

Washington State

Statewide Veteran Employment Program

Report to the Legislature



State Human Resources
Office of Financial Management
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Executive Summary

In 2018, the Legislature [funded a time-limited position](#) in the Office of Financial Management to conduct additional research in response to [Senate Bill 5849](#) (Chapter 192, Laws of 2017). The initial bill charged OFM with the development of a recruitment program for veterans. The extension allowed the agency to expand the research and include data-driven analyses.

OFM recommends the creation of a statewide employment program that provides veterans with purposeful and long-term employment. The program must be given adequate staffing and other veteran recruitment resources. Anything less than an assigned team will compromise the recommended program's success. The program's scope should comprise the full employee life cycle: recruitment, hiring, onboarding, retention, promotion and job satisfaction. OFM recommends extending the program to military spouses to address the financial concerns tied to this group's employability, which ranks as a top stressor for military families.* This would align with initiatives to support military spouses as required by [Executive Order 19-01](#).

Despite a declining veteran unemployment rate, employment after military service continues to be a top stressor for this population.† A statewide veteran employment program would validate and improve the state's commitment to support this population by removing employment barriers faced by service members, veterans and military spouses when they decide to serve as public employees.

Funding for a veteran employment team is imperative to the proposed program. The recommended full-time employees would focus on improving the recruitment, hiring and onboarding of veterans. The recommended military culture training and the military skills translator would address retention, promotion and job satisfaction issues pertaining to veterans by reducing job incompatibility.

One model for success would be for OFM State Human Resources to be the lead agency supporting the initial establishment of the statewide veteran employment program. The Department of Enterprise Services would be a partner in its operation. In this model, OFM would assist DES in designing statewide services and training. Once the program is created, DES would manage it, provide military culture training, monitor applicants' data and submit quarterly reports. OFM would maintain responsibility for the statewide coordination of external and internal state partners, statewide workforce analyses and reporting, policy development, veteran employment plans assessment and support to the Veterans Employee Resource Group and the Military Transition and Readiness Council.

In its research, OFM has found that a lack of reporting and accountability for various — and scattered — veteran employment efforts at the agency level has undercut statewide efforts to create a cohesive and accountable veteran employment program. In summary: **Implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report would boost job satisfaction, reduce turnover, increase accountability and improve recruitment and retention outcomes.**

* 2018 Blue Star Families Survey <https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018MFLS-Executive-Summary-DIGITAL-FINAL.pdf>.

† 2018 Blue Star Families Survey <https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018MFLS-Executive-Summary-DIGITAL-FINAL.pdf>.

Introduction

In 2017, the Washington State Legislature passed [Senate Bill 5849](#) (Chapter 192, Laws of 2017). The bill called for a variety of improvements to veteran services. Section 4 charged the Office of Financial Management with the development of a military recruitment program for veterans. That section was codified in [RCW 43.41.460](#):

Military recruitment program for veterans—Development—Report.

(1) The office shall develop a military recruitment program that targets veterans and gives them credit for their knowledge, skills, and leadership abilities. In developing the program, the office shall consult with the department of enterprise services, department of veteran[s] affairs, the state military transition council, the veterans employee resource group, and other interested stakeholders. Program development must include, but is not limited to, identifying: (a) Public and private military recruitment programs and ways those programs can be used in Washington; (b) similar military and state job classes and develop a system to provide veterans with experience credit for similar work; and (c) barriers to state employment and opportunities to better utilize veterans experience.

(2) The office shall report to the legislature with a draft plan by January 1, 2018, that includes draft bill language if necessary.

In January 2018, OFM presented its [recruitment program for veterans](#) (preliminary proposal) to the Legislature. In that report, four options were provided for consideration. Option four, which requested an additional year to conduct a more thorough analysis, was recommended by OFM and supported by the Legislature.

In 2018, the Washington State Legislature passed the [supplemental budget](#) (Chapter 299, Laws of 2018), in which OFM was allocated funds to hire a program specialist to develop a recruitment program for veterans.

This report is a follow-up by OFM to the Legislature to present the recruitment program for veterans in response to the original charge. In its research, OFM determined that recruitment efforts for veterans are better supported by creating a program that comprises the full employee life cycle and is established at the enterprise level. Legislative action is required for the implementation and operation of the proposed veteran employment program.

Background

To understand how our recommendations were reached, it is helpful to review how military service has been recognized in public employment. This is often expressed as preferential hiring. Federal and state laws addressing veteran hiring vary, but the overarching intent is to assist veterans as they enter public employment. These laws express appreciation for service and recognize the knowledge, skills and leadership veterans bring to the workforce. Governmental entities across the nation have created veteran employment initiatives or programs to complement veteran preferential hiring laws to hire more veterans.

To recognize the sacrifices made by veterans, Washington enacted a law on [preference in public employment](#) in 1895. Under this practice, the state provides a [scoring preference](#) to veterans in the form of enhanced test scores for positions that require assessment examinations. This approach

helps veterans only if the hiring agency uses a scored test as part of its assessment; many agencies do not. While hiring *practices* have significantly changed since the enactment of the preference in public employment, the *law* itself has not.

In May 2013, Gov. Jay Inslee signed [Executive Order 13-01](#), directing leaders to help service members navigate their entry to the civilian workforce. In it, OFM was charged with convening a cross-agency group of veterans in state service to provide advice and assistance on veteran recruitment, retention and strategy development.

This led to the development of the Veterans Employee Resource Group. The group continues to be a leading recruitment resource for agencies and an effective support mechanism for veteran employees and veterans seeking state employment. However, initiatives that rely on volunteers and inadequate funding make it challenging to serve the veteran population.

