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VETERANS' LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION DEMONSTRATION

INTERIM REPORT
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VETERANS' LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION DEMONSTRATION: INTERIM PROJECT REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Members of the United States' military are trained in hundreds of occupations with relevance in the civilian workforce. Ideally, veterans easily could turn that training and work experience into civilian jobs. However, many civilian occupations have highly formalized pathways for entry, requiring licenses or certifications that present barriers for those trained outside of those pathways. Some veterans find that despite highly relevant skills and experience they must go through a lengthy process to obtain the formal documentation required to enter their occupation of choice. Those requirements impose additional costs on veterans and on taxpayers, who pay both for the initial military training and for re-training outside of the military through veterans' education benefits.

The federal government has undertaken several initiatives to streamline professional licensing and credentialing for veterans. Those initiatives include efforts to provide civilian credentials and identify equivalencies between military and civilian occupations. However, ultimate authority for regulating entry into most professions lies with state governments. National professional associations and federal agencies can propose standards and guidelines, but the decision to adopt those standards is made within the states. State licensing boards make final decisions about whether alternative pathways such as military experience uphold public safety standards, based on professional norms and state laws and regulations.

Recognizing states' regulatory authority, Section 237 of Veterans' Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (The VOW Act) authorized a demonstration project to engage governors in streamlining veterans' licensing and credentialing, with the ultimate goal of identifying the most efficient process for moving veterans into civilian employment.[1] The VOW Act directed the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), through the demonstration project, to identify state-level professional requirements that are met through military training and then remove barriers to relevant credentials and licenses. The VOW Act also directed DOL to complete a cost study to inform Congress about the potential federal cost savings of removing barriers at the state level. The cost study will estimate cost savings to federal programs when a veteran completes an accelerated pathway towards licensure versus duplicative training under a full length pathway.

DOL contracted with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) to carry out an 18-month demonstration project. In partnership with DOL, the NGA Center developed a competitive process to select six states to participate in the 18-month demonstration: Illinois, Iowa, Nevada, Minnesota, Virginia, and Wisconsin.[2] Each participating state selected up to three high-demand occupations to focus their licensing and credentialing strategies that corresponded with one of the three pre-selected military occupational specialties: Medic (Army 68W, Navy Hospital Corpsman, Air Force 4N0X1), Police (Army 31B, Navy Master-At-Arms, Air Force 3P0X1, Marine Corps 5811), and Truck Driver (Army 88M, Marine Corps 3531) (see Exhibit 1).

At the writing of this interim report, the NGA Center continues to carry out the demonstration project using a policy academy format, which provides participating state teams with technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, and contacts with national experts. Through that format, states develop and implement strategies to accelerate veterans licensing and certification, and the NGA Center documents and shares promising practices among those states on an ongoing basis. Ultimately, the NGA Center will provide a final report that includes a blueprint for other states

[1] H.R. 674, 112th Cong. (2011)

[2] Participating states hereinafter are referred to as "demonstration states."

and a completed cost study comparing costs to veterans, the states, and the federal government when veterans complete a full-length pathway to licensure versus an accelerated pathway.

About this Report

This interim report on the Veterans' Licensing and Certification Demonstration was prepared by the NGA Center team as a summary of state experiences and preliminary findings to date.[3] Findings emerged from the authors' direct engagement with states and review of state project reports describing their processes and strategies. The report has five sections: Introduction, Design, Implementation, Data and Assessment, and Cost Study. The first four sections provide a comprehensive picture of demonstration activities to date and offer a common framework for sharing lessons learned with other states interested in replicating these strategies. Section five describes the approach for the demonstration cost study, which seeks to inform the rationale for policymakers pursuing these strategies. The NGA Center will complete the cost study and issue it as a companion to the final project report to DOL. This interim report does not attempt to evaluate the success of demonstration state efforts; all findings are preliminary.

Interim Findings Summary

The demonstration states' experiences to date suggest that efforts to accelerate licensing and certification of veterans are subject to a range of state- and occupation-specific complexities. But the broad outline of a process to design a strategy was similar for each of the states: examine equivalencies and gaps between civilian and military occupations, identify an appropriate process for filling any state- or occupation- specific gaps, and equip veterans with professional credentials that are easily understood by civilian employers. Thus, an interim framework emerges that outlines the common steps demonstration states took to design and implement strategies to accelerate the licensing and certification of veterans. Also noteworthy, data on states' veteran populations was informative at all stages, from strategy design to implementation to assessment of results.

The following provide the key interim findings, to date.

Designing Accelerated Pathways: The NGA Center has observed the following lessons about state efforts to design and improve strategies for accelerated pathways:

- Legislation, executive orders, and proposals should be as specific as possible so that stakeholders can be held accountable.
- States struggle to gather data on their veteran population, which can make it difficult to engage potential education and licensing and certification partners.
- States efforts benefit from the support of decision-makers in licensing boards and at postsecondary institutions, but gaining such support can be challenging in some cases.
- National assessments of the differences between military and civilian occupations provide a template for states to follow, but most states prefer to complete their own assessments.
- Veterans may have expectations for salaries and career mobility that are hard to meet in the civilian workforce.
- Accelerating licensure for veterans requires input from diverse government agencies that may not be used to working together.

[3] The NGA Center team included: Amanda Dunker, Iris Palmer, Brent Parton, Alisha Powell, Elise Shanbacker, and Martin Simon.

Implementing Accelerated Pathways: During the implementation phase, the NGA Center has observed that:

- One strategy states use to support education and training partners is marketing campaigns designed to increase veteran participation in new training opportunities. That allowed states to address concerns about whether demand for accelerated programs would be sufficient, particularly since most states did not have access to the data necessary to assure education and training partners that demand existed.
- The timeline for approving new training programs by post-secondary institutions, licensing boards and accrediting bodies was often lengthier than anticipated and includes several layers of approval.
- Many states discovered that they had existing alternative pathways towards licensure for veterans, and that it would be less costly to publicize existing options than to create entirely new pathways.

Data and Assessment: Regarding the use of data and assessment to guide that work, the NGA Center has observed that:

- Many states do not have access to comprehensive data on the makeup of their veteran population.
- Existing data tend to be fragmented, rarely standardized, and lacking information on individuals' military training and experience.
- Demonstration states continue to make progress developing baselines and reporting arrangements of veterans' employment status by establishing new cross-agency linkages.
- States do not track individual veterans' attainment of credentials but are exploring new linkages with existing databases that would provide such information.
- A systematic assessment of the demonstration will be difficult due to a lack of comprehensive data and to certain methodological issues. The focus to date has been on building state capacity to track progress and success over time.

Among the principal interim findings of the demonstration project is that state efforts to accelerate licensing for veterans are hampered by information gaps among state agencies, regulatory authorities, training programs, education institutions, and the military. In response, NGA identified a step-by-step process that provides a "blueprint" for state leaders to identify and address information gaps, thereby accelerating veterans' licensing and certification (see Exhibit 2). The preliminary findings presented in that interim report are structured according to the following blueprint for state policymakers.

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Members of the United States' military are trained in hundreds of occupations with relevance in the civilian workforce. Ideally, veterans could turn their training and work experience into civilian jobs. However, many civilian occupations have formalized pathways for entry, with few mechanisms to recognize skills learned outside of those pathways. Some veterans find that despite skills and experience relevant to the civilian workforce, they must start from the beginning to obtain the formal documentation required to enter their occupation of choice. Starting from the beginning, without accounting for existing knowledge, imposes additional costs on veterans and on taxpayers, who pay for initial training provided by the military and for duplicative re-training outside of the military through veterans' education benefits.

Federal Initiatives

Recognizing the challenges, the federal government has undertaken several initiatives to streamline professional licensing and credentialing for veterans (see Appendix X). That has resulted in new efforts within the federal government, including the military, to provide civilian credentials and identify equivalencies between military occupations and civilian occupations. Examples include:

- The Department of Defense Licensing and Credentialing Pilot Program.[4] Section 558 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) directed the Department of Defense (DOD) to carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility of allowing enlisted members of the Armed Forces to obtain civilian licenses or credentials in occupations related to five military occupational specialties, including aircraft mechanics, automotive mechanics, healthcare support, logistics and supply, and truck drivers. A report to Congress in September 2013 provides further details about services and costs related to both in-service and post-service funding and credentialing costs for veterans.[5]

- The Joining Forces Military Spouse Licensing Initiative.[6] In 2013 the administration expanded an existing program for military spouses to include licensing and credentialing for veterans and separating service members. The existing program had been lunched in 2012 to address the portability of licenses across state lines for military spouses, who frequently practice in professions such as teaching and nursing that require a license at the state level. In February 2013, the White House released a report on Veterans' licensing and credentialing initiatives entitled *"The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses."*[7]

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[4] Pellerin, Cheryl. "Credentialing Effort Helps Troops Enter Private Sector." US Department of Defense. September 3, 2014.
[5] "NDAA Section 558 – Military Credentialing Pilot Program: Volume 1," United States Department of Defense, September 27, 2013, https://www.cool.navy.mil/pubs/CredentialingReportToCongress_VOL_1-FINAL.pdf
[6] "About Joining Forces." The White House.
[7] "The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses." The White House. February, 2013.

- The Department of Defense Military Licensing and Credentialing Task Force.[8] The Task Force works to identify and create opportunities for Service members to earn civilian occupational credentials and licenses. Specifically, the Task Force is charged with: 1) identifying military specialties that readily transfer to high-demand jobs; 2) working with civilian credentialing and licensing associations to address gaps between military training programs and credentialing and licensing requirements; and 3) providing service members with greater access to necessary certification and licensing exams.

- The White House Forum on Military Credentialing and Licensing.[9] The Forum, held in April 2013, includes four ongoing Work Groups co-chaired by DOD in partnership with other civilian agencies: Advanced Medical Occupations; Academic Credit; EMT/Paramedic; and Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDL). Each group has established a work plan that is being implemented through ongoing conference calls.

- The Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI).[10] VEI is a joint task force between the DOD and the Department of Veterans' Affairs that began in September 2012. The Departments of Labor and Education as well as the Small Business Administration are also involved in the task force. Among other employment issues, the VEI focuses on three areas of study related to licensing and credentialing: 1) assessment of service credentialing programs; 2) assessment of gaps between military training and civilian credentialing requirements; and 3) study of methods to promote assessment of military training and experience by civilian credentialing agencies.

However**,** state governments are the ultimate authority for regulating entry into most professions. Although federal agencies and national professional associations can propose standards and guidelines, state licensing boards make final decisions about whether alternative pathways such as military experience uphold public safety standards, based on professional norms and state laws and regulations.

The Veterans' Licensing and Certification Demonstration Project

Section 237 of the *Veterans' Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011* (VOW Act) authorized the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) to carry out "a demonstration project on credentialing…for the purpose of facilitating the seamless transition of members of the Armed Forces from service on active duty to civilian employment" by contracting with an entity representing state governors, in recognition of their authority to regulate professions. The demonstration project was designed to engage states on a maximum of five military occupational specialties (MOS) whose skill sets overlap with civilian occupations in industries with high growth or high worker demand. For each MOS, DOL and its partners were required to:

- Identify civilian credentialing, licensing, and certification requirements that can be "satisfied by the skills, training, or experience acquired by members of the Armed Forces;

[8] Cain, Marion. Licensing and Credentialing Task Force. Presentation to National Conference of State Legislators, December, 2012.
[9] "Fact Sheet: Administration Partners with Industry to Get Service Members Credentialed for High-Demand Jobs." The White House. April 29, 2013.
[10] "Executive Order 13518 - Veterans Employment Initiative." The White House. November 9, 2009.

- Cooperate with appropriate Federal, State, and industry officials to reduce or eliminate any barriers to providing a credential, certification, or license to a veteran who acquired any skill, training, or experience while serving as a member of the Armed Forces…that satisfies the Federal and State requirements for the credential, certification, or license;" and

- Conduct a cost study "comparing costs incurred by Secretary of Defense for training for military occupational specialties without [civilian] credentialing or licensing with costs incurred by Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of Labor in providing employment-related assistance." [11]

DOL-VETS in partnership with the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOL-ETA) selected the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) to implement the demonstration project. NGA's work includes three distinct phases:

1. **Outreach and Research Phase** (May 2013 to July 2013). During the summer of 2013, the NGA Center conducted a review of the credentialing landscape, including both federal and state efforts to reduce credentialing barriers and improve employment outcomes for veterans. On June 21, 2013, the NGA Center hosted a Stakeholder Roundtable primarily for federal stakeholders to share information on complementary efforts related to veterans' licensing and certification.

   The NGA Center and DOL selected the following military occupational specialties for the demonstration project as a result of information learned during the outreach phase of the project:
   - Medic (Army 68W, Navy Hospital Corpsman, Air Force 4N0X1)
   - Police (Army 31B, Navy Master-At-Arms, Air Force 3P0X1, Marine Corps 5811)
   - Truck Driver (Army 88M, Marine Corps 3531)

   As detailed in the White House report, *The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses*,[12] the selected military occupational specialties are among the top ten occupations across the Services and include skill sets relevant to high-demand civilian occupations.

