

Licensing and Certification for Veterans:

State Strategies for Successfully
Removing Barriers



EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



“Twenty-five million
veterans are living
among us today. These
men and women
selflessly set aside their
civilian lives to put
on the uniform and
serve us.”

–Steve Buyer

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Introduction

Military servicemembers on active duty are the beneficiaries of extensive training that prepares them to perform in a wide range of occupational specialties. Many of those occupational specialties have direct or proximate equivalents in the civilian workforce, but transitioning servicemembers might lack the relevant civilian occupational credentials required under federal or state law or by an employer to secure employment. Despite their relevant skills and experience, veterans can encounter lengthy processes and requirements to obtain the credentials needed to enter civilian employment. These barriers can impose additional time and financial costs on veterans and taxpayers, who pay both for the initial military training and for re-training outside of the military, primarily through veterans' federal education benefits.

In response, the federal government has undertaken several initiatives to streamline and accelerate civilian licensing and certification for current service members and veterans. The initiatives undertaken resulted from new intergovernmental efforts across Federal agencies, including the military, to identify equivalencies between military and civilian occupations and provide civilian credentials.

The ultimate authority for regulating entry into most professions lies with state governments. Although Federal agencies and national professional associations can propose standards and guidelines, state licensing boards make final decisions about whether alternative pathways are adequate to uphold public safety standards based on professional requirements, occupational skill competencies, and state laws and regulations. The nation's governors recognize that authority and have made the transition for veterans from military service to civilian life and employment a priority in the states. Thirty-nine states issued executive orders or passed legislation to assist veterans with recognizing and transferring skills gained in military service to civilian employment between 2013 and 2015. In addition, for Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs), all 50 states have implemented the **Military Skills Test Waiver** according to the specific administrative procedures applicable within each state.

“In November 2015, I started thinking about my career outside of the military and the direction I wanted to go. I immediately gravitated toward the trucking industry because I was a truck driver in the Marine Corps. While I was back in Florida for a non-commissioned officer course, I took the time to get my class A CDL through the Military Skills Waiver Test so I would be prepared when the time came to transition out of the military.”

Sgt. Richard Stewart
United States Marine Corps

Although critical for elevating the importance of accelerating employment pathways for veterans, legislation and executive orders can only go so far to help veterans transition to civilian employment. States encounter a range of challenges implementing the related policies and subsequent requirements amid the complexity of state licensure and third-party certification systems. This guide is intended to help states move beyond the legislative and policy intent of making veterans a priority to the design and implementation of accelerated pathways to licensure and certification for veterans.

Section 237 of the Veterans' Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW Act) authorized the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) to carry out a demonstration project for the purpose of facilitating the transition of members of the Armed Forces from service on active duty to civilian employment. DOL-VETS, in partnership with the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOL-ETA), partnered with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) to implement the demonstration project. Six states participated in the 18-month demonstration: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Each demonstration state selected up to three high-demand occupations, for a total of seven occupations across all six states, to focus their licensing and credentialing strategies that corresponded with one of the three pre-selected military occupational specialties: Medic (Army 68W, Navy Hospital Corpsman, Air Force 4N0X1), Police (Army 31B, Navy Master-At-Arms, Air Force 3P0X1, Marine Corps 5811), and Truck Driver (Army 88M, Marine Corps 3531). The resulting **Report** serves as the primary source of the guidelines and strategies found in this guide. While this guide does not recreate the Report in its entirety, it draws upon the Report to identify common barriers, describe strategies for overcoming them, and present a blueprint that can inform State-led efforts to accelerate veterans' licensing and certification. States are encouraged to utilize the entire Report and appendices when developing their own strategic plans to address veterans' licensing and certification.

Barriers

A number of factors can affect the ability of servicemembers and veterans to acquire civilian credentials in related occupations on a timely basis. The demonstration states identified three types of barriers commonly encountered:

1. Veterans who have military training and experience in occupations related to those of licensed civilians often find that relevant authorities, such as licensing boards, or higher education institutions may not to recognize the military documentation of their training and experience.

2. Veterans who experience gaps, between their military occupation training and experience and civilian occupation requirements, are more likely to participate in duplicative training to acquire relevant licensure or certification.

3. State administrative rules and processes within civilian licensing and credentialing systems can create hurdles for veterans who want to obtain licensure or certification; and these hurdles are often unrelated to their ability to competently provide professional services to the public.

Strategies to Address Barriers to Veterans' Licensing and Certification

This section describes the strategies states can use to accelerate licensing and certification for veterans, provides a step-by-step blueprint states can use to identify, design and implement those strategies, and offers lessons learned from the implementation of those strategies by demonstration states. Additional state-specific strategies are available for review in [Appendix III](#) (pg. 62) of the final Report, where they are organized by occupation.

While a number of factors can affect the ability of servicemembers and veterans to attain civilian credentials on a timely basis, the demonstration States successfully employed three types of strategies to support veterans' transition to the civilian workforce by:

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1. Recognizing Equivalent Military Training and Experience

Civilian credentialing agencies have different eligibility requirements for attaining occupational licenses or other credentials. Eligibility requirements might typically include a combination of education and training, work experience, or prerequisite certifications. Each eligibility requirement presents different challenges in terms of the ability of servicemembers and veterans to use their military training and experience to meet civilian credentialing requirements.

There were two common approaches implemented by the demonstration states to address this challenge:

- **Licensure by endorsement to advance or increase reciprocity among states, and**
- **Licensure by exam to minimize duplication in coursework.**

Licensure by Endorsement: If state licensing boards determine that there is full equivalency between military preparation and civilian preparation, veterans can be licensed by endorsement without additional training or exams. States commonly use endorsement when an individual holds a license in another state, and it is most appropriate for occupations for which there are recognized national certification exams.