During fiscal year 2013, OFM employed a planning/strategy specialist and DES a recruiting/technology consultant to review veteran recruitment strategies and develop statewide veteran recruitment efforts. In 2015, when the recruiting position became vacant, DES did not fill the job due to sustainability concerns. During the same time, the planning/strategy specialist's scope of responsibilities expanded beyond veteran initiatives; as a consequence, veteran recruitment efforts declined. And without dedicated resources at the enterprise level to guide this work, veteran-targeted efforts decreased.[‡]

In response to the 2017 legislation, OFM conducted a study and offered four options in January 2018:

- Option 1 is a continuation of the current level of services.
- Option 2 enhances current services through the addition of two dedicated enterprise-level veteran recruitment resources. This option would include developing a state-specific military translation crosswalk, creating an enterprise-wide military culture training and implementing agency mentorship programs.
- Option 3 is an all-encompassing plan. It includes the components from options 1 and 2, plus the creation of a veteran recruitment team. This team would reinstitute an enterprise-level veterans fellowship program and create a veteran recruitment team to provide additional coordination and support. This option would require four additional employees.
- Option 4 asks for one more year to conduct a more thorough analysis of other organizations' military recruitment programs and identification of additional strategies and resources needed to bridge the transitional gaps from military service to state service. This is the option that OFM recommends to ensure a comprehensive, thoughtful and data-driven system to improve the recruitment and retention of veterans in the state workforce.

The Legislature supported option four recommended by OFM, to hire a program specialist to develop a recruitment program for veterans. The specialist was hired in July 2018 and began to conduct analyses. The recommendations in this report, which are also in alignment with the executive order on veteran and military family employment, are the result of that work.

[‡] Veterans Recruitment Program (Preliminary Proposal)

<https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/publications/VeteransRecruitmentProgram2018.pdf>

In related developments, Gov. Inslee signed [Executive Order 19-01](#), Veteran and Military Family Transition and Readiness Support, reinforcing his commitment to the military community. In this May 2019 document, private and public leaders are encouraged to extend assistance beyond transitioning service members to include *every* veteran, reservist, National Guard member and military spouse to secure a living-wage job. State agencies are expected to lead this effort and serve as model employers.

Process and analysis

To hire more veterans in the state workforce, it is important to understand the hiring structures of cabinet agencies. The state's recruitment and hiring processes are decentralized. Each state agency has the flexibility to customize its policies and procedures for recruitment and selection that best meet the agency's needs. While the hiring of veterans is a statewide effort, state agencies maintain flexibility to select how to use their recruitment resources.

The veteran employment program recommended in this report pertains only to executive branch agencies. It does not include recommendations for the public higher education institutions or the judicial or legislative branch agencies. Accordingly, the analyses of veteran employee and applicant information is based on executive branch agencies.

To create a veteran employment program that best serves veterans, OFM reviewed options one through three from the preliminary proposal. It removed recommendations that would not add value to current strategies and expanded research and analysis to previous considerations that would add value.

The process used to craft the proposed veteran employment program included a survey, consultations, interviews, employee and applicant data analyses, research on public and private veteran employment laws, review of initiatives and programs from other jurisdictions and companies, and research on military culture training. These are described below.

Survey

OFM developed a survey for transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard members, reservists and military spouses. Designed to capture the interests of and obstacles faced by these groups when applying for state positions, the survey of 38 questions received 179 responses. Veterans (51%) and military spouses (24%) represented the largest groups of respondents. A total of 74 responses came from current state employees (41%). [Appendix A](#) lists survey questions and the findings from the survey.

Consultations and interviews with state agencies

Cabinet agencies with 100+ employees are required to submit annual veteran recruitment strategies to OFM as part of the Human Resources Management Report survey. On top of this process, OFM requested consultations with the human resources departments of the 39 agencies required to submit strategies. [Appendix B](#) lists the 13 agencies that engaged in these consultations, which yielded information about current veteran recruitment strategies and insight on obstacles agencies faced in seeking to increase veteran workforce representation.

[Appendix C](#) lists the individuals from 13 cabinet agencies interviewed to widen the number of agencies giving information on veteran recruitment and retention strategies. Between the 12 agencies that engaged in consultation and 13 that provided interviews, a total of 24 distinct cabinet agencies offered input.

The Veterans Employee Resource Group and the Military Transition Council were also critical in providing direction and feedback.

Statewide services for veterans

Currently, the Veterans Employee Resource Group offers the only statewide pre-employment assistance for veterans, transitioning service members and military spouses. The monthly VERG meetings provide opportunities for potential applicants to connect with recruiters from a number of state agencies. Attendees seeking employment, including state employees, can network with recruiters and request informational interviews at these sessions.

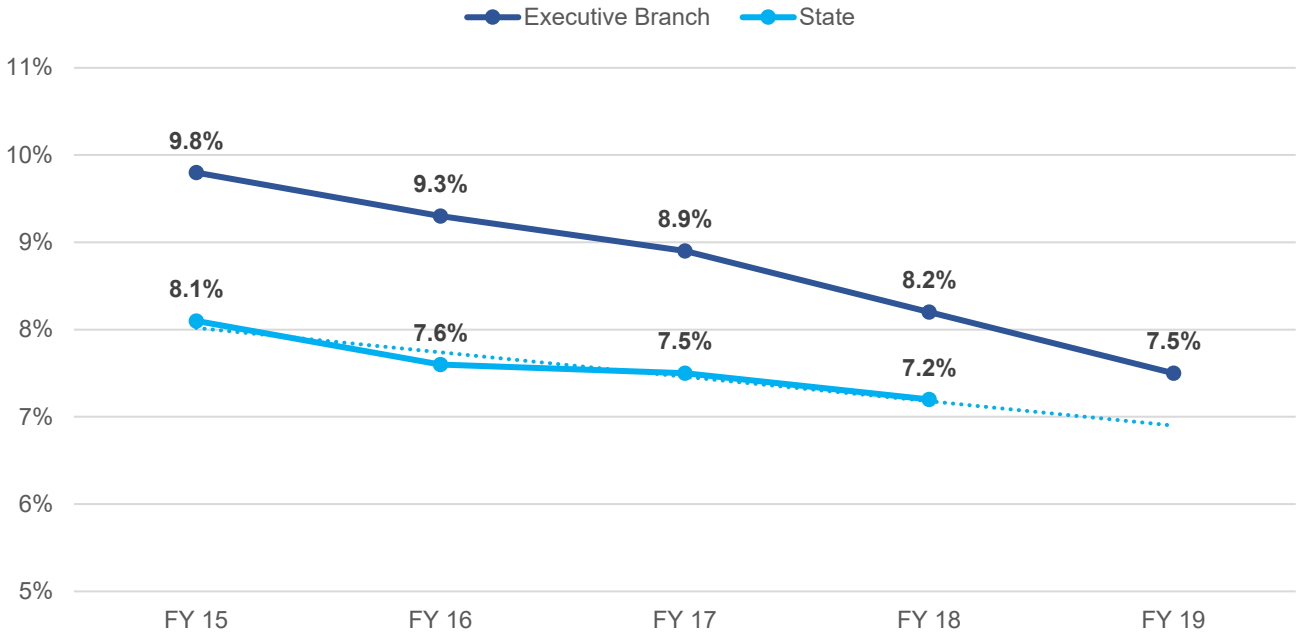
The quarterly workshops, sponsored by the VERG and conducted at Joint Base Lewis McChord, provide another path for jobseekers to connect with recruiters and ask questions about the culture, values and priorities of various state agencies. Representatives from agencies volunteer to staff these workshops, answer questions and offer advice while OFM staff served as the facilitator and coordinator for the events.

