



Veteran Employment in Michigan: Where to Begin



JUNE 2015



*“If you are going to achieve excellence
in big things, you develop the habit in
little matters. Excellence is not an exception,
it is a prevailing attitude”*

-Colin Powell



INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your decision to actively seek talented veterans for your organization. As an employer, you realize your people are your greatest asset. When you hire a veteran, you are getting an individual with job-ready skills, proven leadership, a strong work ethic and a fierce sense of loyalty. Unafraid of new challenges, this person has already demonstrated that he or she can work in diverse and unpredictable environments, cooperate as a team player and shift gears at a moment's notice. These skills and traits are exactly what Michigan businesses need to succeed in tomorrow's economy.

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) was developed to serve as the central coordinating point, connecting those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and their families to services and benefits throughout the state. Staying true to our mission, MVAA is committed to connecting Michigan employers with veteran talent and reducing barriers to employment, such as skills translation and identifying the right talent for the opportunity.

- **For veterans**, this includes leveraging service providers who can assist with resume development and interview preparation and identifying opportunities with employers seeking veteran talent.
- **For employers**, this includes making it easier to navigate available resources, sharing best practices for recruitment, hiring and retention and partnering to conduct targeted outreach to the right veteran talent for the opportunity.

Our goal is to assist employers and veterans in making meaningful connections that will lead to appropriate placement, higher job satisfaction, productivity and retention.

This resource book is intended to be a quick reference guide for veteran hiring and to invite you to partner with MVAA to recruit transitioning talent to Michigan. It includes information about today's transitioning veterans, provides engagement resources and identifies the available incentives that make hiring a veteran a sound investment for your organization. We hope you'll join us in connecting today's transitioning veteran talent to tomorrow's opportunities and help make Michigan the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

GETTING TO KNOW MICHIGAN'S VETERAN POPULATION



Post-9/11 Overview

Currently, Michigan is home to over 73,000 Post-9/11 veterans, and that number is projected to potentially double over the next five years.

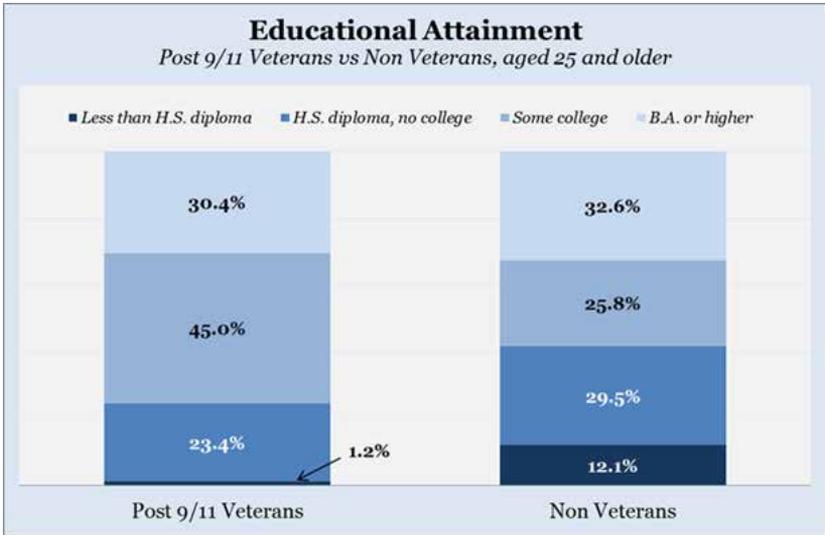
- This includes 10,500 women veterans, the fastest growing demographic in the military. In fact, 15 percent of active duty military and 18 percent of the National Guard and Reserves are made up of women, the highest it has ever been.

Well Educated

Post-9/11 veterans are highly skilled and actively seeking education and employment opportunities in your community. In fact, more than **10,500 students are currently using Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits in Michigan** to obtain technical certifications, associate and bachelor degrees, advanced degrees and more.

Did you know?
71% of 17-24 year olds
would fail to qualify for
military service today.

The graph below shows Post-9/11 veterans have similar or higher education levels than their civilian counterparts, yet higher levels of unemployment.

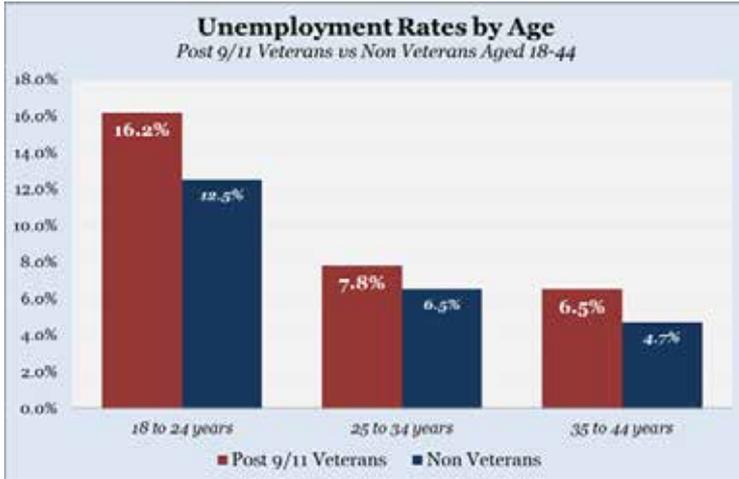


A significantly higher number of Post-9/11 veterans have completed some college compared to their non-veteran counterparts. Additionally, Post-9/11 veterans are far more likely to have their high school diploma than non-veterans of similar age.

