



More Research on Veteran
Employment Would Show

What's Good for Business and for Veterans



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Perspective

Expert insights on a timely policy issue



Although there have been many public- and private-sector initiatives to help veterans translate their military skills to civilian jobs, there has been little research on their effectiveness or on the experiences of veterans and their civilian employers.



In recent years, the federal government and the private sector have made significant efforts to improve employment opportunities for veterans and to support service members as they transition to the civilian workforce. Federal agencies have invested considerable resources to support transition efforts and to improve and expand existing programs. In addition, private-sector companies have come together to collectively engage the veteran talent pool through such initiatives as the Veteran Jobs Mission, formerly the 100,000 Jobs Mission, a coalition of companies committed to hiring veterans that has been instrumental in cultivating and institutionalizing private organizations' dedication to hiring and retaining veterans (Hall et al., 2014). Other recent initiatives from the public and private sectors include developing programs and policies that help veterans translate their skills to civilian jobs, connect with potential employers, obtain training and credentials, and learn about civilian career fields. Innovative approaches have emphasized and leveraged public-private partnerships and engaged with fast-growing industries that have expanding employment opportunities.

Despite this work and progress, the impact of these efforts is unclear. In some cases, findings conflict, and there are gaps in our understanding of veterans' and employers' experiences. For instance, veterans had lower unemployment rates than nonveterans between 2000 and 2013 (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2014), and the proportion of unemployed veterans decreased from 5.3 percent to 4.1 percent between 2015 and 2016 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). However, unemployment rates among veterans who are 18–24 years old remain higher than those of their civilian counterparts (17 percent versus 12 percent; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs [VA], 2015, p. 12).

Other measures indicate that certain cohorts of veterans are excelling in the workplace. For example, post-9/11 veterans' median earnings are 11 percent higher than those of nonveterans with comparable demographic attributes, and female veterans' median earnings are 14 percent higher than those of female nonveterans with comparable demographic attributes (VA, 2015). However, it is not clear how the various trends and measures fit together or which

Private-sector companies have come together to collectively engage the veteran talent pool through a number of initiatives.

programs and policies may be contributing to these outcomes. Private-sector companies anecdotally report that veteran employees tend to have retention rates equivalent to or even higher than their nonveteran counterparts (Hall et al., 2014). However, the Office of Personnel Management reports that veterans in federal government jobs are more likely than nonveterans to leave their jobs within two years (Rein, 2015). Research is needed to provide clear evidence and explain the employment experiences of different cohorts of veterans across the range of job sectors.

Beyond measuring experiences, processes, and outcomes, policymakers should develop a performance framework to guide programs and determine their success—one that establishes clear goals and measures for defining success. According to stakeholders, merely placing veterans in jobs is not enough; veteran employment efforts should also enable veterans to build successful careers over the longer term. To reach this goal, research must provide evidence to inform these efforts and ensure their effectiveness. Currently, this evidence is lacking, and data surrounding veterans' employment outcomes is limited and ambiguous.

With a goal of informing the direction of this research, RAND convened two workshops, in May and October 2015, that brought together key stakeholders from federal agencies, private-sector companies, and research organizations. These workshops began as an effort to address key veteran employment challenges identified by private-sector companies in previous RAND research, *Veteran Employment: Lessons from the 100,000 Jobs Mission* (Hall et al., 2014), and expanded as forums for stakeholders to identify potential areas for new veteran employment research that would elucidate current knowledge gaps. The May workshop focused on key challenges, including facilitating civilian employer access to transition-

ing service members and efforts to close the skill gap as service members transition to civilian employment. To delve into the research on transitioning service member and veteran employment policies and programs, the October workshop focused on studies and research needs regarding leveraging skills that veterans bring to the workplace, effective approaches to credentialing and transition skill training, and data that supports veteran employment efforts.

To facilitate collaboration and sharing of ideas on ways to improve veterans' employment opportunities, RAND assembled panels of experts to lead conversations on various topics. Both workshops included representation from key stakeholders including the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Transition to Veterans Program Office, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, VA, the Chairman's Office of Reintegration, the Force Readiness and Training directorate (which oversees relevant transition programs) in the Office of the Under Secretary

Efforts should enable veterans to build successful careers.



Eugene Chernetsov/Fotolia

of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and the U.S. Army Soldier for Life Program, among others. The workshops also included private-sector companies, organizations focused on serving veterans, and representatives from different governmental organizations, including Joining Forces and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Furthermore, given the October workshop's focus on research, the meeting included additional representatives from academia and research organizations who discussed their relevant studies and data sets.