- In Iowa, the state Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Office reviewed the training provided to medics and corpsmen and designated it an approved training program, allowing veterans with an active national Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification to apply for an **Iowa EMT license** without additional training or testing.
- In Illinois, former medics with an active national EMT certification can apply for an **Illinois EMT license**.
- In Virginia, former medics with an active EMT certification also can apply for a **state EMT license**.

Licensure by Exam. If it is not appropriate for a state to award a license by endorsement, a state may be able to waive the requirement for veterans to complete an approved civilian training program as a condition to sit for a state licensure exam and may be able to grant permission to sit for the exam based on military training and experience alone. In that case, states can use the exam to demonstrate that the candidate has sufficient knowledge to practice competently.

- In Minnesota, former military police that meet experience requirements (four years or two years with a postsecondary degree) can apply to sit for a **military reciprocity exam**.
- Wisconsin's **Law Enforcement Accelerated Development Program** allows veterans who have separated within the past three years and who have at least one year of experience as a military police officer to take a reciprocity exam and become certified with no additional training.

2. Providing Accelerated Training Opportunities

When there is partial overlap between the skillset used in a military occupation and that is needed for a similar civilian occupation, states can provide shortened training opportunities for veterans that focus on filling specific gaps. Such strategies for states include working with education providers to:

- Establish bridge programs designed specifically around veterans' training needs, and
- Help veterans waive required courses by awarding credit for military training or advanced standing within an existing training program.

Bridge Programs: Bridge programs were the most prevalent strategy demonstration states pursued. In some cases they developed new programs and in others they identified existing accelerated programs and made them more accessible to veterans.

Illinois developed a new **veteran bridge program curriculum** for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and through the demonstration, implemented the program at two community colleges, each of which will reduce the training time for medics by half.

Minnesota and Wisconsin identified and adapted existing civilian bridge programs for veterans. In Minnesota, separating and veteran military medics now can take advantage of an existing program that **accelerates training** for civilian EMTs interested in moving up to paramedics. In Wisconsin, the **Vet2RN** program adapted an existing LPN to RN pathway for medics who have the opportunity to accelerate progress towards an LPN license and continue to the RN level.

Course Credit and Advanced Standing. Another strategy to accelerate training periods is to provide academic credit for military training and work experience. In some cases, awarded credits become part of a post-military veterans' academic transcript. In other cases, waived course requirements can provide advanced standing in a training or degree program. Both processes can decrease the time veterans spend in existing training programs to meet civilian licensure requirements.

To provide credit for training and experience the military provides various forms of official documentation that are similar in nature to the official academic transcripts that a civilian would submit from a civilian educational institution. For example, the Air Force operates the regionally accredited Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). As a result, for Air Force veterans, military training is documented on a standard academic transcript issued by CCAF. In addition to awarding academic credit for training, CCAF also assesses certain aspects of military occupational experience for the award of academic credit. The other three Services (Army, Navy and Marine Corps), however, rely on the **American Council on Education** (ACE) to review their military training and experience to recommend appropriate amounts of academic credit. Based on the ACE credit recommendations for those three Services, the **Joint Services Transcript** (JST) documents the military training and the military occupational experience that have been reviewed by ACE and makes academic credit recommendations.

In most cases postsecondary education institutions develop their own policies for assessing prior learning and granting advanced standing in education programs. States are encouraged to work closely with postsecondary education institutions to award credit and advanced standing to veterans with relevant military training and experience.

In Minnesota **Lake Superior College** awards course credit for 27 required Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA) courses to former military PTAs, reducing the credits needed for the degree to 20.

In January 2017, Lake Superior College will be the first college to offer a Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs-approved **practical nursing program** for vets with medic field experience.

Wisconsin's Herzing University now offers advanced standing for former medics entering the **Associate Degree in Nursing program**. The medics join the program as second semester students and can take the **National Licensure Council Examination for Licensed Practical Nurses (NCLEX-PN)** exam after one semester or continue on to receive an associate's degree in two semesters.

Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin now participate in the **Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit** led by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. The three-year, grant-funded initiative began in November 2014 and brings together 13 states to "advance best practices designed to ease the transition of veterans and their families from military life to college campuses. It makes special reference to translating competencies acquired through military training and experiences into milestones toward completing a college degree or earning a certificate or license."

"I'm a medic with the 477th Med Company in Duluth, Minnesota. LSC's Military Bridge Medic to LPN program will give me a huge boost towards my goal of becoming a registered nurse."

Sgt. Darold "Bud" Lindman
US Army 477th Medical Company

3. Streamlining Administrative Processes and Rules

Some requirements for civilian licensure are unrelated to an individual's skills or knowledge, such as application fees and conditional offers of employment for public safety personnel. States should identify opportunities to address administrative processes and regulations in ways that do not affect their substance, but reduce barriers for veterans looking to apply their military training experience within the civilian workforce. Examples of such strategies include waiving administrative fees, ensuring quick turnaround of applications, making information about the licensing process more accessible, and aligning rules such as experience requirements with typical military service experiences.



Minnesota passed **legislation** to make it easier for veterans to take the police officer exam by changing work experience requirements from five years to four years to better reflect the typical length of military enlistments and tours of duty.



Virginia conducted a veteran-specific assessment of the state's performance measurement system currently in place for licensure applications in order to verify that veteran applications were being processed in a timely fashion.