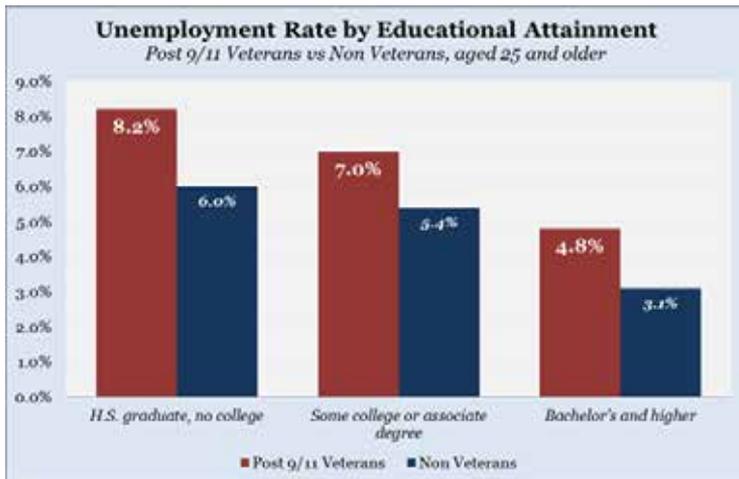
High Veteran Unemployment Rate

Despite higher education attainment and having more than 94,000* job openings, Michigan still has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country for veterans. In partnership with you, we plan to address the veteran unemployment rate by removing barriers and matching incoming veteran talent to openings in Michigan.

* Based on data from MiTalent.org on May 21, 2015



The unemployment rates of Post-9/11 veterans far exceed that of their non-veteran counterparts at all education levels.





Notes

What help do you need with your veteran hiring practices? How can the MVAA and its partners provide that assistance?



STRENGTHS OF HIRING A VETERAN

Recruiting veterans requires learning a little about the military culture, and the willingness to assess the intangible qualities these candidates can bring to your organization. At first glance, you might think someone lacks the technical expertise or years of experience to perform a certain role, but in the military leaders are developed by taking on new and unfamiliar responsibilities with the expectations that they learn quickly, properly leverage the strengths of their team and deliver results. It's with this same attitude that they approach their transition.

"The leadership attributes that are ingrained in our service men and women through their military experiences resonate at Whirlpool. We believe in Being Bold, Playing to Win, Leading with Speed and Owning It to name a few specific areas where we assess potential talent. Through that assessment process, we have hired veterans at all levels of our company, and the challenge often is how we will ensure the job scope will be large enough to keep them challenged!"

Kimberly Fry
Sr. Manager Talent Acquisition
Whirlpool Corporation

2015 Silver-Level Veteran-Friendly Employer

- Veterans are required to attend leadership courses to be promoted in rank.
- All ranks are expected to perform in a value-based culture where concepts such as leadership, honor, duty, selfless-service, teamwork, respect and integrity are instilled in everything they do.
- Tremendous responsibility is bestowed on the individual at a very early point in their career. Oftentimes, resumes will reflect the value of equipment and the number of subordinates that a service member was responsible for because that is how the military reinforces discipline and teaches the meaning of responsibility.
- An individual's "comfort zone" is constantly pushed through training to help them build confidence and to learn to recognize their strengths and weaknesses.
- A "can-do" attitude is expected, but you get to that by building confidence, testing your limitations, growing individually and learning to work as a team.

A veteran is a culmination of the best qualities you could look for in an employee. Veterans have tried and true skill sets that lend themselves well to many organizations and career areas. These skills are not easily taught; however, veterans have been honing these skills throughout their service in the military and have many strengths that can benefit your company. In many cases, the technical skills needed for a position can be taught when an individual brings these strengths to the table.

Leadership

Leadership is something that is both taught and experienced in the military. Veterans often have experience leading their colleagues, sometimes through adverse situations, while accounting for an ever-changing environment. The military also teaches that leaders don't have to be in charge to be a leader. Recognizing that empowers people to make recommendations and offer "bottom-up" refinement when the time and situation allows.

Adaptability

Adaptability is a key attribute many veterans possess. During their time in the military, veterans often had to adjust a course of action to account for a variety of variables, anticipated and unanticipated. This frequently required them to quickly learn new concepts, equipment and roles. Service members routinely work outside of their specialty area during their career and being adaptable gives them the flexibility to adjust to a new role with new technical challenges.