Data analysis of veterans in state service

Understanding the current composition of the veteran workforce is vital to the construction of a veteran employment program. The following charts provide a snapshot of the status of veterans in state service.

Chart 1 shows the percentage of veterans in the executive branch workforce and the percentage of veterans available in the overall labor force in Washington from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2019. The trend suggests that the difference between the number of veterans in the executive branch workforce and veterans available in the overall labor force is shrinking.

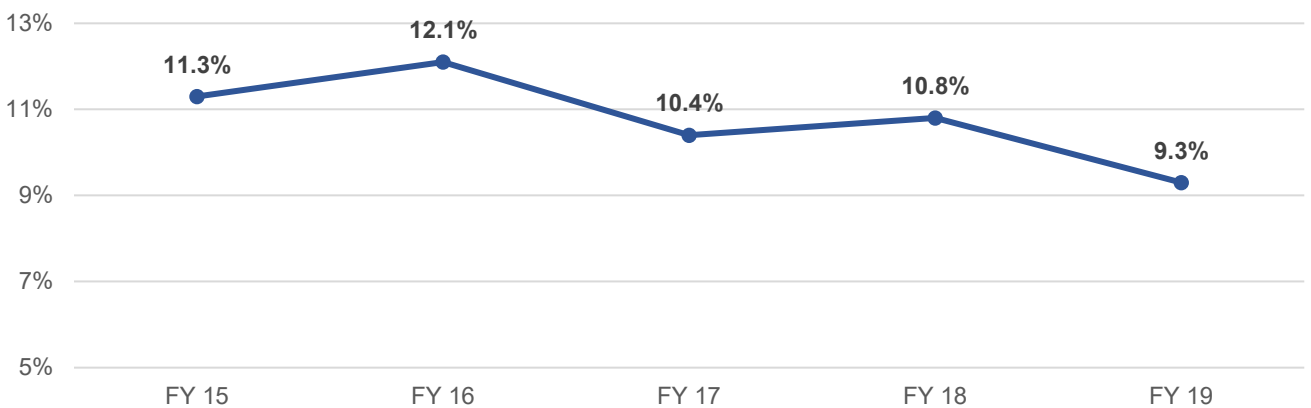
Chart 1: Veteran Representation Rate



Source: Human Resource Management System & American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Data accessed from Public Use Microdata. Sample includes all veterans in Washington civilian labor force ages 18-64.

To better understand the steady decrease of veteran representation in state service, OFM looked at the rate of veteran turnover and veteran new hires. Chart 2 shows the turnover rate of veterans in the executive branch from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2019.

Chart 2: Veteran Turnover

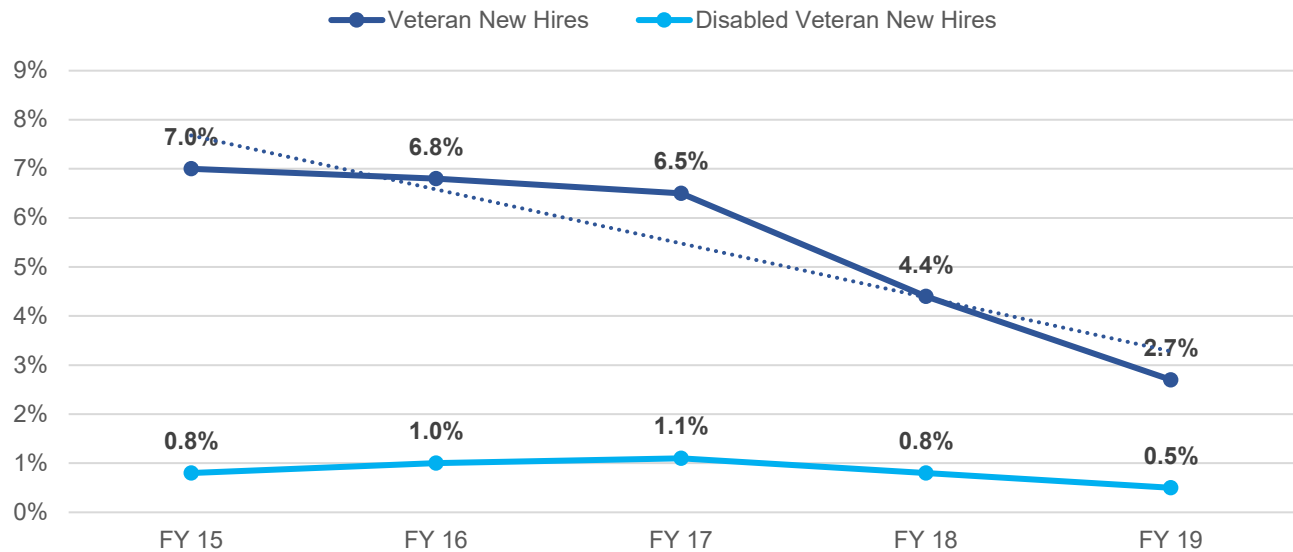


Source: Human Resource Management System. Turnover includes retirement, resignations, dismissals and layoffs.

Compared to nonveterans in the executive branch, veterans have a higher age average; consequently, veterans have a higher rate of retirement. A total of 26% of the veterans in the executive branch are 60 years or older; the average retirement age for this group is 65.

