

The logo for the Education Development Center (EDC), consisting of the letters 'EDC' in white on a dark blue square background.

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WOMEN VETERANS IN STEM: RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE PIPELINE FROM SERVICE TO STEM

For Employers and Professional
Organizations & Associations

JULY 2021

Executive Summary

While many programs and support services exist for veterans, very few are tailored to women veterans, and there is no system in place to unify these resources in a cohesive and effective way. As a result, the needs of women veterans are often overlooked.

In March 2021, Education Development Center (EDC) led a virtual convening on recruiting and retaining women veterans in the STEM workforce, particularly those from populations currently underrepresented in STEM. The event capped an 18-month effort to map the current landscape of women veterans' support services. In addition, the event provided an opportunity to identify strategies to strengthen existing services and develop new programs to effectively engage, train, and retain women veterans in the STEM workforce.

Women veterans in STEM jobs earn 54% more than peers in non-STEM jobs and 13% more than non-veteran women in STEM (Maury et al., 2018). Further, many women veterans have the expertise and skills to enter and succeed in the STEM workforce.

Our [full recommendations report](#) offers actionable recommendations that employers, policymakers, federal agencies, higher education institutions, and professional organizations can take to strengthen the pipeline from service to STEM for women veterans. **Convening participants felt strongly that our country needs a national resource clearinghouse and technical assistance center to serve women veterans.** They envisioned that the center would fill the following gaps:

- » Consolidate information about services and resources available to women service members and veterans and provide advisory services for these women.
- » Provide technical assistance to STEM industry employers and institutions of higher education on how they can better recruit and retain women veterans.

VISION FOR THE NATIONAL CENTER



- ✓ **Provide separate portals for four specific audiences:** women service members and veterans, employers, higher education institutions, and support organizations and professional associations.
- ✓ **Provide resources and guidance for women service members and veterans** to understand the opportunities and pathways in STEM, and support them in their pursuit of STEM careers.
- ✓ **Provide tailored, customized technical assistance to employers and higher education institutions** on how to better recruit and retain women veterans.
- ✓ **Offer guidance to employers and higher education institutions** on how to establish communities of practice; smaller organizations typically don't have the internal capacity to create and sustain their own robust group.
- ✓ **Mandate a third party to serve as a resource and sounding board** for efforts that support women veterans' employment to improve the quality of programs and support provided.

This paper offers recommendations for actions that employers and professional organizations/associations can take to strengthen the pipeline from service to STEM for women veterans. In addition, we spotlight promising programs and successful strategies to help inspire and inform action.

Employers

A Syracuse University study found that during service, veterans develop skills in a number of important domains, including work ethic, discipline, leadership, adaptability, and teamwork.¹ Employers need to know the benefits of hiring veterans in general, and women veterans in particular, and draw on effective recruitment and retention strategies.

RECRUITMENT: WE RECOMMEND EMPLOYERS DO THE FOLLOWING

- ✓ Participate in programs that demonstrate and honor employers' commitments to hiring and supporting veterans; these awards alert veterans that a company cares about supporting service members and could be a great place to start or continue their post-military careers.
- ✓ Offer opportunities that reach out to engage veterans, such as paid apprenticeship or internship opportunities like Amazon's Military Apprenticeship Initiative or Lockheed Martin's Apprenticeship Program.

Promising Programs



- The [HIRE Vets Medallion Program](#) recognizes a company or organization's commitment to hiring and retaining veterans and offering professional development. Employers must meet a number of criteria, such as the number of new veteran hires and the percentage of employees who are veterans. Companies can apply to receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award and are then recognized on the program's website.
- VETS Indexes strives to identify the publicly traded companies that are most supportive of U.S. military veterans by measuring their performance on various selection criteria, such as company culture, policies, and reservist accommodations. Employers take a survey and conduct an organizational self-assessment. VETS Indexes then gives the company a 3-, 4-, or 5-star award and shares these rankings on its website.

¹ Bradbard, D. A., Armstrong, N. J., & Maury, R. (2016, February). Work after service: Developing workforce readiness and veteran talent for the future. *Workforce Readiness Briefs, Paper One*. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/USAA_Report_Jan27FINAL.pdf

HIRING: WE RECOMMEND EMPLOYERS DO THE FOLLOWING

- ✓ Connect with some of the many local and national nonprofit organizations that offer support and resources for recruiting and hiring veterans and integrating them into the workplace (e.g., as part of their Veterans Strong initiative, Hire Our Heroes meets with interested employers to create tailored veteran hiring programs).
- ✓ Actively work to include, rather than exclude, applicants with military backgrounds by shifting the hiring focus from years of experience in similar positions and degrees earned to attainment of knowledge and hands-on experience.
- ✓ Train human resources professionals on veteran-specific issues and translating military experience to civilian language.

