

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT,
TRAINING, AND EMPLOYER OUTREACH (ACVETEO)

2023 Final Report

December 1, 2023

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Veterans' Employment and Training Service
Washington, DC 20210

December 1, 2023

U.S Department of Labor
Frances Perkins Building
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary:

On behalf of the Department of Labor's Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO), it is my honor to present you with the committee's recommendations for 2023.

It is with great humility that we present the committee's recommendations for 2023, and we do so with a profound sense of gratitude for the collaborative efforts that have brought us to this point. The collective dedication of our team, guided by the shared mission of assisting military veterans and their spouses in achieving successful transitions, has been at the forefront of our endeavors.

This significant milestone reflects the tireless commitment and wholehearted engagement of everyone involved, and it is with heartfelt appreciation that we acknowledge the indispensable support provided by the DOL VETS Team. Their exceptional efforts have been instrumental in the realization of our objectives, and we are sincerely grateful for their remarkable contributions.

The committee takes pride in knowing that no stone was left unturned in our pursuit of aiding veterans and spouses during their transitions. Every request for assistance was met with a level of dedication that deserves commendation. The outstanding support we received underscores the strength of our collaborative efforts and reaffirms our shared commitment to this noble cause.

Once again, thank you for your leadership and unwavering support. We are privileged to have had the opportunity to work under your guidance, and we look forward to continuing our collective efforts to make a positive impact on the lives of our military veterans and their families.

Sincerely,



Kayla Lopez
Chair, Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach
Senior Director of Military Partnerships, VIQTORY

PART I

Executive Summary

Congress established the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) in 2007 under the authority of Section 4110 of Title 38, U.S. Code. ACVETEO is a non-discretionary federal advisory committee and is subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), 5 U.S.C. App.2.

ACVETEO consists of 12 members - a diverse group of veterans from each military branch, as well as the value-added experiences from civilian subject matter experts with extensive experience in employment policy, veterans' services, and workforce development. The committee receives extensive expert support not only from DOL, but also from a number of additional ex-officio members from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DOD), Small Business Administration (SBA), and Office of Personnel Management.

ACVETEO assesses the employment and training needs of our veterans. Such needs may include transition assistance, protection of employment and reemployment rights, education, skills training, and integration into the workforce, among others, as well as assisting the DOL Assistant Secretary of Veterans' Employment & Training Service (VETS) in outreach activities to employers. ACVETEO is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness with which existing DOL programs deliver required services to America's veterans and, where deficiencies are detected, to recommend appropriate remedial action.

The 2023 report of ACVETEO provides ten recommendations and supporting rationales to the Secretary of Labor and Congress to address concerns and issues relevant to employment, training and transition assistance for the military and veteran communities. This year's report focused on three specific areas under the purview of the Department of Labor (DOL):

- Underserved Populations,
- Innovative Veteran Training and Employment
- Service Delivery.

The committee determined from the onset to continue our focus with these three subcommittees.

Our report has three main parts including: (1) this executive summary; (2) a summary of our 2023 recommendations; and (3) a review of the 2023 recommendations with their supporting rationales. We look forward to continuing our important work together on behalf of our veterans and their families.

