



# Veterans Affairs Canada: Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) Strategy

Advancing 2025

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### What is Gender-Based Analysis Plus?

Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people experience policies, programs, services and initiatives. GBA+ is not only about gender. Health Canada has chosen to use the term Sex and Gender Based Analysis Plus (SGBA+) to make explicit the distinction between sex (biological) and gender (socio-cultural) considerations and to emphasize the need for addressing both sex and gender. This is essential to ensuring that everyone has the resources and opportunities needed to reach their optimal well-being. At the same time, the “plus” in GBA+ acknowledges the importance of addressing all identity factors, such as age, sexual orientation, social-economic status, race/ethnicity, as well as differences related to sex (biology) and gender (socio-culture). All individuals have multiple factors that intersect to create their identities. See Appendix A – Lexicon on Sex, Gender and Diversity.

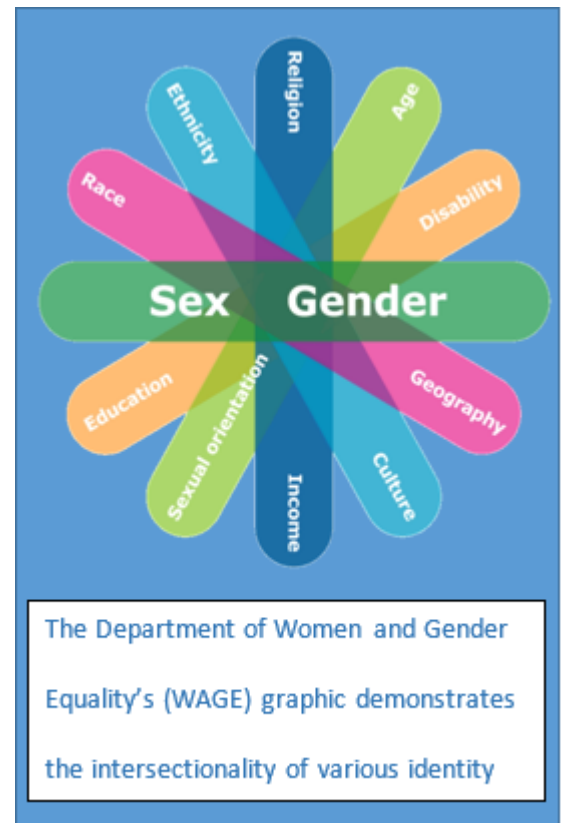
GBA+ helps to ensure that the development of policies, programs, services and initiatives includes consideration of differential impacts on diverse groups. The Government of Canada increasingly requires GBA+ to be applied throughout the policy and program lifecycle, from inception through implementation to evaluation. [Appendix B](#) provides additional detail on incorporating GBA+ into the policy lifecycle.

### GBA+: Government of Canada Direction

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting the full implementation of GBA+ across federal departments and agencies. Canada’s involvement with gender issues and adoption of GBA+ has evolved over the past several decades. [Appendix C](#) provides details on the key milestones and Government of Canada legislation. Today, Canada is seen as a leader in many facets in the advancement of gender equality.

### [The Government of Canada’s Gender Results Framework](#)

The Government of Canada has demonstrated its commitment to advancing gender equality through significant investments in key programs, policies and initiatives. Introduced in Budget 2018, the Gender Results Framework (GRF) represents the Government of Canada’s vision for



gender equality, highlighting the key issues that matter most.<sup>1</sup> The GRF is a whole-of-government tool designed to:

- Define the Government of Canada's gender equality goals;
- Track Canada's performance with respect to these goals;
- Determine what is needed to advance gender equality;
- Establish progress measures.

Under this framework, the federal government has identified six key areas where change is required to advance gender equality which are captured in the following graphic. In each of these areas, Canada has established specific objectives and indicators to measure progress.



## 2. GBA+ AT VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

GBA + indicates that Veterans who identify as female differ from those who identify as male Veterans in several key indicators of well-being, including health, purpose, and financial security. They do not appear to have the same positive outcomes following release as male Veterans. Further, according to a 2020 statement from the Veteran Ombudsman, females who have served in the military are less likely to self-identify as Veterans, with the result that they might not seek benefits, services, and supports to which they could be entitled. Once female Veterans become clients of Veterans Affairs Canada, they often wait longer than their male peers for decisions about disability benefits. The table found in [Annex D](#) provides sex-disaggregated data (compiled during 2018 and 2019) that demonstrates differences in benefit application processing between male and female Veterans. [Annex D](#) also outlines the various intersectionality dimensions of GBA+ at VAC.

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<sup>1</sup> Women and Gender Equality's (WAGE ) website, 2019

Understanding how policies, programs, and services affect diverse groups of women, men, and non-binary people is essential for identifying and eliminating past and persistent gender inequities.

### Veterans and the “plus” in GBA+

Veterans are not a homogeneous group and their various experiences are affected by sex, gender and other parts of their identity such as age, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, language, religion, ability, location of residence, and more. VAC collects data on some, but not all of these identity factors as part of the benefits and services application process. However, VAC recognizes that more information about identity factors is needed. Some data are gathered through the voluntary Life After Service Survey (LASS) and from independent researchers. This information could assist VAC in understanding the needs of diverse sub-groups of Veterans and in improving programs, services and initiatives.

### Implementing GBA+ at VAC

For VAC, GBA+ means providing programs and services that take into consideration the different ways policies, programs, and the service delivery model affect men, women and gender diverse people. In some cases, sex information is highly relevant, particularly as it relates to health and health care. “In some cases, sex information is highly relevant and in others, gender information is needed. Sometimes neither sex nor gender information are relevant to a policy or program, but both sex and gender are important pieces of information in relation to health and health care and both are needed to support GBA+.”

### VAC GBA+ Champion

In 2018, VAC established a senior Executive level GBA+ Champion. The role of the VAC GBA+ Champion is to disseminate information and tools, communicate special events and days related to gender, and provide support to departmental Branches. The GBA+ Champion acts as an advocate for GBA+, promotes related training, and helps to monitor and facilitate its application across the Department. The GBA+ Champion, also chairs the VAC GBA+ Network to engage staff from across the country on a regular basis on GBA+ issues.

### VAC's GBA+ Requirements

VAC fulfills the mandatory GBA+ requirements, including ensuring that a GBA+ template has been undertaken with each budget proposal, Memorandum to Cabinet (MC), Treasury Board submission (TB Sub) and regulatory package. VAC is working to integrate GBA+ for new or modified policies, programs and services.

### *GBA+ Awareness/Training*

To advance these efforts, VAC is also engaging employees in awareness-raising activities, including encouraging them to complete the [Introduction to GBA+](#) online course, available through the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE).