Innovation

Organizations are often looking for ways to increase efficiency and improve outcomes. Veterans can often demonstrate innovation. Operating in a deployed environment often requires ingenuity and innovation to meet the operational needs of the unit. That could range from learning to properly fabricate parts to keeping equipment operational, to adapting tactics for an ever-changing threat environment. The very nature of military operations has changed significantly since 9/11, and military leaders at all levels have had to adapt and continually refine and innovate to meet operational challenges and demands.

Team player

One thing frequently heard from veterans is the importance of their “brothers and sisters” working alongside them. Much of what is achieved is accomplished as a team. When you hire a veteran, not only are you gaining an individual who is concerned for his or her colleagues, he or she also recognizes the importance of collaboration and that the team is only successful if each member of the team is successful. Veterans are used to working as a team to determine collaborative solutions and ways to accomplish the task in a more efficient and effective manner.

Resiliency

Veterans understand not only maintaining professionalism during adversity, but also know not to become paralyzed by it. They have often experienced difficult, dangerous and intense situations and learned to maintain mission focus to accomplish the task at hand. The focus and drive they had in the military can prove valuable to your organization when faced with trying times. It is comforting to know that your employee has the skills needed to evaluate, assess and make the right decision in the situations they may face for you.

Results-oriented, mission driven

Veterans remain focused on the mission, given one is provided, and will work to achieve the goals set before them. Organizations survive based on results, and veterans are trained to adapt and overcome in order to achieve the mission.

Loyalty

In the military, loyalty runs both directions, up and down the chain of command, so a veteran will seek out a similar situation during their civilian job search. When the right fit is found, veterans will be loyal to their organization. This is important because turnover comes at a cost. If you do your due diligence as a company to determine the right skills set for your needs and provide a path for advancement, a veteran hire can provide a long-term win for your organization.



Notes

What are some attributes you look for when hiring an employee?
Did any of the panelists talk about these attributes for veterans?



CONNECTING WITH VETERAN TALENT

Connecting with veteran talent and translating military skills and experience into the organization's mission are the top two employer responses when asked about challenges to veteran hiring. There are an abundance of available resources and programs, but committing the time and energy to figure out which ones best apply to your organization often becomes a barrier. The truth is, veterans experience similar issues trying to identify you. Aligning supply and demand requires simplifying the process of making a meaningful connection. This is an area where MVAA can partner with you to develop a vet hiring strategy that meets your organizational needs.

In this section, you will learn:

- There is no single source where an employer can find every veteran.
- How MVAA can support you in developing a veteran hiring strategy.
- Various ways to recruit veterans: online, face-to-face and through networking opportunities.
- Tips for job postings, interviewing and onboarding veterans.
- Non-traditional ways to include veterans in your company through internships and apprenticeships.

Streamlining the Process

MVAA, in concert with local, state and federal partners, is working to identify and remove barriers to veteran employment through its Interagency Employment Council. The council includes partners from:

- Civil Service Commission
- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
- Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Michigan National Guard
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services
- MichiganWorks!
- Talent Investment Agency
- Unemployment Insurance Agency
- U.S. Army Reserves

- U.S. Department Of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation
- U.S. Department of Labor
- Veteran Community Action Teams
- Workforce Development Agency

This partnership allows the state to take on a multi-faceted perspective when addressing veteran unemployment. Additionally, MVAA has partnered with leaders in the private sector that have proven track records in veteran-friendly employment practices. This group hosts regular meetings to discuss barriers they are seeing in the corporate world and how to eliminate them, as well share best practices.

In partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Michigan has been recognized as one of a handful of All*Vet States. Through this partnership, Michigan is showcased on a national level at every active installation at home and abroad to veterans before they leave the military for career and educational opportunities. MVAA has also partnered with technical schools, colleges and universities to create the Michigan Veteran Education Initiative. This program places veteran resource representatives on campus to connect veterans to benefits and resources throughout the community. Let MVAA help you include these items as a part of your veteran hiring strategy.

Connecting to Veterans

Connecting with veterans in Michigan can be simple and complicated at the same time. Although there are no active duty installations in the state, it is still home to many National Guard and Reserve units from

"It's incredible how closely our Whirlpool values (Integrity, Respect, Diversity with Inclusion, Spirit of Winning and Teamwork) align with the core values of the military branches. This has resulted in hiring qualified talent who not only have the technical aptitude but also exemplify our culture extremely well. It's no wonder our veterans do exceedingly well in the job, proven through promotions and retention!"

Kimberly Fry
Sr. Manager Talent Acquisition
Whirlpool Corporation

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the different branches of the armed forces. Michigan is also the landing point for a large number of active duty soldiers transitioning out of the military. These veterans come in contact with a wide variety of local, state and national organizations in an effort to learn more about benefits and services they have earned. MVAA works hand-in-hand with these organizations in assisting veterans.