In this perspective, we discuss how themes surrounding veteran employment efforts are evolving and identify new research areas that can best support veteran employment efforts, drawing on these workshop discussions.

The Evolving Landscape of Veteran Employment

Our workshops demonstrated that the conversation about how to approach and support veteran transitions is shifting. Against the backdrop of expanded efforts and a demonstrated commitment by government and business to improve veteran employment opportunities, the rhetoric and themes in both policy and media forums are evolving to reflect current dynamics. Recent congressional hearings have spotlighted local innovative approaches to hiring and retaining veterans and promoting job opportunities in fast-growing industries, such as the energy sector (see, e.g., U.S. House of Representatives, 2013). Furthermore, media has reflected the field's development in emphasizing veterans' decreasing unemployment rates and the strengths they bring to the workplace (Shane, 2015; Robinson, 2013). Along with this progress has come an evolution

in the conversation about how to approach service member transitions to the civilian workforce.

While initiatives to hire veterans may have initially been motivated by a sense of patriotism or a desire to participate in a charitable endeavor, this is no longer the primary impetus. Many companies now view veterans as a valuable talent pool to tap into to strengthen their workforce and benefit their business. In short, veterans are in demand, according to workshop participants. Companies that want the opportunity to hire veterans are encouraged to communicate what their industry and organization have to offer these potential employees. Companies must now sell themselves to veterans—the beginnings of a reversal in the employer-employee dynamic. This shift also has the potential to promote sustained attention around veteran employment across industries. While efforts motivated by patriotism or charity may wane over time, those motivated by what is good for business are more likely to endure.

Workshop discussions demonstrated that creating new programs for veteran employment is no longer the focal point for policymakers. Instead, leveraging interagency coordination to maximize the benefits of existing programs has become fundamental. Better collaboration and information sharing across stakeholders in the public and private sectors can increase the effectiveness of these programs.

Our workshop participants also made clear that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to veteran employment challenges. For example, a junior enlisted infantryman and an experienced logistics officer may have very different civilian career goals and will likely require different types and levels of support to reach those goals. Programs and initiatives are beginning to acknowledge that a suite of approaches

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and resources will be most effective in serving the diverse spectrum of transitioning service members and veterans.

Transition support efforts should reflect the fact that not all transitioning service members want to embark on a civilian career that is similar to their military career field. For example, while many Army medics might make the natural transition to becoming civilian emergency medical responders, some would prefer a civilian career outside the medical field. In fact, some veteran employment experts argue that if service members were interested in staying in the same career field, they may choose to continue their military careers, if possible, as military compensation and benefits can be more favorable. Therefore, veteran employment efforts should support transitions to similar career fields, assisting with licensing and certification programs, while also accommodating individuals who wish to pursue training in new career fields. These efforts should consider the need for career counseling to ensure that transitioning service members receive the necessary resources to thoughtfully choose a new career in the civilian workforce if they so desire. Providing a broad spectrum of transition support that reflects the diverse needs and goals of transitioning service members can also have a positive impact on veteran retention in the civilian workforce.

Due to the range of considerations and program and policy shifts in veteran employment, stakeholders—including participants in RAND’s workshops—have emphasized a need for strategic data collection and research. The need for research is bolstered by the changing nature of veteran employment and the field’s desire to create policies and programs that help veterans build careers. Furthermore, as decisionmakers weigh the benefits of various skill-building, credentialing, and transition initiatives, relevant research indicating the impacts of policies and programs can help inform investments and strategies for improving veteran employment outcomes.

New Areas for Research to Inform Innovative Approaches to Veteran Employment

As the veteran employment landscape evolves, research must adapt to maintain and support this momentum and inform new approaches. New research can provide critical evidence to address knowledge gaps regarding veteran employment efforts and outcomes. This evidence can strengthen the support provided to transitioning service members and veterans, build on the progress already made, and ensure that resources are targeted in ways that will most effectively improve veteran employment opportunities.

Assessing Veterans’ Career Paths over Time

The ultimate aim of veteran employment policies and programs is to help veterans have successful civilian careers. A longitudinal study of veterans’ employment would illustrate how these policies and programs affect veterans’ career paths and how veterans experience the civilian labor market. Existing data and research have

not provided a baseline for assessing veterans' career trajectories or shown how available programs affect key employment outcomes (e.g., retention, job satisfaction, salary, earning potential, career options) over time. We acknowledge that it becomes more difficult to obtain data on veterans once they have left military service, making employment outcome data more challenging to track.