### *Other Initiatives*

In addition, VAC is reviewing and reshaping the future of its programs and benefits through a number of new initiatives, including the Innovation Hub, the Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans, and [Advance 2025](#). Each of the concurrent initiatives that influence VAC's GBA+ Strategy are detailed in [Appendix E](#).

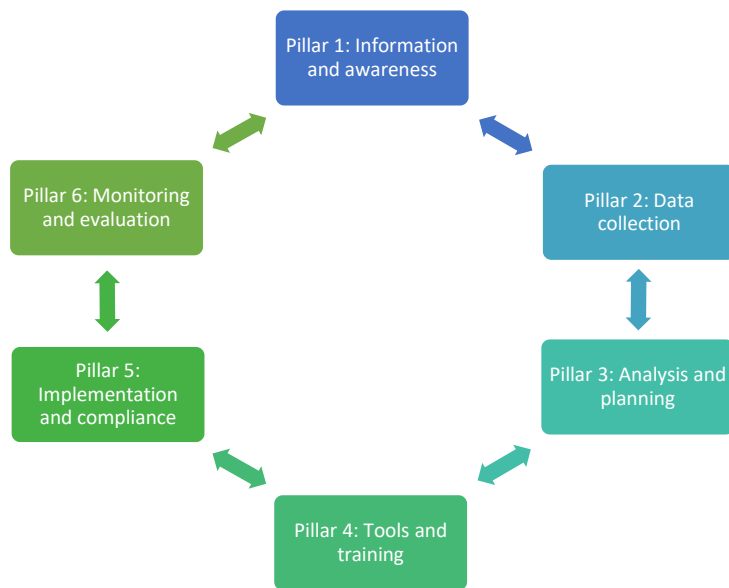
## **3. VAC'S GBA+ STRATEGY – STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE**

While VAC meets the mandatory GBA+ requirements and is supporting awareness and capacity-building through multiple initiatives, more work remains. The Department is looking for more sophistication in GBA+ to better reflect the diversity of the Veteran population and a greater understanding of how diverse Veterans are affected by our programs and services. VAC is also aiming for better incorporation of GBA+ in the day-to-day business of the Department, including how policies, programs, and services are designed and delivered.

### *Six Pillars of VAC's GBA+ Strategy*

This Strategy outlines VAC's proposed approach to integrating GBA+ in Departmental activities and advancing equality and inclusion for Veterans of all sexes, genders, and sexual orientations. Six interdependent "pillars" of action form the Framework for mainstreaming GBA+ and are outlined below with proposed activities to be considered for each pillar. This Mainstreaming Framework will allow the Department to measure and demonstrate progress through iterative and ongoing improvements. These improvements will reinforce the value of GBA+ and build capacity to implement and sustain a shift in culture that is supportive of equality, diversity and inclusion. [Appendix F](#) provides an overview of the roll-out of the Mainstreaming Framework.

## Framework for Mainstreaming GBA+ within VAC



### Strategy objectives and outcomes

The ultimate outcomes of the GBA+ Strategy are:

- to take into consideration the differing needs and experiences of women, men, gender-diverse people, and other under-represented groups in the design and delivery of policies, programs, and services;
- to create gender-inclusive services and service delivery;
- to contribute to enhanced well-being and equitable outcomes for all Veterans.

Short, medium, and long-term objectives have been identified on the road to achieving these ultimate outcomes.

#### **Short-term objectives:**

- Raising awareness and understanding of GBA+;
- Raising awareness of the Gender Inclusive Services project;
- Building capacity for integrating GBA+ into the day-to-day business of the Department;

#### **Medium-term objectives:**

- Improving data collection practices and related IT systems;
- Improving understanding and use of sex and gender evidence;
- Developing training and tools to support capacity-building and implementation of GBA+ using evidence-based decision-making
- Developing a framework for monitoring and evaluation of GBA+ implementation;
- Implementation of GBA+ in Departmental activities.

**Long-term objectives:**

- On-going implementation of GBA+ in Departmental activities;
- Monitoring and evaluation of GBA+ implementation;
- “Course corrections”, as needed.

**Pillar activities**

Although many proposed activities are interdependent and on-going, as per an organizational change management approach, they have been linked with specific pillars to reflect a high-level chronology and for the purposes of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

**Pillar 1 – Information and Awareness****Context**

While VAC continues to improve the quality of its GBA+, more time and effort are needed to sustain this momentum. A commitment from leadership, a willingness to collaborate and coordinate across the Department, and enhanced understanding of GBA+ among staff are crucial to support a culture shift.

**Current Status**

The Department of Women and Gender Equality has indicated that difficulty understanding GBA+ is a key challenge for integrating GBA+ into the work of government. Lack of understanding of GBA+ affects VAC staff. According to the VAC 2018 Pulse Survey, only 42.3% of respondents indicated that they were aware of and understood GBA+. An additional 31.71% of respondents indicated that they were aware of GBA+, but did not understand it.

**Expected Outcomes**

Efforts outlined in the Strategy will create opportunities for staff to be engaged, to learn about and contribute to the full integration of GBA+ into their work. Ultimately, GBA+ will be part of everyday conversations and practices: staff will know what GBA+ is, why it is important and how it applies to their work.

**Supporting Initiatives (or Levers)****Communicate and promote awareness of GBA+**

- Develop communications plan;
- Track current awareness-raising initiatives across government and align VAC activities;
- Support and encourage participation in GBA+ Awareness Week and Gender Equality Week;
- Seek ongoing opportunities to keep GBA+ front of mind for VAC staff all through the year such as regular SDAT messaging;

- Promote the Department of Women and Gender Equality and other Government of Canada activities and initiatives;
- Continue to build content on the VAC intranet related to GBA+ so that it is a “one stop shop” on resources, tools and training, and events related to GBA+.

### The GBA+ VAC Experience

- Create VAC testimonials and specific examples and create GBA+ related content that will resonate with VAC staff on a more individual basis;
- Create engagement opportunities: deliver info sessions, lunch and learn, panel discussions;
- Work with contacts in each branch to relay information (examples: a possible dedicated EXchange that would ensure a common or base knowledge across the EX complement, and leveraging the Middle Managers Forum/Network).

### Integrate promising/best practices

- Build and maintain dialogue with VAC networks and other government departments to continue to exchange promising/best practices;
- Encourage inclusion of GBA+ as a standing item on agendas of senior management meetings and team meetings across the department;
- Create or adopt check-lists and integrate gender inclusive components and behaviours when planning events.

## Pillar 2 – Data collection

### Context

Data collected and disaggregated according to intersectional identity factors are critical for understanding the needs and experiences of diverse populations of Veterans. It is essential for designing and delivering equitable and inclusive programs and services.

