

Operational Reviews at the National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

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Agenda

- ▶ Overview of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA)
- ▶ The Organizational Assessment and Improvement (OAI) Program Overview
- ▶ The Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework (PEF) applied to OAI
- ▶ Components of an OAI self-assessment/review
- ▶ Questions

NCA Overview

- ▶ NCA is one of three administrations within the Department of Veterans Affairs
- ▶ The other administrations are Veterans Health and Veterans Benefits.
- ▶ The National Cemetery Administration (NCA)
 - 135 National Cemeteries
 - More than 3.4 million gravesites maintained
 - More than 100,000 interments per year
 - More than 300,000 headstones and markers provided per year
 - More than 600,000 Presidential Memorial Certificates provided per year
 - Approximately 1,850 employees

NCA Overview

- ▶ **Mission:** National Shrines and Lasting Tributes – NCA honors Veterans and their eligible family members with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our Nation.

- ▶ **Vision:** NCA will be a model of excellence for burial and memorials for our Nation’s Veterans and their families.

- ▶ NCA ICS supports the mission and vision through its key products and services which include:
 - **Organizational Assessment and Improvement (OAI)**
 - National Cemetery Reviews
 - District Office Reviews
 - Central Office Staff reviews
 - Veterans Cemetery Grants Program compliance reviews
 - Improvement studies (Lean, LSS, Process Design/redesign, Best Practice, etc.)
 - Internal Controls, Risk Management
 - OIG, GAO, and other types of evaluations

OAI Program Overview

- ▶ Began in 2004
- ▶ Initial Purpose: Drive continuous improvement efforts at national cemeteries
 - Selected questions from the Baldrige PEF
 - Selected areas of importance – including safety and employee training
 - Operational Standards and Measures
- ▶ Major expansion and redesign in FY15, piloted in FY16, implemented FY17
- ▶ New purpose is focused on an integrated self-assessment and improvement program addressing multiple needs, while further enhancing a learning environment throughout NCA.

Organizational Assessment and Improvement (OAI)

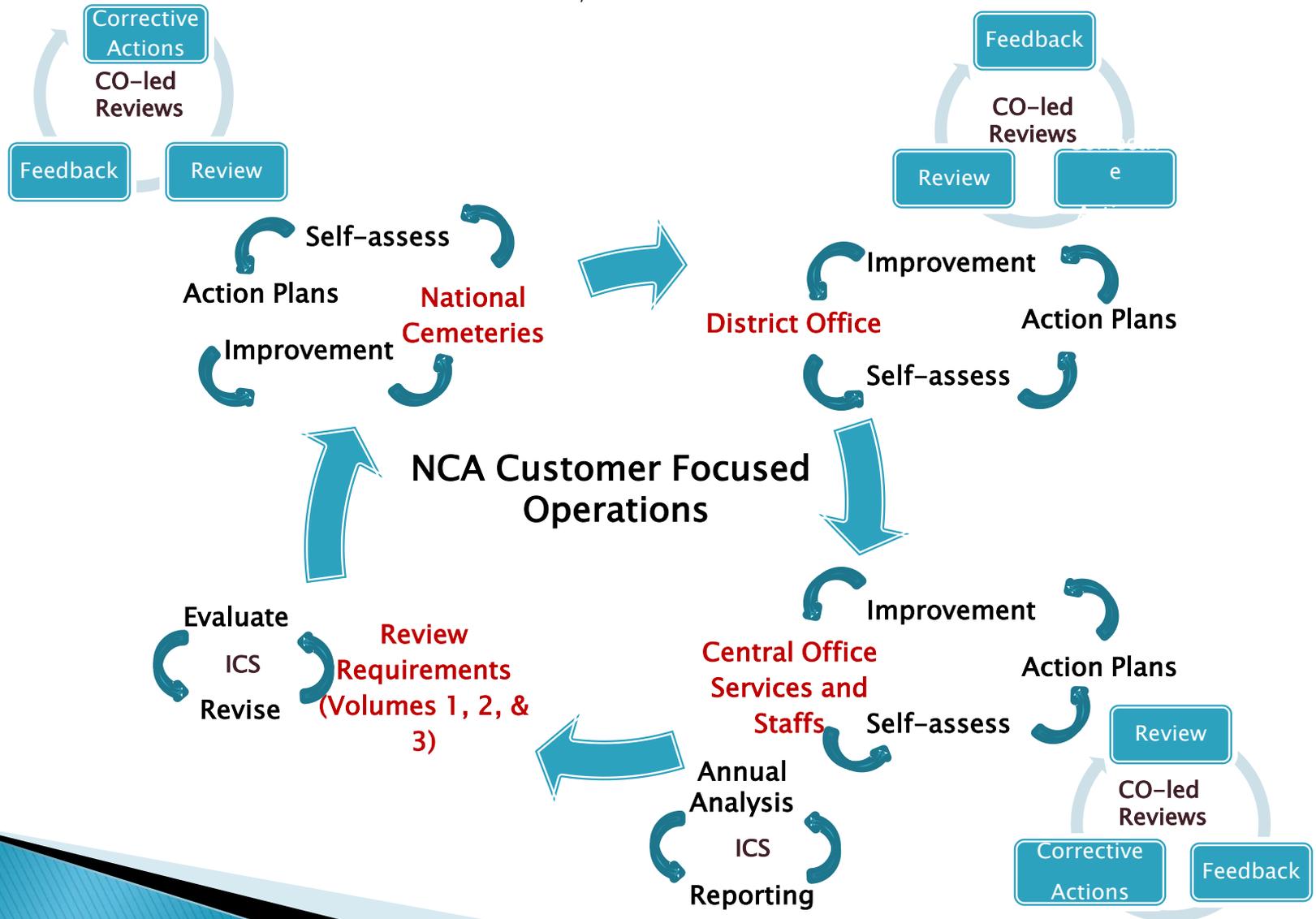
A key component of NCA's Continuous Improvement Program