Another shortfall is the inconsistency with which "veterans" are defined and tracked. The field needs to decide upon and consistently implement a definition for use in both policy and research. Moreover, longitudinal data that capture subpopulations of veterans and their characteristics will allow a comparison of outcomes across different groups, such as transitioning service members, recent veterans, and all veterans, compared with their civilian counterparts. These data would also help identify trends in career paths and veterans' experiences in civilian-sector jobs. In addition, examining employment trends by gender, race/ethnicity, military career field, and other characteristics would allow policymakers to tailor and adjust programs and policies to achieve optimal outcomes. Furthermore, data on veterans' experiences and outcomes by subpopulation should inform efforts to improve job matching and career building. This type of research may also allow more accurate comparisons with civilians and specific nonveteran populations, revealing best practices and lessons learned that could be applied in transition assistance and veteran employment programs. To that end, clearly defined veteran subpopulation data should also be collected in a

Veteran status is often applied inconsistently on the basis of duration of service, whether or not the individual deployed, type of discharge from the military, and active- versus reserve-component service, among other parameters. It is challenging to identify recent veterans because there is no standard length of time since separation from the military to qualify for membership in this group. Clear definitions of veterans and related subpopulations of veterans would allow for clarity and uniformity in veteran-related research.

civilian data set to ensure the proper comparison group. Finally, data on the effectiveness of transition assistance programs and veterans' employment experiences over time would offer insights for decisionmaking about investments in programs and the development of policies (Institute of Medicine, 2013).

Veteran subpopulation data could also explore the connection between veterans' service-connected disability and employability. VA, specifically, offers a range of services through the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program aimed at assisting disabled veterans with such rehabilitation. Given the shifting landscape of veteran employment offerings and options and the recent efforts to restructure the VA disability system, more up-to-date research on vocational rehabilitation and designation of employability for veterans is needed to offer insights on how programs are

Veterans who have very recently left the military are the primary focus of most veteran employment programs.

working and how disabled veterans fit into the bigger picture of veteran employment programs and policies.

Transitioning service members and veterans who have very recently left the military are the primary focus of most veteran employment programs. Stakeholders, including our workshop participants, have reported that the most effective efforts in terms of veterans' civilian employment outcomes focus on this population. However, research is needed to establish whether this is a sound approach or whether more efforts should target veterans who have been out of uniform for several years. Longitudinal data would demonstrate the efficacy of early intervention and assess veterans' employment resource needs over time.

An important component of assessing veterans' civilian career success is their satisfaction with their current employment and career prospects. There is also a need for data on veteran underemployment (or perceptions of underemployment) and job retention.

How Research on Veteran Career Outcomes Can Make an Impact

Research on veteran career outcomes can help policymakers enhance programs in several ways. For example, research on the experiences of employers and veterans, how veterans' skills align with civilian workforce demand, and program effectiveness would help guide the allocation of funding and other resources. Such data would also inform policymakers' strategic improvements to programs and processes. Research that adds structure and data to the business case for veteran employment efforts can demonstrate the value of policies and programs. Here, we provide details on how research and evidence assessing veterans' career paths and employment outcomes can support current veteran employment efforts.

Personnel systems do not always link employees' performance with veteran status.



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Research Can Quantify and Document Employer Experiences with Veteran Employees

Future research should reflect *civilian-sector* perspectives on veterans in the workforce and how veterans can align their skills and training with industry needs. While businesses report positive experiences with veteran employees in terms of supporting organizational missions and generally being good for business, there are no empirical data to confirm this assertion. Building the business case for hiring veterans is critical to sustaining veteran employment efforts over time. A systematic assessment of veteran employees would determine their value to their organizations. This assessment should involve an examination of veteran employees' performance and retention compared with nonveteran employees. Although companies anecdotally find veteran employee performance and retention to be equivalent to or better than their nonveteran counterparts, few of these employers track relevant metrics to

substantiate this belief. (For more on employer perceptions, see Hall et al., 2014.) This lack of data may be a result of difficulties establishing appropriate performance measures or connecting personnel records with veteran status. For example, employers do not necessarily track employees' veteran status along with other personnel metrics, and traditional measures of performance—such as sales, productivity, or promotion rates—may not be recorded in the same way across employers. Including employees' veteran status in personnel databases would allow employers to more accurately assess veterans' value to their organizations. Research can support employers in measuring and tracking performance and outcomes. Such efforts can also help employers identify best-practice measures for veteran employees' performance, encouraging greater standardization across organizations. These employment outcome and career path data would help provide the evidence needed to build the business case for hiring veterans.

