,175	100%

*Rounded to nearest tenth of a percent.

Age

The CTS and ETB programs have similar proportions of applicants broken out by age, although slightly fewer CTS applicants are 40 years of age and older than ETB applicants (55.5% and 62.3%, respectively).

In comparison to the population of released Veterans, it was found that those in receipt of ETB and CTS services are slightly older than the general population of Veterans.

Specifically, in the program groups (CTS, ETB, and CTS/ETB) the mean age of all applicants is 43.9 years, with 59.5% aged 40 and greater. For the population of released Veterans, the mean age is 36.2, with 38% being 40 and older. This would indicate that VAC is attracting an older age demographic to these programs than in the population of released Veterans.

Table 6 – Program type by age

Age	Total	Percent*	ETB	Percent ETB *	CTS	Percent CTS*	CTS and ETB	Percent CTS and ETB*
20-29	625	7.2%	228	5.1%	321	10.7%	76	6.5%
30-39	2,882	33.3%	1,460	32.6%	1,021	33.9%	401	34.1%
40-49	2,249	26.0%	1,157	25.9%	786	26.1%	306	26.0%
50-59	2,203	25.4%	1,180	26.4%	729	24.2%	294	25.0%
60+	702	8.1%	447	10.0%	157	5.2%	98	8.3%
Total	8,661	100%	4,472	100%	3,014	100%	1,175	100%

* Rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent.

Marital Status

Approximately three-in-four total applicants (both programs) are single, divorced, or separated (75.6%). This proportion is slightly smaller for ETB applicants (73.6%), and slightly higher for CTS (77.6%), and CTS/ETB applicants (78.6%). ETB clients (26%) are more likely to be married or common-law than CTS clients (21.7) and CTS/ETB clients (21.2%).

Table 7 – Program type by marital status

Status	Total	Percent*	ETB	Percent ETB*	CTS	Percent CTS*	CTS and ETB	Percent CTS and ETB*
Single/ Divorced/ Separated	6,551	75.6%	3,290	73.6%	2,337	77.6%	924	78.6%
Married/ Common- Law	2,066	23.9%	1,163	26.0%	654	21.7%	249	21.2%
Widowed/ Survivor	30	0.3%	13	0.3%	16	0.5%	1	0.1%
Unknown	14	0.2%	6	0.1%	7	0.2%	1	0.1%
Total	8661	100.0%	4,472	100%	3,014	100%	1,175	100%

*Rounded to nearest tenth of a percent.

Province of applicant

Most applicants are from Ontario (36.8%), Alberta (14.5%), B.C. (13.1%), and Quebec (11.2%). The remaining applicants (24.4%) are from the other provinces and territories, the U.S., or unknown. Similar proportions are reported for ETB, CTS, and ETB/CTS clients.

Table 8 – Program type by province (Prov.)

Prov.	Total	Total Percent*	ETB	Percent ETB*	CTS	Percent CTS*	CTS and ETB	Percent CTS and ETB*
NL	168	1.9%	87	1.9%	58	1.9%	23	2.0%
PE	71	0.8%	43	1.0%	24	0.8%	4	0.3%
NS	827	9.5%	386	8.6%	333	11.0%	108	9.2%
NB	410	4.7%	187	4.2%	168	5.6%	55	4.7%
QC	972	11.2%	540	12.1%	316	10.5%	116	9.9%
ON	3,184	36.8%	1,625	36.3%	1,148	38.1%	411	35.0%
MB	296	3.4%	139	3.1%	123	4.1%	34	2.9%
SK	141	1.6%	78	1.7%	48	1.6%	15	1.3%
AB	1,260	14.5%	650	14.5%	412	13.7%	198	16.9%
BC	1,133	13.1%	616	13.8%	329	10.9%	188	16.0%
NT	28	0.3%	14	0.3%	12	0.4%	2	0.2%

Prov.	Total	Total Percent*	ETB	Percent ETB*	CTS	Percent CTS*	CTS and ETB	Percent CTS and ETB*
YT	10	0.1%	7	0.2%	3	0.1%	0	0.0%
NU	3	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	0.1%	0	0.0%
U.S.	77	0.9%	50	1.1%	21	0.7%	6	0.5%
N/A	81	0.9%	50	1.1%	16	0.5%	15	1.3%
Total	8,661	100%	4,472	100%	3,014	100%	1,175	100%

*Rounded to nearest tenth of a percent.

Favourable CTS eligibility decisions and program use over time

The number of referrals to the third party-service provider for CTS services, and eligibility decisions outlined in this section are reported from the third-party service provider's Year 3 Report (March 31, 2021).²⁸ This section also outlines program utilization over time using data reported by the third-party service provider.

The third-party service provider's services and supports to Veterans, spouses and survivors include:

- Confirmation of employment conditions
- Online resources and instruction
- Tailored resumes and cover letters
- Self-assessment to determine job goal
- Interest inventory
- Resume and cover letter
- Identification of employment barriers for resolution
- Develop an individualized ETB plan
- Referrals to other programs and services
- Support for military to civilian transition

It was reported that in Year 3 (2020-2021), the third-party service provider provided services to 1,290 clients who were still **active** from years one (2018-2019) and two

²⁸ [Third-party service provider], Veteran's Affairs Canada Career Transition Services and Education and Training Benefit Year Three Report, 2020-2021.

(2019-2020), along with an additional 1,155 new referrals to the program, for a total of 2,445 served.

Referrals

The number of referrals to CTS has been decreasing yearly, with Year 3 (2020/2021) having only 1,155 referrals, in comparison to Year 1 (2018-2019) where there were 1,575 referrals.

It should be noted that the number of referrals is greater than number of active files for various reasons. Client files may be closed due to:

- VAC termination (candidates that are initially approved for CTS but are later found to be better served through VAC’s Rehabilitation program; or clients that are outside of Canada for 183 days or more in a 12-month period).
- Not able to contact.
- Registered with the program but did not participate.
- Client withdrew prior to engaging in service.