### Current Status

Data limitations present a significant challenge for implementing GBA+ at VAC. Administrative client data represent only approximately 18% of the Veteran population and little information is available for the more than 60,000 Veteran spouses, families, and survivors who represent an additional 7% of VAC's total client population. Further, administrative client data currently does not include many variables, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, that are needed to support GBA+. There is a need for more systematic data collection so that improvements can be guided by evidence.

### Expected Outcomes

As the Department improves the collection of administrative client data and increases access to other sources of data, a strong evidence base will be established to support application of GBA+ in the design and delivery of equitable and inclusive programs and services

## Supporting Initiatives (or Levers)

### Improve the capture and utilization of administrative client data.

- Through the Building Gender Inclusive Services project, develop an inventory and change roadmap to inform implementation of changes to sex and gender information practices in VAC that will support GBA+;
- Promote data disaggregation in collection and reporting as a best practice in the Department;
- Ensure the use of disaggregated performance measures/indicators in the Departmental Results Framework.

### Continue work with other agencies to collect disaggregated additional information.

- Support the inclusion of a military service identifier on the Census and national surveys, such as the Canadian Community Health Survey, the Labour Force Survey, and General Social Survey;
- Continue to work with Statistics Canada to create a national registry for Veterans that enables use of existing information/data already available as well as explore new data linkages through Statistics Canada;
- Continue to enhance usage of links to Canada Revenue Agency data as an important means of assessing outcomes, particularly in relation to the financial Security of Veterans

### Ensure that VAC-funded research has a requirement for GBA+.

- Work with other government agencies (e.g. CIHR-IGH) to create criteria and tools to support integration of GBA+ into internal and externally-funded research;
- Work with VAC-funded research organizations and projects (e.g. CIMVHR) to promote and/or require GBA+.

## Pillar 3 – Analysis and planning

### Context

GBA+ is now an integral part of the federal decision-making process. Organizations have the responsibility to determine whether there are GBA+ issues within any new proposed policies, programs, initiatives or services. They must ensure that these considerations are reflected in Cabinet/Treasury Board Submissions and regulatory packages and detail how these findings will influence the policy, program, initiative and service design. WAGE provides resources and materials to support accurate completion of GBA+ within departments.

## Current Status

Significant progress has been made in implementing GBA+ across government and within VAC, but there remains a lack of knowledge of available evidence and how to find it as well as how to use it to ensure that decision making is evidence-based.

The Department also lacks mechanisms to support consistent attention to GBA+ considerations in planning and analysis.

## Expected Outcomes

As the Department facilitates easy access to GBA+ data and more linkages between data originators and users, VAC staff will become more aware of how to request and access it and, through training and practice, will become more confident in how to use it.

By acknowledging the expanding use of data, and how VAC is moving from data collection, to analysis, evidence and reporting, it is helpful to consider the full spectrum of steps that moves raw data into evidence that drives decision making at VAC.

By creating mechanisms to draw attention to GBA+ considerations and supports for analysis, GBA+ will become a standard practice.

## Supporting Initiatives (or Levers)

### Create a GBA+ challenge function for analysis and planning

- Include a GBA+ Considerations section as part of all presentations made to senior management committees to ensure that it is part of all discussions;
- Add GBA+ considerations to all project planning templates and other resources;

### Develop resources to support GBA+ analysis and planning

- Develop a guide or checklist for addressing GBA+ considerations in analysis and planning;
- On an ad hoc basis, create a team of GBA+ experts (Branch contact points, Research Division staff, the Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans and others) to offer ongoing support for planning and developing new or enhanced programs and initiatives;
- Develop a repository of VAC and Government of Canada promising/best practices for working on these requirements.

### Explore novel approaches to planning gender-inclusive service design and delivery

- The Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans is already exploring the potential of the TBS GIS “Design Jam” methodology for identifying and devising solutions for complex GBA+-related challenges in service design and delivery. If effective and feasible, this methodology could be

leveraged into further opportunities for staff to collaborate and build capacity for GBA+ in analysis and planning;

- Liaise with other Departments (ESDC, CIC, etc.) to gather lessons learned and resources and promising/best practices on GBA+-informed planning.

## Pillar 4 - Tools and Training

### Context

VAC staff work in geographically, culturally and linguistically diverse locations. As such, it is an imperative to ensure appropriate training/development of tools that meet staff needs. To support organizational change management, GBA+ training should be mandatory and ongoing. The level of training for employees will be tailored to their position/work within VAC. For some, the *Introduction to GBA+ online course* may be sufficient, whereas others may require additional training up to, and including, the CSPS “GBA+ Premium” course. The development of additional, VAC-specific GBA+ training might also be valuable. Tools are required to support onboarding of new staff and knowledge transfer in a phased approach.

### Current Status

VAC’s GBA+ Champion regularly promotes GBA+ training and tools available through the Canadian School of Public Service (CSPS) and through the Women and Gender Equality website. There are also internal and external resources and communities of practice available for the department to build from to develop tools and training that meet the needs of staff. In addition, VAC is in the midst of developing training roadmaps for staff involved in disability benefits adjudication, which presents an opportunity for integrating GBA+.

### Expected Outcomes

As more staff become trained and equipped, VAC should expect to notice an increased use and quality of GBA+ in the design and delivery of VAC programs and services as well as a greater application of a GBA+ lens to front line service delivery. Ultimately, this will ensure that VAC programming is designed and delivered with the needs of all Veterans at the forefront, which will ultimately lead to equitable access to VAC programs and inclusive, equitable services for all Veterans and their families.

### Supporting Initiatives (or Levers)

#### Continue to build GBA+ knowledge

- Deliver enhanced senior leadership training (1/2 day, retreat style (awareness presentation, handout, policy guide and VAC case study));
- Ensure continuous liaison between GBA+ Champion, GBA+ Network and all branches. Branch contacts will provide the key link to individual staff on GBA+ training opportunities, and GBA+ tools and supports;
- Ensure VAC participates in the GConnex GBA+ Community of Practice and other relevant communities of practice.

#### Assess training currently available and adapt/develop VAC-specific tools and training

- Evaluate all VAC tools and training for attention to/inclusion of GBA+;

- Develop an inventory of tools and training on GBA +, including: CSPA; National Employment Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee (NEEDAC); Women and Gender Equality website; Native Women's Association of Canada; governments and NGOs – international, regional, provincial, and local; other sources
- Evaluate potential of these resources for VAC to adopt/adapt;
- Develop, as needed, VAC-specific training.