Studies Can Determine the Match Between Veterans' Skills and Interests and Civilian Workforce Demands

Research should examine how transitioning service members and veterans can best align their transition training and employment goals with industry needs. Our workshop participants expressed concerns that veterans are missing out on job opportunities and careers in certain specialties because of a lack of knowledge about the field or a lack of appropriate credentials. Understanding where transitioning service members and veterans acquire career information and guidance, as well as their interests, can be useful in matching them with appropriate jobs that they may not discover on their own. For example, transitioning service members and veterans who are qualified and seeking work in logistics may limit their

job search to large global freight delivery companies and become discouraged if opportunities are not available. They may not realize that new opportunities are available in organizations not traditionally categorized as logistics-oriented, such as a national pharmacy retailer with a sophisticated supply chain. Similarly, transitioning service members and veterans may also benefit from better information about careers in agriculture, manufacturing, and trucking.

Existing tools, such as the Occupational Information Network (O*NET), provide transitioning service members and veterans with information about in-demand skills and qualifications. However, research is needed to determine how well these tools align with the career interests of transitioning service members and veterans. Understanding how these groups acquire and use employment resources—and whether the information matches their interests and meets their needs—could inform future training, education, and recruitment in both the short and long term. This research would also facilitate opportunities to tailor education, training, licensing, and certification programs to meet industry needs. With this information, existing programs in high-demand skill areas could be replicated to reach more veterans.

Measuring Program Effectiveness Can Inform Strategic Adjustments to Processes and Improve Impact

In recent years, public and private entities have launched a range of veteran employment programs. Those who oversee these programs are beginning to track and assess metrics related to their use. However, these metrics are largely output- or process-oriented (e.g., measuring how many veterans are participating in a particular program). There are few measures in place that assess the outcomes of these programs, and, consequently, we lack a complete

picture of program effectiveness. Research should support a mix of measures—of inputs, outputs, and short- and long-term outcomes—to better assess impact and performance. The spectrum of performance measures should extend beyond counting the number of veterans placed in jobs to tracking the number of veterans pursuing meaningful careers and the resources that supported them in reaching their professional goals. In deciding what to measure, policymakers must first decide what they want to achieve. If the ultimate goal of veteran employment efforts is to foster successful civilian careers for veterans over the long term, then the policies, programs, and performance measures should look beyond the hiring process and consider the impact of these efforts over the course of veterans’ careers—as they work, build skills, and contribute to their organizations. The following case studies reveal areas that would benefit from improved understanding of program

effectiveness and capture findings that emerged from our workshop discussions.

Case Studies: Veteran Employment Policies and Programs

Numerous policies and programs aim to improve veteran employment opportunities and outcomes. Based on insights from our workshops and previous research, we highlight four case studies (Transition Assistance Program, Transition Summits, SkillBridge, and certification and licensing programs) and explain how research could improve the impact of these efforts.

Transition Assistance Program

The U.S. Department of Defense’s (DoD’s) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and its outcome-based curriculum, Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success), provide information and training to build skills and ensure that service members are “career ready” when they leave active duty. The program was redesigned in fiscal year 2013 following the creation of the interagency Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force and the passage of the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. This redesign reflects a focus on building skills to support veterans’ long-term outcomes. Service members who are separating, retiring, or being released from the military with at least 180 continuous days on active duty are required to participate in TAP’s pre-separation counseling, VA benefits briefings, the U.S. Department of Labor Employment Workshop (unless exempt), and a capstone event. Service members are provided with instruction on building resilience, financial planning, and translating their training, education, experience, and skills into civilian career goals and jobs. They may also participate

How many veterans have found meaningful careers, and what employment resources supported them?



in workshops that prepare them to pursue their education, credentialing, and entrepreneurial goals.

TAP's focus on building skills conveys a need to monitor transitioning service members' career goals, plans, and success. Because the TAP redesign and increased emphasis on measuring impact are relatively recent, the outcomes of transitioning service members who participate in TAP are still uncertain. After additional data collection processes are established, it will be possible to better evaluate the effectiveness of the program in terms of outcomes and assess the degree of improvement over the previous TAP structure. The results can then be used to adapt and refine current program offerings and processes.