In Wisconsin, before taking the law enforcement exam, veterans were required to secure a conditional offer of employment. This type of conditional rule posed a challenge, because law enforcement agencies had to offer employment to veteran candidates who lacked civilian law enforcement training or experience. Through an administrative change, the state now allows employers to endorse veterans with military law enforcement training to sit for the **law enforcement exam**, and to offer employment on the basis of the candidates' performance over the course of their prior military training.

The Blueprint: Successful Implementation of State Strategies in Seven Steps

Under the demonstration, participating states designed and implemented a range of strategies to accelerate veterans' transition to the civilian workforce. Although state strategies differed depending on occupational focus and state regulatory environments, a common process for designing and implementing those strategies emerged from the demonstration experience. This section describes that common process, offering a seven-step blueprint to policymakers from states interested in pursuing similar efforts. This blueprint can support state policymakers by offering a step-by-step process to inform the development of their own strategies.

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STEP **01** Assemble a Team

STEP **02** Select the Occupations

STEP **03** Understand Civilian Employment Requirements and Stakeholders

STEP **04** Understand Military Occupational Specialties

STEP **05** Produce Gap Analysis to Identify the Appropriate Strategy

STEP **06** Market to Veterans

STEP **07** Develop an Assessment Plan

Step 1: Assemble a Team

No single state authority or agency is fully equipped to design and implement veterans' licensure and certification strategies. States are encouraged to assemble cross-agency teams. States participating in the demonstration found that six different partners rise in importance at certain points.

Governor's Office: The governor can make policy changes through orders to executive branch agencies and carries weight with stakeholders in and out of state government. In turn, gubernatorial leadership is critical to the momentum and coordination of cross-agency efforts.

Workforce and Economic Development: These agencies bring labor data and knowledge of the state's workforce development infrastructure to the team. They also are positioned to conduct outreach with unemployed veterans and employers.

Postsecondary Education: New courses or programs require several layers of approval within the postsecondary education community. State postsecondary education authorities help the teams engage schools and identify existing programs that could serve as foundations for accelerated courses.

State Veterans' Affairs Agency: These agencies have comprehensive knowledge of state-specific veteran programs, data on states' veteran populations, ties to the veteran service organization community, and specialized capacity to market accelerated licensure pathways.

State Licensing Boards: These agencies maintain detailed information about professional licensure requirements. At the outset of the project, state teams might not know on which occupations to focus. However, broad outreach to licensure boards can be useful at that stage to raise awareness of the issue and elicit preliminary responses from the boards.

State Approving Agency: Every state has a state approving agency that determines whether a training or educational program is eligible for GI Bill educational benefits. It is important for state teams to work with the state approving agency from the beginning of the process to make sure that any new training program developed for veterans meets the approving agency's requirements. Without that approval, veterans will not be able to take advantage of their VA funded GI Bill education benefits for the new program.

In some states, executive orders or legislation designated a lead partner to coordinate and set a timeline for beginning the work. For example, Illinois entered the demonstration project with an **executive order** in place designating the state's Department of Veterans Affairs as a lead on civilian employment for veterans. Additionally, the executive order or legislation typically sets a timeline for identifying occupations and posting online assessments of gaps between military and civilian training.

Step 2: Select the Occupations

Given the scope of the overlap between military and civilian occupations, states are encouraged to place a priority on specific occupations for accelerating veterans' licensing and certification. States should develop strategies for identifying occupations that are both high-demand and high-density. For the demonstration, participating states made efforts to identify to select high-demand occupations for which a high-density of active duty servicemembers hold a related military occupational code (MOC). States have a number of resources available to assist in selecting priority occupations with the greatest potential to offer pathways to civilian employment to the largest number of transitioning servicemembers and veterans.

- States can use state labor market information and federal agency data, available from sources such as the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) and [O*Net OnLine](#), to identify and select the most prevalent occupations for returning veterans and transitioning servicemembers.
- While states do not typically have immediate access to data about the number of active servicemembers holding a specific MOC, requests can be made of the Department of Defense or individual military branches. Point of contact information for the Department of Defense is available in the Resources section, located at the end of this guide. Additional information about military occupations is discussed in **Step 4: Understand Military Occupational Specialties**.
- To determine the MOC density of the existing state veteran population, states can use separating servicemembers' DD214 records, which are provided to states' departments of veteran affairs at the time of a servicemember's discharge. The DD214 record describes a servicemember's military history, MOC, and discharge status.
 - Wisconsin began organizing DD214s by MOC and then, developed a memorandum of understanding between the Wisconsin Departments of Veterans Affairs and Workforce Development to determine how many individuals (in aggregate) with MOC relevant to target occupations receive unemployment benefits in the state.
 - In Minnesota, the state Departments of Veterans Affairs and of Employment and Economic Development entered into a similar data sharing agreement to map veteran unemployment by MOC. That information proved helpful not only for estimating the MOC density of the veteran population in the state, but also for assessing the relative demand for accelerated employment pathways by occupation.

Step 3: Understand Civilian Employment Requirements and Stakeholders

For their selected occupations, states should document the existing pathways to licensure and certification. The documentation of existing pathways facilitates an understanding among stakeholders of all the steps required for those pathways, and makes it possible to identify the barriers that might emerge for veterans. Clear understanding of such key technical details within those pathways in turn guides state strategies.

For example, the demonstration states identified a key distinction between licensure requirements that mandate participation in a state approved training program versus those that mandate participation in an accredited training program. On the one hand, if completion of a state approved program is required, the state licensing board is in a position to assess and approve the military training. On the other hand, if a state requires completion of a nationally accredited training program, the state licensing board cannot on its own affect the acceptability of non-accredited military training, since accreditation is the domain of a national authority.