Successful Strategies



- Create profiles of veterans who made a career switch into STEM careers, and develop career tracks or road maps of their steps to success, recognizing and acknowledging the value of their unique experience; this supports veterans in identifying their career goals and seeing a path to achieve them.
- Use *military skills translators*, tools that allow veterans to enter their experiences and be matched to jobs that fit their skills, such as [Cisco's Talent Bridge for Veterans](#); [Lockheed Martin](#), [Amazon](#), and [Boeing](#) are also leaders in developing and implementing such tools.
- The Society for Human Resource Management offers a [Veterans at Work Certificate Program](#)—a free course for human resources professionals to educate themselves about the needs of veterans in the workplace. [Hire Heroes USA](#) offers training to human resources professionals on veteran hiring and retention.
- Ensure that any recruiting software used by human resources does not inadvertently exclude qualified service members, particularly women.

RETENTION: WE RECOMMEND EMPLOYERS DO THE FOLLOWING

- ✓ Study and learn from companies' successful strategies for recruiting and onboarding veterans; we share some of these strategies at the end of this section.
- ✓ Seek women veterans as advisors to better understand the unique needs of women veterans and to more effectively attract them to and retain them in the workplace.
- ✓ Create an in-house position (e.g., a military relations manager) dedicated to engaging with veteran employees.
- ✓ Offer a workplace affinity group or employee resource group specifically for veterans and/or women veterans.
- ✓ Establish a mentorship program to match women veterans with more senior women veterans; if a mentoring program currently exists, determine if it should be reconfigured for the specific needs of women veterans.

Successful Strategies



- Host networking events to match veteran employees with potential peer mentees.
- Ensure that mentoring programs for women veterans use the latest technology and social networking tools to help these women identify and access mentors.
- Consider partnering with a national networking organization (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook Groups mentoring program) to streamline the mentor–mentee matching process and broaden the reach and impact of such programs.
- Hire women veterans to provide training to civilian women who want to serve as mentors to veteran mentees.

We recommend that smaller businesses that are not able to engage in these actions connect with organizations that focus on hiring veterans, such as Hire Heroes USA, to learn more about how they can support and develop women veterans.

Promising Practices



- [Lockheed Martin](#) partners with government and private organizations to help service members transition into rewarding civilian careers through professional development. The company also employs [Military Relations Managers](#) to support veterans in transition through the hiring process and at the start of their employment.
- Boeing created the [USO Pathfinder® Transition Program](#) to offer support to active-duty service members and their families throughout their military careers and when they transition out of the service. Service members and their families receive an action plan and tailored professional development. A number of Boeing initiatives focus on both women and veterans, including [Women Make Us Better](#), which is dedicated to increasing the number of women in STEM careers worldwide, and [Supporting Veterans and Their Families](#).
- [Oracle](#) offers several resources for veterans, including the Veteran Guidon Program, an onboarding program that matches new employees with mentors, and the Military Affiliated Veteran Employee Network (MAVEN), an affinity group for employees.

Professional Organizations & Associations

Membership-based professional associations provide members with networking connections, information about job opportunities, and industry insights. These associations are typically well-known within industries but aren't always accessible to newcomers breaking into the field. Professional associations are typically key facilitators of industry-specific conferences and the often-unseen connection between employers in the same sector. Membership in a STEM-focused professional association can be a lifeline to the industry-specific information and resources needed to transition into a STEM career. Increasing access to professional associations would not only benefit women veterans but would also bring valuable insight and perspective to association members.

WE RECOMMEND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS & ASSOCIATIONS DO THE FOLLOWING

- ✓ Provide a free one-year membership and/or waived conference registration fees for women veterans transitioning from the military.
- ✓ Partner with women-veteran focused organizations to provide training and resources for members on the strengths that women veterans bring to a professional setting.
- ✓ Form special interest groups for members that focus specifically on women veterans.

Promising Practices



- [IEEE Computer Society](#) has a number of [member communities](#) to facilitate networking and information sharing. Their [Women in Computing](#) community “supports women in tech and offers many initiatives to empower their career development and salary potential.”
- [National Society for Black Engineers](#) has a [Women in Science & Engineering](#) (WISE) special interest group with the mission to “Enlighten, Engage, and Empower not only NSBE women in STEM but foster relationships and collaborate with communities and institutions outside of NSBE.”
- [American Evaluation Association](#) has a [Military Veterans topical interest group](#) that aims to “raises awareness and deepens understanding of the application of evaluation theory, methods, and practice in military, veteran, and national security settings.”




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