While stakeholders lauded the TAP redesign for its higher level of support for transitioning service members, one critique of the program was that its approach to performance measurement does not focus enough on outcomes and impact. To better capture TAP's impact on veterans' outcomes, such as employment and educational attainment, assessments should include more outcome-based data that can be measured and compared longitudinally.

Specifically, research on TAP should examine both outcomes and processes to inform improvements to program design. It should also assess the impact of the timing of transition assistance resources on service members' careers. For example, studies should explore at which points in a service member's military career to offer employment programs to achieve optimal outcomes. Anecdotal evidence from workshop participants indicates that service members may feel that they are "bombarded" with information during their transition from the military. Stakeholders have suggested that DoD should prepare service members for transition to the civilian workforce throughout their military careers, rather than offering these

Service members may benefit from information about civilian jobs throughout their military careers.



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resources only near the end of service. DoD has already integrated this approach into TAP through the Military Life Cycle Transition Preparation (MLC TP) model, which was implemented in fiscal year 2015. The MLC TP model offers career development information to service members at various touchpoints in their military careers. Research on when and how transitioning service members would benefit most from employment programs, training, and credentialing would allow DoD to adapt this model accordingly and maximize veterans' outcomes.

Transition Summits

Held on military installations, Transition Summits are enhanced job-fair events for transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses. In addition to taking part in a traditional job fair, participants are offered workshops on job-seeking strategies (such as résumé writing) effectively using online employment tools, and

connecting with relevant U.S. Department of Labor and state-level resources. Participants can also attend briefings that highlight employment opportunities for veterans in growing industries and available resources for entrepreneurship. These events are hosted by Hiring Our Heroes, an initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and are conducted in partnership with DoD, other federal agencies, and the private sector. Data collection has begun to track the number of service members attending Transition Summits, but a more strategic analysis is needed to assess the impact of participation. For example, data on the extent to which participating organizations match the interests and skills of service members, veterans, and military spouses who attend these events would help inform improvements to the summit agendas and could help DoD identify other promising employers and industries. Research could explore the degree to which targeted job fairs should be used at Transition Summits, where participants are screened and matched with employers prior to the events, facilitating on-site preliminary job interviews.

To measure program outcomes, research is needed to track the proportion of Transition Summit participants who get job interviews and jobs—as well as the industries in which they were hired and which workshops they participated in. Subsequent workshops could be tailored according to participant feedback and outcomes to provide the most effective resources to future event participants.

SkillBridge

DoD's SkillBridge program offers opportunities for transitioning service members to train or intern with civilian employers while still in uniform, if their commanders grant them release time to

participate. Participation may begin up to six months before service members separate from active duty, so participants gain skills and civilian experience just prior to entering the civilian workforce. The program is still relatively new and was established to complement opportunities available through TAP, service-specific programs, and other training programs. Looking ahead, research should evaluate the extent to which participation in SkillBridge helps veterans obtain civilian jobs and build their careers and whether those who participate in SkillBridge continue working for the organization or in the field in which they did their training or internship. Research could also assess the military career fields and civilian industries of the service members who benefit most from SkillBridge participation.

If research reveals that SkillBridge has positive impacts on veteran employment outcomes, these findings could help identify opportunities to expand the program. Currently, a fairly limited number of service members have participated in SkillBridge; preliminary examination suggests that barriers to increased participation may include commander approval and geographic restrictions. For example, SkillBridge participation is largely limited to a 50-mile radius of a service member's installation. This restriction is based on the ability of unit leaders to oversee service members' participation and balance the demands of mission requirements. However, service members may find SkillBridge participation more beneficial if training or internships were with companies in a geographic area where they wish to relocate after leaving the military. To expand participation, there is a need for research on how to better integrate SkillBridge participation with commanders' needs and ways to broaden program location options.

Certification and Licensing Programs

While many transitioning service members and veterans receive extensive training and gain experience in their military occupations that could be transferrable to civilian jobs, they may need credentials to be hired. Since the requirements for obtaining certificates and licenses vary from state to state, transitioning service members and veterans may find themselves navigating a confusing system of rules and red tape. Policymakers are working to reduce these challenges by developing legislation and creating programs to assist transitioning service members and veterans in obtaining necessary licenses and certificates. While the policy landscape of licensing and certification continues to shift, research can play a key role in shaping understanding of how credentials can help veterans build meaningful careers.

