

Employment Journey Map: Service Members & Veterans

U.S. Government Customer Experience CAP Goal

Employment is big topic within the broad domain of Service member to civilian transition. The design team's research focused on a subset of the Veteran population, one that represents a range of people, situations, and experiences. Some people had smooth transitions and some did not. This spectrum represents the employment transition for a subset of Service members and highlights several key themes that are

dominant and forefront in the personal stories of those whom we interviewed. This map and these themes are a composite of the design team's Human-Centered Design qualitative research.

This project originates from the President's Management Agenda (PMA), Cross Agency Priority (CAP) Goal on customer experience. The project leadership group and the design team included representatives from OMB, GSA, VA, and OPM.

Citizen Journey

Military service to employment as a civilian.

- Key moments
- Actions (may be non-linear)

Transition Building Blocks

We interviewed Service members who recently transitioned to the labor force. The steps represented in this section are the positive actions taken by those Service members who built a smooth pathway for themselves to the labor force. The blue boxes are an aggregate of all the positive actions we heard.

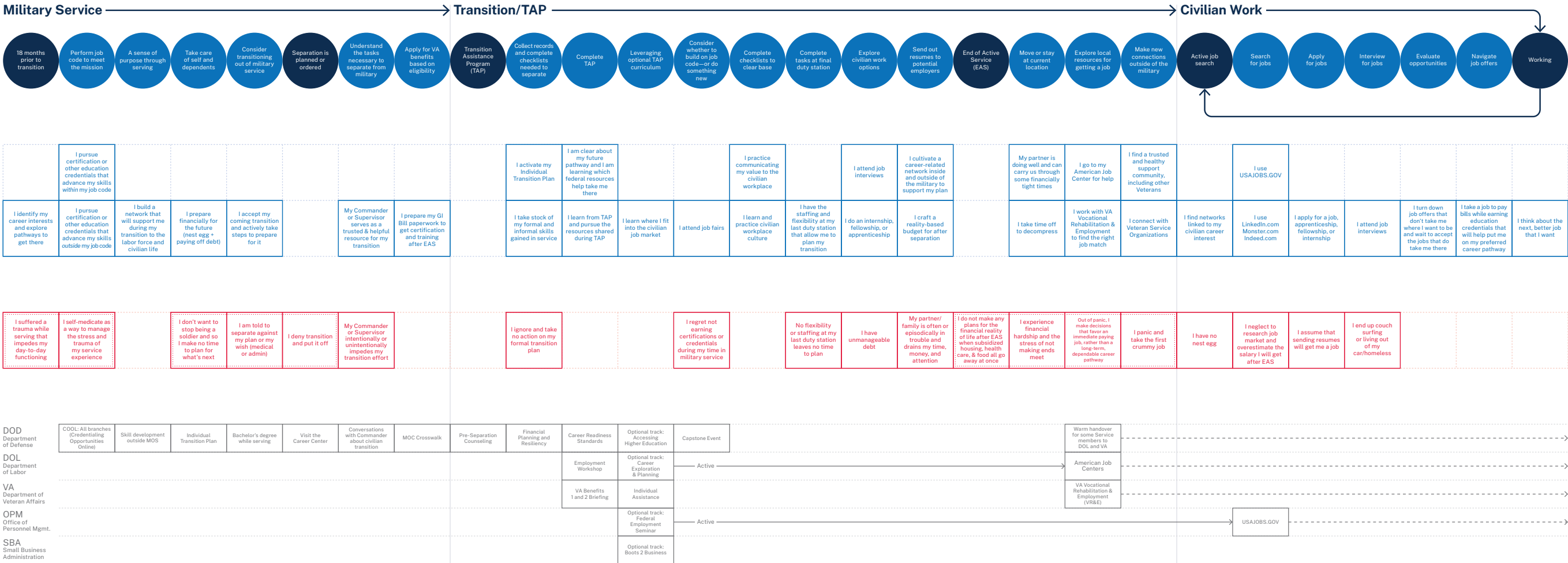
Transition Barriers

Here is an aggregate account of all the things we heard from Service members' personal stories that obstruct their effort to smoothly transition to meaningful work in the labor force.

Federal Agency Supports

These are the core federal agencies supporting Service member transition. Other agencies play a secondary role.

Department of Education (ED) plays an advisory role in the TAP transformation initiative.



Research Themes

These six themes came from the building blocks and setbacks heard in our research. They are opportunity areas for further study and design.

Theme 1

Service members are novices at the labor force. For many, military work is all they know. Service members require time and effort to adapt and be competitive in today's labor force.

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I applied for 48 to 49 jobs. Many interviews reached the second or third level and wouldn't go anywhere. There was a combo of naiveté and hubris. My connections weren't deep enough or focused enough.