Mapping civilian pathways to uncover such distinctions proved important in the formulation and subsequent implementation of state strategies. In cases where state licensing boards were in a position to deem military training a state approved program, boards had to assess the comparability of the training for the military occupation with the state's approved training for the corresponding civilian occupation. Boards in some demonstration states cited staff capacity challenges given the volume and unfamiliarity of the military training documentation to be assessed. For occupations where completing a nationally accredited training program was a prerequisite for civilian licensure, state boards were in a position to use resources developed, for example, by national associations of state licensing boards to help perform a comparability assessment.

The mapping process also helps states identify any existing accelerated pathways to licensure that might be relevant to veterans, including endorsement and exam policies for individuals licensed out-of-state. States also might find that there are accelerated options for individuals with lapsed credentials. Existing accelerated pathways can serve as useful models or examples to adapt for veterans' training and experience, and to engage the state licensing boards and other stakeholders in the design of the acceleration strategies. Once states have enacted policies and programs designed to accelerate pathways to licensure for veterans, such policies and programs can be informative for active duty servicemembers when preparing for their post-service careers, either through early-career planning or through the attainment of civilian certification or licensure while still on active duty. States are encouraged to publish these accelerated pathways on their veteran employment pages and promote them through their state workforce systems.

Step 4: Understand Military Occupational Specialties

Once a relevant civilian pathway is identified, states can help stakeholders understand the occupational relevancy of military training and practice. The state participants in the demonstration found that they could play a key translational role by communicating the details of military occupation descriptions to both state licensing and accrediting bodies and postsecondary educational institutions. This translational role included generating lists of MOC that were relevant to specific civilian occupations, reviewing military training materials, and reviewing course credit recommendations for postsecondary educational institutions. To understand the relevant MOC, demonstration states followed similar processes described below.

Identify All Relevant MOC: An MOC identifies an occupational category in the military and is a proxy for military training and experience. Members of the military are given a basic MOC, and many obtain additional identifiers throughout their careers to indicate further training and specialization. Each branch likely has several relevant MOC for any given civilian job, making it complex for a state to take on all potential pathways to a given civilian occupation. However, states can benefit from multiple existing resources created by the military and federal government that map MOC to civilian occupations. Each branch of service operates Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) websites; official military websites that help servicemembers, veterans, career and transition counselors, military recruiters, employers and credentialing boards identify the civilian certification and license requirements that relate to the MOS of interest. Links to the various COOL sites can be found at the end of this guide.

Additionally, DOL offers a number of online tools to assist veterans, employers and stakeholders that can be found at [Veterans.gov](https://www.veterans.gov) and [Veterans ReEmployment](https://www.veteransreemployment.com) websites. Two major enhancements to information on those sites are designed specifically to assist transitioning servicemembers and veterans. First, there is an enhanced crosswalk states can use to identify more specific matches between MOC and civilian occupations; including factors such as rank, number of tours of duty, and specific skill sets. Second, for each MOC-related civilian occupation, the career sites display information on relevant industry or professional certifications and display **icons** to indicate quality and value, such as whether they are accredited, industry-endorsed, or in-demand based on job postings.

Obtain Relevant Programs of Instruction: Once specific subsets of MOC are selected, the military service branches can provide more information about training requirements for that MOC. Information obtained from the military includes the specific job description, the curriculum for the training (also called the program of instruction or POI), the length of training, and the civilian credentials required. The gathering of information for review by civilian licensing boards is an important part of the process to prepare states to make final decisions about whether there are any equivalencies between the civilian job and the training and experience behind any given MOC.

In demonstration states, some of the licensing boards requested and reviewed detailed information about the content of each military course for the occupations identified in this project before making any decisions about accelerated pathways. To prepare for the licensing boards' requests and rapidly implement the demonstration, the states gathered content and skill requirements at the beginning of the process for both the military and civilian sides. In some situations, the states gathered that information themselves. In others, states had their licensing boards directly obtain those materials from the military, accreditation boards, and national professional associations.

Some national professional associations also developed comparisons of such occupations and can provide copies of the POI. For example, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing obtained POIs for relevant medical professions and published a comparison to national nursing standards. All six demonstration states found that to be a useful resource for designing their respective LPN strategies.

Review Awarded Credits and Credit Recommendations: As indicated previously, most Air Force veterans will have CCAF transcripts and some will hold Associate degrees. In addition, Air Force veterans may have transcripts documenting credits earned at other postsecondary institutions. For Army, Navy and Marine Corps veterans, the JST will provide ACE credit recommendations for some military training and work experience. Veterans of those Services also may have transcripts from civilian postsecondary institutions documenting credits and degrees earned from those schools on a voluntary basis. There also may be postsecondary institutions within the state that already have processes for awarding credit for military training and experience, as the basis for waiving some required courses. Credits awarded allow veterans to start further along the path to licensure instead of at the beginning, and credit recommendations provide information about the equivalence of their military training and work experience.

Step 5: Produce Gap Analysis to Identify the Appropriate Strategy

Full Equivalent Strategies

- Endorsement
- Licensure by Exam
- Administrative or Process Changes

Partial Full Equivalent Strategies

- Bridge Program
- Course Credit and Advanced Placement

States can produce a gap analysis that compares the skills and credentials held by servicemembers in a particular MOS to civilian requirements for state licensure and certification. Gap analyses identify the appropriate strategy, whether it is overcoming documentation issues, providing accelerated training opportunities, or streamlining administrative processes. Demonstration experience indicates that producing a complete gap analysis requires specialized knowledge of the occupation in question, which demands engagement of state licensing boards. To produce a gap analysis for each occupation, states should:

Scan for Existing National Analyses: If a national professional association already has completed a comparison, it can serve as a basis for the state's gap analysis. For example, demonstration states used the gap analysis from the [National Council of State Boards of Nursing](#). National analyses can provide a template for states, but licensing boards in demonstration states still preferred to undertake their own additional assessments because of the potential for additional state-specific requirements. Although national professional associations develop standards, those are voluntarily adopted and often modified by states.

