



An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Office of Veterans Affairs

Work Plan 2026



Introduction

The establishment of the Office of Veterans Affairs was one of the recommendations included in the report of the Commission on the Defence Forces (CODF), published on 9 February 2022. The 2025 Program for Government committed to establishing a properly resourced Office of Veterans’ Affairs, based within the Department of Defence and working across Government to assist with the needs of our veterans.

Following the presentation of a Memo to Government, the OVA was formally established on 10th November 2025. The intention of the Office is to engage and advocate within Government on matters pertaining to veterans as a whole, rather than individuals. This will have a particular focus on the development of supports for veterans at a group level and involve consulting other Government Departments who may be able to contribute to enhancing veterans’ access to benefits.

Within the Memo to Government was a commitment to produce a 12-month plan for the establishment of the OVA. This is essential to guide the structured establishment of this new office and set realistic expectations.

This Work Plan will outline the future direction of the Office over the next 12 months, which will include the evaluation and exploration of the four roles and responsibilities outlined below:

- 1 Partnership
- 2 Advocacy
- 3 Research
- 4 Veterans Policy

The OVA will play a key role going forward in coordinating matters relating to veterans and understanding the veteran community.

1. Partnership

The Office of Veteran Affairs was set up on 10th November, with a high level outline of its purpose and responsibilities. A key first task will be to ensure that the purpose and responsibilities of the office are clear and fit for purpose, and to set out the other aspects of the establishment of the office, e.g. organisational structure/design, required resources and structures for stakeholder engagement. The planned steps to be taken by the OVA are set out below and initial positions on these areas are set out in Appendix A

Task	Outline of steps
Purpose	Assess the purpose of the Office to ensure it meets the needs and supports required by veterans collectively. This will require future engagement with the Defence Forces, Veteran Associations and Department.
	Analyse the benefits and shortfalls of the OVA being a central point of coordination for all matters relating to veterans within the Department of Defence.
	Confirm the purpose of the OVA through structured consultation with key stakeholders and Veteran Associations.
Responsibilities	Collate a comprehensive list of all responsibilities of the OVA.
	Differentiate between broader and core responsibilities and identify specific tasks required to meet them.
Organisational Structure/Design	Assess current workflows, data management systems and work practices to identify areas for improvement.
	This assessment will ensure the structure of the Office will follow best practice when engaging with relevant stakeholders and providing/securing financial supports.
Resources	Identify resources required to ensure all responsibilities identified can be met.
Further Stakeholder Engagement	Continued consultation with established Veteran Associations to identify priorities that may contribute to the future strategy of the OVA.
	Consultation to be initiated between the OVA and other Government Departments to discuss veterans' access to benefits and entitlements.
	Consultation with the Defence Forces to identify level of involvement required with the OVA to ensure all issues raised can be resolved efficiently.

2. Advocacy

Partnership and advocacy are intrinsically linked, and maintaining our relationship with the Veterans Associations will be essential for effective action.

The scope of OVA involvement will be at a policy level, advocating within Government on matters pertaining to veterans collectively. This will be achieved through exploring the issues that affect veterans and making recommendations to Government Departments and policymakers, thereby ensuring veterans receive the support and benefits to which they are entitled.

Numerous supports are utilised by veterans across Government Departments and local authorities. The OVA will work towards coherence and coordination across these areas, to maximise their value for veterans. This will require collaboration across Government and at all levels to deliver effectively for veterans.

Task	Outline of steps
Identify Issues	Consult with the Veteran Associations to gather insights into everyday challenges veterans face when accessing services and support. Information collected will be used to establish the urgency and frequency of these issues.
	Analysis of where gaps, inconsistencies or barriers exist for Veterans when accessing services.
Record Issues	Establish internal processes for recording issues raised by Veterans Associations at quarterly meetings and track actions taken.
Determine Actions	Challenges identified will be used to develop targeted advocacy actions that will facilitate access to services for Veterans.

By way of example, the OVA may engage with the following Departments in the next 12 months to advocate on behalf of veterans:

Government Department	Outcome sought/Communication
Department of Social Protection	Develop a veteran entitlement guide in collaboration with department which is tailored towards retired members of the Defence Forces to ensure access to rights and entitlements.
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Retired members of the Defence Forces currently have access to the same range of services available to all citizens of the State, including access to housing services. Communication could explore the possibility of improvements in accessibility through enhanced signposting. Identifying timeframes required for social housing and eligibility criteria would allow personnel to fully understand the process prior to completion of military service.
Department of Health/HSE	Possibility to develop protocols for veteran specific issues and communication of supports available via VA's when Veterans are attending hospitals. In consultation with VA's an information leaflet could be developed to communicate available supports.
Department of Transport	The basis of this communication may explore what additional services may be available to veterans.

Our interaction with Government officials will involve:

- Engaging directly with officials in the relevant Government Departments, explaining our role and expectations and the issues that veterans face.
- Advocating on behalf of veterans
- Tracking responses, developing timelines and advocating for action on the issues.