   The NGA Center and DOL also selected the following associated civilian licenses:
   - Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)/Paramedic
   - Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)
   - Police Patrol Officer
   - Bus and Truck Driver

   Interested states were to choose two occupations from the four. The NGA Center also allowed states to propose a high-demand, licensed health occupation requiring skills possessed by military medics. Two demonstration states ultimately chose that option, proposing:

[11] H.R. 674, 112th Cong. (2011)

[12] The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses." The White House. February, 2013.

- Registered Nurse (RN)
- Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA)

2. **Policy Academy Phase** (August 2013 to January 2015). The NGA Center chose to carry out the demonstration project as a policy academy, which is a model of technical assistance that engages a cohort of state teams in a long-term project. During the policy academy, states receive technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, and access to national experts. The policy academy focused on building capacity within each state to implement and sustain strategies beyond the demonstration period, helping to organize the many experts and actors within the state toward a common goal.

   States were chosen for the policy academy through a competitive process by a panel of experts from the NGA Center and several external organizations serving the employment needs of veterans. The Request for Proposals (RFP) to states was released in August 2013 to governors' policy advisors and cabinet members in relevant areas. Proposals were due from states in early September, 2013, and were evaluated by the selection committee according to the following categories: 1) State Context and Challenges; 2) Strategies and Expected Outcomes; 3) Provision of Baseline Data and Overall Data Collection; 4) Team Leadership and Core Membership; and 5) Budget and Subcontract Agreement. On October 1, 2013 the NGA Center announced the six states selected to participate in the demonstration project:

   - Illinois
   - Iowa
   - Minnesota
   - Nevada
   - Virginia
   - Wisconsin

   Each state selected three civilian licenses to test strategies for streamlining the credentialing process for veterans and service members with relevant training and experience acquired in the military. Participating states and their selected occupations are presented in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1: Selected States and Occupations

	Bus/Truck Driver	Police Patrol Officer	EMT/ Paramedic	LPN	RN	PTA
Illinois		✓	✓	✓		
Iowa			✓	✓	✓	
Minnesota		✓	✓	✓		
Nevada		✓	✓	✓		
Virginia			✓	✓		✓
Wisconsin	✓	✓		✓		

The policy academy kicked-off on October 1, 2013 and included:

- Two all-state policy academy meetings in Washington, D.C.;
- A series of webinars and conference calls on key topics;
- In-state site visits; and
- Coaching calls and other forms of customized technical assistance tailored for each state.

3. **Final Project Report Phase** (February to May 2015). The final phase is the development of the evaluation of the demonstration, the final project report. The report documents demonstration states' efforts organized into a "state blueprint" of promising strategies for accelerating licensing and credentialing of veterans. The final project report also includes a study of expected cost savings to the federal government for implementing strategies based on experiences of the demonstration project.

About this Interim Report and Interim Findings

The NGA Center continues to implement the demonstration project using a policy academy format. The NGA Center team prepared that interim report on the Veterans' Licensing and Certification Demonstration to serve as a summary of state experiences and preliminary findings as of April 2015. Findings emerged from the authors' direct engagement with states and review of state project reports describing their processes and strategies. That interim report does not attempt to evaluate the success of demonstration state efforts; all findings are preliminary in nature.

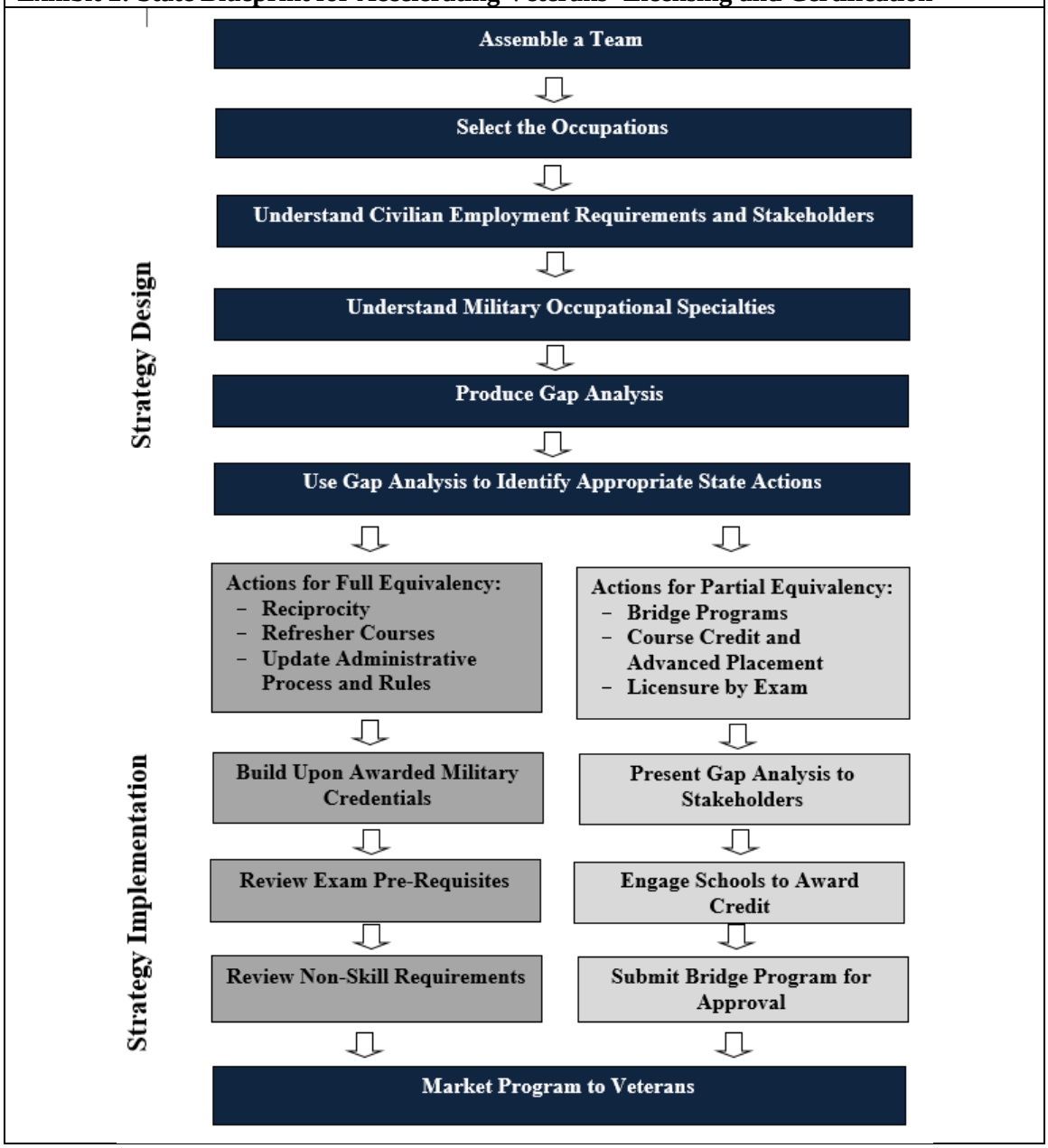
One preliminary finding of the demonstration project is that state efforts to accelerate licensing of veterans are complicated by information gaps among state agencies, regulatory authorities, training programs, education institutions, and the military. In response, the NGA Center identified a step-by-step process, or "blueprint," based on demonstration state experience that can help state leaders to identify and address information gaps, thereby articulating a clear process for accelerating veterans' licensing and certification (see Exhibit 2 on the next page).

Further preliminary findings are organized into three sections that reflect that blueprint:

- Designing Accelerated Pathways
- Implementing Accelerated Pathways
- Data and Assessment

Additionally, that report outlines the approach for the demonstration cost study, which seeks to inform the rationale for policymakers pursuing those strategies. The NGA Center will complete the cost study and issue it as a companion to the final project report to DOL.

Exhibit 2: State Blueprint for Accelerating Veterans' Licensing and Certification



SECTION TWO: DESIGNING ACCELERATED PATHWAYS

States in the demonstration project required significant time to research and design strategies to accelerate licensing and certification of veterans. Each state proposed strategies in their application to join the NGA policy academy, but continuously revised its strategies, incorporating new ideas acquired from other states, national experts, and conversations with project teams and state stakeholders. The framework provided in that report is structured to help other states anticipate and address some of the challenges encountered by policy academy states when developing their strategies.

Key Interim Findings:

- Executive orders, legislation, and proposals should be as specific as possible to ensure that stakeholders clearly understand their role and can identify a process for moving forward. Most states provide between 100 and 200 professional licenses. Within the military, there are over 650 occupations with over 2,000 specialty breakouts for enlisted positions alone.[13] That presents a challenge for conducting direct comparisons, and it demands technical knowledge across multiple fields, including military, education, and workforce including the skills used in specific occupations. In light of the complexity, executive orders, legislation, and proposals would benefit from specificity with regard to occupations and licensing boards that are being targeted by the state. Being specific makes it easier for state leaders to hold the key stakeholders accountable.

- Stakeholders, such as licensing boards and post-secondary education institutions, were hesitant to participate in or provide support for the states' projects without detailed information on the number of veterans in the state who might benefit from accelerated licensure. Post-secondary education institutions cited concerns about attracting enough applicants to sustain a new course or program. At the start of the demonstration, states did not have access to comprehensive information about their veteran population, and each state team spent significant effort developing new data sources that could provide information about the military training and experience of veterans residing in their state.

- Changing professional licensure faces some hurdles, in part because the process is overseen by independent boards with their own technical rules and regulations. In some cases, accelerating licensure for veterans might require new legislation or a lengthy process to revise regulations. Some licensing boards might be unwilling to make allowances for military training and experience, viewing them as inferior to the civilian training process or to degree-granting programs at post-secondary education institutions. Demonstration states were unable to succeed without the support of decision makers from licensing boards and post-secondary education. States in the demonstration project made efforts to develop that support by communicating that accelerated licensing for veterans is a statewide priority and emphasizing how that priority is consistent with relevant institutional missions.

- Demonstration states benefitted when a comparison between civilian and military training was completed by a national professional association, particularly in a profession where most states have agreed to adopt national standards. Such a comparison, however, is not

[13] Data provided by U.S. Department of Labor Project Team.

necessary. Several states used a national standard curriculum as a departure point while including additional course requirements for their state-approved training programs. States also benefitted from experiences of other states, though they often adapted those examples to meet their own requirements and context.

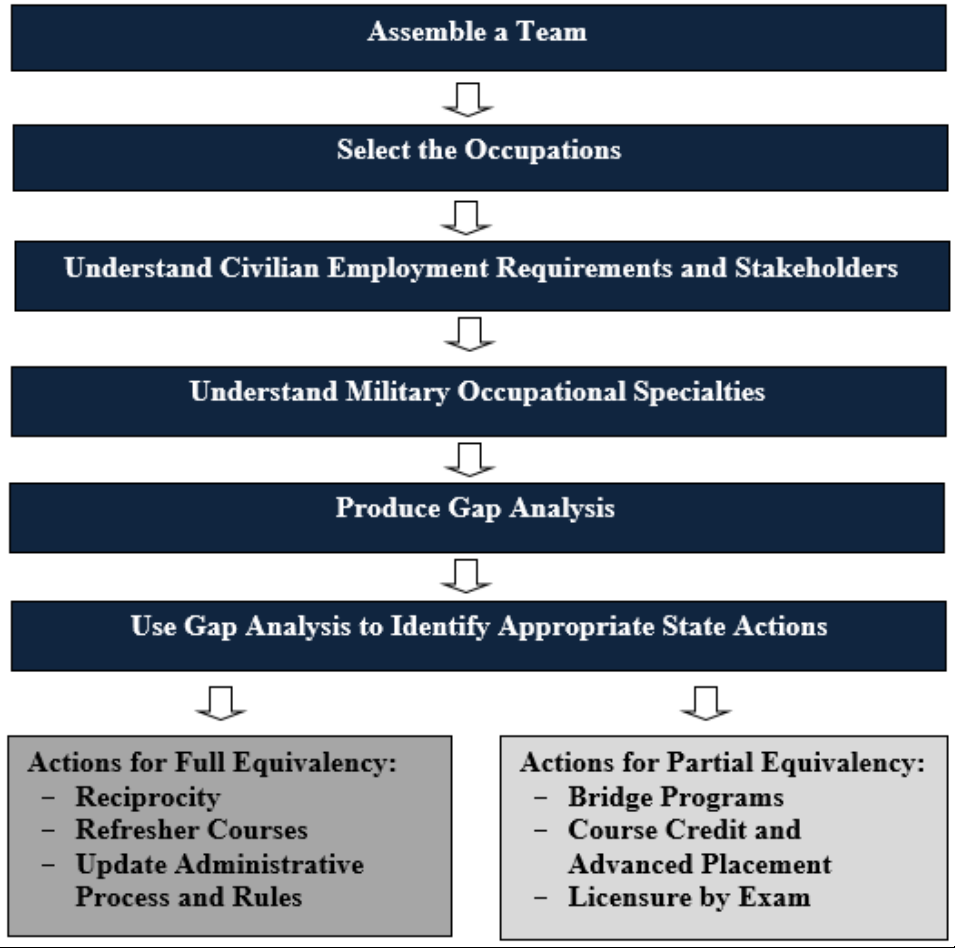
- Veterans leaving the military might have expectations for salary and career mobility that are hard to meet in the civilian workforce. When policymakers are assessing an occupation, they will benefit from analysis to determine whether that occupation is likely to provide a standard of living on par with military service and, if possible, opportunity for advancement.