Despite an assumption that certificates and licensing are a means for transitioning service members and veterans to secure employment, their value has not been quantified or well documented. There is a need for assessment of the extent to which credentials or licenses lead to improved civilian employment outcomes, including job attainment and retention, job satisfaction, salary levels, earning potential, and career options and trajectories. This research should examine the processes for obtaining certificates and licenses, including who pays for the associated training and the costs, timeline, and logistics for obtaining them. Research on veterans' experiences obtaining licenses and certificates may also offer insights on the extent of access to credentialing programs that match transitioning service members' skills and preferences. Although efforts to simplify credentialing may eventually reduce barriers, programs to help transitioning service members

and veterans access information on certificates and licenses will continue to be essential. To this end, studies should examine the impact of the military services' COOL (Credentialing Opportunities On-Line) programs, along with other online options to help transitioning service members and veterans navigate requirements and routes to licensing and certification.

For transitioning service members and veterans, another key facet of the value of credentials is their relative benefits and costs compared with other alternatives. Service members have a vast array of options for career planning and development—for example, GI Bill education benefits, tuition assistance for attending college courses while on active duty, COOL programs, and the employment resources described earlier. Beyond informing service members' and veterans' decisions to pursue a credential, data on the outcomes associated with the wider range of available options for

Although many skills may be transferrable to civilian careers, veterans may also need credentials or licenses.



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training, education, and networking would be helpful in facilitating career decisionmaking and planning.

As these case studies show, there is a wide range of offerings aimed at improving veteran employment. Research can inform processes and outcomes within each of these programs, but it can also capture a broader picture of the landscape of veteran employment policies and the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities it holds.

A Path to Better Data on Veterans' Employment Outcomes

A longitudinal data collection effort is needed to address many of the research questions raised in this document. To maximize the utility of future research on veteran employment and facilitate the establishment of such a data collection effort, stakeholders must determine ways to effectively share quantitative and qualitative data. Improved data sharing would support efforts to create a broader picture of the veteran employment landscape, informing policymakers and other key stakeholders. To this end, researchers should assess data-sharing capabilities and identify potential barriers, including those related to logistics, organizational culture, and policy.

It is also important to consider how the concept of transitioning between the military and civilian worlds may evolve in the future. A one-time transition for which service members begin planning at the end of their military careers may become largely a thing of the past. The future of the force appears to be trending toward more fluidity between the military (both the active and reserve components) and the civilian workforce, leveraging skills from both sectors in a more cohesive and collaborative manner. Innovative ideas—such as fellowships in private-sector companies

for active-duty service members and the lateral entry of civilians with specialized skills into the military—have been raised in stakeholder circles and are beginning to be implemented on a small scale. Additionally, the continuum of service initiative is facilitating easier transitions between the active and reserve components, providing service members with more flexibility in their military careers and access to civilian employment opportunities while preserving military training investments. Finally, service members are increasingly encouraged to begin planning for their transition to the civilian workforce earlier in their military careers—even at entry. “Transition” between the military and the civilian workforce may not only become more fluid, but it could also occur more than once in an individual’s career. These potential trends make research to support successful transitions even more critical.

Efforts to improve civilian employment opportunities for veterans have made great strides in recent years. The next phase of veteran employment research will fill current knowledge gaps, identify approaches to effectively support transitioning service members and veterans, and provide the data for transitioning service members, veterans, employers, and policymakers to make informed decisions and optimize employment outcomes.

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VA—See U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

About This Perspective

RAND hosted two workshops, in May and October 2015, that brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from federal agencies, private-sector companies, and research organizations, to collaborate and share ideas to improve veterans' employment opportunities. Through these workshops, we sought to explore solutions to key challenges to veteran employment identified in previous RAND research, *Veteran Employment: Lessons from the 100,000 Jobs Mission* (www.rand.org/t/RR836). Another goal of the workshops was to build on the existing knowledge base and identify remaining research gaps. The discussions outlined the future research agenda to best support the efficacy of efforts to hire and support veterans in the civilian workforce.

Information from the discussions is attributed anonymously in compliance with the U.S. Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (also known as the Common Rule). While workshop participants were asked to share their perspectives based on their professional experience, in all cases, their views are their own and do not represent official positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. government, or the agencies or organizations with which they are affiliated.

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