In addition to the higher-than-average *retirement* rate of veterans, the *resignation* rate of veterans (even though equivalent to that of nonveterans), when combined, yields a turnover rate that by far exceeds the rate of veteran new hires. In 2019, the rate of veteran new hires declined from 4.4% from the previous year to 2.7%. Chart 3 shows the percentage of veteran new hires from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2019. The chart also shows the percentage of disabled veteran new hires during the same time frame.

Chart 3: Veteran New Hires Rate



Source: Human Resource Management System

The analysis of the disabled veteran presence in the workforce is complex as veterans from all generations compose this group.

OFM uses the definition of a *special disabled veteran* in Human Resource Management System:

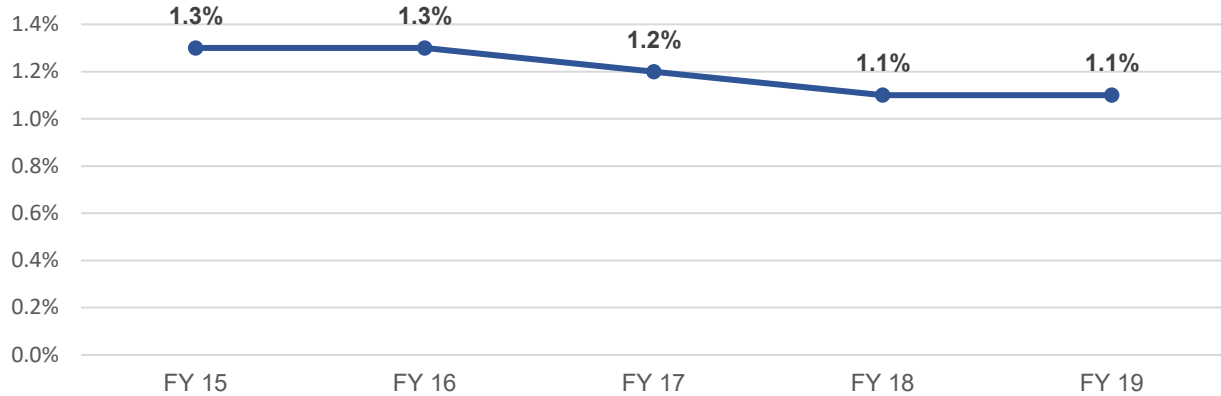
A veteran who is entitled to compensation under laws administered by the Department of Veteran Affairs for:

- *a disability rated at 30 percent or more; or,*
- *a disability rated at 10 or 20 percent in the case of a veteran who has been determined under 38 U.S.C. 3106 to have a serious employment handicap; or,*
- *a discharge or release from active duty because of a service-connected disability.*

This includes veterans who would be entitled to disability compensation if they were not receiving military retirement pay instead.

Chart 4 shows the overall percentage of disabled veterans in state service from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2019, where the previous chart displayed the percentage of veteran new hires who are disabled veterans.

Chart 4: Disabled Veteran Workforce Rate

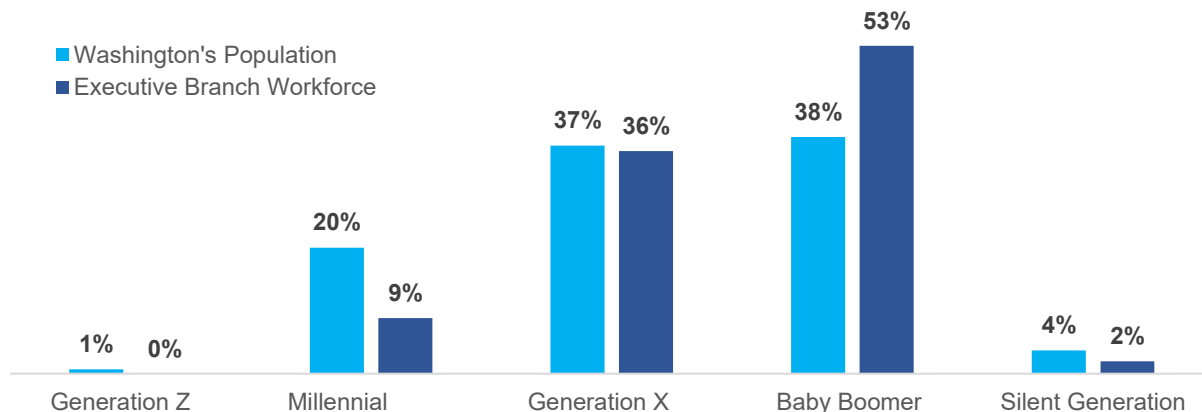


Source: Human Resource Management System

The tracking of Vietnam-era and disabled veterans lends some help in understanding the veteran workforce. In 2019, the Vietnam-era state service representation is 1.6%, of whom .1% are new hires.[§] The representation rate has been steadily declining as this population retires from the workforce.

To learn more about the characteristics of veterans in state service, OFM analyzed veteran data by generations. Chart 5 compares the percentage of veterans in the executive branch with the rate of veterans in the overall state labor force by generations. This analysis revealed that only 9% of state service veterans are millennials, ages 22 to 37. The millennial veteran labor force for the overall state is 20%. This group is not represented proportionally in state service.

Chart 5: Veteran Representation by Generations



Source: Washington's Veteran Population – ACS PUMS 2015-17 weighted pooled data. Calculations exclude members of the armed forces and individuals who are not in the labor force. The executive branch veteran workforce September 2018 data, Human Resource Management System. Calculations include only permanent employees.

[§] Workforce Diversity, Office of Financial Management <https://www.ofm.wa.gov/state-human-resources/workforce-data-planning/workforce-data-trends/workforce/workforce-diversity>

Veteran applicants

During consultations with state agencies, a common concern was that veteran representation could be decreasing due to a decline in veteran applicants. OFM analyzed the self-identified veteran data collected through the Online Recruitment System powered by NEOGOV to learn the actual percentage of veteran applicants for fiscal year 2018.

The following table shows the number of veteran and nonveteran applicants in state service for 2018 and how they moved through the different stages of the hiring process. Veteran applicants represented 11.9% of the total applicants and 10.5% of hired individuals.**

	Applicant	Eligible	Referred	Interviewed	Hired
Veterans	44,940 (11.9%)	21,650 (11.3%)	20,740 (11.4%)	3,824 (11.4%)	617 (10.5%)
Nonveterans	332,960 (88.1%)	169,500 (88.7%)	161,840 (88.6%)	29,840 (88.6%)	5,237 (89.5%)

Veteran laws, initiatives and programs

OFM researched public and private veteran employment laws, initiatives and programs to identify strategies that can be incorporated in Washington’s veteran employment program. The first step was to look at federal and state approaches. The analysis began with a comparison of veteran employment laws and expanded to additional initiatives or programs those governmental entities offer the veteran community. [Appendix D](#) lists the laws, programs and policies reviewed.