Job Posting, Selection Process and Onboarding

As you prepare to post job openings, consider how the opening matches with various military occupational specialties (MOS) from all service branches. The MOS is a code that identifies the individual's primary job function while in the military. Reverse engineering your job postings to show the MOSs that are a good fit for the position makes it easier for veterans to understand how their military skill sets can be an asset to the position and your company. It may be helpful to also list the ranks that may be a good fit for the position (i.e., E-4 or O-2). Veterans often need assistance with translating their military resumes, and adding this information to your postings can be a great bridge to civilian employment.

In reviewing resumes from veteran job seekers, consider having some of your other veteran staff assist in deciphering military jargon and skill sets. When interviewing, you can help them by asking guided questions and setting the tone to help them relax. If you are mindful of the culture change they are experiencing, the interview experience can be more comfortable for both parties. Also keep in mind that a veteran may not have ever interviewed or negotiated for salary and benefits.

Once you have hired a veteran, there are some additional programs and processes that can make the transition smoother. Match the veteran with a willing veteran mentor currently on staff. This mentor can help the new hire transition into the company culture. Connect the veteran with your company's veterans group to provide comradery with other veteran employees. Explain how your values align with the military values to help ease the transition for new veteran employees.

Where do I find veterans?

The most common question many employers ask is, “Where do I find veterans?” MVAA recommends a multi-faceted approach, addressing online, face-to-face and networking/job fair opportunities. Since there is not a master list of veterans, employers need to consider a variety of options and determine those that work best for their company. The companies that have been most successful in their veteran recruitment are active in almost all of these activities.

MVAA works with a variety of agencies and programs through employment councils and partnerships and can work with you to determine the best resources for your needs. We can assist with developing a veteran hiring strategy, and connecting you to local resources most relevant to your job opening.

Following are just a few of the many programs to consider in starting your search:

- **Pure Michigan Talent Connect - [Mitalent.org](https://www.mitalent.org)**
Through Michigan’s statewide talent bank, employers can locate veterans that have self-identified. Veterans are provided 24-hours advance notice for job postings. Consider marking your job posting as veteran friendly or veteran preferred for an increased number of veteran applicants. If you are an MVAA Veteran-Friendly Employer, include this information in your job posting.
- **Veteran Employment Center - [Ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs](https://ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs)**
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor, provides access to veterans seeking employment from around the country. If you meet the Veteran Commitment criteria, you can be a featured employer which increases visibility of your positions.
- **Helmets to Hardhats - [Helmetstohardhats.org](https://www.helmetstohardhats.org)**
If your specialty is in the building trades this dedicated veteran job seeking site is available for your use, and connects you directly to transitioning service members.

- **Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency - MichiganVeterans.com**
The Veteran-Friendly Employer page is viewed hundreds of times each month by veterans seeking employment. In addition to veterans and families residing in Michigan, the website is also marketed to transitioning veteran talent to highlight education, employment and quality of life opportunities for veterans relocating to Michigan. Consider becoming a Veteran-Friendly Employer to increase visibility in the veteran community. MVAA can also connect you to regional contacts and resources to assist you in recruiting veteran talent.

Hiring Fairs and Networking Opportunities

The State of Michigan partners with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation to host Hiring Our Heroes job fairs as a part of the Veteran Expos. Veteran Expos are one-stop shop events for veterans that include employment openings and training, education opportunities, local, state and federal benefits, on-site health screenings, and more. The Veteran Expos and Hiring Our Heroes events are a great way to connect with veterans seeking employment. As part of the Hiring Our Heroes program, employers who register in advance are able to review the resumes of registered job seekers. This provides the opportunity to prequalify candidates, conduct interviews on-sites and make offers during the event.



Regional career fairs and job fairs offered at local veteran service organizations are another venue where employers can find and hire veteran talent. Some veteran-friendly employers even host veteran-specific job events at their facilities to increase veteran recruitment. Additionally, through MEDC, employers can participate in MI Virtual Career Fairs; career fairs that take place completely online.

Internships and Apprenticeships

Consider recruiting veterans enrolled in academic institutions of higher learning for internships. Providing internships for unemployed veterans or veteran students is a great way to connect with veterans, help acclimate veteran candidates to your organization and assist with successful veteran transition into long-term career opportunities within the organization. Many companies have established their own rotational internship programs for veterans to learn about a variety of career areas at the company, while receiving private sector experience. This also provides the employer with the opportunity to see in which areas the veteran excels.

Employers can identify veteran intern candidates via programs such as the Michigan Veteran Education Initiative and through Intern In Michigan (Interninmichigan.com). Intern in Michigan is a new system that instantly connects students and employers through a unique online matching system. Employers can indicate a veteran preference on internship postings and can be matched with profiles of individuals who indicate they are a veteran.