Engage Licensing Boards: Licensing boards have the authority to designate an alternative course of training as an acceptable proxy for required state training, and they have unique technical knowledge of the skills and training necessary to meet state requirements for an occupation. That expertise and authority puts licensing boards in a unique position to initiate a gap analysis. Several states have issued executive orders directing licensing boards to develop accelerated licensure pathways for veterans. Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval used an [executive order](#) to direct state licensure boards to develop new programs for reciprocity agreements and bridging the gap between state-required experience and military experience. The executive order specifically addressed boards overseeing emergency medical services, licensed practical nurses, and law enforcement professionals. Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed an [executive order](#) that required state agencies to identify equivalencies and gaps between military and civilian occupations and develop recommendations for licensing boards that would take military training into account for awarding civilian licenses.

The results of the gap analysis determine whether military training and experience for the occupation in question is fully or partially equivalent to a state's training requirements for licensure or certification. That determination helps states identify the appropriate strategy for streamlining licensure and certification for veterans in that occupation. In cases where full equivalency exists, state strategies can focus on overcoming other barriers to veterans' licensure and certification. Such strategies include overcoming documentation and licensing barriers for veterans through endorsement of military training, or by waiving the training requirement for veterans with similar training and experience to sit for licensing exams. Overcoming administrative barriers to achieve full equivalency includes paying for exam fees or giving licensure credit for non-skill state requirements such as the duration of previous experience.

For occupations where gap analyses indicate partial equivalency is possible, appropriate state strategies focus on providing accelerated training programs that help bridge specific gaps and avoid duplicative training. Those strategies include developing standalone bridge courses that veterans can complete to meet state requirements, or providing course credit or advanced standing in existing training programs so that veterans complete only the courses they need to be eligible for state licensure. All partial-equivalency strategies require engagement with postsecondary educational institutions to (1) modify student outreach, curriculum, or course content policies; or (2) develop, approve, and deliver accelerated courses for veterans. Demonstration states followed a similar process to engage postsecondary educational institutions in those strategies.

Target outreach to veteran-friendly education partners: Demonstration states saw value in engaging training partners with high populations of adult learners such as community colleges, many of which operate support networks and centers devoted to veteran students. The [Service members Opportunity Colleges consortium](#) works in cooperation with the DoD to recognize schools that have veteran-friendly policies.

Provide implementation support to education partners: Across states that pursued the bridge course strategy, whether a new course or an existing course, state teams provided technical assistance to the postsecondary institutions. That assistance included developing the course curriculum and guiding the review and approval of the curriculum through a multi-layered process. The multi-layer approval process may include faculty, institutional boards, accreditation bodies, state higher education boards, state licensing boards, and the state approving agency. Two demonstration states provided small start-up grants to support education partners in the development of new bridge courses.

Step 6: Market to Veterans

Given the need to identify and recruit veterans to the accelerated pathways, the demonstration states emphasized the importance of developing a marketing plan for eligible transitioning servicemembers and veterans. Such an emphasis is important to address any initial concerns among licensing and training partners about the level of demand for those accelerated pathways. State teams in the demonstration agreed to support partners by taking the following steps to market the programs to help increase the pool of applicants.

States can identify the communication touch points with veterans for outreach and recruitment purposes, whether through state departments of veterans' services, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness (Force Training), and the public workforce system, which administers the delivery of unemployment compensation for veterans and non-veterans. An additional avenue for outreach is the Department of Defense' **Transition Assistance Program** (TAP). TAP is a mandatory part of the military life cycle that provides information, tools and training to exiting servicemembers in order to ensure success in their post-service careers and life. TAP includes a number of partner-agency seminars, including the Department of Labor's **Employment Workshop** (DOL-EW) and **Career Technical Training Track** (CTTT).

While broad-based outreach through branding accelerated pathways may be one option, states can also update websites and conduct grassroots outreach through community and veteran service organizations. Some states are using data for more targeted outreach. State teams from Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin organized agency-held DD214s by MOC and implemented letter-writing campaigns with information about accelerated pathways to licensure to those potential applicants. Since DD214s do not always include the current addresses of veterans, the Wisconsin team developed a memorandum of understanding with the state Department of Revenue to help identify accurate addresses for veterans. States also established mechanisms to share data among agencies; The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs began marketing accelerated pathways to veterans through a database maintained by the Illinois Department of Employment Security; Wisconsin partnered with the state Department of Military Affairs to conduct targeted outreach to reserve servicemembers holding a relevant MOC stationed in the state.

Step 7: Develop an Assessment Plan

As states design and implement strategies to accelerate licensing and certification paths for veterans, building data collection capacity also enables states to assess progress and signals the need for adjustments or improvements to new accelerated pathways to licensure. Furthermore, establishing bridge programs and data collection partnerships give the state agencies much needed baselines on veteran licensures and certifications. State teams also can position themselves to assess the potential contributions of accelerated pathways to helping veterans transition to the civilian workforce.

Over the course of the demonstration, participating state teams made progress on both fronts. For example: Illinois' agreement with the two postsecondary institutions focused on implementing bridge courses for veterans and asking the host schools to monitor and report data on bridge course enrollment, completion, and subsequent employment; The Wisconsin team structured a similar agreement to assess the progress of the accelerated courses hosted by partner educational institutions; The teams from Minnesota and Wisconsin also established reporting agreements to track veterans' use of exam waivers and pass rates for police patrol officers.