To complement the information gathered from public organizations, OFM then looked at private corporations that offer veteran employment programs and nonprofit organizations that provide employment services to veterans. [Appendix E](#) lists the representatives from private organizations who were interviewed and the private veteran programs researched.

OFM also reviewed studies, surveys and publications related to veteran and military spouse employment. [Appendix F](#) lists these resources.

Military culture training

The survey results — in combination with the consultations and interviews with state agencies — uncovered a knowledge gap between the veterans, transitioning service members, National Guard members, reservists and military spouses seeking state service employment, on the one hand, and state agency representatives, on the other. To close the gap, OFM researched military culture training that will give representatives of state agencies the tools to understand the benefits of hiring veterans and the skills to assist veterans as they transition to civilian employment.

** Data accuracy is limited to the extent to which agencies input the information. Agencies are required only to use the online recruitment system for job postings. They are not required to use it to capture the full span of the hiring process. Individuals must self-identify as veterans in the application to be counted as such.

Findings

The research identified data gaps that mask the barriers veterans face when seeking state employment. The veteran employment program would use proven strategies tested by other public and private organizations to improve recruitment and retention outcomes and close data collection gaps.

Survey

The overall survey results are weighted based on the number of replies per question to form an accurate representation of responses. Survey results presented in this report reflect the aggregated data for all respondents. Segregation by groups may yield different results.

While the number of responses does not represent a significant portion of the veteran population, when combined with the veteran employee and veteran applicant data for state service, they provide a better understanding of the groups. The survey revealed two characteristics that confirm the need to invest in outreach and recruitment resources:

First: When participants were asked to list their employer agency preference, the Department of Veteran Affairs and the Military Department ranked first and second, respectively. The “no preference” choice ranked third, which suggests that jobseekers are open to positions with any agency. By increasing outreach to the veteran and military community, agencies can boost the number of applicants.

Second: The state’s official job site, careers.wa.gov, ranked as the top source to find state jobs (56%), and from that group, 39% are subscribed to receive job alerts. The data collected through the applicant online recruitment system also confirms that careers.wa.gov is the No. 1 source used by veteran applicants in 2018, when 63% of 44,940 used it. However, 23% of the 179 survey respondents did not find the site user-friendly.

Consultations and interviews with agencies

State agencies consistently requested the standardization of the application of veterans’ preference. OFM, in collaboration with volunteers from 13 cabinet agencies, created the Veterans’ Preference Modernization and Standardization Committee. This group meets to discuss ways to standardize the application of veterans’ preference across the enterprise and plans to update the Statewide Veterans’ Preference Guide.

A second concern shared by state agencies is the time required for veteran targeted recruitment efforts, especially small agencies and agencies with a consistently high number of vacancies. Interviewed agencies shared an interest to access enterprise-level veteran recruitment resources. They suggested the creation of a veteran talent pool, internship and fellowship programs, veteran-specific job fairs, military culture training, partnerships with veteran-friendly organizations endorsed and recommended by the VERG, the Military Transition Council and OFM.

Data analysis of veterans in state service

OFM found that some earlier veteran programs were dismantled and others were never implemented due to the lack of resources. Without dedicated resources at the enterprise level, fellowships that, in the past, provided a successful path to state service employment for veterans

have vanished. While the VERG has attempted to reinstitute the fellowship program, the time required to launch the program has prevented these volunteers from doing so.

[Article 5.4 \(A\) \(3\)](#) of the Coalition Collective Bargaining Agreement allows state agencies to convert nonpermanent positions to permanent if a veteran placement program is used. However, it has not been implemented even though it was introduced in 2015. The veteran placement program language was never defined, which has stymied state agencies in implementing the practice:

The Employer may convert a non-permanent appointment into a permanent appointment if the Employer used a competitive process to fill the non-permanent appointment or if the non-permanent appointment was filled using a veteran placement program. With the exception of FWOOG, before converting a non-permanent appointment into a permanent appointment, Article 3, Bid System, and Article 35, Layoff and Recall, must be followed. For a conversion, the employee will serve a probationary or trial service period.

In its research, OFM found efforts that support the veteran/military community. The Department of Health and the Department of Revenue have assigned individuals as military liaisons. DOH has mapped career paths for service members with a medical background with a health profession crosswalk. DOH has also designed a process to expedite health profession licensure for military spouses and domestic partners.

DOR created the staffing consultant–military liaison position, which lends a veteran/military perspective to the already-assigned responsibilities of a human resources consultant. The position also leads the interagency VERG to recognize employees who are veterans and offer assistance to job-seeking veterans at JBLM.

Transitioning service members, veterans and military spouses find informational interviews to be one of the most valuable resources offered by VERG volunteers. Jobseekers from these groups learn about the culture, priorities and terminology used at the state agencies, which may be unfamiliar to them. This allows them to better prepare for interviews. Mock interviews organized by veteran transition programs or partners such as Hire our Heroes and Onward to Opportunity also help prepare vets and their spouses for job interviews.

Veterans in state service

The state of Washington collects and tracks the rates of veteran representation, veteran turnover and veteran new hires in the executive branch. To address the steady decline of veteran representation in state service, learning more about the characteristics of our current veteran employees is key. This means determining what discourages veterans from pursuing state employment. To this end, OFM added demographic questions to the 2019 State Employee Engagement Survey to gather information about the state service employment experience for veterans and military spouses.

In 2018, the number of veterans in the executive branch workforce (8.2%) remained higher than the number of veterans available in the overall state labor force (7.2%). However, a more detailed analysis uncovered concerns about the future of veteran representation in state government. Without changes to current veteran employment strategies, the number of veterans in the executive branch will decrease.

The decline in veteran new hires, in combination with the steady rate of retirement of veterans, is depleting the surplus of veteran representation in the workforce. To effectively withstand this retirement rate, the executive branch must address the resignations of veteran employees while it attracts and retains veterans from all generations.