"Quicken Loan's 6-month "Tour of Duty" program is a customized apprenticeship designed to give recently transitioned veterans the opportunity to gain real-world experience in the civilian workplace. Our military veteran recruiters work closely with veterans to put them on the path to transforming their military experience into long-term careers."

Rob Ellis,
Veteran Recruiter
Quicken Loans

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Employers may also want to consider hiring veterans through apprenticeship or on-the-job training through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Employers can establish trainings or apprenticeships that result in a veteran gaining job certification or journeyman status through cost-sharing contracts with the VA. See more on page 28.

Local, state and federal government agencies can also have veterans participate in a non-paid work experience program (NPWE) through the VA. The NPWE allows veterans with service-connected disabilities and specified career goals with the opportunity to gain hands-on work experience. If you need assistance connecting with the VA about this program, contact MVAA at 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838).



Notes

Do you post your job openings on MiTalent.org? How have you worked with any veteran organizations in the past? Have you worked with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve to learn more about how to support National Guard and Reserve members?



OVERVIEW OF TODAY'S VETERAN TALENT

Today's transitioning veterans have tremendous work and leadership experience, are highly educated, possess strong technical skills and have often worked outside of their military occupational specialty (MOS) to support on-going operations. All of this contributes to adaptive and innovative character traits that many veterans develop during their service that translates into success after removing the uniform. It is important to draw attention to this because you will often encounter veterans who will pursue a career outside of their MOS.

In this section, you will learn:

- How a veteran's MOS may tie to your current employment opportunity.
- How veterans often have skill sets much broader than their MOS.
- How branch of service and rank may play a role in a veteran's attributes.

Military Job vs. Civilian Job

The military, similar to a business, has individuals working in a variety of different areas: human resources, planning, logistics, public information, network security and more. Following are some ways to consider how military skill sets may fit into positions in your company. It is important to remember that while these are a guide to those career areas that may be similar, the skill sets of veterans are vast and dynamic, as demonstrated in the Strengths of Hiring a Veteran on page 7.

Nearly 75 percent of military employment is concentrated in six military occupational categories: *Health Care; Engineering, Science and Technical; Combat Specialty; Electronic and Electrical Equipment and Repair Transportation; and Vehicle and Machinery Mechanic*. These categories lend themselves well to common civilian career areas such as Health Care, Information Technology, Skilled Trades and Transportation and Logistics. Michigan has made it easier for veterans to transition in

several of these career areas by allowing appropriate military experience to qualify for the required license or credential, thereby expediting the process for those individuals that meet the requirements. This may be a valuable recruiting tool when looking to hire transitioning veterans.



Did you know?
A military occupational specialty may have a different title depending on the individual's branch of the military. It may also be called a military occupational code (MOC), navy enlisted classification (NEC) or Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC).

In the military, service members receive a vast amount of training in a variety of skill sets and have a certain MOS that aligns with their job. The training required for each MOS varies depending on the complexity of the job. Once they graduate from that initial training, they are assigned to a unit where they will use those skills on a day-to-day basis. Veterans leave the military with years of experience and training that come at no cost to you as an employer. When recruiting veterans, it is often helpful to look at both the MOS of the individual, as well as the rank (see page 24). This can provide a great deal of information about their training and skills. In looking at some of the top career areas in Michigan, we can provide cross-walks to MOSs that may be a good fit.

It is worthy to note; however, that service members often operate outside of their MOS or change MOSs, so their skill sets may be much broader.

It is common for officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) to serve in staff positions outside of their MOS as part of their growth and development. For example, a mid-grade officer or NCO has probably worked 30-40 percent of their time in positions of responsibility outside of their primary MOS and were required to manage subordinates with MOSs related to the missions they were managing such as logistics, human resources, civil affairs, etc.

Additionally, not every veteran wants to work in the same career area in which he or she did in the military. Most are assigned their MOS based upon highest and best use of the individual to meet the needs of the branch of service; others are influenced by experiences outside of their primary MOS that they want to pursue after their service. Regardless, he or she will still have a variety of skills that will be valuable to your organization outside of those directly related to his or her MOS, such as adaptability and innovation.

Health Care

Health care professionals in the military receive top of the line training and experience. They are required to not only give medical treatment in a conventional hospital environment, but must also be prepared to do so in austere conditions. They do this with the typical stresses of a life or death situation for the patient, but sometimes even for themselves. Army medics (68W) graduate with their EMT-B certification and have the opportunity for a follow-on specialty. This includes, but is not limited to, becoming an LPN or a flight medic. As a flight medic, they'll receive additional training in critical care and enroute trauma transport.



Information Technology

Cyber warfare is now becoming the tip of the spear in non-conventional combat. These cyber defenders are operating at some of the highest classification ratings and understand what's at stake. They know that it's not just trade secrets they are protecting, but national security. Soldiers with an MOS of 25D receive a 14-week course that teaches them how to protect, monitor, detect, analyze and respond to unauthorized cyberspace domain actions. Air Force officers who specialize in Cyberspace Operations (17DX) are required to go through 23 weeks of specialized training. This training teaches them how to plan and supervise networks to include establishment, operations, information assurance and defense.