PART II

Summary of 2023 Recommendations

Underserved Populations

1. Using the authority granted in 38 USC 4103A(a)(1)(C), the Secretary of Labor should identify additional categories of Veterans and military spouses (current and former) for specialized services provided by authorized Jobs for Veterans State Grant personnel, specifically Disabled Veteran Outreach Program specialists (DVOPs) and Consolidated positions working within their DVOP roles and responsibilities. This authority is in place, and has already been used to add Vietnam-era Veterans, Veterans aged 18-24, and Eligible Transitioning Service Members, Spouses and Caregivers. It should be employed to add other targeted populations that could benefit from these services. Many of the people we propose DVOPs be allowed to serve are already in the American Job Center (AJC) – an estimated 88,990 Veterans in FY2023 - receiving assistance from non-Veteran staff because they do not meet or attest to current DVOP eligibility criteria.
2. Utilize DOL VETS Customer Experience project findings to identify who is not utilizing American Job Center JVSG services and develop policy and procedure recommendations on how to engage these underserved populations. These recommendations should also include marketing and outreach materials customizable by all state workforce agencies.
3. Expand priority of service (POS) eligibility to widows/widowers of service members killed in action. Notably missing from the list of eligible spouses in section 2(a) of the JVA (38 U.S.C. 4215[a]) are those men or women whose spouse made the ultimate sacrifice, dying in the line of duty.
4. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program as defined in 38 USC 4103A(a) does not accurately represent who is eligible for program services, or the staff who provide them. The current name causes confusion with staff, partners and customers who mistakenly believe the only people eligible for DVOP services are disabled Veterans. Recognizing available capacity, and making more persons eligible for DVOP services would also more accurately reflect who is program is designed to serve. We recommend convening a workgroup comprised of members of the NASWA Veterans' Affairs committee, ACVETEO, and USDOL VETS leadership to identify a more all-encompassing name for both this program and the staff responsible for serving eligible Veterans.

Innovative Veteran Training and Employment

1. The Department of Labor (DOL) should formalize the ENPP program with associated funding to further the linkage with state and federal government agencies, national veteran-serving non-government programs, and community-based programs that serve veterans and all spouses.
2. Enhancing U.S. Department of Labor VETS Participation in the Department of Defense SkillBridge Program
3. Registered Apprenticeship- Expand program awareness of the value and benefits of government and private sector registered apprenticeship programs (RAP) as it relates to individuals, the economy, and advancing racial, and gender equality.

Service Delivery Subcommittee

1. The Employment Navigator Pilot Program (ENPP), initiated in 2021 by DOL-VETS, has received exclusively positive ratings. The program offers Transitioning Service Members (TSMs) and their spouses personalized career assistance through Employment Navigators at selected military installations. ENPP services encompass self-assessments, skills testing, career exploration, resume reviews, digital matching, and referrals to both public and private sector organizations for training and employment opportunities. However, limited data exists on participant outcomes after referral to partnering organizations, potentially attributed to the categorization of partner organizations into eight groups. The recommendation is for DOL-VETS to continue ENPP but reconsider the strategy for categorizing partner organizations and enhance the data collection process for TSMs' outcomes post-referral. DOL VETS should evaluate the effectiveness of the Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot (ENPP). Such an evaluation should include a survey of participants of the ENPP to determine, at a minimum, participant satisfaction with their experience and assess employment and earnings outcomes of participants compared to non-participating separating service members, which should be used to help inform: 1) future expansion of the ENPP to new locations and/or a virtual option; and 2) whether the ENPP should be made permanent.
2. The Off Base Transition Training (OBTT) pilot program, led by the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), aims to aid veterans, including those in the National Guard and Reserves, and their spouses in refining employment-seeking strategies through in-person and virtual workshops. The program provides updated materials to assist veterans in job searches and focuses on improving resume creation, efficient interviewing, and effective self-marketing. Currently offered in five states, the program plans to expand to at least 50 locations in 20 states over its 5-year pilot. While Employment Resource Coordinators (ERCs) assist in-person workshops, post-workshop support is limited, prompting a recommendation to employ more trained ERCs to offer ongoing guidance and coaching for program participants until they achieve their career goals.
3. DOL-VETS should direct more resources toward marketing and promoting the OBTT program.

PART III

Recommendations and Rationales by Specific Areas: Underserved Populations, Innovative Veteran Training and Employment, and Service Delivery

Underserved Populations

Recommendation 1.