- The work of the demonstration states spans across government agencies and is focused on workforce, occupational licensing, veterans' services, and other policy interests. Success in working across those agencies and interests is bolstered by a shared understanding of the rules and regulations of each agency. State leadership can be instrumental in facilitating that understanding. Nevertheless, demonstration states faced challenges getting various staffs with multiple existing responsibilities to focus on the complex work of accelerating veterans' licensure and certification.

With those findings in mind, NGA developed the following step-by step blueprint (see Exhibit 3) that other states can use to research and design accelerated pathways for veterans. Key steps include:

- *Assemble a team;*
- *Select the occupations;*
- *Understand civilian employment requirements and stakeholders;*
- *Understand military occupational specialties;*
- *Produce gap analysis; and*
- *Use gap analysis to identify appropriate state actions.*

Exhibit 3: Steps for Designing Accelerated Pathways



Assemble a Team

Project leaders should begin by identifying the key stakeholders that are necessary for developing and advancing a state strategy to accelerate licensure and certification. Demonstration states found that identifying the necessary stakeholders can be a learning process, as teams discovered new partners throughout the project. However, there are some constituencies that project leaders should consult from the outset:

- *Governor's Office:* The governor can make policy changes through orders to executive branch agencies, and carries weight with stakeholders in and out of state government. In turn, gubernatorial leadership is critical to the momentum and coordination of state efforts across agencies and beyond.

- *Workforce and Economic Development:* These agencies bring labor data and knowledge of the state's workforce development infrastructure to the team.

- *Post-secondary Education:* New courses or programs required several layers of approval within the higher education community. State post-secondary education authorities helped the teams engage schools and identify existing programs that could serve as foundations for accelerated courses.

- *State Veterans' Affairs Agency*: These agencies hold comprehensive knowledge of state-specific veteran programs, data on states' veteran populations, ties to the veteran service organization community, and specialized capacity to market accelerated licensure pathways.

- *State Licensing Boards*: These agencies hold the most detailed knowledge about professional requirements and their purpose. At the beginning of the project, state teams might not know on which occupations to focus. However, broad outreach to licensure boards can be useful at that stage to raise awareness of the issue and elicit preliminary responses from the boards.

In some states, executive orders or legislation designated a leader, which helped ensure accountability. In **Illinois**, the governor used an executive order to designate the state's Department of Veterans Affairs as a lead, and set a timeline for identifying occupations and posting assessments of gaps between military and civilian training online.[14] Designating a state agency to lead the effort and providing a timeline helped the state complete significant efforts before the demonstration project started.

Select the Occupations

The universe of military occupations that overlap in some way with civilian occupations is large, and experience in the demonstration suggests it is important for states to focus on specific occupations, preferably those that are both "high-demand" and "high-density":

- *High-Demand Occupations:* The demonstration is meant to improve veterans' employment levels. Thus, states were asked to focus on occupations with good employment prospects. States used state labor market information as well as federal data to select their occupational focus.

- *High-Density Occupations:* The military does not make available or regularly provide information to states on the number of service members holding a specific military occupational specialty (MOS), nor do states routinely collect information about their own veteran population. That makes it difficult for states to make informed decisions about which occupations to prioritize based on how many service members hold a certain MOS. In lieu of readily available sources of information, demonstration states conducted estimates using available DD214 records -- the separation form issued by the military to each service member, which describes their military history and veteran status (see Section Four for challenges associated with the DD214). In some cases, states made rough estimates using national data on MOS density among active duty service members. To aid that process, the military provided a list of the ten most common MOS in 2011, but that list is not updated regularly.[15] During the policy academy, the NGA Center

[14] Governor Pat Quinn, "Executive Order Applying Relevant Military Education and Training Obtained by Illinois Service Members to Professional Licensing Standards," Executive Order 2 (2013), http://www.illinois.gov/government/execorders/pages/2013_2.aspx.
[15] Executive Office of the President, *The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses*, February 2013.

helped states learn more about the MOS held by their veterans by initiating a Freedom of Information Act request.

Understand Civilian Employment Requirements and Stakeholders

Policymakers interested in accelerating licensing and credentialing for veterans need to thoroughly understand the steps required for civilians. That includes understanding the terminology used by licensing boards and the military, and understanding existing pathways from start to finish. Such information allows the state to identify important stakeholders.

- *Examine Key Terminology:* The demonstration states found that terminology can make a difference in how they approach accelerated pathways for veterans. States found that a key distinction was between occupations that required participation in *state approved* training program and those requiring participation in an *accredited* training program. For some occupations, completing a state-approved or accredited training program is part of the existing licensure requirements, regardless of an individual's ability to pass a certifying exam and the nuances between *state-approved* and *accredited* matter. If the training program must be *state-approved*, states can initiate change that allows the veteran to become licensed without any additional training by requesting the licensing board review and approve the military curriculum as a state-approved program. However, if state licensing requirements include completion of an *accredited* training program, the state must work with the national accrediting body responsible for that occupation's training standards to understand if military training can be considered an accredited program. Otherwise, the state also might consider changing the requirement for state licensure.

- *Identify Existing Accelerated Pathways:* A key step states took in designing their strategies was to identify and understand existing exceptions to licensure and credentialing requirements. For example, reciprocity agreements exist for many professions that allow a person trained in one state to apply for a license in another without re-training. In some cases, the military may be treated as if it were another state, and a reciprocity process can be applied. The demonstration states found that they had to investigate those policies, including how they were developed and where the state's authority lies in order to build upon and improve them. Most reciprocity policies have developed after a state board has conducted an investigation into the requirements of another state and determined that there would be no loss in quality. Many states found that if they could provide the licensing boards with enough information about the veterans training and skills, the boards could undertake the same cross-state reciprocity process for military training.

Understand Military Occupational Specialties

MOS identifies an occupational category in the military, and is a proxy for military training and experience. Some members of the military obtain additional identifiers throughout their career to indicate further training and specialization. The states participating in the demonstration found that they could play a key translational role in communicating military descriptions about occupations to licensing and accrediting bodies as well as post-secondary education institutions. That could include generating a list of MOSs relevant to a specific civilian occupations, reviewing training materials provided by the military, and reviewing any existing recommendations for course credit developed for institutions of higher education. The federal

government and the military have created a number of resources to help map MOSs to civilian occupations that states were able build upon.[16]

- *Identify All Relevant MOS:* Although there is often an exact MOS job title match for any given occupation (for example, the Army has service members who are LPNs), there may be multiple military job titles that will overlap with any given civilian job that don't match. Each branch is likely to have several relevant MOS for any given civilian job, making it complex and cumbersome for a state to take on all potential pathways to a given civilian occupation. Demonstration states thus decided to select a subset of high-density MOS to simplify the process. In order to select those MOS, states learned about MOS that are most prevalent either in their state (where data are available) or in the nation.

- *Obtain Relevant Programs of Instruction:* Once a specific subset of MOS has been selected, the military can provide more information about training requirements for that MOS. Information obtained from the military includes the specific job description, the curriculum for the training (called the program of instruction or POI), the length of training, and any civilian credentials required. All of the information is important to prepare for review by civilian licensing boards, which in most states will make final decisions about whether or not there are any equivalencies between the civilian job and the training and experience behind any given MOS.

  In demonstration states, licensing boards often requested detailed information about the content of each course veterans have taken before making any decisions about accelerated pathways. To prepare for that and speed implementation, states gathered as much of the content and skill requirements as possible at the beginning of the process for both military and civilian sides. Sometimes states gathered that information themselves, and in others they had licensing boards directly obtain those materials from the military, accreditation boards, and national professional associations. Some national professional associations also have begun such work and might have copies of the POI. For example, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing obtained POIs for relevant medical professions and published a comparison to national nursing standards. All demonstration states found that to be a useful resource for designing their LPN strategies.

- *Review Credit Recommendations:* States also can review any existing recommendations for awarding college credit for the training provided to the MOS of interest. That course credit could allow veterans to start mid-way along the path to licensure instead of at the beginning, and an existing recommendation can provide some information about how closely related the two occupations are. There may be colleges within the state that already have developed a process for reviewing military training and for waiving some required courses. The American Council on Education (ACE) also has reviewed military POIs and made recommendations for awarding credit. Existing recommendations have not provided enough information to allow decision making by any state licensing board, but did provide some parameters to guide preliminary discussions and address early concerns about the worth of the project.

[16] Army COOL and Navy COOL

Produce a User-Friendly Gap Analysis

With the information described above, states can produce a gap analysis that compares the skills and credentials held by service members in a particular MOS to civilian requirements. During the analysis, the state team might discover that the military provides training on all necessary skills, but without the formal documentation required by the civilian board. If that is the case, policymakers can focus on helping veterans get documentation for that skill rather than providing more training.

- *Scan for Existing National Analyses:* If a national professional association has already completed a comparison that can serve as a basis for the state's gap analysis. Demonstration states found that using existing analyses performed by national professional bodies sped up the process. For example, demonstration states used the gap analysis from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing.[17] Exhibit 4 describes the components of that gap analysis.

  Skill and other requirements for licensure are different across the states for most licensed professions, and state licensing boards participating in the demonstration signaled a preference to undertake their own assessment even with existing examples from national associations or other states. However, the national assessments provided a template for states that made it easier to complete their own assessment.

- *Engage with Licensing Boards:* Licensing boards have the technical knowledge about skills necessary to safely join a profession, and authority to designate an alternative course of training as an acceptable proxy for standard training. That puts them in a unique position to complete a gap analysis. Although some licensing boards might be willing to undertake that work as part of their regular mission, some states used legislation or executive orders to direct licensing boards to help develop accelerated licensure pathways.[18] For example:

  - Before the policy academy, **Illinois** Governor Pat Quinn signed an executive order that required state agencies to identify equivalencies and gaps between

Exhibit 4: The National Council of State Boards of Nursing Gap Analysis

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) created a gap analysis comparing military medics to licensed practical nurses (LPN). The gap analysis provides the standard nursing curriculum as a table that lists specific skills, a job description of the three MOSs of interest, and a table that shows at a glance whether a veteran with that specific MOS was trained in that skill. That gap analysis can serve as a template for states to follow when examining other professions. In their gap analysis, the NCSBN asked the following questions, which are the fundamental questions that states must answer when doing such work:

- Do Army health care specialists (medics), Navy corpsman and Air Force airmen have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to transition into a career as an LPN/VN directly from their military service?
- What are the differences between military training and LPN/VN education?

[17] National Council of State Boards of Nursing, "A Comparison of Selected Military Health Care Occupation Curricula with a Standard Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Curriculum," 2013.
[18] Executive Office of the President, *The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses*, February 2013.

military and civilian occupations and develop recommendations for processes that would take military training into account for awarding civilian licenses.[19]

- Governor Sandoval of **Nevada** used an executive order to direct state licensure boards to develop new programs for reciprocity agreements and bridging the gap between state-required experience and military experience. The executive order affects boards overseeing emergency medical services, licensed practical nurses, and law enforcement professionals.[20]

- In 2013, Governor Brewer of **Arizona** signed H.B. 2076, legislation that specifically required the state's nursing board to identify accelerated options for veterans.[21]

Use Gap Analysis to Identify Appropriate State Actions

A gap analysis will show whether a full or partial equivalency exists between a military and civilian occupation, which in turn informs the options for state action to design accelerated licensing and certification pathways. However, in both cases, the state strategies might require a mix of administrative rule changes and new legislation. When there is a full skills equivalency, the state can look for other barriers that can be removed, such as administrative hurdles. When there is a partial equivalency, state strategies focus on providing veterans with missing skills. The following provides a summary of the strategies demonstration states' are using to address both full and partial equivalency.

- *State Actions for Full Equivalency:* Demonstration states identified some occupations where no skills gap existed between military and civilian training requirements. Examples include medics from the Army, who some states found possess skills to perform as civilian certified nursing assistants (CNA), or Army medics that have received specialized nursing training equivalent to civilian licensed practical nurses (LPN).[22] States found that even with equivalent skills, however, there are other barriers to civilian licensing. Sometimes those barriers exist because veterans lack formal documentation that civilian boards can understand, for example a degree transcript or a certificate for passing a national licensing exam. Against that backdrop, demonstration states are pursuing the following strategies:

    - Reciprocity: Reciprocity requirements for state licenses can include completing an approved training program and passing the required national exam. Demonstration states were able to review military curricula and determine whether or not they met state requirements, and then designate them as state-approved training programs. For veterans with active certifications awarded for passing required exams, states were able to grant licenses through reciprocity. For example, **Iowa**'s EMS Office determined that the Basic Medical Training

[19] Governor Pat Quinn, "Executive Order Applying Relevant Military Education and Training Obtained by Illinois Service Members to Professional Licensing Standards," Executive Order 2 (2013), http://www.illinois.gov/government/execorders/pages/2013_2.aspx.

[20] "A Year of the Veteran in Nevada." NV.gov. January 6, 2014.

