

# Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Veteran Career Readiness

## FY2013 Q2 Status Update

### Cross-Agency Priority Goal Statement

Improve career readiness of veterans. By September 30, 2013, increase the percent of eligible service members who will be served by career readiness and preparedness programs from 50 percent to 90 percent in order to improve their competitiveness in the job market.

### Goal Leader

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#### ***About this document***

*The Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goals were a key innovation introduced in the FY2013 Federal Budget. These goals focus on 14 major issues that run across several Federal agencies. Each of these historic goals has a Goal Leader who is a senior level White House official and is fully accountable for the success and outcomes of the goal.*

*Historically, areas of shared responsibility for multiple government agencies have been resistant to real progress. Success in these areas requires a new kind of management approach – one that brings people together from across and outside the Federal Government to coordinate their work and combine their skills, insights, and resources. The CAP Goals represent the subset of the President's priorities for which this approach is likeliest to bear fruit.*

*This report discusses one of these CAP Goals, the Veteran Career Readiness Goal, in detail, describing the plan for achieving the goal and the current status of progress. To see the full list of CAP Goals and to find out more about them, we encourage you to visit [performance.gov](http://performance.gov).*

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## Overview

Having successfully served and defended our nation, our veterans are well-trained, highly skilled, and ready apply their experiences to bolster the Nation’s economy. The education and training gained thru military service, makes our servicemembers a tremendous source of value to any workplace, school, or community. DOD estimates that over 1 billion dollars a year is invested in training and education to ensure that the active force is career ready and able to meet mission requirements.

This goal focuses on implementing the President’s commitment to improve career readiness for Veterans, reduce overall veteran unemployment, and put veterans to work. To create conditions for success, the White House economic and domestic policy teams have partnered with the Departments of Defense (DOD), Veterans Affairs (VA), and Labor (DOL) to design and implement strategies which increase career readiness of all service members, regardless of branch of service or component.

Historical data tracking separating service members show less than 50 percent participate in transition programs geared toward preparing them for civilian careers.<sup>1</sup> Barriers to participation often cited include command support for attendance, access to curriculum, or rapid separations less than 90 days. With unemployment compensation paid by DoD tracking historically near a billion dollars annually, there is a sound business case to be made for improved counseling and preparation for post service careers.

The Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act of 2011 requires 100 percent of eligible separating service members receive transition assistance services. A complete overhaul of the existing transition program by the federal government led to the launch of a unified curriculum called Transition Goals Plans Success or Transition GPS. Transition GPS includes updated job-seeking tools to assist separating service members in translating their military specialties into comparable private sector parlance. The program also helps veterans capitalize on educational opportunities provided by the GI Bill to build or enter careers of their choosing. Measuring progress is a challenge as there is no standardized system to track separating veterans that would allow a deeper understanding of the problems they might face in the labor market.

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<sup>1</sup> Comparison of yearly DOL Transition Assistance Program Participants with DOD Separators Throughput.

The Veterans Career Readiness Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goal seeks to improve the career readiness of veterans through the following four key strategies:

1. **Ensuring service members are prepared for separation.** Ensuring service members are fully prepared for separation requires a dual approach. First, apply a dedicated focus on the individual service member by bolstering and standardizing the career counseling services received prior to, during, and post separation. Attention on key issues such as financial counseling, personal goal setting, and strong information sharing and referral will improve the transition for the service members. Additionally, before final departure from the military each service member will participate in a standalone CAPSTONE event. This end-of-service event will validate and verify standard transition objectives have been met and execute a warm-handover to federal and local services that can continue to assist the individual or their family pre and post transition.
2. **Maximizing Veterans' career development potential.** To ensure that veterans and their families have the high quality resources necessary to maximize their career potential, we will transform the approach to education, licensing and credentialing opportunities.
3. **Partnering with public/private industry to employ the unique skills of veterans.** Veterans have received the best military training in the world. Through partnerships with states, communities, and the private sector we are promoting the hiring of veterans and increasing knowledge of their skills and experiences.
4. **Fostering Veteran entrepreneurship.** By working closely with the Small business Administration (SBA) and its resource partners, we can equip service members with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to leverage opportunities and become successful entrepreneurs.