Data partnerships between state agencies can work to help develop baselines for veterans' licensure and certification from a performance management perspective; The Virginia team worked with the Department of Health Professions, which licenses LPNs and PTAs, and its Healthcare Workforce Data Center to collect information during the license application and license renewal processes. This approach positions states to set a baseline and track the distribution of veterans across the licensed healthcare workforce. Similarly, Governor Sandoval of Nevada issued **Executive Order 2014-20**, which requires state licensing boards to collect information on veteran status and report that information to the State's Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs.

States that build data collection and reporting capacity in conjunction with the development of accelerated pathways have the ability to assess the progress and success of those strategies beyond the performance period of the demonstration.

Implementation Barriers and Supports

The demonstration states identified the following barriers to, and supports for, implementing state strategies. Those barriers and supports made a difference in the timing and process to implement state strategies as described in the previous section. Although all of the states made progress in their respective strategies, each state encountered some barriers. This section identifies some implementation barriers experienced by the demonstration states and identifies strategies and supports used to overcome them. States are encouraged to use the following experiences of the demonstration states will in order to assess readiness and anticipate potential challenges for implementing accelerated pathways for veterans.

Overcome Implementation Barriers

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Identify information about veteran population: Up-to-date and accurate information on state veteran populations is held by various Federal and state agencies, which presents states with the problem of how to share data systematically. That lack of consistent information may include data storage barriers, such as information in the paper-based DD214, or how to ensure that data privacy is maintained. In turn, demonstration states initially encountered difficulty in developing profiles of the military training and experience of their veteran populations. States need to be ready to assess and communicate the need for accelerated processes for a particular occupation and conduct targeted outreach to veterans eligible to participate in newly established licensure and certification pathways. Notably, some states initiated cross-agency data sharing agreements and established new reporting requirements to confront such challenges over the course of the demonstration.

Create Demand for bridge program pathways: Related to the above information barrier, demonstration states indicated that postsecondary institutions can be reluctant to establish bridge programs for veterans unless a demonstrable level of demand from eligible participants exists to ensure programs are financially sustainable. To respond to that concern, demonstration states offered support in the form of marketing for postsecondary institutions to build awareness and generate interest among veterans. States are encouraged to engage with postsecondary institutions and other education partners early in the process of developing and implementing bridge programs for veterans and to remain in close communication throughout the process.

Set Job Expectations: States indicated that some veterans leaving the military have expectations for salaries, benefits and career advancement that are hard to meet in the civilian workforce. These expectations can arise in part from differences between the military and civilian sectors in the skill sets and the skill levels required, as well as differences in the value accorded a given skill set by the military and civilian sectors. Therefore, as policymakers assess a civilian occupation for compatibility or relevance, they will benefit from understanding the extent to which that occupation is likely to support a standard of living at least on par with military service. An example is that emergency medical skills sets at the EMT level are sufficient to support an adequate standard of living within the military. However emergency medical skills at a (higher) paramedic level command civilian pay and benefits that are comparable to those of a military EMT.

Develop and Maintain Stakeholder Engagement: States had difficulty making progress on accelerated pathways for veterans without the full support of licensing boards and postsecondary institutions. States additionally noted that limited engagement resulted from a lack of capacity within licensing boards and education partners. Licensing board and education leaders found that they need to devote resources or develop the capacity to accelerate pathways for veterans.. The demonstration states indicated that engagement from the governor’s office helped encourage decision-makers in those institutions to pursue this work. States are encouraged to engage with licensing boards and education partners early in the process of developing and implementing accelerated pathways for veterans and to remain in close communication throughout the process.

Establish Processes Early to Reduce Planning and Implementation Time: It took the demonstration states significant amounts of time to identify options, develop specific requests for stakeholders, and educate decision-makers. For example, the curricula for bridge courses often required approval by state higher education authority and licensing boards, and further approval by each postsecondary institution’s board. In order to develop strategies to maintain momentum throughout a long process states are encouraged to utilize the blueprint provided in this guide as well as the suggested supports discussed below.

Implementation Supports

Leadership from Governor: In demonstration states, representatives from the governor’s office either led the state’s team or worked closely with the team leader. This type of leadership helped to keep the various stakeholders engaged throughout the lengthy processes described above. It also helped to engage the necessary state agencies and stakeholders to implement state strategies. For many of the stakeholders, veterans’ employment is not their primary mission, even though these stakeholders are vital to making real changes. Governors can elevate veterans’ employment as part of a statewide agenda, making it a priority across agencies, and promoting constructive cross-agency partnerships. For example, an important cross-agency partnership for advancing state strategies is between state licensing boards and postsecondary education institutions. State licensing boards and education institutions have existing, complementary responsibilities for developing and approving education and training programs that lead to licensure for civilian workers. As a result, the support of both is critical, because neither constituency has complete authority to develop and implement an accelerated pathway on its own.

Existing Accelerated Pathways: The demonstration states benefitted from existing examples of accelerated pathways. Those existing programs helped inform dialogue about the feasibility of state strategies with state licensing boards and postsecondary institutions. States also indicated that having examples of fully realized programs helped accelerate the development and implementation of their own accelerated pathways. Specifically, at the beginning of the demonstration, the GateWay Community College in Phoenix, Arizona had just completed the process of developing and obtaining state licensing board approval for an accelerated LPN pathway for veterans, based on the NCSBN gap analysis. Four demonstration states consulted directly with the director of the GateWay program. In the end, two demonstration states adopted the **GateWay model** as the model for their accelerated LPN programs.