Skilled Trades

In order to have the computers and networks with which to defend, the Ethernet lines and electrical infrastructure must first be established. Marine Electricians (1141) are required to go through six weeks of both classroom and hands-on training to do these tasks. Those electricians, and other skilled labor specialists, are doing their jobs in buildings that may not be up to OSHA standards.

An Army plumber (12K) will work with local natives to rebuild kitchens and bathrooms in a village in Afghanistan. This will be done despite not having all the tools for the job, through a language barrier and while questioning the security of the surroundings.

"Translating military skills to civilian skills can be challenging. At Roush Industries, we've rewritten our internal job descriptions to include applicable military occupational classifications for all branches of service. We also list applicable military skills in our external job postings. For instance, if we advertise for a mechanic, we will also include verbiage stating 'Open to MOSs like 91B for the Army, or 3521 for the Marine Corps.'"

David L. Duncel
Veterans Initiatives Program Manager
Roush

2014 Silver-Level Veteran-Friendly Employer

Transportation and Logistics

A Motor Transport Operator (88M) will spend more than 200 hours in a vehicle learning their job during initial training and receive a majority of their experience driving thousands of miles overseas. This experience will include preparing the vehicle for movement, monitoring the loading of cargo and operating a vehicle through various types of terrain and conditions.

While many civilian vehicle operators will do the same thing, the veteran must also be prepared for unique contingencies.

A flat tire in America will require the driver to pull over and contact a wrecker.

A flat tire overseas

presents the additional requirements of pulling security and loading the cargo into another vehicle to make the mission happen. Additionally, the military is responsible for initiating, coordinating and tracking billions of dollars of vehicles, machinery and equipment being shipped across the country and overseas. Service members with these experiences lend themselves well to logistician positions in your company.

The orthodox training and licensing service members get through the military is thus supplemented with non-orthodox skills that cannot be taught in the school house. These unique circumstances and scenarios enable military veterans to learn what a vast majority of their civilian counterparts will never experience. This is what makes a veteran such a great asset to hire for your company.



Translating Military Experience to Business Needs¹

The chart below is intended to be a reference to assist employers to better translate military positions and ranks to their corporate equivalent. Additional schooling and experience would warrant further consideration.

Title	Years of Military Experience	Corporate Equivalent	Examples of Equivalent Corporate Jobs
Enlisted Ranks			
Private-Specialist (E1- E4)	4-6	Task oriented work and can manage small teams	Transportation or warehouse operations
Staff Sergeant and Technical Sergeant (Air Force) (E5-E6)	6-10	Entry level management; capable of managing large projects	Coordinators
Gunnery and Master Sergeant (USMC) (E7-E8)	10-15	Front-line Manager	Guest service manager
Master Chief Petty Officer (Navy & Coast Guard) (E9)	15-20+	Senior Manager, Director	Operations Manager
Officer Ranks			
Second & First Lieutenant (O1-O2)	4-6	Entry level management	Project Manager
Captain & Major (O3-O4)	6-10	Manager	Distribution Manager
Lieutenant Colonel (O5)	10-15	Senior Manager	Manager of Executive Communications
Colonel/Captain (Navy)(O6)	15-20	Director	Director of Veterans Initiatives
Brigadier General/Major General (O7-O8)	20+	VP +	
Lieutenant General (O9)	25+	SVP +	

¹ Adapted from The Walt Disney Company Veterans Institute Heroes Work Here



Notes

How have you focused on veterans in your recruiting efforts? What are some roadblocks you have faced in trying to find veterans? What are effective ways you have heard today to reach out to veterans?



VETERAN HIRING SUPPORT

There are several federal and state programs and incentives designed to promote veteran hiring. Not only does a veteran make a great addition to your team, it is also a sound investment for your organization's growth strategy. Learning what programs you may be eligible for can assist you in developing a recruiting strategy.

In this section, you will learn:

- Available resources for employers hiring veterans.
- Available resources for veteran employees.
- Available education benefits.

Relocation

Veterans that transition from the active duty to civilian life and relocate to Michigan are entitled to a relocation allowance. The military will pay for the veterans to move their family and all of their household goods. This can save you as an employer thousands of dollars to recruit some of the best available talent.

Health Care

The Veterans Health Administration is America's largest integrated health care system, with more than 1,700 care sites and more than 9 million veterans enrolled. All enrolled veterans have access to the VA's comprehensive medical benefits package including preventive, primary and specialty care; prescriptions; mental health care; home health care; geriatrics and extended care; medical equipment and prosthetics. Many veterans qualify for cost-free health care services, although some veterans must pay modest copays for health care or prescriptions. Additionally, many veterans qualify for VA Health Care Benefits upon leaving the service. In fact, all combat veterans are eligible for five years of VA health care upon their return. Veterans that qualify and use the VA for all of their health care needs may not be required to enroll in additional medical coverage per the Affordable Care Act. Additionally, veterans who have served in combat-zones - and their family members - may visit the VA's many community-based Vet Centers, which provide no-cost counseling, outreach and referral services to help the whole family adjust to life after deployment.