## Strategies

**Strategy 1: Ensuring service members are prepared for separation.** Ensuring service members are prepared for service separation and reentry into civilian life through the following sub-strategies:

- **Developing a revised Transition Assistance Program (TAP) curriculum:** Following the intent set forth in the VOW ACT, the Department of Defense, in partnership with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Education are providing enhanced services for our service members as they transition from active duty to civilian life. Previously, transition preparation for the service member entering the civilian workforce occurred late in a service member's military career lifecycle – near the point of separation. Now, these concepts will be incorporated earlier in a service member's career to ensure that the counseling, assessment, and access to resources to build skills or credentials, occurs at earlier stages of the military career. Additionally, as part of the Administration's newly re-designed military transition program, the Small Business Administration has developed and is piloting a veterans entrepreneurship training program entitled, "Operation Boots to Business: from Service to Startup." The President's Budget provides \$7 million to expand

this program in 2013, providing exposure to entrepreneurship training to all 250,000 service members who transition from active duty to civilian life each year.

**Key Measure 1: Increase separating veterans' access to transition services to 90 percent.**

- There were 144,242 participants in the DOL VETS TAP program in FY11, and 160,182 participants in FY12. There have been 38,724 participants in FY13 through Q1. This is significantly lower than projected and will require regular meetings and review to ensure military services are meeting mandatory requirements of supporting transition services.
- Optional training tracks are scheduled for deployment across all military services by 1 October 2013. **Early adoption and implementation by the Marine Corps should be commended. Army, Navy, and Air Force are developing detailed implementation plans to ensure this goal is achieved.**
- CAPSTONE curriculum is a critical element of ensuring vulnerable or at-risk servicemembers and their families are provided a strong referral and warm-handover to services post transition. This is designed to be more than a validation and review of transition program standards. All military services will have incorporated this program into their transition services by 1 October 2013.
- Approximately 360,739 post-9/11 era veterans were enrolled in DOL's Veteran's Gold Card from November 11, 2011 through April 30, 2013.

**Strategy 2: Maximizing Veterans' career development potential.** Ensuring that veterans have the tools and support to maximize their career development potential through the following sub-strategies:

- **Ensuring standards of excellence in GI Bill education:** To ensure our service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members have the information they need to make informed decisions concerning their educational benefits, the President directed his Administration to develop principles of excellence to strengthen oversight, enforcement, and accountability within these benefits programs. These principles were codified in an [Executive Order signed in April 2012](#).
  - **Progress update.** As of May 24, VA has issued approximately \$29.2 billion in Post 9/11 GI Bill benefit payments to 972,569 individuals and their educational institutions since program inception in August 2009.
- **Streamlining civilian credentialing for service members and Veterans:** In May 2012, the Department of Defense established a DoD Credentialing and Licensing Task Force, whose purpose is to identify opportunities where civilian equivalent occupational credentialing and licensing can be earned by Service members. The objectives of this review are to facilitate recruitment, ease transition of separating Service members, and aid fulfillment of key skill shortfalls in the private sector
  - **Progress update.** With the help of the Task Force's efforts, more than 2,200 Service members from 57 occupational areas are participating in these pilot programs to earn credentials and licenses in high demand occupational areas, such as: aircraft mechanic, automotive mechanic, health care, transportation, supply and logistics, machinist, and welding. This number will continue to increase as Services begin implementing the information technology (IT) pilot. First lady challenged all 50 governors to take action to have legislation for credentialing and licensing for veterans by 2015. To date, 18 states have passed laws removing barriers to Service members and Veterans earning state licensing, especially in the areas of emergency medical technician, paramedics, commercial driver's license, and license practical nurse. For example, 43 states now recognize military driving experience for purposes of earning commercial driver licenses. On April 29th, the White House sponsored a kick-off event to announce the information technology pilot between DoD and several major IT companies to assist both transitioning and mid-career Service members in earning IT certifications. The White House also hosted four military credentialing and licensing roundtables which included representatives from DoD, military services, Departments of Transportation and Health and Human Services, academia, state licensing agencies, and subject matter experts, focusing on: transportation, academic credit, emergency medical services and advance medical operations.
- **Preparing military spouses for the workforce:** DOD delivers a comprehensive education and career solution for military spouses pursuing training, jobs, and sustainable careers by providing career services and connecting them to employers seeking military spouse employees with 21st-century workforce skill sets. DOD's Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) currently has more than 160 partners, who have hired over 36,000 military spouses across employment numerous sectors: corporate, government, non-profit, healthcare, academia, and small business, many of whom offer transferrable, portable