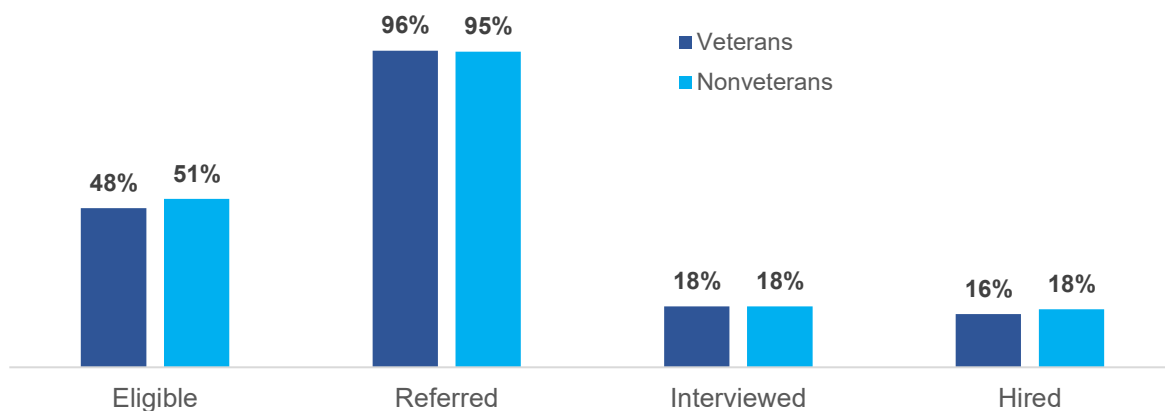
The state strives to maintain, at a minimum, a veteran representation level in the executive branch workforce that is equivalent to the percentage of veterans available in the state’s labor force. Nevertheless, Executive Order 19-01 seeks a commitment to ensure that *every* veteran, transitioning service member, reservist, National Guard member and military spouse is able to secure a living wage job.

Veteran applicants

The state lacks a process to identify where exactly veterans fail to progress through the stages of hiring. This lack of information makes it difficult to determine if veterans receive the preference they are due or if they are given appropriate credit for their skills, experience and leadership abilities.

Despite the longstanding requirement to provide veterans with preference in public employment, applicant data from 2018 showed that veterans and nonveterans have an equal probability of being hired by agencies. Chart 6 compares the weighted percentage of veteran applicants versus nonveteran applicants moving through the hiring stages.

Chart 6: 2018 State Service Applicants



Source: Online Recruiting System powered by NEOGOV

Veteran laws, initiatives and programs

In August 2019, the veteran unemployment rate reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for Washington was 4.6%, higher than the national average of 3.7%. This means that of 50 states and one territory, our state ranked 45th. As an employer, the state of Washington recognizes that more information is needed to address the disparity between the intent to employ more veterans and whether it succeeds in doing so. OFM reviewed laws, initiatives and programs used by public and private entities to identify proven strategies that the state can incorporate in its veteran employment program.

Washington does not have a standardized process for applying veterans' preference, thus increasing opportunities for disparate applications and increasing agencies' exposure to risk. Hiring processes have transformed over time, but the application of the law has not been clarified. [Appendix D](#) lists the governmental entities with codified veterans' preference that were reviewed. States such as [Texas](#) took steps to modernize veterans' preference by explicitly requiring a number/percentage of veterans granted interviews.

Other states have chosen to update their technical guidance about the application of veterans' preference. In 2014, Colorado's Division of Human Resources released [technical guidance](#) to address various topics related to veterans, active military and National Guard disaster response personnel. The guidance included residency, veterans' preference application, preference in layoff and military leave. In 2017, Oregon's Department of Administrative Services also released an updated [Veterans' Preference Guide](#).

Legislative updates and directives or technical guidance releases to clarify the application of veterans' preference is a preferred approach used by public entities. Other mechanisms used by public and private organizations to increase veteran representation in their workforce include military skills translators, independent hiring channels for veterans, veteran affinity or business groups, in-training positions and veteran recruitment teams.

Military skills translators or crosswalks are often a helpful tool to help transitioning service members and veterans choose their career paths. The Washington Department of Health created a [military-to-civilian health professions crosswalk](#), which is regularly assessed and updated by the agency's military liaison.

In 2017, the Washington Department of Social and Health Services launched a [military skills translator](#) job-search tool. More resources would be needed to bring these agency-level initiatives to statewide scale resources.

California completed a military [skills translator](#) program similar to the one launched at DSHS. California's team consisted of three employees: one project manager and two individuals coding for six months. The state continues to improve its skills translator, informed by user feedback. [Appendix G](#) lists multiple military skills translators that can serve as a template for a statewide military skills translator.

Several private corporations have created independent hiring channels for veterans and military spouses. They provide additional assistance to those groups and craft individualized messages with a list of benefits and resources available to them when they are not selected for the position. Talent management teams provide personalized assistance to veteran applicants. [Appendix E](#) lists all the veteran employment programs researched and analyzed by OFM.

Corporate veteran affinity groups receive funding to develop initiatives that support veterans and align with business priorities. Fellowships, internships and mentorships are proven pathways to boost employment of veterans. However, Washington does not have a statewide mechanism to track veteran internships offered by agencies; we cannot determine if they exist and are yielding veteran hires.

Military culture training

OFM's approach concentrated on identifying training that state agencies can incorporate immediately at little to no cost. OFM encourages agencies to take full advantage of all free-of-charge resources, including the following:

- [Veterans at Work Certificate \(SHRM\)](#)
- [The Recruitment, Hiring, Retention & Engagement of Military Veterans Guidebook \(SHRM\)](#)
- [The Institute for Veterans and Military Families \(Syracuse University\)](#)
- [Military cultural training \(PsychArmor Institute\)](#)

Recommendations

To create a veteran employment program for veterans that best serves that community, OFM reviewed the recommendations from the preliminary proposal and expanded on previous considerations. OFM recognized the need to improve the use of employee and applicant data and feedback allowing state agencies to increase the efficacy of their strategic efforts.