[21] Arizona HB2076: http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/51leg/1r/bills/hb2076h.pdf

[22] Medic to CNA was evaluated by Illinois and found to be equivalent. See Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, "Current Military Training Equivalencies – For Veterans," https://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/programs/Pages/StateLicensesMilitaryTraining.aspx. Army nurse to LPN was evaluated by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing in the gap analysis cited above.

provided to medics from several branches of the military meets **Iowa**'s standards for EMT training. A medic with an active certification can apply for an EMT license without additional training or testing.

- Refresher Courses: Another barrier to civilian licensure is that the military sometimes requires national credentials for initial service but not for continuing service. Receipt of credentials for initial service means that some service members might leave the military with lapsed credentials or licenses. Some states have refresher courses available for individuals who hold state credentials or licenses that have lapsed. Those policies and refresher courses may apply to veterans in the same way that they would apply to civilians with lapsed credentials.

- Updated Administrative Processes and Rules: Demonstration states identified changes to administrative processes to make it easier for veterans to apply for licensure without requiring major changes to the licensing process itself. For example, states can assess the time it takes for boards to review applications. **Virginia** had a performance measurement system in place prior to the demonstration and was able to verify that veterans' applications made it through the licensing boards in reasonable time. **Minnesota** passed legislation to make it easier for veterans to take the police officer exam.[23] Originally, the law made it possible for a veteran to take the exam with five years of experience. With the new law, the requirement changed to four years to match the typical length of military service enlistments. **Wisconsin** changed rules to allow veterans to sit for a police officer exam with a modified offer of employment to satisfy potential employers' requirement for considering a candidate.

- *Identify Actions for Partial Equivalency:* When gaps exist between military and civilian training requirements, state strategies to bridge those gaps fall along a spectrum from allowing veterans to complete only those courses they need, to creating stand-alone bridge programs specifically targeting veterans' skills gaps. Across these strategies, states can work to ensure that post-secondary institutions grant credit for the training and experience that veterans already possess through their military service. Specific demonstration state strategies to date include:

  - Bridge programs. Bridge programs can be a series of courses or one refresher course, with a curriculum based only on the gaps identified between military curriculum and civilian curriculum. For example, the states in the demonstration learned about GateWay Community College in Arizona, which offers a bridge course for former military medics to complete required LPN training in half the time that a full LPN program would take. Two policy academy states, **Illinois** and **Nevada**, are ready to enroll students in similar programs developed through the demonstration project.

  - Course Credit and Advanced Placement. For occupations that require a degree, states can work with institutions of higher education to award course credit that accelerates the process of obtaining the degree. A number of recommendations already exist for awarding course credit for specific military training programs.

[23] Office of Governor Mark Dayton, "New Law Makes it Easier for Veterans to Become Police Officers in Minnesota," May 16, 2014, http://mn.gov/governor/newsroom/pressreleasedetail.jsp?id=102-129818.

Examples of course credits for military training from outside the policy academy provided some guidance. For example, Lansing Community College in Michigan awards some course credit automatically, and then uses testing to assess whether other requirements can be waived based on the veteran's skills.

- Licensure by Exam. Although licensing bodies don't often use national or state examinations to determine partial equivalency, boards in several states have approved licensure by exam for certain occupations. Policy academy states were presented with examples from **West Virginia** and **California**, which allow licensure by examination for medics who pass the LPN exam.[24] Some states also posted information about possible gaps in knowledge to help veterans study on their own. For example, **Minnesota** posted a study guide for veterans interested in taking the police officer exam. In that case, veterans must demonstrate a threshold level of experience to take the exam, but they are not required to undergo additional training.

[24] West Virginia State Board of Examiners for Licensed Practical Nurses, "General Information for Licensure by Examination," http://www.lpnboard.state.wv.us/examapp.pdf; and Executive Office of the President, *The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses*, February 2013.

SECTION THREE: IMPLEMENTING ACCELERATED PATHWAYS

States participating in the demonstration project are still in the process of implementing the strategies that were developed based on their gap analyses and assessment of available options described in the previous section. That section describes interim findings on key barriers that states encountered to date as they continue to implement those strategies (see Exhibit 5 on the next page).

Key Interim Findings:

- Post-secondary institutions are reluctant to create bridge programs for veterans unless there is a demonstrable level of demand from potential students to make programs financially sustainable. Several demonstration states indicated instances of post-secondary institutions that had tried to create such programs but eventually closed due to a lack of demand. To respond to that concern, states supported marketing efforts for post-secondary institutions to generate demand.

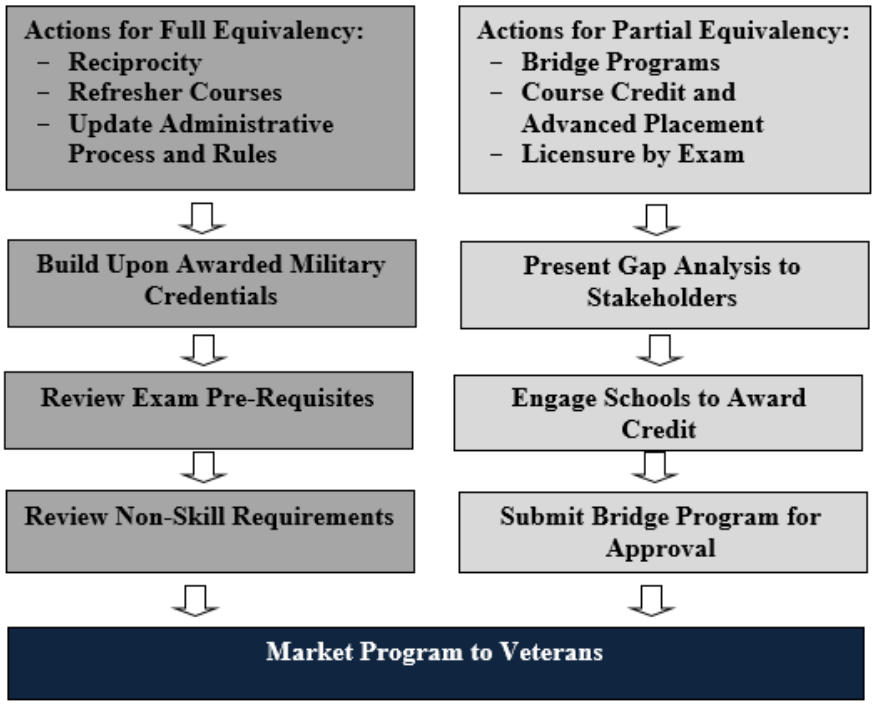
- Creating new bridge programs can be time intensive and involves multiple layers of approval. It can take time to get necessary approvals from the postsecondary education system and from licensure boards. Opportunities to present proposals for a new courses to faculty committees, institutional boards, higher education boards, curriculum committees, and licensing boards might only arise quarterly or less frequently.

- States have found that they can build upon existing accelerated options for veterans in their states that were infrequently used or poorly marketed. In some cases that was because information on the process for veterans to receive waivers or participate in an alternative path towards licensure was hard to locate. States are using the policy academy as an opportunity to assess existing programs, make necessary programmatic adjustments, and build in-state partnerships to streamline processes and enhance awareness of accelerated programs.

Implementation Steps for Full Equivalency Strategies

States may identify some MOS where there is a consensus that military experience provides all of the skills needed for a veteran to safely join a civilian profession. In that case, the state often has to develop ways to identify credentials earned by the veteran during military service, or provide credentials that are recognizable to licensure boards and employers. Demonstration states are taking the following steps to accelerate veterans licensing where there is full equivalency between military and civilian training for an occupation:

Exhibit 5: Steps for Implementing Accelerated Pathways



Build Upon Civilian Credentials Awarded During Military Service

As mentioned earlier, the military requires civilian credentials for some military occupations. For example, physical therapy assistants fulfill all the requirements of an associate's degree for their military training, which is recognizable as a college degree by any state or employer. In some cases, the civilian credential is awarded through national exams. For example, Army and Air Force medics have to pass the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) examinations. That exam is the same test taken by civilian EMTs in almost all states. Accordingly, veterans who have passed the certification test in the military may be able to become licensed by endorsement through existing cross-state reciprocity processes. Demonstration states are implementing strategies to take advantage of existing reciprocity processes. For example, **Wisconsin** found that a reciprocity process existed for veterans interested in becoming police officers, but that very few veterans used it. The state identified several strategies for making the process work better for veterans, including making it clear on the application that military police training counts towards reciprocity just as training in another state would count.

Demonstration states also are working to help veterans take advantage of refresher courses for civilians with lapsed licenses and certifications. As an example, **Iowa** chose to take that approach for military medics trying to obtain EMT licenses without an active certification. Since the military training is considered as an approved program in Iowa, a refresher course provides the necessary training to allow the board to provide permission to test.

Understand Pre-Requisites Rules for Taking Required Exams

State licensing boards often authorize individuals to take certification exams, usually after receiving proof that the individual has graduated from an approved or accredited training program. Demonstration states have found cases where a gap analysis suggests that a military occupation provides all of the necessary skills, but the military does not require service members to pass a required examination for licensure. Demonstration states were presented with examples from **West Virginia** and **California**, which allow license by examination alone for former medics who pass the LPN exam.[25] Demonstration states are also working to change the pre-requisite rules for licensure to allow veterans to take the exam without additional training. To help implement that approach, some demonstration states are developing study guides for veterans choosing to become licensed by exam alone in lieu of requiring formal participation in a training program. For example, **Minnesota** had an existing waiver process for its police officer exam. The state posted study guidelines for legal areas that are familiar to members of the military to help veterans' prepare for the test, but it does not require formal study.[26]

Review Non-Skill Requirements

As demonstration states have worked to implement their strategies, they have found that equivalent skills are not always enough to help veterans become licensed in a civilian occupation. Thus, states need to consider other non-skill requirements such as conditional employment and years of experience. For example, public safety licensure often requires an offer of conditional employment, which means that a person must already have a conditional offer from a willing employer before the state agrees to provide a license. Finding a willing employer without a license or certification presents a barrier for veterans who recently returned to their state. Employers might be unsure how well military training prepares candidates for the exam and may be reluctant to undergo the full hiring process if there is a likelihood of failure.

Wisconsin is addressing that challenge by allowing candidates to take a waiver exam with an employer sponsor – that way, the employer can wait to complete the hiring process until after receiving the exam results, as opposed to the current practice of candidates needing to receive an offer of employment before they can sit for the exam. **Minnesota** is looking to make the reciprocity process work better for veterans by changing experience requirements to match typical terms of service in the military. Instead of requiring 3-5 years of experience in order to take a waiver exam, the state now requires 2-4 years. Such a change does not affect the substance of the experience requirement, but it eases the licensure process for veterans to take advantage of a waiver opportunity.

Implementation Steps for Partial Equivalency Strategies

When gaps exist between military and civilian training requirements, state strategies to bridge those gaps fall along a spectrum from simply allowing veterans to complete only those courses they need, to creating stand-alone bridge programs specifically targeting veterans' skills gaps. Across those strategies, states can work to ensure that postsecondary institutions grant credit for the training and experience that veterans already possess through their military service.

[25] West Virginia State Board of Examiners for Licensed Practical Nurses, "General Information for Licensure by Examination," http://www.lpnboard.state.wv.us/examapp.pdf; and Executive Office of the President, *The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses*, February 2013.
[26] Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), "Military Reciprocity Exam," https://dps.mn.gov/entity/post/exams/Pages/military-reciprocity-exam.aspx.

Demonstration states are taking the following steps to accelerate veterans licensing where there is partial equivalency between military and civilian training for an occupation:

Identify Training Locations

At the current stage of the project, demonstration states are continuing to present stakeholders with the information gathered on military and civilian training to establish partnerships with training institutions. Training institutions familiar with aligning military training to civilian training and addressing recurring issues have allowed more advanced discussions. Demonstration states also placed emphasis on communication efforts to help stakeholders understand the purpose and importance of the effort. This includes demonstrating states sharing examples of existing bridge program with potential education and training partners.

Potential training sites sometimes expressed concern that there would be low demand for new programs. In addition, some training sites point to a dearth of evidence that such bridge programs have long-term success and can demonstrate improved outcomes for veterans. Against, that backdrop, state teams are providing assistance to schools with marketing the programs to help increase the pool of applicants. Another option for policymakers is to work with stakeholders to develop strategies that aggregate statewide demand for programs. This may include providing training online as a way to make the bridge course available statewide, but thus far, none of the bridge programs under development are pursuing that option.

An additional concern raised by training institutions is that veterans might need a significant amount of remedial course work and achieve only low passing rates on courses and exams, which would jeopardize their institutional accreditation. To overcome those concerns, states are engaging training partners with high populations of adult learners such as community colleges, many of which operate support networks and centers devoted to veteran students. Those schools are identified by a "veteran-friendly" designation, which indicates that support structures exist for veterans returning to school. Finally, states are coping with misconceptions about members of the military. Among those misconceptions is the idea that enlisted service members and veterans might not be academically prepared for further post-secondary education. Many training institutions are unaware that the military requires threshold scores on academic standardized tests in order to join and for most MOSs. Members of the military must complete high school or pass the GED test.[27]

Submit Bridge Curriculum for Approval

Course approval requires input from many stakeholders, including faculty, institutional boards, accreditation bodies, state higher education boards, and state licensing boards. The approval process can take substantial time. Policy makers might need to expend significant political capital to make sure that the curriculum is prioritized at each level.