Multiple levels of review and improvement

- ▶ Self-assessment and improvement at all levels of management
- ▶ Periodic review and improvement from higher levels of management
- ▶ Central Office led verification reviews/audits with follow-up and corrective actions

OAI System Map

11/2016



Organizational Assessment and Improvement (OAI)

A key component of NCA's Continuous Improvement Program

Based on the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework (PEF)

Leadership – How leaders set direction, communicate goals, assess performance, and recognize excellence

Planning – How leaders plan for change to meet current and future business/customer needs

Customer Focus – How leaders listen to, understand, and respond to customer needs and expectations

Data, Analysis, and Knowledge Management – How leaders utilize performance data to identify opportunities and quantify improvements

Workforce Focus – How leaders assess capabilities and capacity, develop the workforce, and prepare for changing customer and business needs

Operations – How leaders control, improve, and redesign processes to ensure consistent high-quality products and services

Results – Objective evaluation of key outputs aligned with key processes associated with six primary Baldrige PEF process categories

NCA Key Performance Measures, OIG/GAO open recommendations, Internal Controls, improvement projects/innovations, performance scorecards, Operational Standards and Measures

Key components of an OAI Review

- ▶ **Baldrige PEF based Leadership evaluation**
- ▶ **NCA Key Performance Measures**
- ▶ **OIG/GAO open recommendations**
- ▶ **Internal Controls**
- ▶ **Improvement projects/innovations**
- ▶ **Performance scorecards**
- ▶ **Operational Standards and Measures**

Key components – Leadership evaluation based on six Baldrige PEF process categories

- ▶ **Baldrige PEF** evaluation based on “Facilitated Discussion” approach to applying the criteria.
 - Leaders are asked a series of questions aligned with each of the six Baldrige PEF process categories.
 - Based on leadership responses – review teams develop and ask follow-up questions to members of the workforce to assess process ADLI.
 - All responses are then aligned with a category specific maturity guidelines to identify one Strength and one Opportunity for Improvement.
 - This is repeated for each of the six process categories.

- ▶ *Baldrige PEF application method options: Survey; Facilitated Discussion; Mock Application; Application; or Audit*

Key components – NCA Key Performance Measures, OIG/GAO open recommendations, Internal Controls

- ▶ **NCA Key Performance Metrics**
 - Assess current performance against national targets for NCA key metrics
- ▶ Review facility to determine/identify any **open OIG or GAO recommendations**. If there are open recommendations – then identify and ensure there is a current action plan in place to address.
- ▶ **Internal Controls**
 - Custom checklists
 - Aligned with requirements outlined in OMB Circular A-123
 - Example – Cemetery standard categories include: Compliance with Law; Reasonable Assurance and Safeguards; Integrity, Competence, and Attitude; Separation of Duties and Supervision; Access to and Accountability for Resources; Recording and documentation; Resolution of Audit Findings and Other Deficiencies; and Mandatory Training.

Key components – Improvement projects/innovations

- ▶ **Improvement project/innovations** – projects often the result of:
 - Leaders Developing Leaders sessions
 - Employee suggestions
 - All Employee Survey result evaluation
 - External Customer Satisfaction survey result evaluation
 - Self-assessment (OAI, Performance Scorecard, Staff Meeting)
 - Participation in nationally sponsored studies
 - Opportunities identified through third-party review

Key components – Performance Scorecards, Operational Standards and Measures

- ▶ **Performance Scorecards**
 - Address key products and services of the organization
 - Reported periodically (at least quarterly)
 - Associated goals or targets
 - Overall performance levels
- ▶ **Operational Standards and Measures.** Categories of consideration include:
 - Equipment Maintenance Standards
 - Grounds Maintenance Standards
 - Headstone, Marker, and Niche Cover Operations
 - Interment Operations
 - Other Standards

Results

- ▶ ***An integrated operational review program that addresses multiple areas of importance across multiple types of offices.***
 - More areas of importance addressed
 - More types of offices addressed
 - Lower cost per review (labor and travel)
 - Shorter cycle times from review to feedback report

Questions