OFM identified a series of actionable tasks that will improve veteran outreach, recruitment, hiring and retention. These include standardization of veterans' preference, veteran recruitment goal clarity, building a statewide veteran talent pool, partnerships with colleges and universities with a significant student veteran demographic, creating statewide veteran internships and fellowships, and promoting a veteran-friendly workplace culture.

One model for success to expedite implementation of these tasks and to create a statewide employment program that provides veterans with purposeful and long-term employment would comprise the following recommendations, prioritized in this order:

1. Create a Veteran Employment Program, or VEP, team. This team comprises five new FTEs.
 - One program manager to evaluate program effectiveness by creating performance outcome reports. The program manager is also responsible for the operational support of the program and team.
 - Three human resources consultants 4 to be the face of the outreach and recruitment stages of the program. The consultants educate veterans and transitioning service members on the state's employment processes and résumé-writing approach. Consultants also provide recruitment best practices, consolidate resources and monitor required training.
 - One strategy/policy coordinator responsible for statewide strategic coordination of external and internal state partners, statewide workforce analysis, policy development, assessment of agency-level veteran employment plans and support of the VERG and Military Transition and Readiness Council.

The VEP team is expected to assist with the development of veteran recruitment strategies, recommend updates to the state's job site to increase its veteran friendliness and create a unified message to attract veterans from across the state to employment with state agencies.

2. Develop or adopt military culture training to provide interview panelists, human resources practitioners and hiring managers with tools to understand the skills individuals with military status bring to their organizations. The VEP team will determine what training content must be updated to reflect an inclusive military culture in state government with the option to incorporate it in the Learning Management System used by state agencies to track required training.
3. Develop a military skills translator tool to help veteran jobseekers and hiring managers alike to understand how the training and skills gained in military service translate to public employment and recognize military training, experience and competencies. The development of the military skills translator requires one project employee and additional resources:
 - One nonpermanent programmer/application developer (24-month project position) to develop and implement the skills translator tool that recognizes education before and after military service, military training, experience and leadership abilities.
 - Software and equipment required to facilitate the development of a military skills translator unique to state positions.
4. Identify military liaisons at agencies with 500+ employees to certify that the decisions made at the enterprise-level support agency's practices. The liaisons are the bridge that connects veteran jobseekers to hiring managers for informational interviews. They are critical to connecting statewide initiatives, including those endorsed by the VERG, with strategies at the agency level.
5. Identify agency champions to promote veteran efforts in every agency to prioritize veteran initiatives and allocate internal resources to support initiatives.

Accountability

Every successful program identifies what measures will be used to ensure accountability. This ensures both that the results are realized and taxpayer resources are appropriately used. The following metrics are the primary sources to assess the recommended program's success:

- More applicants (reported by DES through NEOGOV)
- More interviews (reported by DES through NEOGOV)
- More hires (reported by OFM through HRMS)
- Better retention (fewer resignations) (reported by OFM through HRMS)
- Better agency integration and support (measured through the State Employee Engagement Survey)

Conclusion

Washington, through executive orders, laws and policies, has expressed the goal of employing more veterans. However, a number of issues are in the way, including the complex application of veterans' preference, outreach to all veterans, hiring practices, retention policies and other recruitment matters.

For instance, our current approach to increasing veteran employment assumes that all veterans have identical barriers to employment. Statewide data does not distinguish between the individuals now

serving in the National Guard and reserve component and all other military members. This means we don't know if the former group has endured unique barriers or obstacles. Having more complete data would allow us to further customize our solutions to recruiting, hiring and retaining *all* individuals with military status.

Today, Washington has an opportunity to develop an understanding of the uniqueness of veterans and how additional subcategories such as generation, gender, ethnicity, retirement, disabilities or length of service affect veterans' employment after military service.

We have long assumed that veterans are interested only in the fields that are directly related to their military training. This overlooks additional job experience or education received before or after military service that may influence the choice of a post-military career. Entry-level employment opportunities may be inadequate for recently separated veterans with extensive leadership experience. Such positions make veterans underemployed, which affects job satisfaction, turnover and even performance.

By allocating appropriate and enduring resources, Washington can take measured and deliberate steps to improve hiring practices, increase their transparency and be accountable for the results associated with increasing veteran representation in the executive branch workforce.

Appendix A – Survey

The survey targeted transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard members, reservists and military spouses. Designed to capture the interests of and obstacles faced by these groups when applying for state positions, the survey of 38 questions received 179 responses. It contained 11 demographic questions (1–11), 22 state-specific employment questions (12–33), three general employment questions (34–36) and two open-ended questions (37–38) where the respondent can share additional feedback. The survey administered via SurveyMonkey maintains anonymous responses.

The survey was shared with VERG members, transitioning service members attending job fairs and VERG workshops at JBLM. While the number of responses represents a small portion of the targeted population, when combined with the veteran employee and veteran applicant data for state service, they provide a better understanding of the groups.

Questions

Demographic

- Q1. What role best describes you?
- Q2. Branch of service?
- Q3. Time in service (in years)?
- Q4. What is/was your military grade?
- Q5. What is your military occupation/rating/specialist code?
- Q6. What is your gender?
- Q7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Q8. Are you currently enrolled in a college/university?
- Q9. Select the institution you are attending.
- Q10. Are you employed?
- Q11. In which sector are you employed?

State-specific

- Q12. How have you heard about state service employment opportunities?
- Q13. Which job categories are you interested in?
- Q14. Which state agencies are you most interested?
- Q15. Have you visited careers.wa.gov?

- Q16. Are you subscribed to receive “job alerts” at careers.wa.gov?
- Q17. I find careers.wa.gov user-friendly.
- Q18. How often do you visit careers.wa.gov to find new job opportunities?
- Q19. How often do you visit other job sites to find job opportunities?
- Q20. What is your earliest employment availability?
- Q21. In your opinion, what are the biggest barriers when applying for state positions?
- Q22. I am interested in the following events:
- Q23. Are you interested in participating in a nonpaid internship or fellowship?
- Q24. Are you familiar with the Washington state Veterans Employee Resource Group – VERG?
- Q25. How did you hear about the VERG?
- Q26. Have you attended a VERG meeting?
- Q27. Have you applied for state employment?
- Q28. How many times have you applied?
- Q29. Did you receive information about the status of your application?