1. Using the authority granted in 38 USC 4103A(a)(1)(C) , the Secretary of Labor should identify additional categories of Veterans and eligible spouses for specialized services provided by authorized Jobs for Veterans State Grant personnel, specifically Disabled Veteran Outreach Program specialists (DVOPs) and Consolidated positions working within their DVOP roles and responsibilities. This authority is in place and has already been used to add Vietnam-era Veterans, Veterans aged 18-24, and Eligible Transitioning Service Members, Spouses and Caregivers . We propose the following persons/groups be granted DVOP eligibility:

- o Persons eligible for PACT Act benefits. As of November 22, a total of 751,644 Veterans/Survivors have completed claims for benefits offered by the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 (PL 117-168) according to the most recent VA PACT Act Performance Dashboard. Of those claims, 574,731 have been approved. The Secretary of Labor should designate a targeted population eligible for Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) services to any and all persons who are eligible for PACT Act care as defined in the Act, which expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and the Post-9/11 era. Based on current data provided to DOL by states, JVSG-funded personnel are underutilized and have the necessary capacity to serve additional eligible persons without a loss of quality, or consistency. State PACT Act data should be compared to state JVSG numbers, and outreach efforts expanded to connect to this population. We also recommend coordination between DOL and VA to tie PACT Act approval notifications with referrals to the appropriate state JVSG personnel and American Job Center.

- o All Transitioning Service Members. Under the current guidance under JVSG, assistance to transitioning servicemembers is only provided by the DVOP if the installation commander finds that servicemember lacking in their career readiness standards (CRS). While well-intended, we believe that commanders lack the experience to make informed decisions on transitioning service members, as they themselves have not transitioned to the civilian workplace, and are not necessarily familiar with today's career needs, the local economy or what constitutes a good resume. Servicemembers who don't meet CRS can be referred to an American Job Center to receive case management services from a DVOP specialist/Consolidated staff through JVSG-funded programs. However, a transitioning servicemember who is considered to meet or exceed CRS, and who proactively reaches out to a local career center is not eligible to receive the full suite of services otherwise provided to Veterans with significant barriers to employment. This gap in providing much needed employment services for transitioning servicemembers should be available to those personnel within three years of separation as a new

targeted population eligible for DVOP services to align with the definition of “recently separated Veteran” in 38 USC 4211 (6).

- o Veterans facing financial hardship as a result of a federal or state declared natural disaster or emergency. At least 3,000 Veterans were impacted by catastrophic fires in Maui in August 2023, and many more Veterans lost homes, businesses, jobs and loved ones because of recent hurricanes in California and Florida, floods in Vermont and Maine, etc. This aligns with language in 38 USC 4103A, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, that “in the provision of services in accordance with this subsection, maximum emphasis in meeting the employment needs of Veterans shall be placed on assisting economically or educationally disadvantaged Veterans.” (emphasis added)

- o Military spouses are not currently eligible for DVOP services unless they are also Veterans, or military caregivers. We recommend expanding DVOP eligibility to all military spouses, including Gold Star (surviving) spouses. A vast majority of military spouses represent underserved populations. Based at locations around the world, these women and men are essential to our armed forces’ recruitment and retention efforts and are key to the military readiness of our nation’s all-volunteer force. Despite their importance, a 2021 Department of Defense survey reported an unemployment rate among active-duty military spouses of about 21%, and 31.6% are considered underemployed, according to USDOL Women’s Bureau statistics. Spouses of active-duty personnel are currently excluded from the current definition of an “eligible spouse.” Many of these spouses work in occupations that require credentialing and licensing, such as those in education and health care, and face hurdles associated with mandatory military moves and state laws. Lastly, these issues create an adverse financial impact on the entire military family and to the morale of the service member. These barriers are substantial and unique to the military spouse community, yet these silent warriors are generally given no more priority than their civilian counterparts in the provision of career and training services. A recent pilot project attempted to facilitate “warm handoffs” of military spouses at 34 military installations to local American Job Centers yielded minimal referrals, possibly because of the lack of targeted services specific to their needs, and program ineligibility. Other outreach has had similar results, such as a listening tour conducted in Washington State, “Listening & Learning: What We Learned About Military Spouse Challenges During a Listening Tour of Washington State Military Installations” by Suzi Levine and Alfie Alvarado-Ramos.