An additional layer of approval is required to ensure veterans can use their GI education benefits offered through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) because the VA relies on state approving agencies (SAA) to review new programs and determine their eligibility for GI Bill benefits. One of the SAA requirements is that veterans' educational benefits cannot be used for programs that serve only veterans. Known as the "85-15 rule," for any approved program, enrollment by VA beneficiaries may not exceed 85 percent. That rule is meant to prevent the

[27] Service Members in School. Rand Corporation, 2010. See here: http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1083.pdf

specific targeting of veterans benefits by exploitive training programs, as well as offer a measure of assurance that the quality and cost of the program is such that at least 15 percent of those willing to enroll and pay the expected tuition and fees are from the general population.[28] Demonstration states are looking at existing bridge programs as models that were able work with SAA to address that issue, for example by gaining approval by offering the program as a refresher for all civilians with lapsed or soon to expire licenses. There is also a waiver application, but the application process can be arduous in some states. Facilitating that process is a way that states can provide support to training partners.

Work with Schools to Award College Credit

When an occupation requires a degree granted by a post-secondary education institution, demonstration states are approaching licensing boards and post-secondary education institutions with existing recommendations or examples of course credit awarded for military training. For example, military physical therapists and civilian physical therapist assistants (PTAs) have related skills, but PTAs must acquire an associate's degree to become licensed in all states.[29] Demonstration states are engaging their licensing and post-secondary education partners around existing national models of programs that award credit for military training towards a physical therapy assistant degree to reduce the time and money needed to obtain the degree. Demonstration states are using the Arapahoe Community College program in **Colorado** as a national model.[30] In the Arapahoe model, veterans who were in the military's PTA MOS can obtain 51 total credit hours using a combination of their military training and standardized tests. The total remaining credit requirements total only 24 credit hours.

Market Program to Veterans

In their ongoing work with post-secondary education partners and training institutions, demonstration states are planning to offer support by helping to market the program to prospective students. States have a number of communication touch points with veterans, whether through the department of veterans' services, the public workforce system, or through the unemployment system. However, demonstration state experience suggests outreach to the population through those various sources is rarely coordinated. Demonstration states are looking to create more robust systems for conducting more targeted outreach to veterans. That includes using information available on veterans' military training and experience housed within state department of veterans' affairs to conduct outreach to veterans claiming unemployment benefits. For example, the **Illinois** state team plans to market its bridge programs to veterans identified through the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs' database with relevant MOS, as well as through veterans found through the Illinois Department of Employment Security database. To complement the targeted marketing, the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs plans also to include information about the bridge programs in "Welcome Home" letters sent to all returning veterans, and through its social media outlets and newsletters. (More information on how demonstration states are planning to leverage existing state to bolster these marketing efforts is provided in the following section on data and assessment.)

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[28] More information on the 85-15 rule see here: https://gibill.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1481

[29] PTA Education Overview from American Physical Therapy Association: http://www.apta.org/PTAEducation/Overview/

[30] Arapahoe Community College, "SOCAD Letter," http://www.arapahoe.edu/departments-and-programs/a-z-programs/physical-therapist-assistant/socad-letter.

SECTION FOUR: DATA AND ASSESSMENT

State data on veterans play a key role in multiple aspects of the demonstration project. In program design, data can help states determine where to focus their efforts by identifying high-density and high-demand occupations. In implementing their strategies, states find data important for generating support for creating accelerated pathways by demonstrating demand and for assessing the success of state efforts under the demonstration. NGA is working with each state to assess its existing capacity to handle veterans' data, as well to form new links to data that will help in assessing the state's work. The following section describes interim findings from those assessments and the data-sharing strategies states developed to support the goals of the demonstration. Data and assessment findings in this section specifically pertain to state efforts to:

- *Identify and reach out to veterans eligible for accelerated pathways*: A key component of states' efforts to accelerate the credentialing of veterans is the ability to identify veterans and separating service members with training and experience relevant to the accelerated pathways states seek to develop to estimate demand for a specific pathway and conduct outreach to potential participants.

- *Build capacity to collect data to assess accelerated pathways:* The primary purpose of the demonstration project is to develop and implement strategies to accelerate the licensing and certification of veterans. To assess progress and success in meeting that goal, demonstration states are taking steps to build capacity to collect and access information needed to assess accelerated pathway outcomes.

Key Interim Findings:

- Existing state veteran data sources are fragmented and rarely standardized, making it difficult to provide a comprehensive picture of the state veteran population. States often can capture segmented pieces of information about their veteran population, but there is no comprehensive resource that provides a complete picture of veterans living in the state, and what exists typically does not capture information on veterans' military training and experience.

- Demonstration states are making progress developing baseline data on unemployment among veterans. Several states have taken, and are continuing to take, steps to address their lack of data by linking data in different state agencies, creating data sharing agreements, and initiating formal data requests. With the exception of Wisconsin, however, available information does not include MOS to date.

- States do not track individual veterans' credential attainment at a state level, but several demonstration states are exploring the inclusion of "veterans' variables" into existing state databases that track either education and employment outcomes or licensure.

- The demonstration project considered several approaches to isolating the effect of creating accelerated credentialing pathways on reducing unemployment and increasing credential attainment among veterans in the selected occupations. Unfortunately, the most rigorous approaches would require data sets that currently do not exist and statistical methods beyond the scope of the project. Therefore the assessment approach in the policy academy focuses on building datasets to track aggregate unemployment and credential

attainment among veterans within the selected occupations over time and on documenting the data and other barriers that prevent a more rigorous evaluation from taking place. Although that will not provide definitive information on the effectiveness of accelerated pathways strategies in reducing unemployment and increasing credentials, it will provide descriptive information about changes in the outcomes of interest during the period of the demonstration project.

Identifying Eligible Veterans

Demonstration states conducted assessments of existing data in the state to find "eligible" veterans with training and experience relevant to the selected occupations. States found that several state agencies collect data on veterans for their own reporting purposes. However, the data collected at a state level is fragmented, rarely standardized, and subject to barriers to being systematically shared across agencies. States can capture specific pieces of information about their veteran population, but there is no comprehensive resource that provides a complete picture of veterans living in the state, and what exists typically does not capture information on military training and experience. Below is a summary of the variety of state veteran data resources. Interim figures from across those resources are provided in Exhibit 6.

Copy 6 of the DD214

The most complete information states hold regarding any individual veteran is the Copy 6 of the DD214 separation form. Separating service members can opt to send that copy to state offices of veteran's affairs in their home of record. However, demonstration states reported several limitations using DD214s to identify eligible veterans:

- *Completeness:* As separating service members "opt-in" to have that information sent to their home of record, the records do not reflect the entire veteran population that might reside in a particular state. Further, a veteran may choose not to locate in, or might have since moved from, their home of record, where the Copy 6 was sent.

- *Paper records:* Demonstration states indicate that they receive DD214s in paper form.[31] Although in some states those paper records are scanned upon receipt, only in rare cases is the information stored in a searchable database.

Despite those limitations, demonstration states are taking steps to improve their ability to use DD214s as a resource to support their veteran population. Several demonstration states are undertaking considerable efforts to extract information from the Copy 6 and make the information accessible through a searchable database. For example, **Illinois**, **Iowa** and **Wisconsin**, are using optical scanners to capture specific fields from the DD214 to develop a searchable database. Further, some states are taking the time to manually input information into searchable databases directly from the new DD214s. In other states there are barriers to digitizing DD214s. In **Virginia**, the Copy 6 is received by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services but immediately forwarded to regional offices in paper format, complicating any statewide digitization efforts.

[31] MN and UT have reported federal pilot projects to provide Copy 6 DD214s in digital form to states, and NGA is examining further information on these initiatives.

In states the Copy 6 is serving as a central resource for identifying potentially eligible veterans to participate in accelerated pathways. The digitization of DD214s into a searchable database at the **Wisconsin** Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is the key means of identifying and conducting targeted outreach to veterans to support acceleration strategies. To facilitate outreach, **Wisconsin** developed a set of data-sharing agreements with state agencies that enable WDVA to "cross-check" the individuals in the database with information housed in other state agencies. For example, **Wisconsin** is working through a data-sharing agreement with the Department of Revenue to secure an accurate address for veterans with DD214s on file at the WDVA. To date, 183 veterans who have separated since June 2012 have been identified using that process, and the Department of Revenue was able to supply the most current addresses for all 183.

Veteran Unemployment Claims Data

Unemployed veterans with relevant military training and experience are an ideal population to target for participating in accelerated pathways. Demonstration states look to two specific sources of data on veteran unemployment: self-identified veteran claimants within the unemployment insurance system (UI), and the claimants of the Unemployment Compensation program for Ex-service members (UCX).

States in the demonstration project found both resources to be valuable assets. States see particular promise in the use of UCX data to identify potential participants in accelerated pathways. States administer claims for the UCX system, which offers unemployment benefits to recently separated service members. A UCX claimant's most recent employer is the military, and thus his or her MOS is a good indication of the current level of occupational trading and experience. As UCX is only available to recently separated service members – those separated for less than a year – those individuals tend to be in a transition period and interested in exploring a variety of occupational and educational options. Further, all states verify UCX claims through the Federal Claims Control Center (FCCC), which maintains copies of the DD214, and states send a quarterly bill for reimbursement to the Department of Defense that provides key aggregate information on claims and thus the scale of the population.

However, limitations exist for both UI and UCX in terms of providing an accurate picture of the unemployed veteran population and providing information that can facilitate targeted outreach. Those limitations include:

- *For veteran claimants in the state UI system*:
    - **Veteran status is self-reported** – All demonstration states indicate that their UI systems capture veteran status, but capturing veteran status is not a required field for state UI applications and in none of the states is validating that information a condition of filing a UI claim.

    - **Claims capture limited information on training and experience** – In the demonstration states, the UI system tends to capture only whether someone is a veteran (indicated by yes or no) and date of discharge. Demonstration states have found that MOS is not captured within the UI system, a key capability for tracking aggregate veteran unemployment with relevant training and experience to accelerated pathways. Further, if an individual indicates that the military is the employer of record, that information is captured using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code, including the 55-0000 codes for military specific occupations (for example, infantryman). That is a particular challenge in the

context of the policy academy, where military personnel in occupations that are not specific to the military, such as truck drivers, are not assigned a non-military specific code.

- **Inconsistencies in data collection** – An analysis by **Virginia** suggests that there are further complications to relying on UI systems to provide an accurate picture of veteran unemployment. The team found that for the month of January 2014, of all the UI claimants with military-specific SOC codes, less than one-third were also classified as veterans in the UI database.

- *For UCX claimants:*
  - **UCX claimants might not reside in the state** – Veterans may file for UCX claims in a state of their choosing regardless of residence or home of record.

  - **Operational limitations of information on UCX claims and claimants** – Assessments by demonstration states suggest that little information is retained on UCX claims and claimants. Across demonstration states, UCX claims are still filed and validated by paper, and information is not retained in a searchable database. Despite the validation of a UCX claim by the FCCC using a copy of the DD214, information such as an individual's MOS is not captured or retained at that time by states.

Driver's License Identifiers

Demonstration states **Illinois**, **Nevada**, **Virginia**, and **Wisconsin** have a veteran identifier on state issued drivers' licenses. States indicate that is a useful resource for gathering veterans' contact information. For example in **Nevada**, the Department of Motor Vehicles provides monthly reports to the state's Department of Veterans Services (NDVS). That information however, is self-reported by the veteran, and does not capture or link with information related to an individual's military training and experience. There are plans in **Nevada** to explore capturing MOS on the license application in the future.

Requests from Defense Manpower Data Center

There is interest among demonstration states in receiving information earlier about soon-to-be-separating service members with relevant home state of record to enhance outreach and service to veterans. To date, there is no systematic way for states to access information that can help build a profile of the military training and experience of incoming cohorts of veterans. **Illinois** indicated that it is possible to file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). As the technical assistance provider, NGA submitted a common FOIA request on behalf of all policy academy states, which seeks to provide an estimate of the scale of separations by MOS in each state. The request is currently in process. When completed it will serve as a potential resource that complements existing requests filed by **Minnesota** and **Wisconsin**.

National Guard

To better estimate demand for accelerated pathways, **Wisconsin** now works with its National Guard to identify guardsmen and guardswomen with relevant MOS/experience and training for

the state's selected occupations. **Virginia** is exploring similar connections with local military installations.

Self-Reported Profiles

Illinois, **Iowa**, and **Nevada** are working with fledging databases that enable veterans to self-report contact information as well as relevant military experience and training. **Illinois** is working to extract information from the Joblink system maintained by its Department of Employment Services, as well as the portal managed by the state's Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) for the *Stand-up and be Counted* outreach program. Both **Iowa** and **Nevada** are developing web tools and backend linkages with state offices of veterans' affairs that enable individual veterans to upload information and manage a profile.