Educational Benefits

GI Bill

Since its inception as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the GI Bill has helped millions of veterans get a college education or retraining in a trade/profession. GI Bill benefits can be used to fund professional development and career readiness to support advancement within your organization at no cost to you as the employer. The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides qualifying individuals up to 36 months of education benefits, generally payable for 15 years following release from active duty.



Most VA education and training benefits may be used at VA-approved institutions of higher learning, including four-year universities, community colleges and entities offering advanced degrees. The GI Bill can pay for more than one degree. For example, it will pay for an associate's, bachelor's and master's degree in the same field as long as the veteran has remaining entitlement on the GI Bill. As an employer, providing the time for your veteran employees to utilize their GI Bill to complete their degree or pursue an Executive MBA or other degree program will result in an individual that can continue to move up the ladder in your organization.

Often required for work in certain fields, certification tests may be eligible for GI Bill reimbursement. Tests that may be reimbursable by the VA include licensing and/or certification as a mechanic, medical technician, therapist, computer network engineer, website developer and other professional licenses. There is no limit to the number of tests or number of times a veteran can be reimbursed with remaining entitlement on their GI Bill.

On-the-job Training and Apprenticeships

Veterans may use the GI Bill while participating in **on-the-job training (OJT)** and apprenticeship training programs. Employers can use this benefit as a recruiting tool by using wages plus a stipend to attract veteran candidates. These programs allow veterans to learn a trade or skill through OJT participation rather than attending formal classroom instruction. A veteran generally enters into a training contract for a specific period with an employer and at the end of the training period, the veteran gains job certification or journeyman status. Through an approved program, **employers usually pay a reduced wage, and veterans can use their GI Bill benefit and receive a tax-free stipend (average is \$1,000 depending on county of residence)** in addition to the entry-level wage for the first year of training.

Fast Track Programs

Additionally, several Michigan colleges and universities offer fast-track programs that account for veteran's military experience in the curriculum. These accelerated programs credit veterans for their military experience, allowing them to receive certifications or degrees in a shortened period of time. Programs are in a variety of areas which include, but are not limited to: nursing, paramedics, criminal justice, policing, teaching, agriculture and cyber security.



Companies that invest in training their employees tend to thrive, even in the face of strong competition. Training apprentices within your company is one of the best ways to accomplish this investment. If you empower veteran employees through training, you will see direct benefits.

Tax Credits

If you have hired veterans in the last few years, your company could be eligible for tax credits. **The federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit will give credit to a business owner for half of a qualifying veteran’s wages.** Certain benchmarks must be met and we encourage you to talk to a CPA about how this credit can apply to you.

Veteran Target Group	Worked at least 120 hours but less than 400 hours	Worked at least 400 hours
Receives SNAP (food stamps) benefits	Up to \$1,500 (25% of \$6,000 of first-year wages)	Up to \$2,400 (40% of \$6,000 of first-year wages)
Entitled to compensation for service-connected disability:		
Hired 1 year after leaving service	Up to \$3,000 (25% of \$12,000 of first-year wages)	Up to \$4,800 (40% of \$12,000 of first-year wages)
Unemployed at least 6 months	Up to \$6,000 (25% of \$24,000 of first-year wages)	Up to \$9,600 (40% of \$24,000 of first-year wages)
Unemployed:		
At least 4 weeks	Up to \$1,500 (25% of \$6,000 of first-year wages)	Up to \$2,400 (40% of \$6,000 of first-year wages)
At least 6 months	Up to \$3,500 (25% of \$14,000 of first-year wages)	Up to \$5,600 (40% of \$14,000 of first-year wages)

Michigan lawmakers are currently reviewing legislation that is similar to the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit. This bill will allow for a part of the veteran’s wages to apply as a credit for the business when they file their state taxes. For more information, contact your state senator about the “The Hire More Heros Act.”

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Private Sector Special Employer Incentive (SEI) Program

Employers can work with their local VR&E office to hire veterans with service-connected disabilities through the SEI program. These veterans often face extraordinary obstacles to gaining employment, and this program connects the veteran with successful work experience. **Employers who participate in this program can be reimbursed up to 50 percent of the veteran’s salary for up to six months.** This may qualify the employer for a tax credit. To identify a point of contact for this program in your region, contact MVAA at 800-MICH VET (800-642-4838).



Community Ventures

Through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Michigan assists unemployed individuals pursue career opportunities in Detroit, Flint, Saginaw and Pontiac. Unemployed veterans in those areas may qualify for this program. **The Community Ventures program provides employer grants to cover some training and costs related to hiring eligible applicants, wraparound services, career pathways and business supports.** For more information, visit Mitalent.org/community-ventures.