Specificity in Legislation and Executive Orders: States indicated that legislation and executive orders directing licensing boards to award credit for military training and experience were more effective when they focused on specific occupations. For example: Although not a demonstration state, **legislation** in Arizona specifically required the state’s nursing board to identify accelerated options for veterans. That created an incentive for a community college to propose to develop a bridge program for LPNs, as well as an incentive for the nursing board to collaborate with that community college. Accordingly, the nursing board pre-approved the program at the conceptual stage and approved the final curriculum that was developed within a year of the legislation passing; In Illinois, the governor signed an **executive order** that designated the Department of Veterans’ Affairs the lead agency for providing a specific timeline for identifying gaps between military and civilian licensed occupations.

In both cases, it was easier for each of the governors to hold stakeholders accountable because of the specificity of the law and executive order. For additional examples of demonstration-specific legislation and executive orders, please review **Appendix II** (pg. 60) of the full Report.

Existing Gap Assessments: States were able to use existing assessments of the gaps between military and civilian training completed by national associations of state licensing boards. For example, the report by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing provided the states with a foundation and a template for developing accelerated pathways. That organization compared a standard civilian curriculum for the LPN occupation with the training curricula for four different categories of Army, Navy and Air Force Medics, identifying for each civilian curriculum element the extent to which the four military curricula met the civilian standard. All six demonstration states targeted the development of accelerated pathways to LPN. Although state licensing boards do not implement pathways based on those national assessments alone, such assessments can serve as facilitators of implementation, making it easier for the states to engage licensing boards with a tangible example and a starting point.

Target Partners Friendly to Veterans Education: Demonstration states targeted all institutions of higher education that provide education and training services to meet the needs of veterans, and focused on them as potential partners for accelerated pathways. As referenced previously, the demonstration states used the **Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges consortium** to identify schools that have veteran-friendly policies. States additionally used the American Council on Education’s **Toolkit** for Veteran Friendly Institutions for institutions of higher education.

Conclusion

States should take steps to identify the skills veterans earn in the military, translate them in a way that civilian licensure boards will accept, and help veterans take advantage of accelerated pathways for civilian licenses. States are encouraged to identify opportunities to waive tests and training, and create new courses to fill skills gaps without requiring veterans to undergo duplicative training to transition to the civilian workforce.

The demonstration states' collective experiences provide learning opportunities for other states interested in using legislation or executive orders to create accelerated pathways and implement strategies for licensure and certifications for veterans. There is no standard solution for states to create accelerated pathways for veterans, as licensing and certification strategies are often state- and occupation- specific. However, the experiences from this demonstration offer states strategies that correspond to the specific barriers or requirements that veterans might encounter.

The Veterans Licensing and Credentialing Demonstration project was instrumental in establishing that no single entity or agency has the full range of information and capacity to establish accelerated pathways. Both the technical knowledge needed to identify strategies, and the authority to make changes, are spread across multiple state agencies and supporting national association. Vital to the process is communication that occurs to support licensure and certification for veterans among state agencies, the federal government, the military, educational institutions, and the private sector. Demonstration states relied on their partners for the information needed to identify and implement strategies, and get the right information out to veterans. Against that backdrop the cross-agency and stakeholder teams, assembled at the beginning of the demonstration, helped sustain progress to serve the nation's transitioning servicemembers and veterans.

States are encouraged to use this guide as merely a jumping off point. Significantly more detail is available in the full September, 2015 Report **Veterans' Licensing and Certification Demonstration: A Summary of State Experiences, Preliminary Findings, and Cost Estimates** and appendices. Additional information can be found in the Report as well as the Resource sections found at the end of this guide.

General Resources

Veterans' Licensing and Certification Demonstration: A Summary of State Experiences, Preliminary Findings, and Cost Estimates

Veterans.gov

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

Department of Defense SkillBridge

United States Department of Labor (DOL) CareerOneStop Veterans ReEmployment

O*Net OnLine Military Skills CrossWalk

U.S. Department of Navy (DON) Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (DON COOL)

U.S. Marine Corps' Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (Marine Corps COOL)

U.S. Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (Navy COOL)

U.S. Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (Army COOL)

U.S. Air Force Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL)

American Council on Education (ACE) Military Guide

Executive Office of the President, The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses

Force Training, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness

National Governors Association Overview of Military Occupational Specialties

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) Gap Analysis

Operation Workforce: Supporting Georgia's Veterans

National Association of State EMS Officials – Military Specific EMS Licensure Information

Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit (MCMC) – Valuing Military Learning – A Guide to Military Prior Learning Assessment and More

Occupation Specific Resources from Demonstration

Bus and Truck Driver

General Resources:

Program to Assist Veterans to Acquire Commercial Driver's Licenses Report to Congress: A Report Pursuant to Section 32308 of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141) – this report describes military commercial motor vehicle drivers, the national CDL system, and initiatives to facilitate the ability of service members and veterans to attain CDLs. It also outlines recommendations for further action.

Military Skills Test Waiver

- **Application for Military Skills Test Waiver** – application form used by military truck drivers to document that they meet the criteria for the skills test waiver.



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Army COOL provides information on additional related credentials veterans can obtain to enhance their employment opportunities.

Gap Analyses:

Assessment of Gaps between Military Training and Civilian Credentialing Requirements – **Chapter 6: Truck Drivers** – excerpt from a report summarizing the results of a study conducted under the oversight of the Veterans' Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force.

Bridge Programs:

Report: **Virginia's Troops to Trucks Program**.

Wisconsin - established a program similar to Troops to Trucks called MOVE-IT with information that will shortly be available on the **DOT** website.