American Job Centers

In all states, American Job Centers have systemized processes to develop quarterly reports of veterans served – provided to DOL in the form of the VETS-2000 reports. States indicated that such reporting is aggregate in nature and does not capture MOS. But states are currently examining how the information can be used to enhance outreach to veterans in the context of the policy academy. For example, **Wisconsin** is exploring a data-sharing agreement to access the email addresses that veterans provide when they receive services through American Job Centers. Such information would help states reach veterans to advertise courses and other accelerated pathways.

Exhibit 6: Interim Figures on Eligible Veteran Population

	Illinois	Iowa	Minnesota	Nevada	Virginia	Wisconsin
DD214 Copy 6 on file with state	*In process – Copy 6s being scanned*	*In process – Copy 6s being scanned*	87 with MOS corresponding to selected occupations (Feb 2014 to present)	*In process – New Copy 6s being scanned*	Not viable at this time - Paper Copy 6s sent to regional offices	410 with MOS corresponding to selected occupations
National Guard in state			719 with MOS corresponding to selected occupations		603 with MOS corresponding to selected occupations	1041 with MOS corresponding to selected occupations
DMDC request of soon to be separating service-members	*Request in process initiated by NGA*	*Request in process initiated by NGA*	405 with MOS corresponding to selected occupations	*Request in process initiated by NGA*	*Request in process initiated by NGA*	322 with MOS corresponding to selected occupations

Assessing Accelerated Pathways

The primary purpose of the demonstration project is to develop and implement strategies to accelerate the licensing and certification of veterans. Interim findings on demonstration states' progress on those objectives were detailed in previous sections. Further, state efforts to reduce the

time to credential for veterans, and associated estimated cost savings of acceleration, are the subject of inquiry for the companion Cost Study described in the next chapter. This section describes state progress to collect data on the outcomes of the accelerated pathways upon implementation. Although the abbreviated performance period for the demonstration precludes the collection and analysis of outcomes data for accelerated pathways, NGA focuses on working with states to build the capacity to collect data that can describe the contributions of accelerated pathways to the following longer term goals of the demonstration:

- Reducing unemployment claims, duration and costs among veterans in the selected occupations; and
- Increasing credential attainment among veterans in the selected occupations.

The demonstration project considered several approaches to isolating the effect of creating accelerated credentialing pathways on reducing unemployment and increasing credential attainment among veterans in the selected occupations. Unfortunately, the most rigorous approaches would require data sets that currently do not exist and statistical methods beyond the scope of the project. Therefore, the assessment approach focuses on building data sets to track aggregate fluctuations in unemployment and credential attainment among veterans with relevant military training and experience.

Veteran Unemployment Claims, Duration and Costs

Demonstration states are working to establish a baseline of aggregate veteran unemployment for both the number of veteran unemployment claims and the average duration of veteran unemployment claims. Recognizing the limitations of connecting states' accelerated pathways with aggregate reductions in veteran unemployment (number and duration), establishing a veteran unemployment baseline is a practical first step for states to monitor their progress toward reducing veteran unemployment. States are focusing on documenting the scale of veteran unemployment over time, while also determining how that information can be useful for targeting services to support unemployed veterans. To arrive at a baseline, state teams have been working closely with state unemployment insurance data systems to:

- *Produce a baseline report on veteran unemployment*: Key findings from the ongoing efforts of states to develop baseline data include:

    - **Some data are only available in the aggregate** – State policy academy teams indicate that privacy regulations governing the use and sharing of UI data means that only aggregate numbers of unemployed veterans (both within UI and UCX) can be shared with other state agencies.

    - **State UI agencies require reimbursement for providing data** – A couple of state policy academy teams (**Virginia and Wisconsin**) that have moved forward with formal data requests indicated that federal regulations (20 CFR 603.8) that govern state UI systems require a reimbursement for the administrative costs of running a report. States are currently examining what the payment structure will be if they receive quarterly or semi-regular reports.

    - **Disaggregating data by MOS is challenging** - Given the limitations cited earlier about the difficulties of classifying data for UI and UCX claimants according to their MOS, states are employing a workaround, in which states

estimate veteran unemployment by MOS using the ratio of service members by MOS within the military at large.

- *Build linkages across states agencies to improve ability to serve unemployed veterans***:** Despite the limitations of obtaining data on veteran unemployment, states are building linkages across state agencies to develop preliminary reports and lay the foundation for sustained data-sharing capabilities. In addition to filing one-time data requests on aggregate veteran unemployment, states are implementing and exploring a number of strategies described below to gather interim data (see Exhibit 7). Strategies include:

    - **Formal Data Sharing Agreements** - Seeing the value of having a read on the number of unemployed veterans with specific MOS, the **Wisconsin** Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) developed a formal data-sharing agreement with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to cross-check the employment status of a list of veterans with DD214s on file at WDVA (in the aggregate). That agreement will be executed on a quarterly basis. **Nevada** is currently pursuing a legislative approach, in which the state's Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation will be required to share aggregate veteran unemployment data with the state's Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs and Department of Veterans Services. The **Nevada** team is currently conducting outreach to relevant agencies and organizations around the value of veteran data sharing and the upcoming data legislation.

    - **Capturing new information on applications** - Before pursuing the cross-checking approach described above, the **Wisconsin** team examined the feasibility of altering the unemployment application intake forms to capture MOS. However, the Wisconsin team found the approach to be cost prohibitive. Nonetheless, several demonstration states see promise in continuing to explore how UI/UCX intake forms can be modified to capture more complete information about unemployed veterans. The **Virginia** Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) is examining revisions to a standing data-sharing agreement with the state's Employment Commission (VEC) to capture a series of "veterans' variables" that includes MOS. The VEC is currently upgrading its UI system to collect more detailed information on veterans as a way of identifying and fast-tracking veterans towards benefits and services. Both **Illinois** and **Minnesota** are also continuing to explore the feasibility of capturing such information on UI/UCX application forms. **Illinois** views its participation in the Army/USDOL UCX Demonstration Project as an opportunity to pursue such modifications.

Exhibit 7: Interim Figures on Veteran Unemployment						
	Illinois	**Iowa**	**Minnesota**	**Nevada**	**Virginia**	**Wisconsin**
Unemployment Insurance						
Number of Claims Filed by Veterans	9,599 (Jan– Mar 2014)	*Data request In process*	2,204 (April-Jun 2013)	10,111 (Jan-Mar 2014)	*Data request being fulfilled*	12 – WI used DD214 records with MOS corresponding to selected occupations to arrive at figure
Average Duration of Claims Filed by Veterans	9.81 Weeks (Jan – Mar 2014)		18.05 weeks (April-Jun 2013)	*Calculation in process*		7.83 weeks – reflects above population
Average Weekly Benefit Payment	$347.42 (Jan – Mar 2014)		$275.93 (April-Jun 2013)			$224.96 – reflects above population
UCX						
Number of Claims Filed by Veterans	614 (Jan–Mar 2014)	*Data request In process*	482 (April-Jun 2013)	260 (Jan-Mar 2014)	*Data request being fulfilled*	27– WI used DD214 records with MOS corresponding to selected occupations to arrive at figure
Average Duration of Claims Filed by Veterans	9.81 Weeks (Jan – Mar 2014)		30.17 (April-Jun 2013)	*Calculation in process*		8.74 weeks - reflects above population
Average Weekly Benefit Amount	$459.37 (Jan – Mar 2014)		$338.47 (April-Jun 2013)			$365.05 – reflects above population

Veteran Credential Attainment

Demonstration states are working to assess current capabilities and develop mechanisms to track both the number of credentials obtained by veterans through existing pathways and the number of credentials obtained through accelerated pathways. Although there are instances where states capture veteran credentials and participation in existing pathways, in most cases states are developing the capacity to track veteran credentials in parallel with the development of accelerated pathways. Although state progress is ongoing, below is a summary of articulated state approaches to date:

- *Collecting veteran data though state licensure boards or agencies:* To date states are examining the extent to which licensure authorities collect veteran data on application and renewal forms. As needed, states are working with licensure authorities to collect veteran information to track progress with accelerated pathways. Examples include*:*

- To measure the extent to which accelerated pathways can increase credentials, **Virginia** is working with the Department of Health Professions (which licenses LPNs and PTAs) and its Healthcare Workforce Data Center to collect information during the license application and license renewal processes. By doing that, **Virginia** hopes to match the data back to initial licensure data to get a rough estimate of the number of veterans issued licenses each year. Further, the state agency responsible for training and certification of EMTs and Paramedics recently began collecting veteran status on new applications. However, providing that information is voluntary and the response has been low.

- In **Nevada**, the current EMS paper certification application tracks whether the person is a veteran, when they served, and the branch of service. The state is currently working on legislation to require all licensing boards and bodies in the state to add that information in addition to MOS to their applications and to share that information with the state's Department of Veterans Services on an annual basis.

- *Collecting veteran data through examinations and waivers.* Where appropriate in terms of the occupational focus, demonstration states are working to collect veteran data through examination and waiver processes that enable them to track progress and success with accelerated pathways. Examples include:

  - To examine progress and credential attainment related to the 2013 Wisconsin Act 94, which changed the requirements for CDL knowledge tests, **Wisconsin** began gathering data pass rates for veterans and the number of skills-test waivers issued. Although still working to refine its data collection strategy, in the third quarter, 26 military veterans have used the skills-test waiver process to obtain a CDL or add endorsements to an existing CDL based on their military driving experience.

  - In the law enforcement occupations, **Minnesota** is currently working with the state Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) board to retrieve data on military reciprocity examination passes and failures. Although in **Nevada**, the state POST commission initially pursued integrating veteran data collection within the Personnel Action Report, documenting hired officers. However, the state found that to be problematic, as the sworn officer might not ever see or sign that document. There is, however, a state requirement for law enforcement professionals to fill out a Child Support and Personal Affirmation form and the POST commission added the veteran questions to that form to begin tracking veteran hires.

- *Collecting veteran data though community colleges.* To support credential attainment and participation in accelerated pathways, states are working with community colleges hosting bridge programs to track veteran data. Examples include:

  - **Illinois**, **Virginia**, and **Minnesota** are devising strategies to track how many veterans are taking advantage of their respective bridge programs currently under development. That includes veteran enrollment, tracking how many total credit hours veterans logged in each institution, the cost per credit hour, completion of bridge program, and subsequent employment. Currently, the

states are assessing the feasibility of collecting certified students data through the GI Bill information available to community colleges.

- In **Nevada**, the policy academy team is working with the Student Veterans Advisory Council, which recently issued a recommendation for the governor to consider ahead of the next legislative session that state colleges and universities implement a data collection, tracking, and sharing system. Such a system would go beyond a self-identified field or the use of information based on GI Bill benefits, by including MOS data, and it would be shared with other state agencies as appropriate.

SECTION FIVE: COST STUDY APPROACH

A component of the demonstration is to estimate cost savings to federal programs associated with the implementation of state strategies to accelerate the licensing and certification of veterans. The cost study will be an integral component of the Demonstration Final Project Report and will provide information that underscores the value of demonstration state efforts to serve their veteran populations. The development of the cost study is ongoing. The following section outlines the background, approach, and caveats.

Cost Study Background

In 2011, Congress passed and the president signed two laws that included complementary requirements for cost studies addressing civilian credentialing of service members and veterans. The VOW Act (Public Law 112-56) was enacted in November of 2011 and is the basis for the cost study addressed here. In the following month, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2012 (Public Law 112-81) was enacted. Exhibit 8 summarizes the four key dimensions that underlie the cost studies called for by those two separate, but related legislative actions.

Exhibit 8: Cost Study Dimensions

	Pre-separation	**Post-separation**
Status Quo:	**A** DoD provides No additional training	**B** DOL and VA incur unemployment and redundant training costs
Pilot Studies:	**C** DoD provides bridge training (NDAA pilot)	**D** States provide accelerated bridge training (VOW Act)

Section 551 of the NDAA legislation called for a comparison of square **C** with square **B,** and that comparison is summarized in the first subsection below. The language in Section 237 of the VOW Act that specifies the current cost study is less straightforward than the corresponding NDAA language. A literal reading of the VOW Act language could interpret it as calling for a comparison of square **A** with square **B**, which would be a study of baseline costs in the military and civilian sectors. That study would require data on DOD costs that are not available to the NGA Center, and would not take advantage of what has been learned in the course of the demonstration about changes when states provide accelerated bridge training programs.

A different reading of the VOW Act language could interpret it as calling for a comparison of square **C** with square **D**. That type of study also would require data on DOD costs that are not available to the NGA Center. In addition, that type of study would presume a level of operational maturity and cost sophistication in both the military and civilian sectors that lies beyond the fledgling efforts underway.

Although the VOW Act statute does not mandate that DOL consider other costs, the DOL contract calls for a comparison of square **D** to square **B**—that is, the potential cost savings to DOL and the VA that could be realized by creating accelerated pathways to licensure for veterans with relevant military training and experience in the selected occupations. The NGA Center will estimate the potential cost reductions using average cost figures and expected time savings per veteran participating in an accelerated pathway. That approach will provide a base of evidence for ranges of potential cost reductions, calculated for the potential number of veterans participating in accelerated pathways.

