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

For Institutions of Training and
Higher Education Institutes

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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 institutions of training and higher education institutes 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.

Institutions of Training and Higher Education Institutes

Institutions of training and higher education play a key role in assisting veterans with their transitions to the civilian world. These institutions can offer programs, services, and resources to help ensure that needed support is available to veterans.

WE RECOMMEND INSTITUTIONS DO THE FOLLOWING

- ✓ Create “education tracks,” similar to career tracks, that allow military training and experience to count toward entry requirements.
- ✓ Establish affinity groups for women veterans to network and offer support to one another.
- ✓ Offer specific programs and opportunities in STEM disciplines for women veterans.
- ✓ Set up a mentoring program for current veteran students to help entering students navigate the academic world.
- ✓ Seek women veterans as advisors to better understand the unique needs of women veteran students and more effectively attract them to and retain them in STEM careers.
- ✓ Institute a Veteran Students Center on campus, a dedicated space to coordinate support services and resources for veterans—including meeting space, tutoring, assistance navigating and accessing their GI Bill educational benefits, and other academic services—and to help student veterans with the transition from military to civilian life. The Veterans Education Empowerment Act, bipartisan legislation currently in Congress, would offer grants to universities and colleges across the nation who create such centers (Congress.gov, n.d.).
- ✓ Offer tuition and other scholarships specifically for women veterans.

Successful Strategies



- If a mentoring program currently exists, determine if it should be reconfigured for the specific needs of women veterans.
- 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.



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