The following states also have Troops to Trucks initiatives: **California**, **Georgia**, and **Tennessee**

Millis Training Institute Truck Driving Program for Veterans.

EMT/Paramedic

Gap Analyses:

Assessment of Gaps between Military Training and Civilian Credentialing Requirements – **Chapter 4 – Health Care Support** – excerpt from a report summarizing the results of a study conducted under the oversight of the Veterans’ Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force.

Bridge Programs:

Lansing Community College in Michigan offers a military medic to civilian Paramedic bridge program.



Illinois Bridge Curricula (note IL does not use the current NREMT levels for EMS professionals):

- **Army Medics to Emergency Medical Technicians Intermediate (EMT-I) and Emergency Medical Technicians Paramedics (EMT-Paramedics)** - The curriculum addresses the differences in competencies between the 68W-10 Army Hospital Corpsman Program and those of a practical EMT program as delineated in the Emergency Medical Services Systems Act and Trauma Center Code. Upon completion of the curriculum, students need to have a skills check-off and pass the written exam to verify competency.
- **Air Force and Navy Military Medics to Emergency Medical Technicians Intermediate (EMT-B)** - The curriculum addresses the differences in competencies between the Navy Corpsman and Air Force P-e 1 Aerospace Program and those of a practical EMT program as delineated in the Emergency Medical Services Systems Act and Trauma Center Code. Upon completion of the curriculum, students need to have a skills check-off and pass the written exam to verify competency.

Note: Information on all of IL’s licensing and certification work can be accessed on the [IDVA](#) website.

Military Medic to Civilian Paramedic EMS Bridge Programs (11-18-13): National Highway Traffic Safety Administration with National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO) offered a webinar providing an overview of the issue and including presentations on bridge programs.

Law Enforcement

General Resources:

The International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST) maintains a web site devoted to **Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST)**.

Gap Analyses:

Due to the variation in civilian standards, there is currently no standard gap assessment for police patrol officers.

Bridge programs:

Although most services do not have a policy to train to POST standards, the Army is running a pilot with the Missouri POST and adapted its MP training curriculum to align closely with MO Post requirements. MPs are now able to apply for a basic POST License upon completion of MP school at Fort Leonard Wood as a reciprocal agreement with MO POST. Missouri requires approximately 600 hours of training to gain licensure—about average for IADLEST POST requirements. States Basic Law Enforcement Academy Hours range from a low of 360 in LA to a high of over 1000 hours in AK and CA. The Army is in the process of entering into an agreement with IADLEST that would allow its reciprocity with MO to extend to all 50 states through their reciprocity with MO. If it proves viable, it could be a model for the other states and the other services' military police/law enforcement schools to model.



Licensed Practical Nurse/Registered Nurse

Gap Analyses:

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) Gap Analysis - NCSBN staff, with consultation from leading experts in the areas of nursing and military education, conducted an in-depth analysis of the health care specialist (medic), corpsman and airman curricula, and compared these with a standard LPN/VN curriculum. The standard LPN/VN curriculum developed for that project is comparable to the LPN/VN curricula approved by U.S. BONs. In addition, NCSBN staff reviewed the Army LPN program and compared it with the standard LPN/VN curriculum; that analysis is provided within the report, along with recommendations and legislative talking points.



Assessment of Gaps between Military Training and Civilian Credentialing Requirements –
Chapter 4 – Health Care Support.

LPN Bridge Training Programs

GateWay Community College (Phoenix, AZ) - a program that began in January 2014. Presentation by Margi Schultz.

Illinois - drafted a bridge curriculum for Air Force and Navy medics: **METC Corpsman - LPN Approved Assessment** - The program addresses differences in competencies between the METC Basic Medical Technician Corpsman Program and those of a practical nursing program as delineated in the Illinois Nurse Practice Act. Program components include didactic, clinical, and skills validation learning experiences. Upon program completion, students are eligible to sit for the PN-NCLEX. Information on all of IL's licensing and certification work can be accessed on the **IDVA website**.

RN Bridge Training Programs:

Lansing Community College [RN via Medic to Paramedic].

GateWay Community College (Phoenix, AZ) [RN via Medic to LPN].

Herzing University (Madison, WI) [RN via Medic to LPN].

- Herzing offers an approved RN program that allows students to step out of the program at the LPN level and sit for the NCLEX-PN exam. Essentially, the program allows civilian EMTs and military medics to enter the program as second-semester students, enabling them to take the NCLEX-PN exam in one semester or less, or continue on to receive an Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN) in another two semesters. The program will enroll its first Army medic in summer 2014.

Physical Therapy Assistant

Gap Analyses:

Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy [presentation](#) by Dr. Adrien Leslie.

Bridge Training Programs:

Arapahoe Community College, Army Career Degree Plan – Associate of Applied Science – Physical Therapist Assistant – Arapahoe Community College, in Littleton, Colorado, a member of the service members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) - an articulated degree plan that provides credit for Army training attained by Army MOS 68F – Physical Therapy Specialists.

Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) – FSBPT represents the national level interests of State Boards of Physical Therapy. FSBPT administers the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE), promotes standards for laws and regulations governing physical therapy occupations, and promotes public and professional awareness of resources that support high standards of practice in the field.

Policy Academy presentation - [“Military PT Techs to Civilian PTAs.”](#)

Lake Superior College in Minnesota offers an Associate of Applied Science degree for Physical Therapy Assistants that is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). The College adapted that program to also offer a 20-credit, online degree-completion program for military-trained physical therapy personnel: Associate of Applied Science, Physical Therapist Assistant; Military Bridge Program. Lake Superior College is a member of the [Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges \(SOC\)](#), which means that the College subscribes to military-friendly academic policies.





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