Since the primary costs incurred to improve the civilian career preparation of service members and veterans are federal costs, the cost study will not seek to estimate the increases in state costs or the savings in state costs generated by the approaches implemented during the demonstration. The demonstration clearly indicates that there are state costs to implementing the approaches and that, as a result, there are disincentives to states to incur those costs. Those costs and disincentives are regarded as a policy issue rather than a cost issue because the federal government could make a policy decision to promote improved civilian career preparation for service members and veterans on the basis of federal cost savings or its absence. In either case, the federal government also could make a related policy decision to counter the disincentives to states by providing financial and non-financial resources to support state activity in that area (for example, through technical assistance). Therefore, the topic of state costs and the roles played by disincentives and incentives are addressed by the blueprint rather than by the cost study. In addition, as understood by the NGA Center, DOL recognizes that there are significant barriers preventing states not only from tracking increases in credential attainment, decreases in unemployment, and the associated costs, but also from making causal inferences between the demonstration and any observed increases or decreases in costs.

The NDAA Cost Study

Although studying training costs incurred by DOD was beyond the scope of the demonstration, as indicated above, those costs were analyzed in the credentialing report to Congress in response to Section 558 of the FY2012 NDAA.[32] The principal types of costs studied in that report included:

- "Direct credentialing costs, which include:
  - Credentialing agency fees, such as application, exam and membership fees; and,
  - Exam preparation costs, such as study guides specific to the credentialing exam.
- Preparatory costs, which include:
  - Education fees, such as the cost of a degree or courses toward a degree; and,
  - Training fees, such as the cost of training that does not lead to a degree.
- Management and operational costs, such as personnel, equipment and supplies.
- Living expenses, such as housing, food and transportation."[33]

The NDAA cost study estimates that the average direct credentialing cost to DOD during the pilot program was $285 per pilot program participant, though as stated in the report it is important to note that the cost comparison was not intended to provide a rigorous compilation of all the direct and indirect costs of the pilot program; nor was it intended to provide rigorous estimates of the post-service cost savings that accrue to the government. Furthermore, although the report

[32] "NDAA Section 558 – Military Credentialing Pilot Program: Volume 1," United States Department of Defense, September 27, 2013, https://www.cool.navy.mil/pubs/CredentialingReportToCongress_VOL_1-FINAL.pdf
[33] "Pilot Program: Civilian Credentialing for Military Occupational Specialties, Vol. 1" United States Department of Defense, September 27, 2013.

concludes that training before separation is expected to produce cost avoidance for living expenses, it does not provide estimates of the specific amounts of training, counseling, and unemployment costs avoided.

Post-service Costs Incurred by DOL and the VA

When veterans are unable to obtain licensure or certification in occupations for which they have relevant military training and experience, they may rely on unemployment benefits and ancillary vocational training or counseling provided by DOL and on educational benefits from the VA to finance training they already have received. More specifically, costs include:

- The cost to VA for GI Bill benefits, including the costs for both the tuition benefit and the monthly housing allowance benefit;
- The cost to DOD for Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX), and the related cost to states and DOL for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits; and
- The cost to DOL for employment services, which are primarily paid for through Wagner-Peyser State Grants, Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grants (in the past), and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grants (in the future).

The NGA Center's experience implementing the Demonstration Project indicates that those are the salient costs and, as described in detail in Exhibit 9 below, they correspond to the three key cost criteria identified in the VOW Act to be included in the cost study.

Exhibit 9: VOW Act Cost Elements

Cost Element	VOW Act Criterion[34]
The cost to VA for GI Bill benefits	(A) Providing educational assistance under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to veterans to obtain credentialing and licensing for civilian occupations that are similar to such military occupational specialties.
The cost to DoD, DOL & states for UCX/UI	(B) Providing assistance to unemployed veterans who, while serving in the Armed Forces, were trained in a military occupational specialty.
The cost to DOL for employment services	(C) Providing vocational training or counseling to veterans described in subparagraph (B).

Approaches to Estimate Federal Cost Savings

Within each of the three cost areas to be examined, there are three levels of cost to be considered: costs calculated based on national data; costs calculated based on data directly from the demonstration states; and, costs calculated using available state-level data. Although the NGA Center's objective will be to compile the key cost estimates at the demonstration level, it is likely

[34] VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, Section 237(b)(1)

that it will not be possible to include all six states for all three areas. Therefore, within each area, the NGA Center will include those states that have cost data for the area that are of sufficient quality and at a sufficient level of detail. In some cases, it also might be helpful to present cost estimates at the state level in order to illustrate how certain factors affect costs. In addition to the key estimates at the demonstration level, within each of the three cost areas, the NGA Center also will compile national level estimates or averages for key "marker" variables. Those estimates will provide important contextual background for the demonstration level estimates by providing a limited indication of the extent to which the costs at the demonstration level reflect national cost levels.

The GI Bill actually comprises a series of programs defined by statutory history. Although it is not a singular benefit, VA staff members indicate that most veterans take advantage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Therefore, the GI Bill cost estimates for the demonstration will be based on that version of the GI Bill. The cost estimates will include two components, the tuition benefit and the monthly housing allowance benefit. VA's tuition benefit level is capped at the state level because it is based on the in-state tuition cost for the public postsecondary schools within each state. The monthly housing allowance is determined at the local level because it is determined based on the zip code of the postsecondary institution that the veteran is attending. Therefore, although it will be possible to estimate the tuition benefit level for each state, the monthly housing allowance benefit will need to be estimated for specific schools. The NGA Center will focus that estimate on those schools in each state that have agreed to implement bridge programs and will produce a weighted average benefit level, based on the approximate proportion of bridge program participants expected to attend each participating school. With state level estimates of the tuition and monthly housing allowance benefits, the NGA Center will calculate for each type of bridge program an estimated per-student saving in the tuition benefit based on the number of credit hours reduced, and the per-student reduction in the monthly housing allowance based on the reduction in the number of months of benefits expected to be claimed.

Calculating an estimated reduction in the UCX/UI benefit level based on its association with an accelerated learning pathway (and thus a reduced duration in drawing those benefits) will be possible only for those demonstration states that consider attendance under the GI Bill to be "state approved training." If GI Bill training is not state approved, veterans attending school under GI Bill benefits are not allowed to collect UCX/UI benefits. Therefore, the first principle to be observed for that calculation will be to calculate only that benefit for those demonstration states that consider GI Bill attendance to constitute state approved training. The second principle to be observed is that the maximum amount of UCX/UI savings to be calculated will be 26 weeks of UCX benefits. The rationale for that principle is that after 26 weeks, the standard UCX benefit "rolls over" to the each state's UI benefit and that benefit beyond 26 weeks is highly variable by both time and location. Therefore, the study will restrict the benefit savings in that area to UCX savings and will not attempt to calculate UI savings. Where UCX benefit savings are calculated, the savings will be based on the per-student savings level based on the number of weeks of benefits reduced multiplied by the state UCX benefit level. That amount will be calculated by the number of actual or projected students to calculate the UCX benefit cost savings.

Unlike the savings in the other two cost areas, the savings in employment service costs will not be calculated on the basis of an acceleration in the amount of time required. Instead, for each state the per-veteran cost will be calculated for the combination of the state's Wagner-Peyser State Grants, JVSG services and WIA services. Those three programs are essentially "nested" or "tiered" with a veteran's progression through the three programs becoming more selective at each step. As a result, the Wagner-Peyser State Grants serve the largest number of veterans at the lowest per-participant cost, JVSG serves an intermediate number of veterans at an intermediate

per-participant cost, and WIA serves the lowest number of veterans at the highest per-participant cost. The cost will be calculated on a per-veteran basis by calculating the per-participant cost of each program and calculating a weighted average based on the number of veterans served by each program. Once the per-veteran cost has been calculated, an effort will be made to identify a reasonable basis for estimating the number of veterans for whom the presence of an accelerated pathway in the state will make it unnecessary for them to seek services from the public workforce system. So, the cost savings for each state will be calculated by multiplying the per-veteran cost by the reduction in number of veterans expected to seek those services.

In summary, there are a number of key caveats to consider for the cost study. To estimate federal cost savings via the implementation of accelerated pathways the cost study will use estimates in the absence of rigorous impact analysis that would be able causally to link pathway participation to cost savings. The cost study in turn will make important assumptions regarding the potential impact of those accelerated pathways. That approach is conditioned by several key limitations, which include: data access and accuracy from both the demonstration states and federal sources; the timing of the demonstration (at present all states continue to be in the early stage of implementing their strategies); and the prescribed perspective of the cost study as outlined by the VOW Act, which focuses on costs to federal programs and not costs to states, participants or society in general (that is, the total costs of implementing the programs). Despite those limitations, the cost study will seek to inform a broader discussion about the potential benefits of strategies to mitigate the need for duplicative training for veterans by aligning and bridging civilian occupational requirements with the military training and experience. Further, the cost study outlines several key costs elements where there is scope for improved data collection and sharing to further examine the impact of accelerated programs in the future. It also provides a framework for exploring the value of data for both federal and state agencies to serve veterans.

CONCLUSION

Veterans have relevant skills that are needed in the civilian workforce. However, many civilian professional regulations require specific, formalized paths to licensure that are built upon education and training programs provided by traditional post-secondary institutions. Most pathways are not currently set up to provide credit for training or work experience that happens in the military, where training, coursework, and experience are not documented with the certificates and degrees recognized in the civilian world.

States participating in the demonstration project are taking steps to identify the skills veterans earned in the military, translate them in a way that civilian licensure boards will accept, and help veterans take advantage of accelerated pathways for civilian licenses. The states identified opportunities to waive tests and training, and created new courses to fill in skills gaps without requiring veterans to start from scratch when entering civilian occupations. However, the process of uncovering all the necessary information and engaging all the necessary stakeholders to identify those strategies requires time. At this point in the project, most states are still working to implement accelerated pathways for veterans. Enrolling veterans in bridge courses and marketing waivers and other accelerated pathways will require more time and effort.

Many of the military, federal, and private efforts currently underway to help veterans become employed are likely to make the process easier for states in the future. Those efforts are publicizing the problem, and providing information and examples that can help states design accelerated pathways and engage stakeholders. The work of states in the demonstration project, can offer a blueprint for the process that will provide a head start to other states looking to undertake that work. Furthermore, information from the cost study will provide some preliminary estimates that might bolster the rational for scaling accelerated pathways for veterans across more states.

As states continue to implement the demonstration project, the following interim conclusions can be drawn from their experiences to date:

- **Licensing solutions have to be state specific and occupation specific.** Demonstration states had slightly different requirements for the same professions, and licensing boards in each state asked to perform their own assessments regardless of the existence of standardized curriculum. Much of the work of professional regulation depends on relationships among licensing boards, legislators, and the state's executive branch. The norms governing those relationship vary across states. Without significantly changing how professional licensing works, every effort to streamline veterans' licensing must be based on a direct comparison between one civilian occupation and one MOS.

- **States can work with licensing boards to remove regulations that have no public safety value and ensure that those boards are not drifting from their mission to protect the public.** Even when states have adopted national standards for particular professions, there are likely small variations in requirements that can present significant barriers. If those variations cannot be justified by consumer safety, they are an inappropriate barrier to entry for veterans and others.

- **Communication across the federal government, military, state governments, and the private sector is essential for making progress.** It was difficult for states to understand their own nuanced regulations without comparing notes with other states. Frequent

communication among all levels allowed for more creative problem solving, and once one state discovered a solution, it quickly spread to the other states.

- **Despite the highly technical nature of the work, there are two identifiable categories of solutions: administrative barriers that can be removed without jeopardizing consumer safety, and training gaps.** Viewing the challenge through that lens makes a sometimes overwhelming process clearer.

- **States do not yet have compelling data sources that can help understand the issue, but have made progress through the demonstration.** Like the policy strategies identified during the project, data solutions will be state specific and in some cases occupation-specific.

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APPENDIX I
MODEL LEGISLATION AND EXECUTIVE ORDERS DEVELOPED THROUGH THE POLICY ACADEMY

Illinois

Governor Pat Quinn signed legislation requiring that police applicants receive a waiver for education requirements if they were honorably discharged from duty in the armed forces.[35] The state also enacted legislation regarding EMT licensure. Military emergency medical training, clinical experience, and emergency medical curriculum completion will be considered for honorably discharged veterans when they apply for licensure. If the Department of Public Health finds a veteran's military experience to be significantly similar to civilian requirements, it they can reward that veteran with up to fifty percent of his or her required hours of continuing education experience.[36] The state also allows a skills-test waiver for commercial driver's license if veterans have adequate experience in vehicles that meet the federal motor carrier regulations and requirements.[37]

Iowa

Governor Terry Branstad implemented the Home Base Iowa (HBI) initiative, a public-private partnership that connects veterans and employers. The program attempts to create a strong and favorable environment for veterans that allows them to find a high-quality job and a welcoming community. HBI - launched in November of 2013 - provides veterans with a job database of employers who come from a broad range of the state's economic sectors such as electronics, transportation, finance, healthcare, logistics, legal, and clerical fields. Governor Branstad further updated the program in May of 2014 to exempt military pensions from the state income tax, to have licensing boards allow credit for military training and experience, to allow private-sector companies to favor veterans in hiring and promotion, and to expand the state's homeownership assistance program, which subsidizes down payments made by veterans.[38]

Businesses can become "Home Base Iowa Businesses" if they pledge to hire a specific number of veterans, commit to posting their jobs on the HBI website, and join the Skilled Iowa initiative, a state program to help low-income Iowans receive job training certificates. Iowa designated over 50 state businesses as "Home Base Iowa Businesses."[39] The program also designates some counties as "Home Base Iowa Communities." Communities with that designation have ten percent of their businesses designated as "Home Base Iowa Businesses." The community also develops its own incentive package for veterans and works with local governing bodies to ensure support for the initiative. Currently two communities have acquired that distinction.[40] Governor Branstad also required the State Board of Education to adopt a uniform policy for community colleges granting automatic in-state tuition to veterans, their spouses, and their dependents.