career opportunities to relocating military spouse employees. The Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program is focused on four areas: My Career Exploration (career assessment, interest/skill inventories); My Education and Training (financial aid, licensing/credentialing, Post 9/11 GI Bill, Military Spouse Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) Scholarship); My Career Readiness (interview skills, resume preparation, work environment, childcare, transportation); and My Career Connections (MSEP, USAJobs.gov, regional/local employers).

- **Expanding military spouse license and credential portability:** Nearly 35 percent of military spouses in the labor force require licenses or certification for their profession. Many military spouses hold occupational licenses and routinely move across state lines, causing licensing requirements to disproportionately affect the military spouse population.<sup>2</sup>
  - **Progress update.** The First Lady and Dr. Biden encouraged all 50 governors to pass legislation by 2014 to reduce the financial and administrative strains that 100,000 military spouses incur from trying to get their state licenses or certification credentials to transfer from state to state as they move. Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden reached out to governors in February 2012 when only 11 states had legislation on the books. Since February of 2012, 25 states have passed spousal licensing legislation, bringing the overall total to 36 states with military spouse licensure measures in place. An additional 10 states have active spouse licensure bills.

**Key Measure 2: Increase use of Post-9/11 education programs to obtain degrees, certifications, and credentials.**

- **Progress Update:** For spring 2013, VA has already received more than 859,000 Post 9/11 GI Bill enrollment documents and nearly 472,000 changes to enrollments for over 499,000 unique individuals.

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<sup>2</sup> "Supporting Our Military Families: Best Practices for Streamlining Occupational Licensing Across State Lines." Joint Report of the United States Department of Treasury and Department of Defense. [http://www.defense.gov/home/pdf/Occupational\\_Licensing\\_and\\_Military\\_Spouses\\_Report\\_vFINAL.PDF](http://www.defense.gov/home/pdf/Occupational_Licensing_and_Military_Spouses_Report_vFINAL.PDF).

**Strategy 3: Partnering with public/private industry to take advantage of the unique skills of veterans.** Fostering conditions, both internal and external, that utilizes veterans' abilities:

- **Launching the Joining Forces Initiative:** The President issued his challenge to the private sector to hire or train 100,000 veterans or their spouses by the end of 2013. Efforts to encourage private sector hiring have been led by First Lady Michelle Obama, Dr. Jill Biden and their Joining Forces initiative.
  - **Progress update.** Since this time, businesses have exceeded this goal by hiring and training more than 290,000 veterans and their spouses. Additionally, companies have committed to hire or train an additional 435,000 veterans and their spouses by the end of 2018.
- **Creating two new Veterans' tax credits:** In November 2011, the President signed into law two new tax credits for hiring veterans, both of which were included as part of the American Jobs Act. The Returning Heroes tax credit provides an incentive of up to \$5,600 for firms to hire unemployed veterans and the Wounded Warrior tax credit doubled the existing tax credit for long-term unemployed veterans with service-connected disabilities to \$9,600. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, the President signed into law the [American Taxpayer Relief Act](#), which extends these tax credits for one year, until December 31, 2013.
- **Hiring more Veterans in the Federal government:** The Federal government has also helped lead efforts to employ veterans, hiring more than 200,000 veterans since 2009.
  - **Progress update.** In FY2012, there were a total of 195,139 new hires within the federal government. Of these, 56,422 were veterans. This equates to 28.9% veterans of all federal new hires in FY2012.
- **Increasing hiring of Veterans in healthcare-related fields:** The President challenged community health centers to hire 8,000 veterans – approximately one veteran per health center site – over the next three years and the Health Resources and Services Administration pledged to open up career paths beyond nursing and expand opportunities for veterans to become physician assistants.
  - **Progress update.** HHS has partnered with the National Association of Community Health Centers to assist health centers to hire an average of one veteran per grantee site over the next three years with the goal of hiring 8,000 veterans. According to recent survey data from approximately one-third of health centers, in the past year and a half, approximately 9% of the new hires in health centers have been veterans. About one-third of those new hires were in non-clinical positions. HHS is working with the Department of Labor and Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that veterans are aware of health centers as potential employers as well as health care providers.
  - In August 2012, HRSA announced more than \$2.5 million in physician assistant (PA) grants with funding primarily given to programs engaged in veteran activities. HRSA hosts a workgroup of experts in physician assistant, military, and veteran education, representing physician assistant military educators/researchers, DoD, VA, and PA professional organizations including Physician Assistant Education Association and American Academy of Physician Assistants. Workgroup members have formed two committees. One committee is investigating strategies to help