### Integrate promising/best practices

- Require GBA+ training as part of Performance Management Plans;
- Establish a monitoring process to capture GBA+ training completion rates and assess future training needs.;
- Develop GBA+ expectations for communication and decision making at formal level

## Pillar 5 – Implementation and compliance (Mainstreaming GBA+)

### Context

Requirements for GBA+ are expanding and becoming more rigorous. Check boxes signifying that GBA+ has been conducted are no longer acceptable and Departments are expected to be able to explain how GBA+ has been considered and addressed in all aspects of their work. For example, Cabinet/Treasury Board Submissions and regulatory packages must detail how GBA+ considerations have been assessed and how they will influence a policy, program, initiative, or service design. Resources, such as the Departments of Finance and Women and Gender Equality GBA+ template for budget proposals, have been developed, but much remains to be done to support the implementation of GBA+ in government.

### Current Status

VAC complies with GBA+ requirements. VAC attempts to examine the unique intersectionality identity factors that can occur due to military experiences. VAC's GBA+ analysis also examines the family and support structure beyond the individual level. The Department aims to not only fulfill the GBA+ requirements but to include an even greater depth of data and analysis in all future proposals.

### Expected Outcomes

Meeting these ongoing GBA+ obligations for all VAC policies, programs and services will allow VAC to improve its work to attain better results for Veterans and their families by being more responsive to their unique needs

### Supporting Initiatives (or Levers)

#### Develop resources to support GBA+ implementation

- Create VAC-specific templates and/or resources for implementing GBA+ in all of the work of the Department;

- Establish a group with content expertise in GBA+ (Branch contact points, research division staff, the Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans and others) to act as a resource for integrating GBA+ into the work of the Department.
- Greater sharing of VAC's repository of GBA+ analysis completed for previous MC's, TB Subs, Regulatory packages and also examples of GBA+ application details for VAC.

### Integrate GBA+ into corporate areas such as Finance and HR

- Review Human Resources policies to ensure they reflect a commitment to GBA+ (e.g. flexible work arrangements, equal career opportunities);
- Ensure costing estimates and financial analysis reporting for all new and ongoing initiatives and programs consider GBA+ factors;
- Maintain ongoing dialogue with GCWorkplace team to ensure redesign of Daniel J. MacDonald building meets the needs of diverse communities (disability, safe zones, neurodiversity, transgender). Also ensure the differing ergonomic and optimal environmental temperature needs of all employees are respected.

### Governance

- Consider adding a GBA+ related objective in the performance agreement of managers and executives;
- Include a GBA+ Considerations section as part of all presentations made to senior management committees to ensure that it is part of all discussions;
- Ensure GBA+ considerations are incorporated into Integrated Planning and Performance functions/[documents](#) including the Departmental Results Report, Report on Plans and Priorities, and Program Information Profiles.

## Pillar 6 – Monitoring and Evaluation

### Context:

One of the challenges related to the full implementation of GBA+ lies in barriers associated with monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness. Although the Department of Women and Gender Equality, the Privy Council office and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat are committed to developing monitoring and accountability mechanisms<sup>2</sup>, there is still limited guidance on how to evaluate GBA+ and its effectiveness in improving government initiatives.

### Current Status

All departments are required to complete the annual GBA+ implementation survey led by Women and Gender Equality. While some questions may be modified from year to year, the continuity of this survey provides a key monitoring and measurement tool to assess whether a department is advancing

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<sup>2</sup> 2015 Fall Report of the Auditor General of Canada

on the goal of full integration of GBA+ into departmental processes. Although more needs to be done, the VAC survey conducted in 2019, showed an increase in some categories, in particular, the number of Full-Time equivalents dedicated to GBA+ and the increasing level of GBA+ training throughout the department.

## Expected Outcomes

By building the proper mechanisms to support and improve monitoring, evaluation and reporting, VAC will achieve increased accountability and transparency, which will lead to greater overall effectiveness of the Department's GBA+ related efforts.

### Develop a GBA+ monitoring and evaluation framework

- To fully operationalize GBA+ in VAC's environment, it will be key to identify areas of application and examples specific to each division. Through evaluation and close monitoring, VAC will be able to assess the extent to which gender and other identify factors were considered, not only in the design and implementation of a research study, program or policy, but also in the quality of our interventions and communications with Veterans;
- Create performance indicators that can be incorporated into evaluation processes to support GBA+ performance;
- Ensure full integration of GBA+ into audit and evaluation functions, including discussion of GBA+ issues at PMEC, particularly when reviewing individual programs.

### Assess and address challenges and barriers to GBA+ implementation

- Strategic Policy and Commemoration Branch, will conduct regular assessments to identify challenges and barriers to implementation, and take the necessary corrective measures to ensure progress continues.
- A strong and holistic communications strategy will be developed to fully support the implementation of this Framework;
- Ensure that any specific GBA+ recommendations pertaining to departmental implementation resulting from audits and evaluations are actioned.

### Develop resources to support GBA+ monitoring and evaluation

- VAC is currently developing client profiles based on GBA+ and will present this information for programs in the coming years. Client profiles informed by GBA+ are being built into program dashboards so that they will be updated on a consistent and regular basis;
- VAC could also explore options to include additional indicators in tools used by program staff to ensure GBA+ is operationalized from the designing phases through to the delivery of programs and services;
- Continue to complete the annual GBA+ survey to gauge progress towards full implementation. Catalogue and communicate with the Department lessons learned or information of interest.

- Continue to track the quality of GBA+ analysis conducted for MC's/TB Submissions and regulatory packages. Gaps and follow-ups noted in the analysis provide direction for quality improvement of future analysis.

## Risks

A Risk Identification ([Appendix G](#)) was conducted to determine factors that could impact or jeopardize the achievement of the desired outcomes of the Strategy and to define mitigation strategies.

### **GBA+ is our Collective Responsibility:**

- **VAC Deputy Minister** is responsible for providing overall leadership to support GBA+ in the Department and ensuring due diligence related to GBA+ across all business lines.
- **Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Oversight and Communications (SOC) Branch** is responsible for ensuring all MCs, Treasury Board Submissions, Regulatory submissions and budget proposals include the mandatory GBA+ requirements.
- **Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Commemoration (SPC) Branch** provides leadership in the promotion, implementation and monitoring of GBA+ in the Department, and advises senior management of their roles and responsibilities.
- **As of April 1, 2020, the Office of Women and LGBTQ Veterans** will become the first point of contact for GBA+ at VAC. The office is responsible for: raising awareness and offering tools, information sessions and resources to help VAC staff to better understand GBA+ and how to integrate it into their work; providing advice and guidance on incorporating GBA+ into specific initiatives, policies, programs and service delivery.
- **Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs) and Direct Reports (DR)** to the DM are responsible for ensuring their staff take GBA+ training and integrate GBA+ in their work.
- **All VAC staff** are responsible for taking GBA+ training and integrating GBA+ in their work.