- o Veterans who are single parents face employment barriers due to lack of affordable childcare, transportation, housing and absence of family members. These individuals would benefit from interaction with trained JVSG personnel to identify community supports and resources to maintain employment and reduce and/or eliminate dependence on public assistance and food benefits.

- o Veterans with a disability who either incurred disability after service, or who do not seek a VA rating when transitioning out of the military. The current Significant Barriers definition limits JVSG services to Veterans with service-related disabilities and not all other Veterans with a disability. In addition to those who have non-service-related disabilities and are not being served under JVSG, there are those who do not seek a VA rating when leaving the military. This

disqualifies them for DVOP services unless they qualify under one of the other defined SBEs or targeted populations. If a Veteran is not immediately diagnosed for such conditions as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Deployment Syndrome before leaving military service, they may face numerous challenges in obtaining the necessary documentation that qualifies them for compensation, and DVOP eligibility. Many Vietnam Veterans have been determined to be suffering the ill effects of Agent Orange long after their service ended. Veterans who drank the water at Camp LeJeune or inhaled toxic fumes from burn pits are now contemplating the possibility of long-term health issues. The implications of Hawaii's Red Hill fuel storage leak on the water supply are still unknown. Other Veterans have been injured in accidents, or are diagnosed with ALS, MS, cancer and any number of life-altering illnesses. These issues also impact military families. Although they may not have direct health issues, their lives were impacted as potential caregivers. All these circumstances result in many Veterans with disabilities not getting the appropriate and immediate attention they require, and the families the support they need. This situation also strains increasingly limited Wagner Peyser staff and funding. Training non-JVSG staff, who handle a large number of Veteran customers, on Veterans programs, policies and issues has also been inconsistent, creating concerns about adherence to federally mandated Veterans' priority of service policy.

Rationale: Veterans' Program Letters (VPLs) transmit program policy, implementation guidance, procedures, and other information to parties under a grant or contract agreement with DOL VETS. These grantees include state workforce agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories. VPLs cover a variety of areas, including development of state plans, financial reporting, and eligibility for program services.

A key program guidance letter is VPL 03-14, "Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Program Reforms and Roles and Responsibilities of American Job Center (AJC) Staff Serving Veterans." Among other things, it directs all Disabled Veteran Outreach Program specialists (DVOPs) without a full caseload to review open case files of current participants with a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) and conduct relationship building, outreach and recruitment activities to enroll additional SBE and priority category Veterans. Sometimes this may be an adequate strategy for ensuring DVOP time and efforts are relevant and maximized. However, this is not always the case. There are limits to significant and fruitful outreach opportunities, leaving DVOPs to resort to inefficient activities that may not maximize their ability to serve American Job Center (AJC) Veteran customers, and do not provide a good Return on Investment of limited JVSG resources.

DOL Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that in FY2022, American Job Centers served 1.7% of the Veteran labor force. That is in stark contrast to FY2010 when 14.4% of the Veteran labor force received services from an American Job Center. During that time, the size of the labor force actually grew from 151.9M to 161.8M, but the Veteran labor force dropped from 11.8M to 8.8M. With a drop in the labor force, there was a significant decline in the number of people served by DVOPs from 624,000 in FY2010 to 44,674 in

FY2023. JVSG-funded personnel responsible for serving Veterans with significant barriers to employment (SBE) or in targeted populations have the capacity to serve additional persons without resorting to inefficient outreach efforts. Many of the people we propose DVOPs be allowed to serve are already in the AJC – an estimated 88,990 Veterans in FY2023 - receiving assistance from non-Veteran staff because they do not meet or attest to current DVOP eligibility criteria.

Recommendation 2. Utilize DOL VETS Customer Experience project findings to identify who is not utilizing American Job Center JVSG services and develop policy and procedure recommendations on how to engage these underserved populations. These recommendations should also include marketing and outreach materials customizable by all state workforce agencies.

Rationale: The recommendation to utilize the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL VETS) Customer Experience project findings stems from a strategic initiative to enhance the accessibility and utilization of American Job Center (AJC) Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) services. By leveraging the insights gained from the Customer Experience project, we aim to identify specific populations that are currently not benefiting from AJC JVSG services.