Table 9 – CTS referrals by month and year

Month	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
April	233	51	61
May	236	N/A	84
June	172	82	76
July	110	156	94
Aug	130	207	81
Sept	96	102	81
Oct	120	121	125
Nov	77	110	94
Dec	114	85	89
Jan	122	116	118
Feb	109	119	132
Mar	56	90	120
April	233	51	61
Total	1,575	1,301	1,155

Awareness of programs

Awareness among front-line staff

Interviewed respondents report that front-line staff have a general level of awareness and knowledge of both ETB and CTS, but do not necessarily understand the intricacies of the eligibility requirements associated with the ETB program.

The evidence shows that Veterans Service Agents (VSA) and Case Managers (CMs) have the basic knowledge required to direct clients to the CTS and/or ETB programs. Their involvement centres around referring clients to these programs or sending inquiries to ETB/CTS program staff when clients have questions. That said, there is general agreement among front-line staff that VSAs have more familiarity with both programs than CMs because of the nature of their role. VSAs that work on a military base (or Transition Centre) are expected to be familiar with CTS and ETB because they conduct the transition interviews with and releasing members. Information on CTS and ETB is included in the initial VSA/CM training, however, if staff are not kept up to date with these programs and are not discussing them with clients, they may not be as familiar as they should be. Additionally, CMs that work on bases in transition centres deliver presentations on relevant VAC programs, including CTS and ETB and are more likely to encounter questions about the programs, in particular about CTS. CMs that work on bases appear to be more familiar with both programs compared to CMs that do not work on bases (e.g., CMs that work in area offices).

Awareness among clients

The survey findings indicate that clients are not aware of CTS supports or the ETB program until after they had been released from service. Moreover, members of the Supplementary Reserve are also not informed of the eligibility criteria associated with their time in service.

While many praise CTS as an excellent source of support, it is suggested that CTS services should be promoted while serving Members are in the military to prepare them for employment upon release.

“An absolute fantastic service ... however the failure of this service is [that] at the time I became aware, it was only marketed to myself by VAC during my out clearance and retirement. Especially the resume

writing component should be a service that serving military leaders are actively aware and can counsel subordinates who are considering retiring. All serving Members should be made well aware of this service 5 years before they retire.” (Surveyed Veteran)

This lack of awareness of ETB and CTS programs amongst Veterans was further confirmed through the interviews and focus groups with VAC employees. It is noted that Veterans will typically not have knowledge of ETB unless they know other Veterans that have applied for benefits. It is also believed that while some promotion does exist, many populations and communities may not have the same level of awareness as others, particularly those who reside in remote locations.

VAC front-line employees indicate that ETB and CTS should be promoted in career development and resource centers, as well as transition centers, as a joint strategy of outreach to inform Veterans of the programs that are available. It is believed that while some Veterans may access ETB, they are not aware of CTS, and vice versa.

Moreover, it was suggested that CTS and ETB be more closely delivered. For example, applying for CTS could be more closely tied to the ETB application. To improve understanding, it was recommended that program information be clearer and more specific so that individuals understand what is offered by the CTS program, including examples of supports and services.

“The ETB program should be promoted in all career development centers and resource centers. ‘You are [a Veteran now]; this is what you should know.” (Front-line employee)

“When both programs are not promoted together, they’re missing the mark.” (Interviewee)

2.2.2 Are there alternative program delivery approaches that could be considered that would increase outcomes for Veterans?

FINDING: The overall findings from the ETB and CTS Survey of Veterans are mixed, although overall satisfaction ratings for the CTS program are lower. In contrast, most Veterans felt that ETB delivery was satisfactory. Notably, CTS satisfaction ratings from the third-party service provider are significantly more positive.

Opportunities for improvements were identified by clients and VAC staff. Both clients and staff reported a need to increase awareness and improve understanding of the services offered by the CTS program, including more detailed and clearer information available to potential applicants. Survey and interview/focus group findings indicate that clients may require additional resources to support them in their job search, and a suggestion was made to enhance coordination between CTS and VAC's Veteran's Employment Unit to better support clients with their job search.

VAC employees identified a number of opportunities to explore that may improve the delivery of the ETB program, including improving communications with Veterans about ETB, and granting pre-approvals for long-serving Members who are well past the ETB time requirement.

Feedback on CTS delivery

The survey of clients that accessed CTS and ETB services revealed that satisfaction with the third-party service provider and VAC is fairly low, with only a little over one-half (56.1%) of Veterans in receipt of either CTS or both CTS and ETB services reporting they are satisfied with services received from the third-party service provider. Likewise, a similar proportion (55.1%) of Veterans reported they are satisfied with services received from VAC pertaining to CTS (such as referrals and information).

It should be noted that the survey ratings include a fairly large proportion (20.4%) of Veterans reporting that they are neither satisfied or dissatisfied, which is somewhat higher for Veterans in receipt of both CTS and ETB services. This may be viewed as an opportunity to move those Veterans into higher levels of satisfaction through improvements to services, for example, by improving communications with Veterans about available services.

Table 10 – Satisfaction with services received from third-party service provider

Response	Respondents that used CTS	Percent that used CTS*	Respondents that used CTS and ETB	Percent that used CTS and ETB*	Total Count	Total Percent*
Very Dissatisfied	11	12.1%	11	10.5%	22	11.2%
Dissatisfied	12	13.2%	12	11.4%	24	12.2%
Neither	16	17.6%	24	22.9%	40	20.4%
Satisfied	26	28.6%	32	30.5%	58	29.6%
Very satisfied	26	28.6%	26	24.8%	52	26.5%
Total	91	100%	105	100%	196	100%

*Rounded to nearest tenth of a percent.

Further analysis of the detailed components of CTS services indicates that Veterans are least satisfied with services that focus on military to civilian employment transition support (45%); job search techniques and supports (36.6%), job finding and placement assistance (33.6%), interview skills and techniques (32%), labour market information and research techniques (31.3%), and self-marketing (30.8%).