## Responsibility and Accountability

In order for the Department to change its practice and culture, it is key that all VAC employees (in all roles and levels) see themselves as having an important part to play in achieving the desired outcomes. This accountability will start at the management level with senior leaders taking ownership of actions under each of the pillars.

As this Strategy is meant to be evergreen, the specific items and the area responsible may change over time. However, shared ownership and responsibility will position VAC to **mainstream GBA+ across the Department** and bolster its ability to ensure programs and

services consider not only the majority, but also the impacts on marginalized subgroups of the Veteran population.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Government of Canada has been committed to using GBA+ in the Development of policies, programs and initiatives since 1995. VAC is contributing to these efforts by being more responsive to specific needs and ensuring that government policies and programs are inclusive and barrier free. This GBA+ Strategy details VAC's approach to mainstreaming GBA+ and sets the framework upon which all areas of the Department can contribute in enhancing capacity relevant to their functional area of responsibility, with oversight and support from the GBA+ Champion and departmental network. A more detailed action plan will address how the department intends to progress equality, diversity and inclusion over the next three years, fiscal year 2020-2021 to fiscal year 2022-2023, with the idea that the Strategy and Framework continue to provide that guidance to progress equitable access and enable equitable outcomes for all segments of the Veteran population in need of services and supports related to their service to Canada.

*We are committed to evidence-based decision-making that takes into consideration the impacts of policies on all Canadians and fully defends the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. You will apply Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) in the decisions that you make.*

**Mandate Letter, Minister of Veterans Affairs, December 2019**

## APPENDIX A – LEXICON ON SEX, GENDER AND DIVERSITY<sup>3</sup>

The following definitions are taken from [The Gender Integration Framework from the Canadian Human Rights Commission](#), the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#), and the [Canadian Institutes of Health Research](#). Definitions have also been provided by Government of Canada's LGBTQ2 Secretariat.

Another online source of definitions is *TERMIUM Plus*<sup>®</sup>. This Government of Canada site provides a [Gender and sexual diversity glossary](#) including translations in English and French.

**Sex** refers to a person's biological and physiological characteristics. A person's sex is most often determined at birth through physical examination by a health professional. This is also referred to as birth-assigned sex.

**Gender** refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society constructs or considers appropriate for the categories of "man" and "woman", "boy" and "girl". It can result in stereotyping and limited expectations about what people can and cannot do. Gender has often been – and continues to be – understood by many as a binary: an individual is or can only be a female or male, woman or man. Some people do not accept this binary and even those that do increasingly recognize that most people experience gender as a continuum of attributes, behaviours, roles, and activities.

**Gender expression** refers to the various ways in which people choose to express their gender identity. For example: clothes, voice, hair, make-up, etc. A person's gender expression may not align with societal expectations of their perceived gender. It is not a reliable indicator of a person's gender identity.

**Gender identity** is an internal and deeply felt sense of being a man or woman, neither, a combination of both, or another gender. A person's gender identity may or may not align with the gender identity typically associated with their birth-assigned sex.

**Cisgender** is a person whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.

**Intersex** people are born with any of several variations in sex characteristics, including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, or genitals, that do not fit binary conceptions of "male" or "female" bodies.

**LGBTQ2** is an acronym standing for the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual (those who are attracted to both men and women), transgender, intersex, queer (a self-identifying term used in some gay communities), questioning, and two-spirit. There are many different acronyms that may be used by various communities. It should be noted that acronyms like these may

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<sup>3</sup> Department for Women and Gender Equality, 2019

combine sex, gender, and sexual orientation attributes into one community. This combination may or may not be appropriate in all circumstances, and GBA+ analysis should be specific where appropriate.

**2SLGBTQIA** – is an acronym used in the Report of the Standing committee on Veterans Affairs. The acronym stands for, “Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual.”

**Non-Binary** (also ‘genderqueer’) refers to a person whose gender identity does not align with a binary understanding of gender. A gender identity could include man, woman, androgynous, fluid, multiple, no gender, or a different gender outside of the “woman—man” continuum.

**Trans or transgender** is a person whose gender identity differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. It includes people who identify with binary genders (i.e. trans men and women), and people who do not fit within the gender binary, (i.e. non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, agender, etc.)

**Transexual** is a term that is no longer commonly used, though may be more frequently used by transgender individuals of an older cohort. The term defines a person whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth, who has undertaken physical transition which may include medical and/or surgical interventions. The term has fallen out of favour as it implies that physical transition is necessary in order to claim a trans identity.

**Two-spirit** (also Two Spirit or Two-Spirited) is an English term used to broadly capture concepts traditional to many Indigenous cultures. It is a culturally-specific identity used by some Indigenous people to indicate a person whose gender identity, spiritual identity and/or sexual orientation comprises both male and female spirits.

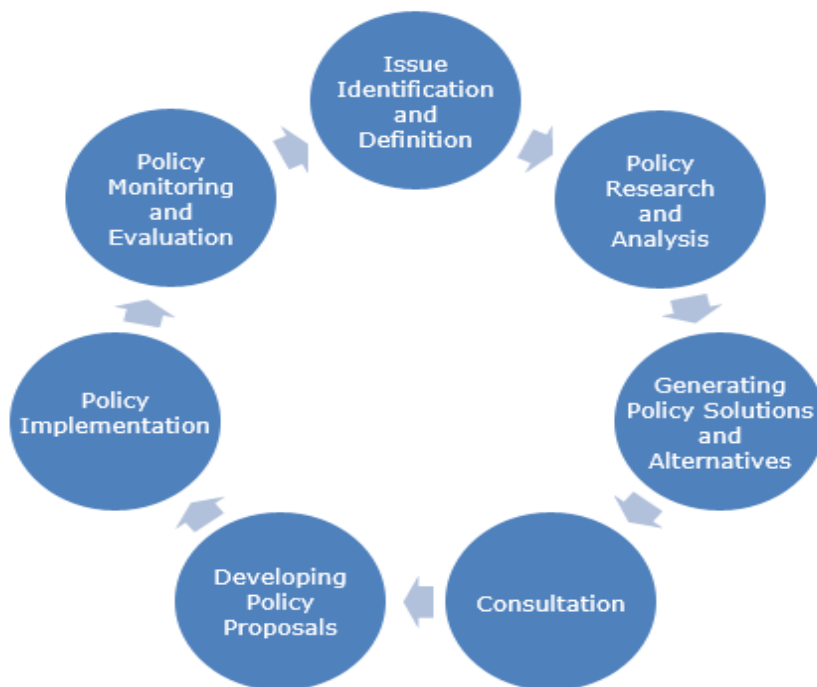
## APPENDIX B – POLICY LIFE CYCLE AND GBA+

GBA+ should be used at all stages of the policy cycle, from development to implementation. The graphic below outlines the multiple stages of policy development and implementation and their continuous interrelationship with each other.<sup>4</sup> All policy proposals brought forward for consideration by Ministers should be informed by Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+).