- Q30. How satisfied are you with the information received about the status of your application?
- Q31. Were you called in for an interview?
- Q32. How many times have you been called in for an interview without resulting in a hire?
- Q33. The interview questions allowed me to adequately describe my skills and abilities.

General employment

- Q34. What are the most important attributes you are looking for when selecting an employer?

- Q35. What type of employment do you prefer?
- Q36. In which counties are you looking for employment?

Open-ended questions

- Q37. How can the application, screening and selection processes be improved?
- Q38. Provide any additional feedback you think is important to include in a state employment veteran/military spouse recruitment program.

Findings

The top sectors of interest selected are administrative service, human resources, information technology, social services and education.

The top three barriers to state service employment are the timeline for the hiring process, translating military skills and years of experience requirements.

The top five desired employment tools are state-specific job fairs, general job fairs, in-training positions, networking events and informational interviews.

The top five attributes respondents are looking for when selecting an employer are professional development, work-life balance, ethics, career opportunities and flexible work schedule.

Compensation ranked in the middle of job seeker's priorities.

Even though 73% of the respondents are currently employed, 33% are looking for immediate employment opportunities.

11% of all respondents are interested in participating in a nonpaid internship. However, this swells to 60% for just transitioning service members.

49% of the respondents were familiar with the Veterans Employee Resource Group. Of those aware of the group, half attend the monthly meetings.

Appendix B – Consultations

State agencies that engaged in consultations with OFM, which yielded information about current veteran recruitment strategies:

Department of Agriculture

Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Department of Corrections

Department of Ecology

Department of Enterprise Services

Employment Security Department

Department of Financial Institutions

Office of the Insurance Commissioner

Washington State Investment Board

Liquor and Cannabis Board

Department of Retirement Systems

Washington State School for the Blind

Utilities and Transportation Commission

Appendix C – Interviews

Individuals interviewed to widen the number of agencies giving information on veteran recruitment and retention strategies:

Department of Commerce

Jimmie Wimberly

Employment Security Department

Ashley Harris

Jason Matheney

Sam Mitchell

Steven Severson

Department of Enterprise Services

Devonee Davis

Michaela Doelman

Department of Health

Tommy Simpson

Department of Labor and Industries

Christine Dominguez

Department of Licensing

Dan Ward

Lonnie Spikes

Phillip White

Department of Social and Health Services

Ben Lloyd

Shawn Prescher

Theresa Powell

Department of Veterans Affairs

Jason Alves

Lourdes (Alfie) Alvarado-Ramos

Paul Cruz

Tom Rawlings

Mark Sullivan

Office of the Attorney General

Susan DanPullo

Ohad Lowy

Office of Financial Management

Don Chavez

Office of the Governor

Jim Baumgart

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Ray Hicks

Washington State Patrol

Capt. Travis Matheson

Appendix D – Veteran employment laws, initiatives and programs

The first list contains public sector entities used to compare veteran hiring laws and veteran employment policies. The second list contains veteran employment programs that go beyond hiring preference.

Public sector veteran employment laws

[California](#)

[Colorado](#) technical guidance

[Federal](#)

[Florida](#)

[Montana](#)

[North Carolina](#) policy guide

[Oregon](#) policy guide

[Texas](#)

[Virginia](#) policy guide

Public sector employment programs

[California Statewide Recruitment](#)

[Executive Order 13518 – Veterans Employment Initiative](#)

[Texas Veterans Commission](#)

[U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

Appendix E – Private & nonprofit organizations

Interviews

Employment Readiness Joint Base Lewis-McChord

Kimberly Fallen

Onward to Opportunity

Benjamin Dufay

Saint Martin’s University – Microsoft Software & Systems Academy

Robert Bone

Olympia SHRM

Wayne Jones

Starbucks

Afsheen Saatchi

WorkEx

Michele Helfgott-Watters

WorkForce Central/ESD partner

Shellie Willis

Veteran programs

[Accenture](#)

[Amazon](#)

[AT&T](#)

[Boeing](#)

[Booz Allen Hamilton](#)

[Disney](#)

[Dominion](#)

[General Electric](#)

[JP Morgan Chase & Co](#)

[Microsoft](#)

[Prudential](#)

[Starbucks](#)

[T-Mobile](#)

[Verizon](#)

[Walmart](#)

Appendix F – Estimated cost

Veteran Employment Program Staffing

Job Class Assumptions	Monthly Salary Assumptions per FTE	Length of Hire	Number of FTE
Program Manager (WMS2)	\$ 9,255	Ongoing	1
Human Resource Consultant 4	\$ 6,534	Ongoing	3
Veterans Strategy Coordinator	\$ 7,429	Ongoing	1
Application Developer		24 months	1

Fiscal details

Cost Estimates	Fiscal Year 2020	Fiscal Year 2021	Fiscal Year 2022	Fiscal Year 2023	Biennium Total 2019-21
Salaries	-	\$ 532,320	\$ 532,320	\$ 435,432	\$ 532,320
Benefits	-	\$ 183,424	\$ 183,424	\$ 151,200	\$ 183,424
Goods and Services	-	\$ 275,679	\$ 275,679	\$ 231,343	\$ 275,679
Travel	-	\$ 4,900	\$ 4,900	\$ 4,400	\$ 4,900
Equipment	-	\$ 12,500	-	-	\$ 12,500
Total	-	\$ 1,008,823	\$ 996,323	\$ 822,375	\$ 1,008,823

Note:

Assumptions and calculations for the following positions:

- 3 Human Resource Consultant 4
- 1 WMS2 (Salary \$111,060/FY)
- 1 Application Developer (project position for 24 months)
- 1 Veterans Strategy Coordinator (Salary \$89,148/FY)
- Travel expenses for Veterans Strategy Coordinator (\$2,400/FY)
- 3% COLA increase for FY 2021
- FY 2021 includes one-time costs for:
 - New equipment costs for 6 FTEs of \$12,500
 - Veterans Strategy Coordinator equipment expenses of \$5,000

Appendix G – Resources

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Appendix H – Military skills translator

[Boeing](#)

[Capital One](#)

[California state careers](#)

[DOH health profession crosswalk](#)

[DSHS](#)

[Lockheed Martin](#)

[Military.com skills translator](#)

[O*Net](#)

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Organizations – main contributors

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Veterans Employee Resource Group

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