3. Research

There has been limited research on the needs of veterans in this country. The OVA will examine this area and may develop a research plan that will be guided by several key factors:

Task	Outline of steps
Existing Research	Identify sources from legislation, existing policies and commissioned studies. ONE is in the process of undertaking research on precise issues affecting veterans. The OVA will examine the results of this research (once available) and its findings.
Analyse Research	Using this research, we can assess the implications of the findings that may contribute to our advocacy and policy work. Consideration of additional research may be required.
Consideration of Future Research	The OVA may, in the future, engage in further investigation into specific areas arising from this study, in particular, the extent to which challenges have developed following completion of their service in Defence Forces.
Identify Gaps	Identifying any gaps not addressed by current available research.

4. Veterans Policy

Suggestions of a whole of government veterans policy being developed will fall within the remit of the OVA. This would be underpinned by the research done on impacts of military service and the needs of veterans. This policy will need to be conducted based on proper research and analysis which would identify and determine actions, designed to deliver better veteran rights through real and meaningful initiatives. Effective policy development seeks to inform policy priorities and to understand the issues that need to be addressed in relation to veterans. Through examining evidence and working with relevant stakeholders, the OVA can identify, assess, and recommend feasible solutions. The OVA will commit to comprehensive evidence gathering effort to understand veterans, their identities, their communities and the value they bring. It will seek to gather information on existing issues to help develop remedies, on existing services to evaluate their effectiveness and emerging issues so it can ensure that its strategies are fit for the future. Our research plan should identify the priority areas for veteran policy development, and the office will carry out the below steps:

Task	Outline of Steps
Deliberation	Extensive deliberation is required to decide what information is needed to build the policy.
Establish Facts	Policy can only be developed after the facts have been established and pertinent questions have been asked.
Consider Research	Using our research and use of other commissioned research (ONE Research due to be completed imminently), we can clarify what we want the policy to achieve. We must understand the research, test assumptions and identify the need and any gaps in policy affecting Veterans.
Address Issues	Identify the problems and barriers that the policy must address, and areas that require improvement.

- Essential, during the next 12 months the office will undertake initial scoping work on the development of a whole of government veterans policy.

Purpose:

The OVA will engage and advocate within Government on matters which are important to veterans as a whole, and will involve consultation with other Departments who may be able to contribute to veterans' access to supports

Responsibilities

- The Office will continue to facilitate financial support by way of annual subvention provided by the Department of Defence through ongoing engagement with two recognised Veterans Associations, the Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (ONE) and the Irish United Nations Veterans Associations (IUNVA). Under the Service Level Agreements, the subvention currently stands at €173,000 to ONE and €40,000 to IUNVA per annum. Dormant Accounts funding is also made available to assist both ONE and IUNVA with specific special projects.

Organisational Design

- The OVA consists of a Principal Officer, an Assistant Principal Officer and a Higher Executive Officer.
- This Office will continue to engage with the four established Veteran Associations to identify and discuss issues affecting veterans.
- Two-way communication between the Department and the OVA will allow for the interactive exchange of information, allowing the Office to respond to evolving issues concerning veterans.
- Engagement and advocacy across other Government Departments will be informed by evidence-based research and interactions with the VAs.



Required Resources

The OVA have engaged with the Defence Forces and have communicated our interest in establishing a designated contact point for OVA. Having a designated contact will provide a clear and consistent communication channel, reduce miscommunication and ensure faster issue resolution. At this stage however, we do not yet have clarity regarding the specific staff, resources or level of support that may be assigned by the Defence Forces. This will be a key action in our 12 month plan.

Stakeholder engagement

Regular meetings will be held between both Department Officials and the Minister of Defence with the four established Veteran Associations. The OVA will organise these meeting ensuring continued engagement with the Veterans Associations to identify and discuss issues affecting veterans.

Executive Summary of 12 Month Work Plan for Office of Veterans Affairs

Following the presentation of a Memo to Government, the OVA was formally established on 10th November 2025. The Office of Veterans Affairs will have a particular focus on the development of supports for veterans at a group level and involve consulting other Government Departments who may be able to contribute to enhancing veterans' access to benefits.

This is an overview of the 12 Month Work plan submitted to Government.

The OVA will play a key role going forward in coordinating matters relating to veterans and understanding the veteran community, under four main headings:

1. Partnership

The OVA will assess the purpose, responsibilities, organisational design and resources of the Office to ensure it meets the needs and supports required by veterans collectively. This will require further engagement with the Defence Forces and Veteran Associations.

2. Advocacy

The OVA will consult with the Veteran Associations to gather insights into everyday challenges veterans face when accessing services and support. These issues will be analysed and information collected will be used to establish the urgency and frequency of these issues. Targeted advocacy actions will be developed to facilitate access to services for veterans, including engagement with relevant Government Departments.

3. Research

There has been limited research on the needs of veterans in this country. The OVA will examine this area and may develop a research plan that will be guided by our analysis.

4. Veterans Policy

During the next 12 months, the office will undertake initial scoping work on the development of a whole of government veterans' policy.

Office of Veterans Affairs – Gantt Chart 2026

	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
Responsibilities	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess purpose, responsibilities, organisational structure and resources required for the office. Engage with Veterans Associations and Defence Forces. 												
Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with Veteran Associations to identify issues. Record issues and determine advocacy actions. Engage with Government Departments. 												
Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse existing research and identify gaps not addressed. Consideration of future research. 												
Veterans Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliberation of information. Establish facts and consider research. Identify issues and consider policy implications. 												