The objective is to ensure that differential impacts on diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people are explicitly recognized and mitigated. GBA+ should be conducted and applied throughout the development of a policy or program proposal and informed by diverse and inclusive sources of information, including data that is gender-disaggregated and accounts for intersecting identity factors<sup>5</sup>.

Considering the diversity and variability of VAC initiatives, there are some key considerations and questions to ask at each step of the process. Considerations include the intersecting identity factors of the Veterans and their communities that are being addressed, and how these intersecting identity factors impact their lived experiences. An overarching consideration is how intersecting identity factors potentially impact the outcomes of the initiative.

### THE POLICY LIFE CYCLE



<sup>4</sup> Canada School of Public Service, GBA+ Premium Course, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> GBA+ Decision Tree for Privy Council Office Analysts, 2018

## APPENDIX C – GBA+ MILESTONES AND KEY LEGISLATION

### Gender/Equality and GBA+ Milestones

- 1982-1985      While the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into force on April 17, 1982, Section 15 came into effect on April 17, 1985 to give governments time to bring their laws in line with the equality rights guaranteed. Section 15 prescribes that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination.
- 1995      •      At the UN conference on Women, the Beijing Platform for Action committed Canada and other countries to accelerate progress toward equality between men and women.
- 2007      •      Mandatory for GBA considerations to be included in TB submissions.
- 2008      •      Mandatory for GBA considerations to be included in Memorandum to Cabinet
- 2009      •      Canada's first Action Plan on GBA.
- 2011      •      Status of Women Canada rebranded GBA as GBAS+ to ensure inclusion diverse identify circumstance into the analysis.
- 2015      • Canada's first gender-balanced Cabinet. • First full Minister for Status of Women appointed.
- 2016      • GBA+ becomes mandatory for all Memoranda to Cabinet and Treasury Board submissions.
- 2017      • Canada's first ever Gender Statement published
- 2018      • Budget 2018 establishes Canada's Gender Results Framework .
- Parliament passes the Canadian Gender Budgeting Act .
- Department for Women and Gender Equality is created.

- Canada celebrates the first ever Gender Equality Week from September 23 to 29, 2018.

2019 • Budget 2019: Gender budgeting is a foundational element of the Government's strategy to improve equality in Canada.

*Source: WAGE website and Budget Plan 2019*

In Fall 2015, the Auditor General of Canada's report, [\*Implementing Gender-Based Analysis\*](#) was released and cited gaps in GBA+ implementation and indicated that more work was required to improve GBA+ across government. Specifically, the report found that a GBA framework was not implemented in some federal departments and agencies, and departments did not always conduct complete GBA+. It also noted that Status of Women Canada (now WAGE) and central agencies made efforts to promote GBA+ analysis, but despite this, departments and agencies faced barriers to including GBA+ analysis in policy development. Since the release of the report, WAGE, the Privy Council Office, and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) have continued to work with departments and agencies to address the findings in the Auditor General's report. VAC's GBA+ Strategy has been designed to ensure that VAC employees have the tools, training and knowledge to ensure full implementation of GBA+

The [\*Canadian Gender Budgeting Act\*](#) was passed by Parliament in December 2018, enshrining the Government's commitment to decision-making that takes into consideration the impacts of policies on all Canadians in a budgetary context.

The Government of Canada continues to advance gender diversity and inclusion with the 2018 launch of the new [\*TBS policy direction to modernize sex and gender information practices\*](#) in the Government of Canada. Through this policy, departments will assess their approach to collecting, using, and displaying sex and gender information. The collection of gender information will be the default with sex information captured only when relevant to the program. Non-binary options will also be introduced on identity forms, surveys, and other government documents.

### [\*Canada's Defence Policy\*](#)

Canada's 2017 Defence Policy, [\*Strong, Secure, Engaged\*](#) provides unprecedented support to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members and their families and highlights the importance of diversity. The people-centered Defence Policy, commits to diversity and inclusion, as well as to research on ways to recruit more women into the CAF. Specifically, the CAF is committed to demonstrating leadership in reflecting Canadian ideals of diversity, respect and inclusion, including striving for gender equality and building a workforce that leverages the diversity of Canadian society (p. 23, [\*Strong Secure, Engaged\*](#)).

In June 2019, the Report of the Standing Committee on National Defence was released entitled: *Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces*. The Report notes that, “the participation of women, Indigenous peoples, visible minorities and members of the LGBTQ2 community in the CAF is not representative of the population it serves (p. 19).”

The Report indicates that the CAF is aiming to increase the representation of certain designated groups over a 10-year period:

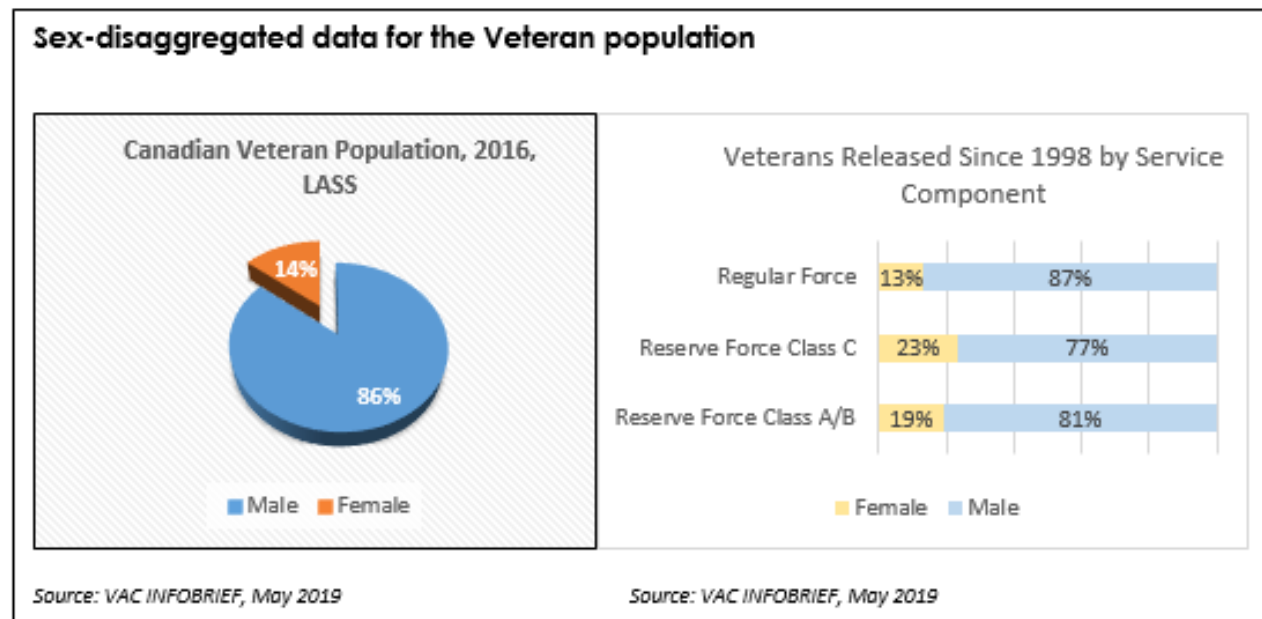
- women: from 14.9% in 2016 to 25% by 2026;
- Indigenous peoples: from 2.6% in 2016 to 3.5% by 2026; and
- visible minorities: from 6.7% in 2016 to 11.8% by 2026.