Notes

Is a degree required for advancement at your organization? Do you share the cost for an employee to get certifications or advanced degrees? What kind of apprenticeship or OJT programs could work for you?





Notes

Do you know how many veterans you currently have in your workforce? Do you have a veterans' network or committee at your organization?



BECOMING VETERAN-FRIENDLY

MVAA created the Veteran-Friendly Employer Program to recognize the great efforts going on across the state to support transitioning veterans and their families as they begin the next chapter of their lives in Michigan. Our intent is to illuminate and share best practices between employers and communicate opportunities that exist in Michigan to veteran talent before they make their post-service plans. A lucrative employment market, combined with phenomenal institutions that accept the GI Bill, make Michigan an attractive option.

The program recognizes a partnership between MVAA and your organization to develop targeted veteran recruitment strategies, provide appropriate training and updates about changes in legislation that could impact your veteran programming and to assist you in developing a veteran-friendly culture. MVAA will work with you to provide VA benefits counseling to your current veteran employees and assist you in moving from bronze to gold recognition.



"GM has supported our nation's military for more than 100 years. Along with our thousands of employees who have served in the military, we're eager to provide opportunity and advocate for transitioning soldiers. GM has a long-standing relationship with The Walt Disney Company and USAA, so this is really bringing together the best that Michigan has to offer for our valued veterans."

Ken Barrett
Global Chief Diversity Officer
General Motors

2014 Silver-Level Veteran-Friendly Employer

In this section, you will learn:

- The benefits of becoming a Veteran-Friendly Employer.
- How to become a Veteran-Friendly Employer.

The MVAA recognizes those companies that go above and beyond the minimum to support our nation's veterans. We do this by granting three levels of certification: Bronze, Silver and Gold to employers that apply and are accepted. The application is simple and available on the MVAA website.

Criteria for the three Veteran-Friendly Employer levels are as follows:



Bronze

An employer:

- Commits to hiring a specific number of veterans. (This number is determined by the company based on its size and hiring plans for the next year.
- Posts job openings on the [MiTalent.org](https://www.mitalent.org) website.
- Signs a statement of support with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.



Silver

In addition to meeting all the Bronze-Level requirements, an employer:

- Implements either an internship, OJT or apprenticeship program
- Advertises its Veteran-Friendly status on its website and marketing materials.

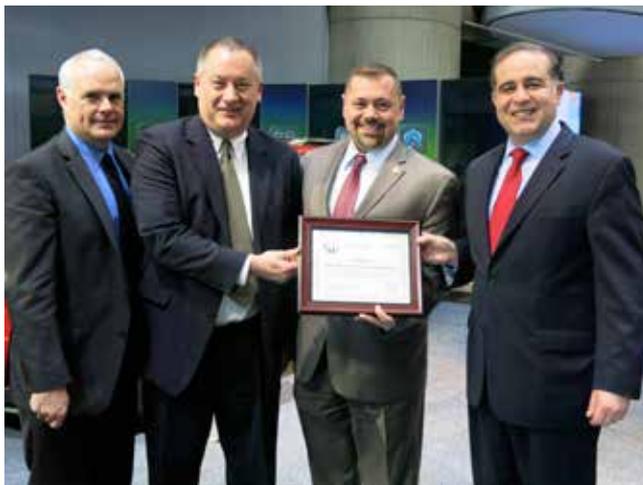


Gold

In addition to meeting all the Silver-Level requirements, an employer:

- Must show they retained 75 percent of their veterans over a 12-month period.
- Implement a veteran-specific internal program.
- Implement a veteran hiring rotation program.
- Share their best practices with other organizations.
- Publish participation in MVAA program and veteran hiring and retention statistics in their annual plan.

By becoming a Veteran-Friendly Employer you show veterans and the public your commitment to helping lower veteran unemployment. This in turn decreases homelessness, depression and suicide among veterans, and helps stimulate the economy in the state by attracting more veterans.



Being a Veteran-Friendly Employer also increases your exposure to the public through our website and annual announcement of Veteran-Friendly Employers.

The MVAA is available from start to finish to help you complete the process. We're here to answer questions about the application; what programs would best fit your organization's needs; how to better target and retain veterans; how to build a veteran hiring strategy; and what steps you need to take to reach Silver and Gold status. We will also send representatives to your organization for brown-bag working lunches to discuss state and federal benefits available to veterans.

By implementing the programs in this section, you help veterans with the transition to the civilian workforce and show your commitment to assisting veterans. These programs are used by our current Veteran-Friendly Employers and they have consistently demonstrated their ability to recruit and retain a quality workforce. Contact an MVAA representative today at 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838) to find out how you can become a Veteran-Friendly Employer.



Notes

What are the steps that you could take today to become a Veteran-Friendly Employer? How much time could you commit to this process? What is your end goal as it relates to veteran hiring?





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