Understanding the customer experience is crucial for tailoring services to meet the unique needs of veterans seeking employment assistance. The findings from the Customer Experience project provide valuable information on the barriers preventing certain populations from utilizing AJC JVSG services effectively. By analyzing this data, we can pinpoint underserved populations and tailor our policies and procedures to better engage and support them.

Developing policy and procedure recommendations based on the identified gaps in service utilization will allow us to address the specific challenges faced by these underserved populations. This targeted approach ensures that we create a more inclusive and effective system, promoting equal access to employment resources for all veterans.

Moreover, recognizing the importance of customization, the recommendation includes the development of marketing and outreach materials that can be adapted by all state workforce agencies. This ensures a consistent and cohesive effort nationwide to reach and engage underserved populations. Customizable materials empower state agencies to tailor their outreach strategies to the unique needs and demographics of their respective communities.

In summary, this recommendation is grounded in the desire to optimize the impact of AJC JVSG services by identifying and addressing barriers faced by underserved populations. By utilizing the insights from the DOL VETS Customer Experience project, we can create targeted and adaptable solutions that enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of our services for all veterans seeking employment support.

Recommendation 3. Expand priority of service (POS) eligibility to widows/widowers of service members killed in action. Notably missing from the list of eligible spouses in section 2(a) of the JVA (38 U.S.C. 4215[a]) are those men or women whose spouse made the ultimate sacrifice, dying in the line of duty.

Rationale: Recommendation 3 proposes an expansion of the priority of service (POS) eligibility under the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) to include widows and widowers of service members killed in action. The rationale behind this recommendation is rooted in the recognition of the significant sacrifice made by these individuals whose spouses made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

As it stands, the current eligibility criteria outlined in section 2(a) of the JVA (38 U.S.C. 4215[a]) do not explicitly include widows and widowers of service members killed in action. This omission represents a gap in the support system for individuals who have endured the loss of their spouses while serving in the line of duty. In order to rectify this oversight and acknowledge the unique challenges faced by these widows and widowers, expanding POS eligibility is both a compassionate and necessary step.

The recommendation aligns with the principles of equity and fairness, ensuring that all eligible spouses, regardless of the circumstances surrounding their loved one's death, have access to the support and resources provided under the JVA. Widows and widowers of service members killed in action often face distinct challenges in their pursuit of employment and stability, and extending POS eligibility is a way to address these challenges directly.

By expanding POS eligibility to this specific group, we not only honor the sacrifices made by military families but also affirm our commitment to providing comprehensive support for those who have lost their spouses in service to the nation. This inclusive approach reflects a deep understanding of the unique needs of this population and seeks to mitigate the potential barriers they may encounter in their efforts to secure meaningful employment and rebuild their lives after the loss of a loved one in the line of duty.

Recommendation 4. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program as defined in 38 USC 4103A(a) does not accurately represent who is eligible for program services, or the staff who provide them. The current name causes confusion with staff, partners and customers who mistakenly believe the only people eligible for DVOP services are disabled Veterans. Recognizing available capacity, and making more persons eligible for DVOP services would also more accurately reflect who is program is designed to serve. We recommend convening a workgroup comprised of members of the NASWA Veterans' Affairs committee, ACVETEO, and USDOL VETS leadership to identify a more all-encompassing name for both this program and the staff responsible for serving eligible Veterans.

Rationale: The recommendation to convene a workgroup to reconsider the name and eligibility criteria of the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) is rooted in the need for clarity, inclusivity, and accurate representation of the program's scope. The current nomenclature, as defined in 38 USC 4103A(a), has led to misconceptions among staff, partners, and customers who incorrectly assume that only disabled veterans are eligible for DVOP services.

The confusion surrounding the program's name creates a barrier to access for eligible veterans who may not identify as disabled but still require the services offered by DVOP. By reassessing and broadening the eligibility criteria, the program can better align with its intended purpose and serve a more comprehensive range of veterans who may benefit from employment assistance.