Minnesota

Governor Mark Dayton signed legislation that reduces the service requirements for those who served in the military and would like to take the peace officers standards and training board examination. Previous requirements for serving five years as a military law enforcement officer

[35] SB0204, 98th Illinois General Assembly. (2013).
[36] HB3186, 98th Illinois General Assembly. (2013).
[37] HB2563, 98th Illinois General Assembly. (2013).
[38] "Home Base Iowa Act." Welcome to Home Base Iowa.
[39] "HBI Businesses." Welcome to Home Base Iowa.
[40] "HBI Communities." Welcome to Home Base Iowa.

were lowered to serving four years or two years with a two-year degree. These changes closely align with more standard military commitments.[41]

Nevada
Governor Brian Sandoval declared 2014 as the year of the veteran in Nevada in a proclamation released by his office. Nevada since earmarked $50,000 to hire a program manager to establish a licensed practical nursing pilot program for veterans at the College of Southern Nevada. Governor Sandoval also ordered state licensure boards to develop new programs for reciprocity agreements and bridging the gap between state-required experience and military experience. The executive order affects boards overseeing emergency medical services, licensed practical nurses, and law enforcement professionals.[42]

Virginia
Governor Terry McAuliffe created a new workforce development board committee that is entirely focused on military transition assistance.[43] The state also passed legislation allowing private businesses to grant preferences in hiring and promoting veterans and spouses with service-connected disabilities.

Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker recently started the MOVE-IT campaign. The campaign focuses on outreach to veterans and connects them with licensing and employment pathways in bus and truck driving. The state also focused on data-sharing between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Workforce Development. In 2014, numerous state departments collaborated to create an accelerated training program for jobs in trucking, which leads to guaranteed jobs and emphasizes veteran eligibility.

[41] HF1915, Minnesota 88th Legislature. (2014).
[42] "A Year of the Veteran in Nevada." NV.gov. January 6, 2014.
[43] "EO-23: Establishing the New Virginia Economy Workforce Initiative." Virginia.gov. August 13, 2014.

APPENDIX II
OCCUPATION SPECIFIC RESOURCES

Bus and Truck Driver

General Resources:

- One-page summary of military training and experience for Bus and Truck Drivers.
- *Program to Assist Veterans to Acquire Commercial Driver's Licenses Report to Congress: A Report Pursuant to Section 32308 of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141)* – this report describes military commercial motor vehicle drivers, the national CDL system, and initiatives to facilitate the ability of service members and veterans to attain CDLs. It also outlines recommendations for further action.
- Military Skills Test Waiver
    - Application for Military Skills Test Waiver – application form used by military truck drivers to document that they meet the criteria for the skills test waiver.
    - Military Skills Test Waiver Map - map showing states that have adopted the military skills test waiver.
- Army COOL provides information on additional related credentials veterans can obtain to enhance their employment opportunities.

Gap Analyses:

- *Assessment of Gaps between Military Training and Civilian Credentialing Requirements – Chapter 6: Truck Drivers* – excerpt from a report summarizing the results of a study conducted under the oversight of the Veterans' Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force.

Bridge Programs:

- *Addressing Barriers to Licensing and Certification – Military Truck Driver to Commercial Bus and Truck Driver* (Links to PDF of Virginia's Troops to Trucks program)
    - Report: Virginia's Troops to Trucks Program.
- Wisconsin - established a program similar to Troops to Trucks called MOVE-IT with information that will shortly be available on the DOT website.
- The following states also have Troops to Trucks initiatives: California, Georgia, and Tennessee
- Millis Training Institute Truck Driving Program for Veterans.

EMT/Paramedic

General Resources:

- One-page summary of military training and experience for EMTs and Paramedics.
- NGA maintains a listserv for EMS professionals to share information such as curricula and technical questions about approaches to streamlining the licensure process for veterans.

Gap Analyses:

- *Assessment of Gaps between Military Training and Civilian Credentialing Requirements – Chapter 4 – Health Care Support* – excerpt from a report summarizing the results of a

study conducted under the oversight of the Veterans' Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force.

- Skills Comparison Checklist—provides information on the skills covered at the EMT, AEMT, Paramedic, and Army 68W levels; currently, there is no similar analysis for the cognitive elements of EMS training.
- NGA hosted an interactive webinar (link to recording) reviewing the equivalency and gaps between military medic training and civilian EMS professionals, as well as outlining potential promising practices for streamlining the process. Slides are available here.

Bridge Programs:

- Lansing Community College in Michigan offers a military medic to civilian paramedic bridge program.
    - TA Memo on Lansing Community College Bridge Program.
- Illinois Bridge Curricula (note IL does not use the current NREMT levels for EMS professionals):
    - **Army Medics to Emergency Medical Technicians Intermediate (EMT-I) and Emergency Medical Technicians Paramedics (EMT-Paramedics)** - The course addresses the differences in competencies between the 68W-10 Army Hospital Corpsman Program and those of a practical EMT program as delineated in the Emergency Medical Services Systems Act and Trauma Center Code. Upon course completion, students would need to have a skills check-off and pass the written competency exam. Army Medic - EMT-I & EMT-Paramedic Approved Assessment [Partial Equivalency] (PDF, 142 KB).
    - **Air Force and Navy Military Medics to Emergency Medical Technicians Intermediate (EMT-B)** - The course addresses the differences in competencies between the Navy Corpsman and Air Force P-e 1 Aerospace Program and those of a practical EMT program as delineated in the Emergency Medical Services Systems Act and Trauma Center Code. Upon course completion, students would need to have a skills check-off and pass the written competency exam. Air Force and Navy Military Medics - EMT-B Approved Assessment [Partial Equivalency] (PDF, 142KB).
    - Side Note: Information on all of IL's licensing and certification work can be accessed on the IDVA website.
- Military Medic to Civilian Paramedic EMS Bridge Programs (11-18-13): National Highway Traffic Safety Administration with National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO) offered a webinar providing an overview of the issue and including presentations on bridge programs:
    - Military Medic to Paramedic Webinar – Link to audio and PowerPoints.
    - Webinar Slides – Link to webinar slides in pdf format.
        - See slides 38-74 for information on other bridge programs including the National EMS Academy at Acadian and a program at Phoenix College in Arizona.
- Accelerated programs for experienced EMTs to become paramedics can also serve experienced veteran medics; an accelerated paramedic program can now cover in as little as 12 weeks what used to take nearly two years.
    - Century College Paramedic for the Experienced EMT (PEEMT) Program (MN).
    - Tidewater Community College Accelerated Paramedic Program (VA).

Law Enforcement

General Resources:

- One-page summary of military training and experience for Law Enforcement.
- The International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST) maintains a web site devoted to Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

Gap Analyses:

- Due to the variation in civilian standards, there is currently no standard gap assessment for police patrol officers.

Bridge programs:

- Several states are streamlining the licensure process for military police through several approaches, including offering reciprocity and standing up distinct bridge programs:
  - TA Memo on Michigan's Law Enforcement Bridge Program.
  - TA Memo on Wisconsin's Reciprocity Program.
- Although most services do not have a policy to train to POST standards, the Army is running a pilot with the Missouri POST and adapted its MP training curriculum to align closely with MO Post requirements. MPs are now able to apply for a basic POST License upon completion of MP school at Fort Leonard Wood as a reciprocal agreement with MO POST. Missouri requires approximately 600 hours of training to gain licensure—about average for IADLEST POST requirements. States Basic Law Enforcement Academy Hours range from a low of 360 in LA to a high of over 1000 hours in AK and CA. The Army is in the process of entering into an agreement with IADLEST that would allow its reciprocity with MO to extend to all 50 states through their reciprocity with MO. If it proves viable, it could be a model for the other states and the other services' military police/law enforcement schools to model.

Licensed Practical Nurse/Registered Nurse

General Resources:

- One-page summary of military training and experience for LPNs and RNs (MOC: 68W).
  - Additional information on the 68C MOS, military medics with additional training as LPNs who are also licensed by the state of Texas.
- Webinar recording: *Military Medic to LPN/RN.*
  - Includes sample ACE Credit Recommendations for training and experience.

Gap Analyses:

- National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) Gap Analysis - NCSBN staff, with consultation from leading experts in the areas of nursing and military education, conducted an in-depth analysis of the health care specialist (medic), corpsman and airman curricula, and compared these with a standard LPN/VN curriculum. The standard LPN/VN curriculum developed for that project is comparable to the LPN/VN curricula approved by U.S. BONs. In addition, NCSBN staff reviewed the Army LPN program and compared it with the standard LPN/VN curriculum; that analysis is provided within the report, along with recommendations and legislative talking points.
- *Assessment of Gaps between Military Training and Civilian Credentialing Requirements – Chapter 4 – Health Care Support.*

LPN Bridge Training Programs

- GateWay Community College (Phoenix, AZ) - a program in its first semester as of January 2014.
    - Presentation by Margi Schultz.
    - TA Memo on GateWay's Program.
- Illinois - drafted a bridge curriculum for Air Force and Navy medics: METC Corpsman - LPN Approved Assessment [Partial Equivalency] (PDF, 164 KB) - The course addresses differences in competencies between the METC Basic Medical Technician Corpsman Program and those of a practical nursing program as delineated in the Illinois Nurse Practice Act. Course components include didactic, clinical, and skills validation learning experiences. Upon course completion, students are eligible to sit for the PN-NCLEX. Information on all of IL's licensing and certification work can be accessed on the IDVA website.

RN Bridge Training Programs:

- Lansing Community College [RN via Medic to Paramedic].
- GateWay Community College (Phoenix, AZ) [RN via Medic to LPN].
- Herzing University (Madison, WI) [RN via Medic to LPN].
    - Herzing offers an approved RN program that allows students to step out of the program at the LPN level and sit for the NCLEX-PN exam. Essentially, the program allows civilian EMTs and military medics to enter the program as second-semester students, enabling them to take the NCLEX-PN exam in one semester or less, or continue on to receive an Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN) in another two semesters. The program will enroll its first Army medic in summer 2014.

Physical Therapy Assistant

General Resources:

- One-page summary of military training and experience for Physical Therapy Assistants.

Gap Analyses:

- Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy presentation by Dr. Adrien Leslie.

Bridge Training Programs:

- Arapahoe Community College, Army Career Degree Plan – Associate of Applied Science – Physical Therapist Assistant – Arapahoe Community College, in Littleton, Colorado, a member of the service members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) - an articulated degree plan that provides credit for Army training attained by Army MOS 68F – Physical Therapy Specialists.
- Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) – FSBT represents the national level interests of State Boards of Physical Therapy. FSBT administers the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE), promotes standards for laws and regulations governing physical therapy occupations, and promotes public and professional awareness of resources that support high standards of practice in the field.
- Policy Academy presentation - "Military PT Techs to Civilian PTAs."
- Lake Superior College in Minnesota offers an Associate of Applied Science degree for Physical Therapy Assistants that is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). The College - adapted that program to also offer a

20-credit, online degree-completion program for military-trained physical therapy personnel: Associate of Applied Science, Physical Therapist Assistant; Military Bridge Program. Lake Superior College is a member of the service members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium, which means that the College subscribes to military-friendly academic policies.

APPENDIX III
POLICY ACADEMY WEBINARS

- Data Collection and Evaluation (February 12, 2014): This webinar provides an overview of the policy academy goals and data approaches that states can use to track progress and measure costs.

- Gap Assessments for EMS Professionals (April 17, 2014): This webinar reviews general equivalencies and gaps between military and civilian EMS training, presents a framework for conducting state-specific gap assessments, and outlines potential promising practices and bridge programs for streamlining the process.

- Gap Analysis and Bridge Programs for Nursing (May 12, 2014): This webinar reviews general equivalencies and gaps between military and civilian LPN and RN training, presents a framework for conducting state-specific gap assessments, and outlines potential promising practices and bridge programs for streamlining the process.

- Veterans' Licensing and Certification (August 12, 2014) In collaboration with the National Council on State Legislatures (NCSL), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), and the National League of Cities (NLC), NGA hosted a webinar to highlight some of the initial lessons learned from the NGA Veterans' Licensing and Certification Policy Academy. The webinar featured the state team leads from Wisconsin and Illinois to provide a deeper dive on their strategies to streamline the licensure and certification pathways in their selected occupations.

- Exploring Academic Credit for Military Training and Experience (December 5, 2014): Many veterans have gained college level learning during their military experience. To facilitate awarding that credit, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least 26 states have passed legislation directing their higher education executive officers to develop statewide policies to provide academic credit. This webinar discusses state policy to support the awarding of credit for that learning, how a state higher education system has created crosswalks for credit and how one institution has created comprehensive alignment between military competencies and academic programs.

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