veterans become physician assistants through bridging programs. The other committee is identifying and disseminating informational tools for service members and veterans on civilian PA careers and education.

- **Developing online tools to boost Veteran employment:** To connect veterans with employment opportunities posted online, the Department of Labor, in partnership with the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, launched the Veterans Jobs Bank, an easy-to-use tool to help veterans find job postings from companies looking to hire them. Additionally, the Department of Labor launched My Next Move for Veterans, a new online resource that allows veterans to enter their military occupation code and discover civilian occupations for which they are well qualified.
  - **Progress update.** Since November 7, 2011, the My Next Move for Veterans website has received more than 542,916 visits through January 31, 2013, with over 1.94 million page views. Additionally, since going live in November of 2011, the Veterans Job Bank has showcased over 2.7 million jobs and has supported over 1.8 million job searches.
- **Increasing access to intensive reemployment services:** Post-9/11 veterans are now able to download the Veteran Gold Card, which entitles them to enhanced reemployment services including six months of personalized case management, assessments and career counseling at their local American Job Center.
  - **Progress update.** Approximately 340,963 post-9/11 era veterans were enrolled in DOL's Veteran's Gold Card from November 11, 2011 through April 30, 2013. Of those new enrollments 175,328 were offered and accepted a staff assisted or intensive service within the month of enrollment. This is a 51.42 percent rate of service receipt within the month of enrollment. (Note: Includes self-service and/or virtual enrollments within the overall counts of veterans enrolled.)
- **Connecting military spouses with employers:** Through the Joining Forces initiative, and the Department of Defense's Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP), more than 44,000 military spouses have been hired and more than 1.2 million jobs have been posted on the MSEP jobs web portal.



**Key Measure 3: Gain 100,000 commitments to hire veterans from the private sector by 2013.**

- **Progress Update.** Since August 2011, more than 290,000 veterans and their spouses have been hired or trained, and companies have committed to hire or train an additional 435,000 veterans and their spouses by the end of 2018.

**Strategy 4: Enable Veteran entrepreneurship.** Providing the tools and resources that enable more veteran entrepreneurship:

- **Helping more Veterans start businesses through increased access to capital:** Nine percent of all U.S. firms are owned by veterans and more than 2.4 million veteran-owned businesses employ more than 5.75 million individuals. The Small Business Administration's veteran entrepreneurship program track provides transitioning service members with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to evaluate opportunities and become successful entrepreneurs as they transition out of the military.
  - **Progress update.** In Fiscal Year 2012, SBA supported nearly \$2.1 billion in lending to over 2,800 veteran-owned small businesses, including Patriot Express loans and microloans.
- **Supporting Veteran firms with the new Quick App for Surety Bonds:** In August 2012, SBA announced a new streamlined application to help small business owners bid and compete for contracting opportunities. The "Quick App" for surety bonds under \$250,000 combines two applications into one to make it easier and faster for small businesses and contractors, including veteran-owned small businesses, to compete for contracts.
- **Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business contracting:** The Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Concern Procurement Program allows Federal agencies to set acquisitions aside for exclusive competition among service-disabled veteran-owned small business concerns.
  - **Progress update.** For the fifth consecutive year, Federal prime contracting dollars awarded to SDVOSBs increased to \$11.2 billion or 2.65 percent of total contract spending in FY 2011. This is up from \$10.793 billion or 2.50 percent of total contract spending in FY 2010.
- **Veterans Business Outreach Centers:** The Veterans Business Outreach Program (VBOP) is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, counseling and mentoring, and referrals for eligible veterans owning or considering starting a small business. The SBA has provided grants to 15 organizations across the country to serve as Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOC).
- **Launching Boots to Business, a public-private partnership to train transitioning service members in entrepreneurship:** The Boots to Business program uses a multi-phased approach to introduce transitioning service members to the fundamentals of small business ownership and to the SBA tools and resources available to them.
  - **Progress update.** Starting in Fiscal Year 2012, SBA developed and piloted its entrepreneurship training program entitled, "Operation Boots to Business: from Service to Startup," at Marine Corps, Navy, Army, and Air Force bases across the country. To date, all four Services have hosted B2B entrepreneurship training courses totally nearly 1,000 service member participants in the first quarter of Calendar Year 2013.

#### **Key Measure 4: Increase number of veteran entrepreneurs by 20 percent.**

- In Fiscal Year 2011, over 190,000 veterans received small business counseling or training through SBA and its resource partners. In addition, since 2009, SBA has doubled the number of SBA Veteran Business Outreach Centers nationwide.

#### **Next Steps**

- The Obama Administration will launch the next phase of its military credentialing and licensing efforts, partnering with the states to streamline state occupational licensing for veterans. The DoD Credentialing and Licensing Task Force will continue to work with the states and national professional association and interest groups to streamline licensing for Service members and veterans, specifically targeting the occupations of bus and truck drivers, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and licensed practical nurses. The Task Force anticipates expanding beyond these pilot programs to a broader range of military occupations with a particular focus on Service members from the combat arms.
- The Obama Administration will outline a suite of best practices, including suggested legislative language, for states to use to ensure that separating service members and veterans receive appropriate licensure and academic credit for their training and experience and do not face other unnecessary barriers to qualifying for employment in high-demand occupations that require certification or licensure.
- During the summer of 2013, the Department of Veterans Affairs will launch new tools to help GI Bill beneficiaries learn more about their vocational aptitudes and selection of an educational institution. The “Factors to Consider When Choosing a School” guide offers future students steps to take when researching, choosing, and attending a school. “CareerScope” is a free, new tool featured on [gibill.va.gov](http://gibill.va.gov) that measures a student’s aptitude and interests through a self-administered online test, identifying potential career paths. The new GI Bill Comparison Tool allows students to research and compare schools, including key indicators like average student loan debt and graduation rates.

#### **Future Actions**

- The Obama Administration will continue to expand educational opportunities available to veterans who wish to build on their military training and experience and earn degrees to become advanced practice health care providers like physician assistants. Through its grant programs, the Department of Health and Human Services will continue to provide incentives for physician assistant and nursing training programs to enroll veterans, give them credit for their military experience, and provide them with the support they need to successfully complete their education.

#### **Contributing Programs and Other Factors**

Agencies contributing in part or in whole to this goal include the following:

- Offices of the First Lady and Dr. Biden (Joining Forces)
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Department of Defense
- Department of Labor
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Small Business Administration

The Federal government is just one of a number of stakeholders that are dedicated to reaching this goal. To accomplish this goal, non-Federal agencies also bring their unique assets to collaborations in order to change the way we support successful veteran reintegration into society.

## **Additional References**

National Resource Directory:

<https://www.nrd.gov/>

eBenefits Portal:

<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/>

My Next Move for Veterans:

<http://www.mynextmove.org/vets/>

Veteran Gold Card:

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/goldcard.html>

Joining Forces:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces>

Hiring Our Heroes:

<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes>

Veteran Recruiting:

<http://veteranrecruiting.com/>