Moreover, recognizing the available capacity and the expertise of DVOP staff, expanding eligibility ensures that the program can make a more significant impact on the veteran community. This aligns with the program's mission to provide outreach and employment services to a diverse range of veterans, acknowledging that their needs extend beyond disability-related concerns.

Convening a workgroup consisting of members from the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Veterans' Affairs committee, the Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO), and the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) leadership is a strategic approach. This collaborative effort ensures diverse perspectives, expertise, and insights are considered in determining a more inclusive and accurately reflective name for both the program and the staff responsible for serving eligible veterans.

In essence, this recommendation seeks to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of the DVOP by aligning its name and eligibility criteria more closely with the diverse needs of the veteran population it aims to serve. By doing so, the program can better fulfill its mission and provide valuable support to a broader range of veterans in their pursuit of meaningful employment opportunities.

Innovative Veteran Training and Employment

Recommendation 5. The Department of Labor (DOL) should formalize the ENPP program with associated funding to further the linkage with state and federal government agencies, national veteran-serving non-government programs, and community-based programs that serve veterans and all spouses.

Rationale: The Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot (ENPP) program has proven itself to be one of DOL's most impactful programs in providing holistic, integrated support to veterans and their families seeking not only employment but economic stability. This program should be formalized in legislation and appropriation to enable its growth, particularly in expanding community coordination partners. ENPP should continue to grow in the number of Department of Defense installations executing the programs and leverage the services of national government and non-government programs to be a bridge to successful veteran community integration. This would provide a seamless connection between service, employment, and the veteran and their family thriving within a community. Lastly, the ENPP program should be integrated into the DOL Vets Medallion program for greater participation and marketing of bringing a federal employment program to communities across the nation.

Recommendation 6. The Department of Labor (DOL) should expand the Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot (ENPP) program and increase linkage with TAP, Apprenticeship, and SkillBridge with communities in the best position to support veterans with or without disabilities and their families.

The Department of Defense SkillBridge program is a valuable initiative that connects transitioning service members with civilian job training, apprenticeships, and internships during

the last 180 days of their military service. A strategic approach is essential to optimize the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) VETS involvement in this program.

Execution Plan:

1. Strengthen Program Awareness:
 - Develop an integrated marketing and communication strategy to raise awareness about the SkillBridge program within DOL VETS (for whatever DOL is doing) and among eligible service members.
 - Collaborate with the Department of Defense (DoD) to ensure consistent program promotion across military installations.
2. Streamlined Information Sharing:
 - Establish a dedicated online portal or platform where transitioning service members can easily access information about SkillBridge opportunities and connect with potential employers. (DOD has something similar, so we may need to request some level of access to information)
 - Ensure seamless data sharing and coordination between DOL VETS and DoD to track program participation and success.
3. Customized Career Counseling: (we may already be doing this)
 - Expand DOL's VETS career counseling services to cater specifically to the unique needs of transitioning service members.
 - Train DOL VETS counselors to provide specialized guidance on SkillBridge program options, transitioning to civilian careers, and leveraging military skills in the civilian job market.
4. Employer Engagement: (this may already be happening in some way or another)
 - Actively engage with private sector employers and encourage their participation in the SkillBridge program.
 - Promote the benefits of hiring transitioning service members to employers, emphasizing the value of their military training and experience.
5. Flexible Funding Allocation:
 - Allocate funding or resources within DOL VETS to support SkillBridge participants with stipends, travel allowances, or training costs as needed.
 - Collaborate with DoD/industry to explore opportunities for joint funding initiatives.