In contrast, Veterans are most satisfied with services that focus on planning and information services, for example, career exploration, career transition, education planning (66.9%); online resources and instruction (61.8%); one-on-one career counselling (59.6); résumé and cover letter development (59.0%); and employment transition support including assessment of education, skills and experience (51.1%).

Suggestions for improvements include providing one point-of-contact (one-stop shopping) so that Veterans are not referred to several service agents along their journey. This was also aligned to suggestions for making the process more efficient at VAC and streamlining the process across the continuum of service. Veterans also suggested the need for more personalized services and more resources for employment and education options. As noted in earlier sections of the report, communication processes and information sharing were also seen as an area requiring improvement.

In comparison, reports from the third-party service provider are significantly more positive, indicating a disconnect, and suggesting that more should be learned about their data collection methods.²⁹ While the results may not be comparable given differing methodologies, third-party survey practices should be reviewed.

Findings³⁰ from the third-party service provider are outlined below:

- 73.6% are satisfied³¹ with the CTS/ETB services made available;
- 90.6% are satisfied the support received from the Employment Coach; and
- 90.6% would strongly recommend this service to someone looking for similar services.

VAC employees consulted for the evaluation have the impression that the CTS program is underused, perhaps due to a lack of awareness and understanding of what it can offer (as noted above under Section 2.2).

A common theme heard in the evaluation was the need for additional clarification and clearer communication about the program, including that serving Members can access the program prior to release and that spouses are eligible for CTS. It was reported that CTS is underused among spouses and that information on this aspect of the program is unclear.

Increasing the profile of the CTS program eligibilities on VAC's website and providing clearer examples of the program services may assist Veterans and their spouses.

Feedback on ETB Delivery

Only a small proportion of Veterans responding to the survey reported challenges with ETB. For example, less than one-third indicated that the information provided to them was not clear, and less than one-quarter believed that the application was confusing.

²⁹ The third-party service provider reminds clients who have completed their service to complete the client satisfaction survey on the portal immediately after services end, and then conducts a follow-up survey by phone 6 and 12 months later. The response rates for the survey are around 50% for all three rounds of the survey. The total number of responses is not known, and it is not known how many (or what proportion) of clients are invited to participate in the 6- and 12-month follow-ups.

³⁰ VAC Report #14: Candidate Feedback. September 1, 2021.

³¹ The third-party service provider has grouped the response categories satisfied very satisfied categories to report satisfaction levels. This is in line with GGI's reporting method.

Even fewer Veterans reported challenges while completing their programs such as distance to training, challenges with pre-requisites, and experiencing language barriers.

In open ended responses, survey respondents who were unhappy with the program delivery noted long processing times for funding, that funding was not adequate to cover expenses, the complexities related to navigating the ETB system and the lack of coverage of certain courses under the formal program.

A common issue with the delivery of the ETB program identified by focus group participants is specific to still-serving Members and concerns regarding the ETB approval process. Serving Members have a short timeframe to plan a release from service and cannot obtain approval for the ETB until they have a verified release date. However, they are often waiting for confirmation that their training program has been approved by VAC before committing to an education program, paying for their post-secondary education and identifying their release date. The approval process can create frustration and uncertainty among Veterans, confirmed by survey respondents who reported that the application processing time was too long.

Focus group participants had several suggestions for how ETB could better coordinate with universities/colleges to improve the experience for Veterans:

- Promote ETB among universities/colleges to raise awareness of the program
- Provide universities/colleges with a better understanding of military culture and Veteran students needs coming into this environment in order to better support them.
- Support Veteran friendly initiatives on campus to facilitate Veteran student success.
- Develop a “Veteran friendly campus toolkit” to enable pathways for access to physical and mental health services using existing networks such as operational stress clinics.
- Establish a navigator employment position that is knowledgeable of Veterans’ pathways and can work closely with VAC to provide information to Veterans.

2.2.3 How effectively have the programs supported Veterans to meet their personal and professional goals?

FINDING: Nearly half of Veterans reported completing their ETB or ETB/CTS program. Most are satisfied with the outcomes of their ETB programs and many report the program met their needs or expectations.

Many CTS clients report that CTS helped them achieve one or more of their career transition goals with nearly two-thirds reporting they were employed at the end of services. Approximately one-half of CTS clients report being satisfied with services received from the third-party service provider.

The majority of survey respondents described their overall health and well-being as good to excellent, however, CTS-only Veterans rated their overall health and well-being much lower than ETB-only recipients. Veterans reported that they greatly valued economic stability for themselves and their families, access to health services, and the ability to buy sufficient food.

With respect to adjustment to life after service, about two-thirds of survey respondents described their adjustment to life after service as good to excellent. ETB-only clients reported a better adjustment to life than CTS-only clients. Likewise, approximately three quarters of Veterans described their satisfaction with life as good to excellent. Again, ETB-only clients are more satisfied with life than CTS-only clients.

This section provides an overview of the degree to which CTS and ETB programs supported Veterans in meeting their personal and professional goals.

CTS

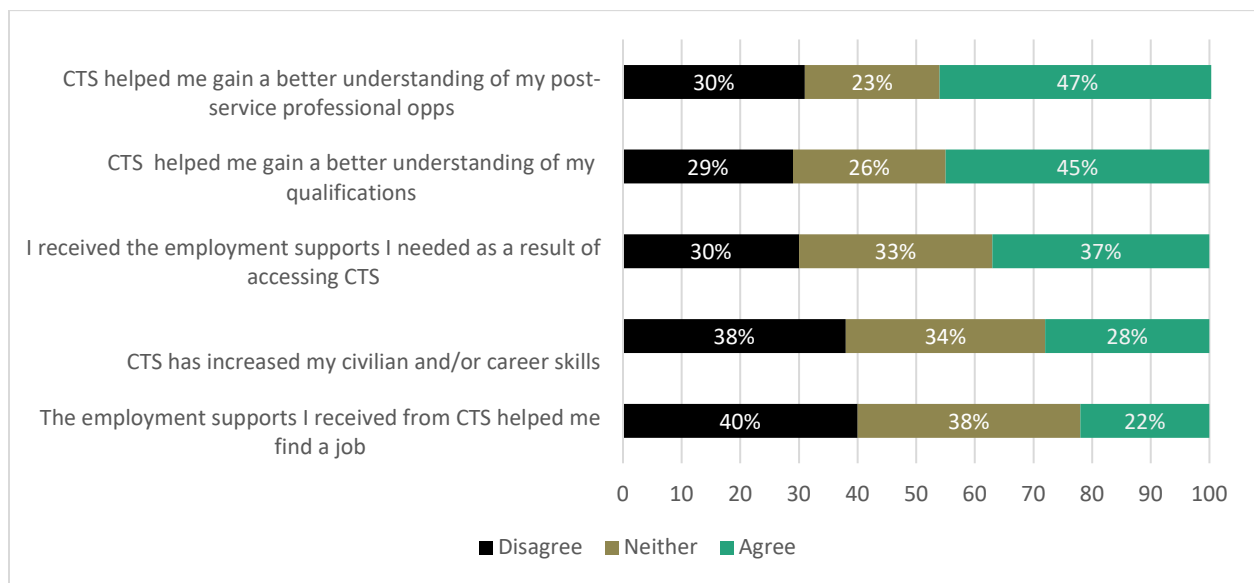
The ETB and CTS Survey of Veterans queried the extent to which CTS supports assisted Veterans in achieving their goals from their career transition plans; as well as what goals were achieved. The survey data indicates that six-in-ten (60.2%) Veterans reported achieving one or more goal from their transition plan. Goals achieved include:

- Obtaining employment (full-time or part-time employment);
- Determining vocations/careers of interest;
- Receiving employment services (resume writing, completion of assessments, etc.);
- Enrolling in educational programs;
- Completing certification courses or other educational programs; and

- Information acquisition of other programs, such as ETB.

However, less than half of Veterans surveyed agreed that CTS helped them achieve several program-related outcomes, as outlined in Figure 4. The evidence shows that just under half of the survey respondents report that CTS services helped them to better understand their qualifications and professional opportunities. However, fewer CTS clients said they got the employment supports they needed, they increased their civilian/career skills or that the supports they received helped them get a job.

Figure 4 – Outcomes of CTS services



Employment status at completion of CTS

In total, 61.8% of Veterans who received either CTS or CTS and ETB services reported being employed at the end of CTS, either in a full-time (45.4%), part-time (8.7%), public service (3.6%), or self-employed (4.1%) capacity.

Similarly, with respect to CTS only Veterans, 62.6% reported employment (full-time, part-time, public service and self-employed).

Employment outcome data from third-party service provider

Data from a report on outcomes achieved at closure³² from the third-party service provider outlines the results of several outcome indicators. A total of 3,829 participants are included in the dataset, including Veterans, Members, Members Intent to Release, and partners/survivors. Employment is captured under several indicators including: employed at CAF, employed at CAF (re-enlisted or re-signed); employed in a suitable civilian occupation, employed in the civilian labour market; and employed in the public service.

The data from the third-party service provider finds that Members (n=1,332) are more likely to be employed at closure (59.2%), followed by MITR (n=595) at 40.1%, and Veterans (n=1,858) at 32.6%. The employment outcome data from the third-party service provider is generally reflective of results found through the survey for Members.³³ The data might suggest that early CTS intervention results in better employment outcomes, although additional research would be required to validate this theory.

ETB

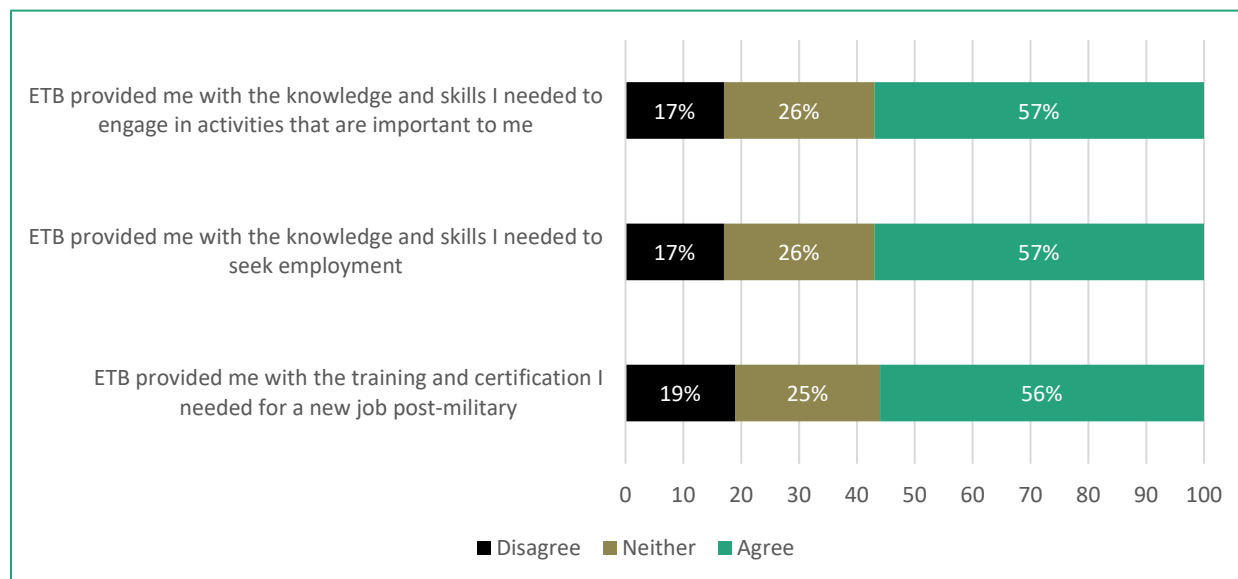
Findings from the ETB and CTS Survey of Veterans indicates that nearly one-half (45.9%) of Veterans reported completing either an ETB or ETB/CTS program, with 40.3% reporting they were still enrolled in the program at the time of survey, and 6.6% had not completed the program.

Findings from the survey of Veterans that accessed ETB are generally positive. The survey found that 81% of Veterans reported that the program and/or courses they accessed met their needs (and only 7% said it did not; the balance did not know or chose not to answer). Less than 20% felt that the ETB did not provide them with the skills and knowledge they needed to engage in activities important to them (17%), find employment (17%) or the training they needed for a new job post-military (19%). See Figure 5.

³² VAC Report #13: Outcomes Achieved at Closure, September 1, 2021

³³ Caveat: the Survey of Veterans did not break down the outcome data by type of participant, therefore comparisons are made with caution.

Figure 5 – Outcomes of ETB



Those that elaborated on their ratings in the survey provided responses related to the following main themes:

- This program provided them with the opportunity to receive training/achieve a degree.
- The training equipped them with new qualifications to improve their job prospects.
- The degree/certificate they received helped them attain employment in the field they trained in.

Overall, a small proportion of Veterans reported they experienced challenges while completing the training program. Specifically, 17.9% of survey respondents struggled with distance to training, with 10.3% experiencing challenges with prerequisites, and 1.1% experiencing language barriers.

According to additional comments provided, travelling and staying onsite for the duration of an educational program is expensive to some Veterans. Veterans also reported they were experiencing financial constraints as they were enrolling in a full-time program and did not have other sources of income.

Employment status of ETB clients

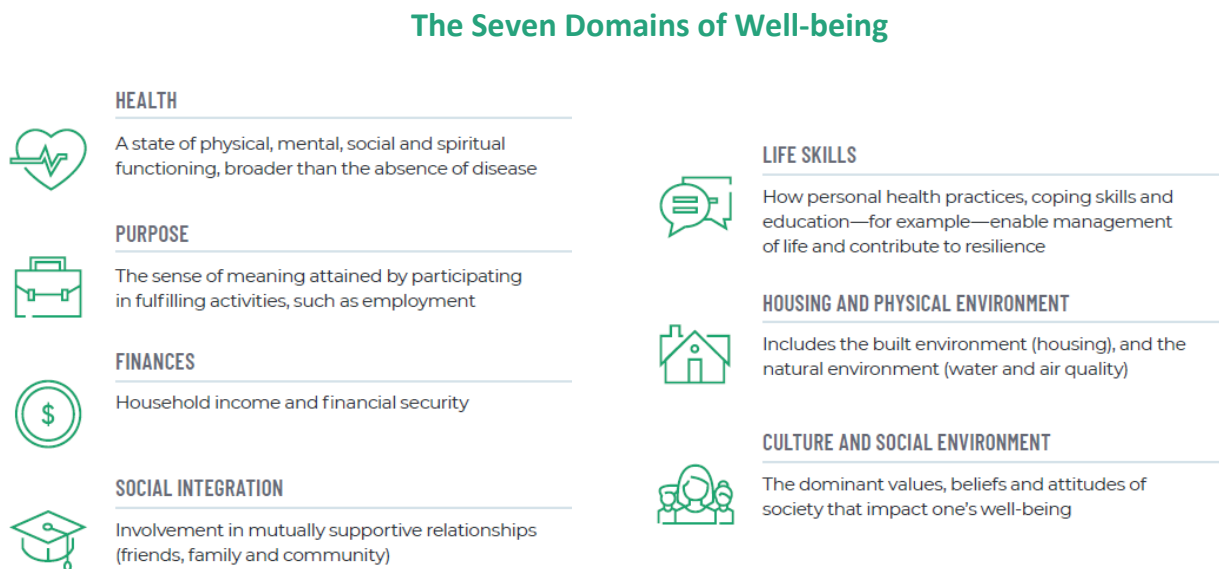
The survey findings indicate that many Veterans who apply for ETB or ETB/CTS programs were, at the time of the survey, employed permanently in full-time positions. Below are the highlights from the findings.

- While greater than six in ten survey respondents (63.8%) are currently employed, 12.9% are retired and 10.7% are looking for employment.
- Among 429 Veterans who are currently employed, more than three quarters (76.5%) are working full-time, with 14.7% being in a public service position, and 11.9% being self-employed.
- The majority of employed survey respondents (78.3%) are employed in permanent positions.
- More than eight in ten survey respondents (82%) indicated their employment is very aligned (64.1%) or moderately aligned (17.9%) with their skills and qualifications.
- About two-thirds of survey respondent (67.2%) are very satisfied (30.8%) or satisfied (36.4%) with their current employment (48.7% for CTS only, 70.2% for ETB only, and 73.3 for both).

Domains of well-being

VAC's Well-being Model describes the seven domains of well-being required for a successful transition to civil life. These are illustrated on the following page.

Figure 6: The seven domains of well-being



The majority of survey respondents (69.6%) described their overall health and wellbeing as “excellent” (10.1%), “very good” (26.5%), or “good” (33%). However, CTS only Veterans rated their overall health and wellbeing much lower than ETB only recipients (52.0% and 76.7%, respectively).

Veterans reported that they greatly valued economic stability for themselves and their families, access to health services, and the ability to buy sufficient food.

The findings are summarized below:

- More than nine in ten (93.3%) said economic stability for them and their family is very important.
- A vast majority of Veterans (92.2%) noted access to health services is very important.
- About nine in ten (90.3%) said ability to buy sufficient good food is very important.
- Just under nine in ten (89.7%) said having healthy lifestyle choices is very important.
- About nine in ten (87.8%) indicated that having greater control and choice in managing life's challenges is very important.
- More than eight in nine (84.8%) indicated quality of housing is very important.
- Coping with stress is very important for 78.9% of Veterans.

- Less than eight in ten (78.9%) said adapting to change is very important.
- Over three quarters (77.3%) noted household management is very important.
- Just over three quarters (77%) indicated driving a vehicle is very important.
- Similarly, about three quarters (74.5%) said having a stable job is very important and another 16.1% said it was of average importance.
- Having a well-paid job is very important for 71.4% of Veterans and of average importance for 19.3%.
- A majority of survey respondents said that having hobbies is very important (70.9%) or of average importance (22.4%).
- Less than two-thirds (64.4%) said career management is very important.
- About one-third (34.2%) indicated that volunteering is very important

With respect to adjustment to life after service, about two-thirds of survey respondents (65.1%) described their adjustment to life after service as “excellent” (15.8%), “very good” (24.4%), or “good” (24.9%). While 72.4% of ETB-only Veterans indicated their adjustment to life after service was good, only 41.1% of CTS only recipients said so.

Likewise, approximately three quarters of Veterans (75.1%) described their satisfaction with life as good (28.7%), very good (26.9%), or excellent (19.5%). ETB-only clients are more satisfied with life than CTS clients (78.5% and 65.9%, respectively).

2.2.4 Were there unexpected outcomes (positive or negative) as a result of receiving services/benefits, including unintended GBA+ related impacts that should be resolved?

FINDING: Survey and interview findings suggest that the availability of the ETB does not impact a Veteran’s decision to leave the Canadian Armed Forces. Other unintended outcomes identified regarding ETB included Veterans using ETB for various purposes, not completing their courses, and applying for multiple courses until they reach the short course funding limit.

Clients surveyed were asked whether the opportunity to access ETB funding impacted their decision to leave the CAF. Survey results found that more than nine in ten responding Veterans (93.2%) indicated that the ETB funding did not play a role in their decision to leave the CAF. Additional comments were provided by 53.6% of Veterans.

Common responses given by those whose decision to leave the CAF was not impacted by ETB include:

- They left the CAF due to medical reasons.
- ETB came into effect after they had left the forces.
- They planned to retire after serving in the CAF for decades.

The third-party service provider for CTS noted that many ETB clients are not aware they have to pay back the funds if they withdraw from the course early without filing the appropriate paperwork (note that the repaid amount is then available to the Veteran as part of their ETB entitlement).

Finally, interviewees also reported some misunderstandings related to the availability of ETB funds including that Veterans think they can use the funds for any purpose, and Veterans using ETB funding and not completing their academic course or program.

2.3 Performance/efficiency

2.3.1 Are the available program data for CTS and ETB adequate to measure outcomes/impact?

FINDING: The program data does not allow for adequate measurement of the outcomes and impacts of CTS and ETB. Program outcomes have been reported using the ETB and CTS Survey of Veterans, in Section 2.2.

The quality of data available for monitoring and oversight is important to measure success of the CTS and the ETB program. Program data entry processes should ensure all data is captured accurately and in a timely fashion. There is an opportunity for VAC to improve data capture when system changes are made to ensure all CTS and ETB data is housed in one place (both program data and financial data). Program data and program expenditures should be stored in such a way as to allow for the easy merging of ETB (both short course and formal course data) and CTS data for performance analysis.

2.3.2 Have the activities of the CTS and ETB been delivered in an efficient and economical manner?

FINDING: For both programs, expenditures are on the rise historically, and are forecast to increase in the coming years, particularly for ETB. The number of applications for CTS has been declining whereas the number of applications for ETB have been increasing and are forecast to continue to increase. A forecast for CTS applications was not available.

CTS approved applications and expenditures

As Table 11 shows, CTS expenditures have risen over the past three years while yearly client intake has declined. Program expenditures are expected to increase as shown in Table 12.

Table 11 – CTS approved recipients and expenditures

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
CTS Approved Applications	N/A ³⁴	1,559	1,236	1,018
Expenditures (in \$ millions)	\$1.7	\$1.6	\$1.8	\$2.3

Source: VAC Facts and Figures Book March 2021 Edition

Table 12 – CTS forecast expenditures

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Expenditures (in \$ millions)	\$2.8	\$3.0	\$3.3	\$3.5	\$3.7

Source: VAC Facts and Figures Book March 2021 Edition

2.3.3 ETB recipients and expenditures

The number of Veterans receiving ETB program funds is somewhat higher than those applying for CTS services, although the expenditures are 10 times that of CTS services and supports.

³⁴ The delivery method for CTS changed on April 1, 2018. Historical data is currently unavailable for 2017-2018 application figures.

The number of ETB recipients increased in 2019-2020 and into 2020-2021. Forecasts indicate that the number of recipients will increase into the next few years, with a slight decrease expected in 2022-2023, and an increase expected in 2024-2025. Expenditures have been steadily increasing over the years and are expected to exceed over \$35 million by 2025-26. See Tables 13 and 14.

Table 13 – ETB approved recipients* and expenditures

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Recipients (Veterans)	N/A	1,072	1,700	1,933
Expenditures (in \$ millions)	N/A	\$12.3	\$20.6	\$16.8

*Recipients refer to Veterans who have received a payment in the fiscal year.

Source: VAC Facts and Figures Book March 2021 Edition

Table 14 – ETB Forecast Expenditures

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Recipients (Veterans)	2,230	1,950	2,210	2,560	2,560
Expenditures (in \$ millions)	\$28.8	\$25.4	\$29.4	\$34.7	\$35.5

Source: VAC Facts and Figures Book March 2021 Edition

3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

3.1.1 Relevance

ETB is largely meeting Veterans' expectations, while CTS appears to be falling somewhat short in comparison. Eligibility is considered appropriate for both programs, although there are some areas of confusion among potential clients of the programs. There were no suggestions for how CTS could be better designed to meet needs. However, some design features of ETB were noted as not meeting expectations including the size of the cap for short courses, and the type of training and educational institutions that are eligible.

The programs generally work well together, particularly for Veterans who access CTS's education planning services. The complementary nature of the programs is reinforced in program policies and other documentation. The programs are viewed as separate from other VAC programs (such as the Rehabilitation Program), which is understandable given the very different eligibility for these other programs. For those consulted for the evaluation who saw a relationship, it was considered complementary in nature. A few noted some confusion between eligibility between the programs.

3.1.2 Effectiveness

Awareness of the programs among VAC front-line staff is quite general. Clients indicated that their awareness of the program while they were in service was low. The evaluation found that being able to access ETB does not impact a Veteran's decision to leave the Canadian Armed Forces.

Program delivery for ETB appears to be functioning well. The program or courses Veterans accessed met their needs 80% of the time, and 59% reported that ETB provided them with the skills and knowledge they needed to engage in activities important to them. However, client satisfaction with CTS would suggest that delivery is not meeting needs. Indeed, an overall satisfaction rating of 56% among CTS clients (or CTS and ETB clients) for services received from the third-party service provider (and a 55% satisfaction rating for VAC services) would suggest that delivery is not meeting expectations. The most poorly rated aspects of CTS delivery were: self-marketing (31%);

labour market information and research techniques (31%); interview skills and techniques (32%); job finding and placement assistance (34%); job search techniques and supports (37%); and employment transition support (45%). This is in contrast to quite high satisfaction ratings reported by the third-party service provider based on their client satisfaction survey they issue shortly after a file is closed.

Most opportunities for improvement identified by VAC employees consulted for the evaluation centred around improving communications.

In terms of the extent to which the programs help Veterans achieve their goals, the evaluation found this is happening to a moderate extent. Many CTS clients report that CTS helped them achieve one or more of their career transition goals with nearly two-thirds reporting they were employed at the end of services. For ETB (or ETB and CTS), 85% of survey respondents indicated that they had completed their program or were still enrolled. Most said they were satisfied with the outcome of their ETB participation.

Most clients report their overall health and wellbeing, their adjustment to life after service and satisfaction with their life as good to excellent (70%, 65% and 75% respectively). Clients who only accessed ETB are more likely to report better outcomes in all these areas than clients who only accessed CTS. The reasons for this difference are unclear, although it is possible that CTS and ETB clients are in different places in their lives and are seeking different outcomes from the program.

3.1.3 Efficiency

Program expenditures for both CTS and ETB are on the rise historically and are forecast to increase in the coming years. Increased client uptake and expenditures are more pronounced for ETB in the forecast data.

The evaluation also explored the extent to which the program data allows for the measurement of outcomes. It was found that there are several gaps in data and errors in data entry. The evaluation had to rely on the survey of clients to assess the achievement of outcomes.

3.2 Recommendations

The evaluation makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that the DG-SDPM improve communications about the programs among Members and Veterans, including:

- a. Information about eligibility for the ETB and the two-stage application process.
- b. Information to improve program awareness for Members planning for their release, including additional training and tools to support VAC front-line staff who support the transition.

Management Response: Veterans Affairs Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Action and Rationale	Expected Completion/ Implementation Date	ADM Accountable for Action
<p>With respect to Recommendation #1 a., the Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management will work in collaboration with Communications, Centralized Operations Division (COD), Policy, Business Integration Directorate (BID), National Learning Unit (NLU), National Client Center Network (NCCN), and Field Operations (FO) to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review and analyze the current situation to better understand the needs for enhanced communications by engaging directly with internal stakeholders; and ii. As a result of the feedback collected above, develop a strategy to improve communication as it relates to eligibility and the two-step application process; and iii. Design, update and release communication products to highlight information about eligibility and the two-stage application process. 	March 31, 2023	Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery
<p>With respect to Recommendation #1 b., the Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management will work in collaboration with, Communications, National Client Center Network (NCCN), Transition, Field Operations (FO), and National Learning Unit (NLU) to:</p>	December 31, 2023	Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review current external and internal communication channels including analytics to better understand the most effective mechanisms for positive engagement; ii. Review Communication products to implement enhancements and ensure consistent and accurate program information is concisely presented; and iii. Develop and disseminate training materials to front-line staff who counsel releasing Members and Veterans. 		
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Recommendation #2

It is recommended that the DG-Policy undertake efforts to review the maximum amount available for ETB short courses and consider whether costs of licensing exams and fees should be included.

Management Response: Veterans Affairs Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Action and Rationale	Expected Completion/ Implementation Date	ADM Accountable for Action
<p>With respect to Recommendation #2, the Director General, Policy and Research will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work in collaboration with SDPM, CPC, Finance and IT to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Collect data on short course applications (numbers of favourable/unfavourable decisions, types of courses, costs, etc.). ii. Undertake an analysis on the information gathered to determine if there are gaps and possible options. <p>Collect data and conduct policy analysis to determine whether to include the costs of licensing exams and fees as eligible benefits.</p>	<p>March 31, 2023</p>	<p>Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Commemoration</p>

Recommendation #3

It is recommended that the DG SDPM explore client satisfaction results and associated performance data to identify areas for further improvement, and gaps where further data collection is required.

Management Response: Veterans Affairs Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Action and Rationale	Expected Completion/ Implementation Date	ADM Accountable for Action
<p>With respect to Recommendation #3, VAC's current contract with a national service provider for Career Transition Services is due to expire in 2022 and VAC is in the process of re-procurement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New contract will be in place (early 2023) • Contract statement of work (issued in Fall 2021 after the evaluation scope period) includes more robust language to address areas where client needs are not being met • VAC will work closely with the service provider during contract implementation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop a methodology to measure client satisfaction with the program ○ Identify gaps where further data collection is required ○ Develop/change business processes where needed to ensure correct data is collected to identify client needs • Using the results of client satisfaction data, implement business processes where necessary to address client needs. 	<p>March 31, 2024</p>	<p>Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery</p>

Appendix A – Evaluation Matrix

Questions	Indicators	Data Collection Method	Source of Data
Issue: Relevance			
1. What is the relationship between CTS and ETB and between these programs and other VAC programs in the continuum of supports for Veterans? Are these relationships appropriate/working effectively to meet Veterans' needs?	1.1 Descriptive information about the programs describe the linkage/relationship	Document review	Program documents, including policy, applicant guide, FAQs, deep dives, training materials, communications/outreach materials Departmental documents including plans, reports, PIP
	1.2 CTS/ETB participants' take-up of other VAC programs, either before, during or after their CTS/ETB participation	Data review	CSDN database Client database
	1.3 CTS/ETB participants' plans for next steps after program participation ends	Survey	CTS/ETB participants
	1.4 Views on the nature, appropriateness and effectiveness of the relationship(s) between the two programs	Interviews Survey Focus groups	VAC CTS/ETB participants VAC personnel (see notes)
2. To what extent are the eligibility criteria for CTS and ETB meeting Veterans' needs?	2.1 Degree of alignment between eligibility criteria and expected program objectives/target beneficiaries	Document review Interviews	Program documents, policies, discussion papers VAC
	2.2 Evidence of barriers to access for target beneficiaries, considering GBA+ factors, rural/urban, region, age, rank, French/English	Interviews Survey Focus groups	VAC CTS/ETB participants VAC
	2.3 For ETB, eligibility criteria for educational institutions, programs and courses meets the needs of participants	Survey Data review	CTS/ETB participants Client data base
3. To what extent do Veterans have unmet needs for career transition and/or accessing education or training?	3.1 Evidence of/views on unmet needs or gaps, considering GBA+ factors, rural/urban, region	Interviews Document review	VAC Program reports, recommendations from stakeholders/OVO, directives and operational guidelines; service delivery reports

Questions	Indicators	Data Collection Method	Source of Data
		Data review	CSDN database
		Survey	CTS/ETB participants
		Focus group	VAC
Issue: Performance/Effectiveness			
4. Are the programs achieving the expected/ desired reach?	4.1 # of applications for each program	Document review	Corporate reports
	4.2 # of formal program plans and short courses established	Data review	CSDN database CRM database Client database
	4.3 # favorable eligibility decisions for CTS, for Veterans, spouses, survivors (GBA+, regional/provincial)		
	4.4 Program utilization over time (i.e., # of clients applying versus # clients accessing the programs (specifically, enrolling education/course for ETB and accessing services for CTS), by type of client		
	4.5 Proportion of budget expended, by FY	Data review	Financial database
	4.6 Awareness of the programs among front line staff	Interviews Focus groups	VAC
	4.7 How participants become aware of the programs	Survey	CTS/ETB participants
5. Are there alternative program delivery approaches that could be considered that would increase outcomes for Veterans?	5.1 % clients satisfied with services they received from VAC and, for CTS, the service provider	Document review	Program/corporate reports
	5.2 Suggestions by program personnel, other VAC employees, program participants re opportunities for improvement (probe for partnerships/placements/matching with employers; link with Service Canada Job Bank, more hands-on support for CV development)	Survey	CTS/ETB participants
		Interviews Focus groups	VAC VAC
6. How effectively have the programs supported Veterans to meet their	6.1 ETB: #/% clients who completed the education/course (or are on track to completion, e.g., completed their first year of study)	Document review	Program/corporate reports
		Data review	Client database

Questions	Indicators	Data Collection Method	Source of Data
personal and professional goals?	<p>6.2 CTS: #/% clients who better understand their qualifications and their post-service professional opportunities</p> <p>6.3 CTS: #/% clients who prepared a CV with assistance from CTS tools/service provider</p> <p>6.4 Veterans indicate they have met one or more of their personal or professional goals through participation in the program (can include goals in their career transition plan or other goals including domains of personal wellbeing/quality of life).</p>	Survey	CTS/ETB participants
7. Were there unexpected outcomes (positive or negative) as a result of receiving services/benefits, including unintended GBA+ related impacts that should be resolved?	<p>7.1 Evidence of unresolved unexpected negative outcomes</p> <p>7.2 Evidence of unexpected positive outcomes that led to improved program performance</p>	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Document review</p> <p>Survey</p>	<p>VAC</p> <p>Program reports, OVO reports, service delivery reports</p> <p>CTS/ETB participants</p>
Issue: Performance/Efficiency			
8. Are the available program data for CTS and ETB adequate to measure its outcomes/impact??	<p>8.1 Clarity of outcome statements, causal link between outcomes; reflection of best practice</p> <p>8.2 Evidence/views that the programs are collecting and reporting data to measure its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency</p> <p>8.3 Adequacy, reliability, timeliness and validity of indicators/data collected by VAC, the service provider (for CTS)</p> <p>8.4 Evidence/views of use of performance information in decision-making</p>	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Document review</p> <p>Data review</p>	<p>VAC</p> <p>Program/corporate reports, Performance Information Profile</p> <p>All databases/sources</p>
9. Have the activities of the CTS	9.1 Average time and resources required to assess/process ETB	Document/data review	Program reports/HR systems

Questions	Indicators	Data Collection Method	Source of Data
and ETB been delivered in an efficient and economical manner?	applications, over time (variation by type of application, region and GBA+)		
	9.2 Trends in program administrative expenditures (including contract expenditures), in program activity (caseload, average payments, forecasts, VAC/SP turnover, etc.)		
	9.3 % of CTS and ETB applications processed within service standards; % of formal program plans/short courses established within 4 weeks of receipt of completed education plan	Document review	Corporate reporting
	9.4 % of payments made before the start of the program; % of payments made in the correct amount		
	9.5 Average wait time and time in the program for CTS, over time (variation by type of service, region and GBA+)	Document review	Program reports, reports from service provider
9.6 Factors that contribute to efficient delivery, seamless delivery between the programs; evidence of inefficiencies (bottlenecks, duplication); more economical mechanisms to achieve same or superior outputs / outcomes	Interviews	VAC	
	Focus group	VAC	
9.7 Suggestions, opportunities to improve efficiency			