Several of the Committee’s witnesses mentioned that the unique experiences and perspectives of individuals from diverse backgrounds can be viewed an asset in the current strategic environment, which is characterized by complex and multifaceted conflicts, technological advances and globalization (p.25). A Government Response to this Report is forthcoming.

## APPENDIX D – SEX, GENDER AND INTERSECTIONALITY DIMENSIONS OF

### GBA+

As the demographics of the CAF are shifting, there is a corresponding increase in women who are making the transition to life after service as Veterans.<sup>6</sup> Women are now one of the fastest growing cohorts of Veterans in Canada.<sup>7</sup>



The September 2018 Veterans Ombudsman Report titled, [\*Meeting Expectations: Timely and Transparent Decisions for Canada's Ill and Injured Veterans\*](#), sheds light on some inconsistencies in how certain groups of Veterans were treated. Based on this study and confirmed through an analysis of VAC disability applications (as of May, 2019), VAC now has intersectional data indicating that Francophone applicants waited longer than Anglophone applicants for disability benefit claims and delays were longer for women Veterans compared to men. These findings reveal that some groups of applicants wait longer than others and that these differences are not based on needs.

Since the publication of the Ombudsman's report, VAC has been changing the way it processes applications and has increased staff by creating a dedicated team of Francophone adjudicators to address the discrepancy in wait times for Francophone applicants. VAC is currently reviewing decision-making tools and business processes using GBA+ and will act on these

<sup>6</sup> VAC Facts and Figures Book, December 2018

<sup>7</sup> The Gender Dimensions of Veteran Transition, Queen's University, December 2018

findings to improve on processing times to ensure consistent and equitable service for all Veterans.

### *Sex and Gender Dimensions and Health*

When it comes to health and well-being, differences matter. Sex and gender shape human beings inside and out, from cells to society. For example, cardio-vascular diseases are the leading cause of death for both men and women, but they are often mis-diagnosed or undiagnosed in women and men tend to develop these diseases at a younger age. These kinds of differences support the need for integration of sex and gender considerations into research, to ensure effective health services and health promotion for men, women and gender diverse people.<sup>8</sup> More work remains to be done in this area: while one in three women in Canada dies from a cardio-vascular disease, most preclinical studies are conducted on male mice and women are often excluded from or under-represented in clinical trials.

### *GBA+: Sex, gender and more*

GBA+ is not only about sex and gender. Veterans are not a homogeneous group and their various experiences are affected by other parts of their identity such as race, religion, disability and more. Although VAC does not currently collect data about all identity factors for the client population, the Department recognizes that information gathered from the broader Veteran population, through the voluntary Life After Service Survey (LASS), could provide valuable information to assist in measuring the effectiveness of existing programs, services and initiatives and in developing new ones.

### *Other identity factors: LGBTQ2*

While VAC is doing some qualitative work to better understand women and LGBTQ2 Veterans, more research needs to be conducted with these sub-populations. The LGBTQ2 community has historically been the subject of persecution and discrimination in the CAF, RCMP and in the federal public service. The campaign to identify and purge LGBTQ2 people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression started in the 1950s and lasted for decades.<sup>9</sup> Although a settlement was achieved to compensate LGBTQ2 people, some Veterans and other clients could still be living with the consequences of discrimination.

### *Geography/Community*

VAC can count on a strong network of close to seventy area offices and transition centres dedicated to providing services to Veterans and their families in their own communities. Members of the Veteran Service Team working in these offices keep abreast of the services offered in their local communities and can refer Veterans to needed resources or providers.

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<sup>8</sup> Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Gender and Health

<sup>9</sup> LGBT Purge, class action website

This is a key aspect of VAC service offering: that delivery of services is reflective of the communities' realities and is based on Veterans' individual needs no matter where they live.

#### *Indigenous Veterans*

With its February 2019 report entitled: [\*Indigenous Veterans: From Memories of Injustice to Lasting Recognition\*](#), the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACVA) highlighted some differences in the way Indigenous Veterans have been treated by VAC and the Government of Canada. The Committee identified historical experiences, geographic isolation, languages and other challenges, which limit the provision of services to this population. The Government of Canada agreed to the twelve recommendations made by the Committee and has committed to better understanding and addressing the specific needs of Indigenous Veterans by taking action on these recommendations.

Specifically, the report called upon all governments to provide adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for Indigenous-centred and community-based health and wellness services that are accessible and culturally-appropriate, and meet the health and wellness needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA<sup>10</sup> people. Since the release of the report, VAC has continued with the development of an Indigenous Veterans Strategy and will be engaging Indigenous Veterans and organizations to ensure their needs are being addressed.

#### *A representative workforce*

Based on workforce data, Veterans Affairs Canada is meeting overall representation for all four designated groups (women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities) at the departmental level as of December 31, 2018, and will continue to achieve a representative workforce.<sup>11</sup>

VAC is working to implement workplace well-being and diversity measures with the objective of creating safer and more positive workspaces. VAC will also work to create a more inclusive, accessible and diverse workplace and workforce to support [\*Bill C-81, an Act to ensure a Barrier-free Canada\*](#) (VAC Departmental Plan 2019-20).

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<sup>10</sup> 2SLGBTQQIA: acronym stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual.

<sup>11</sup> Government Response to the Eleventh Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, *Indigenous Veterans: From Memories of Injustice to Lasting Recognition*

## APPENDIX E – CONCURRENT INITIATIVES

Beyond its GBA+ Strategy, VAC is reviewing and reshaping the future of its programs and benefits through a number of new initiatives, while bringing the voices of diverse Veterans groups to the table through these processes

### *Innovation Hub*

VAC has recently created an Innovation Hub. The Hub will leverage advanced technologies and methodologies, such as digitization and service design, to address the policy, program and service delivery issues facing the department. While the scope of services and expertise are still being developed, consideration of how the activities and ideas generated in the Hub's lab impact people differently depending on their situation, will be a guiding principle and incorporated into the foundational operation of the Hub.

### *Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans*

The Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans was announced on July 29, 2019, following the first Women Veterans' Forum held in Canada on May 23, 2019. It has a dual mandate to work with all branches of the Department, Veterans, stakeholder organizations to identify and address issues and barriers specific to women and LGBTQ2 Veterans and their families, as well as to contribute to key federal government commitments to advance gender equality, diversity and inclusion for Veterans. This shows a commitment on the part of the department to advance gender inclusive policies, programs and services while providing a dedicated channel to expand outreach to under-represented sub-groups of the Veteran population.

Understanding sex and gender specific impacts and needs will rely on collaboration with Veterans with lived experiences. The Office will help the Department position itself to continue to meet the changing needs of Veterans and their families into the future. The Office intends to influence research, policy and program development and implementation, support an informed and inclusive delivery of programs and services, and provide ongoing advice to advance equality for Veterans.

### *Advance 2025*

Given the ageing demographic of the CAF Veteran population, the pace of recent program changes and outcomes achieved, VAC Strategic Policy is undertaking a longer term strategic planning approach to managing the future of VAC benefits. To achieve this, a broad consultation approach is desired to obtain input from Canadians, provinces and territories, Veterans, their families and other stakeholders. Issues such as the nature and extent of Veterans benefits (e.g. long term care), basis of program eligibility (service-related vs needs-based), and benefits for families in their own right could be explored. The goal is to review and

design the future VAC benefits to meet the needs of Canada's Veteran population across lifespan.

*Policy On Service And Digital – EFFECTIVE April 1, 2020*

The Policy on Service and Digital and supporting instruments serve as an integrated set of rules that articulate how Government of Canada organizations manage service delivery, information and data, information technology, and cyber security in the digital era.

The Policy on Service and Digital focuses on the client, ensuring proactive consideration at the design stage of key requirements of these functions in the development of operations and services. It establishes an enterprise-wide, integrated approach to governance, planning and management. Overall, the Policy on Service and Digital advances the delivery of services and the effectiveness of government operations through the strategic management of government information and data and leveraging of information technology.

The management of these functions is guided by a commitment to the guiding principles and best practices of the Government of Canada Digital Standards: design with users; iterate and improve frequently; work in the open by default; use open standards and solutions; address security and privacy risks; build in accessible from the start; empower staff to deliver better services; be good data stewards; design ethical services; collaborate widely. GBA+ is an essential component of co-design with users. Understanding various intersectionality factors from the start will allow Veterans Affairs Canada to ensure that its development of policies, programs, services and initiatives includes consideration of differential impacts on diverse groups.

## APPENDIX F – GBA+ MAINSTREAMING FRAMEWORK SCHEDULE

The following Gantt chart provides a high-level overview of the planned schedule for mainstreaming GBA+ across the initial five fiscal years covered by this Strategy. As the strategy is evergreen, it will be updated on an ongoing basis.

| Pillar                           | Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 2020-21    | 2021-22 | 2022-23     | 2023-24 | 2024-25   |  |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|-------------|---------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Short-term |         | Medium-term |         | Long-term |                                                                                     |
| 1. Information and awareness     | Short/Medium-term and on-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raising awareness and understanding of GBA+;</li> <li>Raising awareness of GIS initiative.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                           |            |         |             |         |           |                                                                                     |
| 2. Data collection               | Short/Medium-term and on-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving data collection systems and practices;</li> <li>Improving understanding and use of evidence.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                               |            |         |             |         |           |                                                                                     |
| 3. Analysis and planning         | Short/Medium-term and on-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving understanding and use of sex and gender evidence;</li> <li>Building capacity for integrating GBA+ into the day-to-day business of the Department.</li> </ul>                                                                          |            |         |             |         |           |                                                                                     |
| 4. Tools and training            | Short/Medium-term and on-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building capacity for integrating GBA+ into the day-to-day business of the Department;</li> <li>Developing training and tools to support capacity-building and implementation of GBA+.</li> </ul>                                               |            |         |             |         |           |                                                                                     |
| 5. Implementation and compliance | Short/Medium-term and on-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of GBA+ in Departmental activities.</li> <li>Improving use of sex and gender evidence.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                |            |         |             |         |           |                                                                                     |
| 6. Monitoring and evaluation     | Short/Medium-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a framework for monitoring and evaluation of GBA+ implementation</li> </ul> Long-term and on-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring and evaluation of GBA+ implementation;</li> <li>“Course corrections”, as needed.</li> </ul> |            |         |             |         |           |                                                                                     |

## APPENDIX G – RISK IDENTIFICATION

Some risks may affect the implementation of the Strategy and the foundation of a rigorous GBA+ function at VAC. These risks, the level of impact, and related mitigation strategies have been identified below.

### Risks:

1. Lack of GBA+ knowledge and capacity to conduct quality GBA+. *Level of Impact – Medium*
  - a. Staff workload is already high, dedicated work on GBA+ specific Reporting, Data Analysis, Tracking, Implementation may not be possible.
2. Increasing pressure from central agencies to keep up with evolving requirements and complete comprehensive GBA+ analysis (e.g. public disclosure of GBA+ analyses, linking GBA+ to government priorities). *Level of Impact - Medium to High*
3. GBA+ is often considered late in the process thus limiting the opportunity to apply the results of analysis. *Level of Impact – Medium*
  - a. Unclear accountability for those completing a comprehensive GBA+ assessment
4. Lack of data available to support evidence-based GBA+ analyses. *Level of Impact – Medium*

### Mitigation:

1. Building strong connections with staff around GBA+ data and information and integrating this topic into broader data discussion would facilitate the work.
  - a. Include GBA+ data requirements into data pipeline planning and development, so that the necessary data is available once the pipeline is built.
2. Dedication of additional resources to increase GBA+ capacity
  - a. Earlier engagement with branches to ensure rigorous GBA+ application in mandatory assessments supporting government proposals
  - b. Increased emphasis on implementing a communications strategy to support GBA+ implementation
  - c. Expanded and proactive outreach to program areas to increase awareness of GBA+

3. Institutionalize GBA+ as a mandatory assessment for internal planning and proposal development
  - a. Regular progress and monitoring updates to all levels VAC management
  - b. Enhanced GBA+ Champion engagement with senior management
4. Enhanced GBA+ Champion engagement with senior management