6. Quality Control and Feedback Loop:
 - Establish a feedback mechanism to gather input from transitioning service members, employers, and DOL VETS staff involved in the SkillBridge program.
 - Continuously assess program effectiveness and make necessary adjustments to improve outcomes.
7. Cross-Agency Training:
 - Foster collaboration between DOL VETS and DoD through joint training programs and workshops.
 - Ensure that DOL VETS personnel are well-informed about transitioning service members' unique challenges and opportunities.
8. Legislative Support:
 - Advocate for legislative changes or enhancements supporting the SkillBridge program's goals and effectiveness.
 - Collaborate with Congress and other relevant agencies to facilitate necessary reforms.
9. Data-Driven Decision Making:
 - Utilize data analytics to monitor program participation, employment outcomes, and areas for improvement.
 - Leverage insights to make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively.

Rationale: Enhancing the U.S. Department of Labor's VETS participation in the Department of Defense SkillBridge program requires a strategic, collaborative, and data-driven approach. By implementing the outlined execution plan, DOL VETS can better support transitioning service members in their journey to successful civilian careers while strengthening the program's impact. This approach will benefit individual veterans and contribute to national workforce development and veterans' well-being.

Recommendation 7. Registered Apprenticeship- Expand program awareness of the value and benefits of government and private sector registered apprenticeship programs (RAP) as it relates to individuals, the economy, and advancing racial, and gender equality.

Execution Plan

1. Expanding awareness may be accomplished by increasing communications of the value and benefits of RAP to DOD and the individual military branch Education & Transition Services Offices. Timely communication or awareness campaigns could be part of the DOL's Apprenticeship Awareness campaigns and TAP classes.

2. Increase usage of RAP's by bolstering support services related to TSM's, Veteran's, and Veteran's with disabilities participating in RAP's. Encourage an equal playing ground when it comes to benefits provided through the GIBILL for RAP participants.
3. Increasing usage of RAP's can be accomplished by eliminating the current step-down process of funding that reduces BHA by 20% every six months and by also eliminating the monthly work hour, or OJT requirement, that reduces funding to the RAP participant during periods of unemployed. This rule overlooks the requirement for them to attend their related supplemental instruction even during periods of unemployment.

Rationale: Expanding awareness and encouraging participation of RAPs will greatly benefit Veterans by the very nature of the way RAPs ensure stepped wage increases throughout the full term of the RAP. The Strengthening of the GIBILL benefits for RAP participants will help to ensure that Veterans can successfully complete their RAP and have their full GIBILL benefit when they need it the most.

Service Delivery Subcommittee

Recommendation 8. The Employment Navigator Pilot Program (ENPP) that started in 2021 received nothing but positive ratings. This DOL-VETS program provides Transitioning Service Members (TSMs) and their spouses access to an Employment Navigator who provides one-on-one career assistance at selected military installations.

ENPP services include Self-assessments, Skills testing, Career exploration, Resume reviews, Digital Matching, and referrals to organizations for training and employment opportunities. These selected organizations are from the public and private sector.

Program data is still limited regarding participant outcomes after being referred to a partnering organization. This may be due to how the program places approved partner organizations into categories: (1) Employment Networking, (2) Digital Matching, (3) Hiring Events, (4) Training Services, (5) Apprenticeships, (6) Placement Services, (7) Employment Mentorship, and (8) Referrals to Employment Opportunities.

Therefore, we recommend that DOL-VETS continue the ENPP but develop a different strategy for categorizing partner organizations and improve its process for collecting outcome data after TSMs are referred to any partner organization.

Rationale:

Based on this strategy of grouping partner organizations by category, it can be difficult to track and report career goal achievement. If a participant is referred to a partner in the Hiring Events category, they may or may not get hired after attending several events. Partners in this category include GI Jobs, Hiring Our Heroes, and MOAA. For the Employment Networking category, the partners include LinkedIn and Blue Start Families.

While networking is a good strategy for finding employment, it's likely that most job leads will require numerous follow ups before securing a career position.

The Training Services and Apprenticeship categories are much easier to measure outcomes. A participant, if approved for training or an apprenticeship, will have a set start and end date with monitored performance metrics. However, it's not certain from the start that the Veteran will

successfully complete the program regardless of program length. And even after successfully completing training, how long will it take for the TSM to obtain a career placement.