– Sean, Veteran

I thought I would get out [of the military] and Lockheed Martin would throw a hundred thousand dollar job at me...I ended up stocking shelves at a supermarket.

– Quinton, Veteran

Theme 2

Well-designed bridge programs help Service members learn the ropes of the civilian workforce in a low-stakes, low-cost way.

“

There are many fellowships for transitioning Service members — Microsoft, Hiring Our Heroes, government, and more. These are great because they introduce you to people who can help you once you get out [of the military].

– Mike, Veteran

I work as a mentor to new Veterans. I see a lot of Veterans who are very, very smart but they just don't have the soft skills.

– Tahlia, Veteran

Theme 3

Service members who most strongly affiliate their sense of identity and purpose with the military encounter challenges and also opportunities during separation.

“

I was in no way ready to hang up my boots.... All I ever knew was military.

– Joshua, Veteran

[When I was told to separate] I went into meltdown because I planned to serve until retiring.

– Eli, Veteran

Theme 4

Accredited certification programs can help Service members build their credentials in a certain trade before they transition to the labor force.

“

I've helped a lot of my men get Lean Six Sigma and Project Management certifications and I think that will give them an edge once they [get into the labor force]....I wish someone had done the same for me.

– Daniel, Retiring Officer

If you don't have the right certification, that knocks you out of the running for about a third of the jobs in our market right now.

– Staff with American Job Center

Theme 5

A Commander or Supervisor has an outsized influence on whether the Service member is granted the time, space, and acceptance to pursue their personal career transition.

“

My Supervisor saw TAP as an inconvenience. Like, 'Oh god, you are going to be out for a week'....It was like my Supervisor resented me for even going.

– Tahlia, Veteran

Sometimes, a Service member is just afraid of asking [their commander] whether they can take the time to do transition work.

– Mike, Veteran

Theme 6

Many enlisted Service members are novices at managing their own budgets. Financial hardship may lead Service members to take the first job available, which has ripple effects across career.

“

The way it's set up now for Service members, they have no skin in the game. Housing is taken out. They don't even see the cost. Food, taken out. Health care taken care of. They have no idea about the actual cost of things.

– Marie, Veteran

It took me months, after I got out, to figure out how to manage money so that I covered my bills...I didn't know about electricity bill going up in the winter or unexpected medical bills.

– Cory, Veteran

Transition Data

Transitioning Service Members

2017 total	290,133
- Enlisted	250,000
- Officer	39,865
- Unknown	238
- Active duty only	97,837
- Active duty, Reserve, Nat. Guard	46,695
- Unknown	7,476

Source for VOW Act: <https://veterans.house.gov/legislation/the-veterans-opportunity-to-work-act.htm>
Source for TAP compliance data: November, 2017 GAO Report to Congressional Requesters: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/590/595205.pdf>

Transitioning Service Members

VOW Act mandates 100% of Service members participate in TAP program, with some exceptions.

In 2016, DOD met its goal of 85% of eligible active duty service members participating in TAP. That year, **159,157** active duty Service members transitioned out of the services.

- **85%** Participated in TAP (135,208)
- **12%** Status unknown—missing data (19,802)
- **3%** Did not participate in TAP (4,147)

Research Data/Demographics

Interviews Conducted

Transitioned Service members	25
- Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard	
- Age range at separation: 22-47 / Average age: 32	
- 21 Enlisted and 4 Officers	
- Average years of service: 10	
- Male: 14, female: 11	
- Mixed race and ethnicity	
- Voluntary separation: 19, non-voluntary separation: 6	
- Enlisted rank: E4-E8	

Agency representatives

- Department of Defense (DOD)
- Department of Labor (DOL)
- Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)
- Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Department of Education (ED)
- Consumer Finance & Protection Bureau (CFPB)

Subject matter experts

- Hiring Our Heroes, Chamber of Commerce
- Source America
- VA Virginia Advisory Board
- Former U.S. Chief Technology Officer
- Nonprofit organizations that hires veterans
- TAP instructor
- Veteran advocate

How Might We Frames

These six How Might We statements are frames and prompts to investigate and test design ideas for improvement.

How Might We: Help Service members prepare for a labor force they have had no prior experience with?

How Might We: Make Service members aware of—and recognize the value of—bridge programs as valuable “first step” towards their civilian career pathway?

How Might We: Prepare Service members who do not want to give up their identity as a warrior for a new role in civilian life?

How Might We: Make accredited and respected certification programs more readily available to Service members early on who might benefit from them once they enter the labor force?

How Might We: Better understand the barriers that prevent commanders or supervisors from supporting Service members in their transition to civilian careers?

How Might We: Prepare Service members to budget and prepare for life after EAS, where all housing, health care, and food subsidies go away—at once—and dramatically?