The Digital Matching category includes, among others, Recruit Military and Indeed. Both are helpful with identifying employment opportunities, but neither can determine a period for success. And of course, those TSMs referred to the American Job Centers certainly cannot predict a date certain for a positive outcome.

Recommendation 9. The Off Base Transition Training (OBTT) pilot program implemented by the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) to assist veterans, including those veterans currently serving in the National Guard and Reserves, and their spouses, to enhance and expand their employment seeking strategies through in-person and/or virtual workshops.

Realizing some veterans may have separated from the military many years ago, this program provides enhanced and updated materials that assists participants' search for employment. When you consider that the process of finding a job is an exercise in selling your skills, abilities, experience, and education to an employer, it reframes the traditional concept of a job search.

The program is designed to teach participants how to create a better resume that gets you noticed, conduct a more efficient interview that will showcase your strengths, and learn how and where to market yourself.

Currently, of the 10 workshops included in the program, only selected ones are offered in-person at the 5 program states, (California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas). However, the program is expected to expand to at least 50 locations in 20 states over the 5-year pilot. Participants can attend any of the workshops virtually. Attendees can mix and match workshops to meet their employment goals and attend at their own pace.

The program uses Employment Resource Coordinators (ERCs) who are stationed at some of the state locations for in-person assistance during the in-person workshops. After the workshops, ERCs are only available to refer participants to local agencies for support, such as American Job Centers (AJCs) and interested partner organizations. They are not available at later times after the workshops to provide one-on-one guidance and coaching even virtually. And data has shown that most veterans, especially service-disabled veterans, have not received sufficient support through the AJCs.

We recommend that the program employ more ERCs that are trained and available to assist program participants after workshop completion much like Employment Navigators under the Employment Navigator Pilot Program. They should have access to ERCs until they obtain their career goals.

Rationale: Having access to an ERC after the workshops is an asset. When veterans are transitioning into a new career, they are in need of assistance outside of training. This requires step-by-step guidance and mentorship that will give the veteran and/or spouse a sense of relief that will keep them secure and motivated throughout the employment search process.

In speaking with several veterans about the OBTT Program, they all felt that the program has great workshops and detailed documentation but should also provide access to personnel to assist them with the job search process and job leads.

One veteran of the Army National Guard felt that the program should have a 24/7 service hotline. They stated that “for many veterans who walk through the training, it’s a second chance for them to harness their skills and find truly meaningful employment. They’re not getting a workshop full of check the boxes or dull PowerPoint slides. But they should also get assistance from an Employment Resource Coordinator who can provide one-on-one support.”

Recommendation 10. DOL-VETS should direct more resources toward marketing and promoting the OBTT program.

Rationale: After conducting a non-scientific survey over 100 veterans in our database, only a few had even heard of the OBTT program.

PART IV
Appendix

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:

Appointed members:

Kayla Lopez
Victory
Recognized Authority (Training)

Jim Lorraine
America's Warrior Partnership
Recognized Authority (Training)

Cody Nicholls
University of Arizona
Recognized Authority (Training)

Mike Hazard
UA Veterans in Piping Program
Recognized Authority (Employment)

Jason Kuroiwa
Japanese American Veterans Association
(Veteran Service Organization)

Gregory Kelly
Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
Veteran Service Organization Representative

Joe Wynn
National Association of Black Veterans (NABVETS)
Veteran Service Organization Representative

M. Eric Eversole
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Representative
(Mandated Organization)

Lori Adams
National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA)
(Mandated Organization)

Tim Carlton
National Governors Association (NGA)
(Mandated Organization)

Darrell L. Roberts (Chair)
Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers Union
Labor Union or Organization Representative (Mandated Organization)

Michael McDermott
Arcadia Group
Business Roundtable Representative (Mandated Organization)

Ex-officio, Nonvoting Members:

- Secretary of Veterans Affairs
- Secretary of Defense
- Director, Office of Personnel Management
- Assistant Secretary of Labor (VETS)
- Assistant Secretary of Labor (ETA)
- Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration